

**The evolving role of youths in militant Nationalist activity in
Ireland, 1909-21**

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Dedications

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Introduction

Within the past twenty years, a substantial body of scholarly work offering fresh perspectives on diverse aspects of the revolutionary period in Ireland (1913-23) has been published, and this is set to expand significantly over the course of the next decade.¹

Within that corpus of literature, the role and significance of youths in the Nationalist movement, especially during the 1910s and early 1920s, is an important theme that has to date been afforded little attention. This lacuna in Irish historiography is surprising given the substantial number of surviving accounts by minors involved in well-known militant organisations, notably Fianna Éireann and the Irish Volunteers (later the Irish Republican Army). As this study will demonstrate, the unprecedented involvement of an emerging generation of boys and girls in the political and militant activities associated with the Revolution increased and diversified significantly during the 1910s and early 1920s. The aim of this thesis is, therefore, to explore and evaluate both the evolving nature and the significance of their involvement that left a lasting impact on the campaign for independence.

¹ These are too numerous to list here. However, the following have been particularly useful in researching the subject addressed in this thesis: Marcus de Burca, *The GAA: a history of the Gaelic Athletic Association* (Dublin, 1980); W. F. Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish nationalist politics, 1884-1923* (Dublin, 1987); Sean O'Mahony, *Frongoch: university of revolution* (Dublin, 1987); Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare: the experience of ordinary volunteers in the Irish war of independence, 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996); Charles Townshend, *Ireland the 20th century* (London, 1998); Marcus de Burca, *The GAA: a history* (Dublin, 1999); Padraig Yeates, *Lockout Dublin 1913* (Dublin, 2000); Francis Costello, *The Irish Revolution and its aftermath, 1916- 1923: years of revolt* (Dublin, 2003); Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Dublin, 2004); Diarmaid Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (London, 2005); Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* (Dublin, 2005); McMahan, Timothy *Grand opportunity: the Gaelic revival and Irish society* (Syracuse, 2008); Annie Ryan, *Witnesses inside the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2005); idem, *Comrades: Inside the War of Independence* (Dublin, 2008); Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish Republican women, 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010); Joseph McKenna, *Guerrilla warfare in the Irish War of Independence, 1919-1921* (Jefferson, 2011).

Although the Children's Act of 1908 defined a child as a person under the age of sixteen years, some seventeen years olds feature in this study.² They are regarded as children because officially, the Irish Volunteers waited until a boy was seventeen years old before he was allowed to join; the same policy was adhered to by Cumann na mBan. While the definition of community is generally understood to refer to a group of people with common bonds and assumptions living in the same place, the Nationalist community is difficult to define in the Irish context since there were many strands within Irish Nationalist political and cultural ideology espoused by groups as varied as the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Irish Volunteers, Sinn Féin, the Irish Citizens' Army and Cumann na mBan among others.³ A particularly dramatic example of the fallout that could result from conflicting tendencies within Nationalist ideology was the split among the Irish Volunteers in 1914, which led to the creation of 'shinners' and 'Redmondites'. Within Irish Nationalism there were different views on how Ireland might become independent: what they had in common was that they all wanted an independent Ireland. This Nationalist community can, therefore, be regarded as an 'imagined community' to borrow Benedict Anderson's concept since although most of its members never met face to face, there still existed a distinct community consciousness among its members who felt bound together by a shared sense of comradeship.⁴ Within this community at the turn of the nineteenth century there was an emerging educated generation, the majority of whom were from old Fenian

² 1908 (291) Children. A bill [as amended by Standing Committee B] consolidate and amend the law relating to the protection of children and young persons, reformatory and industrial schools, and juvenile offenders, and otherwise to amend the law with respect to children and young persons.

³ Oxford Dictionary, 'Community' (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/community>) (5 Aug. 2013).

⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities* (London, 2006), pp 6-7.

families with long memories of resistance to British governance of Ireland. As the present study will show, this younger generation were to play increasingly prominent and significant roles in their community's political and militant activities during the revolutionary decade in particular.

