

[1921] Despite the apparently bleak outlook, Lloyd George still had hopes that Sinn Fein and the IRA could be induced to sit in the Southern Parliament. Time was on the Government's side, and at least Michael Collins on the republican side knew this. The fact was that despite raising two loans, one at home and one in America, he was fast running out of cash and ammunition. Robbing post offices could provide money for a low level campaign, but that supposed that the Government was in control of Ireland and would replace the money stolen. It was not his intention, as it was that of the Bolsheviks, to rob banks and so destroy the capitalist system. As was usual in such circumstances, young men rushed to join the victorious army, but there was no money to provide them with arms and weapons which had to be carefully conserved. It is estimated that the most active men Collins could support was around 3,000, though the total number of men in the local units of the IRA was much higher. Nevertheless, the terrorist tactics continued, and the 'flying columns' were very useful for tying down large numbers of troops. The terrorists continued to shoot anyone suspected of assisting the Government. But the strain on Collins's resources was immense, and he knew he could not continue the struggle much beyond August of 1921. Lloyd George and the Irish Government probably had a shrewd idea about the financial state of the IRA. The culmination of the IRA attacks was the burning of the old Customs House on the Dublin quays. The idea was that, as many of the Government records were stored there, it would be possible to cripple the administration of the Government. What they did do was destroy totally irreplaceable historical records. The so-called Dail, having failed to get official recognition in the United States decided to try getting it from Bolshevik Russia and proposed an Ireland-Russia pact (Weekly Northern Whig 18 June 1921).

The Government forces were trying to deal with the terrorists, though with innumerable restrictions put on what they could do. Lord French and General Crozier resigned because of the restrictions placed on them. The pressures were growing on Lloyd George to arrive at a settlement, for example by conferring dominion status on the Southern Parliament. He was subject to counter-pressures from the Conservatives, who were the majority party in his coalition government, to deal harshly with the 'rebels'. Typically, Winston Churchill wanted to fight the Boer War over again complete with blockhouses, barbed wire, and concentration camps.

The Countess of Fingall recalled the beautiful summer weather, with long quiet evenings in the countryside where there was a curfew from 11 p.m. and a curfew on motors from 7 p.m. 'Travel was made difficult. Trees blocked roads as they had blocked them after the Big Wind, trenches were dug every night, bridges blown up, and the first car going that way in the morning unwarned would be wrecked.

But people are ill at night, and babies frequently choose to be born during those hours, knowing nothing of the curfew. The doctors drove in fear, and messages summoning them must be carried on foot by the poor, who have no telephones. And such messengers made terrifying journeys and were sometimes shot "by mistake". Mails were raided and searched frequently- by the other side- and our letters might arrive with a Censor mark. Not the familiar Censor mark of the War days, but a blue pencil scrawl "Passed by Censor I.R.A.". We poor moderates those days had a bad time, walking in the middle of the road, and likely to get hit by the bullets from either side (Fingall, *Seventy Years Young*, 395-6, 400). Sir Horace Plunkett, returning to his house outside Dublin and finding a party of young men digging a trench across the road outside his gate, asked them how he would be able to get to Dublin in the morning. They said they had been ordered to block the road against military lorries, but a trench on the other side of the gate would do as well.

The Government of Ireland Act (1920) received royal assent and elections had to be held before the Parliaments could be set up. The king through the Privy Council had to appoint commissions to carry on the elections. Under martial law possession of firearms and explosives carried the death penalty (Weekly Northern Whig 1 Jan 1921).

A Report of de Valera to a secret session of Dail Eireann was published. It said that Lloyd George had on 1 December 1920 commissioned Archbishop Clune of Perth to arrange a truce. He had met Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins and decided they were fair and reasonable men. By the 14th December Dublin Castle had agreed to a ceasefire. Lloyd George however demanded that Sinn Fein surrender their arms, and negotiations broke down.

Lloyd George speaking in the Commons regretted that many had failed to come forward to give evidence with regard to the Cork and Mallow burnings. Some indeed, like the mayor of Cork, had fled to America rather than give evidence. One report into the matter was not unanimous; there was evidence of some indiscipline, but no individuals were identified. Steps had been taken to restore discipline. He also dealt with the activities of Archbishop Clune who contacted many of the Sinn Fein leaders; he had stuck to the condition that the rebels would have first to surrender their arms (Weekly Northern Whig 19 Feb 1921). de Valera told the Dail after he returned from America that it might be necessary to 'lighten off' the IRA attacks. There can be little doubt that

he was appalled at the way things had turned out. In 1918 it had seemed so easy just to abstain from Westminster, set up a Dail in Dublin and take over the administration. Now Irishmen were engaged in a bitter struggle with each other. Lloyd George continued to try to keep contacts with the Sinn Fein leaders. de Valera was arrested accidentally and was hastily released. Alfred Cope, an assistant Under Secretary in Dublin, was encouraged to make contacts, apparently behind Sir Hamar Greenwood's back, with Sinn Fein leaders. In the summer of 1920, Alfred Cope and Mark Sturgis were sent to Dublin to nominally to assist Sir John Anderson, the additional Under Secretary. Cope, who had been a detective in the Office of Customs and Excise, was actually sent by Lloyd George to contact Sinn Fein leaders, and in this he was very successful. He was to play a key role in bringing about the truce, and he supplied useful intelligence to the Prime Minister (DNB Cope).

In April 1921 Lord French resigned and was replaced by Viscount Fitzalan. To allow him, a Catholic, to become Lord Lieutenant, a clause in the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829) had to be repealed. An earldom was conferred on Lord French on his retirement.

In May 1921 Lord Fitzalan summoned Parliaments to assemble in Northern and Southern Ireland. Captain James Craig met de Valera at the latter's request and made it clear that there were no concessions on the Ulster parliament, and that Ulster was fully committed to the Government of Ireland Act (1920). He pointed out that the Council of Ireland would provide the necessary constitutional link. Carson had retired from public life. He had not favoured the partition of Ireland, and he felt that a younger man should take charge of the Northern Parliament.

In May nominations for both parliaments were concluded. The intentions of the proposers of proportional representation in the south were frustrated by the return of only republican nominees; the only genuine contest was in Trinity College. The hypocrisy of Sinn Fein in proclaiming it supported the rights of minorities was exposed. Lyons too commented on the fact that no candidate stood, or did not dare to stand, against Sinn Fein. Not even the Labour Party. In Ulster the constitutional nationalists and Sinn Fein were working together; the issue was clouded only by the intervention of socialist candidates who have no chance whatsoever. With regard to the Italian elections then being held the newspaper mentioned the communists and supporters of the Third International, and the 'fascisti' as the young counter-revolutionaries call themselves who have done things hard to justify, but the provocation was extreme (Weekly Northern Whig 21 May 1921).

Sinn Fein/IRB/IRA was not a democratic movement and there was no question of the people of Ireland being given a democratic choice. Gunmen never put their lives on the line for something that can be taken away from them at the next election. Had free elections been held in Southern Ireland, the electorate might have decided, as it subsequently did, that Lloyd George's structure was making the best of an impossible situation. If Ulster did not want to be 'free and Gaelic' nobody was going to bother with them, and in any case they were better off without a mass of Protestants. If free elections were held, and Sinn Fein did not put up candidates, then Lloyd George and world opinion would recognise those elected as the legitimate Government of Ireland. If Sinn Fein did put up candidates, secured say 60% of the seats, and then refused to recognise Lloyd George's Parliament, the Prime Minister would still have handed over power to 40% who took their seats. It followed logically that Sinn Fein should contest every seat and no candidates should be allowed to stand against them. Sinn Fein, the IRB, and the IRA were what were later called 'fascist' or 'far right' bodies. (Lyons admits there must have been a 'degree of intimidation'. Following on the results of the Local Authority elections one should say 'massive intimidation'.) The Northern Whig commented on the freedom of the elections in Ulster compared with the farce in the South where not a single candidate in any of the rural or urban constituencies could be found to stand against the gunmen (Weekly Northern Whig 28 May 1921).

Unsurprisingly, there were only 4 non-Sinn Fein candidates returned in the South, all returned by Trinity College, Dublin. The Government went through the motions of establishing the new Government in the South. The southern Senate was to be chosen as follows- 4 by the Catholic bishops; 2 by the Protestant bishops; 16 by Irish peers; 8 by Privy Councillors, 14 by County Councils; the Lord Lieutenant could nominate 17; the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Mayors of Dublin and Cork were ex officio members. The Privy Council elected the following senators to the Senate of Southern Ireland-Sir William Goulding, bart, the Earl of Granard, Rt. Hon. Walter MacMurrough Kavanagh, Lt. Gen. Sir Bryan Mahon, the Earl of Meath, Sir Thomas J. Stafford, Rt. Hon. Lawrence Ambrose Waldron, and the Earl of Westmeath. The Protestant bishops chose the Primate, Charles Frederick D'Arcy, and John Gregg archbishop of Dublin. The peers chose Lord Cloncurry, Lord de Freyne, the Earl of Dessart, the Earl of Donoughmore, the Earl of Dunraven, Lord Inchiquin, the Earl of Kenmare, the Earl of Mayo, the Earl of Meath, the Earl of Middleton, Lord Oranmore, Viscount Powerscourt, Lord Rathdonnell, the Marquis of Sligo, and the Earl of Wicklow. (Looking back, it clearly is a pity that Lloyd George's scheme was never proceeded with as it would have united all classes in Ireland. But the Fenian movement from the very start

was as much a class struggle as it was an independence one.) The Southern Parliament convened on 28 June 1921. Only 19 members attended and took the oath of allegiance. It met in the council room of the Department of Agriculture, and was a purely formal meeting to fulfil the requirements of the law and to choose Speakers. In the Senate the Lord Chancellor its Speaker was absent through illness and Sir Nugent Everard was chosen as Deputy Speaker. In the House of Commons the 4 members of Trinity College, Dublin assembled and chose Mr Gerald Fitzgibbon as acting Chairman. The Parliament was prorogued until the 13th July to allow others to take the oath; it was assumed that it would then be dissolved (Weekly Northern Whig 2 July 1921)

Returns for Ulster showed that 40 unionists, 6 Nationalists, and 6 Sinn Fein, were elected. Belfast returned 15 Unionists and 1 Nationalist, but in other areas the returns were more balanced. As Nationalists and Sinn Fein were competing for the Catholic vote, they may not have done as well as they expected. Nevertheless, in the system of proportional representation most Catholics probably voted for both Catholic parties. In the Tyrone/Fermanagh constituency the Unionists secured 4 seats, the Nationalists 1 and Sinn Fein 3. In Armagh constituency the Unionists got 2 seats and the Nationalists and Sinn Fein 1 each. Overall, the Catholics got 12 seats, both parties securing 6 seats each. The only Catholic to be elected in Belfast was the redoubtable Joseph Devlin who had been involved in politics in West Belfast (a Catholic enclave) since as a fifteen-year old he had celebrated the victory of the Nationalist Thomas Sexton in 1886.

