

*Reflections on Centenaries and Anniversaries*  
(Discussion 3)

**A Land Fit for Heroes?**  
*State Formation and First World War Veterans*  
*in Belfast and Dublin in the 1920s*

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**ISLAND** (129) **PAMPHLETS**

Published June 2021 by  
Island Publications / Fellowships of Messines Association  
Belfast

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<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/islandpublications>

*The Fellowship of Messines Association wishes to thank:*  
the keynote speaker Richard S. Grayson,  
the discussion facilitator Deirdre Mac Bride  
and those who participated in the discussion

*This publication has received financial support from*

**The National Lottery Community Fund**



Cover Design by *three creative*  
Printed by **Regency Press**, Belfast

# Introduction

The Fellowship of Messines Association was formed in May 2002 by a diverse group of individuals from Loyalist, Republican and other backgrounds, united in their realisation of the need to confront sectarianism in our society as a necessary means to realistic peace-building.

In 2020 the Association launched its ‘Reflections on Centenaries & Anniversaries’ programme. This programme comprised a series of discussions which were intended to create opportunities for participants, from various backgrounds and political viewpoints, to engage in discussion on some of the more significant historical events of 100 years and 50 years ago, the consequences of which all of us are still living with today.

The discussions also afforded an opportunity for those taking part to engage in the important process of challenging some of the myths and folklore associated with past events, by means of an open and respectful engagement with factual history.

In 2021, a further series of talks and discussions was initiated, focusing on the topic of Partition and its legacy. Each event was to comprise a presentation by a well-known historian, followed by a wide-ranging discussion involving invited participants from a diverse range of backgrounds.

This pamphlet details the *first* of those talks/discussions. The keynote speaker was **Richard S. Grayson**, Professor of Twentieth Century History at Goldsmiths, University of London. Richard has conducted extensive research on Ireland and the First World War, his most important book being *Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died Together in the First World War* (Continuum, 2009). He has also led a walking tour of West Belfast around sites connected with First World War veterans. His most recent book, *Dublin’s Great Wars: The First World War, the Easter Rising and the Irish Revolution*, was published in paperback by Cambridge University Press in 2020.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, it was not possible for the participants to meet indoors face-to-face, and so the discussion, chaired by **Deirdre Mac Bride**, was conducted on an online basis (via a ‘Zoom’ conference).

**Harry Donaghy**, Project Manager, Fellowship of Messines Association

# **A Land Fit for Heroes?**

## **State Formation and First World War Veterans in Belfast and Dublin in the 1920s<sup>1</sup>**

**Richard S. Grayson**, Goldsmiths, University of London

As much as any other group in society, veterans were caught up in the tumultuous events which took place on the island of Ireland as the First World War ended and into the 1920s. As two new states were formed, they were integral to processes of state formation, and of course they also faced specific challenges as a result of their wartime experiences. This article examines specific cases of veterans, pointed to the diversity of their experiences, and explores how allegiances were expressed and put to the test through engagement in (or avoidance of) acts of commemoration. Before moving on to those core issues, the context of support for veterans is set out.

### **Context**

Many veterans returning home would continue to need medical support as a result of their wartime experiences, not least in terms of mental health, such as that provided for ‘broken-nerved soldiers’ at Dublin’s Richmond Asylum.<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Pensions was established at the end of 1916 to administer war pensions for the wounded and widows/dependents of the dead, with awards for the wounded covering both physical and mental injuries.<sup>3</sup> Local committees were set up across Britain and Ireland with Dublin’s beginning work in May 1917.<sup>4</sup> Groups were formed to help veterans back into civilian life, and to make claims for benefits or land, the most prominent being the ‘Comrades of the Great War’ which held its first meeting in Dublin in September 1918. It continued to organise events until 1921 when it was subsumed by the British Legion.<sup>5</sup>

Such support was UK-wide and the establishment of the Irish Free State did not result in any change to the entitlement of disabled ex-servicemen to pensions since the British government maintained its obligations to those who had served in the British military. While there were significant problems in the organisation of pension

claims in the early years, by all measures veterans in the Free State were more likely to receive a pension than their counterparts in Great Britain, and at a higher rate. For example, figures for 1926-7 show that 31.6% enlisted men in the Irish Free State received a pension, compared to 16% in Northern Ireland and 9.8% in Britain. Meanwhile, the annual value per pension to a disabled veteran was £17 7s 6d in the Free State, £9 19s 6d in Northern Ireland, and £5 0s 7d in Britain. Possible reasons for this include, for example, Irish soldiers having served longer (due to Irish recruitment having been mostly before 1916), the Ministry of Pensions possibly being more generous to Irish applicants knowing that they would not receive other support in the Free State, or Irish claimants simply being more effective in their applications.<sup>6</sup>

Employment prospects were a different matter and government support could only ever be piecemeal at a time when economic orthodoxy – north and south of the border – was against vast state involvement in job creation. The Dublin Corporation decided in early 1922 that when employing men it would ensure that 25% were from the pre-Truce Dublin Brigade of the IRA, but it did not do the same for British veterans.<sup>7</sup> Of those, in early 1920 there were 83,500 demobilised servicemen in Ireland, of whom 27,468 (one-third) were receiving unemployment benefits, compared to just under 10% in Great Britain. The Ministry of Labour believed this was due to the political situation leading to hostility towards ex-servicemen and the government did provide some funding for public works schemes, some of which went to house-building in the Dublin area.<sup>8</sup> Houses were built through the Irish Sailors' and Soldiers' Land Trust, established in 1923 by the Free State but actually an imperial body since the British government retained responsibility for ex-servicemen. Of nearly 2,000 houses built by 1928 in the Free State, 526 were in County Dublin, nearly half at Killester, which became Dublin's first garden suburb. Rents were lower than in comparable housing elsewhere in the city but this did not prevent a rent strike by tenants over 1924-6.<sup>9</sup> Very little was ever done for ex-soldiers in terms of housing in Belfast, except for limited building in the Cregagh area of East Belfast.<sup>10</sup>

There was also the option of continued military service, both in the British army and, in the south, the Free State army was an attractive option for many British army veterans, with around half of the 55,000 men in the National Army in the mid-1920s

reckoned to be British veterans.<sup>11</sup> Debate continues among historians as to how far British veterans became targets of the IRA. Certainly, in November 1922 the anti-Treaty IRA were ordered by their commander, Liam Lynch, to kill British veterans in the National Army.<sup>12</sup> One recent study of three Munster counties shows that ex-servicemen faced much hostility during the civil war, because of their past service, but also that this was part of much wider violence directed against Protestants.<sup>13</sup> Over 120 war veterans were killed by the IRA in various guises between 1919 and 1924 and it has been argued that most of these were ‘killed simply as retribution for their part in the war’.<sup>14</sup> Such an approach is in line with writers who stress the sectarian nature of the IRA’s activities during the Irish revolution.<sup>15</sup> However, whether or not they might have – at least on occasion – behaved in a sectarian manner in some parts of the country, the sheer number of veterans, not least in Dublin, suggests that any concerted campaign against them by the IRA would have run into difficulties. Moreover, as Paul Taylor argues, ‘Their integration into society was not defined by war service. The term ex-servicemen implied a homogeneity which in reality, beyond attendance at remembrance ceremonies, did not exist.’<sup>16</sup> So what stands out more than 120 dead is the vast number who lived their lives free from IRA violence.

