



National University of Ireland
Maynooth

THE IRISH HOME FRONT 1914-18
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE TREATMENT OF
BELGIAN REFUGEES, PRISONERS-OF-WAR, ENEMY ALIENS AND
WAR CASUALTIES.

by

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Abbreviations

BRCS	British Red Cross Society
CSORP	Chief Secretary's Office, Registered Papers
DMP	Dublin Metropolitan Police
DU	Dublin University
DUOTC	Dublin University Officer Training Corps
IAC	Irish Automobile Club
IFS	Irish Free State
INV	Irish National Volunteers
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
OTC	Officer Training Corps
PRO	National Archives formerly Public Record Office (United Kingdom).
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
RIAC	Royal Irish Automobile Club
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
RUI	Royal Univeristy of Ireland
SJAB	St John Ambulance Brigade
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
UCD	University College Dublin
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
VAD	Voluntary aid detachment
WNHA	Women's National Health Association

Introduction

The historiography of the first two decades of the twentieth century in Ireland has, for the most part, focussed on the national question. In 1967, F.X. Martin drew attention to the historiographical gap caused by the omission of accounts of Ireland's First World War experience. He referred to the omission as Ireland's '“great oblivion”, an example of national amnesia'. Martin emphasised the extent of the amnesia by reference to the numbers who, at the time, supported the war effort and the numbers of those involved in the Easter Rising: 'For every Irishman with MacNeill there were sixteen with the British; over 80% of the people were in sympathy with England's war effort.' He reminded his readers that it was difficult to find Irish men and women who would acknowledge that their parents had supported Britain in the war, while a witticism from the 1920s suggested that if all who claimed to have been in the GPO in 1916 had really been there then the GPO would have needed to be four times its size.¹

The reappraisal of Irish history, started by Martin, continued through the 1980s and 1990s, when attention was redirected to Ireland's military participation in the war. An attempt to address the omission of Irish involvement in the conflict in accounts of the history of Ireland was clearly made by Myles Dungan:

Up to half a million Irishmen and women participated in the Great War. Until very recently only the sacrifices made by roughly one third of their number, the men of Ulster, have been remembered with any pride or regret, while the participation of over 300,000 men and women from the Irish nationalist tradition has been virtually written out of the history of modern Ireland.²

Addressing the amnesia, D.G. Boyce drew on Tom Kettle's deep insight in July 1916 on his return to the war. Kettle had suggested in relation to the leaders of the Rising that 'these men will go down in history as heroes and martyrs, and I will go down – if I go down at all – as a bloody British officer'. Boyce suggests that the national amnesia became a 'sort of field dressing' which saw ex-servicemen and their cause 'sink into oblivion' as the war became to be seen 'as the wrong war, fought in the wrong place against the wrong enemy'.³ However, national amnesia, like other field dressings, only

¹ F.X. Martin, '1916 – myth, fact and mystery' in *Studia Hibernica*, no. 7, 1967, p. 68.

² Myles Dungan, *Irish Voices from the Great War* (Dublin, 1995), frontispiece.

³ D.G. Boyce, 'Nationalism, unionism and the First World War' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (eds), *Ireland and the Great War* (Manchester, 2002), p. 201.

became effective over time and so the participation in the war was remembered in various ways in the years immediately following the war. Armistice Day was celebrated between 1919 and 1931 throughout Ireland and divisional histories, diaries and rolls of honour were written and published in the years following the war.⁴ Significantly, in recent years publications have taken a different approach. Dungan's approach is to address the issue of participation in the war largely setting out to tell the stories of men of the Irish volunteer divisions which had not previously been told. Ireland's contribution was largely made up of the 10th (Irish) Division, which fought mainly in the Balkans, and the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions, which saw action on the Western front. Dungan points out that while the story of the Ulster division has been told well and often, the voices of those who served in the 10th and 16th divisions have remained largely unheard. The 16th Division was largely made up of southern Catholics and is not commemorated by a monument anywhere in Ireland apart from a stained glass window in the City of Derry Guildhall. Paradoxically, the guildhall is traditionally seen as a bastion of Protestantism.⁵ Dungan is not alone in telling the stories of these men. Several works have examined the roles of the various Irish units in the war. These include Stanley's account of the 10th Division⁶, Orr's accounts of the 10th Division⁷ and the 36th Division⁸, and Denman's attempt to capture the human reality of the 16th Division⁹. Bowman takes a different approach by examining issues relating to discipline and morale among Irish regiments that differentiated them from English, Welsh and Scottish regiments.¹⁰ Tom Johnstone offers a comprehensive account of the participation by Irish regiments.¹¹ Quinn follows one occupational group, barristers, and

⁴ Bryan Cooper, *The tenth (Irish) division in Gallipoli* (London, 1918); Felix Lavery, *Irish heroes in the war* (London, 1917); A.R. Burrows, *1st Battalion the Faugh-a-Ballaghs in the Great War* (Aldershot, 1926); Rudyard Kipling, *The Irish Guards* (London, 1923); G.A. Cooper Walker, *The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers* (Dublin, 1920); Henry Hanna, *The pals at Suvla Bay* (Dublin, 1916).

⁵ Keith Jeffery, foreword to Terence Denman, *Ireland's unknown soldiers* (Dublin, 2003), p. 7.

⁶ Jeremy Stanley, *Ireland's forgotten 10th* (Ballycastle and Coleraine, 2003).

⁷ Philip Orr, 'The Road to Belgrade' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (eds), *Ireland and the Great War*.

⁸ Philip Orr, *The Road to the Somme* (Belfast, 1987).

⁹ Terence Denman, *Ireland's unknown soldiers*.

¹⁰ Timothy Bowman, *Irish Regiments in the Great War* (Manchester, 2003).

¹¹ Tom Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki* (Dublin, 1992).

the part they played in the war.¹² Quinn's focus is primarily on those who fought. He provides short biographies of the twenty-five members of the Irish Bar, including Willie Redmond and Tom Kettle, who died in the war. In particular, he examines the role of education and training as a factor in enlistment. Many of the barristers who died attended public schools in Britain or leading Irish schools like St Andrews, Mr Strangeways, Clongowes or Belvedere. Only two of the twenty-five did not have a connection with Trinity College, Dublin. The seven Roman Catholics in the group were either educated at Trinity or were external students as part of their legal studies. Eleven of the twenty-five participated in Trinity's Dublin University Officer Training Corps (DUOTC). The eleven included two Catholics, Gerald Plunkett, whose half-nephew was Joseph Mary Plunkett,¹³ and Hugh O'Connor who had contested East Limerick as an independent nationalist in 1910.¹⁴ Quinn's own stated purpose 'is to address past neglect and remedy remaining imbalances'.¹⁵ While his particular focus is on recovering the memory of those who served, Quinn ties their lives and their stories into wider accounts of the time. In this way he plays a part in weaving a single account of the period. At the same time he gives particular prominence to the part played by Trinity College and the Officer Training Corps.

Many of these accounts focus on recovering the stories of those involved in fighting the war. Nuala Johnston takes a different approach. She integrates the history of the war with the geography of commemoration. By taking a post-modern approach she applies Barthes' and Debord's ideas on spectacle to explore the relationship between social memory and space in the representation of war.¹⁶ She situates efforts to remember those who died in the war within the competing narratives of cultural identity within Ireland after the war.¹⁷ She problematises the question of memory by reminding us of Boyarin's comment that 'memory is neither something pre-existent and dormant from the past nor a projection from the present, but a potential for creative collaboration between present consciousness and the experience or expression of the past'.¹⁸ She draws on the work of

¹² Anthony P. Quinn, *Wigs and guns* (Dublin, 2006).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Nuala C. Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War and the geography of remembrance* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 62.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Hobsbawm and Ranger,¹⁹ and that of Mosse,²⁰ to suggest that ‘collective amnesia’ is part of a process of developing the broad memory necessary to sustain the ‘imagined community’ of nationhood.²¹

Fran Brearton pursues the cultural approach to examining the First World War by drawing on and developing Fussell’s approach to understanding the Great War through an examination of literature.²² Fussell challenged the ‘official history’ of the war given in books, pamphlets, propagandist and other materials which were officially sanctioned under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) and were therefore guaranteed not to conflict with conservative views of the war. Fussell focused instead on the literary efforts of those who took part in the war, whether these were undertaken during or after the war. In this way, he showed that understanding of the First World War in England is dictated by those who took part in it.²³ Brearton draws attention to the fact that this is not the case in Irish understanding of the period. Although a vast collection of accounts of Ulster’s participations in the war were produced in the years after the war these accounts were largely of the official, political-historical kind and were frequently written by unionist politicians and historians. These writers had as an agenda the writing of the Somme into a seamless history of unionists military successes stretching from the Boyne to 1916.²⁴ Indicating a difficulty with applying Fussell’s approach to Ireland, Brearton claims that in contrast to England’s over-anthologized canon of war poetry, Ireland’s Great War literature is a diffuse set of writings. However, this in itself is an aspect of national amnesia as Ireland’s soldier poets are usually categorised as something else.²⁵ Kettle is seen as an essayist and politician, C.S. Lewis as an English academic and religious writer, and Thomas McCreevey as a ‘Modernist’. Brearton develops Fussell’s approach by examining the work of significant non-combatant Irish poets including Yeats, MacNeice and Heaney, and claims that ‘war pervades and informs much of Ireland’s twentieth-century literature’.²⁶

¹⁹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, 2003).

²⁰ George Mosse, *The nationalization of the masses* (New York, 1991).

²¹ Nuala C. Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War and the geography of remembrance*, p. 4.

²² Fran Brearton, *The Great War in Irish poetry* (Oxford, 2003).

²³ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and modern memory* (Oxford, 1977).

²⁴ Fran Brearton, *The Great War in Irish poetry*, p. 30.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 39-40.

²⁶ Fran Brearton, *The Great War in Irish poetry*, p. 42.

In attempting to provide a more complete account of Ireland's wartime experience, many of the newer accounts focus on the participation of Irishmen from the Catholic nationalist tradition in the war. While pursuing the same point, Keith Jeffery extends his discussion of participation into the cultural realm.²⁷ In several publications, he seeks to understand the period through an examination of art, music, and literature.²⁸ In doing this he confronts the dichotomous nature of accounts of the period. He attempts to move from separate nationalist and unionist histories by weaving the war and the 1916 rising into a common account of the period. He sees many similarities between enlistment in the national movement and service in the British armed forces,²⁹ and compares the 'naïve patriotism' of the recruits for the war with that of Padraig Pearse and his colleagues.³⁰ According to Jeffery, Pearse was 'particularly invigorated by the martial courage displayed in the war'. Jeffery also compares the folly of the rebels digging trenches in St Stephen's Green without first taking control of the overlooking buildings with the folly of Suvla, where the Turks were able to fire down into the 10th (Irish) Division positions.³¹ In place of the two opposing stories – one of the Easter Rising and the other of the Great War, one a story of nationalist martyrdom the other a story of unionist sacrifice, Jeffery's approach serves to promote a single common account of the war period. Jeffery continues this theme in his most recent book, *The GPO and the Easter Rising*.³² He takes that most sacred of republican icons, the GPO, and provides a new narrative of its place within the story of the period by focussing on the role of the GPO not just from the republican point of view but from the perspective of other eyewitnesses. He does this by bringing together accounts of the first-hand experience of Easter week of the secretary of the Irish Post Office, Arthur Norway, his wife, Mary Louisa Norway, and two technicians with the Post Office. Their accounts are placed alongside an account of a rebel within the GPO, that of a priest who tended the wounded at the GPO, and the story of the manager of the Abbey Theatre who, while

²⁷ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000); Keith Jeffery, 'The Great War in Modern Irish Memory' in T.G. Fraser and Keith Jeffery, *Men, women and war* (Dublin, 1993).

²⁸ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*; T.G. Fraser and Keith Jeffery, *Men, women and war*; Neil Garnham and Keith Jeffery (eds), *Culture, place and identity* (Dublin, 2005).

²⁹ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 22.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

³² Keith Jeffery, *The GPO and the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2006).

stranded in the United Arts Club on Stephen's Green, had a grandstand view of events there. These accounts are particularly important because of their contemporary nature. With the exception of Arthur Norway's account, the others were written while the events of 1916 were taking place or shortly after. Norway's account was written in the mid 1920s.³³ The range of different perspectives supports Jeffery's mission to avoid dichotomous accounts of the period and instead weave the history of the time into a single Irish experience with common threads.

Oliver Murphy takes up the theme of a common account by pursuing the shared experience of loss. In his collection of short biographies of the Jesuit Belvedere College community, Murphy endeavours to be inclusive in his account. He tells the stories of sixty-four pupils, three Jesuit priests, and one lay teacher who died in military conflicts in the twentieth century. The conflicts include the Boer War, the First World War, the Easter Rising, the War of Independence, the Civil War, the Second World War and the Cypriot War of Independence. Murphy lives up to his claim to be 'neutral'. He 'takes no sides', he 'has no favourites'. He 'gives equal status to the famous and the forgotten'.³⁴ Murphy's account points to the complexity of Ireland at the time of the First World War. Forty-eight members of the Belvedere community died in the First World War. A further two Belvedere past pupils died in the Rising, one, Reggie Clery, in British uniform killed by a sniper, the other, Joseph Mary Plunkett, in volunteer uniform killed by execution. Another two died in the Civil War. One, Cathal Brugha, has resigned as minister to fight as a soldier on the anti-treaty side. The other, Frederick Lidwell, was a Captain in the Free State Army. While all the lives accounted for ended as a result of conflict, Murphy does not focus on the death of his subjects so much as on their lives.

Finally, David Fitzpatrick's study of life and politics in county Clare weaves not just the war and the rising into a single account but seeks to insert the local narrative of county Clare into the broader national picture.³⁵ Fitzpatrick extends this common approach not just to the war period but to the interwar years.³⁶ By joining the traditionally opposing

³³ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁴ Oliver Murphy, *The cruel clouds of war* (Dublin, 2003), p. 3.

³⁵ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-21: Provincial experience of war and revolution* (Cork, 1997).

³⁶ David Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998).

accounts of unionist and nationalist history in a single, unified account, the Great War has been transformed into a symbol of unity between the 'two Irelands'.

Memory and remembrance

Jeffery's and Fitzpatrick's attempts to unify accounts of Ireland's wartime history are reflected in the political realm by the Messines project. Unity in remembrance as a route to reconciliation was underscored by the dedication of the Irish Peace Tower. On the eightieth anniversary of the armistice, 11 November 1998, the Island of Ireland Peace Park was officially opened by the President of Ireland, Mary MacAleese, Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain, and King Albert II of the Belgians.³⁷ The Peace Park is located close to where the 16th (Irish) and the 36th (Ulster) Divisions fought side by side in June 1917 and secured what passes for a victory in the tragedy that was Flanders. The Peace Park is intended to promote peace in Ireland by commemorating the men and women from the island of Ireland who lost their lives during the First World War. The commemoration has many important symbolic elements. The ceremony was attended by members of the political parties of various shades from both the Republic and Northern Ireland. Representatives of the Democratic Unionist Party, the Ulster Unionist Party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the Alliance Party, and Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, and the Labour Party stood side by side like the men of the 16th and 36th divisions eighty years before.

Some, perhaps more obvious, symbolic aspects of the ceremony received more attention than others. The Messines Tower is a traditional round tower finished with limestone blocks taken from the infirmary of Mullingar Workhouse.³⁸ Belgian refugees and German prisoners of war were housed in a range of workhouses throughout Ireland. Ironically this element of the symbolism of Messines was not alluded to. While challenging amnesia, the Messines project has, unwittingly, contributed to it. Participation in the commemoration by representatives of all political hues was elevated so high in importance that many newspapers reported, inaccurately, that this was the first time that the Irish state bestowed official recognition on the sacrifice made by

³⁷ Fran Brearton, *The Great War in Irish poetry*, p. 3.

³⁸ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 140.

soldiers from the twenty-six counties.³⁹ Amnesia is alive and well. Between 1919 and 1931 Armistice Day was celebrated throughout Ireland with Masses for the war dead said in Roman Catholic Churches in Dublin.⁴⁰ President W.T. Cosgrave excused himself from the remembrance ceremonies in London in 1926 on the grounds that his involvement in hostilities during the Easter Rising might be offensive to others who would attend. Cosgrave had been second-in-command at the South Dublin Union during the rising and had therefore been involved in hostilities against the relatives of some of those who would attend the remembrance ceremonies. However, Cosgrave's deputy, Vice-President Kevin O'Higgins, whose two brothers had fought in the Great War, insisted on representing the government in London.⁴¹ Throughout the inter-war years wreaths were placed at the Cenotaph and the Irish government was represented at various ceremonies. Government representation was removed in 1933 when the first de Valera government was formed. Nonetheless, the Irish High Commissioner in London attended the wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph until the Second World War. In 1993 representation at the highest level was restored when President Mary Robinson attended the interdenominational Remembrance Day service at St Patrick's Cathedral.⁴² In 1994 Minister for Finance Bertie Ahern formally opened the renovated Islandbridge memorial.⁴³ In April 1995 Taoiseach John Bruton spoke at the Islandbridge memorial. The growing acceptance of official representation at remembrance ceremonies was brought to a climax in 1998. The opening of the Peace Park by the heads of state of Ireland and Great Britain in the presence of the King of the Belgians signified a combined Ireland moving into the broader European family as it did previously in 1917 and opened the possibility of healing the wounds of the intervening eighty years. Johnstone, lamenting the fact that most Irish ex-soldiers retired into historical oblivion, supported the idea of remembering within the European context: '...as Europe moves towards greater union, let them therefore be properly judged in the wider context of European history...'.⁴⁴ The joining of the two traditions in a commemoration that both

³⁹ *Irish Independent*, 11 Nov. 1998; *Daily Telegraph*, 12 Nov. 1998; *Guardian*, 12 Nov. 1998; *The Times*, 12 Nov. 1998.

⁴⁰ D.G. Boyce, 'Nationalism, unionism and the First World War', p. 201.

⁴¹ Ann Dolan, 'Commemoration: "Shows and stunts are all that is the thing now" – the Revolution Remembered, 1923-52' in Joost Augusteijn (ed.) *The Irish Revolution 1913-1923* (Hampshire, 2002), p. 188.

⁴² Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 142.

⁴³ D.G. Boyce, 'Nationalism, unionism and the First World War', p. 212.

⁴⁴ Tom Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki*, p. 428.

can share seems admirable. The theme of reconciliation through recognising the sacrifice of the 'two Irelands' in the Great War, has been taken up by several writers.⁴⁵ The Peace Park project makes a contribution to reconciliation in Ireland but at the price of continuing the preoccupation with the history of conflict. It fosters a new brotherhood by remembering that past brotherhood when Irish men from both the nationalist and unionist traditions fought and died side by side.

While the Peace Park commemoration addresses one aspect of the amnesia in relation to Ireland's war time experience, its contribution to reconciliation has been questioned. Orr reminds us that the symbolism of Messines would be lost if it were transferred to the Balkans where the men of the 10th (Irish) Division, like those of the 16th and 36th fought and died 'on behalf of small nations'.⁴⁶ The 10th division had been formed in the first phase of the British army's wartime expansion, and drew recruits from the four provinces. It contained battalions of such well-known Irish regiments as the Connaught Rangers, the Leinsters, the Munsters and the Inniskilling Fusiliers. They formed part of the Salonika Expeditionary Force in the Balkans. The 10th division lost over 2,000 men in the spring and summer of 1915. The beaches of Suvla provided the killing grounds for many, and the cemetery at Mikra (Kalamaria, Greece) holds their remains. Many of the deaths and the hardship endured can be put down to the ineptitude of British military strategy: 'When the extreme local conditions combined with intense military action the suffering of the Irish soldier was comparable with the worst excesses of the Western Front.'⁴⁷ The establishment of a Peace Park at Mikra would offer a very different lesson to the one at Messines. The war in the Balkans did not start in 1914 or end in 1918. The hills around Mikra have been ethnically cleansed time and again since 1918. Near the cemetery at Mikra lie the remains of Greeks of Russian origin, refugees from the Bolshevik revolution. Salonika bears silent witness to the town's Jewish community exterminated in Auschwitz during the Nazi occupation. In fact, Irish men in British army uniform took part in operations involving Serbia as late as 1999. Irish soldiers in graves in the Balkans lie among the victims of Soviet and Nazi totalitarianism and local versions of extreme nationalism which continue to the present day. Rather than providing a theme of reconciliation, Mikra might provide a theme of despair at the

⁴⁵ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 3; Fran Brearton, *The Great War in Irish poetry*, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Philip Orr, 'The Road to Belgrade', pp 171-189.

continuing waste of life. Orr suggests that remembering conflict is not the way forward. The hatred that has engulfed Europe throughout the twentieth century has more to do with how 'we engage in the construction of identity, the legitimisation of aggression and sheer ideological hubris'.⁴⁸

Ireland's national amnesia is part of the construction of Irish identity. Johnson, while reminding us that developing memories that go beyond the local is part of the process of mobilising the 'imagined communities' of nationhood, also points out that an essential part of that mobilisation is forgetting older memories.⁴⁹ In the years following independence, Ireland went through such a process of nation building. Creating a unified nation necessitated amnesia about non-national aspects of the near past. Challenging amnesia also has a part to play in reconstructing Irish identity and contributing to reconciliation between those with Irish identities of various hues. Challenging amnesia requires some examination of the nature of memory and how memory is constructed. Part of the process of recovering memory from amnesia requires a consideration of the part played and the contribution made by civilians who mobilised themselves to respond to the effects of the war, in many cases the inhumane effects of the war. The examination of the part played by civilian mobilisation will allow us to draw more solid conclusions about the Irish war effort, particularly in relation to the home front. In seeking to understand the significance of that mobilisation, its many processes will be considered by this thesis in the international context of civilian mobilisation.

The process of reclaiming civilian mobilisation has been started by David Fitzpatrick, his students and others. Fitzpatrick, in his introduction to a series of essays entitled *Ireland and the First World War*, claims that the Great War is treated as an 'external factor which did little more than modify the terms of political debate and redefine political alignments in Ireland'.⁵⁰ The consequence of this is that a major social catastrophe, which affected the lives of all, is reduced to a minor disturbance. He sets about correcting this in his own work, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921*, in which he examines the popular politics of County Clare in the context of a broader national

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp 171-2.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 186.

⁴⁹ Nuala C. Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War and the geography of remembrance*, p. 4.

⁵⁰ David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1986), p. vii.

picture. He does this by examining the political contribution of various groups with a common political involvement. Two compilations of his students' work take the emphasis away from conflict by examining a range of alternative areas which set the stage for a range of new approaches to studies of the period. The first of these compilations deals with mainly non-military aspects of the response to war in Ireland.⁵¹ The second deals largely with changes in Ireland as a result of the war and the Easter Rising as Ireland moved onto a path toward revolution.⁵²

Jane Leonard's article on the Catholic Chaplaincy, included in the first of these compilations, analyses the work of chaplains during the war as being an important contribution to the standing of the churches after the war.⁵³ In particular she draws attention to the relative popularity enjoyed by Catholic chaplains over chaplains of other denominations. She attributes this in part to the fact that Catholic chaplains were permitted to accompany the troops to the front line, whereas Anglican chaplains were not permitted to go beyond base camp. This resulted in Anglican chaplains gaining a reputation among the men for cowardice.⁵⁴ However, the social status of chaplains may have been a factor. Anglican chaplains, being of the same class, spent more of their time with officers. A more interesting aspect of Leonard's conclusion is that the war acted as a unifying factor between religious denominations. She cites many examples of friendship and co-operation between Irish chaplains of different persuasions. A Presbyterian soldier from Belfast speaking after the death of Belvederian Fr Willie Doyle, said, 'we couldn't possibly agree with his religious opinions, but we simply worshipped him'.⁵⁵ In the situation of imminent danger and surrounded by death, Catholic rites appeared to be more tangible to the soldiers than religious services of other churches. The result was a wave of conversions to the Catholic Church. In 1919, the *Tablet* claimed that 40,000 soldiers had been converted to Catholicism since the war began. Leonard draws the conclusion that the Catholic Church in Ireland benefited from the participation in war. A more comprehensive account of the role of the Catholic

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Revolution?- Ireland 1917-23* (Dublin, 1990).

⁵³ Jane Leonard, 'Catholic Chaplaincy' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Ireland and the First World War*, pp 1-14.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

Church during the period of the war is provided by Jérôme aan De Wiel.⁵⁶ De Wiel examines how the church functioned during the war period, both at a religious and political level. He also investigates how the Church dealt with the British war effort, Home Rule and eventual partition. Finally, De Wiel assesses some key church figures of the period, such as Bishop O'Dwyer, Cardinal Logue and Archbishop Walsh.

Tom Crean, in his article 'From Petrograd to Bruree', examines the inspiration gleaned by the labour movement from the Bolshevik revolution.⁵⁷ He draws attention to the crowd of 10,000 which gathered at Dublin's Mansion House in response to the call of the Socialist Party of Ireland to hail the Bolshevik seizure of power. The Bolshevik revolution, unlike the Easter Rising of the previous year, had successfully seized power. The Bolshevik revolution, like the Easter Rising, could be considered a product of the war. The Bolshevik revolution produced a surge in trade-union membership and resulted in active labour campaigns in several part of the country, notably Belfast, Limerick and Kerry. In the event the labour movement, under O'Brien and Johnstone, pursued a reformist path rather than a revolutionary one.⁵⁸

These are two of twenty-one articles in these series. Each article addresses alternative areas like the voluntary aid organisations, the impact of the war on child welfare, youth culture and the Cork I.R.A., and Cumann na mBan policies and activities. Two chapters take a less conventional approach by using a photographic method to examine the part played by recruiting posters and by war memorials. The articles in this series provide a basis for much more extensive research into aspects of the war and its impact on Ireland.

Gregory and Pašeta's more recent collection of articles takes a broad view of the period by covering a range of political and social analyses of Ireland's wartime experience.⁵⁹ It continues the theme of broadening the account of the period by including articles on less-known topics in addition to more traditional ones. These articles analyse the participation of the nobility, constitutional nationalists and civilians, along with the

⁵⁶ Jérôme aan De Wiel, *The Catholic Church in Ireland 1914-1918: War and politics* (Dublin, 2003).

⁵⁷ Tom Crean, 'From Petrograd to Bruree' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Revolution? Ireland 1917-23*, pp 146-158.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁵⁹ Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (eds), *Ireland and the Great War*.

psychiatric impact of the war on soldiers, among others. Eileen Reilly plays her part in this shift of emphasis with her work 'Women and voluntary war work'.⁶⁰ Reilly addresses women's response to the call by Lady Aberdeen on behalf of Queen Alexandra and the British Red Cross Society to organise instruction in first aid and emergency nursing and for volunteers to produce garments and bandages. The work deals with the contribution made by Women's National Health Association (WNHA) and the Irish section of the British Red Cross Society (BRCS), as well as the work of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council (UWUC).⁶¹ Reilly describes the contribution made by the self-mobilisation of women to the war effort at home and abroad through a range of smaller organisations, in many cases organised locally.

Almost a decade after Martin addressed Ireland's 'national amnesia',⁶² Fussell, drawing on his background in literary criticism, examined the memory of the First World War from a literary point of view.⁶³ A similar approach was taken fifteen years later by Stephen Hynes when he wrote of the 'myth of the war' being established in the years after the war and remaining unchallenged since.⁶⁴ Over the past two decades the nature of memory has become a key topic in the historiography of the First World War. This is a phenomenon not unique to Britain. Similar work has been undertaken in France,⁶⁵ Germany,⁶⁶ and Italy. Gregory suggests that three schools of thought are beginning to emerge.⁶⁷ In his view the first of these is the position taken by Fussell: that the First World War was a fundamental moment in breaking the cultural traditions of pre-war period and creating the conditions in which modernism was to flourish by undermining the authority of the old order. It is not easy to see how this might relate to the Irish situation if one views Irish history in the context of conflict between Britain and Ireland

⁶⁰ Eileen Reilly, 'Women and voluntary war work' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (eds), *Ireland and the Great War*, pp 47-67.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁶² F.X. Martin, '1916 – myth, fact and mystery', p. 68.

⁶³ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and modern memory*.

⁶⁴ Samuel Hynes, *A war imagined, the First World War and English culture* (New York, 1990), pp ix-xiv.

⁶⁵ Adrian Gregory, *The silence of memory – Armistice day 1919-1946* (Oxford, 1994); Leonard Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2003).

⁶⁶ John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities 1914 – a history of denial* (New Haven, Connecticut, 2001); George Mosse, *Fallen soldiers –reshaping the memory of the world wars* (Oxford, 1990).

⁶⁷ Adrian Gregory, *The silence of memory*, p. 2.

extending over several hundred years. In this view the Easter Rising was the turning point where the Irish gained the upper hand. However, O'Brien argues that the turning point came not in 1916, as a result of the rising, but in 1917, with the repudiation of the war effort as a result of the enormously high casualty rate in 1917 and the attempt to impose conscription on Ireland.⁶⁸ The Irish party had supported the war but opposed conscription. The government ignored its protests. As a result the Irish Party was seen to have been mistaken in supporting the war and impotent in opposing conscription. Meanwhile, Sinn Féin secured the release of prisoners and mounted a strong anti-conscription campaign. When the government finally dropped conscription plans the elite of the old order, the Irish Party with their culture of 'Home Rule', were seen to have been wrong and Sinn Féin, with their culture of advanced nationalism, were seen to have been right. This enabled nationalism to take on the role of the moderniser. Ireland's memory of the war period has been defined, in Fussell's terms, as a result of the replacement of the old order with a new one. Those matters which were important to that old order, such as participation in the war in defence of the rights of nations and as an expression of loyalty, have been forgotten, while matters which were important to the new order, such as keeping the flame of freedom burning and engaging in a blood sacrifice in order to forge a new nation, are remembered.

Gregory's second school of thought is that described by Mosse⁶⁹, who takes the view that the constructed memory of war served the purposes of the nationalistic far right in Europe. While the meaning of nationalism in Ireland is usually presented as uncontested, there is a view that nationalism in Ireland, particularly at the outbreak of the war, was a complex matter.⁷⁰ In fact there were competing or complementary nationalisms. While extreme Irish nationalism existed, as did extreme British nationalism, for the most part Irish nationalism and British nationalism were not dichotomous. In preference to Comerford's light-hearted suggestion of a one-and-a-half nation theory,⁷¹ it could be suggested that many Irish people's nationalism was located on a continuum between Britishness and Irishness and was, therefore, 'a category of

⁶⁸ Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'We should remember them with honour and pride', *Irish Independent*, 11 Nov. 1998, p. 8.

⁶⁹ George Mosse, *Fallen soldiers – reshaping the memory of the world wars*.

⁷⁰ Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland – World War 1 and partition* (London, 1998), pp 41-2.

⁷¹ R.V. Comerford, *Ireland: Inventing the nation* (London, 2003), p. 1.

constantly changing content'.⁷² When Redmond pledged his support for the crown on the outbreak of war, he was leaning toward the British side of that continuum in the expectation that supporting Britain in her time of need would be remembered in the context of Home Rule. In contrast to other nations in Europe which built their nationalism on the basis of the war, Ireland, after gaining independence, built its nationalism on the myth of opposition to the war. To build our nationalism in relation to the war would be to build on our Britishness; but building nationalism in opposition to the war was to build on our Irishness. An Irish memory of the war was constructed which could be seen, in Mosse's terms, as serving the purposes of the advanced nationalists rather than others along the continuum.

The third approach is the contextual approach taken by Prost,⁷³ Kimball⁷⁴ and Whalen⁷⁵. Each of these, in different ways, sees the war experience of veterans as important, but in each case the war experience is mediated by the previous and later experiences of the veterans. Gregory leans toward the third view, suggesting that the memory of war was determined by the existing predilections in the culture (political, religious and 'communitarian'), and that the memory of the war was not constant but was being reshaped by the political, diplomatic and economic events during the inter-war period.⁷⁶ This view accords with Hobsbawm and Ranger's view that memory is not a fixed account of past events, but is in practice constructed on an ongoing basis in order to support social cohesion and collective identities and to legitimate action.⁷⁷ Disillusionment in Ireland with the war and the resultant dominance of advanced nationalism caused the marginalisation of veterans in Ireland. Nonetheless, the war was remembered both officially and individually throughout the interwar period. However, it is clear that memory of the war has been reshaped over decades and forgetting Ireland's participation in the war served the purposes of developing a cohesive identity within the twenty-six counties. The recent revival in interest in the war could be seen as serving

⁷² Ibid., p. 4.

⁷³ Antoine Prost, *'Les anciens combattants' and French Society 1914-1939* (Oxford, 1993).

⁷⁴ Charles Kimball, 'Ex-service movement in England and Wales 1916-1930' (Stanford: PhD. thesis, 1986).

⁷⁵ R.W. Whalen, *Bitter wounds: German victims of the war 1914-1939* (New York, 1984).

⁷⁶ Adrian Gregory, *The silence of memory*, p. 5.

⁷⁷ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The invention of tradition*.

the purpose of developing a cohesive identity within the thirty-two counties. However, attempting to form a cohesive thirty-two county Irish identity risks marginalising republicans. The major revival of a military commemoration of the Easter Rising in the form of the Easter parade in Dublin in 2006 could be seen as a further adjustment by the authorities in the Republic to reclaim republicanism from extremists. Memory is continually being reshaped.

Remembering the war has a number of aspects. The formal ceremonies of remembrance and the building of monuments and memorials are only partial as they remember a small group, mainly the Ulster Irish, who fought and died. Traditional historical accounts of the period are also only partial, since they have tended to ignore Ireland's participation in the conflict. While more recent accounts are allowing the voices of those who fought and died in the trenches to be heard, as well as those of the principal representatives of religion, politics, and high culture, there is a continuing silence around war-related activities at home. Beyond the conflict, written accounts have forgotten the self-mobilisation of Irish people in response to wartime conditions. In the past decade steps have been taken to address the 'national amnesia' around the First World War; however, most of these steps continue to focus on military and political aspects of that conflict. Clearly Jeffery has taken some steps to move away from the military⁷⁸ as has Fitzpatrick,⁷⁹ directly or indirectly.⁸⁰ Reilly has taken a different approach, but acknowledges that the work done to date on the contribution of women 'has been negligible and the subject requires much clarification before a thorough understanding is achieved'.⁸¹ Undoubtedly, the contribution of women requires clarification, but the need for clarification goes beyond the contribution of women, embracing the contribution of Irish civil society in general.

Wartime mobilisation

Ireland witnessed a civil mobilisation in response to the war, a mobilisation that involved church and government, Catholic, Protestant and Quaker, the owner of the

⁷⁸ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*; T.G. Fraser and Keith Jeffery (eds), *Men, women and war*.

⁷⁹ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921*.

⁸⁰ David Fitzpatrick, *Ireland and the first world war*.

⁸¹ Eileen Reilly, 'Women and voluntary war work', p. 67.

great house and the tenant of the mud hut.⁸² The mobilisation took place on a wide range of fronts. Among these was the response to the plight of Belgian refugees who were housed throughout Ireland; to the needs of the German civilians and combatants who were housed in three detention centres throughout the country; and to the wounded soldiers back from the front. Accounts of these charitable actions are sparse. There are, among them, stories waiting to be told.

At the outbreak of the First World War there were several thousand immigrants living in Ireland. These included Russians, Poles, Germans, Austrians and Americans. In the first few months of the war, more than three thousand Belgian refugees entered Ireland and in excess of one thousand Germans and Austrians were repatriated. A further one thousand Germans and Austrians were detained in prisoner-of-war camps at Arbour Hill, Dublin, Templemore, Co. Tipperary, and Oldcastle, Co. Meath.⁸³ Immigrants were officially designated either 'enemy aliens' or 'alien friends'. By early 1915, there were over 1,200 enemy aliens still resident in eighteen counties throughout Ireland.⁸⁴ Around the same time, Belgian refugees had been allocated to at least forty-three towns throughout the four provinces.⁸⁵ Six workhouses, under the care of the Local Government Board, had been given over to accommodate Belgian refugees, while another workhouse at Oldcastle had been converted to house prisoners of war. A Belgian Refugees Committee that included such notables as Lady Fingall and Sir Horace Plunkett had been established to provide assistance to the refugees. At the same time, the Society of Friends formed the Emergency Committee for the Assistance of Germans, Austrians and Hungarians in Distress under the chairmanship of Ms Edith Webb. Lady Aberdeen, the Vicereine, had initiated Irish branches of the British Red Cross and set up a hospital in Dublin Castle to care for war wounded. Twenty-one voluntary hospitals were established, most of which were in Dublin. More than 5,000 voluntary workers served in local branches of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Ireland. The Irish Automobile Club provided a transport service that ferried wounded from forty-six hospital ships to various hospitals around

⁸² *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1917*, xxiv [cd. 8765] HC 1917, xvi, 286.

⁸³ Dublin Metropolitan Police Report, 1 Apr. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5565).

⁸⁴ Returns of Registration officers, 'Numbers of Enemy Aliens in Ireland', May 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 8570); see also appendix 3.

the city. Large numbers of civilians, mainly women, mobilised to support this work and to provide 'comforts' to men at the front or hospitalised at home.

Purpose of the thesis and methodology

The historiography of twentieth-century Ireland has focussed on difference, notably the difference between the nationalist and unionist communities. Much of this difference has rested on conflict and potential conflict. In the interests of reconciliation between two communities recent attempts to address the amnesia around Ireland's participation in the First World War has focussed on addressing a shared experience of conflict. A focus on the mobilisation of Irish society in response to human calamity may have more to contribute to an understanding of what it means to be Irish in the twenty-first century than the political studies of unionist and nationalist responses to the Great War. This work stems, in part, from Philip Orr's call for an alternative approach to reconciliation in Ireland to that promoted by the Messines Peace tower.⁸⁶ Mansergh suggests that we need to transcend the conflicts of the past, as we construct a future that was hoped for by our ancestors.⁸⁷ While constructing a common future can a common ground be found that can be based in Irish humanity to its suffering fellows rather than one based in participation in one of Europe's greatest catastrophes?

This study examines three distinct aspects of Irish life during the First World War. These are the accommodation of Belgian Refugees, the internment of 'enemy aliens' – mainly Germans and Austrians – and the return of wounded from action in Europe. In each case there were state-led responses to perceived problems. However, in each case self-mobilisation by civil society was also evident. In some cases this mobilisation was prompted by the authorities, but in most others it was started by concerned individuals and groups who set out to provide support to those in need.

This study sets out to discover the nature of the self-mobilisation which took place during the First World War in Ireland. It examines the parties involved, the actions they took and the impact of those actions. The thesis will draw on Eileen Power's

⁸⁵ War Refugees Committee, 'Refugees allocated to Ireland by the War Refugees Committee' in 'Refugee Allocation Register' (PRO: MH 8/14); see also appendix 2.

⁸⁶ Philip Orr, *The 10th Irish Division in the Balkans*.

⁸⁷ Martin Mansergh, *The legacy of history* (Cork, 2003), p. 17.

historiographical view⁸⁸ that one must focus on three viewpoints in order to gain a true picture of a historical event. These are the theoretical position, the legal position and the everyday view. While not ignoring the other two, Power focussed on the latter. This study will take a similar approach.

The nature of this study is such that sources cannot be located in a small number of official archives. Ireland experienced a period of upheaval following the Great War. The War of Independence, followed by the formation of the Free State and the subsequent Civil War, all contributed to a loss and dispersal of official records. Archives in Ireland, the United Kingdom and Belgium that contain relevant papers, documents or other sources were consulted. These documents include parliamentary papers, registers and reports of the Local Government Board, the Chief Secretary's Office, and the refugee committees. The papers of the Society of Friends, Archbishop Walsh, and the Church of Ireland were examined. The study examined national and local newspapers and journals in Ireland. The diocesan papers of Liège, Mechelen-Brussels and the Carmelite papers in *Archiv Karmel* were examined. The family members of immigrants were interviewed to obtain their personal stories.

This work has a clear focus on self-mobilisation. The nature of self-mobilisation is such that it is not documented formally. As a result, a wide range of primary sources have been examined. For the purpose of clarity, they will be divided into a number of groups. The main groups relate to the principal areas of study. These are the government's legislative response to the humanitarian crisis and the civil responses to the different plights of Belgian refugees, enemy aliens, and war wounded.

The National Archives of Ireland, and in particular the papers of the Chief Secretary's Office and the registers of aliens, are an important source. Aliens' legislation from before the war and new legislation enacted during it provided the legal basis for maintaining sets of registers of aliens entering the United Kingdom, including Ireland. These registers acted as a starting point for my work by providing details of the origin of the refugees and other aliens.

⁸⁸ Maxine Berg, *A woman in history: Eileen Power, 1889-1940* (Cambridge, 1996).

The relief efforts for Belgian refugees were supported by the Local Government Board and local councils. Parliamentary Papers, housed in the National Library of Ireland, provide reports on the work of these bodies. The reports of the Local Government Board document the logistics of accommodating the refugees and detail the provision for refugees at various times, including housing, medical care and education. Boards of Guardians papers are located in county libraries, and account for provisions made within the workhouse system. Many relevant Government documents of the time originated in London and as a result can be found at the Public Record Office, Kew. There are handbooks of regulations for the treatment of Belgian refugees and documents from the Local Government Board and the War Refugees' Committee. This committee acted as a model for the Irish War Refugees' Committee. However, as much of the support for refugees involved self-mobilisation, there is no central source and archive material was obtained from a wide range of sources. These included Alexandra College, Belvedere College, St John Ambulance Brigade, University College Dublin, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). *Freeman's Journal* and *Irish Times*, national newspapers of the period, reported on the Belgian situation generally and on refugees in particular. Newspapers provide an invaluable source of accounts of self-mobilisation and the *Irish Times*, *Freeman's Journal*, and *Church of Ireland Gazette* were consulted. While these national papers were important local newspapers like the *Meath Chronicle*, *Tipperary Star*, the *Leinster Leader* and *Kildare Observer*, as well as in-house magazines like the *Alexandra College* magazine and the *Belvederian*, were all consulted.

The internment of aliens is detailed in the Chief Secretary's Office papers, which contain accounts of and representations on behalf of 'enemy aliens'. Newspapers refer to Germans being sent to Oldcastle and details are provided in Board of Guardians Oldcastle Union minute books for 1914.⁸⁹ The Society of Friends was prominent in assisting interned aliens and their families. Its detailed records are an invaluable resource. In common with other agencies, the Local Government Board reported on conditions in the camps. Documentary evidence of the treatment of aliens is combined with the accounts of descendants of some of the prisoners who have been able to provide their personal sources.

⁸⁹ Board of Guardians, Oldcastle Union Minute Book, 1914.

Understanding self-mobilisation required a knowledge of the legislative structure that it operated within. The National Archives and National Library provide sources indicating the development of legislation governing aliens in Ireland. Sources in the Public Record Office, London, support these. The Report of the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration⁹⁰ is researched extensively and the commission took evidence from a wide range of people including the police and medical profession. This report provides important insights into attitudes and beliefs about aliens that were held by various groups, including the authorities, at the time. Fraser's *Control of Aliens in the British Commonwealth of Nations*⁹¹ is a vital secondary source on the subject of aliens. The book, written in 1940, surveys the background to the control of immigrants over a long period of time.

There is extensive coverage of self-mobilisation in relation to war wounded in the local and national press of the time. The St John Ambulance Archive, in its report of the organisation's war work, documented the efforts of Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs). Newspapers provide commentary on the work of Lady Aberdeen and the hospital that she founded in Dublin Castle for the care of war wounded. The Aberdeens' reminiscences of their time in Ireland and the work undertaken adds to the contemporary accounts.⁹² The RIAC archive provides extensive detail on the work it undertook to transport wounded soldiers as do records of the YMCA.

While archive sources have been the principal sources for this work attention must be drawn to the incompleteness of those sources. Local Government Board reports name a range of celebrated Catholic schools which made educational and accommodation provision for Belgian refugees, but none of the archives of the named institutions could provide any evidence of the presence of Belgians within their institutions. Religious educational institutions were not prepared to offer access to their archives and their own investigations produced no results. The archivist of a major religious order which had had a prominent member on the Belgian Refugees Committee, and which played a significant role in supporting Belgian refugees, obstructed research at his archive. The

⁹⁰ *Report of the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix, 9-52.

⁹¹ C.F. Fraser, *Control of Aliens in the British Commonwealth of Nations* (London, 1940).

⁹² Lord and Lady Aberdeen, "*We twa*" – *reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen* (Glasgow, 1925).

reluctance of these institutions to opening their archives is lamentable. It is worth considering the extent to which these authorities contribute to the amnesia which exists and to their reasons for doing so.

The amnesia which some archivists are feeding in relation to primary sources is also apparent in relation to secondary sources. Studies of civilian agency at the time of the war are rare and for that reason secondary sources are used primarily for comparative purposes. For the most part the sources used reference work in Europe rather than Ireland. The thesis draws on the series 'The Legacy of the Great War' sponsored by the Historial de la Grande Guerre, in Péronne, France. The series takes approaches to the war which are an alternative to the traditional political/diplomatic studies. The series deals largely with analyses of French, British and German responses to the war. The theme of amnesia is not unique to Ireland. Rousso reminds us that France has its own 'national amnesia' in relation to the Second World War and calls it 'the Vichy syndrome'.⁹³ The topic of amnesia in relation to self-mobilisation in Ireland raises questions about mobilisation, memory and remembrance. A number of authors have been addressing these recently; these include Beckett,⁹⁴ Fraser and Jeffery,⁹⁵ Horne⁹⁶, Smith, Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker,⁹⁷ and Winter and Sivan.⁹⁸

Since the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising which is, of course, the fiftieth anniversary of some of the Great War's bloodiest battles, a number of historians have been drawing attention to the 'national amnesia' that exists in Ireland in relation to Ireland's participation in the Great War. This amnesia extends from the public at large to our politicians and to our historians. In the intervening years a number of authors, activists and politicians have responded to the challenge and addressed the omission. However many of these attempts to address the 'oblivion' proceed within an agenda around reconciliation and continue within the context of conflict. As we reach the

⁹³ Henry Rousso, *The Vichy syndrome – History and memory in France since 1944* (Harvard, 1994).

⁹⁴ Ian Beckett, *The Great War, 1814-1918* (Essex, 2001).

⁹⁵ T.G. Fraser and K Jeffery, *Men, women and war*.

⁹⁶ John Horne (ed.) *State, society, mobilisation in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997).

⁹⁷ Leonard Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War 1914-1918*.

⁹⁸ Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and remembrance in the twentieth century* (Cambridge, 1999).

ninetieth anniversary of this momentous period an approach which provides a basis for reconciliation but rooted within civilian mobilisation might have more to offer. This study examines civilian responses to the events of the First World War. It attempts to bring to light commonplace and everyday activities undertaken by the people of Ireland during the war. These are events which have remained largely hidden, obscured by issues of nation building. While remembrance has played a significant part in the historiography of Ireland, remembering has often been sidelined. In common with other works appearing recently this study will make its contribution to remembering.

Chapter 1 – Ireland at the outbreak of war

This chapter sets out the background to the activities examined in the thesis. There were two major contexts forming the background to these activities: the political environment in Ireland at the outbreak of war and the legislative framework affecting people in Ireland at the time. Within these frameworks the chapter examines the particularly fluid political context in relation to national politics and local government that formed the context of everyday life in Ireland at the time. The political context is set by reforms undertaken by both Liberal and Conservative governments during the nineteenth century which affected Ireland's position within the Union, the Home Rule debate, local government reform, the formation of the Ulster Volunteers and Irish Volunteers, and the preparations for a possible civil war. As this study focuses, in part, on the response in Ireland to two groups of foreigners, Belgian refugees from the war and those German, Austrian and Hungarians considered 'enemy aliens', this chapter sets the legislative context which affected foreigners before the war. The legislative context is important, not just in its own right, but in how it compares to the legislative situation of foreigners in other jurisdictions. The impact of international agreements and treaties on the position of prisoners of war and war wounded is also considered. The changing legislative context on the outbreak of war will be addressed in a later section.

This thesis is primarily concerned with the mobilisation of a civilian population and this mobilisation, in many cases, was a local mobilisation. Nonetheless the mobilisation occurred across the nation. In attempting to understand mobilisation at the local level it is important to understand it within the national political and legislative context.

Ireland within the Union

Since the Act of Union in 1801, Ireland had had no parliament. Instead, Ireland, as part of the United Kingdom, was represented in the London parliament. Representation took the form of four bishops and twenty-eight peers in the House of Lords and between 100 and 105 members in the House of Commons at various times.¹ The administration of Ireland, under the Union, involved a range of departments and boards presided over by

¹ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine* (London, 1973), p. 71.

the Lord Lieutenant. However, in practice, the Lord Lieutenant was largely a figurehead and the responsibility for administration fell to the Chief Secretary, who was responsible for the departments, many of which operated autonomously.² The Chief Secretary was the minister answerable to Parliament for Irish affairs. However, this responsibility as a minister ensured that Chief Secretaries spent most of their time in London and the day-to-day running of the country fell to the Under Secretary.³ At the outbreak of war the Chief Secretary was Augustine Birrell and the Under Secretary was Sir Matthew Nathan. Nathan oversaw the work of some forty departments including the Local Government Board, headed up by Sir Henry Robinson.

Home Rule

In the years immediately preceding the war, Home Rule dominated the political agenda in Ireland and to a large extent in the Westminster parliament. The results of the 1910 election, with Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party holding the balance of power at Westminster between Liberals and Conservatives, strengthened Redmond's hand in his demand for Home Rule. The major barrier to the passing of a Home Rule act was the veto of the House of Lords, as it had been in 1893.⁴ Following the rejection of Lloyd George's 'People Budget' in 1909⁵ and the subsequent passing of the Parliament Act (1911), which limited the Lords' veto to a delaying action,⁶ the possibility of a successful Home Rule bill became more realistic.

By 1911 it was clear that, with Asquith as Prime Minister, Redmond supporting him and the Lords' power of veto gone, Home Rule could not be defeated in Parliament. Faced with a dearth of political alternatives, unionists turned to the physical-force mode of self-mobilisation as a means of securing the Union. Edward Carson, a Dublin barrister and MP for Dublin University, had become leader of the Unionists in 1910. At a major meeting at his home, Craigavon, Sir James Craig introduced Edward Carson to a

² Diarmaid Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London, 2004), p. 37.

³ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, pp71-73.

⁴ D.A. Hamer, 'The Irish question and liberal politics 1886-1894 in Alan O'Day, *Reactions to Irish nationalism 1865-1914* (Dublin, 1987), p. 255.

⁵ Cornelius O'Leary and Patrick Maume, *Controversial issues in Anglo-Irish relations, 1910-21* (Dublin, 2004), p. 9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

meeting of 50,000 men from all over the province of Ulster on 23 September 1911.⁷ At this meeting Carson gave his first warning of forming a provisional government for Ulster.⁸ A few days later at a meeting of delegates of unionist and Orange institutions, a committee was formed, including Carson and Craig, to frame a constitution for a provisional government for the nine counties of Ulster.⁹ After the Home Rule Bill was introduced in April 1912, the majority of Ulster Protestant males pledged themselves in the 'Solemn League and Covenant' to repudiate the authority of any Home Rule parliament imposed on them.¹⁰ Despite being a measure that was 'little more, indeed, than glorified Local Government', the third Home Rule Bill, known as the Government of Ireland Bill, struggled through parliament. Meanwhile, the Ulster Volunteer Force was formed in January 1913 with the enrolment of 100,000 men. The growth of the Ulster Volunteers precipitated the so called 'Curragh Incident' in March 1914. Concerned at the dangers posed by the Ulster Volunteers with 100,000 men and 80,000 rifles, a cabinet subcommittee was formed. The committee decided to send troops to protect various arms depots in Ulster. The instructions from the Secretary for War, J.E.B. Seely, to the commander-in-chief in Ireland, General Sir Arthur Paget, included a concession that officers whose homes were in Ulster might be excluded from the order. There followed a series of blunders by Paget and Seely which precipitated a mutiny and weakened the hand of the government in dealing with the unionists. Paget clumsily presented the instruction to his officers as an ultimatum to do their duty or face dismissal. Major General Sir Charles Fergusson convinced his officers to obey orders but Brigadier-General Hubert Gough along with sixty of his officers resigned. Following an invitation from the War Office to Gough to return to duty, Gough extracted a written pledge from Seely and General French that the army would not be required to enforce Home Rule in Ulster. The sequence of incidents led to the resignation of Seely and French, and Herbert Asquith took over the War Office.¹¹

⁷ James Lydon, *The making of Ireland from ancient times to the present* (London, 1998), p. 327.