Recognising the Stormont Parliament was too difficult, so the Catholic MPs abstained, i.e. did not take their seats for some years. Devlin, by that time completely excluded from the Parliament in Dublin, took his seat in the Northern Parliament. (Northern Nationalists often expressed the wish to sit in the southern Dail but were always refused.) The Northern Parliament decided to construct a new Parliament House in the grounds of Stormont Castle outside Belfast, and was often referred to as the Stormont Parliament in distinction to the Westminster Parliament. The Northern Whig, itself a Liberal newspaper, noted that British radical [Liberal and Socialist] papers systematically associated Ulster Unionism with the least intelligent and most reactionary school of Toryism and suggested that Sinn Feiners hold the most enlightened Liberal views; this is far from true; Mr Andrews, the Minister for Labour was closely in touch with the workers (Weekly Northern Whig 9 July 1921)

The king, George V, accompanied by Queen Mary, came to Belfast to open the new Parliament in person on 22 June 1921. They placed themselves in considerable danger of assassination. He expressed the hope that the two parts of Ireland would grow together. 'The future lies in the hands of my Irish people themselves. May this historic gathering be the prelude of a day in which the Irish people, under one parliament or two, as those parliaments may themselves decide, shall work together in common love of Ireland upon the sure foundation of mutual justice and respect' (DNB George V). However, because of the total refusal of the republicans in the South to recognise what they called derisively, the 'Six Counties', the two parts of Ireland went their own ways and increasingly grew apart.

The High Court of Appeal for Ireland sat for the first time on 15 December 1921. It was composed of the Lord Chancellor, Sir John Ross, Lord Chief Justice Molony, and Lord Justice Andrews of the Northern Court of Appeal; in subsequent cases the court was composed of the Lord Chancellor, the Master of the Rolls, and Lord Justice Andrews (Irish Law Times 17 Dec 1921). The Law Times on 31 December 1921 noted that appeals from the courts of the Irish Free State were not covered in the recent discussions regarding the Treaty.

The king then urged Lloyd George to see what could be done, so General Smuts, the Boer Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa who was in London for an Imperial Conference, was asked to go to Dublin to see what terms could be agreed. As Lloyd George had refused to negotiate with Sinn Fein while they still had weapons in their hands that was the first point to be negotiated. However Lloyd George modified the condition and suggested a truce and ceasefire for negotiations. In this way he was not negotiating with people actually in arms. (It is reasonable to suppose that this display of reluctance was chiefly for the benefit of Conservative members of his coalition. Michael Collins, who sorely needed a respite for his gang, eagerly grasped the opportunity. Collins was within a few weeks of calling off the campaign. de Valera had to go through tortuous proceedings before he too could be seen negotiating with the enemy (Lyons, Ireland since the Famine, 427).

A truce was arranged, and came into effect on 11 July 1921. It came to Collins just in time, though he considered the British had been mad to offer it. As the IRA 'General' Mulcahy pointed out later, they had not been able to drive the Army out of anything more substantial than a police-barracks. The negotiations were carried on behind Sir Hamar Greenwood's back for he had realised that the IRA was on its last legs. However, the truce gave Lloyd George a relatively free hand to negotiate. Collins and de Valera on one side, and Lloyd George on the other had to extract concessions from their own sides. General Macready walked alone and unarmed into the IRA headquarters in Dublin and asked to speak to someone in authority. This visit came as a shock to the IRA as they thought nobody knew where the headquarters was. That a British officer could just drive up to the door brought home at least to Michael Collins that the Army had not been making a real effort.

Collins saw an opportunity for trying 'Plan B' as 'Plan A', direct military assault, had failed. The two conditions he required were that the Southern Government would be allowed to raise its own taxes, and raise its own army. For he realised that the only way to deal with Ulster was to get five years at least of peace, get control of the Irish Exchequer, recruit an Irish army, purchase military equipment from abroad, and then launch a full military attack on Ulster. The chances were that the British Army would then stand aside. A bitter discussion broke out among members of the IRB and IRA, not over the morality of this plan, but its practicality. Those who objected claimed that once the war against the British was stopped it could never be re-started. They claimed that the war was almost won, and another big push would see the British leaving Ireland. After all it was the British who had first asked for a truce. Broadly, the IRB supported Collins while the leaders of the IRA, especially Cathal Brugha, opposed any agreement which meant accepting the Government of Ireland Act (1920).

Lloyd George now had a free hand to negotiate. He realised that he would have to offer dominion status to Southern Ireland but had no intention of offering more than was necessary to secure the agreement of the prime ministers of the other dominions. He offered the status of self-governing dominion as that term was understood in 1921 with certain restrictions. (On the evolution of dominion status see Keith, *Speeches and Documents*, passim) He also demanded the recognition of the rights of Northern Ireland. de Valera and his 'shadow' cabinet in the Dail at first rejected the proposals, but were prepared to negotiate. Lady Lavery, the wife of the painter Sir John Lavery used her house in London as a meeting place for the Irish in London. The Countess of Fingall recorded that she mixed her guests with 'gallant audacity'. Michael Collins used to stay in her house. She invited Lord French and Michael Collins to the same dinner. At her place Collins and Arthur Griffith could meet people like Winston Churchill, Lord Birkenhead and Lord Londonderry. That nationalist politicians should not mix in English society was a fundamental rule of Parnell, observed by John Redmond to the day of his death. Churchill and Collins had an unlikely rapport with each other.

As the republicans refused to accept an Act of a British Government establishing their state, the Act had to be transformed into a 'Treaty' which would be ratified by both Parliaments. Lloyd George was getting rid of Ireland and he did not mind what the republicans called it. The negotiations dragged on until December 1921, the chief difficulties being an oath of allegiance to the king and the exclusion of Ulster. Eventually, the skilful and indefatigable Lloyd George presented them with an ultimatum. Either sign the agreement or be ready to resume war within three days. Collins knew he was in no position to fight, and the Army was allowed to fight with all restraints removed. But he had no way of knowing if Lloyd George was bluffing though renewing the fight was the last thing Lloyd George wanted. So trusting that the IRA would be content with Plan B, he signed, on 6 December 1921. Needless to say there was no question of putting the question before the Irish people in a referendum. There can be little doubt that Lloyd George and his closest advisors took the possibility of Collins' double-cross into consideration but were not worried if he did, at a later date, attack Ulster. It was later humorously remarked that Collins was like a tinker who had swapped donkeys at a fair. He was worried about what he had received, but satisfied that the donkey he had given was not an honest beast.

I cannot better end this chapter than by quoting from Lyons, 'To their critics and opponents – who included some of their fellow nationalists, among them more than one bishop – their so-called guerrilla campaign was no war at all. It was simply a series of murderous attacks, cowardly, brutalising, and productive only of a vicious circle of savagery' (p. 420). It can be no cause for pride for Irish people that they shared with Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky the pioneering of terrorism as a way towards a political ideal. Nor that they showed the way for the SS and Gestapo and all future terrorist organisations to follow

#### Militia & Yeomanry

The outward forms of monarchical government were maintained. The governing ministry was the king's ministry, and each minister had to be appointed by him. All legislation which the ministry proposed to enact had to be discussed with the sovereign beforehand and get his consent. No law was valid without the royal assent, though his liberty to dissent was limited. Getting the initial royal consent to introduce legislation was often the most difficult part. Only the sovereign could call or dissolve Parliament, and did not always give consent for a premature dissolution. King George III resolutely refused to allow his ministers to enact any further reliefs for Catholics, but his hand was strengthened by the fact that he could always get a majority in parliament to support his view. The queen and the two kings who succeeded her were closely involved in the details of Irish politics, and twice, in 1914 and in 1921 intervened personally to try to resolve the disputes between the parties in Ireland. Queen Victoria carefully read the minutes of cabinet meetings sent to her and commented on them to her prime minister, while her son Edward VII, a more pleasure-loving monarch ignored details. His son was the more conscientious George V, and the prime minister, Herbert Asquith, was acutely aware of his likes and dislikes, as the king could ask the leader of the Opposition to form a ministry. The officers of the royal household were naturally a source of influence on the monarch and quite often Irishmen were appointed to various posts. For example Major General Sir Henry Ponsonby was Queen Victoria's private secretary from 1870 to 1895. In

theory, all foreign policy, and the ability to make treaties with foreign powers was in the king's control, and the army was the royal army, not the parliament's army, and the navy the royal navy. The king, on the advice of the cabinet, could act suddenly in an emergency but both were always dependent on Parliament for money to support the armed forces and foreign wars.

Central to the compromise between Parliament and king was that the king was bound to select his principal ministers from among the leading members of Parliament. To get anything done by Parliament the king had to pick those who had a following in Parliament and could secure the necessary majorities when voting took place. In practice, the king (or queen) called on one of the parliamentary leaders from either the Whigs or the Tories to put forward a panel of ministers (a ministry) though he could object to individual members of it. He then accepted the ministers and officially appointed them. They then formed a cabinet, and the principal minister was called unofficially the prime minister. (His formal title was usually First Lord of the Treasury Board.) The cabinet could resign as a body.

Unlike in the United States where there was written constitution, in Britain the unwritten constitution was continually being modified. For example, throughout the long reign of Queen Victoria Parliament gradually gave itself more and more power over the army, transferring the powers of the monarch's commander-in-chief to a Minister for War. Gradually the great feudal offices of the Commander-in-Chief and the Admiralty were brought under direct the control of Parliament, something which did not occur either in the United States or in Germany. In the eighteenth century the United States rationalised the form of government, assigning different powers in different degrees to different bodies in a logical manner. (It was then left to the Supreme Court to 'interpret' the Constitution, so in practice it is continually modified.) In the United Kingdom such a thorough rationalisation did not take place, so one can find such oddities as the obscurely named Hanaper Office, a branch of the Lord Chancellor's Court of Chancery, which dealt with the administration of counties. Laws too were sometimes repealed, but more often the courts declared them obsolete. Above all, Parliament took over the Executive while maintaining the traditional forms.

Nearly all the great Irish departments of state like the Treasury, the Revenue Departments and the Post Office were merged with their British counterparts following the provisions of the Act of Union (1800). These mergers did not take place immediately or at the same time, but by the end of the 19th century most civil servants in Ireland belonged to merged Offices whose head office was in London. As Lyons points out, by 1914 of the 26,000 civil servants in Ireland only about 2,500 were in the local Irish boards (Lyons *Ireland Since the Famine* 73). It should be pointed out that almost without exception these 26,000 civil servants were Irish. The Post Office retained Irish local offices as did the Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue, which dealt with income tax and estate duties. They were in the Customs House, Dublin, and dealt with excises, estate duties, stamps and taxes, and the customs house for the Port of Dublin. There were also Collector's officers in Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Londonderry, Newry, and Waterford. There was no separate revenue budget but individually salaried officers (Whitaker 1902). The royal army and Royal Navy were common to the whole of the United Kingdom and, for the most part, were not under the Irish Government. For local defence the militia and yeomanry were under the Irish Government (Lord Lieutenant) except for military operations when they came under the army Commander-in-Chief in Ireland.

The flag of Ireland was that of the United Kingdom of England and Scotland with the addition of a red saltire cross on a white field (the cross of St. Patrick) thus forming the well-known Union Jack. The *Warder* in 1902 deplored the unavailability of the traditional flag of Ireland, a gold crowned harp on a blue field. Only the 'rebel' Irish flag of an uncrowned harp was made. This latter flag had indeed been adopted by Cromwell, hence the lack of crown (*Warder* 21 June 1902, *Fox-Davies, Heraldry* 474-5). The old flag of Ireland appears on the royal arms and is without the crown, and historically, on the royal arms never had a crown, though the shape of the harp varied considerably. The badges of the Royal Irish Constabulary had a crowned harp to indicate their royal connection (*Fox-Davies*, 349). (The present flag of the Irish Republic, three vertical stripes of green, white, and orange was the emblem of a political movement which, like the swastika of the German National Socialist Party, was adopted as the flag of their regime. It has no historical connection with Ireland, and is deeply divisive.)