### **Case studies**

Case studies of ex-soldiers’ lives point to the very different experiences they faced in the 1920s. Sergeant John Dickson of Dover Street in the Shankill, who had won both the DCM and the Military Medal in the final allied advance, had been hospitalised earlier in the war. His daughter recalled, ‘His health was never very good as a result of his wounds and gas poisoning.... He had shrapnel in both arms and legs, and developed a serious cough which lasted a number of years.’ However, John Dickson was one of many who did not qualify for a pension. Again, his daughter recalls, ‘He was sent for a medical and was asked by someone to jump over a chain. My Dad ... told them he had been jumping over barbed wire fences for four years and flatly refused.’ He did however find work as a commercial traveller. He worked both in England and Scotland, before later settling in Bangor with his wife, whom he married in 1924, and four children. Having moved back to Belfast in the 1950s, he died in 1967.<sup>17</sup>

Veterans were afflicted by a range of health problems, neurasthenia (as shell shock was classified from 1917) and ‘valvular disease of the heart’, the most common symptoms of which included rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, fatigue and dizziness.<sup>18</sup> As in the wider population, tuberculosis was rife and Daniel McKeown was a sufferer. He had helped to train the 5<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Fusiliers and been wounded at Gallipoli, before serving from late 1916 to 1918 in his regiment’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Garrison Battalion in Salonica and being discharged in May 1918 as no longer fit. Life after the war was hard, and he died in 1927 from tuberculosis. His granddaughter, Marie Toner Moore, was born after his death, but due to the death of both her parents while she was a child, Marie was brought up by her grandmother and was therefore told much about her late grandfather. Eligibility for a war pension, and the amount that could be awarded, depended on the degree to which an ex-soldier was prohibited from working. McKeown was entitled to a pension having been discharged as medically unfit for further service, and he received 44d per day from 1 April 1919, which was increased by five pence per day when he reached the age of fifty-five in 1925.<sup>19</sup> However, at £66 per year this was well below the average wage for a skilled worker and he was keen to find a job. He had qualified as a gym instructor in his first period in the army, and had exemplary references. Marie recalls her grandmother’s account of his life after the war, applying for many positions which he did not obtain, and doing work as a cobbler from his house in Forfar Street:

My granny also told the story of how she had to pawn his ‘great coat’ which they had been using as a blanket during his last illness to feed his children. My grandmother believed that it was because of his Catholicism that he was denied work and I understood from her that he believed this too. She often remarked that he was wont to say ‘so much for the land fit for heroes’.<sup>20</sup>

Other soldiers in Belfast were caught up in the ‘Troubles’ of the early 1920s which many see as flowing from the evictions of Catholic workers from the shipyards in July 1920. The role of employment grievances in the violence was seen at a meeting on 30 July at the Deacon Memorial Hall in McTier Street, chaired by former Company Sergeant-Major Selby, once of the 9<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Rifles. Selby reminded those present (as many as 440) that their employers had assured them in 1914 that ‘the men who went would be reinstated in their jobs.’ Selby claimed that ‘men from other parts

of the country, many of them Sinn Feiners' had filled the jobs, and he linked the street violence to disgruntlement among ex-servicemen. A resolution was passed calling on employers in the city to find work for an estimated 3-5,000 unemployed ex-servicemen.<sup>21</sup>

Sectarian violence took place in Belfast over the next two years and veterans could be caught up in it. The first night of violence in the Falls in 1920 saw two deaths, one of whom was an ex-soldier: Bernard 'Bertie' Devlin, a resident of Alexander Street West and a member of the INVA. He was shot on 21 July when soldiers opened fire on a rampaging crowd in the Falls Road.<sup>22</sup> The next night, William Dunning of Bellevue Street had 'practically the left side of his head blown off'. He died instantly as a result of, according to the *Belfast Telegraph*, 'intense firing ... by a Sinn Fein element' at the junction of Kashmir Road and Bombay Street. Dunning had served with the 9<sup>th</sup> RIRifles but had been discharged as unfit for further service in 1916.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most interesting cases over the next two years is that of Patrick O'Hare and his family in Urney Street. O'Hare had served for thirteen years, eventually becoming a Sergeant, and opting to continue service after the war for two more years from September 1919.<sup>24</sup> The *Irish News* reported on 21 June 1921 that he had been home on leave from the Connaught Rangers the previous week. One of 'the Orange mobs',

... armed with revolvers, numbering over a hundred, rushed down Urney Street, and commenced to smash the windows and doors of O'Hare's home. They got into the house, and proceeded to smash the furniture in the kitchen. O'Hare, who was in uniform at the time, had his wife and children upstairs. Not content with smashing the furniture, the gang of rowdies went one better in cruelty and terrorism. They surrounded O'Hare and his family, dragged them downstairs, and then told Mrs. O'Hare that they were going to shoot her husband.

The newspaper said that from the mob's point of view, despite his uniform, 'he was a Catholic, that was sufficient crime'. Mrs O'Hare apparently ran screaming into the street and feared the worst when her husband was taken into the yard and she heard a shot. But the attackers had not killed him and the family was allowed to leave, although they never went back to their home.<sup>25</sup>

There is a slightly different account of this story from Seán O'Hare, a grandson of Patrick O'Hare. Intriguingly, he said that in the O'Hare version,

... they said that he [Patrick O'Hare] had been saved by British regulars, that ... my grandmother had sent one of her daughters ... running down to a British army peaceline ... which must have been down near the Falls, with his paybook and said that they were going to kill a soldier and that when they saw the paybook they came up and got him released.