⁸ Cornelius O'Leary and Patrick Maume, *Controversial issues in Anglo-Irish relations*, p. 16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁰ J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 6.

¹¹ Cornelius O'Leary, Patrick Maume, *Controversial issues in Anglo-Irish relations*, pp 38-9.

Meanwhile, in Dublin, in an article in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the paper of the Gaelic League, Professor Eoin MacNeill described the formation of the Ulster Volunteers as the 'most decisive move toward Irish autonomy since O'Connell invented constitutional agitation'. Following the model of mobilisation of the UVF but with considerably less threat of physical force, due to the lack of arms, MacNeill proceeded, with others, to form the Irish Volunteers in November 1913. By the following May their numbers had risen to 75,000¹². This rise in numbers placed Redmond in a difficult position. Despite his discomfort with private armies, he realised that if the Irish Parliamentary Party did not take control of the volunteer movement, the latter could become a rival.¹³ In June 1914, Redmond issued a public statement stressing that he must take control. The provisional committee of the Irish Volunteers yielded and Redmond appointed his own nominees to constitute a majority of the Provisional Committee. Two constitutionalists, Carson and Redmond, had effectively placed themselves at the head of private armies. Redmond was not alone in finding himself in an unlikely position at this pivotal point. In response to the gun-running operation by Ulster unionists at Larne, nationalists mounted their own gun-running operation. In another expression of the British-Irish continuum, the nationalist gun-running operation was carried out almost exclusively by members of the Anglo-Irish class. Roger Casement, the son of an army officer, was brought up a Protestant in County Down. He joined the Foreign Service in 1892 and received a knighthood for his work in the Congo and Peru. He convinced Alice Stopford Green to form a committee to raise funds to buy guns. Alice Stopford Green was the daughter of a Church of Ireland deacon. She numbered among her circle Arthur Balfour and many members of the Liberal government of her day. The task of purchasing the arms in Germany was assigned to Anglo-Irish journalist Darrell Figgis. Figgis was accompanied to Germany by Erskine Childers, who had been educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and had fought with the British Army in the Boer War. The suggestion for landing the arms from small yachts came from Mary Spring Rice, a daughter of Lord Monteagle and cousin of the British ambassador in Washington.¹⁴ The operation organised by Erskine Childers and Roger Casement brought guns and ammunition into Howth, Co. Dublin, on Childers' own yacht 'Asgard' and into

¹² F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, pp 322-3.

¹³ R. Rees, *Ireland 1905-1925, Volume 1 Text and historiography* (Newtonards, Northern Ireland, 1998), p. 175.

¹⁴ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, pp 323-28.

Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, on the yacht 'Chotah', owned by Dublin surgeon Sir Thomas Myles. Myles had been Surgeon General to the King in Ireland since 1910. Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, Myles was appointed consulting surgeon to the troops in Ireland, with the temporary rank, pay and allowances of lieutenant-colonel.¹⁵ By late 1914 Sir Myles had been appointed inspector of all military hospitals in Ireland.¹⁶ Myles reflected the extreme fluidity of the period: In a few months he had been surgeon general to the king, nationalist gun-runner and then lieutenant-colonel in the British Army.

The physical-force machinery utilised by the Ulster Volunteers against Home Rule was now being countered by the mobilisation of the Irish Volunteers. But this mobilisation reflected the continuum of Britishness and Irishness which is so often ignored in accounts of the period. The civilian mobilisation on behalf of nationalists and unionists set the stage for conflict.

While MacNeill's reaction to the formation of the Ulster Volunteers gave rise to the Irish Volunteers late in 1913, Dublin businessman William Martin Murphy's reaction to the Dublin Labour movement gave rise to the Irish Citizen Army. Jim Larkin and James Connolly led members of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union in a strike in an attempt to gain recognition for the union. Murphy led the employers' lockout of workers which threw 20,000 men onto the streets.¹⁷ This provoked the creation of the Irish Citizen Army in November 1913. The group of about 1,000 men formed the basis of Connolly's move to fuse socialism with republicanism. In the *Irish Worker*, many articles were published which, by glorifying Tone, Emmet, and Larkin, continually appealed to the national revolutionary tradition.¹⁸

Arthur Griffith and Bulmer Hobson had founded Sinn Féin in 1905 as a radical nationalist group. It attracted a mixed group of Fenians, feminists and pacifists. It absorbed a number of other separatist and anti-recruitment groups like the Dungannon clubs, the National Council, Inghinidhe na hÉireann and Cumann na nGaedheal.¹⁹ The

¹⁵ David Mitchell, *A 'peculiar' place – the Adelaide Hospital Dublin 1839-1989* (Dublin, n.d.), pp 150-1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹⁷ J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society*, p. 19.

¹⁸ R.M. Fox, *History of the Irish Citizen Army* (Dublin, 1943), pp 6-10.

¹⁹ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, pp 256, 316.

writings of Griffith provided a focal point for fringe movements. Throughout the opening decade of the century he opposed recruitment and dismissed Queen Victoria's visit to Ireland in 1900, claiming that she was sent over '...in her dotage...to seek recruits for her battered army'.²⁰ Sinn Féin campaigned against recruitment and supported membership of the IRB. However, Sinn Féin was not successful politically. In its one attempt to challenge the Irish Parliamentary Party, in the North Leitrim by-election of 1908, its candidate was heavily defeated. One of Sinn Féin's own pamphlets argued that the movement was a demand, not a party.²¹

In the period leading up to the outbreak of war, the Irish Parliamentary Party had successfully recovered from the damage of the Parnell split. Parliamentary nationalism was in the ascendant. However, the Irish Parliamentary Party's success was to be its own downfall. The IPP's position, holding the balance of power in Parliament, and the removal of the Lords' veto, placed Home Rule in a stronger position than it had been in for two decades. As Home Rule came closer to reality civil mobilisation became a key feature of Ulster unionists' political strategy. The civil mobilisation was underpinned by the conspiracy needed to import arms and drill men. In the southern provinces nationalists initiated a similar mobilisation in the form of the Irish Citizen Army and then the Irish Volunteers. The formation of the Irish Volunteers was accompanied by manoeuvrings for control of the organisation. As it became increasingly likely that Home Rule would become a reality, the exact form that Home Rule might take added to the fluidity and uncertainty of the period. Unionists, Liberals and nationalists argued over solutions for Ulster; these included the exclusion of Ulster, 'Home Rule within Home Rule', and 'exclusion until the people of Ulster wished to come into an Irish parliament'.²² In Britain the cabinet was divided on the Ulster issue, with four separate groups that could be identified. Lloyd George, Churchill and Grey were pro-Ulster; Reginald McKenna led a group of radicals against Ulster exclusion; a third group, including Asquith, Crewe, Haldane and Morley shifted back and forward. The remaining members had no strong view and followed the majority.²³ Meanwhile, Conservative members like Bonar-Law added to the instability by attempting to involve

²⁰ Ibid., pp 249-50.

²¹ Ibid., pp 247-59.

²² Cornelius O'Leary and Patrick Maume, *Controversial issues in Anglo-Irish relations*, p. 31.

²³ Ibid., p. 32.

the King by seeking dissolution of parliament on the Home Rule issue.²⁴ The air of crisis within Ireland and Britain was such that the nephew of one English peer informed nationalist MP T.M. Healy ‘...that there would be civil war in England as well as in Ireland...’²⁵ A key element of the crisis was the volatility of the political situation, with a high level of conspiracy, the threat of violence and possibly war. The volatility of the situation was underpinned by civil involvement on a large scale with 100,000 men mobilised on each side of the nationalist/unionist divide.

In the years immediately preceding the war Home Rule had become government policy. One of the effects of that policy was the formation of the Ulster Volunteers and in response the Irish Volunteers and Irish Citizen Army. There were direct links between government policy and the burgeoning civil mobilisation that swept the country. This mobilisation was a threat to the government and to constitutional politics but in time came to form a key element in the recruitment of the New Armies. The mobilisation that swept the country would later play its part in the development of support for the war and for refugees and war wounded. In this way national and local politics had a major part to play in the mobilisation which is the subject of this thesis.

An Irish refugees support committee

In September 1913, the Unionist Council of Ulster adopted a Constitution of Provisory Government in preparation for the day when Home Rule would become law. A prominent supporter of the Unionist Council was Flora Shaw, Lady Lugard. Shaw was a granddaughter of Sir Frederick Shaw, parliamentarian and baronet. Flora Shaw had spent summers at the family home of the Shaw’s at Kimmage Manor in Dublin²⁶ and in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary.²⁷ The first colonial editor of *The Times*, she had been a supporter of Parnell and Home Rule in the 1880s but had subsequently moved her allegiances to the unionist cause. In supporting unionism she formed a committee in England which, in anticipation of a putative unionist flight from the horrors of the inevitable civil war, prepared to receive refugees from Ulster.²⁸ Shaw and her husband,

²⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 35.

²⁶ E. Moberly Bell, *Flora Shaw* (London, 1947), p. 11.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 275.

²⁸ R.C. Escoufflaire, *Ireland- an enemy of the allies?* (London, 1919), p. 160.

Sir Frederick Lugard, went together to Belfast in July 1914 to attend the demonstration organised by the Loyal Orange Institution and addressed by Sir Edward Carson. The Lugards travelled with Carson and were inspired by the excitement of the steamer entering Belfast, with every shipyard and every boat crowded with men cheering Carson.²⁹ The Lugards remained in Ulster for two days, giving Shaw the opportunity to talk to 'all sorts of people'. She was stirred by 'the courage and determination of the men ready to face so desperate an adventure...but was filled with forebodings as she contemplated the suffering that must follow the outbreak of war'.³⁰ She was happy that something could be done to alleviate the suffering. She had energetically co-operated in the arrangements made by the Ulster Council for moving women and children from the area likely to be fought over as soon as civil war should break out. 'Registration forms were prepared, transport organised and safe homes in England secured.' Shaw had been in Ulster on 11th and 12th of July; the following week, on the 23rd July, the likely battlefield moved from Ireland to Europe as Austria gave its ultimatum to Serbia.³¹ At the same time a conference to break the impasse over Home Rule took place in Buckingham Palace. Asquith and Lloyd George represented the Liberals, Redmond and Dillon the Irish nationalists, and Bonar Law, Lansdowne, Carson and Craig, the Conservatives and unionists.³² The conference failed to provide a Home Rule solution acceptable to all parties. However, with a European war looming, it was understood that the Home Rule bill should become law, but that its operation would be postponed until an amending bill could be passed. On the 3 August 1914 Redmond pledged that Ireland would support the war effort and volunteers from north and south would defend the island against invasion and so free up regular troops to go on active service. Redmond pressed Asquith to put the Home Rule bill onto the statute books. Asquith allowed the bill to receive the Royal assent but coupled it with a suspensory bill, postponing its operation until after the war. Arguably, a civil war between nationalist and unionists had been averted by Austria's ultimatum to Serbia.

²⁹ E. Moberly Bell, *Flora Shaw*, p. 277.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

³² Cornelius O'Leary and Patrick Maume, *Controversial issues in Anglo-Irish relations*, p. 43.

Europe erupts

On 3 August Germany declared war on France and invaded Belgium. Britain's focus shifted from Ireland to Europe as she joined four other countries by declaring war the following day. By midnight of 4 August, Great Britain and France were at war with Germany. The Austro-Hungarian empire was at war with Serbia. The German Empire stood ready to fight against Britain, France and Russia. The Russian empire confronted Germany and Austria-Hungary.³³ There was public and political support for the war from within almost every belligerent nation. The Germans, who faced enemies to their east and west, relied on their Schlieffen plan, a strategy demanding a swift and decisive invasion of France so all forces could then be sent east to defend against Russia; however, France and Russia planned invasions of their own. The Austrians had expected a swift victory over Serbia without further repercussions.³⁴ The Schlieffen plan required the Germans to inflict a swift defeat on the French while the lumbering Russian mobilisation plans were carried out. The Austrians and Germans were not alone in their optimism. Every army believed it could crush its enemies in a few months. They believed if the war was not over by Christmas, then it would be over early in the New Year.³⁵ Each of the protagonists believed they were defending their very existence except for Britain, which was under no direct threat of invasion. Britain was fighting for a cause, the neutrality and independence of Belgium. As a result Britain spoke in idealistic terms: this was 'a war to end war', 'a war to make the world safe for democracy'.³⁶

While the main protagonists had large conscript armies, Britain had a small standing army. From this standing army an expeditionary force was prepared to cross the English Channel and within a week Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State at the War Office, called for the formation of two volunteer armies, each of six divisions. These became known as 'Kitchener's New Armies'. Three of the new divisions were to be raised in Ireland. Carson, who a short time earlier had supported the mobilisation of a private army with the intention of resisting the will of Parliament, and Redmond, who had taken over a private army with the intention of resisting Carson, both declared their support for the

³³ Martin Gilbert, *First World War* (London, 1994), p. 34.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁶ A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War* (London, 1966), p. 22.

Allies. Carson pledged the participation of the Ulster Volunteers in the war as a display of loyalty. Redmond proposed that the Ulster and Irish volunteers should defend the coast of Ireland, thus freeing up regular forces to go to the front. Redmond's offer was ignored by the War Office. Meanwhile, Carson offered 35,000 members of the Ulster Volunteers for the formation of the 36th (Ulster) division of Kitchener's New Army.³⁷ Carson's commitment of troops was rewarded by his inclusion as attorney-general in the coalition government of his principal adversary, Asquith. Redmond, for his part, having convinced Asquith to place the Home Rule bill on the statute books, albeit with the suspensory clause, attempted to secure an 'Irish Brigade', which would be the nationalist equivalent of the Ulster Division. In support of his proposal he urged his countrymen 'to take their place in the firing line'.³⁸ Redmond failed to convince Kitchener. The 10th (Irish) Division formed part of Kitchener's first New Army and the 16th (Irish) Division part of the second New Army. Although large numbers of Irish volunteers enlisted in these divisions, their formation owed little to Redmond and few of the officers were Catholic.³⁹ The festering ill-feeling caused by Redmond taking control of the Irish Volunteers in June 1914 and effectively recruiting them into Kitchener's army in September eventually led to a split after Redmond's Woodenbridge speech. Redmond went further than he had previously gone and urged Irish Volunteers not just to defend Ireland at home but 'to go wherever the firing line extended'.⁴⁰ The original committee of the Volunteers declared that Redmond's nominees would no longer be members of the committee and proposed to call a convention 'to reaffirm the original manifesto'.⁴¹ MacNeill and his committee formed a separate organisation which continued to call itself the Irish Volunteers. However, majority sentiment lay with Redmond and his support of Britain as a result of which 180,000 men stood with Redmond and took the name 'National Volunteers'. The Irish Volunteers were made up of the remaining 11,000.⁴² By supporting the war effort, Redmond hoped to heal divisions between unionists and nationalists and believed that the position he was taking

³⁷ David Fitzpatrick, *The two Ireland, 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), pp 51-2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Nuala C. Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War and the Geography of Remembrance* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 23.

⁴¹ Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (Dublin, 1999), p. 119.

⁴² *Weekly Irish Times, 1916 Rebellion Handbook Easter 1916, 1917 issue* (Dublin, 1917), p. 151.

was most likely to achieve Home Rule after the war.⁴³ The level of support that he maintained within the Volunteers suggests that many others shared his view.

Following the split, the Irish Volunteers were secretly reorganised, under the influence of advanced nationalists, to form a revolutionary organisation. MacNeill remained as Chief of Staff. However, the holders of other offices were of greater significance. Patrick Pearse was appointed Director of Military Organisation, Thomas MacDonagh became Director of Training, and Joseph Plunkett became Director of Military Affairs. It is likely that all three were either already or were soon to become members of the IRB (Irish Republican Brotherhood). These three represented a secret revolutionary cell within the Irish Volunteers.⁴⁴ However, the majority of members of the Irish Volunteers along with the leader, MacNeill, remained innocent of the influence of the IRB.⁴⁵

Larkin's farewell message to the Irish Citizen Army placed Connolly in command in October 1914. When Connolly became the ICA's commander, Michael Mallin, who had served in the British army, became Chief of Staff. Connolly and Mallin both emphasised the need for military training and set about shaping the Citizen Army into a fighting force which would exploit Britain's preoccupation with the European war.⁴⁶ In time Connolly was to lose patience with the hesitancy of the leadership of the Irish Volunteers and in January 1916 he came to an understanding with the IRB element in the volunteers, Pearse, MacDonagh and Plunkett, which formed the basis for their participation in the Easter Rising.⁴⁷ The major support for physical force came from the tiny Irish Citizen Army, allied with the IRB minority within the Irish Volunteers, who were themselves a minority of those mobilising within the broader volunteer movement. In the years leading up to the outbreak of the First World War an ethos of volunteerism had developed in Ireland. This ethos had developed in response to national politics. In time it was to provide the basis of civilian mobilisation at both national and local level.

⁴³ R. Rees, *Ireland 1905-1925, Volume 1 Text and historiography*, p. 190.

⁴⁴ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, p. 330.

⁴⁵ J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society*, p. 20.

⁴⁶ R.M. Fox, *History of the Irish Citizen Army*, p. 96.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Local Government Board

The English Poor Law (1834) was extended to Ireland in 1838. This was despite the findings of the Poor Inquiry (1836),⁴⁸ chaired by Archbishop Whately of Dublin, which recommended a more extensive reform depending on a huge programme of government expenditure.⁴⁹ Under the Poor Law, Ireland was divided into 'unions', each of which was to have a workhouse. The workhouses and poor relief were administered by Boards of Guardians. The Boards of Guardians were composed of members elected by ratepayers and Justices of the Peace. The workhouses operated on the 'less eligibility' principle – they were designed to be as uncomfortable as possible to ensure that only the really destitute would seek refuge there. One of the most hated rules concerned the separation of families. Within workhouses wives were separated from husbands and parents were separated from children. The workhouses were established with the intention of getting rid of outdoor relief and concentrating assistance locally within the workhouses under the supervision of the Boards of Guardians.⁵⁰ As Lyons describes it, 'services...were left...to the casual mercies of the local authorities'.⁵¹ The role of these boards was extended under the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act (1851), which gave boards the responsibility for dividing their unions into dispensary districts in which a local committee would maintain a dispensary and appoint and pay a medical officer.

In 1847 the Poor Law Commission was set up to take over responsibility for a range of services from the English Poor Law Commissioners. Because of a perceived need for a centralised oversight of the multiplicity of services, the Poor Law Commission was transformed into the Local Government Board in 1872.⁵² The Local Government Board became one of the most important government departments, with a range of responsibilities that continued to expand. It undertook responsibility for overseeing the Poor Law and the dispensary system along with the organisation of the relief of distress and the supervision of the Housing Acts and the Public Service Act (1878). Under the Local Government Act of 1898, it undertook the transfer of power from the old grand juries to the county councils, urban district councils and rural district councils based on

⁴⁸ John O'Connor, *The workhouses of Ireland* (Dublin, 1995), p. 52.

⁴⁹ Gearóid Ó Tuataigh, *Ireland before the Famine* (Dublin, 1979), pp 110-2.

⁵⁰ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, p. 78.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁵² *Ibid.*

the English model. The members of these local authorities were elected by an electorate that included peers and women. Once they began to operate, they were dominated by the Catholic and nationalist majority.⁵³ When the first elections took place in 1899, nationalists took 774 county council seats, compared to 265 won by unionists, the majority of whom were to be found in Ulster counties. The influence of Catholics and nationalists extended into the Boards of Guardians as Rural District councillors who served as Poor Law Guardians.⁵⁴ The work of local government in Ireland was under the direct control of the local authorities dominated, as they were, by the Catholic and nationalist majority. However, an oversight function was maintained by the Local Government Board. Sir Henry Robinson, vice-president of the Board, ensured that the majority of his staff was unionist and Protestant to act as a check on the activities of the predominantly nationalist councils.⁵⁵ One contemporary writer held the view that the 'the general tone and spirit of the County Councils may fairly be tested by the records of the men they have selected as President and Vice President of their General Council'.⁵⁶ These were Sir Thomas Esmonde, M.P. and John Sweetman. Esmonde is described as 'a declared believer in the aims of the Irish rebels of '98' and Sweetman 'an ardent Gaelic Leaguer'.⁵⁷ The County Councils were the only representative institutions at work in Ireland and were dominated by nationalists. It should therefore follow that any position taken by the county councils must represent the position of their nationalist electors.

While the demand on the services of the workhouses had risen and fallen during the nineteenth century, much of it depending on the level of famine, by the early twentieth century the demand for workhouse places was falling. In 1881, during an agricultural depression, the numbers in workhouses reached 364,000 but by 1911 the figure had dropped to 38,000.⁵⁸ Workhouses, by reason of falling numbers, were being directed to other uses.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 212.

⁵⁴ Denis Boyle, *A history of Meath County Council* (Meath, 1999), p. 33.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

⁵⁶ H. Brougham Leech, *The continuity of the Irish revolutionary movement* (Dublin, n.d., c.1912), p. 127.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, pp 78-9.

At the outbreak of war political life in Britain and Ireland revolved around Home Rule. The granting of Home Rule was a certainty, with Redmond believing he had secured it. The key unknown was how Ulster would fit into the picture. In the summer of 1914 Britain was more likely to find itself at war in Ulster than in Europe. The uncertainty that was created by the Home Rule debate gave rise to a previously unseen level of civil mobilisation in the form of volunteerism. Civil mobilisation was to continue on the outbreak of war leading to vast volunteer armies and action on behalf of refugees, prisoners of war and war wounded by those who remained behind. The Easter Rising was another example of civilian mobilisation albeit on a much smaller scale than civil mobilisation supporting the war effort and humanitarianism.

In examining the mobilisation of the civil population during the First World War, a key question remains: who spoke for Ireland? Nationalists held 75% of the seats on local authorities. The Irish Parliamentary Party held 80% of the Irish Westminster seats.⁵⁹ The vast majority of volunteers in the southern provinces looked to constitutional leaders. It seems reasonable to assume that positions taken by the local authorities and members of parliament are likely to be the positions of their electors, the Catholic and nationalist population. In contrast to the usual dichotomous descriptions of the Irish situation – nationalist versus unionist, Catholic versus Protestant – politics and public opinion in Ireland were characterised by a continuum of Irishness and Britishness. Irish people of all persuasions moved back and forward across the continuum appearing more British sometimes, more Irish at others but never entirely one or the other. On the outbreak of war, for most, there was a shift to the British end of the continuum.

Legislating for aliens

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the question of legislating for aliens was becoming topical in Europe and America. From the 1880s increasing numbers of Europeans were entering Britain and Ireland as refugees from their own homes. Many Europeans were looking to America for a better life. Within the states of Europe various individual and groups were moving around. Some of this movement was welcome, some was unwelcome. However, in a short period of time in the autumn of 1914 large

⁵⁹ Cornelius O'Leary and Patrick Maume, *Controversial issues in Anglo-Irish relations*, p. 10.

numbers of aliens were entering countries in Europe while others were being repatriated. An understanding of the control of aliens has a part to play in understanding the legislative backdrop to the entry and exclusion of aliens and the impact of civilian mobilisation on provisions for aliens. The account that follows examines the history of legislation for aliens in a range of countries and the circumstances that led to the tightening or loosening of regulation.

English legislation controlling the movement of aliens dates back to the thirteenth century. However, it appears to have been largely unused until the nineteenth century. According to Fraser,

English legislation directed towards the exclusion of aliens may be traced back to the thirteenth century. However the Magna Carta permitted friendly alien merchants to come and go freely at the same time assuring them of protection. At the beginning of the 19th century the menace of the French revolution raised the government to some realisation of the need for controlling the hitherto almost unrestricted flow of aliens and an act was passed in 1793⁶⁰ empowering His Majesty by order in council to direct that aliens might be landed only at specified ports.⁶¹

However, as the nineteenth century progressed, the threat receded and the restrictions imposed on aliens were reduced. As the fear of the French Revolution lessened, the 1793 Act was repealed by an act passed in the reign of William IV.⁶² This act focussed on gathering information about, and registering, aliens, rather than excluding them. One of the most significant aspects of the act was the lack of a provision to expel undesirable aliens that had existed in previous legislation. Instead the act placed a requirement on the masters of ships landing in the United Kingdom to declare in writing to the chief officer of customs of the port of arrival if there were aliens on his ship and to specify the number of such aliens and their names, rank, occupation, and description. A responsibility was put on each alien on the ship to report to the chief officer of customs and to show any passport he or she might have. He was also required to provide details of day and place of landing, name, and country that he or she was a subject of, as well as of the country and place that he or she was arriving from. The act made provision for fines in the event of non-compliance.⁶³ It further required the officer of customs to maintain a register of such aliens. These registers were to be maintained centrally by

⁶⁰ Aliens Act, 1793 (33 Geo. III, ch. 4 (1793)).

⁶¹ C. F. Fraser, *Control of aliens in the British Commonwealth of nations* (London, 1940), p. 37.

⁶² Registration of Aliens Act 1836 (6 Will. IV, ch. 11 (1836)).

⁶³ Registration of Aliens Act 1836 (6 Will. IV, ch. 11 (1836)).

one of the Secretaries of State and in Ireland by the Chief Secretary. The act made provision for fines in event of failure to make the declaration and for the detention of the ship in the event of failure to pay the fine. The anomaly whereby no provision was made for exclusion was changed in 1848 when an act was passed, limited to one year in duration, empowering the Secretary of State to order aliens to leave the realm.⁶⁴ However, this act fell into disuse and provisions for exclusion or expulsion could not be used as passports had been abolished.⁶⁵ The need for passports between several European countries was removed in 1860 and 1861. In 1865 the Royal Society of Arts awarded the Albert Medal to Napoleon III for, among other reasons, the abolition of passports between Britain and France.⁶⁶ In 1861, the American legation in Brussels was able to report that Belgium had made a reciprocal arrangement with Sweden and Holland that passports would not be required for the citizens of each country to travel within the territory of the other, and that Belgium was pursuing a similar course with England and France. The despatch indicated that a similar arrangement was in place with the United States.⁶⁷

While aliens began to experience less control of their movement at the mid-century, as the century drew to a close the legislation tightened again. In 1880 a wave of emigration, centred on the Jewish population of Eastern Europe, began.⁶⁸ Between 1881 and the outbreak of the First World War 2.6 million Jews emigrated from Russia and Eastern Austria-Hungary to the United States.⁶⁹ In Ireland the number of Jews had increased almost tenfold, from 394 in 1881 to 3,805 by 1911.⁷⁰ An influx of 235,000 Jewish poor entered Britain from Russia and Russian Poland in the same period.⁷¹ In response to the start of the flux a select committee of the House of Commons was

⁶⁴ Aliens Act 1847-8 (11 Vic., ch. 20 (1847-8)).

⁶⁵ *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration* [cd. 1741] 1903, ix, p. 7.

⁶⁶ Skidmore, J, S. 'The award of the Society's Albert Medal to Napoleon III', in *Royal Society of Arts Journal*, 1989, cxxxvii, 652-657.

⁶⁷ Mr H.S. Sanford, United States Legation, Brussels, 3 Jul. 1861 to Mr W.H. Seward, Department of State, 'Instructions and despatches: Belgium' in *Message of the President of the United States to the two houses of Congress*, 1861, I, 58. University of Wisconsin digital collections, retrieved 26 Oct. 2006 from <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=article&did=FRUS.0001.0001.0006&q1=Brussels,%20July%202,%201861>

⁶⁸ *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration* [cd. 1741] 1903, ix p. 3.

⁶⁹ Martin Gilbert, *From the ends of the Earth* (London, 2001), p. 30.

⁷⁰ Dermot Keogh, *Jews in twentieth century Ireland* (Cork, 1998), p. 9.

⁷¹ Martin Gilbert, *From the ends of the Earth*, p. 41.

appointed in 1888 to 'inquire into the laws existing in the United States and elsewhere on the subject of emigration of destitute aliens, and as to the extent and effect of such immigration into the United Kingdom, and to report whether it is desirable to impose any, and if so, what, restrictions on such immigration'.⁷² The committee concluded that the numbers of aliens in the United Kingdom were not known, that the proportion of aliens in the population was not enough to create alarm, and that the aliens in question were concentrated in particular areas and in a few trades, causing pressure on those same localities and trades. Aliens were generally paid less and worked longer hours than English workmen.⁷³ Despite this, the committee recommended that no legislation be enacted at this time but speculated on the likelihood that legislation would be needed in the future. While the 1836 Act⁷⁴ had fallen into disuse, following the publication of the report in 1889 the decision was taken to bring back into force those provisions of the act which involved registration with the Chief Officer of the Customs. However, the enforcement of the act was half-hearted. While the provisions were generally applied, the same degree of thoroughness was not to be found in all ports. At some of the cross-channel ports, including Dover and Folkestone, the lists only show the poorer class of passenger: deck passengers and those travelling as third-class passengers on the train. Indeed the lists were provided voluntarily by the shipping companies to the Board of Trade.⁷⁵ However, while the implementation of the law appeared to be haphazard, there were still those who believed that more restrictive legislation was needed. Five years later, the Marquis of Salisbury, then leader of the Tory opposition in the House of Lords, proposed a restrictive measure, but it was not carried into law. Subsequently, the Earl of Hardwicke succeeded in getting a part of Salisbury's bill through all stages in the House of Lords, but it was not introduced into the House of Commons. In 1902 Major W. Evans-Gordon, Tory member for Stepney and founder of the British Brothers League, an anti-immigration organisation, moved an amendment '...to represent the urgent necessity of introducing legislation to restrict the emigration of destitute aliens in London and other cities of the United Kingdom'.⁷⁶ Stepney was the area where most aliens in the United Kingdom were concentrated. Forty percent of the aliens in the

⁷² *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration* [cd. 1741] 1903, ix, p. 7.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁷⁴ Registration of Aliens Act 1836 (6 Will. IV, ch. 11 (1836)).

⁷⁵ *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix, p. 7.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

London area were in Stepney (54,310 out of a total of 135,377)⁷⁷. As a result of this the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration was appointed. This action could be seen as an aspect of the anti-Jewish sentiment which was wide spread in Europe. The sentiment is exemplified by the Dreyfuss affair in France.⁷⁸

The Royal Commission carried out a detailed analysis of the causes and results of immigration. It observed that 'the present movement of immigration may be said to have begun around 1880 and is drawn from the Jewish inhabitants of Eastern Europe'.⁷⁹ It analysed the reasons for this immigration among the countries whence it originated: '...with regard to Russia the causes are mainly economic... but also due to the anti-Semitism ...' [after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II]. In Russian-controlled Poland emigration was mainly economic in origin but in Romania it was due to repressive measures. The Royal Commission was reporting as a result of a perceived increase in the numbers of immigrants but was operating in a situation where there was little control over immigration.

The commission identified what it regarded as a number of problems in relation to aliens. These included the claim that aliens were impoverished and destitute 'deficient in cleanliness... liable to introduce infectious diseases...' It also noted that '...among them are criminals, prostitutes and persons of bad character in number beyond the ordinary percentage in the native population'. The control of the entry of 'undesirables' was a feature of legislation in a number of jurisdictions. Criminals, felons and prostitutes were frequently specified in legislation.⁸⁰ Legislation in respect of aliens dealt primarily with undesirables. Those with means of their own travelled unhindered and frequently unregistered. However, even among those who were not particularly welcome once they entered the United Kingdom, there was no restriction placed on where they lived.⁸¹ The children born of alien parents had the legal status of native born.⁸²

⁷⁷ United Kingdom Census, 1901 cited in *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix, p. 14.

⁷⁸ Martin Gilbert, *From the ends of the Earth*, p. 30.

⁷⁹ *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix, p. 3.

⁸⁰ Act of March 22, 1833 (Maryland); Act of March 3, 1875 (US 18 Statutes-at-Large 477); Immigration Act of March 3, 1891 (US 26 Statutes-at-Large 1084).

⁸¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix, p. 10.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

The commission examined the measures that had been adopted for the restriction and control of alien immigration in other continental countries, in the United States and in the British colonies. The Commission concluded that the legislation governing the entry of aliens to the United States differed to that in Europe and the United Kingdom in that '...the legislation of the United States proceeds on the assumption that all persons of whatever nationality are at liberty to enter and reside in American territory unless they fall within certain classes defined by statute in which case they may be excluded on the grounds and in the manner provided by the legislature'.⁸³ As a result of this the proportion of aliens in the United States at the 1900 census was 13% whereas the proportion in the United Kingdom was less than 1% in the 1901 census. Up to 1847 much of federal legislation was designed to encourage emigrants to come to the United States.⁸⁴ While the federal position was generally supportive of immigrants, individual states took a different view. In 1833 Maryland introduced restrictions on the entry of paupers and required ships' masters to report the name, age and occupation of every alien carried as passenger.⁸⁵ Between 1847 and 1903 a series of laws was enacted in the United States controlling the entry of aliens. In particular immigration into the United States for the purpose of prostitution and of persons convicted of felonious crimes was prohibited.⁸⁶ In 1891 this was extended to include all those who 'could become a public charge, persons suffering from a loathsome or contagious disease, person who had been convicted of a felony or other infamous crime or misdemeanour involving moral turpitude, polygamists and also any person whose ticket is paid for by another'.⁸⁷ This act and the subsequent 1893 Act conferred powers similar to those in British legislation of the 1836 Act. An officer, called the Superintendent of Immigration, was appointed with a staff whose duty it was to board all vessels containing immigrants and to inspect all aliens. In 1893, legislation was enacted requiring the masters of ships to provide lists of all alien passengers and details of their standing.⁸⁸ The Act of 1903⁸⁹ consolidated the existing laws and added new classes of prohibited aliens to include 'epileptics, persons who have been insane for five years...professional beggars, anarchists and contract

⁸³ *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix, p. 28.

⁸⁴ Kitty Calavita, *U.S. immigration law and the control of labor 1820-1924* (New York, 1994), p. 33.

⁸⁵ Act of March 22, 1833 (Maryland).

⁸⁶ Act of March 3, 1875 (US: 18 Statutes-at-Large 477).

⁸⁷ Immigration Act of March 3, 1891 (US: 26 Statutes-at-Large 1084).

⁸⁸ Act of March 3, 1893 (US: 27 Statutes-at-Large 570).

labourers who have been deported in the previous two years'. A memo to the British Foreign Office indicated that the avowed object of the existing law 'is the protection of American labour'.⁹⁰ These regulations, in common with others elsewhere, applied only to 'steerage' passengers and not to cabin passengers.⁹¹

At this time in continental Europe there was, subject to a few specific exceptions, no legislation defining the class of aliens who could enter or remain in any given country. Similarly, there was no right to enter or remain in a country. In general, where there was control over the movement of aliens, it was a matter of police regulation and cases were dealt with on their individual merits rather than on any general basis. Nonetheless, a number of countries had provision for registration, others for passports, and some had provisions for expulsion.

The states of Germany had not enacted special regulations for the admission of aliens. While there was a passport law (1867), foreigners were not required to carry papers at entry, on leaving, or during residence. However, foreigners, like subjects of the Empire, were required to provide proof of their identity when required.⁹² In the event of a threat to the security of the Empire or of a single state passports could be required. Individual states had differing arrangements relating to identification and registration. A decree of the Prussian Interior Ministry in 1896 directed local authorities to keep lists of foreigners entering their districts. In Bavaria, foreigners were required to provide evidence of their nationality. There were provisions to expel foreigners from the parish for being without sufficient means of subsistence, for non-payments of local rates, for certain criminal offences and for prostitution. This expulsion could be extended to the kingdom by the police authorities. The Ministry of State had the power to refuse entry to the kingdom to foreigners 'in the interests of public necessity'.

In Hamburg there were detailed regulations providing for proof of identity and notification of entry and departure. Alsace-Lorraine, not surprisingly, imposed stringent regulations to carry passports on those coming from the French border. In Switzerland, foreigners had to take out a licence within six days of entry and the licence was subject

⁸⁹ Immigration Act of March 3, 1903 (US: 32 Statutes-at-Large 1213).

⁹⁰ Mr A. Raikes in *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix.

⁹¹ Steerage Act of March 2, 1819 (US: 3 Statutes-at-Large 488).

⁹² *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix, p. 28.

to withdrawal in the event of misconduct or insolvency. Permission was also required to establish a domicile. France had a similar provision regarding domicile. The Minister of the Interior had the power under the 1849 law to expel any foreigner travelling or resident within the country. A law, enacted in 1893, made provision for the registration of foreigners. Austria had no laws relating to the entry of alien immigrants but there were executive powers to expel persons whose presence was considered prejudicial to public order and safety. Similarly, Italy had no special laws but foreigners could be expelled when released from prison. None of these nations had particularly stringent control of aliens despite the fact that aliens were 9.58% of the population in Switzerland and 2.66% in France. In 1901 aliens made up 0.69% of the British population and 0.37% of the population of Ireland.⁹³

In cases where legislation was in place imposing restrictions on aliens it was generally enacted towards the end of the nineteenth century. The first restrictive federal legislation in the US was enacted in 1875. German legislation in 1867 required aliens to provide evidence of identity on request.

The main demand for legislation in Britain arose as a result of emigration after the 1880s: ‘...it seems to be established that a large number of Alien Immigrants have during the last twenty years entered the country. This number is much in excess of those who had in previous years reached us. The excess is mainly composed of Russians and Poles who belong for the most part to the Jewish faith’.⁹⁴ A comparison of the United Kingdom censuses for 1891 and 1901 shows that the number of immigrants from Russia and Russian-administered Poland increased from 45,074 to 82,844, an increase of 84%. Similarly for Ireland there was a rise from 1,147 to 2,028, an increase of 76.8%.

The Royal Commission expressed the view that no case had been established for the total exclusion of aliens but in the case of particular aliens, notably those from eastern Europe, ‘...it is necessary in the interests of the state generally and of certain localities in particular that the entrance of such Immigrants into this country and their right of residence here should be placed under conditions and regulations...’⁹⁵ The commission made a number of recommendations. In summary these were that immigration should

⁹³ Census Reports of the United Kingdom 1901, cited in *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix, p. 62.

⁹⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix, p. 40.

be subjected to state control and that a Department of Immigration be established. It identified groups of undesirables who would be subject to expulsion. It included ‘...any alien immigrant who within two years of his arrival is ascertained or reasonably supposed to be a criminal, a prostitute, a person living on the proceeds of prostitution, of notoriously bad character or shall become a charge upon public funds, except from ill-health, or shall have no visible means of support...’⁹⁶ It also recommended that overcrowded areas should be prohibited to aliens and that they would not be allowed to live there. This referred in particular to the Borough of Stepney, in London, where, as we have seen, large numbers of Russian and Polish Jews had already settled.

Two members of the committee dissented from some of the recommendations. In brief, they claimed that since there was no means of identifying the criminals, prostitutes and those of bad character on entry, making provisions for preventing their entry was pointless. They also pointed out that many of the difficulties around overcrowding could be accommodated by implementing the existing Public Health Act.⁹⁷ One dissenter indicated that ‘...in my opinion the proposal to proscribe any area, as overcrowded, ...would be a discouragement to local authorities to solve... the all-important housing problem’.⁹⁸

As a result of the commission report the Aliens Act 1905 was enacted. The act was put in place to prevent what might be termed as undesirable aliens entering the country. However, legitimate aliens, those with means or those fleeing persecution on religious or political grounds, would not be prevented from entering. The act specifically defined an ‘immigrant as an alien steerage passenger who is to be landed in the United Kingdom’.⁹⁹ The fact that the definition states ‘steerage passenger’ shows that this legislation was aimed primarily at the poor.

The act contained a number of provisions: aliens could only be landed at ports that had an immigration officer; the immigrant was to be examined by this officer and a medical inspector and this was to take place on board the ship. This officer had the power to

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 40.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

⁹⁷ Sir Kenelm E. Digby, ‘Memorandum’ in *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix, pp 45-51.

⁹⁸ Lord Rothschild, ‘Memorandum’ in *Report of the Royal Commission on alien immigration*, [cd 1741] HC 1903, ix, p. 52.

withhold leave to disembark. The immigrant had to show he was not an undesirable immigrant by showing he had in his possession the means to decently support himself, that he was not a lunatic or idiot, that he had not been sentenced in a foreign country. However, lack of means could be waived if he could show that he was fleeing prosecution or punishment on religious or political grounds or for an offence of political character or persecution involving danger of imprisonment or danger to life.¹⁰⁰ The Aliens Act (1905) remained the main legislation controlling the movement of aliens until the outbreak of war in 1914.

Laws concerning war wounded and prisoners of war

Mankind has always attempted, seemingly, to impose restrictions on battlefield conduct. The Hebrews forbade their soldiers from destroying fruit-bearing trees in hostile lands. In the seventeenth century, Hugo Grotius argued that there existed natural laws that were apparent to human reason and should apply even during hostilities.¹⁰¹ Montesquieu argued against killing prisoners of war.¹⁰² Rousseau argued for humane treatment for prisoners.¹⁰³ By 1914, significant attempts had been made to codify the rules of war, making them binding on all countries. The major agreements affecting prisoners of war and war wounded during the First World War were the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Conventions.

By the middle of the nineteenth century a reaction to the callousness of war arose independently in several different countries. In 1853 horrifying reports reaching England regarding the conditions of the wounded in the Crimea resulted in Florence Nightingale and twenty-four nurses undertaking the reform of the barracks hospital. Her reforms were not to be confined to the Crimea. On return to London she set about a total overhaul of the British Army medical services. Meanwhile across the Atlantic, the American Civil War had broken out in 1861. The scale of the war was large, with vast numbers of wounded in the major battles. The Medical Bureau of the Union Army was

⁹⁹ Aliens Act 1905 section 8.1.

¹⁰⁰ C.F. Fraser, *Control of aliens in the British Commonwealth of nations*, p. 219.

¹⁰¹ Hugo Grotius, *On the laws of war and peace*, translated by A.C. Campbell (New York, 1901).

¹⁰² Charles De Secondat, Baron De Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge, 1989), pp 131-54.

¹⁰³ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract* (London, 1989).

poorly organised and equipped. Thousands of women who met in the Unitarian Church in New York City mobilised to provide medical supplies to their men at war. Pastor Bellows, supported by two doctors, secured permission from President Abraham Lincoln to set up a 'Sanitary Commission' to undertake relief work.

Meanwhile in Northern Italy the wars of Italian reunification were raging. The Battle of Solferino was a key event in Piedmont's war for Italian independence from Austria when Franco-Sardinian forces clashed with the Austrians. In 1859 a Swiss businessman named Jean Henry Dunant stumbled upon the aftermath of the Battle of Solferino on his way through Northern Italy hoping to meet Napoleon III to seek support for a business initiative in North Africa.¹⁰⁴ Dunant, coming across the chaos of the battlefield, was struck by the fate of the wounded and mobilised local peasants to take them to local churches and tend their wounds.¹⁰⁵ On returning home Dunant, horrified by the carnage, wrote a pamphlet *Un souvenir de Solferino*¹⁰⁶ (A Memory of Solferino), which introduced the idea of voluntary aid societies to be formed in every country, ready and trained for service in war. Four Geneva citizens announced their support for Dunant. A meeting of the five men in 1863 decided to create what later became known as the 'International Committee of the Red Cross' (ICRC). But Dunant was concerned that medical workers with ICRC might not be respected by combatants so he set about convincing the Swiss government to pursue international recognition. In 1864 the Swiss convened a sixteen-nation conference comprising all the states of Europe, the United States, Brazil and Mexico. The conference produced the 'Geneva convention for the amelioration of the wounded in Armies in the field' and adopted the emblem of the red cross on a white background. The convention provided for a committee within countries that would support the army military services in time of war. While the work of the committees would support the country's military services its membership would be voluntary but in a war situation these volunteers would be placed under military command. In addition to the resolutions the convention recommended that governments should extend their patronage to the committees and in time of war belligerent nations should proclaim the neutrality of hospitals and ambulances and official medical

¹⁰⁴ Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's dream* (London, 1999), p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Recently republished as Jean Henry Dunant, *Un souvenir de Solferino* (Boston, 2001).

personnel, voluntary medical personnel, inhabitants of the country who go to the relief of the wounded, and the wounded themselves.

By the end of the year the treaty was ratified by France, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the Grand Duchy of Baden. They were followed by Britain, Prussia, Greece and Turkey in 1865, Austria and Portugal in 1866, Russia in 1867, Persia in 1874, Serbia in 1876, Chile and Argentina in 1879, and Peru in 1880. The United States was the notable exception and did not join until 1882, when a campaign by Clara Barton, a nurse in the American Civil War, succeeded in getting the United States to sign the Convention. In 1877 Barton organized the American National Committee, which three years later became the American Red Cross. It was also agreed to support Barton's efforts to distribute relief during floods, earthquakes, famines, cyclones and other peacetime disasters. A flood of nations followed including Bulgaria (1884), Japan (1886), Luxemburg (1888), Venezuela (1894), South Africa (1896), Uruguay (1900), Guatemala (1903), Mexico (1905), China (1906), Germany (1906), Brazil (1906), Cuba (1907), Panama (1907) and Paraguay (1907). Germany's late entry was a result of unification. Individual German states had been prominent early adopters with relief societies formed in Württemberg, the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg, Prussia, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Hamburg and Hesse before the convention.

While Britain had been an early signatory to the convention, tensions between Florence Nightingale's mission to change the army's approach to the wounded and the Red Cross approach of volunteerism prevented the British relief associations fully endorsing the work of the convention.¹⁰⁷ The Franco-Prussian War in 1870 changed that. The British Aid Society entered full of doubt with the War Office opposed, but it emerged committed, organised and keen.¹⁰⁸ In July a letter appeared in *The Times* providing £1000 for the financial support for a 'Society for Aiding and Ameliorating the Condition of the Sick and Wounded in Times of War'. By early August, Florence Nightingale had overcome her reservations and appealed for volunteers through *The Times*. John Furley, an English solicitor, travelled to Paris to see the work of French volunteer ladies, to Geneva to meet Moynier, the President of the ICRC and onto Berlin

¹⁰⁷ Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream*, pp 30, 74.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

where he watched German ladies produce 'gifts of love' for the soldiers. By the end of the war they would have produced 426,000 handkerchiefs and 2 million pairs of woollen socks. On his return to London the new society had been launched with Queen Victoria as its patron. English aid workers were scattered all over France. British surgeons and nurses were serving with their own first aid units or with others. Retired British army officers under the banner of the Red Cross were distributing four tons of supplies a day from London. Near the battlefield civilian buildings were being converted for medical care. A railway terminus at Orleans was converted into a hospital. Charles Ryan, a young Irish medical student, said 'I never entered a large terminus ... without speculating on the number of wounded that it would accommodate'.¹⁰⁹ The foundation for a model of Red Cross work based on volunteerism both at the front and at home was being established. The model included seeking voluntary contributions at home and the conversion of buildings for medical care. However while Britain took an active part in providing medical care in war it did this under the name of the British Aid Society. It was not until 1899 that a permanent central Red Cross committee for the Empire and its dependencies was finally organised and approved.¹¹⁰

While the Red Cross movement was pursuing the cause of the wounded in war a separate movement was pursuing the laws concerning the conduct of war. Tsar Alexander II convened a conference in St Petersburg in 1868 to mitigate the calamities of war. The Tsar was responding, at least in part, to the use of the dum-dum bullet, a device that exploded on contact. The steps taken at St Petersburg were extended at the first Hague Convention in 1899. The main effect of the Convention was to ban the use of certain types of modern technology in war: bombing from the air, chemical warfare, and hollow point (dum-dum) bullets. The Second Peace Conference, which gave rise to the Hague Convention of 1907, was held to expand upon the original Hague Convention, modifying some parts and adding others, with an increased focus on naval warfare. This was signed on 8 October 1907, and entered into force on 26 January 1910. A key aspect of the Hague Conventions was the provision for the humane treatment of prisoners of war. The convention placed the responsibility for prisoners of war on the hostile government and guaranteed humane treatment and protection of prisoners' property. The hostile government was required to treat prisoners on the same

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 73.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 139.

basis as its own troops with regard to food, quarters and clothing. Provisions were made for a bureau of information which would pool and distribute information about prisoners of war. This information bureau would have access to free postage on letters, money orders and food parcels.

Both the Geneva and the Hague Conventions were agreements between sovereign governments. As such there was no specific Irish agreement to the conventions until after independence. There was no provision for an Irish Red Cross Committee. Ireland could have local sections affiliated to the British Red Cross. At the time of the outbreak of war the term Red Cross often referred to a type of humanitarian work on behalf of the wounded rather than an organisation. The report of the St John Ambulance Brigade provides a list 'of the principal organisations associated with Red Cross work'.¹¹¹ The organisations listed were all voluntary and concerned with care of the wounded, provision of enquiry bureaux, the donation of 'comforts' and manufacture of medical supplies.

At the outbreak of war there was a legal framework concerning the treatment of prisoners of war agreed under the terms of the Hague Conventions. There were agreements at governmental level concerning care for war wounded but these agreements formed a framework which ensured movements did not obstruct voluntary work on behalf of the wounded.

In the years leading up to the outbreak of war in Europe Ireland was undergoing a period of extreme political fluidity. The unionists with their Tory colleagues while insisting on their desire to maintain the Union were prepared to take treasonable steps to resist the decisions of the parliament of the United Kingdom. Irish parliamentarians took steps to take control of a paramilitary force. There was an imminent threat of violence, but this threat was most likely to come from a unionist rising resulting in a civil war. In preparation for such a conflict large militaristic forces were mobilised. Meanwhile Ireland was still a part of the United Kingdom, a country with liberal policies operating at its borders. There was little xenophobia and as a result there were large numbers of foreigners both in Britain and Ireland. Alongside the militarism that was sweeping Europe a concern with the victims of militarism was also growing. While

¹¹¹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 12.

Ireland was slow to develop its own Red Cross movement, some steps had been taken and these would develop further.

The mobilisation that gave rise to the militaristic volunteer movements was providing a culture that enabled mobilisation to take place on a number of fronts in response to the effects of total war.

Chapter 2 - Belgian Refugees

...They have also had the happy effect in some quarters of acting as peacemakers: the unparalleled charity exercised towards them has linked together people of the most conflicting views in politics and religion...¹

On the 2 August 1914 Germany sent a diplomatic note to Belgium proposing that the Brussels government adopt a policy of friendly neutrality towards Germany, thus allowing the free passage of German troops through Belgian territory. The same note also threatened, in the case of refusal, to treat Belgium as an enemy.² The Belgians responded that an attack on their neutrality would be a flagrant violation of the rights of nations and that, therefore, to accept the German offer would be to sacrifice the honour of the nation.³ Belgium resolved to repel aggression by all possible means.⁴

The German army invaded Belgium immediately upon the refusal. Germany's strategy was based on the Schlieffen plan, which necessitated defeating France before turning Germany's armies eastwards to face Russia. The plan, which had in its origins involved a German attack through Belgium and Holland (although it was later amended in order to exclude Dutch territory), was designed to bypass the heavily fortified French border.⁵ On 4 August, following the German refusal to respect Belgian neutrality, Great Britain declared war on Germany and authorised the despatch of a British Expeditionary Force two days later. By 15 October 1914 virtually all of Belgium was occupied and tens of thousands of Belgian refugees had arrived in England.⁶

In the days following the outbreak of war a mobilisation began in both Britain and Ireland. This was not just the predictable mobilisation of military and political forces

¹ *Report of the Belgian Refugees Committee*, 407 [cd 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 823.