In order to explore these various roles, a number of areas have been selected for detailed analysis. Situating children in the socio-economic, political and cultural milieu in which they were reared is vital to understanding the main influences and struggles with which they had to contend and which shaped their outlook on conditions in Ireland. The turn of the century witnessed a range of important changes in law aimed at preserving and improving the quality of life of children in Ireland. These changes related to housing, health, education and working conditions and as they were implemented, an improvement slowly came about, impacting the lives and opportunities of the generation at the heart of this study.

An appreciation of the various influences at work within the diverse Nationalist community is also necessary to understand this generation's reasons for increasingly gravitating towards participation in militant Nationalist activities during the 1910s and early 1920s. The older generations within the community influenced and enabled their children and grand-children to become involved in militant activities while a new generation of radical republican teachers and clergymen also exerted their influence by educating pupils through distinctive Irish pastimes, folklore, and music.

The period 1910-16 was marked by escalating political, social and economic

tensions in Ireland as a series of comparatively minor challenges to British authority roughly coincided; viewed together, these laid the path for an uprising which came about in Easter 1916. Prior to the Rising, youths were being trained in organisations such as Fianna Éireann in drilling, signalling and first aid; this was in the hope that they would become the future army of Ireland. Many of this generation also worked closely with local Nationalist companies or branches of the Irish Volunteers (later the Irish Republican Army) and Cumann na mBan, and consequently their roles in the militant Nationalist campaign became very clearly defined. The role played by children in the Easter Rising is critical to understanding the entire insurrection. In a context in which child-begging and children working as street vendors were commonplace, and where children by and large evaded suspicion on the grounds of their assumed innocence, those youths who participated in the Rising in Dublin played vital roles in the conveyance of communications and gathering equipment.

In the aftermath of the Easter Rising, as the Nationalist community became galvanised, and both militant Nationalism and Sinn Féin won increasing support, the younger generation acquired increased responsibility in the militant activities of the movement. Their former involvement in messaging, couriership and intelligence work soon evolved into more responsible, high-risk and direct participation in arm raids and guerrilla warfare. The War of Independence was a young person's war, the majority involved being under the age of 35. In that context, it was inevitable that the younger generation would follow their lead. Drawing upon the testimonies of individuals involved in campaigning in different locations across the country, often striking variations in young people's experiences, dictated by local personalities and circumstances, are highlighted, as are the challenges and limitations associated with

their participation in guerrilla warfare.

The approach adopted in this thesis is primarily chronological as this highlights changing patterns in the involvement of children in Nationalist campaigning during the period under review. The analytical methods deployed are varied. A database featuring information extracted from over 1,700 Bureau of Military History witness statements was compiled. In an attempt to ascertain the reliability of information recorded in these statements, and to offset the inherent limitations of testimonies written from an adult perspective several decades after the events described, this evidence has been cross-checked and corroborated with other independent contemporary sources, including the papers of various Nationalist organisations and those of prominent members, as well as government reports, acts and bills, newspapers, newsletters and published memoirs.

To deepen the analysis of this substantial body of primary material from the Military Bureau which is at the core of this study, a small number of interviews were carried out with people involved in republican organisations as children. These have been included in an effort to understand the mindset of these people when as youths they joined these organisations and to trace the main influences that caused them to join. It is also hoped that these interviews will offer counterbalancing or complementary perspectives to those offered by the men and women who gave statements to the Bureau of Military History. Lastly, these oral testimonies provide telling insights into children's mindsets and experiences of life in their homes and communities during wartime. The conceptual framework adopted for this study is a combination of Benedict Anderson's theory of Nationalism, and anthropological

theory, which enables an in-depth analysis of these children's role and reasons for participating in political and military campaigns during the revolutionary period.

Already some of the Nationalist organisations referred to in this thesis, notably the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, Cumann na mBan and the Irish Volunteers, have been the subject of extensive academic research by scholars including Tom Garvin, W. F. Mandle, Marcus de Burca, Timothy McMahon, and Ann Matthews to name a few.⁵ The study which follows draws upon the findings of these historians to set the context for this original and specifically-focused analysis of the role of young people in the Nationalist movement in early twentieth-century Ireland. In the current decade of centenary commemorations, this thesis will present an original perspective on a largely overlooked aspect of modern Irish history.