As Seán himself points out, 'It's not something that would be made up because ... they didn't have any love for the British army but they said that they had saved him and that they actually took him'.<sup>26</sup>

Two cases from Dublin illustrate other aspects of veterans' post-war lives. Captain Robert Callaghan, born in Clontarf in 1886, was hit by a bullet in the Struma Valley in Macedonia on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1916, aged 30, serving with the 7<sup>th</sup> Dublins. The bullet entered his left cheek under the eye, ran through his nose and blew away almost the whole of his right upper jawbone. Both his eyes were lost. After much treatment, first on a hospital ship and then in Malta, he arrived at Southampton on the H.S. *Glenart Castle* in early December 1916. Further treatment followed and he was discharged from the army in March 1917, retaining the honorary rank of Captain. He took up residence at his father's house in Drumcondra Road. Having had two artificial eyes inserted, Callaghan suffered from continued problems with his eyelids and nose. He was transferred from the Special Military Hospital at Blackrock to the care of Harold Gillies in Sidcup in May 1919. In his first operation, incisions and transfers of skin and muscle were made. Four months later he married Violet Hortense Hunter in Fulham. She was the daughter of a surgeon and it is possible that they had met due to his treatment.<sup>27</sup> He returned to Gillies in February 1921 for work on his nose. Then, in late 1921, it was clear that an eyelid need attention so that it did not droop, and a further operation followed in February 1922.

Along with the physical and emotional effects of his wounds, Callaghan faced a battle with bureaucracy over his pension. He initially received an annual wound pension of £200 and a £500 gratuity for the loss of his eyes. Possibly advised by staff in Sidcup (he wrote from there), he applied for another gratuity in February 1921 for facial disfigurement. The latter was because, as a medical board said in July, his

lower right eyelid 'is drawn downwards which causes an unsightly appearance and necessitates wearing a shade'. Meanwhile, nasal obstructions hindered breathing. Callaghan was awarded a further gratuity, of £250, and an additional annual wound pension of £50.

These new awards prompted a Ministry of Pensions official to look again at Callaghan's case. The precise rate of daily 'retired pay' was partly determined by rank. When Callaghan was wounded, he held the rank of Acting Captain. To be paid a pension at the Captain's rate one needed to have been in that role for fifteen days, but Callaghan had only held the rank for ten days when wounded. Despite that, the fact that he was a Captain at the time of his injuries was communicated by the War Office to the Ministry of Pensions, and they paid him for some time at the rate for that rank – 7/- a day instead of the lower rate of 3/-. He had thus been significantly overpaid by £305 and was told that most of the overpayment would be deducted from arrears owing to him for his second annual wound pension of £50 per year. However, £117 was left to be recovered and that would be recovered from his second gratuity.

It is hard to take in what this must have meant to Callaghan. When news reached him, he was living in Booterstown, an area once represented in Parliament by Edward Carson. Callaghan wrote to Carson, by then in the Lords, in November 1921, saying that since the Ministry of Pensions had admitted the mistake was their fault, 'Surely this is not justice?' Carson immediately wrote to the War Office saying it was 'deplorable that a man blinded in the War should be put into such a state of anxiety through no fault or mistake of his own.' Over the course of the next year, three departments – the War Office, Treasury and Ministry of Pensions – sent letters back and forth to each other, partly trying to establish which department was responsible. The War Office took the view as early as January 1922 that the overpayment was not Callaghan's fault, and that only a limited recovery from the second gratuity should be made, proposing a deduction of £17 not £117. It would take until October 1922 to agree that, and in November Callaghan was told that he would receive a further £100 to make up for most of the second gratuity which he had not been sent. In the near future a daughter was born, for in 1931 he made enquiries about support for his daughter to attend the Royal School for Daughters of Officers of the Army in Bath.<sup>28</sup>

There was no expectation that Robert Callaghan would take part in a second war

but he tried to do so. In late September 1938, at the height of the crisis over the Sudetenland, by then living in Blackheath, Callaghan wrote to the War Office saying, ‘In the event of Great Britain becoming involved in war, may I, a war-blinded officer, now practising as masseur & medical electrician, offer my services in these capacities?’ His offer was acknowledged, but it is not clear that he ever took up such a role.<sup>29</sup> He died in Greenwich in on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1948, age 62, from heart failure, bronchitis and phlebitis.<sup>30</sup>

Emmet Dalton offers a different case. Born in the USA but growing up in Dublin from the age of three, his family were middle-class Catholic nationalists. He enlisted in 1915 and was commissioned. He won the Military Cross on the Somme in September 1916 serving with the 9<sup>th</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and in that battalion, was with the former nationalist MP Thomas Kettle at the moment of his death. Yet post-war he became the highest profile crossover from the British army to the IRA. His time in the British army ended in April 1919, demobilised as a Captain. It is not clear exactly what turned him towards the IRA. In one fictionalised account of his own life, his own character joined simply because he was ‘he was so fed up after four years in France’. Nor is it clear when he joined exactly, and after his return to Dublin he took up his studies and worked as a clerk. However, he was involved with the IRA by the middle of 1919 giving lectures to IRA officers. Such work became central to his role in the immediate post-war years: by the summer of 1921 he was Assistant Director of Training, and then soon the overall Director. His way in was through his brother Charles who had joined the Irish Volunteers at the end of 1917 and was involved in intelligence work. It was he who recommended Emmet to Oscar Traynor. Such work meant he soon fell under the gaze of the authorities: in early December 1920 the family home was raided by Auxiliaries and the army, with Emmet and his father arrested (and held from 9<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> December).<sup>31</sup>

During May 1921, there was one especially prominent operation involving ex-British soldiers: the IRA’s audacious mission to Mountjoy Prison on 14<sup>th</sup> May to rescue the Longford IRA’s Seán MacEoin. Emmet Dalton was selected for the venture because Michael Collins’ plan involved capturing a British armoured car and driving it into the prison. The crucial element was someone who could pose as a British officer. Aside from actually being a former British officer, Dalton ‘was the

typical British Officer, very neat, debonair, small fair toothbrush moustache, and spoke with a kind of affected accent, which was entirely suitable for the character which he had to impersonate.<sup>32</sup> The mission failed but Dalton gained significant status because of it.<sup>33</sup> Dalton later played a crucial role in the civil war, securing the artillery from the British with which the national Army pounded the IRA in the Four Courts.<sup>34</sup> Having been with Kettle when he died, Dalton was also alongside Michael Collins when he was killed, and led the war against the IRA in Cork. Dalton had also been in London with Collins during the negotiation of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. However, he became concerned about the execution of republican prisoners and resigned from the National Army on Armistice Day 1922.<sup>35</sup> He went on to be Clerk of the Senate of the Irish Free State, before working in England, first as a film salesman for Paramount, and then as a film-maker. That work took him back to Ireland with the opening of Ardmore Studios in 1958, though he retained his main home at Radlett in Hertfordshire through the 1960s before returning to live in Dublin. His death in 1978 showed how the divisions of the Civil War lingered: his funeral with full military honours at Glasnevin, and burial in the republican plot, was attended by many from Fine Gael, but not a single representative of the Fianna Fáil government.<sup>36</sup>

