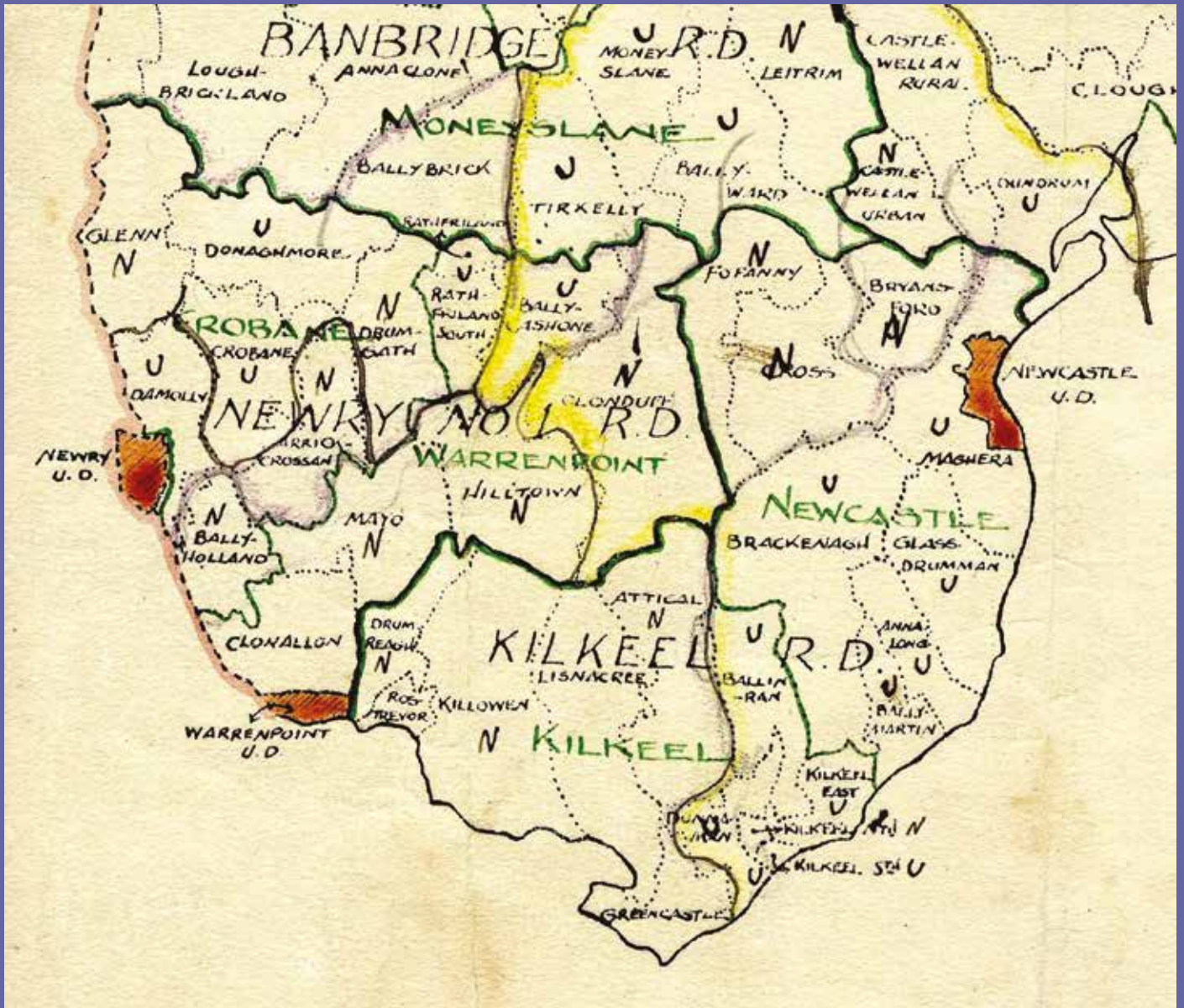


The Legacy: Newry 1920 – 1930



Border customs post at Killeen, outside Newry. In April 1923 a decision was made by the Free State government to introduce a customs barrier between the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland.

Newry and Mourne Museum Collection



Detail from a map of local councils in County Down c.1930, showing part of Newry Urban District Council, Newry No. 1 Rural District Council, Warrenpoint Urban District Council, Kilkeel Rural District Council and Kilkeel Urban District Council.

Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

Réamhrá an Chathaoirligh

Tá lúcháir orm an réamhrá a scríobh don bhailiúchán aistí seo a théann leis an taispeántas sealadach *The Legacy: Newry 1920 – 1930* ag Iarsmalann an Iúir agus Mhúrn.

Le téamaí bunaithe ar ábhar i mBailiúchán na hIarsmalainne a bhaineann leis an tréimhse seo, tugann gach ceann de na haistí seo léargas ar stair cheantar an Iúir agus Mhúrn sna 1920idí.

Thug an Dr Éamon Phoenix forbhreathnú ar an Iúr agus ar a chúlchríoch sa tréimhse rithábhachtach seo i stair na hÉireann, ag cur béime ar eachtraí éagsúla agus tionchar imeachtaí náisiúnta ar an saol poiblí agus ar an tsochaí. Sa dara aiste díríonn sé ar Éamon Donnelly, polaiteoir náisiúnach mór le rá sa tréimhse seo, a bhí ina chónaí ar an Iúr agus a bhfuil a bhailiúchán páipéar polaitiúil san Iarsmalann.

Ina chéad aiste cuireann an Dr Cormac Moore ábhar a bhaineann le Cúirteanna Poblachtacha Dáil Éireann agus Póilíní Poblachtacha i gceantar an Iúir, atá i mBailiúchán na hIarsmalainne, ina chomhthéacs polaitiúil níos leithne. Le haghaidh a dhara aiste úsáideann an Dr Moore ábhar an Choimisiúin Teorann i mBailiúchán Cónaithe na hIarsmalainne chun an Coimisiún a phlé i ndeisceart agus in oirthear an Dúin agus i ndeisceart Ard Mhacha.

Ag díriú ar eastáit an teaghlaigh Hall ó Chaol Uisce, déanann John Corrigan scrúdú ar dhíolacháin talún le feirmeoirí tionóntacha roimh agus i ndiaidh chríochdheighilt na hÉireann, agus an tionchar a bhí aige seo ar an cheantar tuaithe.

Déanann an tOllamh Brian Walker iniúchadh ar thábhacht chuairt James Craig ar Chomhairle Dúiche Uirbeach an Iúir i mí Feabhra 1927, ag tabhairt léargais ar ról an rialtais áitiúil sa stát nua ó thuaidh.

Ba mhian liom buíochas a ghabháil leis na rannpháirtithe thuasluaite agus leo siúd go léir a chuidigh leis an leabhar agus leis an taispeántas, a thugann deis tuiscint níos doimhne a fháil ar chastachtaí na tréimhse seo.

An Comhairleoir Cathy Mhásún

Cathaoirleach Chomhairle Ceantair an Iúir,
Mhúrn agus an Dúin

Chairperson's Foreword

I am delighted to write the foreword to this collection of essays to accompany the *The Legacy: Newry 1920 - 1930*, a temporary exhibition at Newry and Mourne Museum.

Themed around material in the Museum Collection relevant to this period, each of these essays provides an insight into the history of the Newry and Mourne area in the 1920s.

Dr Éamon Phoenix has provided an overview of Newry and its hinterland in this crucial period of Irish history, highlighting the various incidents and impact of national events on public life and society. In his second essay he focuses on Éamon Donnelly, a prominent nationalist politician in this period, who lived in Newry and whose collection of political papers are in the Museum.

In his first essay Dr Cormac Moore puts material relating to the Dáil Éireann Republican Courts and Republican Police in the Newry area, which is in the Museum Collection, into its wider political context. For his second essay Dr Moore uses the Boundary Commission material in the Museum's Reside Collection for discussion of the Commission in south and east Down and south Armagh.

Focusing on the estates of the Hall family of Narrow Water, John Corrigan examines the sales of land to tenant farmers before and after Partition, and how this impacted on the rural area.

The significance of the visit of James Craig to Newry Urban District Council in February 1927, is explored in the final essay by Professor Brian Walker, giving an insight into the role of local government in the new northern state.

I would like to thank the above contributors and all those who helped with the book and exhibition, which provides an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the complexities of this period.

Councillor Cathy Mason

Chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

The Authors

Dr Éamon Phoenix is a former Principal Lecturer in History and Head of Lifelong Learning at Stranmillis University College, Queen's University Belfast. He is the author of a number of books on modern Irish History including *Northern Nationalism 1890-1940*. He writes the daily 'On This Day' column for the Irish News and is a regular broadcaster. He is a member of the Irish Government's Advisory Committee on Centenaries.

Dr Cormac Moore is an historian-in-residence with Dublin City Council on its Decade of Commemorations programme. He holds a PhD from De Montfort University in Leicester and is author of three books; *Birth of the Border: The Impact of Partition in Ireland* (2019), *The Irish Soccer Split* (2015) and *The GAA V Douglas Hyde: The Removal of Ireland's First President as GAA Patron* (2012).

John Corrigan retired in 2010 and completed a BA (Hons) in English and History from the University of Ulster, and is completing an MA in Irish History at Queen's University Belfast. His MA dissertation is on the impact of Irish Land Commission on the Hall estates at Narrow Water and Mullaghglass.

Brian M. Walker is Professor Emeritus of Irish Studies at Queens University Belfast. He has served as Director of the Institute of Irish Studies at Queens, Chairman of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and President of the Linen Hall Library, Belfast. He has written many books on Irish history, including *A political history of the two Irelands: from Partition to peace* (2012) and *Irish history matters: politics, identities and commemoration* (2019).

The Newry Area from Home Rule to Partition and the Boundary Commission, 1912-1927

Éamon Phoenix

From Parnellite 'the invasion of Ulster' in 1885, the Home Rule or Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) held the allegiance of the mass of Catholics in the north of Ireland. Ulster Protestants, on the other hand, had mobilised to oppose Home Rule, fearing that a Nationalist-dominated parliament in Dublin would imperil their civil and religious liberties and economic interests. On the eve of the Third Home Rule Bill in 1912, the Nationalist Party under John Redmond, John Dillon and their northern lieutenant, 'Wee Joe' Devlin dominated the political landscape on the island and in the Newry area. Nationalist MPs represented the three local constituencies at Westminster: Newry Borough, South Down and South Armagh. The port town of Newry was overwhelmingly Nationalist with a significant Protestant minority of about 25 per cent.

Since the early 1900s, Joseph Devlin's political-religious pressure group, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) had established a strong presence in the south Down/south Armagh area. On the Unionist side, the revived Orange Order mobilised the Protestant community.¹

By 1912, following its alliance with H.H. Asquith's Liberal minority government, the IPP seemed unassailable. However, the period 1912-14 witnessed the emergence of determined Unionist resistance, led by the Dublin lawyer, Sir Edward Carson and his northern deputy, James Craig and backed by the formidable forces of British Conservatism. As tensions rose in Ireland with the rise of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and its Nationalist counter-weight, the Irish Volunteers in 1913, the Home Rule leaders found themselves compelled by their Liberal allies to consider some form of Ulster 'exclusion' to defuse the crisis.

Already in August 1913, Sir Edward Carson addressed his supporters in Newry and announced the formation of an 'Ulster Provisional Government' to oppose Home Rule. 'I am told it will be After After Rule'. He added: 'I am told it will be illegal. Of course it will ... the Volunteers are illegal ... and the Government dare not interfere with them ... Don't be afraid of illegalities.'²

In south Armagh, the RIC recorded that the first meeting of the Irish Volunteers (IVF), launched in Dublin in November 1913 by Eoin MacNeill with secret support from the Irish Republican Brotherhood – took place on 18 April 1914. 'With the initiation of the National Volunteer movement in the spring, feeling became very bitter, worse than it had been for years.'² The IVF mushroomed during the summer of 1914 in response to Carson's rejection of the government's 'county option' proposals. This scheme, accepted by Redmond, would have seen the exclusion of four counties from Home Rule for a six-year period but, importantly, would have placed Newry under a Dublin parliament.³

By the spring the nationalist press reported that the Camlough core of the IVF had 300 members. However, the Volunteers remained poorly armed; as a leading figure, Johnny McCoy recalled: 'There were no rifles or military equipment ...' In contrast, the local UVF had a surfeit of German rifles following the spectacular Larne gun-running of April 1914.⁴

By August that year, with the collapse of the Buckingham Palace Conference, Ireland seemed on the brink of Civil War, a catastrophe only averted by the outbreak of the Great War on 4 August 1914. Redmond's support for the British war effort precipitated a split in the Volunteers with the vast majority in the Newry area, and throughout Ireland, following his call 'to go wherever the firing line extends'. As members of 'Carson's Army' swelled the ranks of the 36th Ulster Division, many Newry Nationalists joined Redmond's 'Irish Brigade'.

The 1916 Rising evoked mixed feelings in Newry where the local IRB was taken by surprise. While Unionists condemned the insurrection, many Nationalists viewed it as foolish and a setback for the Home Rule cause. At least two local men, Patrick Rankin of Newry, a member of the IRB, and Michael Donnelly of Silverbridge, took part in the fighting in Dublin. Both would be interned in Britain afterwards as was the Armagh-based separatist, Éamon Donnelly who had mobilised with the Belfast Volunteers at Coalisland.

1. É Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism: Nationalist Politics, Partition and the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1994), pp xiii-xiv

2. D. Mccardle *The Irish Republic* (Dublin, 1951), pp 89-90.

2. RIC Report for Co Armagh, Jan-June 1914, PRONI MIC/448/67

3. Phoenix, *op.cit.*, pp12-13

4. John McCoy, *Memoir* (Newry and Mourne Museum) p 11; Mac Ghiolla Choille, *op.cit.*, p72

The executions in May 1916 transformed public opinion in the area. The RIC noted that in County Armagh following the executions, 'a malignant spirit manifested itself by indifference to Allied successes [and] a falling off in recruiting ...' In south Armagh, Johnny McCoy noted that 'people got a shocked sense of the inhumanity of executing brave men who might have been foolish ...'⁵

As Nationalist opinion began to change in the wake of the Rising, Newry Nationalists were thrown into turmoil by the decision of the Nationalist leadership to endorse the Lloyd George scheme for immediate Home Rule subject to the exclusion of the six counties for an unspecified period. While Carson assured Newry Unionists that Partition would be permanent, thus ensuring their exclusion from an Irish parliament, Redmond and Devlin sought to portray the scheme as merely temporary. At the Belfast Nationalist Conference on 23 June 1916, which decisively endorsed the scheme, two-thirds of the County Armagh delegates supported Redmond. However, many local Nationalists felt betrayed with their spokesman, John McGlone, a leading Hibernian, denouncing 'these dastardly proposals' which would rehabilitate 'the Orange Ascendancy'.⁶ The scheme collapsed but a permanent split developed within the once monolithic Home Rule movement in the north. For the former Redmondite turned Sinn Féiner, Éamon Donnelly, the national leaders had abandoned the Northern Nationalists to their fate.⁷

By 1917, the Irish Volunteers in the Newry area were being revived by young men like Frank Aiken, the son of a prosperous builder and farmer from Camlough, and Donnelly.⁸ At the same time, the Sinn Féin party, committed to the achievement of a united Irish Republic, began to make inroads into the area. The new movement had the support of the local Nationalist newspaper, the *Frontier Sentinel*, which condemned the Redmondites as 'the men who conspired with England and the Carsonites to Partition Ireland' and facilitated the 1916 executions. It contrasted the Home Rulers with 'the virile patriotism of Sinn Féin'.⁹

In October 1917 a crowd of 4,000 attended a Sinn Féin meeting in Castlewellan addressed by Countess Markievicz. The meeting was preceded by 'men marching in formation' and carrying the tricolour. At the same time the local IPP MPs toured the South Armagh and South Down constituencies in an attempt to galvanise support, prompting the English *Morning Post* to comment: 'To judge from the attendance, the Sinn Féiners have captured the great bulk of the Nationalists'.¹⁰

Finally, the deputy leader of the IPP, John Dillon travelled to Castlewellan on 2 December 1917 to address 4,000 Nationalists. The veteran parliamentarian rejected the Republican programme as 'absurd, childish and wild' but, significantly, the South Down MP, Jeremiah MacVeagh was more restrained in his criticism of de Valera's party, expressing his admiration for the men of 1916. Local Nationalists, however, remained uneasy and were unconvinced by Dillon's statement that 'Partition was now as dead as Queen Anne'.

