



DOCTORAL THESIS

The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Ulster, 1905-18

Author
McCurdy, Daniel

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The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Ulster, 1905-18

Daniel McCurdy BA (Hons), MRes

Faculty of Arts of Ulster University
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I confirm that the word count of this thesis is less than 100,000 words excluding title page, contents, acknowledgements, abstract, abbreviations, footnotes, diagrams, maps, illustrations, tables, appendixes, and references or bibliography

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Abstract

This is the first history of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), an Irish nationalist organisation largely based in Ulster that enjoyed its heyday between 1905-1918. A wealth of new material and previously untapped sources informs the present study. To date, the *Hibernian Journal*, the official press organ of the AOH, has been largely unused by historians; and this despite its recording every facet of Hibernian life. Branch and executive minutes have also been located, shedding new light on the degree of congruence and dissonance between the AOH rank-and-file, and its leadership. Our image of the society's financial practices has also been much improved by the discovery of financial records on no less than five AOH divisions. Building on recent work, this thesis suggests that the Order housed and in fact catered to constitutional separatists, a group positioned halfway between constitutional nationalism and separatism. This feat was achieved by recourse to a programme of "populist patriotism" as well as what might be called Hibernian home rule. Of the little work completed on visions of home rule, most focuses on constitutional elites. Elsewhere, historians have precluded the possibility that separatists had a stake in home rule, by concentrating on the experiences of Irish revolutionaries. Here it is argued that the AOH's leadership used Anglophobia, and claims to a separatist lineage, along with an improvised policy in the economic and social spheres, to gain the support of constitutional separatists. Hibernian home rule was particularly efficacious because of its hazy nature. Failure to achieve this goal, however, exposed the Order's function as a gag for separatist sentiment, and when Redmond perverted the Irish Volunteer Force by committing it to the war effort, many constitutional separatists became disillusioned. With the Easter Rising and the rise of Sinn Fein, this disaffection became support for what was, in many ways, a more genuine embodiment of constitutional separatism.

Abbreviations

Ancient Order of Hibernians	AOH
Belfast Catholic Association	BCA
Belfast News-Letter	BNL
Belfast Weekly News	BWN
County Inspector	CI
Cardinal Tomas O' Fiaich Memorial Library	CTOML
Dundalk Democrat	DD
Derry Journal	DJ
Dublin Daily Express	DDE
Dundalk Examiner and Louth Advertiser	DELA
Freeman's Journal	FJ
Gaelic Athletic Association	GAA
Glasgow Roman Catholic Archdiocesan Archive	GRCAA
Hibernian Boys' Brigade	HBB
Hibernian Journal	HJ
Irish American Alliance	IAA
Irish Independent	II
Irish News and Belfast Morning News	INBMN
Irish National Foresters	INF
Irish News	IN
Irish Republican Brotherhood	IRB
Irish Volunteer Force	IVF
Irish Parliamentary Party	IP or IPP
Irish Times	IT
Irish Transport and General Workers' Union	ITGWU
Kildare Observer and Eastern Counties Advertiser	KOECA
Ladies' Auxiliary	LA
Leitrim Advertiser	LEA
Morpeth Herald	MH
Monaghan People	MP
National Archives of Ireland	NAI
National Archives of Scotland	NAS
National Insurance Act	NIA
National Library of Ireland	NLI
Newry Reporter	NR
Northern Star	NS
Northern Standard	NST
National Volunteers	NV
Northern Whig	NW
People's Advocate	PA
Patrick O'Donnell Papers	POD
Public Records Office of Northern Ireland	PRONI

Raphoe Diocese Archives	RDA
Roscommon Herald	RH
Roscommon Messenger	RM
Scottish Catholic Archives	SCA
Sligo Champion	SC
Sinn Fein	SF
Trinity College Dublin	TCD
The Longford Leader	TLL
United Irish League	UIL
Ulster Volunteer Force	UVF
Weekly Freeman's Journal	WFJ
Wicklow News-Letter and County Advertiser	WNCA

A Note on Acronyms, Descriptors and Terms

Throughout, the Ancient Order of Hibernians is referred to as the Ancient Order, the Order, the AOH, the Hibernians and Hibernianism; as well, the Organisation or the Society, the capitalisation and use of additional terms intended to make for easier distinction and to create variety. Advanced nationalist(s) and nationalism is used to describe those individuals or groups ‘whose aspirations were more radical than the official aims of the Irish Parliamentary Party’.¹ In broad terms, constitutional nationalists were those who supported Home Rule; constitutional separatists, those who desired Home Rule as a first step towards separation.

¹Matthew Kelly, *The Fenian ideal and Irish nationalism*, (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 7.

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Introduction

This is the first sustained organisational history of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), a society that became ‘the most important popular political power bloc in nationalist Ireland’ by the early twentieth century.² In 1890 the Order flourished in America, Australia, England, Ireland and Scotland - ‘wherever Irish Catholics as a group felt vulnerable to exploitation’. In the United States, ‘as a sort of Irish Catholic freemasonry, combining nostalgia with benevolence’, it became the largest of all Irish-American societies, boasting 100,000 members.³ In Ireland, during the same period, almost all of the membership – save for 100 members in Leitrim, and Sligo - was based in Ulster, where Catholics and Protestants lived cheek by jowl. Hibernians congregated in lodges of 15 or 20 members and used secret signs and passwords, known as the ‘goods’ of the Order. At this juncture the membership was mostly drawn from the working class, and included farmers, fishermen, labourers and shoemakers. Members paid a monthly subscription of one penny and only Irish Catholics were allowed to join. Policemen and members of the armed forces were forbidden. Each lodge, parish and county had a master. County masters made up the governing executive, the Board of Erin (BOE). The latter held quarterly meetings in Ireland, England and Scotland.⁴ Hibernian excursions, raffles and parties, along with gatherings in pubs were commonplace. Elsewhere, Hibernian parades invited comparisons to the Orange Order.⁵ With the repeal of the Party Processions Act (1860) in 1872, Lady Day (the 15 August) became the Catholic equivalent of the 12 July.⁶ Mass demonstrations were held in Belfast, Derry, and other places. AOH bands led serried ranks. Men with swords marched alongside, adorned with green sashes. Those spearheading the lodges carried banners depicting historical figures

²Kyle Hughes and Donald M. MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies in Nineteenth-Century Ireland and Its Diaspora: The Persistence of Tradition* (Liverpool, 2018), p. 21.

³A.C. Hepburn, ‘The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Irish Politics, 1905-1914’ in *Cithara*, 10 (1971), pp 5-18.

⁴M.T. Foy, ‘The Ancient Order of Hibernians: An Irish Political-Religious Pressure Group, 1884-1975’ (M.A. thesis, Queen’s University Belfast, 1976), p. 18.

⁵Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, pp 17-9.

⁶Demonstrations in subsequent years could not match the spectacle or size of the 1872 celebrations, and they had petered out by 1884. *Belfast Morning News*, 18 Aug. 1880; *Dublin Daily Express* (Hereafter *DDE*), 16 Aug. 1884.

like St. Patrick and Rory O'More.⁷ During the late nineteenth century, the Society entered a period of sterility following splits in first the American organisation, and then the Irish one.⁸

In 1905 the AOH elected Joseph Devlin, a Belfast man, and then MP for Kilkenny North as its national president. A new constitution was drawn up committing the AOH to the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) – the masthead of constitutional nationalism - and its leader John Redmond, and the society was given a structural overhaul. At the bottom were branches or divisions followed by county boards, provincial councils, and the governing body, the Board of Erin. Divisions could be established anywhere one did not exist. To do so – member or non-members – had to first submit a memorial signed by fifteen persons, including the reason for application. At the next county board meeting the memorial would be discussed and the verdict duly communicated. Counties with three branches or more could also apply for the right to form a county board. Each division in the county would then appoint a delegate to serve on a committee. Delegates elected officers from among themselves at county conventions held biennially in March. County meetings occurred once in every three months, at a time and place previously arranged, usually between the 10 and 17 of March, June, September and December. Here they received and considered reports from all their divisions, together with applications for the formation of new ones and any other matters of interest. Their duty was to safeguard and develop the AOH in their county and also settle any disputes arising between branches.⁹ Over time provincial councils were formed to oversee Ulster, Connaught, Leinster, Munster, Scotland, England and Wales. Councils were responsible for appointing a delegate to attend BOE meetings. These were held on a quarterly basis, and with the exception of the national chaplain, the Board's members were elected by way of a national convention, the supreme authority of the AOH, which assembled every two years.

⁷Foy, 'The Ancient Order', pp 13-5.

⁸Foy, 'The Ancient Order', pp 18-9.

⁹'General rules of the AOH (BOE) Friendly Society', 1907, (Hereafter 'General rules, 1907') (Ir 94108 p 36, NLI)

Table 1: AOH officer roles according to hierarchy

Tier	Officer Roles						
Board of Erin	Pres.	Vice-pres.	Sect.	Treas.	Trustees	Marshal	Chaplain
Prov. Councils	Pres.		Sect.	Treas.			Chaplain
Co. Boards	Pres.	Vice-pres.	Sect.	Treas.	Trustees	Marshal	STC
Divs.	Pres.	Vice-pres.	Sect.	Treas.	Trustees	Marshal	STC ¹⁰

Note: President, Vice-president, secretary, treasurer, trustees, marshal and chaplain

The AOH's growth and significance was largely but not exclusively predicated on its political role. In 1905 Devlin became secretary of the United Irish League (UIL) in Ireland. This organisation, created by the ex-Parnellite, William O'Brien in 1898 'aimed at the compulsory purchase of tenanted land and the division of grazing land among local smallholders'.¹¹ As land purchase progressed the UIL was politically broadened, becoming the official Home Rule organisation and primary auxiliary to the Irish Parliamentary Party. The selection of parliamentary candidates was left to locally convened conventions, packed with UIL members and overseen by a provincial UIL officer.¹² In 1900, Hibernian delegates were admitted to conventions, however, and during the next two decades the AOH evolved from 'a marginal, plebeian political network in south-west Ulster to the major force within the ranks of the IPP'.¹³ One factor was the AOH's sectarianism. In Ulster the dominant issue was not land but religion, and the UIL's agrarian programme held little appeal. Under Devlin the Order was trained in machine politics as well, with West Belfast becoming the politician's personal fiefdom from 1906-18.¹⁴ In time the AOH became a 'direct competitor of the UIL's as principal launching-pad for political office in Nationalist Ireland'.¹⁵ Hibernian attempts to rig the outcome of parliamentary conventions, however, as at North Monaghan in 1907, exposed

¹⁰Subject to change.

¹¹Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918* (New York, 1999), p. 31.

¹²David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* (1st ed., Dublin, 1977), pp 93-100.

¹³Fergal McCluskey, "Make way for the Molly Maguires!" The Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Irish Parliamentary Party, 1902-14', in *History Ireland*, 20 (Jan.-Feb. 2012), pp 32-6.

¹⁴McCluskey, "Make way for the Molly Maguires!", pp 32-6.

¹⁵Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp 93-101.

the IPP to criticism. As an instrument for maintaining party discipline and crushing factionalism the AOH also gained a reputation for heavy-handedness. Thus, when the party member William O'Brien spoke out against the Birrell Land Act at a convention in 1909, he was shouted down and attacked by baton wielding Hibernians. The AOH did battle with Sinn Fein throughout the period as well. In 1908, for instance, at a by-election for North Leitrim, the SF candidate Charles Dolan was subjected to a Hibernian campaign of harassment and intimidation.

Away from politics, the AOH had a strong social component. Divisions of the society met weekly, monthly, and at other times besides. When not using its own hall, a division loaned, rented or used pubs, schools and other buildings. After a member or someone in his family died, votes of condolence were had. Hibernians showed up at the funerals of brother members and often helped carry the coffin. The marriage of a brother or the birth of his child elicited congratulations and gifts. Hundreds of members turned out for hall openings, the unfurling of banners, and parades. Hibernian halls were an important part of city, and especially rural life. In the countryside there was a real demand for recreation and socialising. AOH demonstrations involving thousands of people and nearly a hundred bands, meantime, were not uncommon. Platforms afforded Hibernian dignitaries an opportunity to speak on important issues. Elsewhere, members could be heard delivering lectures and holding literary evenings. An interest in Irish culture saw the society prosecute a campaign against newsagents in Dublin for their sale of sexualised postcards. The AOH also held socials at all times of the year. These included annual reunions, concerts, smokers, soirees and whist drives. Dancing, music, recitations, singing, and toasts were commonplace. Facilitating even greater social endeavours were the Hibernian Clubs. One in Dublin held Irish dancing classes. Another in Belfast was home to the Ulster Hibernian Cycling Club. The members engaged in indoor games, including billiards and cards, and outdoor sports such as Gaelic football and hurling. The families of Hibernians were given an opportunity to participate in the movement as well, with a Ladies' Auxiliary established in 1908, and a Hibernian Boys' Brigade in 1911.

After 1912 the Order's main communal function was to administer sickness and unemployment benefits for its working members. Prior to the National Insurance Act (NIA) - which provided low- and middle-income wage-earners with compulsory state health insurance - the Order's practice of financial mutualism was patchy. Benefit divisions, where members paid in a weekly amount and received sickness pay when out of work, were small in number. A variety of division types - including tontine and holiday

- catered to a broad spectrum of financial needs and backgrounds. Farmers' sons and members of the working class made up the bulk of the membership in rural and urban areas respectively. Under the NIA, meanwhile, benefits were issued through existing private organisations, and participating societies were granted an administration allowance from public funds. When the Act was first announced in 1911 the AOH welcomed the prospect. First though, the scheme had to be amended to include Ireland, and strong opposition from the Catholic Church and Sinn Fein overcome. National insurance also necessitated a variety of organizational changes. Most of the Order's divisions had to be converted to the benefits system and the Society's membership was divided into two sections, the private, and the insured. Once the AOH received approval and the act was implemented, further problems were encountered. Irish doctors went on strike over low pay, and secretaries, essential to division financial life, struggled to perform their new role in tandem with their old. Under insurance, the AOH was nonetheless able to expand into many new regions, boost its membership to dizzying heights and fill its coffers until they were overflowing. It was, however, a kind of 'forced growth' with 'shallow roots'.¹⁶ Many divisions outside Ulster had a very small private membership and a much-inflated insurance section. This left the Society particularly vulnerable to later political developments.

The AOH claimed to protect the Roman Catholic faith and population within Ireland from the predations of the English.¹⁷ This role was predicated on the society's ancestry, which it claimed stretched back centuries, to the Ribbonmen and other organisations.¹⁸ From the early eighteenth-century Ireland produced 'a variety of secretive and illegal organisations that the authorities feared were challenges to the existing social order [but really] sought to redress economic grievances or preserve ways of life against the effects of change of modernisation'. These societies, one of which was the Ribbon society, became more populous in the late eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century owing to factors of political and religious pressure, as well as social change. More a series of associations, rather than a single organisation as contemporaries perceived, throughout most of the nineteenth century, this clandestine organisation proliferated amongst Catholic workers and tradesmen. In the countryside, and especially in the towns, both in Ireland and with the Irish in Britain, Ribbonmen made up groups known as lodges.

¹⁶Hepburn, 'The Ancient Order', pp 5-18; McCluskey, "'Make way for the Molly Maguires!'", pp 32-6.

¹⁷Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 1.

¹⁸James J. Bergin, *A History of the Ancient Order of Hibernians* (Dublin, 1910), preface, viii.

Ribbonism, a term devised by the press and officials, was used to describe their collective activities.¹⁹ The Ancient Order name, and the society itself, most likely began in New York, America.²⁰ In 1836, Ribbonmen travelling to the States, were granted a charter from the ‘Board of Erin’, the executive of the Ribbonmen of Ireland, to establish branches of the society there.²¹

Both in Ireland and in Scotland, the AOH had a difficult relationship with the Catholic Church. Mostly, this had to do with the Society’s connection to Ribbonism. With its secretive nature, Ribbonism was a natural target for clerical condemnation all through the nineteenth century. Pastoral letters by Ireland’s Bishop’s warned against ‘The Deluded and Illegal Associations of Ribbonmen’. In July 1890, meantime, Fr. H. McNeece warned his parishioners in Armagh against a recent attempt to establish a branch of the AOH in the city. He described it as ‘nothing more or less than a Secret Society, something on the lines of Ribbonism’.²² By the early twentieth century, however, the AOH had gained several clerical supporters, a result of its new status, as part of the home rule movement. In the spring of 1904, at a meeting of the Catholic Church’s Irish hierarchy, Patrick O’Donnell, the Bishop of Raphoe, managed to have the ban on the society in Ireland lifted.²³ In Scotland, church censure was of an altogether different magnitude. An investigation into secret societies and especially the Hibernian movement resulted in a blanket ban in 1882.²⁴ This was renewed and announced again, in 1894 and 1899.²⁵ Toleration was not granted until 1910.²⁶ For all that the AOH ran afoul of the Church because of its Ribbon antecedents, it was a devoutly Catholic organisation. This was espoused in the society’s three cardinal principles: “Friendship, Unity, and True Christian Charity”. Further piety was demonstrated in the Order’s attendance at Mass, its observation of religious holidays and holding of church parades. Priests were venerated

¹⁹Hughes and MacRaid, *Ribbon Societies*, pp 1-2.

²⁰Though frequently cited by contemporary Hibernians, Kyle Hughes and Donald MacRaid have been unable to locate any evidence for the charter story ‘beyond what appears in official AOH histories’. Hughes and MacRaid, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 291. See also Thomas F. McGrath, *A History of the Ancient Order of Hibernians from the Earliest Period to the Joint National Convention at Trenton, New Jersey, June 27, 1898 [...]* (Cleveland, 1898), p. 886; Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, pp 31-3.

²¹Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, p. 32.

²²‘Copy of Memo’, CO 904/16. See also *Belfast News-Letter* (Hereafter *BNL*), 21 July 1890. During the 1890s, in Lissan parish, Cookstown, the AOH was also derided by the local priest as ‘[an] attempt to revive the Ribbon Society’. Cardinal Tomas O’ Fiaich Memorial Library (Hereafter *CTOML*) (Armagh, parish schedules, report of Bernard Nugent, parish priest, 1894).

²³*Northern Star* (Hereafter *NS*) 25 Apr. 1905.

²⁴‘Eyre to Condon’, 5 May 1882, Glasgow Roman Catholic Archdiocesan Archive (Hereafter *GRCAA*); ‘Commission Report’, 8 Feb. 1883, (*GRCAA*)

²⁵‘Instructions regarding Condemned Societies’, 31 Jul. 1899 (*GRCAA*)

²⁶‘Papal Circular’, 15 Dec. 1909, Scottish Catholic Archives (Hereafter *SCA*), (E.D.6/187/6.)

and occupied many important roles within the society. The Board of Erin had a national chaplain, and many of its trustees were clerics. Only with clerical sanction could AOH divisions be established. Priests raised the spirits of the members and granted moral authority as well.

Ulster

Between 1901 and 1915 the Order moved from 8,000 members to 214,000.²⁷ Up until 1912, most Hibernians were, as a rule, Ulstermen. During the last years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth, between 95 and 96 per cent of the Irish members lived in the province.²⁸ A few divisions resided in Connaught and Leinster to be sure, but during the following years and especially after Devlin gained control of the organisation, it was Hibernianism's grip on Ulster that was mainly consolidated. By April 1911, 80 per cent of the Society's Irish branches still resided in the province though some inroads had been made in Connaught, Leinster and Munster, with 67, 28 and 15 divisions respectively.²⁹ Following the national insurance act's implementation in early 1912 (see chapter 4) the AOH's presence in the rest of Ireland's provinces mushroomed. By April 1913 a quarter of Ireland's Hibs were Leinster men while another 23 per cent belonged to Munster, and 10 per cent to Connaught. Ulster still lead the pack, however, at 41 per cent. Indeed, even by August 1915, at the peak of growth under national insurance, the province had no power comparator, with nearly half of the Irish society's divisions residing there.

In lieu of the AOH's particular geographical dominance then, this thesis is primarily concerned with Hibernian activity in one province, Ulster. We say primarily concerned because not all Hibs lived in Ulster and so a representative picture cannot be realised by examining that province alone. Should we take the Ulster example as the norm, we overlook the possibility of exceptions and deny a more thorough and complex image. To comprehend the Order's political role and significance, for instance, we must necessarily engage with national events and Irish nationalism as a whole. Similarly, understanding

²⁷Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 19.

²⁸Crime Branch Special Report Series (CBS), Summary of Societies, 1898-1901, N.A.I.

²⁹The Hibernian, official journal of the parent body of Ancient Order of Hibernians in Ireland in alliance with the AOH in America (Hereafter *HJ*), microfilm, National Library of Ireland (Hereafter NLI), Dublin, No. 6080 P. 6808. Not to be confused with the *Hibernian Journal* or *Chronicle of Liberty*, a Dublin newspaper which ran between 1771 and 1813. *HJ*, Apr. 1911.

the extent to which the AOH had an amicable relationship with the Catholic Church not just in Ulster, but in Ireland generally, requires an assessment of relations elsewhere, Scotland for example. In order to evaluate the depth and richness of Hibernian social life as well, we have to look at rural and urban areas, at places like Dublin where the Society's headquarters were based. Indeed, even the national insurance act, huge for its impact on the Order, can only really be appreciated if we look at how it affected all of Ireland's provinces.

Up until the sixteenth century, Ulster was a major Gaelic province, its boundaries ill-defined and prone to fluctuation.³⁰ According to A.T.Q. Stewart, as far back as prehistoric times, Ulster had been distinct from the rest of Ireland; the product of geography. Forests and mountains isolated the province and rendered it inaccessible from the main plains.³¹ That said, Ulster's coastline was only a few miles distant from south-west Scotland, allowing for the formation of strong social and cultural links.³² England, by comparison, remained far less important, though this changed with the advent of the Tudors during the sixteenth century. With the latter group's 'thorough-going policy of conquest and centralisation', Ulster was eventually subjugated. After the flight of the Earls (the native aristocracy), vast swathes of the province were forfeited to James II, and the plantation of Ulster was officially begun. The six counties planted included Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh, Tyrone and Coleraine. Of all the attempts to colonise Ireland, the Ulster Plantation was the most successful, resulting not just in a change to the ruling elite but also 'a gradual change in the rank and file of the population'. Arrivals from England and Scotland were mainly English-speaking, loyal to the crown and crucially, Protestants.³³

Even before the Plantation of Ulster, however, a difference in religion, as between the Catholic natives, and Protestants colonisers, was at the 'root of Anglo-Irish troubles'.³⁴ Henry VIII's attempts to implement a reformation of the Church not just in England but also in Ireland was ardently opposed by the former grouping. Subsequent monarchs varied in their religious identity and policy. Then, in 1688, James II, the last Roman Catholic monarch of England, Scotland and Ireland, was deposed. That year, James

³⁰J.M. Mogeey, 'Ulster's Six Counties' in T. Wilson (ed), *Ulster Under Home Rule, A study of the Political and Economic Problems of Northern Ireland* (London, 1955), p. 1.

³¹A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis: Resistance to Home Rule, 1912-14* (Belfast, 1999), p. 26.

³²Mogeey, 'Ulster's Six Counties', p. 2.

³³Mogeey, 'Ulster's Six Counties', p. 6.

³⁴Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, p. 27.

threatened the creation of a Catholic dynasty with the birth of a son, James Francis Edward. Mary, James's Protestant daughter, and her husband, William of Orange, looked likely to be excluded. At the same time, James's political authority evaporated when he famously acquitted Seven Bishops for seditious libel. England's political elite now invited William of Orange to assume the English throne. After William landed in 1688 at the head of a large army, many of James's supporters defected. In December he fled to France. In Ireland meantime, preparations were made for the formation of a new Irish army. In Ulster, however, two small Protestant towns, Enniskillen and Londonderry declared for William. After hearing that Lundy, the governor of Derry, intended on surrendering to James's forces, thirteen Protestant apprentices closed the gates. A boom was constructed across Lough Foyle and the town was besieged. In March 1689, James landed in Ireland but in August an English ship, the *Mountjoy* broke through the boom surrounding Derry and lifted the siege. In July 1690, William routed James's army at the Battle of the Boyne and ushered in a Protestant Ascendancy lasting into the early twentieth century.

Marianne Elliott has talked about how in the three hundred years after 1500, Europe was witness to 'the emergence of polite society'. This meant a distinct demarcation in the social classes, a move away from the 'shared rough lifestyle of the Middle Ages' to the pursuit of 'refinement, good taste and social codes of restraint'; thus, setting the upper classes apart after the seventeenth century. This process occurred in tandem with the emergence of separate cultural and religious communities in Ulster. Lacking a significant gentry class, few if any Ulster Catholics were able to enter the newly defined polite society. Stereotypes of Catholic mental and social inferiority were well ensconced by the close of the eighteenth century, especially with the Protestant Ascendancy's introduction of the Penal Laws after 1691. While intended to force not just Irish Catholics but also Protestant dissenters to embrace the Church of Ireland,

The penal laws lie at the heart of a composite reading of history in which the handful of clerical executions, the land confiscations of the seventeenth century and sectarian atrocities in the 1790s, have been subsumed into an image of biased authority, religious discrimination against an entire people [the Catholic Irish] and behind it all English domination.³⁵

³⁵M. Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster*, (New York, 2002), pp 163-4.

Many historians have fundamentally questioned this view, arguing that while Ulster fits the stereotypical image of the penal era, there was no systematic penal code. The legislation was erratic and the result of political crises. During the eighteenth-century religious conflict was kept to a minimum by territorial and linguistic segregation. Violence only occurred when Protestants and Catholics invaded each other's recognised areas.³⁶

The eighteenth century also saw an attempt to separate religion from politics and unite all Irishmen. Massive emigration from Ulster to America exposed many Ulster-Scots to the War of Independence. The conflict had a troubling effect on Ireland and after most of the resident English troops were withdrawn, a French invasion was threatened, and volunteers in all of Ireland's provinces raised. In Ulster alone, 40,000 men enrolled, almost all of them Presbyterians. Though organised to defend Ireland from a foreign invasion, these men, led by representatives of the middle class, had economic and political grievances to air, and succeeded in 1782 in forcing the British government to grant independence to the Irish parliament. While the volunteer movement waned after 1790, another more radical group, inspired by the French Revolution, and consisting of Presbyterians and Catholics, sprang up. The Society of United Irishmen's attempt, however, to overthrow British rule and found an independent Irish republic in the rebellion of 1798, was brutally suppressed. To alleviate conditions in the country and prevent further revolts, the British government devised the two Acts of Union (1801), establishing the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In Ulster the legislation had an especially positive impact, Belfast growing from a market town in 1792 to an industrial port by 1825. As their legal disabilities were relieved too, Presbyterians broke ranks with their Catholic countrymen, resulting in a hardening of sectarian feeling.³⁷

Further polarisation came in 1829 with Catholic emancipation. Previous restrictions on Catholics, as with the Penal Laws, were reduced and removed. Irish Protestants of all denominations came together in response to this threat to the Ascendancy. Away from political developments, in places like Armagh where Protestants and Catholics lived in nearly equal numbers there was economic rivalry as well, a result of 'considerable

³⁶Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster*, p. 178.

³⁷Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, pp 29-30.

pressure of population on the land'. In this context, secret and criminal societies like the Protestant Peep O'Day Boys, the Catholic Defenders and later the Orange Order and Ribbonmen, propagated. Following the collapse of the United Irish rebellion and the implementation of the Union, the Orange Order in particular, was able to transcend its agrarian origins and primarily Church of Ireland appeal, recruiting Protestants from every strata of society. During the middle of the nineteenth century meantime the organisation experienced a significant downturn. After the Liberal British Prime Minister William Gladstone declared for Home Rule in 1885, however, the movement was dramatically revived. A second Home Rule crisis in 1893 prompted the formation of a network of Unionist clubs, but in 1895 the Liberals were defeated, and a Conservative government came into power. For the next decade at least, fear in Ulster subsided.³⁸

One belief held by a number of Ulster Protestants was that Catholics were under the domination of priests, especially in the spheres of politics and history. While the Catholic community in Ulster was primarily led by the Church up until the 1890s, the clergy preferred a 'modus vivendi with Protestant society...keeping as low a political profile as possible'.³⁹ As Marianne Elliott has pointed out, however, this did not prevent the institution from heavily influencing the very nature of Irish nationalism. Political consciousness in Ulster developed on a different trajectory from the rest of Ireland. The Ulster Catholic populace was not easily politicised, and Irish nationalism took a long time to gain a foothold in the province. Under Charles Stewart Parnell, the Home Rule movement's first engagement with Ulster politics in the 1874 general election was a failure. One large factor was priestly suspicion over Protestant involvement in the movement. In seeking to protect the Catholic Church's interests, Irish priests crushed non-denominationalism in any form, cultivating an image of Irish nationalism as synonymous with Catholicism. As a result, no nationalist movement could succeed without receiving clerical support.⁴⁰

Understanding that only by being more Catholic could the Church's support be counted upon, the Irish Parliamentary Party acted accordingly. During the 1885 election, candidates were only nominated in constituencies with Catholic majorities, meetings were held in Catholic church halls and schools, and priests were invited to stand on political platforms. The result was an overwhelming Party victory. Where there had been

³⁸Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, pp 30-32.

³⁹Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster*, p. 270.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp 292-4.

no Catholic MPs in Ulster in 1868, there were now sixteen. Clerical mobilisation, an efficient Nationalist central organisation based in Dublin and, just as crucially, the 1884 Franchise Act – allowing thousands of lower-class Catholics and Protestants to vote for the first time – produced a massive electoral turn-out of 93 per cent. Parnell’s party won over half of the Ulster seats, taking almost all the seats in the rest of Ireland.⁴¹ After 1885 early Protestant support for the Irish Party vanished, and Ulster electoral politics became almost entirely denominational: Catholics voted for Nationalists, Protestants for Conservatives or Liberal Unionists. Parnell’s “invasion of Ulster” meanwhile, was to be short-lived. In 1890, following the scandal that he had committed adultery, Parnell was disowned by his colleagues. The Irish Party fractured into several groupings, including the anti-Parnellites (vehemently backed by the Catholic Church). While Ulster proved to be more anti-Parnellite than any other province, ‘the existence of a large and organised unionist electorate... militated against a complete breakdown of organisation’. It was not until February 1900 that the Home Rule Party was finally reunified. Threatened with political oblivion owing to the rise and popularity of William O’Brien’s new agrarian focused organisation, the United Irish League, the warring parties were forced to put their differences aside.

With the dawn of the twentieth century Ireland had become home to a number of different associations, groups and organisations. Foremost amongst these was the United Irish League, but also the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Gaelic League, the Irish National Foresters, the Orange Order, and later in the period, Sinn Féin. The AOH was perhaps the most unique in the sense that it seemed to draw from the principles and activities of all. Like the Irish National Foresters, it was a friendly society, able to dole out benefits to relieve sick members. Unlike that organisation it was thoroughly political, and this despite claims – like the Gaelic League – of an apolitical position. Indeed, like the former, it was also heavily involved in the social sphere, ‘offering members somewhere to go, something to do of an evening’.⁴² Where the Gaelic League was more high-brow and wholesome however, the AOH’s sectarianism and secrecy set limits on its appeal. In this it was comparable to the Orange Order, though the latter organisation was perhaps more hard-line. While Protestants could not join the AOH, they could receive

⁴¹Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster*, p. 294.

⁴²Hepburn, ‘The Ancient Order’, pp 5-18.

support from the society if they were also nationalists. Both in spite of and because of all these traits, Hibernianism had a particular regional appeal not easily surpassed.

Sectarianism and the existence of a Protestant Ascendancy were major factors in making Hibernianism an Ulster phenomenon. Many historians, including Fergal McCluskey, Adrian Grant and Terence A.M. Dooley have commented on this. In Tyrone, Catholics constituted a slim 55 per cent of the population, making for ‘religious antagonism and economic competition’.⁴³ In Derry, most of the police across the county were Catholic and yet Protestants dominated the upper ranks.⁴⁴ In Monaghan meanwhile, ‘The transfer of land, the displacement of native Catholics and the establishment of concentrated Protestant communities left lasting legacies of resentment which, at different times, manifested in sectarian violence and...created a folk and literary culture of the dispossessed’.⁴⁵ Hibernianism was not homogeneous, however, and as will become clear, numerous other factors – including church support and opposition, finance, leadership, rival power bases and urbanisation - shaped the society’s nature on a local and county level.

Constitutional separatists and Hibernian Home Rule

In 1999, with his work, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918*, Patrick Maume drew attention to a lacuna in scholarly coverage of nationalist politics. Historians seemed to offer a fragmentary account of the period between the death of Charles Stewart Parnell and the downfall of the Irish Party in 1918. The focus was on the Parnell split and the final struggles after the 1910 elections ‘through the home rule debates and the Easter Rising, to the triumph of Sinn Fein and the establishment of the Irish Free State’.⁴⁶ While this work is very much concerned with addressing the first decade of this period - what R.F. Foster has aptly defined as the “pre-revolution”⁴⁷ – it draws yet greater inspiration from another rather minor remark by Maume, no less loaded with meaning and potential:

⁴³Fergal McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen: The Development of Republican Politics in East Tyrone; 1898-1918* (Manchester, 2011), p. 12.

⁴⁴Adrian Grant, *Derry: The Irish Revolution, 1912-23* (Dublin, 2018), p. 8.

⁴⁵Terence A.M. Dooley, *The Irish Revolution, 1912-23: Monaghan* (Dublin, 2017), pp 1-2.

⁴⁶Maume, *The Long Gestation*, Introduction, p. 1.

⁴⁷R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces – the revolutionary generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (Penguin, 2015), Introduction, xvi.

‘Physical-force separatism was stronger than is often supposed, and the extent to which it had a common discourse with constitutionalism is underestimated’.⁴⁸

In his recent work, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, Michael Wheatley demonstrates how much of the historiography on the Irish revolution can be divided into ‘two contrasting models of the Irish party on the eve of its destruction’; those such as Tom Garvin, E. Rumpf, A.C. Hepburn, and F.S.L. Lyons, who believe the party was ‘rotten’, and others, like David Fitzpatrick, Alan O’Day, and Paul Bew, who consider it ‘representative’.⁴⁹ For Wheatley, ‘neither conception’ is credible without an analysis of the party’s condition in the pre-war years, before its demise. Picking up from where ‘the most important “local” work on the pre-war Irish party’ ends, - Paul Bew’s *Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland* – he looks at five neighbouring counties in Connaught and Leinster, and provides a ‘detailed study of the state of the Irish party, and of provincial, nationalist politics, between the 1910 elections and the Easter Rising’.⁵⁰ Other than the vast amount of local detail provided on the AOH, Wheatley’s work is significant for two reasons. Firstly, he asserts that up until 1913 at least, ‘[while] the UIL, was clearly in decline, [the IPP] was still on balance far more representative than rotten’. Central to this interpretation is the vitality of the AOH, which became a ‘major prop’ for the party in Longford and most of Roscommon, and the ‘dominant partner of the UIL’ in Leitrim and Sligo. While the League declined the Order was expanding and vigorous.⁵¹ Secondly, Wheatley poses a vital question, ‘how Redmondite was the Irish parliamentary party and its grassroots organisations[?]’. As Matthew Kelly has pointed out, ‘It is becoming clear that Redmondism, that particular amalgam of federalist imperialism and constitutional nationalism’ is better understood as ‘the political doctrine of a leadership faction within the party rather than a broadly accepted set of principles characteristic of Irish nationalism’.⁵²

⁴⁸Maume, *The Long Gestation*, Introduction, p. 2.

⁴⁹Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (New York, 1981); E. Rumpf and A.C. Hepburn, *Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Liverpool, 1977); F.S.L. Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party, 1890-1910* (London, 1951); Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*; Alan O’Day, *Irish Home Rule 1867-1921* (Manchester, 1998); Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism 1912-1916* (Oxford, 1994). Some exceptions to this view include Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Fein Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 2005); Maume, *The Long Gestation*.

⁵⁰Michael Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party: Provincial Ireland 1910-1916* (Oxford, 2005), pp 3-11; Paul Bew, *Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland, 1898-1910: Parnellites and Radical Agrarians* (Oxfordshire, 1987).

⁵¹Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 250-3.

⁵²Matthew Kelly, ‘Kelly on Wheatley, ‘Nationalism and the Irish Party: Provincial Ireland, 1910-1916’, Nov. 2007 <https://networks.h-net.org> (19/03/19).

In his research ‘on the ideological basis of popular nationalism’ Wheatley proves that ‘clear boundaries should not be imposed between the political cultures of separatism and constitutional nationalism’.⁵³ This is something which Fergal McCluskey has explored, in what is undoubtedly the most significant work on the AOH, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*.⁵⁴ While this book – as its subtitle suggests – is primarily concerned with *The development of Republican politics in East Tyrone, 1898-1918*, McCluskey acknowledges that during the early twentieth century ‘the nationalist politics of the North with its inherently sectarian dimensions came increasingly to permeate the national scene’.⁵⁵ At the heart of this process was the AOH and Devlin. As part of his attempt to explain ‘how a republican minority group succeeded... in placing itself in the driver’s seat at the general election of 1918’⁵⁶, McCluskey studies the ‘parallels, interconnections and changing fortunes between the republicans and Hibernians in East Tyrone’.⁵⁷ With regard to the AOH, two arguments can be identified. Firstly, that just as there were ‘constitutional nationalists’, there were too ‘constitutional separatists’. The former grouping was composed of IPP supporters ‘who viewed participation and petition at Westminster as the only acceptable or practical means of achieving legislative independence’. Nominal supporters, in particular a ‘constitutional separatist’ constituency, meanwhile, were prepared ‘to endorse the IPP position’ but their ‘ultimate political objectives exceeded the moderate home rule demand, limited devolution under Westminster, extending to a fuller measure of Irish independence’. According to McCluskey it is nevertheless very difficult to ascertain this group’s complexion and size. He maintains, however, that its ‘chief means of political expression’ were the ‘numerous nationalist demonstrations’, including Irish Party rallies, Manchester Martyrs and Hibernian parades, demonstrations of the ’98 Commemorations, and the ‘volunteering craze that swept nationalist Ulster in 1914’.⁵⁸

For Fearghal McGarry, three factors lead to a ‘collapse of the political assumptions underpinning the alliance between the Irish Party and the Liberals’ and paving the way for a political revolution: The Home Rule crisis of 1912-14, the outbreak of the First World War and the impact of the late nineteenth-century cultural revival on nationalist

⁵³Fearghal McGarry, ‘The Fenian ideal and Irish nationalism, 1882-1916 by M.J. Kelly’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxvi, No. 141 (May 2008), pp 121-3.

⁵⁴See also McCluskey, “‘Make way for the Molly Maguires!’”, pp 32-6.

⁵⁵Philip Bull, ‘Fenians and Ribbonmen: the development of republican politics in East Tyrone, 1898-1918, by Fergal McCluskey’, in *Irish Studies Review*, xxi, Issue 2, (2013) pp 229-31.

⁵⁶R.V. Comerford, ‘Fergal McCluskey. Fenians and Ribbonmen: the development of republican politics in East Tyrone, 1898-1918’, in *The American Historical Review*, cxvii, Issue 3, (June, 2012), p. 938.

⁵⁷Bull, ‘Fenians and Ribbonmen’ in *Irish Studies*, pp 32-6.

⁵⁸ McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 5.

consciousness. In the last factor, organisations such as the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic association ‘vigorously cultivated’ an idea of ‘Irish national identity’, ‘particularly amongst the younger generation’, ‘that was not only separate to that of Britain but was defined in opposition to English values [and] implicitly challenged the underlying integrationist assumptions of John Redmond’s political project’.⁵⁹ Historians like Patrick O’Farrell and John Hutchinson have noted how the IPP was ‘losing contact with the dynamic forces within Irish society’, including the growing cultural and temperance movements.⁶⁰ Matthew Kelly’s *The Fenian Ideal* takes these ideas and expands upon them.⁶¹ Like Owen McGee, Kelly argues that ‘interpretations of the Irish revolution should also look to the longer-term separatist background’.⁶² Rather than focusing on the IRB as a ‘coherent movement with a clear purpose’⁶³ as McGee does, however, Kelly ‘complicates the overall anatomy of Irish nationalism’⁶⁴ by arguing that ‘Fenianism was always too broad in its cultural appeal for it to be defined simply with reference to the [IRB]’.⁶⁵ As one IRB apostate explained,

The numerical strength of the strongest revolutionary organisation by no means measured the strength of the feeling for complete independence. Millions of Irishmen were and are separatists in conviction and aspiration who would on no account become members of a secret society.⁶⁶

An Irish nationalist did not have to subscribe to the secularism of the IRB to be a separatist. Many believed in separatism but advocated home rule and constitutional nationalism for ‘strongly pragmatic reasons’.⁶⁷ For Kelly ‘Fenianism emerges as the central influence in an Irish nationalist culture that was deeply embedded in the texture of Irish identity...home rule did not achieve the same level of emotional resonance with

⁵⁹Fearghal McGarry, ‘Revolution, 1916-1923’ in T. Bartlett, B. Smith and J. Ohlmeyer (eds), *The Cambridge History of Ireland, iv: 1880 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 262.

⁶⁰Patrick O’Farrell, *Ireland’s English Question* (London, 1971), p. 258; John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London, 1987).

⁶¹Kelly, *The Fenian ideal*.

⁶²Alvin Jackson, ‘The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism/The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood from the Land League to Sinn Fein’ in *Victorian Studies: A Journal of the Humanities, Arts and Sciences*, c (2), (Winter 2008), pp 307-10. See also Owen McGee, *The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood, from the Land League to Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 2007).

⁶³McGarry, ‘The Fenian ideal’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, pp 121-3.

⁶⁴Kelly, *The Fenian ideal*, p. 111.

⁶⁵Owen McGee, ‘The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916 by M. J. Kelly’ in *History Ireland*, xv, No. 1, (Jan. – Feb. 2007), pp 60-1.

⁶⁶Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (London, 1904), pp 119-20.

⁶⁷Kelly, *The Fenian ideal*, p. 5.

the Irish people'.⁶⁸ In this last notion Kelly perhaps underestimates the appeal of home rule, not just for constitutional nationalists but constitutional separatists as well.

With regard to studies of contemporary perceptions of home rule, the historiography is rather underdeveloped. This is significant, given that, for many Irish people living in 1912, home rule was a very real prospect. Colin Reid has completed a study of Stephen Gwynn, 'a Protestant nationalist who anticipated a Home Rule settlement which would have delivered Irish self-government while binding the country to the British Empire'.⁶⁹ In *Before the Revolution*, meanwhile, Senia Paseta demonstrates how 'a generation of university-educated Irish Catholics', the product of 'British interventionist policy' and improvements in Catholic 'educational facilities', waited in the wings, ready to adorn the mantle of Irish leadership once self-government was granted. Unable to realise this object, the experiences and assumptions of these elites have been largely lost. Where Paseta has focused on the factors affecting this grouping's 'conditioning and mentality' James McConnel has sought to uncover their 'visions of Irish society' under home rule.⁷⁰ While arguing that only a relatively small number of people actually considered or planned for the future after self-government, McConnel believes that this constituency transcended the Irish party, to include, 'many important groups and individuals from politics, government and society'.⁷¹ The AOH falls squarely into this category. While admitting that Hibernian leaders like John Skeffington foresaw 'a prominent, if not dominant role for the organisation' in Irish life after home rule, however, McCluskey does not expand this notion.⁷² In the second of his theses regarding the AOH, he argues that Devlin employed 'a programme of populist patriotism' with two identifiable features: 'an appeal to Catholic interests and staunch nationalism epitomised by the catch-cry of faith and fatherland, and the movement's consistent self-portrayal as a democratic upsurge capable of addressing the desires of all classes and creeds'.⁷³

This thesis makes three arguments. Firstly, that within Irish nationalism, a constitutional separatist grouping existed. Secondly, that in the context of the constitutional nationalist nexus, the AOH was the primary vehicle for this demographic.

⁶⁸Kelly, *The Fenian ideal*, p. 239.

⁶⁹Colin Reid, *The lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn: Irish constitutional nationalism and cultural politics, 1864-1950* (Manchester, 2015), p. 1.

⁷⁰Senia Paseta, *Before the Revolution: Nationalism, Social Change and Ireland's Catholic Elite, 1879-1922* (Cork, 1999), p. 1; James McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis* (Dublin, 2013), p. 222.

⁷¹James McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis* (Dublin, 2013), p. 222.

⁷²McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 110.

⁷³McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 46.

Thirdly, that the Order's leadership appealed to constitutional separatists, as indeed, to constitutional nationalists in general, with preparations towards, and in fact, a sort of ad hoc Hibernian blue print, for life under home rule. McCluskey's programme of populist patriotism, as with Hibernian home rule, showed an intent on the AOH and Devlin's part to treat with constitutional separatists. Indeed, appropriate to its name, the Ancient Order claimed a separatist pedigree to rival even the Irish Parliamentary Party, going as far back as agrarian agitators, Catholic defenders and more besides. Fraternisation with Fenians prior to Devlinite control and secession by advanced nationalist elements confirm the impression of a separatist undercurrent. Patchy religious support too, spoke to Hibernianism's median position within the axis of Irish nationalism. In the social sphere meantime, the Order promoted ideas of Catholicism, Irishness and nationality. Halls entertained, and as with the financial inducements of national insurance, sought to stymie emigration. After 1912, as the chances of home rule seemed to wax and wane, this constitutional separatist grouping came to the fore more and more; first with participation in the Irish Volunteers, then in sympathy with the martyrs of the Easter Rising, afterwards in opposition to plans for Ulster's exclusion in a home rule settlement, and finally, in support of Sinn Féin.

The historiography

Much more has been written about Joseph Devlin, the AOH's national president, than the society itself. Devlin's importance in the context of not just northern nationalism, but Irish nationalism generally makes him an automatic inclusion in a variety of surveys. Thus, Patrick Maume describes him as the IPP leadership's 'heir-apparent' and the head of a 'Catholic fraternal network [which] acquired a reputation for sectarianism and corruption'.⁷⁴ By contrast, Paul Bew has called Devlin 'a complex figure, sectarian in so far as his role in the AOH went but also socially progressive, and able even to attract some Belfast Protestant working-class votes'.⁷⁵ In his discourse on Ireland since the Famine, F.S.L. Lyons notes that he was 'a first-class organiser, who took from Redmond's shoulders the business of local and sometimes grubby negotiation'.⁷⁶ Biographies of Devlin are, notwithstanding, few. F.J. Whitford managed to compile

⁷⁴Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 45.

⁷⁵Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question*, p. 78.

⁷⁶F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1971), p. 258.

material from some of Devlin's contemporaries, resulting in a 1959 Master's thesis, 'Joseph Devlin: Ulsterman and Irishman'. Whitford places some of the IPP's downfall on Devlin's overreliance on 'safe, orthodox men, on his skill in managing [and his oratory].⁷⁷ More recently Sean McMahon has completed a biography of 'Wee Joe', though the work suffers from a diminutive bibliography and a distinct lack of references.⁷⁸ Indeed, the best work on Devlin remains Eamon Phoenix's *Northern Nationalism* and A.C. Hepburn's *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland*. Phoenix's ground-breaking study charts 'the political evolution of the nationalist minority in the north of Ireland during the critical formative period 1890-1940'. While Devlin and the AOH feature throughout, the primary focus here is on the decade after partition, with just one chapter assessing 1890-1918.⁷⁹ Hepburn's work is, for our purposes, more comprehensive, offering a Devlin and AOH centred history of Catholic and nationalist Belfast. Reconstructing correspondence with Redmond and other contemporaries, Hepburn peels back the layers to make sense of a man 'permeated by paradox'.⁸⁰

As one of the only synopses on the AOH makes clear – Hepburn's article 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Irish Politics, 1905-1914' – the Order is remembered most for its political significance. In Hepburn's view, the widespread condemnation, and the various and often contradictory charges levelled against the AOH – a disloyal and near-fascist organisation, primarily Socialist in its aims, representing an era of clericalism – are testament 'to the predominant position which the Order...gained in the councils of the Irish party'. For Hepburn, the emergence of the AOH, as an 'attempt by the party to maintain its central authority', was also an 'indication of the increasing importance of Ulster nationalism relative to the movement as a whole'.⁸¹ Notwithstanding this assessment, studies of Ulster nationalism are thin on the ground. Indeed, the AOH more often features in discussions surrounding the Irish revolutionary period. Up until the 1960s and 1970s, accounts of the latter followed the 'traditional heroic version of a

⁷⁷F.J. Whitford, *Sunday Independent*, 3 May 1959. Whitford's findings were serialised over fourteen weeks in the *Sunday Independent* during 1959. See Frederick J. Whitford, 'Joseph Devlin: Ulsterman and Irishman' (Unpublished MA thesis, University of London, 1959). Also, Frederick J. Whitford, 'Joseph Devlin and the Catholic Representation Association of Belfast, 1895-1905' (Unpublished BA thesis, Queen's University Belfast).

⁷⁸Sean McMahon, *Wee Joe: the life of Joseph Devlin* (Belfast, 2011).

⁷⁹Eamon Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism: Nationalist Politics, Partition and the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940* (Belfast, 1994).

⁸⁰A.C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the Era of Joe Devlin, 1871-1934* (Oxford, 2008), p. 6.

⁸¹Hepburn, 'The Ancient Order', pp 5-18.

national liberation struggle'. After 1922 the Easter Rising became the apogee of Irish patriotism and the key historical event in the foundation of the Irish state. A few historians, such as F.S.L. Lyons and Emmet Larkin, concentrated on the Irish Party - 'partly because of its impact on Westminster high politics and the availability of relevant material in British and Irish archives' - though scholarly interest could not be sustained.⁸² Commemorations surrounding the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising resulted in new academic publications 'from a more dispassionate perspective'. New primary source material was released and previously taboo events – such as the Irish Civil War – were assessed. From the 1970s a new generation of historians – 'many of them...born and raised outside of Ireland – posed new questions and adopted original approaches'.⁸³

One of these, David Fitzpatrick, inaugurated a shift away from the 'parliamentary arena' and towards the IPP's local support, 'a shifting coalition of local Irish-based organisations...[which] had originally harnessed local discontents but were then "vampirised"'⁸⁴ In his seminal *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921*, Fitzpatrick notes,

Irish Nationalism...was remarkably eclectic in its appeal, capable of drawing strength from social groups with sharply divergent interests and outlooks. Many of its peculiarities arose from the need to cater for disparate political minds, offering something to all without threatening the interests of any. The anatomist, therefore, must examine the experience of many groupings of politically minded Irishmen, as well as the patterns of behaviour and modes of thought common to several such groupings.⁸⁵

Determining that such a study could only be effectively carried out at the local level, Fitzpatrick took County Clare for his focus. Within his work, several references are made to the Order, a reflection of its centrality in parochial life. The AOH's main communal function was the administration of sickness and unemployment benefits for its working members, but it also combined the roles of 'village college, amateur dramatic society and women's institute'⁸⁶, and was 'a direct competitor of the UIL's as principal launching-pad for political office in Nationalist Ireland'.⁸⁷

⁸²Patrick Maume, 'Violence and Moderation: The Dilemmas of Constitutional Nationalism' in J. Crowley, D. O' Drisceoil and J. Borgonovo (eds) *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2018), p. 75.

⁸³Gearoid O Tuathaigh, 'The Historiography of the Irish Revolution' in J. Crowley, D. O' Drisceoil and J. Borgonovo (eds) *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2018), pp 865-7.

⁸⁴Maume, 'Violence and Moderation', p. 75.

⁸⁵Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, prologue, ix.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 79.

⁸⁷Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 82.

Fitzpatrick's work has resulted in a spate of similar, local studies. Oliver Coogan's *Politics and War in Meath, 1913-23* is a bald imitation, which adds little to Fitzpatrick's findings on the AOH.⁸⁸ As might be inferred from its title, Peter Hart's *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923* also includes very few references to the Order.⁸⁹ And while Fergus Campbell's *Land and Revolution* breaks the mould – exploring a single theme, the agitation for land reform and its relationship with nationalist politics, over a thirty-year period in the province of Connaught – virtually no concession is made for AOH participation in the same.⁹⁰ Better findings are Joost Augusteijn's *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare* and Marie Coleman's *County Longford*. In his attempt to explain 'the differentiated development of violence in Ireland in the 1916-21 period', Augusteijn demonstrates how some portion of the Irish populace who possessed a 'radical nationalist inclination', but were unaware that outlets like the IRB existed, joined the AOH instead.⁹¹ Later they became members of the radical breakaway group, the Irish American Alliance.⁹² Coleman, on the other hand, reveals how 'defection to the Sinn Fein camp was widespread in the Hibernian organisation in South Longford [during the spring 1917 by-election]'. The secretary of the Longford county board declared that 'since he had no evidence that Paddy McKenna (the IPP candidate) had been a member of the organisation since 1909, he was under no obligation to vote for him and announced his intention not only to vote for Joe McGuinness (the SF candidate) but also to sign his nomination papers'.⁹³

Four Courts Press has also published several county studies, which form the basis for its Irish revolution series. These chronological-thematic accounts address the key developments and major issues that occurred at county level during the tumultuous period 1912-23. Coverage of the AOH varies from study to study. Thus, where Patrick McCarthy's *Waterford* only highlights the Order in the context of the Irish Volunteer movement, Michael Farry's *Sligo* does likewise, but further notes the existence of the Hibernian Rifles⁹⁴, defections amongst the AOH, and struggles with Sinn Fein for halls

⁸⁸Oliver Coogan, *Politics and War in Meath, 1913-23* (Meath, 1983).

⁸⁹Peter Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1999).

⁹⁰Fergus Campbell, *Land and Revolution: Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland 1891-1921* (Oxford, 2005).

⁹¹Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916-1921* (London, 1998), p. 26.

⁹²Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance*, p. 32.

⁹³Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish Revolution, 1910-1923* (Dublin, 2002), pp 56-7.

⁹⁴The Hibernian Rifles were a military auxiliary to the AOH breakaway group the Irish American Alliance, and were involved in both the Dublin Lockout of 1913 and the Easter Rising.

and property from 1917 onwards.⁹⁵ John O’Callaghan’s *Limerick*, meanwhile, examines the AOH’s relationship with the Catholic Church and the UIL, underscoring how Hibernian political tactics - such as impersonation and the creation of bogus branches – incurred criticism. Indeed, an awareness of Hibernianism’s geographic distribution is particularly important when reviewing these works. It certainly comes as no surprise that more detailed information on the AOH appears in studies of the northern counties. While providing a synopsis of the society’s activity and relationships in *Monaghan*, Terence Dooley notes how ‘very little is known of the AOH, including its composition. Local notes appeared in [newspapers]...on a weekly basis but they offered only information on future meetings and forthcoming social events; everything else was shrouded in secrecy’.⁹⁶ Adrian Grant’s *Derry* points out that the AOH’s influence was greater in the wider county than in the city of the same name. New light is also shed on the events at Castledawson in 1912.⁹⁷ Finally, Fergal McCluskey provides a wealth of material in his study of *Tyrone*. There, the AOH was the ‘bete noire of unionist demonology’, ‘formed the backbone of the constitutional movement’, and fought against factionalism.⁹⁸ Taken as a whole then, the political work on the AOH is unsatisfactory. Many questions demand answers. With regard to the period 1905-10, how did Devlin capture and maintain control of the AOH? What kind of relationship did the Order seek and in fact have with the IPP and the UIL? What was Hibernianism’s political role? As for 1912-18, What kind of relationship did the AOH have with the Protestant community within Ireland during the period? To what extent did the Society participate in the Irish Volunteer movement? How did the attitudes of the rank-and-file change after the Easter Rising and the St. Mary’s conference in Belfast? What measures did the BOE resort to in dealing with defections and in attempting to shore up the movement?

Histories that deal with the Irish AOH in its entirety are scarce. Two of the major contemporary accounts - by T. McGrath (1898), and J. O’Dea (1923) – focus on the Order in America.⁹⁹ Indeed, considerable work has been completed on the American

⁹⁵Patrick McCarthy, *The Irish Revolution, 1912-23: Waterford* (Dublin, 2015); Michael Farry, *The Irish Revolution, 1912-23: Sligo* (Dublin, 2012).

⁹⁶Dooley, *Monaghan*, p. 12.

⁹⁷Grant, *Derry*, p. 28.

⁹⁸Fergal McCluskey, *The Irish Revolution, 1912-23: Tyrone* (Dublin, 2014), p. 62; *Ibid.*, pp 35-6; McCluskey, *Tyrone*, p. 42. Further books in the Irish Revolution series are expected in 2019, including Donal Hall’s *Louth* and Joost Augusteijn’s *Mayo*.

⁹⁹McGrath, *A History of the Ancient*; John O’Dea, *History of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in America and Ladies’ Auxiliary*, 3 vols (1923; South Bend, Ind., 1995).

organisation.¹⁰⁰ An official *History of the Ancient Order of Hibernians*, with a focus on Ireland, and written by a Dublin member, J.J. Bergin, only appeared in 1910.¹⁰¹ These early historians – Bergin, McGrath and O’Dea - ‘considered the AOH and its Ribbon antecedents as connected codes for all Catholic resistance to British rule from the seventeenth century’.¹⁰² As modern scholarship shows, however, Bergin’s claim, that Ribbonism gave way to the AOH specifically, lacks foundation. For Tom Garvin, Ribbonism is better understood as ‘an important link between the revolutionary and agrarian societies of the [eighteenth century] and the better-known militant organisations of the late nineteenth’.¹⁰³ M.R. Beames too, has noted that pre-Famine Ribbonism gave expression to ‘diffuse and contradictory interests’, including nationalism, republicanism, embryonic unionism and “mutual” aid society activities. These facets found ‘more mature and effective modes of expression’ in Fenianism, the AOH, and the Irish labour movement.¹⁰⁴ More recently, Kyle Hughes and Donald MacRaild have affirmed these findings, describing Ribbonism as a ‘transitional stage in the development of lower-order nationalism’.¹⁰⁵ Amending a precis of Ribbonism by John Belchem – ‘[It] was multi-functional and morally ambiguous, a blend of Catholic “Defender” nationalism, Whiteboy agrarian redress, primitive trade unionism and criminal protection racket’¹⁰⁶ – they prefer to think of Ribbonism as a tradition; something which evolved and diversified over the nineteenth century and persisted into the early years of the twentieth.¹⁰⁷ These ideas raise important questions about the AOH. How did the society’s antecedents, whether real or imagined, inform Hibernian ideology, self-perception, and the attitudes of others? Was the AOH a secret organisation?

Early histories aside, very little has been written about the religious dimension of the Order. *Ribbon Societies* by Hughes and MacRaild includes a brief examination of the

¹⁰⁰George R. Reilly, *Hibernians on the march: an examination of the origin and history of the Ancient Order of Hibernians with a program for the future* (San Francisco, 1948); Wayne G. Broehl, *The Molly Maguires* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965); John T. Ridge, *Erin’s sons in America: the Ancient Order of Hibernians* (New York, 1986); David M. Emmons, ‘The Socialisation of Uncertainty: ‘The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Butte, Montana, 1880-1925’, *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (1994), pp 74-92.

¹⁰¹Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*.

¹⁰²Hughes and MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 307.

¹⁰³Tom Garvin, ‘Defenders, Ribbonmen and Others: Underground Political Networks in Pre-Famine Ireland’, in *Past and Present*, 96 (August 1982), pp 133-55.

¹⁰⁴Michael R. Beames, ‘The Ribbon Societies: Lower-Class Nationalism in Pre-Famine Ireland’, *Past and Present*, 97 (November 1982), pp 128-43.

¹⁰⁵Hughes and MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶John Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: The History of the Liverpool Irish, 1800-1939* (Liverpool, 2007), p. 97.

¹⁰⁷Hughes & MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, pp 13-5.

AOH's relations with the Catholic Church during the second half of the nineteenth century. There we see how bishops and priests actively policed their parishes for secret society behaviours. As 'the old Ribbon tradition drift[ed] in and out of activity...and the secret society tradition was transformed into a public, religious organisation' the Order was confronted by the clerical allegation that it was simply Ribbonism by another name.¹⁰⁸ Elsewhere, two Masters theses by Michael T. Foy and Hugh P. Hagan look at the AOH in Ireland and Scotland, respectively.¹⁰⁹ Often the study of choice on the AOH, Foy's work is lucid, well-reasoned and boasts a considerable source base. While he focuses on the period 1905-14, his is more a chronological than a thematic telling of Hibernian history. References to the Order's relationship with the Catholic Church, as with its financial, political and social practices, are interspersed throughout. Hagan shares Foy's chronological approach, though the Scottish Hierarchy's long-standing condemnation and eventual toleration of the AOH makes religion the dominant theme in his work. While altogether shorter than Foy's, it is worth recognising that Hagan's history of the AOH is the only one of its kind; no other work has been completed on the society in Scotland. Significantly, the Order also crops up in David M. Miller's clerically focused *Church, state and nation in Ireland, 1898-1921*. Fragmentation in the American, Irish and Scottish societies is documented, as also Devlin's takeover. Miller's primary concern, however, is with the counties where the AOH received church approval. Instances of disagreement and censure lend themselves to a discussion of why the Order elicited so much clerical hostility, especially from individuals like Cardinal Logue.¹¹⁰ For all the ground that the studies above cover, many questions remain unanswered. How did church toleration come about, and what did it mean in practice? What kind of a role did priests and clerics play within Hibernianism?

The AOH had an important social function. County and regional studies, while seemingly perfect candidates for information on this front, offer varying levels of insight. A Master's thesis by Seumas McPhillips looks at the Order in County Monaghan. Although a local picture emerges, and the impact of national events is assessed, details

¹⁰⁸Hughes & MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, pp 293-6.

¹⁰⁹Foy, 'The Ancient Order'; Hugh P. Hagan, 'Ancient Order of Hibernians in Scotland – 1880 – 1914', (Master of Arts thesis, Ruskin College, Oxford, 1987).

¹¹⁰David W. Miller, *Church, State, and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921* (Pittsburgh, 1995). Other histories of Catholicism exist but rarely mention the AOH. See Jerome aan de Weil, *The Catholic Church in Ireland, 1914-1918: War and Politics* (Dublin, 2003); Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster*; Oliver Rafferty, *The Catholic Church and the Protestant state: nineteenth-century Irish realities* (2nd ed., Dublin, 2008).

on the AOH's social dimension, as with its economic and religious aspects, are sparse.¹¹¹ John Joyce's article on the Society in Graiguenamanagh (Co. Kilkenny) is similarly meagre. His reliance on one source, the minutes of St. Fiacre's division, makes for a rather weak synopsis, though the occasional nugget of information offers some value.¹¹² Sean Beattie's article on the AOH in Donegal - a much more informed piece - is a chronological and thematic sketch of the Society with particular reference to his chosen locale. Using the Order's own press organ, the *Hibernian Journal*, newspapers and other, secondary sources, Beattie provides details on Hibernian parades, socials and sports, in particular showing how the Society's social aspect was strong in Ulster.¹¹³ Taking a different approach is an MPhil thesis by R.D. Williams which compares the AOH in Belfast and Liverpool (1905-1934). While the attempt to establish whether the AOH 'was a strong, centralised body or...localised and loosely aligned' is admirable, and reveals much in the way of the economic, political, religious and social character of the Order in both Belfast and Liverpool, Williams is hamstrung by what he perceives as a lack of primary sources.¹¹⁴ Far better is Gerard Morgan's chapter on the AOH in County Longford, which offers a thematic discourse and uses several original sources, including division minutes. Morgan examines everything from the Order's geographic sway and the national insurance act, to its relationship with the Catholic Church and the United Irish League. Particularly useful is his socio-economic profile which assesses the members of Killoe division according to age, occupation, and marriage status. Hibernian social practices and features, including, concerts and dances, bands and regalia, are also discussed.¹¹⁵ Questions about Hibernian social life in its totality remain then. What were the main features of Hibernian social life? How did it differ between rural and urban areas? To what extent did the society's leadership shape and exert control over the membership's social practices?

¹¹¹Seamus McPhillips, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians in County Monaghan with particular reference to the parish of Aghabog from 1900 to 1933', (Master of Arts thesis, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 1999).

¹¹²John Joyce, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Graiguenamanagh' in *Carloviana*, 61, 2012, pp 24-8.

¹¹³Sean Beattie, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Donegal 1904-1927', in *Donegal Annual*, 70, 2018, pp 107-21. Beattie also uses the minutes of Culdaff division though these only cover the period from 1919 onwards.

¹¹⁴R.D. Williams, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians: A Belfast-Liverpool Comparison, c. 1905-1934' (MPhil thesis, University of Liverpool, 2007), p. 6.

¹¹⁵Gerard Morgan, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Longford' in M. Morris and F. O'Ferrall (eds), *Longford, History and Society, Interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish County* (Dublin, 2010).

Research into Hibernian financial life has also been middling. With regard to literature on friendly societies like the AOH, England is the focal point. Peter H.J.H. Gosden's pioneering study - *The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875* – provides essential details on the Office of Registrar of Friendly Societies, and especially the Friendly Societies act of 1875.¹¹⁶ A subsequent work, by Simon Cordery - *British Friendly Societies, 1750-1914* – bridges a gap both chronologically and thematically. General discussions surrounding friendly society roots, rituals, and the contradiction between their offerings of conviviality and financial security are instructional. The way in which friendly societies facilitated the movement towards centralisation and the welfare state is also usefully charted.¹¹⁷ Addressing a large niche, meanwhile, is A.D. Buckley's article '“On the Club”: Friendly Societies in Ireland'. One of Buckley's primary concerns is how friendly society development and experience in Ireland differed from that of England.¹¹⁸ Mel Cousins has written a brief chapter on 'The Creation of Association: The National Insurance Act, 1911 and Approved Societies in Ireland'. The background to insurance, especially Hibernian involvement, is considered; also, the society's explosive growth. According to Cousins, however, there are few studies of pre-existing friendly societies, and little in the post-1913 material to suggest that membership of an approved society involved much more than being insured.¹¹⁹ Somewhat bucking this trend is J.F. Campbell's study of 'Friendly Societies in Ireland 1850-1960: with particular reference to the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Irish National Foresters'. Using a wealth of primary sources, including division minute books, Campbell looks at the AOH through the prism of its friendly society status. He assesses the Organisation's structural and economic facets, its social role, its relationship with the Catholic Church, and its importance in a political context. Unfortunately, because the work covers such a wide periodisation, and incorporates an assessment of the INF as well, much of this information has to be judiciously extracted, and many of Campbell's conclusions, without the original data at hand, are rendered problematic.¹²⁰ Many questions need to be addressed then. What did Hibernian financial life look like both before and after 1911? How did the AOH

¹¹⁶P.H.J.H. Gosden, *The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875* (Aldershot, 1993).

¹¹⁷Simon Cordery, *British Friendly Societies, 1750-1914* (Hampshire, 2003).

¹¹⁸A.D. Buckley, '“On the Club”: Friendly Societies in Ireland' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, xiv, (1987), pp 39-58.

¹¹⁹Mel Cousins, 'The Creation of Association: The National Insurance Act, 1911 and Approved Societies in Ireland' in J. Kelly and R.V. Comerford (eds), *Associational Culture in Ireland and Abroad*, (Dublin, 2010) pp 155-64.

¹²⁰J.F. Campbell, 'Friendly Societies in Ireland 1850-1960: with particular reference to the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Irish National Foresters' (MLitt thesis, University of Dublin, 1998).

change to accommodate national insurance, and what opposition and obstacles, if any, did the society face? To what extent did the Order and its members benefit from the act?

Sources

Much of this study is based on a close reading of the *Hibernian Journal*. As the Order's foremost press organ, the *Journal* has been underused by AOH biographers and Irish historians alike.¹²¹ A lack of press coverage¹²², coupled with a desire to push recruitment, counteract the large number of 'unscrupulous and violent attacks' on the Order and 'educate the public on the actual objects' of the movement, prompted the creation of a monthly paper in early 1907.¹²³ Over time the *Journal's* purpose changed. From June 1912 to April 1915 the organ became a quarterly publication, confined to a Hibernian only readership. Much of the 'great propaganda work' had been completed.¹²⁴ The AOH's membership was so large, its influence so extended, that it compensated a paper to give publicity to any notices dealing with the movement.¹²⁵ Much of the *Journal's* content became economic and financial in concern, reflecting the AOH's focus on and many changes under the national insurance act. By early 1915 the decision was taken to put the paper back on a public footing. While the *Journal* claimed that there was a need for a medium to facilitate 'the interchange of ideas and [link the members across countries]', renewed attacks on the Order were almost certainly the primary factor.¹²⁶ The change was short-lived. In June 1917 the Society announced that 'In order to secure the privacy of the "*Hibernian Journal*" its circulation in future [would] be confined to division and county secretaries'. The new protocol - whereby a division would only be supplied with

¹²¹The *Journal* has been primarily used by two of the Order's chief historians, Michael T. Foy and A.C. Hepburn. See Foy, 'The Ancient Order'; Hepburn, 'The Ancient Order', pp 5-18.

¹²²Prior to 1907, just two newspapers, the *Irish News* and the *Northern Star* gave the society 'any prominence'. *HJ*, Aug. 1911.

¹²³*Ibid.*, Sept. 1911.

¹²⁴*HJ*, Aug. 1909.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, Aug. 1911.

¹²⁶*HJ*, Apr. 1915. In June 1915 the Inspector General noted, 'This action is evidently a counterstroke to the rival society, the AOH IAA, which, with a view to acquiring increased support, has just issued a publication entitled "The Hibernian"'. Irish Government. Police Reports, 1914-1921, 'Inspector General's Monthly Confidential Report' (N.A.I., CO 904/97, June 1915).

a new copy of the *Journal* if they returned the previous month's - caused considerable difficulties.¹²⁷ Many divisions would later complain that they never received the paper.¹²⁸

With regard to content, the *Journal* reflected the Order's many priorities, though home rule was a central topic. Every edition followed a common structure, including a frontispiece (usually featuring one or more Hibernian officers or Catholic priests), an editorial, division and county reports, a letter from the national secretary and articles on topics 'which concern[ed] all Irishmen'.¹²⁹ Culture, economics, politics, religion, and all manner of societal ills were discussed. The *Journal* also reported on almost every aspect of Hibernian life in exhaustive detail. Reports of concerts and dances spoke to a rich social life. Church parades and eulogies for priests reflected the society's Catholic principles. The AOH's political views and electoral practices were also strongly in evidence. Figures on the society's increasing finances along with the distribution and growth of its membership attested to massive expansion throughout the period. The 'distinctively Irish flavour' of the *Journal*, meanwhile, was evinced by its advertisements for Irish manufacturers, the printing of select articles in Irish, even the inclusion of Irish poems and songs. Writers varied across the board, including clergy, journalists and politicians. The policy and everything in connection with the paper was however subject to the approval of the Board of Erin.¹³⁰ While the *Journal* never missed an opportunity to record Devlin's words and actions, it is worth acknowledging two other, regular, Hibernian contributors: John D. Nugent, and James J. Bergin.¹³¹ As the national secretary of the AOH, the former is certainly the better known. A close friend to Devlin, Nugent joined the Order at age 16, in Dublin. Under his secretaryship, the AOH became 'much more disciplined, organised, and centralised'. After 1911 he took the role of national insurance secretary and oversaw the Order's massive expansion.¹³² Little information survives on Bergin, meanwhile. President of the Dublin county board, he later became

¹²⁷*HJ*, June. 1917.

¹²⁸*HJ*, Nov. 1917; *Derry Journal* (Hereafter *DJ*), 15 Aug. 1917.

¹²⁹*DJ*, 1 Dec. 1916.

¹³⁰Minute Book, Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin) (Hereafter 'BOE mins'), 5 Dec. 1906 (microfilm, LOU 13/1/1 – LOU 13/1/2, NLI)

¹³¹Barring some correspondence with John Dillon, none of Nugent's papers have survived. See Nugent (J.D.), 1912-1926 (Manuscripts and Archives, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin (Hereafter TCD), MS 6578, 1334-1349).

¹³²Marie Coleman, 'Nugent, John Dillon', Mar. 2013 <https://dib.cambridge.org> (19/03/19).

assistant secretary to Nugent. His most crucial role, however, was as editor for the *Hibernian Journal*.¹³³

Initially, sales of the *Journal* were lacklustre.¹³⁴ When the paper was established, divisions were invited to take shares. Many did just that.¹³⁵ Others, however, were of the opinion that the *Journal* should have first been introduced ‘at a national convention [where it] could have been properly discussed’.¹³⁶ In early 1909 Bergin confessed ‘[With the exception of Donegal, Dublin and Scotland] we have not received such support from our members as we had expected’.¹³⁷ While the Hibernian leadership blamed divisions for recommending ‘advertisers who did not pay’,¹³⁸ the rank-and-file expressed a dislike for the fact that the ‘outside public knew as much about the working of the Order as [themselves]’.¹³⁹ Often read and debated at division meetings,¹⁴⁰ copies of the *Journal* could be obtained through a subscription or purchased through local newsvendors and Hibernian canvassers.¹⁴¹ From the middle of 1912 until early 1915 – when it went public again - the organ became a quarterly official report, supplied to every division in return for a registration fee.¹⁴² Despite suffering from an inauspicious beginning then, it is clear that the *Hibernian Journal* became a mainstay of AOH life. More than anything, the paper stands out as a vessel for the officials views of the society’s leadership, especially with regard to home rule. Rampant with Anglophobia, and between sectarianism and militant language, it undoubtedly appealed to a constitutional separatist grouping within the movement. Much more difficult to measure are the views of the Order’s rank-and-file. The information appearing in the organ, especially division reports, was obviously cherry

¹³³‘BOE mins’, 5 Dec. 1906; *Irish Independent* (Hereafter *II*), 27 Feb. 1911; *Weekly Freeman’s Journal* (Hereafter *WFJ*), 30 Jan. 1915; *Freeman’s Journal*, (Hereafter *FJ*) 12 Feb. 1910.

¹³⁴And this despite the efforts of both Bergin and Nugent, to drum up support. See *Irish News and Belfast Morning News* (Hereafter *INBMN*), 18, July 1908; *INBMN*, 23 July 1908.

¹³⁵*INBMN*, 12 Oct. 1906; *Ibid.*, 17 Oct. 1906; *INBMN*, 23 Oct. 1906.

¹³⁶Minutes of division 1, Derry (Hereafter ‘Derry mins’), 9 Oct. 1906 (MS in the possession of division 1, 23 Foyle Street, Londonderry).

¹³⁷*HJ*, Feb. 1909. Several isolated towns in counties throughout Ireland and England were also acknowledged, if not named. Instances of whole divisions purchasing the paper can be found. See *INBMN*, 6 Dec. 1907; *INBMN*, 3 Sept. 1909.

¹³⁸‘BOE mins’, 19 Mar. 1909.

¹³⁹‘Derry mins’, 2 Sept. 1909. When the *Journal* was first announced, Brother Lynch of division 1, Derry pointed out that ‘it would be detrimental to the interest of the Order to give publicity to the business transacted at its meetings, or the parading of the names of those associated with it in the public press’. ‘Derry mins’, 19 Oct. 1906.

¹⁴⁰*INBMN*, 16 July 1908; *INBMN*, 9 Dec. 1908.

¹⁴¹*Sligo Champion* (Hereafter *SC*), 21 Nov. 1908; *INBMN*, 15 Jan. 1907. At the price of one penny during its two public runs. *FJ*, 30 Jan. 1907; *DDE*, 5 June 1915.

¹⁴²‘BOE mins’, 25 Aug. 1911; ‘Derry mins’, 28 Aug. 1913. It is unclear whether this practice continued on a monthly basis between 1915 and 1917.

picked from other newspapers or solicited from the branches themselves. In order to secure a more representative picture of Hibernian life many other sources have been canvassed.

Despite being scarce at first, reports of division activity became a common feature of most contemporary Irish newspapers. Principal amongst these were the *Derry Journal*, the *Dublin Daily Express*, the *Irish Independent*, the *Irish News and Belfast Morning News*, the *Sligo Champion*, and the *Weekly Freeman's Journal*.¹⁴³ As Virginia E. Glandon has said, the Irish press played a very important part in the lives of the Irish people:

[They] depended almost exclusively upon their daily or weekly newspapers to keep them informed on local, national, and international developments. Almost everyone who could read, whether in urban or rural areas, eagerly awaited the arrival of the newspaper, and it was common for newspapers to pass from hand to hand to be read by many more than only those who could afford to buy or subscribe to a paper.¹⁴⁴

Pro-home rule papers were, understandably, more willing to provide coverage of the AOH. Concentrations of Hibernianism in particular areas, especially cities, also increased the level of reportage; see Belfast, Derry and Dublin. In keeping with the Order's ascent to national prominence, several newspapers even featured a dedicated AOH column. Between 1907 and 1911 the *Irish News and Belfast Morning News* included, 'Hibernianism. Gossip and News from the Ranks of the AOH. By Rory Oge'.¹⁴⁵ Other organs became outlets for 'Specially Contributed', 'Hibernian Notes'.¹⁴⁶ Whether a branch disclosed its activities to a local newspaper was really down to the views of the membership.¹⁴⁷ The Hibernian leadership made it plain, however, that anything controversial or not in keeping with a wholesome image of the Order or the home rule

¹⁴³Several searches were conducted under different terms and phrases – including the AOH, and, Ancient Order of Hibernians - between 1890 and 1919, using the British Newspaper Archive. Many other papers from Ireland, as well as England and Scotland were also used. See the bibliography. (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>) (20/02/19).

¹⁴⁴Virginia E. Glandon, 'The Irish Press and Revolutionary Irish Nationalism', *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1981), pp 21-33. See also Virginia E. Glandon, 'Index of Irish Newspapers, 1900-1922 (Part I)', *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Winter, 1976) pp 84-121; Virginia E. Glandon, 'Index of Irish Newspapers, 1900-1922 (Part II)', *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 1977) pp 86-115.

¹⁴⁵Rory Oge, or more accurately Rory O'More, was the lord of Laois during the sixteenth century and frequently involved in rebellion against Queen Elizabeth. Idolised by the AOH his image was often painted on Hibernian banners, and Bergin incorrectly claimed that he was the founder of the Defenders. Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, p. 8. See also Emmet O'Byrne, 'O'More, Rory' (<https://dib.cambridge.org>) (19/03/19).

¹⁴⁶Both the *Derry Journal* and the *Weekly Freeman's Journal* featured such a column between 1914-1918.

¹⁴⁷See 'Derry mins', 3 Nov. 1905.

cause, could get a division suspended.¹⁴⁸ When a report of a Hibernian convention appeared in the *Glasgow Observer* ‘which dealt with matters which should not have been made public’, the Board of Erin urged the provincial convention for Scotland ‘to make a strict rule debarring any member sending a report to the press, other than the secretary of a division or county, and it only to be of a strict official character’.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, delegates to conventions often returned to their divisions and gave reports on ‘other matters which were transacted but not allowed in the press’.¹⁵⁰ Under such circumstances, sources authored from a different vantage point are invaluable. While the Order does not crop up quite as much in papers of an Independent Nationalist or Protestant Unionist view, several – including the *Dundalk Examiner and Louth Advertiser*, the *Londonderry Sentinel*, and the *Newry Reporter* – have been examined.

Most significantly, this work makes use of several recently discovered AOH minute books. These records are notable not just for the variety of their provenance, but for the period they cover. Two minute books, belonging to division 563, Falkirk (Central Lowlands, Scotland) and division 1247, Killanny (Co Lough and Co Monaghan, Leinster) provide an image of division life before (Oct 1909-Sept 1911), and during (Oct 1913-1918) the First World War.¹⁵¹ The greatest find, however, is the minutes for division 1, Derry (Co Londonderry), which almost chart the entire period (1905-18).¹⁵² While such sources assume a certain level of familiarity with Hibernian protocol and rituals on the part of the reader, division life, as with the views of the membership, is presented in a bald and candid way, unmatched elsewhere. Questions about recruitment processes, the regularity of attendance, the power of the officer class, even attitudes towards home rule and the AOH leadership, and the impact of local and national events, are answered. Equally revealing, and a fitting counterpart, are the Board of Erin minutes, which encompass 1906-18.¹⁵³ Like the *Hibernian Journal*, the BOE minutes have been severely underused until now.¹⁵⁴ This material is all the more significant for the fact that Joseph

¹⁴⁸As happened in the case of division 670, Tulsk (Co Roscommon) in April 1914, when a resolution ‘dealing with the distribution of land’ was passed and appeared in the press. ‘BOE mins’, Apr. 10, 1914.

¹⁴⁹‘BOE mins’, 25 Aug. 1911.

¹⁵⁰‘Derry mins’, 21 July. 1911.

¹⁵¹Minutebook of division 563, Falkirk (Hereafter ‘Falkirk mins’), Oct. 1909-Sept. 1911 (PD75/1/1, Stirling Council Archive, Stirling); Minutebook of division 1247, Killanny (Hereafter ‘Killanny mins’), Oct. 1913-Dec. 1918 (LOU 5/1, N.A.I.).

¹⁵²‘Derry mins’.

¹⁵³‘BOE mins’.

¹⁵⁴Only J.F. Campbell and Seamus McPhillips has used them. See Campbell, ‘Friendly Societies in Ireland’; McPhillips, ‘The Ancient Order of Hibernians’.

Devlin's papers were, on his instructions, destroyed by his sister after his death in 1934.¹⁵⁵ Though the executive only met quarterly, much of Hibernianism's underbelly is made explicit. The leadership's decision making and the many factors which informed it are traced; as is recourse to discipline where branches refused dictation or were otherwise unlawful.

Dissension in the Hibernian ranks found its way into the reports of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) as well. Concerned with any and all signs of Irish nationalist disloyalty or criminality, the county inspectors mapped out AOH activity on a county by county, and month by month basis, throughout the period 1905-18. This material is particularly useful for gauging organisational health; as well the Order's position within Irish nationalism and its relationships with other organisations, including the Catholic Church.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, the AOH's changing relationship with the latter institution can be traced through a variety of correspondence and papers at diocesan archives. In Scotland, materials held in the Archdiocese of Glasgow archives and the Scottish Catholic archives illustrate how the AOH moved from a banned organisation to a tolerated one.¹⁵⁷ In Ireland, meantime, the papers of Cardinal Michael Logue and Bishop Patrick O'Donnell afford the view of a devoted opponent on one hand, and a stalwart champion on the other.¹⁵⁸ Lastly, no assessment of Hibernian home rule would be possible without sources relating to the Order's financial practices. In that regard, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland boasts a considerable collection. The annual financial reports for no less than five Belfast divisions are available. These include details on membership, income and expenditure. Rule books, division specific and general, exist as well.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵Foy, 'The Ancient Order', preface, i; Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁶A large amount of material has been consulted from the Colonial Office papers (CO 904/), N.A.I., including: 'Inspector General's and County Inspectors' Monthly Confidential Reports', 72-73, 77-88, 90-116; 'Nationalist Organisations', 13, 23; 'Register Of Foreign Associations', 15; 'Register Of Home Associations', 16; 'Precis Of Information And Reports Relating To The D.M.P. District', 10, 11, 12 and 13; 'Precis Of Information Received By The Special Branch, R.I.C.', 118, 120; 'Military Reports', 157.

¹⁵⁷R13/1-13, 15-18, and 21, GRCAA; DA30/58, DA61/42, DE6/90, DE133/1, ED6/182-187, SCA.

¹⁵⁸Michael Logue's Papers, ARCH/9/3/1-18, ARCH/9/10/4; Patrick O'Donnell's Papers, ARCH/10/6/6, ARCH/10/4/14, CTOML.

¹⁵⁹Ancient Order of Hibernians, 1909-66, COM/41/1/2/: 1-4, 7, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (Hereafter PRONI).

1

The AOH and the National Organisation

For Matthew Kelly Irish separatism cannot be ‘properly understood’ if its most obvious manifestation, the organisation known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), is considered its ‘exclusive repository’. Indeed, the idea that separatist sentiment was marginal because the IRB was a small force ‘is historically simplistic’. Moreover, amongst Irish nationalists, a tension existed between ‘occurrent and dispositional attitudes’. Many were inclined towards separatism but chose to support home rule and a ‘broadly constitutional approach’ for ‘pragmatic reasons’.¹⁶⁰ Fergal McCluskey builds on Kelly’s ideas, similarly problematising ‘the old binary distinction between separatist and constitutionalist’.¹⁶¹ He suggests that the AOH of the 1890s – a militant and separatist organisation – was a far cry from the nominally constitutionalist movement that existed from 1905 onwards. According to McCluskey, the AOH membership never truly shed their earlier outlook with the result that there were two groups within the Order: “constitutional nationalists” who viewed participation and petition at Westminster as the only acceptable or practical means of achieving legislative independence’, and nominal supporters, many of whom formed a “constitutional separatist” grouping, and endorsed the party position but desired a greater measure of Irish independence.¹⁶² McCluskey has too argued that Devlin controlled the AOH by using a programme of ‘populist patriotism’, what might even be called a ‘brand of popular nationalism’. Two main features were on display: ‘[1] an appeal to Catholic interests and staunch nationalism epitomised by the catch-cry of faith and fatherland and [2] the movement’s consistent self-portrayal as a democratic upsurge capable of addressing the desires of all classes and creeds’.¹⁶³

This chapter shows how the Hibernian leadership conceived of the AOH – in spite of its Ulster basis - as a national body but not the National Organisation (the UIL). This was the basis for a larger populist programme as McCluskey has demonstrated. Under

¹⁶⁰Kelly, *The Fenian ideal*, p. 5.

¹⁶¹Kelly, *The Fenian ideal*, p. 11.

¹⁶²McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 5.

¹⁶³McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 43-6.

Devlin the Order promised to loyally support the National Organisation or movement which commanded the support of the majority of the Irish people.¹⁶⁴ The AOH was, accordingly, something of a cheerleader for the UIL and the Irish Parliamentary Party. This conformity contrasted with apparent and real, maverick qualities, however. Time and again the *Hibernian Journal* maintained that the Society was no mere tail to the IPP or even the UIL, but a body which gave its support voluntarily. Faith and fatherland corresponded to a specific, Catholic Nationalist demographic, with little provision for Protestants. As for the notion that the AOH was a democratic upsurge, this was encased not just as McCluskey has said, in the employment of ‘militant and quasi-separatist language’, but in two additional concepts: cooperation and forbearance.¹⁶⁵ Devlin sought unity above all else, and both he and his programme demonstrated a willingness to court constitutional separatists. Advanced nationalists were met with a great deal of antipathy by the AOH, but Irish Nationalism was a spectrum, and Devlin’s use of the Order to crush factionalism obscures the extent to which he reintegrated those who abandoned an advanced nationalist position. During the earlier period, between 1905 and 1911, the AOH made little reference to how it would fit in politically, after the implementation of home rule. The *Hibernian Journal’s* delineation of the AOH’s position and role, however, – as a national body but not the National Organisation – and its relationship with both the IPP says much about how the Society would perform and the part it would play, in a post-home rule Ireland.

This chapter deals with a number of questions. How did Devlin capture and maintain control of the AOH? What kind of relationship did the Order seek and in fact have with the IPP and the UIL? What was Hibernianism’s political role? While the first section looks at the background to twentieth century Irish nationalism, the larger focus is on the place of the AOH and Ulster nationalism within this mosaic. There is too an emphasis on Devlin’s success in leading the society down the constitutional separatist path in spite of IRB efforts. Indeed, the appeal of separatist sentiment is indicated by the secession and growth of a separate, Scottish Hibernian section which even managed to enlist several Ulster branches. The AOH’s role under this last umbrella – especially its relationship with the UIL - as understood by Devlin and the rest of the Hibernian leadership, is discussed in full. The way in which localist politics conspired to thwart such arrangements makes

¹⁶⁴This had consequences for the later period as we shall see in chapter five.

¹⁶⁵McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 8.

for a fitting corollary. Indeed, a reversion to localist politics after 1891 feeds into a further discourse surrounding the Order's electoral notoriety and power, as at North Monaghan in 1907. The political relevance of Hibernianism in Great Britain is also compared. Capping proceedings meantime is an assessment of the AOH's attitudes towards the British government. The idea that the AOH-IPP relationship was a continuation of a long-standing tradition in Irish nationalism – 'ambiguity' – is explored. A corollary to this is a discussion of Anglophobia within the Order. AOH efforts to defeat Sinn Fein at North Leitrim, in 1908, along with Hibernian heavy-handedness at the Baton Convention in 1909, conclude the chapter.

The Irish nationalist milieu

Implemented in 1801, the two Acts of Union created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The move was strategic and predicated on the idea that 'within the larger framework of the United Kingdom, Catholics would be a less threatening minority, which the dominant majority could tolerate'.¹⁶⁶ The earlier Irish parliament at College's Green was swept away, the original 300 members now shrunk to 100 and forced to sit at Westminster with 500 others. Two offices headed up the Irish administration meantime, the lord lieutenant or viceroy and the chief secretary. During the nineteenth century the former's power was steadily eroded and by 1900 the real power lay with the chief secretary.¹⁶⁷ British control in Ireland depended on a vast police force. An Irish Constabulary was created in 1836, the forename "Royal" added after the Fenian rising of 1867 was effectively quashed. By then the force was 'armed, centrally controlled' by a single Inspector-General under ministerial authority and 'quasi-military in dress, training and ethos'; with 10,000-12,000 constables posted in barracks throughout the country.¹⁶⁸ Attempts were made to pacify Ireland, such as Catholic emancipation, even to normalise the country in Britain's own image, as with more efficient policing in the 1830s. Such efforts were erratic. Ireland was a low priority in what was effectively British politics. Charles Townshend explains: 'At root, the performance of the Union as a political structure was marked by permanent tension between the notional unity of the United

¹⁶⁶Charles Townshend, *Ireland: the 20th century* (London, 2011) p. 3.

¹⁶⁷Eunan O'Halpin, *The decline of the union: British government in Ireland, 1892-1920* (Dublin, 1987) p. 5.

¹⁶⁸Townshend, *Ireland*, p. 7.

Kingdom and the actual treatment of Ireland as a special entity, with a curious status somewhere between a sub-state and a colony'.¹⁶⁹

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the administration of Ireland became dominated by one overwhelming issue 'the constitutional relationship between Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom'. Every action of the state had political implications and was weighed accordingly.¹⁷⁰ Home rule was not 'a newly sprung, single political stream' but the convergence of 'numerous tributary political traditions and causes'.¹⁷¹ At its heart, the idea was about repealing the Act of Union of 1801. Popular agitation began with Daniel O'Connell, a Catholic lawyer and landowner from County Kerry.¹⁷² His campaign for Catholic emancipation from religious disabilities inaugurated strategies and institutions which later Home Rulers would use. He also popularised a version of 'intense Irish patriotism' and provided a complex legacy with 'a possible sympathy for the monarchy and the idea of Irish Catholic involvement in the institutions of empire'.¹⁷³ An opponent to O'Connell's later 1830s campaign for a repeal of the union, it was the Irish barrister Isaac Butt who popularised Home Rule with his formation of the Home Government Association in May 1870.¹⁷⁴ This was succeeded in 1873 by the Home Rule League. Butt was inspired by the reconstruction of the federal government in the United States of America in the late 1860s and the birth of a new federal constitution. Socially conservative and an ardent parliamentarian, Butt was unable to act on his ideas, however, and after his death in 1879 he was eclipsed by another, the Protestant landowner Charles Stewart Parnell.¹⁷⁵

During the 1860s and 1870s Ireland was dominated by rural unrest. Particularly frustrating was the landlord system. Farmers could not freely purchase land, and rent was set arbitrarily by landlords. After the Land Act of 1870 failed to effectively address these matters, bad weather, low prices, and poor harvests incited a renewed land agitation overseen by the Fenians.¹⁷⁶ The latter grouping, more commonly known as the Irish

¹⁶⁹Townshend, *Ireland*, p. 4.

¹⁷⁰Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Fein Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 2005), Introduction, p. 1

¹⁷¹Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish history, 1800-2000* (London, 2003) p. 9

¹⁷²For more on O'Connell try, Sean O' Faolain, *King of the Beggars: A Life of Daniel O'Connell* (New York, 1938); Oliver MacDonagh, *O'Connell: The Life of Daniel O'Connell, 1775-1847* (London, 1991); Patrick M. Geoghegan, *Liberator: The Life and Death of Daniel O'Connell, 1830-1847* (Dublin, 2012).

¹⁷³Jackson, *Home Rule*, pp 12-4.

¹⁷⁴For more on Butt, try David Thornley, *Isaac Butt and home rule* (Westport, 1976); Alan O'Day, *Isaac Butt: collected writings* (Bristol, 2003); Alan O'Day, *Isaac Butt* (TBA, 2019).