Dalton retained complex views on the war and the revolutionary era. Shortly before his death on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1978 he was interviewed by Cathal O'Shannon on RTÉ and made no apology for his views on the Rising. Describing those at Kilworth Camp in Cork when news came through, he said, 'We were surprised, annoyed and we thought that it was madness'. He defended that as 'we were at war in defence of this country and what we believed in', and denied feeling any sympathy for the rebels.<sup>37</sup> Ten years before, as the Rising's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary was marked, he made a case for also remembering the Somme. He wrote to the *Irish Times* reminding readers that the year was 'also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, where thousands of young Irishmen fought with great gallantry before losing their lives.' He made the bold claim that 'These young men were volunteers who answered the call of Ireland's political leaders of that day; they were motivated by a just cause', and cited his friend Tom Kettle's poem to his daughter Betty.<sup>38</sup>

## Commemoration

The focus for collective remembrance in Belfast even from 1916 was the Somme, but it was not the entire battle – rather, it focused on the Ulster Division’s role on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916, which points to how commemoration rapidly became something which did not include the whole community. One year on, the newspapers carried lists of the dead and the *Belfast Evening Telegraph* included a large picture of J.P. Beadle’s painting of the Ulster Division attacking at the Somme, offering copies for sale to readers.<sup>39</sup> Friday 29 June 1917, was ‘Forget-me-not Day’ when the flowers were sold in memory of the fallen, with the money raised going to the UVF Patriotic Fund.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, on 1 July itself, services in Protestant churches in Belfast focused on the sacrifice at the Somme.<sup>41</sup> The anniversary of 1 July 1916 would continue to be a central point for marking the city’s contribution to the war effort and by 1918 it was fully incorporated into the Orange Order’s activities for July of each year. In 1918 and in 1919 it became tied up with 12 July commemoration.<sup>42</sup>

In the summer of 1919 a series of events drew a line under the war, and also celebrated the return of soldiers. On 29 July, an event was held at Celtic Park for veterans of the 16<sup>th</sup> Division, including sports and the St Peter’s Brass Band. The meeting was also infused with the politics of the day. Joseph Devlin MP argued that Ireland had made a great contribution to the war effort but that while ‘She kept her faith ... faith has not been kept with her.’ Yet Devlin also saw hope in the shared experience of war saying that he had not abandoned his hope that the good relations between the Ulster and Irish divisions could play a role in building a peaceful future in Ulster.<sup>43</sup>

Saturday 9 August 1919 was Peace Day in Belfast, marking the signature of the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>44</sup> Elsewhere in the UK it had been celebrated on 19 July, but in Ulster, other than a small march past in Belfast,<sup>45</sup> it was not held then to avoid clashing with annual Orange marches. Estimates of how many veterans took part ranged from 20,000 to 36,000. The day included the unveiling of a temporary Cenotaph at City Hall and a march from the Antrim Road in North Belfast to Ormeau Park in the East. In the Ulster Division section of the parade, 107<sup>th</sup> Brigade marched in its original format of the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> RIRifles.<sup>46</sup> Many streets were decorated, with Glenwood Street off the Shankill covered from end to end with lanterns and bunting, and the pavements coloured red, white and blue. Parties for children were held in a

number of parks, including Woodvale Park, where children played games and were given sweets.<sup>47</sup>

Many nationalists avoided Peace Day. Even during the war nationalist remembrance of the dead was problematic. Catholic churches did not produce lists of the dead in the way that many other organisations did, although in October 1916 there was a Requiem Mass at St Mary's, Belfast for the souls of Belfast Catholic soldiers and sailors who had lost lives in the war. It was a major event at which the Bishop of Down and Connor presided.<sup>48</sup> Later, while many Catholics were not ashamed of their ancestor's service, their remembrance was private. The *Irish News* argued that 'Peace Day' celebrated militarism and that 'there is absolutely no difference between the manner and temper of a Red Indian victory carnival and the gorgeous processions arranged to celebrate the triumph over Germany.'<sup>49</sup> Formally, nationalists commemorated their dead in an Irish Nationalist Veterans Association parade of Belfast's nationalist ex-soldiers at 7.30am on Sunday 12 October 1919. They marched to St Peter's in the Falls where a Requiem Mass was said for Catholics who died in the war.<sup>50</sup>

From 1919 onwards 1 July was the key commemorative event in Belfast.<sup>51</sup> But remembrance in Belfast in the 1920s should be seen in the context of wider remembrance, both in the rest of Ireland, and in Great Britain. From 1919 to 1938, 11am on 11 November was marked by two minutes' silence across the UK. Suspended in 1939 to 1945, it was reinstated in 1946, but in subsequent years the dead of both world wars (and subsequent conflicts) have been remembered on Remembrance Sunday, the second Sunday of November. The focus of UK remembrance is the Cenotaph in London and the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey, both of which were unveiled in 1920 (in the case of the Cenotaph, replacing a temporary structure). Meanwhile, the British Legion's poppy has been sold since 1921.<sup>52</sup>

Other specific memorials and symbols are more resonant in Belfast, especially the memorials to specific divisions. On the site of the Ulster Division's advance on 1 July 1916 stands the Ulster Tower, a replica of Helen's Tower in grounds of Clondeboye estate in County Down where volunteers had trained in 1914-15.<sup>53</sup> This was initially conceived of and opened in November 1921 as a memorial to the Ulster Division.

Trees were planted on the pathway leading to it, mainly funded by men from specific parts of the Division.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, the 16<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division is commemorated in France and Belgium with stone Celtic crosses at Guillemont and Wytchaete, replacing an earlier wooden one at Ginchy. A similar cross in Salonika honours the 10<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division.<sup>55</sup> The Belfast Cenotaph was unveiled in November 1929. Its unveiling was notable for the absence of Catholic organisations. Although two fascist groups laid wreaths in the formal ceremony, 16<sup>th</sup> Division veterans only did so after the official proceedings, although they were included a year later.<sup>56</sup>

There is some debate over how far unionists consciously appropriated remembrance of the war. Meanwhile, the government of the new Northern Ireland state did not feel any need for ‘national’ remembrance in Northern Ireland, leaving London as the centre of remembrance, and other ceremonies as matters for local communities.<sup>57</sup> However, as Gillian McIntosh argues, the story of the Somme became absolutely central in the creation of inter-war unionism, with many unionist writers pointing out the contrasts between the activities of loyal Ulstermen on the Somme in 1916, and the rebellion in Dublin in the same year.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, regardless of whether unionists intended to make commemorations unionist in tone, any nationalist attending would be surrounded by the flags and symbols of a country to which they felt no allegiance, in a crowd singing songs which had nothing to do with nationalists’ national identity.

