NUI MAYNOOTH
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Cavan Protestants in an age of upheaval, 1919-22

by

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Broadly speaking, this is a study of the Protestant population of County Cavan in a time of social and political upheaval.

Chapter one is concerned with identifying Cavan's Protestants as a group, both politically and culturally

Chapter two, given the cultural and political identity of the county's Protestants, shows how this group reacted and adapted to the political changes of the years 1919-22. It was found that Protestantism, after a slight realignment, largely accepted Ireland's new position regarding Britain and despite that fact that unionism as a political force was greatly diminished, the values that had given rise to that unionism remained relatively intact.

After identifying the group that existed in ideological opposition to Protestantism, namely Catholicism or nationalism, chapter three sought to see if these two groups were impermeable to each other, or if all their relations were marked by hostility. It was found that ideology was muted by the practicality of each group living side-to-side together, with both peoples showing mutual respect for each other.

The study concludes that, while Cavan's Protestants accepted the Irish Free State, they remained a specific cultural/political group within the county as those beliefs that had given them their unionist tendencies were not put to rest, despite the great weakening of Irelands relationship with Great Britain.

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Abbreviations and editorial notes

P.R.O.N.I.	The Public Record office of Northern Ireland
AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
I. U. A.	Irish Unionist Alliance
[ ]	Text within straight is a editorial addition

Introduction

The years 1919-22 proved tumultuous for the Protestant population of what were becoming the southern twenty-six counties. These years saw those who had vehemently opposed the introduction of Home Rule, because of a wish to keep the 1800 act of union intact, saw that union destroyed in the establishment of the Irish Free State. The nationalist insurrection against a British-Ireland had been chipping away at the union, with ever sharpening precision, from the Sinn Fein Victories in the 1918 general election, through the unofficial establishment of Dáil Eireann in 1919, the actions of the volunteers, the government of Ireland act, all culminating in the ultimate climax that was the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1922, leading to the Irish Free State. Off course the links between Ireland and Britain were not totally removed, but Britain no longer was the visible source of power in the country and, for those nationalists that accepted the treaty, the Free State was presented as the example of the Irish nation being free at last.

While the Free State may have been the climax of the Irish struggle for independence, that independence was the consequence of those events that had occurred in the few years preceding 1922, some of which have been pointed out above. Therefore, even before the Anglo-Irish treaty was signed, the Protestants of the south were somewhat aware that their relationship with Britain was entering a new and uncharted phase, or as Patrick Buckland puts it, 'events in 1920 and 1921 determined that it [unionism] should enter a new phase. Changes in British and Ulster politics and the passing of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act emphasised the futility of trying to maintain the union, while the Anglo-Irish war underlined the

growing uselessness of the union as a means of fostering and protecting southern unionism.'[1] In the 1920s therefore, unionism became a blurring of ideology and jurisdictional loyalty, and it is the nature of the Protestant, or unionist, identity in the years 1919-22, that will be examined in this study. It may be apparent that the terms Protestant and unionist have been presented as co-joined in meaning, but it is not the purpose of this work assume that, in the years 1919-22, all those who were Protestant were unionist and vice-versa. However, this dissertation will concern itself with those of the Protestant community who did hold beliefs and practices conducive to unionism and so, when either term is used, it is meant to communicate an individual or group who expressed an identity that was both Protestant and unionist.

It should be noted at this point that the parameters for this study are set within the county of Cavan. The county warrants a special study because of its geographical location, situating it within the province of Ulster, yet separating it from most of that province due to the north-south divide of the island. One of the county's local newspapers explained well the confusing position the people of the three Ulster counties of southern Ireland found themselves in, saying that 'their position was a curious one. They were not in Ulster according to the new law. Neither were they in the south. They were in the buffers between the north and the south.'[2] Also, the percentage of Protestants in the county made the group more of a force within Cavan, there being over eighteen-percent in the census of 1911[3] and almost sixteen-percent in 1926.[4] It is the intention of this study, however, not to compare Cavan with the twenty-six counties as a whole, but rather to provide an insight, or insights, into one pocket of southern Irish Protestantism. It would be hoped that this would clear the

way for further research on how Cavan related to southern Protestants, or ex-unionists, in the rest of the country.

The primary sources employed in this study include the *Northern Standard* and the *Anglo-Celt*, two local newspapers which dealt with County Cavan. Other sources which were used include records from the Orange Order, minutes from Cavan County Council, the County Inspectors monthly police reports, the collected papers of Lord Farnham and minutes from the Protestant Parliamentary Committee for Cavan.

Of the two newspapers, the *Northern Standard* catered towards a Protestant audience, and the *Anglo-Celt* was directed towards the Catholics of the county. In using both local papers, it was felt that a more honest perspective of the county could be gained. Minutes from meetings of the Orange Order's grand assembly were obtained in the Orange Order archives in Belfast and they related to the organisation as a whole, as well as containing resolutions concerning Cavan itself. Furthermore, the constitution of the order was useful in obtaining a clear picture of what the organisation stood for, subsequently allowing for a clearer understanding as to its significance within County Cavan. The minutes for Cavan County Council, obtained from the present council offices, provided a useful insight into how an established political organ became a vehicle for the political ideologies of the time. They also highlighted the relationship between peripheral and central government in a time when the nature of central government was being contested.

The monthly inspector's police reports form part of the Colonial Office's Dublin Castle records which are held in the Public Record Office, London. They provide useful statistics for Cavan regarding active organisations within the county,

both nationalist and unionist, as well as plotting the activity of Sinn Fein. The Farnham papers, held in P.R.O.N.I., were a collection of personal family records from the estate of Lord Farnham in Cavan. Within the collection, there were some documents relating to the Irish Unionist Alliance, of which he was a key member. Finally, the Protestant Parliamentary Committee was set up in 1926 to co-ordinate the Protestant vote in order to maximise the chances of a candidate of that vein being elected. The minutes, held in the private possession of Mr J. H. Cole of County Cavan, provided a valuable insight into the political beliefs and ambitions of the Protestant community in Cavan. While these records fall outside the scope of this study, they have been drawn on in the conclusion in order to give a taste of how the Protestant community continued to fare as the Free State established itself. The minutes of this committee are an important point on which to conclude this study, if only to highlight the continued relevance of Protestantism in further studies relating to post-1922.

Despite the wealth of historical works relating to Ireland in the years 1919-22, there was a considerable lack of works relating to the Protestant/unionist community in this era. While one can only surmise the reason for this scarcity, the possibility that this area is not seen as sufficient for exploration must be considered. Nevertheless, those works that did deal with southern Ireland's Protestants very useful indeed. Kurt Bowen's *Protestants in a Catholic state, Ireland's privileged minority* (Montreal, 1983) provides a comprehensive insight into the difficulties facing the southern Protestants as regards cultural allegiance and political expression, while acknowledging that this group were not totally homogenised despite being a minority

in Ireland's altered state. Patrick Buckland, in *Irish unionism I, the Anglo-Irish and the new Ireland 1885-1922* (Dublin, 1972), offers a highly comprehensive account of unionism from its origins to what he felt was its eventual demise in the early 1920s. In R. B. McDowell's *Crisis and decline, the fate of the southern unionists* (Dublin, 1997) unionism is also charted excellently from its origins until 1922. The year 1922 is subsequently regarded as the time when the term ex-unionist came to describe that group who had opposed the re-defining of Ireland's status regarding Britain and, as is felt by both Buckland and McDowell, had ultimately lost. However, McDowell does what Buckland neglects to do, he acknowledges that the term southern unionist remained a viable means of describing the cultural beliefs and practices of many Protestants many years after the emergence of the Free State. Alvin Jackson's article 'Irish unionism, 1870-1922' in *Defenders of the union, a survey of British and Irish unionism since 1801* which was edited by George Boyce and Alan O'Day (London, 2001) proved quite useful to this study. His theoretical look at unionism was thought provoking and provided a constructive framework from which to look at the movement. The above works, being of a general nature, had their limitations regarding a study limited to County Cavan. However a work by Terence Dooley entitled *The decline of unionist politics in Monaghan, 1911-23* (Maynooth, 1988) proved very useful as Monaghan, which neighbours Cavan, was one of the three Free State Ulster counties and was similar to Cavan in its religious, social and political constitution.

Where then, does the present study fit into existing knowledge regarding Protestantism in the years 1919-22? This work firstly provides another look at a

people who have played an integral part in Irish history and, despite the fact that opinion as to what that part was may be divided. However, the importance of the Protestant community in Ireland's past, both recent and distant, will not be deciphered until the nature of the group is continually assessed and re-assessed in future historical works. Furthermore, this study goes some length in highlighting that identity within a nation can and should not be charted merely through explicit political processes, but rather reliance on culture can be as indicative of a group as visible political practices. The fact that this dissertation is concerned with County Cavan alone clears the way for comparisons to be made with other parts of the twenty-six counties so that county variations can be identified and subsequently, a clearer picture of Protestantism in the Free State can be discerned.