The monarchy was very popular in Ireland. Republicanism was scarcely an issue except among extremists. When Queen Victoria and King Edward VII visited Ireland they received ecstatic welcomes. When the king toured the west of Ireland in 1903 welcoming bonfires were lit on the surrounding hills. [Top]

## Parliament

Though described as a constitutional monarchy, the United Kingdom was in fact a parliamentary democracy. Though there was not full adult suffrage the franchise was sufficiently extensive to gauge the mood

of the tax-paying part of the public. There was one parliament for the United Kingdom and Ireland, and by the terms of the Act of Union (1800 Ireland was to return 100 Members of Parliament (MPs) to the House of Commons and 32 peers or noblemen, four of whom were to be Protestant bishops, to the House of Lords at Westminster, England (Keenan, Ireland 1800-1850, chapter 1). The Parliament of the United Kingdom had almost complete control over the royal or crown executive in the whole of the United Kingdom. Most laws passed in Westminster applied to the whole of the United Kingdom, and most of the British and Irish administrative Offices were merged. But because of traditional differences in laws and administration in Scotland and Ireland these were exempted from some laws, and special versions of the laws were enacted for these two regions. For example, the powers of sheriffs in Scotland were quite different from those in England, so it was simpler to frame a separate Scottish Act than to pass a common Act with special Scottish inclusions and exclusions. Special laws for Ireland usually had the word Ireland included in brackets in the title. Normally only Irish MPs attended the debates on laws intended solely for Ireland, and only Scottish MPs on similar debates for Scotland, so in practice Irish laws were enacted by Irishmen and Scottish laws by Scotsmen. It was found necessary to retain a separate Irish executive to deal with local matters like education and policing that could not easily be fitted into the British model. In general the attitude of Parliament towards Ireland was benign.

Not only was there no oppression, but every effort was made to ensure that the Irish were treated the same as the English, Welsh, and Scots. Significantly, when the United Kingdom was broken up in 1920 Irishmen did not become foreigners, but remained, in British eyes if not their own, citizens of the United Kingdom with full rights, and after two years' residence in time of war, were liable for conscription.

For much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century most Irish MPs supported either the Whigs or the Tories, and voted with them in parliament. Despite the efforts of nationalist politicians to describe Ireland as oppressed, the laws were the same for the whole of the United Kingdom except where local peculiarities in Ireland and Scotland required slightly different wording. The real grievance in Ireland among Catholics was that for historical reasons official patronage and consequently corruption was in the hands of Protestants and it was a closed circle which Catholics found it hard to break into. This was to a considerable extent their own fault, for by insisting on a separate parliament they failed to assist either of the two dominant parties, the Whigs and the Tories. (This was the same as seeking political office in the United States but opposing both Democrats and Republicans.)

The chief characteristic of politics in this period was the regular alteration of parties. Unlike the period from 1714 to 1830, when there was first a long almost unbroken period of Whig rule followed by a similar period of Tory rule, there were twenty two ministries involving twelve prime ministers. While each ministry lasted on average a little over three years, the average length of a government of a particular colour was about four years and eight months. A prime minister who died, resigned or lost the confidence of his colleagues could be replaced by a prime minister of the same party.

With regard to Ireland, there were twenty four appointments of the Lord Lieutenant involving nineteen different peers, with five serving two terms. He was invariably of the same party as the prime minister who appointed him. As a new prime minister normally appointed a new Lord Lieutenant, some of the terms were very short. Most spent two to three years in Ireland, though the Earl of Aberdeen was there for nearly ten years.

The time in office of the Chief Secretary as the Irish Secretary was now universally called was shorter, as the successive prime ministers made thirty five appointments in the period, giving an average of two years. Most were British, though Lord Naas and Lord Carlingford were Irish. Unlike in the first half of the century, where strong personalities were left long enough to make a strong impression, few Chief Secretaries in the second half of the century impressed. But there were exceptions like the two Balfours. The Lord Lieutenant was a member of the House of Lords and reported, if necessary, to the House of Lords, besides his official communications to the queen or king which were normally made through the prime minister. Similarly, the Chief Secretary sat in the House of Commons, and took a leading part in debates on Irish affairs. As the House of Commons, the elected house, became more important so did the office of Chief Secretary become more significant than that of the Lord Lieutenant. The changes of officers were frequent hence the policies of the two main political parties became the central element. This was just a normalisation of ordinary politics (see below The Irish Government).[Top]

## The Political Parties

There were in the nineteenth century two major political groupings or parties, the Whigs now called officially called Liberals, and the Tories now officially called Conservatives. The Liberal Party split over Home Rule for Ireland, and the breakaway group called Liberal Unionists eventually joined the Conservatives. Both parties, like the Democrats and Republicans in the United States were little more than like-minded gentlemen who voted together under an agreed leader. When Sir Robert Peel in 1845 divided his party over the issue of the repeal of the Corn Laws it was nearly thirty years before enough Conservatives could agree on who should be the leader,

so governments were formed from shifting coalitions. In the 52 years between 1834 and 1886 the Liberals and their associates were out of office for scarcely a dozen years, and lost only 2 of the 14 general elections. In the 31 years from 1874 until 1905 the Conservatives were in office for approximately 24 years. This was due to a considerable extent to a similar split in the Liberal Party in 1886. Because of divisions in the Conservative Party over tariffs in the twentieth century the Liberals were in office from 1905 until 1922. (See also Chapter 13, Popular Beliefs and Movements.)

The main political parties had origins dating back for centuries. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Whigs were regarded as the aristocratic class and they combined with the mercantile classes in the great towns. Their interests had come together at the 'Glorious Revolution' in 1688, and to further these ends they insisted on the supremacy of parliament. The party became associated with change and reform. Dissenting churches also supported the Whigs who stood for liberty of conscience. The Tory Party was that of lesser country landowners who rarely attended court, but who were staunchly loyal to the crown and the Established Church. In Ireland they tended to be smaller resident landlords, while the Whig landowners of great estates were often absentees. They therefore stood for the rights of country people.

In the nineteenth century the Whigs, now called Liberals, developed a liberal consensus after 1850. They were in favour of Parliament rather than the monarchy, *pro rege saepe, pro patria semper* (for king often, for country always). They were in favour of free trade and abolishing anything ancient which they regarded as unsuitable for a modern manufacturing and trading nation. They represented the towns rather than the countryside. They were for peace and against war, and did not look favourably on the expansion of the British Empire or intervention in foreign wars. They opposed increases in the royal armed forces. They were largely influenced by the Utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham who maintained that the objective of social policy should be 'The greatest good for the greatest number'. Radicalism was an extreme form of Liberalism. They were more tolerant of dissent in religious matters and were largely backed by Nonconformist Protestants including Presbyterians. These were in principle opposed to the Established Church, and opposed state aid to schools of the Established Churches. They were especially opposed to any assistance to Catholic schools from taxpayers' money. The Nonconformists were also opposed to the sale and consumption of alcohol.

The Tories were traditionally in favour of the crown, of its armed forces, and the Established Church, *pro rege et patria* (for king and country). They favoured the expansion of the Empire to bring religion and the rule of law to other countries. They represented the landed interest and the countryside. In legislation they preferred to retain as much of the traditional ways as possible, but were also the 'paternalistic' party, anxious to better the conditions of the working classes, especially those they saw as victims of the unrestricted *laissez faire* of the Whigs. The best known philanthropic Tory was Anthony Ashley Cooper, the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, who began legislation to improve the condition of employees, especially children, in factories. Under Disraeli, the Tories passed an important series of Acts to better the condition of the ordinary worker. For this reason, before the rise of the Labour Party, the working classes were inclined to vote for the Conservatives. In the north of Ireland where the middle classes were inclined to support the Whigs the working classes supported the Tories. Socialism was regarded as an extreme form of Conservatism or Tory paternalism but it was not politically important until after the First World War.

These were just tendencies, not hard and fast divisions. A Liberal prime minister, for example, might favour armed interventions more than a Tory one, but would face more dissension from his own supporters.

A problem arose in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Catholic Irishmen began demanding a separate Irish parliament, either under the crown or not. Those who wanted an independent parliament under the crown are usually called nationalists, and those who wanted an independent republic are called republicans. The problem arose because nationalists and republicans were concentrated in three of the Irish provinces, while those Irishmen who wanted to retain the Westminster parliament, the unionists, were concentrated in the northern province. Had support for nationalism or republicanism been evenly spread over the whole of the United Kingdom they would have been treated as an insignificant minority. Likewise, had support for the parliament in Westminster been thinly and evenly spread over the whole of Ireland it too would have been dismissed as insignificant. But because each side had its support concentrated in definite regions the possibility of separatist and anti-separatist blocks arose. The Nationalist formed a third party in the House of Commons with little power except to cause nuisance. For achieving practical aims its members would have been better off joining either of the other main parties. When they eventually succeeded in controlling the balance of power in the Commons they split Ireland. [Top]

Franchise and Elections

Franchise

The Great Reform Act (1832) modernised the system of parliamentary representation in Britain by redistributing parliamentary constituencies from ancient boroughs to the new large cities. It also equalised the financial threshold for the franchise over the whole of Britain, retained the old forty shilling freehold vote in the counties, and set the borough franchise uniformly at possession or occupation of a house worth £10. Traditional rights of franchise like that of the 'potwallopers' which included lodgers if they had the right to their own fire on which to boil their own pot, were abolished (OED). The changes raised the total number of voters in the Britain rose from 435,000 to 622,000 (Richards and Hunt Modern Britain 112-3). The property qualification for the franchise was retained on the grounds that the historic role of the House of Commons was to vote on taxation, and it was those with property who by and large had to pay the taxes.

The forty shilling freehold vote had been abolished in Ireland by the Catholic Relief Act (1829) on the grounds that impoverished smallholders were likely to be intimidated either by the landlords or the Catholic clergy. So the county franchise was set at £10 for any lease including traditional leaseholders, and in 1832 the franchise in the boroughs was made uniform. The Irish Reform Act (1832 established the £10 occupancy on the same basis as in England, namely the actual legal occupation of a property worth for example £10 a year if rented. The voter when registering testified on oath the value of his holding to the Clerk who held the register of voters. Every county returned two members, while 31 boroughs returned one member except Dublin and Cork which returned two, and the University of Dublin one. The number of seats in Parliament was raised from 100 to 105. This was pre-Famine Ireland with the population rapidly rising. The five extra seats were created by giving Galway, Limerick, and Waterford, the borough of Belfast, and the University of Dublin an extra member each (Keenan, Ireland 1800-1850 252; Beckett Modern Ireland 308).

Though the principles were clear there was considerable difficulty in practice with regard to determining the value of the freehold independently of the testimony on oath of the would-be elector. In the discussions leading up to the Parliamentary Voters (Ireland) Act (1850 there was much dissatisfaction with regard to registration. Lord Cloncurry wrote to Frederick Conway, the editor of the Dublin Evening Post proposing the Poor Rate as the basis for the franchise, to obviate the present 'annoyances, perjuries, and ill-will' (Dublin Evening Post 5 May 1840). Another was that people swore one income for being assessed for the poor rate and a higher one for voting. Another was that the income from the farm could fall below the attested value. Finally, the one who held the actual certificate in his hand at the hustings was the one who had the right to vote.

The Parliamentary Voters (Ireland) Act (1850 introduced by Sir William Somerville established the Poor Law Valuation of the holding as the determining factor, the assistant barristers still had to revise the lists at revision sessions, and the Poor Law district clerks should keep the records (Walker Ulster Politics 44). The compulsory octennial registration was abolished. Voters would still have to be registered in order to claim their votes. In addition two occupation franchises were introduced; the borough vote was given also to rated occupiers of £12 and upwards, and the county vote to freeholders and rated occupiers of £12 and upwards; the effect was

#### Irish borough electors 1854

rated occupiers	19,719
freemen or burgesses	6,530
other qualifications	3,385
total	29,634

#### Irish county electors 1854

rated occupiers	139,088
freeholders	8,521
leaseholders	1,098
rent charges	638
total	149,345

(from Hanham, in Dod, Electoral Facts).