² Note presented by Herr von Below Saleske, German Minister at Brussels, to M. Davignon, Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs Aug. 2, 1914, *The Belgian Grey Book - diplomatic correspondence respecting the war (Jul. 24-Aug. 29, 1914)*, Brigham Young University, Utah, USA,
<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/papers/belgrey.html>

³ M. Davignon, Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the Belgian Ministers at St. Petersburg, Berlin, London, Paris, Vienna, The Hague Brussels, Aug. 3, 1914. *The Belgian Grey Book*.

⁴ *Report on the work undertaken by the British Government in the reception and care of the Belgian Refugees*, 1920 (PRO: RG20/86, p. 3).

⁵ Martin Gilbert, *First World War* (London, 1994), pp 28-9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

that one expects in the context of war but a civilian, and humanitarian, mobilisation. The mobilisation was not centrally planned and organised but rested, for the most part, on the voluntary efforts of the civilian population. It is clear that the apparatus of government did come into play within the humanitarian enterprise in order to alleviate the misery of war; however, the function of government was mainly to move the responsibility for caring for refugees onto the civilian population. This can be seen clearly in the work of the Local Government Board and in comments by its administrative leader, Vice-president Sir Henry Robinson. The conflictual nature of Irish politics and society at the time can be seen in the events leading up to and during the war – the Home Rule debate, the formation of two private armies, the growth of the Citizen Army and the Easter Rising. Nonetheless the response to the plight of Belgian refugees traversed Irish society. The central Belgian Refugees Committee (Ireland) included society notables, like Lady Moloney and Sir Horace Plunkett. This was also true of local committees; for example Lady Weldon, wife of Sir Anthony Weldon, State Chamberlain to the Viceroy,⁷ was a member of the Kildare committee. However, action on behalf of refugees was strongly supported by the County Councils and other local authorities and these bodies were dominated by the Catholic and nationalist majority. The churches played a key part in supporting action on behalf of refugees. For example, all the clergy of Queen's county, Catholic and Protestant, were on the county committee.⁸ But the role of the Catholic Church was particularly prominent with bishops across the country announcing church-gate collections and the Jesuits and other orders playing a prominent part in local committees and providing school places for young refugees.

The response to the Belgian crisis was extensive throughout society. This can be seen in the coverage by local newspapers, where edition after edition carried accounts of arrivals of refugees, of committees for refugees, of fundraising activities for refugees, of entertainment for refugees, and even of disappointment over the non-arrival of refugees. This chapter will provide some detailed accounts of the self-mobilisation of Irish civil society in a humanitarian cause. The detail is necessary to convey the extent of that mobilisation which has been lost from our collective memory of the period. The mobilisation on behalf of Belgian refugees was possibly the most visible form of

⁷ Lord and Lady Aberdeen, "*We twa*" (Glasgow, 1925), p. 246.

⁸ *Leinster Leader*, 31 Nov. 1914, p. 7.

mobilisation in the early days of the war. In some respects it may be the most important mobilisation in terms of understanding Irish society at the time as this mobilisation united Irish society in a way that is not often seen in accounts of the period. The mobilisation in support of Belgian refugees encompassed all sections of society. However the mobilisation on behalf of refugees, like the mobilisation to enlist, was part of the naïve response to war. Accommodating refugees was believed to be a short-term sacrifice for, like the war, it would be over by Christmas.

The formation of the Belgian Refugees Committee in London

While the outbreak of world war removed the expectation of Irish unionist refugees fleeing a civil war, nonetheless Shaw's committee was not wasted. On 2 August 1914 Flora Shaw, Lady Lugard, telegraphed James Craig, the organiser of Ulster Relief, asking him for permission to use the Ulster organisation to bring Belgian women and children out of their invaded country. Within twenty-four hours she had the embryo of a relief organisation in her hands. Her first step was to secure the support of the 'Roman Communion' and then secure official approval.⁸ Around the time of the withdrawal of the Belgian government to Antwerp in the days following the outbreak of hostilities, Shaw submitted to the Foreign Secretary, Viscount Grey, a scheme for the formation of a society for removing women and children from the theatre of war and placing them in safety in England. The scheme was based on the plan for unionist refugees from the anticipated Irish civil war.⁹ Shaw was put in touch with Herbert Samuel, the President of the Local Government Board, and Count de Lalaing, the Belgian Minister in London. This was to determine, from Samuel, if the Local Government Board had any objections on the grounds of a prior claim and, from Lalaing, if the scheme had the approval of the Belgian Government. Having received the agreement of Mr Samuel and Count de Lalaing, Shaw proceeded to start the process of setting up the War Refugees Committee as a voluntary body.¹⁰ On 22 August, Shaw was told that homeless refugees were already massed in Ostend and that transport had been promised by the navy. At this stage, Shaw had no committee, no office, and no staff.¹¹ By 24 August 1914 she had

⁸ E. Moberly Bell, *Flora Shaw* (London, 1947), p. 278.

⁹ R. C. Escoufflaire, *Ireland - an enemy of the Allies?* (London, 1919), p. 142.

¹⁰ *Report on the work undertaken by the British Government in the reception and care of the Belgian Refugees* (PRO: RG20/86/80363, p. 3).

¹¹ E. Moberly Bell, *Flora Shaw*, p. 279.

formed the committee in London. At the same time another committee was formed at Folkestone, on the south coast of England, to take charge of the refugees on landing and to send them on to the Central Committee in London. The initiative for the committees did not arise as an official response but in the form of self-mobilisation and the mobilisation was made possible as a result of structures created to respond to the Home Rule tensions in Ireland.

Refugees had moved from the conflict in Belgium into neutral Holland. However, Dutch neutrality posed difficulties for transporting refugees from Belgium and Holland. On 30 July the *Landweer*, frontier and coast guards were called up. At the same time, a Royal Resolution was passed suspending the Royal Resolution of 1909 which regulated the admission of warships of foreign powers to Dutch waters. The resolution of 30 July prohibited warships of a foreign power entering Dutch territorial waters. For the purposes of the resolution, territorial waters were stated to comprise coastal waters for a distance of three nautical miles from the coast. By this provision Dutch territorial waters included the mouths of the Scheldt, Meuse, Lek, Waal and Rhine.¹² The River Scheldt rises in France and winds through Belgium, including Antwerp, before entering the North Sea through a series of channels referred to as the Scheldt Estuary in Holland. Holland's location controlling entry to waterways like the Scheldt and the Rhine placed it in a difficult position in terms of maintaining its neutrality. Immediately prior to the outbreak of war, Holland had made clear its intention to introduce war buoying of the River Scheldt. The intention was to leave a channel for merchant ships but these would be guided by Dutch pilots.¹³ As part of this process the Dutch intended to move or modify a portion of the actual arrangement of buoys and lights. They had requested the Belgian government to withdraw 'boats [the light ships *Wielingen* and *Wandelaar*] in order to facilitate the maintenance of the neutrality of Dutch territory'.¹⁴ In investigating the possibilities for rescuing refugees, despatches indicated that '...it will still be possible to sail up the Scheldt as far as Antwerp by day, but only with Dutch pilots'. The Dutch authorities' attempts to maintain Holland's neutrality added to the difficulties posed by the transportation of refugees from Antwerp and Holland. Far from having a well thought-out official response, differing positions were taken by various

¹² *The Times History of the War*, XIII (London, 1917), p. 182.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

interests on the British side. The use of military transports to evacuate refugees was not considered an option in the light of Dutch neutrality. As a result, there was intense activity in order to find an alternative means of transporting the refugees. The decision was made to use commercial ferry ships such as those of the Great Eastern Railway as ‘...this is ostensibly a railway company and so would not cause problems with the Dutch.’¹⁵ The difficulties around transporting the refugees were not confined to protecting the sensibilities of the Dutch but also those of the Admiralty and the Home Office. Sir Edward Troup, Permanent Under Secretary at the Home Office, ‘complained strongly of the course taken in landing Belgians refugees at a prohibited port...’ Troup’s complaint was on foot of a letter from the Admiralty stating that ‘the Admiral at Dover has telegraphed that it is very undesirable to land refugees at Dover owing to the danger of spies’.¹⁶ None the less some 200,000 refugees were transported to Britain and most were landed within prohibited areas. They travelled from Ostend in Holland to Folkestone and Dover on the south coast of England. From December 1914 they travelled from Flushing (known in Dutch as Vlissingen) to Tilbury, south-east England, on boats belonging to the Zeeland Steamship Company. From January 1915 the steamers *Copenhagen*, *St Petersburg* and *Munich*, ships of the Great Eastern Railway Company, carried Belgians from the Hook of Holland to Tilbury. The Great Eastern Railway Steam Packet Company carried 3,700 Belgian refugees from Rotterdam to Tilbury.¹⁷ There had been a plan to bring refugees directly from Holland to Ireland by sea but this had proved impracticable.¹⁸

The division of work among those involved in supporting refugees is important. At first the War Refugees Committee took care of all who sought refuge in the United Kingdom but the influx of Belgians reached such proportions that the Local Government Board in

¹⁴ Baron Fallon, Belgian Minister at The Hague, to M. Davignon, Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Hague, Aug. 4, 1914. Belgian Grey Book, Despatch no. 29.

¹⁵ Home Office, response to a series of letters between Local Government Board and Transport Department relating to the provision of ships to transport refugees (PRO: MT 23/377).

¹⁶ Sir Edward Troup, Internal memorandum recording objections to landing Belgian refugees at prohibited ports, 18 Oct. 1914 (PRO: MT23/377).

¹⁷ A series of documents relating to the transport of 3,700 Belgian refugees from Rotterdam to Tilbury, Oct. 1914 (PRO: MT 23/377).

¹⁸ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1914*, xxxix, [cd. 8016] 1914-1916, xxv, 385.

Britain became involved.¹⁹ During September 1914 a conference was held to determine the respective spheres of the Local Government Board and the War Refugees Committee. It was decided that the Local Government Board should provide transport to London and accommodation in London until the refugees could be distributed to the locations where hospitality was offered. The Committee would meet trains arriving in London and allocate the refugees to homes. Within this framework the role of the Local Government Board was limited. The War Refugees Committee played a much larger role in allocating the refugees to a home. The provision of homes was largely down to local initiatives undertaken by local committees. The pattern that obtained in Britain was mirrored in Ireland.

Belgian Refugees Committee in Ireland

In Ireland, immediately on the outbreak of war, Mrs Hel  n   Fowle, herself a Belgian, and Mr Edward White, a solicitor and chairman of the IAC (Irish Automobile Club), formed a committee to support Belgian refugees. Prior to the formation of an official committee, on their own initiative they undertook to collect subscriptions and organised street collections under the name of 'Belgian Flag Days' in aid of the refugees. Their collections comprised money and clothing. By the end of September over  2,300 had been collected in the country and most of this had been sent by Mrs Fowle to Count de Lalaing, the Belgian Minister in London. Mrs Fowle had clearly envisaged refugees coming to Ireland as she sent the money on the understanding that the funds would be returned to Ireland in the event of Belgian refugees coming here.²⁰

At this time the Local Government Board for Ireland agreed to assist the War Refugees Committee in Britain in its work and issued a letter on 25 September to the Chairmen of the Irish Local Representative Relief Committees suggesting the formation of special Belgian refugee committees.²¹ These committees were to attempt to secure offers of hospitality from the general population. By October the Local Government Board for Ireland had appointed the Belgian Refugees Committee. Mrs Fowle and Mr White put their services, as well as the money they had collected, at the disposal of the Local Government Board. In recognition of their prior involvement Mrs Fowle was appointed

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 398.

President and Mr White was appointed honorary treasurer of the Belgian Refugees Committee (Ireland).²²

The Burgomeister of Malines travelled to England on 5 September seeking accommodation for 1,000 refugees from his town who had been driven into Antwerp and were on their way to England.²³ However, the initial request to Ireland to offer hospitality to the Belgians was withdrawn when the survivors of the German attacks on Liège, Louvain and Malines were accommodated in Britain and Irish support was not needed. It appeared that a temporary relaxation in German pressure in mid September resulted in many Belgian refugees leaving Holland and returning to their homes in Belgium. The fall in numbers continued until 7 October when no steamers left Antwerp. However, within a few days the situation in Belgium and Holland was much worse and, again, there were many thousands of refugees waiting to cross from the continent.²⁴ The military governor of Antwerp was seeking arrangements for 10,000 to 20,000 civilians to be evacuated in view of the near approach of the enemy.²⁵ After the fall of Antwerp on 9 October large numbers of refugees fled to Holland and many thousands were waiting at Ostend. Reports recounted the 'awful conditions of refugee camps in Holland'.²⁶ In the light of this increased demand to make provision for refugees a third circular from London renewed the request for help from Ireland. The Local Government Board (Ireland) was asked to invite hospitality for a large number of refugees. The Lord Mayor of Dublin had already received a large number of offers of hospitality which he passed to the Local Government Board. The Local Government Board provided part of the Old Age Pensions offices in Great Brunswick Street, Dublin to the Refugees Committee but these quickly became too small for the work. The Committee applied to the National University of Ireland for premises and the University offered a house at 62 Mount Street, Dublin, 'provided that the heating, lighting and general care of the house

²¹ Ibid., p. xxxviii.

²² Ibid., p. 398.

²³ *Report of the work undertaken by the British Government in the reception and care of Belgian refugees* (PRO: RG20/86, p. 4).

²⁴ *Report on the special work of the Local Government Board arising out of the war*, 12 [cd. 7763], HC 1914, xxv, 310.

²⁵ *Report of the work undertaken by the British Government in the reception and care of Belgian refugees* (PRO: RG20/86, p. 4).

²⁶ *Report on the conditions of refugees in Holland* (PRO: MH 8/6, p. 2).

be provided for by the committee'.²⁷ These premises became the offices of the committee for the duration of the war. The role of the committee was described as 'dealing with the allocation of refugees, communicating with the different sub-committees and the private hosts and in looking after the general needs of the refugees.'²⁸

In addition to Mrs Fowle and Mr White, the committee drew its membership from prominent and varied members of society including the Countess of Fingall and, cousin of her husband and her long-time companion, Sir Horace Plunkett. Plunkett had been a Member of Parliament and the first president of the Irish Agricultural Organisations Society. The membership included society notables Lady Moloney, who as Mother Mary Patrick co-founded the missionary sisters of St Columban with Fr John Blowick of Maynooth College a few years later, and Captain Gaisford St. Lawrence R.N., of Howth Castle. Mr John Murphy, who was the Honorary Belgian Consul and the Fr T.V. Nolan S.J., Provincial of the Jesuits in Ireland, were also members.²⁹ Fr Nolan's time studying Philosophy in Louvain might very well have influenced his involvement.³⁰ Mrs Fowle and Lady Moloney undertook the main administrative duties of the committee. As offers of hospitality were being organised, the first refugees arrived in Ireland on Saturday 17 October 1914. They were met by members of the committee at the North Wall, Dublin Port, where they received breakfast and were sent to their destinations as soon as possible.³¹ The arrival of the refugees was reported in the *Irish Times*.³² In the same paper the Master of the *SS Rathmore*, Percival Sorge, who had carried the first group of refugees from Holyhead to North Wall, Dublin, took it upon himself to plea for interpreters to meet the refugees at the port: '...not one of [them] could speak a word of English and as we could not speak French, it was distinctly awkward trying to understand where they were going to and what their requirements were.'

²⁷ Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 10 Feb. 1915 (UCD: P10b).

²⁸ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, 398 [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 814.

²⁹ Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 19-21 Oct. 1914 (UCD: P10b).

³⁰ *Irish Province News*, Oct. 1941, iv, 570-1.

³¹ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, 399 [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 815.

³² *Irish Times*, 19 Oct. 1914.

Although the Belgian Refugees Committee (Ireland) was a voluntary body, at a later stage one of the members of the Local Government Board sat on the committee, in order to oversee the expenditure of public funds.³³ Apart from providing funds, the main function of the Local Government Board was in organising transport and temporary accommodation for refugees until more permanent arrangements could be made with volunteer hosts. Mr Leach, of the Local Government Board, expended considerable energy in the enterprise and played a prominent part, with members of the Refugees Committee, in meeting refugees at the North Wall. He was involved in sending telegrams, ordering special trains and helping the refugees into taxis. However, most of the work was undertaken by volunteers to the committee, many of them young women. They were involved in escorting groups to the accommodation that they had previously organised and ensuring that they were cared for in terms of food and clothing. The committee reports that there was wide-ranging support for their work: 'Practical sympathy was demonstrated by all classes on these occasions. The stationmaster allowed the goods office to be temporarily converted into a breakfast room on cold mornings, and the hackney car drivers, even hard hit as they are by the war, refused to accept any fares for driving the refugees to the various railway stations of Dublin.' The practical sympathy extended to the Midland Great Railway company carrying all refugees over the lines at half price.³⁴

Each week brought more refugees, so that by 26 October there were four hundred refugees in Ireland. However, after the first month they stopped coming. The refugees' fear of travel was compounded by the torpedo attack on the French refugee ship *Amiral Ganteaume*³⁵ (or *Le Duc de Ganteaume*³⁶) on its way from Calais to Le Havre. The 1,900 survivors arrived at Alexandra Palace, London the following day. Their experiences spread terror throughout the refugee population and they were reluctant to undertake the additional sea journey to Ireland. This second rejection of Irish offers of help was a setback to the work of the Committee. Nonetheless hospitality was offered from locations throughout Ireland. Mrs John McCann of Simmonscourt Castle, who

³³ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, xl [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 386.

³⁴ *Report of the Belgian Refugees Committee (Ireland)*, 400 [cd 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 816.

³⁵ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, xxxix [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 385.

acquired the use of Sandymount Castle, for several families, formed the first settlement. The Society of Friends, and particularly Messers Goodbody, supported Stradbroke House, Blackrock, which opened shortly after and a third settlement was started in Bray.

These and other local committees were disappointed at the lack of refugees to take advantage of their preparations. The Belgian Refugee Committee reports: 'houses were prepared; fires lighted and in some instances dinners were cooked but no refugees appeared'.³⁷ The population of Celbridge was disappointed by the non-arrival of Belgians. In late October they had assembled at the station expecting the arrival of Belgians. A number of them brought cars flying the Belgian colours to transport the refugees to their accommodation. But the cars returned home empty, and the population returned home disappointed.³⁸

Not content to let this situation lie, the Belgian Refugee Committee sent a representative to England who used powers of persuasion to bring another batch of refugees to Ireland.³⁹ These efforts were rewarded when at the end of October the people of Celbridge assembled at the station to welcome thirty-four refugees who arrived to take up accommodation prepared for them at the workhouse.⁴⁰ The refugees were cheered as they passed by. Local dignitaries turned out to meet them and they were welcomed at the Union by the Sisters [Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul] in charge along with the Master, the Parish Priest and the Rector. Local gestures of support included the donation of a piano which was sent to the workhouse for the use of the refugees by Mr Edmond O'Brien of Celbridge Abbey, who was subsequently involved in transporting wounded soldiers.⁴¹ Clearly, support for the refugees crossed many of the local divides.⁴² But even this large group of refugees was not enough to fill the offers of hospitality. Local newspapers reported the ongoing disappointment of local committees. In county Offaly, a local committee was formed at Edenderry, and expensive

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

³⁸ *Leinster Leader*, 24 Oct. 1914, p. 4.

³⁹ Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 25 Nov. 1914 (UCD: P10b).

⁴⁰ *Leinster Leader*, 31 Oct. 1914, p. 5.

⁴¹ See Chapter 4 – War Wounded.

⁴² *Leinster Leader*, 14 Nov. 1914, p. 3.

renovations were carried out at the workhouse,⁴³ but by early November no refugees had arrived. The local newspapers voiced the concern and indicated that the people of the town were most anxious as no Belgian refugees had come to Edenderry.⁴⁴ The *Leinster Leader* followed this story over the following three weeks commenting on the disappointment and the effect it was having on people's attitude to the war. It remarked that 'many people...believe it is a canard...whilst other folk are under the impression that all the refugees have already been provided for elsewhere and Edenderry will not have the gratification of displaying its hospitality toward any of the units.'⁴⁵ Despite the setbacks, the Edenderry committee continued its work and announced a successful concert in aid of the local Belgian refugee committee in the Town Hall.⁴⁶ At the end of November the absence of refugees was still being remarked upon. There was reference to the mounting concern and the extent to which local credulity was being stretched. The scepticism began to affect not just their belief in the existence of refugees but extended to their belief in the war. 'There have been so many rumours about them ...that unless they come soon, possibly some old folks will arrive at the conclusion that the war itself is only a myth so inseparably are the Belgians bound up in the talk of sieges, sorties and sick lists that form the staple diet of conversation in the town.'⁴⁷ Despite this air of disappointment the local newspapers reflecting Irish Party⁴⁸ and unionist⁴⁹ views continued to give extensive coverage to the expected refugees and arrangements for their arrival. The air of disillusionment was widespread.

Mrs Fowle undertook to travel to England, herself, to bring back further refugees. Mrs Fowle's ability to speak Flemish to her own Belgian compatriots succeeded in enticing regular numbers of refugees. However, the War Refugees Committee in Britain later requested that accommodation be made for 200 refugees per week. Following the earlier disappointments the Irish committee found it difficult to secure sufficient offers of hospitality to meet this demand. The numbers of refugees increased during early 1915, when forty women and children arrived at Celbridge by train and motor.⁵⁰ However, by

⁴³ *Leinster Leader*, 14 Nov. 1914, p. 4.

⁴⁴ *Leinster Leader*, 7 Nov. 1914, p. 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 14 Nov. 1914, p. 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21 Nov. 1914, p. 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 Nov. 1914, p. 4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Kildare Observer*.

⁵⁰ *Leinster Leader*, 23 Jan. 1915, p. 4.

April 1915 only eleven refugees remained in Celbridge Union and these were moved to Dunshaughlin workhouse.⁵¹ This was part of a development which made Dunshaughlin the only centre for Belgian refugees. All other refugees were in the care of voluntary local committees. The Belgian refugees committee made payments to local committees, individual supporters of refugees and the refugees themselves.⁵²

In the period up to March 1915, one thousand six hundred and forty-six refugees were provided with hospitality. There were fifty or more refugees in ten counties throughout Ireland. These were Antrim, Armagh, Donegal, Dublin, Londonderry, Meath, Sligo, Tipperary, Waterford and Wicklow. Dublin was accommodating three hundred and thirty six, while one hundred and fifty-six were located in Co. Meath, with ninety-three in Co. Derry and ninety in Antrim.⁵³ While Mrs Fowle's central committee was based in Dublin, received the refugees at the port, and helped them on their way, the main work of caring for refugees was carried out by the local committees. Apart from the accommodation at Dunshaughlin and other workhouses hospitality was offered to Belgian refugees at many locations throughout the country. The local committees were of varied types and came together in a range of different ways. Committees were formed in urban districts, towns and small villages. Some were church guilds, others were ladies' clubs. The YMCA, the Presbyterian Church, the Jesuits and the Society of Friends all maintained settlements. In one instance a ladies' golf club took charge of a group of refugees⁵⁴ while the Hermitage and Lucan clubs held competitions in aid of the fund.⁵⁵ Private homes throughout the country were caring for families of refugees.

Throughout the war the work of providing for refugees was mainly voluntary. Reporting in March 1916, the central committee stated that 'out of 3,000 refugees who have been, or are sheltered in Ireland, an average of two hundred are being kept at the expense of the Local Government Board, whilst the others are enjoying the hospitality of these sub-committees and charitable individuals.'⁵⁶ The vice president of the Local Government

⁵¹ *Kildare Observer*, 3 Apr. 1915, p. 5.

⁵² See appendix 1.

⁵³ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, xl [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 387.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 400.

⁵⁵ *Irish Times*, 10 Oct. 1914, p. 4.

⁵⁶ *Report of the Belgian Refugees Committee (Ireland)*, 400 [cd 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 816.

Board, Sir Henry Robinson, asked the committee to regard the workhouses as merely temporary residences for refugees and 'urged in all possible cases the transfer of refugees to private hospitality'.⁵⁷ While the refugees were being accommodated by local committees and charitable institutions, Mrs Fowle continued her work to raise additional funds. She did not do this alone, opting instead to call on others to support the cause. In November 1915, Mrs Fowle organised an art sale at Messrs Bennetts Auction Rooms which included donations of valuable curios and *objets d'art*. At her instigation canvases were donated by John Lavery and William Orpen. The highest bidder was to have their portrait painted on the canvases. This art sale raised £2,600 which was split between the Belgian Refugees Committee (Ireland) and the Irish Prisoners of War Committee.⁵⁸ Another of Mrs Fowle's art sales was held in July 1916 in a shop located in Dublin, at the corner of Grafton Street and Nassau Street, simply known as the 'Belgian Gift Shop'. This shop was lent by Messrs Switzers & Co. for refugee relief.⁵⁹ It is worth remembering that the Switzers had themselves been a refugee family of German extraction. Their drapery shops were founded by John Wright Switzer, whose family were members of the Palatinate community who had fled religious persecution in their Rhineland home in the 1700s.⁶⁰

Mrs Fowle was not alone in her fundraising activities. Musical evenings and concerts were popular ways of raising funds. Local newspapers were full of these events. Regular concerts took place in Naas town hall,⁶¹ Edenderry,⁶² Portarlington⁶³ and Carbery;⁶⁴ a gift sale took place in Rathdowney;⁶⁵ money was collected at Navan Roman Catholic church⁶⁶, in Athy parish chapel⁶⁷, at the church doors in Vicarstown⁶⁸,

⁵⁷ Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 10 Feb. 1915 (UCD: P10b).

⁵⁸ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1916*, xviii [cd. 8365] HC 1916, xiii, 222.

⁵⁹ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1917*, xxvi [cd. 8765] HC 1917, xvi, 288.

⁶⁰ Anne Haverty, *Elegant Times: Brown Thomas, a Dublin story* (Dublin, 1995), p. 14.

⁶¹ *Kildare Observer*, 17 Apr. 1915, p. 8.

⁶² *Leinster Leader*, 21 Nov. 1914, p. 5.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 18 Sep. 1915, p. 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 16 Jan. 1915, p. 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 Oct. 1917, p. 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 31 Oct. 1914, p. 5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 14 Nov. 1914, p. 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 31 Oct. 1914, p. 5.

and at the Roman Catholic church, Celbridge⁶⁹. This pattern is continued through other towns and other counties. In Portarlington, Arlington House was offered for the use of refugees and Portarlington was appointed as the refugee centre of Queen's County. All the clergy of the county were co-opted onto the committee. At the first meeting of the committee, subscriptions amounting to £130 were announced.⁷⁰ In Cavan three families of Belgian refugees were '...comfortably housed in Mullagh'⁷¹. Mr T.P. McKenna (Chairman of Cavan County Council) and Mr G.F. Mortimer undertook the arrangements for the housing of the refugees there. We are told that '...the women and young girls of the district acted with such generosity and promptitude that everything was in readiness in a few days for the reception of seventeen victims of the present terrible war'. The conditions in which the refugees found themselves varied considerably. Some were in princely surroundings, while for others shelter was afforded by the mud cabin. One refugee told the Local Government Board that his host was poorer than himself.⁷² Irish support for refugees was not confined to the island. The Irish Literary Society based in London, which had been founded by W.B. Yeats held a concert in aid of Belgian refugees in January 1915. The concert consisted of a folk song programme including Flemish, Irish and Manx folk songs. The Belgian and Irish flags were intertwined on the wall above the concert platform. Twenty-three pounds was raised for the Belgian Refugee fund.⁷³

The care of the refugees was not all attributable to charity. The Belgians themselves were eager to show their independence and most were keen to obtain work. Finding work was not always easy as the type of industrial work that many Belgians were used to at home was not available in Ireland and, besides, the Local Government Board would not permit a Belgian to be employed where an Irishman was available.⁷⁴ This position was taken so seriously that the Bray Belgian Committee, 'which all the people in Bray are subscribing to', sought an order from the Master of the Rolls to enable the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 21 Nov. 1914, p. 5.

⁷⁰ *Leinster Leader*, 31 Nov. 1914, p. 7.

⁷¹ *Meath Chronicle*, 16 Jan. 1915, p. 8.

⁷² *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, 400 [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 816.

⁷³ *Journal of the Irish Folk Song Society*, xv, 1915 (National Library of Ireland (NLI): IR7844 I3, pp 34-5).

⁷⁴ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, 402 [cd. 8016] HC 1914-16, xxv, 818.

letting of a field to grow vegetables.⁷⁵ The Bray committee had 'a little colony of fifty or sixty refugees in three houses. A systematic house-to-house collection by some twenty lady collectors brought in ample funds to provide completely for the refugees. The Committee wished to find employment for the adult males and having received the offer of a field gradually trained a group of men in agricultural work. Having met with encouraging results they decided to carry out the experiment on a larger scale.'⁷⁶ A similar project took place in Ennis. In Limerick several farming families settled down happily. In Mallow, a Mr Williamson donated seed potatoes to the Refugee Committee.⁷⁷

A range of other enterprises was undertaken by the Belgians, including cabinet making at Navan and Edenderry and stone work in Great Brunswick Street, Dublin. Messers Switzers placed a large order for the traditional *Lierre* embroidery which had been completely destroyed in Belgium. A few Belgians worked at a munitions factory in Arklow, in the coalmines at Arigna⁷⁸ and at Wolf Hill mining, Athy.⁷⁹ Despite these examples, very little paid work was available to Belgians and as a result many returned to the munitions factories in England which were expanding, needed experienced workers, and paid very well.

The expected speedy end to the war did not materialise and by late 1915 some of the local committees were finding it difficult to continue raising the necessary funds. Stradbrook Hall, in Blackrock, could not be continued after October 1915. The Sandymount committee sought assistance from the Belgian Refugees Committee, suggesting that sixteen of the refugees under their care could be supported locally but the funds of the Committee were required to support the other ten.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ *Irish Times*, 3 Nov. 1914, p. 3.

⁷⁶ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, xxxvii [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 33.

⁷⁷ Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 13 Jan. 1915 (UCD: P10b).

⁷⁸ *Report of the Belgian Refugees Committee (Ireland)*, 402 [cd 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 818; Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 29 Apr. 1915 (UCD: P10b).

⁷⁹ Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 11 Aug 1915 (UCD: P10b).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 17 Sep. 1915.

The role of the Local Government Board

In Britain, the work of caring for the refugees was divided between the Local Government Board and the Belgian Refugees Committee. A similar situation pertained in Ireland. To facilitate the arrival of refugees, the Local Government Board obtained temporary accommodation in Sheriff Street, Dublin, which is situated conveniently close to the North Wall port. Arrangements were made with several Boards of Guardians of Unions to make part of their workhouse premises available for temporary accommodation. Workhouses in Ardee, Balrothery, Celbridge, Dunshaughlin, Gorey and Rathdrum were used. These functioned mainly as receiving and distributing centres.⁸¹ The Local Government Board put considerable effort into encouraging others to take responsibility for the refugees. The vice president of the Board, while urging the Committee to avoid sending refugees to the workhouses, told them that he was preparing a circular for issue to the Protestant clergy asking them to 'set aside an offertory on any one Sunday in aid of the Committee.'⁸² The daily life and experiences of the Belgian refugees in the workhouses are not detailed in the Local Government reports or in the Committee minute books but there are references in the minutes of the Boards of Guardians to the Belgians. In the case of Dunshaughlin, the minute for 14 November 1914, responding to a request regarding the payment of substitution for an ill employee, notes that no such payment was necessary as 'the military authority cleared out the workhouse of inmates.'⁸³ No reason is given for clearing out the inmates but it is clear that workhouses were being examined at the time with a range of purposes in mind. A request from the War Office in early October initiated a series of enquiries with regard to workhouses being used for the internment of prisoners.⁸⁴ The Local Government Board indicated that in addition to this request they had other requests to use workhouses for training army recruits, spare accommodation existing in still other

⁸¹ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, xli [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 387.

⁸² Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 28 Jul. 1915 (UCD: P10b).

⁸³ Board of Guardians, Dunshaughlin Union Minutes (Meath County Archive: BG84A/86-1914 p. 149).

⁸⁴ Letter from War Office, London to Under Secretary, Dublin Castle, 1 Oct. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914-17503).

workhouses could be assigned to the temporary housing of Belgian refugees.⁸⁵ The minutes of Dunshaughlin Board of Guardians refer to payments made by the Local Government Board to the Union respecting expenses incurred by the Guardians in connection with the provision of accommodation for Belgian refugees in the workhouse and stating that they approved of the following payments being made.⁸⁶ In February 1915, the Central Committee organised a small supply of agricultural implements for the refugees in Dunshaughlin.⁸⁷ In March 1915 the master of the workhouse received instructions 'to till the workhouse grounds in the usual way with the assistance of the Belgians.'⁸⁸ Workhouses were also involved in providing relief to destitute aliens and the Local Government Board provided them with a circular letter giving instructions with regard to how such cases were to be dealt with.⁸⁹ Similar reports can be seen in the local press in relation to the workhouses at Celbridge and Athy.

However, the workhouses were only receiving and distributing centres used when a sudden inrush of Belgians occurred. The use of workhouses was not without its own controversy. At a meeting of Kildare County Council, a motion was proposed that vacant mansions in the district be used to accommodate refugees. One member of council suggested that they (the council) could stir up public opinion on the matter that 'refugees ought not to be put into the workhouse in the first place'.⁹⁰ The reputation of workhouses was having an impact on provisions for refugees despite the fact that care was taken to avoid linking the refugees with the stigma of pauperism; the quarters of the refugees were kept distinct from persons on relief. The clerk of Celbridge Union indicated that refugees 'should not be treated as ordinary inmates but as guests whom the Guardian had offered hospitality' and as a result they would not be subject to normal workhouse rules. The refugees were to be issued new bedding and clothing and it should be different to distinguish it from bedding or clothing issued to inmates of the

⁸⁵ Local Government Board to Under Secretary, Dublin Castle, 19 Oct. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914-18544).

⁸⁶ Board of Guardians, Dunshaughlin Union Minutes (Meath County Archive: BG84A/87-1915, p. 368).

⁸⁷ Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 24 Feb. 1915 (UCD: P10b).

⁸⁸ Board of Guardians, Dunshaughlin Union Minutes (Meath County Archive: BG84A/87-1915, p. 474).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁹⁰ *Kildare Observer*, 21 Nov. 1914, p. 7.

workhouse.⁹¹ The clerk of Ardee Board of Guardians intimated to his board that ‘Mr McCarthy’s (Local Government Board inspector) desire was to have the fever hospital reserved for the Belgians as he wished to have them dissociated as much as possible from the workhouse atmosphere’.⁹² When a refugee died in Celbridge workhouse, the master provided a ‘coffin of the ordinary mounted pattern, same as supplied to private individuals for their friends’, rather than the type provided for paupers.⁹³ However, the workhouses were used less and less and finally abandoned in early 1915 with the notable exception of Dunshaughlin. Dunshaughlin had been cleared of its inmates to change it to a military barracks but was found to be unsuitable for this purpose. Part of the premises was then altered and fitted out for the refugees. The costs of fitting up and maintaining Dunshaughlin and the expenses of transport and temporary maintenance in other institutions and hotels were met by the Local Government Board of Ireland and reimbursed by the Local Government Board in London.⁹⁴

To avoid the ‘pauper’ association with workhouses, refugees were sometimes accommodated in the Fever Hospital wing of workhouses. The Cork Street Fever Hospital took over additional fever work from the Balrothery Rural District Council because the Balrothery Fever Hospital was being used for Belgian Refugees. This led to some modernisation in the hospital because a motor ambulance was acquired to enable the hospital deal with the increasing distances which patients had to travel.⁹⁵ The ambulance was so successful that the hospital decided to acquire a second ambulance two years later.⁹⁶ The use of the fever hospitals attached to workhouses as accommodation for refugees caused concern about the readiness of the community to address an outbreak of fever. In October 1914 the Medical Inspector of the Local Government Board, Dr Browne, warned the Public Health Committee of the danger of an outbreak of smallpox, plague or cholera. The Medical Inspector was concerned that the Isolation Hospital at Pigeon House Road, Dublin had been converted to use as a

⁹¹ *Leinster Leader*, 31 Oct. 1914, p. 5.

⁹² *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 Oct. 1914, p. 7.

⁹³ *Kildare Observer*, 17 Apr. 1915, p. 6.

⁹⁴ *Report on the work undertaken by the British Government in the reception and care of Belgian Refugees* (PRO: RG 20/86/80363, p. 28).

⁹⁵ ‘Fifty-seventh annual report of the Board of Superintendence of the Dublin Hospitals, 1914-15’, in *Dublin Hospitals Reports 1907-21* (NLI: IR 3620941D2, pp 5-6).

⁹⁶ ‘Fifty-ninth annual Report of the Board of Superintendence of the Dublin hospitals 1916-17’ in *Dublin Hospitals Reports 1907-21* (NLI: IR 3620941D2, p. 4).

Tuberculosis Hospital and as a result there was no available specialist hospital to provide isolation. Dr Cameron believed that there were 'urgent reasons' for providing an Isolation Hospital as Typhoid fever and Asiatic cholera had been detected among the armies at war and that there was a risk refugees from Belgium and wounded or sick soldiers and prisoners might bring infection to Ireland.⁹⁷ The committee undertook to build a hospital on a smaller scale than that suggested by the Medical Inspector.

Over the period of the war some 2,300 Belgian refugees were accommodated in Ireland. However, other than a short period at the end of 1914, the number at any given time was less than two thousand. The War Refugees Committee in Britain maintained detailed records of the towns throughout the United Kingdom that refugees were sent to. An extract from those records, maintained by the Honorary Treasurer, Viscount Gladstone G.C.B, lists the towns in Ireland and the numbers of refugees sent.⁹⁸ Local Government Board Ireland reports show 1,426 refugees being cared for on the 31 March 1915.⁹⁹ One year later the figure had dropped to 938¹⁰⁰ and by March 1917 the figure was approximately 600.¹⁰¹ In March 1918 the number had dropped slightly to 527.¹⁰² These figures belie the full numbers of refugees cared for in Ireland. Throughout the period of the war refugees came and left; for example, during 1916, 829 refugees left the country and 341 entered.¹⁰³ The substantial number who left Ireland is accounted for almost entirely by the departure of families for whom employment had been secured. Many refugees returned to Britain to work in the Belgian munitions factories, such as the factory at Birtley, near Gateshead, named Elisabethville, in honour of the Belgian Queen. The factory at Birtley was practically a Belgian colony within England.¹⁰⁴ By

⁹⁷ Charles A. Cameron, Medical Superintendent of Health to the Public Health Committee in *Reports of printed documents of the Corporation of Dublin, 1914* (NLI: IR94133D10, iii, 452).

⁹⁸ War refugees Committee, 'Refugee allocation register' (PRO: MH 8/14).

⁹⁹ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1916*, xvii [cd. 8365] HC 1916, xiii, 221.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

¹⁰¹ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1917*, xxiv [cd. 8765] HC 1917, xvi, 286.

¹⁰² *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1918*, xxvii [cmd. 65] HC 1919, xxv, 29.

¹⁰³ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1916*, xvii [cd. 8365] HC 1916, xiii, 221.

¹⁰⁴ J. Schlesinger and D. McMurtrie, *The Birtley Belgians: a history of Elisabethville* (Durham, 1997).

the middle of 1917, with small numbers of refugees still entering the country, the Local Government Board in Britain had set up a Repatriation Committee.¹⁰⁵ This committee was discussing with the Belgian authorities various points in relation to repatriation. However, at this point the Central Register was still showing 164,000 refugees in the United Kingdom. By February 1919, three months after the end of the war, some 90,000 Belgian refugees were still in the United Kingdom.¹⁰⁶ It was decided that the remaining refugees in Ireland should travel in one party. On 15 February 1919 Mrs Fowle led the last remaining group of four hundred and fourteen refugees onto the S.S. Quilpue at the North Wall Dock. She accompanied the steamer to Cardiff where it stopped for two days and collected another group of five hundred refugees. Mrs Fowle gave the head of each family a sum of money. In all, she distributed £1,000 realised at the Belgian Gift Shop in Nassau Street, Dublin. There remained in Ireland at this point about ninety refugees.¹⁰⁷ The Belgian Refugees Committee (Ireland) held its last meeting on 7 May 1919.¹⁰⁸ The number of refugees in Britain had dwindled to twenty thousand by August 1919. Of this twenty thousand only seventy-three were in Ireland. These were fifty-three adults and twenty children.¹⁰⁹

On 30 May 1919, King George V passed an order in Council abolishing the distinctions imposed on Belgian refugees under the terms of the Aliens Restriction (Belgian Refugees) Order 1914. This order set out to treat Belgians in all respects in the same manner as other alien friends.¹¹⁰ The order discontinued the Central Register of Belgian Refugees. The order was sent by the Home Office to the Under Secretary, Dublin Castle with the comment 'as the majority of Belgian Refugees have now left the country and returned to Belgium it has been decided to discontinue as from 31st inst the Central Register'.¹¹¹ The RIC Office relayed these instructions to the County Inspectors.¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ Local Government Board, Letter of 20 Feb. 1919 (PRO: HO 45/10882/344019)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1919*, xix [cmd 578] HC 1920, xxi, 21.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. xx.

¹⁰⁹ Local Government Board, Letter of 20 Feb. 1919 (PRO: HO 45/10882/344019)

¹¹⁰ Alien Restrictions Order 1919.

¹¹¹ Home Office to Under Secretary, Dublin Castle, 29 May 1919 (NAI: CSORP, 1919-13745).

¹¹² R.I.C. Office, Dublin Castle to County Inspectors, 6 June 1919 (NAI: CSORP, 1919-13745).

Michel Schepers – The Director of Dunshaughlin colony

Michael Schepers was born, on 26 August 1880, in Zonhoven, Belgium, to a farming family. He was one of nine children. Schepers studied at the Episcopal Teacher's Training School in Sint-Truiden (Saint-Trond) from 1898 until 1902.¹¹³ In 1902 he was appointed a Catholic teacher at the lower school of Viversel in the municipality of Zolder. On the outbreak of war he escaped to the Netherlands and from there made his way to England.¹¹⁴ He volunteered to serve as a stretcher bearer with the army, was injured and was sent to Dunshaughlin workhouse in 1915. He was still there in 1918. Private Schepers became Director of the Belgian School and Colony at Dunshaughlin.¹¹⁵ He was paid fifteen shillings per week for supervising the workhouse. He was authorised to pay five shillings per week to the cook and two shillings and sixpence to four other refugees.¹¹⁶ Subsequently, M. Henri Scheere was appointed assistant to M Schepers at a remuneration of seven shillings and six pence.¹¹⁷ Schepers' management of the colony and the different arrangements made for families were important factors in the success of Dunshaughlin over the other workhouses. The workhouses adhered to their harsh system of separating husbands from wives and mothers from children. By contrast Dunshaughlin erected temporary partitions to allow each family to live in privacy. Schepers had responsibility for the education of a group of thirty Belgian children, most of whom were boarded at Dunshaughlin without their parents. These children were being educated along lines approved by the Belgian Minister of Education.¹¹⁸ In addition to being schoolmaster, Schepers was responsible to the Local Government Board for the ordering of provisions, necessaries and supplies of

¹¹³ Luc Minten (ed.), *De inschrijvingsregisters van de bisschoppelijke normaalscholen te Ronduc / Sint-Truiden (1836-1920)* (Hasselt, Belgium 1994) (*Limburgse documenten I*, 7, pp 114-5).

¹¹⁴ MS in possession of Raf van Laere, Heemkundige kring Zolder, Belgium.

¹¹⁵ William. J. Connolly of the Lord Lieutenants Office to the Belgian Military Attache, 16 Jul. 1918 (NAI: CSORP, 1918-19736).

¹¹⁶ Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 9 Nov. 1915 (UCD: P10b).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10 Feb. 1915.

¹¹⁸ F.J. McCarthy, Observations of Local Government Board Inspector, 13 Jul. 1918 (NAI: CSORP, 1918-19041).

all description and to keep a weekly account of the quantities and values of the articles consumed.¹¹⁹

During his time in Dunshaughlin there were repeated requests from the Belgian authorities for him to return to his duties as a stretcher-bearer with the army. A request was made from the Mission Militaire Belge in London on 7 October 1918, to the Belgian Refugee Committee in Dublin, demanding the return of Schepers to his military duties: '...owing to the great scarcity of men in our medical service, it is much regretted that Private Schepers, Michael, Brancardier-Infirmier can possibly not be spared from his army duties'.¹²⁰ The response was that the

...Belgian relief committee were fortunate about three years ago in obtaining the services of Monsieur Schepers to take charge of the Colony at Dunshaughlin. I am of the opinion that the success of the colony is due to his untiring zeal in looking after its interests and welfare combined with the special qualification which he had for the work while administering the affairs of the colony with tact and firmness. He succeeded in winning the goodwill and confidence of the refugees to a remarkable degree and he has had to deal with Belgians of different races, of many social groups and of both sexes.¹²¹

This report on Private Schepers was written to support a strongly worded request from Mrs Helène Fowle that Private Schepers should not be returned to his military service.¹²² Mrs Fowle relates how the Committee had over the years lost the services of trained interpreters and clerical assistants to the demand for able-bodied men at the front. She saw M. Schepers as being in an entirely different category because of his exceptional experience, ability and tact and because he was a qualified teacher from the 'Ecole Adoptée de Viversel'. Mrs. Fowle was so concerned at the possible loss of Schepers that she appealed for the intervention of the Irish Executive through the Local Government Board. Despite these efforts, however, Schepers returned to the war in late October 1918 and the committee was fortunate to obtain the services of another Belgian teacher, Monsieur Volkaert.¹²³

After the war Schepers returned to his teaching position in Viversel, Zolder but maintained contact with the nurse at Dunshaughlin, Berthy Armstrong from Foxford,

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Chief of the Belgian Military Mission to Under Secretary Dublin Castle, 7 Oct. 1918 (NAI: CSORP, 1918-26727).

¹²¹ F.J. McCarthy, Observations of Local Government Board Inspector.

¹²² Mrs Fowle to Local Government Board, 12 Jul. 1918 (NAI: CSORP, 1918-19041).

¹²³ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1919*, xx [cmd. 578] HC 1920, xxi, 22.

Co. Mayo, and they married in Belgium in 1920. After a couple of years Berthy was paralyzed and remained in a wheelchair for the rest of her life. Schepers' activism continued at home in Belgium. Over a period of time he was co-founder of the Christian Teachers League (C.O.V) and was very active in the parish in Beringen. He was founder of the parish of Halveweg where he obtained a plot to build a school and a church. He was the first President of the patient fund of Sint-Lucia of Viversel. He became burgemeester (mayor) of Zolder in 1947 and died while in office. Tragically he suffered a heart attack in bed and his wife Berthy, confined to a wheelchair, was unable to assist him. He remained beside her until the following morning when she was able to attract attention. Berthy Armstrong survived him, dying in 1957.¹²⁴

Education and the Churches' response

While Michael Schepers undertook the education of the orphans at Dunshaughlin, the education of other Belgian children was not neglected. In Sandymount Castle classes were given in Flemish both morning and afternoon and in Sligo two Belgian nuns held Flemish classes. A large number of boarding schools housed and educated Belgian children free of charge. Boys attended the National University, Roscrea College, Belvedere College, Rockwell College, Clongowes Wood College, Mungret and Galway Colleges. Mount Anville and Roscrea, Sacré Coeur, Lisburn and Dominican Convent Belfast. St Louis, Carrickmacross and Sisters of Mercy at Ennis, Lurgan and Strabane all boarded and educated Belgian girls. Orders of nuns gave temporary or long-term accommodation to Belgian children. These included the Sisters of Charity at Merrion and Seville Place, Dublin. Major Catholic schools are most prominent in the lists of schools.¹²⁵ However, refugees also attended national schools, as can be seen in the roll books of Killeshin national school in Co. Laois where three boys and eight girls are listed as Belgian refugees.¹²⁶ A number of Belgian students were assisted in 'gaining admission to Irish universities to complete their studies.'¹²⁷ The Belgian Refugees Committee reserved accommodation at 15 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin for three students

¹²⁴ MS in possession of Raf van Laere, Heemkundige kring Zolder, Belgium.

¹²⁵ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, 401 [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xiii, 817.

¹²⁶ Killeshin National School Roll Book (Co Offaly: Killeshin National School, 1915-6).

following a course of studies at the National University.¹²⁸ One Belgian student, taught by French refugee nuns, took third place in English out of 4,000 in examinations.¹²⁹

The Catholic Church was closely involved in church-gate collections which took place at Navan,¹³⁰ Athy,¹³¹ Vicarstown,¹³² Celbridge¹³³ and many other places. In November 1914, the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Walsh, instructed that a letter be read in all churches in the diocese advising that a collection would be undertaken the following week. This was on foot of a decision made by the hierarchy at their meeting in Maynooth.¹³⁴ Dr Harty, Archbishop of Cashel and Emly, urged support for Belgian Refugees by having a letter read in all the churches of his diocese. He recommended that a collection be held in all churches, the proceeds of which were to be given to Cardinal Mercier of Malines. In urging the support for the Belgians, he drew on the 'traditional ties of friendship' between the Belgians and the Irish and reminded his audience that Belgium 'came to our aid when Ireland was a victim of the penal laws'.¹³⁵ On a lighter note the president of Maynooth College provided a gift of cigars, cigarettes and papers to the refugees in Celbridge.¹³⁶

While substantial amounts of money were raised from the bishops' appeal; there were questions about how the money was being used. Fr B.P. Murphy of Chiswick, London, queried why large amounts of money collected for refugees had not been made available for their relief.¹³⁷ A letter from Robert Brown, bishop of Cloyne, suggested to the Archbishop of Dublin that 'it would be a proper and wise thing to publish in the newspapers the total sum realised for the relief of Belgian distress by the collections

¹²⁷ Belgian students, Application to enter university. (NAI: CSORP, 1916: 8614); (NAI: CSORP, 1916: 9794).

¹²⁸ Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 8 Sep. 1915 (UCD: P10b).

¹²⁹ *Leinster Leader*, 1 Sep. 1917, p. 2.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 31 Oct. 1914, p. 5.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 14 Nov. 1914, p. 5.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 31 Oct. 1914, p. 5.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 21 Nov. 1914, p. 5.

¹³⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 2 Nov. 1914, p. 7.

¹³⁵ *Irish Times*, 19 Oct. 1914, p. 8.

¹³⁶ *Kildare Observer*, 14 Nov. 1914, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Fr B.P. Murphy of Chiswick, London to Archbishop William J. Walsh, 2 Nov. 1914 (Dublin Diocesan Archive: Walsh Papers, 1914: 384/5).

made by direction of the bishops through the dioceses of his Eminence.’¹³⁸ The sums amounted to £27,000.

Dom Patrick Nolan OSB made a plea to the Archbishop of Dublin on behalf of the Abbot of Maredsous, otherwise Abbot Columba Marmion.¹³⁹ The Dom was soliciting support for Marmion’s return to Ireland with his community. He indicated that the community would not be a burden and reminded the Archbishop that he, Nolan, on his profession, left part of his fortune for an Irish Benedictine foundation. He suggested that other funds from his family had been added to this, the total amounting to £1,000. He suggested that an equal sum could easily be raised from other private sources. Clearly, there was a generous response by the people to the plight of the Belgian refugees. It seems extraordinary that refugee priests wishing to enter the country should have to assure the Archbishop of their ability to pay their own way. Fr Murphy’s queries and the suggestion from the Bishop of Cloyne raise some questions about the distribution of funds collected.