¹⁷⁵Jackson, *Home Rule*, p. 25.

¹⁷⁶Robert F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1989), pp 402-3.

Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was established in 1858 by James Stephens. A sister organisation, the Fenian Brotherhood (later called the Clan na Gael) also existed in America. As a ‘tightly organised, oath-bound secret society’ modelled on ‘the underground revolutionary groups that proliferated in early nineteenth-century Europe’, the IRB vetted its recruits carefully and used a ‘cellular structure’ consisting of circles, each run by centres. Though a very small organisation, the IRB was devoted to open insurrection and complete Irish independence. Known for turning the funerals of previous Irish rebels into national demonstrations, the IRB also employed terrorism and the cult of sacrifice. The latter in particular was demonstrated in 1867 when three members – later known as the Manchester Martyrs – were executed for killing a police officer after successfully freeing two leaders of the Brotherhood from a horse-drawn police van on its way to a prison in Gorton, Manchester. When Dublin Castle (the seat of British rule in Ireland) got wind of a planned uprising set for the same year the movement was reorganised, and it was conceded that mass support was needed for any future action.¹⁷⁷

During the period 1879-81, Fenian efforts resulted in the “Land War” and a “New Departure”. The last was an informal agreement between the American Fenian leader, John Devoy, and Charles Stewart Parnell, ‘endorsing full legislative autonomy for Ireland, compulsory land purchase...a thoroughly independent Home Rule Party at Westminster....[and the] integrity of the Fenian movement and of its armed strategies’.¹⁷⁸ As the most prominent advanced parliamentarian, Parnell became the president of the Irish National Land League, founded in Dublin on the 21 October 1879 by three IRB members. In the general election of April 1880, twenty-seven of Parnell’s supporters were returned and in May he took over from Butt’s successor, William Shaw, as chairman of the Home Rule League (renamed the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1882). Parnell was keen for farmers to own rather than rent their property and he advocated boycotting through the Land League to accomplish this, but the greater goal was still Home Rule. In August 1881, however, with its introduction of the second Irish Land Act, the British Liberal government under William Gladstone threatened to defuse the land agitation. This legislation, the product of two commissions of investigation, seemed to provide the three ‘fs’ – fair rent, free sale and fixity of tenure – but really only benefited substantial and northern farmers. Landless labours, leaseholders and those in arrears of rent were left to

¹⁷⁷Townshend, *Ireland*, pp 25-6.

¹⁷⁸Jackson, *Home Rule*, p. 40.

fend for themselves, thus undermining Parnell's leadership and the alliance on which the Land League was built on. Things came to a head in October 1881 when Parnell, who had been demonstrating great antipathy towards the new Land Act, was arrested on suspicion of treason. Imprisonment only served to paint the leader in a patriotic light, however, to emphasise his national standing and create some distance between himself and the League's collapse. In April 1882 Parnell struck an agreement with the government, known as the Kilmainham Treaty. He relaxed his position on agrarian agitation and in return the government promised to free Parnell and accommodate those excluded from the Land Act.¹⁷⁹

Following the "Land War" the Land League was transformed into the 'constituency organisation of parliamentary nationalism'. Under Parnell, meanwhile, the Irish Party evolved from a 'loose medley' into a 'disciplined populist party'.¹⁸⁰ In the general election of 1885 the IPP won four-fifths of the Irish representation, signalling its incorporation of most nationalist factions. The Land League which had been mainly organised by the IRB acted as a bridge for Fenian entry, but the larger coup was the support of the Catholic Church. Parnell's success in suppressing factionalism and mobilising popular support left the church with two options, either cooperate or withdraw from politics. In 1886 the hierarchy endorsed the home rule demand in exchange for the party's support on such issues as denominational education. The parochial clergy became local organisers, subscribed to party funds and offered church porches as forums for political discussion and debate. The beginnings of an even more significant alliance were forged in 1885 when Parnell's party briefly gained the balance of power in the House of Commons and aided the Conservatives in destroying Gladstone's Liberal majority. This encouraged the latter to draw up a Government of Ireland bill and introduce it in April 1886 when he formed a new administration. Joseph Chamberlain, a leading member of Gladstone's cabinet had been in the process of devising an alternative scheme and resigned in protest. He led a secession which defeated the bill, collapsed the government and produced a new Liberal Unionist party.¹⁸¹ In July the Conservatives returned to power

¹⁷⁹Jackson, *Home Rule*, pp 40-5.

¹⁸⁰David Fitzpatrick, 'Ireland Since 1870' in R.F. Foster (ed) *The Oxford history of Ireland* (Oxford, 1992) pp 180-1.

¹⁸¹Fitzpatrick, 'Ireland Since 1870', pp 181-3.

and in 1890, at the height of its power, the Irish Parliamentary Party was split when, in a huge public scandal, it was revealed that that Parnell had engaged in adultery.¹⁸²

During January 1896, Joseph Devlin, later national president of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, wrote to his good friend and mentor John Dillon, MP for Mayo East to refuse his offer of a seat at Louth – ‘I feel that for the present at least I am better out of parliament. I believe that within the sphere of my own influence here I can do infinitely more good’.¹⁸³ Two years later, Devlin revealed his inability ‘under any circumstances [to] accept any paid position in connection with the national movement’ when he also rejected a role with the United Irish League in Great Britain.¹⁸⁴ The latter can only have been the result of a principled stance, for earlier in 1898 he wrote to Dillon citing financial difficulties – ‘For over six years, owing to my part in public affairs, I have been spending all I could earn and of course this cannot go on’. Rather than accept monetary aid, however, Devlin hoped to use Dillon’s influence to establish a relationship with a brewer or distiller and so open a pub in Belfast. Following some investigation in the city, however, he found the conditions ‘impossible’.¹⁸⁵ The ‘pressure of friends and party exigencies’ were too, another factor he could do well without, though he insisted on the long-term benefits of such a move – ‘In a few years I would be in a position to be of far greater service than I am now’.¹⁸⁶ Devlin was by no means naïve, however, and concluded ‘I have no very definite plans as to my future personal action...If I get into business here...I will apply myself to it absolutely. There will be other people...and duty to them would make it essential that I should devote myself solely to the interests of the business’.¹⁸⁷ Joseph Devlin’s correspondence with John Dillon paints a picture of a man adopting an altruistic position where politics were concerned and suffering from inner turmoil as a result.¹⁸⁸ For this reason, he is perhaps an odd duck, especially when considering Michael Wheatley’s description of the party leadership, a hegemonic group

¹⁸²For more on Parnell, see F.S.L. Lyons, *The Fall of Parnell* (London, 1962); Roy Foster ‘Interpretations of Parnell’, in *An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 80, No. 320 (Winter, 1991), pp 349-57; D.G. Boyce and Alan O’Day (eds) *Parnell in Perspective* (London, 1991); Paul Bew, *Enigma: a new life of Charles Stewart Parnell* (Dublin, 2012).

¹⁸³Joseph Devlin to John Dillon, 28 Jan. 1896, TCD, Correspondence with Joseph Devlin, MSS 6729, John Dillon Papers.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 16 Aug. 1898, MSS 6729, TCD, Dillon Papers.

¹⁸⁵Joseph Devlin to John Dillon, 21 Jan. 1898, MSS 6729, TCD, Dillon Papers.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 25 July 1898, MSS 6729, TCD, Dillon Papers.

¹⁸⁷Joseph Devlin to John Dillon, 21 Nov. 1898, MSS 6729, TCD, Dillon Papers.

¹⁸⁸A.C. Hepburn has noted that he left £47 in his will, was heedless with money and generous to a fault. For more on Devlin’s personality, see Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, pp 270-7.

of ‘older, landed, and upper middle-class Catholic nationalists’;¹⁸⁹ in Fergal McCluskey’s words ‘manipulating popular sentiment in order to control the subordinate classes within Irish society’.¹⁹⁰ Where exactly did Devlin fit in?

Born in 1871 to Irish Catholic parents in the lower Falls area of Belfast, Devlin received the bulk of his education from the nearby Christian Brothers’ school.¹⁹¹ Several such institutions were dotted throughout the city and were known for their academic quality and nationalist ethos. Leaving school at the age of 12, Devlin initially worked as a clerk in a jam factory. Later in life he revealed that a subsequent role, as an office boy in a linen firm, was denied to him on account of his religion. Regardless, office work does not seem to have suited the young Devlin, and after a period of idleness he took up work and lived at a pub. Stemming from his education was a great love of reading and recitation, and at the age of 13, with the help of some friends, he formed and became chairman of a reading and social club. Devlin’s political awakening came a year later when he was enlisted in the general election of November 1885, organising a group of boys to deliver leaflets in support of the nationalist and West Belfast candidate, Thomas Sexton. Devlin eventually came to the latter’s attention for his significant oratory skills and after he became its patron, the earlier reading and social club was rechristened the Sexton Debating Society.¹⁹² By 1890, the young Belfast man had demonstrated ‘talents of organisation and leadership’. Already ‘an accomplished orator’, he had a typical ‘late-Victorian literary’ education ‘overlaid by a...romanticism with a specifically Irish nationalist flavour’.¹⁹³ Political events in 1890 and afterwards engendered Devlin with two key characteristics: a loyalty to the Irish party bordering on the fanatical, and with it, an intolerance for factionalism.¹⁹⁴

In the wake of the divorce crisis of 1890 and Parnell’s refusal to step down as leader, the Irish Party split into three factions: the Parnellites, governed by John Redmond, continued the work of the Irish National League. The anti-Parnellites, under John Dillon

¹⁸⁹Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 75-8

¹⁹⁰McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 7.

¹⁹¹For more on the Christian Brothers’ Schools see Elie Maillefer, *The life of John Baptist de La Salle: Priest, doctor, former canon of the Cathedral of Rheims, and founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (St. Mary’s College, 1963); John Ledwidge, *The Brow, the Brothers and the Bogside: a history of the Christian Brothers’ school, Derry, 1854-1990* (Derry, 1991).

¹⁹²Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, pp 29-35.

¹⁹³Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, p. 36.

¹⁹⁴A.C. Hepburn, ‘Devlin Joseph’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-32802?rskey=XyecBF&result=1>) (4 Sept. 2018).

(from 1892 onwards) established the Irish National Federation while Tim Healy, another of Parnell's former close associates, founded his own personal organisation, the Healyite People's Right's Association. Dillon's faction believed in 'a centralised organisation dominated by the parliamentary party and aligned with the Liberals'. This was in contrast to Healy's call for a 'decentralised party dominated by constituency organisations – which to a great extent meant the Catholic clergy and their nominees'.¹⁹⁵ Towards the end of the nineteenth century, two organisations emerged 'which necessitated the national reconciliation of the constitutional factions': the 1798 Centenary Committee and the United Irish League.¹⁹⁶ The former, inaugurated by Dublin Fenians in March 1897, was a means of commemorating the republican 1798 rebellion.¹⁹⁷ By June the organisation's central committee had increased to encompass all the various separatist factions active at the time (including the AOH). Within East Tyrone meanwhile, Fenians conceived the '98 movement to promulgate their faith and to reorganise the IRB. As the movement spread, Fenian control and influence waned. When a Devlinite executive was established in Ulster during September 1897 the Republicans responded a month later by forming a rival provincial executive. Devlin's body was not alone, however, and after linking up with several other Dillonite clubs across Ireland in December 1897, a rival '98 organisation had taken shape. As the Dillonite branches began to outnumber their Fenian counterparts 'local republicans adopted a more conciliatory position, foreshadowing subsequent events at the national level'. The result was that by the time of the commemoration in May 1898, the two rival national executives had merged. Militancy was still the stated creed, but moderate constitutionalists 'dominated the speech-making, and the insurrectionary talk of the preceding months was largely absent'.¹⁹⁸

Come the '98 Centenary, neither the IRB nor AOH had entered the political mainstream and in fact, there was little difference between the two, especially in rural areas. The '98 movement saw a conjunction of the IRB, members of the AOH and the most populist aspects of the Dillonite bloc. Unfortunately, popular independent mobilisation, whether constitutional or republican, was not embraced by the Catholic clergy, especially those who supported T.M. Healy. Given the party violence and rioting that followed the '98 celebrations there was no shortage of justification for church

¹⁹⁵Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 19.

¹⁹⁶McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p.6.

¹⁹⁷For more on the rebellion see Thomas Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: the story of the great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (London, 1969).

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, pp 24-26.

condemnation.¹⁹⁹ The most radical example of the Catholic Church's desire to control Irish nationalist politics occurred in 1896. That year the eccentric and autocratic Henry Henry, the Bishop of Down and Connor, established the Belfast Catholic Association (BCA). Within the confines of Belfast at the time, the Irish National Federation, headed up by Devlin, assumed the right to represent the nationalist community. During 1896, however, the Federation was side-lined by Bishop Henry while a Corporation Bill was contemplated to extend the boundaries of Belfast and so improve Catholic representation. Having taken the lead in securing municipal representation Henry and his followers refused to leave the field. After nearly a decade of struggle, Devlin succeeded in having the Association dissolved.²⁰⁰

The United Irish League was created by the ex-Parnellite MP, William O'Brien in 1898.²⁰¹ O'Brien wanted to remain aloof from politics after Parnell's downfall. Being so close, personally and politically to John Dillon, however, he deferred to the former's judgment and sided with the anti-Parnellites. After a second Home Rule Bill (1893) was defeated and William Gladstone retired, O'Brien was faced with what he saw as the irrelevancy of the party, both at Westminster and in Ireland. He was now convinced of the need for a reorientation in Irish nationalism, in particular, independence from the Liberal Party and a more diverse methodology, moving away from a solely parliamentary strategy. Unfortunately, his preference for agitational politics – to his mind, a necessary means of binding advanced nationalists to constitutionalism – was resisted by all of the new nationalist factions. In 1895, O'Brien withdrew from politics and settled in County Mayo. There he contacted the tenant farmers and began to develop plans for a new organisation, a vehicle for their political aspirations. The United Irish League proved immensely popular, riding the wave of enthusiasm inspired by the '98 centenary. Agrarian discontent was rife as well and many were disenchanted with the factionalism of national politics. By 1900 the organisation had spread to cover most of Ireland. That year the Irish party was also reunified, and John Redmond elected as leader.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 26-27.

²⁰⁰ Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, pp 45-67. For a more detailed discussion of Devlin's struggle with the Catholic Association see chapter two.

²⁰¹ For more on O'Brien, try Michael MacDonagh, *The Life of William O'Brien, the Irish Nationalist* (London, 1928); Sally Warwick-Halle, *William O'Brien and the Irish land war* (Dublin, 1990). For some of O'Brien's own works, see *Recollections* (1905); *An Olive Branch in Ireland* (1910); *The Downfall of Parliamentarianism* (1918); *The Irish Revolution* (1921).

²⁰² Phillip Bull, 'O'Brien, William (1852-1928)' in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/abstract/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-35281>) (4 Sept. 2018).

Tom Garvin has suggested that the UIL was designed to bring a Party reconciliation about, to draw the disparate forces into a new grass roots organisation and install a programme of agrarian agitation, political reform, settlement of the Irish land question and the attainment of home rule.²⁰³ This is further borne out by Philip Bull's description of the body's objects, as evinced by its name: 'to commemorate the United Irishmen of 1798...to be a new Land League...[and to bring] unity to Irish politics'.²⁰⁴ Unfortunately, this democratisation of nationalist politics was not to be, the reunification of the Irish party and its assumption of League control transforming the organisation into an instrument of central discipline. Still, Fergal McCluskey argues that the UIL's metamorphosis was not inevitable, an undue focus on leadership machinations overlooking engagement at the popular level. In East Tyrone the IRB had a notable presence in the league up until 1906, the organisation's latent radicalism and quasi-republican rhetoric attracting many local Fenian councillors.²⁰⁵ In conjunction with lower-class Hibernians, they sought to capture the organisation on a popular democratic and advanced nationalist platform. But for the action of Devlin and his new generation in harnessing popular nationalism, McCluskey argues, 'Fenian influence might well have more forcefully emerged from this period of nationalist flux'.²⁰⁶ In 1901 the police reported that the Board of Erin contained members of the UIL and the IRB who shared a common antagonism for Orangemen. Apparently, the latter grouping 'appreciated [the BOE's organisation] since their own is at fault'.²⁰⁷ In some areas there was great antipathy between the AOH and the IRB, however. The Fenians were perceived as a threat to Hibernian hegemony, and enemies of their country. Fights and feuds were said to occur at Swanlinbar and Virginia, County Cavan during the late nineteenth century.²⁰⁸

After 1902 Devlin's involvement in nationalist politics intensified. In February he was elected MP for Kilkenny North and later that year the Irish party sent him to America on the first of many successful fund-raising tours. It was there that he first encountered and was impressed by the electoral power and machine politics of the American AOH.²⁰⁹ Devlin had become a member of the society in 1893 and by 1902 had made sufficient

²⁰³Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics: Irish Parties and Irish Politics from the 18th Century to Modern Times*, (Dublin, 2005), p. 102.

²⁰⁴Philip Bull, 'The Reconstruction of the Irish Parliamentary Party, 1895-1903' (PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1972), p. 139.

²⁰⁵Bull, 'The Reconstruction', p. 2.

²⁰⁶McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 29-30.

²⁰⁷CO904/76, Oct. 1902.

²⁰⁸Campbell, 'Friendly Societies in Ireland', p. 107.

²⁰⁹McCluskey, "'Make way for the Molly Maguires!'", pp 32-6.

inroads with the Irish organisation that, ahead of his visit, they sent an appeal on his behalf to their American counterparts.²¹⁰ On his return he finally accepted a paid position in the nationalist movement, as London-based secretary of the United Irish League of Great Britain. The following year he began the process of coaxing the AOH into the political mainstream by seeking out ‘the countenance of the Roman Catholic clergy’.²¹¹ By 1903, the largely Ulster based AOH was emerging as a foil for the UIL. In Tyrone, as with the rest of the province, the absence of any discernible agrarianism meant that the League could only act as a voter registration machine. The responsibility for popular mobilisation lied with the emerging AOH. While the two organisations complemented each other, they did not immediately work in harmony. Resentment centred on the fact that although the Order was the only conspicuous organisation, when elections occurred, the Hibernians had a disproportionately small voice in selection. A string of violent electoral disputes well expressed Hibernian disapproval. Pomeroy in County Armagh became the principal battleground. There, in 1902, the Hibernian and one-time Fenian, Terence McGuone, competed with the East Tyrone Executive candidate John Doris. Hibernian victory was evinced in 1903 when McGuone spoke as platform president at Pomeroy’s Lady Day procession. Also present was MP P.C. Doogan. His attendance could only be explained by IPP anxiety, a desire to bring the volatile Hibernians into the party fold.²¹²

Significantly, the Irish Party was not the AOH’s only would-be suitor: ‘By 1900, UIL agrarianism had eclipsed the separatist enthusiasm of the ’98 centenary as the predominant issue on the nationalist agenda’.²¹³ According to Matthew Kelly the IRB responded with ‘a characteristically ill-coordinated complex of infiltration, subversion, resistance and association’.²¹⁴ In this, the AOH was a particularly salacious target. The Order’s decision to fight on the democratic side in the tussle for control of the UIL certainly illustrated the potential for common ground. Hibernian animosity for League ‘shoneenism’ also had the support of working-class Fenians. Indeed, the rank and file membership of both groups shared a common class profile, as well, a militant nationalist disposition. Cross-membership was frequent and IRB cells expedited Hibernianism’s

²¹⁰*HJ*, Nov. 1908; O’Dea, *History of the Ancient*, p. 1248. Speaking at Boston in late 1908, Devlin claimed he had been a member of the society for fifteen years. The November 1907 edition of the *Hibernian Journal* noted his membership of division 114. *HJ*, Nov. 1907.

²¹¹Joseph Devlin to John Redmond, 28 June. 1903, NLI, Correspondence from Joseph Devlin, 1900-1917, MS15,181, John Redmond Papers.

²¹²McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 33-4.

²¹³McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 34.

²¹⁴Kelly, *The Fenian ideal*, p. 134.

swift expansion during the early twentieth century. From the Fenian perspective, the AOH's utility changed over time. At first a conduit for the '98 anniversary celebrations, it then became cover for evading clerical condemnation and a fifth column for increasing Fenian membership and propagating their ideals within the wider nationalist community. McCluskey has talked about how Fenian efforts were frustrated by '[Devlin's] divergent covetous designs for the Hibernian constituency' but in fact, IRB plans extended well beyond the East Tyrone organisation.²¹⁵

The Scotch or IRB section

In 1905 the AOH became Devlin's personal political vehicle. It seems likely that he was inspired by the success of William O'Brien's United Irish League. Devlin was not mindless to the dangers of sectarianism, but in the AOH's case, such airs could be useful. As Hepburn has said, 'The Catholic North was the obvious place to find the energy to mobilise a new force, where the sense of grievance was acute, pervasive and more or less classless'.²¹⁶ Evolving circumstances undoubtedly played a part as well. At first the primary factor was a local one, Devlin's dispute with the Catholic Association taking centre stage. Inspired by the American example – Devlin had witnessed the power of the American organisation during a number of trips there in 1902 and 1904 - the Belfast MP used that struggle to turn the Order to machine politics and transform it into an electoral force. No less important, especially as the land issue receded, was Hibernianism's utility as an outlet for grassroots mobilisation. Finally, there was the union between the American and Irish Orders, an alliance which could be exploited to shore up dwindling party funds and bolster constitutionalism in America.²¹⁷ It was this last, in conjunction with the by now evident parliamentary take-over that resulted in a small section of the Order, predominantly based in Scotland, seceding from the main body in January 1905. Acrimony between what was known as the Scotch Section and the society executive, the Board of Erin, was undoubtedly a product of church disapproval. Two advanced Irish nationalists, however, Thomas Flannery and John Ferguson, were also instrumental in the

²¹⁵McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 34-7.

²¹⁶Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, pp 90-4.

²¹⁷McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 39-40.

decision to break ties. The infiltration of the Scotch Section by ‘sinn feiners’ or ‘IRB suspects’ seems to have begun with John Crilly, a member of the Board of Erin.²¹⁸

Devlin’s increased involvement with Hibernianism caused considerable consternation amongst Crilly, and his Glasgow based proteges, Flannery and Ferguson. An opportunity for thwarting Devlin’s plans was provided in the form of the insubordinate ‘Scotch Section’. Both the Irish and Scottish membership had languished under the Apostolic Constitution of 1825; a papal decree condemning all secret societies. While the church ban on the AOH was lifted in Ireland during 1904, the society in Scotland did not see a similar reprieve until 1910. Efforts at church reconciliation in the latter country had culminated by 1898 in the decision to go public and register under the 1896 Friendly Societies Act.²¹⁹ When a national convention was organised for March 1902, Crilly and his followers attended and pushed the registration agenda. Although the Scottish executive failed to convince the membership of the need for registration at this meeting, they were savvy enough to recognise the opportunity in a further “reorganisation” conference set for 1904. To improve their prospects, they petitioned in September 1902 for a place on the Board of Erin. This was eventually agreed to in May 1904. In the meantime, a propaganda campaign was initiated, advocating the compulsory registration of the entire Order. In Ulster the Scotch Section appointed an organiser, Owen McNally, to convert and establish divisions on a registered footing. By 1903 the Scotch Section had managed to recruit nearly fifty divisions to their cause, with at least four in Belfast. At several meetings of Scotch Section affiliated divisions, the sentiment was expressed that if the BOE would not reform then links should be severed and a relationship with the Order in America established.²²⁰

In June 1904 the BOE conceded some ground to the registered section and took the first steps towards becoming a friendly society. Two new positions, a national president (William Skelton) and a vice-president (Owen Kiernan) were created. The principle of registration was also recognised, and a committee created. After a further conference to consider the necessary rules in July 1904, however, the Board of Erin lost its nerve. Indignation and outrage were most vocally expressed by two members of that body’s executive, Thomas Flannery, an organiser for the west of Scotland, and John Ferguson, the president of division 13, Partick. When registration was shelved for six months after

²¹⁸CO904/11, Dec. 1905.

²¹⁹Registration and the AOH’s financial practices are discussed in chapter 4.

²²⁰Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, pp 57-8.

yet another BOE meeting in October 1904, Flannery and Ferguson had all the grounds needed to act.²²¹ At a conference of the Scotch Section, held on the 3 January 1905, three main resolutions were passed. First, division 18, Ballymacarett (Belfast) called for the severance of the connection to the Board of Erin and a new affiliation with the Order in America. Secondly, owing to the growing importance of the registered divisions in Ireland, it was decided to move the registered offices from Glasgow to Belfast. Finally, the executive of Glasgow district was to be reorganised into a completely independent body, the Ancient Order of Hibernians Benefit Society (AOH BS). Flannery became the national president of this body's executive, and Ferguson, its treasurer (and later secretary).²²²

After January 1905, the situation was such that there were two AOH's in existence – the Ancient Order of Hibernians Benefit Society (Scotch Section) controlled by Flannery and Ferguson with divisions in Ulster and Scotland, and the original Order, overseen by the Board of Erin (AOH BOE). The latter section wasted no time in launching their first salvo. On the 6 April 1905, the *Irish News and Belfast Morning News* reported on a circular issued to the secretaries of all Scotch Section divisions, and with the authority of a body known as the Board of Erin Order of Hibernians Friendly Society. At a meeting in Dundalk on the 19 January 1905, the BOE had taken the decision to register as a friendly society, something they were now more than keen to make all seceding divisions aware of. To make matters worse, the leaders of the Scotch Section now made the tactical blunder of revealing their true political loyalties. In his presidential report for July 1905, Flannery declared 'we stand for national independence and ... say that it is on Irish soil and not at Westminster must the fight for Irish independence be fought and won. The time has come for an alternative... That self-reliant policy which secured Hungarian freedom must be given trial'.²²³ The AOH was not blind to advanced nationalism, and several members made their opposition plain. At a quarterly meeting in March 1906, John Nugent and others noted that members of the Sinn Fein organisation were applying for membership. The national chaplain, Rev. Father McKinley remarked that, 'these persons were secret society men, and should not be admitted into the Order if known'.²²⁴

²²¹Foy, 'The Ancient Order', pp 57-8.

²²²*Derry People*, 14 Jan. 1905; *Glasgow Sentinel*, 7 Jan. 1905; *INBMN*, 6 Apr. 1905. Ferguson becomes national secretary in September 1905. *HJ*, Nov. 1908.

²²³Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 62.

²²⁴CO904/118, Mar. 1906. Speaking at a convention of the AOH at Belfast during the same month, William McLarnon, the Monaghan delegate remarked that 'Some of the Monaghan divisions were so dominated by these [IRB] men that they had the hall at their own foot'. CO904/118, May 1906.

One Ulster Hibernian who found the advanced nationalist component in the Scotch Section particularly alarming was Dr. James Blewitt, a member of division 18, Ballymacarrett. Blewitt had led five Belfast divisions in seceding from the AOH BOE when the question of registration had first been mooted. As the registered section expanded he was appointed Ulster's provincial delegate, responsible for considering and overseeing the establishment of new divisions. After inaugurating a branch at Dromara, County Down, however, he received orders from the national secretary that certain members were not to be admitted. Upon making inquiries he discovered that there was no object in keeping those members out except to check the majority that was gradually growing tired of the board. Though Blewitt was to confront the national directory over intrigue and injustice at a meeting in Govan, June 1906, he was soon ousted.²²⁵ By this point, however, others were waking up to the nature of the Scotch Section's leadership. When Flannery used his presidential speech at the July 1906 convention to call Joseph Devlin an 'imposter' and 'malcontent' the president of division 22, Belfast, responded by seizing Flannery and threatening to throw him off the platform if he used those words again. Clearly, Devlin held considerable influence in Belfast Hibernian circles. Though a majority of the seventy delegates at this convention would declare in favour of Sinn Fein, only seven of the fourteen Belfast representatives were in favour of this policy. The remainder protested against the AOH being made a recruiting ground for Sinn Fein and abandoned the meeting.²²⁶ By September 1906, all of the registered division in Belfast, save for one, had gone over to the BOE.²²⁷

In truth, Flannery and Ferguson's enterprise was ill-fated from the start. Out of the AOH BOE's nearly two hundred divisions, only thirty-one had attended the January 1905 convention, with twenty-eight accepting the motion to separate.²²⁸ Even fighting from such a weak position, the Scotch Section claimed that the Board of Erin was a splinter group helmed by dissidents and malcontents. The absurdity of the situation was well expressed by the treasurer of division 10, Dumbarton in February 1905, when he asked if the minority could rule the majority. After the president answered in the affirmative, the recording secretary stated that there were many present who were in favour of the BOE

²²⁵*HJ*, Nov. 1908.

²²⁶CO904/118, Aug. 1906.

²²⁷CO904/118, Sept. 1906.

²²⁸*SC*, 3 June 1905. Foy has reckoned it difficult to calculate the numbers of dissenters, Bergin putting the figure at 20 divisions, the *Hibernian Journal*, 30. The *Sligo Champion* seems to clear the matter up, with 28 being a close approximate to the latter's claim. See, Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 58; Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, p. 46; *HJ*, May. 1909.

and called for a vote. When the president ruled the motion out of order, both the recording secretary and treasurer tendered their resignation and left the meeting.²²⁹ Many would return to the BOE fold after the society opted to become a registered one in January 1905. The stragglers were left with few options when in September the Board also decreed that any divisions which did not affiliate with the society within the quarter would not be recognised after that period. These reforms, in tandem with the granting of church toleration in 1904 saw the society rapidly expand. Nine new BOE divisions were established in April 1906 and a further eleven in July. The Scotch Section could only lag behind with just two new branches in April and one in July. The latter too, so the police reported, had ‘merely a nominal existence’.²³⁰ New divisions were susceptible to defection as well. In August 1905 John Nugent, the AOH BOE national secretary, received a letter from division 64, Newry, explaining that although their branch had been established in July by Mr. McNally, some of the members were dissatisfied and preferred amalgamation with the BOE.²³¹

In general, Devlin and the other members of the BOE acted as though they were above petty factionalism. Thus, even when the Scottish section parted ways and took up the mantle of the AOH Benefit Society, they continued to use the Hibernian title in newspapers as though nothing had changed. The Ancient Order moniker, however, - acquired through the act of registration in 1897 - was one of Flannery and Ferguson’s chief weapons in the struggle with the Board. To enforce their claim, they served a writ on the BOE’s trustees in September 1905, demanding an injunction to prevent their use of the title and suing for damages on account of their use of it up until that point. Previously the Board had tried to avoid a legal battle. They preferred to keep such disputes in-house, rather than drag the name of the society through ‘the mire of the courts’. A statement of defence was nevertheless filed on the 4 May 1906 - ‘the assumption of the name AOH by the Plaintiff Society is likely to mislead the public, and is an attempt by an off-shoot organisation to appropriate the position of the parent organisation’.²³² When it became clear that the case would be a protracted affair, the financial implications forced the Scotch Section to reconsider. After their proposal to settle costs outside of court was rejected, attempts at arbitration also broke down. The case was finally dismissed in

²²⁹*INBMN*, 23 Feb. 1905.

²³⁰CO904/ 118, July 1906

²³¹Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, p. 47.

²³²*Ibid.*, p. 57.

February 1907 and concessions awarded to the BOE. These could not be extracted however, attempts at liquidation revealing that the Scotch Section had ‘no goods’ and ‘nothing seizable’, their premises consisting ‘of a room at the top of a house’.²³³ Since it was bankrupt the Benefit Society had its registration cancelled in January 1908. The AOH BOE was now in a position to legally register a code of rules under their original title.²³⁴

By early 1908 then the Scotch Section posed little threat to Ulster Hibernianism. The society was bankrupt. Few if any divisions were being established and after the 1907 court case several branches contemplated dissolution.²³⁵ As numbers dwindled and with its registration cancelled, the society took on a different aspect, becoming ‘practically a secret society on the same level as the I.R.B. and having similar objects’.²³⁶ Not all hope was lost, however. During 1908, Seumas McManus was elected as president and the society saw a return in its fortunes.²³⁷ In May a Dublin Castle informant reported that leaders of the Clan na Gael leaders planned to visit Ireland during June to reorganise the IRB and Scottish section of the AOH.²³⁸ Come July, police reports also revealed that a move was afoot to re-register the society, more still, that several of the American AOH’s leadership caste intended on moving at an upcoming convention for affiliation with the Scottish section in Ireland.²³⁹ This was something the Scottish section had scarcely dreamed of.²⁴⁰ Efforts at affiliation on the part of the BOE had been frustrated time and again by what Nugent termed a Clan na Gael conspiracy. According to the national secretary, the Clan had brought about the 1884 split, encouraged the Scottish section and foiled BOE attempts at amalgamation; as at an American Order conference in Saratoga, in July 1905.²⁴¹

At a convention in Indianapolis during 1908, the American Order’s national president, Matthew Cummings was mandated ‘to unite all Hibernians in Ireland, England and Scotland, in one organisation preparing the way for affiliation federation between the

²³³Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, p. 62.

²³⁴Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, p.62.

²³⁵CO904/118, Sept. 1906.

²³⁶CO904/118, Dec. 1907.

²³⁷CO904/11, Oct. 1908. Thomas Flannery, the Scotch Section’s first president died after the 1906 convention. When his successor, a Derryman named John Gallagher retired in September 1908, McManus took over.

²³⁸CO904/118, May 1908.

²³⁹CO904/118, July 1908.

²⁴⁰Though the pretence of an affiliation had been used on occasion for recruitment purposes. See CO904/118, Sept. 1906.

²⁴¹CO904/118, May 1908; *Irish World*, 9 May 1908.

united organisation in Ireland and Great Britain and the Order in America'.²⁴² Thomas Foy has talked about how this development was received with anger by the BOE: 'here was the child coming over to sort out the affairs of the parent'.²⁴³ Equally salient was the Order's exasperation with repeated and failed negotiations: 'we will not again expose ourselves to insult by holding out the olive branch'.²⁴⁴ The BOE's primary concern, however, was how the American Order was being used 'by the advocates of an outside society'.²⁴⁵ Matthew Cummings was a case in point. The latter had been elected president in July 1906. Not five months later he could be found endorsing the Sinn Fein policy at an AOH meeting, attended by none other than Seumas McManus.²⁴⁶ Indeed, it was McManus, amongst others, who travelled with Cummings when he visited Ireland in April 1909.²⁴⁷ Aware of Cummings's visit, the Scotch Section spent the early part of the year preparing. Special levies were implemented to pay for a lavish reception and a flurry of new divisions established; all in a bid to offset perceptions of an ailing organisation.²⁴⁸

Ahead of his visit, Cummings wrote to John Ferguson and John Nugent, the respective national secretaries of the two Hibernian factions in Ireland.²⁴⁹ After several barbed written exchanges with Nugent, a date for a conference was set. On the 14 April, meantime, Cummings made a point of visiting Cardinal Logue, the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland. Whether Cummings believed, in his own words 'that the AOH in Ireland is not at present in harmony with the Church' seems to have been a moot point.²⁵⁰ Given that relations between the AOH of America and the church were so amicable, however, this was evidently a bid to press advantage ahead of the conference, perhaps even create a press controversy. When the conference got under way on April 21 at the Gresham Hotel, Dublin, Devlin and Nugent were accompanied on one side by the Rev. Father's Canon and McKinley, clearly demonstrating that the society was not without its clerical backers. On the other side, sat McManus, Ferguson and seven other delegates.²⁵¹ Overseeing proceedings was Matthew Cummings and the Rev. P.

²⁴²O'Dea, *History of the Ancient*, p.1409.

²⁴³Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 74.

²⁴⁴*HJ*, June 1908.

²⁴⁵*HJ*, July 1908.

²⁴⁶*Gaelic American*, 2 Dec. 1906.

²⁴⁷The American president's retinue also included the Reverend Philip O'Donnell, the state chaplain of Massachusetts, and General John McCarthy of the Hibernian Rifles.

²⁴⁸CO904/118, Jan. 1909; *Ibid.*, Feb. 1909; CO904/118, Mar. 1909.

²⁴⁹Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 74.

²⁵⁰*HJ*, June 1909.

²⁵¹CO904/118, May 1909. Including H. Dobbyn, R. Johnston, J. Johnston, J. Nugent, T.J. Lynch, M.J. O'Farrell, and M.J. Pender.

O'Donnell. Cummings began by stating the object and terms of the meeting, and wasted no time pronouncing judgment,

I have been deputed...to settle...the differences that exist between the two sections of the AOH in Ireland, and then have all under the control of the American Board. As far I can ascertain the only body who can style themselves Hibernians are those connected with...Mr Ferguson and his party. I may tell you Parliamentary agitation is no good for this country. Nothing...has been gained by it. I would suggest to you to unite and form one great body of Hibernians. Cut yourselves adrift from the UIL, and then you can make...a revolutionary party.²⁵²

The idea that there were two Hibernian organisations in Ireland – let alone Ulster - was anathema to the BOE. In March 1909, Nugent had wrote to Cummings saying ‘My Executive are not conscious of the existence of any other organised body calling themselves by the title of “Ancient Order of Hibernians” in this country’.²⁵³ No surprise then, that when it became clear that Cummings’s position relied on the existence of an alternative, radical Hibernianism, the AOH BOE should try to undermine it and assert their claim as the only genuine and real Order in Ireland. After Cummings had finished speaking Devlin demanded that the other faction should produce evidence to prove their status. When the Scotch Section failed to produce any books for inspection Devlin confessed his lack of surprise,

I thought as much. If you produced the books you would probably find yourself in an awkward position [and then addressing the chairman]...I think it is very impertinent on your part to come to Ireland...to instruct us in the manner in which we should conduct our affairs. I know now, and I always knew, that you were a paid agent of the Clan-na-Gael; and that you were sent here to cause disunion. You will fail in that object.²⁵⁴

Disorder followed Devlin’s statement and the conference had to be adjourned for an hour at this point. When Devlin returned, however, he continued his attack. While on an IPP fundraising trip in 1908 he recalled how he was followed by Cummings’s satellites, men who did everything in their power to render his mission a failure. After Cummings called Devlin a liar, more harsh words were exchanged, and violence was threatened.²⁵⁵ Only

²⁵²CO904/12, Apr. 1909.

²⁵³*HJ*, June 1909.

²⁵⁴CO904/12, Apr. 1909.

²⁵⁵Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, p. 75. Foy claims that Cummings called Devlin a ‘bottle-washer’ (an undoubted allusion to one of Devlin’s first jobs). Devlin replied by describing Cummings a ‘bum politician’. This is according to information Foy received from Willie Coyle and derived from Fr. Cannon.

through the entreaties of the Rev. P. O'Donnell was order restored. Nugent then detailed the history of the Board of Erin – producing books and documents in support of his case – while Cummings made notes. The conference eventually broke up without coming to any settlement.²⁵⁶

In the month after the conference, Cummings sought to deal another blow to the BOE cause by travelling to Belfast on a lecturing tour. While there he wrote to John Devoy, the leader of the Clan na Gael to apprise him of his plans: ‘We will recognise the old [Scottish] Board...and that will smash the Board of Erin. We have the Cardinal (Logue) and all the priests on our side and Devlin is desperate. The fact that we held a meeting at his own door in Belfast is a crushing blow’.²⁵⁷ On the 10 May Cummings released a statement in which he declared ‘there can be no connection between the society in Ireland known as the Board of Erin and the AOH in America until it can be proved to the American organisation that it is obedient to the authority of the Catholic Church and absolutely non-political as an organisation’.²⁵⁸ The Scottish section was then arranged to be federated with the American Order.²⁵⁹ This meant, unlike in the BOE case, that members of one society could be transferred to the other. Such an arrangement boosted the Scottish section’s membership ‘because young lads who hope someday to emigrate, will naturally join it with the object of having a kindred organisation to help them in America’.²⁶⁰ In homage to the new relationship, McManus’s Scotch Section also now became known as the AOH Irish American Alliance (IAA).

On the surface then, the visit of Cummings unilaterally benefited the newly named IAA. Developments after May 1910 were to cast a different light on things, however. Though the IAA had been publicly validated and their opposite number snubbed, Cummings had underestimated the durability of Devlin’s organisation. When the BOE held a conference of county officers on the 17 May, the attending delegates unanimously resolved ‘That, having heard the statements of the National Officers as to what took place at the abortive conference...we...heartily endorse the action of our representatives in withdrawing from said Conference’.²⁶¹ In July 1909 meanwhile, several branches of the American Order entered a protest against the mismanagement of the society in the States,

²⁵⁶CO904/12, Apr. 1909.

²⁵⁷Matthew Cummings to John Devoy, 6 May 1909, MS 18,011, NLI, John Devoy Papers.

²⁵⁸*HJ*, June 1909.

²⁵⁹*HJ*, June 1909.

²⁶⁰CO904/78, May 1909.

²⁶¹*HJ*, June 1909.

and by August, thirteen had severed all connection with the AOH in America and pledged allegiance to the BOE in Ireland.²⁶² Cummings, it turned out, had ‘by the grossest misrepresentation of his real purpose and intentions...obtained the authority of the Hibernians of America to come to Ireland as their National President’.²⁶³ In 1910 Cummings was replaced as the American Order’s national president by Mr. Regan.²⁶⁴ Worse still, although Seumas McManus was to claim that Regan was a nominee of the Clan-na-Gael, in October 1910 he was seen opening a Hibernian hall in Chicago, accompanied by Devlin.²⁶⁵ Advanced nationalists may have controlled the American Hibernian organisation but they had singularly failed to compromise or convert the Ulster organisation. A transatlantic alliance was clearly not on the cards, but amicable relations could still be had.

A national body but not the National Organisation

On the 14-15 of July 1905 a convention of the AOH BOE was held in Dublin. There an entirely new constitution and a general code of rules was drawn up. Among the significant changes at this event was the election of Joseph Devlin along with a number of other Irish party and United Irish League men to leadership positions within the AOH. The two-day meeting terminated with a noteworthy resolution, proposed and passed by division 21, Belfast:

This convention heartily approves of the great national work done in the interest of Ireland by the pledge-bound Irish parliamentary party and recognising that the overwhelming vote of our countrymen has declared in favour of the UIL as the national organisation this convention requests the national officers to see that no division of the AOH will adopt or support any candidate for any representative position in opposition to the candidates duly selected by the UIL in the spirit of its constitution.²⁶⁶

²⁶²*HJ*, July 1909. Including divisions 270, New York, 626 and 632, Brooklyn, 634, 394, 73, Providence, Rhode Island, and 129, Pittsburg. *HJ*, July 1909.

²⁶³*Ibid.*, Nov. 1909.

²⁶⁴Some claimed that a change in Cummings’s policy was responsible, others that he had made a secret deal with Devlin’s followers. CO904/12, Sept. 1910; CO904/12, Oct. 1910.

²⁶⁵CO904/12, Sept. 1910; CO904/12, Oct. 1910.

²⁶⁶*Irish News* (Hereafter *IN*), 22 July 1905. Resolutions were also passed in favour of Gaelic games, a Gaelic Catholic university and against emigration. Significantly, as though presaging AOH-UIL conflict, the resolution in favour of ‘falling into line with the UIL’ was ‘not [passed] without opposition’. CO904/11, July 1905.

From 1905 onwards, the Order was weaved ever more into the fabric of constitutional nationalism. Though members of the IRB and Sinn Fein had succeeded, through the mediums of infiltration and factionalism, in forestalling a transatlantic Hibernian alliance, as between the AOH of America, and the organisation in Great Britain and Ireland, they could not halt the process of political integration begun in earnest by Devlin in 1905. That said, the AOH's evident talent for grassroots mobilisation coupled with its rampant expansionism inspired no small amount of perturbation in majority and minority nationalist circles from about 1907 onwards. Foremost amongst those vocalising their disquiet, was William O'Brien.

When the IPP was reunified in 1900, the dominance of the United Irish League saw O'Brien become the most influential figure within the nationalist movement. Initially he hoped to speed up the process of land purchase by tenant farmers and pressure the government to implement compulsory purchase to buy out the landlords. One unintended effect of this was an initiative by moderate landlords for a conference between the two groups. The success of this event, and subsequent legislation - the Wyndham Land Act of 1903 – brought about a radical change in O'Brien's politics. His new policy, encapsulated in the phrase 'Conference, Conciliation, Consent', hoped to bridge many of Ireland's religious and ethnic divisions, remove the 'sharp polarisation' between the landlord and tenant classes, and so broaden the basis of nationalism. Unfortunately, such an approach could not overcome 'the political and cultural habits of a lifetime' or displace the traditional perception of the 'hereditary enemy'. John Dillon, Michael Davitt, and Thomas Sexton soon became figureheads in a campaign against the new policy. When John Redmond, the IPP's new leader singularly failed to discipline the dissenters in November 1903, O'Brien resigned from the movement. His attempt to jolt the party and popular opinion behind him was to spectacularly backfire, however. O'Brien's opponents seized control of the movement and he was excluded thereafter.²⁶⁷

Though now 'A Voice in the Wilderness' O'Brien did not go quietly, the bitterness and betrayal he felt turning him into the principal critic of the Irish Parliamentary Party from 1903 onwards.²⁶⁸ Increasingly dismayed at the Party's 'refusal to reciprocate the co-operative attitude of more moderate members of the landlord class' he predicted a

²⁶⁷Phillip Bull, 'O'Brien, William (1852-1928)' in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/abstract/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-35281>) (4 Sept. 2018).

²⁶⁸Warwick-Halle, *William O'Brien*, p. 252.

resurgence of revolutionary nationalism and warned against the sectarian element in nationalist action.²⁶⁹ The exclusively Catholic AOH was an obvious quarry, as also the Order's national president. Indeed, the two men hated each other. Devlin 'with his horror of division and dissension regarded O'Brien as a wrecker and was less than overjoyed at his return to the party fold in 1907'.²⁷⁰ O'Brien meanwhile, was jealous and had his wounded pride to consider. Devlin's working-class origins and easy-going manner enabled him to usurp the Cork MP both as head of the UIL and as the popular hero of the Nationalist movement. At the root of it all, however, was an ideological contest, for while O'Brien sought to soothe and quash Protestant fears, he maintained that Devlin ran an organisation which was exacerbating them.²⁷¹ This was an allegation the AOH was at pains to deny, especially in the pages of the *Hibernian Journal*.

The Order's press organ had been launched during the same year that O'Brien had returned to party politics. The Cork MPs scathing attacks in his own platform, *The Irish People*, were regularly documented in the *Journal*. According to the paper's editor, Jas. J. Bergin, O'Brien had caught 'the dangerous disease of Conciliation, or as it is more generally known, Devolution', and sought, in conjunction with the Dunravens, Ashtowns, and Mayos, – landlords all – to establish a Centre Party in Ireland 'in the hope of weakening the influence of the Irish Party, and creat[ing] disunion in the country'.²⁷² This the AOH could not abide, for many of their members still recollected the 'tyranny of the landlord and ascendancy party'.²⁷³ O'Brien was an avowed conundrum. While the members could well hold his past services to the Irish movement in the 'highest veneration', they could not permit him 'or any other man, no matter how eminent, to play into the hands of the garrison in Ireland, and compromise the Irish people for some scanty measure of devolution'.²⁷⁴ As one article put it in June 1908 'Mr. William O'Brien's campaign, It must be Ended'.²⁷⁵

²⁶⁹Phillip Bull, 'O'Brien, William (1852-1928)' in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/abstract/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-35281>) (4 Sept. 2018).

²⁷⁰In 1907 Devlin wrote to Dillon, 'now that he [O'Brien] cannot smash up the movement and destroy the unity of the country from without [he tries to] patch things up and have a change of tactics'. Joseph Devlin to John Dillon, 16 Oct. 1907, MS 6729, TCD, John Dillon Papers.

²⁷¹Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 103.

²⁷²*HJ*, June 1908.

²⁷³*Ibid.*, Feb. 1909.

²⁷⁴*HJ*, Jan. 1908.

²⁷⁵*Ibid.*, June 1908.

Outside the *Journal*, many branches of the AOH passed resolutions expressing their indignation at the politician's 'uncalled for attacks'.²⁷⁶ Cries for party disciplinary action went ignored, however, so that a feeling of apathy began to creep into the equation.²⁷⁷ As the *Journal* remarked in August 1908,

[In] the current number of the Irish People... There are upwards of six columns of filthy abuse served up for consumption. Interested as we are in anything that concerns our organisation, we could not at the same time, find either patience or leisure to follow Mr. O'Brien's scribe in his wholesale attack... We had to be satisfied with merely glancing over his print, and endeavouring to ascertain in what way we came under the displeasure of Ireland's Deliverer upon this occasion.²⁷⁸

Such indifference was perhaps par for the course, simply tactical, but there is evidence to suggest that the AOH would have left O'Brien and his 'peculiar policy' well alone but for the 'special interest' he took in 'attacking' the 'organisation' and its 'principal officers'.²⁷⁹ Indeed it was more than just his sectarian characterisation of the society that got the rank and file's back up.²⁸⁰ What worried O'Brien most was the development of Hibernian influence, in particular, the idea that the AOH was exercising a 'hellish tyranny' over the National movement and its constituent parts.²⁸¹ As the Order expanded in numbers and importance, so the claims and evidence against it also increased. Further complicating matters was the gap between leadership goals and implementation at the grassroots level, the struggle between centre and local interest groups.

For gauging the AOH leadership's ideology and intent, the *Hibernian Journal* remains essential reading. From the outset the paper claimed that the Order was a national body, a part of the National Organisation or movement yes, but not its leader. That role instead fell to the United Irish League, having been designated as such at a national convention in December 1901. Until a further convention marked out some other body as the 'National Organisation', Devlin's AOH promised to assist, but at all events could not

²⁷⁶*HJ*, July 1908; *HJ*, Aug. 1908.

²⁷⁷In January 1908 the *Journal* enquired whether there would be any 'further coquetting' of 'Mr. O'Brien' and in June concluded 'If discipline is to be maintained, this sort of conduct should not be tolerated... We can quite appreciate the position of some of the leaders of the IP and the natural hesitancy on their part to hold Mr. O'Brien responsible for his conduct, but, after all, a fool is sometimes more dangerous to progress than a traitor'. *HJ*, Jan. 1908; *HJ*, June 1908.

²⁷⁸*HJ*, Aug. 1908.

²⁷⁹*HJ*, Jan. 1908.

²⁸⁰Claims were also made as to the secretive nature of the Order by both O'Brien and especially members of the clergy. These are dealt with in chapter 2.

²⁸¹*HJ*, Dec. 1909.

frustrate the work of the UIL.²⁸² The leadership was quick to quash any other notion: ‘no responsible officer of the organisation would be mad enough to suggest that any exclusive organisation, such as ours, could ever be created into the National Organisation of the country’.²⁸³ And anyway, according to Devlin, it was and had always been their policy to loyally back any National movement which commanded the support of the majority of the Irish people.²⁸⁴ The *Journal* never tired of printing compelling reasons to support the National Organisation’s masthead, the Irish Parliamentary Party. An article in the July 1908 number recounted the many Acts which the IPP had secured for the Irish people from their inception up until the present.²⁸⁵ The organisation’s leadership, notwithstanding, insisted that the AOH held ‘no brief’ for the Irish Party and more still, was no ‘Mere Tail’ to the UIL. They, speaking on behalf of the AOH in general, controlled and desired to control nothing ‘but their organisation’ and in that regard ‘decline[d] to accept dictation’.²⁸⁶ As John Nugent put it in September 1907 ‘we [are] a separate and distinct National body’.²⁸⁷ Policy, the national secretary contended, was a matter for the country itself to decide: ‘All we ask for is a voice like other organisations in defending [it]’.²⁸⁸

At the heart of Devlin’s position was ‘Faith and Fatherland’, an oft-used mantra that represented a simultaneous duality and priority of goals. This was well expressed by the Mayor of Dublin when he welcomed the membership to a convention at Mansion House in 1907: ‘It was an organisation, in the first place Catholic and next, thoroughly National’.²⁸⁹ Asked to define the difference between the UIL and the AOH the *Hibernian Journal* replied ‘One is a purely National Organisation, pledged to the attainment of legislative independence for Ireland, while the other, in addition to this object, strives for the betterment of the Catholic population of the country’.²⁹⁰ The reason for their focus, indeed, the very necessity for the organisation, so the Hibernian leadership claimed, went back to their early beginnings: ‘Numerous instances will be found in history of the part played by our predecessors in the struggle for the acknowledgement of Catholic rights,

²⁸²Ibid., Sept. 1907.

²⁸³*HJ*, Mar. 1911.

²⁸⁴Ibid., Sept. 1910. See also, *HJ*, Aug. 1908.

²⁸⁵*HJ*, July 1908.

²⁸⁶Ibid., Jan. 1911.

²⁸⁷*HJ*, Sept. 1907.

²⁸⁸Ibid., Jan. 1909.

²⁸⁹*HJ*, Aug. 1907.

²⁹⁰Ibid., Oct. 1910.

and in the endeavour to free our country from foreign control'.²⁹¹ As the *Hibernian Journal* noted in July 1907, 'It would be strange indeed, if...claiming as we do to be...the very parent of all existing Irish movements...we could not take a leading place in the fight for the regeneration of our country'. Indeed, that purpose, as with the Hibernians' own, remained unfulfilled: 'We suffer still from political, religious and social disabilities...The public are the best judges of the tools they require to remove those disabilities'. If, however, the *Journal* reasoned 'we are able to show the majority of our countrymen that the policy we pursue is the best calculated to give them political and religious freedom, then we can rely upon the support of the country generally'.²⁹²

This idea, that 'The interests of Ireland and the interests of Hibernianism [were] identical' was another AOH tentpole, providing a useful motive force, not to mention a convenient recruiting tool. According to Nugent 'Both demand that we should not pause, but, on the contrary, increase our exertions to make Hibernianism a more potent force than it is today'.²⁹³ Further bolstering Hibernian growth was the argument for mutual benefit, as Devlin pointed out at a demonstration in Dundalk in July 1909 'Wherever the AOH is strong, there the National Organisation is also strong, and not only strong, but well organised and disciplined'.²⁹⁴ With Devlin at the helm, the AOH very much cast itself in the role of consolidator. Two words, symptomatic of this doctrine, cropped up time and time again in the pages of the *Hibernian Journal*: cooperation and forbearance. At the crux of these two policies was the notion that the movement in Ireland, as lead by Redmond, was not a political but a national one. Such a claim strengthened the parliamentary position, denied recognition to any competitors and had ample justification besides. As Fitzpatrick has noted 'Whereas most MPs of other parties [at Westminster] represented only the strongest of several electoral factions in their constituencies, most Irish members could fairly claim to represent almost their whole electorate'.²⁹⁵ Moreover, in the last general election before the First World War, Home Rulers were elected in every predominantly Catholic constituency in Ireland.²⁹⁶ At other times the political aspect of the national movement could not be emphasised enough. As

²⁹¹*HJ*, Mar. 1908.

²⁹²*Ibid.*, July 1907.

²⁹³*HJ*, Aug. 1907.

²⁹⁴*HJ*, Aug. 1909.

²⁹⁵Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 72.

²⁹⁶Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 72.

Devlin remarked in 1909, ‘It was politics that enslaved us; it is politics that must set us free’.²⁹⁷

Whether a national or political movement or both, unity was, regardless, a Devlinite and so AOH imperative. In June 1907, Nugent directed that ‘every effort should be made, both in private and public, to show that desire, and...every opportunity [embraced] to impress upon those we come in contact with...that our aim is the consolidation, not the disintegration of unity’.²⁹⁸ One practical effort in this vein was cooperation with other Catholic and national bodies, but especially the UIL. According to the *Hibernian Journal*, members were left free to join whichever particular organisation they wished, with just a few caveats.²⁹⁹ At the base level, such organisations had to have the correct objects. Bodies seeking to advance Catholic and national unity were of course a firm favourite, so too those seeking to elevate the position of the Irish people; but really, any society contributing to the progress of the country was considered fair game.³⁰⁰ For those that disagreed with the parliamentary approach meanwhile, forbearance was the recommended tact,

It is true that different sections of Nationalists advocate different methods to restore [our country’s freedom] but no possible objection can be urged to the candidature of any Catholic Nationalist to our ranks, if he is prepared while holding to his individual political views, to aid us in our endeavour to promote a spirit of Catholic and National unity on proper lines.³⁰¹

In fact, according to the *Hibernian Journal*, there were many such individuals within the Order; men who were ‘prepared to sink personal feeling and stand upon the same platform on the broad issue of Ireland’s Freedom’.³⁰² Extrapolation was only logical: ‘Why not let Nationalists at large have the same toleration for each other, and work together for the benefit of Ireland’. The *Hibernian Journal* implored the rank and file not to ‘condemn all and sundry’ who did not see eye to eye with them.³⁰³ Nugent too asserted ‘We will ever protest against the disastrous consequences of setting one Nationalist against another, or one National organisation against a similar body’.³⁰⁴ Under Devlin

²⁹⁷*HJ*, Aug. 1909.

²⁹⁸*Ibid.*, June 1907.

²⁹⁹*HJ*, Sept. 1907.

³⁰⁰*Ibid.*, Dec. 1907; *HJ*, Mar. 1908.

³⁰¹*HJ*, Mar. 1908.

³⁰²*Ibid.*, Apr. 1907.

³⁰³*HJ*, Aug. 1907.

³⁰⁴*Ibid.*, Sept. 1907.

then the Hibernians hoped not only for unity but to prove their democratic credentials: ‘General forbearance with each other’s views...will demonstrate our fitness to control the destinies of our own nation’.³⁰⁵ In practice however, even forbearance had its limits. At all times ‘for their own material interest’ so Nugent maintained, ‘the minority should acquiesce...in the decision of the majority’.³⁰⁶ The Hibernian leadership was also not prepared to tolerate anyone within their ranks who debased the status of the National movement, whether ‘by joining the garrison element in their ebullitions of loyalty to the foreign throne [or partaking in] loyal addresses or other forms of flunkeyism’.³⁰⁷

The AOH leadership’s ideological position having been clarified so extensively, it should come as no surprise that some of it did find purchase. At the grassroots level, however, more than Hibernian planks had to be traversed. Here, David Fitzpatrick’s description of Ireland’s early twentieth century political situation is salient,

[The country] was virtually a one-party nation by 1914. Yet this triumphant party existed only at Westminster! It had no provincial branches, no rank-and-file party members, no formal party hierarchy through which the aspirant politician could chart his course to local or national political office. Instead he was obliged to grope his way through a maze of disparate, competitive pressure groups, all professing loyalty to the party yet in no way bound to it by any formal organisational links.³⁰⁸

As already mentioned, the AOH, along with many other parliamentary contemporaries, referred to the UIL as the ‘National Organisation’. Because there was no government for the masses in Ireland the *Hibernian Journal* illuminated, ‘[this apparatus] is the only means the people have of expressing their will’.³⁰⁹ Alongside the National Organisation and giving vitality to Ireland’s common denominator, the village communities, were the many societies. The partisan nature of many was evident in their appellation – the town tenants’ association for instance – but as Fitzpatrick has noted, the two most widespread and influential – the UIL and AOH - distinguished themselves by their bland names: ‘Both organisations had subtly changed their sectional character [becoming by 1913] like the IPP itself, amorphous, eclectic bodies admirably constituted to follow the torturous paths of consensus politics’.³¹⁰ If adopting a generic title enabled the AOH to cement its

³⁰⁵*HJ*, Apr. 1907.

³⁰⁶*Ibid.*, Aug. 1907.

³⁰⁷*HJ*, Sept. 1907.

³⁰⁸Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 72.

³⁰⁹*HJ*, Sept. 1907.

³¹⁰Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 80.

position as both a support and an extension of the UIL, however, it did not allow it to escape the fate of virtually all parochial societies. Away from national aspirations and ideals, subservience to small-town groupings and cliques with almost exclusively local political preoccupations was a way of life. ‘Parish pump’ issues were many - including jobs, property, feuds, contracts, railway schemes, newspaper wars, the rates – and in most instances ‘counted for more than heroic principles and dramatic brilliance’.³¹¹

Membership across multiple nationalist bodies was typical. As at the top with Devlin and the leadership, many rank and file members of the UIL also became Hibernians. The AOH, it should be said, was not without its wares, exuding a political appeal that saw it rival and, in many places, come to surpass the United Irish League. Endorsement or membership of the organisation, lectures or attendance at Hibernian demonstrations and meetings, all were acceptable forms of payment. In return, would-be office-holders received a variety of electoral support. Members of the Order often ran candidates’ election campaigns, Hibernian halls were lent out for political meetings or as centres for the distribution of literature while whole divisions ‘provide[d] an army of workers to canvass, serve at polling stations and check the electoral rolls’.³¹² Local politicians, ‘drawing upon their cardinal affiliations with clan and neighbourhood...built up their own village empires in mutual competition, and periodically waged vigorous colonial wars’.³¹³ Mr. Jasper Tully established the AOH in Boyle, Roscommon during 1905 as a counter power base after being expelled from the UIL in 1903. Because of Jasper’s connection, the police noted ‘Several persons will abstain from joining it’.³¹⁴ Party loyalists in the town were, as a result, forced to break the traditional rule of one AOH division per parish and set up their own rival ‘Curlieu Pass’ branch.³¹⁵ Another example was Owen Kiernan of Glasgow. After Kiernan was recorded encouraging the establishment of AOH branches in Fermanagh at a quarterly Board of Erin meeting in Amerston, Glasgow in August 1906, Monaghan’s police inspector deduced, ‘His object seems to be to strengthen his own position in view of a probable parliamentary vacancy in Fermanagh in the near future’.³¹⁶ Elsewhere, in Cavan (April 1905) and Tyrone

³¹¹Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 37. See also K. Theodore Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland 1832-1885*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), pp viii-ix.

³¹²Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, p. 77.

³¹³Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 84.

³¹⁴CO904/118, Apr. 1905.

³¹⁵Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 50. See CO 904/117, Apr. 1905; *Roscommon Herald* (Hereafter *RH*), 17 Jan. 1914.

³¹⁶CO904/118, Sept. 1906.

(February 1910) the AOH and UIL were embroiled in electoral battles, either side backing a different candidate than the other.³¹⁷

The Order and elections

After 1891 there was a gradual reversion to localist politics. When a parliamentary vacancy occurred, a convention was summoned; each delegate in attendance entitled to a vote. With his downfall, Parnell's concept of a 'self-perpetuating, virtually autonomous parliamentary army nominated by sham conventions [and] manipulated by headquarters bosses [was] thoroughly discredited'.³¹⁸ In order to overcome disunity and reignite enthusiasm, the party was forced to turn over the selection of parliamentary candidates to locally convened conventions, contingent on the presence of a provincial officer of the UIL who would remain silent unless spoken to.³¹⁹

'Close personal relationships, face-to-face negotiations, a reciprocity of favours, obligations and expectations', all were now very much back in vogue.³²⁰ Naturally this state of affairs did not sit well with the Irish Party leadership. Both John Dillon and Joseph Devlin very much advocated 'discipline, concentration of authority, iron control over the party and as far as possible over the constituencies'.³²¹ Redmond too chafed under the new system, preferring the Parnellite alternative of centralised candidate selection. The problem was, as the *Hibernian Journal* diagnosed in June 1910, that 'A man may be able by purely loyal and personal influence to get a majority vote at such a Convention, and yet by no means be the most desirable candidate'.³²² The precariousness of the IPP's position and the need for tactfulness was amply demonstrated at North Donegal in 1905. After the local MP William O'Doherty died in May of that year, Devlin wrote to Redmond emphasising the necessity for someone to be sent to Donegal immediately, in order to prevent 'any undesirable local men being pressed on the constituency'.³²³ When it was later discovered that the people there favoured a local candidate, Devlin recommended that the candidature of John Muldoon - the party preference - not be

³¹⁷CO904/118, Apr. 1905; CO904/80, Feb. 1910.

³¹⁸Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp 93-100.

³¹⁹Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp 93-100.

³²⁰K. Theodore Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800: conflict and conformity* (Harlow, 1999), p. 219

³²¹F.S.L. Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party, 1890-1910* (London, 1951), pp 43-4.

³²²*HJ*, June 1910.

³²³Joseph Devlin to John Redmond, 3 June 1905, MS 15,181/1, NLI, John Redmond Papers.

pushed; his name only to be suggested if the convention appealed to the observing UIL representative. Although Muldoon won in June 1905, he was not returned the following year.³²⁴

James McConnel has aptly described how ‘Redmond’s dissatisfaction with the [candidate selection process] lead him to observe the letter of law in public while subverting its spirit in private’. ‘His attempts’, however, ‘to secure the election of [preferred men]...lead to a succession of confrontations that damaged the IPP in the decades before the Great War’.³²⁵ The most notorious of these occurred at North Monaghan in 1907. At the time the Nationalists had an overall majority, the strongest unionist representation residing in the north of the county. During the 1895 election, Daniel McAleese, proprietor of the *People’s Advocate*, beat the unionist candidate Frederick Rutherford for the North Monaghan seat. When McAleese withdrew in 1900, he was replaced by Dr. Edward Thompson, a Tyrone surgeon.³²⁶ Thompson was an outsider, however, and his relationship with the electors lacking. During 1906 therefore, the nationalists in North Monaghan switched their support to the Monaghan-born Patrick O’Hare, a successful Glasgow businessman and magistrate who was also a long-standing member of the AOH. With the support of both the AOH and the UIL, O’Hare was returned unopposed in January 1906. He was soon forced to withdraw because of illness.³²⁷ With another by-election looming and by now dissatisfied with outsiders like Thompson and O’Hare, the nationalists of North Monaghan found their new candidate in James C. Lardner. As a locally educated solicitor and Monaghan native he had the support of most of the UIL and the local clergy. The party leadership had different ideas, however, and John T. Donovan, a Hibernian and prominent solicitor from Belfast was put forward by Devlin for nomination.³²⁸

When the convention was held in June 1907, Donovan narrowly won at 161 votes to Lardner’s 138. Significantly, almost all of Donovan’s votes came from the AOH while Lardner received the lion’s share of clerical votes at 27. Accusations of vote-rigging on the part of the Order were not long forthcoming. The unionist paper the *Northern Standard* reported how ‘Leaguers and Hibernians [were] in opposition’ and pointed out

³²⁴McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party*, p. 56.

³²⁵McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party*, p. 53.

³²⁶McPhillips, ‘The Ancient Order’, p. 67.

³²⁷*People’s Advocate* (Hereafter *PA*) 6 Jan. 1906; *PA*, 20 Jan. 1906; *Anglo-Celt*, 11 May 1907.

³²⁸Peadar Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story: a documentary history of the county Monaghan from the earliest times to 1976* (Enniskillen, 1980), p. 363; *Monaghan People* (Hereafter *MP*), 20 June 1907; *MP*, 1 June 1907.

the questionable origin of ‘The Hibernians[’] new born branches’.³²⁹ This last could only be a reference to the work of AOH members like John Nolan from Aghabog and others from Tyholland in creating ‘bogus’ or ‘paper’ divisions of the Order in support of Donovan’s nomination. Seamus McPhillips informs ‘[They] were called after the townlands of Drollagh and Tattinclave in Aghabog and Greenan’s Cross from the neighbouring parish of Killevan. There are no records of these divisions existing before June 1907 and no record of their activities after the election was over’.³³⁰ Up until then John Redmond had kept his distance from the contest. Bishop Owens of Clogher soon made it clear, however, ‘that no candidate but Mr. Lardner would be acceptable’, and with rumours of a unionist candidate entering the race, even of the former MP Dr. Thompson threatening to re-contest the seat, the party leader was forced to intervene.³³¹ When Donovan retired in late June 1907 on Redmond’s advice, Lardner was returned unopposed.³³² It later transpired that Donovan might have been the victim of clerical retaliation. Fr. Keown, P.P., the convention chairman had decried the Belfast man for his role in an ‘unholy campaign for years past in his native city’.³³³ As one of his lieutenants, Donovan had helped Devlin defeat Bishop Henry’s Catholic Association in 1905.

Events at North Monaghan were to have far-reaching consequences. While A.C. Hepburn is undoubtedly correct in his assertion that ‘what was defeated in that county was less the AOH itself than the authority of the party leadership and the League central office’, such a conclusion overlooks how the exposure and defeat of the AOH machine informed that body’s relations with, and the actions of the UIL elsewhere.³³⁴ At a meeting of the Cavan Executive of the UIL at Coolshill in April 1908, for example, a resolution was carried that AOH divisions would receive no representation by delegates at parliamentary conventions without the consent in writing of the parish priest.³³⁵ The mover of the resolution, a Mr. Leavy, declared that ‘at the time of the conventions, branches of other societies sprang up like blackberries, and very often were composed of birdcatchers and idlers’.³³⁶ Later Leavy published a letter in the *Anglo Celt*, describing

³²⁹*Northern Standard* (Hereafter *NST*), 15 June 1907.

³³⁰*MP*, 14 June 1907.

³³¹*Dundalk Democrat* (Hereafter *DD*), 15 June 1907; *NST*, 15 June 1907.

³³²*WFJ*, 22 June 1907; *NST*, 22 June 1907.

³³³*MP*, 29 June 1907.

³³⁴Hepburn, ‘The Ancient Order’, pp 5-18.

³³⁵CO904/118, Nov. 1908.

³³⁶*HJ*, June 1908. A surge of Hibernian branches could also be expected in those places where, although there was an AOH-UIL consensus as to the correct candidate, a contest was nevertheless expected on account of Unionist and other Nationalist challengers. CO904/79, Dec. 1909.

how the AOH was ‘looked upon by all patriotic Irishmen with suspicion and distrust, and form[ed] a happy hunting ground for the spy and Castle hack’.³³⁷ As the police perhaps more accurately asserted, however, the resolution had more to do with the fear that ‘the AOH was growing too strong and would eventually out vote the UIL at conventions if allowed full representation’. Because many of the clergy, as in North Monaghan, were opposed to the organisation, the Leaguers hoped that this ‘stricture’ would sufficiently reduce their strength.³³⁸ Attempts to rescind Leavy’s resolution in November 1908 were thwarted while a proposal that only branches of the UIL should have representation at conventions was also marginally defeated, at 50 votes to 45 in May of the following year.³³⁹

Also contributing to Hibernianism’s electoral notoriety was Joseph Devlin’s capture and virtual turning of West Belfast into his own little kingdom, from 1906-18.³⁴⁰ The AOH national president’s triumph over the Unionist John Reid Smiley in 1906 - he won by a margin of sixteen votes - marked the return of a constituency which had been out of the parliamentary party’s hands for fourteen years.³⁴¹ It was perhaps inevitable, as the leading nationalist in Ulster during the period 1902-18, that Devlin’s speciality should be in organising and mobilising the Catholic vote. Contemporaries noted how his repeated victories were the result of machine politics in the Tammany Hall mould, through his formidable electoral machine, the AOH.³⁴² By 1909, however, a watershed was looming. With the AOH now not only threatening UIL control but more importantly nationalist hegemony at parliamentary elections, the decision was taken in July to revise the League constitution so as to ensure that UIL delegates would always be in a majority at conventions.³⁴³ Far from being a reversal, however, this development was simply proof that the organisation ‘had successfully permeated the official movement in the northern

³³⁷*HJ*, July 1908.

³³⁸CO904/118, Nov. 1908.

³³⁹CO904/118, Nov. 1908; CO904/118, May. 1909.

³⁴⁰Although the constituency was abolished in 1918, Devlin continued as MP for the Belfast Falls division from then until 1922.

³⁴¹Devlin’s triumph was ‘achieved by means of a vote-splitting Liberal Unionist and tactical voting by Independent Orangemen and Labour in return for nationalist support for Sloan [the radical Independent Orange leader] and [William Walker] the Labour candidate’. Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 209.

³⁴²Eamon Phoenix, ‘Northern Nationalists, Ulster Unionists and the Development of Partition, 1900-21’ in Peter Collins (ed) *Nationalism and Unionism: Conflict in Ireland, 1885-1921* (Belfast, 1996), pp 109-10.

³⁴³The principle change was that each branch of the UIL would now send forward 6 delegates, while branches of the AOH, Land and Labour Associations, and similar bodies were only allowed 3 instead of an equal number as formerly. CO904/78, June. 1909. For the full revised rules, see *WFJ*, 10 July 1909.

counties'.³⁴⁴ In September 1905, Dublin Castle's Inspector General noted how the AOH had been 'practically captured by the UIL'.³⁴⁵ Four years later another verdict was arrived at: 'These societies are not opposed to one another. They seem to differ merely in name'.³⁴⁶

By 1910, Hibernians were on the UIL standing committee and National Directory as well, as a significant part of national conventions. At these events - made up of delegates from all national bodies - party policy was determined, and motions were considered. According to the *Hibernian Journal*, AOH attendance at a convention in 1910 was 129, that of the UIL 475.³⁴⁷ Dual membership was common and encouraged by this point. In September and December 1909 for instance, at meetings of the UIL North Roscommon Executive and AOH Monaghan county board respectively, it was resolved that members of the AOH should take out cards of membership with the UIL.³⁴⁸ Some branches of the Order too would only admit League members.³⁴⁹ The UIL was also known to oversee and encourage the establishment of Hibernian branches.³⁵⁰ In return Hibernian county boards passed resolutions vowing to support UIL candidates at parliamentary elections.³⁵¹ Further evidence of the Hibernian-League merger came in the form of meetings. These were often held one after the other so that attendees could go straight to a meeting of the other society. This did not entail much travel since Hibernian meetings usually occurred at the local UIL hall and vice versa. Both societies also appeared together and shared in the organisation of demonstrations. Even when the League marched alone its branches were typically preceded by Hibernian bands.³⁵²

³⁴⁴Hepburn, 'The Ancient Order', pp 5-18.

³⁴⁵CO904/11, Sept. 1905.

³⁴⁶CO904/79, Sept. 1909.

³⁴⁷We cannot completely trust nor discount the veracity of these figures given their inclusion in a *Journal* article which looks at AOH influence in politics and makes a point of debunking the claims of William O'Brien. Thomas Foy too has alleged that while Hibernian attendance was no more than a dozen strong at their first convention in April 1903, this figure had grown to 417 by the time of another meeting in February 1909; a not insignificant muster, given that the total number of delegates tended to range between 2,500 and 3,000. The *Journal* by comparison specifies an attendance of just over 1000 for the 1910 convention. Unfortunately, Foy has provided no evidence for these figures. See Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 78

³⁴⁸CO904/118, Sept. 1909; CO904/118, Dec. 1909.

³⁴⁹One example was the Shercock division, in County Cavan. In tandem with the earlier picture of Hibernian-League hostility however, the *Hibernian Journal* claimed that some Hibernians were viewed with suspicion and actually refused admission by certain branches of the UIL, albeit, 'in some isolated districts'. *DD*, 24 Nov. 1905; *HJ*, Sept. 1907.

³⁵⁰CO904/78, July 1909.

³⁵¹CO904/118, Dec. 1909. The two organisations could be found working together in support of Nationalist candidates too, as in the case of Mr. Shane Leslie of Derry in December 1909. CO904/79, Dec. 1909.

³⁵²See chapter three for a discussion of the Order's social aspects, including demonstrations and parades.

With the passage of time the AOH also became increasingly involved in traditional League matters, including agrarianism and finance. During 1909, the county inspectors for Longford and Roscommon respectively noted Hibernian support for and involvement in ‘the anti-grazing agitation’.³⁵³ In Donegal and Louth meanwhile, the two bodies could be seen raising and collecting ‘considerable sums of money’ for the IPP throughout 1910.³⁵⁴ As with its encroachment in parliamentary elections, Hibernian involvement necessitated a period of adjustment, however. Thus, following the IPP’s acceptance of a contribution from the Newry AOH, the UIL there passed a resolution in May 1908 to make no collection for the parliamentary fund for 12 months.³⁵⁵ To make matters worse the *Hibernian Journal*, while elucidating on the AOH arrangement with the UIL so extensively during the early period, could also be critical of that body. Even after the debacle of North Monaghan the Order was making recommendations as to how the parliamentary convention system could be improved.³⁵⁶ The UIL organisation in England was also found lacking. Executive supervision was termed ‘totally inadequate’; in over 60 constituencies there was ‘scarcely a score of branches’.³⁵⁷ Ultimately, however, select instances of Hibernian-League acrimony were not representative of the whole. In the north most of the UIL came to accept and actually cooperate with its new partner. Thus, in 1909 Dublin Castle could report on ‘[an] alliance’, ‘friendly relations’ and ‘harmony’ between the two societies, in Leitrim, Tyrone and even Roscommon.³⁵⁸

Outside Ulster and Ireland, in England and Scotland, Hibernian political power, as with the IPP’s electoral representation, was ostensibly negligible. Although the Irish population in Great Britain was large, it was unevenly distributed, the majority resident in urban areas. Most of the northern industrial centres, including Glasgow, had large concentrations of Irish to be sure, but this did not naturally make for a strong Irish voting capacity. In London for example, which boasted the greatest amount, at 350,000 or 10 per cent of the population, the Irish counted for more than 10 per cent of the electorate in just 5 of the city’s 58 constituencies. Only in the constituency of Liverpool Scotland ‘were

³⁵³CO904/77, Mar. 1909; CO904/88, Nov. 1912.

³⁵⁴CO904/80, Mar. 1910; CO904/81, May 1910.

³⁵⁵CO904/118, May 1908.

³⁵⁶The *Hibernian Journal* asserted, ‘It would be much more advantageous...if the Convention were to select three men...and submit them to a committee of the IP or a small committee of well-known impartial Nationalists with the right to select one name from the three nominated’. *HJ*, June 1910.

³⁵⁷*HJ*, May 1908.

³⁵⁸CO904/77, Jan. 1909; CO904/78, July 1909.

voters sufficiently numerous to return one of their own to Parliament'.³⁵⁹ The MP in question, T.P. O'Connor, was a noted Hibernian and friend to Joseph Devlin, who held his constituency for nearly 45 years. Notwithstanding such a bleak electoral picture, the AOH was dismissive, if not outright hostile to any notion that the Irish in Great Britain were without a part to play or deserved no voice in the nationalist struggle. According to the *Hibernian Journal* the political and economic condition of Ireland during the past century had driven thousands into the neighbouring country, and though some had been absorbed into the social life of the people there, the vast majority retained their natural love of country and maintained their national traditions and ideals. Their descendants too were thought to have imbibed those same emotions, their nationality even more intense and unselfish than that of their forefathers.³⁶⁰

Hibernian romanticism aside, the Irish in Great Britain demonstrated their fidelity and utility to the nationalist cause in many practical and tangible ways. Irish demonstrations in the country were well celebrated for their imposing nature and tremendous musters. Speaking at one in Edinburgh during October 1908, Nugent noted how those witnessing it 'would be forcibly reminded that the Irish people were an element to be considered even in the heart of Scotland'.³⁶¹ Less publicised but no less essential was the drudgery of organisation, registration, public meetings, and generous subscriptions that the Irish in the country undertook for the national cause.³⁶² Also plugged by the *Journal* were Irish efforts in county and municipal elections. Thus, in December 1909 the Hibernians of London were toasted on the success that had attended their members 'in the various Boroughs in which they...sought municipal honours'.³⁶³ In Barrow, Cumbria the following year meanwhile, Mr. John Gallagher, though not a Hibernian himself was noted for having been supported by the local AOH in a failed attempt to become a member of the Barrow-In-Furness Board of Guardians.³⁶⁴ Although the Order denied weakness at parliamentary elections they often complained about the

³⁵⁹John Belchem, 'Irish influence on parliamentary elections in London, 1885-1914: A simple test', in R. Swift, S. Gilley (eds) *The Irish in the Victorian City*, (London, 2016), p. 99.

³⁶⁰*HJ*, May 1908.

³⁶¹*Ibid.*, Oct. 1908.

³⁶²*HJ*, May 1908.

³⁶³*Ibid.*, Dec. 1909. Brothers J.P. Brogan, Jeremiah Anglim and William O'Bolger topped the polls at Battersea, Marylebone and Peckham respectively. Brothers Kenny (Battersea) and O'Brien (Fulham) did not meet with the same success.

³⁶⁴*HJ*, May 1910. Although the brethren were said to have, 'left nothing undone to return him', 'outside support did not come up to expectations'. The 1,000 votes Gallagher secured were down 'almost entirely' to his friends, and he therefore failed to secure a seat on the board.

underutilisation of the Irish vote at subsidiary contests. Concern was most vocally expressed in the case of Scotland – where many Irish failed to take advantage of their status as Lodger voters – but even in Ireland the AOH feared the message that apathy was conveying: ‘Do [you] forget that Mr. Balfour [the leader of the Conservative party, July 1902 - November 1911] said in the House of Commons...that the administration of the local government in Ireland, since 1895, proved that we were not capable of taking in hands a larger control of our affairs’.³⁶⁵

Hibernian ambiguity

After its victory in the general election of 1895 the Conservative Party devised a policy of Constructive Unionism, inspired by chief secretary Arthur Balfour (1887-91). Balfour believed that ‘underneath the agrarian agitation and political turmoil of the 1880s lay a number of genuine problems exploited by demagogic politicians for their own separatist ends’. His solution was to address the ‘root economic causes of unrest’ but also ‘deal severely’ with disorder.³⁶⁶ Lord Salisbury, who headed up Conservative governments for most of the twenty years after 1885, believed, like his nephew Balfour, that the Irish question was a material and not an ideological one. Known for its landlord sympathies, Salisbury’s party concluded that Gladstone’s Land Acts had been insufficient, and that a further provision, land purchase, was needed to pacify the Irish peasantry. In order to meet the asking price of the landlord, low-interest loans were offered by way of three acts in 1885, 1888 and 1891. Arthur Balfour too, implemented a number of constructive measures in local education, local government, and transport.³⁶⁷ Ultimately, however, Constructive Unionism died with the creation of the Irish Reform Association, a group led by Windham Wyndham and composed of centrists from the former’s Land Conference and Land Act of 1903.³⁶⁸ In 1904 the Association revealed plans for the

³⁶⁵Ibid., May 1908.

³⁶⁶O’Halpin, *The decline of the union*, p. 11.

³⁶⁷The most famous of these was the Congested Districts Board which attempted to ameliorate the continuance of small farms on marginal land and improve agriculture and industry generally via technical instruction and limited subsidies. For more on the CDB, try Ciara Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board of Ireland, 1891-1923; poverty and development in the west of Ireland* (Four Courts Press, 2005); Sean Beattie, *Donegal in transition: the impact of the Congested Districts Board*, (Irish Academic, 2013).

³⁶⁸The Wyndham Land Act was the product of a conference of landlord and tenant representatives in December 1902, overseen by William O’Brien. Improving upon the acts of previous Conservative administrations, this piece of legislation further induced land purchase in one major way; the British government was willing to pay the difference between the landlords asking price and the tenants offer.

introduction of limited and devolved self-government to Ireland. At the same time traditional Toryism's hostility for progressive policies was re-emerging. Nationalists denounced the Association's plan as a means of neutralising Home Rule, Unionists, as Home Rule by stealth.³⁶⁹

The Irish nationalists fared little better in 1906 when the Liberals were returned at the head of an independent majority. Home Rule was no longer one of their active policies. The greater priority was British questions. Ireland could not be wholly neglected, however. Non-sectional administrative reform was one answer. This had the potential to boost support for the Irish Party as well. During 1906, the newly appointed chief secretary, James Bryce, conceived of a scheme that would build on the Local Government Act of 1898³⁷⁰ and the proposals of Wyndham in 1904. After Bryce left to become the Ambassador to the United States his scheme was taken on by his successor Augustine Birrell (1907-16) and eventually introduced in the spring of 1907.³⁷¹ At a national convention of the UIL later in the month the bill was unanimously rejected. The AOH claimed that no other course was available: 'the acceptance of such a measure would throw back the National movement a quarter of a century, and would tend to create yet another political party in the country – viz, a Devolution Party'.³⁷² In the weeks leading up to the bill an article on 'Irish Reform' appeared in the *Journal*. Using the example of Henry Grattan's 1782 parliament, the AOH sought to demonstrate the beneficial results which could follow in the wake of national independence, as also the achievements of a united and determined people without recourse to physical force.³⁷³

McCluskey has argued that there was a tension in Irish nationalism since the days of O'Connell: 'In order to secure popular support for moderate interests, successive leaderships employed militant and quasi-separatist language [which often sat]

³⁶⁹Townshend, *Ireland*, pp 14-8.

³⁷⁰This Act represented a transfer of power from the landlord class to the Irish people as a whole, establishing democratically elected county, rural and urban councils throughout with a degree of financial autonomy but no judicial responsibilities. For more on the subject see Alan O'Day, *Irish Home Rule, 1867-1921*, (Manchester, 1998), pp 185-8.

³⁷¹O'Day, *Irish Home Rule*, pp 208-13.

³⁷²*HJ*, June 1907.

³⁷³*Ibid.*, Apr. 1907. In 1782, following calls for legislative independence by Henry Grattan and others, the British government allowed Ireland to form a native parliament. British control was nonetheless ensured through its monopoly of the parliament's executive positions and the presence of British and Irish borough owners. Grattan's parliament was able to carry a Roman Catholic Relief Act in 1793, thereby conferring the franchise on Catholics, but the United Irishmen, inspired by the republican example of the French, rebelled in 1798. The British government responded with the two Acts of Union in 1801 and the parliament was closed. For more on Grattan, try Danny Mansergh, *Grattan's failure: parliamentary opposition and the people in Ireland, 1779-1800* (Dublin, 2005); and for an overview of the period, see John Gibney (ed), *The United Irishmen, rebellion and the Act of Union, 1791-1803* (Yorkshire, 2018).

uncomfortably with assimilative leadership objectives'.³⁷⁴ This is perhaps symptomatic of an even wider trend in Irish Nationalism: ambiguity. According to Oliver MacDonagh, ambiguity was derived from Ireland's 'essentially colonial condition'. It was espoused by Unionists and Nationalists, and responsive in nature, being the 'mirror image of British attitudes towards Ireland'. It was the latter which produced political change in Ireland. Irish tactics were in a state of flux, from 'mollification to violent outrage, and back again, and intermingled'. As a rule 'all words and actions were...evaluated in terms of their effects upon neighbouring opinion'. The classic case, as well the primogenitor, was Daniel O'Connell's call for a repeal of the Act of Union. Repeal was 'politically nonsensical'. The idea of a return to Grattan's parliament of 1782 – based on British political control, corruption and Protestant power – was impracticable. A nationalist majority in the lower house would have been demanded, and exterior British control of a native cabinet was impossible. Repeal was not a specific proposition or demand but 'an invitation to treat, an attempt to elicit a proposition from the British government'. O'Connell was a separatist and perceived that the measure of separation could only be determined in Great Britain. Repeal facilitated mass agitation. The object was a clear one. It was a vehicle with no limit to capacity, on which 'current wrongs and miseries could be heaped'. In Parnell's hands it became Home Rule, an equally plastic but apparently solid proposition. This in turn was finally delineated by none other than a British politician, William Gladstone, as 'a native representative assembly, with a nationalist majority and no external manipulation'.³⁷⁵

Outside these bare qualifications, Redmond and the IPP were equally vague about what Home Rule would entail. One major way of sustaining ambiguity was the exhibition of separatist credentials. This was achieved by the presence of Fenians within the Party. The tradition went back to the IRB's reorganisation after the failure of the 1867 rising. A number of Fenians joined and gave Isaac Butt's Home Rule League a trial. The IRB Council rescinded this in 1876, and some Fenians, who opted to remain, were expelled. This ex-Fenian contingent consisted mainly of low rank members but also several men who had occupied senior positions within the IRB. Derided as much for their potential anglicisation - once in parliament - as their organisational apostasy, 'It is significant that [they]...rationalised the transference of their allegiances in terms of the impracticality of

³⁷⁴McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p.5.

³⁷⁵Oliver MacDonagh, 'Ambiguity in Nationalism: The Case of Ireland' in Ciaran Brady (ed) *Interpreting Irish History, The Debate on Historical Revisionism* (Dublin, 2006), pp 105-12.

armed rebellion, rather than any fundamentally ideological change-of-heart'.³⁷⁶ Still, these men are better thought of as a group with a shared identity, rather than a democratic-republican element within the Party. They were also not above exaggerating and using their militant records to demonstrate their political commitment.³⁷⁷ In most cases, however, their networks with the Brotherhood had long since fallen into disrepair, and their primary value was a symbolic one.³⁷⁸ Acting as a sort of 'revolutionary ballast', they allowed the IPP to claim that it was the heir and successor of the Repeal movement, and individuals like Wolf Tone.³⁷⁹ Use of the historical and its remembrance became 'an alternative to action'.³⁸⁰

Ambiguity was further sustained by 'advanced nationalist oratory'.³⁸¹ The prospect of trouble or violence, even a baleful appearance had a firm place in the Hibernian canon. Nugent reckoned 'If we had some Long Toms and a fair supply of Mauser rifles, undoubtedly England would have been disposed to "graciously concede to their Irish subjects" the same liberty that has been extended to the Transvaal'.³⁸² In 1909, at Cork, Devlin explained that the 'the revolutionists of the past and the constitutionalists of today' were agreed, 'it was the function of practical and sane Irish patriots to utilise whatever instrument God and progress had given them to forge their way to Irish freedom'.³⁸³ Michael Wheatley has identified three principal features of popular Party rhetoric after 1910: an appeal to the cause, support for an alliance with the British democracy, and a deep and pervasive Anglophobia.³⁸⁴ We have seen above how the AOH propagated the cause, - the National Organisation - and supported an alliance with the British democracy by pointing out IPP achievements. As McCluskey has pointed out, Anglophobia was more pervasive in Ulster where demographic realities strongly facilitated a sister element, sectarianism or anti-unionism.³⁸⁵ Pro-crown sentiments in

³⁷⁶McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party*, pp 95-110

³⁷⁷Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish question: Ulster unionism and Irish nationalism, 1912-1916* (Oxford, 2002), p. 14.

³⁷⁸McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party*, pp 112-3.

³⁷⁹James McConnel, "'Fenians at Westminster'": The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Legacy of the New Departure', *Irish Historical Studies*, 34:133 (2004), p. 60.

³⁸⁰Kelly, *The Fenian ideal*, p. 86.

³⁸¹McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 2.

³⁸²*Ibid.*, June 1907. The South African Republic, also known as the Transvaal Republic was an independent country that fought against the British in the First Boer War. Though defeated in a second conflict in 1902 the country was granted limited self-government in 1906 and 1907. For more on the subject, see Thomas Pakenham, *The scramble for Africa: 1876 to 1912* (New York, 1991).

³⁸³*FJ*, 6 Sept. 1909.

³⁸⁴Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 79-88.

³⁸⁵McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 50.

particular were severely frowned on by the AOH and may constitute vital evidence of a constitutional separatist grouping. When two members of Derry division 1 were charged with drinking the health of the King at a mayoral dinner in November 1910 they were both expelled. Brothers McCarter and Campbell confessed that they were unaware of any divisional rule, written or unwritten, against their action.³⁸⁶ Subsequently the members appealed to the Derry county board and with the intervention of the National Board had the decision rescinded.³⁸⁷ Later the matter was brought to the national convention of 1911. There, a majority of the delegates reversed the county and National Board's verdict, perhaps showing the disparity between the Hibernian leadership's moderate interests and 'rhetorical high-wire act', and the views of the rank-and-file.³⁸⁸

In the absence of violence, the national secretary encouraged the employment of other tactics,

We must appeal to our brethren in Ireland and Great Britain...and those in Australia and America, to initiate a united and determined campaign which will make Government in Ireland impossible...and while acting directly within the constitution, we can give England as much trouble and annoyance, and prove ourselves as injurious to her prestige and influence, as if the pom-poms were roaring from the hills of Antrim, and the shells flying into Cork Harbour.³⁸⁹

Indeed, as militant as the AOH sometimes appeared, it was still undoubtedly a part of constitutional nationalism; not for the Order or Ireland generally so the *Hibernian Journal* maintained, was 'a policy of Cheap Heroics [in the Sinn Fein vein]...but a policy of courage, wisdom and good sense, such as the Party was at present endeavouring to pursue'.³⁹⁰ Sinn Fein had many tributaries but really began with Arthur Griffith, a gifted writer and journalist. Hard-headed and down-to-earth, Griffith hated British rule and constructed a vision of Grattan's Parliament reborn. One of his principal arguments, predicated on the example of Austro-Hungary, was for a dual monarchy. To that end he advocated a policy of passive resistance or parliamentary abstinence. During the early twentieth century he participated in a number of committees, factions and lobbies. Overlapping membership led to his suggestion in 1900 that a loose federation, Cumann na nGadeheal, be formed. Over time the latter became a front for the IRB. In 1903,

³⁸⁶'Derry mins', 1 Feb. 1911.

³⁸⁷'Derry mins', 10 Mar. 1911.

³⁸⁸McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 2; 'Derry mins', 21 July 1911.