In Ireland elections were notorious for violence, for the coercion of the electors by landlords and priests, and for corruption in the boroughs; in Scotland election petitions are rare and elections are solemn. The small size of the many of the electorates meant each voter could be known individually and subjected to various pressures, and he had to vote in public; the pressure could be from a landlord, or in the case of a shopkeeper, from his customers. Or indeed from terrorists. The constituencies were designed to favour the smaller country towns, and the agricultural counties; in Ireland 23 of the 33 boroughs had fewer than 500 electors, for example Portarlington 86, Athlone 170; majorities were small, and every vote counted. Great landowners had vast influence in elections as they had everywhere in their counties for they controlled most of the wealth and opportunity. The local gentry ceded one seat almost by prescription to the leading local magnate. If the tenants voted against the landlords en masse, as they did in 1831 and 1832 there was little a landlord could do (Hanham, op. cit.).

The next change in the qualifications came with the Representation of the People (Ireland) Act (1868 which followed Disraeli's Second Reform Act (1867) for Britain. The franchise for the counties remained unchanged, but was lowered for boroughs to £4 and this included 'lodgers' who seem to be the old potwallopers. Legally a £4 lodger was one who occupied lodgings at an annual rent of at least £4 (OED). This had the effect of giving the franchise to skilled tradesmen, and the electorate in the boroughs doubled. Farm labourers and skilled artisans got the vote but not indoor servants (Walker, Ulster Politics, 39-45).

There was a further extension and simplification of the franchise in 1884 when the Representation of the People (Ireland) Act (1884) was passed equalising the county and borough franchises and made all householders and lodgers in the counties also eligible to vote. The vote, by what was called the 'service franchise', was given to those who occupied houses or rooms in virtue of their employment. This applied chiefly to agricultural labourers and farm workers. The Conservatives, led by Lord Randolph Churchill, were first to realise that the interests of farm workers were not necessarily the same as those of their employers, and that the working class could be persuaded to vote for the Tories. These proved very loyal and became known as the Tory working class. Working class people were often very conservative in their views. This became known in Ireland as the Orange vote, or the Orange card because of the working class society, the Orange Order, to which many of the Protestant working class belonged. (Lord Randolph Churchill was often accused by Catholics of appealing to religious bigotry; he was in fact appealing to class interest against their employers.) Historically the resident Tory landlords in Ireland had been closer to the people on their estates than the Whigs, so it was not surprising if they eventually supported the Tories.

The franchise was extended again for local authority elections in 1898. The franchise for local government elections in Ireland was wider than in England and wider than for parliamentary elections; it included lodgers, service franchise electors, and freeholders (County Councils' Gazette 18 May 1900). By the same Act women were allowed to vote, and could also be elected town commissioners, urban and rural district councillors and Poor Law Guardians, but not county councillors either in counties or county boroughs though they could vote for such. The law was changed in 1911 to allow them to be county councillors. They could not be justices of the peace in virtue of their office or poor rate collectors (Constabulary Gazette 19 May 1900). By the Representation of the People Act (1918) manhood suffrage was finally conceded to all men over the age of 21. Women over the age of 30 who were ratepayers themselves or the wives of ratepayers or were university graduates were allowed to vote. Elections were all to be held on a single day. By a separate Act introduced by Herbert Samuel women could also be elected to parliament. By the Sexual Disqualification Removal Act (1919) the exclusion of women from all public offices became illegal.

After the introduction of the Home Rule Bill in 1886 the various political parties tried to ensure that as many of their supporters as possible registered themselves (Walker Ulster Politics 44-5). The system was still not entirely safe, especially after the introduction of the 'lodger' vote. When the Nationalist Party was trying to dislodge Tim s from North Louth early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were massive registration drives on both sides, but many of these votes were disallowed on appeal. Nor was the means of removing people who had died or had moved elsewhere from the register ever solved. It became a standing joke that the dead in the local cemetery had polled heavily as usual. By using the names of the deceased a person could fraudulently vote several time, hence the popular joke 'Vote early, vote often'. (Once, much later in Belfast, I personally objected to the presence of the names of 60 students in a single block of flats as ineligible on the grounds of non-residence. They had left the university for up to 20 years previously.) At any given election one could assume that the electoral register was erroneous by at least 10%.

Another piece of legislation concerning elections was the Ballot Act (1872) or the secret ballot Act. Before this each voter had to mount the hustings, a temporary raised platform erected outdoors, identify himself

to the sheriff or other presiding officer, and the County Clerk, and announce in a loud voice without mumbling the name of the candidate for whom he was casting his vote. There was no legal requirement that the elections should be held outdoors, but only that they should be public. In a contested election hustings were normally required, but the secret ballot meant they were no longer required. This Act was aimed against bribery and 'treating' voters, i.e. keeping them supplied with food and drink. It was obviously pointless to bribe a voter who could easily accept bribes from all the candidates. The same applied to intimidation and victimisation. The Act was limited by the Lords to eight years, but when the time for its renewal came round it was made permanent. It was followed by the Corrupt and Illegal Practice Act (1883 which placed limits on the amount of money a candidate might legally spend on the election (Walker Ulster Politics 169). It at least reduced the number of paid workers and paid advertising. However, the costs of elections and the introduction of single-seat constituencies resulted in most constituencies being uncontested after the rise of the Nationalist Party (Walker op.cit 246).

What might be called a regressive step was the Redistribution Act (1885 which divided up counties and boroughs to form single-seat constituencies. The idea was devised by the radicals in the Liberal Party. As most constituencies returned two members political parties put up two candidates, and each voter had two votes. (If the voter cast only one of his votes he was said to be a plumper.) The Liberals often chose a radical and a traditional Whig for the two seats, but the radicals considered that a majority of their supporters favoured the radicals, so they would win far more seats in single-seat constituencies. Lord Randolph Churchill decided that this idea would work for the Conservatives as well and supported the measure. The result, which we have to this day, is that in a three-way contest the candidate with 34% of the votes can win. With four candidates 26% could be sufficient. Indeed, as was quickly shown, almost every seat in whole of Ireland was won by either a Nationalist or a Unionist by simply getting at least 34% of the votes cast; perhaps not even 20% of the total electorate. In the United Kingdom as a whole both Whigs and Tories favoured the new system as they were the biggest parties. Notoriously, in 1918 Sinn Fein won 80% of the seats with less than 50% of votes (Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine 399).

The redistribution of the seats and the formation of roughly equal single seat constituencies were accompanied by the abolition of the boroughs. County Louth for example with two seats was divided into North Louth and South Louth each with a single seat. Newry, Londonderry, and Belfast however retained their separate representation, and Belfast got three additional seats. Though Ireland's population and wealth had fallen considerably relative to England's since 1800 the total number of seats was not reduced.

Proportional representation was introduced in 1919 with the twin hopes of inducing civic-minded citizens to stand for election in place of party hacks, and of negating the evil effect of the Redistribution Act which guaranteed a monopoly of power to nationalists or republicans in all the Catholic districts in Ireland. The only hope of persuading Protestants to accept Home Rule was if they could see a chance of fair representation. Unfortunately, Sinn Fein ensured that nobody would stand against them. It was the wrong message. [Top]

## Elections

Contested elections in Ireland were expensive affairs, and so the gentlemen of the county made a preliminary canvass of opinion in the county to see if they had enough support to win both seats or whether they should put up only one candidate. In many ways Ireland was a deferential society and if a leading nobleman in the county habitually put up a candidate for a seat he would be unopposed for half a century or more. In 1868 only one of the nine Ulster counties was contested (Walker Ulster Politics 51). When a contest was decided on it was regarded by all as an open season to fleece the candidates. It was amazing too how many men could take time off work to 'assist' the candidate. Tenants in mid-century were expected to vote in their landlord's interest, and the Countess of Fingall remarked that the feudal age lasted longer in Connaught than elsewhere. Her father in Co. Galway marched his tenants to vote, and supporters of rival candidates fought each other on the quays of Galway. County Galway was also famous for a reckless hunt, the Galway Blazers, for the persistence of duelling, and supplying officers and men to the Connaught Rangers. The age was brought to an end by Charles Stuart Parnell (Fingall, Seventy Years Young 35-6).

The Catholic Association in the 1820s began successfully to intervene in elections on behalf of candidates who supported their request for Catholics to be allowed to sit in parliament. Because this could be said to have some bearing on the position of the Catholic Church in Ireland the Catholic bishops allowed priests to assist in the electoral campaigns and allowed Catholic chapels, which were frequently the only large public building in a parish, to be used for meetings. After 1829, when the object had been attained, these permissions were withdrawn. But some priests and bishops were unhappy about this and felt that the Catholic clergy should be able to assist and 'guide' Catholic candidates. They could 'explain' for example how Peel's Tamworth Manifesto was a snare and a trap for Catholics! During the remaining seventeen years of Daniel O'Connell's life until 1848 numerous Catholic priests and bishops supported his various campaigns.

After O'Connell's death many of his supporters embraced a revolutionary programme aimed at overthrowing what they called 'British rule' by force. The Catholic clergy had three principal objections to this. First was that Irish grievances were not so great, intolerable, or insoluble that recourse to arms was required. Such grievances as existed could be remedied through action in Parliament. The conditions for a 'just war' did not exist. The second was that on the Continent revolutionary movements were invariably linked to anti-clericalism and attacks on the Church. The third was that the older clergy still remembered with shame the events of an attempted revolutionary insurrection with the assistance of the Revolutionary French army in 1798. Drunken orgies of looting, rioting and murder had been matched with brutal repression. Though a very brief, limited, and ill-prepared uprising had been attempted in 1848 and was easily put down, the political priests felt that their presence in nationalist councils was more necessary than ever. An attempt was made to establish a broad-based Independent Party, and this was wholeheartedly supported by the Catholic clergy. It lasted only 10 years. For the next 10 years, until Isaac Butt established the Home Government Association (later Home Rule Association) in 1869 politics as far as the priests were concerned lay in supporting either a Whig or a Tory candidate.

In the meantime an organisation was formed in 1858 which was to have a malign influence over Irish politics for the next 60 years. It was a secret oath-bound society formed to promote and develop an armed uprising, and was called the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). Secret oath-bound societies were condemned by the Catholic Church for it was realised that they were normally plotting revolutions involving bloodshed. An American branch was formed at the same time, to provide funds, give military training, and to acquire arms. Members were commonly called Fenians after a band of warriors and heroes in Irish mythology (Campbell, Fenian Fire, *passim*). The importance of the IRB lay in the fact that members were usually also members of apparently legitimate bodies like political parties, the Land League, and the Irish Volunteers. Members of the IRB could and did infiltrate these bodies and controlled them. Crucially, American members could collect funds and channel them to their brethren in Ireland. It is likely that the influence of the American branch ultimately proved decisive.

The Catholic clergy were of course aware of what was going on, and stepped up their efforts to get involved in the Home Rule or Nationalist Party after it was formed. Their difficulty is illustrated by the problems facing a parish priest in Co. Monaghan. Canon Hoey, parish priest of Muckno (Castleblaney) in 1882 was a determined supporter of tenant right. His last political fight was against the convention system of selecting parliamentary candidates in which all the real business was done by wire pulling and machining behind the stage and rigging the conventions. The meeting at which he denounced dishonest political methods was itself most dishonestly organised. He was later given an address which praised his support for free conventions in the selection of parliamentary candidates (M'Kenna, Clogher 444-5).