In Dublin, Peace Day was held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1919, but was boycotted by the Irish Nationalist Veterans Association. Just as in Belfast, the general nationalist position was that Peace Day was a celebration of militarism.<sup>59</sup> However, the commemorations were still substantial. Crowds assembled from 9am as military units took up positions around Castle Yard. They included all the Irish infantry regiments, along with English, Scottish and Welsh regiments serving in Dublin, and units such as the Royal Engineers. The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force were also represented, with tanks bringing up the rear. At 11.40am they left Castle Yard, with the salute taken by Lord French at College Green. The *Evening Mail* reported, ‘As was only to be expected, the Dublin Fusiliers received an ovation all to themselves.’ The parade took nearly two hours to pass. There was no outright opposition, but a sign of feeling among elected local politicians was that ‘In contrast to practically every other building in

Dame Street, no flag was flown over the City Hall – even the flag bearing the City arms was not hoisted.<sup>60</sup>

Annual commemorations in Dublin focused on Armistice Day. At the two minutes' silence at 11am on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1919, the *Evening Mail* reported, 'Thousands participated in the mute tribute of respect and homage'. The city's central gathering place was at College Green. The bell of Trinity College sounded at 11am and as traffic halted 'It was as though the chill hand of death had been suddenly laid upon the pulsating heart of the Metropolis, and that the life blood of her arteries had been petrified in their course and ceased to flow.' As the bell chimed again, along with factory and ship sirens, flags which had been lowered were raised and God Save the King was led by students at Trinity. However, a discordant note was struck with the singing of Sinn Féin's 'The Soldiers' Song' outside the party's headquarters in Harcourt Street after the end of the silence.<sup>61</sup>

Over 1919-22, there were plenty of incentives not to disrupt the anniversary of the armistice due to the tensions aroused by street violence and curfews. This meant that 1923 was the first armistice marked in 'genuine peacetime conditions'.<sup>62</sup> The focal points were parades and services in the city centre. The *Irish Times* reported, 'A good many members of the National Army wore the poppy in their caps'.<sup>63</sup> While the President of the Free State's Executive and the Governor-General did not attend Armistice Day commemorations in Dublin, they sent representatives between 1924 and 1932 (after which point Fianna Fáil was in government and did not take part). The first wreath laid for the Free State government by Senator Colonel Maurice Moore, in 1924, carried the words in English and Irish 'From the Government of Saorstatt Eireann, in memory of all the Irishmen who died in the Great War'.<sup>64</sup> Also from 1924, a centre-piece of commemorations in Dublin was a twenty-feet high wooden cross marking the role of the 16<sup>th</sup> Division on the Somme. It had been resting between Guillemont and Ginchy since the autumn of 1917. When plans were made for a permanent stone cross (at Guillemont, which would be unveiled in 1926), the wooden cross was sent to Dublin and it was used annually until 1939 when it was placed at Islandbridge where it still rests.<sup>65</sup> The stone cross that was placed at Guillemont was also on display in Dublin prior to its erection in France, at the College Green events in 1924.<sup>66</sup>

Commemorations in Dublin were not free from controversy and trouble. Tensions often arose between students from Trinity College and University College, reflecting not only how their different politics made them see the war in different ways, but also a general rivalry between two groups of students.<sup>67</sup> Beyond that, there were other efforts to hinder commemorations. In 1926, when it was said that 120,000 had gathered at a memorial to the 16<sup>th</sup> Division in Stephen's Green, smoke bombs were let off.<sup>68</sup> A public meeting in 1927 organised by Fianna Fáil saw speakers protest against 'the flaunting of the English flag in Ireland'.<sup>69</sup> In the same year, a British Legion hall was opened at Inchicore on 5<sup>th</sup> November only to be burned down five days later.<sup>70</sup> In future years, the Union Flag continued to offend, with scuffles breaking out in 1930 as attempts were made by protestors to seize flags.<sup>71</sup> In 1932, there was a police baton charge on those protesting against the armistice commemorations and the display of Union Flags around O'Connell Street and at College Green. One poppy-snatcher got more than he bargained for with 'a nasty cut on the hand from a razor blade, which had been secreted by the poppy-wearer'.<sup>72</sup> As remembrance in Dublin moved from the city centre to Phoenix Park in 1926, the government continued to be represented until 1932 when Fianna Fáil took office.

More widely in Dublin, the focus of remembrance came to be the Irish National War Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge. An all-Ireland memorial in Dublin was first mooted towards the end of 1918, with specific proposals considered from the summer of 1919 by a War Memorial Committee initially led by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord French and later by Andrew Jameson of the whiskey-distilling family and a Senator in the Free State. Initially, a Soldiers' Central Home, which would offer board and lodging to soldiers and sailors passing through the city, was proposed and agreed. As well as having a practical function, it would house Ireland's War Memorial Records.<sup>73</sup> However, by the end of 1919, the ongoing conflict in Ireland led to the idea being abandoned. Until 1923, the committee focused on producing the War Memorial Records, which contained nearly 50,000 names of supposedly 'Irish' war dead, but in reality was all those who had served in Irish regiments. With the end of the Civil War, thoughts again turned to a memorial. Merrion Square was proposed, with a memorial combining a public park 'after the manner of St Stephen's Green, with the addition of a Cenotaph in the centre.' £40,000 was raised by the Irish

National War Memorial Fund.<sup>74</sup> A Senate debate in March 1927 voiced concerns about it as a site of conflict, and the effects of mass gatherings on the daily life of the area. Some felt that it would be wrong to mix solemn commemoration with a recreational park. Perhaps more surprising were issues raised by those linked to veterans, that the money would be better spent on employment and housing for veterans. Faced with a coalition of unlikely allies, the proposal was defeated in the Senate by 40 to 13.<sup>75</sup>

Phoenix Park emerged as an alternative during the debate, and although it was not chosen, ten acres at nearby Islandbridge were provisionally agreed by 1929. Edwin Lutyens, a central figure in the Imperial War Graves Commission's work, was employed a year later as chief architect. When a final decision was taken at the end of 1931 to begin work, the Irish National War Memorial Committee's funds had risen to over £50,000. The Free State government committed a similar amount, justified as being a form of unemployment relief.<sup>76</sup> The work was effectively completed by the spring of 1937, carried out by a workforce consisting half of British veterans and half of those who had served in the National Army.<sup>77</sup>

## **Conclusion**

A key theme which emerges from consideration of First World War veterans in Belfast and Dublin is that the use of the term 'veterans' as if they were a distinct group is extremely problematic. As new conflicts began and developed, men who had once fought on the same side could now find themselves opposed to each other, and even if they were not active participants in the conflicts of the 1920s forms of commemoration at least could be divisive. Moreover, the extent to which one's life in the 1920s was affected by wartime experience varied greatly, for example, depending on whether the veteran had emerged from the war with a serious injury or physically unscathed. What is clear though, is that experiences of the war continued to be felt across the island of Ireland long after it had ended. Although a diverse group, veterans brought with them experiences, skills and beliefs which played an important role in the formation of new states and the reinforcement of identities.