The religious welfare of the Belgians was the concern of several Belgian priests who ministered to their needs throughout their stay. Late in 1914 Fr Nolan, Provincial of the Jesuits, recommended to his refugee committee colleagues the payment of the expenses involved in bringing Père Camille Ottavaere from Belgium to Ireland.¹⁴⁰ Père Ottavaere became chaplain to the Belgian refugees and remained in Ireland until the end of the war.

One group of Belgian refugee nuns were unusual in that they had become a Belgian community as refugees from Ireland and returned to Ireland as refugees from Belgium. These were the Benedictine Community of Ypres. The Benedictine Abbey at Ypres was founded in 1665 and was formally made an Irish Monastery in 1682. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries many daughters of the Irish nobility came to Ypres, because of religious persecution in Ireland. In 1914 the nuns were forced to leave Ypres when the Germans bombarded it. They made their way to Dover and remained in

¹³⁸ Bishop of Cloyne to Archbishop William J. Walsh, 31 Dec. 1914 (Dublin Diocesan Archive: Walsh Papers, 1914: 384/4).

¹³⁹ Dom Patrick Nolan OSB to Archbishop William J. Walsh, 25 Sep. 1914 (Dublin Diocesan Archive: Walsh Papers, 1914: 378/1).

¹⁴⁰ Belgian Refugee Committee, ‘Belgian Refugee Committee minutes’, 2 Dec. 1914 (UCD: P10b).

Oulton Abbey in Staffordshire for a time.¹⁴¹ Eventually, they made their way to Ireland and first settled in Macmine Castle, Wexford.¹⁴² John Redmond MP referred to the plight of the Irish nuns of Ypres in a foreword to MacDonagh's book, *The Irish at the Front*. He took up their cause and appeals for support for them to form a home in their own land, Ireland.¹⁴³ Correspondence between Fr Dawson and Mary Boyle O'Reilly, a journalist, reveals a possible reason for Redmond's concern for the nuns of Ypres.¹⁴⁴ Mary O'Reilly talks of looking up diaries of the nuns of Ypres at this point taking refuge in Oulton Abbey. It transpires that one of the nuns, Dame Theresa, was Redmond's niece.¹⁴⁵ Eventually in 1920 the Community of Ypres moved from Wexford and settled in Kylemore Castle, Connemara.

The dames of Ypres were not the only nuns to seek refuge during the war. The Central Register of Aliens, 1917 tells us that eleven Belgian nuns arrived on 13 February 1917. They originated in the Carmelite Convent, Malines and stayed at the Carmelite house in Delgany and in St Patrick's Home for the Elderly, South Circular Road Dublin. The Little Sisters of the Poor who ran St Patrick's, having received the permission of their superior general, responded to a request from Monsignor Derrachler, auxiliary bishop to his eminence Cardinal Mercier¹⁴⁶ to give hospitality to the Carmelite nuns of Malines. The nuns spent two years in Ireland and returned to Belgium on 15 February 1919¹⁴⁷. Smaller groups and individual nuns were based at a range of location in Ireland, many of them were involved in teaching duties.

However, support from the churches was not confined to the Catholic Church. As we have seen, all the clergy of Queen's county, Catholic and Protestant had been co-opted onto the committee. Protestant clergymen and laypeople were represented on committees throughout the country. The YMCA, the Presbyterian Church, and the

¹⁴¹ Dame M. Columban OSC, *The Irish Nuns at Ypres, an episode of the war* (New York, 1915), pp 192-195.

¹⁴² *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1917*, xxv [cd. 8765] HC 1917, xvi, 287.

¹⁴³ John Redmond MP, 'Appeal' in Michael MacDonagh, *The Irish at the front* (London, 1916), epilogue p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Fr Dawson Correspondence with Mary Boyle O'Reilly (NLI: Redmond papers, MS 13, 997).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Little Sisters of the Poor, Entry in Foundation Book 1917, 12 Feb. 1917 (translated from the French by the archivist).

Society of Friends (interestingly, in co-operation with the Jesuits) all maintained settlements.

There were also church-based fundraising activities in Protestant churches. The Continental Society organised a lecture on 'Christian work in Distressed Belgium'; delivered by the Rev Dr Henri Anet from Brussels in the Presbyterian lecture hall in Rathgar, and a collection was made on behalf of the Belgian Refugees Committee funds.¹⁴⁸

The Alexandra Guild, an organisation of students, graduates and staff of Alexandra College, decided to support the war effort in three ways: by establishing a workroom for women who were unemployed because of the war, a club for the wives of soldiers and sailors, and a house for Belgian refugees. The latter, located at 16 Northbrook Road, in Dublin was provided free of rent and taxes by the Presbyterian Church, Adelaide Road, Dublin. Furnishing and equipping the house was financed by fundraising by the guild.¹⁴⁹ Support was solicited through advertisements in the newspapers.¹⁵⁰ Although the committee organised the funding of the house, including a weekly allowance, the management of the house was in the hands of the Belgians themselves. Unfortunately, after a few months the Church found a tenant for the house and the guild was given two weeks notice to make alternative arrangements. They set about locating an alternative house and finally found one at 25 Northbrook Road, but unfortunately rent had to be paid for the house. This was a big drain on their finances. Fourteen occupants were accommodated in the house. Two of the men were working at the College of Science making glass, and they were hoping to establish a glass factory in Dublin. There were also two teachers in the group, one an organist and one a language teacher, and another man was making toys. None of these were idle but were nonetheless seeking additional work.¹⁵¹ Two of the occupants found employment as resident governesses. At one point, two soldiers on leave from the front were accommodated. In the house there was a number of 'scarletina' scares during the winter of 1917.¹⁵² Scarlet fever was a concern in the minds of refugees. In another case we find the reports that a family of refugees

¹⁴⁷ Dublin Metropolitan Police, 'Register of Aliens' (NAI: 96/20/1).

¹⁴⁸ *Irish Times*, 6 Jan. 1915, p. 7.

¹⁴⁹ *Alexandra College Magazine*, no. xlv (4 Dec. 1914).

¹⁵⁰ *Irish Times*, 24 Oct. 1914; 2 Nov. 1914.

¹⁵¹ *Alexandra College Magazine*, no. xlvi (June 1915), pp 46-7.

accommodated in Scarlet Street in Athy left the house because they thought the word scarlet referred to the presence of scarlet fever.¹⁵³

A group of about one hundred lady graduates and students of Trinity College took a house in Mountjoy Square in Dublin to provide accommodation for a group of twenty Belgian refugees. They guaranteed to meet the expenses for at least six months.¹⁵⁴

Belgian customs

The full range of human activities was undertaken by Belgians in Ireland. In addition to those already mentioned, births, marriages and deaths took place. A baby was born in Dunshaughlin workhouse, 'the first in Meath'.¹⁵⁵ This was one of seventy-three births to Belgian refugees in Ireland.¹⁵⁶ At the funeral of Jean Kock in Celbridge workhouse, a Belgian priest arrived from Dublin to officiate and was assisted by local priests. Two orations in French were read by members of the Belgian community in accordance with the custom in their own country. A copy of each document was thrown into the grave, while the originals were handed to the wife of the deceased. Another custom observed was that of every Belgian present throwing a handful of clay into the grave.¹⁵⁷ Jean Kock was one of forty deaths of Belgian refugees in Ireland.¹⁵⁸

Two young Belgians, Gustavo Eggermont and Irma Heare, were married at Celbridge. The two had worked in a flax mill in Ghent and had passed themselves off as brother and sister on entering the country. A Belgian priest officiated at their marriage. The couple went to Dublin on honeymoon.¹⁵⁹ Eggermont and Heare were one of twenty-six Belgian couples who were married in Ireland.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, no. lii (June 1918), pp 38.

¹⁵³ *Leinster Leader*, 13 Feb. 1915, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Irish Times*, 22 Oct. 1915, p. 7.

¹⁵⁵ *Leinster Leader*, 23 Mar. 1915, p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1919*, xxi [cmd. 578] HC 1920, xxi, 23.

¹⁵⁷ *Kildare Observer*, 17 Apr. 1915, p. 6.

¹⁵⁸ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1919*, xxi [cmd. 578] HC 1920, xxi, 23.

¹⁵⁹ *Leinster Leader*, 21 Nov. 1914, p. 5.

Taking advantage of refugees

The reports regarding Belgian refugees in the newspapers and in the official records suggest that the Belgians were treated well. Private Schepers in Dunshaughlin appears to have been admired greatly by the Belgian Refugee Committee. The newspaper article about the refugees in Mullagh¹⁶⁰ suggests that the local committee acted with generosity and promptitude and readers were advised that Mrs G.F. Mortimer 'will gratefully receive donations.' The Midland Great Western Railway company carried refugees at half fare, but they were the only railway company to do this. This divergence in attitude to the refugees also affected the Local Government Board's handling of offers of hospitality.

Although refugees were being housed at a range of towns and villages throughout the country, there were also concerns in some places with regard to the location of refugees. In a series of letters referring to the appropriateness of accommodating refugees in Limavady, Co. Derry, Messers Martin, King, French and Ingram (Solicitors and Land agents) of Limavady, Londonderry wrote to the Under Secretary of State, Dublin Castle. This letter starts with 'As it is proposed to invite Belgian refugees to this neighbourhood'... and continues,

As these districts adjoin the mouth of the Foyle and are situated within some 20 miles from Lough Swilley defences it occurs to us that there is some grave objection to inviting foreign refugees, amongst whom there may probably be German or other spies, to this part of the country.¹⁶¹

The uncertainty in government circles in relation to provisions for the refugees is evident in the series of letters that the question from Limavady sparked. The Limavady letter was forwarded to the Admiralty in London. The response was that 'this request should be considered in light of the general rules agreed in respect of refugees in the vicinity of ports of significance'.¹⁶²

The refugees committee regarded it as a matter of supreme importance to distinguish between offers which were the outcome of real sympathy and those which were

¹⁶⁰ *Meath Chronicle*, 16 Jan. 1915, p. 7.

¹⁶¹ Messers Martin, King, French and Ingram (Solicitors and Land agents) of Limavady, Londonderry to the Under Secretary of State, 26 Nov. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914-22019).

actuated by other and less praiseworthy motives.¹⁶³ The report of the board points out that requests for adults without dependents were numerous and that there were large numbers of requests for girls of 13 or 14 years old as mother's helps or domestic servants. In many cases payment was not offered for these services and the report dismisses one request for a 'domestique without payment' as an 'attempt to lend glamour to a position of domestic drudge'.¹⁶⁴ It is clear from the report that there were those who were prepared to take advantage of the Belgians' misfortune to profit themselves:

...one lady required, at a salary of £5 per annum, a Belgian Refugee girl as mother's help, strong and willing to do the housework in a family of three children; no other servant was to be kept and it was "essential" that the girl could both speak and read French.

Despite these cases of anticipated exploitation the committee believed that most offers were the outcome of warm and deep sympathy. The arrangements by the committee were usually made for complete families and they requested those who could not offer complete hospitality, covering house accommodation, food and (where necessary) clothing to co-operate with other generous people in their locality to make a full offer of hospitality. This advice was acted upon and in many cases the Belgians formed small colonies rather than being accommodated individually.

Recruitment

Some Belgian men came with their families and the Belgian military authorities made efforts to have their nationals returned to take part in the war. Private Schepers, mentioned above, was one such person. Other cases are documented. A police notice refers to the need to give assistance to the Belgian government in gathering to their colours Belgian subjects in the United Kingdom who were available for military service.¹⁶⁵ Another mentioned a '...Belgian recruiting commission in Dublin'¹⁶⁶ and

¹⁶² Admiralty to The Under Secretary of State, Dublin Castle, 10 Dec. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914-22019).

¹⁶³ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, xxxviii [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 383.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Dublin Metropolitan Police, notice regarding calling Belgians to the colours (NAI: CSORP, 1918: 21312).

¹⁶⁶ Dublin Metropolitan Police, report regarding Belgian Recruiting Commission (NAI: CSORP, 1916: 14991).

‘...a circular as to enrolment in Belgian army’.¹⁶⁷ The Belgian Legation in London applied for information regarding those not eligible for military service.¹⁶⁸ It is clear that there were Belgians in Ireland who might have been eligible for military service. There are a large number of notes referring to a need for stricter enforcement of the Aliens Restrictions (Belgian Refugees) Order.¹⁶⁹ Negotiations took place between the Master of Celbridge workhouse, the Local Government Board and the Belgian consul which resulted in nine refugees, aged between eighteen and thirty being called to the colours. As a result, offers of work had to be refused as the able bodied men had been called up.¹⁷⁰ Young men also left the Dunshaughlin workhouse to join the Belgian army.¹⁷¹

The recruitment of Belgian refugees was not always supported in Ireland. Councillor Partridge tabled a motion to the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin that the Council

enter its indignant protest against the violation of Irish hospitality recently perpetuated on our shores by the arrest of a number of refugees – many of whom were priests and young students – who were taken from the shelter of the homes in Ireland and forced back into the ranks of the Belgian army and compelled to serve as common soldiers.¹⁷²

Partridge recognised the duty to fight for one’s country but had a particular difficulty with the recruitment of priests and made his case largely on the grounds of respect for priests. Partridge wanted the motion brought to the attention of Redmond and Asquith but in the event the motion was ruled out of order at the Council meeting.

Reasons for supporting Belgian refugees

The reasons for rallying to the cause of the Belgian refugees are given by various supporters. These reasons are threefold: Ireland’s associations with Belgium, the notion of an ‘heroic little nation’ overrun, and the barbarity that the Belgians had been exposed to. The *Irish School Weekly* referred to ‘this little nation, dear to us all by many associations, [which] dared to withstand invasion of its territory [and in which] the

¹⁶⁷ Belgian Legation, Circular regarding enrolment in Belgian Army (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 9466).

¹⁶⁸ Belgian Legation, London, to Chief Secretary (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 20356).

¹⁶⁹ (NAI: CSORP, 1916: 9466).

¹⁷⁰ *Leinster Leader*, 21 Nov. 1914, p. 6.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 20 Feb. 1915.

¹⁷² *Minutes of the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin*, 1915 (NLI: IR 94133 D9, p. 485).

enemy has spread desolation wherever he went'.¹⁷³ The article spelled out the associations: 'Down to comparatively recently Louvain was the *alma mater* of many Irish priests... on the plains of Landen lie the bones of Sarsfield...in Courtrai an Irish colony of some 500 persons all engaged in the linen manufacture. These are all probably refugees now.' The theme of Irish associations with Belgium was taken up by Bishop Harty. In a letter read at churches in the diocese of Cashel and Emily, he urged his flock to support the collection for Belgian refugees by drawing on the 'traditional ties of friendship' between the Belgians and the Irish and reminded them that Belgium 'came to our aid when Ireland was a victim of the penal laws'.¹⁷⁴

Mr Wolfe of Kildare County Council urged support for the refugees on the grounds of Belgium's 'heroic stand without which the Germans would have marched on Paris, with the result that it would mean disaster to us and to Europe at large'.¹⁷⁵ Mr Healy urged that 'every man who lived with his wife unmolested in Ireland should recognise the part that the Belgians had played in protecting him and should give assistance in providing for the refugees.'¹⁷⁶ The *Irish School Weekly* echoed the sentiment when it urged teachers 'to aid the national effort for the alleviation of suffering and distress' on the basis that teachers 'cannot take our places immediately in front of the enemy'.¹⁷⁷ The theme was continued by the *Church of Ireland Gazette*. 'We owe a debt to the brave people of Belgium which we can never forget and never adequately repay.'¹⁷⁸ The *Gazette* reminded its readers that Ireland had gained much from instruction gained from refugees in the past. It drew particular attention to the renowned Irish poplin industry which was developed by refugees who settled in Spitalfields.¹⁷⁹

Refugees as Propaganda

While good care was taken of the refugees, their fate was also exploited at the time to gain support for the war effort. Advertisements carried in local newspapers gave accounts of the actions of the Germans in Belgium.

¹⁷³ *Irish School Weekly*, 26 Sep. 1914, p. 697.

¹⁷⁴ *Irish Times*, 19 Oct. 1914, p. 8.

¹⁷⁵ *Kildare Observer*, 28 Nov. 1914, p. 5.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Irish School Weekly*, 26 Sep. 1914, p. 697.

¹⁷⁸ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 8 Jan. 1915, p. 25.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

...everywhere there is ruin and devastation. At Buecken many inhabitants were killed, including the priest who was over eighty years old... the Germans maltreated women and children...the sacred vessels which had not been put in safety did not escape profanation...¹⁸⁰

This advertisement proclaimed, 'Men of Ireland: the sanctity of your churches, the safety of your Homes, the Honour of your Women can only be secured by **Defeating the Germans in Belgium**' [emphasis in original]. The awareness of the plight of the Belgians was clearly being used as a means of recruitment. While this advertisement was directed to the men of Ireland, a subsequent advertisement posed '**4 Questions to the Women of Ireland**'¹⁸¹ [emphasis in original]. The advertisement also relied on knowledge of the Belgian experience: 'You have heard what the Germans have done in Belgium. After referring twice to the Belgian situation the advertisement urges 'Women of Ireland do your duty! ...let your men enlist in an Irish Regiment TO-DAY.'

At a dance in Naas town hall organised by the Naas National Volunteer Nursing Corps to raise funds for the local Belgian refugees' fund, the hall was decorated with Union Jacks and Irish, Belgian and French flags.¹⁸² At a concert in Naas the following April, the Union Jack and Belgian tricolour provided the background while children danced jigs and three-hand reels. The concert was concluded with 'the spirited singing of "A Nation Once Again"'. Around the same time at a concert in Roseboro, Co. Kildare, the entertainment concluded with the playing of the Belgian, Russian, British and Irish national anthems.¹⁸³ Edmond O'Brien of Celbridge Abbey, the member of the Celbridge board of guardians who had previously supplied a piano for the use of Belgians in the workhouse, organised an outing to the Theatre Royal in Dublin for the refugees. He advised them to practise the Belgian National anthem, since 'they will get a chance of singing it'.¹⁸⁴ On the 11 November 1918, Armistice Day, the Belgians in Dunshaughlin colony raised the Belgian flag outside the workhouse entrance.¹⁸⁵

In December 1916 an article in a German newspaper¹⁸⁶ repeated claims made in a Zurich socialist newspaper, *Volksrecht*, in an article entitled 'The enslavement of

¹⁸⁰ *Meath Chronicle*, 27 Feb. 1915, p. 7.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 16 Jan. 1915, p. 6.

¹⁸² *Kildare Observer*, 28 Nov. 1914, p. 8.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 17 Apr. 1915, p. 8.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 14 Nov. 1914, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ *Leinster Leader*, 16 Nov. 1918, p. 5.

Belgians by England'. The substance of the claims was that the British government had systematically procured the removal of Belgian refugees from Holland and France and that they were treated like 'coolies' are in the plantations of Ceylon and India. The article claimed that the Belgians were forced to work in munitions factories at wages much lower than English workers and that they were being subjected to rigorous and harsh criticism. The claims were made the more plausible because they were made by a neutral Swiss. The Belgian Department of Records investigated the conditions of Belgian workers in Britain and published a refutation of the claims in the German and Swiss newspapers.¹⁸⁷ Apart from the propaganda value of pamphlets like this, various books were published, mainly in London and New York, which had as their primary aim raising funds for refugee relief but have a propaganda value also. *Mrs Bunny's Refugee* is a children's book, probably directed toward children learning to read. The book tells the story of a family of rabbits, Mrs Bunny's family, who find a lost refugee boy, Marcel. The Bunnys take care of him until they can return him to his 'delighted Mother and sisters' and they '...all set off in the cart which was to carry them the safety.'¹⁸⁸ The Bunnys wave him off with a Belgian tricolour tied to a stick. The book is well illustrated. While there is a message in this little story, it is enhanced by the images which include an aerial dogfight in the background. One of the rabbits wears a scarf of the Belgian colours. *Me'ow Jones* was a book published in New York. This was primarily a children's book, telling the story of a Belgian refugee cat who found refuge in New York. The book was written by the manager of the 'Belgian Relief Fund' in New York. The author gives Me'ow Jones credit for 'doing his share, through the sale of his photographs, in helping raise more than two million dollars for the starving Belgian women and children'.¹⁸⁹ Books of this type performed two functions. One was raising funds for the support of Belgians. But within the stories themselves they carried messages, sometimes subtle and sometimes very direct. Me'ow gives an account of the day her family left home to become refugees:

As we were going out the gate a strange thing happened. The Schoolman next door, who ever since I could remember had spent evenings each week in Master's studio, started down his front walk. He wore a uniform and a sword. Pinned across his chest was a flag. It was

¹⁸⁶ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 2 Dec. 1916, no. 1224, cited in *The condition of the Belgian Workmen now refugees in England* (London, 1917), p. 3.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Angusine Macgregor, *Mrs. Bunny's Refugee* (London: Blackie, n.d.).

¹⁸⁹ Edward Branch Lyman, *Me'ow Jones, Belgian refugee cat* (New York, 1917).

not a Belgian flag. It was a German flag! Master had begun to speak to him. But the Schoolman turned away. Just then Star-Head [the neighbour's cat] appeared in the doorway and ran down the path towards her master crying piteously at being left alone. Suddenly her Master turned, picked her up by the ears, drew his sword and cut her head off.¹⁹⁰

Clearly there was a significant propaganda element in these books. The image of Mr Schoolman fits well with the accounts of German atrocities which were circulating at the time.

Despite the various reasons given for advocating support for Belgian refugees it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in Ireland, as in Britain, this was a humanitarian response to a great calamity. The *Church of Ireland Gazette* offered 'credit to our own people': 'Trades unions have subscribed to the wants of their fellow labourers; families have pinched and squeezed to enable them to give hospitality to the poor Belgians. Instances of this spirit might be multiplied indefinitely.'¹⁹¹ The Local Government Board, as mentioned previously, indicated that 'some were in princely surroundings, in others; shelter is afforded by the mud cabin.'¹⁹² It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this was a national response, a putting aside of differences and pulling together as one, in a major humanitarian gesture.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁹¹ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 8 Jan. 1915, p. 25.

¹⁹² *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, 400 [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 816.

Chapter 3 Captivity – ‘a side-show story’

‘...With the chronological end of the twentieth century in mind, a number of prominent historians turned their attention to the event that in the opinion of many constituted the primordial catastrophe of the twentieth century, namely World War 1... Still despite these significant recent additions to the historiography of World War 1, the story of captivity remained at best what literary historian Samuel Hynes called a ‘side-show story’...’¹

During the period of the First World War Ireland was no different to many other countries in having had its own ‘side show story’ of captivity. Ireland has shown itself to have considerable capacity to remember and commemorate. However, this side show, as appears to be the destiny of side shows, is selectively forgotten. During the war, Ireland housed three groups of captives. The first consisted of those who were interned or imprisoned as a result of nationalist activity associated with the Easter Rising. The other two groups had their freedoms curtailed as a result of the war. As with many other aspects of Irish historiography of the period the nationalist prisoners are remembered while those imprisoned because of the war are largely forgotten. This chapter examines the state’s effort to incarcerate certain groups, and the civilian mobilisation that surrounded wartime captivity. While the imprisonment of putative enemies might appear to be a matter entirely for the state, the actions and activities of civilians played a key role in captivity in Ireland during the war. Civilian activity in relation to captivity was on the one hand protagonistic and on the other humanistic. Understanding the nature of civilian mobilisation around captivity is in part dependent on understanding the state role in captivity.

War prisoners formed two groups generally known as military prisoners and civilian prisoners. Both groups became prisoners in Ireland because of state mobilisation in response to war. By examining the plight of these prisoners, this chapter will make a contribution to exposing this particular side show to the public gaze. The nature of a side show makes it difficult to give voice to the participants as the details of the show are largely forgotten. Fussell, in his analysis of the contribution of ‘fiction memoir’ to historiography, makes the point that such a contribution is not ‘accurate recall’ but rather ‘recovering moments’ while making a bigger point.² While clearly this chapter is not a work of ‘fiction memoir’, it will proceed by ‘recovering moments’, those moments

¹ Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War – Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford, 2002), p. 3.

that can be recovered from the void of unremembered history and use these to make a bigger point about mobilisation, memory and remembrance.

In the period leading up to the war, and following the outbreak of the conflict, advanced nationalists were busy courting Germany. Roger Casement undertook trips to Germany to buy arms and attempted to form an Irish Brigade among British army prisoners of war held in Belgium and Germany.³ Desmond Fitzgerald's accounts of conversations with Pearse and Plunkett in the GPO during the rising indicate that Pearse and Plunkett were willing to countenance the possibility of a German prince being installed as king of an independent Ireland. This was not an isolated thought as Ernest Blythe remembered the same idea being put forward by Plunkett and MacDonagh in January 1915.⁴ While advanced nationalists were developing an affinity with Germany, the same attitude was not reflected in the attitudes of many other Irish people. Shortly after the outbreak of war anti-German riots took place in Dublin as they did in many other parts of the United Kingdom. Civilians mobilised to attack several pork butcher shops during August 1914. Several thousand rioters gathered outside Lang's shop in Wexford Street, Dublin. Plate glass windows were broken, meats were scattered around the shop and a dressed pig was carried out of the shop by the mob.⁵ Retz's shop on the South Circular Road and Seezers, in Thomas Street, suffered a similar fate on the same night.⁶ Antipathy towards these particular Germans was not limited to the citizenry of the city but extended to those in positions of authority as well. Compensation claims were made against the Corporation of Dublin, Rathmines Urban District Council and Pembroke Urban District Council at the Dublin Sessions in October 1914 in respect of the damage incurred. Every claim was dismissed with no compensation for the traders. In one case, the Recorder, unable to conceal his prejudice, commented that the treatment meted out to the shopkeepers was 'mild compared to what occurred in Berlin'. In a second case the Recorder remarked that if the claimants had any rights at all, they were suspended during the conflict.⁷ The shopkeepers were regarded by the mob and by the Recorder as

² Paul Fussell, *The Great War and modern memory* (Oxford, 2000), pp 203-20.

³ Myles Dungan, *They shall not grow old: Irish soldiers and the Great War* (Dublin, 1997), p. 155.

⁴ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine* (London, 1973), pp 370-1.

⁵ Meat Traders Journal, 20 Aug. 1914 cited in Sue Gibbons, *German Pork Butchers in Britain* (Berkshire, 2002), p. 40.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Germans and therefore legitimate targets. This was despite the fact that Mr Lang had been living and trading in Ireland for twenty-three years, was married to an Irish woman and had Irish children. This did not spare him from the anti-German feeling that was abroad. The civilian reaction to those whom they regarded as Germans and therefore enemies was not confined to the riots on this particular night. 'German' shops were effectively boycotted. Sales of sausages from 'German' delicatessen shops dropped despite lowering of prices and two thirds of the custom in a 'German' restaurant was lost.⁸ Irish participation in anti-German activity was not confined to Dublin. Irish people were prominent in riots that took place outside a shop in a predominantly Irish area in the High Street of Keighley, Yorkshire. Apparently an Irishman entered the shop and asked for a pie without poison in it. In the ensuing riot which lasted for three hours, the shop was bombarded with stones and bottles and was eventually wrecked. After a time mounted police were called out along with the fire brigade. Several policemen were injured and the family of the butcher, Mr Andrassy, was taken to the police station for their own protection. The riot was eventually quietened by the parish priest, Father Russell, who advised the crowd that this was not the way to fight the Germans. 'If they wanted to fight their country's enemies they must join the colours at the recruiting office.'⁹ It is not known if many of the rioters took his advice.

Anti-German feeling was not limited to street rioting. The leading retailer Switzers, of Grafton Street, Dublin, forced an assistant, Mr Nanz, to resign, after Switzers signed an agreement with the recently formed Anti-German Union not to employ Germans. A customer had complained in the early months of the war that Switzers had in their employment an assistant of 'enemy nationality'.¹⁰ The action taken by Switzers is interesting, since we have seen, the Switzers were themselves of German extraction.¹¹ The action by the Switzers reflects the level of antagonism towards Germans or those believed to be Germans which was widespread throughout society. Large advertisements were published in a number of publications, including the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, promoting the Anti-German League.¹² The League set out to prevent

⁸ *Daily Call*, Oct. 1914 cited in Sue Gibbons, *German Pork Butchers in Britain*, p. 43.

⁹ *Meat Traders Journal*, 3 Sep. 1914 cited in Sue Gibbons, *German Pork Butchers in Britain*, p. 44.

¹⁰ Anne Haverty, *Elegant Times: Brown Thomas, a Dublin story* (Dublin, 1995), p. 60.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹² *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 30 Jul. 1915, pp 564-5.

the naturalisation of Germans as British citizens and to take protectionist policies in regard to German trade. The principal focus of the tirade launched by the League was the protection of British commerce. Among those listed as supporters in the advertisement was the Lord Mayor of Dublin. The advertisement for the League dismissed internment of Germans as a 'farical attempt' and referred to German workers in Britain in disparaging terms, emphasising their possible role as spies: '...the German waiter (a born eavesdropper, subsidised by Satan the Second) ...the German hairdresser (always a spy)...'¹³ No doubt such publications added to the antagonism experienced by Germans, Austrians and Hungarians in Ireland, and even by those Irish women who, by marriage, had become, by law, aliens.

The Regular Hotel Workers Union adopted a resolution in August 1914 urging patrons of hotels, clubs and restaurants in Dublin to ask to be served by attendants of English or Irish nationality in preference to those of German or Austrian nationality. The secretary of the Union submitted the letter to the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin. A motion was put to the Council that the receipt of the letter be noted in the minutes. The motion was carried.¹⁴

Alongside the anti-German feeling that was expressed by the civilian population in response to the outbreak of war, the government in London put in place a range of measures to address the perceived threats of war. These measures included legislative responses, military responses, recruitment responses and others. Among the perceived threats to the state were those posed by the entry of aliens into Britain and Ireland. The sense of threat was increased because aliens had been entering Britain and Ireland for some time and as a consequence there were populations which could be seen as having sympathy with the enemy. The alien population fell into two main groups: those officially referred to as 'enemy aliens' and those referred to as 'alien friends'. 'Enemy aliens' were subjects or citizens of countries with which Britain was at war. These included Germans and Austro-Hungarians and, later, Bulgarians and Turks.¹⁵ Alien friends were defined negatively – those who were not alien enemies could be regarded as alien friends. Enemy aliens were composed of two groups: civilians and military.

¹³ Ibid., pp 564-5.

¹⁴ *Minutes of the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin, 1914* (NLI: IR94133 D9, p. 407).

¹⁵ Aliens Restrictions Act, 1919.

There were several thousand civilian enemy aliens resident in Ireland at the outbreak of war¹⁶; in addition some 2,500 military prisoners of war were imprisoned in Ireland in the early months of the war. The perception of level of threat from aliens varied according to different categories of aliens and the provisions made reflected this. Arrangements for civilians and military prisoners varied, although they overlapped. Within the civilian group distinctions were made between those who were of military age and those who were not. It was feared if those of military age returned to their native country they may enlist or be conscripted. Others were too old or too young to fall into this category but still posed a potential threat of spying or other hostile activities if allowed to remain in Ireland or Britain. In addition, there were many British and Irish-born wives of aliens, who had lost their nationality on marriage, and were legally enemy aliens, although the perception of threat from this group was lesser.

Self mobilisation – humanitarian support for aliens

At the start of the war the Society of Friends in London had established the Emergency Committee for the Assistance of Germans, Austrians and Hungarians in Distress. At their October 1914 meeting, Quakers, in Dublin, under the leadership of Edith Webb, formed a similar body at their premises in Eustace Street.¹⁷ This committee functioned throughout the war. The work carried out by the committee was of a practical nature. Its members provided advice to the dependents of interned aliens to help them to survive their difficult circumstances. One way of doing this was by a circular letter issued to their members giving information on supporting prisoners' dependents. They observed that it was very difficult for any family entirely dependent on the government grant to manage for a long period without occasional help of one kind or another.¹⁸ The committee offered advice to their members on how to support the dependents of aliens observing that most of their work was concerned with visiting the women and children and seeking to help them with kindly sympathy.¹⁹ They advised on steps to take to obtain treatment when ill, on how to obtain maternity grants, clothing, rent, schooling,

¹⁶ The Constitutional Year Book 1916 (London, 1917), p. lxi.

¹⁷ First page of undated report (Society of Friends, mss 69/1/57).

¹⁸ Emergency Committee for the assistance for Germans, Austrians and Hungarian in Distress, Guidance for visitors to families of internees (Society of Friends, mss 69/1/13).

¹⁹ 'First page of undated report,' (Society of Friends, mss 69/1/57).

and repatriation. The work of the Society of Friends did not end with circulars. Their work in relation to 'enemy aliens' was so well known that the Commandants of Oldcastle Concentration Camp wrote to them on at least four occasions in the first eighteen months of the war in relation to assistance for prisoners in their care. The Society provided books, lamps and papers for Christmas decorations. James Webb negotiated with Booth Brothers Timbers Merchants (upper Steevens St, Dublin) to supply timber to the prisoners in Oldcastle camp for fretwork. The timber was supplied at a special price. The work of the committee was not confined to raising money for assistance. Georg Meifsner, a prisoner in Oldcastle, indicated that he had the money but not the means of obtaining a football. The Friends obtained the football which Meifsner duly paid for.²⁰ The Friends were also active visiting prisoners in Mountjoy Prison and provided reading matter in German to a number of prisoners there.²¹ Above all their self-mobilisation consisted of helping dependents become independent. Over the period of the war this committee and the Prisons Visitation Committee provided support, both material and emotional, to the prisoners in Oldcastle Camp and in Mountjoy Prison and to their families. While the scale of this mobilisation was small it is worthy of mention not for its size but for the willingness of people to mobilise. It is worth noting that Horgan emphasised the small numbers involved in the Easter Rising by describing them as 'a minority of a minority'. Despite the small size of the advanced nationalists group accounts of their actions have persisted and indeed been mythologized. Simply remembering the contribution of the Quakers might be enough.

Legislation

While the government had been reluctant in the past to place restrictions on aliens, 'spy-fever' was engendered by fear of war and the notion that all Germans could be enemy agents.²² Consequently the restrictions imposed in the Aliens Act (1905) were implemented and greatly reinforced by the enactment of new legislation. The day after the declaration of war the 1905 Act was amended by the Aliens Restrictions Act 1914,

²⁰ George W. Meifsner, prisoner of war, Oldcastle Co Meath, letter to 6 Eustace Street requesting a football, 4 Jan. 1915 (Society of Friends, mss 69/1/2).

²¹ Hannah Sheehy Skeffington, post card to Edith Webb regarding three Austrian or German POWs in Mountjoy unable to speak or read English and asking if they could be supplied with German reading matter, undated (Society of Friends, mss 69/1/40).

which was followed in turn by the introduction of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914. By introducing the Aliens Restrictions Act, the government gave itself the flexibility to respond to the perceived threats posed by aliens. The act itself did not contain specific controlling provisions; instead, it enabled orders to be made in response to changing conditions to control aliens in the event of war or national emergency.²³ The British attitude to aliens had been largely neutral up to the outbreak of war, with the exception of the response to Jews from Russia and Russian-administered Poland. This legislation represented a new departure with lasting effects. The war brought onto the statute books the most restrictive piece of legislation affecting aliens enacted in the United Kingdom. This highly restrictive act and its amending act, the Aliens Restrictions Act 1919, continued to be the most influential legislation affecting aliens for a large part of the twentieth century. The two acts remained on the statute books until 1971 in the United Kingdom. Their restrictive nature was such that it was seen as necessary to review them annually. In Ireland the acts remained on the statute books until replaced by the Aliens Act 1935²⁴. During the Dáil debates in 1935 it was argued that the new law was too restrictive. De Valera gave assurances that it would only be used in times of emergency.²⁵ The basis of independent Ireland's restrictive legislation on aliens was the 1914 act.

The restrictions imposed by this legislation can be seen in the orders which were made under the act. Some orders determined where aliens could disembark and where they could live; others required registration and provided penalties for not registering. Restrictions were also imposed on attempts to change one's name. The entry and movement of aliens was controlled by a series of orders designating approved ports and prohibited areas. The only approved port in Ireland was Dublin Port. An alien attempting to enter Ireland at a port other than Dublin could be detained and the master of the ship that he disembarked from could be regarded as having aided and abetted the offence. A range of areas were designated as prohibited and enemy aliens were not permitted to live in these areas or enter without permission. For the most part these were

²² Yvonne Cresswell (ed.) *Living with the wire: Civilian Internment in the Isle of Man during the two World Wars* Douglas, Isle of Man, 1994), p. 7.

²³ Aliens Restriction Act 1914.

²⁴ An act to provide for the control of aliens and for other matters relating to aliens, 1935 (1935/14 [IFS]).

towns with a port or areas adjacent to a port. Prohibited areas included all of the counties of Dublin, Cork, Kerry and parts of Antrim, Donegal, Down, Londonderry and Waterford. Orders were made in relation to the registration of aliens and for the imposition of penalties for the breach of such orders and for a range of other matters.²⁶ By 1916 the range of orders was so extensive that they were incorporated into the Aliens Restriction (Consolidation Order) 1916.

Detention of enemy aliens

Prior to 4 August 1914 no special provisions had been made for those of foreign nationality living in Britain and Ireland. Several departments of state had an interest in the internment of the many thousands of alien enemies; as a result a committee was appointed and called the Civilian Internment Camps Committee. The membership of the committee was drawn from these departments of state. Their role was to organize the arrangements for interning non-combatant alien enemies.²⁷ By the end of August plans were well advanced for the internment and treatment of enemy subjects. The War Office had issued the location of eight permanent places of internment throughout the United Kingdom, including Templemore in Ireland. There were four temporary camps including one in Dublin²⁸, at Arbour Hill²⁹. From the middle of August male civilian aliens of military age from the countries with which Britain was at war were detained first at Arbour Hill³⁰ and then, as provision was made for them from the end of August, at Templemore.³¹ As numbers increased and there was a need to accommodate military prisoners of war in Templemore, from October 1914 the detainees were moved to Oldcastle Workhouse, Co. Meath.

²⁵ Peter Finlay, 'Immigration and Citizenship law – need for reform' in *Law Society of Ireland Gazette*, 1995, lxxxix, 9.

²⁶ Consolidation Order, 1914; Change of Name Order, 1914; Belgian Refugees Order, 1914; Armenians &c Order 1915; Amendment Order 1915; Seamen Order 1915.

²⁷ B.E. Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War* (Douglas, Isle of Man, 1922).

²⁸ Instructions relative to the internment and treatment of enemy subjects, 31 Aug. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 15091).

²⁹ Dublin Metropolitan Police Report, 1 Apr. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5565).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Police memo noting the detention of Harry Premperl at Templemore (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5250).

Detention at Arbour Hill was a temporary measure while arrangements were being made for a more permanent place of detention. Richmond Barracks in Templemore had been built in 1809 as part of the increasing militarisation of Ireland. However, by the outbreak of war in 1914, the barracks had been unused for three years. Extensive work was carried out on the barracks to make it suitable as a detention centre. The squares were divided into compounds surrounded with barbed wire. Observation towers with machine guns and search lights were erected.³² At the end of August the first batch of fifty civilian detainees were brought to Templemore with a guard from the 3rd Leinster Regiment. Forty-five of these came from Cork, the balance from Dublin.³³ This first group arrived almost unnoticed.³⁴ Subsequent groups were of sufficient importance in Templemore that most of the townspeople turned out to see them.³⁵ The extent of the wartime demonisation of ordinary people of German extraction can be seen in the reports of their detention in Templemore. Periodical reports suggest that the locals were surprised that the prisoners were ordinary human beings; in fact, from comments in the crowd there seems to have been doubts as to whether they were expecting human beings at all.³⁶ These were civilian prisoners, many of whom had been living in Ireland and carrying on a normal working life for many years. The outbreak of war and state mobilisation in its wake had raised doubts in the minds of the general citizenry about the humanity of Germans. Within weeks the number detained had grown to three hundred. On 10 September 1914 the first military prisoners were brought to Templemore. Over the following week some 300 German and Austrian prisoners arrived. These included 200 prisoners brought by special train. Among these were sailors from the *König Luise* a minelayer which had been sunk by the Royal Navy during August.³⁷ Some of the prisoners had had the experience of being rescued from the sea twice by the British Navy.³⁸ By the 20th September some eight hundred prisoners were detained at Templemore; some three hundred of these were civilians, the

³² *Royal Irish Constabulary Magazine*, Oct. 1914, p. 353.

³³ *Tipperary Star*, 5 Sep. 1914, p. 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Royal Irish Constabulary Magazine*, Oct. 1914, p. 353.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Pádraig Ó Mathúna, 'German P.O.W mail between Templemore and Germany 1914 and 1915' in H. Bergdolt, Hans Bergdolt, F. Holzmüller, O. Jung, , H.G. Moxter, P. Ó Mathúna, J. Schaaf, B. Warren, *75 Jahre irische Briefmarke* (Templemore College Archive).

³⁸ *Royal Irish Constabulary Magazine*, Oct. 1914, p. 353.

remainder military prisoners. Speculation was already building locally that the civilian prisoners would be moved out of Templemore to make room for military prisoners. It was rumoured that the civilians would be moved to the Isle of Wight.³⁹ However, on 1 October 1914 the War Office in London enquired of the Under Secretary in Dublin Castle if there were workhouses in Ireland that could be used for the internment of prisoners of war and what numbers of prisoners each of the workhouses could accommodate.⁴⁰ Sir Henry Robinson, vice-president of the Local Government Board, reported that about thirty workhouses were available and that they could accommodate a total of about 10,000 prisoners. He helpfully suggested that land around the workhouses could be used to erect sheds to hold larger numbers of prisoners.⁴¹ The War Office, on behalf of the Army Council, responded by asking for a list of workhouses and expressed particular interest in workhouses which could hold one thousand prisoners of war with the necessary guard and staff.⁴² In order to gather specific details the War Office supplied an official form to be completed by the Local Government Board. Others at the War Office clearly had particular practical issues in mind and looked for information regarding location and the services at each location. They were interested in transportation issues and in particular the distance to the nearest railway station. They were also interested in facilities – the existing methods of lighting and heating the different buildings, whether water was laid on and what the sanitary arrangements were. They indicated some concern for the welfare of the prisoners with questions about the availability of exercise grounds and offering a calculation for the number of prisoners that could be housed based on an area of 40 square feet per prisoner.

By 20 October the Local Government Board had provided a list of sixteen workhouses which were available for the internment of prisoners.⁴³ However, the Local Government Board also reported that while workhouses were available, they did not meet the specifications set by the War Office. None of the workhouses had been built to

³⁹ *Tipperary Star*, 20 Sep. 1914, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Letter from War Office, London, to Under Secretary, regarding availability of workhouses (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 17503).

⁴¹ Chief Secretary's Office memorandum, 'Places of Internment', 6 Oct. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 17718).

⁴² War Office, London, to Under Secretary, regarding list of workhouses 12 Oct. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 18198).

⁴³ Under Secretary, to War Office, London, list of workhouses available for internment, 23 Oct. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 18544).

accommodate one thousand people; moreover, so many changes had occurred since they had been built, with the addition of some buildings and the demolition of others, that it was difficult to determine the precise number of prisoners that any workhouse might hold.⁴⁴ In addition to workhouses not accommodating the numbers required by the War Office, it is likely that the numbers provided were overstated. The board explained this by reference to the age of the workhouses and the fact that modern requirements would suggest that in most cases the workhouses could accommodate smaller numbers than they were built for.⁴⁵ Nonetheless the report suggested that provision might be made for around 8,000 prisoners. The Local Government Board's willingness to provide workhouses was undermined by competing demands for accommodation. Some workhouses were already being used to accommodate Belgian refugees and others had been requested for the training of recruits. However, the military were clearly impatient to find accommodation. Before these enquiries were completed through official channels, on 30 September a military officer from Dublin visited and inspected the Oldcastle workhouse to ascertain if it was suitable for military purposes.⁴⁶ The workhouse, which had opened in 1842, was seeing a decline in demand for the relief of poverty. However, there remained some residents in the workhouse who had to be accommodated elsewhere to allow the military take over the whole building. The master of the workhouse reported that all the inmates and patients were removed from the workhouse on 13 October 1914. A range of preparations had to be made for the evacuation of inmates and for the entry of the military to the workhouse. A committee was appointed to make arrangements for the services which were being moved from the workhouse. They secured accommodation for the boardroom, office and an ambulance house at the Naper Arms Hotel in Oldcastle. The master, matron, nurses and porter were paid an allowance in lieu of accommodation and rations.⁴⁷ However, the evacuation of inmates was not without its problems. Under the terms of the Poor Law no pauper could be placed in any union other than his own. This provision ensured that the responsibility for supporting the destitute lay with the local community. As a consequence of the Poor Law provisions, moving inmates from Oldcastle to other unions was illegal. The Chief

⁴⁴ Local Government Board to Under Secretary, 31 Oct. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 19287).

⁴⁵ (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 18544).

⁴⁶ Oldcastle Union Minute Book, 14 Oct. 1914 (Meath County Archive: BG133A/89, p. 4).

⁴⁷ Oldcastle Union Minute Book, 12 Oct. 1914 (Meath County Archive: BG133A/89).

Secretary, Augustine Birrell, introduced a bill to the Commons to regularise this situation. The Chief Secretary, noting that Ireland 'enjoyed a plethora of empty workhouses', reported that he had provided the military authorities with a list of thirty workhouses with less than one hundred inhabitants. This action caused concerns to at least one Member of Parliament that Birrell's action would enable the Irish Local Government Board to alter the whole of the Poor Law in Ireland.⁴⁸

By early January 1915 several hundred prisoners were detained in Oldcastle.⁴⁹ Apparently the Germans held a celebration on New Year's Eve and they saluted the New Year with the singing of patriotic songs. The locals were impressed with the '...harmonised singing of the Germans and especially of the one who possesses a fine tenor voice of extraordinary power and sweetness'.⁵⁰ In the six months between June 1915 and January 1916 a further one hundred and thirty-five men were committed to Oldcastle camp.⁵¹ Among these was Aloys Fleischmann, later Professor of Music at University College Cork.⁵² The internees were drawn from eighteen different counties throughout Ireland and one man was transferred from Knockaloe Prisoner of War camp, in the Isle of Man. By July 1916 there were five hundred and seventy nine prisoners at the Oldcastle camp, and all but one were civilians. Of these 468 were German and 110 were Austrian.⁵³

Prior to the entry of the United States into the war, in April 1917, prison camps in Ireland and Britain were visited by a representative of the American Ambassador. Visits were made to Oldcastle by the special attaché in charge of the German Division in the Embassy, Mr Edward G. Lowry, in June 1915 and July 1916. Lowry's reports are short, a little over a page long, and deal in the main with physical conditions in the camp. The main sections in the report deal with sleeping accommodation, sanitary arrangements, infirmary, kitchen arrangements, work, exercise, wants by camp and observations. The picture painted by the report is of a contented group in the camp. The prisoners were

⁴⁸ *Freeman's Journal* 26 Nov. 1914, p. 6.

⁴⁹ *Meath Chronicle*, 16 Jan. 1915.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Commandant Oldcastle Camp, 'Return of alien enemies committed to Oldcastle Detention Camp', 23 Feb. 1916 (NAI: CSORP, 1916: 3420).

⁵² Commandant Oldcastle Camp, 'Return of enemy aliens committed to Oldcastle Detention Camp since 1st June 1915' (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5285).

involved in many activities: tailoring, boot-making and repairing shops in addition to wood-carving, toy making and the study of languages. He noted the addition of two new recreation huts where prisoners gave concerts and dramatic performances and had formed two orchestras. A large exercise field had been added since the last visit and the prisoners were playing football at the time of the inspection. Gardens had been allocated and prisoners grew flowers and vegetables. There was a one-sentence mention of 'wants of the camp': 'a number of matters relating to the routine of the camp were brought up for consideration including the use of exercise grounds, parcels, lost luggage &c, and were all taken up with the commandant, who said they would be given immediate attention.'⁵⁴ However there is evidence from three sources to indicate that the 'well cared for' impression given by this report is not entirely true. These are an autobiographical account from a prisoner,⁵⁵ the accounts of the work of the Society of Friends,⁵⁶ and the accounts of Irish nationalist prisoners in Frongoch Prison camp.⁵⁷ Colonel Lushcombe, who was commandant of Oldcastle at the time of the 1916 report, was subsequently Commandant of Stratford Camp in East London. In a personal account of his experience of internment in Stratford, Richard Noschke, an internee, tells of the ill treatment in that camp under Col Lushcombe. He describes conditions in the camp:

'... But the roof of this old factory was so bad, as soon as it rained it came through as a siff (sic) but there was no chance of escaping it as there was no room and I had to sitt (sic) many a night with a jam pot to catch the rain, or I would have been drowned in bed. The floor was of stone or cement, in places full of holes or old machine parts, the old transmission and wheels were hanging still in theyr (sic) places, all surrounded with barbed wire. The sparrows were nesting in many corners and let theyr (sic) droppings on our heads and meals. The whole looked a sort of 'chamber of horrors' ...'⁵⁸

Colonel Lushcombe's answer to complaints about these conditions in the camp was to tell the prisoners how good they had it compared to English prisoners in Germany. When Noschke's complaints made little progress with the commandant, he took them instead to the American Embassy representative. The reply he, in turn, received was

⁵³ *Reports of visits of inspection made by officials of the United States embassy to various internments camps in the United Kingdom*, 39 [cd. 946] HC 1916, xv, 41.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Richard Noschke, 'Diary of Richard Noschke' in Anglo-German Family History Society, *An insight into civilian internment in Britain during WW1* (Berkshire, England, 1998).

⁵⁶ (Society of Friends, Dublin mss 69).

⁵⁷ W.J. Brennan-Whitmore, *With the Irish in Frongoch* (Dublin, 1917).

⁵⁸ Richard Noschke, 'Diary of Richard Noschke', p. 12.

'...it is war time. I get this kind of complaints in every camp...'.⁵⁹ While Lowry's reports mention the many recreational activities that were available to the prisoners, an examination of the reports of the Society of Friends indicates that prisoners were dependent on civilian goodwill for basic comforts. This will be detailed more extensively below. The credibility of Lowry's report is challenged by Irish nationalist prisoners. Frongoch prison camp in Bala, North Wales, accommodated 1,800 German military prisoners and about 1,000 Irish nationalist prisoners after the 1916 rising. Lowry's reports of his visit to Frongoch on 11 April 1916 paint a similar picture to his report on Oldcastle. Irish prisoners tell a different story, suggesting that the camp was unfit for human habitation.⁶⁰ Irish prisoners were shocked when they saw thirty German prisoners yoked to a 'big four wheeled horse lorry' which was being used to collect gravel for road making.⁶¹ The Irish prisoners offered to make representations on the Germans' behalf but their offer was declined by the German prisoners on the basis that the work that they were undertaking was to improve conditions in the camp. While Lowry's apparently non-partisan accounts give the impression that conditions in the camps were generally good, the credibility of Lowry's reports is challenged by the accounts of internee, Richard Noschke. While it might be argued that Noschke, as a German, was not an impartial observer, it must be remembered that he had been working in the one job in England for twenty years, was married to an English wife, and had a son enlisted in the British army. The credibility of Noschke's claims are reinforced by the reality that Noschke had much invested in his English life, in addition to which he was prepared to voice his complaints at the highest level available to him. This was not a man sniping at the enemy. The Society of Friends had no reason to snipe either. The records of the Friends made no attempt to pass judgement on the treatment of Germans; instead, they responded to need. Their actions to support prisoners in the camp and their families revealed circumstances of dire need. Lastly, while it could be argued that Irish Prisoners had plenty of reason to undermine the British by taking the side of German prisoners, the specificity of the accounts of the circumstances of the Germans and their willingness to state these publicly give the accounts a ring of

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Nationalist prisoners to Alfred Byrne M.P., 11 Oct. 1916 (Military Archive, Dublin CD45/4/11).