³⁸⁹*HJ*, June 1907.

³⁹⁰*HJ*, Aug. 1908.

meanwhile, Griffith established an ad hoc body known as the National Council, to protest against Edward VII's visit of Dublin. In due course the Council developed into a movement or club, though not a political party. In March 1905 a collection of Ulster Nationalists led by Bulmer Hobson established the Dungannon clubs. Similar at first to Griffith's movement, in that it called for the restoration of Grattan's Parliament, this early moderation was quickly abandoned. Hobson's newspaper *The Republic* described the clubs as belonging to the Sinn Fein movement.³⁹¹

The moniker Sinn Fein, meaning "we ourselves", was in circulation as early as 1882 in Thomas Stanislaus Cleary's play of the same name.³⁹² The Dungannon Clubs rejected compromise, repeal of the Union, home rule or even devolution. Their goal was an Irish Republic. In June 1905, meantime, Griffith's National Council remodelled itself as a full political party, contesting the elections for the Dublin poor law boards with some success. Griffith showed little enthusiasm for the establishment of branches outside Dublin, however.³⁹³ Hibernian distaste for Sinn Fein resulted in a number of clashes in the city. Members of Sinn Fein were known to interrupt UIL meetings with heckling and jeering. Because Hibernians often acted as stewards and bodyguards at such events, violence and reprisals was inevitable.³⁹⁴ Towards the end of 1906 talk turned to a merger of the National Council and the Dungannon Clubs. The substance of both groups was similar but the style with which it was communicated – logic and satire in the case of Griffith, emotionality and intensity in the case of Hobson – prevented unification. Still, the idea of amalgamating the different Sinn Fein clubs had value and in April 1907 Cumann na nGaedheal joined with the Dungannon Clubs to make a new party, the Sinn Fein League. As Roy Foster has said, 1906 was an important year for advanced nationalists.³⁹⁵ The fiasco of an 'inadequate measure' to introduce some semblance of self-government revealed that 'the Parnellite generation of politicians were old, increasingly out of touch with both the new elements of labour politics and fringe extremists'. Some members of the IPP, as with Ireland's youth, began to flirt with Sinn Fein on the off chance that it might become 'the new vogue of constitutional politics'.³⁹⁶

³⁹¹Laffan, *The resurrection*, pp 16-23.

³⁹²Ibid., p. 20.

³⁹³Laffan, *The resurrection*, p. 23.

³⁹⁴Foy, 'The Ancient Order', pp 137-8.

³⁹⁵Laffan, *The resurrection*, pp 24-5.

³⁹⁶Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 458.

In June 1907, Charles Dolan the Member for North Leitrim announced his belief in the methods outlined in one of Griffith's work's, *The resurrection of Hungary*.³⁹⁷ Dolan decided that he would resign his seat and then campaign for re-election as an abstentionist candidate. While Griffith reluctantly rallied to his new champion, Dolan's conversion did allow him to extract favourable terms from the Sinn Fein League when his National Council merged with it soon after. In 1908 the movement was renamed as Sinn Fein. Griffith had ostensibly succeeded in imposing his moderate views on his fellow republicans.³⁹⁸ Faced with Dolan's revolt the IPP found their counter candidate in F.E. Meehan, the president of the Manorhamilton division of the AOH. Devlin took charge of the Party efforts. The rise of Sinn Fein had not escaped the Belfast MPs gaze. In June 1907, after getting wind of Dolan's intent he wrote to Redmond and urged him to speak out on the physical force movement, to call for discipline and strength, and 'frighten the factionists remaining within the party'.³⁹⁹ Come December he corresponded with Dillon about the idea of bringing the Sinn Feiners into the party: 'the only point on which we differ is that of the retention of the Irish members at Westminster and...this might be waived, provided...that the Party would pledge itself, when Parliament was not sitting, to devote themselves during the Recess...to all the practical objects in the Sinn Fein programme'.⁴⁰⁰ In March 1908 as well, the *Hibernian Journal* drew attention to the similarities in Sinn Fein's programme and the IPP's.⁴⁰¹ Whether or not Devlin actually made overtures to Sinn Fein remains unclear but certainly no punches were pulled when it came to the contest in North Leitrim.

Throughout Ireland, AOH divisions passed resolutions in favour of Meehan's candidature and telegrams were sent out requesting the presence of contingents and 'battle-hardened Hibernian veterans' from as far away as Belfast.⁴⁰² With emotions already high Sinn Fein turned the screws yet tighter with the announcement that a branch of the National Council had been established in Omagh and that 'Several members of the [AOH] – an organisation which for some time past has been manipulated by the Parliamentary wirepullers, were amongst the first to join'.⁴⁰³ When the by-election finally

³⁹⁷The last challenge by advanced nationalists occurred in 1900 when John MacBride contested South Mayo and was decisively defeated.

³⁹⁸Laffan, *The resurrection*, p. 25.

³⁹⁹Joseph Devlin to John Redmond, 25 June 1907, MS15,181, NLI, John Redmond Papers.

⁴⁰⁰Joseph Devlin to John Dillon, 20 Dec. 1907, MS 6729, TCD, Dillon Papers.

⁴⁰¹*HJ*, Mar. 1908.

⁴⁰²Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 141.

⁴⁰³*Sinn Fein* (Hereafter *SF*), 15 Feb. 1908.

got under way the imported Hibernians responded by subjecting Charles Dolan's campaign to constant disruption and harassment. Wherever the Sinn Fein candidate went he was heckled, intimidated, jeered and shouted at. One of Dolan's meetings at Kinlough on the 19 February 1908 was a case in point. There, Dolan was confronted by a number of Belfast Hibernians and several bands. Although the meeting went ahead, once the Sinn Fein candidate began to speak, drums were banged, eggs were thrown, and groans and yelling erupted from the crowd. When Dolan's fist-shaking and calls for the police to remove these 'West Belfast asses' failed, he attempted violence on their leader. Although sticks were then brandished, and foul words exchanged, a full-scale riot was narrowly averted by Dolan's decision to abandon the meeting.⁴⁰⁴ Faced with such opposition Dolan's defeat in the by-election was all but guaranteed and Meehan won decisively at 3,103 votes to his opponent's 1,157. Leitrim was nonetheless a moral victory for Sinn Fein. A substantial challenge had been made in a Party stronghold, and many branches of the movement established. Sinn Fein experienced sluggish and uneven growth afterwards, however. Victories were won at the municipal level, but the party stood aside for the general elections of 1910. Up until 1916 at least, Sinn Fein was suspended.⁴⁰⁵

As an example of Hibernian violence and heavy-handedness in political matters, North Leitrim was exceeded only by the Baton Convention of February 1909 'the stormiest meeting ever held by constitutional nationalists'.⁴⁰⁶ That month Redmond called a national convention to win support for Birrell's Land Act, a piece of legislation which introduced compulsory land purchase while reducing funding of tenant land purchase. Recalling the disorder which had occurred at the convention of 1907 - to debate Birrell's Irish Council Bill - Redmond instructed Devlin to draft in enough stewards to prevent a repeat affair.⁴⁰⁷ The actual recruiting, however, was left to Nugent and Denis Johnston, another Hib, who duly brought in about 100 Hibernians from north and south. Johnston then made the fateful choice of outfitting some of the stewards with wooden batons, a development Redmond accepted, provided the weapons were not used 'except in case of desperate necessity'.⁴⁰⁸ Indeed, the Irish party leader had hoped to guarantee free speech at the event but when William O'Brien began to speak out in opposition to the proposed

⁴⁰⁴*FJ*, 20 Feb. 1908; *Irish Times* (Hereafter *IT*), 20 Feb. 1908.

⁴⁰⁵Laffan, *The resurrection*, pp 30-2.

⁴⁰⁶Paul Bew, *Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland, 1898-1910: Parnellites and Radical Agrarians*, (Oxford, 1987), pp 185-7.

⁴⁰⁷Joseph Devlin to John Redmond, 31 July 1907, MS15,181, NLI, John Redmond Papers.

⁴⁰⁸*FJ*, 11 Mar. 1909.

bill ‘cat-calls, boohs, shouts of ‘Sit down, traitor’ and similar ejaculations were hurled at him from all parts of the big hall’.⁴⁰⁹ After Eugene Crean, MP for South East Cork made to approach Redmond from the rear for what object could not be gathered, he was seized by Mr. Flavin, MP and one of the stewards. When some members went to Crean’s aid a full-blown melee ensued. Although order was eventually restored there was still such a din that O’Brien could not continue.⁴¹⁰ In the aftermath of the convention the AOH appeared unapologetic, dismayed only that the delegates had not passed judgment on a man who ‘supposed to be a member of a pledge-bound party [could be found] abusing, vilifying, and denouncing...his own colleagues in that Party’. The *Hibernian Journal* was further appalled at what it saw as O’Brien’s, ‘plan of campaign’, a scheme that aimed by way of long and overwrought speeches at forestalling Redmond’s motion until the convention’s second day.⁴¹¹ Because a number of delegates would have left for home before the second sitting, O’Brien and his colleagues would then receive a more creditable show. According to the *Journal*, however, the plan was foiled when Redmond got wind of it and insisted on the question being put at 4.30pm on the first day.⁴¹²

For his part, William O’Brien went away from the Baton Convention convinced that he had never stood a chance. In his mind he was the victim ‘of a deeply-laid and ruthless plot by Devlin and the AOH to intimidate the convention, destroy him and...the policy of conciliation he was fighting for’. As F.S.L. Lyons has said however, this was, ‘a pathetic illusion. He was shouted down at the convention...because he had lost the ear of the country’.⁴¹³ Determined nevertheless to out the Hibernian conspiracy, O’Brien and his colleagues found their opportunity when one of their number, Eugene Crean served a summons on Devlin and Johnston, for their part in the disorderly behaviour and assaults at the convention. To secure a guilty verdict O’Brien enlisted the services of the barrister Tim Healy. *Crean v. Devlin and Johnston* turned out to be a farce, however, the irrepressible Healy using a ‘combination of sharp interrogation and knockabout humour which frequently reduced the spectators to helpless laughter, exasperated his opposite number...drove the magistrate Swifte to distraction and the group of important Hibernians...to incoherent rage’.⁴¹⁴ Ultimately, however, Healy could not prove Devlin

⁴⁰⁹*BNL*, 10 Feb. 1909.

⁴¹⁰*BNL*, 10 Feb. 1909.

⁴¹¹*HJ*, Feb. 1909.

⁴¹²*HJ*, Feb. 1909.

⁴¹³Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party*, p. 125.

⁴¹⁴Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, p. 111.

and Johnston's guilt and the charges were dismissed. Believing that the party was now beyond redemption O'Brien set off to establish a new political party, the Munster based All-for-Ireland League (1909-1918). Conflict between the Cork MP and the Ancient Order would remain ongoing, but with a crucial difference. Both the Baton Convention and subsequent court case marked a major breakthrough for the society, O'Brien's antipathy acting in the words of the *Hibernian Journal* as a 'huge advertisement' which 'aroused the curiosity of thousands'.⁴¹⁵ The AOH was also not about to let the factionists get away without retribution and in the two elections of 1910 they set out to destroy them. As it turned out, T.M. Healy was struck the most grievous blow. In December 1910, he lost his seat at North Louth to R. Hazleton the IP candidate. Such was the ferocity of the contest that on polling day Healy was left trapped in a voting booth for two hours after his car was attacked by a vicious mob and his chauffeur fled. The AOH even went so far as to start a boycott against city traders who prominently supported O'Brien and Healy during the elections.⁴¹⁶

Conclusion

Devlin encountered the AOH during a period of decline and sterility, the result of splits within the Irish and the American movement. Hibernians were involved in the commemorations surrounding the 1798 rebellion and could be easily mistaken for Fenians. The latter grouping's use of the '98 movement to spread its beliefs and organisation was thwarted when Devlin commandeered it in the name of the Dillonites. By 1902, however, fissures in the Irish and American organisations had been healed and the AOH was re-emerging. A new variable had entered northern nationalism. Rather than see it subverted by the IRB, Devlin opted, in the traditional Irish Party practice, to 'vampirise' it.⁴¹⁷ As we shall see in chapter two, the AOH required clerical sanction before it could be of use to constitutional nationalism, and this was achieved with Devlin's aid in 1904. A year later the Organisation was pledged to the Irish Party. To the Hibernians of the early twentieth century, the young Belfast MP, with his organisational skills and oratory, must have cut an impressive figure. Devlin was too a gateway for the Ribbonmen to enter the political mainstream. At the same time, his advent drew out a

⁴¹⁵*HJ*, Feb. 1910.

⁴¹⁶CO904/12, Dec. 1910.

⁴¹⁷Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 88.

separatist grouping within the Society. Using church condemnation and the anachronistic tendencies of the Board of Erin, these IRB members managed to induce the Scotch Section to secede. A minority faction, they were quickly and roundly defeated; the separatists, if not completely reformed, at least brought back into the constitutional nationalist fold. With their infiltration of the American organisation, the Fenians frustrated Devlin's plans for a transatlantic alliance. Although they tried in 1909 to undermine the Society's connection with the Irish Party, they failed. Devlin's grip was total at that point.

Devlin had his heroes in Dillon and Redmond. He was the only member of the younger generation to successfully penetrate the inner leadership of the Irish Party. Emulating William O'Brien with the UIL, he used the AOH as a political vehicle to achieve this. The AOH had the potential to, and indeed filled, a substantial gap in IPP strategy and support. Lacking Parnell's charisma and his control of the parliamentary convention system, Redmond relied on Devlin to control northern nationalism. The Order became a constituency organisation where the agrarian UIL could not. While the Hibs were deeply loyal, their tactics were conspicuous. The creation of bogus branches to manipulate UIL conventions as at North Monaghan in 1907 invited widespread criticism. The AOH did not dominate the League or the IPP in the sense that O'Brien asserted, however. In time, Hibernians came to outnumber Leaguers in some places, but the Society's leadership envisaged an ancillary role for its membership. The Order was a national body within, but also not the National Organisation (the UIL) and was pledged to assist the latter because it commanded the majority support of the Irish populace. Of course, once Home Rule was achieved, all bets were likely off. Some talked about the formation of all-Ireland parties. Few believed that party alignments would change quickly. Many anticipated that the IPP would become defunct.⁴¹⁸ Stephen Gwynn talked about how Protestant and Catholic alignments would be irrelevant in the face of Conservative, Liberal and other factions.⁴¹⁹ While Devlin was loyal to Redmond there was a sense that he might lead a Labour group: '[I am] in closer touch with the Protestants artisans of Belfast and Ulster than with the Catholic farmers of [Connaught]'.⁴²⁰ The AOH offered a devoted, powerful and ready-made party.

⁴¹⁸McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party*, p. 288.

⁴¹⁹*FJ*, 31 Dec. 1909.

⁴²⁰*FJ*, 9 Feb. 1912.

A constitutional separatist grouping undoubtedly existed within the Order, indeed within constitutional nationalism as a whole. The IPP drew on its Fenian members and a long history of colourful and worthy predecessors to give itself legitimacy and to authorise its actions, but also to put the force in its policy of “moral force”. Such showboating was essential in wooing those Irish nationalists who sought more than just home rule. The ‘populist patriotism’ which Devlin preached - comprising not just faith and fatherland, but a sort of consolidation of nationalist forces through cooperation, forbearance, and unity - asked the Hibernian, if such was required, to merely prioritise the constitutional goal in the short term, as a means towards the separatist one, in the long term.⁴²¹ Crushing factionalism as at the Baton Convention in 1909 could be rationalised away as an effort to maintain unity. As we shall see in chapters three and five, demonstrations and sectarian tussles provided an outlet for the AOH’s constitutional separatist grouping. Occasionally, however, other channels, as in the case of Derry division’s Anglophobia, demonstrated that there was a clear disparity between the views of the Hibernian leadership and the rank-and-file; perhaps even suggesting that the former had a more moderate goal in mind, home rule alone. One major quality which distinguished the AOH from the National Organisation, however, was the existence of an additional object. The Order was not just pledged to legislative independence for Ireland but sought the betterment of its Irish Catholic population. This was backed up by efforts in the religious, social and economic spheres, suggesting that Faith and Fatherland had a wider utility than mere rhetoric and in fact represented preparation towards and a vision under home rule.

⁴²¹McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 43-6

2

Antecedents, Secrecy and the Catholic Church

In 1904 the *Northern Star* newspaper could say of the AOH's national president, Joseph Devlin, '[He] is constantly presiding and speaking at purely Catholic functions...the clergy gladly reciprocate by cooperating in the work of strengthening the National organisation'.⁴²² Significantly, the *Northern Star* was started in 1897 as a counter to the Belfast, and clerically dominated *Irish News*. The latter paper had fallen under the sway of Henry Henry, the bishop of Down and Connor, after his establishment of a local political machine, the Belfast Catholic Association, in 1896. The BCA flew in the face of the cry "No Priest in Politics" and after the Irish Party was reunified in 1900 it tried unsuccessfully to replace the local UIL as the principal party organisation in Belfast.⁴²³ Devlin had opposed the Association's involvement in municipal and nationalist politics from the outset, but full-blown battle was not joined until 1903.⁴²⁴ In October of that year a by-election was triggered when the member for West Belfast, the Liberal Unionist H.O. Arnold-Forster, was elevated to the post of Secretary for War. Led by Devlin the Party organisation in the city sought to contest the seat but were denied access to the BCA's files of information on voter registration; essential for victory in any constituency where there was Catholic-Protestant parity. Arnold-Forster was duly returned. In 1904 the Association responded to the IPP's annual drive for funds by organising a collection. In the ordinary course donations went to the UIL, but Henry prohibited this and directed his clergy to send them directly to the trustees of the Party fund. Members of the League were naturally infuriated by this attempt to by-pass their organisation and in February the IPP met and decided to unanimously reject the BCA's contribution. When in March, twenty-five clergy sent their contributions to UIL officials outside Belfast it became clear that Henry had a revolt on his hands. In May 1905 talks between the two sides were held without Henry's involvement and in March 1906 the bishop abolished the Association.⁴²⁵

⁴²²A. C. Hepburn, *A Past Apart* (Belfast, 1996) pp 209-11.

⁴²³Miller, *Church, State, and Nation*, p. 97.

⁴²⁴A.C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the era of Joe Devlin, 1871-1934* (Oxford, 2008), pp 48-9.

⁴²⁵Miller, *Church, State, and Nation*, pp 117-29

Devlin's battle with the bishop of Down and Connor, as with the relationship between the AOH and the Irish Catholic Church, can be viewed as part of larger struggle between the Church and Nation, within the context of the State. According to this theory put forward by David W. Miller, the State (Great Britain) was a human community monopolising the legitimate use of physical force within its territory. The Nation, meantime, as exemplified by Daniel O'Connell and later the IPP under Parnell and Redmond, was a parallel institution established alongside the State which vied for the allegiance of the citizenship and sought itself, to monopolise the legitimate use of physical force. Owing to the intensity of popular devotion throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Church represented a crucial third element, able to reinforce the claims of either the State or the Nation. While individual clerics might strongly advocate the claims of the State or the Nation, the Irish Church was generally frugal about conferring legitimacy and it carefully exploited any such action to win support for and advance its own interests.⁴²⁶ Into this mix, at the end of the nineteenth century, came the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a secretive but also a confessional organisation. Reconciling these conflicting aspects and the way in which they informed the modern character of Hibernianism – in particular the society's geographic sway - is the primary object of this chapter. Where others like J.F. Campbell have focused on how clerical views of the AOH varied 'from eulogy, to indifference to rank hostility', here the importance of Catholicism and the clergy to Hibernianism is demonstrated.⁴²⁷ As indicated above, Devlin was ardently opposed to the idea of a clerical party. Priests had to be courted, however, and not just for political reasons. Without their sanction, the AOH could not expand into the rest of Ireland. While the Order was condemned in Ireland up until 1904, the subsequent granting of toleration allowed the Society to grow into new areas, particularly Connaught. Elsewhere in Scotland, toleration came a little late in the Society's lifecycle to provide much of a boost to membership.

Among the questions which inform this study are: How did the society's antecedents, whether real or imagined, inform Hibernian ideology, self-perception, and the attitudes of others? Was the AOH a secret organisation? How did church toleration come about, and what did it mean in practice? What kind of a role did priests and clerics play within Hibernianism? AOH precursors – supposed and actual – form the basis of a first section;

⁴²⁶Miller, *Church, State, and Nation*, Introduction, pp 2-3.

⁴²⁷Campbell, 'Friendly Societies in Ireland', p. 149.

in particular, the Hibernian version of Irish history, whereby the society was descended from many early Catholic defence bodies, including the Defenders and Ribbonmen. An Ulster phenomenon Hibernianism may have been, but it developed first and foremost out of transplanted Irish populations both in Great Britain and America. The beginnings of clerical influence, owing to fragmentation, mediation and reconciliation in the American and Irish societies is considered as well. Two further sections survey the Order's different relationships with the Catholic Church in Scotland, and in Ireland. The way in which changes to the Society in the former country had an impact on the Irish organisation is noted. Hibernian engagement with the Catholic Church – with varying degrees of success in select Ulster counties - is charted in the run up to toleration and for the period afterwards. Secrecy, as a factor in continued clerical objection is also considered. A final section assesses the relative Catholicism of the AOH; the functions, influence and opinions of church representatives within the organisation.

Antecedents

Hibernians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century believed that the AOH had existed for centuries, albeit under different monikers, with church entanglement – variously positive and/or negative – a constant, for just as long. In this they were helped along by a number of contemporary Hibernian chroniclers, including Thomas F. McGrath (1898), James J. Bergin (1910) and John O'Dea (1923).⁴²⁸ According to both McGrath and Bergin, the AOH began in the early 1640s. Where the former sees Pope Urban VIII encouraging Irish Catholics to defend their priests and religion Bergin highlights defiance in the face of the 'grasping greed of the English settlers'.⁴²⁹ Dispensing with an actual date, O'Dea instead emphasises the connection between older Irish secret societies and clandestine resistance. What all three chroniclers share in common, meantime, is the idea that the AOH and its Ribbon antecedents were 'connected codes for all Catholic resistance to British rule from the seventeenth century'.⁴³⁰ Such a conclusion falls down on two counts, however. Not only is there not enough evidence for it, but there is ample justification to suspect contrivance. Indeed, these histories were likely guilty of, in the

⁴²⁸McGrath, *A History of the Ancient*; Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*; John O'Dea, *History of the Ancient*.

⁴²⁹Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, pp 1-21.

⁴³⁰Hughes & MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 307.

words of Eric Hobsbawm's book on the same (co-edited with Terence Ranger), *The Invention of [a] Tradition*. According to Hobsbawm an invented tradition is 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with...a suitable past'.⁴³¹ Hobsbawm asserts that three types of overlapping traditions have been invented since the Industrial Revolution, and the Hibernian histories clearly exhibited the traits of all three, not only establishing, in the case of the AOH, 'social cohesion or the membership of [a group], but actually 'legitimising [that institution]', its status and 'relations of authority', and in fact, inculcating 'beliefs, value systems and conventions of behavior'.⁴³²

More specifically, the Order's official historian, Bergin, seems to have been trying to nationalise Irish history, going so far as to claim that the Hibernians of the 1640s were Irish Catholic nationalists. This tendency was mirrored in the work of contemporary Irish historians and polemicists, including Michael Davitt. Like the latter, Bergin 'embraced a construct of history that drew its initial inspiration from the work of antiquarian scholars and Young Ireland writers of the 1830s and 1840s'. According to this telling of events the Irish had experienced 'a golden age, long since destroyed by a sequence of English invasions, occupations, confiscation of land, and religious persecution'.⁴³³ Similarly, Bergin subscribed to the belief 'that native "races"...inhabiting particular places and regions, speaking the same language, and professing the same religion expressed distinctive traits and ideas which were bred in the bone'.⁴³⁴ Hibernian chroniclers had, to their mind, just cause in being proud of the connection between the AOH and Ribbonism. Where John O'Dea claimed that the latter grouping evolved into the Hibernians through

⁴³¹E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger 'Introduction', in E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (eds) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 1.

⁴³²E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger, 'Introduction', in *The Invention of Tradition*, p. 9.

⁴³³For T.W. Moody, this was one of Ireland's most pervasive myths: the idea of the predestinate nation which connected the modern democratic Irish nation with the pre-conquest era; of a centuries-old struggle to throw off the English yoke. L.P. Curits, Jr. has too talked about the greening of Irish history and John Hutchinson of how, in many countries 'the founders of the historical profession have been leaders of the national revival, concerned to forge on authoritative foundations the claims of their community to an independent and distinctive culture'. See T.W. Moody, 'Irish History and Irish Mythology' in *Hermathena* CXXIV, Summer, 1978, pp 7-24; L.P. Curtis, JR., 'The Greening of Irish History' in *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer, 1994), pp 7-28; John Hutchinson, 'Irish Nationalism' in D.G. Boyce and A. O'Day (eds) *The Making of Modern Irish History, Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (Abingdon, 1996), pp 100-20. For historical revisionism, try D. G. Boyce and A O'Day, "'Revisionism' and the revisionist controversy" in D.G. Boyce and A. O'Day (eds) *The Making of Modern Irish History, Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (Abingdon, 1996), pp 1-14.

⁴³⁴Lawrence W. McBride, 'Nation and Narration in Michael Davitt's *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*' in *New Hibernian Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring, 2001), pp 131-5.

stages, however, Bergin goes one step further, maintaining that there was a long unbroken line stretching back from the AOH to the Ribbonmen and then the Defenders. The latter group had its roots in non-sectarian local factions of young men in Armagh during the early 1780s. By 1786 these factions had divided into two networks, one almost unilaterally Protestant and the other, mainly Catholic; the Peep-o'-Day Boys and the Defenders respectively. While the former sought to enforce laws prohibiting Catholics from arming themselves, the Defenders attempted the opposite. A mainly Catholic agrarian society, the Defenders spread through North Leinster and the borderlands of Ulster. Oath bound and known for their violent tactics, they also developed an inter-county communications network with a system of secret signs and passwords, a lodge system and county grand masters.⁴³⁵

In his search for a date of inception, the Hibernian chronicler Thomas F. McGrath points to 1565 when he claims another group known as the Defenders were active.⁴³⁶ While Bergin acknowledges that this combination might have existed, a lack of knowledge sees him prefer 1641 as the date of Hibernian inception.⁴³⁷ McGrath writes:

It was [in 1565] that Rory Oge O'Moore organised the Defenders. He made arrangements with the clergy to erect crude altars in the mountain fastnesses, and there have the people attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass... Rory sent out fleet-footed and trusted men to inform the Catholics of the country where the priest would read the next Mass. He placed sentinels on the hill-tops to give warning to the people of the approach of sacrilegious intruders.⁴³⁸

Obviously, McGrath's grouping, whether factual or fictional, should not be confused with the eighteenth-century Defenders indicated above. Hibernians, as with contemporary priests and politicians, however, seem to have bought into McGrath's story, even conflating the two groups.⁴³⁹ In August 1907 the *Hibernian Journal* noted how 'When the priests were forced to leave the land under penalty of death it was the Hibernians who sheltered them'.⁴⁴⁰ Speaking at a Hibernian annual social in February 1910, meantime, the ex-West Donegal MP, James Boyle, explained 'The Order...had its origin hundreds of years ago in the defence of...our Holy church...when a price was put on the head of a priest; when they were chased from cave to hut...no power, no people, no law stood

⁴³⁵Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin 1981), pp 27-8.

⁴³⁶McGrath, *A History of the Ancient*, p.28.

⁴³⁷Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, preface, viii.

⁴³⁸McGrath, *A History of the Ancient* p.28.

⁴³⁹Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, preface, viii.

⁴⁴⁰*HJ*, Aug. 1907.

between the soggarth and his persecutors save the AOH'.⁴⁴¹ In May 1911, the Rev. Dr. Murphy of Macroom drew attention to the Defenders 'a body of Catholics who organised themselves in 1784' but also described how 'their very first rule was to defend at the risk even of their lives, the priest who was driven by penal laws amongst the rocks and bogs to say Mass for the poor people'.⁴⁴²

In the pages of the *Hibernian Journal* and elsewhere, the AOH also proudly exhibited its connection with Ribbonism.⁴⁴³ In March 1906, John Cannon, president of division 8, Creeslough revealed how, with the advent of the Orange Order at the end of the eighteenth-century, the Defenders gave way to the Ribbonmen.⁴⁴⁴ For their part, Hughes and MacRaild have identified the emergence of Ribbonism no earlier than the 1810s.⁴⁴⁵ While some Defenders became Ribbonmen and some of these did in turn become Hibernians, the AOH is better understood as a continuation of the Ribbon tradition, and more widely 'an evolving Catholic popular nationalist tradition'.⁴⁴⁶ There is not enough evidence to prove that a 'single unbroken' Ribbon Society existed during the nineteenth century. Nor can we show that Ribbonism had a 'continuous organisational history' with 'enduring leadership structures' and 'a traceable chain of command which spanned the decades'.⁴⁴⁷ During the early decades of the nineteenth century, as a conspiratorial and clandestine, pub-based culture, with a sophisticated hierarchical structure, the Ribbonmen spread out from Armagh and Dublin to other counties, and across the Irish Sea. Not a single organisation as perceived by contemporaries, but a series of associations that multiplied amongst Catholic workers and tradesmen, Ribbonism was the appellation created by officials to describe the phenomenon's activities as a whole.⁴⁴⁸ The emergence of Ribbonmen also coincided with clerical concern 'Both on the national level in Ireland and on the international level...about the activities of secret societies'.⁴⁴⁹ In Ireland, Dr. Doyle, the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin led the campaign. His first pastoral letter (1819) warned against associations with illegal oaths and opposed to all interests. A follow-up in 1822 was addressed, "To the Deluded and Illegal Associations of

⁴⁴¹Ibid., Feb. 1910.

⁴⁴²*HJ*, May 1911.

⁴⁴³See for instance, *HJ*, Jan. 1908; Ibid., Dec. 1908; *HJ*, June 1910.

⁴⁴⁴*DJ*, 21 Mar. 1906.

⁴⁴⁵Hughes & MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 308.

⁴⁴⁶Ibid., p. 15; Hughes & MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁷Hughes & MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, pp 13-4.

⁴⁴⁸Hughes & MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, pp 1-2.

⁴⁴⁹Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 9.

Ribbonmen” and was read in every church of Doyle’s diocese.⁴⁵⁰ Elsewhere the papacy was making its own moves. Secret societies had been met with intolerance by a long succession of Popes. Freemasonry was condemned by Clement XII for example, in a constitution of April 1738. In 1825, meanwhile, Pope Leo XII put together “Quo graviora”, an apostolic constitution confirming all former papal decrees against secret societies. Ribbonmen were now vulnerable to excommunication.⁴⁵¹

From 1825, Bergin claims, under clerical pressure, the Ribbonmen began to adopt a new title, the St. Patrick’s Fraternal Society.⁴⁵² The situation was more complex than one lineal descendant, however, for Ribbonism had also crossed the Irish Sea in the early 1820s. During the period, members in Dublin attempted to consolidate links with their counterparts in Ulster and Britain. Though a national board was established in February 1822 the Dublin leaders were convicted shortly afterwards for administering an unlawful oath. Thereafter Ribbonism was divided into two separate societies, the Northern Union (or Sons of the Shamrock) based in Ulster, and the Irish Sons of Freedom, located in Leinster. Significantly, a solemn interdict of February 1831 forbade the Catholic clergy from giving out the sacraments to any known members of an organisation bound by secret oath.⁴⁵³ John Belchem believes that the Northern Union responded by using ‘the façade of clerically approved benefit societies’ such as the Liverpool Hibernian Benevolent Burial Society (1834) to conceal its operations.⁴⁵⁴ Two years later we see the first use of the modern AOH name. According to several Hibernian histories, Ribbonmen travelling to America were granted a charter by the former society in 1836. Shortly afterwards, no doubt motivated by its negative connotations, the Ribbon name was dispensed with and the mantle of Ancient Order of Hibernians taken up.⁴⁵⁵

While Ribbonmen revered the constitutional parliamentarian and campaigner Daniel O’Connell, the latter’s abhorrence of violence and the change to mass and public agrarian agitation saw the organisation’s revolutionary ardour doused in the 1840s. Ribbonism

⁴⁵⁰Ashtown, *The Unknown Power*, p. 72.

⁴⁵¹H.W. Fanning, ‘Secret Societies’, in *Catholic Encyclopaedia* (London, 1912), Vol. 14, pp 71-4.

⁴⁵²Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, p.29.

⁴⁵³G.P. Connolly, ‘The Catholic Church and the first Manchester and Salford trade unions in the age of the industrial revolution’ in *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 135 (1985), pp 132-3.

⁴⁵⁴Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, pp 97-8.

⁴⁵⁵Hughes and Macrauld note that the charter story is impossible to determine. Outside McGrath and other Hibernian histories there is no evidence for it and in fact, a card found in the possession of a Ribbonman in nineteenth-century revealed that he had become a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians as early as 1825. Hughes and MacRauid, *Ribbon Societies*, pp 291-2. See also *The Ulsterman*, 22 Mar. 1854; *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, 22 Mar. 1854.

nevertheless thrived, as part of a larger entangled web of ‘pro-Catholic defiance’.⁴⁵⁶ By the 1850s, the movement’s ‘nationalist-separatist agenda’ had largely given way to ‘emigrant aid and collective mutuality’. In spite of this transition, Ribbonmen refused to cease in their illicit activities, and continued to use secret signs, oaths and passwords. Hiding illegal activity behind ‘the cloak of collective mutuality’, they adopted a variety of guises, including the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Board of Erin and the Knights of St. Patrick. After the Famine, however, urban Ribbonism moved away from its ‘loosely based, primitive, and sectarian’ image, and became an organisation ‘to some degree attuned to the needs of the Catholic community, enjoying both recognition and support’.⁴⁵⁷ Clandestine elements persisted – ‘protecting associates, racketeering, and supporting immigrant Irish folk tramping for work’ – but an ‘open, moderate nationalism’ synonymous with Hibernianism, became ‘increasingly apparent’.⁴⁵⁸ Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Ancient Order name began to supplant the Ribbon society.⁴⁵⁹ As a Colonial Office memorandum on ‘The Ribbon movement (now the Ancient Order of Hibernians)’ attested in 1890, however, ‘[this] tradition of Catholic, anti-Protestant, proto-nationalist, clandestine collectivism’ was long-lived.⁴⁶⁰

After Hibernianism was planted in America in 1836, the organisation made rapid progress. Irish emigrants - arriving in their millions after the famine - were a steady source of recruitment in the following years. Hibernianism there was also quite different, gaining a reputation for adopting a peaceful role, and eschewing outrages typical of Ribbonism in Ireland. To be sure, the conditions contributing to the development of the former movement in Ireland were not present in America; with one exception. During the early 1870s, several lodges based in the coalfields of Pennsylvania, going under the name of the Molly Maguires, and disillusioned at the conditions of their workplace, took up arms against their employers.⁴⁶¹ Violence ensued for many years until most of the leadership

⁴⁵⁶Hughes and MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 224.

⁴⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp 224-5.

⁴⁵⁸Hughes and MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 262.

⁴⁵⁹Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, p. 15.

⁴⁶⁰Hughes and MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 306; CO 904/16, Sept. 1890.

⁴⁶¹In Ireland as well, the Molly Maguires existed from the mid-1840s. Emerging from ‘a pre-existing base of Ribbon organisation and agrarian redresser activity’ they were just one of the groups that comprised a ‘multifarious Ribbon movement’. Hughes and MacRaild, *Ribbon Societies*, pp 177-82. For more on the Irish movement try Jennifer Kelly, ‘Local Memories and Manipulation of the Past in Pre-Famine County Leitrim’ in Terence Dooley (ed) *Ireland’s Polemical Past: Views of Irish History in Honour of R.V. Comerford* (Dublin, 2010), pp 51-67; Breandan Mac Suibhne, “‘Bastard Ribbonism’: The Molly Maguires, the Uneven Failure of Entitlement and the Politics of Post-Famine adjustment”, in Enda Delaney and Breandan Mac Suibhne (eds) *Ireland’s Great Famine and Popular Politics* (Abingdon, 2016), pp 186-231; and for the American society, W. Broehl Jr., *The Molly Maguires* (Cambridge, 1964);

were convicted and executed in a series of trials between 1876 and 1877. Soon after, Bishop O’Hara of Scranton, Pennsylvania excommunicated all members of the AOH in the state. At a national convention in New York (1877) the rest of the society had no recourse other than to cut all links with those denounced. This halted any clerical condemnation before it could begin, and afterwards the society was complimented by the clergy for its swift and decisive action.⁴⁶²

About 1884, relations between the American and Irish organisations changed. This had, in part, to do with the conditions of the 1836 charter. One stipulation of membership, long since disregarded, admitted only those born in Ireland. Another, still in force, however, insisted that members be born to two Irish parents. Given America’s status as a nation built on the back of emigrants, the Order there was naturally being deprived of many potential members. An arguably even more contentious issue was the nature of the American-Irish relationship. Before the splits of 1884 and 1887, the society in Ireland was ruled by an executive known as the Board of Erin (BOE). Being that Ireland was the origin point for Hibernianism, this body fancied itself the ‘supreme world authority’ in the movement. Strengthening this argument was the fact that the American organisation paid the latter quarterly levies, for which it received the period’s “goods”. The status quo was amenable only while the Order in America was nascent, however, for by the 1880s the organisation there dwarfed its parent, both in numbers and wealth. The secondary position of the American body became increasingly absurd. Voice was finally put to such sentiments at a convention of the organisation in May 1884. There, a narrow majority succeeded in amending the constitution so that ‘those of Irish birth or descent would have the right of admission’.⁴⁶³ Some members disagreed and established their own branch; named for its fealty, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Board of Erin. John Nolan, a former member of the BOE became their new national delegate.⁴⁶⁴

Not long after the split in the American organisation, it transpired that the AOH of America, despite all claims to the contrary, had not in fact severed all links with the Board of Erin in Ireland, and was in fact receiving “goods” from it. Nolan, as national delegate to the loyal American section was sent to Ireland to investigate. Despite attempts by another member – John Crilly – to bar his access, Nolan succeeded in attending a

Mark Bulik, *The Sons of Molly Maguire: The Irish Roots of America’s First Labour War* (New York, 2015).

⁴⁶²Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, pp 22.

⁴⁶³Bergin, *A History of the Ancient Order*, p. 37.

⁴⁶⁴Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, p. 23.

quarterly meeting of the Board in March 1887. All those delegates attending the meeting, save for four (including Crilly) took an oath that they had not provided, nor had any knowledge of merchandise being communicated to the AOH of America. The verdict when it came was unsurprising. The four were quickly ejected from the Order. This was not the last to be heard from the individuals in question, however. On the 4 June 1887, John Crilly, their national delegate, established another board and entered into an agreement with the AOH of America. A relationship of equality would be observed between the two, both parties agreeing not to interfere in the other's affairs. The situation was now such that there were two Hibernians groups in America with another two in Ireland. The majority faction in America (the AOH of America) was tied to the smaller one in Ireland (Crilly and his followers) while the smaller combination in America, the AOH Board of Erin, was linked with the larger grouping in Ireland, then controlled by John Morgan.⁴⁶⁵

Between 1887 and 1897 both Irish organisations experienced a period of sterility. Following the split, several lodges lost all contact with the centre and were forced to operate autonomously. Local activity now took the form of a petty and long running feud between Crilly and Morgan. Many members did not know whose side they were on. Those who did, planted informants, disrupted meetings and tried to persuade others to defect.⁴⁶⁶ Church opposition to the movement was also as alive as ever. In July 1890 the Rev McNeece of Armagh reported having examined the rules of the society, its promoters and propagators. His conclusion was that in every district he knew of, they were the men who had been the county masters or head centres of ribbon societies.⁴⁶⁷ The Order seems to have come to McNeece's attention only a year prior. In April 1889 he warned his parishioners against a person purporting to be a priest, who while recently in the city (Londonderry), had been busy swearing members into some secret society. The priest in question can only have been W.J. O'Shaugnessy, chairman of the majority faction in America. After O'Shaugnessy was chased from the city by the local clergy, he attempted to defend the organisation in a letter to the press. Speaking of the American organisation, he said it employed only lawful and praiseworthy means. More still, the nature and

⁴⁶⁵Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 24.

⁴⁶⁶Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 25.

⁴⁶⁷*IN*, 22 Nov. 1892. See also CO 904/16.

constitution of the American and Irish societies were almost identical. Finally, the AOH was tolerated and in fact had several church benefactors in America.⁴⁶⁸

Church involvement in Hibernian activity became more pronounced from 1897 onwards. In August of that year the leadership of both American groups agreed to the arbitration of Bishop McFaul of Trenton, New Jersey. Come December McFaul decided in favour of the majority faction, the AOH of America. His conditions included the election of a national president who would devise the “goods” for the membership until such time as the Irish branches of the Order would be reconciled. This was agreed to by both sides and reunification achieved at a convention in Trenton, June 1898. On the Irish side, however, the deadlock seemed as unyielding as ever, though the involvement of Fr. John J. McKinley of Castlewellan, was soon to change that. One of the few pro-AOH clerics in Ireland, McKinley was a natural fit for the role of mediator. Though proposed meetings and conferences for May and November 1901 fell through, McKinley remained undeterred.⁴⁶⁹ The membership of both groups was by now reaching the end of their tethers. On the 2 December 1901 the Board of Erin section held their quarterly meeting without John Morgan. Only the next day, a meeting of the Board of America section passed a resolution in favour of union with the Board of Erin section. Crilly, sensing the way things were going, had relented. Reunification was achieved at a conference involving both groups in Belfast on the 4 March 1902.⁴⁷⁰ All that remained was a follow-up conference set for 1904, to ‘consider the reconstruction of the organisation, with an amended constitution’.⁴⁷¹ Calls for an overhaul were strongest amongst the society in Scotland.

The AOH and the Catholic Church in Scotland

‘Separated by only some dozen miles at the narrowest part of the channel that divides them’, Ireland and Scotland ‘naturally had associations with each other from the earliest

⁴⁶⁸*The Donegal Vindicator*, 23 Aug. 1890.

⁴⁶⁹At least one attempt at reconciliation had been made by Crilly and Morgan in December 1892. Many charges of embezzling and other insinuations were bandied about. Ultimately, three fourths of those present voted in favour of the Morgan section. Crilly and his group refused to accept the decision and the meeting broke up. CO 904/16.

⁴⁷⁰Even though unity was achieved in March 1902, a portion of the members under Mr. James Doherty, National Delegate to the Board of Erin America, refused to accept McFaul’s decision, only finally relenting in 1903. Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, p.40.

⁴⁷¹Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, p. 38.

times'.⁴⁷² From the eighteenth century, restraints on Irish trade, an iniquitous land system, the penal laws, absenteeism and the political dependence of the Irish Parliament 'produced the conditions that for a century and a half gave the Irishman a home in every country but his own'.⁴⁷³ From Belfast, Dublin and Londonderry at first, the Irish came on steamboats to work as temporary harvesters or else settle as farm servants. With the onset of the Industrial Revolution the villages and hamlets of the eighteenth century expanded into large towns.⁴⁷⁴ The coal and iron, textile and subsidiary industries became 'the magnets that attracted tens of thousands of immigrants in search of daily bread'.⁴⁷⁵ By 1841 the Irish in Scotland amounted to 126,000 or nearly 5 per cent of the total population, and immigration had persisted long enough to establish second and third generations. Most resided in Glasgow where they formed more than a quarter of the city's 300,000 occupants. Members of the poor, lower class, Irishmen found work as hand-loom cotton weavers or labourers in the coal and iron industries or the building trade.⁴⁷⁶ During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century we see the formation of Hibernian (1792) and St. Patrick (1810) societies, likely fronts for Ribbonmen.⁴⁷⁷ The Scottish political and religious authorities were justifiably uneasy about possible links between the two.⁴⁷⁸

Police intelligence reports revealed the existence of a significant Ribbon organisation in Edinburgh and Glasgow between 1839 and 1841. Branches also existed in numerous towns surrounding both cities. Ribbonmen in Scotland offered job opportunities and political sanctuary for their brothers arriving from Ireland. Those involved in the society were mainly from the lower working-class and shared the antipathy of their cousins in Belfast for Orangeism. Wielding black-thorn clubs, Ribbonmen participated in sectarian riots in Ayrshire, Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire, throughout the 1850s.⁴⁷⁹ Elaine

⁴⁷²J.E. Handley, *The Irish in Scotland, 1798-1845* (Cork, 1945), p. 3.

⁴⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴⁷⁴Handley, *The Irish in Scotland*, pp 38-43, 81.

⁴⁷⁵*Ibid.*, *The Irish in Scotland*, p. 105.

⁴⁷⁶Handley, *The Irish in Scotland*, pp 90-127. For more on Irish emigration try David Fitzpatrick, 'The Irish in Britain, 1871-1921' in W.E. Vaughan (ed) *A New History of Ireland, Vol. VI, Ireland under the Union, II: 1870-1921* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); David Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1871-1921' in W.E. Vaughan (ed) *A New History of Ireland, Vol. VI, Ireland under the Union, II: 1870-1921* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); D.H. Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Dufour Editions, 1997); Donald MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain: 1750-1939* (2nd ed., Basingstoke: 2011).

⁴⁷⁷'Glasgow: Hibernian Society', FS1/16/135, NRS.; 'Glasgow: St. Patrick Friendly Society', FS1/16/157, NRS.

⁴⁷⁸Hagan, 'Ancient Order', p. 3.

⁴⁷⁹Mairtin O' Cathain, 'Bullet Moulders and Blackthorn Men: A Comparative Study of Irish Nationalist Secret Society Culture in Mid-Nineteenth-century Scotland and Ulster' in R.J. Morris (ed) *Ireland and Scotland, Order and Disorder, 1600-2000* (John Donald, 2005), p. 157. See also See Colonial Office papers, reports and letters re Ribbonism in Scotland, 1839-41, CO 904/8; Handley, *The Irish in Scotland*, pp 40-1; William S. Marshall, *The Billy Boys* (Edinburgh, 1996), pp 32-7; Alan B. Campbell, *The*

McFarland and Martin Mitchell have shown how an exiled Irish republican movement existed in Scotland for some years after the 1798 rebellion. This group became a part of the Scottish radical movement and the developing Irish immigrant secret society culture of Defenderism or Ribbonism.⁴⁸⁰ Latterly, Mairtin O' Cathain has identified Ribbonism as one of the three faces of the Irish Republican Brotherhood as it existed in late nineteenth century Scotland.⁴⁸¹ Within the IRB, Ribbonmen were divided over whether to support the traditionalists, those who were wedded to the idea of 'complete separation' through 'armed insurrection' and utilised a secret society culture, or the reformists, 'who challenged the efficacy of the physical-force tradition...arguing for an "open" movement and whole-hearted cooperation with the emergent Home Rulers'.⁴⁸² While many Ribbon elements passed increasingly from the reformist into the Home Rule camp during the 1870s, several were involved in the Fenian dynamite campaign of the 1880s which saw bombs explode in Glasgow, Liverpool and London.⁴⁸³

During the nineteenth century the Scottish Catholic Church was overwhelmed by Irish emigration, in large part a product of the Great Famine. Between 1845 and 1855, an estimated 2.1 million men, women and children left Ireland for overseas destinations, with somewhere in the region of 200-300,000 settling in Great Britain. Although less than 100,000 came to Scotland they did not spread across the country but instead concentrated in particular areas, thus prompting an almost apocalyptic reaction from the Scottish natives. By 1851 there were nearly 210,000 Irish-born in Scotland, constituting nearly a fifth of the populations of Glasgow and Dundee and 16.8 per cent in Lanarkshire.⁴⁸⁴ While those with money headed across the Atlantic, the famine migrations to Great Britain, 'because of quicker access and cheaper fares', were almost unilaterally composed of the very poor.⁴⁸⁵ As the Irish population increased, the Scottish Catholic Church struggled to

Lanarkshire miners (Edinburgh, 1979), pp 316-9; W.S. Brownlie, *The proud trooper* (London, 1964), pp 71-2).

⁴⁸⁰E.W. McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1994); M.J. Mitchell, *The Irish in the West of Scotland, 1797-1848* (Edinburgh, 1998).

⁴⁸¹Mairtin O' Cathain, 'Fenian dynamite: dissident Irish republicans in late nineteenth-century Scotland', in Oonagh Walsh (ed) *Ireland Abroad, Politics and Professions in the Nineteenth Century* (Dublin, 2003), pp 160-71.

⁴⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁴⁸³O' Cathain, 'Fenian dynamite' in *Ireland Abroad*, p. 163.

⁴⁸⁴T.M. Devine, 'The Great Irish Famine and Scottish History' in M.J. Mitchell (ed), *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008), pp 20-1.

⁴⁸⁵Devine, 'The Great Irish Famine and Scottish History' in *New Perspectives*, p. 21. For more on the Famine you might try R.W.D. Edwards, T.P. Williams (eds) *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845-1852* (1956); Mary E. Daly, *The Famine in Ireland* (Dundalk, 1986); John Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking: A History of the Great Irish Famine* (London, 2013)

accommodate this burgeoning Catholicism. In 1850 there were 100 priests but by 1910 this figure had risen to 540. In 1838, in the central belt of Scotland, 52 permanent chapels, a nunnery and an estimated 150,000 primarily Irish faithful grew by 1855, to 4 convents, about 100 chapels, and numerous Sunday schools for about 200,000 Catholics. While Glasgow had just 1 school in 1834, there were 17 by 1870.⁴⁸⁶

These beneficial developments aside, it is clear that the Scottish Hierarchy had ‘profound misgivings about the Irish, particularly the quality of their clergy...their alleged abrasiveness, political sympathies and lack of education’.⁴⁸⁷ Up until the late nineteenth century, meantime, a significant portion of the Catholic Irish community was opposed to the hegemony of the Scottish clergy. Their argument was not without merit; because the majority of the Catholic population in the region - as indeed Scotland as a whole - was Irish or of Irish descent, they wanted to be served by Irish priests and governed by Irish bishops. These demands were given voice by the *Glasgow Free Press* in the 1860s, a newspaper of the Catholic Irish community that was patently against the Scottish bishops and their clergy. This bitter conflict ended in 1868 when Rome intervened and appointed an Englishman, Charles Eyre, to take charge of the Church in the west of Scotland.⁴⁸⁸ Perhaps unsurprisingly, Eyre advocated a centralising policy and under his control the Church expanded rapidly. While he favoured welfare, charitable, social, devotional and recreational organisations, however, Eyre was not favourably disposed towards the culture of secretive associationalism which Irish emigrants brought with them.⁴⁸⁹

As early as 1873 we see evidence of polarisation amongst the British Hierarchy on this subject. In defence of the Hibernian organisation, Fr. Duick of St. Augustines, Manchester wrote to Fr. Howley, secretary to the Archbishop of Glasgow, saying that the organisation was not subversive, but ‘laboured under an injustice’ based on archaic rules. Clerical opinion amongst the Scottish Hierarchy would seem to have been against the organisation at the time. Pope Leo’s Apostolic Constitution of 1825 was in effect in Scotland, and the church was on the lookout for secret society activity. In April 1875, the

⁴⁸⁶Ibid., pp 33-6.

⁴⁸⁷Bernard Aspinwall, ‘Catholic Devotion in Victorian Scotland’ in M.J. Mitchell (ed), *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008), p. 36.

⁴⁸⁸Martin J. Mitchell, ‘Irish Catholics in the West of Scotland in the Nineteenth Century: Despised by Scottish workers and controlled by the Church?’ in M.J. Mitchell (ed), *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008), p. 12. For more on Eyre, you might try Bernard Aspinwall, ‘Anyone for Glasgow? The strange nomination of the Rt Rev. Charles Eyre in 1868’, *Recusant History*, 23 (4) (1997), pp 596-8.

⁴⁸⁹Mitchell, ‘Irish Catholics’ in *New Perspectives*, pp 12-3.

Archbishop's new secretary, James P. Conway, forwarded Duick's correspondence along with a letter from the west of Scotland AOH delegate, to Rev. Williams of Springburn.

The issue in this case seems to have been two of the society's rules:

4. The members shall meet every month, and shall then pay their subscriptions, and as they generally meet in Public Houses, they shall be careful as to intoxication.

6. If any Brother shall be spoken ill of or otherwise treated unjustly, the members shall render him all possible assistance; and in matters of business the preference shall be given to those attached to the interests of the Society.

To the clergy, rule four implied intemperance; rule six, unlawful behaviour. According to the AOH delegate, however, neither rule suggested anything other than the obvious. Rule four was considered a necessity – no other hall, whether church or otherwise was available – while rule six could be amended to read 'all lawful assistance' if so required. The delegate finished his letter by declaring that they were 'not Ribbonmen but rather a Catholic benevolent society'.⁴⁹⁰

On the 5 May 1882, Archbishop Eyre commissioned an enquiry into secret societies with a focus on the Hibernian movement. A committee was appointed, consisting initially of four members – Rev. Michael Condon, Greenock, Rev. Michael Gleeson, Lanark, and David Carmichael, and Alexander Munro, both Glasgow priests – with a fifth member, Rev. Jas. McIntosh, Airdrie, later added because of his contacts within the St. Patrick's Fraternal Society.⁴⁹¹ On the 22 May, the commission interviewed two Lanarkshire miners, John Smith and John McCormick, both ex members of the St. Patrick's Fraternal Society. McCormick revealed an oath bound society where failure to obey an order could result in expulsion or a beating. Smyth confirmed this, exclaiming 'I think that if I did not do what I was ordered, I could not tell what might happen to me'. Rev. McIntosh later supplemented these nefarious findings with some of his own, claiming that the Coatbridge division intended on having Rev. M. O'Keefe 'shot' for having denounced the society from the pulpit. The threat was made real by an apparent 'revolver find' as well. With such sensational and damning discoveries, no wonder then that the commission's report described Hibernianism as merely Ribbonism by another name. Their recommended

⁴⁹⁰West of Scotland Delegate to Conway, 6 Apr. 1875, GRCAA.

⁴⁹¹Eyre to Condon, 5 May 1882, GRCAA.

action was a blanket ban of all such societies, to include all offshoots or bodies with similar means or ends in view.⁴⁹²

The clerical ban of 1882 did not produce the curtailment of Hibernianism that the Hierarchy might have wished.⁴⁹³ While historians like William Sloan have demonstrated how the Irish in Scotland practiced low levels of religious observance during the nineteenth century, they still ‘retained their sense of Catholic identity and heritage, which was reinforced by the active Catholicism around them’.⁴⁹⁴ Indeed, at the time there were three different Hibernian organisations in existence, with ostensibly similar functions - the St. Patricks Fraternal Society, St. Patricks Hibernian Society and the Hibernian Funeral Society.⁴⁹⁵ Only the church knew of their allegiance to one central authority in Ireland, the Board of Erin. By 1889, however, a Bishops conference noted that they had amalgamated, becoming one entity ‘now the Ancient Order of Hibernians’.⁴⁹⁶ Hugh P. Hagan has suggested that Hibernian associational fragmentation initially stemmed from the Scottish clergy’s ‘strict adherence to the Apostolic Constitution (1825)’, but this hastened ‘local combination’ which in turn ‘was accentuated through Irish famine immigration to Scotland’. Further suppression, as with the ban of 1882, may have expedited additional change by such an ‘adaptable group’. Fusion could even have been the product of ‘united action’; an attempt to consolidate in the face of church opposition. As to the Order’s continued propagation and survival, Hagan believes that the answer lay with the Scottish Hierarchy’s policy towards Irish missionary priests.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹²Commission Report, 8 Feb 1883, GRCAA.

⁴⁹³Irish Catholic participation in the AOH despite Church protests feeds into Martin J. Mitchell’s argument that while the Catholic Irish admired and respected their priests and deferred to the Church in the spiritual and religious sphere, in other matters, especially political and social ‘many members of the Catholic Irish community showed a strong independence of mind, and rejected the views, advice and even the orders of their priests and bishops’. This is in contrast to the claims of other historians that the Catholic community and its clergy ‘exercised a considerable degree of power and authority over the Irish’. For Mitchell’s revision, see ‘Irish Catholics’ in *New Perspectives*, pp 1-19. For the alternative view try W.M. Walker, ‘Irish immigrants in Scotland: their priests, politics and parochial life’, *Historical Journal*, 15 (4) (1972), pp 649-67; Tom Gallagher, ‘The Catholic Irish in Scotland: in search of identity’, in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp 19-43.

⁴⁹⁴William Sloan, ‘Religious Affiliation and the Immigrant Experience: Catholic Irish and Protestant Highlanders in Glasgow, 1830-1850’ in T.M. Devine (ed) *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar, University of Strathclyde, 1898-90* (John Donald, 2001),

⁴⁹⁵James E. Handley claims that the Hibernians had ‘a strong representation among the immigrants’ and the Hibernian Funeral Society came first, with the title changing to St. Patrick’s Fraternal Organisation or Society in 1825. J.E. Handley, *The Irish in Modern Scotland* (Oxford, 1947), p. 283.

⁴⁹⁶‘A.O.H., notes regarding’, E.D.6/187/5, SCA.

⁴⁹⁷Hagan, ‘Ancient Order’, p. 16.

Irish priests naturally fulfilled a highly significant role in the Scottish Catholic Church, gaining access to immigrant communities, which, by their segregated nature, presented difficulties for the native clergy. Once the parish was organised satisfactorily, the missionary moved on and was replaced by his Scottish counterpart. Irish priests also tended to be more supportive of Irish societies like the AOH. In general, however, Catholic clergy – whether Irish or Scottish – were insistent about ‘preserving an enclave insulated from the surrounding society’. Social integration held out the danger of better Protestant schools or a Protestant marriage and the clergy encouraged and preached ‘communal self-help’ - one of the underlying principles of associational culture no less - to counter it.⁴⁹⁸ In April 1889, around the same time he was in Derry visiting the membership there, Fr. O’Shaughnessy of the Sacred Heart Mission, Girvin, was reprimanded by Canon Ritchie of Glasgow for fraternising with the AOH. In his letter, O’Shaughnessy expressed his surprise at the Order’s ban, assuming only that there had been a mistake, that the society had in fact ‘been misrepresented’. His loyalty to the Catholic Church was not in doubt, he assured. The AOH “goods” were simply ‘harmless signs’ he explained, enabling the society to keep their business to themselves ‘not unlike the Irish Foresters’.⁴⁹⁹ Though O’Shaughnessy was forced to ‘unreservedly’ give up the society in October 1890, his example does help to explain why the Order continued to grow, especially in areas outside the diocesan centre, where the ban was clearly not in full effect.⁵⁰⁰

Local resistance saw the 1882 clerical ban renewed, and announced yet again, in December 1894.⁵⁰¹ After the O’Shaughnessy episode, Bishop Maguire, a member of Archbishop Eyre’s inner circle, made his own personal investigation into the AOH. Among those he contacted was Cardinal Logue, Prelate of Ireland.⁵⁰² Logue was a long-time critic of the society and wrote back accordingly: ‘Everything appeared in order’, ‘in theory and according to their constitution and rules’; ‘in practice [however] they were

⁴⁹⁸Tom Gallagher, ‘The Catholic Irish in Scotland: In Search of Identity’ in T.M. Devine (ed) *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar, University of Strathclyde, 1898-90* (John Donald, 2001), pp 21-2.

⁴⁹⁹O’Shaughnessy to Ritchie, 14 Apr. 1889, GRCAA.

⁵⁰⁰A.O.H. Excerpts of Minutes from Hierarchy Meetings, E.D.6/187/5, SCA. A meeting of Scottish Bishops in September 1891 revealed that ‘although members of the AOH were refused absolution in the Archdiocese of Glasgow’, they were ‘being absolved elsewhere’.

⁵⁰¹The decree was altered in July 1899 to specifically include the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Instructions regarding Condemned Societies, 31 Jul. 1899, GRCAA.

⁵⁰²For Logue, try John Privilege, *Michael Logue and the Catholic Church in Ireland, 1879-1925* (Manchester, 2014).

nothing more than revamped Ribbonism, and agents provocateur'.⁵⁰³ Maguire's conclusion, for which he sought support from amongst the other Scottish Bishops, was that the societies mentioned in the 1882 decree were now reviving under the name of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. After securing permission from the Hierarchy he had the Order's name added to the decree under the rules of the Apostolic Constitution.⁵⁰⁴

Hibernianism in America, and events there, as with the split and its reflection in Irish circles, shaped the next phase in Scotland. In November 1898 James Sherin, the district secretary for the Glasgow AOH, contacted Bishop Maguire to seek reappraisal for his organisation, in lieu 'of the successful church intervention in America'.⁵⁰⁵ Clerical involvement in the American case not only helped to rekindle hopes of the ban being lifted in Scotland, it also encouraged the adoption of American practices, in an attempt to remove it altogether. More still, Sherin was not contacting Maguire on behalf of all Hibernians in Scotland, only those under the umbrella of the new AOH Registered Benefit Society. According to Hagan, the Scottish members had become envious of their American counterparts, - 'the result of constantly looking towards a thriving concern' - watching them secure church approval and grow in finance and numbers.⁵⁰⁶ This jealousy, in conjunction with undoubted frustration at repeated clerical rebuffs seems to have resulted in the acquisition of 'legal status' by a group of Scottish divisions in Glasgow, early in 1898, under the terms of the 1896 Friendly Societies Act.⁵⁰⁷ Unfortunately, as Hagan has said, the clergy were less concerned with the society's 'printed rules' than their 'actual implementation'. This new development, as with so many other previous appeals and modifications of Hibernian rules, was to have little wash with the Hierarchy.⁵⁰⁸

When the society was condemned yet again in 1899, the members naturally apportioned some of the blame to their cousins in Ireland. Hibernianism there was still, rather embarrassingly, divided. The Scottish, however, were unrelenting in their pursuit of church approbation. If a greater sacrifice was required, then it would be made. If registration by some of the membership could not convince the church, then perhaps registration by all, would. Accordingly, in August 1899, Sherin notified the Scottish Hierarchy that the days of signs and passwords were now behind them.⁵⁰⁹ Even though

⁵⁰³Logue to Maguire, 8 Dec. 1896, GRCAA.

⁵⁰⁴Eyre to Scottish Bishops, 16 Dec. 1896, GRCAA.

⁵⁰⁵Sherin to Maguire, Nov. 1898, GRCAA.

⁵⁰⁶Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 36.

⁵⁰⁷O'Brien to Maguire, 5 Jan. 1898, GRCAA.

⁵⁰⁸Rule books were forwarded to the Scottish Hierarchy for 1889, 1894 and 1898, GRCAA.

⁵⁰⁹Sherin to Eyre: Aug. 1899, GRCAA.

registration was not countenanced at the March 1902 reunification meeting, the Scottish section were savvy enough to recognise the implications of the reorganisation conference set for 1904. To improve their prospects, they petitioned in September 1902 for a place on the Board of Erin. This was eventually agreed to in May 1904 when the Scottish section's secretary, Edward McAspurn, was admitted.⁵¹⁰ In the meantime a propaganda campaign was initiated, advocating the compulsory registration of the entire Order. In Ulster the Scottish section appointed an organiser, Owen McNally, to convert and establish divisions on a registered footing. Debate on registration was certainly passionate and while almost fifty divisions had registered by 1903, the BOE was reluctant to completely embrace the new programme. In January 1905 the Scottish section officially, broke ties. In the years that followed, the latter found itself on the side of a losing battle, however. Despite a legal engagement and repeated propaganda tussles, the BOE eventually succeeded by the time of the First World War in returning almost all of the dissenting divisions to the fold. Though the split of 1905 and subsequent BOE victory had a decided effect on the Hibernian organisation in Ireland and Great Britain, it was not ultimately this event, but another one, which was to have an even more significant role in the papal toleration of 1910.⁵¹¹

In March 1902, Archbishop Eyre, the Scottish ecclesiastic responsible for instigating and reasserting multiple bans against the AOH died. His successor, Bishop John Maguire, was by no means a friend to Hibernianism, but he was the first Scottish Archbishop of Irish stock and so was warmly welcomed by the Irish Catholic community. In June 1906, Maguire received correspondence from the Holy Office, Rome, requesting clarification as to why the Hibernians were refused absolution in certain areas of Scotland. Though Maguire was keen to distance himself from a 'situation' which had developed 'during his predecessor's time', he nevertheless commissioned a new enquiry into the Order.⁵¹² For his part, Hagan has suggested that developments in Ireland 'induced a more conciliatory mood among the Scottish clergy'.⁵¹³ Throughout 1904 and 1905 the Order there made swift progress. First the church ban on the society was lifted. Then the organisation was given a structural facelift. A new constitution was formed and crucially, several members

⁵¹⁰Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 34.

⁵¹¹Many Hibernians were hopeful that victory over the renegade Scottish section and registration under a united Board of Erin would be 'the means of removing the ban which the R.C. Bishops have placed upon the society there'. CO 904/118, Feb. 1908.

⁵¹²Minutes of Hierarchy Meeting, E.D.6/187/6, SCA

⁵¹³Hagan, 'Ancient Order', p. 44.

of the Irish Catholic Church - including Reverends J.J. McKinley, James Canon and Bishop O'Donnell - were elected to senior positions within the organisation.⁵¹⁴ It is clear as well, that the AOH's clerical supporters, as indeed, some members of the Scottish Catholic Church, were putting pressure on the Scottish Hierarchy. In September 1905, Mitchell Quinn, editor of the *Glasgow Observer* received a letter from a Glasgow priest, asking 'can anyone point at any document that can be inspected, where the condemnation of the A.O.H. by the Scottish Bishops is sanctioned by any congregation (Rome)?'. Though Quinn was to tell the Hierarchy 'we thought it better not print this letter and we did not do so', more were soon forthcoming. On the 2 January 1906 the *Glasgow Observer* forwarded another unprinted letter, allegedly from a priest, who reasoned 'If the A.O.H. was once a secret society and if it was condemned then as such – now, when it has ceased to be secret surely that censure ought to be removed'.⁵¹⁵ At an AOH rally in Motherwell on St. Patrick's Day, 1906, Rev. J.J. McKinley, the BOE's very own national chaplain, also denounced the Hierarchy for their attitude towards the Order.⁵¹⁶

On the 25 February 1907, Archbishop Maguire's commission, composed of Reverends Toner, Ritchie, Rogan and Houlihan – three of whom were Irish – delivered a favourable report on the society.⁵¹⁷ Taking every aspect of the Order into consideration, from 'its origin' to its 'present state', they recommended 'toleration' if not 'approbation'. They saw no reason to prevent 'the offering of facilities for approaching the Sacraments', nor to 'limit the discretion of priests, who as confessors would still have to judge each case on its merits'. Though a far cry from previous clerical assessments, these were still only the recommendations of Toner, Ritchie and Rogan. Houlihan, for his part, urged the immediate 'removal of the church ban'.⁵¹⁸ In June 1907, Maguire convened a meeting of the Scottish Bishops in Glasgow and reported his submission of the matter to the Vatican, noting that it 'would be a considerable time before the Holy Office could decide'.⁵¹⁹ During July the Hierarchy issued a circular letter to its clergy reminding them that the

⁵¹⁴A.O.H. Address to National Officers, Oct. 1905, GRCAA.

⁵¹⁵Quinn to Maguire, 8 Sept. 1905, GRCAA.

⁵¹⁶Laylor to Ritchie, 22 Mar. 1906, GRCAA.

⁵¹⁷In December 1906, Glasgow native and national vice-president, James Stafford reported on how several members, including Nugent and himself had been interviewed by the commission. 'BOE mins', 5 Dec. 1906.

⁵¹⁸Report of the Commission on the Soc. of the A.O.H., 25 Feb. 1907, GRCAA.

⁵¹⁹Minutes of Hierarchy Meeting: 11 June 1907, E.D.6/187/6, SCA. In September 1908 the president of Armagh county board noted that a memorial had been sent to the Pope and signed by five (unnamed) Bishops. Only the Bishop of Edinburgh had apparently refused to sign and the county president advised against any 'hasty action on the parts of the Brothers in Armagh' lest they injure the 'prospects of the Memorial'. CO 904/118, Sept. 1908.

condemnation of the Society had not been withdrawn and while the question of the Order's position had been recently submitted to the Holy See, no instructions had yet been received.⁵²⁰ In August the BOE nominated McKinley, Devlin, Nugent and Fr. Cannon (national trustee) to form a committee and wait upon the standing committee of the Archbishops and Bishops of Scotland at any place and time that might be convenient, 'with a view to explain[ing] the position of [the AOH] and so resolve any 'misunderstanding'.'⁵²¹ During 1908 and 1909, plans were made to speak with Monsignor O'Riordan, an Irish priest who acted as Rector of the Pontifical Irish College in Rome, and draw up a petition to submit to the holy see.⁵²² In December 1909, a Vatican decree, signed by Cardinal Rampolla finally declared that 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians, Board of Erin...may be tolerated'.⁵²³ Given that the national secretary was requested to convey him thanks in early 1910 for his 'very successful efforts to get the ban removed', it seems likely that O'Riordan was instrumental in the Vatican's decision.⁵²⁴

Church toleration in Ireland and Scotland

In 1910 the ban on the AOH in Scotland was officially removed. The society was now to be 'tolerated'.⁵²⁵ A similar development had occurred in Ireland six years prior, but there, as in Scotland, the Hibernians would find the path to complete church approbation a difficult one. During 1904, delegates from all over Great Britain and Ireland submitted their case to the Irish Catholic Hierarchy. The society's constitution and rules were offered for perusal, the membership willing to adopt any suggestions and correct anything that was found to be 'not in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church'. As nothing more than a 'Catholic Benefit and Patriotic Society, suited to the wants of the humble labouring man' they claimed to keep no secrets 'from the Ecclesiastical Authority or Catholic Priest'. One way of proving that everything was above board was to invite clerical participation in the organisation. The society's members were, accordingly, very anxious to have a national, and county chaplains, like their counterparts in America. The letter went on to admit that the society had been rent by 'dissension and factionism' in

⁵²⁰Handley, *The Irish in Modern Scotland*, p. 293.

⁵²¹'BOE Mins', Aug. 1907.

⁵²²'BOE mins', 28 Aug. 1908; *Ibid.*, 22 Aug. 1909; 'BOE mins', 8 Dec. 1909.

⁵²³Papal Circular, 15 Dec. 1909, E.D.6/187/6, SCA.

⁵²⁴'BOE mins', 29 Mar. 1910.

⁵²⁵Papal Circular, 15 Dec. 1909, E.D.6/187/6, SCA.

the past, but those responsible were now ‘cut off’. The delegates promised to live as ‘good Catholics’ and concluded with the pitiable statement: ‘If these things be not observed then we must plead that we are worthy of the Church’s condemnation’.⁵²⁶

Ultimately, it was largely through the assistance of one of the Irish Hierarchy’s own, Patrick O’Donnell, the Bishop of Raphoe, that the AOH succeeded at a conference of the Bishops at Maynooth in 1904, in having the ban on their society in Ireland lifted.⁵²⁷ O’Donnell became a keen supporter of the Irish Party and publicly endorsed the United Irish League in 1899. Since 1890 many clergy held out the hope of a ‘fundamental retrogression to the lopsided character of Irish politics before Parnell, in which “national” interests were subordinate to “Catholic” interests and clerical influence predominated over lay’.⁵²⁸ This dream found its vehicle in T.M. Healy. After the Party split, John Dillon sought to perpetuate Parnell’s system of strong central leadership while Healy argued for more democratic decision-making machinery within the Party and wanted constituencies to have freed rein in choosing their candidates. The latter state of affairs had a particular appeal for Churchmen, since it was at the local level that clerical influence could be most effectively exercised.⁵²⁹ The development of the United Irish League put paid to such ideas, however, and while O’Donnell, Croke and some others could see that ‘Healy’s promise of easy clerical dominance in politics was illusory’, others, like Cardinal Michael Logue continued to hold out hope.⁵³⁰

Just what the church’s new-found clemency of the AOH might imply, meantime, became clear in November 1906. That month the members of division 1, Derry received correspondence from a local priest, Fr. William Doherty, asking for the sympathy of the society in aid of Nazareth House. In his letter Doherty strongly implied that the Order needed to prove their high-minded credentials: ‘He would not...dream of writing thus to an ordinary benefit society, but as [their] Order aimed at being more interested in the wellbeing of church or country than even of self...’.⁵³¹ When asked for further clarification as to how they might help, Doherty intimated that the Order needed to be ‘well conducted’ and that the members should ‘give no offence’, ‘because the bishops of

⁵²⁶Petition to the most eminent and revered – the Irish Catholic Hierarchy, 1904, POD, RDA.

⁵²⁷*NS*, 25 Apr. 1905. A nationalist demonstration at Ardglass, East Down in March 1905 also thanked two other contributors: Cardinal Logue and the Most Rev. Dr. Henry. *INBMN*, 18 Mar. 1905. For O’Donnell, try Pdraig S. O’ Baoighill, *Cardinal Patrick O’Donnell, 1856-1927* (Donegal, 2008).

⁵²⁸Miller, *Church, State, and Nation*, p. 44.

⁵²⁹*Ibid.*, pp 44-5.

⁵³⁰Miller, *Church, State, and Nation*, p. 47.

⁵³¹‘Derry mins’, 16 Nov 1906.

Ireland were watching it very closely to see how it would get along for two more years before they would consider giving it their authority'.⁵³² The Hierarchy's decision to install a probationary period for the Order seems in retrospect to have been a judicious one. Complicating things, however, was the existence of two very different AOH bodies at the time (the AOH BOE and the Scottish section), a fact that seems to have been lost on Fr. Doherty: 'the Revd. Gentleman did not clearly understand the difference between the two Hibernian bodies existing in the city (Londonderry)'.⁵³³

On the 17 March 1905 at the opening of a branch of the AOH BOE in Glenties, Donegal, the chairman, Canon McFadden, drew attention to the fact that 'since the Order received ecclesiastical sanction, great numbers are joining'.⁵³⁴ As Foy has said 'a psychological breakthrough had been made...toleration removed the grounds for a crisis of conscience which must have deterred many potential members in the past'.⁵³⁵ In Ireland there was certainly an upswing in AOH growth after the events of 1904. Toleration clearly facilitated growth in areas previously blocked off. The Bishop of Cork, Dr. O'Callaghan was one of the first Munster bishops to recognise the Order after toleration had been granted. In 1914 he was thanked by all of the Cork city divisions for his support of the movement, particularly at a time when the aims of the organisation were not well understood. Fr. Russell, the chaplain to the Order in Cork could only praise the Society for 'Buil[ding] up a great body of young men of the best blood of Ireland, whose enthusiasm for the interests of God and of the county cannot...be surpassed in any present-day organisation'.⁵³⁶

Of course, Hibernian expansion did not go uncontested everywhere, and just as individuals like Dr. O'Callaghan could assist, so too could they hinder, even on occasion prevent it entirely. Clerical support was crucial to the success of the organisation in many places. When a new division was formed at Clonleigh, district of Raphoe in February 1906, the County Inspector remarked 'It has only recently received the sanction of the clergy and its existence was merely nominal until that time'.⁵³⁷ Another attempt to form a branch at Carrickmore, Tyrone during the same month was foiled 'owing to the opposition by the Parish Priest'.⁵³⁸ In a report on the formation of a division at

⁵³²Ibid., 6 Dec. 1906.

⁵³³'Derry mins', 16 Nov. 1906.

⁵³⁴CO 904/11, Mar. 1905.

⁵³⁵Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 91.

⁵³⁶*Cork Examiner*, Dec. 1914.

⁵³⁷CO 904/118, Feb. 1906.

⁵³⁸Ibid., Feb. 1906.

Drumkeeran, County Leitrim in August 1905, meanwhile, the CI gave the gloomy diagnosis ‘Father McMorrow has opposed it....it will be a failure’.⁵³⁹ It was often at divine service on a Sunday that the priest would warn his parishioners against the society.⁵⁴⁰ If admonition proved insufficient the clergy might take further action. In Omagh, County Tyrone, the local Curate, Father Nox visited the hall of Knocmoyle division on more than one occasion ‘and turned their members out by force’.⁵⁴¹ Members of divisions under attack wrote to their county boards and the BOE. A few brothers would then be deputed to wait on the bishop of the diocese to begin talks.⁵⁴²

Sometimes the AOH’s relationship with the local church could start out well and then take a turn for the worst. On St. Patrick’s Day, 1905, at Sligo, Bishop Clancy demonstrated his approval for the Order when he addressed a procession of 260 members wearing their badges and accompanied by two bands.⁵⁴³ When another event on the same lines occurred the following year, the local Hibernians appeared to be reaping the benefits of church approbation, with a turnout of 350 members and 3 bands.⁵⁴⁴ In June, however, the president of the local division, Dan O’Donnell, made the rather controversial statement that ‘if the AOH were to be a success, it should be more secret and the Roman Catholic clergy [should] be kept in the dark as to its working unless they became members’.⁵⁴⁵ It was only a matter of time before such rhetoric reached the ears of Clancy, and in March 1907 he censured the society in Sligo.⁵⁴⁶ It later came to light that O’Donnell had also made ‘some disrespectful remarks...about clergymen collecting money from the AOH in America for the building of Churches and who when they return do not support the Order’.⁵⁴⁷ In June 1908 the county Sligo board noted a decrease in membership due to this souring of relations.⁵⁴⁸ Without clerical support, the St. Patrick’s Day parade that year was pronounced a failure, only two hundred AOH members showing up.⁵⁴⁹ Gerard Morgan has justifiably concluded that ‘Clancy’s antagonism halted the spread of the AOH

⁵³⁹CO 904/118, Sept. 1905.

⁵⁴⁰Ibid., June 1908.

⁵⁴¹CO 904/118, Mar. 1909.

⁵⁴²‘BOE mins’, 9 Mar. 1909.

⁵⁴³CO 904/11, Mar. 1905.

⁵⁴⁴CO 904/117, Mar. 1906.

⁵⁴⁵CO 904/117, June 1906.

⁵⁴⁶Ibid., Oct. 1907.

⁵⁴⁷CO 904/117, Oct. 1907.

⁵⁴⁸CO 904/118, June 1908.

⁵⁴⁹Ibid., Mar. 1908.

in South Roscommon'.⁵⁵⁰ Further south, Dr. Hoare, the bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise seems to have distrusted the Order. Though the AOH regularly sent invitations to bishops and local clergy in the area to attend Hibernian parades and meetings, these were usually declined.⁵⁵¹

Most clerical objection stemmed from secrecy. What the Hierarchy did not know about, and so could not control, they feared. With no church toleration to begin with, those divisions in Ireland affiliated with the Scotch board were naturally the most vulnerable. Though they espoused registration they were still advocates of the physical force movement and accordingly, were even more secretive than the AOH BOE. War with the latter movement seems also to have resulted in some effort to prevent the members of the BOE becoming aware of their doings. In June 1909 meetings of Scottish section divisions in Donegal were held in remote places off the public road. The move also seems to have been necessary because local people 'would not give houses for the holding of meetings of this Section owing to the clergy's opposition'.⁵⁵² Nevertheless, in December 1907 the CI for Louth was forced to recognise just how clandestine this group was, when, following a convention in Dundalk, he admitted 'Little is known about the business transacted, as this is practically a Secret Society on the same level as the IRB'.⁵⁵³

For all that the Scottish section of the society exemplified a more extreme form of secrecy, the AOH BOE was not above employing its fair share. The first line of defence was membership, confined exclusively to Catholics. Governmental prying, meanwhile, was held at bay by an AOH convention resolution of July 1905, disbarring not just policemen and soldiers, but their sons too.⁵⁵⁴ In November 1913 the CI for Roscommon attributed the lack of recruits in the county to the influence of the society - '...If a soldier or a policeman walks into a house where there are Hibernians the latter walk out'.⁵⁵⁵ Associating with the authorities was considered a grave offence. In February 1906, John Lynes was removed as president of the Strabane division when he was seen in the company of the police.⁵⁵⁶ The organisation was also suspicious of would-be, and actual members, with links to government. In April 1910 James Bourne was rejected by the

⁵⁵⁰Morgan, 'The Ancient Order' in *Longford, History and Society*, p. 589. The Order had twenty-one divisions in Roscommon and just one existed in South Roscommon. *HJ*, Jan. 1912.

⁵⁵¹Morgan, 'The Ancient Order' in *Longford, History and Society*, p. 590.

⁵⁵²CO 904/118, July 1909.

⁵⁵³*Ibid.*, Dec. 1907.

⁵⁵⁴CO 904/118, July 1905.

⁵⁵⁵CO 904/91, Nov. 1913.

⁵⁵⁶CO 904/118, Feb. 1906.

Carrick on Shannon division, Leitrim, on the grounds that he was a Land Agent ‘and would be likely to betray the secrets of the organisation’.⁵⁵⁷ P.H. O’Brien, the president of an Armagh division was forced to resign when it was alleged that he had given information to the government, in the hope of securing a Resident Magistracy.⁵⁵⁸ In late 1908, meanwhile, Gowra division in County Longford was dissolved by its own president because the ‘merchandise’ or signs and passwords were leaked to outsiders.⁵⁵⁹

On the 14 January 1906, Fr. O’Kane, Clogher denounced the AOH ‘remarking that any society having secret signs and passwords not known to the general public was a secret society, and as such... would not receive his sanction’.⁵⁶⁰ This was a claim that the Order would repudiate time and again throughout its existence. As one member put it in March 1911, ‘They were not a secret society. Their business was an open book to every priest desiring to know it. Every family had its secrets; every merchant has his trade secrets...’.⁵⁶¹ Amongst the Order’s clerical backers there were certainly those who knew about the system of signs and passwords. These were issued at county board meetings where chaplains were a regular presence.⁵⁶² Furthermore, some priests within the organisation clearly advocated secrecy. At an AOH convention in Belfast during April 1906, Fr. McKinley regretfully informed ‘that a policeman at Lurgan and another at Portadown had given him the “goods” in current use, thus showing there were traitors in the ranks’.⁵⁶³ Individuals like McKinley, irrespective of allegiance, could undoubtedly see the value in ‘measures of protection’ which, crucially, seem to have been employed by most friendly societies of the time.⁵⁶⁴ Such efforts were ultimately fruitless, however. Though the AOH employed sentinels at meetings, and ciphers and lines of communicating information were often narrowed, still the authorities triumphed.⁵⁶⁵ The

⁵⁵⁷CO 904/12, Apr. 1910.

⁵⁵⁸CO 904/118, Dec. 1905-Jan. 1906

⁵⁵⁹*The Longford Leader* (Hereafter *TLL*) 14 Aug. 1909.

⁵⁶⁰CO 904/118, Dec. 1905-Jan. 1906.

⁵⁶¹*HJ*, Mar. 1911.

⁵⁶²McKinley regularly attended such meetings. Rev. Father Dooley, meanwhile, was present at a division meeting in October 1909 where Devlin advised the members ‘not to disclose the password of the Order’. CO 904/118, Dec. 1905-Jan. 1906; C0904/118, Oct. 1909.

⁵⁶³The password was swiftly changed thereafter. CO 904/118, Apr. 1906. See also, ‘BOE mins’, 5 Dec. 1906.

⁵⁶⁴A piece in the April 1911 issue of the *Hibernian Journal* noted that signs and passwords were used by the British United Order of Oddfellows, Independent Order of Oddfellows, Philanthropic Order of Ivorites, Original Grand Order of Druids, National Independent Order of Oddfellows, Ancient Noble Order of United Oddfellows, United Order of Druids, Nottingham Ancient Imperial United Order of Oddfellows, the Ancient Order of Foresters &c. *HJ*, Apr. 1911.

⁵⁶⁵In January 1912 Brother Jack McGuinness of division 1, Derry, withdrew his name for the position of sentinel. The role seems to have been an unrewarding one, McGuinness remarking that ‘He stood on the stairway for seven years and he never received much thanks for anything he had ever done...his duties

true test of an organisation's secretive mettle was always going to be just how much Dublin Castle knew about it, and as we now know, the latter institution knew a great deal about the AOH.⁵⁶⁶

Hibernian secrecy, while often a red flag with clerical and governmental authorities, was not without its merits, however. In July 1909 the CI for Roscommon noted a contrast between the UIL and the AOH BOE: 'The latter organisation deals with the younger generation who are attracted by the element of secrecy'.⁵⁶⁷ 'It is quite possible' he added, 'that the posturing of the AOH may be intended to make the young men independent of the GAA leaders who I believe work in the interests of the Sinn Fein and IRB organisations'.⁵⁶⁸ In May 1910, Fr. Meenan and Rev. Dean McGlone condemned the AOH in Carrickmacross for having the same motives as the Ribbon Society. The County Inspector reported that their opposition actually increased the local society's membership, however.⁵⁶⁹ Oftentimes the AOH found itself lumped in with some of the more surreptitious associations. During June 1905, Rev. Fr. Burns cursed the "Molly Maguires", a secret society that some persons 'who have been refused admission into the AOH' were attempting to revive.⁵⁷⁰ The Order, it must be said, did not always attract the "right sort" of members. Dan O'Donnell, the president of Sligo division knew of former members of the AOH who went over to the IRB and was himself an advocate of the physical force movement.⁵⁷¹ Moreover, a report for Cork division, July 1911, drew attention to the fact that 'for some time past suggestions have been made at meetings...that members should be oath bound, so as to ensure secret working'.⁵⁷²

included delivering circulars often in dead of night...he would not stand in the way of the other members nominated'. 'Derry mins', 19 Jan. 1912.

⁵⁶⁶In December 1907 the Order decided that, in future, all signs and password would be issued by cipher. Come August 1909 an informant revealed that all secret communications were to be handed over to the presidents of divisions. Even county board changes, as with Leitrim's decision in January 1909 to no longer submit their signs and passwords in printed or written form, were noted by the County Inspector. CO 904/118, Dec. 1907; Ibid., Aug. 1909; CO Jan. 1909.

⁵⁶⁷CO 904/78, July 1909. This was a point the CI for Roscommon would make again and again. See CO 904/80, Mar. 1910; CO 904/81, May 1910.

⁵⁶⁸CO 904/78, July.1909.

⁵⁶⁹CO 904/12, May 1910. In October 1908 several branches of the BOE in Cavan, Fermanagh and Monaghan broke from the Order. Their national marshal, James McKiernan, also a former national secretary, was being treated badly and sought to 'revert to the old Order'. Later, McKiernan's 'Old Ribbon Board' threw in their lot with the Scottish section. CO 904/118, Oct. 1908; Ibid., May 1909; CO 904/118, Sept. 1909. For more on Ribbonism's latent revival in Ireland, see CO 904/118, Nov. 1908; CO 904/78, Aug. 1909.

⁵⁷⁰CO 904/118, June 1905.

⁵⁷¹CO 904/117, June 1906.

⁵⁷²CO 904/13, July 1911.

Significantly, secrecy was the least of several criticisms which the society's greatest clerical opponent, the Archbishop of Armagh, Michael Logue, levelled against it. Though credited for his presence at Maynooth in 1904, Logue was to become one of the Order's most virulent critics in the years that followed. The trouble began in July 1908 when at a meeting in Armagh the Ulster bishops decided to forbid the wearing of AOH regalia in churches.⁵⁷³ As Miller notes 'The decision has the appearance of a compromise between [Bishop] O'Donnell, who undoubtedly did not want to disturb the organisation, and Logue, whose later public statements showed him inclined to much stronger measures'.⁵⁷⁴ The trade-off seems to have been an extension of the ban on regalia in churches to include the Irish National Foresters.⁵⁷⁵ That the AOH was the primary target seems to be borne out by an INF church parade in August 1908, where, notwithstanding the recent order of Cardinal Logue, the members all wore regalia while attending divine service.⁵⁷⁶ Whatever the case, the AOH seems to have received the message loud and clear. In September the president of Armagh county board came under fire for abandoning a planned demonstration at Poyntzpass the month previous. In his reply he described his decision as an attempt to 'avoid bloodshed' and reminded the members that 'Cardinal Logue was watching the AOH and only wanted an excuse to denounce [it]'.⁵⁷⁷

With the Archbishop of Armagh leading clerical opposition against the Order in Ireland, a Hibernian fall back would seem to have been almost inevitable, but in fact the majority society response was to actively resist. One division, aping the members in Scotland, did attempt to avert clerical hostility in December 1908 by contemplating registration as a Friendly Society.⁵⁷⁸ Like the members of the Scottish Hierarchy in years gone past, however, the Cardinal was not about to be bought over by a few rule changes. In February 1909 he was back at work, this time condemning the organisation in his Lenten Pastoral. Such a measure obviously had a depressing effect on the organisation, but as one CI astutely remarked, 'I scarcely think that it will cause it to collapse'.⁵⁷⁹ Attacks on the society continued into May, when, at Carrickmore, Logue opined that the Irish Hierarchy had not approved of the AOH, but 'merely tolerated' it. He blasted the society in the diocese and a few other places, for its seemingly harmless rules and strong-

⁵⁷³CO 904/118, July 1908.

⁵⁷⁴Miller, *Church, State, and Nation*, p. 212.

⁵⁷⁵CO 904/118, July 1908. As one CI put it, 'the INF was probably included to stave off criticism'.

⁵⁷⁶*Ibid.*, Aug. 1908.

⁵⁷⁷CO 904/118, Sept. 1908.

⁵⁷⁸CO 904/118, Dec. 1908.

⁵⁷⁹CO 904/77, Feb. 1909.

arm methods - ‘The members boasted that they were all good Catholics’ while ‘they boycotted, threatened, waylaid and beat their neighbours’.⁵⁸⁰ In August 1909 the AOH was dealt another blow when Rev. J.J. McKinley was ordered by his superior, Bishop John Tohill – clearly responding to Logue’s denunciation of the society - to resign his post as national chaplain.⁵⁸¹ In May 1910 the Order remained unbowed, however, a mass demonstration in Armagh, with addresses by Devlin and Dillon, and over 12,000 people attending, posed a clear challenge to Cardinal Logue.⁵⁸²

Elsewhere, in Scotland, 1910 proved a bumper year for the Order. An eight-verse poem in the February edition of the *Hibernian Journal* commemorated the removal of the church ban.⁵⁸³ The event was certainly a great source of celebration amongst the members. There was always going to be those, however, who questioned the relative meaning and worth of toleration. As one self-styled “Observer” put it in November 1911 ‘The Holy See having examined the whole case...decided that it may be tolerated, but had to be watched...It neither condemns nor approves; it tolerates. It is not even toleration pure and simple but a modified kind’. This seemed to indicate that whilst the rules were free from condemnation, something else about the Society appeared to the Roman Congregation of a dangerous tendency. Cardinal Logue had made a similar statement about the Irish society’s rules at Carrickmore, something that “Observer” seems to have been all too aware of. The fact that chaplains had been assigned to the society in some three or four Dioceses of Ireland might have confused the issue “Observer” confessed, but ‘the venerated Bishops of these Dioceses have acted thus, perhaps, in pursuance of the policy of watchfulness recommended by the Holy See’.⁵⁸⁴ During the same month the Rev. John Russell, a chaplain to the AOH in Cork, wrote to the *Irish News and Belfast Morning News* and drew attention to the use of the phrase “tolerari posse” in the Roman Congregation’s ruling as ‘the usual official expression for stating that there is nothing against faith or morals, or against the doctrine or discipline of the Catholic Church, in the matter’.⁵⁸⁵ Regardless, the AOH was forced to recognise that the Congregation’s head, Cardinal Rampolla, had too appended his letter with a caution ‘That if anything blameworthy in the working of the Order is discovered, the Bishops will not fail to report

⁵⁸⁰*II*, 14 May 1909.

⁵⁸¹CO 904/118, Aug. 1909.

⁵⁸²CO 904/81, May 1910.

⁵⁸³*HJ*, Feb. 1910.

⁵⁸⁴*II*, 9 Nov. 1911.

⁵⁸⁵*INBMN*, 13 Nov. 1911.

it directly to the Holy See'.⁵⁸⁶ As in Ireland, a trial period had to be navigated and it was imperative, the *Hibernian Journal* insisted, that every person connected to the society 'realise the gravity of the situation and leave no opening for either unfavourable criticism or lawful rebuke'.⁵⁸⁷

The first verse of The Removal of the Ban in Scotland, by John O'Doherty, division 113, Kirkintilloch

Rejoice to-day, Hibernians,
Who toil in this alien land,
Glad tidings have at last arrived,
We're now no longer banned.
Although our ancient barque was tossed
By many a stormy blast,
But to-day, thank God, the sea has calmed,
We've reached the port at last,

Source: *HJ*, Feb. 1910

Amongst the Scottish branches keen to keep the Catholic Church on side after 1910 was 563, Falkirk. In January the membership began to contemplate appointing a chaplain.⁵⁸⁸ Several divisions would request a priest to fill such a position in succeeding years and chaplains were known to communicate with the county boards and the BOE should the membership's behaviour be unbecoming.⁵⁸⁹ Even more significant, however, was Falkirk division's inauguration of a new scheme. Several members were chosen to watch the conduct of the rest, and report back on the regularity of their church attendance.⁵⁹⁰ Whether this arrangement was adopted by more than one division is unclear. Another development, however, was an emphasis on more rigorous recruitment. In February 1910, James Stafford, the AOH's national vice-president noted 'Now that the Society was set free...many undesirables would be seeking admission'. During the same month, brother McGhee of Parkhead division, Glasgow, urged the officers and members to admit nothing but practical Catholics to their ranks.⁵⁹¹ The *Hibernian Journal* would later comment in August 1911 on the great increase of membership of the Order in

⁵⁸⁶Cardinal Rampolla lead the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the oldest amongst the nine congregations of the Roman Curia, and responsible for defending the church against heresy.