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## **Zoom discussion chaired by Deirdre Mac Bride**

**[Deirdre Mac Bride]** Thank you, Richard, for a very comprehensive and interesting paper. I found the stories of the men you detailed really fascinating. I was reminded of something I was reading yesterday, which was Brian Cowan's speech in 2009 about the upcoming commemorations of the decade of centenaries, and remember he was the Fianna Fáil Taoiseach when he made that speech. And in the middle of the speech he talks about how the impact of that period was that people in the South were very wary of the North: they were 'othered'. And he talks about how we retreat into exclusive identities, and used the well-known metaphor about the 'albatross of the past around our necks'. And from your paper around commemoration, it really strikes me that he is a Fianna Fáil Taoiseach, he is not Fine Gael, he is owning that part of Fianna Fáil that was very exclusive about the commemoration of the First World War; it comes through in the latter part of your talk about is how it has been commemorated. I just thought that was fascinating.

**[Richard Grayson]** Just on that point, the question as to whether our identities were more complex before Partition is an interesting one. Just think of these units of the Ulster Division: they go into battle wearing combinations of crowns and Irish harps; the Ulster Division are presented with shamrocks on St Patrick's Day. This is a time when Joe Devlin, from a different perspective, is saying: we just want a full share in the Empire, which the blood and brains of Irishmen have done so much to create. So there is a Britishness about Nationalists – the Irish Parliamentary Party are not seeking to leave the UK, they just want devolution – and there is an Irishness about Unionists that becomes buried to some extent.

**[Deirdre Mac Bride]** Can I invite comments, or questions, or other things which struck people about the paper, or about the people talked about, such as Emmet Dalton. The stories of those men really underline that while we might think of things as exclusive, their lives don't read as exclusive, do they?

**[Richard Grayson]** I mean, if all you know about Emmet Dalton was that he had been in the IRA in the War of Independence, and he had then gone to get the artillery

from the British to fire on the Four Courts, you can ascribe a certain set of attitudes to him, but you wouldn't then know that he would leave the National Army over the execution of IRA prisoners, and you wouldn't know he had won the Military Cross at the Somme. And although I didn't mention it in my presentation, he was interviewed in the seventies, and he said that he was at Kilworth Camp in Cork when news of the Rising came through. This is him talking in March '78: "We were surprised, annoyed, and we thought it was madness." He then defended that by saying: "We were at war in defence of this country and what we believed in" and he denied feeling any sympathy for the rebels. Now, you might have expected people, over the years, to at least overlay that with a: well, they were brave men and you can see that ultimately what they did led to something... which he himself fought for in later years. But he didn't do that, and he also wrote to the *Irish Times* in 1966, when the 50th anniversary of the Rising was being commemorated. He wants to remind readers that the year was also the 50th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme where thousands of young Irishmen fought with great gallantry before losing their lives. He made the claim that these men were volunteers who answered the call of Ireland's political leaders of the day, and were motivated by a just cause, and he cited Tom Kettle. So he was pretty unrepentant about it; he doesn't at any point say, "Well, I came to realise that the Redmonite view wasn't really what was needed." He doesn't really explain his change; he is capable of holding and defending those different views, his multi-layered beliefs in a way.

**[Deirdre Mac Bride]** I was struck, when I was reading your paper, and you talk about 'homes fit for heroes', as somebody who started my career working in housing, and the bigger space standards and the better standards, and it didn't last for long, and nor did it last very long after the Second World War. When you head into the 1920s and into the hungry thirties I am left wondering what's happening to these men who came back to their families? At what point does sectarianism really intervene?

**[Richard Grayson]** I think it is seen in the early 1920s. You see it on the streets. But there is also the case when the men come back from the front and want to go back to their jobs, and they have this sense that their jobs have been taken by people who they broadly label as Sinn Féiners. And they may not be republicans at all, they may just

be broadly nationalist, but they have that label. And of course there was sectarianism in the city before the war, and in lots of ways what happens is that there is a temporary suspension of it, as they go off to fight a common foe. You can even see it cropping up at the front. There's a point where members of the Ulster Division are playing members of the 16th Irish Division in a sports event in 1918, and someone says: "I thought we weren't supposed to be consorting with the enemy?" It's a joke, it's banter, but nevertheless it means that it has not gone away.

One of the really striking things is that for veterans in the Free State, they were far more likely to receive a more generous pension than veterans in Northern Ireland and, even more so, veterans in Great Britain. The average annual pension is something like £17 in the Free State, £9 in Northern Ireland, and £5 in Great Britain. And why is that? Well, all of it is being paid by the British government. It's not that the Free State is paying a pension at all, but there are a couple of aspects. First of all, if you were an Irish veteran, you were far more likely to have joined earlier in the war. Many in Great Britain would have been conscripted in '17, '18, whereas the bulk of Irish recruitment is in '14, '15, so if you survived that long you would get a longer service pension. Then there is a sense that maybe the War Office, or the Ministry of Pensions, felt that veterans in the Free State wouldn't get any other government support, so they felt they would be a bit more generous with the pensions. And the other argument is that maybe ex-veterans' groups in the Free State were better organised in what they could claim, and did it more effectively. But we don't really know, because a lot of those files from the Ministry of Pensions have been weeded out and thrown away. There were also slightly more generous housing schemes in the Free State, compared to Northern Ireland and indeed Great Britain. But overall, attitudes to employment – and the state's role in creating employment – were very conservative across the board. These are not 'new deal' kinds of governments who are willing to create work for people.

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] Richard, could you say something about mental health, shell-shock, and what you have been able to dig up in terms of the experience of people who were disabled. Robert Callaghan gives us a bit of an insight into that. I read something where Joanna Bourke looked at figures for what they call 'shell shock' – neurasthenia – and she produced figures that showed that the waiting list for people to be seen about

that were much higher in Ireland than they were in the rest of the UK, at a certain point. And she also suggested that it was also because of the War of Independence, there was a whole dysfunction around veterans. And Marie Coleman said that when she looked at the pension records she said she was struck by the numbers of men whose addresses were the big mental hospitals in Dublin. And I know Tom Hartley came across a few people who were in Knockbracken.