⁵ Garvin, *Nationalist revolutionaries*; Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish Nationalist politics, 1884-1923*; de Burca, *The GAA: a history*; McMahon, *Grand opportunity* and Matthews, *Renegades*

Chapter One

Children in early twentieth-century Irish society

‘Great loss of adult life caused thereby makes it more incumbent on us to do what we can to protect the infant life we have.’¹

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries monumental changes occurred in Irish society. These changes were not only as a result of revolution and wartime but also government policy and the commissioning of reports that highlighted the need for social improvements. Therefore moves to improve the lives of Irish citizens were either planned or promoted at this time, but the group within society, which experienced most profound change, were children. This chapter will discuss the lives of children in early twentieth-century Ireland and evaluate both their experiences and their importance in Irish society. This will be done by examining several areas including housing, health, education, employment and emerging popular pastimes. By exploring these facets to the life of a child, this chapter aims to present a rounded view of the place of a child in Irish society and an assessment of their increasing importance against the backdrop of war and growing acknowledgement that they represented the future of Britain and Ireland.

Around the turn of the century many government and semi-governmental bodies completed reports on housing in Ireland. Though much of the focus tends to be on housing in the cities, this chapter will also examine changes in rural housing that

¹ William Lawson, ‘Infant mortality and the Notification of Births Acts, 1907, 1915’ in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, xiii, pt xcvi (1917-19), p. 579.

occurred at that time. Poor housing conditions brought attendant problems of bad health and extremely high child mortality rates. The health of children became an increasingly important concern at this time, a fact evidenced both by the founding of semi-philanthropic bodies and changes in government policy. Educational policy also underwent considerable changes, which deeply affected the overall programme in the school system. However, the fact that these various policies still offered loopholes for working and rural-based children to be absent from school, points to the need for reflection on which groups among Ireland's children were actually affected by these policies. The employment of children, a well-established practice at the start of the century, became the subject of several detailed reports, which in turn gave rise to the passage of a number of significant Bills. From these initiatives it is clear that the safety and health of children had become a matter of real concern, as had the education of the working child. The emergence of new pastimes, such as scouting, and the rise in popularity of old pastimes including sports, demonstrate their importance in society and their possibility of influence of the younger generation.

The main sources used in this chapter are government documents, including parliamentary reports, Acts and Bills generated and implemented during the period under review. Contemporaneous personal accounts and newspaper articles have been drawn upon to corroborate evidence of the effect of these new government policies on the status and life experience of the child in Irish society. A range of secondary sources have been used for setting the context in which this study of children is

located.

Table 1.1 Total population and population under the age of fifteen arranged by province.

Province	1901	1911
Leinster	1,152,829 [329,304]	1,162,044 [326,799]
Munster	1,076,188 [328,692]	1,035,495 [306,058]
Ulster	1,582,826 [482,635]	1,581,696 [477,094]
Connacht	646,932 [273,566]	610,984 [189,786]
Total	4,458,775 [1,414,197]	4,390,219 [1,299,737]

Source: *Census of Ireland, 1911*. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Munster. 1912-13 [Cd. 6050]. p. 33; *Census of Ireland, 1911*. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Leinster, 1912-13 [Cd. 6049]. p. 38; *Census of Ireland, 1911*. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Ulster 1912-13 [Cd. 6051]. p. 9; *Census of Ireland, 1911*. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Connaught. 1912-13 [Cd. 6052]. p. 26; *Census of Ireland, 1901*. Part II. General report with illustrative maps and diagrams, tables, and appendix 1902 [Cd. 1190]. p. 217.

Using census data from this period, Table 1.1 demonstrates the change in population in the first decade of the period under examination. In 1901 children under the age of fifteen represented 31.7% of the population; by 1911 this had dropped to 29.6%.

Given that most of the events that contributed to the significant rise in the death rate happened in the second decade of the twentieth century, namely outbreaks of influenza, civil unrest and World War One; it can be assumed that the decline between 1901 and 1911 was, in itself, a natural drop.

As noted earlier there were serious housing problems throughout Ireland in the early twentieth century. As housing led to a series of other problems for the life of the child, it is essential to understand the living conditions of this generation. Both the 1901 and 1911 censuses feature breakdowns for the types of housing inhabited by the population. Fourth-class houses were those built with mud or perishable materials and having only one room and a window. Third-class houses had between one and four rooms and windows. Those in the second-class were akin to a good farmhouse with five to nine rooms and windows and finally a first-class house was anything of superior quality to those previously described. Housing class was also determined by the number of families in residence; for example, a first-class house could be considered fourth-class if six or more families lived in it or third-class house if it had more than one family in residence.²

Table 1.2 Numbers of families arranged by housing class in 1911 and 1901.