The conventions were for the selection of parliamentary candidates, and the priest wanted them to be open, public, and straightforward. Tammany Hall machine politics was as common in Ireland as in the United States. Conventions were notoriously rigged by the party bosses. But particularly if American money was being channelled towards the IRB and its supporters free and open conventions could not be allowed. John Devoy was a vital supporter of the military council within the IRB, which planned the rising of Easter Week 1916, and he was a key figure behind the Friends of Irish Freedom, an open organisation backed by Clan na Gael (as the IRB in America came to be called), which by late 1919 had raised a million dollars in support of the 'independence movement' (R.V. Comerford DNB Online 'John Devoy').

Towards the end of the century, the parliamentary leaders in both the Liberal and Conservative parties took steps to get greater control by their respective parties in Parliament and over the local organisations in the different counties and towns that were responsible for selecting candidates and ensuring their election (DNB, Lord Randolph Churchill). This could be done for example by insisting that every candidate should be on an approved party list. Steps were also taken to ensure that when elected a Member of Parliament should adhere to the official policy of his party as set out in its manifesto. This led to an increase of the power of the Party Whips or Whippers in, a term derived from foxhunting. In 1883, Charles Steward Parnell revived the Land League under the name of the Irish National League with purely political aims. It still received money from America but in greatly reduced amounts. It was its function to co-ordinate activities in all the constituencies as the two main parties were doing. The Catholic clergy were very active in setting up and leading local branches. In many parts of Ireland local branches were based on Catholic parishes, with the Catholic clergy trying to keep control (Walker *Ulster Politics* 204-5). The Liberal and Conservative Parties in Ireland, and especially in Ulster, began to build up their constituency organisations as in Britain. The new, broad-based Conservative organisations often had links with the Orange Order. The Liberal Party in Ulster followed suit but was not so well organised. In the 1885 general election the Liberals won no seats in Ireland (Walker *op. cit.* 177-201; 221). The Liberal vote was absorbed by the Conservatives. This is why Walker sees the 16 years between 1869 and 1885 as crucial for the development of a separate political identity in Ulster. The year 1885 saw the formation of the Irish Loyal Patriotic Union to co-ordinate Protestant voters against the nationalists. This was reorganised in 1891 to become the Irish

Unionist Alliance as Protestants realised that a split vote would allow nationalists, even if they were in the minority, to take seats. However, this approach was split geographically in 1905 with the formation of the Ulster Unionist Council which became the Ulster Unionist Party (Buckland Irish Unionism 96, 124, 201). In 1905 too the party backed by the revived IRB called Sinn Fein was also started though originally violence was not part of its political programme.

There always was a considerable amount of violence attached to British and Irish elections and this persisted longest in the West of Ireland. This was however rough sport such as had traditionally been found between apprentices and in Irish faction fights. But at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, guns, particularly revolvers began to make their appearance. This was especially true in contests between the various nationalist factions. The Nationalist Party had split in 1890 over Parnell's divorce and re-united in 1900 under John Redmond. A rival United Irish League was formed by William O'Brien who however agreed to the reunification of the party under Redmond. William O'Brien again split the party by forming the All for Ireland League in 1910, and it was in disputes between the Nationalist Party and the All for Ireland League that the gun made its appearance in modern Irish politics.

Payment of Members of Parliament was introduced in 1911. The number of Irish MPs was never reduced despite the fact that the population of Ireland was falling while the population of Great Britain was rising. Had the 'Goschen ratio' of taxable income of Ireland namely 9% of the taxable income of the United Kingdom been applied Ireland should have had about 63 members. An Irish Electoral Boundary Commission in 1917 recommended a considerable redistribution of seats. In the redistribution Newry lost its seat in Parliament which it had obtained by its charter in 1613 (Canavan, Frontier Town, 182). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Ireland had 101 MPs. In 1922 a rather tart comment was made on the character of Irish MPs. Writing of Lawrence Ginnell the Irish Times noted that he was a master of that school of politicians of which Ireland has a surfeit, logic-chopping, quibbling with words, holding up great national issues over sterile phrases, and talking, talking, talking non-stop (Weekly Irish Times 16 Sept 1922). In December 1918 elections in all constituencies had to be held on the same day and women were allowed to vote. [Top]

## The Armed Forces

### Army

The armed forces of the United Kingdom were directly under the crown, though raising money to pay for them was the function of Parliament. As noted earlier, Parliament took steps to get some control over the army, though complete control was not obtained until 1964 long after the Second World War. Like its English counterpart, the Irish permanent army came into existence in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Charles II began to maintain some regiments of cavalry and infantry on a permanent basis. Charles II when abroad in exile adopted the prevailing custom of having a personal bodyguard (Warder 7 Dec 1901). An Irish army was formally constituted by Charles II in 1661 when he established His Majesty's Guards. They were stationed throughout his reign in Dublin where the cost of its quarters and part of its maintenance was borne. It was re-officered largely with Catholic gentlemen on James II's accession; after the Battle of the Boyne (1690) it, or at least its officers, followed him abroad. The subsequent Irish Army was formed from Protestant regiments raised to support the cause of William III. The oldest infantry regiment was the Royal Irish Regiment formed in 1684 from companies raised around 1683 by royalist Sir Arthur Forbes, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Granard and Marshal and Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Army. He was removed from this position by James II and supported William III. It was given its name, the Royal Irish Regiment and its number the 18<sup>th</sup> about 1759 (DNB Arthur Forbes, Harris, Irish Regiments 107).

Previously, commissions were given to various gentlemen to raise a regiment in time of war. They were given the rank of colonel, and a grant of money from the Treasury to cover his expenses in equipping and maintaining their regiments. The regiment was known by the name of its colonel. If he was killed or left the regiment it was called by his successor's name. At the end of hostilities the grant was discontinued, so the colonel dismissed his troops. Officers purchased their commissions from the colonel, and a market for commissions developed. (Besides his pay an officer usually had means of enriching himself so commissions were valuable, and were regarded as property.) An officer, after having purchased his rank, applied for a commission from the crown, and might have to have some influence to get it. Some officers entered the army solely for the status it conferred and sold their commissions as soon as war was declared. This provided an opportunity for other men anxious to see foreign service to buy their commissions. Commissions to raise regiments were given as late as the French Revolutionary Wars and the 87<sup>th</sup> and 88<sup>th</sup> regiments of the line were raised in Ireland at that time. As the number of regiments grew the infantry regiments were just given numbers, and were called regiments of the line as distinguished from militia regiments. Most regiments were eventually given names and nicknames, so the 87<sup>th</sup> was the Prince of Wales's Irish (the Faughs) while the 88<sup>th</sup> was the Connaught Rangers (the Devil's Own) (Keenan, Pre-Famine Ireland 294-7).

In the eighteenth century regiments were often stationed in the same place for many years, and recruited locally, so that the rank and file of one stationed for many years in Ireland was largely composed of Irishmen. Irish regiments based in Catholic parts of Ireland were composed largely of Catholics, while those based in the Protestant parts of Ireland were composed largely of Protestants. As it was a wholly volunteer army, each volunteer could choose which regiment he wished to serve in.

By the Act of Union (1800 legally the Irish Army ceased to exist, but Irish regiments did not. Irish regiments served in every quarter of the world as individual regiments. Not until the First World War were Irish divisions formed, though an ad hoc Irish Brigade was formed during the Boer War under Major General Fitzroy Hart. It was estimated that Irishmen composed two fifths of the army sent to the Crimea. In the reorganisation which followed the Crimean War the ancient office of Secretary at War and the Board of Ordnance were abolished and their powers and responsibilities transferred to the Secretary for War whose office was called simply the War Office. The army of the East India Company was absorbed into the British Army bringing in two regiments which were renamed the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Royal Munster Fusiliers (DNB, George William, Duke of Cambridge).

The military establishment in Ireland as in the rest of the United Kingdom was thoroughly re-organised in the second half on the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These are commonly referred to as the Cardwell Reforms. Edward Cardwell was Irish Secretary from 1859 to 1861 under Lord Palmerston, but in 1868 became Secretary for War under Gladstone. Purchase of commissions was abolished, and officers were selected after tests for fitness including examinations. Provision was made for the retirement of officers. The length of time for enlistment was shortened to allow the formation a veteran reserve. The office of Commander-in-Chief could not be abolished because it was held by the Duke of Cambridge, the queen's cousin, but by the War Office Act (1870) it was firmly subordinated to the War Office. The Duke was totally opposed to all of Cardwell's reforms. Nothing could be done about this until the Duke retired which he did in 1895. In 1904 the office was abolished and replaced by a General Staff, and a Chief of Staff, later Chief of the Imperial General Staff as head of the army. Sir John French, of Irish descent was CIGS in 1913 at the time of the 'Curragh mutiny' but accepted a field command as C-in-C of the British Expeditionary Force in 1914. (This post was held during the Second World War by Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke of Co. Fermanagh.) Officers in the militia could be transferred to the regular army.

Regarding Ireland, the chief reform was the division of Ireland into recruiting districts and the assigning to each pairs of the numbered regiments of the line, now designated battalions, and giving names to each of them. By the Army Enlistment Act (1870) completed by Hugh Childers in 1881 Ireland was assigned 16 battalions in 8 districts. There were eight regular Irish regiments in the peace time army, Leinster had the Leinster Regiment and the Royal Dublin Fusiliers; Munster had the Royal Irish Regiment and the Royal Munster Fusiliers; Connaught had the Connaught Rangers, and Ulster had the Royal Irish Rifles, the Royal Irish Fusiliers, and the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Only the last three survived when the others were suppressed on the foundation of the Irish Free State. The depot for the Connaught Rangers (88<sup>th</sup> and 94<sup>th</sup>) was in Galway, and their recruiting area was Galway, Mayo, and Roscommon. The depot for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers (102<sup>nd</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup>) was Naas, Co. Kildare with the three areas of Dublin city, Dublin county, and Kildare. The depot for the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (27<sup>th</sup> and 108<sup>th</sup>) was Omagh with counties Tyrone, Fermanagh, and Donegal. The depot of the Royal Irish Fusiliers (87<sup>th</sup> and 89<sup>th</sup>) was Armagh with counties Armagh, Cavan and Monaghan. The depot of the Royal Irish Regiment (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> battalions 18<sup>th</sup> foot) was Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, with counties Tipperary, Wexford and Kilkenny. The depot of the Royal Irish Rifles (83<sup>rd</sup> and 86<sup>th</sup>) was Belfast, with counties north Down, south Down, and Louth. The depot of the Leinster Regiment (100<sup>th</sup> and 109<sup>th</sup>) was Birr in King's County (Offaly) with King's County, Queen's County (Laois), and Meath. The depot of the Royal Munster Fusiliers (101<sup>st</sup> and 104<sup>th</sup>) was in Tralee, Co. Kerry, with Kerry, Limerick, and south Cork. The militias of the corresponding counties were then added as the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> battalions (Whitaker's Almanac 1903).

This is a simplified scheme for illustration and probably close to what was originally intended. Before the allocation to recruiting districts in Ireland several of the regiments had no connection with Ireland. The Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Royal Munster Fusiliers had been East India Company regiments, while the Leinsters had been raised in Canada. The Irish Guards were formed in 1900 as the queen's tribute to the bravery of the Irish troops in the Boer War. The Irish Guards were not disbanded and served with distinction in the First and Second World Wars. The 1<sup>st</sup> battalion fought in Tunisia and at Anzio, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion fought in North Western Europe after D-Day. The military recruiting districts did not correspond exactly with the militia districts, and it will be noticed that only 22 out of the 32 counties are mentioned above. The rest of the county militias were associated with the Royal Artillery (Whitaker's Almanac 1903).