[**Richard Grayson**] I haven't gone into the waiting lists but Joanna is a brilliant historian and I am sure that's right. The point about the addresses in places like Richmond Asylum are important. I have a couple of reflections. First of all, this is a generation which is less attuned to the language of mental health than people are today, and some of the treatments, including electric shock therapy, are really rudimentary and counter-productive, and they are just not going to work. So, undoubtedly, if you are having really severe shakes, something which was visible, then that is the kind of situation where you are going to get treatment. But, for a lot of men, waking up screaming in the middle of the night is not going to result in you getting any treatment. The attitude would be: well, get a grip! The second reflection is that shell-shock was more recognised than people think. I mean, you do find a lot of people being discharged for having neurasthenia, shell-shock, and being given a pension. And the idea that is prominent in popular culture today – that men got shot for having shellshock – is just not true. There might be one or two cases across the whole British Army. Certainly there are some cases I found in Belfast – there were men shot for desertion, which should probably have been recognised as shell-shock, but across the British Army, relative to other armies, it is low – 350 men shot across the course of the war, and by and large these were not to do with shell-shock. The other thing is where you find cases where men have gone berserk and courts take a lenient view of that. I found cases of that in both Belfast and Dublin, a limited number, where men had carried out acts of domestic violence, but which was put down to shell-shock, and the courts take this as a mitigating factor... for example, if someone had been buried alive for several hours and was traumatised by the whole experience, and was prone to these outbursts. But for all that I would say that this particular generation doesn't really seek help.

[**Martin Snodden**] Richard, thank you very much for that; I found it very interesting. You focused a fair bit in relation to the South. And I am wondering about the veterans in the North... My own grandparents were veterans of World War One. One ended up becoming a member of the Ulster Special Constabulary; the other ended up going to Glasgow to work on the roads to bring in an income. But it was a very horrendous period in Ireland, and I am wondering how many people who were British Army veterans in the North either joined the IRA or joined the Ulster Special Constabulary, or joined the RUC, during that period, to carry on some kind of conflict in those early years of the twenties. And I am also asking: see that sense of the new northern state focusing on Britishness...would that have contributed to the absence of teaching Irish history in state schools?

[**Richard Grayson**] Thanks, Martin. Yes, the short answer to your first point, on numbers, is that we don't actually know. But I think we can make some reasonable estimates. On the question of British veterans in the IRA in the North, I think the numbers are really small. I mean, I would be really surprised if there are more than 50. I found a half-dozen in Belfast. Jimmy McDermott's book highlights a few individuals who were ex-British soldiers. But I'm going to say that in Belfast, at any rate, it's probably between 10 and 50, and probably at the lower end. Now it might have been the case where there were different numbers in other parts of Northern Ireland. The Ulster Special Constabulary: again, we don't have the analysis from the records, insofar as they exist to do that. But I think there you could be looking at much higher numbers. Partly because to some extent the Ulster Special Constabulary is a resurrection of the pre-war UVF, so those networks were in place, and you might be talking across Northern Ireland of several thousands, at least in the hundreds. And of course it is far less remarkable to go from the British Army into the police, so it's less commented on. Whereas if you are an ex-British soldier in the IRA that seems like a little bit unusual, so it gets commented on.

As regards Irish history: well, if you think about the ruling class of Northern Ireland, quite a lot of them had been to English public schools. Let's face it, they all have English accents when you hear them interviewed. And what is happening in schools in Northern Ireland is very much a traditional English kind of education that they would have had themselves, which is about kings and queens. It's about the

classics as well. And generally – and this is the case around the world as well – the idea that you would study very recent events is just not the norm. So there would have been no question in the twenties of studying say, the Home Rule Crisis, even though that's on school curricula more commonly now. So I think what you're seeing is that some of this is about social class, and the expectations of the ruling elite around what constitutes historical education. The discipline of history as well in the twenties is still a very traditional 'kings and queens' type of history, and when you study kings and queens who are you studying? You are studying British kings and queens, because they are your monarchs, and that's how that happens, I think.

**[Deirdre Mac Bride]** And are you studying that through an Empire frame?

**[Richard Grayson]** Oh, very much so. There is an Empire frame and of course that offers a particular narrative about Ireland being subsumed within a wider British Empire, north *and* south, for that period.

**[Tim Smith]** Richard, I enjoyed that very much. Do you think that the reason you had ex-British soldiers joining the IRA in 1918, and onwards, would be because they felt they had been betrayed by the likes of Redmond, who had said to them: this is going to get us Home Rule? And it wasn't forthcoming, so they then decided: hold on, this is *our* way of getting what we wanted. The other thing I would ask is: following the negotiations for the Treaty, was it the Irish government who were actually made to take on the pensions of the British Army soldiers?

**[Richard Grayson]** The money was still coming from Britain, they were still funding the pensions. Some of the administration of that is obviously done through the Free State, but this is a 'retained' function, a continued Imperial function, it is still a British responsibility. On your first point, yes, I think you're right, that's undoubtedly a part of a process of radicalising of nationalist opinion. And if you were Emmet Dalton, then in 1915, at the behest of the people you saw as your leaders, you joined the British Army. If that hasn't worked and you are the kind of person used to doing something about your concerns, then it is understandable that men would say: well, okay, we've got new leaders arguing for a different set of actions now, and joining the IRA in 1918, '19, '20, is no real difference from joining the British Army in 1915.

[**Harry Donaghy**] In the months leading up to the war some of the largest rallies held on the island of Ireland took place on the Falls Road, where John Redmond and Joe Devlin spoke on many occasions. Now, was Redmond conned by the English politicians at Westminster, because apparently while promising the Irish Parliamentary party that on the cessation of hostilities the Home Rule Act would be implemented, they were telling Sir Edward Carson the direct opposite. I also think it's significant, when the 1918 election led to the political demise of the Irish Parliamentary Party, that of the five seats that they *did* hold on to, one of them was West Belfast. The nationalist party machine there was a substantive force at that time. And let's not forget that Joe Devlin was elected the MP into the 1930s.

When I was in between primary school and secondary school I had a paper round in what later became known as the Lower Falls, and when you were delivering the paper people often brought you into their home, into the living room, and it would have been rare that there wasn't at least one framed photo of a soldier, a nationalist who had served in the war. Now, I am talking about 1969, and that was not unusual at all. And there were hundreds, if not thousands, from the Lower Falls area who followed the lead of the nationalist party, and it could be argued that nationalists are still a significant political force in non-unionist politics across the North, especially Belfast.