Province 1911	1st class	2nd class	3rd class	4th class
Leinster	49,040	154,459	39,899	1,445
Munster	22,540	139,434	38,926	1,655
Ulster	32,730	236,022	70,030	1,029
Connacht	5,734	75,258	40,955	972
Total 1911	110,044	605,173	189,810	5,101
Total 1901	100,807	516,810	252,704	9,905

Source: *Census of Ireland, 1911*. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Munster. 1912-13 [Cd. 6050]. p.5; *Census of Ireland, 1911*. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Leinster, 1912-13 [Cd. 6049]. p. 4, *Census of Ireland, 1911*. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages,

² *Census of Ireland, 1911*. General report, with tables and appendix. 1912-13 [Cd. 6663]. pp 20-21.

civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Ulster 1912-13 [Cd. 6051]. p. 5, *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Connaught. 1912-13 [Cd. 6052]. p. 4, *Census of Ireland, 1901*. Part II. General report with illustrative maps and diagrams, tables, and appendix 1902 [Cd. 1190]. p. 217.

Table 1.2 shows some improvement in the quality of Irish housing between the two censuses, evident in the 9.4% rise in first-class house accommodation and the 14.7% rise in second-class accommodation. At the turn of the century Ireland's urban dwellers experienced appalling housing conditions. Dublin had the dubious distinction of being one of the worst cities in the British Empire, a fact borne out by it having a higher child mortality rate than the Calcutta slums.³ But in common with their urban counterparts, Ireland's rural population also lived in terrible conditions.

The majority of Ireland's agricultural labourers (most popular profession of the younger generation) lived in one or two-room cottages, many built of local materials such as dry stone or mud, with mud floors and thatched roofs, and most had no windows or doors. Through the introduction of a number of Labourers Acts between 1883 and 1919, the government began working with local rural authorities to rehouse labourer families so that they might live in accommodation that complied with simple, stable housing standards. Although this rehousing programme was halted during World War One, it proved a success and by the end of the war, over 48,000 new dwellings had been provided for rural land labourers.⁴

³ Curriculum Development Unit, *Dublin 1913: a divided city* (Naas, 1989), p. 42.

⁴ F. H. A. Aalen, 'The rehousing of rural labourers in Ireland under the Labourers (Ireland) Acts, 1883-1919' in *Journal of Historical Geography*, 12 (1986), p. 287.

This rehousing was carried out quietly which might be the reason why historians have not examined the initiative in detail, this despite the fact that by 1914 Irish rural labourers and families had some of the best houses in their class in Europe.⁵

Under these Acts, certain steps were taken to clear city slums; for example, in 1886 Cork Corporation built seventy–six new houses in the city. Also philanthropic or semi– philanthropic bodies built housing. However, these were known to be highly selective as to who received them, as was the case with the Improved Dwellings Company in Cork city.⁶

A Public Health Enquiry which issued its report on Dublin in 1900, showed the slums tenement housing were among the main causes of bad health and the high morality rate in the city. Yet, in spite of that, between 1900 and 1913 only minimal measures were put in place to improve living conditions.⁷ In 1905 Dublin Corporation built suburban houses in Clontarf, north–east of the city. However, many workers refused to move into these houses because it took them away from their community and also low income families needed to live near their workplace instead of paying to commute. Not surprisingly, in 1908 the proposal to expand the Clontarf scheme was abandoned due to a lack of demand.⁸

On 2 September 1913 the dramatic collapse of two tenement houses on

⁵ Ruth McManus, ‘Blue collars, “Red Forts”, and green fields: working-class housing in Ireland in the twentieth century’ in *International Labour and Working-Class History*, no. 64 (Fall, 2003), p. 38.

⁶ ‘Cork Heritage, origins of Cork city’(http://corkheritage.ie/?page_id=313) (20 Nov. 2012); McManus, ‘Blue collars, “Red Forts”, and green fields’, p. 40.