Chapter 1 The nature of Cavan Protestantism; a religious community or a community label

In order to qualify Protestantism for a special study, it would seem necessary to point out what exactly entitled the Protestants of Cavan to a group status outside that of their particular religious beliefs. This chapter will seek to identify and examine the nature of this group amid the political upheaval of the early 1920s. While it is a common fact that any group exists only in relation to a given 'other', and is therefore a product, in part, of what lies outside its domain, the usefulness of first looking at this group internally should not be minimised. Therefore it is the given intention of this chapter to furnish the reader with an inward look at the Protestant community in Cavan. If the Protestants of the county did constitute a separate political and cultural grouping, how was this distinctiveness expressed in the years 1919-22? An obvious and very useful source in dealing with such a question is to look towards the local media at the time, namely reports, advertisements and editorials from two local newspapers, the *Anglo-Celt* and the *Northern Standard*. The nature and practices of the Orange Order are also examined as they provide a highly informative platform from which to examine one mode of expression regarding the Protestant identity.

It is perhaps fitting to begin this discussion with the fact that the New Year issues of the *Northern Standard* newspaper covered, from 1919-22, the list of Irish names that appeared on the royal honours list.[5] No such reports were found in the *Anglo-Celt* and, while this may seem a rather insignificant piece of information, it sets the tone for where the interests of the Protestant community in the county were

thought to lie. It is indeed tempting to launch into a discussion of how this group expressed themselves through the large political issues of the time. However it is equally important to look at the grouping in terms of the little, seemingly insignificant things, with the understanding that one cannot admire a tapestry without first taking note of the intricate stitch-work of which it is made. In pursuance of such a vein, what will now ensue is a look into what were the everyday, mundane interests of this community.

1:1 Cultural Protestantism

It was stated above that it was necessary to look at the little things in order to get a firm grasp of the whole, but maybe it is possible to extend this statement somewhat. Following this section, political Protestantism will be discussed and it will be shown that, in terms of the political issues of the early 1920s, this community walked an identificational tightrope. As regards the two local newspapers of the day, there seems to have been less scrutiny of that news which did not involve direct politics and therefore perhaps it is in these seemingly innocuous items that one gets a more accurate picture of the said group. An article in the *Anglo-Celt*, speaking of the publication of a new Irish language prayer book, told of one-thousand such books being circulated around Cavan, with no mention as to what religious denomination they were intended.[6] Another, relating to Cootehill Urban Council, reported on compensation being sought from the council for a destroyed bread-van from Belfast, a claim for which the council decided to take no notice.[7] News items from the *Anglo-Celt* which dealt directly with the main political

issues of the time, those being the struggle for Irish independence, the question of partition and the Belfast boycott, tended to so in a clinical and rather factual way. Such reports left little room for opinions regarding the Protestants of the county. Yet, from reports that would seem largely mundane, a more full and uncensored picture of the time could be seen.

The same could be said for the *Northern Standard* which, after the setting-up of the Free State, reported a Protestant community who politically embraced the new arrangement which saw relations with Great Britain greatly altered but, as Kurt Bowen asserts, 'few Protestants could reject totally their ingrained, centuries-old British loyalties.'[8] And indeed, in an advertisement from 1922, one was given the impression of a group who, culturally at the very least, remained very much identified, and identifiable with Great Britain. The advertisement, entitled 'the soap that changed a nation' had a small print which stated that the product was 'the finest that has ever been introduced to the British housewife.'[9] One gets the impression that, in a time when identity was threatened, the Protestant housewife was being sold Britishness in a soap. It is the nature of an advert to tap into a feeling or trend in order to sell a given product, and the fact that a British identity was the vehicle of this product tells us something of the feelings of the Protestant community in the county, something that many articles dealing with the political developments of the time failed to mention.

Previously the Royal New Year's honour roll was mentioned, what was not mentioned however, was the familiarity with which the names on the roll were discussed, a familiarity which would tend towards the opinion that there was a

certain knowledge of these people throughout the paper's readership. It is worth noting that none of the names mentioned were local to County Cavan, but of course it cannot be discounted that those who had received honours had been contemporary celebrities. Yet there seems to have been a local awareness which could well have fed into a national familiarity comprising in something of an Irish-Unionist community. The *Northern Standard* also featured many local weddings 'of interest,'[10] all of which were Protestant, and the commentaries on these occasions included notes on the families and some of the guests present. The presence of such reports assumes an interest and knowledge of the wedded persons among the newspaper's audience, something that would point to a community of interest existing among the Protestants of the county. It is perhaps worth noting that no such articles relating to Catholic or nationalist weddings appeared in the *Anglo-Celt*, and those weddings that were of interest to the readership of the *Northern Standard* were not covered in the nationalist newspaper, further showing a divergence in the interests of the county's communities.

In the light of this, what else could be found in the *Northern Standard* that was not to be found in the *Anglo-Celt*? The harmless preoccupation that is sport tells a good deal about the divergence of interests within the Cavan of the early 1920s. Two sports that were predominantly played by Protestants were cricket and rugby and each week the *Northern Standard* provided both local and national results and fixtures for these sports. The *Anglo-Celt*, however, provided no coverage of such sports, reporting instead on Gaelic football and, on a lesser scale, hurling. While the *Northern Standard* was covering various activities of Protestant

interest, such as notices of forthcoming meetings of the Girls Friendly Society and the Boy's Brigade, both Church of Ireland youth groups, various church fundraisers and meetings of unionist and orange organisations, the *Anglo-Celt* had something of a different focus. Readers of the *Northern Standard*, for example, were not aware of the many Catholic prayer meetings, what was going in organisations such as the Gaelic League or the AOH, or even the results of the Gaelic football or hurling fixtures. Neither were they made aware of the fact that the Roman Catholic bishop of Kilmore saw the Belfast boycott as 'justifiable' in a city where '8, 000 Catholics had been forced out of their employment because of their religion or politics,' or that, despite this, he did not condone the use of violent methods, such as burning bread-vans.[11] But, consequently, neither were the readers of the *Anglo-Celt* aware of 'the King's birthday in Cavan'[12] or that 'Cricket in the Royal School [was] again in full swing.'[13] The very fact that there were such exclusive events speaks volumes in itself, however the fact that there was sufficient involvement in these groups to warrant notices in the local newspaper speaks even more. To elaborate on this point, that such notices were needed in a newspaper that spanned not just Cavan, but County Monaghan also, gives the impression that not only were such groups much more than highly localised bodies, but that they were linked by a county-wide web of interest.

Such diversity of interest would point towards a unique cultural identity, however if such an identity did indeed exist for the Protestant community then one must look at how it was expressed through the various institutions to which the group was affiliated. The Orange Order was one such organisation which catered

for some members of the Protestant community within a cultural dynamic and therefore it is one such way that Protestantism will be examined. The lodges themselves were self-professed strongholds of Protestant culture and tradition which, in itself, proved the point that Protestantism encapsulated more than just religion. But despite the fact that Orangeism was intrinsically linked to, and produced a certain brand of Protestantism, can it be claimed that Protestantism was intrinsically liked to the Orange Order, or that Protestantism alone produced Orangeism? Alvin Jackson says of the Orange Order, that it was 'one of the key resources in Protestant society'[14] and indeed, while all of Cavan's Protestants may not have been part of it, the order was there to be used by any Protestant who happened to agree with its ideals. It is therefore difficult to pin down precisely the relationship between the Protestant community of Cavan and the Orange Order, but a clearer picture can only be obtained in looking at the county itself. While any attempt to pin down this relationship may seem irrelevant, but one must have an idea as to what extent the Protestant community in County Cavan was represented by the Orange Order, for any discussion of that organisation to carry weight within this present study.

The large number of Orange Lodges within the county, and the large attendance reported at Orange activities such as the opening of the Canningstown Orange Hall as reported in the *Anglo-Celt* of 22 March 1919. Canningstown, a small rural area that constituted no more than a townland, hosted contingents of Orangemen from 'Cootehill, Balieborough, Shercock, Drummon, Ardmony, Sheagh, Lisball, Lartaneane, Drumartin, Rakeevan, Miltown, Billyhill, Cliffin No.

1, Cliffin No. 2, Cornaskeagh Drumlon, Stonewall, Curlurgan, etc.'[15] These areas, some small towns and some no bigger than Canningstown itself, existed within a ten mile radius of the place in question, pointing to a high concentration of Orangeism within a not too large area. On the other hand, however, while membership of the Orange Order did seem to be quite high within the county, there is nothing to suggest that there was one-hundred percent membership among the Protestant community, as was shown by a statement made in by the Grand Orange Order in 1921, urging all those members of the Orange, Black and Loyalist Defence Association of Ireland 'to do all in their power to bring in all loyalists who are not members of our order.'[16]

Being a member of the Protestant church, however, was not synonymous with being in the Orange Order and, for those who were not members of the order, the churches themselves provided a strong sense of both community and leadership. To elaborate, in the *Northern Standard* there was much evidence of the local churches themselves providing much community and solace in, what was largely, a time of turmoil and an example of this could be found in the fact that 'meetings at which united prayer is offered up for peace is held at frequent intervals at Darley National School, Cootehill, by sections of the various Protestant denominations of the town who go there in good numbers.'[17] Orangeism tended to be one mode of formal institutionalisation of Protestantism, while the religion in itself remained a strong institution of faith, morals and culture. Notwithstanding the fact that all Protestants were not Orangemen, the Orange Order should not be ignored as a useful means of looking at one facet of Protestant cultural or political life. Jackson

asserts that 'the significance of the Orange Order in terms of the ideological and institutional groundwork for unionism can hardly be overstated'[18] and, from the amount of coverage it received in the *Northern Standard* and the sheer volume of lodges that were to be found in the county, it can be deduced that the order did have a strong following within Cavan, and was therefore quite representative of a sizeable proportion of the county's Protestants.