⁶¹ W.J. Brennan-Whitmore, *With the Irish in Frongoch*, p. 65.

authenticity. The combined effect of these three sources is to strongly challenge the accounts of Lowry.

While civilians had been interned from the outbreak of war, further steps were taken to control all enemy aliens from the summer of 1915. This action was the official response to new rounds of civilian anti-German riots which had occurred after the sinking of the *Lusitania* by a German submarine.⁶² The Home Office in London requested all police forces in England and Wales and the Chief Secretary in Ireland to provide particulars of all alien enemies on the Registers who were not already interned.⁶³ This was the first step in a process of deporting enemy aliens other than males of military age, women of British birth and persons who had obtained an exemption.⁶⁴ Enemy aliens could obtain an exemption from internment but this was often a slow and protracted affair.

As part of the invigorated campaign to remove enemy aliens from society the Dublin Metropolitan Police and the Royal Irish Constabulary made returns of aliens at large in May 1915. There were over twelve hundred enemy aliens living within their communities still.⁶⁵ In June 1915 the British government moved to enforce its policy of deporting or repatriating alien enemies other than males of military age.⁶⁶ Enemy aliens had been categorised under three headings: repatriation cases, internment cases and British-born wives. The policy had been to repatriate or intern all enemy aliens with some exceptions. Males of military age, Germans and Turks aged 17-55, and Austrians and Hungarians aged 17-50 were to be interned.⁶⁷ Repatriation was the preferred option for those other than males of military age. The exceptions included British-born women who lost their nationality through marriage, men of seafaring experience or skilled mechanics or chemists. Among those who were exempt from deportation or internment were a number of members of religious orders. While explicit accounts of these arrangements are difficult to find, there are short references in official documents which indicate that these arrangements were made. 'Fr Müller, German Professor at Rockwell

⁶² Yvonne Cresswell (ed.) *Living with the wire*, p. 7.

⁶³ Under Secretary of State Home Office, telegram to Under Secretary, Dublin Castle, 28 May 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 8570).

⁶⁴ Home Office, circular to Chief Constables, 12 June 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915, 19792).

⁶⁵ Returns of Registration officers, May 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 8570); see appendix 3.

⁶⁶ Home Office, notice, 12 June 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 11224).

College [was granted a permit] to come to Dublin for medical treatment'.⁶⁸ Three Alsatian students arrived at the African Missions College in Cork.⁶⁹ Several other clergymen and religious brothers are listed among those exempt.⁷⁰ If the Chief Constable considered that the continuance of the aliens in this country was of advantage to British interest, or 'if the alien was technically of alien nationality for example German or Austro-Hungarian but was a member of a friendly 'race' or 'community' such as Alsations, Lorrainers, Danes, Italians, Czechs or other Slavs an exception could be made'.⁷¹ Aliens of enemy nationality had to make an application for exemption if they did not wish to be deported or interned. Applications forms to apply for exemption were issued in early July 1915 with a return date not later than 17 July 1915. Women of British birth were not to be served with the forms unless their sympathies were likely to be injurious to the national interest if they stayed. Nonetheless the police maintained lists of these women. By early November 1915 the applications for exemption had been dealt with by the Advisory Committee on Repatriation.⁷² Arrangements were previously put in place to support the deportation through London and from there to the port of Tilbury.⁷³ The police were instructed to check the registers for any residue of enemy aliens who had not been exempted. They were further instructed to give such aliens fourteen days to leave the country.⁷⁴ As a result the numbers of prisoners detained in Oldcastle increased after May 1915. In November 1915, another effort was made to pursue any remaining residue of alien enemies who had neither left the country nor applied for exemption.⁷⁵ In December 1915 there were eighty-eight 'British born wives' listed in the Dublin Metropolitan Police area. This list included Mary Vogelsang, who features in the case study below. A subsequent report in

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Fr Müller, Request by a German national for permission to travel from Roscrea College to Dublin for medical attention (NAI: CSORP, 1917: 30899).

⁶⁹ Alsatian students, application on behalf of three students to enter the African Missionaries College in Cork (NAI: CSORP. 1916: 17972;18275;18521).

⁷⁰ Dublin Metropolitan Police, Enemy aliens in the Dublin Metropolitan Police District, 24 Dec. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 21838).

⁷¹ Home office to Chief Constable, Repatriation of Alien Enemies, 1 Nov. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 6685).

⁷² Home Office, circular from to Chief Constables, 1 Nov. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915, 19792).

⁷³ Home Office, circular from to Chief Constables, 5 Jul. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915, 19792).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Home Office to Chief Constable, 1 Nov. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 3420).

1917 shows that while the number of German males at large in the RIC area in June 1915 was one hundred and twenty-five, this figure had dropped to seventy-nine by January 1916. The number of German females had dropped from one hundred and seventy-three to ninety-four in the same period. Eighty-three of these women were British born and therefore exempt.⁷⁶ Clearly the policy of internment and repatriation continued apace. Some aliens found other ways of becoming exempt. Josephine Debes appears on an exemption list in 1915; however by 1917 Josephine Debes, who was a nun in Mount Sackville, 'applied to be recognised as French instead of German'⁷⁷. By April 1918 the Chief Secretary's office acknowledged the decision to close Oldcastle Camp and the prisoners were transferred to other camps, mainly to Knockaloe Camp on the Isle of Man.⁷⁸

Military Prisoners

When civilian prisoners were moved from Templemore to Oldcastle in October 1914, military prisoners remained behind. At this time there were close to one thousand prisoners in the camp. A large group of four hundred prisoners, including a number of officers, had been carried on a steamer, *The Barry*, a ship of the Bristol Channel Ports, to the North Wall Port in Dublin at the end of September. The prisoners were transported by train to Templemore where they were marched from the railway station to the camp. A number of wounded soldiers were carried from the station to the camp by car.⁷⁹ The prisoners had been taken at various engagements in France and Belgium. Steamers carrying similar numbers continued to arrive.⁸⁰ In late November a further group of over four hundred prisoners taken at Aisne, were transferred by steamer from Aldershot to the North Wall.⁸¹ Within a few weeks the numbers had risen to over 2,000. The local reaction to these prisoners varied considerably. As mentioned earlier, locals experienced some shock at initially discovering that the much-denigrated Germans were actually human beings. Newspaper coverage dwelled on the appearance of the

⁷⁶ Dublin Metropolitan Police, return of enemy aliens at large, 2 Mar. 1917 (NAI: CSORP, 1917: 5285).

⁷⁷ Josephine Debes, application from a nun in Mount Sackville to be recognised as French rather than German. (NAI: CSORP, 1917: 1419).

⁷⁸ Chief Secretary to War Office, 20 Apr. 1918 (NAI: CSORP, 1918: 11769).

⁷⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 23 Sep. 1914, p. 3.

⁸⁰ *Irish Times*, 21 Oct. 1914, p. 9.

⁸¹ *Tipperary Star*, 14 Nov. 1914, p. 7.

prisoners, noting on some occasions that they were men of fine physique while on another occasion the prisoners appeared crestfallen, war-worn and travel stained.⁸² The arrival of the prisoners added to the town's prospects. Newspaper coverage suggested that the prisoners made Templemore more famous than it had ever been, encouraging tourists to travel to Templemore to see its new cosmopolitan inhabitants. Prisoners were being paid the same allowance they would have received if still at war, and most of this money was being spent in a shop which a local shopkeeper had set up in the prison yard.⁸³ It appears that the local population overcame its initial notion that Germans were not human and were taking full advantage of the notoriety and economic advantage that the prisoners were bringing to Templemore. The townspeople had for a number of years been trying to have the barracks reoccupied.⁸⁴

While numbers of prisoners arrived in Templemore wounded, only one died of his wounds while in Templemore. Some accounts of his death point to diabetes.⁸⁵ These accounts are not necessarily inconsistent, as diabetes sufferers often succumb to injuries which would be non-fatal for non-sufferers. The prisoner was buried with military honours. A firing party of the Leinster Regiment escorted the funeral. The Prussian guard formed a guard of honour and the coffin was draped in the German colours. A large group of local people gathered at the gates of the camp to view the funeral. As the dead prisoner was a Catholic, the funeral was met by the parish priest of Templemore, Father Kiely, who read the prayers at the grave side. German soldiers sang hymns and three volleys were fired by the firing party and the last post was sounded. Following their custom, each of the German soldiers threw three handfuls of clay into the grave. Four wreaths of flowers with ribbons in the German colours were placed on the grave.⁸⁶ Subsequently, a second prisoner, Private L. Spelleberg, from the 212th regiment, died of food poisoning as a result of eating German sausage that had been kept too long.⁸⁷ Spelleberg, a Protestant, was buried at the Church of Ireland graveyard. The funeral was described as being 'impressive'. Over five hundred comrades attended the funeral of the young man. One of the prisoners played the organ. The usual honours of the firing party

⁸² *Freeman's Journal*, 23 Sep. 1914, p. 3.

⁸³ *Tipperary Star*, 10 Oct. 1914, p. 8.

⁸⁴ *Royal Irish Constabulary Magazine*, Oct. 1914, p. 353.

⁸⁵ *Royal Irish Constabulary Magazine*, Dec. 1914, p. 55.

⁸⁶ *Tipperary Star*, 29 Nov. 1914, p. 7.

⁸⁷ *Royal Irish Constabulary Magazine*, Mar. 1915, p. 158.

and the playing of the last post were observed.⁸⁸ Both bodies were re-interred in the German National Cemetery in Glencree, Co. Wicklow, after the Second World War. Some local sentiment for the German prisoners was shown by a local man who asked the German Graves Commission to leave the gravestone as a marker in St Mary's cemetery and offered to maintain the grave.⁸⁹ The Commission agreed to the request.

Prisoners were outside of the barracks frequently. While in Templemore, the soldiers undertook daily walks in the countryside and climbed the Devils Bit Mountain. They undertook Church Parade on Sundays, the Catholics marching to the Catholic Church and the Protestants to the Church of Ireland. Prisoners took a car to the local post office to collect mail. On all of the trips they were escorted by soldiers from the Leinster regiment. The prisoners refer to this exercise in a poem inscribed on the collar bone of a cow which they undertook in Templemore. They refer to the quality of the food in Templemore somewhat disparagingly:

...But even if we grow old,
We shall never forget,
The splendid food, both hot and cold,
We got at Templemore.
In the morning for breakfast,
And the evening as well,
We generally got water and sugar,
Always clean in the trough.
At midday fatty soup,
And plenty of bones as well,
Each day a quarter loaf,
What more do you want.
But everything is amiss,
And what I told you of the food,
Is merely a fairytale,
we've gone to bed hungry.⁹⁰

The poem is in marked contrast to local accounts of the quality Tipperary beef provided to the prisoners.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 158.

⁸⁹ German War Graves Commission to Mr William Larkin, 12 Aug. 1959 reproduced in H. Bergdolt, Hans Bergdolt, F. Holz Müller, O. Jung, H.G. Moxter, P. Ó Mathúna, J. Schaaf, B. Warren, *75 Jahre irische Briefmarke*, p. 8.

⁹⁰ *Leigh Chronicle*, 5 Feb. 1915, p. 4.

⁹¹ *Tipperary Star*, 10 Oct. 1914, p. 8.

Departure from Templemore

By early 1915 plans were underway to move the prisoners out of Templemore to the British mainland. There are a variety of explanations for the move. The explanation favoured in English newspapers was that the sanitary facilities in the barracks were not up to the required standard and that the barracks was condemned.⁹² However, RIC accounts suggest that the barracks was required for training purposes.⁹³ The camp was used as a training centre for Irish recruits, including the Munster Fusiliers and Leinster Regiments.⁹⁴ Another explanation for moving the prisoners is that the authorities were concerned at the rise of Irish nationalism with the formation of the Irish Volunteers and feared that local nationalists might attack the barracks and release the prisoners in the hope that the prisoners would support them in attacking the British.⁹⁵ This account is given some credibility by the evidence given to the Royal Commission of Enquiry into the shooting of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington by Captain Bowen-Colthurst. In justifying the shooting, Bowen-Colthurst referred to rumours that were circulating that 600 German prisoners at Oldcastle had been released and armed and were marching on Dublin.⁹⁶ Clearly, the possibility of German prisoners in Ireland supporting a rebellion was a concern to the authorities. This fear may have been accentuated by Roger Casement's visit to Germany in an attempt to secure the support of Irish prisoners of war in Germany for the formation of an Irish Brigade which could take part in the fight for Irish freedom.⁹⁷ Bowen-Colthurst claim was not without foundation. An account by Sean McEntee of preparations for the Rising claims that Donal O'Hannigan, an IRB man, met Pearse two weeks before the Rising to receive instructions. The instructions concerned plans for the Volunteers in west Dublin and Meath. As part of the mobilisation, volunteers from the Fingal Battalion and from Kildare were to form a ring around Dublin. O'Hannigan was to proceed to Oldcastle to release the German prisoners there. Pearse believed that these included German reservists, among whom were men with artillery experience. The plan was to use the German reservists' artillery

⁹² *Leigh Chronicle*, 5 Feb. 1915, p. 4.

⁹³ *Royal Irish Constabulary Magazine*, Mar. 1915, p. 158.

⁹⁴ John Reynolds, *History of the Garda College* (Templemore College Museum, n.d.), p. 8.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹⁶ *Weekly Irish Times, Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook, Easter 1916, 1917 issue* (Dublin, 1917), p. 212.

⁹⁷ Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement* (London, 1973), p. 279.

experience to man an artillery consignment coming from Germany and captured British artillery from Athlone.⁹⁸ While these accounts refer to the release of prisoners from Oldcastle rather than Templemore there can be little doubt if several thousand battle-hardened military prisoners-of-war were housed in Templemore at the time of the Rising they would represent a much greater contribution to the Rising than the civilian internees in Oldcastle.

Whatever the reason for moving the prisoners, Templemore was cleared by March 1915. Nearly two thousand prisoners were moved to the camp at Leigh, outside Manchester. They undertook the return journey by train to the North Wall and by steamer to Holyhead and again by train to Leigh. The first group of 360 prisoners arrived in Leigh on 4 February 1915. The fifth and last batch arrived on Friday 19 February, which brought the total number transferred from Templemore to Leigh to 1,855.

Treatment of aliens

While arrangements were being made for the detention of 'enemy subjects', the War Office was busy issuing instructions 'regarding the treatment of enemy subjects'.⁹⁹ Specific instructions were provided in relation to postal arrangements, visitors, newspapers, telegraphic addresses, censorship, and transfer of prisoners, releases and deaths and the registration of prisoners. Considerable discretion was permitted to camp commandants but nonetheless detailed instructions were offered. While the commandants had discretion as to what literature was supplied to prisoners, they were explicitly instructed that prisoners should not be allowed access to any newspapers published during the war.¹⁰⁰ Despite this the Germans had good access to news: the

⁹⁸ Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War 1 and partition* (London, 1998), pp 130-1.

⁹⁹ Instructions relative to the internment and treatment of enemy subjects 25 Oct. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 18924); War Office to The General Officer, Commanding-in-Chief removing facilities for receipt and despatch of letters from German prisoners (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 15904); Instructions relative to the internment and treatment of enemy subjects, 5 Sep. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 15395); War Office to The General Officer, Commanding-in-Chief notifying arrangements for internment of officer prisoners (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 15091).

¹⁰⁰ Instructions relative to the internment and treatment of enemy subjects, 31 Aug. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 15091).

prisoners in the Oldcastle camp were aware, for example, of the sinking of the British ship 'Formidable' before the soldiers in the camp were.¹⁰¹ Prisoners moving from one camp to another may have provided the alternative to newspapers as a means of gathering news. One internee, Noschke, suspected that the internees were the most informed community in the land.¹⁰²

At the end of August 1914, the General Post Office had not finalised postal arrangements but the rules on censorship were quite explicit and could not be relaxed without reference to the War Office.¹⁰³ Prisoners' letters were restricted in volume but the level of restriction was at the discretion of the local commandant. They were required to write in English if they could do so and were discouraged from writing in other languages by being told that lengthy letters in foreign languages would be subjected to much delay. All letters sent to a prisoner would carry the sender's name and address and in the event of this being missing the letter was to be destroyed, but the envelope given to the prisoner to enable him to identify the handwriting of the sender. Censors were particularly warned to be on the watch for letters with false names and addresses. Censors were also warned to look for 'ciphers, code, unintelligible marks or signs or shorthand in letters' and forward these to the Postal Censor at the War Office. Censors were also advised of techniques used to evade censorship such as writing under stamps.¹⁰⁴ These rules applied to Irish nationalist prisoners in Frongoch, who for a time were being treated as prisoners of war. Irish-language books which were sent to the prisoners were directed to the War Office censor in London. Many of the books were never returned to the prisoners but a number of them turned up on second-hand book stalls in London.¹⁰⁵

Specific precautions were taken in relation to the movement of prisoners. The transfer of prisoners could only take place with the authorisation of the War Office and all despatches of prisoners were to be made early in the day to ensure that no prisoner was travelling after dark. The numbers of prisoners moving at a time was to be restricted and movement of numbers in excess of one hundred was to be avoided. Prisoners were

¹⁰¹ *Meath Chronicle*, 9 Jan. 1915.

¹⁰² Richard Noschke, 'Diary of Richard Noschke', p. 13.

¹⁰³ Instructions relative to the internment and treatment of enemy subjects, 31 Aug. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 15091).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

searched before being despatched to a place of interment and all possible weapons were taken away.¹⁰⁶

Self-interest

Previous reference has been made to the welcome that was afforded to Belgian refugees arriving in Ireland at this time. It was noted that some people were not beyond taking advantage of this situation. The same appears to be true in relation to the enemy aliens. Roscommon Town Commissioners took advantage of the presence of 'enemy aliens' to undertake an initiative on the town's behalf. The commissioners made an appeal to the Lord Lieutenant to make Roscommon town the headquarters for the County Militia instead of Boyle. In support of their appeal they cited the remoteness of Boyle compared to the facilities at Roscommon town – 'a disused barracks in perfect repair, a first-class water supply, ample camping ground with facility for a rifle range. It is centrally situated and of easy access to populous parts of the county'.¹⁰⁷ Military Headquarters responded that the request would be borne in mind in the event of a move of the Depot from Boyle being considered and suggested that the Town Commissioners might offer the old barracks to the Belgian Refugee Committee who were looking for accommodation for refugees. Not content to leave their initiative there the town commissioners again wrote to the Lord Lieutenant two weeks later, and emphasised how their population had mobilised for war. They pointed out to him that Roscommon had 'already sent to the seat of war more than the due proportion of her male population and had suffered severely by the withdrawal from the town of so many wage earners'. They drew the Lord Lieutenant's attention to the fact that Roscommon possessed 'many suitable sites for the formation of a concentration camp' and pointed out that the formation of this camp 'would fire a great fillip to recruiting besides being a great help to the struggling shopkeepers of the town'.¹⁰⁸ The town commissioners of Roscommon clearly saw greater benefit to the town in providing a 'concentration camp' than in providing a refugee centre. Roscommon was not the only place that opportunities were

¹⁰⁵ W.J. Brennan-Whitmore, *With the Irish in Frongoch*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁶ Instructions relative to the internment and treatment of enemy subjects, 31 Aug. 1914. (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 15091).

¹⁰⁷ Roscommon Town Commissioners, Memorial to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, 17 Oct. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 18682).

seen. Besides the employees whom the Oldcastle Union had to pay allowances to in respect of lost gratuities, a number of contractors had to be compensated. Mr Michael McCormack of Oldcastle complained of losing his contract to supply milk to the workhouse and requested compensation for the loss which was interfering with the profitability of his business.¹⁰⁹ The workhouse carpenter and dressmaker made similar claims. All three claimants were compensated. Nurse Gibney wrote to the Guardians claiming to be 'inconvenienced by the appropriation of the said institution'.¹¹⁰ The Hibernian Insurance Company took a more positive view of the change. They allowed the change of use of the premises without prejudice to the insurance under the policy.¹¹¹

Case study 1 – Harry Premperl

In 1914 Harry Premperl, an Austrian man aged twenty, was resident in Belfast. Premperl, having lived in Ireland for fourteen years, had not been abroad since childhood.¹¹² At this time he had been employed at Fulton's Hotel, York Street, Belfast for eight or nine years.¹¹³ On 22 September 1914 he was arrested by the Military Authorities and taken to the 'Detention Barracks' at Templemore. The basis of his detention was twofold. Firstly, he was of military age and, secondly, on account of his knowledge of the docks, quays and military stations of Belfast, all of which were prohibited areas, he represented a security risk. Premperl's work with Fultons Hotel involved canvassing business at the railway stations and quays. He was known as a 'boots and tout' for the hotel. Clearly, he had an intimate knowledge of these areas and therefore it was not considered safe to have him at large.¹¹⁴ A War Office instruction issued in March 1915 permitted petitions for the release of prisoners. The petition for release had to be accompanied by written statements from two British-born subjects of standing, personally vouching for the character of the prisoner of war, and stating that they are each willing to enter into a money bond for £25 or more to guarantee his good

¹⁰⁸ Roscommon Town Commissioners, to the Lord Lieutenant, 13 Nov. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1914: 20052).

¹⁰⁹ Oldcastle Union Minute Book, 26 Oct. 1914 (Meath County Archive: BG133A/89).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Oldcastle Union Minute Book, 31 Oct. 1914 (Meath County Archive: BG133A/89).

¹¹² Detective Branch, Belfast, report to the Police Commissioner (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5250).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

behaviour during the war.¹¹⁵ Premperl was aware of this and wrote to Mr David Fulton, the proprietor of Fultons Hotel, indicating that he could be released if he succeeded in obtaining the two sureties.¹¹⁶ Mr Fulton wrote to the Commandant in Templemore enquiring if there were any objections to Harry returning to his job at Fultons Hotel and he asked for particulars on how he should proceed with attempts to have Premperl released.¹¹⁷ The Commandant advised Fulton that the question of release was the concern of the police in the district where the prisoner would live if he were released.¹¹⁸ On foot of this the police in Belfast wrote a report on Premperl's background and recommended that he should not be allowed to return to Belfast. The Commissioner of the Royal Irish Constabulary indicated to the Commandant at Templemore that he had no objection to the release of Premperl whom he did not consider dangerous.¹¹⁹ Despite the view of the Commissioner Premperl was still detained in March 1915. At this point he had been moved to Oldcastle and the Commandant offered a petition for his release with two sureties to the Under Secretary at Dublin Castle. A second police report indicated neither the police nor military authorities objected to Premperl's release but both objected to his return to Belfast. Despite these reports the General Officer Commanding the Troops in Ireland objected to the petition on the basis that Premperl knew too much about Belfast and that the authorities would find it impossible to supervise his movements or correspondence.¹²⁰ Premperl was not released.

Case Study 2 – Frederick Vogelsang

Frederick Vogelsang was born in Scharrinhausen, Sulingen, Germany. At the outbreak of war he had been resident in Dublin and working as a waiter in the Hotel Metropole, in Sackville Street, for some nine years. While working in the Metropole he met Mary McQuillan, a typist there, four years before their eventual marriage. Mary was one of eight children and her mother was widowed. On the 13 August 1914 Frederick was

¹¹⁵ Instructions for the release of Prisoners of War (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5250).

¹¹⁶ Harry Premperl, Handwritten letter, 9 Oct. 1915. (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5250).

¹¹⁷ Fulton's Commercial and Family Hotel, handwritten letter, 14 Oct. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5250).

¹¹⁸ Commandant, Templemore to D. Fulton Esq, 28 Nov. 1914 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5250).

¹¹⁹ T.J. Smith Commissioner of Police to the Commandant, Templemore, 7 Oct. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5250).

arrested as an enemy alien and placed in military custody in Arbour Hill.¹²¹ When he was released after a few weeks his job in the Metropole had been filled and he was forced to seek employment elsewhere. After being idle for three months he was employed by Mr Youkstetter, a pork butcher from North Strand Road.¹²² Mr Youkstetter, a Mormon, had been of German nationality but was now a naturalized British subject. On 16 December 1914 Frederick was again detained and 'interned as an enemy alien of doubtful loyalty'¹²³ at Oldcastle Concentration Camp¹²⁴. In early January, Mary Vogelsang, nearly seven-months pregnant, moved to a single-roomed flat in the front drawing room of 34 Lower Mount Street to be nearer her mother. Her baby was born in late February 1915. At this time Mary was living on an allowance of 9 shillings and 6 pence per week from the Local Government Board. Her rent was 4 shillings and 6 pence leaving just five shillings to live on.¹²⁵ Mary's financial position can be better understood by comparison to two labourers who were paid five shillings and six pence per day each to move furniture from the Oldcastle workhouse as part of the reorganisation into an internment camp.¹²⁶ Mary's widowed mother's circumstances left her in no position to support her daughter. Mary found it necessary to pawn articles of furniture, wearing apparel and wedding rings. In an attempt to gain the release of her husband, Mary Vogelsang obtained two sureties, one of them from the Chairman of Bray Urban District Council. Mr Denis O'Moore wrote to the Commandant of Oldcastle internment camp expressing his fear that if Mr Vogelsang did not soon return there would only be a motherless baby waiting for him. Dr Doyle, the Assistant Master of the National Maternity Hospital, Holles Street, confirmed that she was in a delicate state of health and in need of rest and attention.¹²⁷ By the end of April 1915 the Home Office informed the Under Secretary at Dublin Castle that the petition for the release of Frederick Vogelsang had been unsuccessful.¹²⁸ The Home Office informed Major

¹²⁰ Lords Justices to Under Secretary, Home Office, 7 Apr. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5250).

¹²¹ Dublin Metropolitan Police Report, 1 Apr. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5565).

¹²² Youkstetter's is the butchers shop which Fr Conmee passes by in James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London, 1998), p. 212.

¹²³ Dublin Metropolitan Police Report, 1 Apr. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5565).

¹²⁴ Dublin Metropolitan Police Report, 25 Mar. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5565).

¹²⁵ Dublin Metropolitan Police report, 1 Apr. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 5565).

¹²⁶ Oldcastle Union Minute Book, 31 Oct. 1914 (BG133A/90).

¹²⁷ Dr Doyle, Assistant Master, Holles Street Hospital, to Commandant Oldcastle, 24 Mar. 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 7084).

¹²⁸ Home Office to Under Secretary, Dublin Castle (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 6905).

Johnstone, Commandant of Oldcastle Camp of the decision. No grounds were given for the refusal of the petition.

The side show of captivity that Hynes identified¹²⁹ in accounts of the First World War is apparent in Irish accounts of the period, but perhaps more so. While there are accounts of Irish nationalists prisoners held in camps – indeed the importance of Kilmainham Jail is ingrained in Irish nationalist consciousness and tales like De Valera's escape from Lincoln Green Prison¹³⁰ have entered our folklore – there are few accounts of Irishmen in the British forces who became prisoners as a result of war. Dungan¹³¹ and Johnstone¹³² have given some account, but few others have. Memories of the detention of Germans, Austrians and Hungarians in Ireland are even more difficult to find. Accounts of anti-German rioting, which amount to pro-British rioting, are scarce. The 'national amnesia' referred to by Martin extends beyond those who took the King's shilling to those who fought for Kaiser. The amnesia extends to men, women and children of German, Austrian and Hungarian extraction who were living in Ireland at the outbreak of war. Many of these had been living here for so long that they were practically Irish. The amnesia extends to Irish women who had married Germans, Austrians and Hungarians, becoming 'enemy aliens' as a result. Mary Vogelsang lay in an unmarked grave from her young death, shortly after the end of the war, until 2004, when her family erected a stone over her grave. Mary has been remembered as a result of latter day agency which gave her voice, telling the story of her tragedy. Winter and Sivan warn that the upheavals of the twentieth century have separated 'individual memories from politically and socially sanctioned official versions'.¹³³ The officially sanctioned collective memory of Ireland's twentieth century has focussed on the national question and the sacrifice of nationalists. In recent years the individual memories of those who fought in the Great War have been brought to our attention. The individual memories of two thousand military prisoners detained in Templemore, of six hundred civilians detained in Oldcastle and many other family members have been obscured. Memory of the self-mobilisation of the Society of Friends has been lost.

¹²⁹ Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, p. 3.

¹³⁰ Tim Pat Coogan, *De Valera: Long fellow, long shadow* (London, 1998), pp 125-9.

¹³¹ Myles Dungan, *They shall not grow old: Irish soldiers and the Great War*, pp 135-162.

¹³² Tom Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki* (Dublin, 1992), pp 45-6.

These had no part to play in the officially sanctioned collective memory. This account, after Winter and Sivan, is intended as a contribution to collective remembering in the twentieth century. Its purpose is to examine the interaction of self and state mobilisation and thereby contribute to a more complete account than the partial and partisan officially sanctioned national account. In the context of the overall purpose of this thesis, which is to offer an alternative approach to reconciliation in Ireland than that promoted by the Messines Peace tower, the work of the Society of Friends stand out as a beacon. Perhaps Eustace Street, headquarters of Irish Quakers, would be a more appropriate location for a peace tower?

¹³³ Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1999), pp 6-7.

Chapter 4 - War Wounded

‘...if we cannot stop war, then we must do our best to stop some of the horrors of war...’¹

Ireland’s remove from the theatre of war might suggest a remove from the horrors of war. However, in the second decade of the twentieth century the consequences of the continental war were constantly visible in Ireland’s streets. Between October 1914 and February 1919 forty-six hospital ships, carrying 19,255 patients, docked at the North Wall Port in Dublin.² Twenty-one voluntary hospitals were established to supplement the existing civilian and military hospitals. More than 5,000 voluntary workers served in local branches of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Ireland. The vast majority of these volunteers were women.³ Many served in voluntary hospitals in Ireland, or provided ‘comforts’ to soldiers, wounded and fit, at the ports and railway stations. Irish civil society mobilised on a grand scale to minister to the needs of the sick and wounded sent home from the front for hospitalisation. Such self-mobilisation was built upon the pre-existing small voluntary infrastructure which was centred in Dublin but spread its embrace throughout the country. While other organisations were involved, the core of this voluntary work lay with the St John Ambulance Brigade (SJAB) and the Irish branches of the British Red Cross Society (BRCS). Accounts of their work are short and sparse. The Trinity History Workshop, under the editorship of David Fitzpatrick, provided an account of the work of Voluntary Aid Detachments.⁴ In the preface to the publication, Fitzpatrick writes that the overwhelming importance of the war in the life and death of ordinary Irish people is largely ignored and his book sets out to demonstrate some of the richness and excitement of the social catastrophe that the First World War inflicted on Ireland. Fitzpatrick cautioned that this work is too important to be left to the historians;⁵ I suggest that it is too important to be ignored by historians. In this chapter the part played by the voluntary aid organisations is examined. These include the St John

¹ Brian Peachment, *The Red Cross story*, cited in David Fitzpatrick (ed) *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1986), p. 37.

² *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 26.

³ Margaret Downes ‘The civilian voluntary aid effort’ in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Ireland and the First World War*, p. 29.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 27-37.

⁵ David Fitzpatrick (ed) *Ireland and the First World War*, vii-ix.

Ambulance Brigade (SJAB), the British Red Cross Society in Ireland (BRCS), the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). However the work on behalf of the wounded was not confined to charities which might be expected to be involved in such but to many social, leisure and sporting clubs and organisations. There included the Irish Automobile Club (IAC) and Leinster Cricket Club a range of golf clubs and rugby clubs. Apart from the organisations involved in voluntary aid there were many private individuals who mobilised themselves and gave their time, their homes and their money to provide humanitarian aid. Humanitarian workers responded to need and were as willing to respond to the victims of the European war as to the victims of the Easter Rising. While the mass mobilisation of these groups was a response to the war in some cases the humanitarian work of the organisations had commenced long before the war. The formation of groups like the SJAB and BRCS in Ireland owed much to the development of humanitarian organisations across Europe and in other parts of the world as a response to the horrors of nineteenth century wars.⁶

The first Irish division of the St John Ambulance Brigade was formed at the Guinness Brewery, at St James' Gate, Dublin in 1904, by the Chief Medical Officer to the brewery, Dr John Lumsden (later Sir John Lumsden K.B.E.).⁷ This was followed by the formation of a division at Jacobs biscuit factory. Members of these divisions and new divisions which formed in the following years were lectured and trained for a possible emergency and plans were established for the formation of Voluntary Auxiliary Detachments (VAD). Immediately on the outbreak of war in August 1914, a detachment of volunteers numbering close to one hundred was dispatched to Devonport from the North Wall, Dublin. This group formed part of the Royal Naval Auxiliary Sick Berth Reserve.⁸ With its first contribution to the voluntary war effort in place, the Brigade set out to mobilise its members. Volunteers for the Home Military Reserve of the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) were required to have first-aid certificates and the Brigade set about organizing courses of lectures and classes in First Aid and Home Nursing. Up to this time Irish divisions of the Brigade were under the jurisdiction of the

⁶ See 'Laws concerning war wounded and prisoners of war' in chapter 1.

⁷ *St John Ambulance Brigade of Ireland: Centenary Issue 1903-2003* (Dublin, 2003), p. 14.

⁸ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 40.

Brigade in London. On foot of work undertaken in connection with the outbreak of war, a decision was taken to form an 'Irish District' of the St John Ambulance brigade.

While Britain had been an early signatory to the Geneva Convention in 1865 she was slow to accept the volunteer principles of the Red Cross, only accepting this principle during the Franco-Prussian war. Britain was even slower to take up the name Red Cross continuing to call its voluntary aid society the National Society for Aid for the Sick and Wounded in War⁹ until the Boer War. In 1899 a permanent central Red Cross committee for the British Empire and its dependencies was organised and approved.¹⁰ Following considerable bickering the society was finally incorporated by Royal Charter in 1908. However conflict between the military, the British Red Cross Society and the St John Ambulance continued up to and after the outbreak of the First World War.¹¹

Lady Aberdeen, as wife of the County Lord-Lieutenant in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, had been invited to form a Red Cross Ladies' Committee to collect funds and organise working parties to provide garments and comforts for the soldiers in South Africa.¹² She took to this work with her usual enthusiasm. Aberdeenshire had fourteen auxiliary hospitals and working parties produced 126,894 garments for soldiers. One auxiliary hospital was located in the Aberdeen's shooting lodge at Cromar. Lord Aberdeen had returned to Ireland in 1906 as Viceroy for a second term. Lady Aberdeen brought with her a burning enthusiasm for social improvement and an extensive knowledge of voluntary medical care.¹³

Similarly to the St John Ambulance Brigade, at the outbreak of war there was no Red Cross headquarters in Ireland. As Red Cross committees were formed by sovereign governments there could not have been an Irish Red Cross Committee. Each county branch of the Red Cross in Ireland was independent and reported to the Central Committee in London. On 10 August 1914, Lady Aberdeen convened a meeting of all those involved in Red-Cross-type activities. This extraordinary meeting packed the lecture hall of the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) at Leinster House, and many hundreds

⁹ The organisation was frequently referred to as the National Aid Society or the British Aid Society.

¹⁰ Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream* (London, 1999), p. 139.

¹¹ *British Red Cross Society, The county branches: their organisation and work during the first months of the war*, pp lii- lxxx.

¹² Lord and Lady Aberdeen, "*We twa*" (Glasgow, 1925), p. 224.

were turned away. The meeting was attended by representatives of St John Ambulance Association, Department of Technical Instruction, the Women's National Health Association (WNHA), the United Irishwomen, the Irish Volunteers Voluntary Aid Association, the Dublin Branch of the Ulster Volunteers and Cumann na mBan, along with members of the nursing and medical professions.¹⁴ Political differences were forgotten in an attempt to mobilise the Irish people for the needs of wartime. A proposal was put to the meeting that an Irish Red Cross Society be formed. When questions were raised about the skills necessary for such an undertaking the meeting decided instead to focus energies on forming classes for instruction in first aid and emergency nursing and on providing comforts for the sick and wounded. Mr George Fletcher, head of the Department of Technical Instruction, outlined a scheme whereby the Department would provide grants to aid classes in emergency nursing, first aid and ambulance, provided they reached the necessary standard and undertook the examination and certification of those who undertook the courses. The proposal was supported by the meeting and a resolution was moved by Nicholas Donnelly, Bishop of Canea and Coadjutor to the Archbishop of Dublin, calling on the women of Ireland and on men not serving with the Army or Volunteers to qualify for Red Cross work by forming classes.¹⁵ During the following six months some 10,000 people qualified for Red Cross service by joining classes and obtaining certificates.

There was close cooperation in the work of the various voluntary bodies. This was particularly exemplified by the St John Ambulance Brigade and the County Dublin Branch of the British Red Cross Society, both of which agreed to work together and formed the Joint Executive Committee from September 1914.¹⁶ The decision to join forces in Ireland was made in advance of a similar decision being made for the two parent bodies in England. A headquarters in Dawson Street was donated to the joint bodies, free of rent.¹⁷ The joint committee co-ordinated relief work in Dublin. The joint operations of the two organisations were extended to the rest of the country in February 1916 when the Joint VAD Committee for Ireland (Leinster, Munster and Connaught)

¹³ Ibid., p. 175.

¹⁴ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 25 Sep. 1914, p. 789.

¹⁵ Lord and Lady Aberdeen, "*We twa*" p. 230.

¹⁶ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 293.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 41.

was formed. The Central Joint VAD Committee in London gave its approval to the Irish Committee, recognising the Irish Committee as its representatives with control over the British Red Cross Society in Ireland, the St John Ambulance Brigade and Association and all other VADs.¹⁸ Joint county directors were appointed for each county. Unlike the situation that existed in England, the County Directors were to represent equally the two organisations. Between the two organisations they mobilised throughout the three provinces. This was reflected in first aid and nursing work¹⁹ and in other activities. Throughout the war Ulster acted independently in the area of civilian mobilisation.²⁰ Ulster VADs took their instructions from the Belfast branch of the BRCS. As a result it is difficult to analyse the work of Ulster separately from Britain.²¹

Several St John Ambulance Divisions were in place prior to the outbreak of war, and many more were formed during the conflict. The work of the divisions was divided into nursing and ambulance divisions. Ambulance divisions were staffed by men, while nursing divisions were the preserve of women. Frequently the membership of divisions was based on occupational groups. The St James Gate division based in Guinness Brewery and the W&R Jacob division based in the biscuit factory have already been mentioned. The Four Courts Ambulance division, formed in July 1915, was manned by officials of the Four Courts and staff of the Incorporated Law Society and the Land Registry. The Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) Ambulance Division was formed by constables based in the RIC Depot in Dublin. The Cork RIC also formed a division in June 1915. The John's Lane Division was formed in the early stages of the war by the staff of John Power and Sons, Distillers. There were divisions based in Brookes Thomas builders' providers, in the Great Northern Railway and the Dublin Building Trades. Educational institutions played a part too. Divisions were formed in Dublin University, Alexandra College and in the Royal College of Science. Sporting groups were not to be left out with the Rugby Union forming a division. Other divisions were simply based in various locations throughout the city and county: Rathmines, Glenageary, South Dublin, North Co. Dublin, Howth, Clontarf, Leeson Park, Dundrum, Rathgar, Stephen's Green,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁹ See appendix 8 for details of auxiliaries posted to war work by the Joint VAD Selection Board.

²⁰ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 9.

²¹ Margaret Downes, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort', p. 28.

Harcourt, Earlsford, Grafton, Fitzwilliam, Inchicore and Carrickmines all had their own divisions. The formation of divisions of the Brigade was not confined to Dublin. Divisions were formed in Naas, Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire), Sligo, Galway, Nenagh, Bray, Borrisokane, Portlaw in County Waterford, Clonmel, Lismore, Leixlip, Greystones, Killiney, Coolgreeney Wexford, Fermoy, Maryborough in Queens County (County Laois), Wicklow, Roscommon, Athlone, Waterford, Birr, Boyle, Limerick, and Taylor's Hill, Galway. The British Red Cross Society was not as widespread but had branches in Dublin City, County Dublin, Carlow, Kerry, Limerick, Louth, Meath, Nenagh, Wexford and Cashel. The report of the SJAB and BRCS claimed that the contributions from Ireland to the war effort represent all social grades of people and all religious denominations. 'Catholic, Protestant, nationalist and unionist, rich and poor have shown in the most practical manner their loyalty to the Red Cross, and to War Funds subscribed to help the fighting forces of the Empire.'²² Nonetheless the report recognised that a 'proportion of the population stood aloof and offered no help'. Clearly support was widespread if not universal. At the Red Cross Pageant which took place in the streets of Dublin in 1915 all shades of political opinion were represented and supported the Geneva Convention.²³

The plan for mobilising the Red Cross in England had been that Red Cross Detachments would be auxiliary to the territorial forces. However, there was no territorial force in Ireland prior to the war and there was little encouragement to form detachments. The British Red Cross had a recognised syllabus for training volunteers and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction had used this syllabus as the basis for classes in First Aid and Home Nursing. On the outbreak of war, and in response to the decisions made at the RDS meeting of the British Red Cross Society, more than 170 first-aid classes with twenty to thirty trainees in each took place before December.²⁴ While classes of instruction were ongoing, each division raised detachments. There were separate detachments for men and women. Unlike the St John Ambulance Brigade, Red Cross detachments were not generally organised by occupational groups. Instead, many detachments were associated with a particular hospital, work depot or railway station. The work undertaken by members of the British Red Cross was wide and varied. Some

²² *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 11.

²³ Margaret Downes, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort', p. 27.

served abroad as hospital or wounded train orderlies in France and Russia. Those who could not go abroad assisted at hospital ships or at train stations at home. Those who could not offer medical or nursing assistance made dressings or collected monies to support the wounded in hospitals at home or abroad. Up to fifty Red Cross auxiliary detachments were formed in Dublin city, with a further fourteen in the county. Detachments were formed in Cork city and county and in Carlow, Kerry, Limerick, Louth, and Meath. In all, the joint committee had under its authority thirty-one men's detachments with 1,200 members. The women's detachments totalled some eighty-three with 2,927 members. Most, if not all, of these were trained in first aid and held First Aid Certificates. In addition, the women generally held a Nursing Certificate. A Joint Board of Selection was formed with the purpose of posting auxiliaries to military and auxiliary hospitals. The Dublin committee approved and appointed over 1,500 auxiliaries. A further four hundred were recruited by the Cork committee. These auxiliaries were posted to military hospitals in England, Ireland, France, Italy, Salonika and Egypt. Two auxiliaries were seconded to the Russian Red Cross.²⁵

The toll of war became apparent in Ireland in late October 1914 when the first convoy of wounded soldiers arrived. Seven hundred non-commissioned officers and men and twenty six officers who were wounded in service in France and Belgium were landed in Queenstown (now Cobh, Co. Cork). They had been carried by the hospital ship *Oxfordshire* from Boulogne, France.²⁶ Some of the soldiers arriving by the scheduled service from Queenstown to Cork were distributed to hospitals in Cork and surrounding areas. These included Cork Military Hospital, Buttevant, Fermoy, Kinsale, Waterford, Youghal, the North Infirmery, Victoria Hospital, Mercy Hospital, Eye, Ear and Throat hospital, Barrington's Hospital (Limerick) and St John's Hospital (Limerick).²⁷ Two special ambulance trains carried a total of 296 wounded through Cork on their way to Kingsbridge Railway Station, Dublin. More of the soldiers left the train at stations along the way and 254 eventually arrived in Dublin. The most seriously wounded soldiers were conveyed to Dr Steevens Hospital, one of the principal civilian hospitals in the city. More were brought to the King George V Hospital at Arbour Hill and the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham. Both were military hospitals. The remainder was distributed to

²⁴ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 25 Sep. 1914.

²⁵ See appendix 8.

²⁶ *Irish Times*, 28 Oct. 1914, p. 7.

the city's hospitals. Within a week the 'Oxfordshire' returned with a further 650 wounded soldiers.²⁸ The number of wounded arriving in Ireland was placing severe demands on the country's hospitals. An alternative source of hospital beds was required. The response came in the form of voluntary hospitals.

The Officers' Hospital in Fitzwilliam Street was the first voluntary Red Cross hospital to be opened in Dublin after the outbreak of war. The house, fully equipped as a hospital, was presented to the British Red Cross Society by Sir William Ireland de Courcy Wheeler M.D. for the period of the war. Sir William was to become the President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) and one of the first members of the Irish Senate in 1922. In the intertwining events of the period Sir William's brother, Captain (later Major) Henry de Courcy Wheeler accepted the surrender of Michael Mallin and Countess Markievicz at the Royal College of Surgeons²⁹ and Pearse's surrender. Sir William remained in charge of the surgical services in the Officer's Hospital. The hospital treated five hundred surgical cases during the war, including the injured from the 1916 Rising. Apart from a capitation grant and a grant of £500 from the Red Cross, this hospital was funded privately.³⁰ In 1917 the adjacent house was equipped by Ernest Guinness and added to the accommodation provided by the hospital. The opening of the Officers Hospital was followed by a collection of other auxiliary hospitals including Monkstown House, Temple Hill in Blackrock, St Ann's Hill (Cork) and others.³¹

While these small voluntary hospitals were filling a gap and would continue to do so throughout the war, a larger initiative was required. In November 1914, Lady Aberdeen announced that the King had approved of Dublin Castle being put at the disposal of the Red Cross for the purpose of providing a hospital for wounded soldiers. She obtained the support of the Presidents of the Royal College of Physicians and of the Royal College of Surgeons for this project. The City of Dublin branch of the Red Cross undertook to provide the beds and necessary equipment and to undertake the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Royal Irish Automobile Club, *War Services* (Dublin, 1919), p. 6.

²⁹ June Shannon, *Remembering RCSI and the 1916 Rising* (Dublin, 2006), p. 2.

³⁰ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 245.

³¹ See appendix 4.

management of the hospital.³² The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Lorcan Sherlock, chaired a meeting in the Mansion House on 30 November and personally advocated the support of the public for the hospital.³³ The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress and Alderman Moran became committee members of the hospital. In late December at a meeting of the City of Dublin Branch of the Red Cross, Lady Aberdeen announced that following an inspection of the Castle that the Deputy Director of Medical Services agreed to the establishment of a 250 bed hospital subject to structural alterations. The treasurer was able to announce that he had raised over £4,000 for the project.³⁴ The Dublin Castle Hospital was formally opened on 27 January 1915 by the Viceroy, Lord Aberdeen. Initially it offered accommodation for 250 men and nineteen officers. The officers quarters were in the same room that King George and Queen Mary had occupied during their stay in 1911. Later the hospital was extended so that 300 patients could be taken in.³⁵ This voluntary hospital operated for over four years. In this time over 5,500 men and nearly 1,000 officers were treated. Of these about half were wounded and half were sick. The hospital offered a wide range of surgical and medical treatments. Over 1,500 operations were undertaken, with nearly two thousand radiographs. Over one thousand men were given massage or electrical treatments.³⁶ The hospital was staffed largely by volunteers. During its operation there were at least fifty volunteers who served in excess of six months each in the hospital.

Apart from Dublin Castle Hospital there were two VAD hospitals with accommodation for two hundred patients or more. These were the Irish Counties War Hospital in Glasnevin, Dublin and Princess Patricia Hospital in Bray, Co. Wicklow. While many counties had established hospitals of their own, there was recognition in 1917 that it would be desirable to have a high quality hospital in the city of Dublin as hospital ships disembarked there. As a result a general committee representing all twenty-three counties (Ulster was not included) was formed. Marlborough Hall in Glasnevin, which had previously been used as a teacher training college, was obtained. Over the following two years, over £22,000 was raised throughout the country for the support of the hospital. Under the direction of Sir Frederick Moore, curator of the nearby Royal

³² *Freeman's Journal*, 28 Nov. 1914.

³³ *Freeman's Journal*, 28 Nov. 1914; Lord and Lady Aberdeen, "We twa", p. 236.

³⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 22 Dec. 1914.

³⁵ Lord and Lady Aberdeen, "We twa", p. 238.

³⁶ See appendices 5-7.

Botanic Gardens, the lands surrounding the hospital were cultivated for the production of vegetables for the patients. One entire ward within the hospital was endowed by Lady Ardilaun, who organised a ladies' committee for the entertainment of the soldiers. The medical staff was headed by Lieutenant-Colonel Seton-Pringle, who, having spent a year in a Red Cross Hospital at Verdun, gave up a lucrative practice to devote his time to the hospital. During its operation the work of the hospital was supported by a large group of volunteers.

The Princess Patricia of Connaught Hospital was set up in the International Hotel in Bray in June 1915. Similarly to the other large hospitals, Princess Patricia's was run with a combined workforce of paid staff and volunteers. Funding was obtained from subscriptions made to the hospital. Initial subscriptions amounted to more than £5,000. A single donor contributed £1,000. Five wards were endowed by Irish counties, a sixth by the Dublin Women's Unionist Club, and a seventh by the city of Toronto, Canada. The hospital was well equipped with modern appliances like 'Radium Hot Baths, Medical Switch Board, Galvanic Batteries etc.' The hospital was able to offer its patients 'Swedish massage, Remedial Exercises, Tonic Medication, Radiant Heat, Galvanism etc.'³⁷ This was accomplished with the support of in excess of one hundred voluntary auxiliaries. In addition there were over twenty non-nursing volunteers who assisted in the sewing room carrying out repairs on soldiers' clothes. The hospital became a centre for fitting artificial limbs. Two hundred and sixty-seven men were fitted with artificial limbs until that function was moved to the Duke of Connaught Hospital, also in Bray, in 1917.³⁸ The three largest auxiliary hospitals had a complement of 710 beds occupied by 12,800 patients throughout the war.

Voluntary support equipped and maintained individual wards in the major civilian hospitals. The Adelaide Hospital in Dublin provides an example of this approach. In August 1914 the War Office asked the Hospital to provide accommodation for wounded soldiers. The Hospital offered thirty-eight beds which comprised all of the Victoria House section of the hospital. Following pressure from the War Office another twelve beds were made available. However, the provision of these beds required alterations within the building. These alterations were carried out through voluntary contributions

³⁷ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 283.

and were not refunded by the government. The following year another request was made of the hospital to provide additional beds. This time the convalescent home was made available. However, this was at a time when the hospital was going through a financial crisis. The general account was overdrawn by £2,000 and the building fund by £3,284.³⁹ In the Richmond Hospital provision was made to provide twenty-eight beds for wounded soldiers at a cost of £852. The governors, staff and a few friends donated £300. The balance remained as a debt to the bank. Another twenty-four beds were provided by adding additional beds to existing wards. During 1914 only 4,224 of 9,402 bed-days (number of beds multiplied by days available) were used. The Treasury paid for the use of beds but only occupied beds. The outcome of this is that the hospital had to meet the cost of unoccupied beds. The cost of an occupied bed in the Richmond was three shillings and five-penny farthing (3s 5¼d). The cost of an unoccupied bed was two shillings and five-penny farthing (2s 5¼d). Unoccupied beds were very costly for the hospital. The method of payment by the Treasury left the hospital with most of the burden of wounded soldiers and the costs were largely met by voluntary contributions. Steevens' Hospital, the Meath Hospital and Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospitals all placed beds at the disposal of the military at their own cost and all suffered shortfalls similar to the Richmond.⁴⁰ The difficulties caused by the mode of payment prompted the Board of Superintendence to write the Assistant Director of Medical Services in Dublin Castle to request a change in the mode of payment. The Board suggested the reason for the hospital suffering the losses without question was that since the outbreak of war 'there has been a widespread desire to do everything possible for wounded soldiers and thus many things were lost sight of that which at other times would have been more carefully considered'.⁴¹ However, the Boards strongly suggested that the charitable contributions already been made by the Red Cross should be increased to take account of the shortfalls.⁴² During 1915 the Military Authorities requested that additional beds for wounded soldiers be made available in the Richmond hospital. The

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ David Mitchell, *A peculiar place, the Adelaide Hospital Dublin, 1839-1989* (Dublin, n.d.), p. 151.