⁷ *Report of the committee appointed by the Local Government Board for Ireland to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin. 1900.* Vols 1-2 [Cd.243] [Cd.244]. p. 3.

⁸ McManus, ‘Blue collars, “Red Forts”, and green fields’, p. 40.

Church Street in Dublin highlighted the gravity of the housing problem. These tenements buildings held shops and were home to over forty people. The *Irish Times* reported twenty-nine people were removed from the rubble, seven of them dead. Fatalities included small children and sole earners within families. The tragedy also highlighted the dangers of slum housing conditions and exposed the already known living conditions to the wider world as newspapers publicised the appalling conditions through articles and numerous letters to newspaper editors.⁹ Due to the coverage of the Church Street disaster, and also the high profile of the Dublin Lockout, the government conducted another report into Dublin housing, which was published in January 1914.

This second report classified housing in three sections; third was unfit for human habitation, second was so decayed that it was on the borderline of being unfit for human habitation, and first-class was deemed structurally sound.¹⁰ Table 1.3 shows the recorded family units and people living in these conditions at the end of 1913. The 1911 Census recorded 301,802 people (28% of the population) living in third class housing in Dublin city.

⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 21 Oct. 1913; *Irish Times*, 15 Sept. 1913.

¹⁰ *Report of the committee appointed by the Local Government Board for Ireland to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin. 1900.* Vols 1-2 [Cd.243] [Cd.244]. p. 3; *Report of the departmental committee appointed by the Local Government Board for Ireland to inquire into the housing conditions of the working classes in the city of Dublin. 1914.* Vol. 17 [Cd. 7273]. p. 2.

Table 1.3 Figures from Local Government Board for Ireland to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin (1914).

Tenements	Family units	(no. of people)
First class	8,295	(27,052 people)
Second class	10,696	(37,552 people)
Third class	6,831	(22,701 people)

Source: *Report of the departmental committee appointed by the Local Government Board for Ireland to inquire into the housing conditions of the working classes in the city of Dublin ...*, p. 3.

Though this report clearly showed the serious need for change in Dublin housing, nothing happened due to the combination of the outbreak of World War One, the destruction of large part of the city during the Easter Rising 1916, and the distraction and disturbance associated with the War of Independence (1919–21). In 1918 a report by Dublin Corporation on housing again recommended the refurbishment of the city’s tenement instead of suburbanisation. Peter Chalmers Cowan, architect and author of this report, recommended investment in housing, as it would show good faith to Ireland during the period of civil unrest.¹¹ This became more viable for all cities after the Housing of the Working Classes (Ireland) Act of 1919 became law as this gave more lending capacity to city and rural corporations dealing with housing issues.¹²

Many companies built stable housing for their employees at this time. The most famous was the Guinness trust or Iveagh trust, founded in 1890, which built

¹¹ P.C. Cowan, *Report on Dublin housing* (Dublin, 1918), p. 30.

¹² *Housing of the working classes (Ireland). A bill [as amended by Standing Committee D] to amend the enactments relating to the housing of the working classes and the acquisition of small dwellings in Ireland. 1919* (129). p.3

houses for Guinness brewery employees, and provided health benefits for employees and their families. Even in earlier days, Guinness funded the construction of houses intended for non-employees by Dublin Artisan's Dwellings Company.¹³ Other examples of companies that built housing for their employees were the Great Southern and Western Railway Company's engineering works, along with Dublin United Tramways Company and Merchants Warehousing.

There are a number of reasons why the government focused on rural rather than urban housing at the beginning of the twentieth century. One obvious reason was that nearly 90% of the Irish population relied on the land to survive, though only a quarter of a million was affected by re-housing agricultural labourers schemes. Another reason discussed by historical geographer Ruth MacManus is 'Killing Home Rule by kindness', that is the hope that social and housing reforms in Ireland would affect the popularity of Home Rule. The assumption here was that these reforms would first impact the bigger proportion of the population.¹⁴ MacManus also emphasises that during the early decades of the twentieth century Dublin city's population was mostly Catholic and nationalist after the middle class (the majority of them Protestant and unionist) moved to the suburbs: that resulted in a Catholic and nationalist Dublin Corporation. This gave unionists a chance to criticize the Corporation for not dealing with the housing issue and in their eyes at least demonstrated that the nationalist community were not fit to govern themselves.