The constitution of the Loyal Orange Institution of Ireland stated that 'the institution is composed of Protestants, united and resolved to the utmost of their power to support and defend the rightful Sovereign, the Protestant religion, the laws of the Realm, and the succession to the throne of the House of Windsor, BEING PROTESTANT; and united further for the defence of their own persons and properties and the maintenance of public peace.'[19] Protestantism here was explicitly linked to the crown, something that was not altogether an alien concept given that historically, the Protestant faith in Britain, and by virtue Ireland, had been linked to the British monarchy. However, since disestablishment in 1869 any links between the crown and Protestantism, or more precisely the Church of Ireland, were ideological only. Jackson asserts that 'the termination of establishment removed a source of division between the two main Irish Protestant traditions [namely, the Church of Ireland and Presbyterianism], and therefore prepared the way for the inclusivist 'Protestant' identity'[20] and indeed the Orange Order presented a united religious front that remained ideologically connected to Britain. The Orange Order, then, was an exclusively Protestant organisation and the above statement highlights six layers, come duties, of loyal Protestants, those being the defence of 'the rightful

sovereign'; the Protestant religion'; 'the laws of the Realm'; 'of their own persons'; 'properties'; and 'the maintenance of public peace.'[21] Only one of these duties was concerned with actual religious beliefs, and one gets a sense of a cultural bubble that encompassed a set of values, political and otherwise.

Obviously it is a primary objective of any religion to embed itself in the everyday conduct of those to whom it administers. The Protestant church, as well as the Orange Order, promoted a certain set of values that were both cultural and political, as well as explicitly religious, the 'prayers for peace' in Cootehill being a good example of this.[22] Therefore, it is not untoward that Protestantism should have promoted a certain way of living, a 'culture', if you will and looking at the local churches themselves, as well as the Orange Order, offers us a glimpse into that culture.

1:2 Political Protestantism

It may appear a pointless task to seek to make a clear distinction between culture and politics, after all, both feed into and are integral to each other. For this reason, it would seem the time has come to explain the divisions that have been made. The previous section spoke about cultural Protestantism, but it was quite easy to see that this category was laced with implicit political beliefs. In this light, the need for a section devoted to politics may seem somewhat redundant. However, the express purpose of such a section is to examine the explicit political beliefs of this group or, even more so, to examine how Protestantism shaped itself around the political events of the time. And, while such beliefs were born out of an implicit

culture, this fact does not make them any less deserving of a separate category. Subsequently, here an attempt will be made to distinguish the political identity of Protestantism.

Above, a point was made, stating that Protestant culture was situated very much within the realm, but what exactly did this mean? The Protestant faith had, for a number of centuries, been indelibly linked to the British monarchy and, perhaps in part due to the existence of an established church until 1869, Protestantism had been a symbol of British rule. Since the reformation in Britain, politics, culture and religion had become interlinked concepts and therefore politics too, or to be more exact the politics of the religious minority in Cavan, were largely expressed through the language and mentality of the United Kingdom. An examination of the Grand Orange Order provides a good theoretical basis for such political thinking, and it is this that will be looked at first, before the political situation of County Cavan is delved into. It is important to note, at this stage, that Orangeism was quite active in Cavan in the early 1920s. In an article entitled 'Balieboro' Twelfth' it was stated that 'it was very satisfactory to see so many new [Orange] halls springing up,'[23] such a statement being made in the context of a new hall having been purchased in the town. It is also worth noting that the biannual general meetings of the Orange Lodge of Ireland contained a good deal of material related to the county. Therefore Orangeism is not only relevant, but highly necessary in any discussion of Protestant politics in Cavan.

In a statement made and signed on behalf of the Orange Order of Ireland in 1922, the principles of the order were stated, or rather reiterated. The statement

claimed that 'their [the Orange Order] only rule of faith is brotherhood and justice and love. They stand for equal rights, equal liberties, and equal opportunities for all men, no matter what their religious outlook, and no matter what their political bias; and to attain such an end they are now, as they have always been, ready to co-operate with those otherwise, perhaps, in many respects, differing with them, but who share their very real desire for the betterment of Ireland and for the establishment of those principles that make for the safety and welfare of all men.'[24] A fair and equitable statement, and one would find it difficult after reading it, to believe that this group were having any difficulty with the way things were unfolding in Ireland's ongoing relationship with Great Britain, namely the aftermath of the Anglo-Irish treaty of December 1921. The following however, situated the above comment within a framework that reflected the cultural/political Protestantism of the Orange Order. The statement proceeded as follows; 'All this however, is, in their minds, subject to three conditions:- First, that those who are willing to work together for the welfare and peace in Ireland should themselves be unswervingly loyal to the Crown.' The following two conditions concerned the safeguarding of rights of religion, politics, life and property 'which is the birthright of every citizen of the state'[25] and it is hard to avoid the feeling that such rights would be best secured if those who were loyal to the crown were in control.

One gets the impression then, that the politics of the Orange Order were very much situated within the context of the United Kingdom. However, it is necessary to find out if attitudes were different on the ground, among the Protestant community of County Cavan, and indeed if the greater Protestant community in

Cavan was reflected in the Orange Order. Articles from the *Northern Standard*, relating to the political situation of the time, lacked the almost passionate bombast that could be found in Orange Order documentation. The Catholic/nationalist community were not castigated in the *Northern Standard* despite the fact that articles which described numerous attacks on Protestant properties and persons, such as 'Protestant farmer visited'[26] or 'Union Jacks burned'[27] were very common. Such reports showed the constant physical and ideological attack against the Protestants in the county. Indeed, from the factual descriptions that seemed to evade elaboration, it could be possible that such reporting could stem from the fact that, while the newspaper was writing towards a particular audience, another audience did exist within the county, and any airing of grievances could make living together a little uncomfortable, if not difficult.

County Cavan in the late 1910s and early 1920s was indeed a political pressure cooker, and 1921 saw no release of this pressure. It was in this year that those who had been fighting against Ireland's involvement with Britain, those same people who had largely been perceived by the Protestant community to have been part of the 'criminal activities of the murder gangs by which this country is still infested'[28] entered talks with the British government regarding a peace settlement. Sinn Fein, the group mainly responsible for attacks on Protestants, and on the British Empire in general, were now negotiating with Lloyd George and a number of unionist representatives as to what Ireland's future relationship with Britain would be. Due to these circumstances one must wonder how the Protestant community of Cavan viewed the negotiations, and what shape their political

identity took in relation to them. The following, written during the truce and subsequent negotiations, stated that 'freedom within the Empire, the freest in the history of the world, can be Ireland's tomorrow'[29] and this statement articulates well the feelings of Cavan Protestants regarding a possible peace settlement.

During the ongoing negotiations of 1921 there were very strong messages of hope communicated by the Protestant churches, by the Orange Lodges and in reports and editorials of the *Northern Standard* and it was indeed difficult to ascertain opposition to the negotiations. Cavan Protestants were in support of a possible treaty, as could be seen in statements made separately by various Churches and Orange Lodges, and the *Northern Standard* held no accounts of any reactions against a settlement. The general address of the Presbyterian Church moderator stated that 'all Irishmen may use the opportunity which has come to them to show in a practical way what capability they have for self government.'[30] Editorials were of a similar vein each week, and the message that 'all of the Unionists of the twenty-six counties could hope for is a just and honourable peace which will permit the trade of the country to revive. They do not belong to the six-counties and are entitled therefore, to long and work for peace between men of all shades of opinion in Ireland'[31] was a common one. As was the feeling that 'no person can do other than hope for a settlement which will give the country a chance to revive.'[32] Even the local Orange Lodges were of the opinion that the prospect of peace, born from the negotiations, provided a reason for hope and one speech from an Orange demonstration in Killashandra stating that 'we are met at a time when, after a devastating and horrible war, there is a prospect of peace and I am glad of it as our

country would have been ruined'[33] articulated justly the feeling of other lodges in the county. So, given that the Protestants of County Cavan were so anxious for peace to be brokered between Great Britain and nationalist Ireland, how were the cultural and political beliefs of Protestantism reconciled with negotiations to appease Sinn Fein?

The answer to the above question is highly indicative of the marriage between culture and politics concerning Protestantism. Among Protestant circles, in the time before and after the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty, there existed a dichotomy of opinion that fed into a consistency regarding Protestant identity. To clarify this point, the Protestants of the county seemed to both accept Ireland's altered political relationship with Great Britain, while holding on to a cultural identity that remained largely unionist. The Presbyterian general assembly stated that the setting up of two Irish parliaments meant the creation of two communities which were different in many ways, 'each able to carry out it's own ideals.' The assembly did not see the creation of two parliaments as the partition of the country, but rather as a means of doing more for the 'general good' of the country. Furthermore, despite the fact that some Presbyterians would owe allegiance to the southern legislature, 'the unity of the church [would] not be impaired.'[34]

As regards the Orange Order, in December 1922 following the establishment of the Irish Free State and its constitution, the County Monaghan Grand Orange Lodge sent a resolution to the main meeting, a resolution that was of interest regarding County Cavan's Orangemen and their feeling regarding the new structure of Ireland. In the resolution, it was stated that 'for us the Union no longer

exists, consequently we cannot pledge candidates to maintain a Union which has been by law abolished... That we are bound to be loyal to the Government under which, against our will, we are placed, and are determined to be so, as resistance to the powers that be is forbidden by our religious teaching' and that 'the [Orange] institution that presently exists in Southern Ireland is illegal, and if it continues will undoubtedly be suppressed by the government.'[35] Many interesting issues were brought up in this statement, the problem of being a unionist without a union was raised, as was the difficult conflict of interests that would ensue if one tried to juggle existence within the new southern structure with a continued and unaltered allegiance to Great Britain, given its altered relationship with the southern counties. Furthermore, the County Monaghan Orangemen requested that the Orange Lodges within the southern counties be given leave to draft a new and separate constitution that was relevant to their altered situation, inviting Orangemen in the twenty-six counties to join with them. They were given permission from the grand council of the Orange Order to proceed with such plans, but their brothers in the south, including their neighbours in Cavan, were unwilling to dissolve links with the main organisation and plans for a separate constitution fell through. Here it is revealed that, within the Cavan's Orangemen at any rate, Protestant unionism remained consistently unified even after the creation of two separate jurisdictions within the Island.