⁴⁰ 'Fifty-Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Superintendence of the Dublin Hospitals, 1914-1915', in *Dublin Hospitals Reports 1907-21* HMSO, 1915 (NLI: IR3620941 D2, pp 7-8).

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴² Ibid., p. 10.

cost of providing the additional beds was met in its entirety by Lord Iveagh.⁴³ It is clear that provision for wounded soldiers, whether in voluntary hospitals or the major civilian hospitals, was made from voluntary contributions while government assistance was limited.

Apart from support for the major civilian hospitals, eleven voluntary hospitals were maintained in Dublin on the basis of voluntary subscriptions. These included the three major hospitals already mentioned, Dublin Castle Hospital, Irish Counties Hospital and Princess Patricia Hospital. Ten auxiliary hospitals were equipped and maintained in seven counties outside Dublin.⁴⁴ Over the period of the war these smaller auxiliary hospitals accommodated over 8,000 patients in 490 beds. The establishment of the hospitals follows a similar pattern. In many cases the premises for the hospital, frequently a private house, was donated for the period of the war and the hospital was staffed either completely or mostly by volunteer auxiliaries. One or two examples will suffice to illustrate this.

Monkstown House, an estate of some twenty acres, was placed at the disposal of the Monkstown House Auxiliary Military Hospital committee by the owner, Mr J. Harold Pim. In nearly five years of operation over 1,100 soldiers, sailors and officers were treated there. With a staff of just two nurses, a masseuse and housekeeper, the hospital was assisted throughout the entire period of its operation by Kingstown Nursing VAD. The Kingstown VAD was formed from the Kingstown Nursing Division of the St John Ambulance Brigade. This division had over one hundred members, all of whom served either in Monkstown House or abroad. Fourteen members served abroad including the medical commandant Dr Robert de Courcy Wheeler and nurse Violet Sophie Barrett, who died on the *RMS Leinster* disaster returning to service in France just a month before the war ended.⁴⁵ Sheelah Plunkett did not get the opportunity to serve abroad as she also perished on the *RMS Leinster* on her way to take up war work.⁴⁶

⁴³ 'Fifty-Eight Annual Report of the Board of Superintendence of the Dublin Hospitals', in *Dublin Hospitals Reports 1907-21* HMSO, 1915 (NLI IR3620941 D2, 1915-1916, p. 7).

⁴⁴ Appendix 4.

⁴⁵ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 239-41.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

The Dublin University VAD Auxiliary Hospital occupied a premises in Mountjoy Square which was provided free of rent for the duration of the war. The hospital had accommodation for twenty-four patients and treated 461 during the war. The permanent staff of the hospital consisted of a matron and two sisters. They were supplemented by the Dublin University Nursing Division of the St John Ambulance Brigade and assisted by eleven other detachments including one from Donegal.⁴⁷ In addition, this division supported the nearby Dublin University Hostel for Belgian Refugees.⁴⁸

In response to a request from the military, an auxiliary hospital was established in the grounds of the Hermitage Golf Club specifically to care for shell-shock and neurological patients. The tranquil surroundings of the club, situated on the banks of the River Liffey in Lucan, Co. Dublin, provided ideal surroundings for rest and recuperation. The Hermitage VAD provided a wide range of treatments and activities to the patients. These included massage, electrical treatment and Swedish exercises in addition to occupational therapy in the form of basket weaving, hat making, office work and gardening.⁴⁹

The work of the joint committee of the SJAB and BRCS was not confined to the provision of auxiliary hospitals and volunteer aid in hospitals. An important activity undertaken by the committee was the fabrication of hospital supplies and equipment. This work was placed in the hands of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot.

Throughout the war a wide range of committees and private individuals worked constantly to supply prisoners of war with what was commonly called 'clothing and comforts'. The supply of comforts to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers amounted to £40,000 per annum throughout the war. The Fusiliers, along with the Munster and Leinster regiments and the Connaught Rangers, were the main beneficiaries of this aid for Irish prisoners of war.⁵⁰ However, during 1915 the military authorities brought it to the attention of the Joint Committee that medical dressings and surgical appliances were needed for the wounded and the Joint Committee set about responding to the need. The Central Irish War Hospital Supply Depot was opened in December 1916. This type of

⁴⁷ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., C.1919), p. 248.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 88-9.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 262.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

work was already being carried out in Waterford under the patronage of the Marchioness of Waterford and the first depots were started here. Depots for the supply of hospital equipment were established throughout the country with the headquarters in Dublin. As with other projects, the premises for the central depot in Merrion Square was provided free of charge. The central depot was on the one hand a production centre where women worked all day and in the evening producing dressings, bandages, operation coats, slippers and slings. It was also the co-ordinating centre for over eighty self-supporting sub-depots formed throughout the country. The central depot was staffed by out of work seamstresses.⁵¹ Some 6,000 women in the depots throughout the country produced dressings and bandages, surgical appliances made from papier maché, and sphagnum moss dressings. The contribution to the provision of sphagnum moss dressings was enormous. The abundance of bogs in Ireland was a significant contributory factor. However, the energy which was put into this aspect of volunteer work was astonishing. The Royal College of Science had formed a nursing division of St John Ambulance Brigade shortly after the outbreak of war. After training, that lasted some months, the division undertook the provision of dressings based on sphagnum moss. The division had at its disposal the not insignificant facilities of the college and the expertise of its staff.⁵² Nonetheless in order to make sphagnum moss dressings the moss had to be collected. Forty-four sub depots and numerous collecting centres were formed in the counties of the south and west and some elsewhere. The work of the College of Science sub depot was undertaken by 120 women who worked in relays over the period of three years. The entire moss dressing operation produced almost one million moss dressings, dysentery pads and rest cushions in this time. About one quarter of these were produced by the College of Science. Sub-depots in Abbeyleix, Bray, Castlebellingham, Kenmare, Kilgowan and Melcomb (Co. Mayo) and Moate produced more than 40,000 dressings each. Fifty-eight hospitals in eight countries were supplied with the dressings.⁵³ The expertise of the college was sufficiently well known that the war hospital supply depots in Britain sent samples to the college to establish their quality.⁵⁴ However, the production of such vast numbers of dressings was not without

⁵¹ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 25 Sep. 1914.

⁵² Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland Council Minute book vol. ix (RCSI/9).

⁵³ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., C.1919), p. 236. See appendix 9 for details of hospitals supplied with sphagnum moss dressings.

⁵⁴ Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Letter and Minutes 1918 (RCSI/28).

its problems. Members of the academic staff complained of the noise caused by nailing down the boxes when filled and the Board of Works was not happy about the scratching of the marble of the corridors when the boxes were moved.⁵⁵

In February 1916 the men's section of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot was formed. Its function was the manufacture of splints, crutches, bed rests, bed tables and similar equipment. Using gifts of timber and other necessary materials, some fifty workers manufactured medical appliances and sent them to Mesopotamia, Salonika, the Expeditionary Forces in France, to hospitals at the Verdun front and other hospitals under the French Red Cross. By April 1916 a metal splint department was started. Most of the materials for this work was obtained from waste metal, the clippings or remnants of sheet material from large manufacturing processes. Not content to reduce costs by using waste metal, the workshop recycled damaged wings, mudguards and panels of motor cars. Cauldrons, baths and galvanised sinks were all converted into surgical instruments.⁵⁶ The production of splints in metal was a major step as metal splints are more flexible and lighter. This enabled them to be bent to an appropriate shape and was easier to clean and disinfect. Many of the workers in the workrooms were not alone providing their services freely but were paying for the privilege. In addition they were paying for their meals and teas. In this ways the workrooms not alone provided the medical appliances but also provided a profit.⁵⁷

The depot which was referred to as Central Red Cross Workrooms, Ireland, was established first in rather cramped conditions in Dawson Street and then in more extensive premises in Merrion Square. In addition to the supply of dressing and surgical appliances the depot supplied clothing for soldiers. Using materials supplied from London, eighty women worked daily producing nearly 20,000 items of clothing, pyjamas, vests, shirts, pants and night shirts, in the workrooms. A further thirty thousand items were made by one hundred and sixty three work parties around the country.⁵⁸ Public appeals were made for garments.⁵⁹ Garments and bandages made in

⁵⁵ Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Letter and Minutes 1918 (RCSI/30).

⁵⁶ Thekla Bowser, 'The story of British VAD work in the Great War' (London, 1917).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁵⁸ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., C.1919), p. 298.

⁵⁹ *Irish Times*, 14 Oct. 1914, *Freeman's Journal* 4 Dec. 1914.

the workrooms in addition to donated items brought the total numbers of items donated by the Clothing and Comforts Department to nearly 250,000. At the same time, the Duty-Free Department, in co-operation with customs authorities, channelled nearly four million cigarettes and 6,000 pounds of tobacco to the troops.⁶⁰

The work of the VADs was not confined to supporting the war effort. During the Easter Rising VADs and the VAD hospitals took an active part in caring for all victims: soldiers, rebels and civilians. Corps Officer Holden Stodart of the St James Gate Ambulance Division of the SJAB was the senior officer of St John Ambulance Brigade in Dublin on the outbreak of the Rising. He organised volunteers for ambulance duty from several division of St John Ambulance for several hospitals in the city.⁶¹ When his superiors returned to the city Stodart settled down to ambulance work at the station he had established in the Royal City of Dublin Hospital in Baggot Street. On the afternoon of Wednesday 26 April he was shot and killed while attending a wounded soldier on Pembroke Road.⁶² Henry Olds of No. 2 Detachment went to the aid of a wounded blind man on O'Connell Bridge. He applied First Aid and while bandaging the man's leg was himself shot in the shoulder. Olds completed the bandaging and then helped the blind man to safety before he lost consciousness himself.⁶³ The work of volunteers in relation to the rising was not confined to individual acts of heroism. The Dublin Castle Hospital, which had been established to care for war wounded, took on the role of caring for the wounded from the Rising. During Easter Week the hospital admitted and treated 176 victims of the rising. These included eleven officers, 106 NCOs and men, sixteen civilians including two women, one police man and forty-two rebels. Twelve of these died in hospital, and a further sixty-four were admitted dead.⁶⁴ Under the Red Cross banner lay soldiers from France, Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army, civilians, police and soldiers brought from England to suppress the rising. James Connolly lay among them. The Dublin Castle hospital responded to the demand of the victims of the RMS

⁶⁰ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), pp 292-4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁶² *Weekly Irish Times, Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook Easter 1916*, 1917 issue, pp 232, 284.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁶⁴ There is a small variation in the figures given in *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and*

Leinster disaster when the Dublin steam packet boat was torpedoed and sunk in sight of Dublin harbour. A number of British, New Zealand and American Naval officers were brought to Dublin Castle Hospital for care.⁶⁵ In response to the Rising, an emergency hospital was set up at the War Supply Depot at 40 Merrion Square. The depot was converted into a hospital in a matter of hours. Within three hours of the volunteers arriving an amputation was taking place in the improvised theatre.⁶⁶ The hospital was staffed by members of the Fitzwilliam and Rathgar nursing divisions of the SJAB.⁶⁷ In Corrig Castle Auxiliary hospital a Pavilion Hospital was set up in the grounds during Rising. This was used as a clearing station where many patients were treated.⁶⁸ Similar action was taken by the Leeson Park Nursing division which equipped an auxiliary hospital at Litton Hall, a premises provided by Rev Phair, to accommodate 25 patients.⁶⁹ The Harcourt and Dundrum Divisions set up an emergency hospital at the High School, Harcourt Street.⁷⁰

During intense fighting at Northumberland Road, two Irish Automobile Club ambulances were kept busy for eight hours ferrying wounded to nearby hospitals.⁷¹ Ambulances were assigned to the King George V hospital, Castle Hospital, Amiens Street, Ballsbridge and to the IAC premises in Dawson Street. Throughout the disturbances the ambulances were in continual use. One of the drivers was shot while driving past the Four Courts. The ambulances and private cars attached to the IAC were involved to ferrying food and medical supplies to hospitals.⁷² They were involved in a wide range of relief activities including carrying food to dispensaries for distribution to the poor,⁷³ carrying wounded civilians home from hospital, carrying wounded men from

Connaught 1914-1918 (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 247 and those in *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook*, p. 236.

⁶⁵ Philip Lecane, *Torpedoed! The RMS Leinster Disaster* (Cornwall, 2005), pp 42, 233, 240, 250, 252; Roy Stokes, *Death in the Irish Sea* (Cork, 1998), p. 128.

⁶⁶ *Weekly Irish Times, 1916 Rebellion Handbook Easter 1916*, 1917 issue (Dublin, 1917), p. 232.

⁶⁷ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 136.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁷¹ *Weekly Irish Times, 1916 Rebellion Handbook Easter 1916*, 1917 issue (Dublin, 1917), p. 234.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

houses to the hospitals, and carrying wounded prisoners to hospitals. The ambulances carried medics to the various points throughout the city where they were required.⁷⁴ Several ambulances were struck by bullets while carrying out this work.⁷⁵

Transporting the wounded

Most of the ships carrying wounded soldiers to Ireland arrived in Dublin. The arrival of forty-six hospital ships over the period of war added to the usual traffic of soldiers returning from war on leave or going to the front. A range of services were provided by voluntary bodies to assist the movement of wounded and to make travelling a little easier. The transport arrangements at hospital ships arriving in Dublin were undertaken by the male detachments of the St John Ambulance and British Red Cross. They were assisted in this work by the Irish Automobile Club, who had charge of motor transport. Unlike the rest of the United Kingdom, Dublin was a location where transport arrangements were an entirely voluntary matter. Wounded soldiers were allocated to hospitals in Dublin, Cork, Belfast, the Curragh and other places. Some of these hospitals were military, others civilian and others voluntary auxiliary hospitals. When ships arrived there was the problem of moving the walking wounded and those who were unable to walk from the ships to the various hospitals. Beyond the immediate need there was a desire to make transport more comfortable for wounded and able-bodied alike. Women's detachments from St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross staffed temporary buffets at North Wall Port and the train stations to provide refreshments to the patients. The buffet at the North Wall operated daily throughout the war. Members of the Red Cross provided 'comforts' in the form of cigarettes, newspapers and post cards to the patients on ships and trains on arrival. Nurses from the Joint Societies accompanied the patients on their journeys to the various hospitals. The Irish Automobile Club (IAC) provided transport between ships, railway stations, hospitals and homes.

Immediately on the outbreak of war, the IAC took the initiative of compiling a register of members willing to volunteer for service with their cars. They received over four hundred responses volunteering for service either at home or aboard. They immediately

⁷⁴ Royal Irish Automobile Club, *War Services*, p. 13.

appealed to members for funds to equip ambulances for use at the front and despatched three ambulances to France along with a further three cars which were donated and then converted into ambulances. In October 1914 the Wounded Soldiers Reception Committee was set up with the intention of assisting sick and wounded soldiers on their way home. Initially, the wounded were transported in members' cars but in time this became a highly sophisticated operation which worked in co-operation with the St John Ambulance Brigade and British Red Cross Society. The committee provided a wide range of services to wounded soldiers while travelling or at home on leave. The committee responded to a variety of crises, like the Easter Rising and the sinking of the *RMS Leinster*. In the early stages of the war there was no difficulty getting private cars to transport walking wounded but there was a shortage of ambulances to carry stretcher cases. The hospital ship *Oxfordshire*, which first arrived on 5 November 1914, was met by fifty private cars which were adequate to move the walking wounded. However, it took two days to transport the one hundred and sixty-two stretcher cases to hospital using nine ambulances with twenty-two stretchers. The urgent need for additional ambulances was evident. The committee appealed to traders to donate their motor vans for use as ambulances. This helped fill a gap but the committee was not happy to leave it there and set about establishing an ambulance fleet. Through donations of chassis and fitting them out as ambulances using donor funds, by the end of 1915 the committee had twenty ambulances with sixty-eight stretchers. In contrast to a year previously, in October 1915 the committee was able to transport 643 wounded from the *Oxfordshire* to hospitals around the city in less than four hours. The committee acknowledged the contribution of other authorities in this work.⁷⁵ In a letter to the Town Clerk of Dublin Corporation, Walter Sexton, the Honorary Secretary of the IAC, thanked the Corporation for the assistance provided by the corporation ambulance in the speedy transport of wounded and enclosed a letter from General Anderson, Deputy Director of Medical Services, Irish Command, thanking the IAC for the 'unostentatious way that

⁷⁵ *Weekly Irish Times, 1916 Rebellion Handbook Easter 1916*, 1917 issue (Dublin, 1917), p. 225.

⁷⁶ Walter Sexton, Honorary Secretary Irish Automobile Club, to Town Clerk, Dublin Corporation, 11 Oct. 1915 in *Minutes of the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin 1915* (NLI: IR 94133 D9, p. 522).

the Automobile Club carries out this humane and patriotic self-imposed work'.⁷⁷ The Committee did not confine its work to transporting wounded from the port and railways but involved itself in every manner of work that required transport. Member vehicles were used to convey volunteer staff to the buffets at the North Wall each morning and evening, soldiers were carried from hospitals to and from the Wounded Soldiers Club and the distribution of eggs for the National Egg collection was carried out by members of the IAC.⁷⁸

The work undertaken at the free buffets at the North Wall and Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) ports and at Kingsbridge and Amiens Street stations was considerable. Over the period of the war over two million soldiers were served tea, coffee, Bovril and sandwiches at these buffets. The costs of maintaining these buffets were met mainly by public subscription but were supported by the proceeds of a military tournament held at Lansdowne Road Stadium and cricket matches organised by the Leinster Cricket Club.⁷⁹

Not content to confine their work to transport, the IAC provided clubs for the soldiers. A summer club was established in a rented bungalow near the Scalp, at Enniskerry, and a Winter Club was established in the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) premises at Ballsbridge. However the IAC did not rely entirely on its own members. Its activities mobilised the efforts of many others. The clubs at the Scalp and RDS were supported by the Golfing Union of Ireland which mobilised its constituent golf clubs to support the activities of the Scalp and RDS clubs. It gained the support of a wide range of social clubs, corporate bodies, commercial firms and private individuals who assisted by funding and providing entertainments, organising games and arranging concert parties.⁸⁰ Over one hundred different organisations and groups provided entertainments for the Wounded Soldiers Club. The Earl of Iveagh was sufficiently interested to place the gardens of his residence in Stephen's Green at the disposal of the IAC and this became a base for the Wounded Soldiers Club. From its inception until it closed in 1919 forty-six

⁷⁷ Deputy Director of Medical Services to the Chairman, Irish Automobile Club, 5 Oct. 1915 in *Minutes of the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin 1915* (NLI: IR 94133 D9, p. 523).

⁷⁸ Royal Irish Automobile Club, *War Services*, pp 4-9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ See appendix 12.

thousand soldiers from various military, civil and auxiliary hospitals were entertained at the clubs.⁸¹

Funding volunteer work

While carrying on their voluntary work within auxiliary hospitals, in workrooms, at seaports and railway stations, many of the VADs sponsored hospital beds within hospitals. Some of these were the auxiliary hospitals, in other cases the beds were military beds within civilian hospitals in some cases beds in military hospitals at the front. The Dublin Castle Ambulance Division of the St John Ambulance endowed a bed in the Dublin Castle hospital,⁸² while the City of Dublin BRCS VAD endowed two beds in the same hospital.⁸³ Number 16 BRCS VAD did the same.⁸⁴ The Royal College of Science SJAB Divisions 'endowed two cots in the Duke of Connaught Hospital'⁸⁵ And Co. Sligo Nursing Division endowed beds in Mercer's Hospital and the Irish Counties War Hospital. Alexandra College Nursing Division endowed a bed in the Duke of Connaught Hospital.⁸⁶ Endowing hospital beds was not confined to hospitals at home. Leeson Park division endowed a bed in the Brigade Hospital in Étaples, France⁸⁷ as did the Co. Sligo Nursing Division.⁸⁸ The Irish district of the SJAB endowed several beds at Étaples. An Irish hospital attached to the French Red Cross was for a time maintained by Irish contributions.⁸⁹

Funding the vast range of activities undertaken by the SJAB and BRCS was undertaken by its members. A number of major fundraising drives took place including two major collections referred to as 'Our Day' collections. These took place throughout the southern provinces in 1917 and 1918. The County Directors of the Joint Committee undertook to organise the collection within their respective areas. A flag day and

⁸¹ See appendix 12.

⁸² *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 54.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

pageant which took place in Dublin raised over £4,000.⁹⁰ Throughout the provinces flag days, concerts, sports, fetes, gymkhana, and church collections raised in excess of £60,000 in 1917. A target of £100,000 was set for 1918, but the armistice was signed five weeks after the fundraising drive was launched. None the less the campaign raised nearly £70,000.

Apart from these major drives for funds there were ongoing local events which raised money. The work of the Central Work Depot was supported by the establishment of a National Waste Paper Depot. Paper was collected throughout the country and sold for recycling. The proceeds of this work averaged £61 per month. The work of the two bodies was supported by the donation of goods rather than money. The National Egg Collection provided gift of eggs to the value of over £20,000 which were donated to the various hospitals in Ireland and the surplus was sent abroad.⁹¹

The work of IAC officers was provided freely. It is impossible to put a value on this work. The IAC's 'War Fund' was mainly expended on its ambulances, although some costs were incurred through the Wounded Soldiers Clubs. Although some ambulances were maintained at the expense of their donors, the cost of maintaining the fleet of ambulances throughout the war was nearly £5,000. This money was raised by direct appeal to the members of the IAC. The members' contributions were supplemented by grants from the St John Ambulance Brigade and British Red Cross, and donations from the Turf Club, the National Hunt Committee, the Irish Aero Club and the Royal Automobile Club. The IAC never made a direct appeal for funds to the public despite the fact the war related volunteer work had direct costs in excess of £7,500, apart from the voluntary efforts of its members.⁹²

Among the organisations that mobilised on a humanitarian basis was the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). The principal mission of the YMCA is to lead young men to the discipleship of Christ. On the outbreak of war in 1914 the City of Dublin YMCA, in common with British branches of the organisation, 'saw a great vision and...dashed forward to claim the troops for God'.⁹³ In seeking to claim the troops the YMCA followed its traditional response of providing spiritual support, in the form of

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 36.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹² Royal Irish Automobile Club, *War Services*, pp 21, 56.

religious services and reading materials along with recreational support in the form of cafés, reading rooms and activities. While the work of the YMCA was underpinned by strong Protestant values, these do not appear to have been forced on the men. In fact the work of Catholic chaplains in the front lines appears to have had a greater impact. Leonard indicates that the presence of Catholic chaplains at the front while Anglican chaplains were required to remain at base stations, resulted in greater respect for Catholic chaplains.⁹⁴ The nature of Catholic religious services may have been more relevant to men facing death. As a result there were significant conversions to Catholicism. Redmond, among others, indicated that the war might be a force for unification among the Irish. It is unlikely that he anticipated that Catholic chaplains may have been key in that process. One Presbyterian soldier went home on leave to Killeshandra Co. Cavan bringing rosary beads with him. Fr Finn, a Catholic chaplain in the Dardanelles, presented a Carmelite emblem to his Anglican colleague, Rev Foster 'to protect him'.⁹⁵ Captain Noel Drury, a member of Dublin University Officer Training Corps (DUOTC) serving in the Dublin Fusiliers talks of 'good Presbyterians like myself who went off to chapel for the first and perhaps the only time in our lives'.⁹⁶

In the first days of the war the Dublin YMCA opened its gymnasium and Reading and Writing Room to all men in the armed forces. Recognising that this was not sufficient to meet the needs the Association set up marquees on four of the Barracks Squares in the city. This was followed by establishing recreational huts in six of the eight military Barracks Squares in the city. In the huts and in the YMCA Gymnasium magazines, newspapers and books in addition to writing materials and postcards were supplied free. Postage stamps were sold and a postal service was provided to the soldiers. At the same time, Gospel services were provided nightly and copies of the New Testament and booklets of portions of the gospels were distributed.⁹⁷ The YMCA estimated that there were between 12,000 and 15,000 troops occupying barracks in Dublin but that the numbers passing through were much higher. To meet the demands imposed by seeking

⁹³ City of Dublin YMCA, *65th Annual Report, 1914*, p. 7.

⁹⁴ Jane Leonard, 'Catholic Chaplaincy' in David Fitzpatrick (ed), *Ireland and the First World War*, p. 13.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹⁶ D.G. Boyce 'Nationalism, unionism and the First World War' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta *Ireland and the Great War* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 198.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

to support the soldiers, the YMCA Committee appealed to its members for voluntary helpers. More than ninety helpers volunteered. The YMCA did not confine its activities to supporting soldiers billeted in Dublin. While groups like the Red Cross and St John Ambulance in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction were organising first aid courses, the YMCA was not to be left out. Sixty members enrolled in first aid classes in August 1914. At the same time, the Association established a 'Shilling Fund' for its members and the proceeds were donated to the Mansion House Auxiliary.⁹⁸ By the end of 1915 the City of Dublin YMCA had established eleven centres for recreation purposes with another thirty at location throughout the country. The YMCA offered these services to counteract '...the temptations to a young man in a strange city, away from home influences...'⁹⁹ The recreation centres, generally referred to as 'huts' in the Association's literature, were established at the main camps and at other locations where soldiers were to be found.¹⁰⁰ The premises were opened from 10 am to 9:30 pm. The services offered related mainly to the provision of reading and writing materials and a postal service; in one hut alone 1,500 letters were posted daily. In three of the huts refreshments were sold. In the largest, 2,000 to 3,000 items were sold per day. At the same time the Association sought pledges from those who used the huts. The pledges involved temperance, purity, anti-gambling, and clean speech. One centre recorded over 200 of these pledges in three months. Clearly the food items were more popular than the pledges. Nonetheless, the association took possession of a public house premises in Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street) and established it as a temperance bar for soldiers and sailors. The premises was open in the evenings, at a time that might tempt the soldiers away from public houses. The café was staffed by a ladies' auxiliary formed by the YMCA and by volunteers from Dublin University.¹⁰¹ Establishing the various centres cost the Dublin YMCA in excess of £4,000. The YMCA was not alone in this work and received the support of other Christian organisations in the city including the Irish Church Missions, the Methodist Colportage Society¹⁰² and the Irish Baptist College. Each of these organisations loaned staff members to the YMCA to manage the huts.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

⁹⁹ City of Dublin YMCA, *66th Annual Report*, 1915, p. 14.

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix 13.

¹⁰¹ City of Dublin YMCA, *66th Annual Report*, 1915, p. 18.

¹⁰² A colporteur is a peddler of devotional literature.

Early in 1915 the YMCA joined with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) to form a visiting committee to visit wounded soldiers in Dublin hospitals. This work was carried out in fifteen hospitals in Dublin. Similar to the work carried out in the huts, the visiting committee provided reading and writing opportunities for the wounded soldiers.¹⁰³ This work continued to expand throughout 1915 and into 1916. The Easter Rising brought a setback to the work of the association when the Soldiers Café in Sackville Street was occupied by the rebels and eventually destroyed by fire. However, despite damage to the Association headquarters, which was located on Sackville Street but further away from the GPO, a replacement café was opened there after the Rising.¹⁰⁴ The Association continued to expand its work, opening an additional six new recreational centres in 1917. This brought the number in Dublin and surrounding areas to twenty-three. There were at least as many more throughout the country. Nearly £1,000 was raised by the YMCA during 1917 for work with soldiers. By the end of the war the City of Dublin YMCA had established thirty clubs and recreation centres for soldiers. The new centres opened in 1918 included a marquee in the Phoenix Park, which served the large number of troops encamped there. There were new centres on Arran Quay and Eden Quay. These provided services to soldiers travelling through Kingsbridge Station and the North Wall respectively, and would appear to add to the services already provided by the Irish Automobile Club. The hostel in Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) responded to a need that the St John Ambulance and Red Cross had identified; that of soldiers and sailors arriving at Kingstown Port and needing accommodation. By the end of 1918, twenty YMCA recreation centres were still in operation. The others were closed because of the withdrawal of troops. To support this work in 1918, over eighty salaried workers were employed. These were supported by two hundred volunteers. Apart from providing recreation services and information, more than 2,000 evangelical services were held. The recreation services consumed over £32,500 worth of refreshments. These included three million cakes and 10,000 pounds weight of tea. In one centre 45,000 eggs were consumed.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ City of Dublin YMCA, *66th Annual Report, 1915*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ City of Dublin YMCA, *67th Annual Report, 1916*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁵ City of Dublin YMCA, *69th Annual Report, 1918*, p. 9.

Recognising voluntary service

While the contribution of volunteers is largely forgotten today, it was recognised at the time. Following the Easter Rising the contribution of volunteer nursing and ambulance workers was recognised by the General Chapter of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. Silver medals were awarded to four members of the SJAB and to one non-member. The members were all senior officers. Dr Lumsden, Deputy Commissioner, Dr Ella Web, Lady District Superintendent, Mrs Constance Heppel-Marr, assistant County Director and William G. Smith, District Superintendent. Mrs Edith Chaytor, was not a member of the SJAB but was wife of the secretary of the Irish Automobile Club. She was the fifth recipient of a silver medal and the only non-member to receive one. Nine bronze medals were awarded to men and ten to women. Of the nine men awarded bronze medals, only one was not an SJAB volunteer. Herbert Chaytor, secretary of the IAC was the non-member. A husband and wife team, neither of whom was a member of the SJAB received the highest honours from the SJAB for their ambulance work using the mobilised resources of a sporting club. Of the ten women awarded bronze medals most were not members of the SJAB but played key roles in the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot which was converted into an auxiliary hospital during the rising. Several of the women recipients were members of the British Red Cross Society. Forty-six men and twenty-five women were awarded certificates. Of these most were members of the SJAB or BRCS.¹⁰⁶ Among the small number of non-members to receive certificates was Nevil Shute Norway, son of the Secretary of the Post Office in Ireland and later the novelist known as Nevil Shute. Norway, while staying with his parents in the Hibernian Hotel in Dawson Street, had volunteered to act as a stretcher bearer.¹⁰⁷ Norway's father was the senior official in charge of the GPO at the time of the Rising. He had recently overseen a major refurbishment of the GPO which was completed only months before the Rising took place. The contribution of the Irish Automobile Club Ambulance Service was recognised at an inspection by General Sir John Maxwell at the Royal Barracks. There were several ambulances, at the inspection, including some bearing bullet holes. Martin Redmond, the ambulance driver shot while driving his ambulance past the Four Courts, came from hospital to take part in the function. Among those at

¹⁰⁶ *Weekly Irish Times, 1916 Rebellion Handbook Easter 1916, 1917 issue* (Dublin, 1917), p. 237.

the inspection was Mr Edward White, Chairman of the IAC, who was also treasurer of Belgian Refugees Committee. Herbert Chaytor, secretary of the IAC who was later honoured by the St John's Ambulance. Among the drivers who attended was Edmond O'Brien, of Celbridge Abbey, who had donated the piano to the Celbridge Belgian Refugees at the Workhouse and Nevil Shute Norway was among the orderlies.¹⁰⁸ The importance of the mobilisation of a sporting organisation, the IAC, into a civilian voluntary ambulance service is underscored by the honours poured onto its volunteer officers and members.

Mr Iley, of the North City Ambulance Division of the SJAB was commended by the Commanding Officer of Beggarsbush Barracks for rendering first aid in the absence of a doctor during the Rising.¹⁰⁹ Elsie Boyle of the Kingstown Nursing Division was awarded the Order of Elisabeth (of the Belgians) for her nursing work while Lady Quin received the Medaille de la Reine for services to the Belgians.¹¹⁰ Muriel Ball and Helena Turkey of the Dublin University Nursing Division were mentioned in despatches 'for meritorious service in France from 1916 to 1919'.¹¹¹ Florence Barrington was awarded the Russian Medal of St George.¹¹² Six of her colleagues in the Maycourt Nursing Division were awarded the 1915 Star. Bertha Bruce of the Nenagh Nursing Division was made a member of the Order of the British Empire.¹¹³ J Crozier of the Co. Dublin Branch of BRCS was awarded the Russian Medal of St Stanislaus.¹¹⁴ Alice Doyle from Limerick BRCS received the Queen Alexandra's Certificate of Honourable Service.¹¹⁵ Jeanie and Nora Fitzpatrick were awarded the Royal Red Cross¹¹⁶ in recognition of the work they performed in the area of Northumberland Road where some of the fiercest fighting took place during the Rising. Taking a very non-

¹⁰⁷ Keith Jeffery, *The GPO and the Easter Rising* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), p. 74.

¹⁰⁸ *Weekly Irish Times, 1916 Rebellion Handbook Easter 1916*, 1917 issue (Dublin, 1917), p. 107.

¹⁰⁹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 77.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹¹² *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 97.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 160 and 166.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

partisan approach to their volunteer work these two volunteer nurses also worked at Richmond Barracks Hospital dressing the wounds of rebel prisoners.¹¹⁷

In one of the curiosities of the time there were probably more honours conferred in recognition of volunteer nursing and ambulance work during the Rising than for the entire war. However, it is clear from the list of awards and many others not listed that there was, at the time, a recognition of the contribution of volunteers in humanitarian work during the war.

After the war

After the armistice the work of demobilising hospitals and organisations commenced. A hostel was established at Stephen's Green, in Dublin, for discharged soldiers. This enabled treatment and training to take place. The hostel was equipped with furniture from the Dublin Castle and Irish Counties hospitals. The funds raised in the 'Our Day' activities of 1918 were used to enable the Joint Committee to continue its activities not just supporting discharged soldiers but by getting involved in civilian nursing care. The Irish War Hospital Supply Depot was converted into the Hospital Supply Depot for Civilian Hospitals. Ambulances which had been in use during the war were allocated to various Poor Law Unions throughout the country.¹¹⁸ The equipment released by the demobilisation of auxiliary hospitals was distributed to Dublin and provincial hospitals and grants were made to nearly seventy hospitals and nursing organisations. These grants ranged from £20 to over £1200.

In common with other voluntary bodies, the Irish Automobile Club (IAC) found demand for its services increased rather than decreased as the war ended. Sick and wounded soldiers were still to be found in the many voluntary hospitals. Sick men continued to arrive in Dublin. The large numbers of soldiers granted leave all added to the demands placed on the buffet services and the ambulance service. After a short time prisoners from Germany were repatriated and began to arrive in numbers. A new committee, the 'Repatriated Prisoners Committee' was formed. It included members of the prisoner of war committees of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and Leinster Regiments,

¹¹⁷ *Weekly Irish Times, 1916 Rebellion Handbook Easter 1916*, 1917 issue (Dublin, 1917), p. 240.

¹¹⁸ See appendix 10.

along with representatives of the IAC and other interested bodies. Returning soldiers were met at the North Wall and provided with breakfast, information on train services, friends were telegraphed for them and they were transported to the railway stations. Any particular needs of these men were also catered for. This work began to decline at the end of January 1919. Throughout its five years of voluntary work, the IAC calculated the total numbers of soldiers and sailors that it provided services to was close to two and a half million. In recognition of its voluntary mobilisation of civilian effort the King commanded that that the club should be known as the Royal Irish Automobile Club.¹¹⁹

Because of the political unrest in Ireland in 1919, the City of Dublin YMCA continued its war emergency work for the large force of troops which were still stationed in Dublin. It extended its civilian work beyond its normal activities to supporting demobilised soldiers. The increase in activity due to mobilisation can be seen in the increased value of goods provided in the recreation centres in 1919. Over £50,000 of refreshments were provided in eighteen huts. This represents more than 50% increase in value with a 50% decrease in venues. The decrease in venues was due to the withdrawal of troops and closure of auxiliary hospitals.¹²⁰

Within the historiography of the early twentieth in Ireland there is considerable emphasis on sacrifice and particularly blood sacrifice. The inhumanity of the execution of the leaders of the Easter Rising is frequently addressed: Joseph Plunkett shot despite his life limiting illness of tuberculosis; Connolly shot despite near death from wounds received in battle; Willy Pearse shot because of his hero-worship of his brother.¹²¹ Within this litany of bloodshed there is no mention of Holden Stodart, Corps Superintendent of St John Ambulance Brigade, shot dead while going to the aid of a wounded soldier in Pembroke Street,¹²² or Martin Redmond driver of an Irish Automobile Club ambulance shot in the chest while passing the Four Courts.¹²³ Violet

¹¹⁹ Royal Irish Automobile Club, *War Services*, pp 21 and 56.

¹²⁰ City of Dublin YMCA, *70th Annual Report, 1919*, p. 8.

¹²¹ Mick O'Farrell, *A walk through rebel Dublin 1916* (Cork, 1999), p. 126; F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine* (London, 1973), p. 377; Diarmaid Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London, 2004), p. 153; Brian Barton, *From behind a closed door: Secret Court Martial Records of the Easter Rising* (Belfast, 2002), p. 159-167.

¹²² *Weekly Irish Times, 1916 Rebellion Handbook Easter 1916*, 1917 issue (Dublin, 1917), p. 274-5.

¹²³ Royal Irish Automobile Club, *War Services*, p. 13.

Sophie Barrett, Sheelah Plunkett¹²⁴ and Miss Greene-Barry,¹²⁵ all of whom died in the *RMS Leinster* disaster returning to voluntary service in France just a month before the war ended,¹²⁶ are not mentioned. Miss P. Dawes, invalided on account of illness contracted while serving in Salonika,¹²⁷ and Iza Mahony¹²⁸ and Florence Olpert,¹²⁹ who died in a similar way are not mentioned. J. Geoghegan, P. Nolan and F. Collins, all members of W.R. Jacobs V.A.D. wounded while serving,¹³⁰ are not mentioned. Phyllis Smyly, torpedoed on her way home from service in Malta,¹³¹ and Miss Ingram, who died while nursing influenza patients during the epidemic of 1918,¹³² are not mentioned. The volunteer work of citizens during the period of the war was extraordinary. The number of volunteers, the range of activities, the funds raised, the sacrifice made, including the supreme sacrifice, is largely unrecognised, unmentioned, and unremembered. Fitzpatrick's analysis is that 'Irish public life continues to dwell in imagined pasts'¹³³ and it reminds us that commemoration was used for partisan purposes. Within this partisan framework of commemoration perhaps a more careful choosing of icons would provide more sustainable models for a peaceful Ireland than the conflictual icons revered at present. National amnesia extends not just to those who followed Kitchener but to those who gave their time, money and lives caring for the sick and wounded. VADs ministered to the unfortunate wherever they found them. Nearly twenty thousand wounded from the British army were cared for in voluntary hospitals. James Connolly and forty-one of his colleagues were treated side-by-side with them at Dublin Castle Voluntary Hospital.¹³⁴ The survivors of the *RMS Leinster*, military and civilian, were ferried by Irish Automobile Club ambulances and cared for by voluntary nurses and bearers. The victims of the 1918 influenza epidemic were nursed by volunteers.

¹²⁴ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 126.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 239-41.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹³³ David Fitzpatrick 'Commemoration in the Irish Free State', in Ian McBride (ed.) *History and memory in Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 186.

¹³⁴ Brian Barton, *From behind a closed door*, p. 290.

I share Jeffery's unease with the location of the Island of Ireland Peace Tower at Messines: the site of a victory.¹³⁵ I see more appropriate locations for a memorial to peace: Dublin Castle Hospital, where Irish volunteers sacrificed themselves to care for Irishmen whether they fought for Kitchener or for Cathleen Ní Houliháin. Consideration could be given to the Dawson Street headquarters of the Royal Irish Automobile Club, or the headquarters of the St John Ambulance or Red Cross. I am uneasy with the idea of a Peace Tower. In what way does a tower connote 'peace'? Would a stretcher bearer, a nursing sister or a seamstress provide a better symbol? The tragedy of the First World War brought out the best in many Irish people. Thousands gave freely of their time; the Sisters of Charity provided a hospital at Linden Convalescent Home, Blackrock, Dublin.¹³⁶ while the YMCA provided refreshment huts. The chaplains of the Irish Counties Hospital were Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter.¹³⁷ Unfortunately, much of this has remained unremembered, not fitting into the polar politics of post war Ireland. It is time to recover our silenced memory.

¹³⁵ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 139.

¹³⁶ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 286.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

Chapter 5 – Was the Irish Home Front unique?

Framing the comparison

In the preceding chapters the responses of Irish civil society to the challenges posed by the Great War have been examined. This task has been carried out by looking at the home response in three major areas. These are the responses in relation to Belgian refugees, prisoners of war and so called 'enemy aliens', and the war wounded. However, domestic responses to the effects of war were not confined to Ireland and there is a value in examining home front responses in other countries. However, such comparisons are fraught with difficulty. What nations should Ireland be compared to? What activities should be compared? What people should be compared? A view could be taken that the most appropriate comparisons for Ireland are to nations like Bohemia or Finland. Politically these nations shared some characteristics with Ireland. Bohemia, as the province inhabited by the Czechs, was a part of the greater Habsburg empire. It had striven for its independence in the years before war and had achieved limited autonomy in a form similar to Home Rule. It subsequently gained its independence with the break-up of the Habsburg empire at the end of the war. Finland held a similar position within the Russian Empire; the Finns having a greater measure of autonomy before the war than many other nationalities like Byelorussians or Ukrainians.¹ However, these nations share Ireland's amnesia in relation to accounts of humanitarian responses to the war and such studies cannot be easily found. While the Bohemian experience was drawn upon it was necessary to turn elsewhere for comparisons. Among the nations considered were Britain, France, the Netherlands, Russia, and the United States of America. However, the status of combatants like Britain and France was quite different to that of neutral Netherlands. Ireland occupied an unusual position: not entirely combatant but not neutral either. Ireland shared some characteristics with Russia. Neither was ruled by the choice of its people, and both endured a revolution during the war.² The USA was in different position, since it was nominally neutral for much of the war but clearly pro-Allied. Ireland's response will have to be compared to

¹ Norman Davies, *Europe: a history* (London, 1997), p. 828.

² Adrian Gregory and Senia Pařeta, *Ireland and the Great War* (Manchester, 2002), p. 4.

that of other nations while keeping in mind all of these significant variations. In many cases a contrast will be made between activities which were undertaken by the civilian population in Ireland but were state responses elsewhere. Accounting for the national responses to refugees, internees, prisoners of war and war wounded in each of these countries is beyond the scope of this work. Comparisons have been selected which illustrate either a sharp divergence or a commonality of response.

Britain and Ireland

The most striking feature in comparing the response in Ireland to that in Britain is the similarity of approach and activities. At the outbreak of war the Earl of Lytton started a relief fund and around the same time the Belgian Refugee Committee was formed by Flora Shaw, Lady Lugard. An appeal to the public was launched by the Refugees Committee. Within a fortnight offers of hospitality for 100,000 refugees had been received. By the middle of 1915 a detailed census of the refugees showed 211,000 refugees were living in Britain.³ The Belgian Refugees Committee continued this work as a voluntary civilian body throughout the war although after a time Lady Lugard shifted her attention from the generality of Belgian refugees and established a new committee for the support of refugees 'of the better classes'.⁴ Meanwhile many hosts and local committees provided entirely for the maintenance of refugees while the Local Government Board paid an allowance of ten shillings a week for adults and children in some cases. For the most part the extent of the Local Government Board support was the provision of transport and temporary shelters on the arrival of refugees. Generally, after three or four days the refugees moved on from temporary accommodation to homes provided by the Belgian Refugees Committee. In many cases they entered private houses as guests. Some local committees provided rented houses. Britain's seaside resorts provided a solution to the accommodation problem. The loss of business for seaside guest houses caused by the outbreak of war was compensated for by the accommodation of refugees. However, the disadvantage of this arrangement was that seaside resorts like Blackpool and Devon could not provide employment for the refugees and many were left idle with little money. By the end of June 1915, 20,000

³ David Bilton, *The Home Front in the Great War* (Barnsley, England, 2003), p. 220.

⁴ *Report on the work undertaken by the British Government in the reception and care of the Belgian Refugees* (PRO, RG 20/86: 80363).

refugees had found work through Labour Exchanges. Another 50,000 had found work through their own endeavours. Yet another 50,000 did not find any work. A number of restrictions limited the work opportunities available for refugees. Because of the mobilisation of the new armies there were some employment opportunities but Belgians were not always in a position to take up vacant positions. Belgians were not permitted to work in ports under the terms of the Aliens Restrictions Act. They could not work in mines because their lack of English constituted a safety risk.⁵ In other cases the wages that were offered were below subsistence level and gave rise to claims of exploitation. The overall pattern of provision for refugees was very similar in Britain and Ireland. However, the employment opportunities in Britain were better than those available in Ireland and many refugees left Ireland and returned to Britain to take up employment. Nonetheless the pattern of support for refugees in Britain and Ireland was substantially the same. It was based on voluntary civilian mobilisation with the state providing limited backup to the voluntary bodies in the form of transport, emergency accommodation and allowances when voluntary efforts failed to meet the need.

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) had developed a model for supporting soldiers by providing recreation facilities for the troops during the Boer war. With the mobilisation of large numbers of troops for the 'New Armies', the YMCA again responded and set about providing facilities. The model followed by the YMCA in Britain was the same as in Ireland. The YMCA set up marquees or huts in every army camp to provide refreshments for soldiers during off-duty hours. The huts provided many accessories required by soldiers. These included cigarettes, matches, bootlaces, buttons and other items. As the huts became more organised provision was made to provide hot refreshments and in one case, at Crowborough, an auditorium was provided that could seat 2,000. A key feature of YMCA activities was the provision of libraries and writing and postage facilities.⁶ Although the work of the YMCA was underpinned by strong Protestant beliefs, these were never pushed at the men. In England Roman Catholic, Church of England, and Free Church chaplains all provided Sunday worship in the huts; in the evenings non-denominational services were held.⁷ This practice was

⁵ David Bilton, *The Home Front in the Great War*, p. 226.

⁶ Walter M. Godden and William N Maolin, *A century of service 1849-1949* (Dublin, 1949).

⁷ David Bilton, *The Home Front in the Great War*, p. 141.

reflected in Ireland. The pattern of activities by the YMCA in Britain and those in Ireland mirrored each other.

Similarly to the YMCA, the St John Ambulance Brigade (SJAB) had cut its teeth in the Boer War between 1899 and 1902.⁸ Over 2,000 medical orderlies had served on hospital ships and in field hospitals during the Boer War. Before war was declared in August 1914 members of SJAB who formed the Royal Naval Sick Berth Reserve were mobilised. Within days several hundred members were mobilised for the Military Home Hospital Reserve, freeing up regular Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) personnel for active service. At the same time 1,500 members volunteered to serve with the British Expeditionary Force. These men served as stretcher bearers and provided first aid at ports and base hospitals. Shortly after the declaration of war a War Committee was formed and undertook the work of raising funds and encouraging women members to undertake work that would relieve the pressure on men. The Motor Ambulance Department obtained eighty vehicles which could be used as ambulances. The arrangements around the provision of an ambulance service were different in Ireland, where the ambulance service was provided by the initiative of the IAC (Irish Automobile Club) which mobilised its members to form the ambulance service. With the aid of the SJAB and BRCS, the IAC provided custom built ambulances and members cars as the principal transport service carrying wounded from hospital ships to hospital beds. In addition to the critical necessity of carrying wounded to hospital, the IAC carried recuperating soldiers to a variety of entertainments in addition to carrying Belgian refugees to their adoptive homes.

By October 1914 the British Red Cross Society (BRCS) and the St John Ambulance Brigade (SJAB) had joined forces forming the Joint War Committee (JWC). The BRCS maintained a base hospital in Netley and the SJAB a Brigade hospital at Étaples in France. The Irish district of the SJAB endowed several beds in the hospital at Étaples and Irish members of the SJAB served there.⁹ The JWC was responsible for a very wide range of functions, which included provision of ambulances, trains, hospital ships, voluntary hospitals and rest stations with the necessary staff and stores. These included

⁸ Pamela Willis, Unpublished museum booklet on St John Ambulance Brigade in the First World War (London, 2005), p. 3.

⁹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d. c.1919), p. 11.

a variety of 'comforts' and clothing. Special departments included one to assist tracing wounded and missing servicemen. These activities required enormous sums of money to maintain. Fund raising was carried out through the Times Fund, flag day collections named 'Our Day' in October annually, and private donations. In one year over £2.5 million was donated by public subscription. In many ways the work of the SJAB, BRCS and JWC in Ireland were identical to the work of these bodies in Britain. Irish internal politics were reflected in the organisation of these bodies in Ireland where civilian war effort in Ulster was carried out independently to the rest of Ireland. The separation is made explicit in the title of the report relating to civilian war work: 'War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918'.¹⁰

Belgian refugees in the Netherlands and France

In the early weeks of the war, large numbers of Belgians fled before the German invader. Conservative estimates suggest that in excess of 400,000 Belgians fled to the Netherlands and a further 150,000 fled to France.¹¹ Other estimates place the numbers much higher, suggesting that as many as 1.5 millions Belgians, or one fifth of the population, fled.¹² One million of these entered the Netherlands into the border villages north of Antwerp.¹³ At the same time some 200,000 refugees fled south, to France.¹⁴ For obviously different reasons, neither the Belgian nor the German authorities wanted Belgians leaving Belgian soil. The German reasons were two-fold. They wanted to remain in good standing with neutrals like the Netherlands and did not want to supply the allies with the additional manpower that the refugees could provide if called to the colours. For their part, the Belgians feared that refugees, who might find a better life

¹⁰ Ibid..

¹¹ John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities 1914: a history of denial* (New Haven, Connecticut, 2001), pp 185 and 499; J.P.T. Bury, *France 1814-1940* (London, 2003), p. 232.

¹² Mark Derez, 'The experience of occupation: Belgium' in John Bourne, Peter Liddle, Ian Whitehead, *The Great World War 1914-1945* (London, 2000), i, 513-4.

¹³ Bob Moore, Susan Wolf and Paul M. Binding 'The Netherlands and Sweden: the experience of neutrality' in John Bourne, Peter Liddle, Ian Whitehead, *The Great World War 1914-1945* (London, 2000), ii, 315.

¹⁴ Henri Pirenne, *La Belgique et la guerre mondiale* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1929), pp 275-82 cited in John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities 1914 – a history of denial*, p. 499.

elsewhere, perhaps in North America, would not return home. As a result of the concerns of the Belgian government and the Germans the stay in the Netherlands was short for the majority of refugees. Many had returned home by the end of winter. Nonetheless over 100,000 remained in the Netherlands for the duration of the war. While the reduction in the numbers of refugees in the Netherlands was largely due to the number returning home, those who moved on to other countries also contributed to the reduction. In the early weeks of the war large numbers of refugees travelled from the Netherlands to Britain. These formed a part of the 200,000 refugees that sought refuge there. Most of these remained in Britain until the end of the war with some 125,000 still being there in November 1918. In contrast to the decline in refugee numbers in the Netherlands, the 250,000 refugees who fled to France at the outbreak of war were added to as the war proceeded and there were some 325,000 Belgians refugees in France at the end of the war.¹⁵

Ireland's remove from the centre of conflict dictated that Ireland's experience of the refugee flight would be different to that of the Netherlands or France. Both France and the Netherlands share a land frontier with Belgium and therefore offered easy access to fleeing refugees. Because of Ireland's remoteness and the need for two sea journeys, Ireland was an unlikely destination. While refugees were forced on the Netherlands and France and to a lesser extent Britain, those who found refuge in Ireland were invited and supported by a voluntary desire to help.¹⁶ Although some refugees simply arrived on Britain's shores in a flotilla of small boats, Britain took the initiative to carry large numbers of refugees from Belgium, the Netherlands and France, and provide homes for them. While the British may have been motivated by compassion, there is no doubt that the Belgians helped alleviate the skills shortage which had developed in Britain because of the large numbers of men at the front.¹⁷ Without the motivation of a skills shortage or a shared frontier, Ireland was part of the voluntary initiative to offer protection to refugees. Ireland shared in common with Britain, the Netherlands and France its humanitarian response to the plight of refugees. In Ireland and Britain the initiatives to support refugees were largely due to a civilian voluntary effort with some support from the state; in the Netherlands and France, the response was largely handled by the state.