In January 1918, the death of the South Armagh MP, Dr Charles O'Neill, was to pave the way for Sinn Féin's first electoral contest in Ulster. The South Armagh by-election was dominated from the outset by the issue of Partition rather than 'Home Rule v Republic'. The Nationalists had the advantage of a strong local candidate in Patrick Donnelly, a Newry solicitor, while Sinn Féin nominated the Tyrone Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) leader, Dr Patrick McCartan. The election was characterised by violent clashes between the Hibernians and 'train' bands of Volunteers, imported from the south while de Valera was physically attacked by Hibernians near Crossmaglen.¹¹ The result showed a striking victory for the Nationalist candidate who won by a majority of over a thousand votes.

5. McCoy memoir, p 25

6. Phoenix, op.cit., pp 21-35

7. On his printed account of the 'Ulster Nationalist Conference' [23 June 1916], Donnelly, a former IPP supporter in Armagh, wrote: 'The battle is lost'.

8. J Quinn and P Maume, *Ulster Political Lives 1886-1921* (Royal Irish Academy, 2016), 27-29

9. *Frontier Sentinel* [FS], 13 Oct 1917. The *Frontier Sentinel* was part of the *Ulster Herald* group of newspapers in Omagh whose owners switched allegiance to Sinn Féin in 1917.

10. Phoenix, op.cit., pp 45-46; FS 13 Oct. 1917

11. Ibid., pp 46-47

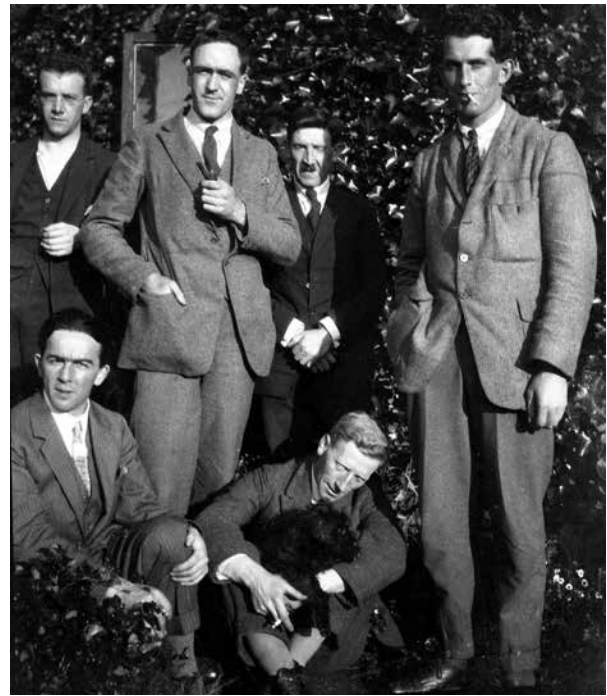
The Newry area was heavily impacted by the Anti-Conscription campaign in April 1918 which increased support for the Republican Party.¹² As the prospect of a post-war general election loomed, grassroots pressure mounted for an electoral pact between the two anti-Partitionist parties which would prevent the 'Carsonites' winning the Nationalist seats. In the end a pact was brokered by Cardinal Logue who allocated the Ulster seats between the contesting parties. Donnelly, the outgoing MP, conceded privately that, without a pact, the IPP would be 'swamped by the Sinn Féin organisation'.¹³

In the end, Logue allocated South Armagh and South Down to the Nationalists and the newly constituency of East Down (created with a built-in Nationalist majority) to Sinn Féin. The pact worked smoothly except in East Down where a revolt by the local Nationalists against the Sinn Féin candidate and his 'mongrel flag' forced a bitter contest which resulted in a Unionist victory.¹⁴

Even before the opening of the War of Independence in January 1919, local Irish Republican Army (IRA) leaders in the Newry area such as Frank Aiken and Johnny McCoy had begun to reorganise the Volunteers for possible military action. In Camlough, the ubiquitous Aiken became O/C of the local battalion and other South Armagh companies joined them. Later a Newry Brigade was formed. In early 1919 the local IRA launched a series of raids on private houses and RIC barracks to procure much-needed arms.¹⁵

The first IRA action took place at Camlough in July 1919 when two RIC constables were physically assaulted as they escorted a party of Gaelic footballers. This was followed by a carefully-planned attack on Newtownhamilton police barracks in May 1920 involving twenty men, led by Aiken. Explosives were used to destroy this important police base though the RIC refused to surrender. In face of the escalating IRA campaign the RIC began to abandon the smaller outposts in the Newry area, many of which were later burned. The war continued to escalate during 1920.¹⁶

In response to these attacks, local Unionists began to revive the pre-war UVF. J Webster, a leading UVF figure in Armagh, recalled that, as the RIC were unable to protect Loyalist property, he organised a number of 'responsible men' into security patrols 'to protect the lives and property of the Loyalists'. Obtaining guns from UVF Headquarters in Belfast, he visited most of the Orange Halls in south Armagh in an effort to re-form the 'Carson's Army'. In most cases the RIC helpfully turned 'a blind eye' to his illegal endeavours.¹⁷



During the War of Independence, Frank Aiken (2nd from left) from Camlough, south Armagh, commanded the 4th Northern Division of the IRA. P104/670 Reproduced by kind permission of UCD Archives.

12. RIC Intelligence Notes, TNA, CO 903/19/4

13. Donnelly to TJ Hanna, 28 Nov 1918, TCD, John Dillon papers 6763/197

14. Phoenix, op cit., p52; *Irish News*, 3 Dec 1918; handbill in Down County Museum entitled, 'Nationalist Electors of East Down' (11 Dec 1918): it reads 'Vote for Michael Johnston in the true interests of Ireland' and is signed by a number of leading IPP councillors in the constituency. The Sinn Féin 'Pact' candidate, Dr RH McNabb was defeated by DD Reid (Unionist).

15. McCoy Memoir, pp 42-57; McCoy, WS 492 pp 46-54; Raymond P Watson, *Cath Saoirse an Iúir: Newry's Struggle* (nd) pp 34-38

16. *Newry Reporter*, 7 Mar 1919; McCoy Memoir, pp 56-70; John Grant WS 658 (Bureau of Military History, Dublin).

17. J Webster, Account of revival of UVF in south Armagh [1920], PRONI D1022

The latter half of 1920 witnessed the IRA campaign move to a new phase with larger guerrilla operations and British counter-measures, including the use of official 'reprisals'. In November 1920 the IRA assassinated Head Constable John Kearney as he emerged from devotions at the Dominican Chapel in Newry. In retaliation, Crown forces burned the local Sinn Féin hall.¹⁸ It was at this point that the Ulster Special Constabulary (USC), formed by the British Government at Craig's request, arrived in the area. A sectarian paramilitary force, based on the UVF, the Specials were both feared and detested by the local Nationalist population. Within a few days of their arrival in Newry, Devlin claimed in Parliament that they were harassing people and firing revolvers wildly in the street.¹⁹

For the local Unionist minority, however, the Specials offered protection and reassurance. As one Newry Unionist informed Craig, '... after the murder of Head Constable Kearney ... the Loyalists were living in a state of terror and were largely at the mercy of the rebels. Captain Carlisle [an RIC officer] got control of the position and by his firmness ... obtained the confidence of all Loyalists and the intense hatred of the rebels.'²⁰

In the local elections of 1920, the first held under Proportional Representation (PR), Sinn Féin made inroads in the Newry area, becoming the largest party on Newry Urban Council. In June the Sinn Féin-dominated Kilkeel Board of Guardians became the first public authority in north-east Ulster to proclaim its allegiance to the Dáil.²¹

Against this background of growing Republican self-confidence, Éamon Donnelly, a key Sinn Féin organiser, was active in raising subscriptions for the Dáil Éireann Loan, organised by his friend, Michael Collins to support the underground Republican government. In addition, following a decree of Dáil Éireann, he set about establishing Republican arbitration courts in south Armagh and adjoining areas with mixed results. These became more effective after the Truce.²²

In December 1920, the IRA launched its most spectacular operation, an attack on the heavily-defended Camlough RIC barracks. The operation was deliberately planned by Aiken to protest at the final passage of the Partition Act. While one IRA company, led by Aiken, attempted to capture and burn the barracks, another lay in wait at the Egyptian Arch for the expected British reinforcements. The IRA failed to capture the barracks but three Volunteers were killed in a fire-fight with British troops and Specials at the Arch. In a direct reprisal Crown forces burned a pub and several houses belonging to Aiken.²³

In May 1921 the Nationalist and Sinn Féin parties signed an electoral pact. This secured the return of de Valera and the Nationalist, Patrick O'Neill in Down while Michael Collins was returned in Armagh along with the leading Hibernian, John D Nugent. James Craig was among the Unionists returned for Down.²⁴ The IRA responded to the visit of King George V to open the new northern parliament by derailing a royal troop train containing the King's personal bodyguard and killing four people.²⁵



The aftermath of the derailment of the troop train near Adavoyle which took place on 24 June 1921, just two days after the opening of the Belfast Parliament. Three soldiers and an assistant guard died as a result of the derailment. Three local men working close to the scene were shot in retaliation. Over 40 horses were thought to have been killed. *Courtesy of Cathy Brooks*

18. *Newry Telegraph*, 23 Nov 1921; Watson, op. cit., p 41.

19. M Farrell, *Arming the Protestants: The Formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary 1920-27* (Brandon, 1983), pp 51-52

20. E Phoenix, Report on State papers released by PRONI, *Irish News*, 3 Jan. 1991.

21. Ibid, pp 74-5, 90-91;

22. M Collins to E Donnelly, 27 July 1920, Newry and Mourne Museum, The Éamon Donnelly Collection, 1.2; Austin Stack to Donnelly, 19 January 1921, ibid; Jack McElhaw, WS 634 (BMH) on Republican Court in the Foresters' Hall in Camlough during the Truce of 1921.

23. McCoy memoir, 91-6.

24. Phoenix, op cit., 127-32

25. John Grant WS 658 (BMH), pp 7-8; *Irish News*, 25 June 1921.



Camlough RIC barracks pictured in May 1921.
Courtesy of Jim McCorry

The Truce brought the violence to a temporary end. IRA training camps were established at Seaforde, Castlewellan and Killeavy while the Specials were temporarily stood down. The fear of local Unionists are captured in a letter from GW Young, the agent of the Meade estate in south Down to his landlord in October 1921:

‘... every rebel in the county seems to be in possession of a firearm ... whereas the unfortunate Loyalists ... were asked to surrender their arms and the majority did so ... trusting the British Government to defend them. ... The worst of it all is that the county is becoming terrorised and the sympathy of the uneducated RCs is with the Shinnners.’²⁶

In September 1921, Michael Collins paid a dramatic visit to Armagh at the behest of Éamon Donnelly. Addressing a vast assemblage of 10,000, the Dáil Finance Minister assured the northern Nationalists that Sinn Féin ‘would not desert them.’²⁷

The Treaty of 6 December 1921 was received by the Nationalist population of the Newry area with a mixture of confusion and unease. However, many looked to the promised Boundary Commission to transfer the town and its hinterland to the new Irish Free State. Almost immediately, Newry Urban Council under its old Redmondite chairman, Hugh J McConville, passed a motion ‘refusing to recognise the authority of the Northern Parliament’ and pledging allegiance to Dáil Éireann’. In response, the Belfast government dissolved the council.

With de Valera’s rejection of the Treaty, anti-Treaty feeling began to manifest itself in the area. A Sinn Féin solicitor in Downpatrick, John Henry King informed Collins that local Nationalists were ‘nervous over our position here in Ulster’. Pressed by Bishop Mulhern of Dromore on the Boundary Question, Collins assured him on 20 January 1922:

‘Quite clearly the Irish Government would have the allegiance of the people in such places as South and East Down and a great part of Armagh ... Therefore, no action ... of the Northern Parliament could take this territory away from the Irish Government ...’

In addition, Collins pursued a twin-track strategy in relation to Northern Ireland, combining diplomatic overtures to Craig with direct action by the IRA. This involved Collins, as chairman of the Provisional Government, in giving military guarantees and support to the local IRA divisions while agreeing to fund a non-recognition campaign by teachers in northern Catholic schools. As violence flared on the border, Aiken, whose overriding concern was Partition, became chairman of a special ‘Ulster Council’ of the IRA and plans were drawn up for a six-county insurrection to commence in May 1922. At the last minute, however, Aiken received orders not to mobilise his men but the campaign went ahead in other IRA divisional areas.²⁸

The run-up to the Civil War in June 1922 saw a series of brutal sectarian reprisal killings in the Newry area involving both the local IRA and the USC. The local Resident Magistrate, James Woulfe Flanagan was shot dead at Newry Cathedral while a series of roadside murders of Republicans in south Armagh was to prompt the IRA reprisal killing of six Protestant civilians at Altnaveigh, a small Protestant hamlet near Newry.²⁹

The violence ended abruptly with the outbreak of the Civil War in the south, with Aiken ultimately taking the anti-Treaty side, and the introduction of internment by Craig. At the same time the Unionist government passed the Local Government Act abolishing PR for local elections and paving the way for the gerrymandering of council wards.³⁰ By now, the suppression of Sinn Féin by the Unionist government, the internment of many local Sinn Féin leaders on both sides of the border and the serving of ‘exclusion orders’ on others had placed local affairs in the hands of the old Nationalist Party.³¹

26. GW Young to Mrs Meade, October 1921 (PRONI, Meade papers, D3644)

27. Phoenix, op.cit., p 147

28. Phoenix, op.cit., pp 218-9, McCoy memoir, pp 152-3: McCoy refers to the orders being ‘muddled’ by GHQ in Dublin with the result that the IRA in Belfast, Antrim and other areas ‘were soon overwhelmed’.

29. McElhaw WS 634; *Newry Reporter*, 17, 20 June 1922

30. Phoenix, op. cit., 223-4, 243--5

31. In an angry letter from Newbridge Internment Camp (Co Kildare), former Newry Sinn Féin leader, Robert Kelly attacked JH Collins MP for ‘handing over control of the town to a clique that always opposed the Sinn Féin organization and that would have acknowledged Craig and England at any time.’ (R Kelly, to JH Collins, 16 January 1923, PRONI JH Collins papers, D921/3/3)

It was not until the end of 1924 that the much-heralded Boundary Commission was finally constituted. At the Rostrevor hearings in March 1924, E M Stephens, the head of the Free State's Boundary Bureau, reported that the Nationalist witnesses, had been 'very strong on both the wishes of the inhabitants' to be incorporated in the Free State and on the economic links between Newry and its cross-border hinterland. The official was convinced that the Commission's finding in the Newry area would be 'in accordance with the evidence'. However, in the end, the Commission collapsed in December 1925 and the original 1920 border was confirmed.³²

There followed a series of meetings between the abstentionist 'border' MPs, including J H Collins (Armagh), Patrick O'Neill (Down) and the Fermanagh Nationalist leader, Cahir Healy. In February 1926, a Nationalist Convention in Castlewellan decided that O'Neill should take his seat in the Belfast parliament. In his speech the Nationalist MP railed against the 'desertion' of the border Nationalists by the pro-Treaty government in Dublin.³³

By 1927 there were ten Nationalist MPs in the Northern Ireland Parliament under Devlin's leadership and it is in this context that James Craig's 'conciliatory' visit to Newry in February 1927 should be seen. Healy's efforts to persuade Éamon Donnelly, now Republican MP for Armagh, to join the Nationalist group were unavailing. Nonetheless, in May 1928 the MPs had formed a new constitutional Nationalist party, the National League.³⁴

Over the years 1913 to 1925, the Newry area had been in the eye of the storm of rebellion, Partition and the Irish Revolution. This period had been one of great political hope, followed by bitter disappointment for the Nationalist majorities of Newry, south Down and south Armagh. For the local Unionist population, however, despite seemingly impossible odds, Craig had redeemed his pledge to secure their position under the Union Jack.