In examining the *Northern Standard* it is evident that the political separation of Cavan from the northern counties did little to change ideological links to the north. There were many northern business establishments which advertised in the

newspaper in a time where the *Anglo-Celt* hosted businesses from Dublin, and a large number of news items in the Protestant based paper showed how Northern Ireland remained very much a part of everyday life in the county. A report on the 'local successes at the royal Ulster show'[36] in Belfast hosted a large number of prizewinners from Cavan and, furthermore, the fact that successful entrants hailing from different parts of the six-counties were also mentioned hinted at a familiarity with fellow farmers in the north. It is perhaps worth noting that this show was not reported in the *Anglo-Celt* and that there was no evidence of Catholics among the prizewinners. There was then, a continued cultural allegiance to the north that trickled through the political separation, providing a continuity which seemed to act as a stabilising influence during turbulent times.

It seemed to be the case then, that the lack of a physical union, with the north as much as with Great Britain, did little to change the cultural allegiances of Cavan Protestantism, and it is important here to note the use of the word cultural rather than political. Yes, the particular culture of Cavan Protestants fed into a set of political beliefs, but because a large proportion of the explicit mode of expression of those beliefs had been removed, their particular political identity would, in the future, have to be expressed in cultural rather than political terms. Their new political identity was linked to the new state, but it would seem that their culture still remained firmly rooted in a united Ireland within the union. Therefore, it would seem justified to use the term 'unionist' to encapsulate this group, but it should be clear that this is not a by-word for a political party or a mode of overt political

activism, but rather spoke for a particular way of existing within the world in which this group found themselves in the early years of the Free State.

Chapter 2 New beginnings and old ways; unionism and the passing of the union

Protestant culture in Cavan was constituted out of what were largely unionist principles through a cultural and political allegiance to Great Britain. Given that the years 1919-22 marked a time of upheaval in relation to Ireland's relationship with Britain, what became of the unionist identity and how was that identity incorporated into a new Ireland? Did unionism die with the end of the union of Great Britain and Ireland, as those who had been unionist became nationalist? Or was it reinvented to create an alternative way for the 'ex-unionists' to exist within the new Ireland?

2:1 Unionism; forsaken or reinvented?

It has already been established that Protestantism held a unique sense of itself in the Cavan of the late 1910s and early 1920s and, in such a light, an interesting question must be posed, that being; how this view of self fitted into the changing shape of Ireland? Patrick Buckland, in an exemplary look at Irish unionism, says that the years 1920-21 'saw the penultimate stage in the story of a distinctive Anglo-Irish political movement in the south of Ireland,' and that 'by the middle of 1920 southern unionists were once more trying to come to terms with the new Ireland as many abandoned their unionism.'[37] Indeed, on a national scale, the impression is given of a unionist identity being ground into submission by the actions of Sinn Fein, as well as by British and northern reaction to the exploits of nationalism. R. B. McDowell observes that 'by the summer of 1920 political

uncertainty, violence, threats, disruption of communications, destruction of property and boycotting had lead to a slump in morale among loyalists in southern Ireland. "We loyalists" a Leitrim man wrote, "cannot venture to speak or act. We have only our thoughts left to us."'[38]

Indeed overt unionism had been largely obliterated from the Irish political landscape, with those ex-unionists who wanted to participate in the political system doing so as independent candidates, given the fact that there emerged no political body to represent the unionist, or Protestant, voice in the new Free State. Even the emblematic unionist, Sir James Craig, was elected as an independent in the general election of 1922 to the Dublin University constituency,[39] and County Cavan's first ex-unionist, and independent Protestant, to be elected for the Free State government was J. J. Cole in 1923.[40] Kurt Bowen, speaking about the independent Protestants who were elected TDs in the early years of the Free State, says that 'the three Protestant TDs from Ulster [of which J. J. Cole was one] served primarily as "contact men for their constituents in political and administrative circles."'[41] They did not play a major part in Dáil debates, and when they did involve themselves they tended to be concerned with agricultural matters and other issues of local concern.'[42] It seems, then, that even those Protestants who managed to get themselves elected did not bring any of the ideological weight of unionism to bear on the Free State, and one must wonder why. Terence Dooley states that, in the wake of the Free State, Monaghan Protestants 'did forsake their unionist principles'[43] but seems a little ludicrous to suggest that the beliefs, the concerns and the overall identity that had constituted the need for a unionist party in the time

before the creation of the Irish Free State, vanished with the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty. If then, the qualities that constituted unionism continued to exist, where did they find expression in the altered political circumstances of the early 1920s?

While political unionism may have been, for all intensive purposes, killed in the years 1919-22, something of the culture that had fed into the unionist movement continued to exist as 'considering oneself an ex-unionist constituted an attitude of mind rather than membership of a political party.'[44] Alvin Jackson broadly defines unionism as a 'belief in the constitutional connexion between Britain and Ireland'[45] and, while this union may have been greatly altered, the belief in an innate connection between Ireland and the crown remained securely intact for Cavan Protestants. On the position of Protestants within an altered Ireland, R. B. McDowell says that 'the mail boat still ran, every term a number of boys left the Free State for schools in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, young Irishmen continued to join the army and the civil services, English touring companies came regularly to the Gaiety and ex-unionists who scorned Gaelic games could enjoy playing or watching rugby, cricket and hockey. 'In practice' he tells us, 'an ex-unionist could live for most of his time with like-minded people.'[46] As has been looked at previously, and what will be looked at again at a later stage, there did exist a distinctive Protestant culture in Cavan. This culture was evident in ones choice of sports, in the existence of such gatherings as church fetes and garden parties as well as an interest in all things royal, such as 'the kings birthday in Cavan.'[47] This continuity of culture, despite the political shift, showed that

unionism, in the sense of beliefs and interests, had far from ceased to exist in the county.

There is little to suggest, however, that Cavan Protestants believed themselves not to be Irish, yet their 'Irishness' was intimately linked to a wider sense of 'Britishness.' However, this view of being Irish as an extension of being British was strongly bolstered by the act of union which provided a solid connection between the two areas. With the passing of the Government of Ireland Act in 1920 and the eventual Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921, this Protestant symbiosis between 'Irishness' and 'Britishness' held less theoretical credence. Despite the fact that the British monarch would continue to be the Irish head of state, 'in much of the country the treaty was being hailed as the termination of eight-hundred years of British rule.'[48] The *Northern Standard* reported on how the people of Cavan and Monaghan had reacted to the ratification of the treaty, mentioning that orange, green and white bunting was hung and that candles were placed in the windows of many catholic homes. Furthermore, the parish priest of Cootehill wired a telegram to Dublin stating that 'Cavan unanimously congratulates Griffith and Milroy,' as did one Paul Smith, 'one of the most prominent merchants in the town,' whose message sent 'heartiest congratulations to the leaders of the majority.'[49] So, despite the fact that Ireland's connection to Britain was not completely severed, there was still a palpable sense of changed status in relation to Britain communicated to the Protestants of Cavan that was difficult to ignore.

Yet, the Protestant identity remained largely what it had been before the Government of Ireland Act, or the Anglo-Irish treaty, albeit in a cultural rather than

political sense, as had been previously discussed. It seems not overly outrageous to presume that the ability to hold onto such an identificational status quo required a slight realignment of where Ireland was perceived in relation to Britain in order to justify an identity that would remain both Irish and British. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will examine the nature of Protestantism within the changing face of Ireland, as well as the mental adjustments that were necessary to keep this distinct identity intact.

2:2 Making or forsaking a nation; official Protestant reaction to the political developments of the early 1920s

Before one can begin to explore how the Protestant population dealt with the developments of 1919-22 it is not only useful, but necessary, to examine how they perceived these occurrences. It may seem like a simple case of stating the obvious, but how this group viewed such political manoeuvrings must be recognised as an integral motivation in how they would subsequently deal with any changes. And therefore, in an effort to keep the horse very much before the cart, this section will look at what was being said, within exclusive Protestant circles, as regards the political upheaval of the time. Furthermore, the reactions of this group will be first examined through the lens of some of the official manifestations of Protestantism. Such organisations produced much material intended for Protestant eyes only, therefore doing away with the need for any dilution that might be necessary in the presence of a more heterogeneous audience.