At this time child begging in urban areas was a common problem. John Cooke

¹³ *Irish Times*, 11 Jan., 3 Feb. 1890.

¹⁴ MacManus, 'Blue collars, "Red Forts", and green fields', p. 38.

of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in his testimony to the Dublin Housing Inquiry 1914 described how;

The children have such freedom, I might say, such possession of the streets as Dublin. Many thousands of little ones throng the thoroughfare under no control, running moral and physical risks.¹⁵

This was corroborated by a report in the *Freeman's Journal* that reported that the Children's Court saw an increase in the number of child beggars in 1913, and that this was partly due to the charitable public. This remark was made in the context of a case of two 14-year-old boys who were charged with late night begging.

Interestingly the police force being distracted by the Dublin Lockout (1913) was also cited as a cause of this increase.¹⁶

Dublin was not the only city in Ireland afflicted by the problem of large numbers of child beggars. Belfast had also recognised its child-begging problem: in one court case in 1907, the parents were prosecuted for sending a child out to beg. The article described the child, as 'a picture of misery' and denounced his being 'sent out by his parents to beg [as] ... an act of great cruelty'.¹⁷ Likewise Dublin experienced this problem. In 1912 alone a total of 465 cases of neglect involving children being used for begging purposes came in front of the NSPCC and the courts.¹⁸ Child begging was just one of many problems that came with the burgeoning population living in poverty in urban cities.

The child mortality rate in Ireland was high throughout this period. In Dublin 1911 there were 1,808 infant deaths in their first year. In Belfast in 1917, a total of

¹⁵ Arnold Wright, *Disturbed Dublin* (London, 1914), p. 30.

¹⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 6 Dec. 1913; *Irish Independent*, 5 Dec. 1913.

¹⁷ *Irish Times*, 7 Nov. 1907.

¹⁸ *Irish Times*, 25 May 1914.

1,399 children under the age of one died.¹⁹ An academic paper delivered to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland in 1919 by William Lawson discussed several doctors' reports throughout the British Empire on child mortality, including Dublin and Belfast. In his opening paragraph he stated;

Great loss of adult life caused thereby makes it more incumbent on us to do what we can to protect the infant life we have.²⁰

In the context of the effects of World War One on the adult population – Ireland lost over 40,000 people – there was a move to prevent the unnecessary loss of children's lives.²¹ Lawson discussed a report by a Dr Marion Andrews, which in her opinion, states the causes of high mortality rate in Belfast and other cities is far from being well known, 'poverty, intemperance and bad housing are amongst the cause', but was convinced that ignorance of the factor was of importance. His paper's remedy for tackling this issue was to focus on solving housing problems and also educating mothers on how best to take care of their newborn babies.

Following the passage of the Notification of Births Act in 1907 there was a move to establish babies clubs in those areas that had high mortality rates. As one might expect, the majority of these clubs were found in cities in Ireland. The clubs were ran by volunteer nurses and doctors with the help of philanthropic bodies. They focused on helping the mother and child under the age of five, by providing check ups, education in taking care of the child, and also providing much needed items

¹⁹ Curriculum Development Unit, *Divided city*, p. 42; Lawson, 'Infant mortality and the notification of Births Acts, 1907, 1915', p. 590.

²⁰ Lawson, 'Infant mortality and the Notification of Births Acts, 1907, 1915', p. 579.

²¹ 'Records of 49,000 Irish WWI dead in new digital archive' (<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/records-of-49-000-irish-wwi-dead-in-new-digital-archive-1.1651010>) (12 Jan 2014)

such as clothing, food and baby milk. Most clubs were set up initially in Dublin in areas like Blackrock and Pembroke, both upper class areas, but by 1917 babies clubs had been set up throughout the city, some targeting needy areas. The babies' clubs schemes were also introduced in Belfast during the latter part of this period as well, and were in high demand.