⁵⁸⁷*HJ*, Feb. 1910.

⁵⁸⁸'Falkirk mins', 2 Jan. 1910.

⁵⁸⁹McGhee, secretary to division 730, to Maguire: 15 Oct. 1911; Michael Sharpe, member of division 461, to Maguire, 1 Jan. 1912, GRCAA; 'BOE Mins', 12 Apr. 1912.

⁵⁹⁰'Falkirk mins', 2 Jan. 1910; *Ibid.*, 13 Feb. 1910; 'Falkirk mins', 27 Feb. 1910.

⁵⁹¹*HJ*, Feb. 1910.

Scotland.⁵⁹² One of the main methods of expanding the organisation had always been demonstrations and parades. In January 1910, however, in consequence of the new status quo, the delegates for Stirling district were asked not to hold any such events ‘and to carry on the business of the Order even more quietly than heretofore’.⁵⁹³ Caution seems to have been later thrown to the wind though, for in October of that year the society held a massive demonstration at Airdrie, North Lanarkshire.⁵⁹⁴ A still more significant event occurred the next month when division 604, Bo’ness, Falkirk, held the Order’s first ever church parade in Scotland.⁵⁹⁵

When the Scottish commission came together and recommended toleration in 1907, they did so with two supplementary rules in mind. Priests could ‘not in any way or under any pretext encourage the AOH society, or grant it the use of any mission building’.⁵⁹⁶ Such limits would appear to have been lost on, or even ignored by at least some of the organisation in Scotland. Asking for chaplains was one thing, inviting the Archbishop of Glasgow to attend a Soiree and concert, as the divisions in County Lanarkshire did in February 1910, was quite another.⁵⁹⁷ Requests for the use of church property, however, were undoubtedly the most common violation. In February 1910, Dalmuir division wrote to the Archbishop of Glasgow ostensibly dumbfounded, after being refused the use of the parochial hall, St. Stephens, by the local priest - ‘We now ask your grace what objective is against our order as the ban has been removed’. What was worse, the hall was being lent out ‘for any other purpose bar for [the] AOH’.⁵⁹⁸ Finding a location to hold meetings, let alone events, was an obstacle that many divisions, even female ones encountered. In March 1913, the members of the Ladies’ Auxiliary, division 45, contacted the Archbishop to petition for the use of a local ‘cold church’ and complained of their repeated difficulty ‘in procuring suitable accommodation’.⁵⁹⁹ Even divisions like 834, Lambhill, who side stepped such issues by attempting to construct their own hall could find themselves with no alternative but to ask for the use of local buildings. The Rev. Fr. Mullen maintained that their construction ‘would injure the League of the Cross Hall in every way’.⁶⁰⁰ At the local level, some associations were also obviously favoured over others.

⁵⁹²*HJ*, Aug. 1911.

⁵⁹³‘Falkirk mins’, 30 Jan. 1910.

⁵⁹⁴*HJ*, Oct. 1910.

⁵⁹⁵*HJ*, Nov. 1910.

⁵⁹⁶Report of Commission on the Society of “The AOH”, Glasgow, 25 Feb. 1907, GRCAA.

⁵⁹⁷J.J. Gallagher, on behalf of the Lanarkshire county divisions, to Maguire, 26 Feb. 1910, GRCAA.

⁵⁹⁸John Rafferty, secretary to division 302, to Maguire, 28 Feb. 1910, GRCAA.

⁵⁹⁹Division 45, Ladies’ Auxiliary, to Maguire, 14 Mar. 1913, GRCAA.

⁶⁰⁰William Hennessy, on behalf of division 834, to Ritchie, 7 June 1912, GRCAA.

Even outside the rules of toleration itself, the AOH made multiple proposals and several actions in succeeding years, which invariably tested their new relationship with the church. One trouble started in December 1912 when some of the members of division 493, Stevenston approached Holy Communion wearing badges. Near the end of Mass, the Rev. Fr. O'Neill referred to the distinctive emblems and indicated that it was directly contrary to the instructions of the Archbishop. James Milgrew, a member of Stevenston then wrote to the Archbishop about the matter. Though he deferred to the explicit orders of His Grace should they exist, he had reasonable doubt – 'we know with absolute certainty that these and somewhat similar badges are worn on like occasions, openly and without in various churches throughout this Archdiocese, and therefore we feel that if at any time a prohibitive rule was in force it is not now regarded as such'. Nevertheless, Milgrew and the division at large did not presume to think that they could make their own regulations, but they did 'in all obedience' and 'as loyal Catholics' ask if they could approach the sacraments once a quarter as a 'corporate body' and wear the 'distinctive badge' of their Order on such occasions.⁶⁰¹

The matter of Hibernian regalia and specifically badges seems to have continued into 1913. In April, John Bradley wrote to the Archbishop on behalf of the Lanark county board appealing for the use of badges at quarterly Holy Communion.⁶⁰² A follow-up letter in July revealed that the Archbishop had given the impression at an earlier date that he might consider granting the society's request - 'while His Grace does not approve of any badge being worn at Holy Communion except by members of religious societies, an undertaking was given that he was prepared to consider samples...if the deputation thought that a Communion Badge was really very much desired'. In August, however, the Lanark county board noted their disappointment at the Archbishop's 'last letter' but still promised to observe His Grace's wishes.⁶⁰³ Prior to the outcome, in January, the National Board had emphasised the importance of obedience, telling their counterparts in Scotland to 'carry out implicitly the wishes of the Archbishop'.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰¹James Milgrew, recording secretary of division 493, to Ritchie, 28 Dec. 1912, GRCAA.

⁶⁰²John Bradley, on behalf of Lanark County Board, to Ritchie, 30 Apr. 1913, GRCAA.

⁶⁰³Ibid., 21 Aug. 1913, GRCAA.

⁶⁰⁴John Bradley, on behalf of Lanark County Board, to Ritchie, 30 Apr. 1913, GRCAA.

The confessional character of Hibernianism

For all that Hibernianism's relationship with the Catholic Church in Ireland and Scotland could be described as a bumpy and uneven one, the society did take its religion very seriously. As the general rules for 1907 opined, rightfully or wrongfully 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians...was founded by the ancient princes and chieftains of Ireland in defence of their faith and fatherland'. Alongside the goal of 'self-government' was an equally important one, 'religious equality'. To the AOH 'the banding of the Catholic Irish race' into a society like theirs was necessary because of the growing strength of 'materialistic views and selfish interests'. A 'common organisation' could by 'mutual aid...protect them against organised and exclusive institutions...detrimental to religious and political liberty'. Further fleshing out the society's Catholic underpinning were three cardinal principles: "Friendship, Unity, and True Christian Charity". The first insisted on members regarding each other as brothers in a family practicing the same religion, holding the same holy traditions sacred, and animated by a purpose of mutual assistance and forbearance. "Unity", meanwhile, was about counselling concerted action not just on the part of Hibernians but of all Irishmen, in the causes of church, country, and mutual support. The last, "True Christian Charity", emphasised bearing with each other's weakness, aiding distressed or erring brothers, and by doing to others as the society's members would wish to be done by.⁶⁰⁵

With the Order very much casting itself as defender of the Catholic faith, it is perhaps unsurprising that the pages of the *Hibernian Journal* were filled with references to ongoing religious predicaments. The very first print of the organ in April 1907 ran a piece on 'The French Crisis'. After the third French Republic was established in 1871 the country was divided into monarchists, including the French clergy and bishops, and republicans, consisting in the main of the anticlerical middle classes. The latter held that the church was a purveyor of superstition and outmoded traditions.⁶⁰⁶ Consequently, over the following decades many laws were passed to weaken the institution. The most decisive blow was struck in 1905 when church and state were separated.⁶⁰⁷ Many divisions and county boards would go on to pass resolutions decrying 'the action of the

⁶⁰⁵'General rules, 1907'.

⁶⁰⁶Philippe Rigoulot, 'Protestants and the French nation under the Third Republic: Between recognition and assimilation' in *National Identities*, March 2009, Vol. 11, Issue 1, pp 45–57.

⁶⁰⁷Robert Gildea, *Children of the Revolution: The French, 1799–1914* (Penguin, 2010).

French government, or any other government, in interfering with the religious rights of its people'.⁶⁰⁸ The example of France did, however, strengthen the argument for Catholic associationalism – 'Had there been such a society as the AOH in France, no Government would have dared to do what had been done there'.⁶⁰⁹ In late 1908 the Prime Minister also came under fire when he stopped the carrying of the Sacred Host in the Eucharistic Procession held at London.⁶¹⁰ The religious blunders of the British institution provided fuel of a different kind - vilifying the oppressor. At the regional level too, the AOH was keen to highlight offences. In March 1916 Mullingar division condemned the action of 'the Local Government Board in connection with the rating of the Franciscan Order as "outlaws"'.⁶¹¹

Further demonstrating the Order's preoccupation with Catholicism and its defence was the *Hibernian Journal's* various articles on doctrine and church adversaries. A typical piece focused on the significance of Mary as both virgin and mother, another, the upcoming season of Lent, when the Pastorals of the Irish Bishops would be released.⁶¹² More common, however, were discussions of the dangers and enemies confronting Catholics. Riffing off the French Crisis, the May 1907 number claimed that the infamous continental cry of "Clericalism the Enemy" had reached Irish shores. Select Irish journals and newspapers were called out for propagating an 'anti-clerical spirit amongst the impressionable youth'. 'Newly pledged theologians' who allegedly advocated 'the utter exclusion of the priest from all things secular' were saddled with some of the blame as well. The idea that religion was too holy and sacred to be introduced into 'ordinary avocations' was ardently rejected: 'Our Catholic Faith is not for the privacy of our homes only, nor solely for religious services on Sundays...In literature, in art, in politics, the principles and teachings of our religion must ever be before our eyes'.⁶¹³ Also formidable were the forces of Atheism, Proselytism and Socialism. 'In Great Britain', readers were told, 'we have lecturers who in the broad light of day...preach disbelief'. The *Journal* railed against 'that species of fraud (Proselytism) which in the name of charity bribes the

⁶⁰⁸*HJ*, Apr. 1907. See also, *HJ*, May 1907; *HJ*, June 1907.

⁶⁰⁹*HJ*, Jan. 1909.

⁶¹⁰*DJ*, 25 Sept. 1908. See also *FJ*, 15 Mar. 1907; *HJ*, Nov. 1908.

⁶¹¹*HJ*, Mar. 1916.

⁶¹²*Ibid.*, June 1907; *HJ*, Apr. 1908.

⁶¹³*HJ*, May 1907.

unfortunate to forsake their faith'.⁶¹⁴ Such laconic manifestos as 'Socialism does not aim at destroying religion; it aims at putting down poverty', were viewed with equal scorn.⁶¹⁵

'Of all the hidden and open enemies of Catholicity', however, the greatest, and the one which the AOH reserved the most vitriol for, was Freemasonry.⁶¹⁶ In November 1910 the *Hibernian Journal* traced the AOH's journey from 'essentially the body-guard of the Catholic priest in the past' to 'a mighty and powerful combination for the promotion of the temporal interests of Catholics'. Given, however, that the days of the Penal Laws had passed into memory, the *Journal* asserted 'the question naturally arises whether any necessity exists for an organisation such as ours in the defence of the Faith'. In a series of follow-up questions, one inevitable conclusion was drawn, that a system of Protestant ascendancy and Catholic victimisation continued to exist.⁶¹⁷ In Ireland the Hibernians considered the Masonic body 'the chief agency by which that ascendancy [was] upheld'.⁶¹⁸ The Freemasons were condemned for their secrecy and the danger they posed, as 'a combination of men...allied for...mutual benefit, and...bound by a solemn oath to stand loyally together against all outsiders'.⁶¹⁹ This appraisal was certainly ironic given the similarities between both societies, and while the Hibernians could never explicitly praise the organisation, it is clear that they derived lessons from its example. A preamble to one Freemasonry article in the *Hibernian Journal* read: 'What the maintenance of discipline means for our Society can be best illustrated by comparing the power wielded by the Freemasons, with the comparatively small membership that their Society can boast of'.⁶²⁰

When not battling the various forces arrayed against Catholicism, Hibernians could be found saying prayers at the beginning of division meetings, taking confession, or sitting in church.⁶²¹ In May 1908, division 94, Ballymoney resolved to 'approach the altar rails in a body and receive Holy Communion on the first/last Sunday of every month, and so fulfil our obligations as Hibernians and also as members of the Sacred Heart

⁶¹⁴Ibid., Mar. 1908.

⁶¹⁵*HJ*, May. 1908.

⁶¹⁶*HJ*, Mar. 1908. For the origins of the Catholic Church's dislike, see Charles H. Lyttle, 'Historical Bases of Rome's Conflict with Freemasonry', in *Church History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Mar. 1940), pp 3-23. For an Ulster perspective on the movement, try Petri Mirala, *Freemasonry in Ulster, 1733-1813: a social and political history of the masonic brotherhood in the north of Ireland* (Dublin 2007) or Sean Beattie, 'Freemasonry in Donegal, 1757-1953' in *Donegal Annual*, Vol. 62, (2010), pp 30-9.

⁶¹⁷*HJ*, Mar. 1908. English and Protestant ascendancy are assessed in the final political chapter.

⁶¹⁸Ibid., Dec. 1916.

⁶¹⁹*HJ*, Mar. 1908.

⁶²⁰*HJ*, Apr. 1917.

⁶²¹Morgan, 'The Ancient Order' in *Longford, History and Society*, p. 589.

Sodality'.⁶²² Attendance was thought to reflect well on the division and the Order at large.⁶²³ Participation did, however, vary from place to place. The involvement of division 114 and the local officers of the Ladies' Auxiliary in a service at St. Mary's, Belfast on the 27 January 1918, was the first such venture by any branch in the region. More seems to have been the pity for as the *Hibernian Journal* noted 'such an occasion...creates enthusiasm amongst the members and non-members...as is shown by the fact that since this over 26 new members joined this division'.⁶²⁴ One of the largest such events in the Order's history was the Triduum and Annual Communion held at the Pro-Cathedral, Marlboro Street on the 21 March 1909. The whole transept of the church was specially reserved for the members but because of the large turnout the space inside the altar rails, the organ gallery and even some of the side aisles were requisitioned. The Rev. Fr. O'Donnell preached a course of sermons on the Wednesday and Thursday, and on the Friday spoke in glowing terms of the AOH and its work. Confessions were heard all day Saturday and on the Sunday morning at a little past 8 o'clock over 1,000 Hibernians arrived, every spot in the church occupied.⁶²⁵

Alongside church services, the AOH observed its fair share of religious holidays. In December 1907 the *Hibernian Journal* gave a 'hearty Christmas greeting' and encouraged members not only to 'feast themselves with becoming solemnity' but also 'to endeavour to make [the festival] brighter for their less fortunate brethren'.⁶²⁶ The Society viewed the derailment of such seasons or even events with equal fervour. During March 1908 the Order lamented that St. Patrick's Day would be celebrated in Dublin that year by way of a great international boxing match, and this in contrast to the previous year's festival, when a huge demonstration was organised to protest the treatment of the Catholics of France by their government.⁶²⁷ The Order certainly set up a high religious standard for its members. Division 487, Kilenumery promised to deal severely with any member absenting himself from quarterly communion while Killany division fined those who failed to attend and could not provide a satisfactory explanation.⁶²⁸

In Scotland meanwhile, Hibernians were encouraged to take advantage of a retreat house near Airdrie, ran by the Jesuit Fathers, to combine a pleasant holiday with 'making

⁶²²Ibid., May 1908.

⁶²³*HJ*, Sept. 1908.

⁶²⁴Ibid., Mar. 1918.

⁶²⁵*HJ*, Mar., Apr. 1909.

⁶²⁶Ibid., Dec. 1907.

⁶²⁷*HJ*, Mar. 1908.

⁶²⁸*SC*, 6 June 1908; 'Killany mins', 28 May 1915.

their soul'.⁶²⁹ During 1913 the Dublin county board also proposed organising an Irish National pilgrimage to Rome, and in June 1914 a member produced a hymn.⁶³⁰

Hibernian Hymn, by Councillor T. Brogan, Battersea

Children of our ancient race,
Breed of the Clan-na-Gael,
Give praise unto the Lord of Hosts,
Give praise for Innisfail.
The mists are rising from her glens,
Proud hope her bosom fills
The golden sun of liberty
Is shining on her hills.

Source: *HJ*, June 1914.

Any instance of devoutness or piety on the part of the members or the society at large was spotlighted. In April 1915 it was reported that Councillor Turnbull, a member of the National Board and president of the provincial council of the AOH in Wales, had been appointed as Privy Chamberlain to the Sovereign Pontiff.⁶³¹ Only the year previous, the AOH made a presentation to the newly elected Pope, Benedict XV. This 'very handsome example of Irish craft in carving' included 'an illuminated address...from the 200,000 Irish Catholics embraced in the Hibernian Order, conveying a heartfelt expression of love, loyalty, and obedience'.⁶³²

Far and away the most 'magnificent display of Hibernian fidelity to Mother Church', however, were the parades.⁶³³ These usually occurred on Sunday's throughout the year, though St. Patrick's Day was a popular date. The members of division 104, Lavagh (Co. Roscommon) began their church parade, as was often the case, by attending the local chapel for Holy Communion. At around 1pm they assembled at Carnadoe Bridge with the band and banner, awaiting the arrival of their Kilmore brethren. On their approach the two formed a long procession, struck up "St. Patrick's Day" and the parade was commenced in earnest.⁶³⁴ The orderly conduct of the procession was considered of the highest importance. Division's turned out to a man for such events or else sent delegates.

⁶²⁹*HJ*, Feb. 1916.

⁶³⁰The pilgrimage seems to have gone ahead, for in January 1914 division 1, Derry made plans to approach the clergy about hanging up cards announcing the same. 'Derry mins', 2 Jan. 1914.

⁶³¹*DJ*, 2 Apr. 1915; *HJ*, Apr. 1915; *WFJ*, 2 Oct. 1915.

⁶³²*HJ*, Dec. 1914.

⁶³³*Ibid.*, Oct. 1915.

⁶³⁴*HJ*, Apr. 1908.

Sometimes church parades were even made the occasion of dual events, Gaelic games and other sports, like the parade itself, proving an attractive annual fixture.⁶³⁵ And far from purely local affairs, such gatherings could be county or even provincial in scale. A church parade at Keady, Co. Armagh in October 1909 saw divisions from Down, Louth, Monaghan, Tyrone and of course, Armagh take part.⁶³⁶ Another at Tyrone in October 1915 involved eighty-four divisions, marching from Dungannon to Donaghmore.⁶³⁷ Still, the significance of small church parades, for illustrating how local loyalties to parish priests trumped more remote institutional allegiances, should not be understated. When division 162, Inver (Co. Donegal) held one on St. Patrick's Day in 1907 they listened to a Mass delivered by Rev. Fr. McHugh, and afterwards made a point of marching to the residence of the Rev. P. McCafferty.⁶³⁸

More than any other figures save perhaps for the organisation's own leadership, priests were venerated by the AOH. This extended well beyond the clergy on the National Board, though they had two 'typical soggarths' in Fr. McKinley and Fr. Cannon.⁶³⁹ On the 5 July 1911, the members of division 1, Derry noted that the Rev. P.N. McDermott who had 'honoured' the branch on a former occasion when he gave an address and a presentation, was soon to leave Irish shores. It was resolved to 'give him a token of [their] esteem and respect...as the Rev. gentlemen [was] ever ready to place himself at a disadvantage to oblige the derry brethren'.⁶⁴⁰ McDermott had recently purchased a Great Dane and the division decided to present the animal with an inscribed collar.⁶⁴¹ The contributions of priests to the society, even the wider community, gave good cause for an address or presentation, especially if the individual in question had been promoted or was due to transfer. Rev. T.F. O'Reilly was the recipient of 'a beautiful address from the members of the Bray Division, Boy's Brigade, and the Pipers' Band' when it was announced that he was moving.⁶⁴² At the other end of the spectrum was the welcome afforded to new arrivals. In October 1907, division 266, Portadown offered a 'whole-hearted Cead Mile Failthe' to Rev. James Canon Grimes. They hoped to 'show [their] respected Parish Priest

⁶³⁵Ibid., May. 1908.

⁶³⁶*HJ*, Oct. 1909.

⁶³⁷Ibid., Oct. 1915.

⁶³⁸*HJ*, May 1907.

⁶³⁹*HJ*, Feb. 1908.

⁶⁴⁰'Derry mins', 3 May. 1911.

⁶⁴¹'Derry mins', 5 July 1911.

⁶⁴²*HJ*, Apr. 1916.

that he [could] confidently look to the members...for cordial cooperation...in carrying out his important duties'.⁶⁴³

The removal of a beloved local priest, or his death, was particularly distressing for the members of the AOH. Speaking at a meeting of Wallsend-on-Tyne division in March 1909, brother John McCreesh, the district trustee, noted 'that in the hearts of every member...there was a deep sincere note of grief at the thought that Father Kennedy [soon to depart for Kilkenny] was in their midst for the last time'. Kennedy responded by thanking the members 'for the kindness they had always shown him' and insisted that 'No matter what part of Ireland he was stationed in he would always have kind remembrances of the happy days spent among the members of division 41'.⁶⁴⁴ In May 1915 the members of Killanny division adjourned their weekly meetings as a gesture of respect to the memory of the late Fr. Murphy 'whom we always found most appropriate and considerate and who by his exemplary piety and devotion in the discharge of his duties won for him the esteem of all'.⁶⁴⁵ The *Hibernian Journal* often contained reports of grieving divisions. A full-page spread, part biography and part eulogy was sometimes even allocated for the especially significant. Such was the case in April 1915 when the *Journal* included an article titled 'Hibernian Order's Loss. The late Fr. Cannon'. The latter was commended as 'a tower of strength', 'One whose help and counsel' the Order could ill afford to spare. By his death too, the national movement had lost 'a staunch supporter and an earnest friend'.⁶⁴⁶

The amount of praise heaped on the clergy by the AOH was of course symptomatic not just of their centrality in Irish life in general - at home and abroad - but within Hibernianism itself. There priests performed many key roles. Almost every county and district board, and many, though not all divisions, had a chaplain.⁶⁴⁷ As indicated above, however, and as Terence Dooley has deduced 'It would be erroneous to assume that the AOH had the full support of the Catholic clergy and hierarchy'.⁶⁴⁸ Clerical support, and so the number of chaplains, obviously differed from county to county. Both divisions and county boards were encouraged to speak to the bishop of the diocese about appointing a chaplain. The latter acted as officers, had the right to examine all books and accounts, and

⁶⁴³Ibid. Oct. 1907.

⁶⁴⁴*HJ*, Mar. 1909.

⁶⁴⁵'Killany mins' 9 May 1915.

⁶⁴⁶*HJ*, Apr. 1915.

⁶⁴⁷Longford county board, for instance, did not have a chaplain. Morgan, 'The Ancient Order' in *Longford, History and Society*, p.577.

⁶⁴⁸Dooley, *The Irish Revolution, 1912-23: Monaghan*, p. 12.

could speak and vote at meetings.⁶⁴⁹ In England, the Order had an excellent relationship with the Catholic Church. Every division in Manchester had at least one chaplain and enjoyed the patronage of three or four priests.⁶⁵⁰ In Ireland, meantime, the members of the Cork Pioneer branch considered themselves especially lucky to have the Rev. Fr. John Russell as their chaplain. The latter began in the role in 1910, and on St. Patrick's Day 1916 he could be seen marching in front of the branch, garbed in Hibernian regalia. After Russell left following a promotion in 1917 he was presented with an illuminated address by the members, and lovingly described as "father, friend and counsellor of all". Lauded for his 'sincere and deep interest in upholding all that appertains to the spiritual and general welfare of the Order', the branch president could only speak to 'the cordial relations, the affectionate feeling...which had always existed between the members and their beloved chaplain'.⁶⁵¹

More than anything else, priests were a guiding and rallying force. At a meeting of Northumberland district in October 1908, the resident chaplain, the Rev. Fr. Moore, discussed the Order's position among the other friendly societies in the north of England, defined the main road to success, the obstacles they could anticipate and how to overcome them.⁶⁵² Clerical sanction, always critical to division success, was helped along by the society's strong religious principles, a constant source of priestly addresses. The Rev. T. O'Connor was so taken with the Order's three virtues – friendship, unity, and true Christian charity – that during a meeting of division 673, Cork, in June 1910, he insisted on being initiated. Though it was pointed out to him that 'through being a priest [he was already] a member' he nevertheless took the obligations.⁶⁵³ The Rev. Fr. Kennedy took his advocacy of the movement to another level still, becoming not just a chaplain to division 41, Wallsend-on-Tyne, but also their honorary president. His dual role was cited by the members as a key factor in exterminating the view held by some, that the AOH was a secret society.⁶⁵⁴ No mere mouthpieces, the clergy also utilised the society to actively implement and propagate their own causes and ideas. Opportunities for speaking were plentiful, even for those unconnected to Hibernianism. Local priests and even foreign ones were often invited and agreed to chair, lecture or preside at events and

⁶⁴⁹Morgan, 'The Ancient Order' in Longford, *History and Society*, p. 577.

⁶⁵⁰*The Liverpool Catholic Herald*, 20 July, 1912.

⁶⁵¹*HJ*, Apr. 1916; *HJ*, Apr. 1917.

⁶⁵²*Ibid.*, Oct. 1908.

⁶⁵³*HJ*, June 1910.

⁶⁵⁴*Ibid.*, Feb. 1909.

meetings. The education movement was commonly endorsed, as was the trend towards vigilance.⁶⁵⁵ At the behest of the Rev. Fr. Coleman and four other priests, a meeting of the AOH and other Catholics societies in Dublin pledged to ‘kill the sale of immoral and indecent literature in Ireland’ in January 1909.⁶⁵⁶

Most clerical interests and opinions were given a fair hearing and readily assimilated into Hibernian canon. As its greatest clerical champion for instance, bishop Patrick O’Donnell was able to bolster the society’s confessional character by composing the ritual book. During his initiation the prospective Hibernian was informed that all Order business was to be ‘conducted strictly in accordance with the teachings of the Church’. The member was also able to consult his confessor about everything that took place at the meetings, to inform him where the division met and who its officers and members were. Priests too were allowed to attend any of a division’s meetings, to join in its deliberations and ‘at any reasonable time, inspect the different books of the division’. Priests and ecclesiastical authorities aside, O’Donnell also seemed to sign off on the secretive nature of the AOH, requiring the member to declare that he would keep secret ‘from all those who are non-members of this Order the business transacted at our meetings, or any information I may obtain by being a member’.⁶⁵⁷

Even occupying such an important role in Hibernian circles, however, there were always going to be some who resented priestly influence and disagreed with their views. In 1909 Cardinal Logue castigated the society for erecting halls and converting them into dance-houses where ‘young people of both sexes [were] kept away from parental control and the prudent supervision which decency requires, till the small hours of the morning’.⁶⁵⁸ Further concerns about alcohol consumption – many priests advocated temperance - seem to have been justified in some cases, given the example of a branch at Gweedore in 1918. There, one parishioner claimed, the local AOH chairman had built a hall, held dances on Sunday nights and holidays of obligations, and opened a speakeasy at the back of the building where young boys could drink beer. The example is significant, not least because the former events seem to have transpired after the Bishop of Raphoe, Patrick O’Donnell removed the local priest, the Rev. Fr. Burns from the parish.⁶⁵⁹ Indeed,

⁶⁵⁵*HJ*, Sept. 1909.

⁶⁵⁶*HJ*, Jan. 1909.

⁶⁵⁷See Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, p. 91. The former was allowed by a member of the AOH to make a copy of the early ritual book.

⁶⁵⁸*II*, 22 Feb. 1909, *Northern Whig*, 4 May 1909.

⁶⁵⁹Anonymous letter, 23 Sept. 1918, to bishop Patrick O’Donnell, POD, RDA.

the presence or non-presence of a cleric could be crucial. In March 1910, brother Logue noted the elimination of drink from the Derry county board's proceedings after the Rev. Fathers McKenna and Kerlin began to attend.⁶⁶⁰ Notwithstanding localism and the church's gaze, temperance did find some purchase with the organisation, not least in its observance at most Hibernian demonstrations - if not all of the society's events - and the establishment of a total abstinence division. In February 1910, Fr. McGroarty wrote to bishop Patrick O'Donnell 'We can never forget the powerful and effective help they [the AOH] have kindly given us in combating the will of intemperance'.⁶⁶¹

Another example of Hibernian-clerical disagreement was church offerings. In January 1907, Fr. Joseph Boyle wrote to the Bishop of Raphoe calling attention to a system the AOH had inaugurated of collecting offerings; the people trained to pay no more than six pence per time. Apparently, the plan had been carried out in three or four cases before the matter had come under the notice of the priests: 'They collect the offering in the house before the procession starts for the graveyard, they enter the names in a pass book and take no more than six from any person. The names are read out when they reach the graveyard'.⁶⁶² When the idea had first been conceived at a meeting, the members had wanted to pay no offering, but this was later amended to six pence. Hibernians in Cullyhanna, County Armagh went one step further in August 1911 when they passed two important resolutions at a public meeting:

- 1 – That the custom of paying offerings at funerals is unseemly and unnecessary in the parish, and that we pledge ourselves to discontinue this custom in future
- 2 – That we pledge ourselves to discontinue paying money for parochial purposes, except the usual copper collection, until a parish committee is appointed

According to one witness, the meeting was called 'not in any partisan or vindictive spirit but as the result of a general outburst of popular feeling against the shameless system...and the resolutions were warmly supported by all classes of the parishioners'.⁶⁶³

A few local exceptions aside, priests regularly reaped the benefits of Hibernian coffers. Between 1906 and 1914, division 1, Derry provided no less than five clerical visitors with funds. Donations went towards charities and testimonials as well as the

⁶⁶⁰'Derry mins', 18 Mar. 1910.

⁶⁶¹Father John McGroarty to bishop Patrick O'Donnell, 12 Feb. 1910, POD, RDA.

⁶⁶²Father Joseph Boyle to bishop Patrick O'Donnell, 29 Jan. 1907, POD, RDA.

⁶⁶³*Dundalk Examiner and Louth Advertiser* (Hereafter *DELA*), 11 Nov. 1911.

paying off or funding of churches and schools.⁶⁶⁴ Even with so much money passing hands, it was undoubtedly still the AOH who benefitted most from clerical association. The importance of ecclesiastical advocacy and defence for the success of Hibernianism cannot be understated. Speaking at division 125, Barrow-in-Furness's annual concert and ball, Fr. Miller encouraged all present to identify with the AOH and expressed his pleasure at the way in which the members attended to their religious duties. Fathers Fisher, Smith and Roberts who were also in attendance concurred.⁶⁶⁵ The Very Rev. Dr. Murphy expressed similar sentiments after Mass at the parochial church, Macroom, in May 1911 – 'There is a special satisfaction in seeing men banded together as those Hibernians are, making it a fundamental rule that the members shall attend, and, what is still better, acting up to the rule'. Murphy could only express his amazement at how 'almost every week, we hear them denounced as a secret society'.⁶⁶⁶ He, like the Bishop of Ferns, the Rev. Dr. Codd, acknowledged the society's Defender and persecution era origins, but could see no basis for claims of secrecy or church condemnation.⁶⁶⁷

Other members of the church set conditions on their endorsement of the society. Though the Bishop of Waterford, Dr. Hackett, described the members as 'some of the finest specimens of Christian manhood' he contended that they would only continue 'to promote the best interests of their country' so long as they lived true to their motto of Unity, Friendship and True Christian Charity.⁶⁶⁸ For the Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, Dr. Hoare, meantime, the AOH's sectarianism was clearly an issue, 'Then we have the Ancient Order of Hibernians, who boast that they love their religion so well that they would not let a Protestant or Freemason touch their sacred body'.⁶⁶⁹ Fr. Lillis of Ballindangan, Co. Cork expressed no such reservations: 'There is no body of men in this country or outside it who have won my sympathy in a higher degree...for there are none whose purity of motive is more unquestioned'.⁶⁷⁰ For the Very Rev. Fr. McNamara, that motive could only be Catholic associationalism – 'They needed...some organisation like it in Ireland at present to combat the organised societies of those who hated...the name of Catholicity...whose who were organised against their religion and their National

⁶⁶⁴'Derry mins', 6 Apr. 1911; *Ibid.*, 22 June 1906; 'Derry mins', 24 Jan. 1911; *Ibid.*, 20 Feb. 1914; 'Derry mins', 17 July 1914.

⁶⁶⁵*HJ*, Oct. 1907.

⁶⁶⁶*Ibid.*, May 1911.

⁶⁶⁷*HJ*, Mar. 1918; *HJ*, May 1911.

⁶⁶⁸*Ibid.*, Apr. 1916.

⁶⁶⁹*TLL*, 9 June 1917.

⁶⁷⁰*HJ*, Oct. 1916.

principles'.⁶⁷¹ Indeed, the Rev. R O'Loughran reckoned it 'Ireland's only sane political and social guide'.⁶⁷² It was an organisation, the Dean of Cashel maintained 'which, properly understood, stands as a protection for religion and country'.⁶⁷³ The Rev. F. McCotter, Antrim, could only conclude 'When our country has obtained her freedom...historians, far removed from the passions and exaggerations of our time...will chronicle...the patient strivings, the brave exertions, the cheerful sacrifices of the AOH'.⁶⁷⁴

Conclusion

In the main, the AOH claimed to be directly descended from the Ribbonmen and the Defenders. There is not enough evidence to substantiate either claim. The Defenders are arguably too far removed from the modern day AOH to invite comparison. Contemporaries, meanwhile, tended to lump and attribute most forms of clandestine protest to Ribbonism, to credit it with an 'impressive omnipresence'.⁶⁷⁵ In fact, Ribbonism was multifarious, making it almost impossible to prove that it directly gave way to Hibernianism. Some Ribbonmen became Hibernians, however, and the two groups did indeed share some similarities. In at least one instance the executive for the Ribbonmen was referred to as the Board of Erin. Ribbonmen also used signs and passwords, and were pro-Catholic and anti-Orange. While many were based in Ulster, there were strong links with Great Britain and America too.⁶⁷⁶ If nothing else, Ribbonism was a 'transitional stage in the development of lower-order nationalism'.⁶⁷⁷ It was during this transition, particularly in the late nineteenth and for the first few years of the twentieth century that the emerging AOH came under fire from the Catholic Church. Ironically, it was another of the Order's claimed antecedents, the so-called Defenders of Rory Oge O'More's time that gave the Society so much of its confessional and Catholic militant nature. Under Devlin too, Hibernianism became 'a conformist Catholic form of social association'.⁶⁷⁸ The AOH continued to be labelled as a secret society to one degree or

⁶⁷¹Ibid., Nov. 1915.

⁶⁷²HJ., Sept. 1918.

⁶⁷³Ibid., Oct. 1916.

⁶⁷⁴HJ, Sept. 1918.

⁶⁷⁵Hughes and MacRaid, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 308.

⁶⁷⁶Garvin, 'Defenders, Ribbonmen and Others', pp 133-55.

⁶⁷⁷Hughes and MacRaid, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 7.

⁶⁷⁸Hughes and MacRaid, *Ribbon Societies*, p. 306.

another, but this was more organisational privacy than anything else, and continued use of signs and passwords, as with the Order's parades and sashes, was probably intended and undoubtedly helped, to attract a younger generation of Irish Catholics.

In Ireland the Church's toleration came about in part because of Devlin's friendship with the Bishop of Raphoe, Patrick O'Donnell. The latter seems also to have recognised which way the nationalist winds were blowing; coming out in support of the UIL in 1899 and pushing for the AOH's toleration in 1904. With O'Donnell's support and Devlin's leadership, the Order moved from 300 divisions in February 1905 to 600 in October 1908.⁶⁷⁹ Almost all of the growth occurred in Ulster where Church backing was strongest. After toleration the Society was able to move into Connaught as well, though it remained small in Leinster and was almost non-existent in Munster. Up until 1911 the Catholic Church undoubtedly played a role in slowing Hibernianism's advance into the latter two provinces. When the National Insurance Act was implemented in Ireland in 1912, the AOH was able to bypass the Catholic Church, and establish itself more fully in eastern and southern Ireland, however. Insurance obviously weakened the Church's control of Irish life, and as will become clear in a later chapter, this helps to explain its opposition to the Act. Scotland, meantime, is an altogether more problematic case. Where the Society in Ireland enjoyed its fair share of clerical champions, Hibernianism in Scotland seems quite literally to have been simply tolerated. In August 1908, at a parade in Edinburgh, the Order's national secretary revealed that there were 114 divisions in the country.⁶⁸⁰ While Nugent only recorded 94 and 99 divisions as having paid their contributions in April 1911 and February 1912 respectively, and these figures have to be treated with care, this would suggest that toleration did not result in the same expansion of Hibernianism within Scotland as it did in Ireland.⁶⁸¹ Indeed, toleration only seems to have come about, because by 1910 the AOH in Ireland had acquired enough power and respect to make its continued condemnation in Scotland untenable.

In his study of the Catholic Church in the west of Scotland during the nineteenth century, Martin J. Mitchell arguably underscores the main characteristics of the Scottish Hierarchy and AOH relationship during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century:

[They] bowed to the will of the Church in the spiritual and religious sphere, and had great respect and admiration for their priests... [but] in matters concerning

⁶⁷⁹*HJ*, Feb. 1905; *HJ*, Oct. 1908.

⁶⁸⁰*Ibid.*, Oct. 1910.

⁶⁸¹*HJ*, Apr. 1911; *HJ*, Feb. 1912. For a discussion of these figures see chapter four.

how the Church in the region should be governed, and in political and social affairs, many...showed a strong independence of mind, and rejected the views, advice and even the orders of their priests and bishops.⁶⁸²

In Ireland, as David Miller has demonstrated, the Church's involvement in politics, specifically its advocacy of either the State or the Nation, was a large factor in determining its relations with the IPP.⁶⁸³ There, however, 'Priests were expected to be adjutants, not generals'.⁶⁸⁴ Away from politics the clergy's important role in the Irish parish was reflected and recognised in the AOH. Not only were they granted officerships at all levels of the organisation, they had an uninhibited knowledge of its finances, and its passwords and signs. Chaplains and local priests were loved and venerated by divisions of the Order throughout Ireland. Priests helped to restrain some of the harmful impulses of the membership, including intemperance, and often co-opted Hibernians into their campaigns, as in Dublin against the sale of immoral literature. While the AOH was almost certainly a confessional organisation, Miller is undoubtedly correct in his assertion that it was less the secrecy of the Society that gave clerical opponents like Cardinal Logue pause than its status as a 'clearly labelled "Catholic" institution [that]...remained effectively outside clerical influence'. This idea that contact with working class Protestants in Ulster 'demonstrated that religious devotion need not imply deference to the clergy' probably explains why the Order had so much difficulty in penetrating Leinster and Munster prior to 1911.⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸²Mitchell, 'Irish Catholics' in *New Perspectives*, p. 19.

⁶⁸³Miller, *Church, State, and Nation*, Introduction, pp 2-3.

⁶⁸⁴Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 76.

⁶⁸⁵Miller, *Church, State, and Nation*, p. 214.

3

Entertainment, Organisation and Teaching

In October 1915, over a year after home rule had received royal assent, the *Hibernian Journal* printed an article entitled ‘The Programme of the Ancient Order of Hibernians’. As the organ explained it, the ‘framers and organisers’ of Hibernianism had ‘from countless platforms’ indicated ‘general lines’ along which the Order ought to be developed. Many lengthy discussions were had, but on account of the ‘unprecedented growth of the Order’ the leaders confined their observations to ‘fruitful suggestions’ rather than ‘definite terms’, giving ‘the high significance of Hibernianism to Catholic Ireland...time to take root’. Now, however, a ‘definite policy’ had ‘naturally evolved’; the product of the rank and file in conjunction with the elected leaders and organisers of the Order. Alongside a political, and economic policy, there was a social one. In this last the AOH seemed, rather surprisingly, to borrow from Arthur Griffith, with its conclusion that ‘the resurrection of Ireland is the noblest national romance of the age’.⁶⁸⁶ The story of the nation was considered an ‘epic’, the ‘poetic instinct’ of the Irish people, a ‘real national asset’. While cherishing this ‘anti-materialistic quality’, the AOH sought to wed it with the ‘material reforms’ achieved by the IPP in recent years. These had not, in the Society’s opinion, ‘made the people less spiritual-minded’, and the AOH sought to help the population reap their full benefits. As part of this materialistic viewpoint, there was a focus on emigration. Though acknowledging the ‘social needs of the cities and large towns’, the Order asserted that the ‘bulk of the population’ was ‘presently centred on the land’. Radical changes in the system of land tenure were not considered sufficient to ‘retain the people on the countryside’. Without ‘counteracting influences’ the Irish Catholic’s ‘vivid imagination and undoubted intellectual gifts’ would continue to go towards ‘enriching other nations’.⁶⁸⁷

For A.C. Hepburn, the social side of Hibernianism was merely a part of the Order’s appeal, something which, in the words of the journal *Sinn Fein* ‘[Provided] social

⁶⁸⁶See for instance Arthur Griffith’s *The Resurrection of Hungary* (1904) which inspired Michael Laffan’s tribute *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Fein Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 2005).

⁶⁸⁷*HJ*, Oct. 1915.

enjoyment...at a low figure in a way that does not clash with any of the accepted notions of religion, politics and respectability'⁶⁸⁸; something too, that obscured what was – despite not having a 'precise political programme' – a 'thoroughly political' society.⁶⁸⁹ Fergal McCluskey has drawn a connection between these two facets, arguing that the AOH employed 'a programme of populist patriotism' with two features: an appeal to 'Catholic interests and staunch nationalism' and the Order's self-portrayal as a 'democratic upsurge capable of addressing the desires of all classes and needs'.⁶⁹⁰ For McCluskey, however, this programme spoke to the inherent tensions within constitutionalism - 'The tenuous balance between rhetoric designed to guard popular support and the necessity to remain a broad church' – and was derived not from 'genuine support for the adopted stance' but rather a 'conservative instinct to weaken dissent and control potentially dangerous social forces'.⁶⁹¹ This chapter recognises the applicability of McCluskey's concept in some regards but argues that Hibernian efforts in the social sphere had larger causes besides; in fact, constituted preparation towards and a vision of society under home rule. Consolidation of the Hibernian ranks, even recruiting, were important of course, and are acknowledged here, but more significant were attempts to promote specific ideas about Catholicism, Irishness and nationality, and above all, to check emigration. Such a programme was obviously at least partly inspired by Hibernianism's northern surroundings; the result, an eclectic if insular and traditional vision of Irish life, with clear boundaries (unwritten or not and well before October 1915) on what was and was not to be included.

To that end, this chapter answers several important questions. What were the main features of Hibernian social life? How did it differ between rural and urban areas? To what extent did the society's leadership shape and exert control over the membership's social practices? Beginning with the basic unit of Hibernian social life, the hall or assembly point, I examine meetings, processes and protocols. The establishment of a new division or hall, the unfurling of a banner, even a county demonstration, all were watershed moments in Hibernian life; these I have underscored next. A third section touches on the Society's educational efforts, with temperance, lecturers, cultural vigilance and the Irish language discussed. No perusal of the organisation's social life would be

⁶⁸⁸*SF*, 1 Mar. 1913.

⁶⁸⁹Hepburn, 'The Ancient Order', pp 5-18.

⁶⁹⁰McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 46.

⁶⁹¹McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 46-7.

complete without an in-depth analysis of its entertainments and a fourth section accordingly details everything from competitions and dances, to clubs and games. Closing out the chapter is a discourse on the society's two, largely social, auxiliaries: The Hibernian Boys' Brigade and the Ladies' Auxiliary.

Organisation and meetings

The Hibernian Hall was both catchall and lynchpin, being not just the most visible manifestation of the Order's social strategy but also a reflection of its ambition and variety. As one member put it, these were 'unequaled facilities for instruction, entertainment, and the promotion of friendship'.⁶⁹² During the period 1907-15, the AOH purchased or erected 400 halls throughout Great Britain and Ireland, at a rate of almost four per month.⁶⁹³ By means of the division hall, the Irishman was able to find 'opportunities for social intercourse', 'derive benefit from his leisure hours' and freshen his interest in 'a somewhat monotonous life'.⁶⁹⁴ While these buildings were 'an essential and necessary portion of city life' they were even more important in the countryside where one of the chief problems was the 'lack of reasonable amusement or recreation'.⁶⁹⁵ It was within this last characteristic that the Hibernians, like many others, saw the makings of emigration. Halls were one possible answer, giving people something to invest in.

On the occasion of opening a hall in the town of Louth, in 1919, Devlin reminded those attending that 'for many long years to come' it would remain 'a monument' to their 'enterprise, zeal, self-sacrifice and patriotism'.⁶⁹⁶ Buying and maintaining halls gave the young men something to live and to work for. As part proprietor of the local hall the Hibernian member was jealous for 'its good name'. Further, the structure invited him 'to stay in his own land'. Hibernian halls became the natural centre around which the national activities of the parish radiated.⁶⁹⁷ But more than that, they formed rallying and training grounds, enabling debate and the free exchange of views on political and social questions

⁶⁹²*HJ*, June 1914.

⁶⁹³*Ibid.*, Sept. 1915. The September 1917 edition gave the official figure at 200, but the leaders of the organisation reckoned the real number closer to double that. *HJ*, Sept. 1917.

⁶⁹⁴*HJ*, Oct. 1915.

⁶⁹⁵*Ibid.*, Mar. 1911; *HJ*, Sept. 1917.

⁶⁹⁶*HJ*, Sept. 1919.

⁶⁹⁷*Ibid.*, Oct. 1915.

thereby conferring on the Irish Catholic ‘that training which it is necessary he should have if he is to become an important unit in a self-governing nation’.⁶⁹⁸ Divisions were, accordingly, encouraged to set up halls wherever possible. Not all effectively availed of their property. The *Hibernian Journal* grumbled: ‘What service does a Hall render...if it is only used once a week or so for meetings?’.⁶⁹⁹

For those divisions that could not afford their own property, there was always the option of loaning or renting. Catholic Religious Institutes, bars and pubs, schools, town halls and the premises of other individuals, groups or nationalist organisations were common venues.⁷⁰⁰ It was also essential that members have a common informal meeting place. In the early period, Scotland’s members had a reputation for failing to follow this procedure, rarely if ever assembling outside ‘the ordinary Branch gatherings’.⁷⁰¹ Sometimes divisions met weekly, at other times fortnightly, all at least monthly and quarterly, and definitely yearly.⁷⁰² Brother Coyle of division 1, Derry, complained in 1905 about a number of men ‘whose names were on the role but did not put in an appearance at any meeting’.⁷⁰³ Similarly, in December 1906 the BOE noted that some people joined the Order ‘who never attend[ed] after their initiation and consequently [knew] nothing of the business of the Order, its aims and objects’. Taking inspiration from the by-law of a Dublin division, the Board instituted a new rule whereby ‘any member not attending regular meetings once in the month [was] lapsed of the books, except he [could] give satisfactory explanation of his inability to attend’.⁷⁰⁴ Every division had a committee of management, consisting of a president, vice-president, marshal, secretary, treasurer and doctor. These were elected at the yearly meeting and met fairly regularly. Meetings were cancelled if an insufficient number of committee members turned up.⁷⁰⁵ Quarterly gatherings provided an update on the division’s financial status. Division 68, Dublin capitalised on the higher attendance at less regular meetings by initiating their new members at monthly gatherings.⁷⁰⁶

⁶⁹⁸*HJ*, Sept. 1910; *HJ*, Oct. 1915.

⁶⁹⁹*HJ*, Nov. 1918.

⁷⁰⁰*INBMN*, 27 Sept. 1906; ‘Falkirk mins’, Oct. 1909 – Sept. 1911.

⁷⁰¹*HJ*, Oct. 1910.

⁷⁰²*INBMN*, 27 Sept. 1906; ‘Derry mins’ May 1905 – Mar. 1907, July 1909 – Jan. 1915, Sept. 1916 – Dec. 1918; ‘Falkirk mins’ Oct. 1909 – Sept. 1911; ‘Killany mins’, Oct. 1913 – Dec. 1918.

⁷⁰³‘Derry mins’, 7 July 1905.

⁷⁰⁴‘BOE mins’, 5 Dec. 1906. See ‘General rules, 1907’.

⁷⁰⁵‘Derry mins’, 11 Aug. 1905.

⁷⁰⁶*HJ*, Jan. 1911.

Division meetings generally adhered to a set procedure. The first order of business was reading the minutes of the previous meeting. Roll call was next, and then a report was given on the candidates for membership. Correspondence followed. Afterwards, bills and other claims were doled out and the reports of the division committees were heard. Candidates for membership were then variously balloted, initiated and proposed and the meeting concluded with a collection of all dues and fines.⁷⁰⁷ The president, vice-president and marshal headed up the social side of division life. The former presided at all meetings, ensuring that the rules were enforced and that all division officers and members discharged their respective duties. The vice-president assisted the president and officiated in his absence. The marshal, meanwhile, stood at the door during division meetings, barring access to inebriated members, and anyone unconnected to the society.

Votes of condolence – expressed at the death or during the illness of a member or someone in his family – were a regular occurrence at meetings. It was not uncommon for two brothers, a father and son, or even an uncle and a nephew to be part of the same division.⁷⁰⁸ Sympathy was also extended to politicians and their families, and the members of other organisations at home and abroad.⁷⁰⁹ Eulogies took the form of biographical sketches, emphasising the members' role(s) and tenor in the society as well as their local and political contributions. The full complement of a division's members would often turn up at the funeral and take an active role. When division 172, Annaduff (Co. Leitrim) lost a brother 'The members carried his remains on their shoulders for about a mile, each two falling back to the rear of the procession when they had carried the remains for a few yards, until each member took part in doing honour to their departed Brother'⁷¹⁰ The recent marriage of a brother or birth of a members' child was an altogether happier occasion. Purses and other small gifts accompanied congratulations. Weightier adornments were reserved for presentations, which honoured the contributions, service and election of members. Events like these both incentivised and rewarded action. President Patrick McCloskey received a gold badge when his term of office ended, secretary James Nagle a gold-mounted umbrella.⁷¹¹ Gifts further buttressed recruiting

⁷⁰⁷ 'General rules of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin), Friendly Society, AOH, 1907', Ir 94108 p 36, NLI (Hereafter 'General rules, 1907'); 'Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin) Friendly Society, Rules of Dr. Blewitt Division No. 22, 1910'.

⁷⁰⁸ *HJ*, Apr.; *Ibid.*, June 1907; *HJ*, July 1907; *HJ*, Sept. 1907.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, July. 1907; *HJ*, Oct. 1909; *HJ*, Nov. 1908.

⁷¹⁰ *HJ*, Sept. 1908.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*, Jan. 1909.

efforts. Brother Malyn of division 5, Townhead (Glasgow, Scotland) promised a sash to the brother who introduced the most members during the first half of the year.⁷¹²

Arbitration and investigation or vigilance committees were second only in importance to the committee of management, - being present in the case of almost every division, though other committees abounded, including those for demonstrations, entertainments and financial matters. The arbitration committee heard and decided on all complaints, disputes, and charges raised between members and against the division. Sometimes that body's decisions could get the members in trouble with other units in the Order hierarchy. After division 563 Falkirk suspended one of their members, bro. P. McCluskey – for 'quarrelling' with a fellow member, threatening 'to fight', using 'obscene language', 'being drunk on Saturday nights' and omitting his 'spiritual duties on Sunday's' - a letter was received from the county board secretary instructing the division to remove the suspension. When the division president brother Ward delayed in acceding to that request, a county delegate, brother Doherty, was dispatched to sort the matter out. A quarrel soon broke out, the delegate disclosing that there 'were some unwritten rules in the AOH which were not and could not be put in rule books', the president claiming that he could put a 'different complexion' on the case.⁷¹³

Potential members were vetted by the investigation committee. To qualify for membership, the individual first had to be a practical Catholic, with no connection to any secret societies condemned by the Catholic Church; second, to be Irish or of Irish descent; third, to be willing to aid the goal of Home Rule.⁷¹⁴ The members of division 1, Derry passed a rule that no candidate born outside the city of the same name be admitted 'without a reference from the nearest division to the place where the candidate was born'.⁷¹⁵ Existing members could advocate for or deride those proposed. A stream of negative reports made for easy dismissal: 'O'Neill...stated that he objected to the admission of Donnelly on the grounds of his being an irate Irishman...in addition to which Bro. Whyte had heard that the person...had been seen drunk whilst wearing the badge of the St. Andrews' Society'.⁷¹⁶ At other times when the verdict was in question – 'Another couple of members who know the man personally testified to his being civil,

⁷¹²*HJ*, Apr. 1907.

⁷¹³'Falkirk mins', 21 Aug. 1910.

⁷¹⁴'General rules, 1907'. Age and health formed a fourth criteria and are discussed in chapter 4.

⁷¹⁵'Derry mins', 5 July 1906.

⁷¹⁶For more on this group see Kyle Hughes, 'We Scotsmen by the banks o' the Lagan' The Belfast Benevolent Society of St. Andrew, 1867-1917' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, 37 (1) pp 24-52.

hardworking and respectable' – the case was left in the hands of the investigation committee.⁷¹⁷

As the Order attained more influence, the greater the rush for admission from all quarters. Some of those joining cared only for their own ambition.⁷¹⁸ For that reason, whether 'a peer of the realm' or an 'honest labourer', all were subjected to the same conditions of membership. Once inside the society all class distinctions were apparently sunk: 'We meet each other...on a footing of perfect equality...in our organisation is created that spirit of true friendship which it will be impossible to find in any other society.'⁷¹⁹ Much scorn was heaped upon those Irishmen who joined organisations foreign to their race and creed.⁷²⁰ The greatest vitriol, however, was reserved for the Irishman who joined England's police or armed forces: 'Of one thing the Order could boast, they never supplied a recruit for the redcoats, the khaki, or the bottle-green jacket'.⁷²¹ Individuals employed by these bodies were forbidden from entering the ranks of the AOH. A poem in the *Hibernian Journal* described an Irishman's address to his son, who had joined the British Army: 'You have donned the red of England, you are England's creature now, And the cursed brand of serfdom has its mark upon your brow'.⁷²²

Other Order units further up the society's hierarchy differed largely in responsibility, if not in structure. Counties with a minimum of seven divisions could apply for the right to form a county board. This body held meetings at least once every six months. There they received and considered reports from all their divisions, together with applications for the formation of new ones. Members were elected at county conventions, held annually. Divisions did the nominating at their monthly meeting, occurring in January.⁷²³ Some branches attempted to exploit the rules by nominating their own members to a majority of positions.⁷²⁴ Provincial directors, acting as delegates and granted a seat on the National Board, were nominated and elected as well; two for each province.⁷²⁵ Members at all levels, whether district or otherwise, were known to attend division meetings.

⁷¹⁷Falkirk mins', 24 Oct. 1909.

⁷¹⁸*HJ*, July 1908.

⁷¹⁹*Ibid.*, Jan. 1909.

⁷²⁰*HJ*, Apr. 1911.

⁷²¹*Larne Times*, 11 July 1908. A statement, of course, that was only true up until John Redmond's famous speech at Woodenbridge (Co. Wicklow) in September 1914 when he committed the Irish Volunteer Force to the Allied war effort. See John Bruton, 'September 1914: John Redmond at Woodenbridge' in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 101 (402), 2012, pp 237-41.

⁷²²For the full poem, entitled *A Tool of England*, see *HJ*, Aug. 1907.

⁷²³'General Rules, 1917'.

⁷²⁴Falkirk mins', 12 Feb. 1911.

⁷²⁵*HJ*, Oct. 1907; *Ibid.*, June 1913; *HJ*, Nov. 1915.

Neighbouring branches learnt from the example of others, while county and national officials liked to check up on members' progress, expound on the society's objects and principles, and rejuvenate ailing energies.⁷²⁶ Ultimately, however, the buck stopped with the Board of Erin, the supreme authority within the Order. Meetings, held quarterly, dealt with all manner of fare. The January 1912 quarterly report noted the suspension of division 446, Carrigallon, Leitrim, for suppressing its membership. Disputes, as between the Nitshill and Parkhead divisions, over the admission of a member, occurred too. Requests for permission and complaints from division officers, about the behaviour of local members were had. Members could appeal suspensions and reverse the decisions of other society bodies.⁷²⁷

National conventions, held privately in Dublin and occurring biennially, were the members' best opportunity to be heard. Not everyone could attend.⁷²⁸ Divisions were granted a delegate each. Presidents and secretaries, according to each other level in the hierarchy (including the Ladies' Auxiliaries' provincial council) also made a showing. Only the Board of Erin was represented in full.⁷²⁹ Short of the latter, the convention's decision was final on every matter or subject affecting the Order in its dealings. Amendments to rules, appeals, complaints, motions, nominations for offices and resolutions, all were part of an agenda, usually spread out over two days. The national secretary reminded members that this was their opportunity to give expression to any criticism they considered justified: 'For our part we recognise but one tribunal from which we take instructions in Hibernian affairs – and that is a Convention...representative of the entire Order'.⁷³⁰ Assemblies described men drawn from every walk of life: rich and poor, the labourer and the employer, the lawyer and the engineer, the doctor and the craftsman.⁷³¹ Further distinctions included age and location. In the early years the organisation had been largely composed of old veterans – clinging steadfastly 'with a supernatural devotion and affection to the great order which [was] hereditary to them' – but by 1907 the 'greater body' of the delegates were young men between 20 and 35.⁷³²

⁷²⁶Ibid., Sept. 1916.

⁷²⁷*HJ*, Jan. 1912; *HJ*, June. 1912; Ibid., Jan. 1913; *HJ*, Apr. 1915.

⁷²⁸It was undoubtedly for this reason that the members of division 1, Derry were particularly perplexed when their county delegate chose not to attend a convention in July 1905. 'Derry mins', 28 July 1905.

⁷²⁹'The Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin) Friendly Society, General Rules, 1917' (Hereafter 'General Rules, 1917') LOU 13/14, N.A.I.

⁷³⁰'General Rules, 1917'; *HJ*, Aug. 1911.

⁷³¹*HJ*, Aug. 1907; *HJ*, June 1913.

⁷³²Ibid., Aug. 1907.

For all that the AOH touted the variety of these gatherings, – it was asserted that the more divergent the opinions, the better conducted the society – unanimity in decision and purpose was expected and praised, if not always observed.⁷³³ In a flourish of oratory at a convention in August 1911, Devlin noted the presence and sang the praises of the ‘sturdy men of the North, the unpurchaseable men of Munster, the clansmen of Connaught, and the loyal men of Leinster’, also the ‘representatives of the exiled Irish in Great Britain’ who ‘through good and ill...kept proudly flying the unconquered and unconquerable banner of Irish nationality’.⁷³⁴ There was no room for personal or petty spirit, however. Where differences occurred, they had to be discussed in a fraternal and charitable spirit, reflecting the society’s motto. In the *Journal’s* August 1907 number, Devlin fondly recalled the convention earlier that year: ‘Every question that arose was discussed with ability and marked intelligence... The will of the majority was allowed to prevail’. He recognised that it was possible for the majority to be in the wrong and for the minority to be in the right, but better that the members go wrong together than that a section asserts themselves, even when right, at the expense of the whole organisation.⁷³⁵

With so many important and representative members under one roof on such occasions, it was no wonder that conventions were used to inspire and teach the members. Before the agenda was even considered, time was taken to hear the national secretary’s general report. By setting out increases in the number of divisions by county and province, Nugent induced pride and competition in equal measure. The machinations of enemy and rival organisations, meanwhile, were a source of pleasure. Their attempts were considered fruitless, the result, only to bind the general ranks together ‘in a spirit of greater loyalty and unison’.⁷³⁶ Amicable relations with other Catholic and National bodies were by comparison encouraged, demonstrating that while the Order was independent, it was able to cooperate with others.⁷³⁷ The bounds of responsibility constituted another topic. In many districts, the inclination was to attach culpability to the officers of the branch if there was any decrease in membership or other issue. It was made clear, however, that every member of the Order owed a personal obligation to the Society, to advance its

⁷³³*HJ*, Aug. 1909.

⁷³⁴*Ibid.*, Aug. 1911.

⁷³⁵ *HJ*, Aug. 1907.

⁷³⁶*Ibid.*, Mar. 1911.

⁷³⁷*HJ*, Aug. 1907.

interests. Officers were in part vehicles for the wishes of the members and could not be expected to shoulder entire authority for the success or failure of a branch's activities.⁷³⁸

Another important facet of these meetings was the re-election year after year of Devlin and his allies. If the BOE's successes did not garner sufficient support they were not above raking up the past: 'While we are not desirous of opening up old wounds....we do say that it is essential to safeguard against the errors of the past by approaching the election of a Board in the proper spirit'. Recruitment was also indulged in. As members arrived in trains they were met by an AOH delegation 'marshalled in processional form' and typically headed by one or more bands. The 'unusual sight' often of 'one thousand' or more men 'all wearing some insignia' attracted 'high crowds' along the route. Such displays were critical in bringing the organisation before those who were unaware of its existence. Divisions located in the immediate vicinity of the convention were thought to benefit most from the doings of convention week but in truth there were advantages for all.⁷³⁹ Reception committees ensured a steady flow of activities and events outside the convention's proceedings. Delegates got together for photo opportunities. Merchandise, including badges and regalia were sold. Excursions to the local area were had and many members availed of the local mayor's hospitality at smoking concerts and tea parties. Delegates went back to their districts filled with fresh enthusiasm and 'happy and pleasant memories'.⁷⁴⁰

Watersheds

Conventions were not the only significant events in the Hibernian calendar. Division openings, the inauguration of new halls, even the unfurling of banners and monster demonstrations, formed watersheds in their own right and exhibited many shared traits. The presence of not just delegates and officers from other divisions and units in the hierarchy but also members of the clergy and local politicians was assured. Numerous divisions took the opportunity of such events to initiate further activities. The capacity of a new hall had to be tested by way of a dance; the artistic merit of a fresh banner, paraded for all to see. Turnout for these events was always large. Brother Duffy, the county delegate for Monaghan opened a new division at Tullycorbet in February 1908 in the

⁷³⁸Ibid., Aug. 1917.

⁷³⁹HJ, Aug. 1907.

⁷⁴⁰HJ, Sept. 1915.

presence of ‘100 members of the Order’.⁷⁴¹ Many branches were formed from pre-existing members for varying reasons. With a ‘large roll’ of new members the Ballyshannon membership at Donegal found it necessary to open a new division in a more ‘central position’ in their parish.⁷⁴² Another group at Edingah, Glenties, took the opportunity of a beautiful new church being opened to form a new branch ‘for their own competition’.⁷⁴³ Membership growth more than anything, however, gave impetus to the movement’s dispersal in the early years: ‘It was arranged lately [in Co. Down] to divide Division 303 into two’.⁷⁴⁴

Divisions could be established anywhere one did not exist. To do so – a division, or group of non-members – had to first submit a memorial signed by fifteen persons, including the reason for application. At the next county board meeting the memorial would be discussed and the verdict duly communicated.⁷⁴⁵ If a division was in the going, a deputation was formed, the crowd of would-be members, perhaps even a band, serving to convey it to the place of meeting. Once there the various authority figures waxed lyrical on the Order. For new membership, short lectures were given on the society’s aims and objects. Those presiding played on the emigrant status of some members and the nominal religiosity of all: ‘he trusted that every Irishman worthy of the name would become a member’⁷⁴⁶ and ‘it was a society that all good Irish Catholics should be members of’.⁷⁴⁷ Much was also made of Hibernianism’s world-spanning reach – ‘They were affiliated with America and Australia’⁷⁴⁸ – and friendly society aspect: ‘It was...helpful for our fallen brothers who through affliction have dropped by the wayside’.⁷⁴⁹

After the speech-giving a division was established and elections had. Inductees were then drilled on society protocol.⁷⁵⁰ Sometimes the newly-elected president would give a speech thanking all present and usually pledging to leave ‘no stone unturned’ in making the division ‘a credit to the old Order’.⁷⁵¹ The size of the new branch varied. One launched at Cleland, Lanarkshire in October 1908 had 30 members.⁷⁵² Another at Bo’ness, Falkirk,

⁷⁴¹*INBMN*, 20 Feb. 1908.

⁷⁴²*DJ*, 7 Oct. 1908.

⁷⁴³*DJ*, 12 July 1907.

⁷⁴⁴*INBMN*, 14 Jan. 1908.

⁷⁴⁵‘General rules, 1907’.

⁷⁴⁶*INBMN*, 4 Nov. 1908.

⁷⁴⁷*INBMN*, 28 Aug. 1908.

⁷⁴⁸*WFJ*, 17 Aug. 1912.

⁷⁴⁹*HJ*, Aug. 1911.

⁷⁵⁰*INBMN*, 2 Jan. 1907.

⁷⁵¹*DJ*, 7 Oct. 1908.

⁷⁵²*INBMN*, 30 Oct. 1908.

a month later, clocked in at 100 members.⁷⁵³ Not all were successful. A division intended for Glasgow in 1911 foundered when at the day of opening only ten names were given.⁷⁵⁴ During the same year the Lanarkshire board in Scotland installed a division at Whiterigg ‘but the effort proved abortive’.⁷⁵⁵ After a division had been in existence for a period, public or recruiting meetings were periodically arranged to further develop or rejuvenate the membership. As with a branch’s inauguration, ‘Wonderful, heart-stirring address[es]’ sought to ‘awaken the Irishmen’ to the benefit society in their midst.⁷⁵⁶ There was no charge for entrance at these events which were by and large very successful. After an ‘interesting, entertaining, and educational’ meeting by Wallsend division in September 1908 it was expected that the membership would double.⁷⁵⁷

The establishment of a Hibernian hall represented the pinnacle of division achievement. When brother Watters congratulated the men of Tullycorbet on their new division in February 1908, he hoped when next he arrived in the district that ‘they would have a splendid Hibernian Hall...to meet and enjoy themselves in, and make life happy in the country’.⁷⁵⁸ First though, a hall committee had to be got up and running. Many months would pass before the project was finished. The members of division 409, Foreglen (Co. Londonderry) laid their foundation stone on the 29 June 1907. Two years passed before the hall was formally opened.⁷⁵⁹ Money had to be saved and a suitable location identified. Mrs. Margaret Gillan ‘offered every facility’ to the members in Glassdrummond (Co. Down), placing ‘any part of her holding...suitable to the purpose at their disposal, and in addition gave them very favourable terms on lease’.⁷⁶⁰ It was the fortunate division that could call on one or more of its own members to construct the building. The young men of Gortvagh district (Co. Leitrim) laboured ‘early and late in quarrying the stones...and other materials to the site’.⁷⁶¹

Some built the new hall near the local chapel or church, others at crossroads.⁷⁶² Some even with an eye to the view. In Glassdrummond, one hall was situated ‘At the foot of

⁷⁵³*HJ*, Nov. 1908.

⁷⁵⁴*Ibid.*, Apr. 1911.

⁷⁵⁵*HJ*, Feb. 1917.

⁷⁵⁶*WFJ*, 15 June. 1918.

⁷⁵⁷*HJ*, Sept. 1908.

⁷⁵⁸*INBMN*, 20 Feb. 1908.

⁷⁵⁹*DJ*, 24 Mar. 1909.

⁷⁶⁰*INBMN*, 2 Mar. 1908.

⁷⁶¹*Leitrim Advertiser* (Hereafter *LEA*), 20 Nov. 1913.

⁷⁶²*LEA*, 20 Nov. 1913.

the Mourne Mountains...[commanding] a wide and extensive view of the sea'.⁷⁶³ The final product was neat and compact, frequently 'forty feet long, twenty feet wide, and of a convenient height', able to accommodate at least 400 people.⁷⁶⁴ The first ever erected by the AOH in Scotland was built of 'corrugated iron', the interior lined with the 'best pitch pine', 'the space between the wood and iron work being packed with sawdust'. Inside, the hall was 'very cosy, illuminated and heated by gas, and seated' with a 'spacious platform' and 'committee-room'.⁷⁶⁵ Not all were made. Some were purchased from previous occupants. When opening a hall at Lisdoonan, the national secretary revealed that a Hibernian building at Cookstown was formally an Orange Hall. At a town in the west of Ireland, meanwhile, premises were taken over that were previously devoted to the production of a faction newspaper 'now defunct...[and] noted for its attacks on the Hibernian order'.⁷⁶⁶

There were certainly practical reasons for the construction, or acquisition of a hall. Division's easily outgrew their present abodes. Others had no place for public meetings 'except under the canopy of the heavens'.⁷⁶⁷ Inside the hall, members were welded more closely together.⁷⁶⁸ From outside, the building 'foment[ed] zeal', encouraged 'practical emulation' and attracted new membership.⁷⁶⁹ Halls were also of benefit to the parish at large. Other local groups like the UIL could avail of the facility.⁷⁷⁰ Many districts were crying out for a suitable building to hold social entertainments.⁷⁷¹ Halls had a defensive role too, acting as 'Citadel[s] of Hibernianism'.⁷⁷² While in East Belfast, Devlin remarked, 'Here...you are cut off from the current of Irish National life...You are, as it were...in the heart of the enemy's camp'.⁷⁷³ A speaker at another event noted the great change which had come over the country. Their fathers 'dare[d] not entertain the thought of building a hall; the landlord would probably have served notice'.⁷⁷⁴ Those in Moy, County Tyrone remembered the sight of the new hall, 'not so long ago...a Catholic or

⁷⁶³*HJ*, Apr. 1908.

⁷⁶⁴*Ibid.*, Apr. 1908.

⁷⁶⁵*HJ*, Jan. 1908.

⁷⁶⁶*DJ*, 12 Nov. 1915.

⁷⁶⁷*INBMN*, 2 Mar. 1908.

⁷⁶⁸*INBMN*, 30 Nov. 1907.

⁷⁶⁹*DJ*, 4 Nov. 1907.

⁷⁷⁰*INBMN*, 2 Mar. 1908.

⁷⁷¹*LEA*, 30 Oct. 1913.

⁷⁷²*INBMN*, 2 Jan. 1908.

⁷⁷³*DJ*, 19 Mar. 1909.

⁷⁷⁴*INBMN*, 12 Jan. 1909.

Nationalist could scarcely walk through the town without incurring grave risks'.⁷⁷⁵ More than anything, halls were a sign of Hibernianism's progress; as it took 'root in the land', and longevity: 'Theirs was not a movement that would pass like a ship in the night, leaving no trace behind'.⁷⁷⁶

Banners and bands represented another important division investment. For some these were a fitting prelude to the creation of a Hibernian hall, for others, a corollary, first step or affordable alternative. What most agreed on was that a division could not in good conscience take part in the year's many Hibernian demonstrations without either a band or a banner. Killany division (Co. Louth) formed a new band in the first half of 1914. A band class was also held during the winter, and in early 1915 the members attended and played at a football match in Julianstown. During 1916, meanwhile, the band along with the division's membership, participated in parades at Carduff and Blackmarch.⁷⁷⁷ Oftentimes there was a rush to outfit bands and complete work on banners ahead of such events: 'Shortly after unfurling the banner a procession was formed, and, headed by Glencolumbille fife and drum band, with new banner borne in front, [and] proceeded to Carrick'.⁷⁷⁸ Others, like Moneymore division, made a circuit of the town with their band before the ceremony.⁷⁷⁹ It was not uncommon for the event to be held at the local Foresters', UIL or town hall.⁷⁸⁰ The 'beauties' of a banner could form a theme of 'almost universal conversation'. When the members of Letterkenny division took their banner out for the first time they found all the windows along the route 'occupied' and the footpaths 'thronged'.⁷⁸¹

Virtually every banner 'symbolised Faith and Fatherland - the two guiding principles of the Order'.⁷⁸² These were both landmarks, proving that the Order was prospering – and 'The Irish cause was not going to die'⁷⁸³ - and emblems 'of which a body of Irishmen might be proud'.⁷⁸⁴ Almost all were made of Irish poplin. The front of the banner contained the name and number of the division, often with a tried and trusted motto:

⁷⁷⁵Ibid., 17 Apr. 1906.

⁷⁷⁶INBMN, 2 Jan. 1908.

⁷⁷⁷'Killany mins', 14 June 1914; Ibid., 1 Nov. 1914; 'Killany mins', 21 Mar. 1915; Ibid., 14 June 1916; 'Killany mins', 30 July 1916.

⁷⁷⁸DJ, 31 Aug. 1908.

⁷⁷⁹INBMN, 12 Aug. 1910.

⁷⁸⁰HJ, Apr. 1908.

⁷⁸¹DJ, 16 Aug. 1911.

⁷⁸²HJ, Dec. 1908.

⁷⁸³Newry Reporter (Hereafter NR), 3 Mar. 1908.

⁷⁸⁴DJ, 2 May 1904.

“‘God Save Ireland’” or “‘Ireland a Nation’”.⁷⁸⁵ The front and back contained a centrepiece with a scroll at the bottom, giving context or revealing the meaning of the image. Other trappings included the ‘round tower, wolf dog, and sunburst’, ‘arms of the four provinces’, harps and shamrocks, and gold and silver bordering.⁷⁸⁶ “‘Mass during the penal days’” was a favourite depiction: ‘The Priest stands on an elevated portion of rock in the act of imparting his blessing to the people, who are gathered in a group below him. A sentinel in the foreground, armed with a blunderbuss, is eagerly scanning for the approach of the hostile soldiery’.⁷⁸⁷

In general, imagery of Ireland was secondary to a portrait of an esteemed figure. The Order’s supposed founding father, Rory Oge, was a natural subject, so too central figures of modern day Hibernianism. The banner of Corran division featured Devlin and Fr. McKinley the national chaplain, alongside such esteemed company as Daniel O’Connell and Michael Davitt.⁷⁸⁸ Moreover, the Order shared the Irish Parliamentary Party’s predilection for national history. Thus, the presence on banners of ‘the United Irishmen...Daniel O’Connell, the Young Irelanders’.⁷⁸⁹ Also important were figures of religious significance such as St. Patrick and Pope Leo XIII.⁷⁹⁰ Room was found for the local as well. Lisburn division had a centre-piece representing a well-known ‘Lisburn patriot’.⁷⁹¹ As Neil Jarman has said, ‘banners were used to link the contemporary campaigns with Irish history’ and even though Home Rule was a peaceful movement, ‘the banner acknowledged the violent traditions of previous bids for political independence’. Further, there was ‘the unspoken suggestion’ that the violence of those earlier events might be required again. The dream of a distinctly Catholic Ireland ‘was still worth dying for’.⁷⁹²

Demonstrations occurred all throughout the year. In general terms, these events contributed to group ‘cohesion’, allowed for ‘public displays of power, wealth, strength and authority’, announced, ‘challenges’ and gave ‘warnings to other sectors of society’, even acted as ‘celebrations and entertainment’. From 1870 onwards, however, nationalist parades, in contrast to the Protestant equivalent, took on an increasingly political aspect.

⁷⁸⁵*INBMN*, 8 Feb. 1908.

⁷⁸⁶*INBMN*, 24 Aug. 1907.; *Ibid.*, 27 Aug. 1908; *INBMN*, 1 June 1909.

⁷⁸⁷*NR*, 3 Mar. 1908.

⁷⁸⁸*INBMN*, 14 Aug. 1908.

⁷⁸⁹Peter Alter, ‘Symbols of Irish Nationalism’ in *Studia Hibernica*, No. 14 (1974), pp 104-123. p.106.

⁷⁹⁰*DJ*, 2 May 1904.

⁷⁹¹*INBMN*, 8 Feb. 1908.

⁷⁹²Neil Jarman, *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland* (Oxford, 1997), p. 64.

Devlin and other nationalist leaders recognised the value of such events for consolidating and presenting support for the home rule cause.⁷⁹³ The largest were reserved for March and August, to commemorate St. Patrick's Day and Lady Day, respectively. The memory of the Manchester Martyrs was also preserved.⁷⁹⁴ County Boards were responsible for orchestrating events. Not every county held a demonstration. Some cooperated with each other for a single event. Most of the time a demonstration in one area accommodated divisions from a variety of districts. Demonstrations to celebrate the opening of a hall or the unfurling of a banner tended to be smaller affairs, though an annual church parade at Newry in June 1907 saw the attendance of over 30 divisions.⁷⁹⁵ Those engaging in the demonstration had to appoint banner bearers and marshals and procure conveyance ahead of time. The members put on a procession for the local inhabitants of their area before departing. Trains were the principal means of transport, the sheer quantity of excursionists, staggering. For a demonstration at Rooskey (Co Roscommon and Co. Leitrim), 3000 members of the Order arrived at Dromond Station.⁷⁹⁶

Table 2: Suitable Catholic and bank holidays for AOH marching

Date	Celebration
17 March	St. Patrick's Day
5 June	Ascension Thursday
9 June	Whit Monday
29 June	Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul
4 August	First Monday in August
15 August	Lady Day

The AOH liked to claim that they could mobilise from 'every corner in Ireland and Great Britain' within twenty fours.⁷⁹⁷ In practice, divisions required many days of notice and elaborate planning was involved. Provincial and national parades especially required the help of the BOE. Invitations had to be sent to branches, transport organised, and routes

⁷⁹³Neil Jarman, Dominic Bryan, *From Riots to Rights: Nationalist Parades in the North of Ireland* (Coleraine, 1998), p. 2; *Ibid.*, p. 38; Jarman and Bryan, *From Riots to Rights*, p. 39.

⁷⁹⁴Peter Alter demonstrates how the IPP took over already known symbols and placed new ones at the service 'of a certain national idea'. St. Patrick's Day predated the Irish Party, but the commemoration of the Manchester Martyrs, shared in by the AOH, was a party creation. Alter, 'Symbols of Irish Nationalism' in *Studia Hibernica*, p. 111; *Ibid.*, p. 112; Alter 'Symbols', in *Studia Hibernica*, p. 122.

⁷⁹⁵*NR*, 18 June. 1907.

⁷⁹⁶*HJ*, June. 1910.

⁷⁹⁷*Ibid.*, Oct. 1908.

chose, usually to give the society as much publicity as possible.⁷⁹⁸ Much of Hibernian membership resided, and so demonstrations occurred, in Ulster. Northern Lanarkshire, and Donegal and Tyrone boasted the largest parades. The AOH in Scotland gathered sparingly, at least twice in the year, for each of the holidays in March and August. Attendance was accordingly huge. A demonstration at Airdrie to celebrate Lady Day in 1910 involved 89 divisions with 85 banners and 40 bands.⁷⁹⁹ Along with Donegal, Tyrone was one of the strongholds of Hibernianism. For a parade in Omagh, March 1908, 81 of the county's 82 divisions showed up. A further 20 East Donegal branches were also present.⁸⁰⁰ Larger parades necessarily began in the afternoon. The morning was usually spent waiting on or meeting arrivals. Members would then muster at a central spot, the starting point for the march. Marshalling arrangements and roll call followed. Around early to mid-afternoon a start was made, the members marching through the principal streets of the town or village. Smaller demonstrations, occurring at all times, used halls and churches as destinations and venues.

Considered a source of pleasure 'to sympathising onlookers' and a subject of 'legitimate pride' to all who participated, perhaps the most striking aspect of Hibernian demonstrations was their 'orderly, sober and sedate demeanour'.⁸⁰¹ In sequence, the cavalcade differed between occasion. Attired in Robert Emmet costume and riding on a grey charger, with pikestaff in hand, brother Charles Ward, the Donegal county vice-president lead a procession at Falcarragh (Co. Donegal) in August 1906.⁸⁰² A St. Patrick's parade at Donaghmore (Co Tyrone) in the same year was preceded by a brake, in which county officials of the AOH and other speakers were seated.⁸⁰³ The main concourse was, of course, the divisions. Geography was the dominant factor. At a parade in Dundalk, (Co. Louth) July 1909, divisions from Belfast, Dublin and Londonderry, being the most distant, came first. They were followed by branches from Down and Monaghan then Armagh and Cavan, and finally, Louth's own, with Drogheda division naturally in the vanguard.⁸⁰⁴ Hibernian attendance typically numbered in the thousands, that of the Irish population often in the tens. As the members marched the accompanying bands struck up

⁷⁹⁸Campbell, 'Friendly Societies in Ireland', p. 236.

⁷⁹⁹*HJ*, Oct. 1910.

⁸⁰⁰*DJ*, 18 Mar. 1908.

⁸⁰¹*DJ*, 16 Aug. 1905.

⁸⁰²*DJ*, 17 Aug. 1906.

⁸⁰³*INBMN*, 19 Mar. 1906.

⁸⁰⁴*INBMN*, 19 July. 1909.

‘spirited march tunes’ and ‘Irish patriotic airs’.⁸⁰⁵ Handsome and full regalia, typically involving a green sash was worn.⁸⁰⁶ Badges tended to be green with the division number, the AOH motto and a crest. The reverse side was coloured black so that it could be worn when attending funerals. Advertisements for regalia appeared in the *Hibernian Journal* and some divisions purchased items from firms in Belfast and Dublin.⁸⁰⁷ Regalia had an important function within the AOH, which, despite its hierarchical structure, subjugated individualism in place of a ‘collective identity, reinforced through the adoption of formalised dress’.⁸⁰⁸

Once the march was over the members filed into a nearby field where a platform had been erected for speakers. A chairman, appointed from the list of dignitaries, lead proceedings. Letters of apology by absentees were read out before speeches were heard and resolutions passed. Among the speakers a common approach was to emphasise the heritage, location and virtues of the audience. At Mountcharles (Co. Donegal) in August 1909, Devlin confessed his pleasure ‘to find himself surrounded by the descendants of the brave clansmen of the O’Donnells, men whose loyalty to Ireland was as firm and unshaken as their native mountains’.⁸⁰⁹ Attention was also drawn to what one speaker called ‘practical’ and not ‘mouth patriotism’.⁸¹⁰ The thousands of AOH ranks that made up a procession at Edinburgh reminded those watching ‘that the Irish people were an element to be considered even in the heart of Scotland’.⁸¹¹ Demonstrations allowed the populace to proclaim their association and renew their allegiance with the AOH and IPP; above all ‘to unmistakably testify their detestation of the present system of governing their country’.⁸¹² Resolutions in support of these bodies and matters were par for course. Other bedfellows included education, economy, land and language.

Not all Hibernian demonstrations were seamless affairs. At Strabane in June 1906, Dillon recalled, ‘They were told if they left Cookstown and attended...they would on their return be skinned’.⁸¹³ Bigoted railway companies and sectarian hostility represented

⁸⁰⁵*HJ*, Aug. 1909. Bands came in all types, whether brass, fife, flute or reed.

⁸⁰⁶The colour green has become synonymous with Ireland, the green flag in particular, a symbol of Irish nationality. For a full discussion read Brian O’ Cuiv, ‘The Wearing of the Green’ in *Studia Hibernica*, No. 17/18 (1977/1978), pp 107-19.

⁸⁰⁷Morgan, ‘The Ancient Order’ in *Longford, History and Society*, pp. 590-1.

⁸⁰⁸Neil Jarman, ‘Intersecting Belfast’ in B. Bender (ed) *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford, 1993), pp 132-3.

⁸⁰⁹*HJ*, Sept. 1909.

⁸¹⁰*DJ*, 16 Aug. 1905.

⁸¹¹*HJ*, Oct. 1908.

⁸¹²*HJ*, Sept. 1910.

⁸¹³*DJ*, 4 June 1906.

a few of the obstacles. Police interference, otherwise known as “Blue-coat” displays were the most pervasive.⁸¹⁴ A parade at Kilrea in 1905, called to mind the events of 1688-89: ‘It looked like a place in a state of siege. The Diamond...was watched by a patrol of police, mounted and on foot’.⁸¹⁵ The constabulary did their best to separate the baying religious crowds. The Order’s frankly laissez faire attitude to the location and number of parades obviously did not help. Despite new rules in 1909, permitting only one county demonstration per board in the same year, the example of the Castledawson affray in June 1912, had sinister implications. Hibernian revellers returning from a rally, attacked a Protestant Sunday school excursion carrying Union Jacks. The Protestant backlash - illustrated most clearly by the ensuing Belfast riots – when viewed against then promising political developments - the ostensible imminence of Home Rule - gave good reason for the postponement of most demonstrations in Ulster during the following years. Significantly, the BOE was contemplating that ‘no divisions organise meetings particularly in Ulster for the next two years, so that the HR movement would not be endangered by unnecessary strife’, as early as May 1912. The events at Castledawson provided further justification for just such a move, and all Hibernian parades for the year were cancelled.⁸¹⁶ Succeeding years saw some rare activity, but with the onset of the First World War and the Easter Rising in 1916, the torrent was turned to a trickle.⁸¹⁷

Education

The consumption of alcohol at Hibernian parades had been a much-condemned practice even before Castledawson. At a demonstration in Maghera during 1909, Brother Doherty extolled the virtues of abstinence, calling it a ‘patriotic act’ in an honour becoming ‘the light [of Christianity] which St. Patrick brought to their ancestors’.⁸¹⁸ Naturally the Church approved of this decision and the society was keen not to give their enemies an

⁸¹⁴*HJ*, Sept. 1907.

⁸¹⁵*DJ*, 6 Aug. 1905.

⁸¹⁶‘BOE mins’, 23 May 1912.

⁸¹⁷Fergal McCluskey has stated that ‘Devlin banned all Hibernian demonstrations after the Castledawson incident in 1912’. Newspaper records for the following years clearly demonstrate the persistence of some activity. In fact, Tyrone county board were granted permission to hold a demonstration on St. Patrick’s Day in 1915. Fergal McCluskey, ‘Unionist Ideology in Tyrone, 1911-1914’ in *Clogher Record*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2012), pp 65-89. For Devlin’s announcement look at *Dungannon News*, 8 Aug. 1912; for the Tyrone parade, ‘BOE mins’, 10 Mar. 1915.

⁸¹⁸*HJ*, Apr. 1909

opportunity to slur their good name.⁸¹⁹ Besides financial donations, the creation of a Total Abstinence Division for Dublin in August 1907 was another example of the Order's support for the movement.⁸²⁰ Throughout its tenure the branch was called a 'freak', those who initiated it 'harmless cranks'.⁸²¹ Thirty months in and they had the admiration of the Order at least, though they were the weakest division in the house, at only 11 members in February 1910. Still, the turnover in membership was comparably high, with 65 members initiated in the same period. The lack of sickness or death in the division – no doubt a product of its small stature – was held up as a strong argument in favour of temperance.⁸²²

Though few in numbers, the abstainers lead the way in other activities too, and were numbered amongst the 'most energetic' of the members in Dublin.⁸²³ Each season they started a debating society in order to train young members to express their views fully and without diffidence.⁸²⁴ Everything from home rule to the Ladies Auxiliary was discussed, while leaders in the society like Nugent and T.P. O'Brien attended and delivered papers.⁸²⁵ As a corollary to this scheme, the inauguration of a regular parliamentary debating society in October 1908, exemplified the idea that the AOH was a government in waiting. Members of the Total Abstinence Division formed the government, the members of division 67 the official opposition; those of division 68 an independent party. The year was set at 1920, the parliament, a purely Irish one.⁸²⁶ Proceedings indicated that the Dublin Hibernians would place at the disposal of the country 'several youthful orators' while Bills passed and dealing with women's suffrage, the abolition of workhouses, the creation of ten seats for the universities of the country

⁸¹⁹Ibid., Apr. 1909.

⁸²⁰*HJ*, Oct. 1908.

⁸²¹Ibid., Feb. 1909.

⁸²²*HJ*, Feb. 1910. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were dominated by two major Catholic Irish Temperance movements, the Teetotal Abstinence Society (1838) and the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart (1898). For work on the former, see Elizabeth Malcolm, 'The Catholic Church and the Irish Temperance Movement, 1838-1901' in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 89 (May, 1982), pp 1-16; Paul Townend, 'Temperance, Father Matthew, and the Irish Clergy' in *New Hibernian Review* (Irish Aireannach Nua), Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1999), pp 111-22; and the latter, Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation of Extremes: The Pioneers in Twentieth Century Ireland*. (Dublin, 2008); Peter Durnin, 'Fifty Years of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association in St. Peter's Parish, Drogheda "For Thy greater glory"' in *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2004), pp 201-36.

⁸²³*HJ*, Feb. 1909.

⁸²⁴Ibid., Nov. 1908.

⁸²⁵*HJ*, Feb. 1910.

⁸²⁶Ibid., Nov. 1908.

and the taxation of bachelors, demonstrated what the Irish people might expect to receive in the near future.⁸²⁷

Still, despite spearheading educational efforts, the Total Abstinence Division was an aberration. Intellectual improvement of the membership and any attending audience was achieved mostly by a medley of addresses, debates, lectures and literary evenings. When Brother Doherty delivered a lecture on the “Life of Robert Emmet” the result was one of Ballymena branch’s most attended meetings since its inception.⁸²⁸ Subject matter invariably had a part to play but the high showing also had something to do with the dual role of such activities. Education and entertainment were prized qualities, especially during the winter when the membership was restless. Here, the Dublin divisions lead the way, arranging literary evenings all through the 1907 winter session. On Friday, October 4, brother Butler read a paper about the good work such classes could accomplish. The following week an animated debate occurred concerning woman’s suffrage. Tuesday, October 15 saw the national president deliver an oration on Hibernianism while Rev. Fr. Aloysius gave a lecture on temperance on the Friday.⁸²⁹

Divisions everywhere were encouraged to imitate these practices, not least for recruitment purposes. Not everyone could call upon such esteemed company as the national secretary, however. Most of the time, outlying and rural divisions had to make do with local talent but even orators like the president of Ballymoney division could see that the odds were stacked against them. When delivering an instructive address to the members on their duties as Hibernians, the president noted the anomaly in attendance and after congratulating the members on a creditable turn out, made ‘eulogistic reference to the young men who sacrificed their pleasures and pastimes to attend the meetings’.⁸³⁰ Still, the Order was clever enough to make use of some of their bigger draws. Brothers Diffin, McIlvenny and Skeffington were some of the better-known Hibernian orators, often engaged by local divisions to deliver addresses and lectures.⁸³¹

The workload was large and various, with orators in high demand at division and hall openings, demonstrations, concerts, smokers and so on. In December 1907, it was reported that brother McIlvenny had recently delivered addresses to seven divisions and

⁸²⁷ *HJ*, Dec. 1908. A private member’s bill to disconnect the Trades Unions of Ireland from those in other countries was defeated by a small majority.

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*, Jan. 1910.

⁸²⁹ *HJ*, Nov. 1907.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, May. 1908.

⁸³¹ *HJ*, Feb. 1908.

was due to address two more meetings in East Cavan on the occasion of the Manchester martyrs. When the *Hibernian Journal's* author Jas. J. Bergin related a story told by a relative of his, living at Carndonagh, the value of such individuals becomes clear: 'until Bro. McIlvenny, who was in the district on other business, went amongst them, they had not that knowledge of the Order essential to secure a harmonious existence'.⁸³² Poor railway facilities and the inaccessibility of some areas made visits like McIlvenny's all the more vital. Some lecturers were known to travel even further afield. After delivering a lecture at Drumcree, Brother Diffin departed for another engagement at Motherwell.⁸³³ There he delivered addresses on the songs of Ireland, and confessed how impressed he was by the 'splendid spirit of loyalty to the old land' that he found there.⁸³⁴

Hibernianism in all its shades was a common topic of discussion – the utility of halls was much discussed at their opening, giving an indication of the fair on offer - but Irish patriotism was also writ large, with frequently drawn portraits of historical figures. At Galbally in February 1908, brother Skeffington spoke extensively on Richard Dalton Williams, an Irish poet and patriot.⁸³⁵ Social issues were also par for the course and after lamenting the restricted facilities for education in Ireland, Brother Diffin concluded, 'Literary discussions in the Divisions will serve you in lieu of the National Education which you were supposed to get at School, but did not'.⁸³⁶ The AOH also took to a public stage wherever possible in a bid to re-educate the masses. During 1907 the August edition of *The Irish Rosary* – a well-known Catholic magazine – featured an editorial column vigorously protesting the retention of objectionable pictures at the Irish International Exhibition.⁸³⁷ The AOH, no stranger to speaking on behalf of Catholic Ireland, was not long in weighing in. Not only did they note that 'The pictures were of the worst possible kind' being 'unquestionably dangerous to morality', they also advised 'in the interest of common decency' that they should be withdrawn 'without further delay'.⁸³⁸ This was

⁸³²Ibid., Dec. 1907.