Any of the given expressions of Protestantism provides a different means of viewing the unfolding political situation of the late 1910s and early 1920s. The Irish Unionist Alliance, as one such expression, is a useful port-of-call in relation to examining one such reaction to the changing state of Ireland. Therefore a letter from the alliance for the attention of the British government is of particular interest at this point. It is important to note, before delving into the contents of this correspondence that one of the its main signatories, and the chairman of the I.U.A., was one Lord Farnham, a Cavan man and prominent member of the Grand Orange Lodge in the county. With that said, the full text of the letter was as follows:

> As a Unionist we again appeal to you with all the force at our command. There are two forces at work in Ireland to day---the forces of treason, which seek to drive from the country every vestige of British constitutional authority, and the forces of loyalty. Owing to the weakness of the Unionist party in England, the former is gaining in strength from day to day, while the latter are becoming proportionately more helpless.
>
> The following extract from a recent leader in the *Irish Times* gives a partial glimpse of what is happening in the south and west: --- "The Irish Attorney-General startled the House of Commons yesterday by telling it that 25, 000 armed men must have been engaged in the recent swoop on 250 barracks. He could have startled it still more thoroughly with a hundred further facts which must be in his possession. The House does not seem to know that the whole South of Ireland has fallen under the government of Sinn Fein, and that life and property are absolutely without protection many areas from which the police have been removed..."
>
> We appeal to you to stand firm before our country is reduced to a second Russia. The very lives of many of your loyal fellow subjects are now at stake. Their liberties have long since vanished.

> Insist that the government shall tell the country the truth, and abandon their policy of discussing constitutional changes while the country is in open rebellion, and insist that they shall apply their undivided attention to the task of restoring law and order before the remaining land-marks of civilisation are swept away. In the name of honour we appeal to you.[50]

From this letter it can be seen that there was little ambiguity as to the feelings of these unionists in relation to the both Sinn Fein's military activity within the country, and the on going constitutional changes that were being negotiated with Sinn Fein present at the conference table. The choice between an Ireland shaped by Sinn Fein as opposed to one modelled in the image of Britain was likened to a choice between barbarity and civilisation. This correspondence gives an interesting snapshot into the official -ideological, if you will- stance of what were becoming the ex-, or southern, unionists. The fact that Lord Farnham was a major figure in this grouping indicated a strong Cavan component in an all-encompassing unionist entity.

However, in 1920 when the above letter was written, Ireland was in the throws of the Anglo-Irish war and the Protestants of Cavan were indeed feeling the harsh-hand of what the I.U.A. termed an 'open rebellion.' Yet, two-years proceeding this correspondence, the *Northern Standard* reported on a meeting of the I.U.A. in Dublin. There were no names given of those present, but the very presence of such an article, as well as the existence of Lord Farnham as a key member of the organisation would presume, at the very least, a measure of interest among Cavan Protestants in the organisation. At the meeting the following

resolution was adopted: 'that this committee, having carefully considered the present situation, views with serious alarm the condition of Ireland today and the increasing anarchy that prevails, and is gravely apprehensive that when crown forces have been withdrawn there will be no reliable protection for life or property.'[51] In 1922, when this meeting took place, the truce between Sinn Fein and the crown forces had been in place for approximately six months, the Free State was now in place, and the Protestant readership of the *Northern Standard* were being encouraged to embrace and make the best of Ireland's altered political situation. Yet, within what was one mode of unionist expression, there did exist a very grave mistrust of the new political situation, as well as a continued community that saw salvation only in the physical presence of the British in Ireland.

Another repository of official, or institutional, unionism was the Orange Order. Minutes from the order's biannual general meeting in December 1921 showed a similar distrust for any new political regime in Ireland that did not involve a direct British presence. One address that was said to be 'representative of Orangemen from all parts of their native land' gave a concise and telling picture of what was being felt, among this group as to the Anglo-Irish treaty. The address communicated the fact that the Orange Order was 'of the opinion that the so-called Treaty entered into between representatives of His Majesties government and the rebel forces of Ireland will break up the Empire without their [the Orangemen's] consent.'[52] Furthermore, in a meeting of June 1922, a further address stated that 'the very cornerstones of ordered society have been uprooted.' The statement went on to say that 'the Society which they represent [that being the Grand Orange Lodge] has

never failed in their passionate adherence to imperial ideals, nor have they ever failed to respond most generously to the Empire's call in the hour of her bitter need. They appeal, in their turn to the Imperial Parliament, and to the great nation for protection and defence.'[53] What can be seen from such statements is that Protestants were clinging very much to the empire and made the point of pointing out the unique and deeply rooted links that existed between themselves and the imperial crown, as well as the inherent distrust they felt towards nationalism.

Another item to be found in the *Northern Standard* was an appeal from the Southern Irish Loyalists Relief Association, based in Westminster, to all loyalists to assist those who the association termed as 'southern refugees.' The appeal stated that 'hundreds of the most deserving people of our Empire are now supplicants for charity. This, remember, is through no fault of their own, but because of the suspension of the law. These loyalists stood to their faith and to the King. It is now the duty of every loyalist here to stand by them.'[54] Another expression of another official unionist line, the above statement again evokes the picture of a loyal people stranded in an over-run country. Furthermore, it suggested a community of people who were linked to another community of support in Great Britain.

The fear expressed by these respective unionist organisations was quite indicative of the fear of a unionist demise that was mentioned at the outset of this chapter. However, amid this fear of annihilation at the hands of the new Irish Free State, was a core community whose fear manifested itself into a need to consolidate the group in order to protect that which had not been lost by rabid nationalism. A

concrete political identity may have been lost, but the culture that had led to that identity remained ultimately intact.

2:3 Reaction and distraction: popular Protestantism and the end of the union

If the official repositories of Protestantism could be seen as giving an undiluted picture of reactions at the dawn of the Irish Free State, then coverage in the local newspaper can be described as giving a valid picture also. Albeit, the picture offered by the *Northern Standard* was slightly altered in texture from that which was offered by a number of the given aficionados of unionism, yet the colours in the two views had much in common. Furthermore, given the fact that local concerns can sometimes dilute those of an ideological nature, the local paper went some distance in illuminating what were the attitudes on the ground regarding the Protestants of County Cavan.

In County Cavan there seems to have been a sense of resignation regarding the course of southern Ireland and this was, in part, due to the fact that she, as an Ulster county, had been left out of the northern jurisdiction. A short item, entitled 'The only one?' in the *Northern Standard* of June 1921 stated that 'at least one Six-County Unionist paper, the *Armagh Guardian,* has had the good sense to regret that counties Cavan and Monaghan were not included in the area of the Northern Parliament.'[55] Here one gets a distinct sense that the worry felt by the change in the status of Ireland was compounded by a sense that the unionists of those Ulster counties that had been left out of the northern loop felt a tangible sense of rejection from their fellow brethren. In a letter to the editor of the *Northern Standard* a self

proclaimed 'observer' asked if 'the Orangemen of Monaghan and Cavan noticed that the *Belfast Newsletter* contained no reports of any twelfth meetings held in Ireland outside the six-county area. Perhaps they're [the Cavan and Monaghan Orangemen] are not now wanted, or now considered too provincial to be published in this "metropolitan" newspaper.'[56] Furthermore, in the paper's editorial of July 1921 it was said of Northern Ireland that 'it has got all it wanted, and got release from all it didn't want- Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal, for instance' and in speaking about the Northern representatives' role in the peace negotiations, it was said that 'if the Six-counties were asked to give up something they already have, or take back something they did not want, they will be very much annoyed.'[57] There was a definite sense that the unionists of Cavan had experienced a very palpable sense of rejection as regards their separation from the unionist north. This separation somewhat divorced Cavan unionists from what was, for all intensive purposes, the nerve-centre of Irish unionism, a nerve-centre which became institutionalised, and almost quarantined, within the six northern counties. This would perhaps go some distance in explaining what turned out to be the acceptance, or resignation, as regards the Anglo-Irish treaty.

Even those 'official' organisations, when at work in Cavan, tended to temper their ideological rhetoric with local practicality, as could be seen in the speeches given by members of a local Orange Lodge on the occasion of 'Balieborough Twelfth.' There was, on this occasion, an inclination towards pragmatism with the Reverend Mr Flannery stating that 'all parties in Ireland wanted to have too much of their own way. There was too much of a tendency with

the Orangemen to bathe in the waters of the Boyne, and with others to cool their heads on Vinegar Hill,' and furthermore, he thought that 'in the past Protestant patriotism was too imperial. They were very slow to cheer for Ireland, but they were always ready to cheer for the Empire.'[58] And, as a succinct blow to the largely 'No Surrender' dogma of the Orange Order, not to mention the northern counties, Reverend T. W. Wells stated at the Balieboro' meeting that 'if there was going to be peace in the future all parties must surrender something. The men in the North must give away something. They promised to do a lot for us, but when it fitted their own purpose they threw us all overboard.'[59] Such words showed a certain sense that the Cavan Orangemen felt equally abandoned by their northern brethren, being therefore left with little choice but to turn towards the Free State.