The Victorian army in its heyday in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was commanded by two outstanding Irish generals, Frederick Roberts, Earl Roberts (Bobs) of Co. Waterford and Garnet Wolseley, Viscount Wolseley, of Dublin, who between them led most of the campaigns in the incessant minor wars.

Wolseley led the army in 1884-5 to rescue General Gordon in Khartoum in the Sudan. Roberts successfully led a relief army on a forced march from Kabul to Kandahar in the Second Afghan War (1878-1880). The flavour of the time was memorably caught by Kipling

"When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains,

And the women come out to cut up what remains,

Jest roll on your rifle and blow out your brains,

And go to your Gawd like a soldier" (War Stories and Poems, 56).

In the First World War, an enormous number of Irishmen both in Ireland and in England volunteered for the army. The Ulster Protestants led the way and Belfast city was the greatest single district for volunteering. The Irish Catholic nationalists endeavoured to match their efforts. The rate of volunteering was high in cities and urban districts and lowest in rural districts especially in the west of Ireland. Besides those who volunteered for the regular and militia battalions, special 'service' or wartime only battalions were formed. These were added to the existing regiments, and by the end of the war, the Royal Irish Rifles had 20 battalions. The total number of Irish battalions by 1918 was 82. In the British Army regiments were not a combat unit. This was the brigade composed of two or more battalions, and two or more brigades formed a division which was a larger combat unit.

On 1st August 1914 there were 20,780 Irishmen serving in the army; at the outbreak of war 17,804 reservists and 12,462 special reservists re-joined making a total on mobilisation of 51,046 men; subsequently three new divisions, the 10th, 16th, and 36th were formed each of 12 battalions, which added to the original 16 Irish battalions made 52 battalions; at the same time reserve brigades were formed to act as feeders (Weekly Irish Times 5 Feb. 1916). It was estimated that up to half a million Irishmen volunteered to fight in the British and American armed forces combined in the First World War (Weekly Irish Times 24 Nov. 1923). In the Irish War Memorial Records the names of the 45,435 names of fallen Irishmen were collected; not only the names of those who served in Irish regiments but as far as was possible those who served in other regiments as well; local newspapers were combed for names (Weekly Irish Times 24 Nov. 1923). A total mortality rate of about 10% of all those serving is indicated. It is clear that a large proportion of Irishmen of military age at home and abroad volunteered for the armed forces.

## Navy

There never was a separate Royal Irish Navy. In 1688 under Admiral Baron Dartmouth the navy submitted to the Prince of Orange and remained loyal to the Hanoverian monarchs. All Catholic officers were removed from its ranks, at least officially. (In 1829 they were officially re-admitted, but had been present unofficially long before that.) The Act of Union (1800 made no change to its status. The navy maintained two main bases in Ireland, in Lough Swilly, Co. Donegal and Queenstown Co. Cork, to which was added in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Berehaven, Co. Cork. There were also depots for fuel oil at Rathmullan, Co. Donegal and Haulbowline, Co. Cork (Encyclopaedia of Ireland, 'Treaty Ports'). These were returned to the Irish Free State (Eire) before the Second World War. Berehaven was not constructed as a base for anti-submarine warfare but as a fall-back position for the Channel Fleet in case of a defeat by the German or French fleets. The most memorable Irish admiral was Lord Charles Beresford, of Co. Waterford who between 1905 and 1909 was firstly C-in-C in the Mediterranean and then C-in-C of the Channel Fleet, the senior appointment of an officer at sea (DNB, Beresford). Admiral Beattie whose family was from Co. Waterford, commanded the Home Fleet in the second half of the First World War (DNB Beattie).

## Royal Artillery

The Royal Artillery was historically separate from the British Army, and like the Royal Engineers remained separate. The army was describes as 'horse, foot, and guns' and it was always difficult to get the various units to speak to each other, let alone fight alongside each other. In the Royal Regiment of Artillery there were militia depots in Antrim, Clare, Cork, Donegal, Dublin city, Limerick city, Londonderry City, Mid-Ulster, Sligo, Tipperary, Waterford and Wicklow. Associated with these depots were the Antrim militia, Clare militia, Cork City militia, Limerick City militia, Londonderry militia, Sligo militia, Waterford militia, and Wexford militia. In 1901 the

total embodied militia infantry in Ireland was 13,750 and militia artillery 5,440 (Belfast Weekly News 30 May 1901).[Top]

### Militia and Yeomanry

The militia was an ancient local defence force, based on the county and formed by a levy on the county and paid for by a tax on the county, which was normally made up to strength or embodied when there was danger of invasion or internal disturbance (Keenan Pre-Famine Ireland 297-9). For most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Irish militia was governed by the Militia Interchange Act (1811). By this Act militia regiments could be asked to serve in any part of the United Kingdom outside their own county. The Lord Lieutenant could also order a ballot for service in the militia to be held among all those adult men liable for service in the militia, but in practice the Government relied on bounties. The militia was disembodied in 1815 following the defeat of the French at Waterloo leaving only a handful of officers and non-commissioned officers to man the county depots. County governors were still required however to keep the militia lists, i.e. lists of those men liable to serve, up to date.

As fear of the French revived after 1850 the British, as usual preferring to rely on enthusiastic amateurs rather than on an expanded professional army, decided to revive and reform the militia. The Militia Act (1852) fixed the strength of the militia for the United Kingdom at 80,000 to be recruited, as in Ireland, by bounties. The power to use the ballot was retained. Militia regiments were empowered to serve overseas (Barnett, Britain and Her Army 282). The Irish militia was re-embodied in 1854, for the Crimean War, and again for the Indian Mutiny, and the Great War (Northern Whig 1 Nov 1924). The militia were said to be embodied when they were called from their homes to camp for training or service, and disembodied when dismissed to their homes at the end of the required period. During the Napoleonic Wars some of the militiamen were away from their families continuously for twenty years. The Irish militia was separate from the militias of the other two kingdoms.

In 1899 several battalions of the Irish militia were embodied to be sent to South Africa. The North Cork militia (9th battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps) and the King's County militia (3rd Leinsters) got to South Africa. The latter battalion was embodied at Birr January 1900, and like other militia regiments at the time it volunteered for the War (Weekly Irish Times 31 May 1902). The 5th battalion, the Royal Irish Rifles, better known as the South Down militia got ready to sail for South Africa in March 1901. It originated in an Act in 1793 and was called the 9th Royal Downshire Militia; it fought at Killala in 1798. It was disembodied after Waterloo and re-embodied in 1854 under the name Royal South Down Light Infantry, and during the Crimean War it supplied 227 volunteers to the line. In 1881 it was renamed the 5<sup>th</sup> battalion Royal Irish Rifles. It was re-embodied in May 1900 and had already supplied 150 volunteers to the 2nd battalion (Belfast Weekly News 14 March 1901).

'When Kruger heard the regiment had landed at Capetown,

"I regret," says he, "we're bate," says he, "we may throw our rifles down."

There is only the one conclusion: we'd better quit the Rand

For the South Down Militia is the terror of the land'. (irishlyrics.homestead.com)

The other battalions were stood down as the situation in South Africa came under control. Though only part-time soldiers they were useful for guarding bases and back areas. When embodied in Ireland they released the regular battalions for front line duty.

Though the organisation, equipment, drill and tactics of the militia were identical with that of the regular army the two organisations were totally different. In one the officers and men joined a regiment to make soldiering their life's work. They could be sent abroad for any number of years in times of war and peace. The militia were occasional soldiers. They came under the county governors who came under the Lord Lieutenant not the War Office until the Cardwell reforms. When they first joined they were given the basic military training, how to march, how to form a line, a column, or a square and how to get from one formation to another. They were taught how to load a musket and fire it on the word of command. For defence, the regiment was extended in a long thin line to enable the greatest number of muskets to bear. For attack they formed a square or column to bring the greatest weight of numbers to bear on a single point in the opposing line. A crucial part of the drill was how to step forward or side-step to fill up the place of anyone who had fallen. This drill was all taught on the parade ground.

In the first half of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars the militia was of necessity retained at home, but after the naval victory at Trafalgar in 1805 the role of supplying volunteers for the regular army became more important, especially in Ireland. After 1854 when the militia were allowed to serve overseas in a body they were useful for guarding bases. Yet Cardwell wanted to improve on this. They would form a kind of army reserve and supply volunteers in a time of crisis to the regular regiments. This change was not finally completed until the formation of the Territorial Army in 1908. The first step was to place the militia and yeomanry under the War Office and this was done in 1855. Then following the formation of two-battalion regiments in 1870 and 1881, the militia regiments were linked to the eight regular regiments who had been given depots in Ireland and three county militias was attached to each regiment as described above. They still in the press and elsewhere retained their traditional names. Finally, the Haldane Reforms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century transferred the Irish militia to the Special Reserve. In the First World War the militia battalions were ignored by Lord Kitchener who preferred the newly raised and trained 'service' battalions. Why he did so is not clear. He may have thought that many of them were too old, especially the officers, or too set in their ways, and that it was easier to form completely new units with officers from the regular army from fresh volunteers. The militia served on garrison duties in the United Kingdom, and volunteers from their ranks could transfer to fighting units. With the disbanding of five Irish regiments in the territory of the Irish Free State in 1922 their associated militia regiments were disbanded too. The militia regiments in Ulster were suspended, but not abolished until 1953. Thirty six of the 82 Irish battalions who served during the First World War were militia battalions (Harris, *The Irish Regiments*, 274).

The term yeomanry covers any volunteer units which established themselves in accordance with the various yeomanry Acts. The yeomanry regiments raised under the Yeomanry (Ireland) Act (1797) and given official status were disbanded in 1815. But many of the official or legal yeomanry companies were earlier unofficial volunteer companies, several of which had been patriotically raised to defend Ireland during the American War of Independence (Harris, *Irish Regiments* 13-19). As the yeomanry companies served only in their own localities they were popular and over 60,000 men joined them. For various reasons like the continuing threat of agrarian terrorists and the prospects of Catholic Emancipation many of the companies did not disband and an enquiry in 1828 found that they still numbered around 20,000 with three quarters of them in Ulster. The Government always refused to give them official recognition, they were formally disbanded in 1834, and they seem to have gradually declined (Keenan, *Pre-Famine Ireland* 300-1). It would appear that the various Acts regulating volunteers and yeomanry did not apply to Ireland (*Irish Law Times* 20 Jan 1900).

The Volunteer Act (1899) allowing the British to volunteer for service in South Africa was not applied to Ireland; but it was hoped that a Belfast volunteer brigade might be formed. The Irish were soon allowed however to join the Imperial Yeomanry, and there was a rush of volunteers. The Imperial Yeomanry was recruited from all over the Empire and called for young men who could ride a horse and shoot with a gun. It was intended that they should be used as mounted infantry. As with the Boers, the horses gave mobility, but the troops fought dismounted. Local companies were formed and combined into a battalion, the 13<sup>th</sup> battalion Imperial Yeomanry. The companies were the 45<sup>th</sup> (Dublin), the 46<sup>th</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> (Belfast), and the 47<sup>th</sup> (Lord Donoughmore's). Another battalion had two English and two Irish companies, the 60<sup>th</sup> (North Irish) and the 61<sup>st</sup> (South Irish). The 13<sup>th</sup> contained several Irish Masters of Foxhounds. It was commanded by a totally incompetent British army officer who allowed the brigade to be surrounded by the Boers who were armed with artillery and it was forced to surrender (Harris *op. cit.* 232; Pakenham, *Boer War*, 436).