Among the working classes, even if children survived beyond the first year there were numerous diseases that could have killed them, a reality acknowledged by *The Irish Worker* in 1913, which stated;

The unfortunate infant brought into being in the Dublin underworld is cruelly handicapped from the day of his birth; the land that varies (sic.) him denies him sufficient food, sends him adrift when he can scarcely toddle to swell the ranks of the homeless, ragged, half starved.²²

As author and journalist Arnold Wright remarked in *Disturbed Dublin*, published in 1914;

If a child lives past infancy, life is bound to be difficult. Being ill-fed, ill-taught, ill-disciplined, rushed into matrimony and the old process starts to repeat itself, numbers never rise of slum life.²³

Other killers were respiratory and digestive ailments like pneumonia and diarrhoeal diseases. Most of these were caused by unhealthy diet, bad sanitary conditions and unhealthy living conditions. In 1913 a public health report showed that 4,642 adults and children died of respiratory and digestive diseases.²⁴ In 1918, 35.9% of deaths of children under the age of fifteen were caused by pneumonia, showing that in the later part of this period, much work still needed to be done to improve the health of children.

²² *Irish Worker*, 18 Oct. 1913.

²³ Wright, *Disturbed Dublin*, p. 31.

²⁴ Curriculum Development Unit, *Divided city*, p. 42.

As described above, overcrowded slums throughout Ireland meant that contagious diseases spread rapidly throughout the tenements. But two other diseases in particular affected all classes and caused the mortality rate to rise significantly in Ireland, namely tuberculosis and influenza. Tuberculosis, also known as consumption or the ‘Great killer’, was highly contagious. As a cure evaded mystified medical professionals throughout this period, measures were put in place to prevent it from spreading, including educating people to cover their mouths when coughing and to appreciate the importance to fresh air.

Table 1.4 Tuberculosis death rate in Dublin according to socio-economic class (1914)

Dublin Registration Area Tuberculosis Death Rate (Taken from Annual Reports of Registrar – General).					
-	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
Professional and Independent Class	.73	.63	1.49	1.15	.41
Middle Class	2.23	2.36	2.42	2.35	1.92
Artisan Class and petty Shopkeepers	3.71	2.94	2.71	3.04	2.94
General Service Class	3.99	3.69	3.55	3.56	3.16
Domestic Servants	1.32	1.31	1.61	1.72	1.83

Source: *Report of the departmental committee appointed by the Local Government Board for Ireland to inquire into the housing conditions of the working classes in the city of Dublin*. 1914. Vol. 17 [Cd. 7273] p. 9.

Table 1.4 shows that those members of the professions who dealt most frequently with the public (that is, shopkeepers and the service class) experienced high death tolls arising from tuberculosis. Yet, the highest death rates occurred among the working class who lived in the tenements.

Influenza, also known as the Spanish influenza, of which there was an outbreak in Ireland in 1918 killed more than one fifth of the world's population within two years. Ireland was fortunate to have had relatively small loss of life due to this epidemic compared to the rest of the world, killing 10,651 in 1918 with 2,192 being under the age of fifteen.²⁵ Ireland, especially Dublin and Belfast, was included in all statistics for Britain compiled at the time. It is known that the highest rate of deaths due to influenza in Britain occurred in November 1918, with the first weekend being the worst for Dublin city, the last weekend of that month being the worst for Belfast city.²⁶

While some diseases affected all classes, a number of major threats to public health impacted in a particularly pronounced way, the most vulnerable, lower and working classes. Successive reports on housing and health published in the early 1900s spell out clearly that unsuitable diet and appalling living conditions, along with poor education on health issues, were the biggest causes of Ireland's health problems. In response to media coverage of the poor state of health and housing, many charitable schemes came into being at this time, some semi-state funded, others completely dependent on the charitable donations of the public.

The Children's Act of 1908 was a landmark that heralded substantial changes to the lives of children in Ireland. The act brought clarity on issues of laws

²⁵ William J. Thompson, 'Mortality from influenza in Ireland' in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, xiv, no. 1 (1919-20), pp 2, 11.

²⁶ W. H. Frost and Edgar Sydenstricker, 'Epidemic influenza in foreign countries' in *Public Health Reports* (1896-1970), 34, no. 25 (20 June 1919), p.1370

and regulation in relation to children and also liberated the necessary finance for local authorities to establish semi-state funded societies or to donate to independent charitable societies devoted to improving the welfare of children and their families.²⁷

There were many philanthropic organisations which did important work within the communities in which they were operating during the first two decades of the twentieth century. To demonstrate their effect on society and more specifically the lives of children, this chapter will focus on one city at a particularly pivotal time: Dublin 1913.