Perhaps one John W. Vogan put the judicious position of the Cavan Orangemen best when he said 'it seems to me the policy of trying to make all our people think in the same way is a ruinous one. We will not interfere with any man's religion or politics, but we will not allow anyone to trifle with ours.'[60] This position, tinged with yet more pragmatism, could be seen clearly in an editorial of June 1922 which was speaking of the forthcoming elections to the Free State parliament. Speaking of the common misconception that Ireland must 'present a united front at this juncture of her history,' the editor, who suggested his favour for independent candidates, stated that 'the greatest need is that Ireland should present a true indication of the feelings of her inhabitants.'[61] The reason for this was that 'the fate of Ireland is in the Balance,' and following this assertion the cusp of the matter was clenched, as the editor went onto rationalise Protestant involvement within the new

state. Hence, the article continued as follows; 'Observe, we do not say the fate of the Irish Free State, the fate of the Irish Republic, or the fate of the Workers Republic... we are concerned solely and absolutely with the fate of the Irish people and we regard the national title as a matter of secondary importance. The ex-Unionist voters, therefore, must decide which candidates are the more likely to bring –or attempt to bring- peace and prosperity to the country, and vote for those candidates.'[62]

It would seem then, judging by the *Northern Standard,* that Protestant reaction within Cavan itself was heavily tinctured with hard and fast practicalities. While a reliance on ideology alone would preserve the group as part of the empire and allow it to remain very much insulated from anything that might threaten that position, there were certain factors which demanded a slight dropping of the fortification against that which did not complement a more grandiose Protestant purpose. One of these factors was the blunt separation that was felt at being inside Ulster, yet outside the North. It would not be going too far to presume that this left a bitter after-taste in the mouth of Cavan unionists, which led to recognition that little could be done but to resign themselves to their new status within Ireland. Furthermore, there was no alternative but to begin to make the best of this position, while not forsaking their uniqueness within the new political structure. It seemed also that, by explicitly focusing on their own practical wellbeing and not on a larger political/patriotic allegiance to the new state, that the Protestants of County Cavan were wilfully creating a separation between ideology and pragmatism. Such an approach was more beneficial in allowing for full participation in both spheres of

influence, without having to deal with any messy issues regarding a possible compromise of principles.

2:4 For the love of Ireland; 'Irishness', the Protestant way

The Protestant community of County Cavan was then, very much part of the newly formed Irish Free State, and this indeed was their intention. But given their unique cultural identity, and the way in which this identity remained very much imbued with empiricist notions, what form did their 'Irishness' take? To phrase it differently, how would the Protestants of Cavan reconcile their innate cultural links to the crown with meaningful participation in a new political arrangement for Ireland which greatly altered Britain's role in the country? And, in view of these factors, what would 'being Irish' come to mean for this community?

Possibly the most succinct way of categorising 'Irishness' from the point of view of a unionist was a short statement made in an editorial from the *Northern Standard* from July 1921. The editorial, arising from the on-going peace process, stated that 'freedom within the Empire, the freest in the history of the world, can be Ireland's tomorrow.'[63] This statement managed to present Ireland's forthcoming freedom, not as a cataclysmic blow to relations with the empire, but rather it acted as a further vindication of the utter greatness and mammoth wisdom of Great Britain. In other words, Ireland's freedom was merely another expression of 'Britishness,' rather than a complete divorce from that kingdom.

In another article entitled 'Southern Unionists, support for Free State' the situation was interpreted as follows; 'The Union that was brought about by Pitt in

1800 by devious means had gone and vanished, but they should remember –no matter what government would be in power in Ireland- England was their best customer and they would always have to trade with their best customer.'[64] Such a view was highly pragmatic, not to mention reassuring, communicating the point that even if Ireland did attempt to dislocate herself completely and utterly from Great Britain, cold, hard economic realities would ensure that a link would always be maintained. However, the abiding feeling obtained from the above article was the comment made in response to the assertion that unionism, as a viable term, no longer would have relevance within the new Irish Free State. In what was a clever, and quite apt use of Shakespeare, the line went as follows, 'a rose by any other name would smell as sweet,'[65] indicating, perhaps, that although unionism in Ireland would no longer take the form it once had, it would continue to exist, albeit dressed in different garments.

In a county where home rule had been vehemently opposed by Protestants less than a decade before, it is interesting to see how a new national arrangement that went beyond mere domestic government was not merely tolerated, but actually accepted within County Cavan. Granted, this would have been an unlikely choice of direction for the island and acceptance of the new status quo was heavily tinged with a sense of resignation. After all, a continued campaign of violence against the Protestants of Cavan, a crusade against the British authorities to whom they pledged allegiance, as well as their feeling of abandonment by the northern counties did much to weaken their resolve. However, the Protestant community of Cavan

wilfully settled into the new arrangement, and in doing this they re-drew slightly the parameters both by which they were identified and through which they identified themselves. This shift in classification caused them to first accept the reality of heterogeneity in the light that that such a state could still be conducive to some measure of unity. Such a reality was, however, sweetened by a rationalisation that Ireland's new political arrangement was merely a new way to exist within the empire, rather that complete separation from it. Also, a renewed reliance on Protestant culture and togetherness provided a basis whereby it was possible to continue living as before, but more through community than nation. Interaction with the new political state was seen not as a betrayal of ideology, but rather as a product of practical necessity in the interest of the common good of community. So, the Protestants of Cavan accepted the southern legislature, but did so with the understanding that it was an extension of British rule. This does not mean that this group was inferior as regards their 'Irishness,' but rather it had an alternative view as to what it meant to be Irish.

Chapter 3: 'Love thy neighbour'; relations within County Cavan

In the previous chapters, Protestantism was identified as a cultural or ethnic group within County Cavan. Richard Jenkins asserts that the ethnic identity is situated within a constant dialogue between similarity and difference,[66] thus highlighting the point that any given group is characterised as much by the 'difference' that lies outside its domain, as by the 'similarity' that lies within. In view of this point, who lay outside the Protestant domain in the years 1919-22? Broadly speaking, it was Catholicism that existed parallel to, and separate from, Protestantism. This difference was understood more in terms of culture and political beliefs than actual religious difference, creating a situation where religion became 'the visible symbol of deeper and less tangible attachments to national 'roots.''[67] However, the common perception that Catholicism and Protestantism existed in separate, and opposing, realms must be deciphered and dissected to ascertain if this was indeed the case in County Cavan in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Therefore this chapter, after a careful examination of Cavan's Catholic community will, in looking at the relationship between the Protestants and Catholics of Cavan, examine if the boundary between the two groups was totally impermeable.

3:1 Crossing the line; outside Protestant culture

It is necessary to point out here that this section is not being written for its own sake, but as a means of further defining and understanding the nature of Cavan Protestantism during the years 1919-22. No group exists in a vacuum, just as no group is created out of one, and therefore what lies outside that conceptual

boundary can often be highly indicative of what lies within. It may seem a little oversimplified to state that what lay outside the realm of Protestantism/unionism was in fact Catholicism/nationalism but these terms do indeed tend to capture the dichotomous nature of the county at that time.

Perhaps, before the discussion gets confused by the brandishing of such terms as 'Catholic' and 'nationalism,' a brief inspection to ascertain the extent of correlation between the two terms should be carried out. In previous chapters it was established that a generous number of Cavan's Protestant population held beliefs that could broadly be described as unionist. Subsequently, if Catholicism was the main definitional landmark of that group who was not Protestant, can it be said that those who were not unionists were nationalists? In other words, what was the relationship between Catholicism and nationalism? Richard Jenkins observes that the conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland is 'not religious as it is not the religions, as ideological symbols, that are in conflict, but their members'[68] and such an observation presents religion as a means of labelling a deeper political division. Indeed such a connection between religion and politics could be seen in the Saint Patrick's Day mass in Cavan town[69] where hymns were sung and responses given by members of the town's branch of the Gaelic League. That this, a religious ceremony to celebrate the coming of Christianity to Ireland should have, as chief participants, members of an organisation that acted as an important vehicle for the cultural nationalist message of a 'Gaelic spirit'[70] leading towards an 'Irish-Ireland,' showed some connection between the Catholic religion and the national struggle for independence.

Furthermore, speeches by Catholic clergy in relation to the political events of the late 1910s and early 1920s showed a genuine Catholic interest in the national struggle. One such speech, made by the Catholic bishop of Kilmore, stating that 'the country should be governed by the methods chosen by the majority of people, even if that meant complete independence. That was the meaning of self-determination'[71] showed the articulation of nationalist principals on a religious platform. Even The Pope's 'message to an Dáil' in January 1922, stating that 'the Holy father rejoices with the Irish people... and prays that the lord will send his blessings on the noble chosen people which has passed through such long sorrow, ever faithful to the Catholic church'[72] showed an intrinsic link between Catholicism and Irish nationalist ideology. A congratulatory telegram sent to the Free State government from the Catholic Parish Priest of Cootehill showed the same connection between religion and politics.[73]

The question must be asked at this point; how nationalist was Cavan and what was the extent of her explicit activity in the nationalist cause? Taking Sinn Fein as the supreme expression of nationalism, it is quite telling that she was the second largest political organisation in the county in 1920, having sixty-four branches and 4, 873 members, with only the United Irish League beating her for membership. Furthermore the county inspectors report for June 1920 tells that 'Sinn Fein is stronger in Cavan than any other Ulster county.'[74] Indeed, in looking at both the *Northern Standard* and *Anglo-Celt*, a strong nationalist sentiment could be detected in the county. The *Northern Standard* was full of such reports as 'IRA raid Orange Hall,'[75] 'Butlersbridge road trenched,'[76] 'Protestant farmers visited'[77] and

'Union Jacks burned.'[78] Likewise, from looking at the *Anglo-Celt*, the fraught state of Cavan could be viewed in reports such as 'searches for arms, prosecutions in Cavan,'[79] 'Sinn Fein plans if the peace conference should fail,'[80] 'East Cavan nationalists make presentation to Mr J. F. O'Hanlon'[81] and 'Belfast boycott, another breadvan burned near Cavan.'[82]

Even in the minutes of Cavan Urban Council the political strain between the Cavan's Catholics and Protestants was evident. In 1920 a Protestant member of the council, Mr W. Reid, dissented on a vote for a motion to formally pledge the council's allegiance to the Dáil, stating that 'political matters should not be introduced.'[83] In the same meeting a complaint was raised regarding the wasteful use of water by the British army, with members of the council of the opinion that services such as water should be withdrawn in order to make British occupation uncomfortable. Reid rejected this proposal on the grounds that it could cause the army to become ill, reminding the council that the soldiers in question were most likely Irishmen. However, he seemed very conscious of how his feeling would be received among his fellow councillors, assuring them that he was 'speaking now as a member of the community and a ratepayer, not as a politician, or a unionist, or a carsonite.'[84] During the same council meeting Reid went on to reject a proposal to re-name the streets in Cavan town to reflect more nationalist sentiments, and raising the point that the people of Cavan should be more familiar with the Irish language before the street signs were changed. These views were not only rejected but were met with a speech on how the Irish language was being redeemed from England.