On the return of the Irish companies from South Africa the Government raised two new Irish yeomanry regiments, the North Irish Horse and the South Irish Horse. The first was raised in 1902 with its regimental headquarters in Belfast and the second, raised in the same year had its headquarters in Limerick with 2 squadrons in Beggar's Bush barracks in Dublin. In 1908 the two regiments were converted to Special Reserve and re-named the North and South Irish Horse, with precedence over the yeomanry in the Territorial Army (Harris, 235). They were sent to France in August 1914, the first non-Regular Army units. The South Irish Horse was disbanded along with the other southern Irish regiments. In the Second World War the North Irish Horse like many cavalry regiments became a tank regiment and fought in Tunisia and Italy.

In the First World War there arose a mass of volunteer auxiliary units, many of them for women to help the armed forces. The first however, in the Boer War, was Lord Iveagh's field hospital. It was composed of 70 volunteers who trained at the royal barracks, with several RIC mounted men assisting with the training. It had all the requirements of a self-contained field hospital from surgeons to the blacksmith and wheelwright. Training was provided in the handling of mules (*Warder* 27 Jan 1900). Four Irish doctors were appointed, Dr William Thompson being in command. The hospital was organised by Edward Cecil Guinness of the brewery company, then Baron Iveagh.

During the First World War, despite the carping of the sourpusses of Sinn Fein and the IRB, all ranks of Irish society rushed to give what assistance they could to the armed forces. Among these was FANY, the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry. There was also the Dublin University VAD, or Voluntary Aid Detachment branch of Dublin University Women graduates and undergraduates. The scheme began in 1909 when the Secretary of State for War requested a plan for voluntary aid for the sick and wounded in time of war. In 1911 the Officers Training Corps in the university took advantage of the scheme, and enabled a university VAD to be formed and registered with the Territorial Branch of the St John's Ambulance Brigade. A camp of instruction was held in 1912, and in 1914 the university provided No. 19 Mountjoy Square as a hospital, and there they worked; there were 24 beds, with a resident surgeon. Housework, including cooking was done by voluntary workers, and Belgian refugees (Weekly Irish Times 3 July 1915). A Report was made of Irish nurses at the front: they were two to a tent at the general hospitals, and had to provide the furniture of the tents themselves. The VADs were at first resented by the trained nurses. Volunteer VADs were put on probation for one month, then accepted for 6 months, and were sent to hospitals in England or France to do the work of junior probationers. Much of their work was washing in the sink room and cleaning things, sweeping and dusting the wards, running with fomentations, washing bandages, helping with meals and making beds (Weekly Irish Times 21 Aug. 1915). The victory parade in Belfast in August 1919 involved 11 miles of fighting men with 30,000 men and women; women's units were Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), Red Cross, Voluntary Aid Detachment, women (VAD), Legion Corps, Women's Royal Air Force, Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), Women's Royal Army Service Corps, Women's Forestry Corps, and Women's Land Corps (Weekly Irish Times 16 Aug 1919).

### The Armed Forces in Irish Society

The armed forces had a much more important part in Irish social life than they have today. Even after the purchase of commissions was ended most officers in cavalry and line regiments were selected only if they had private means. Officers who relied on their pay were directed towards the Royal Engineers and other unfashionable regiments. The term 'crack regiment' meaning first class regiment referred to their social position and desirability not their military efficiency. There were famous military families like the Brookes of Colebrooke, Co Fermanagh, 26 of whom served in the First World War and 27 in the Second World War (DNB Alan Brooke). The army barracks and depots were spread evenly over the whole of Ireland, and one battalion was always at home so officers were constantly in demand at hunts, balls, races, shoots, fishing, and other rural sports of the gentry. Their brilliant uniforms lent glamour to many a local occasion. And the lower ranks were similarly popular with the lower ranks in society. Every regiment had its band which also graced social occasions. The position in Ireland was no different from the rest of the United Kingdom. Every officer, and not merely the officers in cavalry regiments, had to have his own expensive personal horse or horses for riding and hunting. They were therefore a welcome sight at horse fairs. Trooping the colours, the ceremonial mounting of the guard, on St. Patrick's Day at Dublin Castle attracted crowds of spectators. Cities and seaside resorts provided bandstands in public parks where regimental bands could entertain the public.

It was not until after 1900 that extreme nationalists began denigrating what they called the 'British' Army. Even then, nationalist propaganda had little effect on popular sentiment until after 1918 when it was realised that the IRA was going to be the new Irish Army and was keeping tabs on all who fraternised with the security forces. [Top]

### The Irish Government

#### The Structure of the Irish Government or Executive

Besides Her (His) Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom there was a separate Her (His) Majesty's Government of Ireland (the Irish Government) to deal with Irish affairs. The Irish Government or Executive was an anomaly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In theory, by the Act of Union it should have ceased to exist as the various Offices were merged into their British counterparts. In 1801 the entire abolition of a separate Irish Government was proposed by the Home Secretary Thomas Pelham, but this was fiercely resisted by those in the threatened offices. The major offices, the Exchequer, the Treasury, the Post Office, and the Revenue Boards were indeed amalgamated or combined with their British counterparts. The Treasuries were amalgamated in 1816, the Revenue Boards in 1823 and the Stamp Offices in 1827 (McDowell, *The Irish Administration*, 65, 88-92). The Irish Board of Ordnance was united with its British corresponding Board at the Union. The Audit Boards were merged in 1839. The Ordnance Survey was carried out in Ireland by the Board of Ordnance and was transferred to the English Board of Works in 1870 though it maintained several of its offices in Ireland. The Treasury Remembrancer's Office was in Dublin Castle. It was the office of the Treasury Remembrancer and Deputy Paymaster, with no separate budget, but only individual salaries. The Post Office (a Revenue Office) had its principal office in London, and its principal Irish office in the General Post Office in Dublin.

Yet, a hundred and twenty years later the Irish Government was still in existence, presiding to a greater or lesser degree over a heterogeneous collection of Boards which survived or were developed because there was no corresponding British Board. Nor was any attempt made to squeeze them into the British system by making them committees of the Privy Council which was the way similar issues were dealt with in England. There were proposals made at times to completely abolish the office of Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary which depended on it, and subject all Irish affairs to the relevant Department or Office in Westminster, but this was never done. Also after the Union some Boards or Offices were developed which had no equivalent in England like the Board of Education, the Board of National Education, the Valuation Office and the Land Commission. The Irish Poor Law Board developed into the Local Government Board. The Irish police was a national service not a county one as in Britain. These were developed in Ireland to meet needs which had no direct equivalent in England at the time and it was said that Ireland had enough Boards to make herself a coffin. The courts were under the Lord Chancellor, but gradually lost most of their administrative functions. The entire court system was left unaltered, and even after the English and Irish systems were rationalised no attempt was made to merge them. Oddly enough the two Civil Services were amalgamated, and entrants in Ireland were often given their first posting in London. Proposals by the Liberals with regard to Home Rule for Ireland were largely concerned with the various Boards concerned with purely Irish affairs which had survived or had developed.

It should be noted at the outset that the Government of Ireland was composed almost exclusively of Irishmen and always had been. It was no more the 'British Government' than the Australian or Canadian Governments were the British Government. In theory, Ireland did not have a legislature separate from that of the United Kingdom, but much special legislation had to be passed for Ireland, and normally only Irish MPs took part in those debates. For all practical purposes regarding local Irish issues there was a separate Parliament (Keenan, Pre-Famine Ireland). Mainly, government in Ireland was local government and was in the hands of the Irish country gentlemen in the counties, who met as the county Grand Juries. The chief local officer was the sheriff who was appointed by the Lord Lieutenant from a short list of the gentlemen of the counties. The governing bodies in towns and cities, after the acts of 1828 and 1840 were composed of locally elected councillors or officials.

Historians studying 19<sup>th</sup> century Ireland struggle to understand the structure of the Irish Government and how it functioned. Though individual elements can be described, it is difficult to understand how they functioned together (Keenan Pre-Famine Ireland 254-272; McDowell, The Irish Administration). The reason is that it was composed largely of left-overs from the past and bits added from time to time to deal with particular Irish needs. It was continually evolving, but not in accordance with any plan. As the Chief Secretary George Wyndham remarked the government of Ireland was conducted only through continuous conversation (McDowell, The Irish Administration, 31). Nor is it surprising that trouble arose when Augustine Birrell (Chief Secretary 1907-16) withdrew from that conversation.

The structure itself of the Government was derived from the medieval government of the royal justiciars and viceroys, and was itself modelled on the royal government of England. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Lord Lieutenant exercised the royal power. Under him were the great officers of the Irish state, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Treasurer, the Lord Admiral or Admirals, the Commander of the king's forces, the Lord Primate, the Lord Chief Justice, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Revenue Commissioners, the Post Master General, the Lord Lieutenant's Secretary, and the Irish Secretary. There were also minor offices like the Clerk of the Pells, the Inspector of Gaols, the Board of Works (construction of fortifications), Barrack Board in charge of housing troops, Inspector of Mines, and the Commissioners of Imprest Accounts (auditors). Under these were other offices, like the Hanaper Office under the Chancery.

All these Irish officers were independent of each other and fiercely defensive of their rights. They (except the judges) could be dismissed by the king, but as long as there were no complaints to the Lord Lieutenant they were left alone. The various offices in the Revenue, the Post Office, in the Secretaries' Departments etc. were run as independent fiefdoms where office holders could have opportunities for personal gain either for themselves or their followers. As the country was increasingly prosperous, well-managed, and peaceful, there was no reason to disturb them. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Lord Lieutenant came to Ireland only for a brief period every two years to hold a brief parliament lasting a few weeks, so the departmental heads were their own bosses most of the time. There was an Irish Parliament, but for long stretches it did very little and did not meet. The chief point in summoning it was to vote the necessary taxes.

The British Government's i.e. the cabinet's, interest in Ireland was slight, to keep the peace, to keep out the French, to maintain the Protestant religion, to maintain an additional reserve army in peacetime, and to ensure that Irish taxes covered the cost of the Irish Government. As long as the required revenue was paid into the Treasury each year from the legal taxes nobody interfered. Not that there was massive corruption or massive extortion but it was agreed that every public official should be able to derive an appropriate income from his

office. Gifts for the award of contracts were regarded as normal. The principal interest of the king, however, besides getting the Irish Parliament to vote supply, was to ensure that no laws were passed against the royal interest. To obtain the necessary majorities in Parliament the Hanoverian kings and their ministers in England depended on influential men in Ireland to secure the necessary majorities by whatever means. As the prime minister at the time, Sir Robert Walpole put it, 'Everyman has his price'. These influential men were called 'undertakers' but they had little control over the other great officers of state. After the accession of George III in 1760, in Ireland as in England, he wished to exercise more direct control, and the appointment of George Townshend as Lord Lieutenant in 1767 marks the beginning of the attempt to secure some control over the Government of Ireland. Then between 1782 and 1800 the Irish Parliament made efforts to get some control over the Irish royal executive for itself. But right up to 1921 the Government of Ireland was a collective effort, relying on the co-operation of the chief officers who remained, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice, and the Commander-in-Chief of the army in Ireland, with the Chief Secretary.

This structure was changed as the various provisions of the Act of Union (1800) came into force. The two parliaments were merged immediately, and the office of Irish Secretary was merged with that of the Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, but otherwise there was little apparent change. A separate Irish budget was presented until 1817 when the two exchequers were merged. Customs duties against British goods were progressively reduced until they virtually ceased in 1825 so the Revenue Boards were then amalgamated, as were the Stamp Offices. There was no haste about the amalgamations which took place when the times were right.

When the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, in 1907 introduced his Irish Council Bill he set out the shape of the executive part of the Government of Ireland as it then stood. Over legislation, he said, the Irish have had long a considerable measure of control; now they needed also to control the exercise of those laws, to control the administration of the officials, conveniently if inaccurately called Dublin Castle.