⁸³³*HJ*, Jan. 1908.

⁸³⁴Ibid., Feb. 1908.

⁸³⁵*HJ*, Feb. 1908.

⁸³⁶Ibid., Nov. 1907.

⁸³⁷The AOH was not specific about what the pictures depicted. The Exhibition was 'a strange combination of trade fair, industrial showcase and side-show entertainment'. A highly successful event, 28,000 people visited with receipts of over £340,000. Brian McCabe, 'Irish International Exhibition of 1907', in *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 137 (2007), pp 149-52.

⁸³⁸*HJ*, Aug. 1907. For more on the postcards in terms of audience, themes and official reactions, try L.Z. Sigel, 'Filth in the Wrong People's Hands: Postcards and the Expansion of Pornography in Britain and the Atlantic World, 1880-1914' in *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Summer, 2000), pp 859-85.

only one in a series of pitched battles that, with AOH involvement, and against the many cultural evils wracking Ireland, would propel the Order into the spotlight.

The most notable example occurred in May 1908 when the *Hibernian Journal* included the headline ‘War Declared! Immorality and Indecency Tackled. Dublin Hibernians prosecute vendors of Infamous Postcards. “An Intolerable Scandal”’. Acting on information sworn to by some members of the AOH in Dublin, the police raided several newsagents’ shops in the metropolis and seized a large number of pictorial and printed postcards ‘of a vilely filthy nature’ imported from England.⁸³⁹ The Dublin Hibernians were to play a large role in the ensuing court case. One member, Thomas Purcell, provided testimony against the first defendant, Laurence Byrne, stating that he saw the cards exposed in Byrne’s window. The printed matter could be read from the street. He bought and paid for a number of the cards. Prosecutions were brought against six other defendants for like offences with members of the AOH providing testimony in each case. Fines and prison terms were variously doled out.⁸⁴⁰

The Order was commended for its creditable action throughout the cases, but one significant question was raised: why the need for their involvement at all? Indeed, just why the police had failed to act, was a subject of much bewilderment. The AOH was quick to point the finger, ‘It should not be necessary for a private individual or a society to be forced to take up the cudgels in defence of decency when such work should be done by those who are handsomely paid by the citizens to uphold the public morality of the city’.⁸⁴¹ Their solution, that the people of Dublin should have control of the costly police force foisted on them, and insist on this work being carried out, was yet another feather in the cap of the home rule movement. As far as the Order was concerned, the authorities could have long since, were they so inclined ‘instituted prosecutions against the vendors...and secured convictions’.⁸⁴²

As Philip O’Leary reminds us, however, ‘Concern about the sort of cultural exports reaching Ireland from England was neither new nor limited’. Catholics were among the most vocal and active in their concern, and from its foundation in 1893 the Gaelic League

⁸³⁹*HJ*, May 1908.

⁸⁴⁰*HJ*, May 1908. In March 1909 the BOE further empowered the national secretary ‘to expend any sum he considered necessary to take such steps as would end their [the vendors’] abominable traffic’. ‘BOE mins’, 19 Mar. 1909.

⁸⁴¹*Ibid.*, May 1908.

⁸⁴²*HJ*, May. 1908.

had sought the creation of a modern literature in Irish.⁸⁴³ The AOH echoed many of the wider movement's activities and sentiments. Emboldened by their successes in Dublin, the society next turned its attention to the Catholic Irish press. Articles on this source of irritation had frequented the pages of the *Hibernian Journal* since its inception in 1907.⁸⁴⁴ In Ireland there was a large number of Catholic journals issued daily, weekly and monthly, and while a few of them constantly championed and defended the rights and privileges of Catholic Irishmen, the AOH contended that the vast majority devoted their columns exclusively to national or political problems. The supposed identity and objects of certain papers, along with the lack of focus given to Catholic and Irish social problems was heavily called into question; the *Irish Catholic's* coverage of the royal family's movements was a particularly head turning, though fringe example. The Hibernians were savvy enough to recognise that a persistent and vigorous onslaught in the columns of the Irish press was necessary to keep their political grievances before the world, but they did not see this as reason sufficient to ignore the disabilities under which Catholics laboured or the injustices they suffered owing to their religion.⁸⁴⁵

There were exceptions to this rule, to be sure. On special occasions the whole Catholic press of the country expressed in forcible language its opinion on certain Catholic problems. However, this only tended to come about when one person – lay or cleric – whose utterances could not be ignored, drew attention to them. That fever only ran high for a day or two before speedily abating, at which point nothing further was heard about the particular issue until some other higher authority made a similar announcement. To the Order at large, this attitude was both un-Catholic and cowardly, leading to the conclusion that the papers concerned were afraid to fight the Catholic issue for fear of wounding the tender susceptibilities of their Protestant advertisers. The Hibernians could sympathise with the business logic behind such a decision, but they concluded that no consideration 'no matter how attractive' should be sufficient to turn a paper 'issued in support of Catholic and National interests' from its policy. Matters affecting the welfare

⁸⁴³Philip O'Leary, 'The Gaelic Movement and the Vigilance Campaign against "Indecent" Literature, 1899-1913' in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquim*, Vol. 11 (1991), pp 37-58. For the Gaelic League, try Mac Aonghusa, Proinsias, *Ar son na Gaeilge; Conradh na Gaeilge, 1893-1993* (Conradh na Gaeilge, 1993).

⁸⁴⁴A more specific target was the Sunday newspapers which angered the Hibs to such an extent that they considered resorting 'to any extremity' that would banish the 'filth introduced by our hereditary foe' from their shores. For the full details try *HJ*, May 1908.

⁸⁴⁵*HJ*, June 1907.

of Catholics ‘spiritually and temporally’ demanded equal ‘if not indeed greater prominence’ than national topics.⁸⁴⁶

Asked to define such issues, the AOH pointed to conspiratorial masonic rings and the sensationalist reporting of divorce court cases.⁸⁴⁷ The prevailing policy of ascendancy and boycotting was also a hot topic. Time after time, when vacancies for highly remunerative positions occurred, the lucky candidate was found to be a non-Catholic and yet few of the leading journals made the smallest comment upon it, preferring rather to accept such injustices as a matter of course. The AOH position, with some justification, was that their co-religionists were just as intelligent as the average non-Catholic. More than that, the job should go to the most suitable candidate, irrespective of his religion. The Hibernians were not deaf to the risks in treating such matters, however. Rather, they considered that charges of bigotry and intolerance against the journals were of small consequence when weighed against the crime of inaction, something that prevented their people from climbing further up the commercial, professional and social ladder.⁸⁴⁸

Silence by the Catholic press when faced with these claims was naturally read as guilt. The newsagents were soon lumped with the journals for equal blame. The AOH wanted the Irish agents to form into a union and strenuously refuse to sell foreign productions. Arguments of “If I don’t stock such papers the man next door will” had little stock in Hibernian circles.⁸⁴⁹ And anyway, with the assistance of other Catholic and national societies in Ireland, stemming the flow of gutter literature from England was considered an easier battle than raising the tone of the native press to a healthier level. For this, the Order had sought time and again to make the journals alive to their responsibilities and duties. When this failed they resolved to take matters into their own hands.⁸⁵⁰ At a national convention in August 1909, a resolution was passed authorising the National Board ‘to take steps to suppress the sale of, and distribution in Ireland of indecent newspapers, postcards, books, novelettes, and other printed matter of a similar description’.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁶*Ibid.*, Nov. 1907.

⁸⁴⁷*HJ*, Mar. 1908; *HJ*, Nov. 1909. When a committee formed from both houses of parliament delivered a report on the question of indecent literature, the Order reprimanded them for overlooking the matter of divorce, which was given such exposure in the press. For more on this matter and how the Order sought to make it illegal for any paper to report on such instances see *HJ*, Mar. 1908.

⁸⁴⁸*Ibid.*, Nov. 1907.

⁸⁴⁹*HJ*, Jan. 1908.

⁸⁵⁰*Ibid.*, Mar. 1908.

⁸⁵¹*HJ*, Aug. 1909.

Members of any stripe could aid in this crusade by working on their own initiative. Where indecent postcards or literature were exposed for sale they could call in and purchase a sample and communicate the particulars. The National Board could then find the funds to initiate a prosecution.⁸⁵² Unfortunately, further efforts were frustrated by ‘the glaring inconsistency of the law’.⁸⁵³ Some members managed to obtain postcards but the police declined to act. The *Hibernian Journal* explained: ‘The fiend...has no place of business, but merely carries the cards around in his pocket, trying to dispose of them at street corners...hence no power is vested in the police’.⁸⁵⁴ Still, in 1915 the Cork membership achieved some success when their testimony resulted in the imprisonment of James Lenihan. He was sentenced to one month for having exhibited and delivered to a certain city gentleman a picture or photograph of an indecent nature.⁸⁵⁵

Elsewhere in Ireland, other organisations were taking similar steps to combat the taint. In Hibernian circles the work of the Dublin Vigilance Committee, set up in November 1911 by the Catholic Young Men’s society, was closely followed.⁸⁵⁶ This grouping had an altogether wider mandate, encompassing not just the trade in ‘evil literature’ but also the ‘debasing performances’ witnessed at theatres and music halls and the ‘corrupting films’ screened at pictures houses.⁸⁵⁷ The AOH showed their support of the movement by participating in its demonstrations and regularly reporting on the committee’s achievements in the pages of the *Hibernian Journal*.⁸⁵⁸ But they also understood that there were limits to what could be accomplished. Members of the committee could meet, pass resolutions, and call on the various newsagents but this would be but ‘a cry in the wilderness’ unless they were able to induce such traders to exhibit and push ‘healthy, clean, and inspiring works’.⁸⁵⁹

A list of acceptable works soon graced the pages of the *Hibernian Journal*. High praise was heaped on the Dominican-ran *Irish Rosary*, its literary merits extolled. Next was the *Native*, a Belfast paper, rated for its periodicals giving valuable household hints and, with a special page devoted to ladies and fashions. Then there was *Ireland’s Own*

⁸⁵²Ibid., Aug. 1909.

⁸⁵³*HJ*, Mar. 1909.

⁸⁵⁴Ibid., Mar. 1909.

⁸⁵⁵*HJ*, Dec. 1915; *WFJ*, 13 Nov. 1915.

⁸⁵⁶*WFJ*, 11 Nov. 1911. Other than O’Leary, ‘The Gaelic Movement’, see, Michael Adams, *Censorship: The Irish Experience* (University, 1968) pp 13-21; and Terrence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History from 1922 to the Present* (Ithaca, 1985), pp 54-61.

⁸⁵⁷*HJ*, Oct. 1915.

⁸⁵⁸Ibid., Oct. 1915; *HJ*, Dec. 1915.

⁸⁵⁹*HJ*, June. 1912.

and the *Colleen*, publications by E.C. Walsh, his works, described like the man, as ‘Irish as the glens of Wicklow’.⁸⁶⁰ Pamphlets were also hocked. *The New Religion of Liberty Hall* by the Rev. A. Coleman was a particular favourite. As was *Grievances in Ireland*, described as a ‘badly needed tonic for milk-and-water Catholics, exposing...the brutal bigotry, rampant proselytising and unscrupulous ascendancy...by the so-called persecuted minority in Ireland’.⁸⁶¹ A demand had to be created. If members of the Order were to insistently call for works of a wholesome kind, so the logic went, then the agents would have no other recourse than to keep such items on sale.⁸⁶²

In tandem with its advocacy of wholesome Catholic literature, the AOH championed the Irish language. Devlin himself asserted that it ‘must strongly appeal to the members, because it is not only the language of our ancestors...but it was also the language of the members of the Order for nearly three hundred years’.⁸⁶³ Time and again the *Hibernian Journal* recommended that divisions establish Irish language classes.⁸⁶⁴ Members were encouraged to study the language and history of Ireland, to make Irish the medium of speech as far as possible on all occasions, even to insist on Irish music, songs, dances and instruments at concerts and entertainments.⁸⁶⁵ Hibernians marched in language demonstrations. Division 140, Kilcar requested that the teachers of the parish ‘give regular instruction in Irish and teach Irish History from a National standpoint to the pupils under their care’.⁸⁶⁶ Books were offered as prizes to the ‘most capable Irish scholars in the parish’ as an inducement.⁸⁶⁷ Elsewhere, divisions passed resolutions of support for the Gaelic League, especially in their demand that the Gaelic language should be ‘an essential subject for matriculation’, at Ireland’s new university.⁸⁶⁸ The members of

⁸⁶⁰Ibid., Aug. 1909.

⁸⁶¹*HJ*, Mar. 1914.

⁸⁶²Ibid., June. 1912.

⁸⁶³*HJ*, May 1908.

⁸⁶⁴Ibid., Aug. 1907; *HJ*, Oct. 1907; Ibid., May 1908; *HJ*, Jan. 1912.

⁸⁶⁵*HJ*, May 1908.

⁸⁶⁶Ibid., Apr. 1907

⁸⁶⁷*HJ*, May 1907. On a related note, division 1161, Graigenamanagh (Co. Kilkenny) had difficulties with local children and school attendance. Motions were sent to each member of the county and district councils pressing for the enforcement of compulsory attendance and Fr. Mooney was deputed to lobby local Councillors on the subject. Joyce, ‘The Ancient Order’ in *Carloviana*, pp 24-8. For more on Irish education, try Tom Walsh, ‘The National system of education, 1831-2000’ in Brendan Walsh (ed) *Essays in the history of Irish education* (London, 2016), pp 7-43.

⁸⁶⁸Ibid., Jan. 1909. See also *HJ*, Mar. 1909. The Irish Universities Act (1908) saw two new Universities established in Ireland: the National University of Ireland (here referred), and the Queen’s University of Belfast. For Irish education, a subject of prime importance for the Catholic Church at the time, try T.W. Moody, ‘The Irish university question of the nineteenth century’, in *History*, 43 (148), pp 90-109; Senia Paseta, ‘The Catholic Hierarchy and the Irish University Question, 1880-1908’ in *History*, 85 (278), pp 268-84.

division 1, Derry perhaps showed the limits of support for the language in April 1906. Bro. Doherty moved that the title of the organisation be put in Gaelic (with an English translation) on all official reports and papers, while brother Breslin suggested an amendment, that the Irish language be alone used, without a translation. In a subsequent vote, Doherty's motion won out by ninety-seven votes to seventy-seven.⁸⁶⁹ Once home rule received royal assent in September 1914, however, the Order's leadership made its ambition clear:

Education is a sort of national as well as individual safety...[and] must be thoroughly Irishised. It will not be sufficient that the Irish language and Irish history should be taught at stated hours. Denationalising tendencies must be completely eradicated. Any attempt at secularisation of the school curriculum will [also] meet with the resentment of the entire Order. In the Catholic schools Catholic doctrine must colour and inform the atmosphere.⁸⁷⁰

Entertainment

A thoroughly enjoyable night...tobacco, cigarettes...clays, coffee and biscuits...everything at the function was "racy of the soil."...Bro. Duigenan's singing of "The Minstrel Boy" and "Through Erin's Isle" was much appreciated...Bro. Buggy danced a reel and hornpipe in first-class style, the Division Secretary afterwards contributing a jig... Bros. Nolan, Irvine and Kearney sang in the comic strain...the Chairman recited..."Emmet's Speech from the Dock."...The function was fittingly brought to a close by Bro. McCabe and the company singing "A Nation once again."

Source: *HJ*, Oct. 1907.

Boards and divisions organised socials of all types throughout the year. Smokers were but one form of entertainment that the AOH regularly engaged in, though the example above does serve to evoke a sense of overlapping eclecticism and varied objects. These qualities were the essential ingredients in Hibernian social life. The old Irish "Ceilidh" or soiree, where any combination of nourishment, dancing, music, recitations, singing and storytelling occurred, was the dominant type.⁸⁷¹ Fellowship and unity among the members had to be promoted and consolidated.⁸⁷² Opening a new hall or presenting a gift

⁸⁶⁹'Derry mins', 25 Apr. 1906.

⁸⁷⁰*HJ*, Oct. 1915. For more on the religious side of the Order, see chapter 2; and the Irish language, Vincent Morley, 'The Irish Language' in R. Bourke and I. McBride (eds) *The Princeton history of modern Ireland* (Oxford, 2016) pp 320-42.

⁸⁷¹*HJ*, Oct. 1907.

⁸⁷²*Ibid.*, Aug. 1907; *HJ*, Jan. 1912.

offered good reasons for arranging such an event. St. Patrick's Day and other national holidays also required commemoration. At other times celebrations were organised to fund the creation or purchase of a banner or band; sometimes even to increase membership, though this last was a natural by-product of most gatherings. Annual balls, concerts and even reunions – so as to celebrate the anniversary of a division's establishment - spiced up local Irish life.

Cranagh division (Co. Tyrone) had trouble accommodating the huge swell of visitors at their concert in February 1908.⁸⁷³ People and members of other divisions travelled from far and wide to take part in what was for many, the event of the month or season. Representatives from other national organisations, including the INF and UIL also tended to make a showing.⁸⁷⁴ Halls had to be decorated for such occasions. When division 149, Ballybofey (Co. Donegal) held its fifth annual reunion the walls were 'adorned with appropriate mottoes' and the windows were 'tastefully done off with draping; all around the room garlands of flowers drooped in graceful festoons from the ceiling'.⁸⁷⁵ At the second annual concert and ball of division 125, Barrow-in-Furness, held at the local town hall, a banner was hung over the stage reading "Cead Mille Failte".⁸⁷⁶ Alternative mottoes included "Success to the AOH", "Faith and Fatherland" and "God Save Ireland".⁸⁷⁷ Suppers and other repasts were a common occurrence before, during and after such events.⁸⁷⁸ In October 1917, Killany division's secretary was ordered to purchase 4 large hams, 6 dozen loaves, 3 pounds of sugar, 6 pots of jam, some Yorkshire relish, mustard, and salt, for an upcoming dance.⁸⁷⁹

With some socials – typically dances - admission was confined to members of the Order and their lady friends. Much importance was accorded to the choice of chairman or speaker. Securing the presence of a county president was the standard practice. Roping Devlin himself on the other hand, or another member of the National Board, was quite a coup. Some divisions, like 306, Anderston (Glasgow), relied on local celebrities like 'Brother "Sandy" McMahon, the renowned ex-Celtic F.C. player'.⁸⁸⁰ The programme for the evening usually consisted of national songs rendered by prominent Irish artists.

⁸⁷³*HJ*, Apr. 1908.

⁸⁷⁴*Ibid.*, Oct. 1908.

⁸⁷⁵*HJ*, July 1909.

⁸⁷⁶Gaelic for a hundred thousand welcomes.

⁸⁷⁷*HJ*, Nov. 1907.

⁸⁷⁸*Ibid.*, Mar. 1909.

⁸⁷⁹'Killany mins', 23 Oct. 1917.

⁸⁸⁰*HJ*, Dec. 1907.

Brother members frequently joined in the dancing and singing, even using instruments on occasion. Divisions availed of talents residing at other branches by inviting their secretaries. Great emphasis was placed on making these events purely Irish and national. One reason was to give example to other Irish societies. This was especially true in Scotland where the stereotype of the stage Irishman was not to be tolerated.⁸⁸¹ When Bergin attended a social at Falkirk in 1911 he reflected: ‘Those who maintain that the Irish spirit can be crushed by exile should...hear the loud and deafening cheering which springs from Irish throats when a song or air of a National kind is rendered’.⁸⁸²

Songs were almost uniformly patriotic, celebrating Irish events, locations and people. The singing of ‘A Nation Once Again’ capped most proceedings, reminding all involved of the hard fight still to be fought and won and that they should never lose sight of Ireland’s condition, past, present and future.⁸⁸³ Recitations added a more sobering tone to events, given their medium. Toasts were also raised, sometimes to division members and officers, county and districts boards or even the Order at large. Tribute was also made to his holiness the Pope, nationalist politicians and Ireland itself. Brother James McLaughlin’s toast to “The Immortality of Irish Nationality” was a typical expression of immigrant national consciousness:

To every true-born Irishman a glory and a pride.
A thing of noble birth it is; the livest thing on earth it is.
It can’t be killed or conquered, battered down or put aside!⁸⁸⁴

In general, clarinets, fiddles, flutes, pianos, pipes and violins provided the music for such events.⁸⁸⁵ But some divisions, like one in Belfast and another in Clydebank, Scotland, secured the services of full-blown orchestras.⁸⁸⁶ As accompaniment, there was no shortage of dancing - typically jigs and reels - involving between 50 and 100 couples, and more often than not, lasting until the ‘wee hours’ of the morning.⁸⁸⁷ On such

⁸⁸¹Ibid., Nov. 1910.

⁸⁸²*HJ*, Sept. 1911.

⁸⁸³Ibid., Jan. 1908; *HJ*, Jan. 1909; *HJ*, Feb. 1910. “A Nation Once Again” was written by Thomas O. Davies in the early to mid 1840s. Peter Alter has talked about how this popular song gave way to “God Save Ireland” as the national anthem from 1880 to 1916. In practice and by weight of numbers, those Hibernians within Ireland preferred the latter; those in Britain the former. Incidentally, “A Nation Once Again was the favoured song of the Sinn Fein movement. See Raymond Daly, *Celtic and Ireland in Song and Story* (2008); Alter, ‘Symbols of Irish Nationalism’ in *Studia Hibernica*, pp 109-18.

⁸⁸⁴*HJ*, Feb. 1910.

⁸⁸⁵Ibid., Apr. 1917; *HJ*, Jan. 1918.

⁸⁸⁶*HJ*, Feb. 1909; *HJ*, Jan. 1908.

⁸⁸⁷ See Ibid., Apr. 1907 for the quote. The numbers are inferred from multiple accounts, for example, *HJ*, Feb. 1909; *HJ*, Dec. 1910.

occasions members would wear badges, full regalia or even fancy dress. When division 563, Falkirk held a concert, brothers Gaffney and McBride appeared in Robert Emmet costumes, while several ladies came in Irish Colleen apparel.⁸⁸⁸ Dramas, musical sketches and plays were staged as well, though the Order frowned on attempts to introduce too much of a variety programme. There was no place for the ‘caricature’ or anything ‘vulgar’. Concerts and entertainments were to be used entirely to ‘stimulate the patriotism’ of the Irish people by recalling the ‘heroic deeds’ of their ancestors, ‘amid persecutions’ of the ‘most gruesome and horrid nature’.⁸⁸⁹

Nevertheless, by exhorting every district with a hall to organise a dramatic club or hold classes, the Order opened the door for more organic proceedings, if not a complete hijacking of the patriotic model. Books containing dramatic scenarios were considered cheap and such activities had merits besides, not only in retaining membership but also increasing and developing members’ talents.⁸⁹⁰ The secretary of Haggardstown division was praised for forming the Dundalk Hibernian Players, a dramatic troupe that popularised Irish drama, music and singing in Co. Louth. Scenery was created that could be easily transported from one place to another and after giving performances in their own district, the group planned for similar productions in the surrounding areas.⁸⁹¹ Divisions were known to use their members’ talents to achieve in-house goals. On St. Patrick’s night, 1917, the Players delivered two comedy sketches at a concert, the proceeds of which were devoted to the building of a new Hibernian hall in Haggardstown (Co. Louth).⁸⁹² Other troupes resided at Ballygawley and Drogheda.⁸⁹³ The most famous group, however, came from Dublin. The Dublin Hibernian Players were made up from members of both sexes. Comedies, dramas and works across all genres were produced: *The Croppy Boy*, *Family Failing*, *Knocknagow*, *Mike McCabe*, *The Shadows* and *The Workhouse Ward*.⁸⁹⁴

⁸⁸⁸*HJ*, Feb. 1909.

⁸⁸⁹*Ibid.*, Oct. 1907.

⁸⁹⁰*HJ*, Jan. 1912.

⁸⁹¹*HJ*, Nov. 1917.

⁸⁹²*Ibid.*, May 1917.

⁸⁹³*HJ*, Apr. 1916; *HJ*, Mar. 1917.

⁸⁹⁴*Ibid.*, Apr. 1916.

Irish dancing classes for children were also endorsed.⁸⁹⁵ Towards the end of 1916 almost 1,000 children were attending classes in Dublin.⁸⁹⁶ Jigs, Hornpipes, Quadrille and Reels were all taught.⁸⁹⁷ The dancing was certainly a source of joy to those involved but it fulfilled another agenda too. To the AOH, Irish dancing in particular was an antidote to the poisoning of Irish national life and the pollution of the country's young people. Amongst the youth there was a 'tendency to ape immoral musical hall exhibitions and adopt the indecent extravagances imported principally from America'.⁸⁹⁸ The facilities of the Order offered an alternative to public dancing clubs, – where the children might be tainted with foreign methods – offering places with a clean, healthy and crucially, national atmosphere instead.⁸⁹⁹ Unfortunately, most divisions lacked the facilities for such activities, if not the enthusiasm or numbers. Dublin's status as both a nexus for organised social activities, and as an example to other divisions was largely predicated on those grounds. The Order's largest club-hall combination was established at 31 Rutland Square, and opened by the Lord Mayor on 8 December 1908. With a main hall capable of comfortably housing 600 people, every requirement of the members was catered for. On the ground floor well-lighted bathrooms and dressing rooms were fitted, spaces for pastimes and educative pursuits were supplied, and the roof of the Hall was made into a tea garden for the summer months.⁹⁰⁰

During October 1916 the dance classes were held at three of the Hibernian clubs in the city: each Monday at Harcourt Street, each Tuesday at Rutland Square and every Wednesday at Glasnevin.⁹⁰¹ There were five other clubs within the city limits, most discharging similar functions to Rutland, albeit in a more limited form.⁹⁰² The National Board had no qualms about paying for these. A number of divisions with unsuitable

⁸⁹⁵The members of division 1, Derry also contemplated dance classes but the extent to which the practice was carried on by divisions outside Dublin is unclear. 'Derry mins', 6 Oct. 1909.

⁸⁹⁶*HJ*, Dec. 1916. Sharon Phelan has identified a two-pronged Irish dance system: 'The Gaelic League aimed to formalize the traditional dance system; this would involve a regulated teaching system, supervised dance events and an approved repertoire. In the main, rural dance masters reacted against the initiative. Situated far from the Pale, others were oblivious to it'. Given the primacy of Dublin in the pages of the *Hibernian Journal*, that organ naturally held with the League example, but elsewhere in Ireland, as indicated by the earlier discussion of Irish "Ceilidhs", Hibernian proceedings were undoubtedly altogether more organic. Sharon Phelan, 'Irish Dance during the Gaelic Revival: Conflicts of Consciousness' in *Nordic Irish Studies*, Vol. 14 (2015), pp 127-37.

⁸⁹⁷*HJ*, Nov. 1917.

⁸⁹⁸*Ibid.*, Nov. 1916.

⁸⁹⁹*HJ*, Nov. 1909; *HJ*, Oct. 1916.

⁹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, Dec. 1908.

⁹⁰¹*HJ*, Oct. 1916.

⁹⁰²*WFJ*, 1 Apr. 1916. Besides those already mentioned there was one at Seville Place, and two more at Great Brunswick Street, and James's Street.

facilities were seriously handicapped and required central premises.⁹⁰³ The investment was well worth it. When the Order purchased the premises for the Rutland club, it was naturally expected that there would be a great increase in the membership of the divisions in the metropolis. None, however, ‘bargained for the huge lists of applications and nominations which...poured in’.⁹⁰⁴ Membership in the Order meant membership in every one of its clubs. For the travelling member, these pit stops could be found all over the British Isles.⁹⁰⁵

Belfast had a large club too, located at Ulster Street and opened on the 1 October 1906.⁹⁰⁶ The Ulster Hibernian Club was for the use of all the divisions in the Belfast area, but belonged principally to division 21. At the inauguration, the national chaplain and others underscored the importance of such buildings. They were a visible token of the progress of Hibernianism ‘because its whole end and object was to bring men together and develop amongst them a sense of human solidarity, a feeling of good comradeship and conjoint action’.⁹⁰⁷ These clubs also acted as a sort of halfway house for inter-division bodies and schemes. County and district along with the National Board naturally availed of the Ulster Street premises, but so too did the Ulster Hibernian Literary Society.⁹⁰⁸ Annual celebrations, like the Manchester Martyrs commemoration, which were appropriated by the IPP, also found a home at this larger venue.⁹⁰⁹ On Sunday 24 November 1907, brother Skeffington delivered a panegyric on the martyrs and afterwards a gramophone, songs, and recitations were heard.⁹¹⁰

The Ulster Hibernian Club acted as the headquarters for the Ulster Hibernian Cycling Club as well. This grouping, formed in February 1906, was confined to Hibernian members only and held cycling runs at the beginning, middle and end of every week.⁹¹¹ After riding to Antrim in April 1907 a dinner was held at the Massereene Arms Hotel. A chamber concert followed and a stroll on Lough Neagh’s banks before bicycles were steered homewards. The members departed for Lurgan the next day.⁹¹² Other divisions periodically took to their bikes. Summer was the recommended time for organising a club.

⁹⁰³*WFJ*, 1 Apr. 1916.

⁹⁰⁴*HJ*, Feb. 1909.

⁹⁰⁵*HJ*, June. 1919.

⁹⁰⁶*INBMN*, 2 Oct. 1906.

⁹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 2 Oct. 1906.

⁹⁰⁸*INBMN*, 18 Sept. 1907; *Ibid.*, 3 Mar. 1910; *INBMN*, 6 Feb. 1908; *INBMN*, 22 Jan. 1907.

⁹⁰⁹Alter, ‘Symbols of Irish Nationalism’ in *Studia Hibernica*, p. 111.

⁹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 27 Nov. 1907.

⁹¹¹*INBMN*, 5 Apr. 1907; *Ibid.*, 24 Apr. 1906; *INBMN*, 2 Feb. 1907; *INBMN*, 27 Apr. 1906.

⁹¹²*INBMN*, 13 Apr. 1907.

Although Glasgow was not considered a beautiful city, the members of division 5 had the allure of the surrounding area, ‘the most picturesque woodland, lake and mountain country’ and all within easy cycling distance to merit just such a venture.⁹¹³ Alongside amusement and recreation, such clubs were regarded as a good medium for general organising work.⁹¹⁴ When brother Hughes started a cycling club in May 1908 he hoped to bring Co. Louth further under the auspices of the Order.⁹¹⁵ Places could be visited where no division existed, and efforts made to get some of the prominent local men interested in the movement.⁹¹⁶

In general, however, notwithstanding the bustling activity of its many semi-permanent tenants, attendance at the Ulster Hibernian Club was lacking.⁹¹⁷ One novel idea of boosting the numbers was to hold a social, at which a gold medal would be presented for the best rendering of any song of strong Irish sentiment.⁹¹⁸ Around the same time, the idea of a Hibernian songbook was raised. Poems were considered a natural inclusion.⁹¹⁹ During March 1918 a similar regenerative effort was made, only on a much larger scale. A competition for the best Hibernian rallying song, open to members and the public alike, and with a prize of five guineas, was implemented.⁹²⁰

The first verse of the winning Hibernian Rallying Song, by Mr. J.E. Murray, Portrush

From North to South, from East to West
 Unite, for danger’s nigh;
 Ye sons of Erin rally
 Our country’s foe defy
 Let’s march together true and strong
 With the green flag borne on high
 And banded brave, while our banners wave,
 We’ll conquer or we’ll die.

Source: *HJ*, May 1918.

After their successes with dance classes, the Dublin clubs organised a singing alternative. Membership was open to all male and female members of the Order in the

⁹¹³*HJ*, July 1908.

⁹¹⁴*HJ*, May 1911.

⁹¹⁵*INBMN*, 27 May 1908.

⁹¹⁶*HJ*, May 1911. For more on Irish cycling, try Brian Griffin, *Cycling in Victorian Ireland* (Dublin, 2006).

⁹¹⁷*INBMN*, 8 Jan. 1908.

⁹¹⁸The Minstrel Boy, Clare’s Dragoons, Paddies Evermore, The West’s Asleep, The Harp That Once, Erin the Tear and the Smile.

⁹¹⁹*HJ*, Feb. 1908; *INBMN*, 11 Dec. 1907.

⁹²⁰*WFJ*, 16 Feb. 1918; *Ibid.*, 23 Feb. 1918; *WFJ*, 4 May 1918.

City.⁹²¹ Individual singing was advocated over the choir equivalent, choral, so that whether as children or as adults, the pupils would be able to contribute to the ‘attractions of home life’ and keep ‘Irish melodies and Irish ballads’ depicting the ‘country’s charms, its history and its virtues’ ever before the ‘minds of the people’.⁹²² As with every club, – though the larger the better - projects could be proposed by members and in due course implemented, provided there was sufficient accommodation and patronage.⁹²³

Table 3: List of fixtures for Nov. 1915 at the Hibernian Club

Date	Event
Wed 3	Parliamentary Debating Society
Sat 6	St. Anthony’s Div., L.A. Social
Sun 7	Whist Drive
Wed 10	Parliamentary Debating Society
Sat 13	Commercial Div., L.A. Social
Sun 14	Sandymount Div., Dramatic Entertainment
Wed 27	Parliamentary Debating Society
Sun 21	Whist Drive
Tues 23	Grand Concert in aid of Widows’ and Orphans’ Fund
Wed 24	Parliamentary Debating Society
Sun 28	Billiard Exhibition by Duncan and Gilligan

Source: *HJ*, November 1915.

The Order saw no reason why every division and district should not be making better use of its resources for the entertainment of members. If there was a billiard table, handicaps were to be promoted and competitions with other clubs in the county got up. These helped create interest and brought members into closer touch with each other. If the division could not afford a billiard table, a bagatelle table was recommended.⁹²⁴ For those with a card room, weekly card-parties were a must. Less well-off divisions could also set up a gymnasium by investing in some minor equipment, including rings, a good

⁹²¹*HJ*, Jan. 1918.

⁹²²*Ibid.*, Nov. 1917.

⁹²³*HJ*, Sept. 1916.

⁹²⁴*Ibid.*, Aug. 1916.

rope ladder and a set of boxing gloves.⁹²⁵ Other indoor games included darts, drafts, chess, and house.⁹²⁶ Outdoor games and sports, meanwhile, were considered a worthy addition to almost any AOH social event, whether during a parade, after a presentation or as part of an annual reunion or outing.⁹²⁷ Divisions also tended to lead in the organisation of sports competitions within their area. The Killenumery AOH sports included bicycle, foot and pony races.⁹²⁸ In rural areas especially, all of these activities provided an important social outlet ‘as many AOH members were young and unmarried’.⁹²⁹

In tandem with the work of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), special emphasis was placed on Irish games and sports.⁹³⁰ The society had pledged itself to the movement at a convention in July 1905.⁹³¹ Every man owed a duty to his country. Since the games and pastimes of a country were integral to nationality, it was thought incumbent on every Irishman to support and perpetuate them.⁹³² Many branches, like division 1, Donegal, established Gaelic football and hurling teams⁹³³, thereby participating in ‘invented traditions’, practices which Eric Hobsbawm has defined as ‘[seeking] to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past’.⁹³⁴ In general, the movement was stronger outside Ulster than in.⁹³⁵ Most teams were named after their place of origin.⁹³⁶ Those wishing to enter or play under GAA competitions and rules were forced to shed their society designation, adopting the name ‘Hibernians’ instead. There was no place in the GAA for politics or sectarianism.⁹³⁷ Regardless, as John Hoberman has stated ‘sport...[was] a ready and flexible vehicle

⁹²⁵*HJ*, Nov. 1918.

⁹²⁶*Ibid.*, Sept. 1912; *HJ*, Apr. 1919; *HJ*, Dec. 1919.

⁹²⁷*HJ*, June 1908; *Morpeth Herald* (Hereafter *MH*), 12 Apr. 1912; *MH*, 29 Aug. 1908.

⁹²⁸*HJ*, Sept. 1919.

⁹²⁹Morgan, ‘The Ancient Order’ in *Longford, History and Society*, p. 590.

⁹³⁰Games were just one aspect of a ‘larger Irish nationalist effort at the turn of the twentieth century to distinguish Ireland from Britain through language, literature, drama and other expressive culture’. See Sara Brady, ‘Home and Away: The Gaelic Games, Gender and Migration’ in *New Hibernian Review* (Irish Aireannach Nua), Vol. 11, No. 3 (Autumn, 2007), pp 28-43; also Mike Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity Since 1884* (Dublin, 1999); and W.F. Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish National Politics, 1884-1924* (London, 1987).

⁹³¹*DJ*, 24 July 1905.

⁹³²*HJ*, Dec. 1907.

⁹³³*DJ*, 27 Oct. 1905.

⁹³⁴Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions,’ in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, (Cambridge, 1983), p. 1.

⁹³⁵“‘Ulster has not yet been invaded systematically, but...many important centres are taking to the fields in the most enthusiastic manner’”. See *United Ireland*, 11 July 1885; also Donal McAnallen, ‘Michael Cusack and the revival of Gaelic games in Ulster’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 145 (May, 2010), pp 23-47.

⁹³⁶*DJ*, 23 Oct. 1908; *Roscommon Messenger*, 18 Mar. 1905; *SC*, 14 Apr. 1906; *Kildare Observer and Eastern Counties Advertiser* (Hereafter *KOECA*), 25 Apr. 1914; *Star Green ‘un*, 27 Dec. 1913.

⁹³⁷*KOECA*, 25 Apr. 1914.

through which ideological associations [could] be reinforced'.⁹³⁸ This had especial relevance outside Ireland, where Hibernians used Irish sponsored events to demonstrate their commitment to national pastimes. When the Gaelic AA, an association of London Irish Athletic clubs, held their annual Easter sports at Elmpark, Lead Bridge, brother Hayes came 2nd place in the 100 yards run while the Emmets defeated the local Hibernian hurling team, 30-2.⁹³⁹

Games and socials became increasingly vital to Hibernianism in Ulster after Castledawson, and in Ireland and the rest of the British Isles generally, with the onset of the First World War. Annual socials, as an example, were generally carried out to realise a profit, then to be devoted to division funds. Newfound circumstances, however, made that a short-sighted policy. The principal object was now to be organisation. If a dozen men could be induced to join the Order as the result of a short pithy appeal at the annual reunion, the profit to the division at the end of the year was considered much greater than the expected financial gain. Increases in membership were always the best outcome. The war had made the usual demonstrations and parades impossible. Cash profits were one thing but 'if the socials fail[ed] to swell the manpower of the Order they...[were]...practically without value'.⁹⁴⁰

The Hibernian Boys' Brigade and the Ladies' Auxiliary

The first division of the Hibernian Boys' Brigade was established at Dublin in 1911. According to the AOH, organisations for the 'moral, social, and physical training of boys' were found 'all over the world' but there were few in Ireland.⁹⁴¹ The notion that the children of today would become the men of tomorrow was a particularly powerful motivator.⁹⁴² Members of the Brigade were transferred to the adult section upon attaining the age of sixteen.⁹⁴³ In the meantime they learnt about Hibernianism's 'advantages and worth'.⁹⁴⁴ As the Order understood it, the future manhood of the country was exceedingly

⁹³⁸John Hoberman, *Sport and Political Ideology* (London, 1984), p.10. See also J.M. Bradley, 'Celtic Football Club, Irish Ethnicity, and Scottish Society' in *New Hibernia Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 2008), pp 96-110.

⁹³⁹*Morning Post*, 17 Apr. 1906.

⁹⁴⁰*HJ*, Dec. 1916.

⁹⁴¹*WFJ*, 26 Dec. 1914.

⁹⁴²*HJ*, Aug. 1911.

⁹⁴³*HJ*, Sept. 1911.

⁹⁴⁴*WFJ*, 2 Jan. 1915.

vulnerable. The minds of the youth were impressionable, and their habits were unformed. Discipline and training would fashion character along the right lines. This was especially relevant in urban centres where ‘growing materialism’ or ‘irreligion’ was thought to be rampant, and due to the long hours and laborious work of some parents, close supervision was all but impossible.⁹⁴⁵

The objects of the Brigade, like the Ladies’ Auxiliary, reflected the Order’s own but were also more instructive, being that the youth were at a more malleable stage. Upon admittance the recruit pledged himself in loving devotion to his faith and country. Honour and respect for the member’s parents but also the aged, infirm and poor was paramount. There was too a discountenance of bad pictures and prints and a promise to refrain from cursing or using vulgar language. Support for the AOH and its work was a natural inclusion, as was the vow to increase the Order’s popularity wherever possible. On the political side, the boys committed to studying the history of Ireland and supporting the country’s language and industries.⁹⁴⁶ Less stated, but by no means unapparent, was the focus on discipline, health and self-restraint. Here the intent was to foster a spirit of manly independence. Boys were obliged to become attached to one or more of the sodalities existing in their parish, to abstain from smoking and the consumption of alcohol. Physical and military drill along with athletics and field sports were an essential part of their routine. There were classes for first aid, gymnastics, lifesaving, signalling, scouting and swimming as well.⁹⁴⁷

Counties and divisions were responsible for establishing battalions in their districts.⁹⁴⁸ All enquiries were directed to the Brigade executive located at 31 Rutland Square, Dublin. Battalions were required to submit quarterly reports on progress and organisation for the perusal of the executive. Any division wishing to establish a battalion had first to propose a resolution. The success of the Brigade depended on finding young men in the local area.⁹⁴⁹ For the most part, general membership was confined to boys under 17, though, where circumstances warranted it a cadet corps could be formed for youths who had already reached that age and sought to qualify as officers. The entrance fee was fixed at *6d.* and the weekly contribution, at *2d.*⁹⁵⁰ Members paid for and were outfitted with belts,

⁹⁴⁵*HJ*, Sept. 1914; *HJ*, Feb. 1915.

⁹⁴⁶*HJ*, Apr. 1911.

⁹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, Apr. 1911.

⁹⁴⁸*HJ*, Sept. 1917.

⁹⁴⁹*WFJ*, 26 Dec. 1914.

⁹⁵⁰*HJ*, Sept. 1914.

buttons, caps and haversacks.⁹⁵¹ Growth was slow initially. The First World War changed things: ‘The martial spirit is abroad and the thoughts of the youth of the country are fixed on training and discipline.’⁹⁵² The Brigade’s resurgence coincided with the formation of the Irish Volunteers. After the IVF secured Irish Party approval, the Boys found another appeal: ‘In these days of Volunteers the younger generation will only be too anxious to have an opportunity of undergoing training under competent instructors and thus fitting themselves for joining the ranks of the Volunteers at a later period’.⁹⁵³ Strengthening the Volunteers became, in effect, strengthening Hibernianism, and vice versa.

With the onset of the war, companies were formed at Kells, Kingstown and Rathmines, as well as Cashel, Cork, Limerick and Waterford, and Edinburgh and Glasgow.⁹⁵⁴ During August 1915, there were 21 companies in existence, 10 in Leinster, 6 in Munster, 4 in Scotland and 1 in Connaught.⁹⁵⁵ Belfast, Bray, Dundrum and Sligo became homes for battalions in later years. There was too some indication of an effort to establish more in Warrington, Liverpool and the west of Scotland.⁹⁵⁶ Soon the relative success of the movement warranted its own piece in the *Hibernian Journal*; the author, playfully known as “Quick-March”, discussed all aspects of the movement, providing guidelines, ideas and news. Boys of all ages, whether ‘rankers’ or company commanders far advanced in their teens were encouraged to write in about their lives and the work of the Brigade. Letters were received from all over, and prizes, including drill manuals and fountain pens, awarded to those with the best letter, both under the age of fourteen and over.⁹⁵⁷

An article on Brigade life by John O’Leary, adjutant for the Dunleary Battalion, highlighted both the ambition of the AOH, and the responsibility of the Brigade officer when setting up a new company: ‘In a few months – if he and his colleagues are hardworking, capable and enthusiastic – a large percentage of the Catholic boys of the district will be in the ranks of the local Brigade’.⁹⁵⁸ Because of their influence, each officer was equated with the parent or schoolmaster. As a role model his conduct had to

⁹⁵¹Ibid., Dec. 1914.

⁹⁵²*HJ*, Sept. 1914

⁹⁵³*WFJ*, 15 Aug. 1914.

⁹⁵⁴*HJ*, Dec. 1914.

⁹⁵⁵*HJ*, Aug. 1915.

⁹⁵⁶References to the locations of battalions are scattered throughout the following. I have distinguished between confirmed places and those where intent was shown, but is not substantiated by the historical record. *DE*, 15 Oct. 1915; *Wicklow News-Letter and County Advertiser* (Hereafter *WNCA*), 10 Apr. 1915; *WFJ*, 14 Nov. 1914; *HJ*, Nov. 1915; *HJ*, Feb. 1916; *DJ*, 11 Dec. 1914.

⁹⁵⁷*HJ*, Sept.; *HJ*, Oct. 1915.

⁹⁵⁸Ibid., Apr. 1915.

be beyond reproach. Officers were also reminded that they were dealing with boys, not men, and that membership was voluntary, thus setting limits on the severity of discipline. Still, personal cleanliness, punctual and regular attendance were prized and careful attention to duties – not only in the Brigade but also at home and at school – were insisted upon.⁹⁵⁹ At other times stories were had and information appeared on technical subjects such as signals and whistle blasts.⁹⁶⁰ Brigade activities, of a ‘suitable kind’ were frequently reported on too.⁹⁶¹ Smokers and drinking events were out. Galas, like one held in Wicklow where a full programme of band selections, dancing, drilling, gymnastic displays, recitations and singing occurred, were typical.⁹⁶² Excursions were documented too. On Easter Monday 1915 the Bray boys marched with their Dundrum counterparts to Belmont house demesne, Windgate. Games were indulged in, ‘and on their return to Bray a tea party was thoroughly enjoyed by the happy youngsters’.⁹⁶³

And like their adult counterparts, the Brigades tended to appear at the events of their brothers. Here they had a more than honorary role however. During 1915 the Bray HBB travelled to Kingstown on Monday and Tuesday evenings to assist the Dunleary brigade at a concert and musical display, held for the purpose of raising funds.⁹⁶⁴ Money was essential to the lifeblood of any company, but it was also a means of attaining an objective dear to the heart of every Brigade member, the creation of a band. In Dublin where patronage was plentiful the companies could afford the full-fledged fife and drum type.⁹⁶⁵ Those in rural areas, however made do with bugles.⁹⁶⁶ Flags and uniforms were another important acquisition. On the 22 June 1913 the Rev. R.F. Colohan presented new colours to the Bray HBB. Many of the boys’ friends attended and followed with great interest the grand display of manoeuvres by the Brigade. Public displays were certainly a good opportunity for recruitment.⁹⁶⁷

All of these efforts towards martial perfection reached their apex in parades. On Sunday, 18 July 1915, the County Dublin battalions, numbering between 700 and 800 boys and accompanied by 4 bands, marched through the thoroughfares of Dublin.⁹⁶⁸ The

⁹⁵⁹*HJ*, Apr. 1915.

⁹⁶⁰*HJ*, Aug. 1915.

⁹⁶¹*WFJ*, 26 Dec. 1914.

⁹⁶²*WNCA*, 21 Aug. 1915.

⁹⁶³*Ibid.*, 10 Apr. 1915.

⁹⁶⁴*WNCA*, 2 Jan. 1915.

⁹⁶⁵*DJ*, 15 Oct. 1915.

⁹⁶⁶*WFJ*, 3 Oct. 1914.

⁹⁶⁷*WNCA*, 28 June. 1913.

⁹⁶⁸*HJ*, Aug. 1915.

brigades were also often wheeled out for AOH ceremonies, whether as an honour guard or for review. After opening a new hall in Cork, Devlin inspected a body of 200 boys at Fitton Street. In his address, the national president described how their training ‘would fit them to be the soldiers of a free Ireland in the future’.⁹⁶⁹ The pervasiveness of volunteer rhetoric, by this point, was clear. The HBB also mustered on behalf of other causes, as at the Dublin Vigilance Committee’s demonstrations.⁹⁷⁰ Others like the Dunleary Company, who affiliated with the GAA and entered a team for the Co. Dublin Minor League, demonstrated their approval for various nationalist organisations.⁹⁷¹

The Ladies’ Auxiliary, though conceived in 1908, only took off after 1911 with the National Insurance Act.⁹⁷² The work of the organisation was, notwithstanding, largely predicated on women’s allotted social role, as laid out by the Church and toted by Hibernianism in its role as protector of Catholic interests.⁹⁷³ In discussing the example of the Ladies’ Auxiliary based in America – a separate organisation - bro. McGhee lamented, ‘Would to God we had 80,000 of our sister Hibs here...for in a generation we would have...youthful minds [taught] the true precepts of the Order, and likewise cherishing them in the True Faith, and by this means we would become a real power for faith, purity and nationality’.⁹⁷⁴ Indeed, the AOH was partly inspired to their creation by the presence - and corresponding success - of women at other times and in other nationalist organisations, including the Gaelic and Land Leagues, the Siege of Limerick, the Ulster Ninety-Eight Centenary Association and of course, the aforementioned LA for America.⁹⁷⁵ Mostly, however, it was the emerging women’s movement and an opportunity to appear progressive that gave the AOH pause.

The society claimed, from the very start of the Hibernian revival, to show remarkable prescience as to the future. The ‘universal stirring of feminine activities’, an ‘outstanding and potent feature of the age’, was not going to leave Ireland ‘untouched’. In an attempt to prevent the movement adopting a position in opposition to constitutional nationalism,

⁹⁶⁹*WFJ*, 23 Jan. 1915.

⁹⁷⁰*HJ*, Oct. 1915

⁹⁷¹*HJ*, Nov. 1915.

⁹⁷²The BOE was particularly reluctant to establish branches in England and Scotland. Applications from divisions at Cleator Moor, Falkirk, Durham and Northumberland were postponed during late 1908 and 1909, while one for Derry was granted. ‘BOE mins’, 9 Dec. 1908; ‘BOE mins’, 8 Dec. 1909’.

⁹⁷³Diane Urquhart, *Women in Ulster Politics, 1890-1940: A History Not yet Told* (Dublin, 2000) p. 103.

⁹⁷⁴*HJ*, Feb. 1909.

⁹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, Aug. 1908; *HJ*, Apr. 1915, *DJ*, 16 Apr. 1909.

women were ‘invited to a share’ of the Hibernian ‘platform’.⁹⁷⁶ There was too, some desire to cash in on female support, to increase the AOH’s influence over the country, give impetus to the society and remove any prejudice which existed against it. The major focus of the Order was on “Faith and Fatherland”, the maintenance of the Catholic religion, and securing the absolute freedom and independence of Ireland. This was not a question for men alone, or so the Hibernian line went. The girls of today would be the mothers of tomorrow, and unless they were prepared to take their share in the fight for religious equality, they would live to see the day ‘when their own children [were] prevented owing to...religion...from material advancement’.⁹⁷⁷

Giving the LA identical objects to the AOH - albeit with a larger emphasis on the social sphere – meant in a broader sense shackling female energies. ‘Cooperation with the men Hibernians’ came with the caveat, ‘as far as the Lady members’ qualifications and opportunities permit’.⁹⁷⁸ Accordingly, LA members played a large part in many of Hibernianism’s social activities. They danced, recited, sang and performed music at concerts, dances and annual socials.⁹⁷⁹ Female members accompanied male members on excursions where dinners and picnics were had.⁹⁸⁰ Where the members of the LA could not participate or in short where domestic work required doing, they were not found wanting. The ladies served food and refreshments and they helped wherever possible with arrangements, decorative and organising work.⁹⁸¹ This was a department of work, the male members were convinced, in which women not only excelled but took a delight in, so ‘that it could hardly be termed work’ at all.⁹⁸² Indeed, male expectation and influence was an ever-present feature of Auxiliary life. Male members showed up to meetings regularly and spoke on the principles of the Order. The role of women in Hibernianism was also a topic of much conversation in the pages of the *Hibernian Journal*.⁹⁸³

The relationship between the two groups was notwithstanding, mostly amicable, one member describing it from the point of view of an “elderly brother” and his younger

⁹⁷⁶*HJ*, Aug. 1915. Margaret MacCurtain and Rosemary Owens have, notwithstanding, proven conclusively that the Home Rule struggle damaged the feminist movement. See Donncha O Corrain, Margaret MacCurtain (eds), *Women in Irish Society: The Historical Dimension* (Connecticut, 1979) and, Rosemary Owens, *Irish women’s struggle for the vote* (Dublin, 1975).

⁹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, Aug. 1908.

⁹⁷⁸*HJ*, Apr. 1915.

⁹⁷⁹*HJ*, Feb. 1909; *HJ*, Feb. 1910; *Motherwell Times*, 24 Apr. 1914; *DJ*, 13 Nov. 1914.

⁹⁸⁰*HJ*, Aug. 1916; *INBMN*, 16 July. 1910; *WFJ*, 2 Aug. 1913.

⁹⁸¹*INBMN*, 16 Aug. 1910; *WFJ*, 12 Feb. 1916.

⁹⁸²*INBMN*, 6 Jan. 1910.

⁹⁸³*DELA*, 6 July 1912; *HJ*, Feb. 1909; *Ibid.*, Apr. 1915; *HJ*, Mar. 1917.

sister.⁹⁸⁴ For all that the Ladies' Auxiliary helped the Hibernians, it was a society in its own right, if one which structurally, was very similar to the AOH. As with that body, applicants had to be practical Catholics, Irish or of Irish descent, further, to have no connection with any society condemned by the Catholic Church and be willing to aid in the creation of a free Ireland. The central office was situated in Dublin. Divisions and an executive were the main hierarchical units and eventually county and district boards too. Each division consisted of a minimum of fifteen members and typically contained a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, together with five other members who formed a managing committee. Regular meetings, monthly if not weekly, and yearly elections for office-bearers were held.⁹⁸⁵

Structural similarities and male collaboration aside, another important feature of the LA was the 'mutual assistance, advice and sympathy' it offered its members.⁹⁸⁶ Being a transnational organisation like the AOH, the LA catered to the wants and needs of many members across multiple regions. General sociability was a large part of their programme. The example of Dublin was touted as the norm. There, during the summer months, outings were arranged, and the ladies were entertained and received at many institutions throughout the city and county. In the winter, meanwhile, literary, musical and social evenings predominated.⁹⁸⁷ Female members were also more than capable of holding their own – sometimes gender exclusive - activities, including excursions, socials and whist drives.⁹⁸⁸ A great deal of socialisation also occurred at meetings, where gifts and presentations were made, and votes of condolence delivered. The former was especially important given the tendency of Irish women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to emigrate. Inside Ireland and even outside, the LA found jobs for its members and increased their marriage prospects by constantly rubbing shoulders with the male body.⁹⁸⁹

⁹⁸⁴WFJ, 10 Aug. 1912.

⁹⁸⁵HJ, Aug. 1908

⁹⁸⁶Ibid., Aug. 1908.

⁹⁸⁷HJ, June. 1911.

⁹⁸⁸Kirkintilloch Gazette, 19 July 1912; WFJ, 13 June 1914; WFJ, 22 May 1915.

⁹⁸⁹Much work has been completed on female Irish emigration, though little on Britain during the early twentieth century. See Sharon Lambert, *Irishwomen in Lancashire, 1922-1960: their story* (Lancaster, 2001); Enda Delaney, 'Gender and twentieth-century Irish migration, 1921-1971' in Pamela Sharpe (ed), *Women, gender and labour migration: historical and global perspectives* (Routledge, 2001), pp 209-23; Louise Ryan, 'Moving spaces and changing places: Irish women's memories of emigration to Britain in the 1930s' in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, xxix (2003), pp 67-82.

Where the LA really distinguished itself from the AOH, indeed, enjoyed the most freedom, was in its ‘various kinds’ of ‘charitable work...among the poor’.⁹⁹⁰ Most of the documented social work occurred in Dublin. Numerous children, men and women were rescued from proselytising parties and homes, given clothes, nourishment, work, and/or placed in Catholic institutions.⁹⁹¹ The ladies regularly visited the city slums, and while their resources did not permit them to give monetary assistance to all, they did their best to brighten the lot of the people there. They also gave advice and counsel, especially to ‘ignorant slum mothers’ about the ‘rearing and feeding of their children’, though this had to be done carefully, for few mothers liked to be dictated to about the ‘welfare of their children’ or admit that they were ‘in need of advice’.⁹⁹² As one president succinctly put it, the LA’s work was exclusive, in that only they could give suggestions in many quarters ‘where a man’s presence would be resented’.⁹⁹³ Further work involved protecting against the many dangers which beset young girls in a city like Dublin, participating in the work of the Dublin Committee for the Prevention of Infantile Mortality, and the establishment of the Prison Gate Mission. This last saw members of the Ladies’ Auxiliary prevent released Catholic prisoners from falling into the clutches of Protestant proselytisers.⁹⁹⁴

Unfortunately, by the time of the First World War, the society’s activities had begun to wind down. The *Hibernian Journal* commented, ‘During one season we find certain work taken up with enthusiasm and vigour, only to find it neglected and half-forgotten the next’.⁹⁹⁵ Stagnant leadership and a lack of clarity in purpose were identified as the main culprits. Ultimately, however, the emerging woman’s movement gave the society a much-needed shot in the arm. In preparation for suffrage, county boards were dispensed with, and councils/district set up. Each of these was responsible for ascertaining the social conditions under which the bulk of Catholics in their area laboured under. The different Catholic charitable philanthropic movements, along with all literary, national, nurse, religious and teachers’ groupings, organisations and societies had also to be identified. The Ladies’ Auxiliary hoped to occupy the role of intermediary, a group where, because all classes of people met, members would be better able to realise the different viewpoints

⁹⁹⁰*HJ*, Aug. 1908.

⁹⁹¹*Ibid.*, Mar. 1911.

⁹⁹²*HJ*, Apr. 1915.

⁹⁹³*Ibid.*, June 1911.

⁹⁹⁴*HJ*, Aug. 1915.

⁹⁹⁵*Ibid.*, Feb. 1917.

than those of other societies, established for the benefit of one particular class or section.⁹⁹⁶

Conclusion

Though appearing complex and diverse, Hibernian social life was in fact quite formulaic. Most members met and conversed at division meetings. They also turned out for demonstrations, attended ceremonies for the unfurling of banners and participated in concerts, dances and other socials. These were the principal but by no means exclusive channels through which rigid ideas were communicated. The two features of McCluskey's populist programme were well in evidence. The Society's principal catchcry "Faith and Fatherland" was espoused by the Order's basic entry requirements; members had to be practical Catholics and Irish or of Irish descent. At division meetings and national conventions alike, the AOH also portrayed itself as a 'democratic upsurge'.⁹⁹⁷ Equality was prized, and individualism was subjugated to the will of the majority. Read another way, however, the Order concerned itself with developing and instilling a sense of Irishness, a groundwork for home rule. Banners at parades spoke to the country's illustrious heritage and were almost always Irish made. Speakers at demonstrations extolled the specifically Irish traits of those attending. When Hibernian orators were not travelling up and down the country to deliver addresses and lectures on all things Irish, divisions were holding literary evenings to celebrate the same. Branches passed resolutions in support of the Gaelic language. Irish music and songs could be heard at Hibernian socials. Some divisions even went so far as to form Irish dramatic troupes. In Dublin, meantime, Irish dancing classes were held, and branches of the Order were known to establish Gaelic football and hurling teams. Perhaps nothing, quite like the campaign against immoral literature illustrated the dogmatic and doctrinal aspect of the Society. The AOH was, in short, husbanding their own (insular) vision of Ireland one ceilidh at a time.

⁹⁹⁶*HJ*, Feb. 1917. Diane Urquhart addresses the growth and continued activity of the Ladies' Auxiliary after 1918 while an upcoming article by this author looks at the society's early years in more detail. See Urquhart, *Women in Ulster Politics, 1890-1940: A History Not yet Told*, pp 85–117; and Daniel McCurdy, "'A work which surely should appeal to the heart of an Irishwoman", The Ladies' Auxiliary and the AOH, 1908-1918' (TBA).

⁹⁹⁷McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 46.

As this chapter has shown, alongside this Irish ideal there was a provision for training in self-government and attempts to reduce emigration. At the centre of all three strategies was the Hibernian hall. By their very existence, such buildings provided a venue for debate, entertainment, friendship and instruction. In constructing, purchasing and maintaining halls the membership was afforded something to invest in. These permanent fixtures demonstrated progress (both Hibernian and Irish Catholic), attracted new members and became centres of activity for the local populace. If halls required administration so too did county boards, districts and divisions. Here committees were formed, decisions were made in a democratic fashion, elections were had, and protocol and rules carried out and observed. Though biennial, national conventions were not unlike the meeting of a Hibernian parliament as well. The broad programme of social activity which the Order boasted, meanwhile, kept the members occupied and entertained. As a result of greater wealth and better access to facilities, divisions in urban areas were more able to participate in the social side of Hibernianism. In this regard, owing to the proximity of the AOH's headquarters, the existence of several clubs, and pressure to lead by example, Dublin forged ahead. Finally, the Hibernian Boys' Brigade and the Ladies' Auxiliary represented a clear attempt at the making of a 'Hibernian family circle'.⁹⁹⁸ Boys were steeped in Hibernian and Irish values and groomed for self-government. Women, meantime, were granted a surprising amount of latitude. Able to hold their own entertainments and to engage in social work without male interference, they were nevertheless expected to be the mothers of tomorrow, and to perform a necessary and ancillary role to their preferably Hibernian husbands. Social activity then played an important role within Hibernianism, providing the impetus for much of the movement's growth up until 1911. Thereafter, as the next chapter shows, the financial aspect of the Order came to dominate. In 1912 Joseph Devlin noted that Ulster divisions spent too much money on the management and upkeep of bands and banners: 'To have any degree of permanency the AOH should offer material benefit to its membership'.⁹⁹⁹

⁹⁹⁸*HJ*, Feb. 1917.

⁹⁹⁹'BOE mins', Jan. 1912.

4

Financial Practices and the National Insurance Act

It not only introduces a man to friends...it guarantees to him for a very small subscription, benefits of a financial character...When out of work an allowance is paid and efforts made to find employment. When sick, the cost of medical attendance is defrayed, and an allowance provided; in the case of the death of a member, a grant is made to his wife and family...or in the case of death in a member's family, substantial help is given to tide over the time of trouble.

National president, Joseph Devlin, commenting on the financial benefits of joining the AOH, *Hibernian Journal*, May 1908.

Between 1912 and 1914 nearly twenty Hibernian divisions (male and female) and likely many more besides, contributed to the Irish Parliamentary Party's Home Rule fund. Money poured in from Antrim, Clare, Cork, Donegal, Kerry, Meath and Sligo, to name but a few places. Even divisions as far away as Workington, England and Rutherglen, Scotland subscribed.¹⁰⁰⁰ Small communities like Armoy, Co. Antrim, led by their local division 'gave cheerfully and willingly' to prove they still had 'a spark of true nationality'.¹⁰⁰¹ These were, without exception, W.B. Yeats's fumblers in the 'greasy till', adding the 'halfpence to the pence' and shoring up the Irish Party.¹⁰⁰² Contributions for the parliamentary coffers were in fact only a small part of a wider, Hibernian financial life. As indicated by the quote above, the AOH was a friendly society. Such societies were important focal points for popular and especially urban social life in Ireland during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁰⁰³ Though friendly societies never came to

¹⁰⁰⁰*WFJ*, 4 Jan. 1912; *Ibid.*, 30 Mar. 1912; *WFJ*, 11 May 1912; *Ibid.*, 3 Aug. 1912; *WFJ*, 5 Oct. 1912; *Ibid.*, 19 Oct. 1912; *WFJ*, 9 Nov. 1912; *Ibid.*, 21 Dec. 1912; *WFJ*, 19 Apr. 1913; *Ibid.*, 28 June 1913; *WFJ*, 20 Dec. 1913; *Ibid.*, 2 Jan. 1914; *WFJ*, 10 Jan. 1914; *Ibid.*, 17 Jan. 1914; *WFJ*, 24 Jan. 1914; *Ibid.*, 7 Feb. 1914; *WFJ*, 21 Feb. 1914; *Ibid.*, 28 Feb. 1914; *WFJ*, 4 Apr. 1914.

¹⁰⁰¹*WFJ*, 4 Jan. 1912.

¹⁰⁰²William Butler Yeats, *September 1913*. Yeats (1865-1939) was an Irish poet and instrumental in the Irish Literary Revival. See Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (1948); R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life, Vol. I: The Apprentice Mage* (Oxford, 1997); R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life, Vol. II: The Arch-Poet 1915-1939* (Oxford, 2003).

¹⁰⁰³For the fundamental texts on friendly societies and similar organisations, which largely relate to England, see F.M.L. Thompson (ed), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, Vol. III, Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge, 1990); P.H.J.H. Gosden, *The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875* (Aldershot, 1993); Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800: the Origins of an Association World* (Oxford, 2000); Simon Cordery, *British Friendly Societies, 1750-1914* (Hampshire, 2003). Work on friendly societies in Ireland is scant, but you might try T. Percy C. Kirkpatrick, *The Ancient and Most*

dominate Ireland the way they did Great Britain, the number of people involved was considerable.¹⁰⁰⁴ In April 1909 the AOH had 60,000 members. When we consider that a person usually joined a friendly society on behalf of and in order to protect their whole family, it becomes clear that members of the Order comprised an important part of Irish society.¹⁰⁰⁵ Prior to 1911, Hibernian financial practices were overshadowed by electioneering and parading.¹⁰⁰⁶ Money was, nevertheless, the great enabler. How else, after all, could banners be bought, halls built for dances, and members' sickness benefits doled out?

Threatening to consume these, and other financial considerations, was the potentially huge issue of the National Insurance Act (1911). One of the main pillars of the New Liberal welfare reforms at the time, the Act provided for the establishment of a system of health and unemployment, to be operated through a network of existing friendly and industrial societies. Insurance through benefit societies was virtually unheard of in Ireland outside the counties of Ulster, and friendly society work and especially financial mutualism, was in the hands of the Irish National Foresters and the Ancient Order of Hibernians.¹⁰⁰⁷ With the Act's implementation in 1912 the Hibernians quickly signed on and had 200,000 members by February 1915.¹⁰⁰⁸ With national insurance the AOH intended to strengthen its position prior to home rule and improve the lot of the Irish population as a whole. Wheatley has demonstrated how, as a result of the Act, the Society continued to grow in Connaught and Leinster throughout 1913, thus making it 'the most vigorous component of the Irish party'.¹⁰⁰⁹ For A.C. Hepburn, meanwhile, outside Ulster the Order was 'a forced growth, [which] shared the UIL's lack of drive'.¹⁰¹⁰ With national insurance the AOH was able to expand in and into areas in ways it had been previously unable to. There, alongside its financial role, the Society established itself as a 'patronage,

Benevolent Order of the Friendly Brothers of St. Patrick: A Suggested Origin (Dublin, 1943); Kyle Hughes, "'Scots, stand firm, and our empire is safe": the Politicisation of Scottish Clubs and Societies in Belfast during the Home Rule Era, c. 1885-1914', in T. Bueltmann, A. Hinson and G. Morton (eds), *Ties of Blood, Kin and Countrie: Scottish Association Culture in the Diaspora* (Ontario, 2009), pp 203-20; Kyle Hughes, 'We Scotsmen by the banks o' the Lagan': the Belfast Benevolent Society of St Andrew, 1867-1917, in *Irish Economic and Social History*, 37, 2010, pp 24-52; Clara Cullen, 'Stillorgan's first Friendly Society, 1802-1915', in *Obelisk: Journal of Kilmacud and Stillorgan Local History Society*, 11, 2017, pp 94-105.

¹⁰⁰⁴Buckley, "'On the Club'", p. 39.

¹⁰⁰⁵Buckley, "'On the Club'", p. 39.

¹⁰⁰⁶See chapters 1 and 3.

¹⁰⁰⁷Cousins, 'The Creation of Association' in *Associational Culture*, p.155.

¹⁰⁰⁸*HJ*, Feb. 1912; *HJ*, Feb. 1915.

¹⁰⁰⁹Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 253.

¹⁰¹⁰Hepburn, 'The Ancient Order', pp 5-18.

brokerage and recreational association'. Fergal McCluskey augments Hepburn's assessment, however, by pointing out how, owing to the lack of any 'prevailing sectarian temper' in the rest of Ireland, these were 'shallow roots'.¹⁰¹¹ Equally salient, and what neither of these accounts for, is the great structural flaw which the AOH developed outside Ulster, as a result of insurance. It only took twenty-five members to establish a division and so many the private and insurance membership sections. Hundreds of divisions were established in the space of less than a year, in places where traditionally, there had been no Hibernians. These made for very rickety foundations as the country was shaken by political convulsions from 1916 onwards.

These arguments aside, the content of this chapter is guided by several important questions. What did Hibernian financial life look like both before and after 1911? How did the AOH change to accommodate national insurance, and what opposition and obstacles, if any, did the society face? To what extent did the Order and its members benefit from the act? The first section describes the Order's friendly society origins and analyses its early financial practices. Hibernian organisational issues tie into a second section which looks at how the national insurance act came about. The AOH's journey towards national insurance - especially the many changes required, and opposition overcome - is charted. Hibernian life under the legislation is the main topic in a third section. The many problems associated with the Order's new, labyrinthine structure are discussed; as also, profitability, expenditure, and sickness risk. In a fourth segment meantime, implications of benefit membership are examined. Malingering and examples of sickness claims are analysed. Types of sick allowance and due process - when a member became ill - facilitate a wider review of a division's financial officers. How and where branches received and spent their money is the central aspect of a fourth section. Jobbery and other financial related mechanisms, such as a widows and orphans fund are relevant. The chapter finishes on an appraisal of membership distribution, and growth in all of Ireland's provinces, up until 1915.

¹⁰¹¹McCluskey, "Make way for the Molly Maguires!", pp 32-6.

Early financial practices

Friendly societies were often founded upon a particular trade. Typically they provided an income or medical treatment when a member was sick, at other times, funds for burial, and money for surviving family members.¹⁰¹² There is some difficulty in identifying exactly when friendly societies first came to Ireland.¹⁰¹³ Part of the problem is that during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries ‘the distinction between friendly societies and other organisations was far from clearly drawn’.¹⁰¹⁴ These issues were corrected from the late eighteenth century onwards when the British government began to take a keener interest in the phenomenon. In 1793 the first Friendly Societies Act made clear distinctions between friendly societies and other organisations. Certain privileges were also offered if the society was willing to deposit its rules for approval. British elites recognised that friendly societies offered those in poverty a way of saving themselves from destitution. Perhaps more importantly, the poor were less of a burden on the rates as a result. There was, however, an element of suspicion, derived from the fact that friendly societies were similar in antecedent, composition and organisation to politically subversive organisation existing at the time.¹⁰¹⁵ Under the Unlawful Societies Act of 1799, any association with secret signs or oaths was considered illegal. From 1846 to 1914 friendly societies nevertheless enjoyed a golden era. A new Act in 1829 appointed lawyers for England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales with the power to peruse the rules of friendly societies and to recommend adjustments before they became approved. In 1846 these individuals were granted further powers and became the registrars of friendly societies. The Unlawful Societies Act was also disposed of. In 1875, meanwhile, societies were given the right to own land and property and initiate legal proceedings. Registered societies were expected to submit quinquennial reports in return and the office of Chief Registrar, along with assistant registrars was established.¹⁰¹⁶

During the nineteenth century the AOH emerged in stages, practicing its financial mutualism privately and under other names, sometimes the St. Patrick’s Fraternal Society, at other times the Hibernian Society.¹⁰¹⁷ In Scotland, however, the Order was

¹⁰¹²Buckley, ‘‘On the Club’’, pp 39-40.

¹⁰¹³Ibid., p. 41. There is evidence as to the existence of fraternal societies from the eighteenth century onwards which were similar to friendly societies.

¹⁰¹⁴Buckley, ‘‘On the Club’’, p. 40.

¹⁰¹⁵Gosden, *The Friendly Societies in England*, pp 5-6.

¹⁰¹⁶Buckley, ‘‘On the Club’’, pp 42-7.

¹⁰¹⁷Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, p. 98.

condemned in 1882 owing to its connection with Ribbonism. Registration under the Friendly Societies Act offered respectability and was perceived as a way of reducing clerical opposition and lifting the church ban. Under the leadership of the ‘Scotch Executive’ a number of divisions in Glasgow formed themselves into a district and registered a code of rules with the assistant registrar of friendly societies in Scotland.¹⁰¹⁸ A follow up to the 1875 Act, the 1896 Friendly Societies Act imposed certain requirements and rules, ensuring the smooth running of a society’s financial affairs. Every registered society had an office to deal with all business and a trustee to supervise finances. Auditing occurred at least once a year and the Registrar was provided with a return of the receipts and expenditure of the society. Members were entitled to a copy of the rules and of the last annual return. The books of the society, meanwhile, were made open for any member to inspect. By collecting contributions on a regular and clearly set out basis, money could be invested, and generous tax concessions obtained from the government. Subscriptions could also be used to pay benefits for a guaranteed period, to any member who had fallen into distress.

Ultimately registration did not have the desired effect and the clerical ban remained. Still, the new system proved very popular and while the ‘Scotch Executive’ broke ties – ostensibly the result of impatience at the Executive’s intransigence but really a product of IRB infiltration – the Board of Erin eventually became convinced of the need to place the organisation on a more democratic and sounder basis. A committee met at Enniskillen on 28 December 1904. Registration was recommended for adoption. Offices for that purpose were to be established in Ireland. All divisions were to register as soon as possible. This mode of procedure prevailed until the next convention in Dublin on the 14 and 15 July 1905.¹⁰¹⁹ There a new constitution was drawn up organising the Order into tiers.¹⁰²⁰ Alongside the Board of Erin and other tiers, districts were created. Since it was thought that banding divisions would extend the liability of funeral benefit and so reduce the risk, these were meant to handle the administration of benefit funds. Each was composed of one or more delegates from each branch, responsible for electing a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, trustees and other officers. They like the county

¹⁰¹⁸*HJ*, Dec. 1907.

¹⁰¹⁹*HJ*, Dec. 1907.

¹⁰²⁰*IN*, 22 July 1905.

boards were also responsible for settling any disputes between the divisions within their district and had complete control over benefit funds in their areas.¹⁰²¹

In 1907 the BOE made the decision to register the general rules of the Order. This allowed divisions to register themselves, and the earlier split was remedied.¹⁰²² In May 1908 the AOH could happily report that the principal dissenting branch - numerically and financially - in the city of Glasgow, had formally applied to the national officers of the BOE for affiliation with the parent body. Even with ties re-forged, however, many divisions continued to remain unregistered and in fact the Board crafted a code of rules exclusively for their guidance.¹⁰²³ Branch reticence, best espoused by division 185, Newry in May 1908, had much to do with the logic that they could manage their own affairs 'without the grandmotherly attentions of a Castle official'.¹⁰²⁴ There was too a concern that government knowledge of society finances would result in heavy taxation.¹⁰²⁵ In practice, however, this laissez faire policy gave a chaotic and uneven quality to the Order's workings. On the one hand the members were able to decide amongst themselves on the nature of their branch, and perhaps this state of affairs initially suited Devlin, giving the latter time to consolidate his nascent grip on the organisation. On the other hand, a single registered division could work on a sound financial basis, able to purchase a hall, provide benefits and contribute to community projects.

Prior to insurance, branches came in a plethora of shapes and sizes, including: benefit, tontine, clothing and holiday.¹⁰²⁶ Benefit branches were often registered and worked on scales of payment. In general, they provided a weekly allowance and medical aid to all members, their wives and families, during sickness. A fixed sum was usually guaranteed to defray the funeral expenses of the same and also assist in periods of exceptional distress. Full benefit divisions were few at first, since not everyone could afford to pay between 6 and 7*d.* per week at the A Scale. A full mortality grant of £10 was quite expensive as well. The other scales naturally catered for less well-off members. Scale B

¹⁰²¹'General rules, 1907'

¹⁰²²*HJ*, May 1908. In December 1906 at a meeting of the BOE it was made clear that registration could not proceed until the court case involving the Scotch Section was resolved. See chapter one. BOE mins, 5 Dec. 1906. Registration had been completed in the case of Ireland and Scotland by March 1909, but England took longer. 'BOE mins', 19 Mar. 1909.

¹⁰²³*Ibid*, Aug. 1908.

¹⁰²⁴*HJ*, May 1908.

¹⁰²⁵Cordery, *British Friendly Societies*, pp 157-9.

¹⁰²⁶I have focused here on divisions explicitly of a financial bearing, but there were also Athletic and Parish Clubs and Band divisions. Tontine refers to an annuity shared by subscribers to a loan or common fund, the shares increasing as subscribers die until the last survivor retains the whole income.

HJ, Apr. 1911.

required weekly contributions of a lesser amount and gave half the mortality grant with proportionate sick allowance. Scale C was intended only for rural districts and honorary members or those organised for social amusement and mutual cooperation, while Scale D referred to those divisions varying in accordance with their district and the class to which they were associated, ranging from 3*d.* per month to £1 per year.¹⁰²⁷

While offering the same benefits as in Scale A, Slate Clubs or Tontine Societies asked for less in proportion to the weekly contribution, with the advantage that the surplus funds could be divided yearly between the members in proportion to the amount paid.¹⁰²⁸ These divisions could also advance a loan to members not exceeding £3 on the usual conditions of a Loan and Investment Society. In other areas Clothing Clubs were established on the cooperative system. Members giving in their weekly installments bought their requirements with a reasonable discount. Holiday Clubs were also formed to enable young men or women to pay a contribution throughout the year and thus provide them with the means of taking a summer holiday without any undue strain on their weekly or monthly income.¹⁰²⁹ The Order was certainly keen to get members in the door by conveying adaptability and catering for all objects and income levels with no due obligation. Rates of contribution that varied from 6*d.* per month to 7*d.* per week also facilitated those who had from time to time to remove from the agricultural districts to the commercial ones in search of work.¹⁰³⁰ This state of affairs also likely demonstrated that Ireland's industrialisation process, lagging behind England's and Scotland's, was putting friendly societies like the AOH in the rather unenviable position of trying to appeal to an employed population less wealthy and still heavily involved in agriculture.

As the Hibernian society grew, so too did the pressure for greater organisation and uniformity. The demerits of a lax approach were most evident in March 1909 when a newly designed balance sheet and officers return form was sent to all division secretaries. A large number of branches returned their forms at the request of the national secretary, but some did not, and few of the returned forms included all the required information. As the form provided for the increase and decrease of membership in each division during the year, the executive was left in the dark.¹⁰³¹ A memorandum followed in August 1910.

¹⁰²⁷*HJ*, Feb. 1911.

¹⁰²⁸Tontine societies were particularly popular in Dublin during the late nineteenth century. When the money was shared out, usually at Christmas, the bulk of it went to the members' wives and was then used for a special meal and treats for the family. For a full discussion, see Buckley, "On the Club", pp 49-51.

¹⁰²⁹*Ibid.*, Feb. 1911; *HJ*, Apr. 1911.

¹⁰³⁰*HJ*, Sept. 1907.

¹⁰³¹*Ibid.*, Mar. 1909.

Some branches paid small sums of money to members when the occasion required it but the Order realised it would be much better if specified contributions were laid down in divisional rules, fixing certain grants to members when in distress. Benefit divisions were urged to return valuation forms without delay, as these were essential in forming an actuary's opinion of the financial responsibility each branch was to undertake.

The divisions in Scotland were also admonished for failing after a conference in Belfast to appoint six auditors for each county. What, Nugent asked, was the point in having conferences if the findings were not carried out? New division books, with the intent of imposing uniformity, were created and provided.¹⁰³² When the officers of Roscommon county board failed to furnish new officers with books and accounts the BOE wrote to all of the parties concerned.¹⁰³³ The Board was also waking up to the implications of its financial situation. One idea, that of a central benefit fund where divisions could contribute a quarterly levy and thereby protect themselves against mortality risks, was much mooted. A number of small branches had comparatively small amounts to their credit, but the total if centralised and invested would mean a preponderance of influence and power for the Order. The Board could invest the surplus subscriptions received, giving Hibernians as a whole, a voice in the management of a number of large firms and public institutions, a personal advantage not alone to members but also to their co-religionists generally.¹⁰³⁴

The National Insurance Act (1911)

By 1911 the dream that private mutualism and self-help could overcome all challenges was beginning to crumble as friendly societies failed to meet the dual challenges posed by increasing morbidity and life expectancy rates. Though some held that only the state could command resources sufficient to support the aged and ill, the friendly societies opposed direct government intervention while nevertheless demanding their assistance. However, countervailing tendencies were discernible even then. Legal precedents for state involvement in the life and work of the people were becoming commonplace. Acts regulated industrial labour, and education legislation made attendance at schools

¹⁰³²*HJ*, Aug. 1910.

¹⁰³³'BOE mins', 28 Aug. 1908.

¹⁰³⁴*HJ*, Aug. 1909.

mandatory.¹⁰³⁵ The precedent for state-funding social programmes was first set in 1908 with the old age pension scheme.¹⁰³⁶ Afterwards the Liberal government turned its attention to supplying health insurance for all British citizens. The Act when it came provided compulsory state health insurance for low to middle income wage earners. In order to placate the friendly societies, and in lieu of the existing network, the scheme was to be operated not by state machinery but through the friendly and industrial societies in Britain. An insurance fund was established, relevant to all men and women earning less than £160 a year. Workers contributed *4d.* a week from their wages, their employer a further *3d.* and the state another *2d.* Participation meant entitlement to 10 shillings a week in sickness benefit and to free medical treatment from a doctor. Approved societies also had their administration expenses defrayed.¹⁰³⁷

The benefits of insurance were immediately apparent to the AOH's leadership, Bergin famously saying that the act would 'enable them to plant the organisation in every town and village in Ireland'.¹⁰³⁸ Their first task was to secure Ireland's inclusion in the scheme.¹⁰³⁹ There was too the matter of convincing the Society's rank and file of the Act's merit. The AOH was helped in this by a discussion of state insurance by members of the Order at all levels. Brother Fern, a doctor for division 307 was particularly qualified. In August 1911 he addressed the members of 361, Parkhead on the subject and later the same day the members of division 541, Glasgow.¹⁰⁴⁰ Devlin could claim with some justification that there had been a long felt desire for such a scheme.¹⁰⁴¹ The

¹⁰³⁵Cordery, *British Friendly Societies*, pp 154-6.

¹⁰³⁶The societies had long known about and tried to tackle the fiscal drain caused by older members drawing virtual pensions. For more on the subject see Cordery, *British Friendly Societies*, pp 161-2 and for the Order's own attempts in this regard, *HJ*, June 1909.

¹⁰³⁷For more on national insurance and its impact on Ireland, try Mel Cousins, "Sickness", gender and national health insurance in Ireland, 1920s to 1940s in Margaret H. Preston, and Margaret O Hogartaigh (eds) *Gender and medicine in Ireland 1700-1950* (New York, 2012); David Durmin, 'Medicine in the city': the impact of the National Insurance Act on health care and the medical profession in Dublin in Francis Devine (ed) *A capital in conflict: Dublin city and the 1913 Lockout* (Dublin, 2013). For the British angle, try Bentley B. Gilbert, *The evolution of national insurance in Great Britain: the origins of the welfare state* (1966); George R. Boyce, 'The evolution of unemployment relief in Great Britain' in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 34.3 (2004), pp 393-433. For the Act itself, see Orne Clarke, *The National insurance act, 1911; being a treatise on the scheme of national health insurance and insurance against unemployment created by that act* (1912)

¹⁰³⁸*SF*, 17 June 1911.

¹⁰³⁹*HJ*, Apr. 1911.

¹⁰⁴⁰*HJ*, Aug. 1911.

¹⁰⁴¹Benevolent and philanthropic organisations were symptomatic, and common in Ireland throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See F.K. Prochaska, 'Philanthropy', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, Vol. III, Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge, 1990), pp 357-93; Mel Cousins, 'Charity, philanthropy and poverty in Ireland, 1850-1914' in Inga Brandes, Katrin Marx-Jaskulski (eds) *Armenfürsorge und Wohltätigkeit. Ländliche Gesellschaften in Europa, 1850-1930*

conditions in Ireland and Great Britain were different he conceded, the one agricultural, the other industrial, but the problems in the country were just as grave if not worse. He was also quick to see the political ramifications, noting that workers of every stripe would view the act as a test of what they – the Irish Parliamentary Party - were likely to do for them when they secured Home Rule. Insurance could arrest the outflow of emigration too by alleviating the position of a poverty-stricken populace.¹⁰⁴²

AOH approval for insurance was unanimously granted at a biennial convention in Dublin, July 1911.¹⁰⁴³ It was recognised that the exclusion of Ireland would not just inflict hardship on the workers of the country but also subsequently serve as a stimulant to emigration. Irish workers going to Great Britain could use their higher wages to secure the assistance of the State during sickness and invalidity.¹⁰⁴⁴ Another strong selling point was that societies like the AOH could, as in the past, allow their rules and qualifications for membership to be the deciding factor. Even with the membership in agreement, however, questions were raised over the Society's suitability. Over two-thirds of AOH divisions paid no benefits. A plan was duly put forward to convert all branches to a minimum rate of benefits, thereby validating the Society's inclusion in the scheme. Ulster divisions in particular were guilty of spending most of their funds on management and the upkeep of bands and banners.¹⁰⁴⁵

Among those who stood firmly in the path of extending the Bill to Ireland was the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁰⁴⁶ Because a farmer's rent barely exceeded £20 it was unjust to expect him to insure his sons and daughters over 16 years of age; to pay the twofold contribution of employer and employed, with no compensation save for doctors and drugs. Figures were rolled out and Ireland was credited with a population 72 per cent rural and 28 per cent urban, and England and Wales, the inverse.¹⁰⁴⁷ Devlin countered by citing the census for 1901, showing that over 300,000 people were employed in commercial and domestic service, over 600,000 in industry and a further 800,000 in agriculture. This, he maintained was a Bill for the workers, 'the cost of which be the

(Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), pp 73-91; Geary and Oonagh Walsh (eds) *Philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2015).

¹⁰⁴²*HJ*, June 1911. For more on Devlin's thoughts, try the *DDE*, 16 Apr. 1914; *WFJ*, 10 June 1911.

¹⁰⁴³*HJ.*, July; *HJ*, Aug. 1911.

¹⁰⁴⁴*HJ*, Aug. 1911; *Hansard*, 5, *Commons* (xxvii, 777-948).

¹⁰⁴⁵*HJ*, Jan. 1912; *HJ*, June 1911. Over time the AOH also developed several divisions for specific occupations, including civil servants and railway clerks. 'BOE mins', 19 Dec. 1911; 'BOE mins', 10 Apr. 1914.

¹⁰⁴⁶*HJ*, July 1911.

¹⁰⁴⁷*The Scotsman*, 24 June 1911.

merest bagatelle' compared to the millions it was taking to buy out the landlords. The workers in Ireland would not be content with less than those of Great Britain, and in Ireland, as there, they formed the overwhelming mass of the voting strength of the country.¹⁰⁴⁸

The next salvo predictably came from that persistent and long-time critic of the Order, William O'Brien.¹⁰⁴⁹ He sought to disqualify the AOH, the Orange Order and any sectarian or secretive society. His peroration, however, the oft quoted line on the Society's secret password for the quarter, 'Will the times be good?' - "Yes, when we are insured", was met with loud laughter in parliament.¹⁰⁵⁰ And what really were O'Brien's feelings to Lloyd George? The latter did not believe in adjusting the scheme because of distaste for one particular society. As he put it, other societies could be formed and if groups like the Roman Catholic hierarchy were in such opposition to the Hibernians, the greater would be the incentive to form their own societies.¹⁰⁵¹ The Bill received royal assent in December 1911, with its implementation in Ireland postponed until July the following year.

Into 1912 and the AOH was contemplating further organisational changes. At a convention held in February, the national secretary made the rather sobering remark that the next six months would decide whether the organisation was a complete success or an abject failure. Up until that point, the Society had not always run smoothly. Some members, even divisions, defied the decisions of the National Board. Others would not remit levies or give an indication of their income or expenditure. Nugent refused to remain in office unless something was done. Fearful of losing a man with such considerable organisational talent the convention was forced to agree.¹⁰⁵² The national secretary envisaged keen competition from other societies and insurance companies in the ensuing twelve months.¹⁰⁵³ The insurance act had to be merged with the general framework of the organisation. Arrangements were made for a reduction – after the enactment of insurance - in the weekly contribution. To meet increased management expenses, quarterly levies were increased, and a special levy enacted. Officers, or those

¹⁰⁴⁸*HJ*, June 1911.

¹⁰⁴⁹Try chapter one for more on O'Brien.

¹⁰⁵⁰*Hansard, The parliamentary debates*, fifth series, *House of Commons*, 1909-42 (Hereafter *Hansard 5, Commons*) (vol xxxi, 290-329).

¹⁰⁵¹*Hansard 5, Commons* (vol xxxi, 343-496). For more information on rival insurance groupings, try Hepburn, 'The Ancient Order', pp 5-18.

¹⁰⁵²*HJ*, Feb. 1912.

¹⁰⁵³There are few documented instances of insurance meetings, so we know little of the proceedings. See *DJ*, 7 Apr. 1913; *WFJ*, 7 June 1913.

whose hands money passed through had to submit guarantee forms. All clubs, halls and other property owned by members were to be registered. Greater communication and smoother hierarchical interaction were also essential. Divisions were asked to arrange weekly meetings where the committee of management and sick stewards could receive reports and pay claims. All branches who held meetings within three miles of each other and those with less than 100 members were encouraged to amalgamate.¹⁰⁵⁴

The campaign to convert all divisions to a scale of benefits also took on a new form. Under state insurance, sick risk had to be centralised. The insurance commissioners could not value a society or estimate its liability if it had less than 5,000 members and they therefore made it compulsory upon small bodies to group with others to make up this number. The AOH's vehicle for this was the central funeral fund and they now encouraged every branch to join.¹⁰⁵⁵ For those societies who did not possess the requisite membership, there was always the option of federation. Several efforts were made by larger societies in England to induce Hibernian members to do just that, but the Order refused, and soon got in on the action themselves.¹⁰⁵⁶ Smaller societies wishing to receive the benefits of the Insurance Act through the AOH, could affiliate as branches or federate.¹⁰⁵⁷ Hibernians who enjoyed dual membership were encouraged to exercise their influence and see that smaller bodies did not join other organisations.¹⁰⁵⁸ In December 1912 the Land and Labour Association proposed the affiliation of their branches, inviting and accepting the cooperation of the Order for a period of 12 months, on the condition that their association retain its absolute independence and was entitled to adopt separate rules. They offered to pay the annual contribution usually paid by ordinary members of the AOH and did not ask for any representation on the governing body of the AOH or at any convention of the organisation.¹⁰⁵⁹ The Steam and Gas Engineer Drivers' Union also made a request for affiliation but was refused. The National Board would not accept the affiliation of any society that was not exclusively Catholic.¹⁰⁶⁰

With the Act's implementation due in July, the AOH spent the early months of 1912 renewing their recruitment drive. At the outset they hoped for a modest insurance membership of 30,000. It was understood that a large percentage of the members were

¹⁰⁵⁴*HJ*, Jan.; *HJ*, Feb. 1912.

¹⁰⁵⁵*Ibid.*, Jan.; *HJ*, Feb. 1912.

¹⁰⁵⁶*HJ*, Jan. 1912.

¹⁰⁵⁷For the conditions of joining in either case, try *WFJ*, 2 Mar. 1912.

¹⁰⁵⁸*HJ*, Jan. 1912.

¹⁰⁵⁹*WFJ*, 23 Dec. 1911.