¹⁵ Mark Derez, 'The experience of occupation: Belgium', pp 513-4.

As refugees flooded into the Netherlands the Dutch Committee for the Support of Belgian and other Victims (het Nederlandse Comité tot steun aan Belgische en andere Slachtoffers), later called the Amsterdam Committee (Amsterdam Comité) was formed as a voluntary initiative. Because of the size of the influx the work of the committee was taken over by the Central Committee (Centrale Commissie) and became a state project. Provincial Refugee Committees were formed (Provinciale Vluchtelingencomités) and refugees were placed in the care of the committees.¹⁸ By the 12 October the Belgian and Germans were acting on their desire to see the refugees return home and the Belgian government had started negotiations with the Germans to secure the return of refugees. As a result of this initiative the number of refugees registered in the Netherlands had fallen by two-thirds to 323,600 by the end of 1914 and by May 1915 the numbers were down to 105,000. This number remained constant throughout the war. Apart from the initial deluge of refugees the Netherlands supported a little over 100,000 civilian refugees for the duration of the war. In the initial exodus 40,000 Belgian soldiers including officers, among them six generals, entered the Netherlands. Some 7,000 soldiers escaped to England and enrolled for military service there. The remaining 33,000 were disarmed and interned under the terms of the Hague agreement.¹⁹

Refugees in the Netherlands who had the means took care of themselves. But the authorities were challenged to provide accommodation for refugees of little means, among them some 'undesirable refugees'. Civilian refugees who did not possess the means to maintain themselves were initially housed in a large number of camps. Many of these were made up of tents or temporary barracks. The government established prison camps at Oldenbroek and Veerhuizen to house 'undesirable' refugees, among whom were prisoners released from Belgian prisons when Antwerp was bombed. As the tented accommodation proved unsatisfactory, the Dutch government built camps to

¹⁶ See chapter 3. Mrs Fowle travelled to Britain to encourage refugees to travel to Ireland.

¹⁷ Mark Derez, 'The experience of occupation: Belgium', p. 514.

¹⁸ *Verslag van de Vereeniging Nederlandsch Comité tot steun aan Belgische en andere Slachtoffers* (Amsterdam 1916) (translates as Report of the Dutch Committee for the Support of Belgian and other Victims (Amsterdam, 1916)), cited by M.P. Wielinga, 'Refugees in the Netherlands 1914-1918', lecture presented to Historische Vereniging van de Gemeente Bedum, 17 Sep. 1997, retrieved 8 Oct. 2006 from <http://www.war1418.com/refugees/english/index.htm>

¹⁹ M.P. Wielinga, 'Refugees in the Netherlands 1914-1918'.

accommodate poor refugees who would not go home. Camp Nunspeet was built for 13,000 'dangerous or unwanted individuals'. Camp Ede was designed to accommodate 10,000 'respectable needy individuals' while Camp Uden offered accommodation to a further 10,000.²⁰

In line with international agreements made at the Second Peace Conference of The Hague in 1907, military refugees and deserters were disarmed and interned for the duration of the war. In many cases, if they had the means to do so, officers lived in private accommodation. At first, soldiers were accommodated in military barracks which were left empty as a result of mobilisation. These included the barracks at Amersfoort, Harderwijk, Groningen, Oldebroek and Alkmaar.²¹ The internees at the Alkmaar camp were later transferred to a new camp at Gaasterland, in south-west Friesland. While the title of camp suggests a discrete unit, Camp Gaasterland was made up of a collection of hastily erected tents, former industrial premises and private homes spread across a collection of towns and villages. As internees were transferred from other camps and demand for places increased, a brickworks at Rijs, a school and several sheds in the village of Sondel were used to house the internees. The nearby villages of Nijemirdum, Oudemirdu and Bakhuizen provided private accommodation. Two hundred were accommodated in an old Catholic Church in Bakhuizen. This motley collection of locations, buildings and accommodation arrangements formed Camp Gaasterland. While these varied arrangements do not coincide with modern ideas of an internment camp, the presence of the Women's Camp at Boschkant was more unusual. In late 1916 the 'women's village' of Boschkant was built within Camp Gaasterland. The village nature of the camp is made clear by its structure. It comprised five barracks, each accommodating twenty families, four private buildings, a central electrical area, a bath house, a sewing room, a school and houses built by the Quaker Society of Friends. There was a Belgian hospital which cared for the refugee ill. This remarkable camp accommodated the wives and families of Belgian soldier internees detained in Camp

²⁰ W. Verwajen, *Op de vlucht – Vluchoord Ede 1914-18* (Ede, Netherlands, 1984), cited by M.P. Wielinga, 'Refugees in the Netherlands 1914-1918'.

²¹ G.L. de Boer, *Een stuk historie bij Harderwijk*, cited by M.P. Wielinga, 'Refugees in the Netherlands 1914-1918'.

Gaasterland.²² The practice of placing women's refugee camps adjacent to internment camps for soldiers was common in the Netherlands. The women's camp, Moensdorp, was located beside the internment Camp Oedebroek. Alberts' Dorp, Elizabeth's Dorp and Nieuwdorp, all women's villages were located beside Amersfoort military internment camp. The practice of giving special privileges to married internees and allowing their families to visit regularly resulted in families of internees moving into private accommodation near the camps and pushing up the rents. The solution was to provide women's villages near the internment camps. These unusual arrangements were not exclusive to the Netherlands. The Holzminden internment camp in Germany was the place of detention for foreign nationals from enemy countries living in Germany in August 1914. The arrangements within the camp were those of a prison camp but women and a small number of children were mixed with the men.²³

The wide diversity of types of accommodation and the diffuse arrangement which formed Camp Gaasterland conflict with what we consider today the classic prisoner camp. However this type of arrangement was not unique to the Netherlands. Rachaminov, in his study of prisoners of war in Russia, reminds us that the regulated environment enclosed by barbed wire, high fences and watch towers only developed slowly over the first two years of the war.²⁴ He puts this down to the shortage of facilities and suggests that makeshift solutions, like factories, theatres, barns and private houses were the norm. Drawing on the French experience Smith *et al* point out that concentration camps were not organised but developed through improvisation and muddle.²⁵ Spanish General Weyler developed our modern idea of the internment camp during the war he fought against the Cubans in 1896-7. His approach was one of all-out war using pillage and the systematic destruction of property and cultures with what he called the 're-concentration' of civilians. Later the British used the same measures

²² H. Doeleman, H. Dijkstra en J. Oosterhof, *Interneringsdepot Gaasterland – Belgische vluchtelingen 1914-1918* (Oudemirdum, Netherlands, 1996), cited by M.P. Wielinga, 'Refugees in the Netherlands 1914-1918'.

²³ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding The Great War* (New York, 2003), p. 73.

²⁴ Alon Rachaminov, *POWs and the Great War* (Oxford, 2002), p. 88.

²⁵ Leonard Smith, Stéphane Audoin Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 46.

against the Boers in South Africa.²⁶ The position in the Netherlands, Russia and France contrasts with Ireland where internees and prisoners of war found themselves 'concentrated' behind a barbed-wire fence of stockade, so they could be supervised in Templemore and Oldcastle. The Irish experience mirrored the British one and may owe its origins to the British practice of establishing organised concentration camps during the Boer War.²⁷ The position of prisoners in Ireland contrasted strongly with the position of refugees who were almost exclusively housed in private accommodation with the notable exception of the families housed in Dunshaughlin workhouse. But even the inhabitants of Dunshaughlin Workhouse were hardly in a regulated environment. The ethos of the workhouse was completely overturned by accommodating people in family units in preference to the classic workhouse practice of separating husbands from wives and children from parents.²⁸

In France, like the Netherlands, support for the refugees was in the hands of the state.²⁹ France had its own internal refugee problem as a result of refugees from its northern and eastern departments fleeing south as the Germans invaded. The Belgians simply added to the scale of the French refugee problem. The French authorities made no distinction between French and Belgian refugees. By 1915 there were over 600,000 refugees receiving allowances from the French state. These consisted of 437,143 French, 154,298 Belgians and 10,447 Alsatians and Lorrainers. There were an additional 283,000 not receiving relief. The cost of French support for refugees was considerable, amounting to 30 million francs in 1914 but rising to 687 million in 1918. Throughout the war allowances amounted to 1.5 billion (1,508,000,000) francs. The surge of refugees moving south added to the unemployment problem caused by the outbreak of war. A central employment agency for unemployed and refugees was set up in Paris in November 1914. This agency put considerable effort into finding work for the refugees and was supported by the associations of employers, mine-owners, ironmasters, and building employers and by the trades-unions of the printers and binders engineers, and tailors; the railway companies also co-operated. Over the next twelve months this

²⁶ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding The Great War*, p. 70.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁸ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1915*, 401 [cd. 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 817.

²⁹ J.P.T. Bury, *France 1814-1940*, p. 232.

agency found work for nearly 50,000 refugees. By the end of 1915 its work was taken over by department agencies.³⁰ Because the refugees had been forced south by the invasion from the northern and eastern provinces and from the whole of Belgium they were seen as deserving of sympathy not only because they had no work, but because they were entirely destitute and were seen to have sacrificed everything in the national cause. The relief of the refugees was seen as an imperative duty. Accordingly, relief was granted to them.³¹ The extent of the sympathy for the refugees is illustrated by the arrangement whereby relief for refugees was administered mainly in the form of unemployment allowances. Nonetheless, when refugees obtained work, they continued to receive some kind of support.

In France the two main groups of refugees, the Belgians and the French from the north and the east, provided French industry with a badly-needed source of labour. Mobilisation took nearly 2,900,000 French men away from their homes and jobs in the first two weeks of the war. This had a different effect in the agricultural and industrial sectors of the country resulting in a shortage of labour in one sector and unemployment in the other. In agriculture there was a rush to harvest crops and the shortage of workers was keenly felt. In industry the first effect of the outbreak of war was unemployment. This was due to a range of factors. In many cases mobilisation removed a manager or key workers from a business resulting in businesses closing down and leaving other workers unemployed. Unemployment was exacerbated by the influx of refugees from the north. The sudden invasion had robbed France of its richest mining and industrial centres. At the same time transport services were almost entirely devoted to military purposes.³² The effect of these factors was to completely paralyse business. Refugees formed a key part of the reorganisation required to maintain the war effort. It is said that the refugees did not take easily to work but this was not true of the mass of refugees in France.³³ The refugees furnished French industry and agriculture with the additional supply of labour needed to support a war economy. But the refugees were in poor spirits and found it difficult to establish roots as they constantly expected to return home. It was frequently the case that the only work they found to do was unfamiliar to them and

³⁰ Arthur Fontaine, *French Industry during the war* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1926), pp 38-9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

unsuitable. French lists of the unemployed show 70,000 heads of families, representing 200,000 refugees in December 1914. By January 1916 the number had dwindled to between 20,000 and 25,000 heads of families, representing 60,000 refugees. While war mobilisation was removing workers from key industrial and agricultural jobs, the exodus of refugees had provided workers to fill 8,000 mining jobs, 2,500 in metalwork and 6,000 in agriculture before the end of 1914.

As the refugees were absorbed into the workforce, France turned to enemy POWs as an additional source of labour, and they became an important element in the country's war effort. At first they were not very numerous but the total number of prisoners captured by the French army finally amounted, in the north-eastern operations, to 421,655 and in the East to 81,078.³⁴ Their labour was resorted to at first with caution, in order to prevent escapes and to avoid friction with the civil population. But under pressure of necessity, it was found impossible to dispense with this source of labour supply. These prisoners of war were men in the prime of life. Many were industrial specialists who possessed skills not readily available in France. One group of German prisoners manufactured clinical thermometers, an item in much demand, but which was not produced in France. Eventually, several thousand prisoners were provided for agricultural purposes at harvest time and for wood-cutting. Others were involved in transport of goods and loading and discharging ships at the ports. Some were involved in repairing roads and in a range of industries.³⁵ They were at first placed directly under the control of a Prisoners of War Commission; later, their employment was managed, jointly with that of exempted men and foreign and colonial labours, by the inter-ministerial labour commission sitting at the Ministry of Labour. As the war progressed there was a gradual extension of their employment. At the end of 1916, 35,000 prisoners were working on the land, and nearly 88,000 were contributing, under military direction, to various services. The Headquarter Staff employed 30,000 on transport alone. By 1917 there were 208,000 prisoners employed. The number had risen to 306,000 by 1918. Prisoners became a key part of the war effort with some 25,000 men in munitions factories and 24,000 in maritime and river harbours. The practice of involving military internees in the workforce was reflected in Russia where POWs were

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

scattered around Russia performing agricultural, construction and mining work.³⁶ During summer months practically all rank and file prisoners were involved in work having been allocated to estates and peasant farms.³⁷ The iron mines at Krivoi Rog employed 2,000 prisoners in August 1915. This had risen to 15,000 by 1917. About half a million men were involved in building and fortification work close to the front.³⁸

The Netherlands, despite being neutral, found refugees and internees could play a part in meeting its labour shortages. The sudden influx of refugees into the Netherlands resulted in near chaos. The army had been mobilised, with its tents, help centres and provisions. As a result living conditions varied from spartan to deplorable.³⁹ In Camp Gaasterland, which opened nearly a year after the outbreak of war, 'accommodation and hygiene were very bad to begin with'. The barracks buildings were draughty and leaked. Floor covering was provided by wet straw and vermin were widespread. Often the soldiers only had the clothes they were wearing and boredom and overcrowding led to rows. Alcoholism was also a problem. In an attempt to improve conditions sports activities were organised along with music bands and drama societies. Many of the internees occupied their time by involving themselves in handcrafts and later by undertaking vocational training programmes. These training programmes led the Belgians into the Dutch workforce which required replacements for the many young men who had been mobilised.⁴⁰ By the end of the war over 40% of the 33,000 military internees were employed.

In France, large numbers of prisoners and practically all refugees were employed. In fact, most of the refugees who remained unemployed were too old or too ill to work.⁴¹ In the Netherlands a similar situation prevailed. This contrasts markedly with the situation in Ireland. Despite a number of projects like those in Bray, Co. Wicklow and another in Ennis, Co. Clare, where refugees ran a successful market garden,⁴² most Belgians found it difficult to find work. Their skills were mainly of an industrial nature

³⁶ Alon Rachaminov, *POWs and the Great War*, p. 89.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³⁸ Peter Gatrell, *Russia's First World War* (Harlow, UK, 2005), p. 114.

³⁹ Two British envoys cited by Mark Derez, 'The experience of occupation: Belgium', p. 514.

⁴⁰ H. Doeleman, H. Dijkstra en J. Oosterhof, *Interneringsdepot Gaasterland – Belgische vluchtelingen 1914-1918*.

⁴¹ Arthur Fontaine, *French Industry during the war*, p. 38.

and there was little demand for that type of work in Ireland. For this reason many Belgian refugees left Ireland to work in the special Belgian munitions factories in England in 1916.⁴³ A further group of 335 workers and dependents left Ireland for munitions work in England in 1917.⁴⁴ Some of these travelled to live in Elisabethville, a Belgian village located in the town of Birtley, near Gateshead. This town had been established as part of a drive by Lloyd George, Minister of Munitions, to set up munitions factories throughout Britain.⁴⁵ One such factory, called the National Projectile Factory, was set up at Birtley but labour was in short supply because of mobilisation. Belgium was approached to see if war-wounded or refugees were available to work in the factories. The village of Elisabethville, named for the Belgian queen, was created. Elisabethville was unusual in that the village was run as a Belgian village under Belgian law, protected by Belgian gendarmes, with Belgian currency in circulation. Girls in the school were taught French, Flemish and English by Ursuline nuns. The village was not without problems. At least one riot took place in December 1916 and a shot was fired by the gendarmerie at a group of 2,000 men. The men were hard-working, exceeding targets set for them for the production of shells by making over 1.5 million shells during the factory's operation.⁴⁶ The village continued to function throughout the war and only closed after the armistice when the Belgians returned home. German military prisoners did not remain long enough in Ireland to make an impact in terms of employment although there are accounts of Germans prisoners undertaking local voluntary work for example, laying a fine parquet floor in the Sanctuary of the convent chapel for the nuns.⁴⁷

⁴² *Irish Times*, 3 Nov. 1914.

⁴³ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1916*, xvi [cd. 8365] HC 1916, xiii, 220.

⁴⁴ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, 1917*, xxv [cd. 8765] HC 1917-8, xvi, 287.

⁴⁵ John Cannon (ed.) *The Oxford companion to British history* (Oxford, 1997), p. 585.

⁴⁶ J. Schlesinger and D. McMurtrie, *The Birtley Belgians: a history of Elisabethville*. (Durham, 1997).

⁴⁷ Pádraig Ó Mathúna, 'German P.O.W mail between Templemore and Germany 1914 and 1915' in H. Bergdolt, Hans Bergdolt, F. Holzmüller, O. Jung, , H.G. Moxter, P. Ó Mathúna, J. Schaaf, B. Warren, *75 Jahre irische Briefmarke* (Templemore College Archive).

In common with Ireland and Britain, charitable committees were formed throughout the Netherlands⁴⁸ to provide support for the refugees. In Ireland the government position was that looking after refugees was a civilian affair.⁴⁹ By contrast, civilian involvement was not always welcome in the Netherlands. The provincial committee in Groningen that visited Camp Oldebroek in September 1914 with offers of money and clothing found to their disappointment that their support was not required. When they asked what they could do to help, the camp Commissioner Hendrik Mueller told them “Nothing!”⁵⁰ While they were treated courteously by the Commissioner, they were clearly not welcome and were not permitted to view the camp or meet the residents.

In Ireland, camp security followed the model of the concentration camp with barbed wire and watch towers. In the Netherlands arrangements were different. The dispersed nature of the camp made security a different proposition to the barbed wire protected camps in Ireland. Security of the camp was under the supervision of two companies of the first battalion Landweer, consisting of 450 men.⁵¹ While this might appear a small number of soldiers to secure such a large number of internees located in various buildings over a wide area, the geography of Gaasterland eased their task. Gaasterland was essentially an island linked by bridges and the security of the camp was maintained by opening the bridges and isolating it.

The response to refugees in the Netherlands was mainly a state response. The army was mobilised with tents and provisions. Families accommodated some refugees but most were accommodated in camps that were self-sufficient. Bread was baked by their own bakers and clothes made by their own tailors. The camps contained their own schools and dispensaries. In Britain the government took considerable steps to support refugee evacuation but most of the work and costs of supporting refugees fell to civilians.

⁴⁸ Bob Moore, Susanne Wolf and Paul M. Binding ‘The Netherlands and Sweden’, in John Bourne, Peter Liddle, Ian Whitehead, *The Great World War 1914-1945* (London, 2000), i, 316.

⁴⁹ Belgian Refugee Committee, ‘Belgian Refugee Committee minutes’, 10 Feb. 1915 (UCD: P10b).

⁵⁰ Comité tot steun van Belgische, ‘Verslag van het provinciaal Comité tot steun van Belgische en andere vluchtelingen Groningen’ (translates as Report of the Groningen Provincial Committee), cited in M.P. Wielinga, ‘Refugees in the Netherlands 1914-1918’.

⁵¹ H. Doeleman, H. Dijkstra en J. Oosterhof, *Interneringsdepot Gaasterland – Belgische vluchtelingen 1914-1918*.

England had not been prepared for the influx of refugees and a major disaster was averted by Lady Lugard's offer of the support apparatus that she had developed to receive refugees from an anticipated Irish civil war. The main thrust of support for refugees fell to the local Belgian Refugee Committees and was a matter of voluntary civilian mobilisation. This support was based in the traditional philanthropy of the notables, of wealthy women and clerics and the efforts of thousands of volunteers.⁵² The deployment of the refugees' workforce was not always the most appropriate to their skills; thousands of Belgians were sent to the seaside resort of Blackpool where there were no opportunities for them.⁵³ Britain was not unique in this, since in France refugees often found work that was unfamiliar.⁵⁴ Nonetheless the nature of Britain's industrial economy and the demands for a workforce created by the war both to replace workers at the front and the increased demands in munitions factories provided a wide range of jobs which could not be equalled in Ireland.

American Mobilisation

Among the first group of refugees to appear in the United Kingdom in August 1914 was the English component of an estimated 125,000 American citizens who found themselves stranded in Europe. These refugees descended on the American embassy in London seeking assistance. Future president Herbert Hoover, a friend of the American consul-general and a Quaker, helped to organise the relief efforts for these American refugees. Between August and October 1914 Hoover, his wife and their committee provided rent, board and food for 42,000 people until the American government could provide transportation home.

Shortly after the outbreak of war voluntary communal relief committees were set up in Belgium to house and feed refugees and give aid to the destitute. The *Comité Central* was set up at the start of September under the patronage of the Ministers of the United States and Spain. When Hoover learned of the difficulties faced by the committee in securing food supplies and dealing with the many difficulties involved in transporting them to Belgium he immediately used his influence with American Ambassador Page to enlist American support. Having secured the President's support, Page reverted to

⁵² Mark Derez, 'The experience of occupation: Belgium', p. 514.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Hoover asking him to act on the ambassador's behalf to arrange for shipments of aid to Belgium. The Commission for Relief in Belgium was set up and worked closely with the *Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation* for Belgium and the *Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France*. The committee followed Hoover's view that penetration of the blockade and occupation zones could only be achieved through the intervention of Americans with authorisations and guarantees from both belligerent sides and with the support of neutral governments. The commission negotiated a range of special immunities from the belligerents, flew its own flag, maintained a merchant navy and held such a range of special privileges that it came to be regarded as a kind of informal state.⁵⁵ The committee dispersed over \$880 million in food supplies. Those too poor to pay received free food, those who could pay were supplied through their retailers.⁵⁶ The funding was raised through subsidies from Britain and France amounting to \$700 millions and a further \$50 millions was raised from private sources, mainly in the United States. Although the \$50 million raised by private sources represented less than 5% of the funds raised and dispensed by the commission, it was an unprecedented charitable contribution. The funds were raised by over one hundred principal committees and nearly 4,000 regional committees with a membership of 75,000 persons located in Britain, United States, Argentina, Italy, Spain and China. The British National Committee for Relief in Belgium coordinated relief throughout the British Empire. In the USA the New York office maintained contact with committees in every state. In addition to raising money support the commission received volunteer service which formed a major part of the relief effort. This included people of wide experience and ability who gave their time and effort to the work of the various committees, not least Hoover himself. The commission secured special privileges from railway, shipping, telegraph, insurance and brokerage firms all over the world. In some instances where professional bodies, such as brokerage firms, were not permitted by regulation to offer services for free, the firms charged fees and then made a contribution to the commission of an equal amount. In this way the Commission operated with

⁵⁴ Arthur Fontaine, *French Industry during the war*, p. 37.

⁵⁵ George I. Gay and H. H. Fisher, *The Commission for Relief in Belgium* (Stanford, California, 1929), retrieved 22 Oct. 2006, Brigham Young University, Utah: <http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/comment/CRB/CRB1-TC.htm>

⁵⁶ Jay Winter and Blaine Baggett, *The Great War and the shaping of the 20th century* (London, 1996), pp 356-357.

administrative costs of less than half of one per cent.⁵⁷ The impact of Hoover's operation is difficult to assess but there is no doubt that while there was hunger in wartime Belgium and occupied Northern France, this hunger did not result in famine. The lives of some nine million Belgians and French⁵⁸ were owed to the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

While the scale of Hoover's relief operation dwarfed anything that took place elsewhere, there are some comparisons that can be made. Hoover was a Quaker. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Hoover's participation was prompted by a Quaker tradition of philanthropy which supports the disadvantaged wherever they are found. Hoover went on to organise aid programmes in twenty-two countries at the end of the war.⁵⁹ Perhaps the essence of Quaker altruism could be seen in the aid programmes which supplied 3,000 Soviet kitchens with capitalist American food during the Russian famine of 1921.⁶⁰ A similar philanthropy, albeit on a different scale, could be seen in the work of Irish Quakers in supporting German internees and the families of those internees. Hoover's work during the war left a legacy in the aid programmes pursued after the war. Ireland had its own share of war legacies. At the end of the war the SJAB and BRCS Joint War Committee for Leinster, Munster and Connaught retrieved the funds that they had collected in the 'Our Day' collection from the Central Finance Committee as a decision had been made to continue its efforts after the war. The intention was to take a part in tackling the many health problems that existed in the country in addition to the new problems that were associated with the discharge of many soldiers. The premises in Merrion Square, previously used by the Irish War Hospital Supply depot, were leased for ten years and offices were set up for the St Johns Association and the British Red Cross Society. Offices were provided to the St Johns Ambulance Brigade, the Girl Guides and the Boy Scouts. At the same time the Irish War Hospital Supply depot was converted into the Hospital Supply Depot for Civilian Hospitals at new premises. The Transport Ambulance Department was set up and ambulances, previously used to ferry war wounded, were presented to nine Unions

⁵⁷ George I. Gay and H.H. Fisher, *The Commission for Relief in Belgium*.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Jay Winter and Blaine Baggett, *The Great War and the shaping of the 20th century*, p. 357.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 358.

throughout the provinces and to the Dublin branches of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross society.⁶¹

While the bulk of funding for Hoover's initiative came from governmental sources, the level of voluntary contributions and voluntary support is not to be dismissed. The raising of some fifty-two million dollars from voluntary subscriptions is substantial.⁶² The formation of voluntary civilian committees and the raising of funds enabled Hoover's work to start ahead of the agreement of the British and French governments to provide subsidies. However, the level of civilian support provided Hoover with the moral support that made it difficult for governments or armies to stand in his way.⁶³ In Ireland the main support for Belgian refugees came in the form of voluntary organisations and civilian fund raising. The civilian support for Belgians can be seen in the efforts made to raise monies, form local committees and organise homes. The desire to play their part is emphasised by the reports of the frustration experienced by local committees and individuals when Belgian refugees who had been expected and prepared for failed to materialise. The commitment is underlined by the Belgian Refugees committee in Dublin sending a representative to England to encourage refugees to come here and when this did not succeed sending their president Mrs Fowle.⁶⁴ Perhaps the biggest contrast is illustrated by the fact that Hoover's operation became a mainly state-funded operation. While the Local Government Board provided increased funding as the war dragged on the Irish support for refugees was primarily a voluntary matter.

The position of refugees was always precarious. The welcome they received was often ambiguous and contradictory.⁶⁵ Those who were working were seen to be taking jobs from the locals. Those who had no jobs were seen to be living off society. These experiences were common wherever the refugees were. The Archbishop of Dublin had difficulty extending charity to a fellow priest unless he had the means of supporting himself.⁶⁶ Similarly a Dutch priest had difficulties with Belgian refugee gratitude and

⁶¹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), pp 30-33.

⁶² George I. Gay and H.H. Fisher, *The Commission for Relief in Belgium*.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ See chapter 3 – Belgian refugees.

⁶⁵ Mark Derez, 'The experience of occupation: Belgium', p. 517.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 3 – Belgian refugees p. 22.

religious knowledge describing them as ‘frivolous, ignorant of the faith and thankless’.⁶⁷ It suited the Allies to give the Belgian refugees the status of unfortunate victim of German atrocities. The Germans in their turn represented the refugees as a ragged working class exploited by the Allies.⁶⁸ Providing for the refugees was a task subject to normal political tensions. Mrs Phillipa Lawless, who raised funds for the refugees through an art sale, wrote to Rev T.V. Nolan, Provincial of the Jesuits in Ireland and member of the Belgian Refugees Committee, indicating that she would not provide the funds she had raised to the Belgian Refugees Committee because she objected to mixed religion committees. Mr White, the treasurer of the committee was not a Catholic. However she was happy to give the funds to Fr Nolan despite his membership of the same committee.⁶⁹

The veil of forgetfulness and civilian mobilisation

This thesis sets out to contribute to a process of unfolding the extent of Irish voluntary civilian war effort. While credit has been given elsewhere to the contribution of F.X. Martin to addressing the national amnesia in relation to Ireland’s involvement in the First World War, addressing amnesia did not begin in the 1960s. In the report on the work of the St John Ambulance Brigade and British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught the societies put considerable effort into comparing the Irish war effort with that in the rest of the United Kingdom. The societies devoted three pages of their report to this comparison. The report sets out to do this by comparing the size of the population of Ireland and Great Britain, noting that the population of Lancashire exceeded that of the three provinces of Ireland by 70% and concluded that the ratio of the populations was 1 to 15 and the ratio of wealth 1 to 28.⁷⁰ The report points out that, taking into account the relative size and prosperity of Ireland, the contributions in Ireland to ‘Our Day’ collections were four and a half times higher than in England and Wales. Having made several other comparisons the report concluded that it was doubtful if any other part ‘of His Majesty’s dominions contributed more generously’. The contributions of all sections of society were noted, the report specifically stating

⁶⁷ Mark Derez, ‘The experience of occupation: Belgium’, p. 516.

⁶⁸ See Chapter 3 – Belgian refugees.

⁶⁹ Letter to Fr Nolan dated 2 Nov. 1914 (Jesuit Archive: ADMN/3/7(1)).

⁷⁰ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 9.

that 'the contributions represent all social grades of the people, and all religious denominations, Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and unionist, rich and poor'. It appears that by 1921 the SJAB and BRCS had to argue very forcibly that Ireland had made a voluntary contribution which was greater than any other part of the Dominions.⁷¹ The 'veil of forgetfulness' was already obscuring the Irish civilian contribution.

Parallels with Bohemia

Probably the most significant aspect of the comparison of Ireland's mobilisation on behalf of refugees, prisoners and wounded is the similarity between the response in Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom in contrast with the significant differences between Ireland and France or the Netherlands. There is another aspect of the experience of prisoners of war that points to the integrity of the Irish and British experience. Shortly after the outbreak of war and Redmond's pledge committing Ireland to the imperial war effort 'wherever the firing line extends' Roger Casement began talks with the German military attaché in New York about forming an Irish brigade from Irish prisoners of war in German prisoner camps.⁷² At the end of October Casement arrived in the German capital with the intention of seeking German support for an independent Ireland and mobilising Irish prisoners of war into an Irish Brigade to fight for Irish independence. By late November German newspapers announced the arrival of Casement in Germany and gave notice of a *Declaration of German intentions towards Ireland*, a document that outlined Germany's position indicating that Germany desired only 'national prosperity and freedom' for Ireland.⁷³ A few days later, having secured German support for Irish independence, Casement set about recruiting the Irish brigade.

Curiously the Germans had received considerable criticism from the Allies for mixing nationalities in prisoner of war camps. An American camp inspector Daniel J McCarthy claimed that a combination of Russians, Frenchmen, Britons, Belgian and Serbians was awkward enough but 'when to this mixture was added the French Colonial, Negro, Mussulman and the British Colonials from India the possibilities for social

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 11.

⁷² Angus Mitchell, *Casement* (London, 2003), p. 95.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 103.

inconvenience can be imagined.’⁷⁴ Perhaps criticism would have been more justified for segregating prisoners of different nationalities in an attempt to exploit ethnicity for military and political advantage. The Germans set up two camps, one, for the Irish at Limburg and, another, at Zossen for Islamic and Hindu prisoners. MacCarthy described Limburg as ‘one of the best constructed camps in Germany’ where ‘the prisoner was given exceptional care and treatment’. The purpose of the camp was to seduce prisoners from their allegiance to the Allies.⁷⁵ Prior to Casement’s recruiting drive Irish prisoners had resisted these attempts to separate them from their fellow British soldiers.⁷⁶ Senior NCOs informed the camp commandant that while they appreciated the efforts being made they wanted no concessions that did not apply to all prisoners claiming that ‘...in addition to being Irish Catholics, we have the honour of being British soldiers’.⁷⁷ On 4 December 1914, Casement visited the prisoner of war camp at Limburg and addressed a group of Irish soldiers. His appeal did not meet with much success and he recruited just two soldiers. One of these, Corporal Timothy Quinlisk, returned to Ireland and received a Sinn Féin pension in 1919. He switched sides again and began to work as a Dublin Castle agent. In November 1919 he attempted to decoy Michael Collins to capture in Dublin.⁷⁸ He was executed by members of Cork IRA in February 1920 on Michael Collins’s orders.⁷⁹ Casement proceeded to secure an agreement from the Germans emphasising that the brigade was to be formed solely to fight for Irish independence, although a clause that referred to fighting in Egypt caused some confusion then and at his subsequent trial.⁸⁰ A month later, on the 5 January he visited Limburg again. This time the reception was even poorer than previously with the soldiers providing an openly hostile response. Some accounts claim that on Casement’s arrival the soldiers cheered for Redmond and called out ‘how much are the Germans paying you?’ Having been struck and pushed he left the camp in disgust.⁸¹ Casement eventually secured the

⁷⁴ Richard B. Speed III, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War* (Westport, Connecticut, 1990), p. 65.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷⁶ *The treatment of prisoners of war in England and Germany*, 9 [cd. 7862] HC 1915, lxxxiii, 631.

⁷⁷ Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement* (London, 1973), pp 287-8.

⁷⁸ Seán McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922* (Oxford, 2005), p. 559.

⁷⁹ Jane Leonard ‘The IRA and ex-servicemen’ in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Revolution – Ireland 1917-23* (Dublin, 1990), pp125-6.

⁸⁰ Angus Mitchel, *Casement*, p. 105.

⁸¹ Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement*, p. 289.

support of thirty-two of the four thousand prisoners in the camp.⁸² The loyalty of Irish soldiers to Britain is in marked contrast to the actions of some soldiers of other nations in a similar position. Despite the fact that the First World War is frequently seen as a war of competing empires, it was also a war of emerging nationalisms. Hence large numbers of Serbs and Italians served with the Austro-Hungarian army against the armies of Serbia and Italy. Romanians from Transylvania joined the German-Austro-Hungarian offensive against Romania.⁸³ Perhaps most interestingly from an Irish perspective, were the activities of the Czechs under Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.

The variety of nationalities in the Austro-Hungarian empire was a source of strain in second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The mobilisations in the Habsburg Empire in 1908 and 1912 had resulted in mutinies in Czech units. Despite the autonomy that had been achieved by the Czechs in Bohemia, which some compare to Home Rule in Ireland, Czech loyalty to the Habsburg Empire was uncertain. In late September 1914 two Czech Landwehr battalions left Prague flying the national flag and another with the words: 'we are marching against the Russians and we do not know why'.⁸⁴ In April 1915 when attacked by the Russians, the Czech infantry regiment No. 28 laid down its arms and deserted *en masse*. The cause of the desertion was not the hardship of the Russian front but that the Czechs 'were nationally contaminated'⁸⁵ Deserting Czech conscripts went on to form units which fought against their rulers.⁸⁶ The Czechoslovak Legion was to reach 40,000 prisoners of war towards the end of the war.⁸⁷

Masaryk's activities formed the basis of a defence that Roger Casement proposed using against the charge of treason which was levelled against him. Masaryk, who was in exile in Paris at the outbreak of war, had been a member of the Czech legislature. In 1915 he obtained a declaration from Asquith in relation to Czech independence similar to the one Casement had received from the German government and helped mobilise

⁸² Richard B Speed III, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War*, p. 66.

⁸³ Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999: nationalism, war and the great powers* (London, 2000), p. 309.

⁸⁴ Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (Oxford, 2001), p. 157.

⁸⁵ Mark Cornwall, 'Morale and patriotism in the Austro-Hungarian War' in John Horne (ed.) *State, society and mobilisation in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 176.

⁸⁶ Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 3.

Czech units among POWs in Russia to fight to free Bohemia.⁸⁸ Casement believed that Masaryk and Bohemia paralleled his own and Ireland's case. In Casement's view, Masaryk had less justification than himself as Bohemia already had its own parliament. In the event this defence was never used as a different approach was taken by Casement's counsel, Serjeant A.M Sullivan.

The parallels between Bohemia and Ireland during the war provide some insight into the attitude of Irish people to the war. The Czech Legion, similarly to the Polish Legion and the Alsatian Corps, were made up of prisoners who were recruited to fight their leaders. Casement's lack of success in recruiting Irish POWs to form a brigade in 'Ireland's cause' against Britain suggests that Irish soldiers in the British army did not regard Ireland's cause as being in opposition to Britain's cause.

The role of schools and colleges

The role of schools and colleges in the war effort at the Front or on the Home Front bears some relationship to the position of schools and colleges in Ireland in the early twentieth century. The impact of the Intermediate Education Act and the results of the 'university question' had a major impact on the structure of education in Ireland. Pařeta cites Andrew's division of Catholics into four major social, political and economic strata and the schools favoured by each stratum.⁸⁹ Those at the top of the socio-economic scale sent their sons to English schools or to the very best Irish school, Clongowes. Daughters were sent to prestigious convent schools. Andrews called this group 'Castle Catholics'. Pařeta cautions that the choice of such schools did not necessarily imply support of the Union as Thomas Kettle and the Redmond brothers attended Clongowes. The 'middle-middle class' sent their sons to Dublin schools such as Belvedere College, St Mary's and the Catholic University School and their daughters to Sacred Heart Convent (Mount Anville) or the Loreto Convent. The next group, the lower middle class, sent their children to the Christian Brothers, the Dominican nuns, the Holy Faith sisters or any of the other convents offering intermediate level education at modest cost. Pařeta cautions that one of the effects of the Easter Rising is that

⁸⁷ Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, p. 115.

⁸⁸ Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement*, p. 329.

⁸⁹ Senia Pařeta, *Before the Revolution* (Cork, 1999), p. 37.

disproportionate attention has been paid to the Christian Brothers schools and their role in providing 'an effective leadership for a revolution'.⁹⁰

Ireland participated in the Officer Training Corps established in 1908 which resulted in thriving units in schools and universities. Trinity College, Queen's University Belfast, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the Royal Veterinary College of Ireland had formed units by 1911.⁹¹ However Catholic schools did not form Officer Training Corps organisations.⁹² MacArdle claims that 'it was almost impossible for a Catholic to get a commission; the National University (including UCD) was not permitted to have a training corps for officers'.⁹³ In challenging claims that there were hardly any Catholic officers in the 10th and the 16th divisions Boyce claims that there were more Catholic officers than critics claim but also the problem lay outside of the prejudice of the British and was caused by the lack of OTCs within Irish schools resulting in a lack of an officer class.⁹⁴ Clearly this argument can be made both ways. Establishing the allegiances of Catholic colleges is not an easy matter.

In a study of Belvedere College between 1916 and 1922, Martin challenges claims that Belvedere was 'a seed-bed for leaders who were soon to lead the nation to a new Ireland'.⁹⁵ The idea of Belvedere as a seedbed for advanced nationalism is supported by listing prominent names, Joseph Mary Plunkett, Jack Plunkett, Dick Humphreys, Cathal Brugha, Laurence O'Neill and Kevin Barry, who were all Belvederians. Despite the list Martin maintains that these men, like Eoin MacNeill, Patrick Pearse and Tom Clarke were a minority of a minority, and uses the contents of the college magazine over the years 1915-1921 to support his argument. The *Belvederian* for the year 1915 deals with a range of 'safe' war topics, refers to the National Volunteers and provides a roll of honour of Belvederians that had died in the war and a long list of those who were serving. There is no reference to any matters of an advanced nationalist nature. In the

⁹⁰ CS Andrews, *Dublin made me* (Dublin, 1979), p. 74.

⁹¹ Roger Willoughby, *A military history of the University of Dublin and its Officer Training Corps* (Limerick, 1989), p. 7.

⁹² D.G. Boyce 'Nationalism, unionism and the First World War' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 203.

⁹³ Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish republic* (Dublin, 1999), p. 121.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ F.X. Martin, 'Did Belvedere Change 1916-1922?' in John Bowman and Ronan O'Donoghue (eds), *Portraits: Belvedere College 1832-1982* (Dublin, 1982), pp 49-62.

early years of the war Belvedere played its part in the war effort by providing an officer class from among its middle and upper-middle class students. These officers did not restrict themselves to Irish regiments. A significant number were with the RAMC but others were in all branches of the services and a wide range of regiments. Belvederians were not unlike public school boys in Britain who served wherever the call took them. Martin's analysis fits with McRedmond's evaluation of the major colleges.⁹⁶ Clongowes position, not just as the premier college but, as the premier 'Home Rule' college was established with the presence of all three Redmonds, John, Willie and William Archer, at the Clongowes centenary in 1914.⁹⁷ However, attitudes in Jesuit colleges were not uniform and Tullabeg under the leadership of Fr Delany, formed a very close relationship with the castle. By contrast Mungret College, under Fr Edward Cahill, was promoting attitudes closer to Sinn Féin than the Irish Party.⁹⁸

Despite the reputation that Christian Brothers' schools had for their advanced nationalism, Christian Brothers College, Cork (CBC) provided over 300 past pupils to the allied war effort.⁹⁹ According to the college centenary history '...while schools debates on war and conscription included references to "misrule in Ireland" but a vital thrust was to "support Britain in her time of need" '.¹⁰⁰ Despite the varying attitudes of these schools and colleges all of them, Jesuit, Christian Brothers and Dominicans, among others, provided accommodation and tuition for Belgian Refugee children.¹⁰¹

It is clear that despite the socio-economic standing of schools and the political stance taken by those who controlled them, the attitudes that prevailed mirrored those that prevailed in society as large. Similarly to society at large, the attitude began to change for many of them as the war progressed. Martin's analysis of the *Belvederian* continues into 1916 where he finds the major emphasis is still on Belvederians serving with the forces although the Rising received mention. By 1917 the *Belvederian* published two

⁹⁶ Louis McRedmond, *The greater glory: a history of the Irish Jesuits* (Dublin, 1991), p. 272.

⁹⁷ Anthony P. Quinn, *Wigs and guns: Irish barristers in the Great War* (Dublin, 2006), p. 30.

⁹⁸ Louis McRedmond, *The greater glory*, p. 272.

⁹⁹ Anthony P. Quinn, *Wigs and guns: Irish barristers in the Great War*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁰ 'CBS Centenary magazine' cited in Anthony P. Quinn, *Wigs and guns: Irish barristers in the Great War*, p. 37.

¹⁰¹ Sir F.C. Burnand (ed.) *The Catholic Who's who and yearbook* (London, 1914) (NLI: 9222 C1 p. 526).

articles in praise of Plunkett and 'A rebel's diary' by Dick Humphreys. By 1919 the *Belvederian* was congratulating Laurence O'Neill on becoming Lord Mayor of Dublin for the third time, although his previous two successes had not received mention. Tribute was paid to Cathal Brugha in another article. Schools like Belvedere reflected the attitudes of society and where those attitudes were complex and changing so were attitudes in the schools. Tom Kettle was in British army uniform when his fellow Clongowian, The O'Rahilly was in the GPO. Both were to die leading a charge, Kettle on the Somme, The O'Rahilly up Moore Street as the Rising drew to a close.¹⁰² Reggie Cleary, a Belvederian, and member of the Volunteer Training Corps (commonly known as the 'Gorgeous Wrecks' because of the conjunction of the emblem 'Georgius Rex' on their uniform and the decrepit appearance of many members) died while on a route march which took the corps across Northumberland Road on Easter Monday 1916. Although unaware of the Rising, and unarmed, five of their number were killed and seven were wounded. On the wall of 25 Northumberland Road there is a plaque on the wall commemorating Lieutenant Michael Malone of the Irish Volunteers who died close to the same spot on the following day. Malone's commanding officer was Éamonn De Valera, who had taught at Belvedere.¹⁰³

Despite its standing as a leading school the Belvedere experience of the period was a reflection of society at large. To paraphrase F.X. Martin the majority in Belvedere were with Redmond and only a minority of a minority were with MacNeill. As the war dragged on and disillusionment increased, support for the war waned and sympathy with the martyrs of the rising increased. While Belvedere's position as a leading school ensured that Belvederians who joined the forces received commissions, the position in Christian Brothers College suggest that the attitude in other schools was not significantly different to that in Belvedere.

¹⁰² Louis McRedmond, *The greater glory*, p. 274.

¹⁰³ Oliver Murphy, *The cruel clouds of war* (Dublin, 2003), p. 81.

A common experience of forgetting

The most striking element of comparison between various countries and the story of refugees, internees and prisoners is the extent to which they are forgotten. Atack,¹⁰⁴ in her analysis of the experience of occupation in Northern France, draws on the work of Becker¹⁰⁵ to emphasize the difference between the sacred position in public memory achieved by the combatants and the 'veil of forgetfulness'¹⁰⁶ surrounding the war experience of non-combatants. The gap in public consciousness of the suffering of non-combatants was raised shortly after the war by Gromaire¹⁰⁷. More recently, Becker drew attention to the French amnesia, pointing out that even in the occupied territories it is the heroes of the trenches that are commemorated, not the non-combatants. She posed the challenging question: 'How does one commemorate the victims rather than the heroes?'¹⁰⁸ Becker suggests that that not alone were prisoners of war and civilians who lived under occupation excluded from the memory of the conflict but the people who helped them, like the Red Cross and the Vatican.¹⁰⁹ In the case of Ireland, not alone are the refugees, the prisoners and the wounded forgotten but also the many who helped them like the Red Cross, the St John Ambulance Brigade, the Irish Automobile Club, the Belgian Refugees Committee, the Society of Friends, the members of the various local committees, the seamstresses and knitters of the various workshops, the sphagnum collectors in the bogs, the rich and the poor who contributed their pounds and their pennies at gala evenings or church gate collections. While Ireland is slow to remember its combatants in the Great War it has completely forgotten the non-combatants who voluntarily manned the home front. These non-combatants came from all parts of Irish

¹⁰⁴ Margaret Atack, 'The experience of occupation: Northern France' in John Bourne, Peter Liddle and Ian Whitehead, *The Great World War 1914-1945* (London, 2000), i, 535.

¹⁰⁵ Annette Becker, *Journaux de combatants et civil dans la France du Nord dans la Grande Guerre* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, France, 1998), p. 13, cited in Margaret Atack, 'The experience of occupation: Northern France', p. 535.

¹⁰⁶ Marc Blancpain, *Quand Guillaume II gouvernait 'de la Somme aux Vosges'* (Paris, 1980), p. 291, cited in Margaret Atack, 'The experience of occupation: Northern France', p. 535.

¹⁰⁷ Georges Gromaire, *L'Occupation allemande en France (1914-1918)* (Paris, 1925), p. 7, cited in Margaret Atack, 'The experience of occupation: Northern France', p. 535.

¹⁰⁸ Annette Becker, 'Introduction' in *La Revue de Nord*, special issue: *1914-1918 guerre et occupation*, 53 (325) (Apr./June 1998), p. 254, cited in Margaret Atack, 'The experience of occupation: Northern France', p. 535.

society. In the words of the SJAB and BRCS report 'the contributions represent all social grades of the people, and all religious denominations, Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and unionist, rich and poor'¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding The Great War*, p. 233.

¹¹⁰ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 9.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

“...the imperative to rescue what had been forgotten...”¹

The opening of the Messines Peace Park on the eightieth anniversary of the armistice supported the Irish peace process by providing a symbol of unity between the two traditions on the island of Ireland. Reconciliation through common war service was the underlying theme. The blaze of publicity surrounding the opening promoted reconciliation in the context of greater union within Europe. The idea of unity was substantiated by the presence of the President of Ireland, the Queen of England and the King of the Belgians. However, Ireland, north and south, and Europe, were unified not alone in remembering but in forgetting. The Messines project focussed on remembering the sacrifice of Irishmen from both traditions who fought and died side by side in a military mobilisation that affected much of Europe. Little recognition was given to the sacrifice, in some cases the ultimate sacrifice, made by civilians in a voluntary mobilisation to support the victims of war. The Messines Park could be seen as a memorial to forgetting civilian mobilisation in Ireland in the context of forgetting civilian mobilisation within Europe. Perhaps Edna Longley’s suggestion that the next commemoration might take the form of ‘raising a monument to amnesia and forgetting where we put it’ is not as silly as it seems.²

Throughout the combatant countries there are extensive accounts of the contributions and sacrifice of the military. Smith *et al* remind us that the French ‘remembered the living and the wounded but most especially the dead’.³ For much of the twentieth century Ireland, preoccupied with nation building, distanced itself from the living, the wounded and the dead of the First World War and focussed instead on its nationalist martyrs. In the decades since Martin identified Ireland’s national amnesia, steps have been taken to redress the balance on the part of the dead. Many accounts have appeared addressing the part played by Irish men in the military mobilisation that underpinned the

¹ Martin Jay ‘Against consolation, Walter Benjamin and the refusal to mourn’ in Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and remembrance* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 230.

² Edna Longley, *Belfast Telegraph*, 17 Feb. 1998.

³ Leonard Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War: 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 52.

First World War. There are fewer accounts telling the story of those who did not die but spent much of their time and effort working to support the victims of war in a civilian mobilisation that was extensive and inclusive. Gregory and Pašeta acknowledge Jeffery's comment that enough work has now been done in relation to the First World War and Ireland to enable us to 'look intelligently and with a more informed perspective than hitherto on the period'⁴ but caution that the tendency of historians of early twentieth-century Ireland to focus on conflict means that the contribution of civilian responses and experiences remains shadowy.⁵ In fact, looking intelligently at the period probably requires much more extensive study of the non-military aspects.

Irish support for the war

In his analysis of participation in the Great War, Jeffery compares the numbers of men volunteering for service in Ireland with the numbers in Great Britain.⁶ The assessment is incomplete because a comparison becomes invalid after conscription was introduced in Britain in early 1916. Based on work by Callan, Fitzpatrick and others, Jeffery comes to the conclusion that volunteering in Ireland was not dramatically out of line with the rest of the United Kingdom. He further concludes that the decline in volunteering in the first eighteen months of the war occurred in the same proportions as in the rest of the UK. Jeffery's analysis suggests that there was an initial enthusiasm for war in Britain and in Ireland, although the support in Ireland was less. Evidence of that enthusiasm can be seen in the daily reports of newspapers of the time. The enthusiasm for war was a threat to advanced nationalism and evidence of the struggle between these positions can be seen in the newspapers accounts also. The enthusiasm of 'stupid imperialists' was criticised in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the official journal of the Gaelic League. The leading article complained that 'it has become the fashion of late on all platforms to adopt the Imperial attitude'.⁷ Clearly the Gaelic League was concerned at the level of support for the war. The extent of Irish support for the war can be seen in the difference between the response to the Great War and to the Boer War. The dominant Irish mood moved from being decidedly anti-British during the Boer War to being pro-British

⁴ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 1.

⁵ Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (eds), *Ireland and the Great War* (Manchester, 2002), p. 1.

⁶ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, pp 37-69.

⁷ Cited in *The Freeman's Journal*, 23 Oct. 1914, p. 4.

during the First World War. For over two years the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) fought a determinedly pro-Boer action in the House of Commons. Over a much longer period, starting in January 1896, Freeman's Journal devoted a large part of its news section to pro-Boer coverage.⁸ A similar position was taken by many provincial newspapers.⁹ The action in parliament and in the newspapers reflected a substantial pro-Boer movement in Ireland which united various shades of nationalism. The position of the Irish Parliamentary Party, the newspapers and the population at large was different in 1914. The radical change in position is reflected in the popular song:

You used to call us traitors, when we were agitators,
But you can't call us traitors now.¹⁰

This difference in support for the Great War and the Boer War may have been Casement's undoing in his campaign to raise an Irish Brigade among the prisoners of war in the specially segregated Limburg prisoner of war camp.¹¹ When they met in 1913, Casement was impressed by MacBride's account of the exploits of the three-hundred strong Irish Brigade in South Africa. He was sufficiently impressed to urge MacBride to write the story of the Brigade. 'I begged him to write the story – to have on record the fight of that little band of Irishmen made for Boer freedom. It was a fine fight and should be told.'¹² Casement thought he could emulate MacBride's success in forming an Irish Brigade during the Great War. However the Boer War was an unpopular cause in Ireland whereas the Great War was not. Irishmen in the British army during the First World War were committed to their cause. Despite this initial enthusiasm for war in both Britain and Ireland, support for the war declined as time passed and the war, which was to have been over by Christmas, refused to end.