Some of the Irish officials, he said, are under the control of the Irish Secretary for the time being; other are independent of him; some departments are wholly on the votes [annual parliamentary budget], some are partly on the votes, and some have independent endowments; the Board of Intermediate Education was totally independent. [Its income was taken from the funds of the disestablished Church.] The total number of Irish Boards is a matter of controversy; excluding the Admiralty and War Office there were he was told 45 Boards; 10 of these were directly under the control of the Irish Government, the Royal Irish Constabulary, the Dublin Metropolitan Police, the General Prisons Board, Reformatories and Industrial Schools, the Inspector of Lunatics, the General Register Office; the Department of the Registrar of Petty Sessions Clerks, the resident magistrates, the crown solicitors, and the clerks the Crown and the Peace.

Under partial control of the Irish government were the Land Commission, the Commissioners of Charitable Bequests, and the Public Records Office. Not at all under the control of the Irish Government except as regarding appointments and the framing of rules were five; the Board of National Education; the Board of Intermediate Education, the Commissioners of Endowed Schools, the National Gallery, and the Hibernian Academy. Not under the control of the Irish Government but with the Chief Secretary as president ex officio were the Local Government Board, the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction; and the Congested Districts Board. There were four boards exercising statutory authority in Ireland and not under Government control: the Public Loan Fund Board, the Commissioners of Irish Lights, the Royal University and Queen's Colleges. Also not controlled by the Government were eight more, including the Supreme Court of Judicature and its offices, the Registrar of Deeds, the Local Registration of Titles, and the Railway and Canal committee being the most important. There were also 12 English boards working in Ireland, not under the control of the Irish Government, of which it is sufficient to mention the Customs, the Inland Revenue, and the Board of Trade (Weekly Irish Times 11 May 1907).

The re-organisation of the boards into proper departments headed by a minister awaited the establishment of two separate Irish Governments in 1920, but as the creation of a Department of Agriculture showed such a re-organisation could have taken place sooner.

It must be stressed that Government, both central and local in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was very small. This was especially true of Government Offices, most of whom had only a handful of staff. In the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century almost every Office was housed in one of three buildings, Dublin Castle, the Four Courts, and the Customs House, and the total number of people employed in the public service was given as 4,700. Though called the Castle after the original castle of Dublin it was in fact a large group of buildings. The term Castle in this connection had the same significance as Whitehall had in Britain, and the White House in the United States, the centre of the executive as opposed to Westminster, or Capitol Hill, the seats of Parliament. Almost all work was farmed out. If the Military Department, for example, wanted muskets or uniforms, or supplies of fuel or forage they placed advertisements in the newspapers. The Board of National Education had a board room, a

resident commissioner, a head inspector, and sufficient clerks to deal with reports from inspectors. Taxes were collected in the simplest way possible. A tax on newspapers was collected by appointing a shop to sell pre-stamped newsprint. A tax on beer and spirits was collected by taxing maltsters who made the malt. A tax on leather was collected by measuring the size of tanning pits. However, after 1850, the number of civil servants, including those in the vastly extended Post Office grew to around 26,000, which was still relatively small. As a result of the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms admission to the civil service was by public examinations which were held in Ireland (DNB Stoney, G.J.).

The same was true of local administration. There were several county officers, the most important of whom was the sheriff. The sheriff could employ some bailiffs, gaolers, clerks etc., and in times of particular need could swear in a posse comitatus of special deputy sheriffs, a system which persisted in the United States. But almost all public works were put out to contract. Otherwise the ruling body in the county, the Grand Jury, met four times a year for the assizes. With regard to towns and cities their local powers were set out in their charters, and these were rationalised by various Acts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The borough of Newry for example, up to 1828, was bound by the terms of its charter of 1613 in addition to the preserved rights of the Cistercian abbey of Newry as a liberty. From 1828 onwards, the situation was no longer static. Counties had the traditional rights and duties of counties but from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards more and more duties were being heaped on them.

#### His Majesty's Household in Ireland

The chief governor in Ireland since the Middle Ages was called the Lord Lieutenant (pronounced lef-tei-ant), who as his French title indicates held the place of the king and governed in the king's place, and in his name, not that of parliament. This was a matter of form, for in practice the Lord Lieutenant was responsible to the ministry or cabinet in London and was nominated by it. His role was not as it had been in the Middle Ages to rule Ireland but to supervise the Irish Government. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century he quite often did not reside in Ireland but came every two years to hold a short Irish parliament. (The Lord Lieutenant was alternatively called the Viceroy. The adjective referring to the office was invariably viceregal.) In his absence the country was governed by the Lords Justices and officers of state who were usually members of the Irish parliament, almost invariably Irishmen and were the real rulers of Ireland if any such persons could be said to exist (Keenan Pre-Famine Ireland 254-5). The big change after the Act of Union (1800) was not the loss of the parliament, for the same people continued to legislate on specific Irish concerns in the same manner, but now sitting in Westminster. It was that, after a great struggle, the Lord Lieutenant and his Secretary, on behalf of the cabinet, succeeded in gaining some oversight and control over the Boards and Offices. After the Act of Union (1800) it took thirty years for the Lords Lieutenant and Chief Secretaries to gain control of the Under Secretary's office. To a degree virtually incomprehensible nowadays, the head of an office or a board had virtually a free hand to run his office as he liked within the terms of his remit. The great object of the nationalist politicians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to restore the happy state of affairs of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The royal household in Ireland (for the most part honorary or ceremonial) in Ireland consisted of the Hereditary Chief Butler in Ireland who in 1920 was the Marquis of Ormonde; the Hereditary Seneschal, or Lord High Steward who was the Earl of Shrewsbury and Talbot; the honorary physicians, surgeons, and surgeon oculist; the Office of Arms and the Chancery of the Order of St Patrick. In the Office of Arms were the Ulster King of Arms and Registrar of the Order of St Patrick, the Athlone Pursuivant, the Deputy Ulster King of Arms, and the Registrar of the Office of Arms. Next came the Lord Lieutenant and Viceregal Household. Then came the Irish Executive under the Chief Secretary for Ireland with the Office of the Chief Secretary and the Irish Privy Council, the assistant Under Secretary for Ireland being the Clerk of the Privy Council (Whitaker's Almanac 1920).

The offices of Butler and Seneschal (Steward) though important once, became largely honorary and ceremonial. So too were appointments like royal physician though he could be called on if the king were in Ireland. The office of Secretary only achieved importance after the Union when the offices of Irish Secretary and Lord Lieutenant's Secretary were merged.

The Irish Office of Arms was distinct from the English College of Arms. Conferring of honours was a prerogative of the monarch. The office of Ireland King of Arms dated from around 1370, but was changed by Edward VI in 1552 to Ulster King of Arms whose office covered the whole of Ireland. The junior office of Athlone Pursuivant was created at the same time. Scotland had the Lyon King of Arms, while England has two, Norroy and Clarenceux, whose respective domains are marked by the River Trent. An attempt in 1898 to merge the Office of the Ulster King of Arms with the English College of Arms was defeated by the Irish MPs. The Office in Dublin is now called the Office of the Chief Herald (Fox-Davies, Heraldry, 24, 27; Encyc. of Ireland, 'Heraldry'). The office of Ulster King of Arms was ultimately merged with Norroy.

The Lord Lieutenant's powers were set out in general terms by the monarch appointing him. (Unlike the Viceroy of India he had no powers to wage wars or make treaties.) In theory he was the chief executive, like the president of the United States. But as described above, many of the offices or departments had by 1850 become controlled from London, or else were independent boards with a limited remit. The status of the office declined as the status of the office of Irish Secretary, progressively called the Chief Secretary, increased. By 1916, Birrell, the Chief Secretary was not bothering to keep the Lord Lieutenant informed about what he was doing. (There was a personal element in this, for the Earl of Aberdeen was a colourless figure, but it was significant all the same.) The Lord Lieutenant became a figurehead from whom only his signature was required. But Aberdeen was a totally different kind of person from the imperious pro-consular Marquis Wellesley in the 1820s. The functions of the Lord Lieutenant were numerous. He could apply statutes by means of proclamations, hear appeals for clemency, grant pardons, issue writs, have oversight of the administration. He was responsible for castles and fortifications, and had oversight over the military forces except during actual campaigns. He alone could call out the militia, and call in the army to aid the civil power. Until 1869 he appointed to many benefices in the Established Church, and in practice appointed Protestant bishops. Through the Deputy Master of the Revels he licensed Irish theatres. The Lord Lieutenant could commission surveys into matters like the use of bogs, get legislation passed by Parliament for the holding of censuses. In general, a great deal of the legislation concerning Ireland was pushed through Parliament by the Lord Lieutenant with the assistance of either the attorney general or the Irish Secretary (Keenan Pre-Famine Ireland 257-9). The situation in 1916 was summed up as follows: "Theoretically the executive government of Ireland is conducted by the Lord Lieutenant in Council, subject to instructions which he may receive from the Home Office of the United Kingdom. Practically, it is conducted for all important purposes by the Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant...For many years past the office of Lord Lieutenant has been a ceremonial office...The military and naval forces in Ireland take their orders from the War Office and the Admiralty respectively...Though the Chief Secretary is in the position of a Secretary of State he has no Parliamentary Under-Secretary, and the Irish Law Officers are frequently not members of the House of Commons" (Weekly Irish Times 8 July 1916). Lord Wimborne in 1916 noted that he still retained the prerogative of mercy, but received no reports on anything. When he asked for them he was told they were for information only (Weekly Irish Times 27 May 1916).

When the Lord Lieutenant left Ireland even temporarily his duties were discharged by a Commission of Lords Justices which normally included the Irish Lord Chancellor and the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin. Ireland was ruled by Lords Justices between May and August 1916 following the resignation of Lord Wimborne. The Lord Lieutenant had an Irish Privy Council composed of important office holders appointed by himself. He was bound to consult some members at least of the Privy Council before taking important steps like issuing proclamations. This however was a mere formality, as it came under the control of the Chief Secretary and the assistant Under Secretary became the Clerk of the Privy Council (Whitaker 1920).

The office of Chief Secretary or the powers it exercised were not established by any statute. By the Act of Union (1800 the offices of Irish Secretary, a sinecure post, and Lord Lieutenant's Secretary were combined. The Irish Secretary thus only exercised the powers of the Lord Lieutenant. The office of Irish Secretary was run by two Under Secretaries, one for civil affairs and one for military affairs but the latter office was discontinued. The Lord Lieutenant's secretary and the Under Secretaries got on reasonably well until the then Under Secretary, William Gregory, opposed the Marquis Wellesley on his general policy towards the Catholics. There could be only one winner. The office of Under Secretary in 1853 was made non-political and permanent and became in effect the senior post in the civil service. The merging of the offices of Irish Secretary and Lord Lieutenant's Secretary finally became effective. The military Under Secretary corresponded to British Secretary at War. When the office was merged with that of the civil Under Secretary in 1831 its military duties were taken over by the War Office.

What were the duties of the Under Secretary's Office, later the Chief Secretaries Office? It is easier to say what it did not do. It did not do anything which was assigned to any other Office. It was not responsible for the revenue, it was not responsible for the courts, it was not responsible for the administration of towns and counties, it was not responsible for military matters, it was not responsible for barracks, castles, and fortifications, it was not responsible for the militia, it was not responsible for public works, it was not responsible for poor relief or famine relief, it was not responsible for legislation involving Ireland, just to name the chief areas which were the responsibility of other offices and which jealously guarded their independence, especially if the Chief Secretary was an Englishman, which was usually the case