[**Richard Grayson**] The point about the photos is important. Tom Hartley talked about how commemoration went underground, it became private; so you might have a photo up in your house, and you might have medals in drawers, but you wouldn't be going out and taking part in commemorations, and you wouldn't be wearing poppies. Having a photo at home would be about the individual as much as anything else. The family member might be wearing a British Army uniform but it doesn't necessarily imply support for the British Army, it is about the individual, the family member.

[**Harry Donaghy**] I always ask myself: what would *we* have done? If *we* had've been the ones standing at the rallies in Celtic Park or outside the Hibs club, if we passionately believed that that was what Irish nationalism was asking us to do? And it was basically asking Britain to treat us like Canadians, Australians and New

Zealanders. But unfortunately when Partition became a fact, the different Unionist governments never gave people that recognition.

Another observation: There was a Presbyterian church at the corner of Gibson Street and the Grosvenor Road where my grandparents lived – the Drew Memorial Church – and on the mini-Twelfth, the 1st July, there was always a parade to it, and that went on for many years. And apparently my grandfather would stand at the door and nod to people he knew from his army days, who were in the Orange Order and were going to a Somme memorial service. So what you were talking about, Richard – the public and the private – I think that became a feature of how people commemorated. Some of them did it very quietly, very unobtrusively, while for others it was woven into the culture of the non-nationalist community here.

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] Robert Hesketh was telling me that in the archives, the storerooms of the Ulster Museum, there are collections of what I think are called ‘slip ballots’, that ex-servicemen sold to raise money – effectively begging – in the years after the First World War. That’s a complicating factor in the story.

[**Richard Grayson**] That’s something I have not come across, that’s interesting. You would find people selling their medals, that would certainly happen, and maybe that was just down to dire financial difficulties; also you would be more likely to do it if you had less of an attachment to them.

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] Or you felt you had been let down – your ‘homes fit for heroes’ didn’t happen. And I wanted to note here that Pdraig had posted that Captain John Redmond was very active in pursuing the interests of World War One veterans.

[**Richard Grayson**] Yes, certainly in the Dáil they are spoken up for, and have their representatives. Another part of the problem is that, by the mid-twenties, the Free State government is dealing with pensions for IRA veterans – initially for certain categories that were largely defined to exclude people who had been in the anti-Treaty IRA. And then Fianna Fáil expands that when they get into government. I did find one case of a man who had carried on serving in the British Army in the Second World War and had been in the anti-Treaty IRA, and was getting a pension from the Irish government for having been in the IRA, while continuing to serve in the British Army!

[**Tim Smith**] You see round about '23, '24, I read that the Free State army was made up of roughly 50% ex-British Army soldiers.

[**Richard Grayson**] That's right. They had got the experience, they knew army life.

[**Tim Smith**] Some also said it gave them the chance for retribution against some of the IRA ones as well, because of what was going on at that time.

[**Richard Grayson**] And Padraig [Yeates] has pointed out that there were members of the National Army in the IRA in the Civil War receiving up to 80% disability pensions from the War Office. A lot of Irishmen were receiving that money well into the 1970s.

[**Anne Devlin**] Thank you, Richard, for that tremendous paper. I was struck also by Harry's memory of Gibson Street, because I lived across the road from it, and I remember those ceremonies. And it wasn't just once a year, there were several Sundays when that happened at the Drew Memorial. But I was also interested in the reference to the photographs, and I reflected on the incredibly complex identities that there could be within one family. My grandmother was an English Catholic who met a Belfast man and came to Belfast, and my mother's sisters all went to England for work and did very well. And there was a brother in the RAF and a brother in the Irish Army, and that very complex sense of identity only began to make sense for me, in a very curious way, when the Queen went to lay her wreath at the memorial for the veterans of 1916. And I thought: that exactly sums up what my mother's family were in Belfast in the 1940s and 50s and that whole period, that their identity was so mixed. And we had neighbours in Andersonstown who had sons in the British Army. So it was very, very complex. And everybody knew. And then everything fundamentally changes after the Civil Rights movement and after the start of the Troubles in the early 1970s, everything changes when the British Army comes back onto the Falls Road. So I was very grateful for those very detailed case histories because I found myself thinking that we had more complex identities *before* the Troubles than we have now.

But what you're also saying is that it was much so much more complex from the period of the turn of the century, and I am very well aware of how appealing Joe Devlin was to my father's mother, who was a Joe Devlin supporter entirely. I think

she tried to fake that she was a kind of relative of his, but of course she wasn't. And we're now entering another period where it is going to become more difficult, this sense of the freedom we had, I felt, because of Europe, that we've lost again. And this constant need to reduce our identities in this way.

**[Richard Grayson]** If I think of my own family... my dad was born in England in 1932, but my grandfather was born in Lurgan, and my grandmother in Dromore, Co. Down, and they grew up in Lurgan. The family signed the Covenant in large numbers, so they were pre-Partition unionists. And certainly growing up that was always important. But I remember one weekend having a conversation with him, during the Six-Nations rugby tournament, one evening when Ireland had played, and he said "we won" and then I talked to him the next day when England had played and he said "we lost". So he was supporting Ireland one day and England the next. He was to all intensive purposes an Englishman by birth, upbringing and the way he sounded, but he still supported Ireland at rugby.

**[Deirdre Mac Bride]** During the 18th century 50% of the British Army was recruited and established in Ireland, and the barracks were put in Ireland and was paid for out of Irish taxes. Is that partly what we are talking about? In my town you knew families who had a history of military service – not recent, but going back a long way.

**[Richard Grayson]** They might be in the British Army but they are in an Irish regiment. So, what's the first identification? They might say: 'Oh, he was a Dublin Fusilier', and then, 'Oh yeah, that was part of the British Army' – almost as if he was *incidentally* part of the British Army. But sometimes service in the British Army was the only employment available. Just as going to work in England might be the best way of making money for a period of time – it doesn't mean you becoming English, you might not even like the place, but it's what you did.

**[Harry Donaghy]** That's an interesting point, Deirdre, about the army barracks. Wherever England encountered 'troublesome natives', especially in Ireland and Scotland, the response was the same. Some of the most grandiose military structures in Scotland were built as a result of the two Jacobite rebellions, 1715 and '45, because they needed to keep order. Also, many of the fighting soldiers who helped England

establish its Empire around the world, came from Ireland and Scotland. You look at all those famous regiments: The Black Watch, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the Caledonian Highlanders... It is no accident that that was the case, and maybe that's something that England is increasingly worried about again, given that the issue of Scottish independence is now a major question in the politics of these islands.

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] Can I say a big 'thank you' to Richard for today's very thought-provoking paper, to Harry for organising this, and to you all for participating.