The initial enthusiasm shown for military mobilisation in Ireland was mirrored in civilian mobilisation. The mobilisation took place across a range of civilian activities. This thesis focuses on the mobilisation that took place in three main sectors – in relation

⁸ Donal P. McCracken, *Forgotten Protest – Ireland and the Anglo-Boer War* (Belfast, 2003), p. 31.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁰ D.G. Boyce, 'Nationalism, unionism and the First World War', in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (eds), *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 193.

¹¹ Richard B. Speed III, *Prisoners, diplomats, and the Great War* (Westport, Connecticut, 1990), p. 66.

¹² Roger Casement to Alice Green, letter quoted in Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement* (London, 1973), p. 287.

to Belgian refugees, prisoners of war and war wounded. While the three of these illustrate the extent of civilian mobilisation, they do not tell the whole story but add to work undertaken elsewhere in relation to, for example, army chaplains¹³, women and war work¹⁴ and cultural responses¹⁵.

In each of the areas in question there was a substantial civilian mobilisation. Belgian relief committees were formed in at least forty-three towns throughout Ireland and refugees lived in each of these towns. The vast majority of these refugees were maintained by voluntary contributions rather than by state aid. St John's Ambulance Brigade (SJAB) and British Red Cross Society (BRCS) mobilised throughout the country with joint county directors in every one of the twenty-three counties in Leinster, Munster and Connaught.¹⁶ Twenty-three Red Cross auxiliary hospitals were opened in eight counties in addition to the equipping and maintenance of wards in existing hospitals like King George V, Mercer's, the Adelaide and Sir Patrick Duns hospitals. The voluntary hospitals were staffed mainly by volunteers. Transport arrangements were made by the Irish Automobile Club (IAC) and SJAB for over 19,000 wounded soldiers who arrived in 46 hospital ships between October 1914 and February 1919.¹⁷ While the scale of the operation on behalf of 'enemy aliens' was considerably smaller than those on behalf of refugees and war wounded, the Society of Friends worked on behalf of victims whose 'crime' was to have the wrong nationality or to be Irish and married to a man of the wrong nationality. The work of the Society of Friends is particularly significant in that it was a humanitarian response to an unpopular cause. Despite the attitude of advanced nationalists to Germany, in the populations at large there was substantial antipathy toward Germans and those who could be mistaken as Germans. The work of the Friends continued on behalf of detainees in Oldcastle camp until its closure and on behalf of the families of detainees to the end of the war.

¹³ Peter Anthony Boyle, 'The sword and the cross' Ph.D. thesis in progress; Jane Leonard, 'The Catholic Chaplaincy' in David Fitzpatrick, *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1986), p. 1-15.

¹⁴ Eileen Reilly, 'Women and war work', in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (eds), *Ireland and the Great War*, pp 49-73.

¹⁵ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, pp 69-106; Neil Garnham and Keith Jeffery (eds), *Culture, place and identity* (Dublin, 2005); Fran Brearton, *The Great War in Irish poetry* (Oxford, 2003).

¹⁶ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 21-23.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

While the willingness to take up arms can be seen in the rates of enlistment a similar pattern of willingness to play one's part can be seen in the response to the plight of Belgians. Before there was any suggestion of refugees coming to Ireland a committee was formed on a voluntary basis to collect subscriptions, to carry out street collections and collect clothing on behalf of refugees. The committee was formed immediately on the outbreak of war, and by the end of September was in a position to send over £2,000 to the Belgian Minister in London.¹⁸ The work of this committee was started almost two months before the Local Government Board (LGB) sought to encourage the Irish Local Representative Relief Committees to form special Belgian Refugee Committees. When the LGB decided to become involved it was clear that there was no intention that this should be a state initiative but that the authorities would encourage offers of hospitality from the general population. This view persisted and was emphasised by the vice president of the Local Government Board, Sir Henry Robinson, in February 1915, when he encouraged the transfer of all refugees out of workhouses and into private accommodation.¹⁹ The population in general and the committee in particular continued the initiative they had themselves undertaken before the involvement of the LGB and they could report in 1916 that while there were over 3,000 refugees accommodated in Ireland, only 200 were maintained at the expense of the LGB.²⁰

Decline in support for the war

It had been anticipated by many that the war would be short and the expectation was that support for refugees would be a short-term project. By December 1914 the Alexandra College Guild, which ran a hostel for refugees on Northbrook Road in Dublin, was expressing the hope that the refugees would soon be able to return home!²¹ By late 1915 many local committees found it difficult to continue to support all of the refugees in their care and found it necessary to request assistance from the central committee.²² This decline in support for refugees can be seen in the context of the

¹⁸ See Chapter 3.

¹⁹ Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', 10 Feb. 1915 (UCD: P10b).

²⁰ *Report of the Belgian Refugees Committee (Ireland)*, 400 [cd 8016] HC 1915, xxv, 816.

²¹ *Alexandra College Magazine*, Dec. 1914 cited in Anne V. O'Connor and Susan M. Parkes, *Gladly Learn and Gladly Teach* (Dublin, n.d.), p. 93.

²² See chapter 3.

decline in support for the war. A phenomenon that can be seen in Jeffery's analysis of military volunteering finds a parallel in civilian volunteering. Perhaps the parallel is not surprising as enlisting, unlike conscription, is a form of civilian volunteering. All of the Irishmen who took part in the war were volunteers, unlike men from most other countries. The varying causes of the decline in support for voluntary war work can be seen in the case of the Alexandra Guild War club and workrooms. The Guild had opened a Club in 1915 in D'Olier Street in Dublin. The club was one of many projects undertaken by this guild of women to support women. The club was intended to provide a meeting place for women whose husbands, brothers and sons were away at war and provided them with classes in cooking, sewing, music, healthcare and drill. But by 1916 support for the club had dwindled and it was closed. In 1914 the Guild had opened a work room in Westland Row where twelve women knitted socks for the war effort. However the relentless demand for labour created by the war played a part in declining voluntary support. The Guild was forced to close its workroom in 1916 because its labour force had found war work in the munitions factory in Parkgate Street.²³ The Irish Automobile Club (IAC) suffered some decline in support as some of their volunteers were physically not up to the extended demands placed on them as the war dragged on. Nonetheless some of the original helpers who manned refreshment buffets at ports and railway stations continued without a break, sometimes on a daily basis, to the end of the war.²⁴ Despite the increasing demands the IAC stepped into the breach when the Garrison Institute, in Lower Abbey Street was destroyed during the Easter Rising. The Garrison Institute had offered cheap refreshments and leisure activities for soldiers. Similar facilities throughout the city were put under pressure by the loss of the Institute. The IAC, with the support of the Institute of Civil Engineers converted the IAC hall in Dawson Street into a restaurant, known as the Garrison Buffet, with a billiard table, piano and reading and writing rooms. Towards the end of the war the Garrison Buffet was providing 4,000 meals a months and required an average weekly staff of 160 voluntary helpers.²⁵

²³ Anne V. O'Connor and Susan M. Parkes, *Gladly Learn and Gladly Teach*, p. 94.

²⁴ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Motivations for supporting the war effort

While there has been an ongoing debate about the reasons why Irishmen went to war there are also a variety of reasons why Irishmen and Irishwomen supported the war effort from home. The initial enthusiasm for supporting refugees had a variety of sources. It was in part based on admiration for the Belgians and the sense of being bound to them through a debt of gratitude for heroically standing up to invasion and saving much of Europe, including Ireland, from disaster. The Chairman of Kildare County Council used such an argument while urging his county men and women to do anything that they could by collecting money or securing the use of suitable houses to accommodate refugees.²⁶ The theme of a debt of honour and gratitude was supported by the Irish M.P. for Liverpool, T.P. O'Connor, when he referred to the hospitality shown to refugees in Ireland and England. He contended that the Allies' march to freedom was based on the belief that the first blow for victory was being struck by Belgium. From the vantage point of today this may seem an overly optimistic view, but in December 1914 it probably reflected the prevailing belief that this would be a short war.²⁷ Appeals to a sense of gratitude were not limited to the Catholic population. The *Church of Ireland Gazette* reminded its readers of the debt owed to 'brave Belgium'.²⁸ The theme of sympathy was reinforced by newspaper advertisements and many articles detailing the atrocities suffered by the Belgians and drawing particular attention to atrocities which were likely to influence Catholic readers. These included the desecration of churches and the abuse of priests and nuns.²⁹

A second reason for supporting Belgian refugees can be found in the relationship between Ireland and Belgium that had existed since Penal times. Several calls for support for the Belgians reminded the public of this link. The Archbishop of Cashel reminded his flock that in Ireland's hour of need, when she was a victim of Penal Laws, the people of Belgium had come to Ireland's aid and Irish exiles had found a home in Belgium.³⁰ This theme was taken up in a South African newspaper, which argued that there were extensive links between Belgium and Ireland, claiming that Louvain was

²⁶ *Kildare Observer*, 28 Nov. 1914, p. 5.

²⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 23 Dec. 1914, p. 4.

²⁸ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 8 Jan. 1915 p. 25.

²⁹ *Meath Chronicle*, 27 Feb. 1915, p. 6.

³⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 23 Oct. 1914, p. 4.

almost sacred ground to the Irish because Irish clergy had found refuge there, that Ireland's priesthood was educated there, that the flags of the Irish Brigades were deposited there and that almost every ancient town in Belgium has an association with Ireland.³¹

The appeals to the Irish people were based on sympathy for an abused people, obligation to a people placed in the front line against a brutal invader, affinity for a fellow Catholic nation with historic ties and which had supported Ireland in her hour of need. These were appeals to common humanity, patriotism and religion. There can be little doubt that the mobilisation was due to the combination of all three motivations.

A mobilisation of care

Prior to the outbreak of war the St John Ambulance Brigade (SJAB) in Ireland had a small membership. Organisationally it was an adjunct of the Lancashire district of the Association with a small number of branches. Shortly after the outbreak of war a new Irish district of the Brigade was formed and Dr Lumsden was appointed Deputy Commissioner. Meanwhile, steps had been taken by Lady Aberdeen to form an Irish branch of the International Red Cross but this was deferred and efforts were focussed instead on training and instruction. During the war the SJAB comprised fifty-three branches with 2,400 members. The British Red Cross Society formed thirty-two branches and 1,670 members. This amounted to over 4,000 members in 85 branches. The membership in Dublin, where the bodies were most concentrated, was about 1% of the population. This represents a large mobilisation of the civilian population. While the support for refugees was already declining in 1915, the support for war wounded continued to increase. The greatest increase in support for war wounded occurred during 1915, with new nursing and ambulance divisions formed by occupational divisions, (those based in business or companies), and unrestricted divisions (those with open membership). Divisions were formed by the RIC, Irish Land Commission, Royal College of Science and Brooks, Thomas & Co. Ltd. Unrestricted divisions were formed in Cork city, North County Dublin, Rathgar, Harcourt and Fitzwilliam in Dublin city. While 1915 was the year with the greatest number of new divisions, nonetheless the formation of new divisions continued throughout 1916 and 1917. However, enthusiasm

³¹ Johannesburg *Sunday Times* cited in *Freemans Journal*, 28 Dec. 1914, p. 2.

waned during 1917 and 1918 and some divisions and VADs were lamenting the shortage of volunteer workers. In 1917, the Swords district report expressed the wish for greater numbers of volunteers while the Malahide War Hospital Supply depot indicated that numbers had fallen off during the summer.³² The decline in support paralleled the decline in support for refugees and the decline in military volunteering although with a delayed time frame. However there was an increase in military volunteering in the second half of 1918³³ and a similar increase can be seen in the increased funding of the two main bodies caring for war wounded.

A substantial part of the funding for the activities for the SJAB and BRCS was made through the 'Our Day' collections. It was considered unwise to have a Red Cross collection during 1916 due to the unsettled conditions relating to the Rising.³⁴ However, collections were carried out in 1917 and 1918. The armistice was signed just five weeks after the 1918 fund was launched. Nonetheless, the 1918 fund exceeded the 1917 fund by some 11%. All twenty-three counties contributed to the fund, sixteen of the counties raising more money than in 1917. While support for the work of the SJAB and BRCS showed some decline during the war, there was an increase in support in the closing months of the war. Jeffery's analysis of military volunteering shows a similar increase in the rate of military volunteering in the last 3½ months of the war. Jeffery suggests that the increase in military volunteering was due to a special voluntary recruiting effort which if successful, was to be a possible alternative to conscription.³⁵ This may provide an explanation for the increase in support for the voluntary work of the SJAB and BRCS. The removal of the threat of conscription removed one unpalatable aspect of the war and allowed a more positive attitude to the war to develop in the third quarter of 1918. Jeffery's conclusion³⁶ that the decline in the Irish voluntary spirit of service was not unlike that throughout the United Kingdom is a plausible explanation for the decline of civilian voluntary service. The similarity in volunteering to enlist and volunteering for civilian service is not surprising when we consider that volunteers enlisting were, in a real sense, civilian volunteers. The decline in volunteering of various types had more

³² Margaret Downes, 'The Civilian Voluntary Aid Effort', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1986), p. 36.

³³ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 8.

³⁴ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 34.

³⁵ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 8.

to do with war weariness and less to do with the growth of support for advanced nationalism. The increase in support in the closing months of the war may have been due to a fear that the Allies might still lose the war.

Occupational groups formed the basis of many of the divisions of the SJAB and BRCS. The support for war wounded came from sporting and leisure clubs, in many cases. The Irish Automobile Club (IAC) was probably the most outstanding example of a private members' social club making a remarkable contribution to the mobilisation of the home front. The IAC undertook the entire work of transport in relation to war wounded. The IAC did not confine itself to transport but supported many other activities which were loosely related to transport. These included providing tea rooms at the docks and railway stations and providing entertainments for the war wounded. The IAC enlisted the support of over one hundred groups or organisations in providing entertainments of various sorts to the wounded.³⁷ Thirty-two of these organisations were golf clubs. Football clubs and gentlemen's clubs were included in the number. Challenging the economic argument for military volunteering, Fitzpatrick, in his analysis of volunteering for military duty tells us that kinship was the most important factor in enlistment.³⁸ Neighbours and fellow members of organisations were most likely to enlist. This pattern is replicated in civilian volunteering where 'Pals Battalions' were as prevalent as in the New Army. Many of the branches of the SJAB and BRCS were based on occupational groups or geographical groups. The membership of the IAC and the range of sporting clubs supporting the IAC were formed of friends. In a real sense they were 'pals battalions' made up of people who were already friends or neighbours.

Britain and Ireland joined in civilian mobilisation

The model of mobilisation in Ireland closely resembled the model in Great Britain. The organisation of the refugee committee was similar with the effort being largely voluntary with an underlying state support. The organisation of SJAB and BRCS was similar in the two countries. A key difference was the fact that the Red Cross was

³⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

³⁷ Royal Irish Automobile Club, *War Services* (Dublin, 1919) pp 40-1; see appendix 12

³⁸ David Fitzpatrick 'The logic of collective sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918', *Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), pp 1017-30 cited in Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 20.

aligned to sovereign governments and therefore Ireland could not have its own independent Red Cross. Nonetheless the substantially voluntary nature of the two movements was similar and the work undertaken in both countries was the same. Similarly the operation of the YMCA in Ireland and that in Britain was the same. The Quakers' work through the Emergency Committee for the Assistance of Germans, Austrians and Hungarians in Distress mirrored the work of the Quakers in Britain. Apart from details it is difficult to find a difference between the voluntary civilian war effort in Ireland and Britain. Despite the Easter Rising occurring halfway through the war, it is difficult to find evidence that the Rising affected support for the civilian war effort. It is more likely that the high casualty rate of 1917 and the anti-conscription campaign mounted by Sinn Féin provided the turning point. The war brought the same burst of enthusiasm in Ireland as it did in Britain. In both countries there was a rush of volunteers to enlist. In both countries there was a rush of civilians to mobilise. Ireland joined the experience of what was becoming total war along with its neighbour. Ireland, unionist and nationalist, hesitated in this rush. In the light of the events of the preceding few years the hesitation is not surprising. War in Ireland was foremost in the minds of people, not war in Europe. The prospect of war between any combination of the British army, the UVF and the Irish Volunteers was high. The sudden emergence of war in Europe gave pause to the leaders of the UVF and INV, Carson and Redmond. The initial response of both was to local considerations. Carson would only offer his UVF to the army if Britain reversed its position on Home Rule. Redmond offered his INV but only to defend Ireland. Within weeks both had overcome their local anxieties to focus on wider concerns. Carson responded to his innate patriotism and Redmond conceived a new project. If Irishmen, unionist and nationalist, fought and died side by side, new bonds of understanding and friendship would form between them, overcoming the animosities of generations.

At the Messines memorial Redmond's project is being revitalised. Is it any more likely to succeed eighty years on? Carson's and Redmond's support for the British war effort was largely down to local political considerations. For Carson, Ulster's willing participation in the war would cement its position within the Union. Carson's position is aptly described in a line taken from a piece of poetry in a local newspaper '...Ulster will

strike for England – and England will not forget.’³⁹ Redmond’s participation arose, at least in part, out of a desire to consolidate Home Rule and to ‘lessen the difficulties with Ulster’.⁴⁰ Those men of the 16th and 36th divisions at Messines who were following their leaders were not fighting for a common cause. The 16th was fighting for Home Rule, the 36th was fighting against.

The background to civilian mobilisation is formed within a picture of Ireland in early 1914 poised on the brink of rebellion. The protagonists in this rebellion were the Ulster unionist population under the leadership of Carson. It was likely that the rebellion would lead to a civil war in Ireland and committees were already formed in Ireland and Britain to care for the refugees from the conflict. The schizophrenic tendency within Ireland’s identity can be seen the events of the time. The ‘loyal’ population of Ulster was at an advanced stage of rebellion against the democratically elected government while the constitutionalists in the south were seeking to assert control over their own rebels. The apparent contradictions within these events are a reflection of a continuum of Irishness and Britishness in Ireland which ebbs and flows with circumstances. Prior to the outbreak of war Carson was leaning to the Irish side and exercising his independence from Britain, using both constitutional and extra-parliamentary means, in an early example of what was later termed the ‘armalite and the ballot-box’ strategy. Redmond was striving to control the ‘physical-force’ wing of the Irish volunteers. On the outbreak of war, both Carson and Redmond moved slowly at first, but eventually wholeheartedly to the British side of that continuum and urged their followers to enlist. The civilian mobilisation of those enlisting was matched by the civilian mobilisation of the refugee committees, the SJAB, BRCS, YMCA, VAD, IAC, the Society of Friends and many others. The threat from outside pushed the pendulum to the side of Britishness – Britain’s interest was Ireland’s interest. Ireland was swept up in an enthusiasm for war that infected all including the advanced nationalists. Pearse was particularly enthused with the blood sacrifice of the war. He wrote ‘It is good for the world that such things should be done. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields’.⁴¹ Connolly shifted his position from pragmatic socialism towards nationalist martyrdom. Tied to the enthusiasm for war was a

³⁹ F.S. Boas, *Newtonards Chronicle* 31 Oct. 1914 cited in Philip Orr, *The Road to the Somme: Men of the Ulster Division tell their story* (Belfast, 1987), p. 54.

⁴⁰ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 14.

widespread belief that the war would be over by Christmas. As the war dragged on and many lives were lost with little sign of gain the sense of futility developed. The sense of futility provided the impetus to move from the British side of the continuum. The trend was evidenced in a small way by falling support for the voluntary bodies – refugee committees, VADs, SJAB and BRCS. It can be seen in the fall-off in enlistments but reached a peak in the campaign against conscription. Rather than the Rising providing the focus for opposition to the war, disenchantment with the war precipitated support for advanced nationalism. With time, memory of participation in war work became an uncomfortable link to the British side of the continuum and eventually the memory was exorcised.

Reconciliation through common sacrifice

The idea of the war as a unifying force in Ireland was first voiced by the Earl of Meath in August 1914 when he suggested the raising of a monument to the Kaiser for having achieved Irish unity.⁴² While no doubt the Earl's comment was facetious the idea of unity against a common enemy reappears and is developed into the theme of reconciliation through common sacrifice. Redmond proposed the war as a unifying force in his September 1914 Declaration. He appealed to 'our countrymen of a different creed' that

...as our soldiers are going to fight, to shed their blood, and to die at each other's side, in the same army, against the same enemy, and for the same high purpose, their union in the field may lead to a union at home, and that their blood may be the seal that will bring all Ireland together in one nation, and in liberties equal and common to all.⁴³

The link between common war service as a path to reconciliation and Messines first appeared in *The Times* in June 1917.⁴⁴ In an article marking the death of Willie Redmond M.P. at Messines, the reconciliation theme was raised: 'The story of his death in action side by side with the Ulster Division has impressed North and South with a feeling of their essential unity'. The essential unity was underscored by the account of

⁴¹ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 24.

⁴² *Irish Times* 14 Aug. 1914.

⁴³ John Redmond, 'Declaration issued by Mr Redmond on behalf of the Irish Party' 17 Sep. 1914 cited in Fran Brearton, *The Great War in Irish poetry* (Oxford, 2003), p. 11.

⁴⁴ *The Times*, 11 June 1917 cited in Terence Denman, *A lonely grave: life and death of William Redmond* (Dublin, 1995), p. 130.

the mortally wounded Redmond being cared for in an Ulster Division field ambulance post.⁴⁵ The theme was continued by Stephen Gwynn in the 1930s when he suggested that Redmondite participation in the war was sealing Home Rule and 'lessening the difficulties with Ulster.'⁴⁶ By 1937 Sean McEntee, Minister for Finance, saw similar potential in the opening of the National War Memorial at Islandbridge. McEntee supported a formal opening ceremony on Armistice Day as the memorial could 'be treated as symbolical of the unification of all elements of the country under an agreed democratic constitution'.⁴⁷ Edward Said, in his examination of colonialism and culture, reminds us that appeals to the past are among the commonest strategies in interpretation of the present.⁴⁸ The development of the Messines Peace Tower project continues the theme of reconciliation through remembrance and fits into Said's analysis. However, it raises the question of whether remembering shared participation in war and particularly a war that is seen by most to have been utterly futile, is a good way of promoting reconciliation.

This work has examined some of the stories of civilian involvement at the Irish Home front which have been forgotten. This raises the question 'Who exercises the power to say what stories can be recalled?' Winter believes all political leaders massage the past for their own benefit.⁴⁹ As a result individual memories which die with those who have them are replaced by politically and socially sanctioned versions of the truth. Remembering the contribution of Irish people to 'Britain's war' was too uncomfortable for much of the twentieth century but as Ireland tries to extricate itself from the troubles of the late twentieth century a new master-discourse is being developed.⁵⁰ This master-discourse requires the use of selective memories of Irish nationalist and unionist volunteers fighting side by side in a great European project to stir feelings of unity to support the Peace Process. However the use of selective memories obscures as much as it reveals. In the National Archive records of Jewish immigrants who arrived in Ireland during the First World War and since are still restricted and can only be accessed with

⁴⁵ Terence Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers* (Dublin, 2003), p. 115.

⁴⁶ Stephen Gwynn, *The charm of Ireland* (London, 1932), p. 279.

⁴⁷ Jane Leonard, 'Lest we forget' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Ireland and the First World War*, p. 66.

⁴⁸ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1994), p. 1.

⁴⁹ Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and Remembrance*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Philip Orr, 'The 10th (Irish) Division in the Balkans', in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 186.

ministerial permission. The various religious orders who participated in Ireland's war effort by accommodating Belgian refugees and providing officers and men for the British army are preventing 'stories' from being told by the restrictions they impose on access to their archives. As 'gate-keepers', the Government and religious orders are ensuring that a sanitized version of history is produced. Michael Ignatieff has suggested that the iteration of one kind of memory involves the forgetting of others.⁵¹ Memorials may commemorate a version of events, but it is an exclusive one. Much that is left out is forgotten. While there is a wide acceptance of the amnesiac quality of the historiography of the south of Ireland the amnesiac quality of Ulster accounts of the Great War receives less attention. In many respects both southern Irish and Ulster historiography is based on 1916. In the south the focus is on the myths surrounding the martyrs of the Rising. In Ulster it is on the myth of the Somme. Much of Ulster's Remembrance Day ceremonies are idealised memorials that perpetuate the myth of a great Ulster military tradition undefeated since the Battle of the Boyne and say little of the experience of soldiers at the Front. During the war years and the years immediately following the war the social memory of that war and of the Somme in particular became part of the Ulster battle against Home Rule.⁵² Sinn Féin's boycott of the Westminster parliament following its election victory in 1918 left the Ulster unionist representatives, many of them officers, in a strong position to emphasise the contribution of Ulster despite the fact that Catholics comprised some 58% of those who enlisted.⁵³ While the southern Irish shifted to remembering the Rising, remembrance here too has been dictated by political considerations. The fiftieth anniversary of the Rising was marked extensively throughout the Republic in 1966 but by 1991 the seventy-fifth anniversary was a much more muted affair. The 1966 commemoration predated the Northern Ireland 'troubles'. By 1991, twenty years of paramilitary activity prompted one journalist to ask the Taoiseach of the day, Charles J. Haughey, if IRA terrorists might derive comfort and

⁵¹ Michael Ignatieff, 'Soviet War Memorials' *History Workshop Journal*, 17 (Spring 1984), pp 157-63 cited in Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan *War and Remembrance*, p. 62.

⁵² Nuala C. Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War and the geography of remembrance* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 71.

⁵³ James Loughlin, *Mobilising the sacred dead: Ulster unionism and the politics of remembrance*, in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 137.

succour from the rather muted festivities marking the Rising.⁵⁴ However by 2006 and the ninetieth anniversary the government was confident enough to re-instate the Easter Sunday military parade as part of the commemorations. As the effects of the Good Friday agreement and remembrance became more popular the Fianna Fail led government needed to reclaim its Republican credentials from the former terrorists. Ferriter, in his analysis of the legacy of the Easter Rising,⁵⁵ draws on Jay's claim that commemorations say more about the time that they are occurring than the time they are supposed to be commemorating. The version of events being marked by the Messines commemoration fits neatly with the political requirements of the day. The Peace Park project is as much a result of the Peace Process as it is a contributor to that process. It appears that remembering civilian mobilisation needs to wait for the political moment to be right.

In recent years an extensive literature has appeared on the topics of memory, commemoration and remembrance.⁵⁶ It is beyond the scope of this work to analyse these but of particular interest is Martin Jay's analysis of Walter Benjamin and his 'refusal to mourn'.⁵⁷ Benjamin, following the trauma caused by the suicides of two young friends opposed to the First World War, became one of the foremost thinkers on trauma and memory. Benjamin rejected the celebration of the solidarity of the community of the trenches believing that the 'technologically manufactured slaughter of the western front was anything but an inner experience worth re-enacting in peace time'.⁵⁸ Benjamin rejected the process of collective mourning that would successfully work through the grief. The technologically manufactured slaughter of the 'victory' of Messines is hardly worth re-enacting in peace time. A more worthwhile remembrance

⁵⁴ Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha and Theo Dorgan (eds), *Revising the Rising* (Derry, 1991), p. ix.

⁵⁵ Diarmaid Ferriter, *What if?* (Dublin, 2006), p. 88.

⁵⁶ Adrian Gregory, *The silence of memory – Armistice day 1919-1946* (Oxford, 1994); Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and Remembrance* (Cambridge, 1999); Jay Winter, *Sites of memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, 1995); Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an art of memory* (Vermont, New England, 1993); Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, history, forgetting* (Chicago, 2004); George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers – reshaping the memory of the world wars* (Oxford, 1990).

⁵⁷ Martin Jay, 'Against consolation: Walter Benjamin and the refusal to mourn' in Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and Remembrance*, pp 221-239.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

would be a celebration of the solidarity of the humanly crafted caring of the civilian population.

This work started by drawing on Martin's comments on 'national amnesia'. Perhaps returning to his work would be an appropriate place to end. Martin's account of the Howth gun-running of July 1914 throws light on the forgotten continuum of Britishness and Irishness which existed at the time.⁵⁹ The gun-running at Howth and Kilcoole on behalf of the Irish Volunteers was not organised by the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). The organisers were for the most part Anglo-Irish, Liberals, Protestants, Home Rulers and of the upper and professional classes.⁶⁰ Within a fortnight of the landing of the arms from the 'Asgard', the 'Kelpie' and the 'Chotah', the three captains of the yachts, Erskine Childers, Conor O'Brien and Sir Thomas Myles, had joined the British forces.⁶¹ For these men, and many others, fighting Ireland's cause and fighting Britain's cause was not a contradiction. Tom Kettle was in a similar position. At the outbreak of war Kettle was in Belgium buying guns for the Volunteers. While there he witnessed the invasion of Belgium and produced a catalogue of eye-witness accounts of events of the early days of the war.⁶² These experiences provided the basis for his support of the war. Shortly after the outbreak of war he wrote:

'It is impossible not to be with Belgium in the struggle. It is impossible any longer to be passive. Germany has thrown down a well-considered challenge to all the deepest form of our civilisation.'⁶³

Kettle himself asserted the complementary nature of Irishness when arguing the inevitability of Home Rule 'resides in the fact that it is a biped among ideas. It marches to triumph on two feet, an Irish and an Imperial foot.'⁶⁴

The support for civilian mobilisation within Ireland was based on Ireland's position within the Union. For much of the population of Ireland, apart from the minority of a

⁵⁹ F.X. Martin, *The Howth Gun-running 1914* (Dublin, 1964).

⁶⁰ F.X. Martin, '1916 – Myth, Fact and Mystery' in *Studia Hibernica*, no. 7, 1967 p. 53.

⁶¹ F.X. Martin, *The Howth Gun-running 1914* pp 25-7; 108-110 and '1916 – Myth, Fact and Mystery' in *Studia Hibernica*, no. 7, 1967 p. 53.

⁶² Senia Pašeta, 'Thomas Kettle' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 10.

⁶³ T.M. Kettle, 'A world adrift' in *Ways of War*, p. 104 quoted in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 10.

⁶⁴ Senia Pašeta, 'Thomas Kettle' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 12.

minority among advanced nationalists, there was no conflict between Britain's war and Ireland's cause. In Redmond's words 'The interests of Ireland – of the whole of Ireland – are at stake in this war'.⁶⁵ Irishmen and women at home of all classes, creeds and political persuasions were as willing to support Belgian refugees as were their husbands, brothers, fathers and sons to fight for them. And when their husbands, fathers and sons fell in that fight at the Front the Home Front was organised and prepared to provide comforts, transport and medical care. What of the work of the Society of Friends in supporting 'German' prisoners? The work of the Friends can be dismissed as the work of a tiny minority out of sympathy with the vast majority of their compatriots. But this is a criticism that could also be levelled at the leaders of the Rising.

Ní Dhonnchadha and Dorgan have warned that 'Amnesia, private or communal is both unhealthy and dangerous'.⁶⁶ The work of the Belgian refugees committees, the Society of Friends, Irish Automobile Club, Irish branch of the British Red Cross Society and the St John's Ambulance Brigade has largely disappeared into Ireland's 'Great Oblivion'. In Martin's words The 'Official Secrecy Act'⁶⁷ has concealed their work and distorted understanding of Ireland's position in the war and important elements of Irishness that can contribute to us understanding ourselves. National identity has been described as the cultural outcome of a discourse of the nation.⁶⁸ The discourse of this nation has neglected the diversity of its people for much of the twentieth century. As Ireland moves into a new millennium with a population more diverse than at any time in its past this work plays a small part in recovering the forgotten, challenging the amnesia and contributing to a healthier, more diverse and less dangerous understanding of Irishness.

⁶⁵ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p. 13.

⁶⁶ Ní Dhonnchadha and Dorgan, *Revising the Rising*, p. ix.

⁶⁷ F.X. Martin '1916 – myth, fact, and mystery' in *Studia Hibernica* no. 7, 1967, p. 68.

⁶⁸ Patrick O'Mahony and Gerard Delanty, *Rethinking Irish history: nationalism, identity and ideology* (Hampshire, England, 2001).

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Appendix 1 – Belgian Refugee Committee list of payments (1915)¹

The refugees' committee made payments to individuals and groups for the support of refugees. Some of these are listed below:

Madam van Brevet, Montpelier Parade, Monkstown
Madam Legris, self and family
J. A. Maconchy, Raheny
Miss Brill, Warrenpoint
J Cummins, Portarlington
Miss Spring-Rice for Vervoort family
Lady Bellew for de Villiers family
Mrs Boylan for van der Heyde family
Albert van Hoeymissen for Balla refugees
Wm Clare, Portadown
Rev P McKeepy, Dupont family
M Vandergucht, self and family
M de Pooter, Foxrock
Madame Smet, self and family
Louis Ghysbrechts, self and family
Miss Deanes, for Don's family
F Cuffe (R.L. Pike. D.L.), Kilcock
Joseph Peeters, Dundalk
Francois Hendrickx, self and family
M. Gottebecke, self and family
Madame Willemyns, self and family
M van Ryssen, self and family
C. Verbinnen, Fitzwilliam square
M Sargent, self and family
Madame de Monck, self and family
Alfons de Bals, self and family
Alex Stocq, wages as cultivator at Dunshaughlin
Mrs Penrose for Coenan family.
P.H. Nicholls for Vermeerberghe family
A.S. McBride, for Ballinmena refugees
Mrs Vere O'Brien for Daems family
M de Graeve, self and family
E.B. Croasdell, refund of advances Alphonse Rits
Chas. Heather, sheets etc
Rev Prims for 137 copies per week of *l'Echo de Belgique*
M Shepers, Dunshaughlin
Madame van Hoeywegen, self and family.
Madame Monton, self and family
Miss Caulfield for rent for de Smet family
Mrs Jennings, 2 weeks maintenance of Louis Verbeck
M Collombien, self and family.

¹ Belgian Refugee Committee, 'Belgian Refugee Committee minutes', Sep. 1915 (UCD: P10b, p. 124).

Appendix 2 – Refugees allocated to Ireland by the War Refugees Committee (London) 1914-6¹

	1914 Nov-12		1914 Dec-31		1915 Mar-31		Jun-30		Sep-30		1915 Dec-31		1916 Mar-31		Total	
	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child
Dublin	120		232	42	535	165	121	33	57	12	34	3	31	3	1130	258
Cork	77		86	27	3		2	1	1	1					169	29
Letterkenny			46		4				1						51	0
Enniscorthy			12		12				1		4		2		31	0
Monaghan	14				4										18	0
Wexford			11												11	0
Ballymena	8						2								10	0
Belfast	2		1		1	1			4						8	1
Kells					5	2									5	2
Midleton	5	1													5	1
Sandymount	4														4	0
Carlow			2						1						3	0
Clonmel			1						2						3	0
Ennis					3										3	0
Clonakilty	2														2	0
Downpatrick									2	3					2	3
Kilkenny			1						1						2	0
Moira					2										2	0
Bray	1														1	0
Cashel					1										1	0
Clane									1	1					1	1
Cookstown									1						1	0
Dungarvan			1												1	0
Kerry	1														1	0
Kilcock					1										1	0
Killarney			1												1	0
Limerick					1										1	0
Londonderry					1										1	0
Listowel							1								1	0
Lifford													1		1	0
Newtownards					1										1	0
Sligo							1								1	0
Ballyragget															0	0
Charleville															0	0
Howth															0	0
Johnstown															0	0
Kingstown															0	0
Londonderry															0	0
Louth															0	0
Queenstown				1											0	1
Rathdrum															0	0
Rathmines				1											0	1
Strangford (Co Down)															0	0
Waterford															0	0
	234	1	394	71	574	168	127	34	72	17	38	3	34	3	1473	297

¹ War Refugees Committee, Refugee Allocation Register (Public Record Office: MH 8/14)

Appendix 3 – Numbers of Enemy Aliens In Ireland May 1915¹

Nationality		German	Austro-Hungarian	Turk
Number of males of Military age		165	53	4
Number of males above military age		57	20	0
Females	British born wives or widows	135	37	1
	Alien enemy born	167	46	2
Children under 18		405	120	4
		929	276	11

¹ Returns of Registration officers, May 1915 (NAI: CSORP, 1915: 8570).

Appendix 4 – Hospitals equipped or assisted and maintained by voluntary contributions during the war. ¹

	Patients	Beds	Opened	Closed
Corrig Castle Red Cross Hospital, Kingstown, Co Dublin	1, 128 soldiers 365 sailors	28 Later 42	10/3/1915	5/2/1919
Dublin Castle Red Cross Hospital	6496	250	27/1/1915	4/5/1919
Dublin University VAD Auxiliary Hospital,	461	24	1914	1919
Fetherstonhaugh Convalescent Home, Rathfarnham	461		1914	1919
Glenmaroon Auxiliary Hospital, Chapelizod,	237	12	Dec 1914	
Hermitage Auxiliary Hospital, Lucan			1/3/1917	
Irish Counties War Hospital, Marlborough Hall, Glasnevin	2150	260	19/6/1917	
King George V Hospital (Iveagh Wing)	not available	not available	not available	not available
Linden Convalescent Home, Blackrock	1159	32	25/2/1915	31/3/1919
Mercer's Hospital (one ward)				
Monkstown House Officers Hospital	316	30	Sep 1917	Jun 1919
Monkstown Naval Hospital	830	50	Oct 1914	Sep 1917
Officers Hospital, 33 Upper Fitzwilliam Street	500 surgical		Sep 1914	
Rockfield Auxiliary Hospital, Blackrock	200 to 5/1917	8	Nov 1914	
Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital (one ward)				
Stillorgan Convalescent Home		44	Sep 1916	31/1/1919
Surgeon Wheeler's (for Officers)				
Temple Hill Auxiliary Hospital, Blackrock	500 +	36	Sep 1914	Apr 1919
Aut Even Auxiliary Hospital, Co Kilkenny (for Officers) later named The Dowager Lady Desart's Military Hospital			Founded 1913 Wounded soldiers 1916	
Balrath-Burry Auxiliary Hospital, Kells, Co Meath	347		May 1917	Feb 1919
Bloomfield Auxiliary Hospital, Mullingar, Co Westmeath		40+	18/7/1917	May 1919
Co Louth Auxiliary Hospital, Dundalk, Co Louth	244	30	1/5/1917	
Duke of Connaught Hospital, Bray, Co Wicklow	801	60	18/4/1917	
Firmount Auxiliary Hospital, Sallins, Co Kildare	600	40	2/5/1917	12/2/1919
Glengariff, Co Cork (for Officers)				
Princess Patricia of Connaught Hospital, Bray Co Wicklow	4236	200	Jun 1915	30/9/1919
St Ann's Hill Hydro, Co Ltd, Cork		14 later 25	Nov 1914	
Tudenham Auxiliary Hospital, Mullingar, Co Westmeath	140	6 later 12 later 17	24/7/1916	31/10/ 17

¹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), pp 9, 24, 235-9.

Appendix 5 – Treatments offered in Dublin Castle Red Cross Hospital during its operation¹

No of Officers treated	951
No of NCOs and Men	5545
Wounded	3342
Sick	3154
Operations performed	1572
Radiographs taken	1930
Massage and electrical treatments	1113

¹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), pp 246-7.

Appendix 6 – Treatments offered in Irish Counties Hospital during its operation¹

No of Officers, NCOs and Men treated	2150
Operations performed	548
X-ray investigations	600

¹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), pp 271-9.

Appendix 7 – Treatments offered in Princess Patricia of Connaught Hospital during its operation¹

No. of Officers, NCOs and Men treated	4236
Artificial limbs fitted	267
Swedish massage	869
Remedial exercises	
Tonic medication	
Radiant heat	
Galvanism	

¹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), pp 283.

Appendix 8 – Work of the Joint VAD Selection Board (Dublin)¹

Auxiliaries posted to	
military hospitals in England	441
military hospitals in Ireland	281
military hospitals in France	74
military hospitals in Italy	6
military hospitals in Salonika	8
military hospitals in Egypt	2
Aerodromes in Ireland	3
Naval hospitals	44
Auxiliary hospitals in England	15
Auxiliary hospitals in Ireland	103
Seconded to Russian Red Cross	2

General service members posted to	
hospitals in England	131
hospitals in Ireland	370
Naval hospitals	14
Auxiliary hospitals in England	10
Auxiliary hospitals in Ireland	107
Military hospitals in France	47
Military hospitals in Salonika	5

¹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 228.

Appendix 9 – Sphagnum Moss dressings provided during the war¹

No. of hospitals supplied with dressings.	
England	14
Ireland	13
France	24
Italy	1
Egypt	2
Salonika	2
Palestine	1
India	1

¹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 236.

Appendix 10 – Allocation of ambulances to hospitals after the Armistice¹

Loughrea Union
Dundalk
Clogheen Union
St John Ambulance Brigade (Dublin Headquarters)
Nenagh Nursing Division, St John Ambulance Brigade
Co Dublin Branch, BRCS
Mullingar Union
Killarney Union
Tullamore Union
Athlone Union
County Galway (2 ambulances)

¹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 31.

Appendix 11 – Grants to various organisations from the proceeds of 'Our Day' Collection 1918¹

Drogheda Cottage Hospital	52 10 8	City of Dublin B.R.C.S.	217 6 3
City of Dublin War Pensions Committee	200 0 0	Prevention of Cruelty to Children	25 0 0
St. John Ambulance Brigade	967 6 8	Drummond *Institution	50 0 0
British Red Cross Society	91 13 11	St. Dunstan's	47 16 4
Co. Director, S. Tipperary	500 0 0	Navan District Nursing Association	22 19 8
Co. Director, N. Tipperary	1, 246 16 2	Kells	23 0 5
Co. Director, Waterford	309 10 6	Enfield	22 19 8
Co. Meath Infirmary	50 0 0	Stamullen	22 19 8
Co. Director Cork,	854 9 4	Trim	22 19 8
Co. Kerry Infirmary	50 0 0	Dunboyne	22 19 8
Stillorgan Convalescent Home	100 0 0	Agher	22 19 8
Linden Convalescent Home	100 0 0	Athboy	22 19 8
Fetherstonhaugh Home	100 0 0	Nobber	22 19 8
Q.V.J.I. for Nurses	500 0 0	Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society (Tuberculosis Branch)	55 17 9
United Irish Women (Nursing Branch)	500 0 0	Joint Committee Command Depot, Tipperary	110 7 7
Nurses' Social Club	1, 000 0 0	Irish VAD Scholarship Scheme	300 0 0
Royal City of Dublin Hospital.	109 11 9	Repatriated Prisoners of War of the R.D.F.	469 13 3
Peamount Sanatorium	350 0 0	National Institute for the Blind, Irish Branch	200 0 0
Adelaide Hospital	81 9 3	Q.V.J.I for Nurses (2nd Grant)	250 0 0
Mater Hospital	81 9 3	United Irish Women Nursing Branch 2nd Grant)	250 0 0
Meath	137 7 0	Lucan District Nurses' Fund	45 0 0
mercer's Hospital	81 9 4	Clonmel Nursing Association	50 0 0
St. Vincent's Hospital	81 9 3	Waterville District Nursing Association	50 0 0
Richmond Hospital	81 9 3	Martin Cottage Hospital, Portlaoigh	500 0 0
Dr. Steevens' Hospital	81 9 3	Killamey District Nursing Association	50 0 0
Jervis Street Hospital	81 9 3	Westmeath County Infirmary	20 0 0
Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital	81 9 3	Society of St. Vincent de Paul	50 0 0
Monkstown Hospital	56 7 3	Wicklow Fever Hospital	20 0 0
St. Michael's Kingstown	56 7 3	Wicklow Co. Infirmary	20 0 0
Valentia Hospital	100 0 0	Castlebar Infirmary	25 0 0
Irish War Hospital Supply Depot	1, 000 0 0	Aut-Even Hospital	20 0 0
Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society	246 17 0	City of Dublin B.R.C.S.	217 6 3
Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association	200 0 0	Prevention of Cruelty to Children	25 0 0
S.S.H.S and S.S.F.A. (Curragh)	100 0 0	Drummond *Institution	50 0 0
Jubilee Nurse, Birr,	28 2 6	St. Dunstan's	47 16 4
District Nurse, Swords	34 8 6	Navan District Nursing Association	22 19 8

¹ *War Record of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught 1914-1918* (Dublin, n.d., c.1919), p. 32-4.

Appendix 12 – Entertainments provided as a result of IAC mobilisation during the war¹

	Entertainments	No of Soldiers
Royal Irish Automobile Club	205	10112
Rotary Club of Ireland	89	3853
Portmarnock Golf Club	71	3775
Kingstown Golf Club	55	2777
Island Golf Club	39	2167
Messrs Switzers Staff	19	1500
Foxrock Golf Club	32	1388
Stock Exchange Golfing Society	19	1052
Milltown Golf Club	16	937
Sutton Golf Club	18	871
Skerries Golf Club	17	784
Rathfarnham Golf Club	14	725
Greystones Golf Club	13	642
Clontarf Golf Club	13	631
Local Government Board Staff	12	600
Royal Dublin Golf Club	11	577
Castle Golf Club	12	579
Monkstown Lawn Tennis Club	12	554
Killiney Golf Club	9	482
Mrs Craigie and Friends	5	465
Kildare Street Club	8	440
Carrickmines Golf Club	9	420
Dundrum Ward of Mercers Hospital	7	411
St James Gate Brewery (some members of the Staff)	6	411
Stillorgan Golf Club	8	396
Anonymous	7	366
Insurance Institute of Ireland	7	305
Grange Golf Club	6	301
Engineering and Scientific Association	7	290
Finglas Golf Club	6	277
Hermitage Golf Club	6	272
University Club	4	252
Sackville Street Club	5	240
Malahide Golf Club	5	223
Kildare Street Club (some members of)	3	207
Irish Land Commission (Estates Commissioners Office)	3	203
Stephen's Green Club	4	202
Miss Bermingham and Friends	3	199
Lucan Golf Club	4	196
Wanderers Football Club	4	185
Rosslare Golf Club	3	182
Royal Institute of Architects	4	180
Westmeath Golf Club	4	163
VAD No. 2 Co. Dublin BRCS (Mrs Johnstone Commandant)	3	158
Irish Land Commission (Collections Dept)	3	156
Waterford Golf Club	3	154
United Services Club	3	152
Kilkenny Golf Club (County)	3	150
Athy Golf Club	3	145
Carrickmines Croquet and Tennis Club	4	144
Kenilworth Bowling Club	3	143
St James' Gate (Brewery Office)	2	138
Wanderers Club House	3	134
Masonic Girls School Ballsbridge	3	125
Executive Committee B R C S and St JAA and Staff	1	124
Mrs and Miss Dove	2	119
Pembroke Girl Guides	2	115
Bective Football Club	2	JOI

¹ Royal Irish Automobile Club, *War Services* (Dublin, 1919), pp 40-2.

Irish Cyclists Old Timers	2	101
VAD No. 24 (Mrs Bolton Commandant)	2	97
Rt Hon Sir Plunket Barton Bart	1	95
Lansdowne Football Club	2	87
Mr and Mrs Robert Bruce	1	86
Mr and Mrs Robert Mitchell	1	72
Wicklow Golf Club	2	71
Wicklow and Co. Meath Golf Clubs	1	70
The Earl of Iveagh KP	1	68
United Free Church Guild	2	68
F. Morgan Mooney	1	67
Royal College of Surgeons	1	67
Colonel Tweedie and Officers 2/8 Royal Scots	1	65
Some Members of the RIAC	1	65
Mr Dashwood Tandy	1	64
UK Commercial Travellers Association (Dublin Branch)	1	63
Mrs Phillips and Mrs Barker	1	63
Some Friends from Shankill	1	60
Mrs W A McConnell	1	58
Dublin University Football Club	1	57
Mrs Hanna	1	57
Irish Land Commission (Registrars Dept)	1	55
Ladies of the Joint BRCS and St JAA Depot	1	54
Major and Mrs Mordaunt Richards	1	53
Glenageary Tennis Club	1	51
Wanderers Football Club (Old Boys)	1	53
Messrs Stirling Green and Hayes	1	52
Bray Golf Club	1	51
Monkstown Football Club	1	51
Some Members of the Royal Dublin Golf Club	1	61
Mr and Mrs F V Westby	1	51
Colonel and Mrs Carr Ellison	1	49
Clontarf Football Club	1	47
Lady Cullinan, Mrs White and Mrs Wisdom Hely	1	46
Abbeyleix Golf Club	1	45
Mr and Mrs Sillar	1	45
Greystones Children	1	42
Law Department, Bank of Ireland	1	42
Majorie and Ruth Jenkins	1	41
Lay town Golf Club	1	41
Old Wesley Football Club	1	40
Alexandra Club	1	39
Mr and Mrs Phillips	1	37
VAD No. 22 BRCS (Mrs Frith Commandant)	1	37
St Stephens School	1	37
Some Members of the Board of Public Works	1	36
Mrs and Miss Figgis	1	35
Mr Ogilvie	1	35
Meath Golf Club	1	30

Appendix 13 – Locations of YMCA ‘Huts’ (recreation centres)¹

Beggarsbush Barracks (hut on loan)	1914
Marlborough Barracks	1914
Portobello Barracks	1914
Richmond Barracks	1914
Royal Barracks	1914
Wellington Barracks	1914
YMCA Offices (43 Upper Sackville Street)	1914
Arklow (hut on loan)	1915
Curragh Camp	1915
Dollymount School of Musketry	1915
YMCA Café (45 Lower Sackville Street)	1915
Bray, Florence Road hut for wounded soldiers	1916
Chapelizod Summer Camp	1916
Phoenix Park (Ashtown)	1916
Phoenix Park (Fifteen acres)	1916
Rathdrum	1916
Straffan	1916
Straffan Summer Camp	1916
YMCA Café (YMCA premises, Sackville Street)	1916
Balbriggan	1917
Blackrock Orthopaedic Hospital	1917
French Furze Camp (Curragh)	1917
Information Bureau, College Green	1917
Keene and Gough Barracks (Curragh)	1917
King George V Hospital	1917
Arran Quay Information Bureau and Buffet	1918
Birr, Kings County (Co Offaly)	1918
Collinstown Aerodrome	1918
Eden Quay Information Bureau and Buffet	1918
Mullingar, Co Westmeath	1918
Phoenix Park Summer Camp	1918
Ship Street Barracks, Dublin	1918
Kingstown Sailors and Soldiers Hostel (45 beds)	1918
Abbey Street Hostei (170 beds)	1919

¹ 66th Annual Report, City of Dublin YMCA, 1915; 67th Annual report, City of Dublin YMCA, 1916; 68th Annual report, City of Dublin YMCA 1917; 69th Annual Report, City of Dublin YMCA, 1918.

Appendix 14 – Localities selected by the Government for Places of Internment 1914¹

Permanent

Queen's Ferry, Flintshire
Lancaster
Dorchester, Dorsetshire
Templemore, Ireland
Newbury Race Course, Berks.
Edinburgh
Dyffryn Aled, Abergele (for officers only).
Aldershot, Frith Hill

Temporary

Olympia, London
York Castle, York.
Horsham, Sussex.
Dublin

¹ Instructions relative to the internment and treatment of enemy subjects, 31 Aug. 1914 (National Archive of Ireland: CSORP, 1914: 15091).

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