Cavan County Council, which had no Protestant representation, also acted as a springboard of nationalist sentiment, as well as being the co-ordinator of everyday county business. In June 1920 it was unanimously accepted that the council should 'acknowledge the authority of Dáil Eireann as the duly elected government of the Irish people' and a resolution of the same was forwarded to 'the republican minister for Foreign Affairs for transmission to the governments of Europe, and to the President and Chairman of the Senate and House of Representatives of the USA.'[85] In other resolutions, those who had been 'killed by enemy forces'[86] and 'those who had given their lives for accepted principals,' of who Kevin Barry, the executed nationalist, was an example, were sympathised with.[87] Furthermore, the council refused to co-operate with the British authorities, passing a motion that 'no books or documents belonging to this council be produced or any inspection be permitted to any inspector, auditor, or other persons except those appointed and given authority by Dáil Eireann.'[88] It can be seen, then, that there was a strong, and quite visible, nationalist element in Cavan in the years 1919-22 and, in this light, it would have been quite easy for the Protestantism to recognise the 'other' within the county.

. Catholic nationalism, then, had a strong presence within Cavan in the late 1910s and early 1920s, and both these states of Catholicism and nationalism had a symbiotic relationship of sorts, each feeding of, and into, the other to create a more viable whole. Later in this chapter the nature of their relationship with Protestant unionists will be explored, but at this stage it is sufficient to say that, in the context of the ideology of the time both groups, those being Catholicism and Protestantism,

were quite distinct. It may seem to have been a pointless exercise to go to such pains to point out this distinctiveness, yet one cannot presume to speak of a relationship without first denoting the parties within that correlation. And, while it would be all too tempting to look at Protestantism as an isolated entity, the fact that any group exists in the context of a given other cannot be ignored. Consequently, would there have been any need for organisations such as the Grand Orange Lodge in the time of which we speak, organisations that affirmed and reaffirmed a particular way of life, if that way of life was not being threatened somehow?

3:2 Community versus disunity; practical relationships in principled times

Assuming the presence of those groups within Cavan of which have been spoken, and given the political situation being that was being played out in the years 1919-22, the question is ultimately raised; how did the Protestants and Catholics of the county react to each other in day-to-day life. R. B. McDowell, in an astute assessment of inter-group relations in the early 1920s, says that 'in a sorely divided society, Irishmen had learned how to avoid contentious issues when in the congenial company of adherents of a different faith, religious or political. So though old, deep-seated loyalties persisted, most of the time they were dormant and did not interfere with the daily round.'[89] While both the Protestants and Catholics of Cavan had respective ideologies they could follow was every interaction with, or every opinion about, those of the 'other' side used as ammunition against a perceived enemy? To put it another way, was every sinew of life saturated with a need to act out and promote a particular set of

values, or was life conducted in the most productive way possible, with grand political thoughts left on the back-burner until the Sabbath or the political rally? Therefore, at this point, the relationship between ideology and everyday life will be perused in order to gain a more three-dimensional picture of Cavan Protestants in a less ideologically fraught setting.

It is apparent that both Protestants and Catholics did constitute two quite separate audiences, as can be seen from the two newspapers in the county but, in due accordance with those two newspapers, were these audiences impermeable to each other? Even those articles in the *Northern Standard* which were of a predominant Protestant interest, and most notably those relating to the political strife that was taking place at the time, were situated within a framework that gave an impression of general interest rather than localised political interest. The editorial of July 1921 spoke of the peace conference that was unfolding, a peace conference where Lloyd George had the task of 'devising some plan which will have a chance of pleasing both of the Irish leaders (those being James Craig and Eamon de Valera), and agree with what England, as a nation, is prepared to give to Ireland.'[90] While one could not automatically assume that this statement was a meditated attempt to please all strands of Irish society, including the opposing parties, it cannot be denied that it did situate the process in a setting which, while acknowledging the divergence as regards the future of Ireland, took the sectarian potency out of these parties. Or perhaps more so, such a statement dealt with and acknowledged these opposing peoples while, in one fell swoop of a sentence, unified them under the impartial guidance of one Lloyd George.

The article went on to cite the worries for the future of the conference and the fear of Ireland being plunged once more into a cascade of violence. What is surprising, however, is that this was a local paper speaking to a local people, yet it did not express such fears through any hostility that had occurred within the county itself but rather dealt with it almost abstractly. Furthermore, articles which were dealing in a more localised fashion with salient issues of politics and violence were sited as direct quotes or commentaries from another commentator and one gets the feeling that, even if there was displeasure on the part of Protestants with the content of such an article, it would be difficult to lay any blame, after all the paper was merely providing news, not commentary.

Despite the lack of a strong voice within such articles themselves, the titles, or rather sub-headings, of such writings are quite indicative of how the text should be interpreted. On 1 December 1922 the 'Free State constitution, text of the Irish bills; the position of Ulster'[91] was given, and in this almost incidental mention of Ulster the article, which in itself was given in full textual form, was given an interpretative framework. Earlier in the same year an article, dealing with Arthur Griffith's speeches in Dáil Eireann through direct, and a little indirect, quotation, there was a very innocuous appendage to the main heading of 'Dáil Eireann meets, election in June' which said ' "Murder" and "Business".'[92] The article quoted Arthur Griffith's statement regarding the murder of a member of the British army and, following from this went on to speak about the constitutional rights on freedom of expression and speech. None of this content was directly relevant to the above sub-heading, yet the notion of 'Murder and business' seemed an uncanny parallel to

the present day indictment of Sinn Fein as having 'an armelite in one hand and a ballot box in the other.'

From acts perpetrated by nationalists on the Protestant community, and from the very ideals of nationalism that sought Ireland's total separation from Britain, the Protestants had reason to feel some animosity towards their nationalist brothers. Yet if this was so then why was such animosity almost encoded so as only a select audience could read into it? Were the unionist population trying to merely pay lip-service to a formulaic mode of goodwill or was there an unspoken, but inherently felt, separation between political beliefs / practices and local relations? And, furthermore, was this abstract look at their political rivals a means of satisfying two dichotomous levels of feeling towards their nationalist neighbours? As has been said, from looking at the *Northern Standard* -even down to its notices of births, deaths and marriages -a distinct unionist audience was evident within the county. The sensitivity in reporting that has been mentioned above does not disprove the existence of such an audience, after all it could have been dangerous, in the climate of the time, to openly antagonise the opposition. However, where did direct reporting on nationalist / Catholic items fit into the notion of such a specific audience?

On the same page that provided notices for various upcoming July anniversary services and marches, and on the page that heralded the opening of a new Orange Lodge there was a lengthy article about 'Garden fete at Christian Brothers School' and a short report on the Catholic church holiday that had occurred the previous week.[93] The item that spoke of the church holiday stated that

'a marked feature of the Roman Catholic Church holiday on Wednesday was the small number of country folk in town compared to other years' and the use of the term Roman Catholic to frame the nature of the holiday showed a certain unfamiliarity with such a phenomenon. In other issues of the local newspaper, Roman Catholic 'school examinations'[94] were reported on, as was an attack on the Catholic parochial house in Cavan which was castigated as a 'deplorable outrage.'[95]

It is interesting to note that the *Anglo-Celt's* treatment of the activities of their Protestant brethren was very similar indeed, as an item just post- Christmas, 1920, stated. In this article much space, sixteen lines to be precise, was given to the church festivities in Cootehill, and the fact that these ceremonies are Catholic was a given and therefore not stated. However, regarding the Protestant services it was said, 'Rev. W. R. Moore, Rector, concluded the service in the Protestant Church, preaching to a large congregation.'[96] Despite the brevity of the report regarding the Protestant services, the presence of even a few lines displayed a measure of acknowledgement and respect for the Protestant community and many articles, such as one in which an 'Orange MP tells strange story of Chief Secretary,'[97] served a similar purpose.

What can be seen from such reporting is that there was an effort being made at inclusiveness, despite the fact that these efforts seemed rather awkward. One can presume that if the *Northern Standard* was reporting on Catholic events then there had to have been some interest in such items. It would be all to easy, and highly naive, to put this interest down to a morbid curiosity as to the nature of the

opposition, but this would seem an over simplified view, if not a little preposterous. More so, it would seem that it was recognised that this was not a county belonging to one group, but rather a shared entity. Subsequently, although each group saw the county through the spectacles of their own ideologies, they were not blind to the others that existed. Overall, one gets the feeling that while ideology may breed exclusiveness, life breeds a need, at the very least, for valid recognition, even in the wake of such exclusivity.