Sarah Ann Maginnis, pictured second from left with members of her family in 1926, was the first female councillor in Newry Urban District Council representing Sinn Féin. Joseph Connellan, Sinn Féin councillor and editor of the *Frontier Sentinel*, proposed at the council meeting of 4 July 1921 that Maginnis be co-opted, seconded by W.F. Cunningham. Courtesy of Dr Eoin Magennis

32. Phoenix, op.cit., 316-7, pp 332-3

33. Ibid, pp339-41. Fr Frank O'Hare, CC (Newry) used the convention to attack 'the gymnasts of the Free State Cabinet'.

34. Phoenix, op.cit. pp 339-53; Donnelly to Fr E Coyle [March 1928], PRONI Cahir Healy papers, D2991/B/9. Donnelly rejected Devlin's leadership and the concept of a separate northern Nationalist Party.

Éamon Donnelly (1877-1944): Republican Politician and Lifelong Anti-Partitionist

Éamon Phoenix

Éamon Donnelly, Sinn Féin activist, Republican politician and life-long anti-Partitionist, was born Edward John Donnelly on July 19, 1877 at Middletown, County Armagh. His father, Francis, was a stonemason and Home Ruler and his mother, Catherine Haggan, was the daughter of a Fenian farmer. Following an elementary education, Éamon became a labourer and then, for 27 years from the age of 14, he was employed as a storekeeper in Armagh Asylum.

For one who was later an unswerving Republican, Donnelly first entered politics as a supporter of the Irish Parliamentary Party and a member of Joseph Devlin's Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), a powerful force in Nationalist Ulster in the early twentieth century. His allegiance seems to have changed after 1914, possibly due to his opposition to John Redmond's support for the British war effort, resulting in his 'assimilation into the Republican movement'.³⁵ Donnelly's papers, now in Newry and Mourne Museum, show his anger at the northern Nationalists' endorsement of the Lloyd George scheme for six-county Partition in the wake of the Easter Rising in June 1916. 'The battle is lost', he scrawled on a printed account of Redmond's support for the scheme which subsequently collapsed.³⁶

One of the first members of the Irish Volunteers in Armagh in 1914, Donnelly mobilised with the Belfast Volunteers under Denis McCullough at Coalisland, County Tyrone at Easter 1916. Though they dispersed without fighting on receiving Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order, Donnelly would seem to have been arrested and briefly interned in England. On his release he played a key role in the reorganisation of the Volunteers in Armagh and in the expansion of Sinn Féin, now a Republican party, in the north in 1917-18. In the words of a political associate, the Middletown man's interest lay in the political movement rather than the Volunteers (soon to be reorganised as the IRA): '[He] transferred his energies and great ability to Sinn Féin ... and soon made his presence felt all over north Armagh'.³⁷

Donnelly (now 40) was widely seen as a gifted organiser, full of 'push and enthusiasm'. He was described as 'a human dynamo ... and one of the greatest organisers of election machinery that the Sinn Féin movement threw up'. He was also an accomplished platform speaker in the various elections of the revolutionary years. He played a prominent role in the South Armagh by-election of January 1918 (when the Sinn Féin candidate was defeated by a Home Ruler) and in the subsequent Anti-Conscription campaign which brought a flood of recruits to the Volunteers. In spite of Sinn Féin's defeat in the by-election, Donnelly was instrumental in the establishment of a rash of new Sinn Féin clubs across south Armagh.

As his political activities increased in May 1918, Donnelly was asked by his employers at Armagh Asylum either to terminate his public role in Sinn Féin or to resign his position as storekeeper of the institution. He refused to resign from the Republican Movement and was subsequently dismissed from his post. As a result, he became a full-time organiser for Sinn Féin in Armagh while fulfilling the role of president of the local Sinn Féin club.

During the general election of December 1918, which saw Sinn Féin win 73 of the 105 Irish seats, Donnelly was appointed director of elections for North-East Ulster. It was the original intention of Sinn Féin to contest only 'safe' Nationalist seats in the province due to financial constraints. However, Donnelly went to see Robert Brennan at Republican Headquarters in Dublin and argued that, if Ireland was to make a credible appeal to the post-war Peace Conference, they must be able to demonstrate 'the entire Irish vote for the Republic'. Moreover, he argued, by failing to contest strongly Unionist constituencies, the party would, by implication, be conceding to Unionism 'the right to rule a section of the country which should be subject to ... the whole Irish nation'. As a result of Donnelly's intervention, it was decided to run Sinn Féin candidates in every Irish constituency.³⁸

35. Frank Donnelly, Witness Statement (WS) 941 (Bureau of Military History (BMH), Dublin)

36. 'Ulster Nationalist Conference: Official Report [1916]' (The Éamon Donnelly Collection, Newry and Mourne Museum)

37. Donnelly WS, op. cit.

38. Robert Brennan, WS 774, BMH

During the War of Independence (1919-21) Donnelly's activities became the focus of police attention and his home, Tullyard House in Armagh, was frequently searched for arms. In September 1919, he was arrested and imprisoned for a fortnight in Belfast Gaol for refusing to pay a fine for riding a bicycle at night without a light.³⁹ Upon his release he was asked by Michael Collins, Minister of Finance in the new Republican government, to promote the Dáil Éireann Loan in the north. As a result of these activities, in November 1919 he was jailed for three months for 'unlawful assembly' at Tynan, County Armagh by soliciting subscriptions for the Republican Loan.⁴⁰

On his release, Donnelly resumed his activities as Chief Loan Organiser in the north ranging as far west as Fermanagh where he collaborated with the local Sinn Féin leader, Cahir Healy. Collins was impressed by Donnelly's abilities, informing him on July 27, 1920: 'I consider that the success of the Loan has been in no small way due to your effort in your own area.'⁴¹

During 1920-21 Donnelly was heavily involved in attempts to create a structure of Republican arbitration courts in the North following a decree of Dáil Éireann. While he had some success in 'border' areas of south Armagh and south Fermanagh, he faced practical difficulties in supplanting the Crown Courts in Unionist-dominated parts of Ulster. In Tyrone he found it difficult to persuade even Republican lawyers to abandon the British courts as he informed a Dáil official: 'As long as solicitors and [lay] magistrates attend British courts, it will be a temptation for our people to go there.'⁴² His papers reveal his regular contact with Austin Stack, the Dáil Minister of Home Affairs on his visits to Republican courts over a wide area.⁴³

Due to his regular contacts with the underground Republican government, the Armagh man forged a strong friendship with Michael Collins which would continue until the Treaty split in December 1921. In November 1920, for example, we find him in touch with Collins over the supply of goggles to the British forces. This followed a series of 'reprisal' assassinations of Republicans by men in mufti, wearing goggles. Following Donnelly's investigations into the matter, Collins informed him on December 9, 1920: 'I believe your surmise was correct and they are for murderous practices.' Collins passed the issue on to the Dáil Propaganda Department.⁴⁴

Donnelly played a key role in managing the Sinn Féin campaign during the local elections in Ulster in 1920 which resulted in the return of anti-Partitionist councils in Tyrone, Fermanagh and Derry City. In Newry, Sinn Féin became the largest party on the urban council with seven councillors though denied control by a combination of Nationalists and Unionists.



Éamon Donnelly was the Ulster organiser for Sinn Féin in the 1921 election campaign. He acted as election agent for Michael Collins and, in the campaign, an attempt was made on Donnelly's life by the Igoe Gang, a group of undercover RIC intelligence agents. In Northern Ireland, Unionists gained 42 out of the 55 seats available. Michael Collins was elected as an Abstentionist member for Armagh. *Newry and Mourne Museum Collection*

39. *Armagh Guardian*, 19 and 26 Sept. 1919

40. *Frontier Sentinel* [FS], 22 Nov. 1919

41. Collins [Dail Ministry of Finance] to Donnelly, 27 July 1920 (The Éamon Donnelly Collections)

42. Donnelly to Ministry of Justice, Dáil Éireann, 11 Oct. 1921 (NAI, DE11/1599)

43. 19 Jan 1921, Stack to Donnelly regarding District Courts visited by Donnelly

44. Collins to /Donnelly, 7 Dec. 1921

The Government of Ireland Act, passed at Westminster in December 1920, not only legislated for the Partition of Ireland, but provided for elections to a new Northern Ireland Parliament in May 1921. For Donnelly, a passionate Irishman, Partition was the supreme issue. In the words of his fellow-Republican, Robert Brennan: 'From 1920 ... to the day of his death, Éamon Donnelly worked day and night to right this wrong'⁴⁵.

During the 1921 election campaign to establish the new Northern Ireland Parliament, Donnelly was once again Sinn Féin's election organiser for the six counties. He was instrumental in persuading his friend, Michael Collins to stand as a Republican candidate in County Armagh. President de Valera stood in Down. Donnelly's aim was to strengthen the hands of the Sinn Féin leadership in any future Anglo-Irish negotiations about Partition.

The election campaign was marked by a pact between de Valera and Joe Devlin in an effort to maximise the anti-Partitionist vote. During the campaign Donnelly spoke at a series of Sinn Féin meetings, including one at the Shambles in Armagh where he was joined by the party's vice-president, Fr Michael O'Flanagan. In his memoirs, the local IRA commander, Charles McGleenan recalls that an attempt by the RIC to arrest Donnelly and O'Flanagan was only thwarted by the intervention of armed IRA Volunteers.⁴⁶ Despite harassment by the authorities, the difficulty of holding meetings in Unionist areas and an attempt by the notorious 'Igoe Gang' to assassinate him, Donnelly injected enthusiasm and vitality into the Republican campaign. Joseph Connolly, a Sinn Féin candidate in County Antrim and a future Minister under de Valera, described him as 'an excellent organiser with tireless energy ... an irresistible sense of humour and caustic Northern wit'.⁴⁷

At the height of the campaign de Valera wrote to him congratulating him 'on your successful organisation work up there. Everyone is full of praise for it.' The return of the Sinn Féin president in Down and of Collins in Armagh was regarded as a major triumph by Donnelly. However, the net total of six Sinn Féin MPs and six Nationalists returned was overshadowed by Sir James Craig's resounding victory with 40 seats in the new Northern Parliament.

In the run-up to the Treaty negotiations Donnelly persuaded Collins as a key member of the Irish delegation to make a dramatic visit to his Armagh constituency on September 3, 1921. The Dáil Minister and IRA leader, accompanied by Eoin O'Duffy, addressed a 10,000 strong audience including several thousand Volunteers, in the College Grounds in Armagh. He was welcomed at the City Hall by Donnelly who declared that 'the day had arrived at last in Armagh when it took its place with the rest of Ireland and its representative in the Republican Parliament was here to meet his friends'. Collins, in his speech, reassured the northern Nationalists that 'no matter what happens ... we shall not desert them'.⁴⁸

During the Treaty negotiations that autumn, Donnelly was invited by Collins to London to advise the Irish delegates on the Ulster Question but he was apparently prevented from attending by the illness of his wife, Marianne.⁴⁹

The Treaty, signed on 6 December 1921, with its failure to guarantee a united Ireland, came as a crushing blow to Donnelly who now broke with his former friend, Collins and joined the anti-Treatyites under de Valera. Like his fellow northerner, Sean MacEntee, Donnelly saw the Treaty as 'perpetuating Partition' and had little faith in the Boundary Commission. In the run-up to the Civil War he was de Valera's representative on Sinn Féin's Northern Advisory Committee.⁵⁰

45. Robert Brennan, WS, op. cit.

46. Charles McGleenan, WS 829, BMH

47. J. Anthony Gaughan (ed), *Memoirs of Senator Joseph Connolly* (Irish Academic Press, 1996), pp 150-1

48. *Irish News*, 4 Sept. 1921

49. Information from Donnelly family

50. Kevin O'Shiel to WT Cosgrave, 25 Sept 1922 (NAI, DT S1801). O'Shiel, Collins's Northern adviser on the Joint Committee describes Donnelly as 'chief [of the] 'disgruntled Northern Sinn Féiners' who opposed the Treaty and Collins' approach.



Shortly after the election, in September 1921, Éamon Donnelly organised a large rally in Armagh, at which Michael Collins was the key speaker.
Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

As a Republican activist during the subsequent Civil War (1922-23) Donnelly was arrested by Free State forces in February 1923 and detained in Mountjoy Prison until his daughter, Nellie, successfully applied for a writ of *Habeas Corpus*. As a result, he was briefly released in August 1923 and then rearrested. He participated in a 41-day hunger strike, recording in his prison diary that 'the physical and mental agony was awful'.⁵¹ On his release in 1924, the Armagh man was immediately served with an exclusion order by the Northern Ireland Government, prohibiting him from entering or residing in the six counties. His subsequent breach of this order would lead to two brief terms of imprisonment in the 1930s.

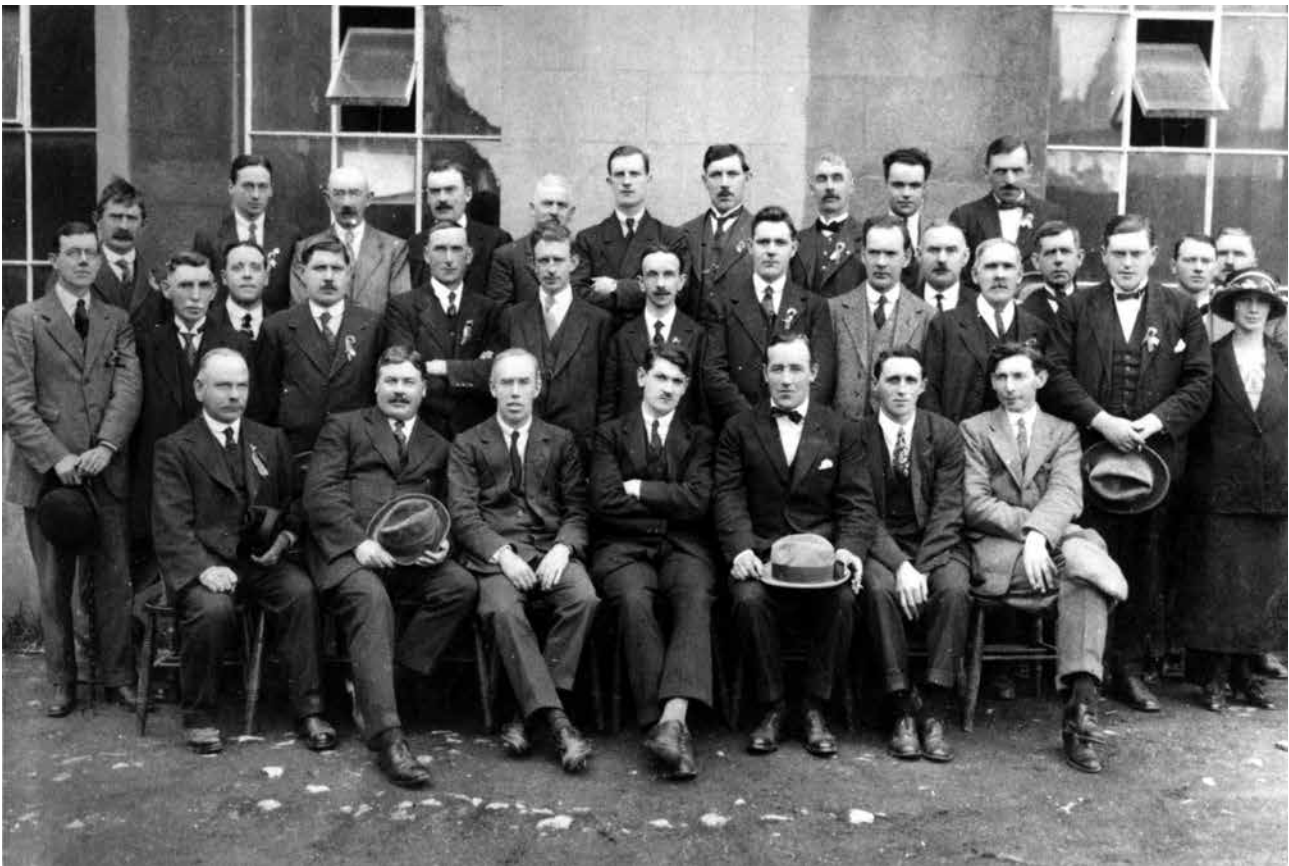
In the early 1920s Donnelly would become a bystander as his former friends in the north like Cahir Healy pinned their hopes on the Boundary Commission, then hearing witnesses along the border. In the snap 'border election' called by Craig in March 1925, Donnelly sprang a surprise by winning a seat as a Republican abstentionist in County Armagh at the expense of outgoing Nationalist MP, John D Nugent. When the Boundary Commission finally collapsed in December 1925 and the Cosgrave government signed an agreement confirming the 1920 boundary, Donnelly attended a protest meeting in Dublin, along with de Valera, Sean Lemass and Thomas Johnston, the Irish Labour leader.⁵² A year later he left Sinn Féin with his chief, de Valera to form the Fianna Fail party.