¹⁰⁶⁰*HJ*, June 1912.

not insurable, being professional men, merchants, farmers and so on. Many members were also agents for industrial companies and other bodies interested in the working of the Act. They could reasonably be expected to influence a large number to join their respective societies. An organising campaign was essential and men were sent into the different districts to sell the advantages of joining the Order. Convents, factories and workshops, all were canvassed.¹⁰⁶¹ Of course, the Irish people everywhere had to be informed not just about the societies they could join, but also the conditions of the state insurance scheme itself. A total of seventy-eight lecturers, fifty-three English and twenty-five Irish were appointed to travel and explain the objects and provisions of the Act.¹⁰⁶² With the AOH's background as a benefit society, a large number of local officials were commissioned for the role. The claim that lecturers were specifically forbidden from recommending one form of society over another was likely much harder to manage in practice and the Order was pragmatic enough to use this along with anything else to their advantage.¹⁰⁶³

The AOH was exclusively Catholic and controlled only by its members, so the sale pitch went. Those in leadership positions were well experienced in the administration and control of a benefit society. The carrot was oft brandished, that as the Society was a large one, the risks would be extremely divided, and the claims scarcely felt. There was also the promise of additional benefits for insured members should the AOH demonstrate a substantial balance to credit at its valuation after three years. Another inducement was the transfer system. With branches everywhere, the Order's insured members could transfer from one branch to another, without having to seek out a new society in the town they moved to.¹⁰⁶⁴ More locally, at a division meeting in Manchester, Fr. McCarthy pointed out the advantages of a large organisation that could fight far better for legal rights than an individual.¹⁰⁶⁵ And at a largely attended meeting near Tallaght, Dublin, Mr.

¹⁰⁶¹*HJ*, Mar. 1914.

¹⁰⁶²Figures quoted from *DDE*, 8 Mar. 1912. The proportion to population in England, was 1 to 635,000 and in Ireland, 1 to 175,000. *Ballymena Observer*, 1 Mar. 1912, meanwhile, records the beginning of the lecturing campaign.

¹⁰⁶³According to A.C. Hepburn *The Times* could not associate more than half a dozen with the AOH in any way, 'But large numbers of temporary canvassers and instructors were also appointed under the act, and here local AOH officials probably made something of a killing'. A.C. Hepburn, 'The Ancient Order', pp 5-18; *The Times*, 20 Feb. 1912. See also *Hansard*, 5 *Commons* (xxxiv, 1161-1336) where the Protestant MP Captain Craig asked what precautions were being taken to ensure that the lecturers appointed by the commissioners, those who were of 'various nationalist creed and organization', did not use their official position to persuade people to join their bodies.

¹⁰⁶⁴*HJ*, June 1912.

¹⁰⁶⁵*WFJ*, 20 Jan. 1912.

T.P. O'Byrne, president of division 67 could impress upon his hearers, that as Catholics they should join a Catholic society, especially one with such a glorious past and present record.¹⁰⁶⁶

Approval for the AOH was finally secured in June 1912.¹⁰⁶⁷ An application for the approval of the Order as it stood was made earlier, but when it came to the adoption of the new rules, they found it would considerably interfere with the general policy of their work. Rules for a separate insurance section were drafted and duly submitted. There were certainly advantages in having two bodies. First, the Society would be centralised, obviating the necessity for registering branches. Second, the existing officers would form the committee of management and third, all Catholics could be admitted for insurance purposes without gaining access to the private organisation. This was also perceived as more economical, and the difficulty, likely to be experienced by many of the divisions, of keeping the books and forms necessary, would be averted. The National Board at the central office would keep these instead.¹⁰⁶⁸

The aftermath of insurance

When the Act was implemented in July 1912, the AOH was ill prepared for the enormity of the task. A much vaster membership was secured than they had anticipated. The first big trouble had to do with the proposal forms. Over 20,000 were received in the first few months. Each contained a home address and in the ordinary course these were recorded, and the contribution cards forwarded quarterly to the addresses given by the insured persons. Unfortunately, many never reached the person for whom they were intended, and 20,000 new proposal forms had to be secured and re-signed with the present address of the insured persons. In this as in other things the Order found it necessary to make the work more systematic. The office structure was reordered, and six distinct departments were created, including the Dublin office, rural divisions, districts, claims, sorting and accounts, with a clerk in charge of each and a staff under his/her immediate control.¹⁰⁶⁹

¹⁰⁶⁶WFJ, 13 July 1912.

¹⁰⁶⁷Hansard, 5, Commons (xxxix, 1180-1208). The AOH was almost debarred when the county secretary of Lanarkshire put in word with the Registrar of Friendly Societies against the body. For the full story read the *Hibernian Journal*, Apr. 1913.

¹⁰⁶⁸HJ, June 1912.

¹⁰⁶⁹Ibid., Apr. 1913. Premises at 1 Mountjoy Square, Dublin were used as the Central Offices exclusively. The insurance section paid an annual rent of £150. 'BOE mins', 27 Dec. 1912.

New rules were laid down regarding payments. Secretaries, the mainstay of divisional financial life, now performed a dual role, catering for both private and insured members. Naturally, the officer class was not expected to do this for free, but rather was paid *3d.* per member for all cards returned to the office. In addition to amounts for insurance secretaries, each branch received *2d.* per member per quarter, as an allowance to assist them in the new undertaking.¹⁰⁷⁰ Protocol dictated the sending of a package of documents, including the claim form, the report of the visitors, the members' contribution book and the medical certificate. No benefit could be paid until 26 weekly subscriptions had been paid and 26 weeks had elapsed from date of entry into insurance. If rules were not followed, claims would be delayed. A fresh visitor's report form was required for each further week of illness. Despite these instructions, the AOH offices were inundated with letters from divisions merely intimating that a certain insured member was ill and to forward benefit.¹⁰⁷¹ Another problem was that secretaries were accepting people in advanced stages of consumption or other diseases, and when questioned afterwards they simply retorted that the applicant or some of his friends were members or supporters of the Order. Secretaries also complained about the smallness of the remuneration allowed for insurance work.¹⁰⁷² Brother T. O'Sullivan of division 888, Kerry was given short thrift when he applied for special remuneration on account of work performed in connection with the insurance section.¹⁰⁷³

To remedy these and other problems Nugent arranged for the formation of districts in centres where there were 1000 or more insured members, and within a radius of five miles. In such places an official was appointed to personally collect the cards each quarter – within a radius of 3 miles - and supervise the collection by the local secretaries outside the area. He would see to the requirements of the insured members in his district and arrange for visitors to call upon sick members and meet all local claims for benefit as they arose. The new system hoped to remove delays in getting claims out and lessen the rush at the Central Office. Permanent officials were appointed for Belfast, Cork, Derry, Dublin and Waterford with more arranged for Athy and Lurgan.¹⁰⁷⁴ Because of the huge

¹⁰⁷⁰*HJ*, Sept. 1912.

¹⁰⁷¹*Ibid.*, Jan. 1913.

¹⁰⁷²*HJ*, Apr. 1913.

¹⁰⁷³*Ibid.*, Jan. 1913.

¹⁰⁷⁴*HJ*, Jan. 1913.

membership in Dublin, the county was also appointed four professional nurses, two male visitors and twelve district agents.¹⁰⁷⁵

An even greater issue was reserved for the doctors and the medical community at large.¹⁰⁷⁶ Problems first arose in August 1912 when a scheme for the administration of medical benefits under the insurance act was drawn up by the AOH and considered by the Local Medical Committee. Medical benefit was to be provided at the rate of six shillings per head, for attendance upon the insured and his family. The committee informed Nugent that the rates were well below those demanded by the profession.¹⁰⁷⁷ A meeting of medical practitioners in Dublin followed before a national boycott occurred as doctors everywhere pledged not to administer the Act unless they received a higher rate of pay.¹⁰⁷⁸ The main problem was that insured persons in Ireland would have to increase their contributions in order to meet the demands of the doctors.¹⁰⁷⁹ Amongst the Order there was a general desire to have medical benefits conferred upon Ireland. The only difference of opinion was that while the officers of the AOH, to secure efficiency and solvency, desired medical benefits - irrespective of whether it included the dependents of the insured - the vast majority of the members did not want an increased contribution, except the dependents be included in the provision for medical attendance. In the urban districts the insurable population were unanimously in favour of the extension of medical benefit to Ireland and were happy to pay a higher contribution. But in the rural areas over 90 per cent of the insured persons were entitled to medical treatment under the Medical Charities Act of 1851, and those people could not understand the necessity of paying an increased contribution to be attended by the same doctor.¹⁰⁸⁰

By the middle of 1913, the AOH was having immense difficulty in getting members of the medical profession to sign certificates. Compelled to find other means, they resorted to the testimony of the Catholic clergy, but this system only lasted a few weeks, as the clerics did not like to issue certificates when local doctors refused. The solution was the panel system. Dispensary and Poor Law Medical Officers were paid to attend and

¹⁰⁷⁵*Ibid.*, Apr. 1913.

¹⁰⁷⁶*HJ*, Mar. 1914. Nugent recalled how they had tried to get permanent premises up to six times.

¹⁰⁷⁷*DDE*, 25 Sept. 1912.

¹⁰⁷⁸The Friendly Societies insisted upon the old charges for medicine and medical attendance. For the full account, see *DDE*, 25 Sept; *DDE*, 4 Nov. 1912.

¹⁰⁷⁹*DDE*, 4 Nov. 1912.

¹⁰⁸⁰National Insurance Act, 1911—medical benefit. Appendices to the report of the committee appointed to inquire into the extension of medical benefit under the National Insurance Act to Ireland. Minutes of evidence, &c. [Cd. 7039], 1913, xxxvii, 17.

assess members while the officer class signed the medical certificate.¹⁰⁸¹ The insurance commissioners appointed medical advisers and whole-time certifiers to further plug the hole. The panel system was undoubtedly the more expensive of the two but also safer and the AOH claimed that the sickness risk in Ireland was lower than that of Great Britain because of it.¹⁰⁸² The problem was that the constant change of system made it impossible for societies to provide a check against malingering.¹⁰⁸³ There were also many complaints against the dispensary and Poor Law Medical Officers for the inadequacy of their services. The salary on offer was not sufficiently high to attract any but those of moderate ability. The grave dissatisfaction with the system of certification resulted in societies appointing medical referees out of their own pocket in order to check malingering. Many cases arose where an insured person was certified as unfit for work by one doctor and then stated fit by another, and state societies were forced to decide which practitioner was the more reliable.¹⁰⁸⁴

Problems continued throughout the period. At the end of December 1913, a number of members had yet to surrender contribution cards for the 2nd, 3rd or even 4th quarters, mainly, the AOH believed, due to the failure of employers to stamp them. The custom was for secretaries to collect contribution cards at the division hall. They were also expected to chase up any missing, whether in person or by written application. In some cases, secretaries allowed contribution cards to be collected by agents of other societies. At other times, they were so desirous of advancing the interests of the Society and incidentally their own, that they collected every card they could manage.¹⁰⁸⁵ Thousands of cards were received each quarter with the wrong registered number affixed. Much inconvenience was caused by inattention to letters and queries. Sometimes three reminders had to be sent out before a reply was forthcoming and serious delays resulted.¹⁰⁸⁶ Employees and employers were liable for fines, suspension or expulsion if carelessness or deliberate evasion of the act was found to be the case. Where the employee

¹⁰⁸¹For more on the Dispensary and Poor Law Medical Officers try Catherine Cox, 'Access and engagement: the medical dispensary service in post-Famine Ireland', in C. Cox and M. Luddy (eds) *Cultures of care in Irish medical history, 1750-1950* (Basingstoke, 2010); Edel Kavanagh, 'A short biography of a dispensary doctor', in *Skibbereen and District Historical Society Journal*, 8, 2012, pp 9-16; W.M. Murphy, 'The Irish Medical Dispensary Service some Tipperary perspectives', in *Tipperary Historical Journal*, 2018, pp 155-66.

¹⁰⁸²*HJ*, Dec. 1914.

¹⁰⁸³*Ibid.*, Apr. 1913; *HJ*, Mar. 1914.

¹⁰⁸⁴*HJ*, Dec. 1914; *HJ*, Jan. 1916.

¹⁰⁸⁵*Ibid.*, Mar. 1914.

¹⁰⁸⁶*HJ*, Dec. 1913.

would not surrender his/her card to the employer, the latter obtained an emergency one from the post office.¹⁰⁸⁷

In May 1913, the BOE appointed organisers for Leinster, Munster and Connaught. Organisers for Leinster and Munster were paid £1 per week with expenses, while another for Connaught, reflecting the Society's underdevelopment there – was paid £2. Ulster already had an organiser in the form of Mr. Watters.¹⁰⁸⁸ During the first six months of 1913 the Society experienced a second wave of new insurance members. These were mainly young people who had not attained the qualifying age to become insured at the time of the Act. There were many transfers to and from the Order as well. In April and June 1913, 964 members left the Society, while 1,783 joined. Outward transfers occurred mainly in large centres of population where members sought connection with their own trade unions, many of which had not secured approval at the initial stages of the Act. Those joining came predominantly from rural districts, where the sickness risk was claimed to be considerably less than in the large manufacturing towns.¹⁰⁸⁹ In April 1915 the staff at the central office was reorganised again, into five sections.¹⁰⁹⁰ By January 1916 the Society employed 150 clerical assistants on a permanent basis at the Central Office. Another 50 were required at the different district offices in Ireland and Great Britain, while upwards of 1800 individuals were employed as part time officers.¹⁰⁹¹

In keeping with the massive size of the enterprise, insurance was incredibly profitable for the Order. Income and expenditure for the private membership in 1912 was £6,000 and £4,000 respectively, with £2,000 balance to credit. Between October 15 and November 30 of the same year, the insurance section brought in the same amount of money in only an eighth of the time.¹⁰⁹² The AOH was particularly adept at hoarding the funds provided by the insurance commission. Of the money provided for administrative purposes - £21,600 – they saved £4,760. The commissioners also offered one shilling per member for each contribution card collected during the first quarter, to defray the abnormal expenditure of the societies in organising. The AOH sent the Irish Commission

¹⁰⁸⁷Ibid., Dec. 1913.

¹⁰⁸⁸'BOE mins', 26 May. 1913. In April 1914 the BOE contemplated letting go of its organisers, Nugent pointing out that the 'income of the organisation was inadequate to permit the Board to sustain the present extensive system of organising'. 'BOE mins', 10 Apr. 1914.

¹⁰⁸⁹*HJ*, Apr.; *HJ*, June 1913.

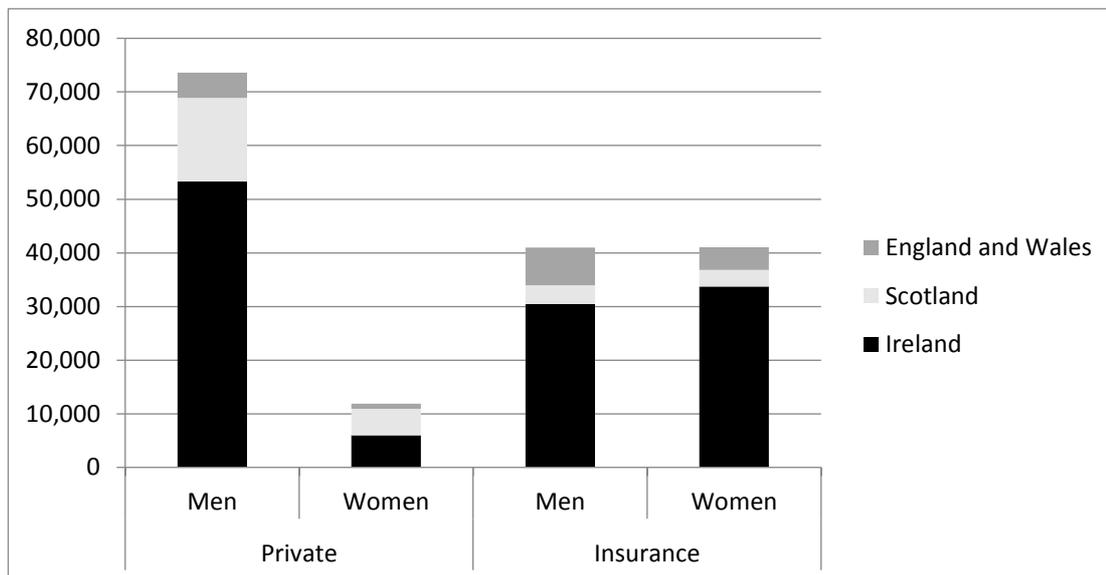
¹⁰⁹⁰As we shall see, the majority of the Order's insurance business took place in Ireland but there were also sub-offices in England, Scotland, Wales, Belfast, L'Derry, Portadown, Kurgan, Strabane, Drogheda, Athy, Clara, Waterford, Limerick and Cork. *HJ*, Apr. 1915.

¹⁰⁹¹*HJ*, Jan. 1916.

¹⁰⁹²Ibid., Apr. 1913. These figures are rounded off and do not include shillings or pence.

129,500 stamped cards for members resident in Ireland, amounting to the sum of £6,470. This meant a total saving out of administration for the first year of £11,120.¹⁰⁹³

Figure 1: Private and insured membership, Mar. 1914



Source: *Hibernian Journal*, Mar. 1914. Note: The number of insured members eclipsed the private membership later in the period.

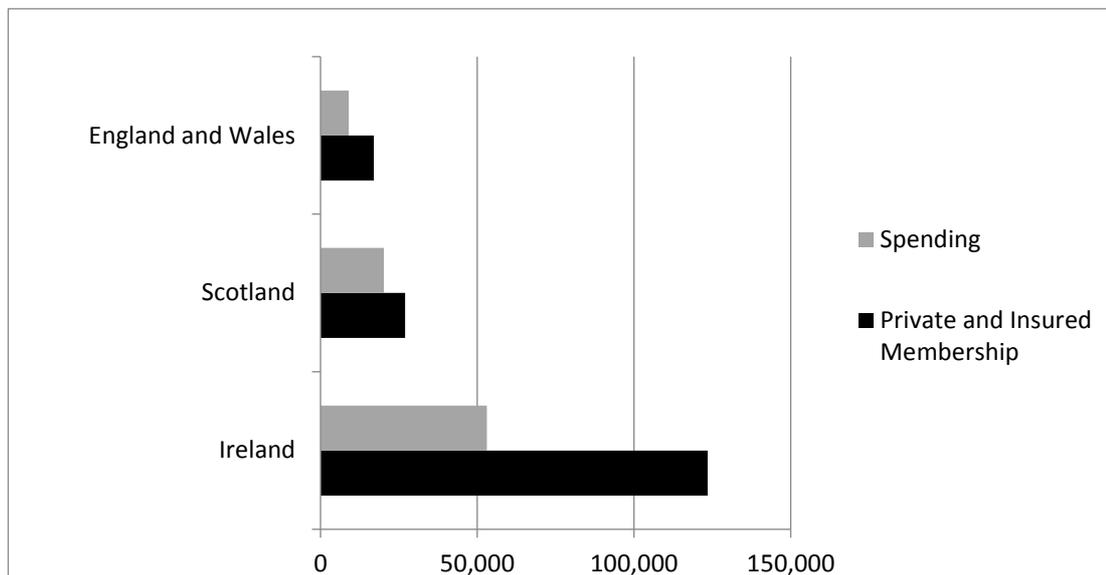
By March 1914 the Order boasted a combined membership of 119,000 men and 52,000 women. A majority of male divisions compared to a minority of female was reflected in the private membership, with 73,500 men and 11,900 women respectively. The insurance section was much more equal at 41,000 members each. Insurance was a resounding success in Ireland where a private membership of 59,000 managed to induce an insurance membership of 64,000. Scotland was not nearly so lucky, the insured members only totaling about a third of the private membership. Most surprising are the figures for England and Wales where both countries had an insured membership double the size of their private one.¹⁰⁹⁴ Scotland's private membership was proportionally large – when measured against the Irish population there – even before insurance. Afterwards, more than 15 per cent of the population was in some way connected to the Order. England and Wales had a membership comparative to Scotland at this stage even if it was primarily

¹⁰⁹³*HJ*, Mar. 1914.

¹⁰⁹⁴England and Wales had a private membership of 5,693 and an insurance membership of 11,299; the latter almost twice that of Scotland despite the country having a private membership almost four times as large, at 20,463.

made up of insured members. There were more Irish combined in those two countries, however, and only 4.5 per cent were paying into the Society.¹⁰⁹⁵

Figure 2: Private and insured members compared to insurance spending, 1912



Source: *Hibernian Journal*, Mar. 1914. Note: Insurance was implemented in Great Britain in December 1911 and in July 1912 in Ireland.

During the first year the AOH spent £82,200 on insurance in Great Britain and Ireland: 61 per cent on sickness, 27 per cent on maternity and 12 per cent on administration. With the majority of membership in Ireland, two-thirds of the spending occurred there. The administrative costs of insurance were at their worst in Scotland, at £0.74 per person. England fared much better at £0.53 while in Ireland, insurance only cost £0.40 per member.¹⁰⁹⁶ Sickness claims constituted over 50 per cent of outgoings no matter the country, but were particularly bad in Scotland's case, forming 75 per cent of expenditure. Maternity claims never ran higher than 13 per cent. The highest percentage of sickness claims lay with the married women workers, those engaged in smaller factories where there was no proper accommodation or supervision. Among men, the highest percentage was traceable to agricultural labourers in lieu of the low standard of wages and the connivance practiced between some employees and employers when work was slack.¹⁰⁹⁷

¹⁰⁹⁵Census of England and Wales; Census of Scotland, 1911.

¹⁰⁹⁶Needless to say, this is in terms of modern-day sterling. Old money distributors of shillings and pence make a contemporary conversion exceedingly difficult in this case.

¹⁰⁹⁷*HJ*, Mar. 1914.

The cost of sickness benefit was much higher in the rural areas than in the urban centres or large cities.¹⁰⁹⁸

As to sickness risk, it was generally found that where the rates of wages were low, the cost of sickness benefit was high and vice versa. Those jobs that were hazardous and unhealthy perversely offered the least recompense. Manufacturing centres such as Lurgan, where wet spinning was carried on had a much higher sickness risk than Portadown, which was just a few miles down the road and carried out no wet spinning. The cost of benefits was less in Derry than in Belfast, higher in Cork than in Belfast, while Limerick was lower than Cork. Of the large centres in Ireland, excluding Dublin, Waterford was the lowest. Scotland was considerably lower than England whilst Liverpool and Manchester were comparatively low, and London City had the lowest sickness risk of any centre in Great Britain. Durham and Northumberland had the highest in England and this also applied to Wales, where the sickness risk was markedly high.¹⁰⁹⁹

Sickness claims, pay and membership

Under insurance, malingering - where employees faked illness to get off work - was a real problem in Ireland, especially in the agricultural districts where the number of fictitious claims rose in the winter. Trivial complaints included colds and headaches, and insurance secretaries were reminded that the Insurance Act was not intended to relieve poverty. Claims were not to exceed more than one weekly, on the average, for every fifty members in a division. The central office in Dublin nevertheless received hundreds of claims on a daily basis. They made it clear, however, that no claim would be entertained except where illness was genuine.¹¹⁰⁰ When a member was dissatisfied with a decision they could appeal to their local division's arbitration committee.¹¹⁰¹ Such was the case of John O'Neill, a young member of the local AOH insurance branch in Lurgan. John fell sick on the 18 January 1913 and after a doctor certified him with an abscess on his arm, his certificate was handed to the local secretary. Weekly benefit payments, full at first, soon dried up and after a fortnight O'Neill's Aunt called upon the local secretary and was

¹⁰⁹⁸Ibid., Jan. 1916.

¹⁰⁹⁹*HJ*, Jan. 1916.

¹¹⁰⁰Ibid., Dec. 1915.

¹¹⁰¹*HJ*, Apr. 1913.

told that the boy was unfit for work and would receive no more money until he got a form filled by the medical attendants. John did as was asked. He now had an abscess on his leg and the doctor recommended he go to hospital since he was receiving no sick allowance. He did not and after the certificate had been handed to the secretary he was told that he would receive no further benefits because he had not done as the doctor asked. Soon after, solicitors Watson and Neill were contracted.¹¹⁰²

Two years later the same solicitors were involved another case. In 1911 Ellen Lennon moved in her with brother so as to help with the housework but mainly to take care of their ailing mother. At her mother's death, however, she refused to do any further work unless she was paid. Not long after, Lennon struck an agreement with her brother Patrick, to act as housekeeper and domestic servant in return for 2 shillings per week and board and lodging.¹¹⁰³ Thereafter she joined the local Ladies' Auxiliary insurance branch. From that date on Lennon's brother stamped her insurance cards regularly. In September, however, she became ill with rheumatism and was certified unfit for work. Lennon duly forwarded her certificate and was paid a sum of 7s. 6d., being one week's sickness benefit up to the 13 September 1915. Afterwards the Society refused to pay her, claiming that she had been an invalid for years, not genuinely employed and consequently not an insurable person within the meaning of the Act.¹¹⁰⁴ John O'Neill, meantime, eventually lost his case. The local secretary claimed that he had been suspended after being witnessed out after hours and working. O'Neill's Aunt had refused to let him go to hospital and no further benefit could be paid. To this he added that the boy was badly deformed, lived with his aunts and was practically unfit for work; 'how he became insured remains a mystery to me'.¹¹⁰⁵ Eventually the arbitration was arranged for Dublin, where the arbitrator unsurprisingly decided in favour of the AOH. Ellen Lennon had more luck. After reading several affidavits from Lennon, her brother, and friends of the family, the arbitrator decided in her favour and granted her a cheque worth £13 7s. 6d.¹¹⁰⁶

¹¹⁰²John O'Neill of 24 William Street, Lurgan', 1913-15, (Hereafter 'O'Neill case, Lurgan, 1913-15') (D1929/3/6/7, PRONI)

¹¹⁰³For more on female workers in during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Joanna Bourke, 'The best of all home rulers: The economic power of women in Ireland, 1880-1914', in *Irish Economic and Social History*, XVIII, (1991), pp 34-47; Mona Hearn, 'Life for domestic servants in Dublin, 1880-1920', in Alan Hayes, Diane Urquhart (eds) *The Irish Women's History Reader* (Routledge, 2002), pp 148-79.

¹¹⁰⁴Ellen Lennon of Derrycon, Lurgan, Co. Armagh', 1916, (Hereafter 'Lennon case, Lurgan, 1916') (D1929/3/1/2, PRONI).

¹¹⁰⁵O'Neill case, Lurgan, 1913-15'.

¹¹⁰⁶Lennon Case, Lurgan, 1916'.

Appeals like O'Neill's and Lennon's were not uncommon. Between 1911 and 1914 the AOH entertained seventy-six, at a median of nineteen per year.¹¹⁰⁷ Insured members were not treated as well as private members. The AOH was willing to embrace Irish Catholics from all walks of life to be sure. With every other society offering equal facilities, how else were they to compete on favourable terms? But insurance members had no right to attend any division functions. Instead, they attended separate insurance meetings. As the Society's leadership saw it, insured members would not interfere in the work of the Order's private section 'whereas the Order will benefit considerably by the admission of such members as their entrance will enable the Society to considerably swell its ranks and its finances'.¹¹⁰⁸ There was an expectation that servants like O'Neill and housekeepers like Lennon, people earning scanty wages really, those in effect typically unable to contribute to the private portion of the Hibernian movement, would be only too happy to join the Society for the purposes of insurance. The leadership hoped, in a word, for joiners; they hoped few of them would claim. The contributions payable to cover sick and mortality, so Nugent explained, were based upon the understanding that a large proportion of the members would not draw any sick alimnt.¹¹⁰⁹ Little wonder then that Messrs. Watson and Neill would report victory after 'a very hard fight with Nugent's man', when appealing on behalf of Ellen Lennon.¹¹¹⁰

Benefits and sickness pay were of course only one – albeit intrinsic - part of division business. At that level, a more elaborate committee of management oversaw affairs:

President
 Vice-president
 Treasurer
 Financial/Insurance secretary
 Division marshal
 Trustees
 Doctor

A sick committee with sick stewards, an arbitration committee and even a vigilance grouping also figured in. All officers were elected by ballot or a show of hands in

¹¹⁰⁷A decision was made in January 1912 to give detailed statements of expenditure on a regular basis, so that the members would be fully conversant with how the money was expended. See *HJ*, June 1912; *Ibid.*, Apr. 1913; *HJ*, Dec. 1913; *Ibid.*, Mar. 1914; *HJ*, Sept. 1914; *Ibid.*, Dec. 1914; *HJ*, Feb. 1915; *Ibid.*, June 1918.

¹¹⁰⁸*HJ*, June 1912.

¹¹⁰⁹*HJ*, Sept. 1912.

¹¹¹⁰'Lennon Case, Lurgan, 1916'.

December and installed in January, continuing in office for twelve months.¹¹¹¹ Secretaries and treasurers such as Peter McCalister and Laurence Traynor could persist in the role for many years.¹¹¹² Trustees were also divisional stalwarts - Bernard Burns for example (1912-20) - but the role was mainly a stepping-stone on the way to greater offices.¹¹¹³ Members could only be elected after one year's membership and were not permitted to nominate their successor.¹¹¹⁴ As the Order grew and especially on the eve of national insurance, the leadership would regularly impress upon its membership the necessity of electing the most capable and suitable men, irrespective of personal friendship, political belief or local popularity.¹¹¹⁵ Scotland's branches were admonished for employing too much sentiment and not enough direct and practical instruction in carrying out branch business.¹¹¹⁶ It was a common practice in the rural districts too, to elect men because of age or standing, regardless of ability.¹¹¹⁷ In places like County Longford, meanwhile, a few divisions monopolised the positions on the county board.¹¹¹⁸

The most important financial officer was the secretary, followed by the treasurer.¹¹¹⁹ Both were obliged to attend every branch meeting. The secretary kept an account of all receipts and expenditure, and collected all assessments, dues, fines and initiation fees, paying them over to the treasurer. Within ten days after every quarterly meeting, he furnished the division surgeon with a list of all members clear on the books.¹¹²⁰ Both the secretary and treasurer were bonded, the former at £10, the latter usually higher.¹¹²¹ Division 18 provided a cautionary tale after they had to expel their treasurer for misappropriation of funds.¹¹²² Both officers were allowed to keep cash in hand, usually £12 to £14.¹¹²³ This way death claims could be paid as and when they arose. The treasurer

¹¹¹¹'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast', 1912, Belfast District, Division 114; Annual Returns, 1912-23, COM/41/1/2/1, PRONI.

¹¹¹²Ballymacarrett, Division 22; Annual Returns, 1911-66', (Hereafter 'Division 22, Annual Returns') COM/41/1/2/7, PRONI; 'Belfast District, Division 45; Annual Returns, 1910-55', (Hereafter 'Division 45, Annual Returns') COM/41/1/2/2, PRONI.

¹¹¹³'Division 45, Annual Returns'.

¹¹¹⁴'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

¹¹¹⁵*HJ*, Mar. 1909.

¹¹¹⁶*HJ*, June 1911.

¹¹¹⁷*HJ*, Jan. 1908.

¹¹¹⁸Morgan, 'The Ancient Order' in *Longford, History and Society*, p. 583.

¹¹¹⁹A third office, that of the recording secretary also existed before being abolished in 1913, when the duties of the former and the financial secretary were amalgamated. See 'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

¹¹²⁰'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

¹¹²¹Division 42 set it at £30 and division 45, £25. 'Rules of Division No. 42, Armagh', 1909, Co. Armagh, Branch No 42; Annual Returns, 1913-66, COM/41/1/2/4, PRONI; 'Rules of Division No. 45, Belfast', 1910, Belfast District, Division 45; Annual Returns, 1910-55, COM/41/1/2/2, PRONI.

¹¹²²*HJ*, Sept. 1912.

¹¹²³'Rules of Division No. 45, Belfast'; 'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

also recorded all money received and expended and would not pay out unless an order signed by the president and financial secretary was presented. All other money was lodged in the bank in the names of the trustees, and the bankbook was exhibited at every meeting of the division. It was also the treasurer's duty to provide an account of the income and expenditure and the balance at hand after each meeting, and at the end of every month.¹¹²⁴

Candidates for benefit membership had to be over sixteen and under forty years of age, in good bodily and mental health and practical Catholics.¹¹²⁵ To become a member you first had to be proposed by another, who paid a fee of one shilling on your behalf.¹¹²⁶ If admitted, the proposition fee was deducted from a secondary, initiation fee.¹¹²⁷ Every candidate was expected to produce proof of age and a certificate from the division surgeon, confirming good health. The members of division 563, Stirling (Scotland) were unconvinced that bro. McKenna was under forty and asked him to produce his birth certificate. When he could not produce it, the matter was dropped. Pressed on the subject at another meeting McKenna erupted, declaring that 'if the members thought that he wanted to defraud them they could strike his name off the roll'.¹¹²⁸ Potential members also had to sign a declaration stating that their wife (if any) was of good health and under forty years of age. Any member admitted had full power to vote on all matters concerning the organisation. Every benefit member was entitled to the full benefits of the branch at the expiration of twelve calendar months from the date of initiation, provided they were clear on the books of all entrance fees and had paid fifty-two weeks' worth of contributions.¹¹²⁹

¹¹²⁴'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

¹¹²⁵'Falkirk mins', 27 Mar.; Ibid., 10 Apr. 1910; 'Falkirk mins', 8 May 1910; 'Falkirk mins', 5 June 1910. See chapter two for information on what being a practical Catholic entailed.

¹¹²⁶'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

¹¹²⁷'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

¹¹²⁸'Falkirk mins', 10 Apr. 1910; Ibid., 24 Apr. 1910; 'Falkirk mins', 5 June 1910.

¹¹²⁹'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

Table 4: Sickness pay brackets

Bracket	Full Pay	First Period	Second Period
Duration	Weeks 1-12	Weeks 13-24	Weeks 25-36
Amount	10s 6d.	6s.	4s 6d.

Source: Div. 114 Rulebook, 1912.

Sick allowance came in three tiers known as full pay, first period and second period. A number of rules governed eligibility. Members, who had only received full pay and then signed off, for example, would be entitled to the same after twelve months.¹¹³⁰ In the ordinary run of things the majority of sick members would receive full pay before signing off; only a few would make it as far as the first period and virtually none, the second period. Sickness was highest in the winter months, at the beginning and end of the year, before tailing off in February and March, then picking up again at summer's end. It did not pay to be sick on Lady or St. Patrick's Day when there was marching to be done.¹¹³¹ During 1901-12, division 45 spent £122 on sickness pay for its members.¹¹³² The older members became, the greater the likelihood of sickness and the projected expense. Societies tended, as a result, to campaign to attract young blood so that they might afford the benefits payable to the older members.¹¹³³ The highest costs amongst division 45 were derived from the 40-44 age group, expected to require £47 or 35 per cent of the branch's total outlay. In reality, this category cost £65, over half of the division's total costs. That age grouping was obviously predisposed to higher rates of sickness but the branch may also have had a membership in large part over 40 years of age.¹¹³⁴ Indeed, division 42, Armagh had 126 members in 1914, with over 72 over 40.¹¹³⁵ These divisions were probably exceptions to the rule, however, for during 1914 over three quarters of division

¹¹³⁰Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'. There were major differences over how and when a member could sign on, once the three periods had ended. For the differences between divisions, see 'Rules of Dr. Blewitt Division, No. 22', 1910, Ballymacarrett, Division 22; Annual Returns, 1911-66, COM/41/1/2/7, PRONI.; 'Rules of Division No. 42, Armagh'; 'Rules of Division No. 45, Belfast'.

¹¹³¹'Falkirk mins', 10 Oct. 1909 - 10 Sept. 1911.

¹¹³²'Division 45, Annual Returns'.

¹¹³³Buckley, 'On the Club', p. 49.

¹¹³⁴'Division 45, Annual Returns'.

¹¹³⁵See 'Valuation of the Assets and Liabilities', 1914, (Hereafter, 'Valuation of the Assets and Liabilities, Division 42, 1914') Co. Armagh, Branch No 42; Annual Returns, 1913-66, COM/41/1/2/4, PRONI.; 'Valuation of the Assets and Liabilities', 1914, (Hereafter 'Valuation of the Assets and Liabilities, Division 46, 1914') St Columbkil, Belfast, Branch No 46; Annual Returns, 1909-1921, COM/41/1/2/3, PRONI.; 'Valuation of the Assets and Liabilities', 1919, (Hereafter 'Valuation of the Assets and Liabilities, Division 46, 1919') St Columbkil, Belfast, Branch No 46; Annual Returns, 1909-1921, COM/41/1/2/3, PRONI.

46's members fell within the category of 16-40.¹¹³⁶ Gerard Morgan as well has argued that the AOH in Longford was dominated by young men. Over 43 per cent of division 375, Killoe's members were between the age of 20 and 29.¹¹³⁷

As indicated by Table 5, the AOH attracted applicants from a wide social range. This included barbers, bakers, carters, factory hands, painters, publicans, shoemakers, van men, and many more besides.¹¹³⁸ In Cork, meantime, we see almost half of the 733 members involved in industrial service and manufacturing. Small numbers resided in public roles, building, domestic service, professional transport and agriculture.¹¹³⁹ Among the office-holders in Belfast, meanwhile, were accountants, hotel inspectors, managers and salesmen, but also carpenters, chauffeurs, foremen and postmen.¹¹⁴⁰ Away from urban areas, agricultural occupations predominated amongst the general membership. Over 23 per cent of Killoe branch's members were farmers, another 50 per cent, farmer's sons. Using census data Gerard Morgan has demonstrated the importance of family and social networks in Killoe division. There were 4 pairings of fathers and sons and 14 sets of brothers. Seventy of the 183 members were the eldest children and in 40 per cent of those households one of the parents was deceased. This leads to the conclusion that many members of the Society bore a degree of financial responsibility towards their own households.¹¹⁴¹

¹¹³⁶A valuation for Division 46 gives a breakdown of age in 5-year segments at the beginning of the war, in 1914. Annual reports give a more imprecise impression, though the majority of members were undeniably between 21 and 50. 'Valuation of the Assets and Liabilities, Division 46, 1914'.

¹¹³⁷Morgan, 'The Ancient Order' in *Longford, History and Society*, p. 585; Morgan, 'The Ancient Order', p. 588.

¹¹³⁸Occupations listed appear in quantities of more than ten. Other, less represented occupations included agents, architects, auctioneers, bar tenders, billiard makers, blacksmiths, box makers, bread makers, car drivers, cattle-drivers, factory clerks, coal dealers, composers, contractors, coopers, corkers, doctors, editors, electricians, farmers, firemen, fitters, foremen, fowl dealers, gardeners, gas-fitters, gravellers, grocers, guards, harbour porters, horse-dealers, insurance agents, laundry men, managers, merchants, metal workers, milk men, moulders, pawn brokers, photographers, plasterers, porters, printers, railway clerks, road contractors, rope makers, school masters and teachers, shop porters, solicitors, station masters, store men, and students. 'Derry division nominations, 1905-1909'

¹¹³⁹This information is taken from 733 initiates across three divisions. U389/7/1-3, Cork Archives Institute. See also Campbell, 'Friendly Societies in Ireland', p. 190.

¹¹⁴⁰'Division 22, Annual Returns'; 'Division 45, Annual Returns'; 'St Columbkil, Belfast, Branch No 46; Annual Returns, 1909-1921', (Hereafter 'Division 46, Annual Returns') COM/41/1/2/3, PRONI.; 'Belfast District, Division 114; Annual Returns, 1912-23', (Hereafter 'Division 114, Annual Returns') COM/41/1/2/1, PRONI.

¹¹⁴¹Morgan, 'The Ancient Order' in *Longford, History and Society*, p. 588.

Table 5: Occupations of nominated individuals, division 1, Derry, 1905-9

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Labourers	116	18%
Clerks	42	6%
Shop Assistants	39	6%
Carpenters	33	5%
Tailors	28	4%
Butchers	25	4%
Masons	22	3%
Plumbers	22	3%
Cattle-dealers	21	3%
Others	324	48%
Total	672	100%

Source: 'Derry division nominations, 1905-9'.

When a member fell sick, he gave his contributions card to the division doctor, sent a notice to the secretary and was hopefully granted a sick certificate. Sick allowance was paid from the date of first intimation. At every branch meeting, benefits were paid after deducting all sums owed by the member to the division. Sick allowance was not paid for less than three working days' illness, and members were forbidden from working or travelling when receiving benefits.¹¹⁴² Bro. Bernard McCole of division 563, Stirling was one exception. He solicited the approval of his branch to travel to Ireland for three weeks with the object of recuperating. Bro. Judge was not nearly so fortunate. He was found absent from the district when ill and unable to work.¹¹⁴³ The doctor kept a registry and was tasked with examining members, giving certificates for admission and reporting to the division all rejected candidates. Where the doctor could not attend, an equally qualified medical practitioner was sent.¹¹⁴⁴ Divisions believed, with some justification

¹¹⁴²'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

¹¹⁴³'Falkirk mins', 2 Jan. 1910; 'Falkirk mins', 16 Jan. 1910.

¹¹⁴⁴'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

that there was a correlation between the death rate and the attention of the medical officer. In February 1909, the members of division 284, Newry sung Dr. Cronin's praises noting how 'No deaths occurred during the quarter, nor during the preceding one, which speaks well for the general health of the members, as it does also for the attention given by the medical officer'.¹¹⁴⁵ Bro. McCluskey stated that his branch's doctor did not pay as much attention to patients from friendly societies as he should, and bro. Duigan complained about the treatment he had received for an accident to his finger.¹¹⁴⁶ In general, however, doctors were a major reason for joining a friendly society. Many people stressed the sense of indignity in having to resort to medical officers under the Poor Law Act. Where they had to accept whatever such individuals offered, a friendly society doctor had to meet the 'often exacting standards which the society could set or run the risk of being replaced'.¹¹⁴⁷

The doctor also visited sick members and their families, providing them with medical attendance and all medicine during their affliction. He did not attend to members' wives at childbirth or any member or relative who was suffering from any ailment or injury caused by their own misconduct. Division 563, Stirling reported one brother on the sick list at their quarterly summoned meeting 'but as there was some doubt as to the cause of the accident and none of the stewards were present it was agreed to delay payment until the surgeon would be consulted'.¹¹⁴⁸ Sick stewards helped the doctor by visiting all sick members between once and twice a week and within twenty-four hours after receiving notice from the secretary. Sick certificates were collected from the doctor's residence, produced at each meeting and then returned. The sick member's allowance was carried to him within twenty-four hours of the division treasurer receiving it. Sick stewards also assisted the vice-president in examining all candidates prior to admission.¹¹⁴⁹

¹¹⁴⁵*HJ*, Feb. 1909.

¹¹⁴⁶'Falkirk mins', 19 Dec. 1909. The brother was another resident of division 563, Stirling. Dr. Watt was prone to other blunders and some members tried to have him replaced with another practitioner, Dr. Smyth. 'Falkirk mins', 18 Dec. 1910.

¹¹⁴⁷Buckley, "On the Club", p. 48.

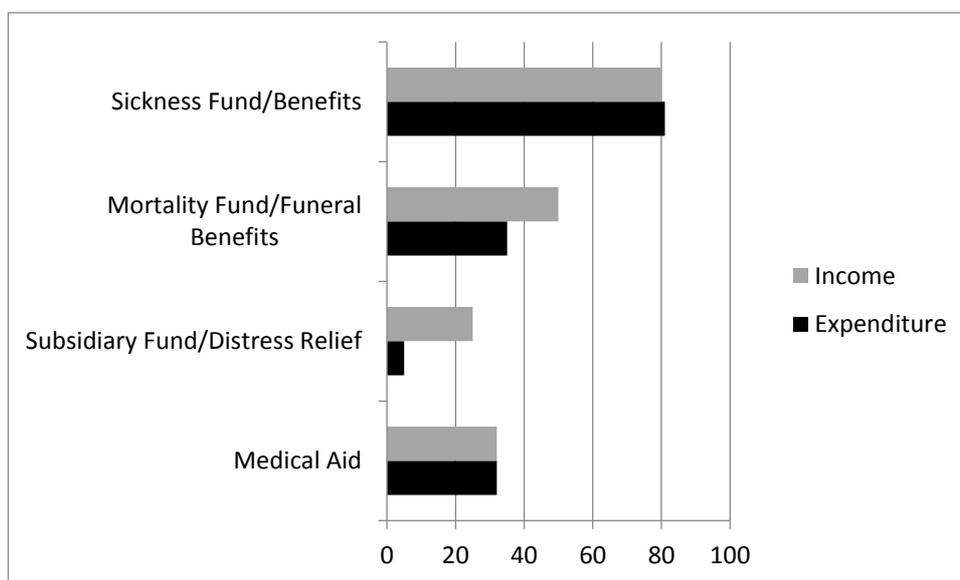
¹¹⁴⁸'Falkirk mins', 24 Oct. 1911.

¹¹⁴⁹'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

Division aid and solvency

Division income and expenditure were dependent on two streams of money: benefits and management. All those initiated as benefit members paid a minimum of 6*d.* per week: 3*d.* to the sick fund, and then 1*d.* to each of the three other funds, the funeral/mortality fund, the management fund and the subsidiary fund.¹¹⁵⁰ Entrance fees were an easy first-time affair, but many members found it difficult to keep up with the constant stream of contributions. In 1910, 7 per cent of division 375, Killoe's members paid no contributions during the year. This rose to 27 per cent for 1911.¹¹⁵¹ On the 27 Dec 1913, division 1244, Leith was forced to suspend 3 members in arrears, for failing to pay contributions amounting to 32*s.* 9*d.* and levies worth 12*s.* Leith had an average of forty-six members during 1914, with almost a quarter in arrears at some point in the year. Suspension on account of arrears kicked in if the member's obligations remained unpaid in any part for three months. Getting back in was particularly difficult. The member was not eligible for reapplication until forty days had passed, all arrears including those accruing between the time of suspension and application had to be paid and even then, the member's fate was reliant on a majority vote in favour of reinstatement.¹¹⁵²

Figure 3: Benefits income and expenditure, division 114, Belfast, 1913



Source: Annual Returns, division 114, 1913 (PRONI, COM/41/1/2).

¹¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹¹⁵¹Morgan, 'The Ancient Order' in *Longford, History and Society*, p. 587.

¹¹⁵²'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

Sickness income and benefit outgoings had the first and last say on division solvency. Mortality rates were hard to predict, and the fund was subsidised by the central funeral fund of the local district. The death of a member resulted in a payment of £10, his wife £5.¹¹⁵³ The 1914 valuation for division 46, Columbcille revealed a membership of 130, with 128 married members, while in division 42, Armagh's 1914 valuation, 92 of the 101 members were married.¹¹⁵⁴ A preponderance of older members and/or war recruitment may have skewed the figures, however. Indeed, 73 per cent of division 375, Killoe's members were unmarried. Among the thirty to thirty-nine age group, 25 per cent were married, while 70 per cent of the forty to forty-nine year olds had wives.¹¹⁵⁵ Money was only paid if the member was free of arrears three months before death and could produce a certificate of death signed by the registrar.¹¹⁵⁶ A subsidiary fund provided distress relief for members, who, out of employment through no fault of their own and unable to pay weekly contributions to the branch, could make a personal application to the secretary. Like division 114, Belfast, most divisions did not make substantial use of their subsidiary fund. This was more the purview of those in dire economic circumstances as with division 52, Pollokshaws, which assisted 20 members during the industrial depression in Scotland, 1908.¹¹⁵⁷ Medical aid referred to the doctor's salary as it was paid out of the benefits income and not the management income.

¹¹⁵³There were many variations among divisions in this regard. Divisions 22 and 114 set the amount at £5, division 42, £8 and division 45, £6. Many of the differences between divisions probably owed something to the passage of time and local socio-economic conditions. 'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'; 'Rules of Dr. Blewitt Division, No. 22', 1910, Ballymacarrett, Division 22; Annual Returns, 1911-66, COM/41/1/2/7; 'Rules of Division No. 42, Armagh'; 'Rules of Division No. 45, Belfast'.

¹¹⁵⁴'Valuation of the Assets and Liabilities, Division 42, 1914'; 'Valuation of the Assets and Liabilities, Division 46, 1914'.

¹¹⁵⁵Morgan, 'The Ancient Order' in *Longford, History and Society*, p. 588.

¹¹⁵⁶'Rules of Dr. Blewitt Division, No. 22'.

¹¹⁵⁷*HJ*, Dec. 1908.

Table 6: Division 114, Belfast, Management Income and Expenditure, 1913

Income			Expenditure		
Source	Amount	Percentage	Source	Amount	Percentage
Contributions	£56	60%	Salaries	£35	40%
Donations	£1	1%	Rent	£16	18%
Initiation Fee	£7	7%	Printing, Stationery etc.	£7	8%
Interest	£4	4%	Levies to District/Order	£12	14%
Other	£26	28%	Other	£17	20%
Total	£94	100%	Total	£87	100%

Source: Annual Returns, division 114, Belfast, 1913 (PRONI, COM/41/1/2).

Contributions made up the lion's share of management income. Donations came from honorary members. Any male who met the conditions in the general rules of the Order could become a friendly or honorary member without claim to any of the funds but with power to vote on all matters unrelated. The term friendly or honorary seem to have been interchangeable, the former cropping up as early as division 42's 1909 rule book.¹¹⁵⁸ During the years 1914-18, division 1244, Leith had a membership three parts benefit and one part honorary.¹¹⁵⁹ Some branches allowed such members to become officer-holders.¹¹⁶⁰ Honorary members were required to contribute an initiation fee of not less than two shillings and six pence along with monthly dues and national levies and were liable to expulsion, same as benefit members, for false information at initiation, or breach of any of the rules.¹¹⁶¹

Interest was another plank of income. All the funds and property in the division were placed in the hands of three trustees usually elected from members in good financial standing, for investment purposes. Trustees were permitted to invest the money in savings

¹¹⁵⁸ The term friendly or honorary seems to have been interchangeable. See 'Rules of Division No. 42, Armagh'.

¹¹⁵⁹ 'Division 1244, Leith, contribution book, 1913-44', Leith, AOH, BOE, division 1244, 1913-35, GD1/708/4, NAS.

¹¹⁶⁰ 'Rules of Division No. 45, Belfast'.

¹¹⁶¹ 'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

banks, in public funds, in government securities and in the purchase of land.¹¹⁶² In October 1908 a branch of the AOH in Scotland invested £1000 in the improvement schemes of Glasgow City Council. In October 1910 another £600 was lodged, this time with the Glasgow Parish Council.¹¹⁶³ No member holding office in either the division or district was eligible as a trustee. Responsible for the guarantee bonds of every officer they also had the power to draw any money required for branch purposes.¹¹⁶⁴ Here we see the power of other income as well, with over a quarter of division 114, Belfast's management income being sourced from there. This took a dizzying array of forms, including arrear notices, bank interest, the sale of rulebooks and transfer forms and special levies.¹¹⁶⁵ Some divisions were quite creative, usually out of necessity. Recreational activities were highly lucrative and included amusements, concerts, dances, dramatic clubs, excursions and socials. Halls and yards were also rented out to the local insurance section, Ladies' Auxiliary and other interested parties. Fines, meanwhile, contributed little if anything and the effectiveness of the system, at least in the case of the branches highlighted is illustrated by the almost complete lack of fines in any branch's management income. Only division 46's annual reports include any reference to fines, ranging between two and ten shillings over the period 1913-17.¹¹⁶⁶

Most of a division's management expenditure went on salaries. Every officer except the president was paid on a quarterly basis, with the amount agreed upon by the majority of the membership.¹¹⁶⁷ Some branches defaulted on paying levies to both the Board and district, others paid, albeit erratically.¹¹⁶⁸ Other expenses related to the usual culprits, including bank charges, cheque and rulebooks, coal and gas and national levies, but also travel costs for delegates to conventions, registration fees and regalia for officers. Rent was also important.¹¹⁶⁹ Division 563, Stirling relocated when the proprietors of the hall

¹¹⁶²'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

¹¹⁶³These figures are from half yearly reports by the Scottish AOH, ending Feb. 1909, Feb. 1911, Aug. 1912, Feb. 1910, and are available in Hagan, 'Ancient Order of Hibernians in Scotland', p. 58.

¹¹⁶⁴The decision was taken to establish a Guarantee Society for Hibernian secretaries and treasurers in August 1910. 'BOE mins', 26 Aug. 1910.

¹¹⁶⁵'Division 22, Annual Returns'; 'Division 45, Annual Returns'; 'Division 46, Annual Returns'; 'Division 114, Annual Returns'.

¹¹⁶⁶'Division 46, Annual Returns'. Any dereliction of duty by virtually any officer or member could result in a fine of some description. For all the details, consult 'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'.

¹¹⁶⁷'Rules of Division No. 114, Belfast'. The secretary was the exception; sometimes receiving a set figure per year and at other times a specific amount times the number of members. See Division 22, Annual Returns'; 'Division 45, Annual Returns'; 'Division 46, Annual Returns'; 'Division 114, Annual Returns'.

¹¹⁶⁸'Division 114, Annual Returns'; 'Division 46, Annual Returns'.

¹¹⁶⁹'Division 22, Annual Returns'; 'Division 45, Annual Returns'; 'Division 46, Annual Returns'; 'Division 114, Annual Returns'.

they were using upped the price. The Swords Wynd Hall was chosen as a replacement at a rate of 1s. 1d. for each Sunday and the division defrayed their costs by selling off the chairs they had purchased for usage at their previous abode.¹¹⁷⁰ Divisions also made frequent applications to the BOE for permission to collect funds for the building of halls, and testimonials for widows. Such requests were usually granted, provided they were confined to the county in which the division was situated in and so long as the Board was not in the process of conducting their own special levies.¹¹⁷¹ On occasion, divisions would appeal for a reduction in Board levies, but these were always refused, and the Executive championed the right of county boards to impose levies, assuming expenditure was kept within the same limits as other counties.¹¹⁷² Brother Moran got into trouble in 1909 after he attended several county board meetings and claimed that the BOE would realise close on £1000 through a special levy. The object was in fact just £70 and Moran was duly suspended.¹¹⁷³ Sometimes management income was used in ways it likely should not have been, as sick pay or to help members out of work, even in one instance, as a final payment for the installation of a piano.¹¹⁷⁴ Divisions also raised money for charities and other communal works, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Sisters of Lanark.¹¹⁷⁵

Benefits and sick pay were not the only method employed by branches to help members. If Ireland's many employers would not give work to the country's people then the AOH intended to do so, and not just by building enterprises like the collecting society or creating jobs through insurance. Devlin elaborated on how 'so long as a member is duly qualified, he has at his back all the resources of the Order and the practical sympathy of its members, who are pledged to stand by him as friends and brothers through good and ill'.¹¹⁷⁶ Division 68, Dublin's president was in the fortunate position of being able to announce vacancies and offer information to applicants seeking employment.¹¹⁷⁷ In 1909, meanwhile, the BOE devised scheme of relief for members travelling in search of employment. Members were only entitled to relief on the production of their contributions book. This included a day and a night's board and a shilling and a half. The money was derived from an auxiliary fund and relieving officers were appointed for Dublin, Belfast,

¹¹⁷⁰'Falkirk mins', 27 Mar. 1910; 'Falkirk mins', 24 Apr. 1910.

¹¹⁷¹'BOE mins', 27 Dec. 1912; 'BOE mins', Aug. 1907.

¹¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 9 Dec. 1908; 'BOE mins', 12 Apr. 1912.

¹¹⁷³'BOE mins', 9 Mar. 1909.

¹¹⁷⁴'Division 22, Annual Returns'; 'Division 45, Annual Returns'; 'Division 46, Annual Returns'; 'Division 114, Annual Returns'.

¹¹⁷⁵*HJ*, Oct. 1908; *HJ*, Dec. 1910.

¹¹⁷⁶*HJ*, May 1908.

¹¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, Jan. 1911.

Sligo and Glasgow.¹¹⁷⁸ Such schemes perhaps put paid to the claims of opponents that the Society was able to secure all the highly paid positions. Indeed, the AOH maintained that some members expressed apathy and indifference to the interests of their unemployed brother members.¹¹⁷⁹ Those in large population centres were thought to cooperate earnestly with each other but some branches failed to report vacancies to county committees, forcing a large number of members, who could doubtless have been employed at home, to emigrate.¹¹⁸⁰

Employment committees cropped up from time to time as well.¹¹⁸¹ Arrangements were made in September 1917 for the establishment of an employment bureau at the central office in Dublin, to oversee the conglomerate of committees then existing in Ireland. Local members were pressed to report any and all vacancies no matter how small. Applicants were made to understand that positions could not be guaranteed, though no effort was spared in securing them.¹¹⁸² This was by no means a system of favouritism, however, and the committee was unwilling to make a recommendation on behalf of a candidate for any position, unless the individual was suitably qualified.¹¹⁸³ In particular, young members, male and female, who contemplated leaving home to take up employment were encouraged to report to the central office through their division, so that they could be supplied with information as to the stability or otherwise of the business, house or farm where they were to be employed, along with details on suitable lodgings.¹¹⁸⁴ Later in the period the BOE decided to compile a register of the present members of the Order in all parts of Ireland and Great Britain, with the object of having a record of the name, address and occupation, business or profession of every member of the Society.¹¹⁸⁵ Such information would obviously be invaluable in furthering the Employment Bureau's work but it also had other ramifications.

¹¹⁷⁸'BOE mins', 19 Mar. 1909.

¹¹⁷⁹*HJ*, Jan. 1912. The claims of opponents were somewhat exaggerated though the AOH did admit to 'endeavouring to secure for those in our ranks, who by education and natural ability are qualified, some of the "plums of office."' *HJ*, Jan. 1912.

¹¹⁸⁰*HJ*, Jan. 1912.

¹¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, Dec. 1914.

¹¹⁸²*HJ*, Sept. 1917.

¹¹⁸³*Ibid.*, Sept. 1917.

¹¹⁸⁴*HJ*, Nov. 1917.

¹¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, Oct. 1917. An ill-fated scheme certainly and likely impracticable given the division penchant for ignoring Executive solicitations. Division secretaries were asked to forward the relevant particulars but in December 1917 it was reported that many had failed to comply and the work could not be proceeded with. *HJ*, Dec. 1914.

For one thing the AOH would be better informed as to when members would become qualified for the degree system. Different motives prompted individuals to join the Society and without calling those objects into question, members underwent a probationary period before receiving the full advantages of the organisation.¹¹⁸⁶ A degree system, with two distinct purposes, was authorised by a national convention at Dublin in 1915. First, to enable the National Board to establish a fund for the support of the widows and orphans of deceased senior members and second, to recognise seniority within the Order by conferring advantages and benefits on members which would not apply to new members.¹¹⁸⁷ Any member having three years' continuous membership of the Society could apply for a membership certificate making him part of the second degree and entitling him to claim on the widows' and orphans' fund. A fee of 2s. 6d. accompanied the certificate application and second-degree members paid a half-yearly contribution of 1s, once in June and again in December.¹¹⁸⁸

Unfortunately, these sums were insufficient to the task of defraying the large and expensive number of claims.¹¹⁸⁹ The fund had been set up to ensure that the dependents of members who had assisted in the building of the Order were not rendered destitute by the early death of a breadwinner.¹¹⁹⁰ Members were not nearly as thrifty as Nugent and others would have hoped. Cases arose where members of the degree had died and left a widow and three and four children absolutely unprovided for. Inquiries into the same found that deceased members were four or five years in the Order, during which time the full amount contributed by them to the Society was 25 or 30s. Out of this sum the Executive received a paltry 2s. and 8d. Members paid subscriptions into the fund to be sure, but other than the certificate fee the only other semi-regular source of income was concerts and social fixtures.¹¹⁹¹

The original intention of the National Board had been to dole out no grants until the amount to credit had reached at least £5,000. Instances of extreme urgency had made it

¹¹⁸⁶*HJ*, Oct. 1918. Degree systems existing within a democratic organization were viewed by some with a degree of suspicion. The AOH cited the Knights of Columbus as an example of a Catholic society with a successful system. For more on this grouping, see Christopher J. Kauffman, *Patriotism and Fraternalism in the Knights of Columbus: A History of the Fourth Degree*, (New York, 2001).

¹¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*, Oct. 1918.

¹¹⁸⁸*HJ*, Sept. 1918; *HJ*, Oct. 1918.

¹¹⁸⁹Even though members were not shy in making claims on the Widows' and Orphans' Fund, they did not similarly avail themselves of the second-degree plank. In October 1918 the *Hibernian Journal* reported that a large number of divisions had made little to no effort in enrolling members. See *HJ*, Oct. 1918; *HJ*, Nov. 1918.

¹¹⁹⁰*HJ*, Feb. 1915.

¹¹⁹¹*Ibid.*, Nov. 1915; *HJ*, Oct. 1916.

difficult to turn down appeals, however. For this reason, a decision was taken to increase the revenue of the fund and extend the qualifying period from three to five years. Divisions were urged to recognise that resources were extremely limited. An example was given of an application received for support on behalf of the widow and two children of a deceased member. The members of the branch in question informed the Board that a sum of £1 per week was the minimum, which would “keep the wolf from the door”. The Board could hardly entertain such an application and a grant of £1 per month was made instead. Around that time over three thousand members were enrolled in the second degree and the fund had £2,300 to its credit. If fifty claims of a similar kind arose within the short period of one year and a similar grant was made in each case, the entire fund would have been exhausted.¹¹⁹² Still, the fund did help the lives of many. During 1917, seven cases received grants. In one instance, fees of £20 per year were paid at an orphanage for the two children of a deceased member. Rent was granted to widows in three cases, varying between £10 and £24. Allowances, ranging from £5 and £12 per year, were paid to aunts and widows who declined to allow children to go to orphanages. The total annual charge on the fund for the year was tallied at £94 8s.¹¹⁹³ The next year the AOH secured employment for a widow at £65 per year, while her children were sent to a convent to be educated.¹¹⁹⁴

Membership distribution and growth

When citing figures for membership the national secretary was prone to a number of disclaimers. Levies, the primary method of gauging membership, suffered from acute problems. During the December 1912 quarter it was reported that none were received from almost 100 branches and Nugent was confident that a large number did not pay levies on all of their members.¹¹⁹⁵ Arrears were a consistent bone of contention. In April 1913 Nugent stated ‘If we are to admit the principle that if a member is in arrears in his Division, his Division is not entitled to pay, and that out of the 1166 Divisions which are registered a large number avails of that plea, then it will be for all time impossible to

¹¹⁹²*HJ*, Sept. 1917.

¹¹⁹³*Ibid.*, Sept. 1917.

¹¹⁹⁴*HJ*, Oct. 1918.

¹¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*, Jan. 1913.

judge the strength of the Society'.¹¹⁹⁶ A remedy was only finally formulated in September 1917, making it an offence against the rules for any division to supply an incorrect quarterly return. As long as a member was retained on the division's books, that branch was liable for his quarterly levy.¹¹⁹⁷

Table 7: Male divisions and private membership in provinces and counties, BOE, 1898-1901

Location	1898		1901	
County	No. of Divs.	Membership	No. of Divs.	Membership
Ulster				
Fermanagh	21	450	29	607
Derry	16	650	18	350
Donegal	12	700	11	575
Antrim	8	847	8	845
Armagh	8	350	1	950
Cavan	8	780	8	520
Monaghan	4	80	4	200
Belfast	1	700	1	40
Down	0	0	8	350
Total	78	4,557	88	4,437
Connaught				
Leitrim	2	107	2	88
Roscommon	1	50	0	0
Sligo	1	18	1	14
Total	4	165	3	102
Leinster				
Meath	5	80	0	0
Total	5	80	0	0
Overall Total	87	4,812	91	4,539

Source: Crime Branch Special Report Series (CBS), Summary of Societies, 1898-1901, N.A.I.

¹¹⁹⁶*HJ*, Apr. 1913.

¹¹⁹⁷*HJ*, Sept. 1917.

In 1898, as indicated by table 7, the vast majority of AOH members and divisions existed in Ulster, with 78 branches and 4,557 members. During the next year the total number of branches and members dropped from 87 and 4,812 to 80 and 3,939. In 1900, meanwhile, the number of divisions recovered to 86 but by 1901 the membership had nonetheless dipped, at 4,539. This period of Hibernian sterility is highlighted in chapter two. The membership in Connaught was significantly damaged while Leinster's seems to have evaporated. In Ulster, Belfast was the worst affected, dropping from 700 members to 40. This shortfall was made up by Armagh, however. County Down was also organised during the period, and Fermanagh saw the largest division growth. By 1901, the latter, along with Derry and Donegal lead in branches, while most Hibernians resided in Antrim and Armagh.¹¹⁹⁸ When Devlin took over in 1905 the Society boasted 200 divisions.¹¹⁹⁹ By 1907, however, only one division existed in Munster, at Limerick City. In Leinster too, Hibernians could only be found in Dublin. Connaught meantime had contracted to just one division in County Mayo.¹²⁰⁰ After 1905 the Society substantially increased its grip in Ulster, however, and by 1908 there were 600 divisions overall.¹²⁰¹ Figures for April 1911 reveal 676 divisions with two-thirds in Ulster. Another 94 existed in Scotland, 67 in Connaught, 39 in England and Wales combined, and just 28 and 15 in Leinster and Munster.¹²⁰²

¹¹⁹⁸Crime Branch Special Report Series, Summary of Societies, 1898-1901, N.A.I.

¹¹⁹⁹*HJ*, Feb. 1905.

¹²⁰⁰CO909/117, Dec. 1907.

¹²⁰¹*HJ*, Oct. 1908.

¹²⁰²*HJ*, Apr. 1911.

Table 8: Male divisions in provinces, Apr. 1911-Aug. 1915

Province	Apr. 1911	Jan. 1912	Feb. 1912	Sept. 1912	Apr. 1913	Aug. 1915
Ulster	433		454		469	476
Connaught	67		102		122	166
Leinster	28		99		167	197
Munster	15		130		186	193
Scotland	94	99			114	118
England	35	39			87	84
Wales	4	4			18	17
Total	676		824	1,100	1,163	1,246

Source: *Hibernian Journal*, Apr. 1911; *Ibid.*, Jan. 1912; *HJ*, Feb. 1912; *Ibid.*, Sept. 1912; *HJ*, Apr. 1913; *HJ*, Aug. 1915. Note: Spaces show where information is unavailable.

Many factors can be attributed to the distribution of AOH divisions and membership in Great Britain and Ireland. Growth under insurance is outlined below while religious tolerance and Hibernianism's political and social utility have been discussed in previous chapters. That being said, some other variables are worth acknowledging. According to A.D. Buckley, friendly societies were most commonly found along the south, east and north coasts of Ireland, and especially in the major cities. During 1911, there were 12,717 and 46,938 friendly society members, representing 12.7 and 34.7 per cent of the adult male population in the cities of Belfast and Dublin.¹²⁰³ The AOH's pre-eminence in Ulster, meantime, likely owed much to the religious divide, with Catholics forming 43.67 per cent of the population in the same year. In Connaught (96.24%), Leinster (85.20%) and Munster (94.04%), however, Catholic hegemony was largely unchallenged.¹²⁰⁴ This, however, does not help to explain Hibernianism's growth in Connaught prior to 1911. Not all of the movement's development there can be credited to clerical sanction, or even antipathy towards William O'Brien. In his study of five counties in Connaught and Leinster, Michael Wheatley shows how agrarian hostilities did not end in the years 1909-

¹²⁰³Buckley, "On the Club", p. 39.

¹²⁰⁴W.E. Vaughan and A.J. Fitzpatrick (eds) *Irish Historical Statistics: Population, 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), pp 66-8.

14 but were nonetheless in a clear and pronounced decline. While the UIL did not sizeably contract between 1909 and 1913, county inspectors commonly described its membership as inactive and many branches as ‘nominal’.¹²⁰⁵ This would suggest that the AOH in Connaught expanded in response to League weakness.

Between January 1912 and January 1913, the Order grew by 366 divisions.¹²⁰⁶ During the 1911-12 period the AOH increased its grip substantially on the provinces of Connaught, Leinster and Munster. Much work was also completed in England and Wales. The former doubled its branches by 1913; the latter quadrupled. (See Table 8) Connaught was already well organised by April 1911 and the AOH had a foothold in all five counties. Leitrim and Galway experienced very modest growth while Roscommon jumped from 15 divisions to 23, Mayo from 3 to 14 and Sligo, up from 9 to 17. In all, the province went from 67 to 99 divisions during the period. In Leinster, AOH strongholds existed in only four counties, being Dublin, Louth, Wicklow and Meath. Ten months later and the Order were in all twelve. The greatest inroads were made in Dublin, which jumped from 12 to 29 branches, Meath from 2 to 12, Longford from 0 to 16, for a total of 99 divisions, compared to 28 previously. Munster experienced the most organisation. A mere 15 divisions hiked to 130 with Cork and Limerick going from 15 branches combined, to 87. The first progress was also made in Clare, Kerry, Tipperary and Waterford.¹²⁰⁷

In the next two years only 83 more divisions were opened in Great Britain and Ireland, for a grand total of 1246. In England and Wales branch numbers fell. Munster and Scotland moved listlessly while Ulster faltered and even regressed in some places. Fifteen divisions were added in the fourteen months after February 1912 and only seven, two years later. Derry, Donegal and Tyrone lost a combined 16 divisions between February 1912 and December 1915.¹²⁰⁸ Only Connaught and Leinster continued to demonstrate marked growth during the later period. In April 1911 Ulster had no power comparator. Over 64 per cent of the Order’s branches were located there, but only 32 per cent of membership.¹²⁰⁹ The Order commented, ‘The fact is that there are numerous small Divisions [In Ulster] which could with advantage...be amalgamated’.¹²¹⁰ Michael Foy uses the *Hibernian Journal* sparingly and so misrepresents the distribution of branches

¹²⁰⁵Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 24-5; Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 44-5.

¹²⁰⁶*HJ*, Aug. 1909; *Ibid.*, Apr. 1911; *HJ*, Jan. 1912; *HJ*, Jan. 1913.

¹²⁰⁷*Ibid.*, Apr. 1911; *HJ*, Feb. 1912.

¹²⁰⁸*HJ*, Apr. 1911; *Ibid.*, Feb. 1912; *HJ*, Dec. 1915.

¹²⁰⁹*Ibid.*, Apr. 1911; *HJ*, Apr. 1913.

¹²¹⁰*HJ*, Apr. 1911.

and membership by showing figures purely for this early period.¹²¹¹ Four years later and the province was still the dominant force at 38 per cent of branches, but together, Connaught, Leinster and Munster now possessed 556 divisions, eclipsing England, Scotland and Wales by some margin. This swelling of the Order was undoubtedly a product of organising in the face of insurance and as a result, A.C. Hepburn is probably correct in his assertion, that outside Ulster, the society was a ‘forced growth’.¹²¹²

Spikes in growth on account of insurance did not alone occur in male membership. The first Ladies’ Auxiliary divisions were established in Scotland and then Ireland in 1908.¹²¹³ The movement was slow to grow initially, in part because of hesitancy over the women’s rights movement. Pragmatism and a boosting of the society’s democratic principles proved sufficient impetus in getting the scheme off the ground.¹²¹⁴ There are scant references to branches being established in the Order’s mouthpiece. There was still only one division in Scotland by October 1910. By June 1911 there was 11 in total.¹²¹⁵ After insurance the National Board’s attitude changed. All female workers came under the Bill and where divisions could not be established members were urged to provide women with forms and secure their commitment to the AOH. Hibernian halls were lent out for a night or two so that the Ladies’ Auxiliary could arrange meetings, and members were told to distribute fliers and handbills outside the Catholic Churches so as to intercept women coming from Women Sodality meetings.¹²¹⁶

At the start of January 1912 there were 26 female branches but by the end of February this had risen to 108 and by September, 230. During the next three years, the Ladies did not spread much further and come August 1915, a sum of 285 prevailed. Ulster had the most branches at 122 in 1915, followed by Scotland with 75 and England with 40. The Auxiliary did not exist in Wales and was not so popular in Connaught or Munster, though there were 30 branches in Leinster. A real demand for female branches existed in England and Scotland meanwhile.¹²¹⁷ In December 1913 there were 6,673 female members, with about half in Ireland, half in Scotland and a minority in England and Wales. On average, there was 1 Ladies’ Auxiliary division for every 20 male divisions and 1 female member

¹²¹¹Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, pp 87-96.

¹²¹²Hepburn, ‘The Ancient Order’, pp 5-18.

¹²¹³*HJ*, Oct.; *HJ*, Dec. 1908.

¹²¹⁴*Ibid.*, July 1908.

¹²¹⁵*HJ*, Oct. 1910; *HJ*, Jan. 1912.

¹²¹⁶*Ibid.*, Jan. 1912.

¹²¹⁷*HJ*, Aug. 1915.

for every 9 male members.¹²¹⁸ Hibernian Boys' Brigades were not nearly so numerous. Of these there were only 21 in 1915, with 10 in Leinster, 6 in Munster, 4 in Scotland and 1 in Connaught.¹²¹⁹

Male divisions in the towns and cities had a larger membership than those in rural districts, especially after insurance. To benefit from the Act a person had to be in employment. Urban divisions had large insurance sections because paid employment was more readily available.¹²²⁰ In 1911 the Order claimed that few branches in any town or city had a lesser membership than 100, while most had anything from 300 to 700 members.¹²²¹ This was probably just showboating. Ulster's divisions were known for being quite small, at an average of 50 private section members per division in 1913. The same could be said about branches in Connaught, England and Wales. Scotland's were likely the biggest at a median of 140 members while Leinster averaged 88 and Munster 70. During 1913 across the whole of Great Britain and Ireland the average was 62 private section members to a branch. The Order at large was not wholly unaware of this fact. During 1911 a campaign was carried out to amalgamate smaller divisions, so things were probably worse early on.¹²²² Because divisions were the nucleus around which insurance business occurred, there was a natural rush to establish them. Private membership received a boost but was also a means to an end, dwarfed in many places by their fellow members in the insurance section. Nowhere was this truer than in the case of the Ladies' Auxiliary. During 1914-15 the average female division in Great Britain and Ireland had 25 members in its private section, but with the addition of the insurance section, that number rose to 186. Male divisions received a similar bump in the period mentioned, from an average of 74 private members to 138 combined. There were some exceptions. Scotland for example, moved from 179 benefit members in a division to a two-section total of 209.¹²²³ In general, however, branches were a good deal larger after insurance than before.

¹²¹⁸Ibid., Mar. 1914.

¹²¹⁹*HJ*, Aug. 1915.

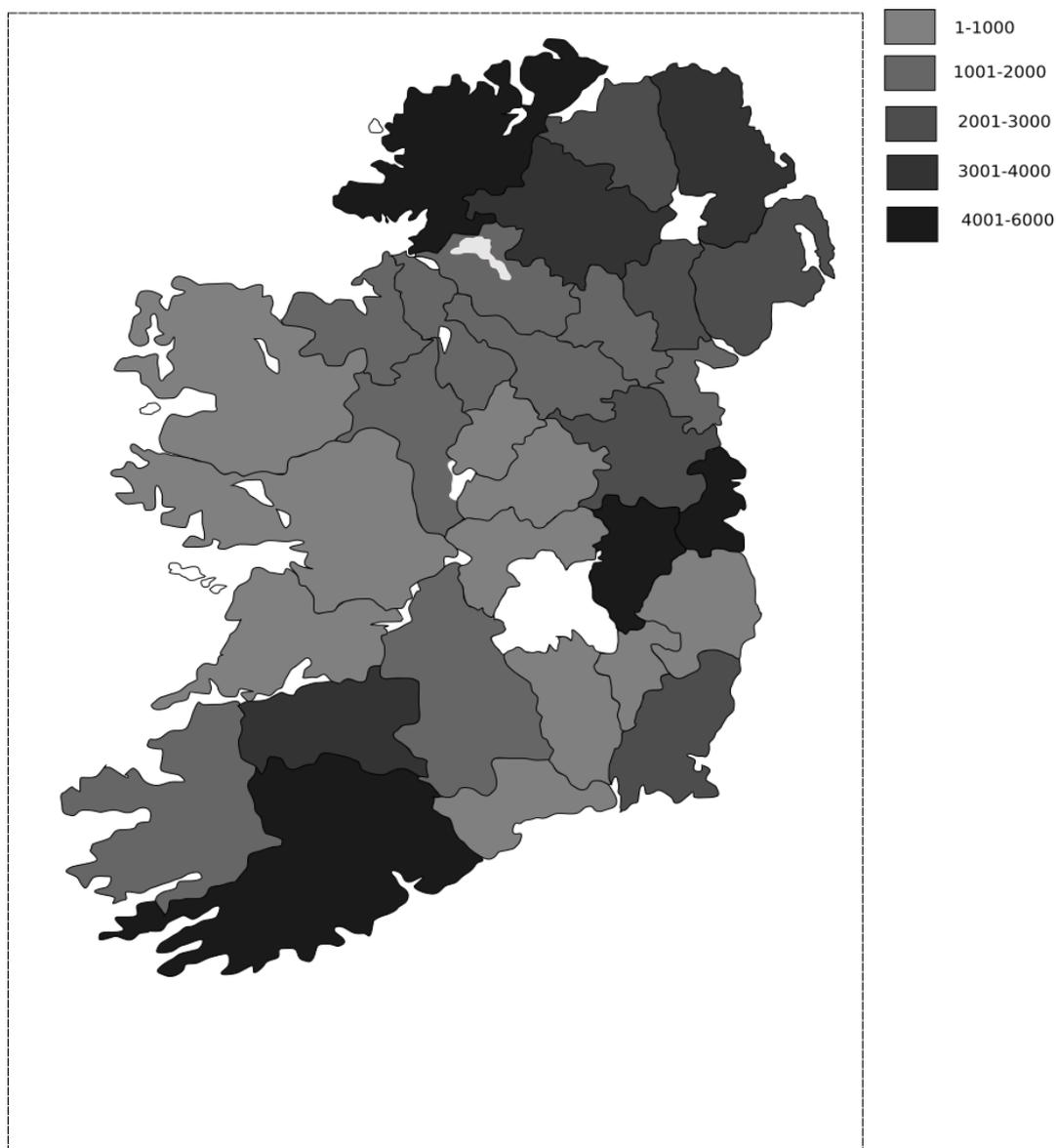
¹²²⁰Morgan, 'The Ancient Order' in *Longford, History and Society*, p. 580.

¹²²¹Ibid., Apr. 1911.

¹²²²*HJ*, Aug. 1911.

¹²²³We infer this by taking private membership figures for December 1913 and dividing them by division figures for January 1913. The Ladies' Auxiliary only increased by 19 divisions between January 1913 and August 1915, so the difference is superficial. Insurance membership can be calculated by similar means using the data on private membership for March 1914 in conjunction with division numbers for August 1915. *HJ*, Mar. 1914; *HJ*, Aug. 1915.

Map 1: Distribution of male private membership in Ireland, Apr. 1913



Source: *Hibernian Journal*, Apr. 1913.

By membership and proportionally, Ulster was the capital of Hibernian activity. In 1913 no county had less than 1,000 members. Donegal lead the pack with over three thousand.¹²²⁴ You were more likely to see a Hibernian on the North Coast at 1 in 67 compared to 1 in 82 elsewhere in Ireland. Ulster had been the centrefold of Hibernian power during the early years and so it remained after insurance. Still, much progress had been made in the other provinces of Ireland, especially Leinster. Combined, Dublin and

¹²²⁴Donegal had 5,210 members and walking along the county's thoroughfares you might see 1 Hibernian for every 32 people. The full county figures are available for perusal in Appendix 2.

Kildare boasted a membership just shy of 6,000.¹²²⁵ Elsewhere the numbers varied widely, with 1,524 members in Louth and 150 down the road in King's County. Nevertheless, proportionally at least, one could expect to meet a Hibernian in every 29 people when in Meath. Munster was quite similar to Leinster both in population, membership, and as a result, proportion. Travel through either province and your chances of meeting a Hibernian were 1 in 78. Cork competed with Dublin/Kildare and Donegal with 5,322 members. Limerick also fared well at 3,158 members and was best proportionally at 1 member for every 45 people.¹²²⁶

The real surprise was Connaught, however, which despite its proximity to Ulster could only muster 5,993 members. The province did, however, have a population half a million short of Leinster or Munster. Most Hibernians resided in Leitrim, Sligo and Roscommon.¹²²⁷ Elsewhere, in Scotland the Hibernians were a force of nature and almost one tenth of the Irish population belonged to the Society.¹²²⁸ Membership was largely centred in Edinburgh, Lanark and Renfrew, the traditional abodes of Irish immigrants. There were further scatterings in Ayr, Dumbarton and Stirling.¹²²⁹ Excepting Wales, England was the least organised of all the provinces. Among the Irish population you might spot the green of a Hibernian coat once in every 98 people. Durham and not London was the centre for activity. With the passage of insurance, the Order crept further into Cumberland, Lancashire and London. Some small number of Hibs – about 5 per cent of the Irish population – also resided in Wales at Glamorgan.¹²³⁰

The onset of the First World War did not have a tremendous impact on the AOH's insurance membership. Expansion was still going strong as late as 1915, with 166,000 members in both sections in April and 214,000 by September.¹²³¹ Insured members now constituted almost two-thirds of membership. The private section was suffering, however.

¹²²⁵The figures for both counties are amalgamated in the *Hibernian Journal*. Some fudging - or in this case merging - of numbers was probably intended to give a certain impression. Dublin was, after all, the headquarters for the AOH.

¹²²⁶*HJ*, Apr. 1913.

¹²²⁷*HJ*, Apr. 1913. While we do not have provincial membership figures for the period 1914-1916, we do have division statistics, and these indicate that Connaught, Leinster and Munster experienced tremendous growth between 1911 and 1915.

¹²²⁸Census figures for Scotland in 1911 reveal an Irish population 174,715 strong.

¹²²⁹Save for a total figure of membership, there is no record for the number of members in each of the counties of Scotland in 1911. Division figures for the same period reveal a strong presence in the counties listed, however. Lanark and Edinburgh in particular, had 44 and 17 divisions respectively and Renfrew, 11. *HJ*, Sept. 1917.

¹²³⁰*HJ*, Apr. 1913.

¹²³¹*HJ*, Apr. 1915; *HJ*, Sept. 1915. There is some conflict in the numbers. In August 1915 Devlin stated, 'We have been paying into the funds of the society in the insurance and private sections 230,660 members, or practically a quarter of a million'. *WFJ*, 28 Aug. 1915.

During the first two years of the war, membership declined from 78,111 in April 1913 to 68,500 by September 1915. Brother McGhee was able to draw attention to the exceptionally high rate of mortality in the Scottish funeral district during 1915, caused by the war.¹²³² By February 1916 the *Hibernian Journal* could comment, ‘many of the younger members have been attested and will shortly be called upon to join their groups, with the result that Divisions are likely to lose the active services of some of their best workers’.¹²³³ With the passing of the Military Service Act the Order began to realize how few men over forty years of age were taking an active part in the movement. Many officials were in reserved occupations, but the military authorities noticed a goodly number of others and some more came within the extensions of the Act.¹²³⁴ Irish migrants, departing to take up employment at munitions and other work, initially filled in holes in the ranks. But this had a knock-on effect, reducing the membership in Ireland.

Conscription was something of a controversial topic in Irish circles.¹²³⁵ The Order, like the population at large was hyper aware to any attempt at forcing one of their number into the army. In October of 1916, Nugent was credited with a timely exposure of one plot to do just that, ‘In some offices [In Ireland] sheaves of notices have been served on men who were thought eligible for military service, giving them the option of enlisting or losing their positions. Consideration is not given even to length of service or whether the persons are married or single’.¹²³⁶ The claims work of the Unemployed Insurance Department was transferred from Ireland to London and with it, all the permanent Irish staff with salaries of less than £150 per annum. In other parts of the country, Customs and Excise and other government officers who were prominent in the Irish language movement, many of them married and settled men, found themselves transferred to England and Scotland without reason assigned.¹²³⁷ Organising spirit was also at an all-time low. The county president for Wales noted the difficulty of carrying out propaganda

¹²³²Ibid., July 1916.

¹²³³*HJ*, Feb. 1916.

¹²³⁴Ibid., July 1916.

¹²³⁵For more on conscription try Tom Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki: The Story of the Irish Regiments in the Great War, 1914-18* (Dublin, 1992); David Fitzpatrick, ‘The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-18’, in *Historical Journal*, 38:4 (1995); James McConnel, ‘Recruiting Sergeants for John Bull? Irish Nationalist MPs and Enlistment during the Early Months of the Great War’ in *War in History*, 14:4 (2007).

¹²³⁶*HJ*, Oct. 1916.

¹²³⁷Ibid., Oct. 1916.

work for the private section owing to the war. He resolved to devote a good deal of his time and energy to the promotion of the Order as soon as peace was declared.¹²³⁸

Conclusion

Before 1911 Hibernian financial life was chaotic and uneven. Fractures and a lack of centralisation in the Irish organisation during the late nineteenth century made it difficult to address the matter. Ironically it was the Society's early secretive nature – traditionally a bar to registration - which eventually prompted a reconsideration. Scottish divisions sought to remove the basis for the Catholic Church's condemnation by becoming respectable friendly societies. Continued clerical disapproval was blamed on the anachronistic Irish organisation. When the Scotch Section tried to convert the Irish membership, the Board of Erin's reticence was used to justify further fragmentation. In time, however, and under Devlin the BOE recognised the need for modernisation. While this was a slow process, the earlier split was largely rectified as a result. In Ireland the divisions were run on a variety of financial models, and full benefit divisions were in the minority. Near the end of the decade more efforts were made to put the organisation on a uniform footing. Divisions and officers were, as ever, reluctant to change.

With national insurance the AOH was justified in a further organisational overhaul. In just a few short years most of the divisions were converted to a system of benefits, an insurance section was added, and new offices were established. This process was not a smooth one. Ireland had to be added to the scope of the Act and the Society had to become approved. Several organisational changes were also made, and there was opposition from the Catholic Church and factionists like William O'Brien to contend with. After the Act was enacted the AOH was confronted with additional problems. Division secretaries struggled with their new responsibilities, doctors went on strike and contribution cards along with other documentation went missing or were returned with incorrect details. Through it all, the Hibernian leadership responded with admirable alacrity, and insurance proved very lucrative. Over £10,000 was made in the first year.¹²³⁹ Between 1912 and 1914, meantime, the Society doubled its overall membership, and continued to grow. Insured members were primarily cash cows, however. They had no say in the working of

¹²³⁸*HJ*, Apr. 1916.

¹²³⁹*Ibid.*, Mar. 1914.

a division's private section and they attended separate meetings.

Under insurance, as before it, finance was an important component of Hibernianism. The contributions of members ensured that they had a recourse when sick or out of work. When the member passed away a mortality grant ensured that his wife and family were looked after. Division solvency depended to a large extent on maintaining a large contingent of young members and the AOH was predominantly a working-class society. In rural areas, meantime, many of the members were tied by family and social networks. Friendly societies like the AOH ensured that the poor had access to quality doctors though many members had difficulty making regular contributions to their division and fell into arrears as a result. Once suspended the member had a hard time rejoining. Division officers tended to remain in their posts for years. Divisions could use their money to purchase banners, build halls and outfit bands. Fundraising, whether for any of the former reasons, or for purposes of charity and community occurred almost exclusively within the division's resident county. Concerts, dances and the renting of halls could also be vital in keeping a branch on an even keel. The degree system incentivized long-standing membership. Employment committees and the widows' and orphans fund were attempts at addressing wider problems, which met with varying degrees of success.

Devlin had many compelling reasons to advocate the National Insurance Act. In the first place, Ireland's exclusion would only see the country lag even further behind Great Britain. Even if they could not close this gap, the IPP had to at least keep up. Improving Ireland's economic position was imperative to stymieing emigration. Another feather in the cap of Party achievements, insurance could also be held out as an example of what was to come under Home Rule. Perhaps most significantly, with its new development in Leinster and Munster, the AOH was able – on the surface at least - to extend its grip from Ulster and northern nationalism, to Irish nationalism as a whole. On the eve of insurance, indeed for years even before then, most of the society's divisions resided in Ulster. In April 1911, Ulster housed 433 branches, or 64 per cent of the total. Of the 110 branches in the rest of Ireland, 67 existed in Connaught, 28 in Leinster and 15 in Munster. Compared to growth elsewhere, Ulster hardly moved between April 1911 and 1913, with just 36 additional branches. Connaught, meanwhile, almost doubled its branches, though it was somewhat organised to begin with. Both Leinster and Munster experienced huge growth, however, at nearly 500 and over 1,000 per cent respectively.¹²⁴⁰

¹²⁴⁰*HJ*, Apr. 1911; *HJ*, Apr. 1913.

The AOH became important in Ireland as McCluskey has said, as a ‘patronage, brokerage and recreational association’.¹²⁴¹ Sectarianism did not prevail, it is true, but perhaps just as importantly, the new membership had little organisational loyalty compared to those in Ulster. Hibernian organisers showed up, swore dozens of members in and swiftly moved on. The new officers and members did not know ‘anything of the previous history of the Order, little of its objects, and nothing of its working’.¹²⁴² By the time Hibernians began to defect to Sinn Fein, many had been members for, at best, four or five years, and a good portion of this during the First World War. With the BOE’s recourse to discipline and suspensions, and the rise of Sinn Fein, these ‘shallow roots’ were ripped out.¹²⁴³ Divisions with their benefit members were too, the cogs around which the insurance section could be built. But private section membership, sometimes deceptive in its size, was absolutely essential for the working of the divisions. When the consensus of nationalist opinion turned in 1916, first the private section members left and then branches everywhere began to shut up shop.

¹²⁴¹McCluskey, ““Make way for the Molly Maguires!””, pp 32-6.

¹²⁴²*HJ*, Jan. 1919.

¹²⁴³McCluskey, ““Make way for the Molly Maguires!””, pp 32-6.

5

Towards Hibernian Home Rule

In their discussion of Irish constitutional and revolutionary impulses, Caoimhe Nic Dhaibheid and Colin Reid borrow from the Irish nationalist and writer Frank Hugh O'Donnell's phrase: 'the voice and [the] sword'.¹²⁴⁴ They maintain that these two elements cannot be considered in 'isolation' but must be perceived as 'two sides of the same coin', blurring into each other 'often with emphatically successful results'. While loathe to provide a fixed definition of either term – given the evolving nature of Irish politics - Dhaibheid and Reid do interpret constitutional methods 'as operating primarily within the boundaries of parliamentary structures'. 'Civil disobedience and other extra parliamentary methods', meanwhile, occupied a sort of median position, and for our purposes, might be considered a criterion of action and outlet for a constitutional separatist grouping. Dhaibheid and Reid further assert that while constitutional movements can act as safety-valves at revolutionary moments 'it is not always clear if the fluid boundaries that have existed between parliamentary and violent methods can necessarily be controlled or kept in check by constitutional parties'. This assessment has particular salience for Irish politics after 1913 when, in their formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), the Unionist Party at last brandished a sword to match their decades long employment of the voice.¹²⁴⁵

This chapter argues that up until 1913 the AOH was the primary outlet for the sword or separatist sentiment within the constitutional nationalist movement. Unionist escalation threatened to derail the Home Rule project, however, and following the formation of the UVF and IVF the Order was to some extent displaced as the vanguard of the 'National Army'.¹²⁴⁶ For McCluskey, the constitutional separatist grouping within the AOH and Irish Nationalism became more apparent in these years. He sees this demographic bubbling to the surface in the second wave of Irish Volunteer mobilisation.

¹²⁴⁴F.H. O'Donnell, *A History of the Irish Parliamentary Party*, 2 vols (London, 1910), vol. I, p. 273.

¹²⁴⁵Caoimhe Nic Dhaibheid and Colin Reid, 'Introduction: The Constitutional and Revolutionary Histories of Modern Ireland' in Dhaibheid and Reid (eds) *From Parnell to Paisley, Constitutional and Revolutionary Politics in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), pp 1-3.

¹²⁴⁶*HJ*, Sept. 1907; *HJ*, Jan. 1911; Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 139.

The Easter Rising and the exclusion conference at St Mary's Hall, Belfast, in 1916, meanwhile, signalled its detachment from constitutional nationalism.¹²⁴⁷ These conclusions are affirmed and, critically, supplemented by the findings of this chapter. Hibernian sectarianism, as with the Anglophobia discussed in the first chapter, was one manifestation and outlet for constitutional separatists. The fact that the Protestant population largely ignored the AOH up until June 1912 – despite its proximity – is as much a testament to Home Rule's admittedly bleak prospects during this period as it is a product of Devlin's success in fettering this grouping. After the events of Castledawson, however, when Hibs purportedly attacked a Protestant Sunday school excursion (including women and children), the AOH was demonised and helped accelerate the development of the Ulster Volunteer Force. In this context, one manifestation of Ulster nationalism was used against the wider Irish nationalist cause.