Conclusion: a new era

This has been a study of a people within a context of social and political upheaval, and it has been a study of adaptation without assimilation. Those Protestants of Cavan who had upheld a belief in the direct union of Great Britain and Ireland found themselves, during the years 1919-22, in uncharted territory. In 1919 the first Dáil claimed sole jurisdiction over the Irish people, despite the continued existence of Ireland's union with the United Kingdom. Home Rule was granted to the country in 1920, through a north-south division of the island but despite the establishment of a southern legislature, Dáil Eireann continued to claim authority over the Ireland. Furthermore Sinn Fein, with the help of the volunteers, continued to undermine British authority in the country. Through these years the visibility, and viability, of the British in Ireland was contested and destabilised by the ongoing activities of nationalism, all of which culminated in the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921 and the subsequent establishment of the Irish Free State. And, while links with Britain were not completely obliterated, nationalism became the most recognised source of power in the twenty-six counties as the tri-colour was hoisted onto buildings, the soldiers song was sung, and the head of the British monarch removed from such things as Irish postage stamps.

The Protestants of Cavan, facing the dual injury of being partially separated from both unionist north-east Ulster and from Britain itself, faced an important juncture in their history. Given the nature of this juncture, logic would presume two possible outcomes for the Protestants of Cavan. Would they become totally assimilated into the state, thereby burying those beliefs that had previously given

them their unionist tendencies? Or would they, out of obligation to those principles, refuse to acknowledge or interact with Ireland's new political structure in a form of passive resistance? It is quite telling, therefore, that the Protestants of Cavan did neither.

Their resigned acceptance of the Free State was, for the county's Protestants, not a submission of their unionist principles. Granted unionism, as a defined political force, died within the county, as it did in the twenty-six counties as a whole. However, that group which had previously made up Cavan's unionist population continued to be identifiable, and the principles that had constituted a belief in the unionist ideology, remained relatively intact. That is not to say, however, that the Protestants of Cavan existed in an insulated bubble, keeping them a safe distance from both the Free State and their nationalist neighbours. Mutual respect was paid their Catholic neighbours, despite the existence of contrasting ideologies. Furthermore, the county's Protestants seemed willing to take their place within the new political structure. All of the Protestant organisations within the county, both religious and otherwise, urged Protestant participation in the new state and the fact that a independent Protestant was elected to the Dáil in 1923 showed that they heeded these calls.

In 1926 the Protestant Parliamentary Committee for County Cavan was established with the purpose of nominating Protestant candidates to stand in general elections, and to co-ordinate Protestant support within the county to so as to give the committee's candidate the greatest chance of election. The initial membership of the organisation was approximately fifty persons, many of which were also

members of the Orange Order, including W. J Vogan and the Rev. William McAlister. The parliamentary committee that was set-up opted against the establishment of a political party, and instead its candidate, who in 1927 was John J. Cole, stood as an independent farmer whose main aims were largely concerned with agricultural issues and improvement of the county's infrastructure. However, he also stood in opposition to compulsory Irish and in favour of free trade with Britain.[98] The organisation continued to put candidates forward for election until the 1950s when, for as yet unknown reasons, the committee fizzled out.

While the above reference to the Protestant Parliamentary Committee falls outside the margins of this study, it is a worthy point on which to conclude what was an historical snapshot of Cavan Protestantism, taken in changing times. The fact that such a committee was set up is an apt symbol of not only a Protestant culture continuing to exist in the Free State, but of a specific community of interest who was willing to interact with the Free State in order to make its mark on the new establishment.

Endnotes

Introduction

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[3] W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick (eds), *Irish historical statistics; population, 1821-1971*, p. 67.
[4] ibid., p. 70.

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[5] *Northern Standard*, 6 January 1922, p. 2.
[6] *Anglo-Celt*, 9 July 1921, p. 2.
[7] ibid.
[8] Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic state; Ireland's privileged minority* (Montreal, 1983), p. 47.
[9] *Northern Standard*, 13 January 1922, p. 3.
[10] ibid., 29 July 1921, p. 4.
[11] *Anglo-Celt*, 26 March 1921, p. 1.
[12] *Northern Standard*, 10 June 1921, p. 2.
[13] ibid.
[14] Alvin Jackson, 'Irish unionism, 1870-1922', in George Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds), *Defenders of the union: a survey of British and Irish unionism since 1801* (London, 2001), p. 118.
[15] *Anglo-Celt*, 22 March 1922, p. 2.
[16] *Report of the proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, June 1921* (Dublin, 1922), p. 30.
[17] *Northern Standard*, 19 June 1921, p. 2.
[18] Jackson, p. 119.
[19] *1924 Constitution, laws and ordinances of the Loyal Orange Institution of Ireland* (Belfast, 1925), p. 1.
[20] Jackson, p. 118.
[21] *1924 Constitution... of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland*, p. 1.
[22] *Northern Standard*, 19 June 1921, p. 2.
[23] *Northern Standard*, 1 July 1921, p. 2.
[24] *Report of the proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, June 1922* (Dublin, 1922), pp 20 -21.
[25] ibid.
[26] *Northern Standard*, 17 June 1921, p. 2.
[27] ibid., 24 June 1921, p. 5.
[28] ibid., 19 June 1921, p. 2.
[29] ibid., 29 July 1921, p. 4.
[30] ibid., 15 July 1921, p. 2.
[31] ibid., p. 4.
[32] ibid., 23 July 1921, p. 4.
[33] ibid., 15 July 1921, p. 3.
[34] ibid., 17 June 1921, p. 2.
[35] *Report of the proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, December 1922* (Belfast, 1923), pp 22-23.
[36] *Northern Standard*, 23 July 1921, p. 4.

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[37] Patrick Buckland, *Irish unionism I; the Anglo-Irish and the new Ireland, 1885-1922* (Dublin, 1972), p. 195.
[38] R. B. McDowell, *Crisis and decline; the fate of the southern unionists* (Dublin, 1997), p. 103.
[39] Brian Walker (ed.), *Parliamentary results in Ireland, 1918-92* (Dublin, 1992), p. 105.

[40] ibid., p. 108.
[41] Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic state; Ireland's privileged minority* (Montreal, 1983), p. 52.
[42] ibid.
[43] Terence Dooley, *The decline of unionist politics in Monaghan, 1911-1923* (Maynooth, 1988), p. 24.
[44] McDowell, p. 163.
[45] Jackson, p. 115.
[46] McDowell, p. 167.
[47] *Northern Standard*, 10 June 1921, p. 2.
[48] Bowen, p. 47.
[49] *Northern Standard*, 13 January 1922, p. 8.
[50] I.U.A. to British government, 5 May 1920, (P.R.O.N.I., Farnham papers MS D3975/E/11/16).
[51] *Northern Standard*, 27 January 1922, p. 2.
[52] *Report of the proceedings of the Loyal Orange Lodge of Ireland, December 1921* (Dublin, 1922), p. 48.
[53] *Report of the proceedings of the Loyal Orange Lodge of Ireland, June 1922* (Dublin, 1922), pp 20-21.
[54] *Northern Standard*, 3 November 1922, p. 2.
[55] ibid., 10 June 1921, p. 5.
[56] ibid., 15 July 1921, p. 4.
[57] ibid., 8 July 1921, p. 4.
[58] ibid., 15 July 1921, p. 3.
[59] ibid.
[60] ibid.
[61] ibid., 9 June 1922, p. 2.
[62] ibid.
[63] ibid., 29 July 1921, p. 4.
[64] ibid., 27 January 1922, p. 3.
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[66] Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking ethnicity; arguments and explorations* (London, 1997), p. 11.
[67] Edward Maxon-Browne, 'National identity in Northern Ireland', in P. Stringer and G. Robinson (eds), *Social attitudes in Northern Ireland; the second report, 1991-1992* (Belfast, 1992), p. 23.
[68] Jenkins, p. 108.
[69] *Anglo-Celt*, 22 March 1919, p. 2.
[70] ibid., 15 January 1921, p. 2.
[71] ibid., 26 March 1921, p. 1.
[72] *Anglo-Celt*, 14 January 1922, p. 1 and *Northern Standard*, 13 January 1922, p. 3.
[73] *Anglo-Celt*, 14 January 1922, p. 1 and *Northern Standard*, 13 January 1922, p. 8.
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[79] *Anglo-Celt*, 22 February 1919, p. 1.
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[81] ibid., p. 6. It is perhaps worth noting that Mr. J. F. O'Hanlon was the editor of the *Anglo-Celt*.
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[83] ibid., 10 July 1920, p. 2.
[84] ibid.
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[86] ibid., 5 August 1920, minute 759, p. 139.

[87] ibid., 4 November 1920, minute 846, p. 154.
[88] ibid., 5 August 1920, minutes 770, p. 141.
[89] McDowell, p. 168.
[90] *Northern Standard*, 23 July 1921, p. 4.
[91] ibid., 1 December 1922, p. 7.
[92] ibid., 28 April 1922, p. 6.
[93] ibid., 1 July 1921, p. 8.
[94] ibid., 19 June 1921, p. 2.
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