51. The Éamon Donnelly Collection.

52. 7 Dec 1925, Minutes of meeting in Dublin, attended by Donnelly, de Valera, Sean Lemass, P O Maille and Fr Eugene Coyle to oppose the Tripartite Agreement of 3 Dec 1925 as 'this attempt to Partition our country'. (The Éamon Donnelly Collection 2.9)

For Donnelly, Partition remained the great unfinished business and he tried in the late 1920s to bridge the gulf between de Valera's supporters and those, like Mary MacSwiney, who remained in Sinn Féin. Efforts by Cahir Healy to persuade him to join the northern Nationalists, reunited under Devlin in the Belfast Parliament in 1927, failed. Donnelly bitterly denounced Devlin for his 'crime' in supporting 'exclusion' in 1916 and, in any case, rejected the idea of a separate northern Nationalist party; 'the Ulster question must be kept national', he declared.⁵³ He would spend the 1930s as a prominent member of Fianna Fail, becoming TD for Laois-Offaly during 1933-37. However, he clashed with de Valera on Partition, alleging that the Taoiseach was neglecting the issue, and demanded that the 1937 Constitution should declare a de facto united Ireland and that northern MPs should be admitted to Dáil Éireann.⁵⁴ By 1938 he had been marginalised within the party.

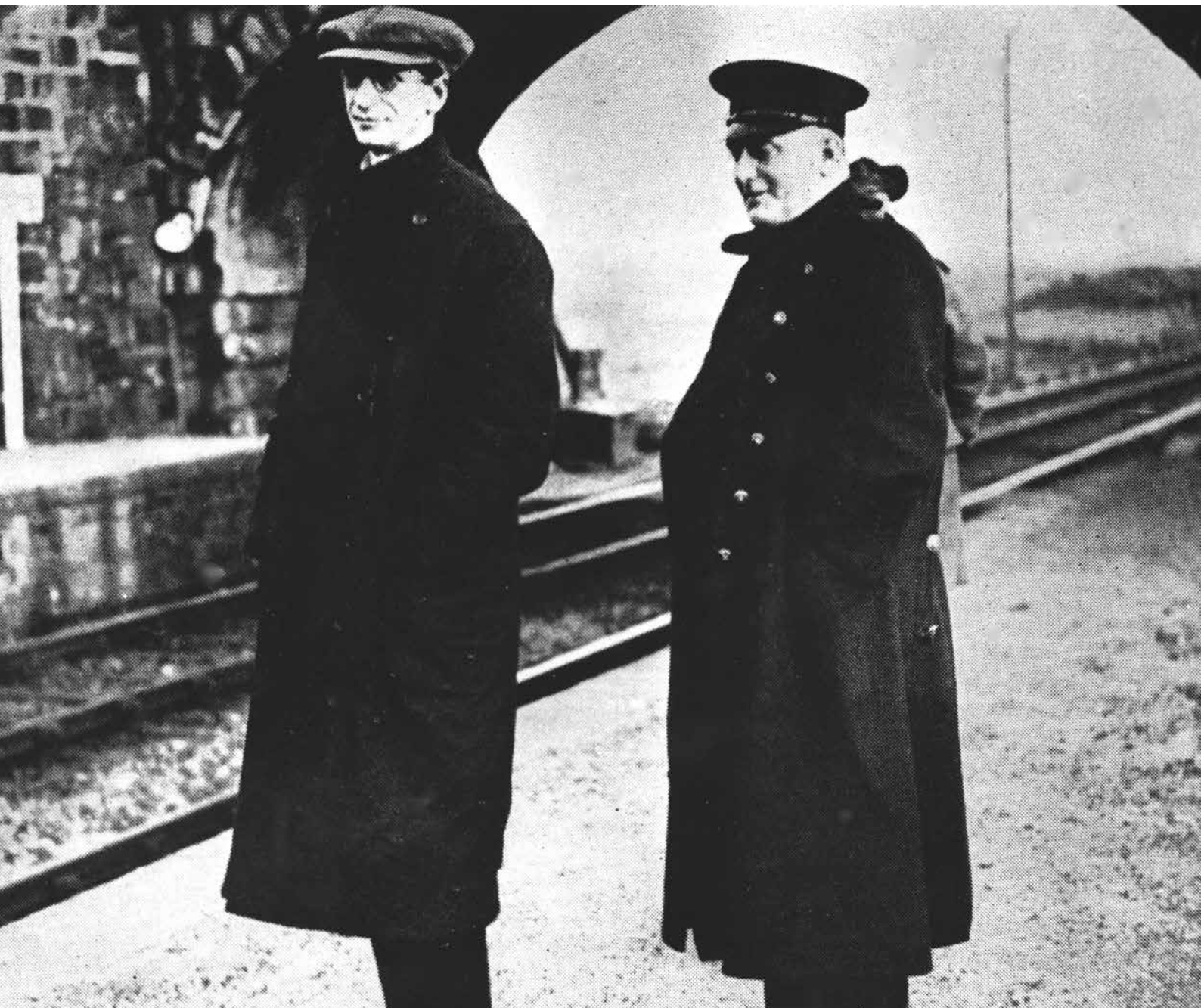
Despite serving a prison sentence for breaking his exclusion order in 1938, Donnelly spent his last years in Newry. His final election foray was in the Falls by-election in 1942 when he was returned as Republican abstentionist MP. Éamon Donnelly died in a Dublin nursing home on 29 December 1944 after a short illness, aged 67, his aim of a united sovereign Irish Republic still unfulfilled. After a Requiem Mass in Dublin, attended by de Valera, he was buried in St Mary's Cemetery, Newry. His papers, donated by his family to Newry and Mourne Museum in 2011, offer the opportunity for a proper historical appraisal of this remarkable Nationalist political figure whose long career spanned Home Rule, Partition and the Irish Revolution and two Irish parliaments.



Michael Collins with a reception committee outside City Hall, Armagh in September 1921. Front row from left to right: Michael Garvey, Seán Ó Muirthile (Sean Hurley), Éamon Donnelly, Michael Collins, Harry Boland, Tom Cullen (Collins's bodyguard), Joseph Dolan. Newry Nationalist and solicitor, John Henry Collins is also pictured (back row, first right).
Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

53. Éamon Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism: Nationalist Politics, Partition and the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland 1990-1960* (Ulster Historical Foundation, 1994) pp 357-8.

54. Stephen Kelly, *Fianna Fail, Partition and Northern Ireland 1926-1971* (Irish Academic Press, 2013), pp 35, 41, 56-7



Despite an exclusion order, Éamon de Valera crossed the border to address a meeting in the Town Hall, Newry on the 25 October 1924. Before he could address the audience, he was arrested and held in Canal Street barracks. He was released after a few days and this photograph shows him under police escort at Adavoyle Railway Station before being placed on a southbound train.

BELUM.W2013.110.4 © National Museums NI, Ulster Museum Collection

Dáil Éireann 'Republican Courts' and 'Republican Police' in Northern Ireland

Cormac Moore

A successful circumventing of British authority in Ireland by Sinn Féin was the establishment of Dáil Courts which were also named Republican Courts or Sinn Féin Courts. Brian Farrell has claimed that Sinn Féin, in its quest to create a 'polity within a polity', was nowhere more successful than it was with the creation of an alternative administration of justice.⁵⁵

The Dáil Courts came to prominence, not through initiatives or measures taken by Dáil Éireann, but through certain 'influential people' intervening in disputes, mainly of an agrarian nature, in different locales around Ireland.⁵⁶ From the autumn of 1919, there were very few arrests for crimes described as 'ordinary crimes'. Under the British judicial system, whilst the Defence of the Realm Act and from August 1920, the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act, dealt with political violence, the Assizes and Quarter Sessions that dealt with ordinary crime were short of business, with sittings only lasting for minutes. Due to a lack of business, one solicitor claimed they were faced with the bleak prospect of having to break stones for a living.⁵⁷ Deserting courthouses, people took their legal proceedings to shabby halls, outhouses, or rooms above shops to be decided by men and women not unlike themselves.

The typical method of punishment, imprisonment, was not an option in most cases, sentences frequently imposed took the form of banishment from the parish, locality, county or even province. It had the advantage of being severe and inexpensive. Some were even banished from Ireland. There was a complaint in the House of Commons on the 'use of England as a sort of convict settlement for men deported by Sinn Féin'.⁵⁸ There were even examples of those punished taking pride in the Republican Courts that punished them. Two men who had disobeyed an order of a Sinn Féin tribunal to rebuild a wall they had demolished were left on an island off the coast of Clare for three weeks. A party of the RIC who arrived by boat to rescue them were pelted with stones and abused. The castaways proudly declared that they were citizens of the Irish Republic and the police had no right to rescue them.⁵⁹

In time there were a network of alternative tribunals being run around the country by Sinn Féin and IRA activists to investigate and adjudicate on a wide range of issues such as assaults, robberies, licensing offences, property damage and larceny, and protecting women from abuse. The tribunals concerned themselves only with preserving the peace as traditionally understood and settling civil disputes; there was no attempt to claim jurisdiction over the activities of the IRA. IRA members were also recruited as 'Republican Police' to carry out the sentences imposed by the courts.



John Quinn, from Newry, was a 'Justice' for the Dáil Éireann Republican Court in Warrenpoint which sat on the first Monday of each month. He was also a Commandant-General in the 4th Northern Division of the IRA. Quinn later died of his wounds after Free State troops attacked leaders of the anti-Treaty forces, of which he was a member, in Castlebellingham in April 1923. *Newry and Mourne Museum Collection*

55. Foreword for Mary Kotsonouris, *Retreat from Revolution: The Dáil Courts, 1920–24* (Dublin, 1994), p. ix.

56. J.P. Casey, 'The Genesis of the Dáil Courts', *Irish Jurist* (Winter 1974, Vol. 9, No. 2), p. 327.

57. Kotsonouris, *Retreat from Revolution*, p. 13.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

59. *Limerick Leader*, 11 June 1920, p. 4.

Although the Dáil had decreed in August 1919 that a scheme of arbitration courts was to be set up, the Dáil initially made no concerted effort to take control of those Courts, which were left to individual constituencies to make their own arrangements. It was only when the Dáil was compelled to intervene in a land dispute in county Mayo in May 1920 that it decided to build regulated structures for the already operating courts system.⁶⁰ The minister responsible was Austin Stack, the Minister for Home Affairs. The tardiness in taking control of the Courts could be explained by Stack's prolonged absences due to imprisonment. Stack had some prior legal experience as a solicitor's clerk in Tralee.

The case in Mayo was one of many agrarian and land disputes throughout 1920 in Ireland. Farmers, unhappy with landlords using eleven-month leasing's to avoid provisions of the various land acts, took their anger out on land, cattle and landlords. Landowners in Mayo who initially went to the RIC without any success, were forced to ask Sinn Féin to intervene in May 1920. It was an 'enormous public relations coup for the Dáil. Here was a class...being forced to turn to men regarded as rebel agitators for help in their desperation. Moreover, help was given by the Dáil and proved to be effective within a relatively short period of time'.⁶¹

The first court under the direct authority of the Dáil convened in Ballinrobe in County Mayo on 17 May 1920. It was widely reported in the Nationalist press. It did pose some potential pitfalls for the Dáil. If it was the democratic government of the people, then it had to be prepared, like every other government to use the coercion and sanction necessary to impose its laws. It would have to show that it intended to use such force without hesitation and nationwide.

Shortly afterwards, Stack initiated an Arbitration Courts Committee to set up an arbitration scheme.⁶² It resulted in the establishment of a Supreme Court, a District Court in every parliamentary constituency and a local or Parish Court in every Roman Catholic parish. No qualification was necessary to be a district judge, with the vast majority being laypeople. The judges of the higher courts had to be lawyers, though, with all appointed being barristers.



Thomas Carr, from Newry, was an 'officer' in the Dáil Éireann Republican Police force for Warrenpoint. He was also a member of the 4th Northern Division of the IRA and was subsequently shot dead on 12 February 1925 by RUC Sergeant Tutty at Newry Cathedral. *Newry and Mourne Museum Collection*

60. James Casey, 'Republican Courts in Ireland 1919-1922', *Irish Jurist* (Winter 1970, Vol. 5, No. 2), p. 325.

61. Kotsounouris, *Retreat from Revolution*, p. 14.

62. Casey, 'Republican Courts in Ireland 1919-1922', p. 325.

Republican Courts in the North

The 12 June 1920 edition of the *Freeman's Journal* listed extensive Republican Court activities throughout the island. There was no mention of any activity in the north of Ireland, though.⁶³ The Dáil Courts were less successful there as the 'political realities of the Northern situation prevented the Dáil Courts winning the kind of acceptance by the community which they had in the south.'⁶⁴ There, the Dáil Courts were 'limited to Fermanagh, south Armagh, and mid-Tyrone, where the local Sinn Féin clubs were delegated "to organise the courts and appoint 'policemen' to see that the decrees were carried out'"⁶⁵ In June 1920, Austin Stack reported that courts were set up in every county in Ireland except for Antrim, Armagh, Derry and Down.⁶⁶

By the summer of 1920 efforts were made to introduce courts throughout Ulster. By late June, the Sinn Féin-controlled Kilkeel Board of Guardians in south Down became the first local authority in the six-county area to declare allegiance to Dáil Éireann and also resolved that, 'in future, no malicious claim could be defended on their behalf in a British court.'⁶⁷ By September 1920, Sinn Féin courts were operating in south Down and south Armagh. The main coordinators of the courts in Ulster were Cahir Healy, Kevin O'Shiel and Armagh-native Éamon Donnelly who became the primary organiser for all of the area that would become Northern Ireland.⁶⁸

Correspondence exists between Donnelly and Austin Stack's Home Affairs Department in the Éamon Donnelly Collection based in the Newry and Mourne Museum showing the efforts he made to establish Sinn Féin Courts in the north under very trying circumstances. On 23 September 1920, Donnelly was advised by the department that:

'It is not desirable that District Courts should be set up anywhere in which the effective Republican population has not a clear majority though Parish Courts might be set up under this decision even where a District Court is not advisable and has not effective backing to sustain it effectively. This applies not alone to south Derry but to any other Constituency where opponents of the Republic are in a numerical superiority.'⁶⁹

Difficulties were encountered in Tyrone where it was reported 'District and Parish Courts were, I believe set up throughout my area, but with the exception of one sitting of the Omagh District Court and one, or perhaps two sittings of the Gortin Parish Court, these Courts have never functioned.'⁷⁰

The risks of taking part in the Republican Courts and Police in the north were highlighted when Sligo-native Henry J. Sheeran was sentenced in Belfast in October 1920 to six months imprisonment for 'being in possession of forms of enrolment in the Irish Volunteers and a summons for a Republican Court filled in by himself.'⁷¹ Patrick J. Casey, vice O/C in the IRA Newry Brigade, recalled being searched in Newry by police one day in March 1921 and realised he had some papers in his possession, 'dealing with the Republican Loan or with some matters pertaining to the Sinn Féin Courts'. The papers were not found but Casey was furious with himself as the Newry Brigade 'resolutely used to refuse to handle this kind of stuff and I swore because I had been silly enough to do so on this particular day'.⁷²

63. *Freeman's Journal*, 12 June 1920, p. 6.