The Home Rule crisis was temporarily defused by the onset of the First World War, the establishment of the IVF the year prior providing a much-needed salve and vehicle for Irish nationalist anxiety. The Volunteers were particularly attractive to constitutional separatists within the AOH because of Devlin's implementation of a quietist policy and a blanket ban on demonstrations after Castledawson. Up until that point, the Order had been a useful vent for the constitutional separatists; a grouping who seem to have been based mainly in Ulster. While these members were pleased at Redmond's incorporation of the Volunteers into the national cause, his commitment of the movement to the British war effort tested the limits of even constitutional nationalists, let alone constitutional separatists, and the IVF swiftly went into decline. IRB efforts to turn the Irish populace to a separatist course, as with anti-recruitment propaganda, culminated in the Easter Rising. The Hibernian response showed evidence of separatist sympathies. The British government's mishandling of the aftermath, where rebels were executed and became martyrs, and exclusion was offered, accepted and then scrapped, finally knocked the constitutional nationalist cart over. While attempts were made to set the cause back on an even keel, a constitutional separatist party, Sinn Fein, had emerged. Hibernians now began to flock to the movement, demonstrating their support at by-elections. By this juncture separatist sentiment and support for Sinn Fein was rampant throughout Ireland. When the Board of Erin resorted to discipline it further alienated its members and by the

¹²⁴⁷McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 139; McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 179.

time of the general election in 1918, despite efforts to reverse the tide, the AOH and wider constitutional nationalist cause was swept away.

What kind of relationship did the AOH have with the Protestant community within Ireland during the period? To what extent did the Society participate in the Irish Volunteer movement? How did the attitudes of the rank-and-file change after the Easter Rising and the St. Mary's conference in Belfast? What measures did the BOE resort to in dealing with defections and in attempting to shore up the movement? These and more questions are answered throughout the course of this chapter. In the first two sections, the AOH's sectarianism is contrasted with Protestant perceptions of the Order. This provides a fitting backdrop to the subsequent section's discussion of Protestant resistance to Home Rule and the creation of the Irish Volunteers. The First World War is an appropriate watershed, and events immediately following the conflict, such as the shooting at Bachelor's Walk, is at centre of a fourth section. Afterwards I suggest that Home Rule's passage through parliament prompted the creation of a more definitive Hibernian programme. This is followed up by an analysis of attitudes to war recruitment and the activities of the IRB. Chips in the constitutional nationalist consensus, owing to the Easter Rising and the St. Mary's conference, provide the majority of the discourse in a sixth section. In the last two parts, meantime, the Board of Erin's attempts to shake off its political lethargy and mount a counter offensive against Sinn Fein are addressed. A series of events in 1918 as well, including the East Tyrone by-election and the conscription crisis, end in a discussion of the general election and its results.

Hibernian sectarianism

During August 1910 the *Hibernian Journal* drew attention to the latest attack on the Order. In the pages of one of the country's many *Leader* newspapers, a critic, going under the pseudonym 'Imaal', alleged that the AOH was dominating the National Organisation. The charge was not a new one and the *Journal*, replying with typical gusto, downplayed Hibernian representation in politics in response. The prospect, meantime, of a situation where the National Organisation was controlled by an exclusively Catholic Society induced the rather sobering conclusion: '[It] would reduce the Irish Party to the same level as the Ulster Unionist Party, which is, unquestionably, controlled by the Orange lodges of Ulster'. Further down the lists of the same paper, however, and another writer asserted that exact reality. 'As a Protestant and a Nationalist' Mr. E.A. Aston of Dublin

declared, ‘I have hesitated – perhaps too long – to enter my protest against the absorption of the National Organisation by the AOH...The only organisation which makes any appeal to me is the UIL and it is barred’. Though the *Journal* would subsequently undermine Aston’s nationalist credentials with evidence that he was a Freemason, the point remained, Hibernian sectarianism, best espoused in the Order’s exclusively Catholic membership, was a problem for some, and the starting point in a conflict with many others.¹²⁴⁸

The idea, that Hibernian hegemony or even association might change or even compromise the very fabric of the United Irish League was understandably perplexing. As Foy has said ‘The UIL prided itself on the fact that it was open to all religions...Many UIL members were therefore intensely aware of...[the] hypocrisy in that, while preaching the doctrine of toleration, equality and conciliation, they were intimately associated with an Order confined to one religious group’.¹²⁴⁹ Of course, even accepting the Order’s sectarianism as a factor impinging on the AOH-UIL nexus, it must also be recognised as the basis for much of Hibernianism’s success. In Australia, England, Scotland, and Ulster as well, the movement flourished as an open counter to Freemasonry and the Orange Order.¹²⁵⁰ Notwithstanding this, some members of the UIL held that their organisation was sufficient in itself to carry on the struggle, the AOH only serving to produce jealousy and strife wherever it laboured.¹²⁵¹ All of this the Order was naturally keen to refute. Foremost amongst its counter arguments was a claim to a defender of the faith type pedigree, stretching back to the Defenders - a body known for being clerical bodyguards during the Penal law era – and their successors, the Ribbonmen.¹²⁵² Significantly, it was after a skirmish between the Defenders and the Peep O’Day Boys at the Diamond, near Loughgall, that the Orange Order was formed.¹²⁵³

According to Jas J. Bergin, the continued onslaughts of the Orange Lodges - as well ‘the forces of Freemasonry, Socialism, Atheism, [and] Proselytism’ - necessitated ‘the

¹²⁴⁸*HJ*, Aug. 1910. According to the *Journal*, Aston was a plant ‘put forward simply and solely by the Unionists and the Masonic Lodges of Dublin to venomously attack the IP by slandering the AOH and misrepresenting its position in Irish politics’. Not just a member of the Masonic Secret Society in Dublin he also associated with the Companions of St. Patrick and the Imperial Home Rule Association, ‘organisations in Ireland’, the paper added, ‘which have nothing in them to commend them to the approval of genuine Catholics and Nationalists’. *HJ*, Aug. 1910.

¹²⁴⁹Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, pp 82-3.

¹²⁵⁰*NS*, 13 May 1905.

¹²⁵¹*HJ*, Oct. 1910.

¹²⁵²See chapter two for more details.

¹²⁵³Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, p. 31.

existence of a strong, militant Catholic society such as the Hibernians'.¹²⁵⁴ Under these circumstances, the AOH saw its role as twofold: 'to give protection to both the Roman Catholic faith and the Roman Catholic population in Ireland'.¹²⁵⁵ Unsurprisingly then, the AOH was strongest where Catholics were in the minority, in particular Ulster, where they formed just under 44 per cent of the population in 1911.¹²⁵⁶ Religious bitterness ensured high concentrations of Hibernians in the western and rural parts of the province, especially Donegal, but it was in the industrial north-east that the movement really came into its own. There the United Irish League's agrarian programme held little sway and Joseph Devlin shrewdly utilised the Order as a badly needed tonic for dwindling nationalist energies. Political manoeuvres aside, the AOH publicly claimed that the Catholic population in Ulster was being subjected to an English and Protestant ascendancy '[which] in a great measure directs, our National, Political, Commercial, Educational and Social life and outlook'. 'To destroy that domination, and counteract, nullify, or neutralise [it]' was a work, the Order insisted, which all Irishmen could and should take a part in, but which their body – especially in lieu of its lineage – was equipped and perforce, at the forefront of.¹²⁵⁷

The *Hibernian Journal* never tired of highlighting 'the injustice meted out to Catholics in every walk of life'.¹²⁵⁸ At the top of the list was unfair treatment with regard to job opportunities. As the AOH perceived it, the odds were stacked against their co-religionists from the off. The victories of Catholic colleges and schools over their competitors were to be applauded 'Yet tomorrow, or the next day when a Catholic goes forward for some important position, he will be told that his acquirements from an educational standpoint debar him from securing what he desires, and a Protestant secure[s] the job'.¹²⁵⁹ The situation was so bleak, the Order maintained, that without organisations like theirs in the north 'there would be no occasion for Catholics to remain there, for the simple reason that they could not obtain a livelihood'.¹²⁶⁰ Obviously the dream was for Catholics to seek and secure a position which their experience entitled them to, notwithstanding religion.¹²⁶¹ The reality, however, was well illustrated with

¹²⁵⁴Bergin, *A History of the Ancient*, preface, vii.

¹²⁵⁵Phoenix, 'Northern Nationalists', p. 110.

¹²⁵⁶*HJ*, Aug. 1915. See also Census of Ireland, 1911.

¹²⁵⁷*Ibid*, Oct. 1907.

¹²⁵⁸*HJ*, June 1912.

¹²⁵⁹*Ibid*, Oct. 1907.

¹²⁶⁰*HJ*, Aug. 1908.

¹²⁶¹*Ibid*, Sept. 1907.

recourse to examples like the Bank of Ireland. Particularly outrageous from the Hibernian perspective was that institution's predominantly Protestant staff despite a heavy reliance on Catholics for custom. The discrimination extended from the upper echelons of the organisation to its bottom. In June 1908, it was noted that 12 of the bank's 15 directors were Protestants and only 3 – by law, the *Journal* added – Catholics. In the 67 country branches, there were 57 Protestants to just 10 Catholic agents.¹²⁶²

Not just an Ulster based organisation, the AOH submitted that anti-Catholicism was rampant throughout Ireland. The August 1908 number of the *Hibernian Journal*, for example, publicised the efforts of nationalist MPs like P.J. Meehan, who sought to remedy bigotry at the General Post Office in Dublin. Statistics sourced by Meehan proved that 33 of the GPO's 45 principal officers were non-Catholics, and this 'in a city where the population is 95 per cent Catholic, and where the rank and file of the employees in the Post Office are even in a greater proportion Catholic'.¹²⁶³ Though ostensibly a sectarian body the AOH professed to stand for 'perfect equality as between Protestant and Catholic', desiring only that 'fair competition should prevail'. With Home Rule ostensibly just over the horizon, this was coupled with the assurance that 'As history shows, whenever Catholics in the past gained the mastery they ever and always showed an undue toleration to their Protestant fellow-countrymen'.¹²⁶⁴ Unfortunately, this was merely lip service; the very constitution and rules of the society in fact providing for a Catholic bias amongst the rank and file. This was amply demonstrated in November 1906 when a member of division 1, Derry was chastised for giving 'his printing to a Protestant firm in the city' when it could have been accomplished by a Catholic one - '[a] violation of the obligation when becoming a member'.¹²⁶⁵ The best part of a decade later and the attitudes of Derry division's members remained the same. After one of their city's gas companies began to dismiss Catholics and engage Protestants, the members contemplated changing the lighting in their hall from gas to electric in protest.¹²⁶⁶

Hibernian particularism also extended to local and national politics. Much vitriol was reserved for Ireland's English and Protestant administrators. Ridiculed as 'Ireland's Real Proxy-Thinkers', the AOH doubted 'if any other country in the world...produces so many ridiculously conceited nonentities as Ireland'. Even worse was how 'The blue-blooded

¹²⁶²*HJ*, June 1908.

¹²⁶³*Ibid*, Aug. 1908.

¹²⁶⁴*HJ*, Feb. 1911.

¹²⁶⁵'Derry mins', 2 Nov. 1906.

¹²⁶⁶'Derry mins', 2 May 1913.

atmosphere of a government office so familiarises these insignificant gnats with the divine rights of Unionism [that they]...soon begin to mistake their pens for sceptres, their hats for crowns, and their three-legged office stools for hereditary thrones'.¹²⁶⁷ Concurrently, the *Hibernian Journal* for July 1907 underscored the large number of jobs which the Liberal government was doling out to Protestant Tories.¹²⁶⁸ Members of the society were further dismayed at Redmond's decision in 1908 that the Irish Party would not accept 'any favour, office, or emolument' from the English Party 'while the present relations between the two countries exists, either for themselves or their friends'.¹²⁶⁹ The Order's perception was that while Protestants were busy bagging the numerous nominated positions, Catholics were left to flounder; not only was the Party not helping them when it should, it was in fact actively preventing them from securing jobs. The notion that an Irish Nationalist was any less for being under the pay of the English government was curtly dismissed, the AOH countering 'We see no reason why members of the IP, in their individual capacity, should not be allowed to exercise their influence on behalf of those who are in sympathy with the National movement when such positions of patronage are going'.¹²⁷⁰

The truth was that Hibernians were just as avid participators in the battle for hegemony - especially at the parish-pump level – as their Protestant opposites. As the Order's press organ disclosed in August 1908, Catholics were in the ascendant throughout the county councils of southern Ireland but had to treat with stiff opposition in the north.¹²⁷¹ In Tyrone, Unionists had a majority on four of the seven Rural District Councils. During the period 1898-18 virtually no Catholic was employed by a unionist-controlled body.¹²⁷² According to Patrick Maume 'many Catholics...look[ed] forward to engaging in discrimination'.¹²⁷³ This is borne out by Hibernian action. When the Order gained power, as at Strabane in 1914 the police noted how they 'always had things their own [way]'.¹²⁷⁴ In May 1911, meanwhile, the *Journal* not only laughed off the allegation

¹²⁶⁷*HJ*, Mar. 1908.

¹²⁶⁸*Ibid*, July 1907.

¹²⁶⁹*HJ*, Dec. 1908.

¹²⁷⁰*Ibid.*, Dec. 1908. The higher representation of Protestants on Ireland's many magisterial benches was an additional slight. In May 1911 the *Journal* observed that over 60 per cent of those holding the Commission of the Peace in Dublin were Protestants. Figures were also quoted for the preponderantly Catholic areas of Mayo (54%), Meath (55%), Monaghan (60%), Donegal (63%) and Kerry (59%). *HJ*, May 1911.

¹²⁷¹*HJ*, Aug. 1908.

¹²⁷²McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p.108.

¹²⁷³Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 130.

¹²⁷⁴CO 904/93, May 1914.

that Protestants did not get fair play in places where the electorate was majority Catholic, but actually suggested that ‘were there some truth in it there would be no cause for surprise’.¹²⁷⁵

Publicly, however, Hibernians sought to conceal their political tussles with Protestants behind a façade of friendship and toleration; the implication that the Order was an anti-Protestant organisation, treated as preposterous. Speaking at a monthly meeting in August 1910, brother Patrick J. Neary, the president of Aughrim division, Co. Roscommon, noted how the society had been accused of disrespecting ‘the shades of martyred Irish Protestant heroes and statesmen’. Neary firmly rebuffed such a notion: ‘We cherish the memory and applaud the oratory of Robert Emmet... We are cognisant of the true-hearted patriotism of Mitchel and Martin... We honour the sentiment, and yet regard as our leader the late immortal and illustrious Charles Stewart Parnell’. The Order was also savvy enough to exploit their involvement in parliamentary elections, pointing out how their enemies could not ‘account for the fact that the very constituencies where the AOH is strongest in Ireland, happen to be represented by Protestant Nationalists – by such men as Mr. Swift MacNeill, K.C., Mr. Jeremiah Jordan, Mr. Hugh Law, Mr. Stephen Gwynn and others’.¹²⁷⁶ In this regard, Joseph Devlin was something of a golden child. His victory at West Belfast in 1906 over the Unionist John Reid Smiley was attributed to hundreds of Protestant votes.

As the president of the AOH, Devlin was undoubtedly the bete noire of contemporary non-sectarian nationalists.¹²⁷⁷ The Belfast MP did not necessarily seek to save the Order from ‘the morass of sectarianism’ so much as harness this element.¹²⁷⁸ At the grassroots level Hibernian sectarianism found a variety of outlets, not least agrarian boycotting. Throughout early 1909 both the AOH and the UIL were involved in an agitation against Thomas Connell, a publican and shopkeeper, from Killybegs, Donegal. After Connell took possession of an evicted farm from the Hibernian, Patrick McIntyre, he began to lose customers and several local tradesmen refused to do work for him.¹²⁷⁹ Although Connell’s case was a fairly typical one, the Order did not always get its way. A Hibernian boycott at Clonmany, Donegal, in 1910, for instance, proved of little avail, the police reporting

¹²⁷⁵*HJ*, May 1911.

¹²⁷⁶*HJ*, Aug 1910.

¹²⁷⁷Bew, *Conflict and Conciliation*, p. 123.

¹²⁷⁸Phoenix, ‘Northern Nationalists’, p. 111.

¹²⁷⁹CO904/77, Jan. 1909; *Ibid.*, Feb. 1909; CO904/77, Mar. 1909.

that the matter looked soon to die out.¹²⁸⁰ Indeed, the constabulary took agrarian agitation very seriously. In April 1911 the Inspector General for Dublin arranged for farmers to be carefully watched by patrols after the AOH's own national secretary, John Nugent, made threatening remarks about how they would become "dinners".¹²⁸¹ Such a response was probably not unwarranted. At Leitrim in 1910, the local Hibs prosecuted such a successful boycott against the McNeill brothers that they required police protection when travelling to and from Cavan, so as to 'procure the necessaries of life'.¹²⁸²

An unknown power

From 1905 onwards then, Hibernians were engaged in a daily struggle with their religious opposites on multiple fronts, for jobs, land, even political offices. Remarkably, for a majority of the Protestant community, the AOH remained undeserving of recognition, let alone scrutiny. Partly this had to do with continued Protestant ascendancy in Ulster, but also the Liberal majority in parliament which prevented the Irish Parliamentary Party from pushing the Home Rule agenda to completion. One notable exception to Protestant nonchalance, however, was Frederick Trench, 3rd Baron Ashtown, an Anglo-Irish landowner and hard-line Unionist 'who fought tooth and nail against Home Rule... and every other manifestation of Catholic nationalism for most of his life'.¹²⁸³ In 1906, Ashtown became editor and writer for the monthly publication *Grievances from Ireland* (1905-1910), an openly anti-Home Rule magazine, conceived to counteract the surfeit of nationalist propaganda in Great Britain.¹²⁸⁴ In the pages of *Grievances*, Ashtown alleged that the principal organisation in the Nationalist cause, the United Irish League, was run by the Church of Rome.¹²⁸⁵ Later the UIL was swapped out for an admittedly more credible villain, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and after writing a piece on the society for the December 1906 issue of *Grievances*, Ashtown took it upon himself to publish a book: *The Unknown Power Behind the Irish Nationalist Party* (1907).¹²⁸⁶

¹²⁸⁰CO904/77, Jan. 1909.

¹²⁸¹CO904/83, Apr. 1911.

¹²⁸²CO904/80, Apr. 1910.

¹²⁸³L. Perry Curtis, Jr., 'The Last Gasp of Southern Unionism: Lord Ashtown of Woodlawn', *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 40, No. 3 & 4, (Fall/Winter 2005), p. 141.

¹²⁸⁴*Western Daily Press*, 6 Feb. 1905.

¹²⁸⁵*Londonderry Sentinel*, 20 Feb. 1906; *Belfast Weekly News* (Hereafter *BWN*), 22 Feb. 1906.

¹²⁸⁶Frederick Oliver Trench, 3rd Baron Ashtown, *The Unknown Power Behind the Irish Nationalist Party: Its Present Work, and Criminal History* (London, 1908), preface, pp v-viii.

The unknown power in question – exploiting a statement made by John Redmond – was none other than the AOH; the work, an unabashed hatchet job.¹²⁸⁷ According to Ashtown, the Order was formed almost four centuries prior, to drive the English government out of Ireland ‘and that is as much its object to-day as ever it has been in the past’. Under various names, as the Whiteboys, the Defenders, the Ribbonmen and the Molly Maguires, the society’s operations were said to have been stained ‘with outrages, murder and blood’. Although the AOH was not accused of committing the same offences in the present, its leaders were condemned for failing to express any regret at these past deeds, and more still, for glorifying in their organisation’s traditions.¹²⁸⁸ All of this the Order seems to have endured with good cheer. While the attack was acknowledged, the *Hibernian Journal* shied away from criticising the source in detail – ‘We are not prepared to spoil [Ashtown’s] little joke by attempting the refutation of the many libels and downright deliberate falsehoods the work contains’. And in fact, only one charge was given any serious consideration, an idea that – in another case of ambivalence - the AOH was only too happy to validate for Ashtown,

If the author alleges that the Ancient Order of Hibernians would be prepared to take their rightful place at the side of their fellow-countrymen in any feasible effort to throw off the yoke of English slavery either by constitutional or unconstitutional means, then we say that his allegations are perfectly correct.¹²⁸⁹

For the first few years of the twentieth century, Protestant anxiety regarding Home Rule was at a low ebb. When it became clear in 1904 that Balfour’s Conservative government was on its last legs, the Protestant community was forced to mobilise once more. In December, the Ulster Unionist Council, a 200 strong body composed of Unionist MPs and representatives from other loyalist institutions, was formed, and after the first meeting in 1905 this body took charge of the movement to resist Home Rule.¹²⁹⁰ Significantly, the return of the Liberals to power in 1906 was not quite the seismic event that some had anticipated. Most pertinent from the Irish perspective was that party’s lacklustre attitude to Irish Home Rule. As Matthew Kelly has diagnosed, with a large

¹²⁸⁷At a meeting reported by the *Freeman’s Journal* Redmond is said to have declared ‘I have always held the view that it was strength to the National Movement, and not a weakness, that England should realise that there was behind the men who were conducting the Constitutional Movement on the floor of the House of Commons, a Great Unknown Power, waiting for an opportunity which might arise to have recourse, if necessary, to other methods to advance the cause of Ireland.’ *FJ*, 9 Oct. 1906.

¹²⁸⁸Ashtown, *The Unknown Power*, preface, pp v-viii.

¹²⁸⁹*HJ*, Aug. 1907.

¹²⁹⁰Foy, ‘The Ancient Order’, p. 120.

majority in parliament, and more pressing matters to attend to ‘Home Rule had ceased to be British liberalism’s defining political question’. Not until 1909, with ‘the greatest constitutional crisis of twentieth-century British politics’ would the ground be laid for the IPP’s success.¹²⁹¹ After Lloyd George’s radical “People’s Budget” was rejected, the Liberal majority was wiped out in two subsequent general elections – in January and December 1910 – so that by the end of the year, the Irish party, in a mirror of 1885, now held the balance of power between the two main English political parties. In August 1911 the situation improved further still when the Parliament Act was passed. With this piece of legislation, the principal constitutional obstacle to Home Rule – the House of Lords’ veto – was removed, and a third Home Rule bill was confidently expected the following year.

It was likely this rekindling of Irish Home Rule hopes and a corresponding rise in nationalist confidence that induced the AOH to hold its two annual Ulster demonstrations at Newry and Garvagh in 1910. The former, being a known nationalist stronghold was not a controversial choice, but the latter, a staunchly Protestant village, had held no Catholic demonstration in over a century. Of course, a ‘premediated policy’ of encroachment into predominantly Protestant areas was part of the Order’s MO and particularly useful for discharging separatist energies. Hibernian-Protestant confrontations and clashes were more common before Devlin’s takeover but nonetheless continued, if in smaller numbers, after 1905.¹²⁹² Increased police vigilance seems to have curbed the excesses. In March 1907, at Stewartstown, Tyrone, for instance, drafted police managed to haul down a Union Jack and disperse a crowd of rowdies before contingents of Hibernians from outlying districts arrived by train.¹²⁹³ Equally salient, however, was the degree of Hibernian restraint, almost certainly a product of Devlinite influence. The orderliness of AOH parades has been discussed elsewhere, though one notable exception occurred at Randalstown in August 1907. The town had been earmarked three months prior, but on the eve of the demonstration the Hibs were informed that the procession would not be permitted. As train loads of Hibernians began to arrive it became quite clear

¹²⁹¹Matthew Kelly, ‘Home Rule and its Enemies’, in Alvin Jackson (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History* (Oxford, 2017), p. 596.

¹²⁹²McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 44. McCluskey identifies a clear trend between these years. See CO904/10, Feb. 1903; *Ibid.*, June 1903; CO904/10, Aug 1903; *Ibid.*, Oct. 1903; CO904/10, Mar. 1904; *Ibid.*, May 1904; CO904/10, July 1904; *Ibid.*, Sept. 1904; CO904/10, Nov. 1904; CO904/10, Jan. 1905; CO904/11, Mar. 1905; *Ibid.*, Apr. 1905; CO904/11, May 1905; *Ibid.*, June 1905; CO904/11, July 1905; *Ibid.*, Aug. 1905; CO904/11, Jan. 1906; *Ibid.*, Apr. 1906; CO904/11, Apr. 1906; *Ibid.*, July 1906; CO904/11, July 1907; *Ibid.*, Aug. 1907; CO904/11, Oct. 1907; CO904/11, Mar. 1908.

¹²⁹³*INBMN*, 19 Mar. 1907.

that they intended to force their way into Randalstown. Though a disturbance was avoided initially, the Hibernian leadership could not restrain the processionists on their return from the substitute venue at Craigstown. Several charged the police with pikes and swords. Stones were thrown and later, shots fired from the departing trains.¹²⁹⁴ It was likely building on the lessons of Randalstown that the Hibernian parade at Garvagh in August 1910, along with a threatened Orange counter demonstration, was proclaimed.¹²⁹⁵

Unionists were not without their counter measures. In September 1910, only a month after the Parliament Act, a huge rally was held in Craigavon, County Armagh. There, Edward Carson, leader of the Irish Unionist alliance, made it clear that his faction would do their utmost ‘to prevent the loosening of the bonds uniting Ireland to the sister countries, and to refuse to have anything to do with an Irish Parliament’.¹²⁹⁶ Wholeheartedly sharing in this ideal was a group of Orangemen from Tyrone. Among the thousands of attendees, this contingent singled themselves out by their smart appearance and the precision of their marching. It was soon discovered that they had been practising military drill. A.T.Q. Stewart informs ‘Almost by accident...an effective means of resistance to Home Rule [was discovered], for the Orange Order provided a framework for a citizen army... and the zeal for military training soon spread to the Unionist clubs and ultimately to men who belonged to neither organisation’.¹²⁹⁷ Craigavon then, was something of a coup for the Unionists. After the third Home Rule bill was read out in parliament in April 1912, however, the pendulum seemed to swing back in favour of the Irish Nationalists.

Three further developments, in the summer of 1912, significant for Hibernian involvement, would see Carson and his colleagues claw back the advantage: an incident at Castledawson, County Londonderry in June 1912, the circulation of an alleged Hibernian oath a month later, and, at the same time, the implementation of the national insurance act. Under this last piece of legislation, friendly societies like the AOH became conduits for providing state health insurance for low to middle income wage earners. Though conceived in 1911, the Act was not implemented in Ireland until the summer of 1912. Indeed, but for the efforts of Devlin and Redmond, the country would have been excluded from the scheme. Opposition to Ireland’s inclusion was fierce, originating not

¹²⁹⁴*IN*, 17 Aug. 1907.

¹²⁹⁵*BNL*, 16 Aug. 1910.

¹²⁹⁶*BNL*, 25 Sept. 1911.

¹²⁹⁷Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, p.69.

just with the Catholic Church and William O'Brien, but significantly, several Unionists as well. Years even before national insurance was conceived, James Craig, then Member for East Down, could be found drawing a spotlight on the Order. At a meeting of the commons in April 1907 he asked if Ireland's Chief Secretary was aware of a statement made by the Hibernian James Donnelly, that 'the [AOH] had the men and the guns and only wanted powder and shot to blow English rule out of Ireland'.¹²⁹⁸

With James Craig uncovering similar instances of the Hibernian potential for, and in fact violence, in the following years, it came as no surprise when in May 1911 he queried whether Lloyd George intended to 'take care' that the AOH not be included in national insurance.¹²⁹⁹ Craig's concerns were, however, ignored and by May 1912 the society looked set to reap the full benefits of the scheme. For the Liberal Unionist Andrew Horner, speaking at the second reading of the government of Ireland bill, the danger had become all too clear,

[The AOH's] branches are everywhere in Ireland...by reason of its being an approved society under the Insurance Act...It is immeasurably the strongest society in Ireland under the Act, and its numbers and influence in a few years will far transcend anything that has ever yet appeared in the Irish political arena. The permanent majority of the Irish Houses of Parliament will be under its domination, and Ulster will be in a helpless and hopeless minority.¹³⁰⁰

It was of course only logical that Unionists should question what the future under Home Rule might look like. The AOH attracted attention because it was a sectarian society at the forefront of Irish nationalism. Unfortunately, all of these traits became even more apparent after June 1912. On the 29 a Protestant Sunday school excursion party, numbering about 500, many of them women and children, and accompanied by a band, came from Whitehouse, County Antrim, to Castledawson. At the same time, four bands belonging to the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and about 300 followers, went from the latter place to attend a meeting at Maghera. As both parties returned, they met on the road to Castledawson station. Although the police did their best to supervise the two crowds, one of the Hibernians seized a small union flag carried by a boy of the excursion party. A general row erupted; stones, sticks and other missiles being flung. The excursionists were then reinforced by Protestants of the town. Several persons were injured before the

¹²⁹⁸*Hansard 5, Commons* (vol clxxii, 992-993).

¹²⁹⁹*Hansard 5, Commons* (vol xxv, 2113-2282); *Ibid.* (vol clxxxxiii, 109-110); *Hansard 5 Commons* (vol xxiii, 246-358).

¹³⁰⁰*Hansard 5, Commons* (vol xxxviii, 236-344).

two groups were finally separated.¹³⁰¹ As news of Castledawson spread, Protestant anger was total.¹³⁰² Unionist efforts at redress in parliament, however, were frustrated by the reluctance of Ireland's Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, both in providing information, and passing judgment: 'The only knowledge which I have of the occurrence is derived from the police...I cannot make myself a partisan as regards this matter...'.¹³⁰³ This response only served to confirm the notion that the two elections of 1910 had left the Liberal government in thrall to the Nationalists.¹³⁰⁴

Worse still, as the newspapers did the rounds, truth and fiction became blurred. The Protestant community was driven to a furore by the testimony of a key witness, the Rev. Barron, a member of the excursion party. In a series of interviews Barron not only intimated that the incident was completely unprovoked and likely premeditated, but that, crucially, several children were injured as a consequence: 'In a moment they were in the middle [of them] with the pikes striking and stabbing right and left'.¹³⁰⁵ In the context of such assertions the Protestant mindset was fairly explicable - '[This] organisation [was] giving a demonstration of what it...was capable of if Home Rule were granted' - and retaliation, almost inevitable.¹³⁰⁶ On the 2 of July, a mere three days after events at Castledawson, a serious melee broke out at the Belfast shipyard of Messrs. Workman, Clark & Co, several men having to be hospitalised. According to the *Belfast News-Letter*, a riveter, two of whose children had been injured at Castledawson got into an altercation with a Roman Catholic workman.¹³⁰⁷ The *Irish Independent* reported how groups of Protestant workmen then marched round the yard's departments, ordering their Catholic colleagues to leave. A large number did, those declining to do so being roughly treated.¹³⁰⁸ As Adrian Grant has said, however, Castledawson was more likely a 'propaganda gift' than the direct cause for events at the Belfast shipyards. There, 'anti-

¹³⁰¹This description is based on two reports, that of Ireland's Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, given in parliament, and that of Londonderry's County Inspector; both compiled shortly after the event. CO904/87, June 1912; *Hansard 5, Commons* (vol xxxx, 976-982). See also *BNL* 1 July 1912; *BNL*, 3 July 1912; *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 1 July 1912.

¹³⁰²*BNL*, 16 July 1912; *NW*, 5 July 1912.

¹³⁰³*Hansard 5, Commons* (vol xxxx, 976-982).

¹³⁰⁴Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 127.

¹³⁰⁵*BNL*, 3 July 1912; *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph* (Hereafter *BWT*), July 6, 1912.

¹³⁰⁶Foy, 'The Ancient Order', p. 126.

¹³⁰⁷*BNL*, 3 July 1912.

¹³⁰⁸*II*, 3 July 1912. Though the violence was almost certainly a product of the Castledawson affray, the exact circumstances of its perpetration remain up for debate.

home rule sentiment...had been building for some time' and many officials, including the Chief Secretary, expected an outburst at any moment.¹³⁰⁹

Throughout July 1912 Devlin described how Belfast was subjected to a reign of terror, of people ready to work but unable to do so.¹³¹⁰ During the month there were 80 assaults; 55 outside the Belfast shipyards, 25 within, and 5 life-threatening in their nature.¹³¹¹ The boycotting and intimidation, meanwhile, had expanded to include Harland & Wolff, so that 2,000 Catholics and 500 Protestants were out of employment.¹³¹² Such was the desperate situation of some of the workers and their families that a financial appeal became necessary.¹³¹³ As A.T.Q. Stewart has commented 'Once kindled, the age-old fire of sectarian hatred burst out sporadically, and despite every effort to damp it down, smouldered [on]'.¹³¹⁴ The righteousness of Protestant action was affirmed towards the end of the month when a leaflet purporting to be the "Oath of the Ancient Order of Hibernians" and published by the Unionist Association of Ireland, was circulated at a by-election in Crewe, Cheshire.¹³¹⁵ Among other things, Hibernians reportedly promised to owe 'no allegiance' to any Protestant Sovereign, disregard any oath tendered to them in a Court of Justice, and, most blood-curdling of all, to 'aid and assist' in the massacre of Protestants.¹³¹⁶ Though Devlin denounced the oath 'as an infamous falsehood', by the year's end it had been printed and circulated at every by-election in England.¹³¹⁷ Perhaps realising that a more public and definitive clarification of the Hibernian position was required, Devlin selected a target and went on the offensive in January 1913. Only the month previous, Colonel Hickman, the Member for Wolverhampton South, had created some sensation in Bradley when he read the oath out at a meeting. When the Belfast MP subsequently called on Hickman to explain his actions in parliament he was asked to showcase the real Hibernian obligation.¹³¹⁸ After Devlin agreed, and read it out the

¹³⁰⁹Grant, *Derry*, p. 28.

¹³¹⁰*Hansard 5, Commons* (vol xxxxi, 2088-2149)

¹³¹¹*Ibid.*, (vol xxxxi, 1855-1859).

¹³¹²*Hansard 5, Commons* (vol xxxxi, 2088-2149).

¹³¹³*Roscommon Messenger* (Hereafter *RM*), 10 Aug. 1912.

¹³¹⁴Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, p.60.

¹³¹⁵*FJ*, 22 July 1912. See also *BNL*, 22 July 1912. Questions over the Hibernian oath were raised in July 1911 by John Newman, the Conservative Member for Enfield, - as a pretext for denying the Order approval under national insurance - but did not catch fire until the following year. See *Hansard 5 Commons* (vol xxvii, 799-800).

¹³¹⁶*HJ*, June 1914. See also *FJ*, 22 July 1912; *South Bucks Standard*, 26 Sept. 1912.

¹³¹⁷*BNL*, 22 July 1912.

¹³¹⁸*Hansard 5, Commons* (vol xxxvii, 443-446).

following day, Hickman conceded that it was the real thing, though not without making one final riposte,

I understand that it is not denied by the Nationalist party that the particular oath which the hon. Gentleman read yesterday was the oath of the Ribbon Society... I should like to make another point, and that is that the Ribbon Society is practically the same thing as the Ancient Order of Hibernians.¹³¹⁹

The *Hibernian Journal* for June 1914, however, helps make sense of the Unionist position: ‘The alleged Hibernian oath’ was one of Unionism’s ‘trump cards... chiefly designed for consumption amongst electors in Great Britain’¹³²⁰ – many of whom were ‘quite willing to believe even the most outlandish stories as to the bloodthirstiness of Irish Catholics’ - in a bid to ‘defeat the prospects of Home Rule for Ireland’.¹³²¹ It was likely for this reason that the oath continued to dog the Order as late as 1914.¹³²² In 1912 the trend towards reprisal continued. During September the AOH’s Dublin headquarters released a printed list of Belfast wholesale traders believed to be in sympathy with the recent attacks on Roman Catholic workers at the shipyards, in order that Nationalist shopkeepers in the south and west of Ireland might cease dealing with them. The police were soon reporting on boycotting in Armagh, Cavan and Mayo, with considerable injury to Belfast’s traders.¹³²³ More significantly, this month also saw the signing of the Ulster covenant. By the terms of this document the bulk of Ireland’s Protestant population, nearly half a million people, pledged to resist by force the implementation of the Third Home Rule Bill. Alarmed by escalating events in the earlier portion of the year, Carson sought to avoid the outbreak of civil war by imposing discipline on the Protestant community, directing their feeling against Home Rule, and away from their Catholic neighbours.¹³²⁴

¹³¹⁹*Hansard 5, Commons*, (vol xxxvii, 645-647). The oath disseminated in Crewe was likely pilfered from the reports of the Parnell Commission, a judicial inquiry in the late 1880s into allegations of crimes by the same. When the oath was read out for the benefit of a witness in 1888, Michael Davitt rose and confirmed its provenance. *BNL*, 22 July 1912.

¹³²⁰Not just an English phenomenon, the oath was referenced by Unionists at Ahoghill, Ballymena, and Belfast (County Antrim), and Kilkeel, (County Down). The *Weekly Freeman Journal* as well noted its distribution amongst Protestants at Clara and Tullamore districts, King’s Co. See *BWT*, 17 Aug. 1912; *DDE*, 24 Sept. 1912; *BNL*, 2 Nov. 1912; *WFJ*, 24 Aug. 1912.

¹³²¹*HJ*, June 1914. As the *Derry Journal* concluded in October 1913 ‘The dissemination of this dastardly lie persists with unrelaxed assiduity... It is... evident that somebody is paying for it somewhere since the thing goes on’. *DJ*, 13 Oct. 1913.

¹³²²See *WFJ*, 31 Jan. 1914; *Dumfries and Galloway Standard*, 1 July 1914; *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, 6 July 1914.

¹³²³CO904/88, Sept. 1912; *Ibid.*, Oct. 1912; CO904/88, Nov. 1912.

¹³²⁴Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, p.61.

Then, in December, at the winter assizes in Londonderry, the Hibernians involved in Castledawson were finally put to trial. Chief amongst the court's findings was that although the riot had been initiated by a member of the Order, no women or children were injured.¹³²⁵ At the case's close the 23 Hibernian defendants were convicted of riot and sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment with hard labour. Just 6 weeks of this punishment was served before the men were freed. The prisoners had the benefit of a memorial signed by 100 Catholic and 60 Protestants and both the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary intervened to secure an early release.¹³²⁶ To many Unionists, the trial was a miscarriage of justice. The crown prosecution, it was alleged, had not only suppressed evidence - a list of the children hurt at Castledawson - but failed to interview any member of the excursion party, other than the Rev. Barron. The case's import for the Protestant community in Ireland was succinctly summed up by the Unionist member for North Down, Mr. Mitchell-Thomson,

This is a class of thing which makes us have fears for the future. It is the fact that the administration of justice, even under present conditions, is not even fair. Remember that under [the Home Rule bill] your judges are going to be appointed by and be responsible to an Irish Executive and an Irish House of Commons.¹³²⁷

The Castledawson case was another feather in the cap of Unionist escalation. In January 1913, the Ulster Unionist Council made the decision to centralise the various Unionist clubs under one organisation, the Ulster Volunteer Force. As with the Ulster Covenant, the move likely stemmed from a desire to exercise better control over militant elements.¹³²⁸ Hibernians did not take kindly to this new development. Throughout August-November 1913, Donegal's County Inspector noted how the formation and organisation of unionist clubs produced considerable 'ill-feeling' and a 'good deal of resentment' amongst members of the Order.¹³²⁹ Drilling in recognised Nationalist districts was especially provocative but save for 'in a few isolated cases'¹³³⁰ the AOH's leadership kept a lid on things.¹³³¹ Their success in this regard was undoubtedly down to Devlin's implementation of a quietist policy following the Castledawson incident in June 1912. During the summer of 1913 a circular was issued from the Order's headquarters

¹³²⁵*DDE*, 21 Dec. 1912.

¹³²⁶Grant, *Derry*, p. 44.

¹³²⁷*Hansard 5, Commons* (vol li, 237-297).

¹³²⁸McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 97.

¹³²⁹CO904/90, Aug. 1913.

¹³³⁰CO904/91, Sept. 1913.

¹³³¹CO904/91, Oct. 1913.

forbidding the Ulster divisions from participating in the usual demonstrations during August; it also, rather tellingly, advised members to avoid any acts which might be prejudicial to the Home Rule bill.¹³³²

Unionist escalation and the Irish Volunteer Force

Beginning in September 1912, a series of initiatives and speeches by Liberal politicians ‘indicated a failure of government resolve and a risk of the [Home Rule] Bill being at best mutilated and at worst lost’.¹³³³ The first wobble originated with the former Liberal Lord Chancellor, Lore Loreburn. In a letter to the *London Times*, Loreburn called for an all-party conference and a compromise with the Unionists. Though Carson immediately rejected the proposal and the nationalist press almost unanimously derided Loreburn as a lone voice, speculation that a conference might happen persisted until the end of the year. Then, on the 24 September Carson further upped the ante by establishing a provisional government for Ulster. Like many Unionist actions before it, the move was treated in nationalist circles as a publicity stunt. When another olive branch was offered in October, by Winston Churchill, an active Liberal minister – this time suggesting that North East Ulster should have some autonomy from an independent Irish government – it became clear that the political mood had shifted. In two subsequent speeches, Redmond allayed nationalist fears by refuting both Loreburn and Churchill. A ‘process of oratorical ping-pong’ had begun, however, and ‘new fears’ were created by numerous Liberal and Unionist speakers.¹³³⁴ The partition bugbear in particular, first raised by a backbencher in June 1912, was gaining traction. As Matthew Kelly has stated ‘Loyalist mobilisation could be airily dismissed as posturing but the possibility that this might lead to a HR Bill that undermined the geographical integrity of Ireland could not be lightly shrugged off’. Irish Nationalists were at last roused to activity.¹³³⁵

In November 1913 the Irish Volunteer Force was created in Dublin. Athlone’s ‘Midland Volunteers’, a local group established in mid-October 1913, seem to have been one factor; IRB machinations, a greater one. In March 1908, the Fenian Bulmer Hobson

¹³³²CO904/90, June 1913.

¹³³³Michael Wheatley, ‘Right Behind Mr. Redmond’: Nationalism and the Irish Party in Provincial Ireland, 1910-14’ (PhD thesis, St. Mary’s College, 2002), p. 253.

¹³³⁴Wheatley, ‘Right Behind Mr. Redmond’ pp 253-6.

¹³³⁵Kelly, ‘Home Rule’, p. 597.

moved to Dublin where he worked closely with Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott. The son of an English army sergeant and an Irishwoman from Tipperary, Clarke was born in 1857 and spent his early years in Dungannon, County Tyrone. It was there that he became involved in a number of nationalist societies and was sworn into the IRB. Lacking employment, he emigrated to New York and, after meeting John Devoy the Clan na Gael leader, was sent to England on a bombing mission. In May 1883 he was arrested and sentenced to penal servitude. When he emerged from prison in 1898, the result of a government amnesty, his desire for revolution was stronger than ever. In 1900, he migrated once more and continued his political apprenticeship under Devoy. In 1907, hearing speculation of an imminent Anglo-German war, Clarke returned to Ireland and became a member of the IRB's Supreme Council. He also set up a tobacco shop in Dublin and established a firm friendship with Sean MacDermott. The latter had joined the IRB in 1906 and moved from Belfast to Dublin two years later.¹³³⁶ The son of a farmer, MacDermott became Clarke's protégé and later a member of the Supreme Council. Between 1908 and 1912 'this secretive, manipulative and relentless pair revitalised the IRB, shaping its policies and promoting talented, like-minded individuals'.¹³³⁷

The formation of the Ulster Volunteer force gave the IRB its opportunity. Hobson saw that Carson was 'opening the 'door' and that it would be practical 'when public opinion had ripened a bit more and [was] shaken out of [its] stupor...to start [the] Irish Volunteers'.¹³³⁸ Redmond had dismissed the UVF as a sham, but by the autumn of 1913 the Irish populace was becoming increasingly anxious that Home Rule might be defeated.¹³³⁹ Such was the strength of the Irish Party that any explicit effort on the part of the secretive and advanced nationalists would have repelled the Irish populace and was sure to be checked. The idea for the movement, therefore, had to originate with the constitutional quarter.¹³⁴⁰ And so, long before November 1913, the IRB drilled in Dublin and busied themselves propagating the view that nationalists needed to set up their own volunteer force. In this they were aided by a compellingly straightforward political rationale,

¹³³⁶Michael T. Foy and Brian Barton, *The Easter Rising*, (Stroud, 2011) pp 12-4.

¹³³⁷Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, p. 15.

¹³³⁸Bulmer Hobson on 'The Volunteers', Oglaih nah Eireann – Bulmer Hobson Interview, RTE, 1963, RTE Archives <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9nnU6VrSjA> (13 Apr. 2019).

¹³³⁹Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, p. 15.

¹³⁴⁰P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland Under the Union, 1801-1922* (New York, 1969), pp 669-70.

Ireland was supposed to live under the protection of the British constitution, but an English party had now substituted force for the ballot box. The demands of four Ulster counties were being heeded because they had taken up arms. Ireland had to show that she was prepared to [do the same].¹³⁴¹

In November 1913, Eoin MacNeill, an Ulster native and Professor of Early and Medieval History at University College, Dublin, published his article, 'The North Began', supporting the formation of a military organisation to safeguard Home Rule and nationalist interests generally. After Hobson got in touch with him through his publisher, MacNeill became the non-party figurehead for the Volunteers, agreeing to preside on the provisional committee of the movement at a meeting in Dublin on the 25 November. Three of the committee's four members – including two Hibernians - espoused the constitutional separatist position. These men rejected partition but considered Home Rule a first step towards actual independence. If a partial recourse to Fenianism would save constitutionalism, so be it. The IRB, by contrast, sought 'to undermine constitutionalism and generate the conditions for a mass movement pledged to a republican and ultimately insurrectionary programme'.¹³⁴²

Another factor in the IVF's formation was the Dublin lock-out. In 1907 'Big Jim' Larkin arrived in Belfast as the representative of the National Union of Dock Labourers. In just a few short months he recruited nearly 3,000 members; his aggressive and confrontational tactics prompting a full-scale industrial struggle. The next year Larkin founded the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) based on his conceit of organising labourers around decisive confrontation. Larkinism, as it became known, sparked labour militancy throughout Ireland. Another advocate for labour, James Connolly arrived from America in 1910. Connolly proposed that the force of nationalism might begin a revolution, leaving the door open for socialism. Together, Larkin and Connolly provided the Irish labour movement with a fearsome leadership. In early 1913, meantime, Larkin's control over the Dublin working class was consolidated in a successful strike against the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company. In August, the ITGWU was forced into another strike action, this time by William M. Murphy, a leading businessmen and owner of the Dublin United Tramway Company. Murphy detested Larkin and declared that he would never recognise him or his Union. Each strike on Larkin's part produced a lockout by Murphy, the dispute dragging on for months.¹³⁴³

¹³⁴¹SC, 29 Nov. 1913.

¹³⁴²McCluskey, *Tyrone*, pp 105-7.

¹³⁴³Townshend, *Ireland*, pp 61-3.

Public opinion began to turn against Larkin, however, after he allowed some radical suffragettes to initiate a scheme for the evacuation of starving Catholic children to England for the strike's duration. Archbishop Walsh was quick to denounce this action and Hibernian mobs were mobilised. With young priests leading them, they picketed ships heading for England and trains going to Belfast.¹³⁴⁴ Although the strike was eventually defeated, one significant outcome was Connolly and Larkin's creation of a third militia in Ireland, the Irish Citizen Army.¹³⁴⁵ Elsewhere, the conflict further stratified Irish nationalist politics. The IPP was hostile, Sinn Fein silent and many advanced nationalists sympathetic.¹³⁴⁶

The formation of the IVF did not immediately meet with IPP approval and was an unwelcome distraction.¹³⁴⁷ As one party member wrote in December 1913, 'Redmond does not like this thing, neither does Devlin, but they are loath to move at present... Dillon is much more against it.'¹³⁴⁸ Short of restraining their followers from engaging in the movement, however, the party leadership opted to adopt a wait and see approach. McCluskey delineates three phases in the IVF's subsequent development. The first, which lasted until March 1914 and reaped 14,000 members, constituted a lower-class, autonomous and advanced nationalist mobilisation.¹³⁴⁹ In Tyrone the IRB was able to use their pre-existing network to forward the movement. Hibernians played a part, advanced nationalists like Arthur McElvogue using their membership in the Order to help them get cells off the ground. In Donegal, meantime, the IVF was said to have sprung from the AOH, albeit with local Republican cooperation.¹³⁵⁰ Elsewhere, in Derry, Fermanagh and Monaghan, a directive by Devlin prohibiting drilling under pain of expulsion seems to have taken effect.¹³⁵¹ In areas outside IRB influence, companies were nonetheless formed

¹³⁴⁴Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, p. 156.

¹³⁴⁵Townshend, *Ireland*, p. 61.

¹³⁴⁶Emmet O'Connor, *A Labour History of Ireland, 1824-2000* (Dublin, 2011), p. 93. See also James McConnell, 'The Irish Parliamentary Party, industrial relations, and the 1913 lockout', *Saothar*, 28 (2003), pp 25-36.

¹³⁴⁷Colin Reid, 'The Irish Party and the Volunteers: Politics and the Home Rule Army, 1913-1916' in Dhaibheid and Reid (eds) *From Parnell to Paisley*, p. 38.

¹³⁴⁸Muldoon to Horgan, 16 Dec. 1913, quoted in John J. Horgan, *Parnell to Pearse: Some Recollections and Reflections* (Dublin, 2009), p. 229.

¹³⁴⁹McCluskey, *Tyrone*, pp 107-9. McCluskey talks about strands of public opinion in his subsequent work, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, though phases seems more apt. See McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 139.

¹³⁵⁰CO904/93, June 1914. In January 1914 Donegal's County Inspector reported on how in the western portion of the county, where the AOH was strongest, there was talk of organising an Irish Volunteer Corps. A branch was later formed at a meeting under the auspices of the AOH, at Burtonport, Letterkenny. CO904/92, Jan. 1914.

¹³⁵¹'Derry mins', 24 Oct. 1913; McCluskey, *Tyrone*, pp 109-10; Phoenix, 'Northern Nationalists', p.14; Denis Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond* (London, 1971), pp 315-18.

as a result of independent, lower-class, Hibernian activism. At Newtownstewart, Tyrone, for example, one hundred nationalists, including several Hibernians, paraded ‘without leaders’.¹³⁵² In general though, AOH involvement tended to reflect local circumstances; branch growth, relative to party support. In Waterford a city battalion was established in January 1914, with Robert A. Kelly, a prominent businessman and president of a local AOH division, appointed as chairman. Kelly subsequently became a commanding officer with the rank of colonel; W.A. Jacob, another local Hib, took office as his secretary.¹³⁵³ In Boyle, Roscommon, the Volunteers were led from the outset by a party stalwart, T.J. Devine. The inaugural meeting in February was attended by local clergy, Hibernians, and Gaelic Leaguers.¹³⁵⁴ In Sligo, IVF leadership was provided by several party and AOH men, including John Jinks and Henry Monson. Early recruitment reflected the political alliance between the local Hibernians and the ITGWU.¹³⁵⁵

Into 1914 and while the IVF’s growth was limited, its position outside the ‘sphere of parliamentary influence’ represented ‘a grave threat’ to Irish Party control and undermined Redmond’s efforts to strike an accord with Ulster.¹³⁵⁶ Regardless, the Irish Party continued to reassure the population that ‘the government was firm, [an] inter-party conference would not happen, the whole bill would pass, [and] Ulster resistance would fold’.¹³⁵⁷ Nevertheless, in January, Bonar Law confirmed that British inter-party talks had occurred. By early March, meanwhile, the government was offering and Redmond was agreeing to ‘temporary’ county-by-county exclusion for Ulster. Then, near the end of the month, the next phase in Volunteer growth was sparked by the Curragh crisis.¹³⁵⁸ After the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in Ireland, Sir Arthur Paget, returned from briefings in London, he informed seven of his most senior officers that the government, fearing a UVF action to seize arms from military bases in Ulster, contemplated increasing the military presence there. In a radical departure from normal military procedure, those officers living in or native to Ulster were permitted to withdraw for the duration of any operations. Others who did not wish to participate on conscientious grounds were to be

¹³⁵²CO904/92, Feb. 1914.

¹³⁵³McCarthy, *Waterford*, p. 24.

¹³⁵⁴Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 183-7.

¹³⁵⁵Farry, *Sligo*, p. 18.

¹³⁵⁶Reid, ‘The Irish Party and the Volunteers’, p. 39.

¹³⁵⁷Wheatley, ‘Right Behind Mr. Redmond’, pp 260-8.

¹³⁵⁸Initially called the Curragh “mutiny” and then the Curragh “incident”, this event has been reappraised in recent years. Though not technically a “mutiny” – for no orders were actually given – the circumstances are certainly significant enough to warrant the term “crisis” over the rather insipid “incident”.

dismissed from the army. Though ostensibly only a troop movement, one of Paget's officers, Brigadier General Sir Hubert Gough, feared that he would be called upon to engage in combat with the UVF. Following some consultation with the upper ranks of the 5th Royal Lancers - part of Gough's 3rd Cavalry Brigade stationed at Curragh, Co. Kildare – he informed Paget that the vast majority of his officers would opt to resign rather than carry out operations in Ulster. When Gough and several of his officers were subsequently summoned to the War Office events took an even more ominous turn. Instead of receiving a reprimand for their actions, Gough and his party managed to secure written assurances signed by the Secretary of State for War along with several others, that the officers would not be sent on military operations into Ulster.¹³⁵⁹

In the wake of the Curragh incident, nationalist faith in the British government's ability to enforce Home Rule, evaporated. The County Inspector for Roscommon noted how members of the AOH received secret instructions 'to hold themselves in readiness to act together should any unforeseen contingency arise in connection with the Home Rule Bill'. It was also expected that, 'men and money' would be forthcoming in the event of any 'serious disturbance arising in Ulster'.¹³⁶⁰ Unionists on the other hand, not without cause, deduced that the military was on their side and would not willingly take up arms against them. Secure in this knowledge, the UVF engaged in a massive importation of arms and ammunition at Larne and other places between the 24-25 April. Such flagrant disregard for law and order capped the second episode of Volunteer development, many moderate nationalists joining up in reaction to this and the Curragh incident.¹³⁶¹ Indeed, even elements of the AOH were becoming restless. From mid-April an AOH memorandum in favour of the Volunteers was circulated in Longford.¹³⁶² Louth's County Inspector noted a change following the gun-running: 'The BOE have for some time been opposed to the Irish Volunteers movement. Now however...they find that the Ulster movement has been allowed to go too far and that a counter move is necessary'.¹³⁶³ At Armagh, meantime, rumours abounded of division presidents giving permission for covert drilling in Hibernian halls.¹³⁶⁴

¹³⁵⁹Conor Mulvagh, *The Curragh Crisis, March 1914*, in RTE, *Century Ireland* <https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/the-curragh-crisis-march-1914> (27 Dec. 2018) The document which Gough took away was later disavowed by Asquith. The Secretary of State for War and the other signees resigned soon after.

¹³⁶⁰CO904/92, Mar. 1914.

¹³⁶¹McCluskey, *Tyrone*, pp 107-9.

¹³⁶²CO904/93, Apr. 1914.

¹³⁶³*Ibid.*, Apr. 1914.

¹³⁶⁴CO904/93, Apr. 1914.

The final phase of IVF expansion, the entry of Devlinites, occurred in May 1914: ‘The genuinely popular nature of the movement, the prevalent hostility to the UVF and the open association of local party supporters forced Devlin to lend his support lest he lose followers’.¹³⁶⁵ On the 27 April Nugent issued a circular to divisions in Roscommon, calling on the members to make themselves available for Volunteer drill.¹³⁶⁶ Twelve days later, organisers were instructed to begin drafting Hibernians into the movement: ‘If the Volunteers have already been organised in your Parish or District you should cooperate in the movement. If on the other hand no company exists you should at once establish a company’.¹³⁶⁷ David Fitzpatrick has talked about how, with this action, the IPP’s vampiric urge at last prevailed.¹³⁶⁸ Certainly, the rate of IVF branch formation after the 9 May spoke to a massive influx of party supporters. Even before then, in April, Tom Kettle had written to Stephen Gwynn about the danger of ‘their swamping the ship’.¹³⁶⁹ This dilution of the IVF’s composition aside, Wheatley has convincingly argued for a similarly deleterious effect on the IPP: ‘The party “vampire” did not feast on the blood of the Volunteers but rather its largest affiliate, the UIL began to appear decidedly anaemic’.¹³⁷⁰ Redmond’s termination of the Home Rule fund early in 1914 removed a key prop of League activity. The IVF, meanwhile, with its large amount of drilling and meetings ‘pushed the more humdrum work of the UIL out of the limelight, clashing with the routine of branch committees and resolution passing’.¹³⁷¹ While the AOH also seems to have experienced a dip in activity – albeit marginal by League standards – more perplexing was the way in which the IVF allowed Hibernians to radicalise ‘the doctrines of the constitutional agenda while presuming to remain within its bounds’.¹³⁷²

¹³⁶⁵McCluskey, *Tyrone*, pp 105-7.

¹³⁶⁶CO904/93, Apr. 1914.

¹³⁶⁷J.D. Nugent’s ‘Private and Confidential’ circular, MS 13,069/42/3, NLI, Ceannt Papers.

¹³⁶⁸Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp 102-5.

¹³⁶⁹Kettle to Gwynn, 15 April, quoted in John B. Lyons, *The Enigma of Tom Kettle: Irish Patriot, Essayist, Poet, British Soldier, 1880-1916* (Dublin, 1983), p. 243.

¹³⁷⁰Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 260.

¹³⁷¹Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 192-5.

¹³⁷²Matthew Kelly, ‘The Irish volunteers: a Machiavellian moment?’ in D. G. Boyce and Alan O’Day (eds) *The Ulster Crisis: 1885-1921* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 65.

The First World War

By the eve of the First World War, Redmond's position on Home Rule, along with that of the rest of the IPP's leadership, had radically changed. The shift had begun in February with the acceptance of temporary exclusion by county option. This decision did not sit well with local supporters. Although obliged to concede the point, they were adamant that no further concessions should be made. Temporary exclusion eventually became a reality after the Amending Bill of June 1914, turning Home Rule's passage only the previous month, into something of a hollow victory. The IPP's decision to publicly support the Volunteer movement was thus a timely one. The movement could be held up as a counter to the UVF and a deterrent to further compromises. By this juncture, however, the relationship between Party and base, even the nature of grassroots support, had experienced 'a discernible shift in emphasis'. The popular illusion of 'a great democratic cause' had been smashed. The development of the exclusion debate showcased how, in spite of electoral support, the IPP was not 'democratically accountable', even to its constituency executives. Any dissent was silenced, the Party justifying its dictation on the basis of leadership capabilities and the need for unity. Still 'The unaccountable and secretive course of executive decision-making disenfranchised normally moderate supporters, who, seeking an outlet for their concerns gravitated to the Irish Volunteers'.¹³⁷³ This change in popular mood saw the party abandon its opposition of the IVF in May, and actually seize control of the movement in June.¹³⁷⁴

At the same time, the Volunteer movement was becoming more bellicose, giving weight to John Dillon's remark that it - and now almost certainly the IPP as well - was 'playing with fire'.¹³⁷⁵ Reports on 'The State of Ireland' in the summer of 1914 revealed relatively crime-free localities. In the words of one Captain, however, the expanding Volunteer companies had 'no responsible leaders' and if armed, were likely to be 'a menace to the public peace'.¹³⁷⁶ The rhetoric employed to describe the role of the IVF had moved on from a political role, even a locally-defensive one, to Ireland's army 'the purpose of which was either to ensure the arrival of Home Rule or to enforce it after it

¹³⁷³McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 120-3.

¹³⁷⁴Redmond issued a press statement on the 9 June explaining that the IPP must control the Volunteers otherwise it would launch a rival movement.

¹³⁷⁵John Dillon to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, 21 May 1914, Vol. 6, Box 16, West Sussex Record Office, Blunt Papers.

¹³⁷⁶CO904/227, Report of Captain Owen, Roscommon District ('The State of Ireland').

had been passed'.¹³⁷⁷ More and more there was talk of resorting to force. At Sligo the AOH co-regional director John Keaveny expressed his hope that Edward Carson would not be shot by 'Nationalist troops' and his bride to be, Ruby Frewen, made a widow.¹³⁷⁸ Keaveny's fellow director, Henry Monson, talked about how the 'flimsy dam' of constitutional agitation restrained a 'mighty pent up volume of water'.¹³⁷⁹ Both constitutional and advanced nationalists within the IVF sought to arm the movement. In the north Devlin ostensibly indulged his followers and a large number of Italian rifles were imported. These 'gas-pipes', as they were nicknamed, however, 'constituted a sop to militant supporters, with the added benefit that they could not do any damage'.¹³⁸⁰ As the Unionist press remarked, the guns 'are utterly useless...it is impossible to obtain ammunition for them, the calibre and type being obsolete'.¹³⁸¹ Devlin's 'gas-pipes' were simply one part of a wider strategy of de-escalation, the Belfast Fenian and Volunteer Seamus Dobbyn noting how 'training practices developed into mere parades, to open air meetings, where we were addressed by Joe Devlin and some MPs'.¹³⁸²

On the 26 July 1914, at Howth harbour in Dublin, several advanced nationalists, including Bulmer Hobson and Thomas MacDonagh, oversaw the unloading of arms from a private yacht during daylight hours. When the Dublin Metropolitan police and the local British army regiment, King's Own Scottish Borderers, were informed and duly turned out, a riot ensued.¹³⁸³ In the commotion the culprits managed to discreetly transport the weapons and hide them nearby. At this point a crowd had gathered to heckle the frustrated authorities. As the Borderers made to return to their barracks they met the crowd at Bachelor's Walk.¹³⁸⁴ In the events that followed three people were shot and killed while thirty-eight were injured.¹³⁸⁵ The difference between the gun-running at Howth and that at Larne is striking. The former was a secret operation intended to arm the UVF; the latter, more likely a propaganda coup. It was certainly no coincidence that under Bulmer Hobson the IVF landed arms in daylight, as close to Ireland's capital as possible.¹³⁸⁶ The nature

¹³⁷⁷Wheatley, "Right Behind Mr. Redmond", p. 280.

¹³⁷⁸*Roscommon Messenger* (Hereafter *RM*), 30 May 1914.

¹³⁷⁹*Sligo Nationalist*, 18 July 1914.

¹³⁸⁰CO904/102, 'Vengeance 1916'; McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 144.

¹³⁸¹Sean S. O Ceallaigh, 'Sceilg' to Gavan Duffy, 30 March 1917, MS 5581/105, NLI. Gavan Duffy Papers.

¹³⁸²CO904/102, 'Vengeance 1916'.

¹³⁸³M. McNally, *Easter Rising 1916: Birth of the Irish Republic* (Osprey, 2007) pp 6, 13-5.

¹³⁸⁴Jackson, *Home Rule*, p. 136.

¹³⁸⁵Sean J. Connolly, *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 1999), pp 263-4.

¹³⁸⁶Jackson, *Home Rule*, p. 136.

of the weapons imported – the next generation of rifles in the Unionist case, and 19th century Mauser's in the nationalist – only confirms the notion that the guns were bought more for the attention they would garner than actual use.¹³⁸⁷ The Bachelor's Walk incident was the latest in a series of events ranging from 1912-14 which had a 'cumulative radicalising impact on nationalist opinion'. Ratcheting tensions ever higher was the notion that the British government was employing double standards.¹³⁸⁸ The leniency shown at Larne contrasted harshly with the violence which unfolded at Bachelor's Walk.

When the First World War broke out at the end of July 1914 'it temporarily defused the Ulster situation...put Home Rule on ice [and] altered the conditions of military crisis in Ireland at a stroke'.¹³⁸⁹ Redmond responded by proposing that the Irish Volunteers serve alongside the UVF in the defence of Ireland, thereby enabling resident British army units to assist overseas.¹³⁹⁰ Support for the war effort can be interpreted as a dangling carrot, the price, royal assent for the Home Rule Bill. Outflanking Carson had its merits as well, while amongst the Irish in general, some traction was gained by evoking 'the spirit and role of the Volunteers of 1778'.¹³⁹¹ The new-found mood of Irish unity, sparked by these developments, had faded by the end of August, however. 'Now the country is seething with suspicion and disappointment' wrote John Dillon, 'You can see how the Sinn Feiners are prospering on the ground. Our friends are disheartened and bewildered'.¹³⁹² Government shilly-shallying - ostensibly the spurning of Redmond's offer, and the deferral of royal assent for the Home Rule Bill - alongside the continued obstructionist efforts of Unionists, and a lack of official support for the Volunteers; all seem to have played a part.¹³⁹³ Home Rule's passage on the 18 September 1914 did little to mollify the Irish population either, being 'doubly fettered by an amending bill and suspension until the end of the war'¹³⁹⁴, and resulting only in 'patchy manifestations of popular support'.¹³⁹⁵ The act's passage also 'fired the starting gun for an open, political fight between the IPP and its "factionist" and "Sinn Feiner" opponents'.¹³⁹⁶

¹³⁸⁷Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement* (London, 2002), p. 277.

¹³⁸⁸McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 123.

¹³⁸⁹Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 471.

¹³⁹⁰Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 202.

¹³⁹¹Oliver MacDonagh, *States of Mind: A Study of Anglo-Irish Conflict 1780-1980* (London, 1991), pp 11-2.

¹³⁹²John Dillon to T.P. O'Connor, 5 Sep. 1914, Dillon Papers, TCD, MS 6740.

¹³⁹³Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 203.

¹³⁹⁴McCluskey, *Tyrone*, pp 115-6.

¹³⁹⁵Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 206.

¹³⁹⁶Wheatley, "Right Behind Mr. Redmond". p. 297.

Only two days later, on the 20 September 1914, at a meeting of Volunteers in Woodenbridge, County Wicklow, Redmond prompted a split in the IVF – now 180,000 strong - when he committed the organisation to the war effort - to ‘wherever the firing line extend[ed]’.¹³⁹⁷ According to J.J. Lee, participation in the war aimed to secure operation of Home Rule, woo British opinion ahead of a likely 1915 general election, unite nationalists and unionists in shared wartime comradeship, and secure better arms and training for the Volunteers. In contrast, Irish neutrality would play into the hands of the unionists, make partition certain, and forfeit British support.¹³⁹⁸ Service to king and empire was nevertheless too much for Eoin MacNeill and many other separatists to bear. About 11,000 broke away, retaining the original title of the Irish Volunteers. The great majority, 170,000, remained with the IPP, becoming instead the National Volunteers (NV).¹³⁹⁹ In the weeks that followed, the degree of coordination and organisation shown by the Party suggests that the split was not just anticipated, but forced. Almost all of the party’s local leadership presided at a succession of committee meetings, demonstrations, parades and rallies, declaring support for Redmond and his policies. Volunteer companies were required to declare their allegiance in the meantime, while those loyal had their committees restructured, and objectors relegated to the lower ranks.¹⁴⁰⁰

During December 1914, the *Hibernian Journal* noted how the Volunteer movement had received staunch support from the AOH: ‘all over the country thousands of our members have enrolled themselves in the ranks of Ireland’s fighting force’.¹⁴⁰¹ From time to time Hibernian halls became host to miniature shooting ranges and were often lent out for drill practice.¹⁴⁰² Such a rosy picture belied a grave reality, however. Between mid-September and early November, Volunteer membership dropped from a national high of 191,000 to 145,000.¹⁴⁰³ Thereafter, deterioration was constant and by the end of the year the organisation was virtually in extremis. Though concurrent, not all of the movement’s decline can be pinned on the party takeover. Peaks in Volunteer activity in counties

¹³⁹⁷Redmond seems to have first flirted with the idea in parliament as early as the 15 September. It was confirmed in a Manifesto published the following day, though the thought only became action after Home Rule was finally passed. See *Western Nationalist*, 19 Sept. 1914; Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War One and Partition* (Psychology Press, 1998), p. 86.

¹³⁹⁸Joseph Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (New York, 2006), p. 21.

¹³⁹⁹Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast, 2007), p. 450.

¹⁴⁰⁰Wheatley, ‘‘Right Behind Mr. Redmond’’. p. 297.

¹⁴⁰¹*HJ*, Dec. 1914.

¹⁴⁰²*HJ*, Dec. 1914.

¹⁴⁰³David Fitzpatrick, ‘Militarism in Ireland’, in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffrey (eds) *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997) p.386; *CO904/95*, Nov. 1914.

Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon and Sligo during August, along with slumps in September and November, and marginal recovery in October, put paid to such a notion. In fact, the large number of meetings and parades necessitated by the takeover may have temporarily boosted Volunteer activity. On the other side, this event may even have increased dissension and driven out some of the movement's earliest activists, thereby weakening the Volunteers in late September and through to early October. Outside the party takeover, several other explanations have been proffered, including 'The lack of arms, boredom, inadequate drilling facilities, shorter evenings, internal dissension and the lack of a *raison d'être* after the passing of Home Rule'.¹⁴⁰⁴

There is evidence as well, to suggest that the Volunteers began to experience a decline as early as August 1914. That month the Inspector General reported 'a falling off in drilling... which is attributed partly to the fact that a great number of the drill instructors had to rejoin their regiments in mobilisation'.¹⁴⁰⁵ Because of their competence in drill instruction, army reservists formed the backbone for many companies. Over 7,000 of them, about 40 per cent of the total called up, belonged to the Irish Volunteers.¹⁴⁰⁶ If departing reservists played a part in the decline of the movement, however, the impact must have been delayed. More important and likely the primary reason for Volunteer decay was a fear of enlistment. The Irish population's advocacy of the conflict should not be confused with a willingness on their part to participate. Redmond had too, only talked about deploying the Volunteers for the purpose of home defence, at least initially. Any apprehension in August soon turned to panic by September when the movement was officially committed to the war effort. A rumour abounded that drilled men could be compulsorily enlisted in the Army, and many feared that publicly taking part in the Volunteers would increase their chances of being recruited.¹⁴⁰⁷ In Tyrone, members of the IPP refused to cooperate in the war until Home Rule had become a reality.¹⁴⁰⁸ Elsewhere, the party tried to take the sting out of Redmond's pronouncements by downplaying recruitment and stressing discipline, loyalty and unity.¹⁴⁰⁹

Enlistment rates – though abysmal throughout Ireland until the end of 1914 – were, nonetheless, only one feature of an ever-worsening situation. Outside the Volunteers, that

¹⁴⁰⁴Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 110.

¹⁴⁰⁵CO904/94, Aug. 1914.

¹⁴⁰⁶Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 110.

¹⁴⁰⁷CO904/94, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴⁰⁸McCluskey, *Tyrone*, p. 115.

¹⁴⁰⁹Wheatley, "Right Behind Mr. Redmond", p. 306.

other party affiliate, the UIL, was on a downward spiral. So consumed in the business of attending and controlling Volunteer gatherings and rallies were local party leaders, that the proportion of UIL meetings in the last quarter of 1914 dropped by seventy-five per cent, compared to the first quarter of the year. League activity was further hampered by a more general desiccation of ‘local, day-to-day political activity’, the fear of recruitment occasioning a withdrawal from public activity above and beyond simply the Volunteers.¹⁴¹⁰ Keeping the Irish party at least somewhat vigorous, meanwhile, was the AOH. During November 1914 the Inspector General reported on how both the Order and the UIL had ‘merely a nominal existence’. Such a view failed to take the full range of Hibernian activity into account.¹⁴¹¹ Though ‘quiet in party political terms, [the Order] was bolstered by its social functions, halls, sports, music and national insurance role, [and] still meeting locally and sending reports of its meetings to the press’.¹⁴¹² One redeeming aspect did not make for a picture of health, however. By the end of 1914 the tables were turning. In the first five months of the war the IPP’s primary auxiliary not only experienced a sizeable deterioration, but Redmond’s latest acquisition, the Volunteers, began to crumble too. Despite being similarly mired in a wartime malaise, Sinn Fein had increased in number, and could now provide an alternative, national political centre, ‘a focus of nationalist, Anglophobic opposition to the IPP’s central, wartime policies’.¹⁴¹³

Hibernian Home Rule

When the Home Rule bill was read out for the third time in parliament, in June 1914, the *Hibernian Journal* responded with triumph. ‘The Union is Dead!’ and ‘Nothing short of a miracle can now prevent the enactment of Home Rule within the next few weeks’. Ireland was said to have experienced a Joy-Day. Not only was a responsive chord ‘struck in the heart of every Irishman worthy of the name’ but southern and western Ireland joined together in exhibiting ‘thankfulness and gladness in public demonstrations of various kinds’. Reflecting on the imminence of Home Rule the *Journal* now anticipated that Unionists would countenance an offer of friendship and goodwill: ‘Why should they not

¹⁴¹⁰Wheatley, ‘Right Behind Mr. Redmond’, pp 308-9.

¹⁴¹¹CO904/95, Nov. 1914.

¹⁴¹²Wheatley, ‘Right Behind Mr. Redmond’, p. 310.

¹⁴¹³Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 212-23.

accept the inevitable and make common cause with their fellow countrymen in working for a regenerated Ireland'.¹⁴¹⁴ Months later, in September 1914, further rapture was recorded. Home Rule had received royal assent, and within a week or two it would become 'the law of the realm...[and] the long-cherished hope will have been realised'. According to Nugent, it was because they were the wrong type that freedom had been denied for so long. If we were English Catholics and Irish Protestants we could have risen 'to the highest positions in the government of the country' and would have been recognised for our 'worth' and rewarded with 'trust and confidence'. As Irish Catholics, however, they had refused to become a province of England and clung to their religion. Though their suffering had been great – 'We have endured the prison cell and worn the felon's cap, while the bolt of the scaffold has rung in our ears' - Nugent now held out the possibility of the promised land,

The wrongs of centuries will be speedily swept away...The fertile fields of Ireland will...support a growing and prosperous peasantry...the old land of Saints and Scholars, freed from the restraint of foreign rule, will have fair opportunity to develop along her own lines. Amid her own fertile fields, smiling hills and rushing rivers, a home will be found for all her sons, and happiness and prosperity shall make of our land what God destined it to be – the purest, the happiest, and the noblest spot on earth.¹⁴¹⁵

In the jubilation surrounding Home Rule's achievement, the IPP was inevitably singled out for much praise. 'In sunshine and in rain' the *Hibernian Journal* proclaimed, 'through good report and ill, the unpurchaseable Irish Party have battled resolutely and unselfishly for Ireland's Nationhood'.¹⁴¹⁶ As its foremost press organ, however, the majority of the acclaim was inevitably reserved for the AOH. From the summer of 1912, Hibernianism in the north of Ireland was forced to follow a distinctly quietist policy. Recognising the tense and volatile atmosphere in Ulster following events at Castledawson, and not wishing to jeopardise Home Rule's chances, Devlin opted to cancel all demonstrations there.¹⁴¹⁷ As Home Rule passed through parliament the Ulster membership continued to display considerable restraint, the *Journal* commenting on how they refrained from giving the slightest cause for offence or provocation to their Unionist opponents.¹⁴¹⁸

¹⁴¹⁴*HJ*, June 1914.

¹⁴¹⁵*HJ*, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴¹⁶*Ibid*, June 1914.

¹⁴¹⁷*HJ*, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴¹⁸*Ibid*, June 1914.

This almost deferential mentality was nevertheless at odds with the Order's traditional role, as 'One of the chief militant forces in the army of Irish liberation'.¹⁴¹⁹ Indeed, much of the Hibernian contribution to Home Rule was predicated not just on the body's support 'for the cause which received the adherence of the majority of the Irish people', but its maintenance of unity within the National Organisation.¹⁴²⁰ As John Dillon remarked in September 1914 'The victory to-day is due to the maintenance of unity of the Irish Party...and there are few forces which the maintenance of that unity owes more to [than the AOH]'.¹⁴²¹ From one perspective, keeping the Irish Party whole was an innocent affair. The AOH was praised for its many achievements over the past decade. Alongside its loyalty and discipline, Hibernian halls were celebrated as centres of social life and intellectual activity, giving strength to Devlin and Nugent's claim that the Order was an anti-emigration society.¹⁴²² At the other end of the scale was dissension. Pacifying some of nationalism's younger, ardent spirits was one thing¹⁴²³, but Hibernianism also countered factionalism, no matter in what guise it raised its head.¹⁴²⁴ It was precisely this militancy in conjunction with its sectarian nature, which saw the Order subjected to so much vitriol. With Home Rule now all but achieved, however, the *Hibernian Journal* reckoned the AOH vindicated in its actions.¹⁴²⁵

With the Order's many contributions towards Home Rule enumerated, talk next turned to what the society's role would be under self-government. Some people believed that Ireland's transformation would make the organisation's existence unnecessary. As one contributor to the *Hibernian Journal* noted, however, 'the raison d'être of the Order is a fight for religious freedom. Legislative freedom does not necessarily imply the former'. The case of Belgium was highlighted. Though the country enjoyed local autonomy from 1830 onwards, there was much strife before the resident Clerical Party managed to gain control of government. Indeed, the AOH made no bones about its conservatism, 'We want a practical Catholic Ireland, which can stand the assaults of modern free thinking, materialism and immoral literature'.¹⁴²⁶ Elsewhere, the implications of Home Rule, that there was a need for change, was acknowledged, '[The Order] while always maintaining

¹⁴¹⁹*HJ*, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴²⁰*Ibid*, Feb. 1915.

¹⁴²¹*HJ*, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴²²*Ibid*, Feb. 1915.

¹⁴²³*HJ*, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴²⁴*Ibid*, Feb. 1915.

¹⁴²⁵*HJ*, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴²⁶*Ibid*, Apr. 1915.

its position as a democratic Catholic organisation, will in some respects have to review its outlook, slightly modify its constitution, and take a new line on many matters'. One subject which saw immediate examination was the Order's refusal of membership to members of the army, navy and police. The arrival of Home Rule saw a general request for the removal of this debarring clause. As a result, the National Board decided that in future, every candidate seeking admission would be considered only on their merits as a Catholic and an Irishman.¹⁴²⁷

Unsurprisingly, the AOH was unwavering in its desire to be a part of life under Home Rule: 'With self-govt attained the real work of our organisation in helping to build up a prosperous and united Ireland will only be beginning. In the shaping and fashioning of the new Ireland of the future Hibernians can and will play a great part'. In order to ensure continued influence, the AOH deduced that it must exercise a potent force 'in the moulding and forming of public opinion'. With so many of Ireland's problems requiring solutions the Order envisaged its divisions as rallying grounds. The Irish people's fitness for self-government was not in question. The way in which Irishmen rose to the highest positions in other autonomous dominions, especially America, attested to this. So that the Irish populace might be prepared, however, - for all the new-found duties and responsibilities which Home Rule would thrust upon them - some training was required. Also relevant was the concept that the government of a country reflected the minds and opinions of the majority of the electorate. The *Hibernian Journal* concluded: 'With the idea of informing our people, stimulating healthy discussion...and thus creating a public opinion...our divisions all over the country should...form themselves into literary and debating societies, and by papers, addresses, and debates keep themselves fully in touch with public matters'.¹⁴²⁸

In December 1914, the *Journal* published a paper written and delivered by a prominent Hibernian, at a meeting of division 100, Dublin. In his essay the author considered some of the 'earlier matters' that a 'restored Irish Parliament' might take in hand. Prior to his wider discussion, however, the author affirmed not just his right but that of the AOH as a whole, to assist 'firstly in ordering the course of legislation, and secondly...in helping to steady and form public opinion on sane and business-like lines'. First amongst his points was the notion that the Irish public harboured an abnormal

¹⁴²⁷*HJ*, Dec. 1914. The prominent role which ex-army men and police took in furthering the National Volunteer Movement seems also to have prompted the move. *HJ*, Dec. 1914.

¹⁴²⁸*Ibid*, Sept. 1914.

attitude to institutions of government. This was the result of ‘periods of governmental spoon-feeding’, along with bouts of ‘fierce coercion’, during which the entire executive ‘was entirely divorced from all control of or sympathy with Irish public opinion’. Ireland’s economic position was another important facet. Owing to the meagre financial provisions in the Home Rule Bill, the author recommended ‘the strictest economies in administration’. In light of both factors, a general overhaul of every Irish government department was also called for. New appointments would be made based on competition and not nominations as hitherto. Such an action hoped to dispel Unionist fears of religious inequality. Education was touched on as well, with a new emphasis on the practical and not ‘faddish subjects’ offering no assistance in securing a livelihood. In agriculture, legislation encouraging tillage farming and the reduction of grazing was advised.¹⁴²⁹

Outside the reproduction of papers by members, the *Hibernian Journal* itself waxed lyrical on the subject of life after Home Rule. In the September 1914 edition of the organ a number of issues were highlighted ‘which will require immediate and close consideration’. Alongside agricultural and industrial development, the plight of the workers was considered – ‘particularly the problems of unemployment, a living wage, and the right to work’. Social reform was also scrutinised, the *Journal* keen to emphasise how the Ladies’ Auxiliary could do much useful work ‘[in] preparing the ground for reform in many directions’.¹⁴³⁰ It was not until February 1915, however, that the AOH actually set forth a programme for managing the country.¹⁴³¹ Politically, the AOH admitted that it would push for national freedom even if that desire ceased to exist amongst the people of Ireland. Beyond that object, as a national and not a political party, they would not dictate. Loyalty to the party which commanded the support of the majority of the populace would continue. The only exception would be any ‘avowedly anti-Catholic or anti-Democratic Party’ which the Order would naturally resist. With regard to an international policy, the AOH considered itself a democratic organisation and sought to propound political and religious freedom for all nations.¹⁴³² Closer to home, in Britain, the Order contemplated the future of their Irish brethren after Home Rule, and three options were duly highlighted: repatriation, absorption and a missionary effort.¹⁴³³

¹⁴²⁹*HJ*, Dec. 1914.

¹⁴³⁰*HJ*, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴³¹Three of that programme’s facets - the social, economic and educational – have been variously discussed in previous chapters, and so here I examine the political and international aspects alone.

¹⁴³²*HJ*, Oct. 1915.

¹⁴³³*Ibid*, Apr. 1915. See also, *HJ*, Sept. 1915.

Recruitment and attitudes to the war

Though much of the AOH's designs for Ireland's future depended on the outcome of the war, the *Hibernian Journal* was quite circumspect in its appraisal of the conflict. During September 1914 for instance, explicit support for England was eschewed; the righteousness of the Allied position emphasised instead. A lack of sympathy for England in its prosecution of previous wars was attributed to Ireland's 'position of vassalage'. In other countries such as Australia, South Africa, and Canada, Irishmen were said to be 'perfectly loyal' because they enjoyed all the 'privileges of self-government'. Now that the Act of Union had been undone, Ireland was a nation again. This did not mean, however, that the Irish populace would automatically support England, only that any war in which the country was engaged in 'would be judged...on the merits and on the merits alone'. To that end, Belgium was extended sympathy, and Germany, - as the violator of that 'gallant little' country's neutrality - disapproval. Descriptions, meantime, of how German marauders took a fiendish delight in sacrilegiously destroying religious objects played upon the sensibilities of the *Journal's* Catholic readership. While German propaganda was also considered, the greatest impetus was reserved for speculation surrounding Irish life under German rule. Militarism, heavy taxation and the suppression of Irish culture, all lead to one conclusion '[German] domination would be worse than that of England ever was'.¹⁴³⁴

McCluskey has identified two positions amongst the Irish population which shaped attitudes to the war: those for the English connection and those against. He does not believe, however, that a breakdown of the numbers which gravitated to these ideological opposites fully accounts for local nationalist perceptions of the war. Not all individuals conformed to these two political directives. Rather 'a myriad of conflicting and complementary economic, social and political considerations affected individual and group mentalities'. A significant number of local nationalists rejected either viewpoint and 'tailored their position to a conscious appreciation of unfolding events'.¹⁴³⁵ As indicated above, though clearly advocating continued loyalty to England, the *Hibernian Journal* empathised with and attempted to treat with this "mental neutrality", 'which characterised much of nationalist Ireland during the early part of the war'.¹⁴³⁶ Because

¹⁴³⁴*HJ*, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴³⁵McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 145-6.

¹⁴³⁶McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 145-7.

the passage of Home Rule depended on purely nominal support for the Allies, however, the *Journal's* appeals fell on deaf ears. More still, the scarcity of recruits in the last months of 1914 suggests that many Home Rule MPs actually shared in the rest of nationalist Ireland's neutrality.¹⁴³⁷ Although active participation, especially enlistment, conflicted with the interests of a majority of the Irish population 'an open rejection of the Party position, through engagement in republican politics, appeared equally unappealing at this point'.¹⁴³⁸ Nevertheless, while the *Hibernian Journal* might satisfy itself in late 1914 with talk of how 'The conscript has proved himself no match for the voluntary soldiers', the possibility that low recruitment might continue only increased the risk of conscription and so the upsetting of this delicate equilibrium.¹⁴³⁹

Until early 1916 with the implementation of conscription in Great Britain, Irish recruitment patterns matched those of the United Kingdom, though at a much lower rate and certainly well under Ireland's portion of the British population. Irish recruitment like that in the UK also peaked in September 1914 and then sharply declined. Between the outbreak of war until the middle of October 1916 over 130,000 men enlisted in Ireland. Recruitment in the country was primarily an urban affair with almost 40,000 recruits hailing from Belfast, over 21,000 from Dublin and another 8000 from Cork.¹⁴⁴⁰ During almost the same period – until January 1916 – Donegal, the Hibernian heartland contributed 1,032 recruits or 0.6 per cent of the total. Figures for Tyrone, Fermanagh and Derry city, though better, did not rise above 3 per cent.¹⁴⁴¹ Devlin's influence was almost certainly a factor in Belfast, however, where the Catholic population not only matched the city's Protestants for recruits but were four times as likely to enlist as Catholics in other parts of Ulster.¹⁴⁴² As for the IVF and the UVF, between the war's start and April 1916 both fraternities provided nearly 60,000 recruits at an almost equal split. Considering a combined total membership in July 1914 of 280,000, neither group's members 'were exactly rushing to the colours'. UVF recruitment was the superior,

¹⁴³⁷James McConnel, 'Recruiting Sergeants for John Bull? Irish Nationalist MPs and Enlistment during the Early Months of the Great War', *War in History*, 14:4 (2007), p. 409.

¹⁴³⁸McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 149-50.

¹⁴³⁹*HJ*, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴⁴⁰Jackson, *The Oxford Handbook*, p. 608.

¹⁴⁴¹'Estimate of the number of recruits who have joined the army', 4 Aug. 1914-15, Jan 1916, MS 26,191, NLI, Brennan papers.

¹⁴⁴²McCluskey, *Tyrone*, p. 121.

however, at 30 per cent of its 100,000 members. Though 180,000 strong at the beginning of the war, the NV could only boast 16 per cent by comparison.¹⁴⁴³

Into 1915 a large number of factors affected enlistment rates and attitudes to the war. Any hope that the conflict would end soon had evaporated by this stage. Casualties reported in many of Ireland's newspapers soared. Stories of serving soldiers and tributes to the dead contrasted with a lack of success. The western front was at an impasse and defeat was in the air. Taxes were increased by way of half-yearly budgets and imposed on both commodities - such as cider, cocoa and coffee - and entertainments, including cinemas, football matches, and theatres.¹⁴⁴⁴ Emigration from Ireland more than halved during the first nine months of 1915 compared to the same period in 1914.¹⁴⁴⁵ Nationalist apathy also continued to dominate. In the five counties commentators of all backgrounds commented on the lack of political activity throughout 1915.¹⁴⁴⁶ In January, the defeat of the party's nominee for King's County prompted renewed efforts to reorganise the UIL, the Inspector General noting a desire 'to retain it as an effective association until HR is finally settled'.¹⁴⁴⁷ Professional organisers were re-employed. MPs did tours. Branch committees were reformed, and annual meetings organised. By the middle of the year county conventions were also held at Donegal, Down and several other counties.¹⁴⁴⁸ The result of these efforts was a partial, if superficial recovery in 1915 and early 1916. Circumstances remained unfavourable for the UIL, however. Agrarian disputes were rare, there were no wartime local elections and the Home Rule fund was closed.¹⁴⁴⁹

In Connaught and Leinster, meanwhile, the AOH continued to display relative vigour. New divisions were established in South and West Roscommon. The Order's status as an approved insurance society kept it busy, and social events continued. Indeed, an analysis of press reports within the five counties suggests that Hibernian activity had by early

¹⁴⁴³Timothy Bowman, 'Ireland and the First World War' in Alvin Jackson (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History* (Oxford, 2017), p. 607.

¹⁴⁴⁴Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 228.

¹⁴⁴⁵*RM*, 16 Oct. 1915. The number of those leaving only spiked during October 1915 because of increasing speculation that the government would bring the Militia Ballot Act into operation. This piece of legislation, dating from 1882, had the power to reintroduce compulsory 'balloting' for recruits. The scare story, that the act would see a revival - promoted by Sinn Fein in Dublin - was supported by confusion over a speech made by Redmond at Waterford in October 1914. When the Irish party leader remarked that conscription would be inevitable if the Allies were defeated it was inferred that any setback in the war would trigger conscription. Wheatley, "Right Behind Mr. Redmond", p.315.

¹⁴⁴⁶*Leitrim Observer*, 20 Feb. 1915; *TLL*, 1 May 1915; *RH*, 24 Apr. 1915; CO904/96, Jan. 1915; CO904/97, Mar. 1915; CO904/98, June 1915; CO904/99, Sept. 1915; CO904/99, Feb. 1916.

¹⁴⁴⁷CO904/96, Jan. 1915.

¹⁴⁴⁸CO904/97, Aug. 1915.

¹⁴⁴⁹Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 234-5.

1915, recovered to levels the year previous. More still, the organisation was able to maintain this rate up until April 1916. That said, the AOH's position cannot detract from the general, local perception that the IPP was in a considerably weakened state, relative to the pre-war period.¹⁴⁵⁰ Wheatley is undoubtedly correct in his assertion that '[The] prolonged nature of the war, the indefinite delay to the implementation of HR and the [wartime] political truce [between the Conservatives and Liberals] all trapped the IPP into an essentially passive, reactive policy'.¹⁴⁵¹ Other than an advocacy for Irish participation in the war, only one object was pursued at this juncture, the maintenance of the organisation.¹⁴⁵² Such a sentiment was reflected in the *Journal* which rationalised away the Order's political lethargy as the result of a stiff fight ahead: 'Home Rule... is not yet beyond the possibility of danger... We need to conserve all our strength and husband our resources... We could say much, and if need be, could do much, but there are periods when the wisest and most courageous thing is to remain silent and apparently inactive'.¹⁴⁵³

Inactivity along with the Irish population's fear of conscription only served to fuel a resurgence amongst the Irish Party's advanced nationalist opponents.¹⁴⁵⁴ While the National Volunteers declined, the IVF - now synonymous with the IRB - experienced growth. Free from Redmondite influence, the Volunteers were able to assume their own identity and became more active.¹⁴⁵⁵ After August 1914, determined to prevent nationalists from enlisting in the army and in an attempt to stir up ill-feeling against England and sympathy for Germany, the IVF initiated a vigorous propaganda campaign. Anti-recruiting leaflets and placards were circulated while seditious articles appeared in press organs such as the *Irish Volunteer* and *Irish Freedom*.¹⁴⁵⁶ While these efforts had largely fizzled out by January 1915¹⁴⁵⁷, the advanced nationalists still managed to 'establish a foothold in Irish politics' and now possessed a 'greater influence' than was warranted by either their 'numbers or position'.¹⁴⁵⁸ 'At another time', the Inspector General reckoned, their 'violent attacks' on Redmond and the IPP would probably have

¹⁴⁵⁰Ibid., pp.235-6.

¹⁴⁵¹Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 232.

¹⁴⁵²Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 232.

¹⁴⁵³*HJ*, Apr. 1915. A sub-heading for an article marked "Organisation" also read, 'Maintaining the Conquests Won'. *HJ*, Apr. 1915.

¹⁴⁵⁴CO904/95, Oct. 1914.

¹⁴⁵⁵Reid, 'The Irish Party and the Volunteers', p. 51; Reid, 'The Irish Party and the Volunteers', p. 46.

¹⁴⁵⁶CO904/94, Aug. 1914; Ibid., Sept. 1914; CO904/94, Oct. 1914.