64. Kotsounouris, *Retreat from Revolution*, p. 55.

65. Éamon Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism: Nationalist Politics, Partition and the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940* (Belfast, 1994), p. 90.

66. Casey, 'The Genesis of the Dáil Courts', p. 338.

67. Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism*, p. 90.

68. Kotsounouris, *Retreat from Revolution*, p. 43.

6 Newry and Mourne Museum, The Éamon Donnelly Collection, 23 September 1920.

70. *Ibid.*, undated.

71. *Sligo Champion*, 16 October 1920, p. 2.

72. Bureau of Military History, 1913 – 21, Document No. W.S. 1,148 available from <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/>; accessed on 30 August 2021.

Others like Edward Fullerton, another IRA member in Newry, claimed the IRA took a prominent part with Republican Courts in Newry from February to March 1921, with the IRA providing 'police for duty in connection with court work'.⁷³ John McCoy, in his witness statement to the Bureau of Military History, gave details of a petty thief being arrested by Republican Police in Keady in Armagh who was subsequently convicted and sentenced to imprisonment at a Republican Court. The prisoner escaped from the vacant house he was incarcerated in and reported the Republican justices, police and witnesses at his trial to the RIC who then arrested them. McCoy also claimed that Unionist opposition was not the only stumbling block for the courts to operate in the north, as the 'so-called Nationalist population all over the northern counties contained a big percentage of Hibernians who did not subscribe to the Republican doctrine and were not enthusiastic about the Republican activities of the time'.⁷⁴

The Dáil Courts were most successful in the north during the Truce period from July 1921, where court sittings were convened more regularly and more openly, mainly due to the absence of the British military, including one held provocatively 'near the Crown court in Bishop Street' in Derry.⁷⁵ According to IRA member Jack McElhaw, so successful was a Republican Court established in Camlough in Armagh after the Truce that 'nearly all the prominent Newry Solicitors attended at the Camlough Court to represent clients including Mr. Fisher, a Unionist Solicitor'.⁷⁶ In February 1922, the IRA's 4th Northern Division was reporting that most areas in county Down had at least two Republican Court sittings per month with between three and five Republican Policemen available in each area. District Court Judges Robert Kelly and John Quinn also held monthly sittings in Newry and Warrenpoint respectively.⁷⁷ Later in 1922, with the IRA retreating in the north, sittings became more sporadic, eventually petering out of existence.

Conclusion

So successful was Sinn Féin in setting up an alternative justice system, one that even its enemies were forced to use, that the British government claims of Irish lawlessness rang hollow at home in Britain. In a letter to *The Times* of London, Lord Dunraven summed it up best when he stated:

'Over the greater part of the country the *de jure* Government is unrecognized and inoperative. The ordinary process of law is paralysed. An illegal Government has become the *de facto* Government. Its jurisdiction is recognised. It administers justice promptly and equitably; and we are in the curious dilemma, that the civil administration of the country is carried on under a system, the existence of which the *de jure* Government does not and cannot acknowledge and is carried on very well.'⁷⁸

While the courts operated successfully in the south and west of Ireland, Sinn Féin found it more difficult to establish and operate Republican Courts in the north, where in most places, the majority of the population would not contemplate an alternative justice system to that of the Crown.

73. Bureau of Military History, 1913 – 21, Document No. W.S. 890 available from <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/>; accessed on 30 August 2021.

74. Bureau of Military History, 1913 – 21, Document No. W.S. 492 available from <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/>; accessed on 30 August 2021.

75. Adrian Grant, *The Irish Revolution 1912–23: Derry* (Dublin, 2018), p. 121.

76. Bureau of Military History, 1913 – 21, Document No. W.S. 634 available from <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/>; accessed on 30 August 2021.

77. Newry and Mourne Museum, *The Reside Collection – Republican Courts*.

78. *The Times*, 20 July 1920, p. 8.

The Boundary Commission in south and east Down and south Armagh

Cormac Moore

The Boundary Commission hung over Northern Ireland and its border areas from the moment it became part of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921 up to the tripartite government agreement four years later in 1925 when the British, Irish Free State and Northern Ireland governments agreed to shelve the Commission report and to retain the status quo. For Nationalists, the Boundary Commission gave, what turned out to be false hopes, for the transfer of large tracts of territory and people from Northern Ireland to the Irish Free State. They felt they could continue to ignore and obstruct the institutions of Northern Ireland, particularly in areas of Nationalist majorities. For Unionists, the Boundary Commission was a source of instability and threat to the new entity of Northern Ireland so soon after its foundation. It contributed to the vulnerability and paranoia of Unionists.

South and east Down and south Armagh were areas where the border, created under the Government of Ireland Act 1920, was hotly contested and received considerable attention during the convening of the Boundary Commission. This article looks at the main Boundary Commission submissions from Unionists and Nationalists in those areas which are available in the Newry and Mourne Museum. The submissions provide an invaluable source on how the border was interpreted and experienced by people in the areas of south and east Down and south Armagh so soon after its creation.

Article 12 of the Treaty

The Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in the early hours of the morning of 6 December 1921 between negotiating teams from the British government and Sinn Féin. Its main provision relating to Ulster was Article 12. It stipulated that if Northern Ireland, which had been in existence since the summer of 1921, opted not to join the Irish Free State, as was its right under the Treaty, a boundary commission would determine the border 'in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants, so far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions'.⁷⁹ Although Northern Ireland was nominally included in the Irish Free State, it took the first opportunity to opt out of the Dublin jurisdiction in December 1922.

While the Boundary Commission was viewed as a major concession to Sinn Féin, its wording in particular posed many problems. Central to the problems was the Boundary Commission's ambiguity. No timetable was mentioned, or method outlined to ascertain the wishes of inhabitants, 'how exactly economic and geographic conditions would relate to popular opinion, and which would prove most important'.⁸⁰ No plebiscite was asked for, the clause was open to a number of different interpretations, and no time was specified for the convening of the Commission.

Ulster Unionists were vehemently opposed to the Boundary Commission. Although they were not party to the Treaty, they were now obliged to adhere to its clauses. The Boundary Commission re-opened uncertainty and put Northern Ireland's future in doubt, at least significant parts of it, yet again. The Northern Ireland Prime Minister James Craig told the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George he would refuse to cooperate with the Commission as there was 'no precedent in the history of the British Empire for taking away territory from an established government without its sanction'.⁸¹

79. Cormac Moore, *Birth of the Border: The Impact of Partition in Ireland* (Dublin, 2019), p. xx

80. Robert Lynch, 'The Boundary Commission', in John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil and Mike Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2017), p. 828.

81. Michael Hopkinson, 'The Craig-Collins Pacts of 1922: Two Attempted Reforms of the Northern Ireland Government', *Irish Historical Studies* (Vol. 27, No. 106, Nov., 1990), p. 146.

Nationalist leaders in the six and twenty-six counties were overly optimistic, as it would transpire, on the outcomes that would be achieved from this Boundary Commission, believing many areas in Northern Ireland would be transferred to the Irish Free State, including Derry and its western hinterland, counties Tyrone and Fermanagh, south Armagh and south Down.⁸² The optimism over the Boundary Commission, in many ways, explains the fraction of time devoted to Partition during the acrimonious Dáil Éireann debates over the Treaty. Both the pro- and anti-Treaty sides supported the Boundary Commission as a means to end or at least limit Partition. Both sides 'were complacent about the vague terms of reference for the Boundary Commission and the lack of provision for plebiscites even in border areas'.⁸³ Many Nationalists along the border believed their transfer to the Irish Free State was imminent. They were lulled into a false sense of security, believing they could continue to ignore the northern jurisdiction and its institutions.

The local elections of 1920 had been deeply embarrassing for Ulster Unionists, losing many local authorities and seats to Nationalists and the labour movement. Most Nationalist-controlled local authorities within Northern Ireland chose a policy of non-recognition of the new jurisdiction. Both Tyrone and Fermanagh County Councils declared allegiance to the Dáil on 28 November 1921. The northern government decided to act against the 'recalcitrant County Councils', Tyrone and Fermanagh, by suspending both councils, with the police taking over the headquarters in Omagh and Enniskillen and impounding their records.⁸⁴ In total, twenty-one Nationalist-controlled authorities, including those of Newry, Kilkeel, Warrenpoint, Downpatrick, Armagh, and Keady were suspended by April 1922.⁸⁵ Paid commissioners were put in place to run the affairs of the suspended local authorities. On top of suspending councils, the Northern Ireland government looked to take back control of them. It did this by abolishing PR, compelling councillors to pledge an oath of allegiance to the Crown and the Belfast parliament, and by the rearranging of local government boundaries.⁸⁶ Michael Collins, chairman of the provisional government of the Irish Free State from January 1922, complained to Winston Churchill that some of the decisions were made in anticipation of the Boundary Commission's work, 'to paint the Counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh with a deep Orange tint'.⁸⁷

Boundary Commission Finally Meets

The convening of the Boundary Commission was delayed by almost two years from the moment Northern Ireland opted out of the Irish Free State in December 1922. The Irish Civil War was a contributory factor in the delay, as were the non-cooperation of the northern government and several changes of government in Britain.⁸⁸ Between 1922 and 1924 there were three general elections and four governments in Britain.⁸⁹ The Free State government was the first to appoint its commissioner, Eoin MacNeill, the Minister of Education, in July 1923. Almost a year later, in June 1924, the British government appointed the Chairman, Richard Feetham, a British-born judge based in South Africa. With the northern government refusing to appoint its commissioner, the British intervened by selecting Joseph R. Fisher, a barrister and former editor of the Belfast Unionist-leaning newspaper, the *Northern Whig*. The Commission met for the first time in November 1924.⁹⁰ Much to the dismay of Nationalists, Feetham decided not to conduct a plebiscite, 'choosing instead to assume a quasi-judicial approach' and ruling out wholesale transfers.⁹¹ From December 1924 to July 1925, the three commissioners conducted informal and formal hearings, interviewing more than 500 witnesses based on written statements submitted in advance. Given the volume of evidence submitted to the Commission from south and east Down and south Armagh, the areas were of vital importance to both Unionists and Nationalists.⁹² The submissions focused on three areas mainly; the wishes of the inhabitants, economic conditions and geography.

82. Paul Murray, 'Partition and the Irish Boundary Commission: A Northern Nationalist Perspective', *Clogher Record*, (Vol. 18, No. 2, 2004), p. 182.

83. Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast, 2001), p. 486.

84. PRONI, CAB 4/28, 1 December 1921.

85. Bardon, *A History of Ulster*, pp. 499–500.

86. B. O'Leary, 'Cold House': The Unionist Counter-Revolution and the Invention of Northern Ireland', in Crowley, Ó Drisceoil and Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, pp. 821–822.

87. Bardon, *A History of Ulster*, p. 500.

88. Peter Leary, *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border, 1922–1972* (Oxford, 2016), p. 34.

89. Ivan Gibbons, *Drawing the Line: The Irish Border in British Politics* (London, 2018), p. 49.

90. TNA, CAB 61-1 – Boundary Commission Minute Book, 6 November 1924.

91. Leary, *Unapproved Routes*, p. 35.

92. Paul Murray, *The Irish Boundary Commission and its Origins 1886-1925* (Dublin, 2011), p. 171.

Wishes of the Inhabitants

The main argument used by Nationalists in the areas of south and east Down and south Armagh was that the wishes of the inhabitants should override any economic and geographic factors, and as Catholics made up the majority in those areas, the areas should be transferred to the Irish Free State.

The Boundary Commission relied on the 1911 Census figures, election results and evidence provided by witnesses to determine the wishes of the inhabitants. Feetham generally supported the assumption that all Catholics tended to be Nationalists who sought inclusion in the Free State and all Protestants tended to be Unionists who sought inclusion in Northern Ireland. Based on submissions to the Boundary Commission, in most cases, this rule held through. Submitting evidence on behalf of the Newry Urban District Council, spirit merchant Robert O'Rorke claimed, 'It is nearly entirely on the religious division. The entire Protestant population want to be included in the Northern Government, and I might say 999 Catholics out of every 1,000 are easily in favour of inclusion in the Free State.'⁹³ George Bennett, who gave evidence through the Warrenpoint Urban District Council, was an exception, a Protestant who supported the inclusion of south Down and south Armagh in the Irish Free State, stating, 'I am myself a Protestant in religion but I am an Irishman and share the political opinions of the majority of my Countrymen. I desire inclusion in the Irish Free State and know that the majority of the people in South Down & South Armagh desire to be with their Southern neighbours.'⁹⁴



Robert O'Rorke, a Newry Urban District councillor and spirit merchant. He was appointed by the local traders to give evidence on behalf of the spirits merchants in support of remaining in the Irish Free State.
Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

Many of the submissions from Nationalists in south and east Down and south Armagh provided the Boundary Commission with the 1911 census returns to prove their areas had 'an unanswerable case' for inclusion in the Free State. According to the 1911 census figures, 74.6 per cent of the population of Newry were Catholic, and were therefore overwhelmingly in favour of being included in the Free State.⁹⁵ Likewise, Father Felix Canon McNally, parish priest in Upper Kilevey [Killeavy] and Catholic Chaplain to the Newry Union Workhouse, claimed the district electoral division of Kilevey [Killeavy] in south Armagh had a total population of 2,305 in 1911 made up of 2,283 Catholics and just 22 from all other denominations.⁹⁶ The Nationalist MP Patrick O'Neill claimed, based on the 1911 census returns, that 'the boundary line of East and South Down should be the boundary line between the Free State and Northern Ireland.'⁹⁷

Many Nationalists believed they could only be retained in Northern Ireland through coercion and referred to their political rights being removed by the northern government, highlighting the suspension of Nationalist-controlled local authorities by April 1922 and the decision not to contest the local elections of 1923 when those taking their seats were obliged to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown and the northern government. As a result, bodies such as Newry Rural District Councils 1 and 2 and Kilkeel Rural District Council, which had been controlled by Nationalists, were taken over by Unionists 'without any Authority from the majority of the Inhabitants' according to Patrick Connolly, an ex-Poor Law Guardian and ex-Rural District Councillor from Newry.⁹⁸ Unionists countered that the non-compliant local authorities were rightly suspended for 'their refusal to perform the duties imposed on them in pursuance of the Local Government (Ireland) Acts' and that they would have won their seats in a contested election.⁹⁹

93. TNA, CAB-120 – Newry Urban District Council (Volume 2), 9 March 1925.

94. TNA, CAB 61-158 – Warrenpoint Urban District Council, 12 March 1925.

95. TNA, CAB 61-119 – Newry Urban District Council (Volume 1), 17 February 1925.

96. TNA, CAB 61-113 – Newry Union (Armagh).

97. TNA, CAB 61-55 – Committee of Nationalist Inhabitants of East Down, 18 March 1925.

98. TNA, CAB 61-113 – Newry Union (Down).

99. TNA, CAB 61-115 – Newry Chamber of Commerce.

Most Unionist submissions to the Boundary Commission in Down and Armagh did not focus on the wishes of the inhabitants but some points were raised on the levels of unity within the Catholic community. J. Moore Boyle, a solicitor representing the Newry Chamber of Commerce, claimed that Catholics were divided between those who sought a republic and those who favoured inclusion the Free State.¹⁰⁰ Robert Forsythe, chairman of Kilkeel Rural District Council, also asserted that the Catholics of the Kilkeel Union were 'divided in their political outlook as a large section of them are republican and the leaders of the republican party are against the fixing of a boundary line in Ireland'.¹⁰¹ Some Unionists in Warrenpoint and Newry also claimed that people should be differentiated based on the rates and taxes they contributed, and that those who paid the most were in favour of retention in Northern Ireland.¹⁰²

Economic Conditions



William Johnson was a solicitor with a legal practice, Johnson & Rutherford, at 6 Marcus Square, Newry. He provided evidence and submissions on the pro-Partition side to the Irish Boundary Commission on behalf of several interested parties.
Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

Unionists mainly focused their cases for inclusion in Northern Ireland on economic factors, with almost all submissions claiming south and east Down and south Armagh were intrinsically linked economically with Northern Ireland. William Johnson, solicitor based in Newry, claimed 'it could materially interfere for a considerable length of time with our tourist trade that we enjoy here from Northern Ireland' if Warrenpoint was transferred to the Free State.¹⁰³ Martin Hamilton, general manager of the linen firm Bessbrook Spinning Company asserted they had no economic links with the Free State.¹⁰⁴ Coal importer and ship owner Frank Fisher believed Newry would lose its coal and linen trade if it was transferred to Newry. He also mentioned the higher cost of living in the Free State compared to Northern Ireland, stating, 'A £1 note can at present buy more in Newry than in Dundalk and this fact has a bearing on local wages'.¹⁰⁵



J. Moore Boyle was a solicitor in the legal practice of Hunter Moore Boyle solicitors, Newry, and acted for landlords such as the Kilmorey estate. He was also an election agent for Unionist candidates and a member of Newry Chamber of Commerce.
Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

100. TNA, CAB 61-115 – Newry Chamber of Commerce, 24 March 1925.

101. TNA, CAB 61-86 – Kilkeel Rural District Council, 21 February 1925.

102. TNA, CAB 61-115 – Newry Chamber of Commerce, and CAB 61-157 – Principal Property Owners, Traders, Lodging House-Keepers & Residents, Urban District of Warrenpoint.

103. TNA, CAB 61-157 – Principal Property Owners, Traders, Lodging House-Keepers & Residents, Urban District of Warrenpoint, 12 March 1925.

104. TNA, CAB 61-32 – Bessbrook Spinning Company Ltd., 21 March 1925.

105. TNA, CAB 61-115 – Newry Chamber of Commerce.

Feetham looked at economic conditions as they prevailed in 1924/25 and not how they were interpreted by the Treaty signatories in 1921. In fact, Feetham refused to hear any evidence on how the Treaty signatories interpreted Article 12, despite its obvious ambiguities.¹⁰⁶ This proved highly damaging for the Free State cause. The northern government began construction on a reservoir to supply water to the residents of Belfast in the Silent Valley in the Mourne Mountains in 1923. This was used as an argument to retain all of county Down in Northern Ireland.¹⁰⁷

Arguably more damaging was the decision by the Free State government to introduce a customs barrier between the Free State and Northern Ireland in April 1923. Feetham, describing it as 'the terrors of the Customs Barrier', continuously referred to it in his questioning and of the damaging consequences it would cause if the boundary line underwent further changes.¹⁰⁸ Both Unionists and Nationalists went into some details on the affects the customs barrier had on their daily lives and livelihoods. Matthew H. McCann, a baker based in Newry, stated that output from his bakeries had 'been considerably reduced owing to the fact that the confectionery made by my firm cannot now be carried by my carts over the Customs barrier'¹⁰⁹ John Foster, a draper also based in Newry claimed that:

'Since the Customs Boundary was put up a lot of people come to Newry to buy boots and wear them home and do not pay duty on them.'

He also believed 'a barrier north of Newry would very seriously affect the shipping trade. Anything that affects the prosperity of the town affects the retailer. There is no doubt that farmers north of Newry, if the barrier were between them and Newry, would not cross it.'¹¹⁰

While Unionists believed the placing of a customs barrier north of where they lived would lead to large financial losses and considerable inconvenience, Nationalists claimed they were already suffering from the effects of the customs barrier by losing customers from their hinterland in the Free State. Asserting their economic prosperity lay with the Free State, Nationalists sought for the boundary line to be drawn northwards.¹¹¹

Nationalists in south and east Down and south Armagh stated there were no economic conditions incompatible in those areas from being transferred to the Free State. Edward A. Lamb, secretary of Newry Port & Harbour Trust claimed 'the interests of the port of Belfast will always be paramount and receive preferential treatment from every authority in Belfast including the Government of Northern Ireland to the detriment of the port of Newry'.¹¹² Joseph Johnston, an economist based in Trinity College Dublin, believed 'overwhelming economic considerations would have to be proved before the Commission would be justified in going against the wishes of the inhabitants'. He further contended that 'the commercial hinterland which is the background of Newry's activities, is even under present conditions, to a greater extent in the present Free State area than in Northern Ireland', claiming the bulk of Newry's grain and flour trade was with Monaghan and Cavan in the Free State.¹¹³



Matthew McCann took over McCann's 'Victoria Bakery' on Castle Street, Newry, in 1924 after the death of his father. At this stage the bakery was a large business with 50 workers, 5 motor bread vans and 14 horse vans. *Courtesy of Madeleine Burns*

106. TNA, CAB 61-115 – Newry Chamber of Commerce, 11 March 1925.

107. TNA, CAB 61-28 – Belfast City and District Water Commissioners.

108. TNA, CAB 61-157 – Principal Property Owners, Traders, Lodging House-Keepers & Residents, Urban District of Warrenpoint, 12 March 1925.

109. TNA, CAB 61-113 – Newry Union (Armagh).

110. TNA, CAB 61-115 – Newry Chamber of Commerce, 11 March 1925.

111. TNA, CAB 61-119 – Newry Urban District Council (Volume 1), 17 February 1925.

112. Ibid., 17 February 1925

113. Ibid., 17 February 1925.



John Foster was the owner of Newry's largest clothing shop situated on Hill Street, Newry, which had branches in Warrenpoint and Portadown and was a member of the Newry Chamber of Commerce.
Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

Geography

With Feetham deciding that smaller units such as district electoral divisions, instead of large units such as entire counties or poor law unions, should form the basis of areas to be considered for transfer, geographic factors took on added significance. When Patrick O'Neill MP claimed all of east Down should be transferred to the Free State, Feetham contended that the town of Newcastle, with a Protestant majority, was not a small area and this would have to be considered.¹¹⁴

Unionists contended that Carlingford Lough was a natural geographic boundary, with William Johnson stating that to transfer Warrenpoint 'into the 26 County area would not only be incompatible with the existing Geographical conditions but would be substituting for the present natural so well defined boundary of Carlingford Lough an unnatural and ill-defined line of demarcation'.¹¹⁵ This was refuted by the Newry Urban District Council who claimed that south Down 'will be bounded both on the west and on the south by territory at present under Irish Free State jurisdiction and on the east by the sea. Of necessity it must touch Northern Ireland territory at some point and this will be confined to the Northern Boundary of the area. There is therefore no geographic condition which can be adduced to prevent the area from being retained in the Irish Free State'.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

The work completed by the Commission would not be revealed for decades due to a leaking of the recommendations by the pro-Unionist newspaper the *Morning Post*, in November 1925. Much to the surprise of many Nationalists, no large-scale transfers were on offer. In fact, parts of the Free State were to be transferred to the north. The leaked report recommended the shortening of the border by 50 miles, transferring 286 square miles to the south and 77 square miles to the north, which would have moved 31,219 people to the Irish Free State and 7,594 in the opposite direction.¹¹⁷ Parts of south Armagh, including Crossmaglen, were recommended to be transferred to the Irish Free State with some areas in north Monaghan being recommended for transfer in the opposite direction. No part of Down was deemed to have met the criteria for transfer. The leak caused outrage in Dublin, leading to the Free State Commissioner Eoin MacNeill resigning from the Commission, the Free State government and the Dáil, claiming as he departed that 'he wasn't the most suitable person to be a commissioner'.¹¹⁸ Realising the danger the crisis posed to the Free State government, the President of the Executive Council, W.T. Cosgrave, dashed over to London to have the report shelved. Nationalists Richard O'Hagan, Patrick O'Neill and J. Henry Collins expressed their disgust by stating,

'The overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Newry, South Down, East Down, and South Armagh protest against any deal settling their destiny behind closed doors. They are not sheep or cattle to be given from one Government to another against their wishes. They insist on self-determination'.¹¹⁹

Despite their protestations, a tripartite agreement was signed by the British, Free State and Northern Ireland governments that shelved the Boundary Commission report and maintained the border as it was, as it is to the present day.

114. TNA, CAB 61-55 – Committee of Nationalist Inhabitants of East Down, 18 March 1925.

115. TNA, CAB 61-157 – Principal Property Owners, Traders, Lodging House-Keepers & Residents, Urban District of Warrenpoint, 12 March 1925.

116. TNA, CAB 61-119 – Newry Urban District Council (Volume 1), 17 February 1925.

117. Moore, *Birth of the Border*, p. 80.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

119. Irish News, 5 December 1925 quoted in James A. Cousins, *Without a Dog's Chance: The Nationalists of Northern Ireland and the Irish Boundary Commission, 1920-25* (Kildare, 2020), p. 309.

The sales of land to tenant farmers before and after Partition

John Corrigan

Immediately prior to Partition, the Irish Land Commission was busily engaged in processing thousands of sales of land to the tenants of estates both large and small. Most of these sales were the result of the Land Act of 1903, commonly referred to as the Wyndham Act, and the 1909 Land Act (the Birrell Act). The operations of the Land Commission had been suspended for the duration of the First World War having been started after the 1903 Act came into effect in November of that year.

After the Irish Free State officially came into being in December 1922, preparations that had been under way to separate the administration of the island were put into effect. Out of this came the establishment of the Land Purchase Commission for Northern Ireland which came into being on 1st April 1923. Records for estates under purchase in the six counties were transferred to Belfast from the Irish Land Commission and the Land Registry in Dublin. When the Land Commissioners recommenced work on land sales after the war one of the first problems they had to deal with was the changes that had happened during the period of suspension. The main change was that many of the original tenants who had signed the agreements to purchase their holding had now died, some without making a will. In these cases, it was left to the Land Commission to investigate and decide who had the right to take up the purchase under the terms agreed. The time and effort to do this added to the delay in completing many transactions.

The 1903 Act had allowed for estates to be dealt with in 'blocks'; for example, where a group of townlands or even a single townland, belonged to a particular estate but stood apart from the remainder of the estate. This option was applied to sales on the Hall estate where around 130 tenants in the County Armagh townlands of Mullaghglass, Cloughrea, Maytown, Derrywilligan, Glassdrummond, Cloughinney, Latt and Goragh agreed sale terms for over 2,000 acres in February 1905 and was completed in May 1912.¹²⁰ The tenants in the townlands of Aughnamoira, Ballydesland, Ballymaconaghy, Ballyrussell, Burren, Clonallon, Donaghguy, Dromore and Ringmacilroy around Narrow Water itself who had signed agreements in July 1908 were among those being dealt with in the aftermath of the transfer from Dublin to Belfast. Land Commission documents for these sales that had originally been issued from Dublin were amended in manuscript in Belfast to show the post-Partition situation.

Sales on the Richardson estate around Bessbrook were also being completed around the time of Partition. Notices in the Belfast Gazette, which had replaced the Dublin Gazette as the paper for carrying official announcements from January 1923, were announcing sales to tenants in the townlands of Clougharaven, Carrickcruppen, Maghernahely, Camlough, Carrickbracken, Cloghgrovla, Cross, Ballard, Keggall, Ballynaleck, Carrickcloughan and Derrymore in 1923 and 1924.

The Northern Ireland Land Commission was able to continue the work of processing the transfer of ownership of tenancies without interruption after it was set up. Other than the delay due to the war the process of land sales in the North was not significantly affected by the political changes that had happened in the period from the Home Rule crisis of 1912 to the division of the country nearly ten years later. Agreements that were commenced in the decade of the 1900s were completed as intended in the 1920s notwithstanding some of the legal difficulties mentioned earlier.

In the south the widespread non-co-operation with the old British administration had, among other things, led to a severe fall off in the payment of annuities for agreements already signed. In Dublin, the Land Commission as it then existed was abolished by the Dáil in December 1922 but plans for its reconstitution were put in place immediately. When the Commission was re-established, it also absorbed the former responsibilities of the Congested Districts Board. Legislation to regularise remaining land ownership was given urgent attention. A new Land Act with powers backdated to December 1922 was passed in August 1923, just before a general election in the same month, and it gave the Commission wide ranging powers of compulsory purchase. It is claimed the passing of this Act was a significant step towards the loss of support for the anti-Treaty side in areas where the two issues of land ownership and the Civil War had become entwined. The new Free State government was also keen to let it be seen that annuity payments would have to be recommenced for existing purchases and would have to be maintained for these and new purchases too.

120. The spelling of townland names is as they appeared in the *Dublin & Belfast Gazettes*.

The 1923 Act provided a reduction of up to 35% between purchase price and rents while for the landlord the purchase price was just over 15 years rent with no bonus payment. This compared to the average 25 years rent that was paid to those who had sold under the terms of the 1903 land Act. Exceptions from compulsory purchase was allowed where a landlord had a farm that supported his own home's needs, or where woodlands and forestry needed to be preserved. Another exception allowed for the development of the horse racing industry by exempting stud farms from having untenanted land purchased by the Land Commission.

In August 1925 a notice appeared in *Iris Oifigiúil*, which had replaced the Dublin Gazette in January 1923 as the source of official government announcements, announcing the beginning of the process for vesting the tenancies in the County Louth townland of Cornamucklagh in the Land Commission. Cornamucklagh was owned by the Hall Estate of Narrow Water. The Land Commission vesting date was 1 May 1931 and in August around 125 acres were vested by the Land Commission in 23 tenants with the addition of grazing rights on the untenanted mountain part of the townland and rights to seaweed from the foreshore. Not all landlords who had land vested were from old, landed families. The 37 tenants in Lislea, the County Louth townland adjacent to Cornamucklagh had St. Vincent de Paul in Newry listed in the same edition of *Iris Oifigiúil* as their landlord.

The sales that were the outcome of the 1923 land Act were financed by a huge loan from the British exchequer. This placed a huge burden on the finances of the Free State for repayments that other social spending had to be curtailed and cost much more than was originally estimated. Land re-distribution was going to continue to be a hot political topic on through the 1920s and 1930s especially when the Land Commission came to break up large untenanted estates and redistribute them. The whole process became mired in political interference and favouritism from below and above and from both parties when they were in power. Unrest extended to protests against families that had been relocated from congested districts in the west to take up holdings that had been allocated to them in the midland counties.

Subsequent Land Acts were required to meet the continuing demand for land by closing loopholes, especially around the exemptions that had been allowed for lands attached to the landlords' dwelling, in the hastily prepared 1923 Act. No Dáil party could afford to ignore the issue even though they understood small individual holdings would be much less economical and efficient. The breakup and distribution of untenanted land on large estates was legislated for and even large holdings that had already been bought came under the spotlight to meet demand. South Armagh native, Frank Aiken, while acting as Minister of Lands in the first Fianna Fáil government, spoke in the Dáil about the problems 'whereby the Land Commission are compelled to spend years wrestling with legal difficulties, while the people who should be using the land are standing idle looking at it going to waste.'¹²¹ As an example of the frustrations and the conflicts between prospective purchasers the Dundalk Democrat had reported a few days before Aiken's speech on shooting threats being made against those who defied a boycott of the letting of land on the Rocksavage estate just across the border near Carrickmacross.¹²² By the late 1930s over 100,000 holdings on over 3 million acres had been transferred.¹²³

In the north, the progress of land sales in the Free State was now watched with envy by those who had not yet purchased their tenancies and their representatives in the Unbought Tenants Association. Ever since mass land sales had begun under the 1903 and 1909 Acts, those who remained as tenants has become increasingly annoyed as they compared the rents they were still paying to the annuities being paid by their neighbours whose landlord had agreed to sell. A Northern Ireland Land Purchase Act granting compulsory purchase powers was passed by Westminster in 1925 after agreement with the Ulster Farmers Union and the Landlords body as representatives of both sides. On the Kilmorey estate around Newry the beneficiaries were the 570 tenants in the townlands of Carnbane, Lisdrumgullion, Derrybeg, Ryan, Ballinlare, Gransha, Ouley, Ballyholland Upper and Ballyholland Lower, Ballynacraig, Commons, Fathom Upper, Drumcashellone, Altnaveigh, Cloghoge, Drumalane, Lisdrumliska and Ellisholding and notices of completion of sales were appearing in the Belfast Gazette from mid-1929 to mid-1930. The Kilmorey estate had earlier agreed to sell to the tenants in the townlands in the Kilkeel area and around Mourne Park under the 1903 Act. These sales were completed in 1908 and 1909. Also transferred to tenants, under trust arrangements, was vast amounts of Kilmorey estate untenanted land in the Mourne mountains.