¹⁴⁵⁷CO904/96, Jan. 1915

¹⁴⁵⁸CO904/95, Oct. 1914.

attracted ‘little attention’, ‘but the war affords them an opportunity to acquire notoriety and an exaggerated influence by interfering with military recruiting’.¹⁴⁵⁹ Under these circumstances Redmond was forced to initiate a national recruiting drive in the spring of 1915. Though well attended, recruitment meetings had a minimal effect.¹⁴⁶⁰ Far more successful, as McCluskey has demonstrated, was a parallel recruiting drive conducted by the Irish Volunteers. Coordinated local activity played a part but it was principally the creation of a coalition cabinet in May 1915 – of which Edward Carson was a part but Redmond was not - and the conscription panic which it precipitated, that most stimulated growth in the organisation.¹⁴⁶¹

‘The formation of a Coalition Government has given the cue to...all the “croakers and prophets of evil”’, reported the *Hibernian Journal* in June 1915. ‘The only danger to the National cause’ continued the organ, ‘[comes not from the Coalition Government, the Unionist Party, or even the war] but from factionists masquerading under the name of Nationalists’.¹⁴⁶² While such a reading of events not only failed to consider the paradox of Redmond’s situation but the broader factors impinging on the IPP’s health, – the consequences for joining in the Coalition or refusing were both negative – there was at least some appreciation for the danger which the factionists now invariably posed. In August the Inspector General reported on the IVF’s progress, revealing new insights,

The Force bears resemblance to the old Fenian movement; but, unlike the latter, it is permitted to drill and arm its members and is not regarded as a secret society. It is therefore supported by all sections of extremists. It is probable that many, if not the majority of the members since the outbreak of war, joined...in order to shirk military service.¹⁴⁶³

This last comment did not quite suggest a volte face on the part of the Irish population so much as an unfavourable comparison to the National Volunteers. As the RIC further noted in November 1915, despite repeated claims by Party leaders that they would not submit to conscription ‘the Irish Volunteers are better organised to resist it’.¹⁴⁶⁴ As with the UIL,

¹⁴⁵⁹CO904/94, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴⁶⁰McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 150.

¹⁴⁶¹McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 150; McCluskey, *Tyrone*, p. 126. If the IPP leader joined in the coalition ‘he would alienate many supporters, undermining the Party’s theoretical independence at Westminster and its Parnellite credentials’. Refusal meanwhile, ‘relinquished the political initiative, fuelling the growing local perception that the British government would support Carson’s demand of permanent six-county partition’. McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 151.

¹⁴⁶²*HJ*, June 1915.

¹⁴⁶³CO904/97, Aug. 1915.

¹⁴⁶⁴CO904/98, Oct. 1915.

Redmond had tried to revive the National Volunteers but it continued to ‘wither on the vine’.¹⁴⁶⁵ In the, meantime, the AOH began to suffer as well, the result of factionist incursions. Richard English has characterised Fenians as ‘attitudinal revolutionaries’ willing to question deference and push behavioural boundaries.¹⁴⁶⁶ To that end, McCluskey has shown how the factionists made ‘forays into forbidden territory’ by confronting and challenging Hibernians within East Tyrone.¹⁴⁶⁷ While acknowledging that the IVF did not siphon off ‘significant numbers of constitutional defectors’¹⁴⁶⁸, McCluskey further observes how familial connections, even a shared social background – as between Ribbonmen and Fenians – resulted in the desertion of many Hibernians.¹⁴⁶⁹ In November 1915 Devlin noted how the membership in Ulster had decreased by 5,000 in two years and attributed it to the influence of Sinn Fein.¹⁴⁷⁰

If, however, the Order was beginning to hurt, the *Hibernian Journal* showed little sign. During August the paper reiterated its support for the constitutional cause by printing one of Redmond’s letters, written by him after receiving a resolution of confidence from the Dublin Corporation. In what really amounted to an entreaty, the IPP leader wrote ‘If we are to bear the great responsibility of conducting the national affairs at so difficult a time we must have the confidence of the people and reasonable freedom in determining methods of action and the proper moment to take action’. As the *Journal* saw it, the Irish people had a duty in the ‘present crisis’ to grant this ‘reasonable request’; to trust in their leader and to grant him latitude. The idea, floated by factionists, that Home Rule might be implemented ‘in the midst of a conflict such as the world has never before witnessed’ was treated as preposterous. As to the question of Ulster, ‘Mr. Redmond had made it plain that he never will consent to a settlement involving the permanent division of Ireland’.¹⁴⁷¹ In September, the Order held a very successful biennial convention, the *Journal* noting great increases in membership and Devlin’s speech at the event’s end, communicating considerable optimism: ‘We are passing through a great crisis, and we are on the threshold of a great new era for Ireland’.¹⁴⁷² Going into 1916, the AOH’s strategy, as with the rest of constitutional nationalism was very much to stay the course.

¹⁴⁶⁵McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 148.

¹⁴⁶⁶Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (London, 2004), p. 7.

¹⁴⁶⁷McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 161.

¹⁴⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁴⁶⁹McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 163.

¹⁴⁷⁰CO904/120, Nov. 1915.

¹⁴⁷¹*HJ*, Aug. 1915.

¹⁴⁷²*HJ*, Sept. 1915.

In time the war would end, Home Rule would be implemented and Ulster's exclusion would only be temporary.

The Easter Rising and exclusion

In June 1914, Bulmer Hobson convinced the provisional committee of Irish Volunteers to accept co-option by Redmond. He believed that resistance would only lead to a civil war within the movement. Afterwards, incensed and outraged by his actions, Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott confronted Hobson, the former demanding to know how much Dublin Castle was paying him. Soon after, Hobson resigned every position he held in the IRB. The triumvirate had collapsed over divergent visions of how the IRB should influence political developments in Ireland. In light of England's economic and military resources, Hobson considered a rising impossible. Clarke and MacDermott were, in contrast, driven by a great fear, that Redmond would succeed, and Ireland would become a permanent fixture within the United Kingdom. Over the next two years the two men conducted a silent coup, infiltrating the leadership positions within the Volunteers.¹⁴⁷³ After Woodenbridge and the split, the Irish Volunteers were confined largely to Dublin. A new Headquarters Staff was organised, however, and the movement became increasingly militarised. Several IRB members quickly acquired the key posts, and as the National Volunteers declined, the Irish Volunteers 'came to the forefront of public consciousness', using its 'drive and an uncompromising hostility to the war effort' to widen its popular base.¹⁴⁷⁴ In mid-August 1914 the IRB's Supreme Council began plans for a revolt before the war's end. A Military Council was eventually formed and throughout the rest of 1914 and 1915 this inner coterie attempted to forge links with Germany and acquire weapons and ammunition. In early 1916 the provocative and rebellious James Connolly and his Citizens Army was recruited and, on the 24 April 1916, fearing that the war would end soon, and anxious about the demoralising effects of perpetual inaction on the Volunteers, the Rising occurred.¹⁴⁷⁵

In the wake of Easter week, there was some variety in the large number of AOH resolutions. The members of Killany division espoused one end of the spectrum: '[We]

¹⁴⁷³Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, pp 16-20.

¹⁴⁷⁴Ibid, p. 20.

¹⁴⁷⁵Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, pp 20-36.

strongly disapprove of the action of the recent rising in Dublin and we firmly believe that the constitutional movement under John Redmond and the Irish Party is the only course for peace and prosperity in Ireland and we again pledge out unwavering support to Mr. Redmond and his party'.¹⁴⁷⁶ Elsewhere, the *Hibernian Journal* pointed out that many would only express regret at the event. Others refused to pass comment until all the facts were at hand. Most significantly 'While admitting that the rebellion was a most foolish idea...some prominent Hibernians declined to call the rebels by any opprobrious name and held that no man who sacrificed his life in what he believed to be his country's cause was a traitor'.¹⁴⁷⁷ In early May, South Monaghan's division presidents held a meeting at Carrickmacross. Discussion centred on those members who were in sympathy with the 'Sinn Fein policy at the recent rising in Dublin' and instructions were given for dealing with such members.¹⁴⁷⁸ Several brothers of Killany division were summoned to the management committee to answer for remarks made about the Rising. After satisfactory explanations were given the cases were dropped.¹⁴⁷⁹ In the *Journal*, meantime, any notion that Redmond's leadership was in question was put to pasture with the rather sharp idiom 'Never swap horses when crossing a stream'. There was too an understanding that developments had prejudiced the nationalist position in Great Britain.¹⁴⁸⁰

The *Hibernian Journal's* ire paled in comparison, however, to that of the Irish population as a whole. In Dublin, thousands were wounded, and hundreds killed. Property was destroyed, and food supplies disrupted. Socialist implications, arising from James Connolly's participation, along with the German connection, further aggravated the situation.¹⁴⁸¹ By May, however, antipathy had turned to sympathy and even admiration. As the *Journal* understood it, 'The overwhelming majority of the Irish people were...entirely opposed to physical force methods...At the same time, Irishmen are lovers of fair play...and the methods employed since the suppression of the rebellion have not commended themselves to them'. Public opinion swiftly turned at news of the large number of executions carried out. Wholesale arrests and the shooting of persons without trial exacerbated antipathy towards Britain. The *Journal* responded with several recommendations, aimed at securing 'peace and good-will'. Martial Law had to be

¹⁴⁷⁶'Killany mins', 7 May 1916.

¹⁴⁷⁷*HJ*, June 1916.

¹⁴⁷⁸'Killany mins', 14 June 1916.

¹⁴⁷⁹'Killany mins', 22 June 1916.

¹⁴⁸⁰*HJ*, June 1916.

¹⁴⁸¹Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 181.

removed as soon as possible. A general amnesty for all prisoners was counselled. Compensation for the dependents of non-combatants killed during the conflict was encouraged.¹⁴⁸² The rebels, meantime, continued to grow in popularity. Before long the Rising was seamlessly incorporated into ‘the cumulative layers of local nationalist folklore’. Songs and ballads were written to commemorate the event. The contrast between local republican political sacrifice and apparent national constitutional self-concern, meanwhile, was not lost on the Irish populace. Claims that prominent IPP men had made equal sacrifices in the war were unsatisfactory, given the view that they had given their lives in support of a regime which shot Irish patriots.¹⁴⁸³

After the Rising, Britain reopened the Irish question. David Lloyd George’s ambiguous Headings of a Settlement was the product. Speaking to Redmond and Carson separately, George persuaded the former to accept, in principle, a Home Rule scheme based upon the exclusion of the six counties, with partition merely temporary. Carson, meantime, was assured of the scheme’s permanency. While providing for the immediate implementation of the Home Rule Act, this piece of legislation also came with an amending Act facilitating Irish representation at Westminster and six-county exclusion until the war’s end. Afterwards an Imperial Conference would decide the future of the excluded counties. When the scheme was unveiled in May 1916 Ulster Nationalists responded with unequivocal hostility: ‘Realistically, they were unconvinced as to its temporary nature, and evinced the fear that a boundary, once drawn, might harden into permanency’.¹⁴⁸⁴ Several of the northern bishops, including Joseph MacRory were also ardently opposed. In early June a number of senior clergy and diverse nationalists held a conference in Omagh, County Tyrone. This event provided a focal point for the nebulous antipathy which many felt towards the conciliatory policy of Redmond. These anti-exclusionists next invited the Ulster bishops to articulate their feelings on exclusion and proceeded to organise a series of protest meetings throughout the north. These county conventions bound as many delegates and public representatives of the AOH, INF and UIL against the scheme, in advance of its implementation. Indeed, several Hibernian divisions also passed resolutions against partition.¹⁴⁸⁵ The members of Kilkerrin branch described it as ‘worse than no settlement...an abrogation of our highest ideals and

¹⁴⁸²*HJ*, July 1916.

¹⁴⁸³McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 183.

¹⁴⁸⁴Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism*, pp 22-3.

¹⁴⁸⁵Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism*, pp 23-5.

aspirations for an Ireland “one and indivisible””. The petition for other Hibernians ‘who think as we do...to speak out’ was met in kind.¹⁴⁸⁶ The Cork county board passed a resolution expressing disapproval for ‘any attempt to eliminate a portion of Ireland’ while Tattysallagh division (Co Tyrone) asked the Irish Party ‘to fight exclusion to the utmost’.¹⁴⁸⁷

Notwithstanding these misgivings, Redmond and the rest of the Party leadership were determined to secure acceptance for the scheme, and a provincial convention was scheduled for 23 June 1916, at St. Mary’s Hall, Belfast. In the run up to the convention Devlin spent his time defending the proposals. An AOH convention was held on the 13 June, the *Journal* noting how the delegates thought the Lloyd George proposals ‘an ingenious device for the mutilation of Ireland, the partition of north-east Ulster, and the destruction of everything that is implied in the hallowed ideal of Ireland a Nation’. Speeches were said to have set the members’ minds thinking ‘in the right groove’, however, Devlin in particular declaring ‘Prudent strategy does not lend itself to flamboyant rhetoric. The hour is not one for flag-waving, sunburstry, spread-eagleism and raimeis. We have come to a great crisis whose solution is not to be found in a shibboleth’.¹⁴⁸⁸ Indeed, Devlin’s oratory would turn out to be vital at the St. Mary’s conference. In the event, 776 delegates turned out, including clergy, councillors, MPs and representatives from the AOH, the UIL and the INF. Redmond took the chair, and for five hours the exclusion and anti-exclusion sides were locked in a gruelling battle. Redmond thought the scheme the last hope for practicable Home Rule; the exclusion of Ulster, merely provisional and temporary. He threatened to resign the leadership of the Party if the proposals were not accepted. A lone Hibernian, John McGlone, a member of the UIL National Directory, seems to have taken the side of the anti-exclusionists. He argued that the scheme would see the Orange ascendancy rehabilitated in the north:

Catholics would again after years of heroic struggle for equality of rights, be subjected to an odious oppression...Every concession was a sign of weakness...Nationalists had tolerated too much. They would be unworthy of being free, unworthy of their forefathers, if they yielded this sacred principle of a united Ireland to an ascendancy party.¹⁴⁸⁹

¹⁴⁸⁶*II*, 14 June 1916.

¹⁴⁸⁷*II*, 15 June 1916; *II*, 23 June 1916.

¹⁴⁸⁸*HJ*, July 1916.

¹⁴⁸⁹*IT*, 24 June 1916.

Ultimately, it took ‘a virtuoso display of eloquence by Devlin, who threatened to “go down” with his leader’ to secure the approval of the conference; at 475 votes to 265. The majority exposed a lack of consensus, however. The Antrim and Down delegates were behind Devlin but those from Fermanagh and Tyrone were decidedly against. County Derry’s delegates, meanwhile, were equally split.¹⁴⁹⁰ Afterwards the anti-exclusionists declared that the conference ‘was not a representative gathering of the people of the counties concerned’.¹⁴⁹¹ The *Hibernian Journal* tried to rebuff such charges by providing figures for representation and voting. While the AOH’s representation was small, there were those who claimed that many of the local councillors were Devlinites.¹⁴⁹²

Table 9: Voting by delegates at the St. Mary’s conference, 23 June 1916

Delegate Type	For	Against
Public Bodies	275	150
Clergy	56	74
MPs	5	1
UIL	77	22
AOH	36	1
INF	26	17
Total	475	265

Source: *HJ*, July 1916.

Though part of a ‘longer national process’, the St. Mary’s conference and the Easter Rising represented watersheds which ‘ruptured the previous status quo, creating fluidity in local nationalism, upon which Sinn Fein eventually capitalised’.¹⁴⁹³ In both local and national terms ‘the seams in the fabric of Irish society opened and a myriad of potentialities appeared possible’. Sinn Fein’s participation in the events of Easter week and the resultant dubbing of the revolt as “the Sinn Fein Rising” saw the organisation’s political capital drastically rise.¹⁴⁹⁴ Elsewhere, these two events divided the constitutional separatists from the Devlinite leadership. One explicit manifestation was the anti-partitionist Irish Nation League. Began as a reformed nationalist party, the League joined

¹⁴⁹⁰Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism*, p. 33.

¹⁴⁹¹*HJ*, Nov. 1916.

¹⁴⁹²K. O’Shiel, *The Rise of the Irish Nation League* (Omagh, 1916), pp 4-5.

¹⁴⁹³McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 178-9.

¹⁴⁹⁴Brian Feeney, *Sinn Féin: A Hundred Turbulent Years* (Dublin, 2010), pp 56-7.

with Sinn Fein in the middle of 1917. Clearly subscribing to the assessment that the Sinn Fein movement represented ‘the old [Home Rule] wine...decanted in new bottles’¹⁴⁹⁵, McCluskey sees the INL as the mixing of ‘home rule wine with a more separatist bouquet, while the Devlinite Hibernians remained resolutely of the old Party vintage’.¹⁴⁹⁶ In July 1916 sales of the latter brand took another hit, however, with the news that Lloyd George’s proposal had fallen through. As ever the *Hibernian Journal* remained the party’s stalwart champion. Much scorn was heaped on the Coalition Government. As discussion turned to the government’s next course of action, the *Journal* scathingly asked ‘Are the “Imperial necessities” which made a settlement urgent and compelling two months ago non-existent now?’. Redmond and the IP were completely vindicated. The charge that the Irish leaders had agreed to permanent and definite exclusion was proven false by a publication of the terms of the agreement. Events had in fact only served to immeasurably strengthen the position of the nationalist cause. In the *Journal*’s estimation one trump card persisted,

It has now been generally conceded that the Act, notwithstanding the cheap sneers of factionists, is a fact. Tories and Liberals alike have admitted that no Party would dare to repeal it.... The fact that the Ulster Party agreed to a settlement and recommended its acceptance to their friends in Ulster does away with three-fourths of their case and shows how the wind is blowing.¹⁴⁹⁷

By-elections and the Hibernian stampede

On the 3 December 1916, John Skeffington, county president for East Tyrone opened a new Hibernian hall for Derrylaughan division. During the ceremony Skeffington observed how such buildings were ‘The strongest testimony of the increasing power and progress of the Hibernian movement...[this being] the ninth hall he had opened...within the past eighteen months’. Five days later, at an annual re-union held under the auspices of the Coalisland Division, also in County Tyrone, Skeffington adopted an altogether different tone, describing the present as ‘a time for the utmost caution and the most complete unity they could secure’. The county president further expressed the hope ‘that none of the Divisions of their organisation in any part of the county would be guilty of

¹⁴⁹⁵Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 167.

¹⁴⁹⁶McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 179.

¹⁴⁹⁷*HJ*, Aug. 1916.

passing any hasty or ill-conceived resolutions'.¹⁴⁹⁸ Once it became clear that partition had been agreed to, Hibernian protests increased both in frequency and intensity. Such was the disapproval of division 180, Derrgonnelly, that they called on all divisions to get rid of Devlin and the Fermanagh county board delegates 'at once'.¹⁴⁹⁹ The members of Fintona branch (Co. Tyrone) expressed similar regret at the action of their county delegates, and wished to dissociate themselves from their views.¹⁵⁰⁰ In County Derry, Tamnaherin division went beyond mere invective, exhorting '[those] of the 6 excluded counties to summon a Convention where the wishes of the people will be represented'.¹⁵⁰¹ Donemana division (Co. Tyrone) rejected such a proposal, however, believing 'that the better government of Ireland should stand for consideration at the Peace Conference [after the war], where Ireland will be faithfully represented'.¹⁵⁰²

With so many branches adopting a position at odds with the actions of the Hibernian leadership, some form of censure was all but guaranteed. At the end of September, the *Irish Independent* recorded how several divisions which passed anti-partition resolutions were suspended 'until such time as the resolutions referred to are rescinded'.¹⁵⁰³ In a letter to one such offender, the Board of Erin revealed how members were free to discuss matters of 'national importance' but that divisions were not permitted to publish anything of a nature 'calculated to create disunion in the national ranks'. In October, over one third of the membership in Fermanagh, along with two divisions in County Tyrone severed their connection with the Order as a result. The secessionists felt that the action of the National Board was 'tyrannical' and recorded their 'unalterable determination to adhere to the anti-partition resolutions [which they had] passed and published'.¹⁵⁰⁴

McCluskey describes how the IRB and, by implication, the Irish Volunteers, had a large role in the rise of the Sinn Fein party in East Tyrone. Notable individuals held small-scale meetings and led drills throughout 1916. Such independent and local organisation lacked guidance, however. It was only after those involved in the Rising were freed from Frongoch prison camp in Wales during December 1916, that proper re-organisation occurred. The admiration, respect and authority which the ex-prisoners accumulated as a

¹⁴⁹⁸*HJ*, Jan. 1917.

¹⁴⁹⁹*II*, 28 June 1916.

¹⁵⁰⁰*Ibid*, 7 July 1916.

¹⁵⁰¹*II*, 28 June 1916.

¹⁵⁰²*Ibid*, 13 July 1916.

¹⁵⁰³*II*, 30 Sept. 1916. The offending divisions were given a month to comply. Failure to do so resulted in their dissolution. See *II*, 20 Oct. 1916.

¹⁵⁰⁴*II*, 20 Oct. 1916.

result of their hardships, allowed them to re-establish and extend the Volunteers. McCluskey notes ‘Within the local context, republicans, with a superior patriotic record, could now easily rebuff the Devlinite epithet of non-entities’. Against this backdrop of ‘increased Volunteer activity’, Sinn Fein now emerged ‘as a coherent political alternative to the Irish Party’.¹⁵⁰⁵ Nowhere was this more apparent than in the organisation’s success in a series of by-elections throughout the first half of 1917. After the Irish MP for North Roscommon, James O’Kelly, passed in December 1916, a by-election was scheduled for February the following year. The party received ‘a staggering blow’ when the independent candidate, Count George Noble Plunkett, was voted in over another party devotee, Thomas Devine.¹⁵⁰⁶ In April 1916, Henry Monson, the president of the Sligo AOH county board was invited and attended a conference overseen by Plunkett in Dublin.¹⁵⁰⁷ During the election, meantime, the Sinn Fein candidate was granted the use of the local Hibernian Hall at Corrigeengoe and was backed by both Monson, and the Roscommon county secretary.¹⁵⁰⁸ After his victory Plunkett also received congratulations from a number of Hibernian divisions including Clonmel in County Tipperary and Keadue in County Roscommon.¹⁵⁰⁹

Changes in Ireland’s political tides and the allegiances of the AOH rank-and-file had a not unnoticeable effect on the *Hibernian Journal*. The March 1917 number came with two rather charged articles, one about ‘Organisation and Loyalty’ and another, titled ‘Only two courses’. According to the *Journal* the Order combined ‘democratic control...with the maintenance of discipline within the ranks’. In this regard, rules had been drawn up and registered which were ‘binding’, on the members. As to the two courses, there was the IP and UIL ‘which had won so many reforms for the people’, and Sinn Fein ‘blended with revolution’. Recounting the results of events in Dublin – especially the application of military law, and the embittering of Irishmen against one another - the *Journal* felt certain that ‘[the people] will not allow them[selves] to sacrifice what they have already gained and imperil the whole future of the country by pursuit of a chimera’.¹⁵¹⁰ That a not insubstantial portion of the Hibernian membership did not share in the *Journal*’s views was well displayed in May 1917, at South Longford, when Sinn

¹⁵⁰⁵ McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 212-3.

¹⁵⁰⁶ *II*, 11 May 1917. Plunkett’s son Joseph was executed for his role in the Easter Rising.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Farry, *Sligo*, p. 33.

¹⁵⁰⁸ *II*, 31 Jan. 1917.

¹⁵⁰⁹ *II*, 6 Mar. 1917; *II*, 10 Mar. 1917. The *Irish Independent* also claimed that the members of Keadue played ‘a considerable part’ in Plunkett’s triumph.

¹⁵¹⁰ *HJ*, Mar. 1917.

Fein won yet another by-election; this time, largely as a result of AOH efforts. During the month the *Irish Independent* reported how ‘In almost every branch in the division there are [AOH] men who are using the organisation to further the interests of the Sinn Fein candidate [Mr. McGuinness]’.¹⁵¹¹ When John Phillips, the previous IP incumbent died in April 1917, the party immediately plumped for Patrick McKenna, a local Hibernian. Not long after, Mr. F. Cox, the county secretary for Longford wrote to the *Irish Independent* and confessed that he could find no record of McKenna’s membership. As a result, Cox did not feel he was bound by a county board resolution in favour of the latter. After the members of Clonguish division (Co Longford) corroborated Cox’s findings they felt free to do the same.¹⁵¹²

For one commentator – ‘A Hib. But not a hack.’ - the significance of the by-election in South Longford lay less in the electoral battle than in a vital question, ‘Are the Hibernians [there] going to allow Nugent...acting under the directions of Mr. Devlin to force upon them whatever policy [they] desire, irrespective of local opinion[?]’.¹⁵¹³ When the Longford AOH’s own county secretary seconded Joseph McGuinness’s nomination and the Sinn Fein candidate was duly elected, the answer seemed decidedly in the negative.¹⁵¹⁴ In June 1917, the *Hibernian Journal* announced a string of county board suspensions. Rather than let the *Irish Independent* continue to propagate the idea that such action was the result of political purposes alone, the *Journal* asserted its right to acquaint the membership with the ‘exact position’, of things. While Roscommon and Longford were discussed, four other counties were also highlighted; all exhibiting severe inactivity. In Limerick, for example, it was alleged that the membership had halved in the space of three years while the county board had not met for twelve months. Kerry’s county president - locally regarded as an extreme Sinn Feiner – was allowed to continue in office despite not having attended a division meeting for close on two years. Wicklow was also said to boast a county president with Sinn Fein sympathies, while Clare had ample funds but undertook no organising work.¹⁵¹⁵

¹⁵¹¹*II*, 3 May 1917.

¹⁵¹²*Ibid.*, 3 May 1917.

¹⁵¹³*II*, 9 May 1917.

¹⁵¹⁴*II*, 5 May 1917.

¹⁵¹⁵*HJ*, June 1917. Stirling was also suspended; the former’s president having committed a grave offence only for the county board to take no action.

Unfortunately, the Board of Erin's tendency to enforce discipline only resulted in resentment amongst the rank-and-file, and so compounded the issue.¹⁵¹⁶ At the centre of the matter, as evinced at South Longford, was whether or not the membership was obliged to follow the politics of Devlin and the rest of the Hibernian leadership. The rapidity with which the BOE meted out suspensions to dissenting divisions and county boards produced the impression that 'every member of the Order had pledged himself to support the Irish Party'. Many Hibernians claimed, however, that their only political pledge upon entering the Order was to be a 'Nationalist'.¹⁵¹⁷ The leadership's dictation also clashed with the AOH's self-proclaimed status as a 'purely religious' and 'mutual benefit society'.¹⁵¹⁸ Being at the forefront of the Order's campaign of discipline, Nugent came in for the most flak. Given the title of 'Grand Suspender', many divisions described the national secretary's actions as 'drastic' and 'high-handed', declaring that the AOH was not his 'property', and that he had 'no right to dictate [their] politics'.¹⁵¹⁹ A piece in the *Hibernian Journal* – the aptly named 'Definition of Policy' – made it clear, however, that the AOH's leadership did not fully subscribe to the latter idea. Attributing the recent trouble to 'a misunderstanding of the obligations of membership' the *Journal* explained,

It is the duty of a member to loyally assist in the carrying out of any decision come to by his division. That is the obligation which binds the members of every division, and is equally binding as regards the decisions of the county boards. The national board is the supreme governing body of the organisation, subject to the Biennial Convention and its decisions on all matters are binding on all members of the Order.¹⁵²⁰

As long as the executive remained firmly in the grip of constitutional nationalism this meant a muzzling of the members' politics. If a Hibernian felt that he could not support the candidate recommended by his division, he was prohibited from canvassing against him, nominating his opponent or attending public meetings in opposition. When the member entered the ballot-box, however, he was free to exercise his own judgment.¹⁵²¹

¹⁵¹⁶Many divisions came out in support of their county boards and officers. Others both condemned and expressed outrage at what they perceived as unwarranted attacks by the Hibernian executive. See *II*, 14 May 1917; *Ibid.*, 22 May 1917; *II*, 29 May 1917; *Ibid.*, 23 July 1917; *II*, 17 Sept. 1917.

¹⁵¹⁷*II*, 9 May 1917. See also, *II*, 21 Sept. 1917.

¹⁵¹⁸*Ibid.*, 11 May 1917.

¹⁵¹⁹*II*, 10 May 1917; *Ibid.*, 11 May 1917; *II*, 29 May 1917; *Ibid.*, 23 July 1917; *II*, 17 Sept. 1917.

¹⁵²⁰*HJ*, July 1917.

¹⁵²¹*Ibid.*, July 1917.

In what was undoubtedly a bid to get some of the membership back on side, the Order made the decision in July 1917 to lift its prohibition on Ulster demonstrations.¹⁵²² At least six were held on Lady Day. The parades at Armagh and Magherafelt were the largest, with over fifty banners on either occasion. Others, at Ballybay and Downpatrick, were much smaller; at least partly a result of no railway facilities, owing to war restrictions.¹⁵²³ Other efforts to fortify the society included a recruitment drive and a change in the *Hibernian Journal's* publication. In order to 'secure the privacy' of the organ, its circulation was confined from June 1917 onwards to division and county secretaries. No division was to be supplied with a copy unless it returned the previous month's issue to the AOH headquarters in Dublin.¹⁵²⁴ The decision was clearly financially and defensively motivated. During 1916 the *Journal* disclosed a sizeable loss.¹⁵²⁵ Mass defections and continued press clearly also took their toll, with the result that the Order went on a war footing. Throughout 1917 the *Hibernian Journal* attacked the *Irish Independent* for misrepresenting the organisation, vilifying its officers and creating the impression that large secessions were taking place.¹⁵²⁶ Sinn Fein came under similar fire. While Griffith and his followers were kept together by 'hatred', the AOH apparently preached 'tolerance'. A large portion of the Irish people now went by the label of Sinn Feiners, the *Journal* admitted, but that organisation lacked a coherent policy. One leader was said to believe only in the policy of Easter week while another wanted to elect members to parliament only for them to abstain from attendance. The Sinn Fein leadership were also criticised for their inexperience, and a programme 'based on the reforms won by the IP'.¹⁵²⁷

The Hibernian counteroffensive, though manifold, amounted to closing the stable door after the horse had bolted. All through the second half of 1917 the *Irish Independent* reported on the large number of AOH defections. When a Sinn Fein club – Oldcastle Sean McDermott – was established in North Meath in July, several local Hibernians joined.¹⁵²⁸ During the next several months the same occurred in Cavan, Leitrim, Longford, King and Queen's County, Roscommon, Westmeath and Wicklow.¹⁵²⁹ In some cases divisions

¹⁵²²*HJ*, July 1917.

¹⁵²³*Ibid.*, Sept. 1917; *HJ*, Aug. 1917.

¹⁵²⁴*HJ*, June 1917.

¹⁵²⁵*Ibid.*, Sept. 1917.

¹⁵²⁶*HJ*, July. 1917; *HJ*, Oct. 1917.

¹⁵²⁷*HJ*, Nov. 1917.

¹⁵²⁸*II*, 10 July 1917.

¹⁵²⁹*Ibid.*, 30 July 1917; 6 Aug. 1917; 15 Aug. 1917.

actually dissolved themselves, handing over their funds and often their halls to the local Sinn Fein clubs.¹⁵³⁰ Tracing the impact of defections on the AOH's membership is, notwithstanding, problematic. Though the Order's insurance section continued to expand massively as late as September 1915, this obscured the fact that the private membership was stagnating, even declining. Because the AOH did not count members in arrears, it is difficult to obtain an approximate figure for membership. Still, the difference between years, in the figures available, is striking. While Ireland recorded 57,751 members in April 1913, we can estimate that this figure had dropped to 50,348 by September 1915.¹⁵³¹ Two years later, there was a further decrease, to 36,593.¹⁵³² Given the information available in the *Hibernian Journal* and the *Irish Independent*, it is clear that a 'stampede' occurred.¹⁵³³ Even though data is available for AOH membership in Ireland's counties and provinces, this only covers two points of time – April 1913 and September 1917 – with a considerable interval. While the private section decreased almost across the board, this does not rule out the possibility of increases during this period and so smaller reductions than ostensible. Recruitment rates and wartime deaths also deserve some consideration. Taking all of these factors into consideration, however, we can say that Hibernian defection was highest in Munster, Leinster and Ulster, with a decline in membership of 58, 35 and 29 per cent respectively.¹⁵³⁴ Decreases were at their worst in the former two provinces, with the counties of Cork, Limerick, and Kerry (Munster) – ranging from 60 to 80 per cent – then Meath, Westmeath and Kilkenny (Leinster), all over 50 per cent, with King's County and Wexford just under.¹⁵³⁵

¹⁵³⁰*II*, 24 Sept. 1917; *II*, 8 Nov. 1917; *DDE*, 10 Nov. 1917.

¹⁵³¹*HJ*, July 1916.

¹⁵³²*HJ*, Sept. 1917. Figures for total Hibernian membership (including all counties and provinces in Ireland and Great Britain) are only available in the case of April 1913 and September 1917. A total figure for private membership was given for September 1915, however. Given that the membership of England, Scotland and Wales totalled 26 and 27 per cent in these two instances, we can subtract a mean figure - 26.5 per cent - to extrapolate the Irish membership in each province in September 1915.

¹⁵³³In September 1917, Nugent visited the members of division 1, Derry, and congratulated them on the stand they had made 'during the recent stampede'. 'Derry mins', 12 Sept. 1917.

¹⁵³⁴Ulster was next in line at 29 per cent and Connaught, just 25 per cent. *HJ*, Apr. 1913; *HJ*, Sept. 1917.

¹⁵³⁵*HJ*, Apr. 1913; *HJ*, Sept. 1917.

Table 10: Male membership in the private section, Apr. 1913 – Sept. 1917

Province	Apr 1913	Sept 1917	Loss
Ulster	23,707	16,849	6,858
Munster	13,200	5,593	7,607
Leinster	14,851	9,684	5,167
Connaught	5,993	4,467	1,526
Scotland	16,020	10,533	5,487
England	3,699	2,793	906
Wales	641	547	94
Total	78,111	50,466	27,645

Source: *HJ*, Apr. 1913; *HJ*, Sept. 1917. Note: There are certainly gaps in the record, but private Hibernian membership likely peaked at the end of 1913 and possibly into the first few months of 1914. Almost 8,000 members were lost in the first two years of the war and nearly 15,000 during the final months of the conflict.

Asked to explain why the organisation was declining and so many of its members were defecting, the *Journal* pointed to ‘the big flow of new members’ after 1911.¹⁵³⁶ As McCluskey has said ‘[The insurance Act] permitted the [AOH] to spread rapidly southwards beyond their northern heartland’. These were ‘shallow roots’ however.¹⁵³⁷ In Ulster the branches were organised by the members themselves. An existing division recruited and educated men from an adjoining parish who then undertook the establishment of a new branch. In the south, however, organisers formed divisions in which neither the officers or the members ‘knew anything of the previous history of the Order, little of its objects, and nothing of its working’.¹⁵³⁸ This was coupled with ‘those who sought membership merely to avail themselves of the popularity of the organisation and utilise its influence for their own personal interest’.¹⁵³⁹ Sinn Fein was able to use the major policy issue of partition to foster a ‘spirit of independence’ amongst the Hibernian

¹⁵³⁶*HJ*, July 1917.

¹⁵³⁷McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 218.

¹⁵³⁸*HJ*, Jan. 1919.

¹⁵³⁹*Ibid.*, May 1917.

rank-and-file.¹⁵⁴⁰ When the Board of Erin tried to enforce discipline in response, this only played into Sinn Fein's hands. Told to either abide by the executive's politics, or leave, many members chose the latter.¹⁵⁴¹ Even though Hibernian defections were widespread, Sinn Fein still operated 'on a limited organisational base in 1917'.¹⁵⁴² Peter Hart has shown how several local trends prevented the society from outbidding its moderate opponents in Ulster. Northern nationalism was characterised by a traditional clerical bias. It also possessed the ability to combine in the face of unionist aggression but still maintain sectional independence. Finally, though Joe Devlin lacked influence over and knowledge of southern politics, he enjoyed greater credibility and resources in Ulster, than Dillon or Redmond.¹⁵⁴³ McCluskey has also noted how in places like Tyrone and Donegal 'the Ribbonmen represented an established social phenomenon with a muscular history of popular engagement'. In Ulster as well, those constitutionalists who deserted, had a history of disillusionment with Devlinite politics, while those who remained tended to have risen off the back of the Hibernian network.¹⁵⁴⁴ The position of individuals like John Skeffington, therefore 'relied on continued Party and more specifically Devlinite Hibernian fortunes'.¹⁵⁴⁵

The AOH's last stand

From the middle of 1917 onwards the AOH demonstrated a desire to shake off its political torpor. In June, the national secretary reported on visits amongst Hib branches in Dublin, Mullingar, Down, Antrim and Belfast which he considered to be in a satisfactory state. This led to the Board's conclusion 'that the country only wants to be rounded up to be all right'.¹⁵⁴⁶ There was a sense, however, that the leadership was out of touch with public opinion. To address this a small Publications Committee, composed of commercial travellers and civil servants, was established in Dublin. The former group would collect information and relay it to headquarters while the latter could prepare leaflets.¹⁵⁴⁷ During January 1918, Nugent wrote of the 'difficult' year which the Order had passed through, when 'conscientious discharge of a patriotic duty' had compelled the society to point out

¹⁵⁴⁰*II*, 11 May 1917.

¹⁵⁴¹*HJ*, May 1917. See also, *HJ*, Oct. 1917.

¹⁵⁴²McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 216.

¹⁵⁴³Peter Hart, *The IRA at War, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003) p.23' Coleman, *County Longford*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁴⁴McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 218.

¹⁵⁴⁵McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 220.

¹⁵⁴⁶'BOE mins', 15 June 1917.

¹⁵⁴⁷'BOE mins', 15 June 1917.

‘the way of sanity and reason’. Owing to ‘the inflamed passions of the time’ they were confronted by ‘terrorism’ and even ‘public obloquy’ as a result. The AOH had ‘defended itself’, however, and now looked to the future ‘[to] the consolidation of our ranks’ and ‘the preservation of National sanity, so that the youth of our country may be prevented from being driven into another holocaust, either by hysterical Irishmen upon the one side or the uncompromising Ascendancy upon the other’. Renewed AOH activity accordingly centred on two issues: ‘consolidation’ of the organisation, and opposition to Sinn Fein.¹⁵⁴⁸

In January the *Journal* reprinted its ‘Definition of Policy’ article from July 1917. New material was included, stressing the obligations of AOH membership. Unlike other societies which only required a subscription, the Order demanded that its members be practical Catholics, of good character, and critically, ‘supporter[s] of Ireland’s claim to self-government’. In what was almost certainly a reference to the mass defections of the previous year, a distaste was expressed, for ‘men who change[ed] with every passing wind’.¹⁵⁴⁹ Indeed, Nugent was keen to downplay the events of 1917. While some decrease in Ireland was ‘anticipated’ in consequence of the Board ‘enforcing discipline’, the membership in Great Britain was said to have increased. This was attributed to Irish migrants, attracted by employment at munitions and other works, with the result, that membership in Ireland had went down. Where divisions lapsed, were dissolved or suspended, the *Journal* admitted that there was probably too much of a disposition in the past ‘to spend money organising weak and indifferent centres’, which could have been used on those ‘where enthusiasm and consistency have been exhibited’.¹⁵⁵⁰

Hibernian efforts at consolidation seem to have met with some success. During the early portion of 1918, the membership in counties Derry, Donegal and Tyrone increased, while new divisions were opened throughout Cavan.¹⁵⁵¹ After 1917 the number of AOH defections recorded in the press also dried up.¹⁵⁵² One anonymous critic may have helped explain these developments, however, when he noted the ‘all-round withdrawal of suspensions’ in February 1918, and the ‘cautiously worded letter[s]’ sent to dissolved divisions ‘offering terms of reinstatement’.¹⁵⁵³ Even with AOH defections subdued, however, the Sinn Fein offensive was still in evidence. Towards the end of 1917 and all

¹⁵⁴⁸*HJ*, Jan. 1918.

¹⁵⁴⁹*Ibid.*, Jan. 1918.

¹⁵⁵⁰*HJ*, Feb. 1918.

¹⁵⁵¹*HJ*, Feb. 1918. At Losset, Templeport, and Miltown.

¹⁵⁵²With the exception of Grange division (Co. Sligo) during February 1918. *II*, 13 Feb. 1918; *II*, 16 Feb. 1918.

¹⁵⁵³*II*, 16 Feb. 1918.

through 1918, Hibernians were attacked, their halls burned, and musical instruments stolen.¹⁵⁵⁴ In the pages of the *Hibernian Journal* the incompatibility of both organisations was asserted time and again. Though the AOH admitted that it was ‘not opposed to Republicanism’¹⁵⁵⁵, ‘until a general election decided against the leaders elected to pursue the policy of Parnell and Davitt’, they could not ‘either favour another Easter week...or the Hungarian runaway policy of Griffith’.¹⁵⁵⁶ When a by-election was called for South Armagh in February 1918, the Order was therefore afforded a vital opportunity for redress. The news elicited a surprisingly gloomy prognosis from the *Irish Independent*,

[This] contest will probably provide a much severer test for Sinn Fein than any yet fought...Sinn Fein has made no real progress in the greater part of Ulster, where, of course, the AOH has a stronger foothold than in any other part of the country. South Armagh Sinn Feiners have been taken somewhat by surprise, and have nothing like the organisation that has been established in districts further South.¹⁵⁵⁷

On the first Sunday of the South Armagh campaign, Nugent recalled how ‘an attack was made upon prominent members of our Order who had attended a meeting’. Such was the indignation roused in the local members that an appeal for support was made to the Hibernians in the districts surrounding the constituency. At subsequent gatherings it was made clear that such conduct as was carried on by the Sinn Feiners ‘in Roscommon, Longford, Clare and Kilkenny’, ‘would not be tolerated in Ulster’. Even so, in the weeks before the election, Sinn Fein’s new leader, Eamon De Valera, made a statement that he intended on bringing Volunteers from other portions of Ireland ‘to dominate the constituency’.¹⁵⁵⁸ On the day of the election therefore, ‘hundreds of his “peace patrols”...armed with hurleys, bludgeons and other weapons, and carrying Sinn Fein flags, marched into South Armagh to terrorise the people’. Not long after this, however, ‘Hibs from all the districts surrounding were on the move [so that] all the polling booths

¹⁵⁵⁴See *HJ*, Oct. 1917; *HJ*, Nov. 1917; *II*, 26 Feb. 1918; *Ibid.* 15 July 1918; *II*, 15 Aug. 1918; *II*, 16 Oct. 1918; *DJ*, 25 Feb. 1918; *DJ*, 15 July 1918.

¹⁵⁵⁵Provided in the *Journal’s* words, that ‘there is no other alternative to Castle rule in Ireland’. *HJ*, Jan. 1918.

¹⁵⁵⁶*HJ*, Jan. 1918.

¹⁵⁵⁷*II*, 22 Jan. 1918. ‘The AOH, on the other hand, is a considerable force in the constituency’, the *Independent* further added, ‘and the Irish Party organisation generally is on a much better footing than in most places’.

¹⁵⁵⁸One of the only surviving leaders of the Easter Rising, de Valera was released by the British authorities in June 1917. Only a month later he was elected Member for East Clare and later became the president of Sinn Fein. For more on de Valera try Joseph Lee and Gearoid O’Tuathaigh, *The Age of de Valera* (Dublin, 1982); Ronan Fanning, *Eamon de Valera: A Will to Power* (London, 2015).

were kept clear for voters [and] intimidation was put down'. According to Nugent, it was down to such menacing behaviour, alongside impersonation, carried out 'on a most extensive and unscrupulous scale', that the organisation's previous successes 'were mainly due'.¹⁵⁵⁹ In the case of South Armagh, however, Sinn Fein was thwarted, the IPP candidate, Patrick Donnelly, taking over sixty per cent of the vote. The Hibernian celebration was total. At Draperstown, Donnelly's birth place, the Ballinscreen AOH band paraded the town while bonfires blazed.¹⁵⁶⁰ It was Nugent's hope that the story of South Armagh would – where vacancies occurred - inspire Hibernian divisions from the immediate neighbourhood to assist their brother members '[so] that the principles of liberty [were] not outraged in the fight for freedom'.¹⁵⁶¹

The AOH would not have to wait long for another contest. In early March, John Redmond died. When John Dillon took over, a visit to Enniskillen prompted an address by the Fermanagh county board. In his reply, the new IPP leader neatly summarised his political pedigree and the continued obligation of the Order,

When I went with the late Charles Stewart Parnell to the United States, in 1880, I first made the acquaintance of the Ancient Order of Hibernians... From that hour to this they have stood loyally by whoever was the accepted leader of the people of the country... I rejoice to believe that in the task which is before me I can count on their support.¹⁵⁶²

After Redmond's death, his son William vacated the East Tyrone constituency to make a bid for his father's old seat at Waterford City. The Party used their leader's demise to engineer 'two contests in favourable constituencies' as a counter strike against Sinn Fein.¹⁵⁶³ In East Tyrone, where the AOH was a force to be reckoned with, the local candidate, T.J. Harbison, enjoyed several advantages. As an anti-exclusionist, Harbison had voted against partition at St. Mary's in May 1916. This made him an ideal fit to represent northern nationalists at the Irish Convention.¹⁵⁶⁴ Also relevant was Cardinal

¹⁵⁵⁹*HJ*, Mar. 1918.

¹⁵⁶⁰*DJ*, 6 Feb. 1918. See also 'Derry mins', 8 Feb. 1918; *WFJ*, 9 Feb. 1918; *DJ*, 11 Feb. 1918.

¹⁵⁶¹*HJ*, Mar. 1918.

¹⁵⁶²Dillon's ascent to the position of leader occasioned a large number of AOH resolutions, expressing congratulations and pledging support. 'Derry mins', 14 Mar. 1918; *WFJ*, 30 Mar. 1918; *SC*, 20 Apr. 1918.

¹⁵⁶³McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p.234. The *Hibernian Journal* was surprisingly tight-lipped about both contests. The April 1918 number provided only an anecdote about how Mr. John Smith, an honorary member 'well over eighty years of age', had 'travelled to [Waterford City] to vote for Capt. Redmond'. *HJ*, Apr. 1918.

¹⁵⁶⁴The latter was called by Lloyd George in December 1916 so as to resolve the Irish question and placate American and therefore Allied opinion. Though Sinn Fein refused to attend and the Irish Party was granted a chance to halt their progress, the talks foundered and no settlement was reached. During the

Michael Logue's explicit antipathy for Sinn Fein; the election set to occur in his diocese.¹⁵⁶⁵ And unlike in the case of South Longford, where the United Irish League had not fought an election since 1892, the religiously divided nature of the East Tyrone constituency necessitated a generation long Party battle.¹⁵⁶⁶ Though Sinn Fein realised that the odds were stacked against them, local republican opinion in the East Tyrone constituency forced a contest.¹⁵⁶⁷

During the campaign, intimidation and violence were rampant. On the one hand this could be attributed to the positive response which Harbison's appeal for unionist cooperation garnered; on the other, a continuation of previous Sinn Fein tactics. In a large part of rural East Tyrone 'the Volunteers effectively established an Irish Party no-go area'. At Pomeroy no party meeting was held. Gatherings at Galbally, Cappagh and other places were pelted with eggs and stones. IPP outrage at such developments must be balanced with Hibernian violence, the degree of party organisation, and available resources, however. Devlin flooded the constituency with party MPs, while Nugent sent three cars from Dublin 'a luxury that...local republicans could not match'. The result of these efforts was yet another Irish Party victory, if not 'the unqualified success the Devlinities proclaimed'. Harbison received just under sixty per cent of the vote, the Sinn Fein candidate, the remainder. Further evidence suggests that the outcome was achieved in no small part as a result of Unionist support. From that standpoint, Sinn Fein had narrowly lost. Further consolations of the election came in the form of 'an organisational stimulus' and 'entrance into previous Hibernian strongholds'. Perhaps most significantly, however, the exposure granted by the East Tyrone contest played into Sinn Fein's prominent role in the anti-conscription campaign during the rest of the month.¹⁵⁶⁸

On the 5 April 1918 the British cabinet proposed a bill extending conscription to all males up to the age of fifty-one. Crucially, this included Ireland. Though the threat of conscription had dogged the Irish imagination ever since the war had commenced, Redmond and the IP had repeatedly kept the threat at bay. In January 1916, for instance, when Britain first introduced conscription with the Military Service Act, Ireland was

East Tyrone contest, however, the convention had not yet concluded and Harbison's prominent role may have influenced 'the floating vote'. McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p.234.

¹⁵⁶⁵Miller, *Church, State, and Nation*, p. 399.

¹⁵⁶⁶See Coleman, *County Longford* p.56. No electoral contests were held in East Clare, Kilkenny City or North Roscommon, before 1895. See Brian Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin, 1978), p. 371; *Ibid.*, p. 344; Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results*, p. 356).

¹⁵⁶⁷Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 127.

¹⁵⁶⁸McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, pp 236-9.

excluded.¹⁵⁶⁹ As the conflict progressed however, conscription was extended and the reasons which qualified a man for exemption steadily narrowed.¹⁵⁷⁰ By the spring of 1918, however, under pressure from a successful German offensive and fearing that continued exclusion would alienate British public opinion, the British government finally made its move. In return for acquiescing to conscription, Lloyd George offered Ireland Home Rule. Nationalist hostility to these terms was wholesale. When the bill was passed on the 16 April the Irish Party withdrew from Westminster ‘confirming many Irish voters in the calculation that Sinn Fein’s abstentionist policy was not such a risk after all’. A few days later the act received royal assent and Nationalists of all stripes met at the Mansion House in Dublin to discuss strategy. At Maynooth, the Catholic hierarchy also gathered. Both groups eventually agreed to a campaign, an anti-conscription pledge to form the centrepiece.

The conscription crisis affirmed Sinn Fein as a ‘political alternative’ while ‘radicalis[ing] the position of erstwhile moderates in the clergy and middle class’.¹⁵⁷¹ Because the campaign was a shared one, Hibernian-Sinn Fein fraternisation was commonplace. At Dunfanaghy Catholic Church in Donegal, the local Hibs and Sinn Feiners joined forces ‘in their determination to resist to the death any attempt...to compel Irishmen to serve compulsorily in the army’.¹⁵⁷² Notwithstanding such occasions, the Irish Party was hard pressed to retain its share of the campaign platform. The militant quality of Sinn Fein clubs and the widespread reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers - in response to the crisis - allowed the republicans to take the lead in anti-conscription meetings. Standing beside members of the Catholic hierarchy and clergy at such gatherings also gave the republicans ‘a new respectability’.¹⁵⁷³ The Irish Party was by comparison, unable to even secure equal credit for its contributions; Sinn Fein propaganda going so far as to attribute conscription’s introduction to IP successes in the three by-elections of early 1918.¹⁵⁷⁴ In May, the landscape of constitutional nationalism was further eroded when the British government arrested and imprisoned seventy-three national Sinn Fein figures on the flimsy pretext of their being involved in a German plot.

¹⁵⁶⁹Under this act and with certain exceptions - including marriage and occupation - British men from 18 to 41 years of age were liable to be called up.

¹⁵⁷⁰In May 1916 a second act provided for the inclusion of married men as well.

¹⁵⁷¹McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 239.

¹⁵⁷²*DJ*, 19 Apr. 1918.

¹⁵⁷³William Murphy, How Ireland was lost in the 1918 conscription crisis, in RTE, Century Ireland <https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/how-ireland-was-lost-in-the-1918-conscription-crisis> (10 February 2019)

¹⁵⁷⁴McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 239.

Aware of the operation, the republicans were able to spin the event to their benefit.¹⁵⁷⁵ By virtue of the British government's action, the Irish people were led to believe that it was Sinn Fein and not the Irish Party, that was preventing conscription. The imprisoned republicans also garnered widespread sympathy, Arthur Griffith being famously elected in East Cavan under the slogan "put him in to get him out". According to Michael Laffan it was this victory which enabled Sinn Fein 'to regain its momentum of 1917'.¹⁵⁷⁶ By June, plans for conscription in Ireland were scrapped, but the damage to the IP cause had already been done.¹⁵⁷⁷

As the First World War began to wind down in late 1918, the British government turned its attention to the need for a general election. On the 14 November, it was announced that parliament – sitting since 1910 – would be dissolved at the end of the month, and a general election held on the 14 December. Significantly, the latter election would be the first of its kind held under the Representation of the People Act. This bill, introduced in early February, extended the vote to men aged 21 and over – regardless of property ownership - and to women over 30, under certain terms.¹⁵⁷⁸ Realising the potential benefits of the 'Franchise Bill' for the constitutional cause, the members of division 1, Derry, spent the spring and summer helping new voters register their claim.¹⁵⁷⁹ As brother Doherty put it 'If every nationalist in Derry was entitled to a vote...[the city] would easily be a safe nationalist seat'.¹⁵⁸⁰ In September, focus switched to the upcoming general election, the *Journal* pointing out 'the necessity of organising election committees'.¹⁵⁸¹ The Derry members attempting to reorganise the local UIL.¹⁵⁸² The unsatisfactory state of the League, in particular, the lack of regular meetings, was commented on in March. By the end of the year, the members had 'done all in their power'¹⁵⁸³ to get the organisation ready for a general election, but 'their efforts...had failed'.¹⁵⁸⁴

The Irish Party's electoral prospects were further hurt in early November, when brother Doherty expressed the belief that the Hibs were going to be ignored 'when it came

¹⁵⁷⁵Laffan, *The resurrection*, pp 142-4.

¹⁵⁷⁶Laffan, *The resurrection*, pp 147-9.

¹⁵⁷⁷American participation swung the war back in favour of the Allies.

¹⁵⁷⁸Residence in the constituency, occupation of land or premises over a certain value, or husbands who fit this criterion; all afforded women the right to vote in parliamentary elections.

¹⁵⁷⁹*DJ*, 19 June 1918; *Ibid.*, 28 June 1918; *DJ*, 3 July 1918.

¹⁵⁸⁰'Derry mins', 28 June 1918.

¹⁵⁸¹*HJ*, Sept. 1918.

¹⁵⁸²'Derry mins', 12 Apr. 1918.

¹⁵⁸³*Ibid.*, 1 Mar. 1918.

¹⁵⁸⁴'Derry mins', 1 Nov. 1918.

to the selection of a candidate for Derry City'. Doherty's proposed solution was to ask the National Board for a loan of £500 so that the division might be better equipped to contest the seat.¹⁵⁸⁵ At a special meeting held a week later Doherty admitted that the amount required was a large one, but he believed that the principle of the organisation was at stake. Sinn Fein thought the Hibernians of Derry 'a negligible quantity'. Worse still 'There were some men in the division...doing their utmost to seduce the members from their loyalty'. Though some opposition did indeed follow, the motion was eventually carried by seventy-four votes to seven.¹⁵⁸⁶ During the weeks that followed, the division was invited to send delegates to a series of political meetings overseen by the Bishop of Derry, Charles McHugh. There, McHugh attempted to convince the nationalists of the need for united action at the coming election.¹⁵⁸⁷ Not considering themselves bound by any decision made at these conferences, however, the Derry members pressed on with their own campaign.¹⁵⁸⁸ Several UIL meetings were held and William Davey was selected as the IPP candidate.¹⁵⁸⁹ Then, in December, the division's momentum came screeching to a halt. A communication was received from the P.H. Pearse Sinn Fein club appealing for the active support of the Derry members in electing their candidate, Professor Eoin MacNeill. Derry division's committee responded with a resolution of agreement.¹⁵⁹⁰ Two days later the Sinn Feiners were granted the use of the members' hall, to be used as a tally room on the day of the general election.¹⁵⁹¹

During August 1918, a new article series, the 'Hibernian Catechism', appeared in the *Journal*. Through a set of questions and answers the AOH rank-and-file were instructed on the nature of the Order, their own responsibilities and the political climate in Ireland generally. Many of the statements make for a fascinating juxtaposition, given the results of the general election at the end of the year. Asked how Hibernians should direct their organising energies, the *Journal* noted how 'indifference and apathy [had] endangered the existence of Constitutional effort in Ireland'. The members had to educate themselves, to disseminate sound and sensible views on current topics, so that they might 'prevent the

¹⁵⁸⁵'Derry mins', 1 Nov. 1918.

¹⁵⁸⁶'Derry mins', 8 Nov. 1918.

¹⁵⁸⁷Brother Doherty believed that were it not for the action of the members at the previous weekly meetings – most likely the request for funds – the division would not have received an invitation to the conferences. 'Derry mins', 15 Nov. 1918.

¹⁵⁸⁸'Derry mins', 15 Nov. 1918.

¹⁵⁸⁹Ibid, 15 Nov. 1918; 'Derry mins', 22 Nov. 1918; 'Derry mins', 29 Nov. 1918.

¹⁵⁹⁰'Derry mins', 11 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵⁹¹'Derry mins', 13 Dec. 1918.

stampeding of the unthinking'.¹⁵⁹² As to the actual state of affairs in the country, 'Thirty per cent of the people are violently opposed to Home Rule'. Of the remainder 'not half genuinely believe in the policy of separation'.¹⁵⁹³ The *Journal* rubbished the claim that 'the majority of the voting power of the country' was republican. England's power and wealth were said to make the latter organisation's goal impracticable. Members were reminded that Republican principles were not consistent with sound Hibernianism, the former's policy 'in open opposition to the method of securing Ireland's national freedom by sane and successful means'.¹⁵⁹⁴

In the general election of 1918, Sinn Fein achieved a landslide victory, taking nearly 50 per cent of the votes and 73 of the 105 seats. The Irish Party took just 6 seats by comparison, with 4 in Ulster. Four of these were part of a deal with Sinn Fein to prevent unionist victories. In Fermanagh South, Londonderry City, and Tyrone North-West the IPP instructed its supporters to vote for Sinn Fein.¹⁵⁹⁵ Though Devlin managed to decisively beat Eamon de Valera at the polls in Belfast, this was little consolation. Many modern-day historians have pointed to the Easter Rising as inaugurating a mass conversion to Sinn Fein. They maintain that 'admiration for the insurrectionists, anger at their execution, and resentment at the large number of arrests which followed "transformed" public opinion'. James McConnel, however, has convincingly argued that the introduction of wartime legislation for the reform of the franchise and registration system 'repoliticised electoral reform in nationalist Ireland'. While the IPP protested against the British government's attempt to redistribute Irish constituencies it was accused of 'deliberately conspiring to exclude Ireland' from the bill 'because the young men and women it would enfranchise intended to vote for Sinn Fein'. While the results of the election proved that the latter movement's support was 'not sectional but in fact cross-generational', this idea gained traction amongst critics, the press, even the British administration in Ireland and the Party itself, ultimately adding to its defeat.¹⁵⁹⁶

¹⁵⁹²The need for further registration work, as practiced by Derry division earlier in the year, was also pushed. *HJ*, Sept. 1918.

¹⁵⁹³*HJ*, Sept. 1918.

¹⁵⁹⁴*HJ*, Nov. 1918.

¹⁵⁹⁵The members of Derry division agreed to support Eoin MacNeill's candidature and lend out their hall after John Dillon passed a resolution of instruction at the Derry City Executive of the UIL, on the 10 December 1918. Sinn Fein's supporters were given similar orders in the case of Armagh South, Down South, Tyrone North-East, and Donegal East. 'Derry mins', 11 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵⁹⁶James McConnel, 'The Franchise Factor in the Defeat of the Irish Parliamentary Party, 1885-1918' in *The Historical Journal*, 47, 2 (2004), pp 355-77.

For its part the *Hibernian Journal* asserted that ‘there was considerable intimidation [and impersonation] on the polling day’. Many people were prevented from voting while others were compelled to vote against their convictions. Blame was further placed on inefficient Party organisation. ‘Making due allowance for all these considerations’, however, Sinn Fein’s success made it manifest ‘that the majority of the people of the country wanted to give a trial to the policy propounded by them’. As a consequence of this, the Hibernian position had changed.¹⁵⁹⁷ Because the AOH had so ‘vigorously condemned’ factionalism in other cases, it could not now adopt that role. The Order was forced to bow to the will of the country ‘and give Sinn Fein a fair opportunity and reasonable time to make good the promises made’. Pending a biennial convention, those who had no confidence in the ideals of Sinn Fein had but one option, to ‘remain silent but watchful spectators’. Neutrality in the case of Sinn Fein did not render the AOH impotent, however. At that moment there was a clear-cut issue between ‘the extreme Republican Party in Ireland...and the reactionary Castle ascendancy’. As a Catholic organisation, the AOH could not ignore its duty: ‘If any individual Catholic or body of Catholics is attacked or unfairly dealt with, because of their religious belief, we must make every effort to assist and defend them irrespective of politics’. Country had to be placed before party.¹⁵⁹⁸

Conclusion

Up until June 1912 the greater mass of Ireland’s Protestant population ignored the AOH, and this despite the Society’s concentration in Ulster. While only a recent growth, tackling the Protestant Ascendancy was one of Hibernianism’s greatest stimuli, a cornerstone and duty which, as indicated in chapter two, many Hibernians were convinced, went back hundreds of years. Stepping out from under the Protestant yoke was a sentiment which constitutional separatists could agree with, and the AOH was unquestionably a sectarian organisation. With its tales of religious discrimination in workplaces which relied on Catholic custom the *Hibernian Journal* never ceased to stoke this particular fire. Elsewhere, agrarian agitation and territorial encroachment, if not physical violence, was advocated and indulged in, with the dual benefit of satiating the more advanced members. While this element of Hibernianism made some members of

¹⁵⁹⁷*HJ*, Jan. 1919.

¹⁵⁹⁸*HJ*, Jan. 1919.

the UIL uneasy, most simply turned a blind eye. And anyway, the Order's sectarianism was only really apparent in the north, where with Unionists manning all of the county councils, the Hibs appeared righteous in their actions. Indeed, notwithstanding its veneration of Irish Protestant heroes, the AOH showed every sign that it too would participate in an ascendancy. In many ways, Devlin was the ideal Hibernian champion, outfitted with a legendary story in his conquest of Protestant West Belfast.

For Baron Ashtown the Order was at the centre of a massive conspiracy. Run by Rome, and as the power behind the IPP, it planned to overthrow the English government in Ireland. While the AOH's proud heritage provided no shortage of ammunition, Ashtown's claims were easily dismissed as the wild ravings of a bitter Protestant landlord. It is tempting to blame much of the escalation in Unionist tactics after June 1912 on the AOH. The Protestant mobilisation began much earlier, however, a direct response to the increased likelihood of Home Rule; once the Liberals were in government and Redmond had achieved a balance of power. In this context the Society's growth under National Insurance Act and its involvement in the Castledawson affray were convenient propaganda coups, used by Carson and the rest of his followers to further inflame Protestant passions, paint themselves as the victims and so gain leverage in any discussion surrounding Home Rule. The alleged Hibernian oath was obviously a deliberate concoction. The Belfast Shipyard Riots meantime were likely to occur regardless of Castledawson. We may never know exactly what happened at the latter event, but the weight of evidence suggests that no women or children were hurt, their only injury psychological. The Rev. Barron relayed a story that the Protestant population were all too willing to believe and doubtless informed newspaper accounts as to the origins of the riots in July. That being said, the Order was more than ready to participate in some kind of internecine conflict, as the boycotts of September proved. In sum then, the AOH was a useful scapegoat, if not, as indicated above, entirely innocent. This does not rule out the possibility of Hibernian violence and other excesses after Home Rule's implementation, but it does suggest that the Protestant population's perception of the Order was exaggerated.

The AOH was involved in the Irish Volunteers right from the start. In Ulster especially, recruitment was spurred on by the proximate example of the Ulster Volunteer Force, and many Hibernians, especially of the constitutional separatist kind, were undoubtedly frustrated at the lack of demonstrations following Devlin's implementation of a quietist policy. Elsewhere, IRB infiltrators co-opted the membership, and local

politics and pressures ensured Hibernian participation. With Home Rule wobbling, and the Protestant population threatening to resort to violence, the IVF was the Irish population's – if not the IPP's - mandated contingency. In this sense it was an appropriate half-way house for constitutional separatists, who were starting to doubt the efficacy of constitutional tactics and the ability of the government to grant Home Rule, – as indicated at Curragh - if not yet completely prepared to throw in their lot with the advanced nationalists. Within the IVF many Hibs were doubtless converted to a median position as well, especially with Redmond's acceptance of temporary county by county exclusion in early 1914. The events at Howth harbour and the shootings at Bachelor's Walk further increased Volunteer recruitment while the constitutional separatist position became clearer after Redmond's Woodenbridge speech. Though the majority of Irish nationalists remained in the National Volunteers, participation in the British war effort was obviously anathema. Even for constitutional nationalists who were willing to exist under a Home Rule parliament within the United Kingdom '[this] was a fundamental paradigm shift'.¹⁵⁹⁹ Indeed, while the National Volunteers suffered from an uncomfortable leadership, ill-organisation and a lack of support from the British government, it was this commitment more than anything, and the fear of being called up, that saw the movement sharply decline. Though small, the IRB run Irish Volunteers made no such promise and were able to organise and grow.

At the end of 1914, in what now seems like starry-eyed optimism, the *Hibernian Journal* turned its attention to constitutional nationalism's achievement, to life after Home Rule. The AOH's consolidation of nationalist forces, its maintenance of unity, had made the dream possible, but in the years to come, the Society would have to change. If the leadership's true goal – Home Rule but not separation – was to some extent revealed in its desire to dispense with Anglophobia, constitutional separatists were nevertheless kept on side by one consistent principle: legislative freedom was not synonymous with religious freedom. The Order would have to fight on. The AOH also saw itself as particularly outfitted to oversee a transitional period. Divisions would be rallying grounds. The Irish people had to be taught; public opinion moulded. As the First World War dragged on, however, it seemed like Home Rule would never come. The Irish populace became indifferent; nationalism, stagnant. Seizing on anti-war sentiment, IRB activity contrasted starkly with the AOH and general IPP policy of keeping their heads

¹⁵⁹⁹Reid, 'The Irish Party and the Volunteers', p. 47.

down and waiting the conflict out. In April 1916 the Easter Rising jolted the country out of its complacency. Separatists efforts had failed but many Hibernians seemed to disagree only with the timing. At the same time, the British government's draconian reaction gave rise to the idea that Home Rule would never come, that separatist action might be the only recourse. In June, support for the Irish Party was further fractured when it forced through exclusion at St Mary's, only to have the British government renege at the last. If constitutional nationalists living in the north were outraged at what they saw as their abandonment in the face of partial Home Rule, constitutional separatists can only have been driven to apoplexy. Ulster's exclusion seemed to suggest that total separation would never occur.

AOH branches and county boards alike passed resolutions condemning their delegates and leadership for participating in exclusion. By resorting to discipline and suspensions, the Board of Erin further alienated its membership. After the surviving participants of the Easter Rising were released from Frongoch in late 1916 a constitutional separatist party began to coalesce. Disaffected Hibernians now had an outlet and joined Sinn Fein in by-elections at North Roscommon and South Longford in February and May 1917. While some effort at cogent argument was made by the *Hibernian Journal*, the paper finally revealed the leadership's hand. Separatist energies were muzzled by a majority constitutional nationalist consensus. Members could do as they wished in the ballot box, but while part of the AOH they could not move against IPP candidates. Such democratic arguments could be turned on their head, however. Under Devlin the Order promised to support the movement which commanded the support of the majority of the Irish people. Now that the IPP's hegemony had been substantially challenged, the members felt free to switch their allegiance. Sinn Fein was able to foster this spirit of independence, especially in the south, where many Hibs had only been members since the national insurance act and so bore little political loyalty. Those who did not hand over their halls and property were subjected to a campaign of intimidation, theft and violence. Thus, Hibernian defection must also be viewed in the context of a wider community conversion. Unsurprisingly, it was in Ulster that the membership remained most steadfast. Small increases in Hib membership along with a resurgence in Hibernian parades, and victories at by-elections in South Armagh and East Tyrone – on what really constituted home turf - should not obscure the extent to which Sinn Fein was making rapid progress, however. The conscription crisis and the Representation of the People Act were the final

nails in the coffin, propelling Sinn Fein to national prominence and turning cross-generational support into voting power at the general election.

Conclusion

How did Devlin capture and maintain control of the AOH? What kind of relationship did the Order seek and in fact have with the IPP and the UIL? What was Hibernianism's political role? During the first years of the twentieth century Devlin became a leading member of the Irish Party and was able to use his influence to capture the emerging AOH. The latter craved legitimacy and clerical sanction, and Devlin was able to provide this, though at the cost of tying the movement to the constitutional nationalist cause. IRB members succeeded in infiltrating the Order, especially in Scotland. The split occurred under false pretences, however, and despite the Order's antecedents and similarities with Fenians, exclusively separatist action was anathema to the membership. The Scotch Section lacked the numbers or resources to prosecute a long-term campaign against the Board of Erin and after the latter institution finally relented and began to modernise, the basis for dissociation was removed. In time, populist patriotism, the concept of the National Organisation and Hibernian Home Rule - among other things - ensured the continued loyalty of the rank-and-file. The AOH was a Party auxiliary, below the IPP and about even with the UIL. The latter had a broader appeal to begin with though it could not contest Hibernian hegemony of Ulster and after national insurance the Order matched it for numbers and in some places surpassed it. The UIL was the primary constituency organisation, however, and while it and the IPP had majority support, the Order was pledged to it. Local politics could bring the AOH and UIL into opposition, as also the Order's at times underhand and militant political purpose; manipulating parliamentary conventions and smashing factionalism. The Society was vital in mobilising northern nationalism, however, and it consolidated Devlin's position within the Party's inner leadership.

How did the society's antecedents, whether real or imagined, inform Hibernian ideology, self-perception, and the attitudes of others? Was the AOH a secret organisation? How did church toleration come about, and what did it mean in practice? What kind of a role did priests and clerics play within Hibernianism? Some Defenders became Ribbonmen, some Ribbonmen, Hibernians. Beyond that, the AOH was a fairly recent foundation. The largely claimed connection with Ribbonism, however, invited the Catholic Church's condemnation. The story of the Defenders helped to mitigate this,

giving the membership a confessional quality and cultivating a sense of militant Catholicism. Elsewhere, the Order's roots affirmed the suspicions of Protestants like Baron Ashtown. Though it practiced secrecy to some degree, the Order was not a secret society. Unlike the shadowy IRB, the Royal Irish Constabulary knew much about its activities and workings. Police informants and loose-lipped members often compromised the Society's security, though passwords and signs gave the Order an enigmatic quality attractive to the young. Clerical toleration in Ireland was a product of Bishop O'Donnell's sympathies; the latter understanding that the Church could not dominate nationalist politics as it had after Parnell's downfall. Although O'Donnell chose to swim with the tide, the AOH incurred the disapproval of Cardinal Logue and other priests for its lineage and secrecy, and at times amoral practices. Most significant were Hibernian halls which abolished dependency on the local priest for access to the parish hall. In Scotland, however, the Order had a much more difficult time with the Catholic Church. After years of trying, it was the AOH's power and influence in Ireland which finally secured a reprieve. Hibernians had been condemned for too long there, however, and for many priests, the circumstances had not really changed; antipathy persisted. Under Devlin, the AOH sought to curb the influence of priests in politics. In virtually every other sphere the Order mostly welcomed the guidance of the Catholic Church. The Society's members were devoutly religious. Clerical campaigns against Freemasonry and immoral literature were embraced. Chaplains oversaw division meetings and were showered in gifts, praise, and subscriptions.

What were the main features of Hibernian social life? How did it differ between rural and urban areas, English, Scottish and Irish ones? To what extent did the society's leadership shape and exert control over the membership's social practices? Hibernian social life had three main aspects: entertainment, organisation and teaching. AOH activity fell into or could be said to accomplish one or more of these objects. In this sense it was quite formulaic and rigid. For most Hibernians it meant participating in a demonstration, showing up at a meeting and catching a concert. Entertainment was about relieving the monotony of rural life and giving people a reason to invest in society; organisation, about subsuming the individual in favour of the majority; teaching, about instilling a sense of Irishness. Hibernian clubs and halls were the lynchpins for all three strategies, providing a platform for dances, meetings, and lectures. Hibernians living in Irish cities, such as Belfast and Dublin, had more resources and enjoyed a richer social programme. In rural areas the membership made do – where possible - with a local hall. The culture of bands

and banners was strongest in Ulster, and the Irish language was more easily taught in Irish speaking areas such as Donegal. Devlin and the rest of the Hibernian leadership exerted control through demonstrations, national conventions and county boards. The latter's officials were known to occasion division meetings and mete out punishments for what might constitute un-Hibernian behaviour. Control was not total, however, and the precepts of the *Hibernian Journal* were sometimes liberally interpreted. The AOH's desire to shape and control identity and activity was especially manifest in the case of the Ladies' Auxiliary and the Hibernian Boys' Brigade but neither auxiliary proved particularly successful. The latter came late and remained a small enterprise while the LA could not surmount sexism and only grew as a result of national insurance.

What did Hibernian financial life look like both before and after 1911? How did the AOH change to accommodate national insurance, and what opposition and obstacles, if any, did the Society face? To what extent did the Order and its members benefit from the act? During the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, not many divisions of the AOH offered financial benefits; those that did varying greatly in practice. Modernisation came in two waves, first in 1905 as a result of the Scotch Section and then in 1911 and afterwards, under national insurance. Registration, if only on a division by division basis, marked the beginning of the Order's transition from anonymity and illegitimacy into public life. With Nugent at the helm, some kind of reorganisation was inevitable, but it came early partly to placate the Scottish membership and then to reintegrate the breakaway group. By the eve of insurance Devlin's control of the organisation was sufficient to push through a much more far reaching and comprehensive programme. Many obstacles were thrown up during the changeover. Most of the Order's branches had to be converted to a scheme of benefits, Ireland added to the provisions of the Act, and a new insurance section established. Once the new apparatus was in place, it had to be effectively managed. Secretaries found it difficult to adjust to their new role and doctors went on strike. Insurance was a huge coup for the AOH and its members, however. Insurance members might not have the same access and perks as private section members, but they received their benefits nonetheless. Under the Act the Order was able to massively expand upon its footholds in other Irish provinces. With the thousands of new members came a preponderance of wealth as well. In some ways, however, the financial life of the AOH rank-and-file did not change. Contributions still had to be paid and sick pay doled out. Banners were purchased, bands outfitted, and halls built.

What kind of relationship did the AOH have with the Protestant community within Ireland during the period? To what extent did the Society participate in the Irish Volunteer movement? How did the attitudes of the rank-and-file change after the Easter Rising and the St. Mary's conference in Belfast? What measures did the BOE resort to in dealing with defections and in attempting to shore up the movement? Despite its claims to a defensive role, the AOH was a sectarian organisation. Demonstrations, confrontations and violence, agrarian agitation and sabre-rattling paid testament to this. Protestant domination in jobs, politics and elsewhere was repeatedly highlighted. Rather than seeking equality, however, the Order showed every indication that it would impose a new ascendancy. The lack of success which met such efforts helps to explain why the Order was largely ignored up until 1912. With the Protestant population mobilising against Home Rule thereafter, however, the Order became a liability, allowing Carson and his followers to level all manner of accusations. This was only affirmed by what had apparently happened at Castledawson, the AOH's growth under national insurance and of course, the bogus oath. For many Hibs, the Irish Volunteer Force exerted a strong appeal, thus their presence at its founding. The IVF was, in a very real sense, what the Order had always claimed to be, a national army. Hibernians joined the movement during all three phases of recruitment. Local pressures, IRB influence, larger national events and eventually Redmond's decision to embrace the Volunteers, all played their part. As the Easter Rising unfolded its participants incurred the sympathy of many Hibernians, if not their out and out support. The conference at St Mary's represented a betrayal of the principles which many of the rank-and-file had bought into. Home Rule at any cost was a shaky proposal to begin with, but partial Home Rule was a non-starter. The Board of Erin misconstrued what was plainly outrage for a breach of discipline and acted accordingly. Suspensions played into Sinn Fein's hands and only further estranged the membership. Many Hibs demonstrated their independence by supporting SF candidates at by-elections in 1917. The BOE's quick-fixes, including demonstrations, a recruitment drive, and changes to the circulation of the *Hibernian Journal*, only demonstrated how out of touch the leadership was with popular feeling.

Constitutional separatists and Hibernian Home Rule

Anglo efforts to control and dominate Ireland go back nearly 1,000 years. Between 1177 and 1541, parts of the country were ruled by the King of England and his Anglo-Norman lords. From 1542 until 1800, meanwhile, Ireland was a client state. Then, in 1801, the Acts of Union merged the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland. This change was partly inspired by the United Irishmen and the Irish Rebellion of 1798. At this juncture, important lessons were learnt. Daniel O'Connell was arguably one of the first constitutional separatists. He recognised that insurrection was impossible, that only the British government had the power to grant Ireland freedom. In this context emancipation was about bridging the gap, acquiring Irish self-government piece by piece. Repeal of the Union was obviously impracticable, but such a large demand made for a better bargaining position and likely capitalised on memories of Grattan's parliament, allowing for mass mobilisation and agitation. O'Connell's successor, Isaac Butt, was not a constitutional separatist. While he showed sympathy for separatists and defended those involved in the failed Fenian Rising of 1867, he opposed repeal, concluding that a federal system or home government was the answer. His failure to extract any notable concessions from Westminster proved that a purely genteel form of constitutional nationalism was insufficient to the task, and separatists, who were initially willing to give his policy a try, soon abandoned it. Parnell, was undoubtedly the most successful example of constitutional separatism. Much like O'Connell, Parnell used Home Rule as the primary lever in his negotiations with the British government. In his hands the concept was equally a will-o'-the-wisp, however, crucially only ever being defined by Gladstone. Parnell also had connections with the Fenians, and his extra parliamentary tactics were obviously palatable. With his promise to preserve separatist autonomy, to postpone but not abandon insurrection and to push for the greatest measure of Irish legislative independence, a new departure was forged.

Historians tend to overemphasise the damage done to the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Home Rule cause following the revelations surrounding Parnell, the split and his death. In fact, it was Parnell, and not the former that was defeated at this juncture. The constitutional path, unlike the purely separatist one, still held out the potential for greater victories. Parnell was almost impossible to replace, however, and a power vacuum followed. With political extinction threatened - owing to the rise of O'Brien's United Irish League - Parnell's lieutenants managed to reach a *détente*, and one amongst their

number, John Redmond, was appointed as leader. It was at this point that the constitutional separatist ideal was usurped. As would eventually become clear, Redmond was a constitutional nationalist and imperialist through and through. Under his leadership the IPP was sufficiently constitutional nationalist to repel full-fledged advanced nationalists, but not so without its Fenian raiment, as to lose the support of constitutional separatists. Recourse to quasi-republican rhetoric along with a greying contingent of ex-Fenians gave the Party a separatist veneer. The larger factors were the UIL and the AOH, however. Agrarian agitation and the League's Ranch War (1906-9) had their parallels in Parnell's Land War of 1879-81. The League reunited the Irish Party, but the landscape of Irish nationalism had changed in fundamental ways. Separatists could no longer be counted on for their support, and neither could the Catholic Church. Many of the precedents of Parnell's time, including his nigh absolute control of parliamentary conventions, no longer held true. The UIL had its problems too. Northern nationalists had little reason to invest in a rural programme and with constructive unionism on the horizon the UIL's motive force could not be expected to last forever.

Joseph Devlin and the AOH were answers to these problems. A native of Ulster, Devlin reached adulthood when the IPP was at the height of its power and as Parnell was deposed. His interest in politics soon drew him into the orbit of John Dillon. The latter became a mentor, clearly perceiving Devlin's potential. In time the young man from West Belfast demonstrated his loyalty and earned his constitutional nationalist spurs, preventing separatists from completely hijacking the commemorations surrounding the rebellion of 1798 and extinguishing clerical attempts to set the IPP's agenda. With his youth and impressive organisational and oratorical skills, Devlin became the leading voice in northern nationalism and was an excellent addition to the Irish Party's roster. It was his understanding of politics in the north that led him to the AOH. Changes would have to be made, but much of the raw material was there. The Society made claim to an anti-English, anti-Orange and separatist heritage. As an apparently Ancient Order, it could further legitimise Irish Party efforts. Hibernian secrecy and sectarianism, meantime, attracted the young. More than anything, however, the AOH had a militant character that could serve a dual purpose: crushing dissent and providing a vent for separatist sentiment. Constitutional separatists could understand that their secretive and advanced nationalist brethren were failing to see the wider picture. Anglophobia, party achievements, violent rhetoric and demonstrations – with the commemoration of Irish martyrs and incursions into Protestant areas constituting a sort of territorial assertion –

kept this grouping on side. The AOH also operated on the edges of clerical approval and while Devlin made efforts to ameliorate this, toleration was not the same as blanket sanction. Still, faith was a central tenet within Hibernianism, though it was perhaps commensurate with Catholicism, and specifically, in combination with its twin – fatherland - the Catholic Irish. While the Order preached cooperation, forbearance and unity, these policies were solely directed at its exclusive membership. Such blatant sectarianism made members of the UIL uncomfortable and, despite Hibernian efforts to elect them, some Protestant, Irish Party MPs too.

All of this the AOH was able to reconcile with recourse to two concepts: the Redmond inspired National Organisation, and Devlin's own, Hibernian Home Rule. Like O'Connell with Repeal, and Parnell with Home Rule, the National Organisation was a Redmondite subterfuge. It was more than just the United Irish League. It spoke to the idea that Ireland was a nation, that the entire populace was mobilised and participant in one entity. To that end it left no room for dissenters. Opposition was easily quelled in lieu of the argument that it undermined the National Organisation. The concept also reflected a preoccupation with unity, a decided side effect of the Parnell split. No matter claims to the contrary, the AOH was subservient to the National Organisation, though it was also a few steps removed. It could at times pick up the shortfall in nationalist energies, but it was not bound to the Organisation as tightly as the UIL. This allowed the Order a duality that was lacking in the League case. With one eye set on assisting the National Organisation and achieving legislative independence, the Order could set its other on Catholic betterment, on preparing for Home Rule, and envisioning life afterwards. This was a dream that constitutional nationalists and constitutional separatists alike could partake in. Prior to 1914 three elements were apparent. The AOH was devoted to the idea of a Catholic Ireland, one where the Catholic Church and its priests were respected and venerated, and all the heretical forces of Freemasonry and Orangeism repulsed. Indeed, a further crusade against immorality overlapped with Hibernian designs in the social sphere. There the AOH sought to prevent and reverse Anglicisation, to cultivate an Irish identity distinct and separate from England. Banners, lectures, music, songs, language and dance classes, the Hibernian Boy's Brigade, and Ladies' Auxiliary, all attested to this. Under national insurance, the Order improved the economic condition of the Irish populace and perhaps in this way suggested two less obvious policies: Hibernian halls and national insurance doled out education and training while also stymieing emigration.

Hibernian Home Rule did not come to pass, Redmond's goal was exposed, and the AOH, along with the constitutional nationalist cause was usurped by Sinn Fein. How did this come to pass? The trouble seems to have begun with the Unionist Party's establishment of the Ulster Volunteer Force. The UVF demanded an equally militant response, one which John Redmond and the rest of the IPP leadership was unwilling to meet. The initiative was lost to the IRB who were able to use Eoin MacNeill to establish an Irish Volunteer Force and mask their involvement. Fear, not just that the British government would not implement Home Rule but that the UVF would resist it, spurred IVF recruitment – and the enlistment of constitutional separatists - at critical points; as with the Curragh incident, the gunrunning at Larne and Howth harbour, and the shooting at Bachelor's Walk. The First World War froze matters, but here Redmond made a grievous mistake, revealing his pro-Imperialist predilections by committing the IVF to the British side in the conflict. Afterwards the movement was split into two factions, and while the Redmondite National Volunteers became moribund and rapidly declined, the IRB led Irish Volunteers stayed active and grew. By 1916, the First World War was still going on and Home Rule seemed like it would never arrive. During Easter week a number of separatists took matters into their own hands but were quickly defeated. The Rising and its rebels might have been forgotten but for how the British government responded. Conducting nation-wide arrests along with killing some but not all of the participants and freeing the remainder alienated the Irish populace and allowed a constitutional separatist party to coalesce. We say constitutional separatist in that this new party – which obviously aimed at separation - endeavoured to and was successfully elected by the will of the Irish people. This became possible after the IPP showed its true colours once again, trying and failing to force through exclusion. The Conscription Crisis of 1918 undoubtedly played its part, as with the Representation of the People Act, but courting the Irish vote was the crucial difference between this and previous efforts at separation. Now exposed for what it was, a decidedly constitutional nationalist organisation, the AOH could hardly compete, and it is clear that many Hibernians, as with the wider Irish population were converted to the constitutional separatist course.

Other angles

This thesis has studied the Ancient Order of Hibernians during its heyday, 1905-18. In so doing it has affirmed the notion that a constitutional separatist grouping existed within the AOH, and perhaps even more significantly, within Irish nationalism itself. Sufficient evidence has been solicited to prove that this vein ran deep, existing as far back as Daniel O’Connell. Still, further examination, specifically of the extent to which O’Connell and Parnell were constitutional separatists could prove profitable. An us and them dichotomy, as between constitutional nationalists and purely separatists clearly fails to explain the happenings of the pre and Irish Revolution. The views of individuals like John Redmond, Joseph Devlin and John Dillon need to be set on a firmer footing, their actions and behaviours interrogated perhaps even more extensively. Similarly, Hibernian Home Rule, and in particular, the AOH’s efforts in the social sphere problematises or enhances – depending on your view – the literary revival and cultural nationalism which separatists were said to draw upon, in challenging the Irish Party’s hegemony. Either the Order was adding to the conversation or it was providing an alternative. This thesis ends at 1918, though it is clear that the AOH laboured on. Short of incidental efforts by Eamon Phoenix and A.C. Hepburn – which focuses on northern nationalism and Joseph Devlin respectively - no substantial work has been completed on the AOH after the general election. This study has also uncovered two additional organisations which could be usefully investigated: The Ladies’ Auxiliary and the AOH Irish American Alliance.

To date only Diane Urquhart has examined the Ladies’ Auxiliary. Her focus, however, is on the Society’s political opportunities as a result of enfranchisement in 1918.¹⁶⁰⁰ The more significant decade of LA activity, 1908-1918, is overlooked. Research into the Ladies’ Auxiliary is all the more salient for the heavy emphasis on the Republican tradition.¹⁶⁰¹ The LA clearly complicates the notion that the IPP and constitutional nationalism as a whole was unsympathetic towards the Suffragette movement.¹⁶⁰² The current work has only highlighted the Auxiliary’s social role, but the Society did have a political and economic one as well. It was the latter aspect and in particular, the advent

¹⁶⁰⁰Urquhart, *Women in Ulster*, pp 85-117.

¹⁶⁰¹Beth McKillen, ‘Irish Feminism and Nationalist Separatism, 1914-23’ in *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 17, No. 3, (Winter, 1982), pp 52-67; Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London, 1983). The members of the Ladies’ Auxiliary also do not feature on a single photo in Liz Gillis’s recent work *Women of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2016).

¹⁶⁰²Donncha O Corrain, Margaret MacCurtain (eds), *Women in Irish Society: The Historical Dimension* (Dublin, 1979), pp 49-50.

of national insurance, which facilitated a massive expansion of the organisation. As a factor affecting women's history, especially before the Representation of the People Act (1918), national insurance clearly deserves greater analysis. The LA was too a transnational organisation, with branches in England, Ireland and Scotland. Just recently D.A.J. MacPherson and M.J. Hickman have asserted that women's experience is a marginal part of general works on migration and diaspora.¹⁶⁰³ The Auxiliary existed during a downturn in Irish emigration that has, to date, been underrepresented in the historiography.¹⁶⁰⁴ While no minute books for the LA have been discovered, those of the Board of Erin along with several male divisions shed light on the organisation. Taken with newspaper reports of the time and references to the LA in the *Hibernian Journal*, there is clearly an adequate bedrock for a study of the society.

The AOH Irish American Alliance also had a Ladies' Auxiliary. Between 1910-13 there were at least nine branches in existence, with at least one in Londonderry and another in Dublin.¹⁶⁰⁵ While the Alliance's LA preoccupied itself with much the same activities as the BOE's, the members were also known to drill and march. Indeed, the IAA further adds to the notion that Irish nationalism was a spectrum. The police reported on how the movement was quite secretive, but newspapers such as the *Dundalk Examiner and Louth Advertiser* and the *Derry Journal* reportedly extensively on its public activities.¹⁶⁰⁶ In this sense the IAA was perhaps one of multiple Sinn Fein precursors. Despite the available information on the Alliance – in the colonial office papers, the *Hibernian Journal* and newspapers – it rarely crops up in studies of the period and no inquiry has been conducted. In his 1977 study, *Politics and Irish Life*, David Fitzpatrick notes that a rival AOH existed, but there were no branches in County Clare.¹⁶⁰⁷ More recently, Adrian Grant has identified a flourishing Alliance division in Londonderry. With over 180 members in 1908 it overshadowed the workings of the local AOH branch. It seems to have involved itself in the language and cultural revival, opening rooms at the local hall for classes and events. Some cross-membership with the IRB was also apparent,

¹⁶⁰³D.A.J. MacPherson and M. J. Hickman, 'Introduction' in D.A.J. MacPherson and M. J. Hickman (eds), *Women and Irish diaspora identities: Theories, concepts and new perspectives* (Manchester, 2014), p. 1.

¹⁶⁰⁴J.A. Jackson, 'The Irish in Britain' in P.J. Drury (ed), *Irish Studies 5: Ireland and Britain since 1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), p. 125.

¹⁶⁰⁵*BWN*, 8 Sept. 1910; *II*, 6 Sept. 1910.

¹⁶⁰⁶A search on the British Newspaper Archives yields 346 hits. See for instance, *DELA*, 18 Feb. 1911; *DJ*, 1 Jan. 1913. (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>) (18/04/19)

¹⁶⁰⁷Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 82, reference 18.

ten of the branch's members holding positions of national leadership within the Fenians. In 1913, meanwhile, the member J.J. Scolan departed for Dublin and established a military wing, the Hibernian Rifles, thereby anticipating the Irish Volunteer Force.¹⁶⁰⁸ Using new materials from the Bureau of Military History Archive, Ruan O'Donnell and Micheal O' Haodha have shown how the Rifles participated in the Easter Rising.¹⁶⁰⁹ Gerard Morgan as well has noted that when Hibernian divisions in the parish of Clonguish collapsed, the members joined Sinn Fein and an AOH IAA branch was started.¹⁶¹⁰ The Irish American Alliance then, is surely worthy of investigation.

¹⁶⁰⁸Grant, *Derry*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁰⁹Ruan O'Donnell and Micheal O' Haodha (eds), *Voices from the Easter Rising* (Sallins, 2016), pp 144-46.

¹⁶¹⁰Morgan, 'The Ancient Order', p. 595.

Appendix 1

Male divisions in provinces, Apr. 1911-Aug. 1915

Province	Apr. 1911	Jan. 1912	Feb. 1912	Apr. 1913	Aug. 1915
Ulster	433		454	469	476
Connaught	67		102	122	166
Leinster	28		99	167	197
Munster	15		130	186	193
Scotland	94	99		114	118
England	35	39		87	84
Wales	4	4		18	17
Total	676		824	1,163	1,246

Source: *HJ*, Apr. 1911; *HJ*, Aug. 1915.

Appendix 2

Private section membership in Ireland, Apr. 1913-Sept. 1917

County	Apr. 1913	Sept. 1917	County	Apr. 1913	Sept. 1917
Ulster			Leinster		
Antrim	1,755	1,178	Dublin & Kildare	5,962	3,918
Belfast	2,005	2,026	Meath	2,251	840
Derry	2,339	1,762	Westmeath	6,55	316
Tyrone	3,273	1,985	Kilkenny	1,28	311
Donegal	5,210	3,281	Louth	1,524	1,022
Fermanagh	1,167	842	King's Co.	150	279
Cavan	1,214	1,590	Wexford	2,250	1,167
Armagh	2,369	1,418	Wicklow	974	851
Monaghan	1,527	1,027	Longford	847	525
Down	2,908	1,740	Carlow	110	126
Total	23,707	16,849	Total	14,851	9,684
Munster			Connaught		
Cork	5,322	2,139	Mayo	966	660
Limerick	3,158	677	Galway	215	900
Waterford	826	514	Leitrim	1,916	1,050
Tipperary	1,630	1,459	R'common	1,386	896
Kerry	1,946	392	Sligo	1,510	961
Clare	318	412	Total	5,993	4,467
Total	13,200	5,593			

Source: *HJ*, Apr. 1913; *HJ*, Sept. 1917

Appendix 3

Private section membership in Scotland, England and Wales, Apr. 1913-Sept. 1917

County	Apr. 1913	Sept. 1917	County	Apr. 1913	Sept. 1917
Scotland			England		
Ayr		324	London		488
Fife		440	Liverpool		265
Renfrew		1,214	Lancashire		396
Dumbarton		873	Cumberland		344
Linlithgow		412	Durham		1,300
Stirling		518	Total	3,699	2,793
Lanark		2,836		Wales	
Glasgow		3,776	Glamorgan	641	547
Edinburgh		490	Total	641	547
Total	16,020	10,533			

Source: *HJ*, Apr. 1913; *HJ*, Sept. 1917

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