¹²¹ Dáil debates 13/07/1933.

¹²² *Dundalk Democrat* 06/05/1933 page 10.

¹²³ Terence Dooley, "The Big Houses and Landed Estates in Ireland", 2008, p.62.

Landlords in the north came out with much better terms than their counterparts in the south under the respective Acts in the 1920s. The Northern Ireland Land Act of 1925 gave landlords payment in bonds at an annual rate of 4½% plus a bonus, based on the levels of rent locally in each county. The bonus worked out at around ten percent of the purchase price. The aim was to provide the landlord with a similar income from the bonds and investment of the bonus, to what he had been receiving in rent. The tenants had their annuity payments reduced by around 15% compared to the rents they had been paying.

When the Northern Ireland Land Purchase Commission was wound up in 1935 it had overseen the transfer of more than 800,000 acres to 38,500 tenants.¹²⁴

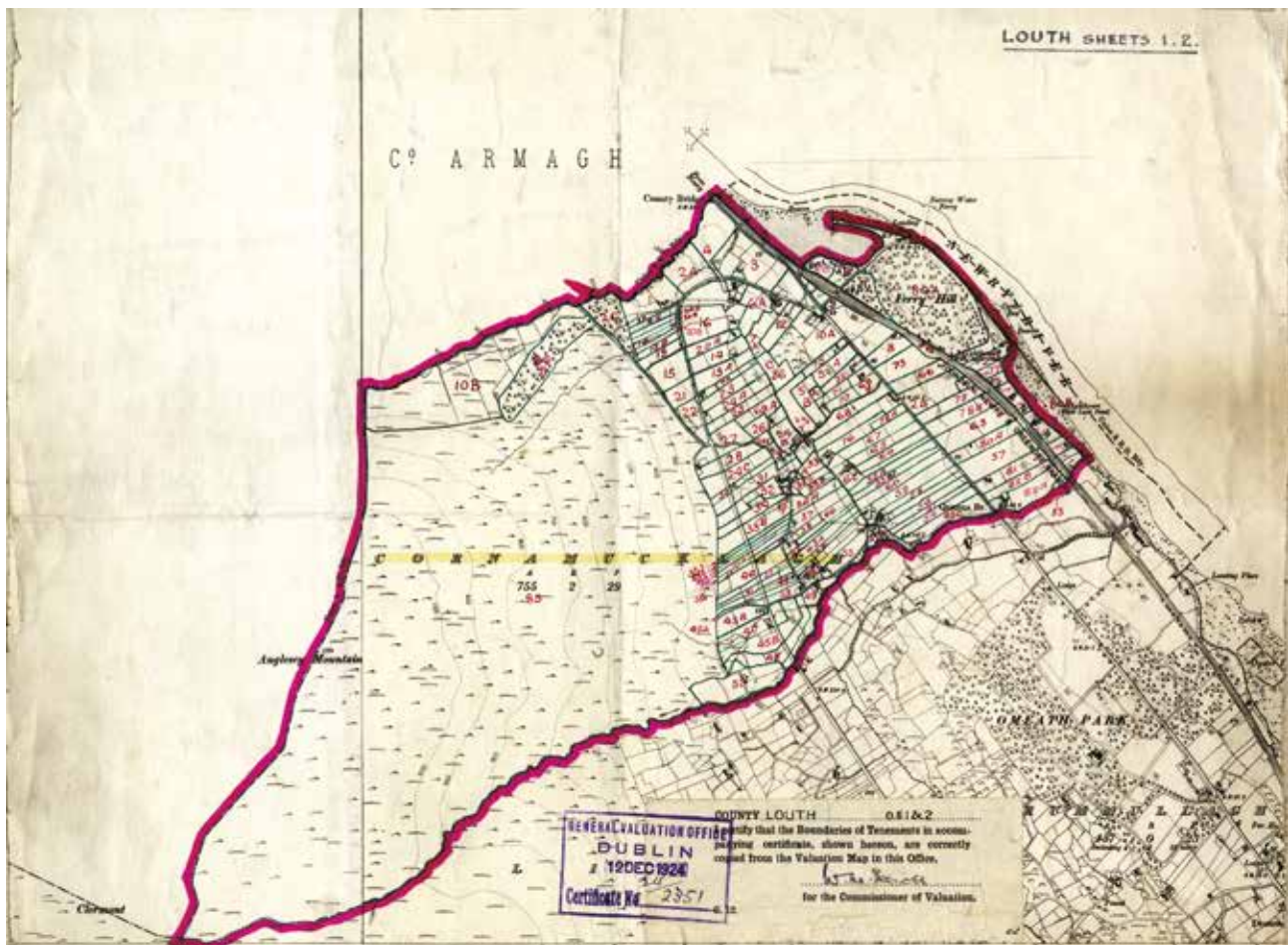
The template for both the 1923 Act in the Irish Free State and the 1925 Act for Northern Ireland had been prepared by a Westminster Bill in late 1920 which never became law as its provisions were overtaken by the Government of Ireland Act. This bill allowed for compulsory purchase with broadly the same exceptions that appeared in both later Acts. With Westminster retaining powers over land reform for the North in the Government of Ireland Act, the 1925 Act was virtually the completion of the 1920 Bill, the main difference being the lowering in the rates of compensation. Much to the displeasure of the Unionist Party the 1925 Act provided for the compensation payment to the landlords to be taken from the Northern Ireland budget allocation. Like previous land acts there were exclusions to what was vested by the Land Purchase Commission. Mineral rights on previously tenanted land were not transferred to the new owners and these rights were either retained by the landlord or by the Land Commission. The most common example under these mineral exclusion clauses was quarries. Also excluded from the terms of the 1925 Act were holdings that were not primarily agricultural or pastoral land, as were holdings where the occupier worked on the landlord's own estate. Land that had potential for building on and town parks, which were typically plots of land rented from the landlord by town dwellers, were also excluded from sale. This latter exclusion was the subject of an appeal case taken in July 1930 by the renters of 32 holdings from the Hall Estate around Warrenpoint challenging the exclusions from the sale. All their appeals were dismissed and costs, with one exception, were awarded against them.¹²⁵

Conclusion

After the creation of separate states on the island of Ireland, Belfast took over the administration of land sales in its territory and was able to pick up the work that had commenced before the Great War caused it to be suspended. The 1925 Northern Ireland Land Purchase Act completed the work on compulsory purchase that had been on the way for some time. The new government in the south had a much more difficult time with land purchase, dealing as it was with pressing demands particularly in the Congested Districts of the west. It required a number of land bills to be passed to combat obstructions and try and redistribute land in some form of equitable basis and the cost placed a very heavy demand on the finances of the new state for several years.

124. Olwen Purdue, *"The Big House in the North of Ireland"*, 2009, p.99.

125. *Newry Reporter*, 17/07/1930.



Map prepared after the passing of the 1923 Irish Land Act as part of the vesting of tenancies in the townland of Cornamucklagh in north County Louth. Cornamucklagh was part of the Hall estate. The map is an Ordnance Survey extract annotated to show the individual tenancies. Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

No 409-410. Newry, 1st December 1920

Received from Edward O'Sullivan the sum of

Five Pounds. — Shillings and — Pence.

for One half Year's Rent — of Holding in Derrybeg due 1st day of November 1920.

For The Trustees of the Estates of the Earl of Kilmorey.

Rent £ : :
 Rent Charge : :
 Duties : :
 Allowed Inc. Tax £ : :
 Do. Rates : :
 .. : :

£ 5 : 0 : 0

Wm. Moore

Please produce this Receipt at next Payment.

Prior to the passing of the various Land Acts, tenants paid their rent twice a year, in May and November. After payment, they were issued with a receipt, such as this example, which relates to land in Derrybeg in County Armagh, now a suburb of Newry. This townland was part of the Kilmorey estate. Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

Viscount Craigavon, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland visits Newry in 1927

Brian Walker

Among the collections in Newry and Mourne Museum is a photograph which records a significant event in Newry on 8 February 1927. It shows members of Newry Urban District Council and other Newry public bodies with Viscount Craigavon, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, on his visit to the town. They are standing in front of the Town Hall after a reception and lunch for their visitor. The photograph captures an important moment in the history not only of Newry but also of Northern Ireland. At this time Newry council was a rare example of what we would call today a 'power-sharing' council with a Unionist Chairman, William Robinson, and a Nationalist Vice-Chairman, Terence Ruddy. The council was made up of six Nationalist, six Unionist and six Labour councillors. This visit of Craigavon arose as part of a ten-day tour to various parts of Northern Ireland. It occurred when, after the tumultuous period 1920-5, there were efforts to encourage political accommodation and reconciliation. These efforts achieved certain success, as seen in Craigavon's visit to Newry in 1927, but in the end political relations became highly polarized and confrontational.

The years 1920-1922 witnessed considerable violence and political conflict in Newry and surrounding district. On 19 December 1921, under Chairman Hugh J. McConville, Newry Urban District Council passed a motion pledging loyalty to Dáil Éireann.¹²⁶ Consequently, in April 1922 the government dissolved the council, along with other councils which had taken similar action, and appointed a commissioner for the town.¹²⁷ The council was restored in early 1923. A following election saw the return of twelve Nationalist and six Unionist councillors. The next years were marked with much political uncertainty over the Boundary Commission. The outcome in late 1925 of no change to existing boundaries was met with disappointment by Nationalists and relief by Unionists. In January 1926, however, the election for Newry council had surprising results, reflecting the relevance for many of social and economic issues over constitutional matters.

The outcome was the return of not only six Nationalist and six Unionist councillors but also six Labour councillors, led by W.F. Cunningham. There followed heated meetings over two days to elect the next chairman. After different suggestions to break the deadlock, such as drawing lots, a secret ballot was held. This led to the election of Unionist William Robinson as Chairman, the first Unionist chairman for over twenty years. He was managing director of the Newry firm of Foster & Co. Ltd. The Nationalist Terence Ruddy was elected Vice-Chairman. Appointments to standing committees resulted in three members of each party in each committee.



Terence Ruddy was first elected to Newry Urban District Council in 1908. He was a Victualler and Licensed Vintner, and leader of St. Joseph's Brass and Reed Band and played a prominent role in the commercial and social life of the town. *Newry and Mourne Museum Collection*

¹²⁶. *Northern Whig*, 20 Dec.1921.

¹²⁷. Tony Canavan, *Frontier town: an illustrated history of Newry* (Belfast, 1989) p.191.

In 1922 Sir James Craig conducted a tour of the border areas but subsequently he was involved in annual tours of all the counties of Northern Ireland. On 24 January 1927, Craig, recently elevated to the peerage as Viscount Craigavon, attended a public luncheon in Belfast City Hall. He announced plans for a ten-day tour of local authorities to assure them that their interests would not be neglected by the government. He would be accompanied by Sir Dawson Bates, minister of home affairs. In concluding remarks, he declared: 'Not only did peace reign in their midst, but Protestants and Roman Catholics were working together for the common good and Ulster might now be looked upon as one of the best parts of the Empire'.¹²⁸

On the morning of 8 February Craigavon and Bates travelled to Kilkeel where they met members of the local Board of Guardians, who raised concerns about the fishing industry.¹²⁹ The next visit was to Warrenpoint where they were greeted by members of the urban council. Edward Byrne, Nationalist Chairman, welcomed Craigavon and stated: 'They might not always have seen eye to eye on political matters but they believed that his lordship was, and would continue to be on the side of peace and goodwill'. He continued: 'They realized that this visit had no political significance, and that being so, had joined heartily in welcoming him to what would become one of the most important ports in Northern

Ireland'. He urged support for the port. The Nationalist Vice-Chairman, Francis Connolly, paid tribute to Bates as 'the man who, in the darkest hour in the history of their province, with his back to the wall, used his strong hand in putting down crime of all sorts'. Craigavon promised to back port improvements.

The two men then travelled to the Town Hall in Newry.¹³⁰ First, they met Chairman William Robinson and members of the urban council in private conference. At 2.00 pm the visitors and a large representative company were entertained to luncheon by Robinson, 'the catering being excellently done by Mrs Truesdale, of the Clanrye Café Newry'. Present were members of the council, including Vice-Chairman Terence Ruddy and W.F. Cunningham, the Newry Port and Harbour Trust, the Carlingford Lough Commission and the Newry Chamber of Commerce, together with officials of these bodies. Office bearers from neighbouring rural district councils, Down and Armagh county councils and Newry Board of Guardians were there. Present also was the Earl of Kilmorey, who no longer enjoyed the legal powers of his predecessors but still played a prominent public role in Newry. After lunch, according to the *Newry Reporter*, the chairman, William Robinson, 'submitted the usual loyal toast, which was followed by the singing of "God save the King" while the *Frontier Sentinel* referred only to the toast of "The King"'.

Robinson next proposed 'Prosperity to Northern Ireland' and then made a speech. He thanked the government for their 'liberal grants'. He pointed out that the work of urban councils was directly under the control of the local government department of the Ministry of Home Affairs. They received grants for roads, housing and schemes of unemployment. He discussed the work of the council, such as the recent erection of forty-one workmen's dwellings. He called for support for more housing, as well as help with their bridges. Craigavon replied, to express gratitude for their welcome. He said that it was good to get away from politics and to help local authorities to get on with



W.F. Cunningham was a Labour councillor who had served in the First World War and was President of the local branch of the Legion of Irish Ex-Servicemen. He was sub-chief Ranger of the Newry branch of the Irish National Foresters, a Newry Board of Guardians Member and Chairman of the Newry Port Sanitary Authority. Courtesy of Gerry Cunningham

128. *Newry Reporter*, 27 Jan. 1927.

129. *Ibid.*, 10 Feb. 1927. *Frontier Sentinel*, 12 Feb. 1927.

130. *Ibid.*

their work. He then turned to deal with the issues of housing and bridges. In conclusion he urged people to work for prosperity for Northern Ireland. He added: 'Might he also say that they in Ulster of all creeds and classes were sufficiently broadminded to say that they also hoped for prosperity for the whole of Ireland (applause)'. After lunch, Craigavon and Bates inspected the town's fire engine and visited the new council houses.

This visit of Craigavon to Newry in February can be seen as evidence of efforts to improve relations after the turmoil of 1920-1922 and the demise of the Boundary Commission in late 1925. At a meeting on 5 January 1926 of the Rotary Club in Belfast, attended by a number of politicians, including the Nationalist leader, Joseph Devlin, J.M. Andrews, Minister of Labour, declared that they were 'united in the desire that the better spirit which had been growing in Northern Ireland should continue to grow and be fostered in their midst'.¹³¹ At Belfast City Hall on 25 January 1926, Sir James Craig expressed his delight that Falls Alderman Oswald Jamison had been selected as the city's high sheriff.¹³² On 14 February 1926, Cardinal Patrick O'Donnell, Archbishop of Armagh, speaking at Keady, County Armagh, declared: 'What would have happened had the [Nationalist] members taken their seats from the beginning I am unable to conjecture. But what matters now is that the case be made in such a way as to be thoroughly understood, and that can be pressed by every legitimate means, with nothing but good feeling for our neighbour'.¹³³ A year and a half later, on 12th July 1927, an *Irish News* editorial observed how 'a broader toleration is spreading, a kindlier feeling is growing up'.

Craig was a keen Orangeman but it can be noted that from 1923 to 1926 he did not attend 12 July demonstrations, probably reflecting a sense of his broader responsibilities as premier of Northern Ireland.¹³⁴ On 12 July 1927, however, Craig returned to the 'field' and made a speech that would begin to change things.¹³⁵ His main concern was neither the south nor northern Nationalists. Indeed, he praised the south, 'our friendly neighbours', and remarked respectfully that 'Mr Devlin and his party are the natural opposition'. Instead he stressed the need for Unionist unity and announced the government's intention to abolish P.R in Northern Ireland parliamentary elections. Unionist M.P.s had fallen in numbers from 40 in 1921 to 32 in 1925, due to the return of Labour and independent members. The big worry for the party in 1927 came from the temperance movement. On 23 December 1927 the *Belfast Newsletter* recorded: 'The question of local option loomed large on the political horizon during the year'. The party was threatened with independent temperance election candidates, hence the need to abolish PR (Fianna Fail in the south would later try twice to abolish PR). Subsequently, Craig attended the 12 July demonstrations in a different county each year to bolster Unionist unity.

Abolition in 1929 of PR at parliamentary elections was not aimed at Nationalists but at independents and Labour supporters. Under the new arrangements at the 1929 general election, Nationalist MP numbers actually increased from nine in 1925 to ten, but crucially, figures for small parties and independents fell from eight to four and Unionist numbers increased by five. Local option candidates were routed. Nationalists were very critical of the abolition of PR in 1929. This change did not reduce their numbers, but it served to remove the possibility of effective labour or independent MP allies. In 1932 in the Irish Free State a minority Fianna Fail party took power with the aid of labour and others. The opportunity for Nationalists to make an impact in parliament was weakened and caused Devlin and his colleagues to feel frustrated by their minority position. With little influence in political affairs Nationalist attendance at Stormont would now fall. During the 1930s, politics and society in Northern Ireland became increasingly polarised.¹³⁶ This outcome was due to heightened conflict over the constitutional/national position and north south tensions, as well as contemporary party dynamics, internal and external.

As regards Newry, however, we can note that politics continued along conciliatory lines. Shortly before the January 1929 urban elections it was announced that William Robinson would stand down and leave Newry. He had been appointed managing director of the Bank Buildings department store in Belfast.¹³⁷ At his last council meeting tribute was paid to the 'able, dignified and impartial manner' in which he had discharged the duties of the chair.¹³⁸

131. B.M. Walker, *A political history of the two Irelands: from Partition to peace* (Basingstoke, 2012), p.10.

132. *Northern Whig*, 26 Jan.1926.

133. Walker, *Two Irelands*, p.56.

134. *Ibid*, p.27.

135. *Ibid*, p.21.

136. *Ibid*, chapters 1 and 2.

137. *Belfast Newsletter (BNL)*, 16 Jan. 1929.

138. *Newry Reporter*, 17 Jan. 1929

In May he was presented with an inscribed silver salver for his services to the town.¹³⁹ Robinson, who died in 1961, was knighted in 1946, in recognition of 'outstanding public service in many fields'.¹⁴⁰ The 1929 election saw again the return of six councillors from each party. The new Chairman was Nationalist Hugh J. McConville, a former Chairman, a Justice of the Peace, and, later in the year, a Deputy Lieutenant for County Down. The Unionist James Boland was elected Vice-Chairman. At the 1932 elections, the return of the parties was the same, with no contest. Again, a Nationalist Chairman and Unionist Vice-Chairman were elected.¹⁴¹ In 1938 Labour councillor W.F. Cunningham was elected Chairman.

This 1927 photograph allows us to recall a special, largely forgotten, moment in the history of Newry and Northern Ireland. It deserves to be appreciated.

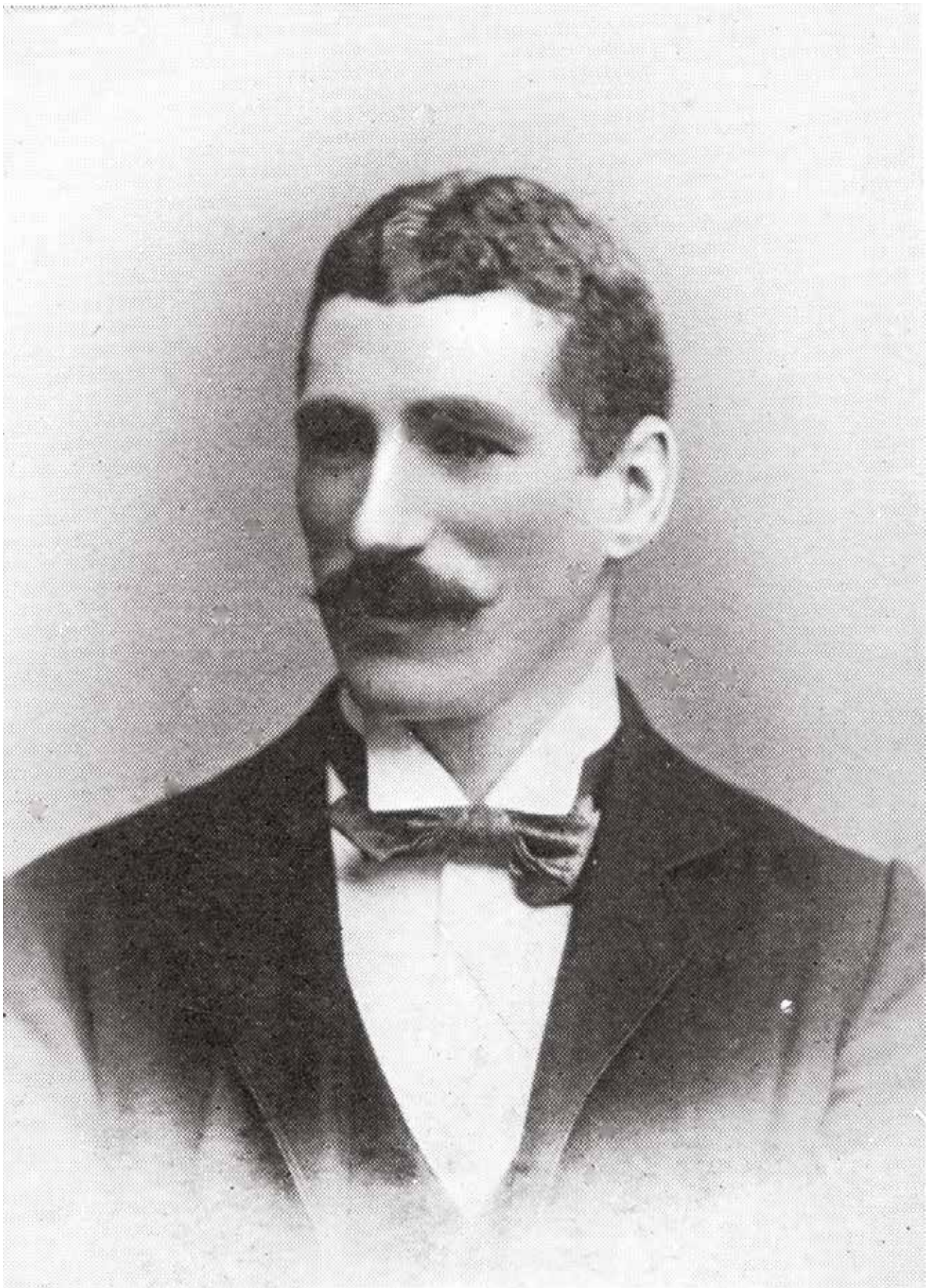


Photograph taken outside Newry Town Hall, marking the visit of James Craig, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland to meet with members of Newry Urban District Council and other local public bodies. Front row, first from left is the Earl of Kilmorey, fourth left is Sir Dawson Bates, Minister of Home Affairs, fifth left is Viscount Craigavon and sixth left is William Robinson, Chairman of Council. *Newry and Mourne Museum Collection*

139. BNL, 8 May 1929.

140. *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 Dec. 1961.

141. BNL, 24 Jan. 1929, 6 and 24 Jan. 1932.



Hugh John McConville was Chairman of Newry Urban District Council from 1909 – 1922 and from 1929 - 1937. McConville was the Chairman when the council was dissolved in April 1922 for refusing to recognise the authority of the Belfast Parliament.
Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

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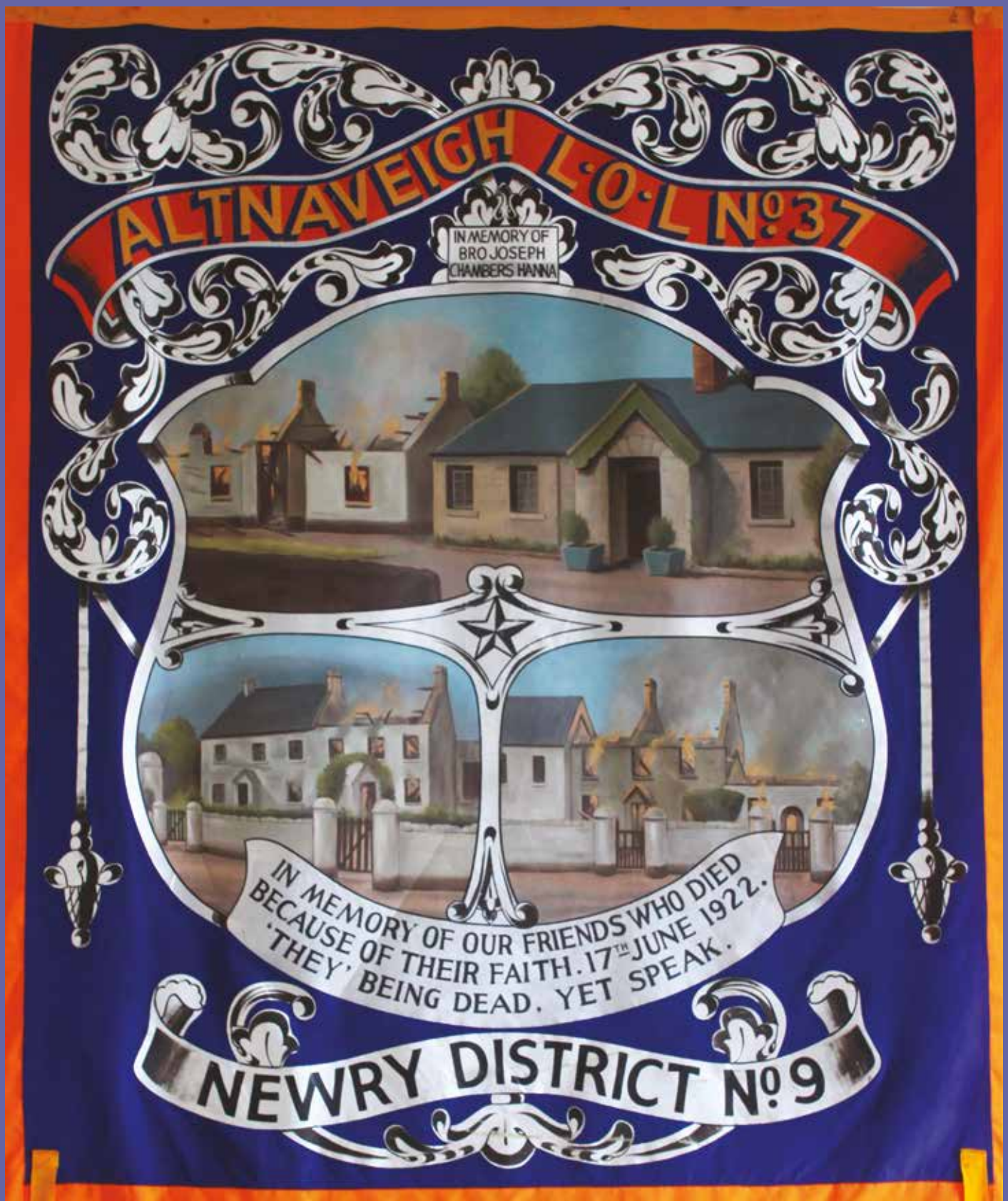
University College Dublin (UCD) Archives

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William Johnson's office in Marcus Square, Newry. Although Johnson was the solicitor for local pro-Partition organisations, such as the Warrenpoint Harbour Authority, he was a great personal friend of John Henry Collins, the Newry solicitor who represented the anti-Partition argument.
Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

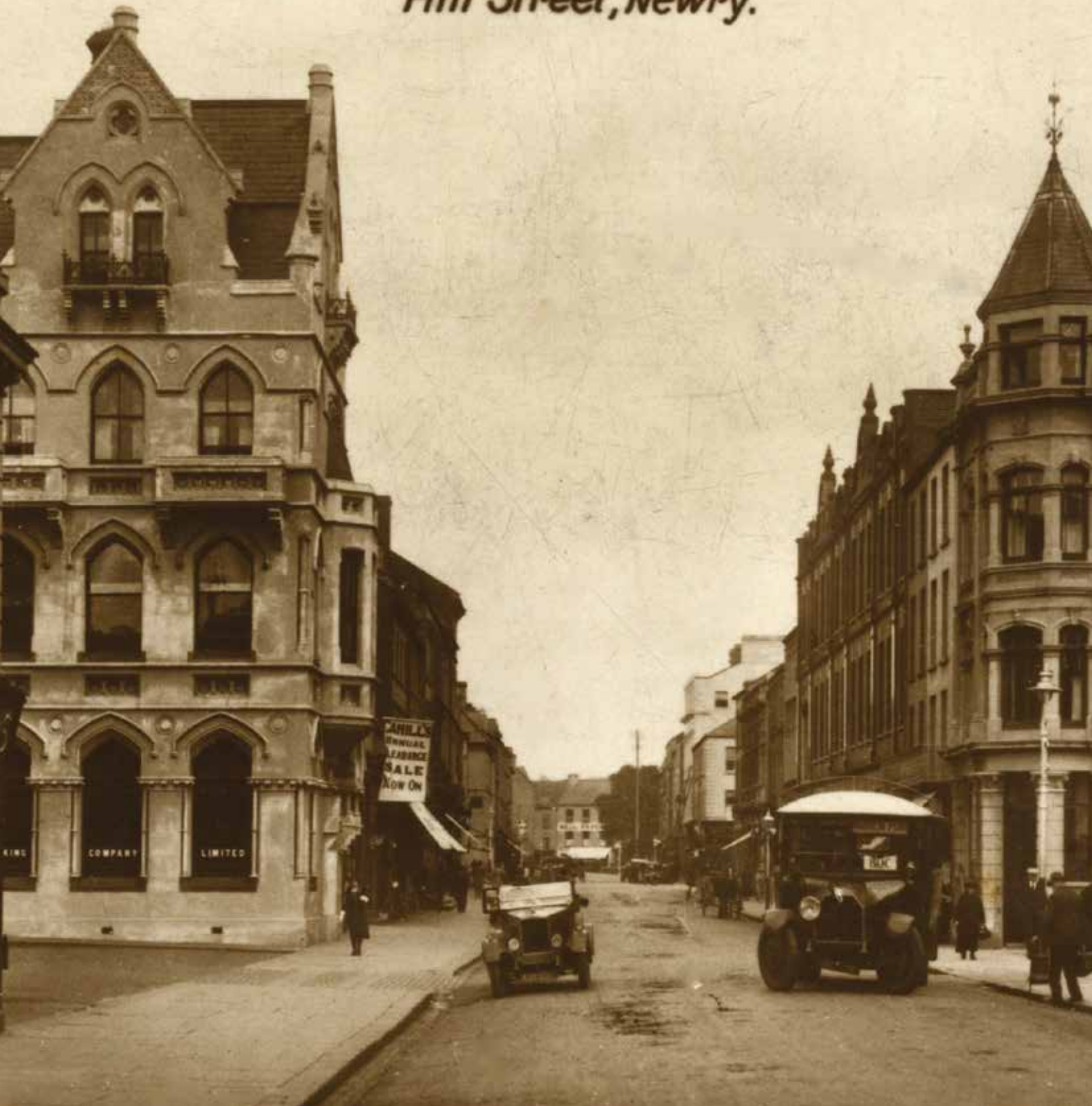


Detail of banner c. 1974 originally from Altnaveigh Orange Hall, now on display in Newry and Mourne Museum.

The banner depicts the Altnaveigh Massacre in which the IRA raided the Altnaveigh area on 17 June 1922, killing five men and one woman, and burning down several houses.

Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

Hill Street, Newry.



Hill Street, Newry, in the 1930s.
Newry and Mourne Museum Collection