The winter of 1913 in Dublin was a period of distress for most families due to the Dublin Lockout, but some of the positive work being done by charitable bodies in response to panic was also in evidence. The St Vincent de Paul Society's scheme was just one of many philanthropic organisations that ran a programme for Dublin children. In October 1913 the Catholic archbishop of Dublin, Dr William Walsh, stated that 2,450 meals were distributed daily in Catholic schools within the three parishes most affected by the Lockout. Later, he described four different parishes in which the society had clothed 2,045 children.²⁸

The Lord Mayor, Lorcan Sherlock's wife set up the Women and Children's Fund in the Mansion House September 1913. Catherine Marie Sherlock organised

²⁷ 'The children's charter' in *The British Medical Journal*, 1, no. 2518 (3 Apr. 1909), p. 853.

²⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, 28 Oct. 1913; *Irish Independent*, 28 Oct. 1913.

the Women and Children Fund committee to raise money, which was then distributed to the fifteen known institutions which were directing help to the poor and struggling workers' families. This was primarily done through the aegis of schemes that were already being run by the Catholic Church in Dublin. In a letter featured in several newspapers of the day, it was stated that in schools not run by nuns, the money would be given to charitable committees which were already established there and which would ensure that the children were fed.²⁹

The *Irish Worker* recorded details of several different concerts and benefit performances that were organised as fundraisers for the union's Women and Children Fund. Letters published by the newspaper featured acknowledgements of several theatres and performers who conducted the benefit events. Judging by the number of fundraisers held in late November and most of December, they appear to have been popular.³⁰

In the lead up to Christmas, the *Daily Sketch* in Great Britain appealed to its readers to donate dolls to them in order that they might be given to children from poor families in Britain. However, the Lord Mayor of Dublin intervened and requested that the dolls instead be sent to Dublin: in all, 5,000 dolls were distributed. The *Irish Worker* recorded that little girls, chosen by the clergy and lay friends of the Lord Mayor from the city's poorer districts, queued all along Dawson Street to get one of the dolls.

The St Vincent De Paul Society also increased its assistance to families over

²⁹ *Irish Times*, 8 Sept. 1913; *Freeman's Journal*, 8 Oct. 1913.

³⁰ *Irish Independent*, 31 Oct. 1913; *Irish Worker*, 22, 29 Nov., 13, 20 Dec. 1913.

the Christmas period. During the Lockout months, the committee was heavily involved in the distribution of relief funds. On 31 December the *Freeman's Journal* credited the Society with sheltering 1,700 families during that month: this represented a significant increase of 310 families as compared with the previous year. Providing shelter was just one of the many services offered to the capital's poor by the society, which also included supplying children's meals in schools.³¹

By focusing on this particularly challenging period in Dublin's inner city one gains a glimpse into the work of Ireland's leading Catholic charitable organisation, the St Vincent de Paul's Society (est. 1845 in Ireland). At this time, it was linked to many schools, orphanages and hospitals and ran a number of schemes. The society's main goal was to feed and house families and keep them off the streets. In 1908 alone, the society helped 17,400 families across Ireland.³² As already mentioned, the society also provided shelter. In December 1915, at one of its houses for Catholic men in Dublin city centre alone, the society provided shelter for 320 men for Christmas and fed 630 on Christmas day, some of these men being under the age of 17 years.³³

As various authorities' attention turned increasingly to children and their welfare from the late nineteenth century, an extensive examination of the education system in Ireland, which was fast becoming outdated and in serious need of reform, was undertaken. In 1892 the Irish Education Act became law. In the course of the next decade, further legislation followed which open up possibilities for improving

³¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 31 Dec. 1913.

³² Nicholas Acheson, Brian Harvey, Jimmy Kearney, and Arthur Williamson, *Two paths, one purpose. Voluntary action in Ireland, north and south*, Royal Irish Academy, Third section research programme (Belfast, 2004), p.22; *Irish Times*, 31 July 1909.

³³ *Freeman's Journal*, 29 Dec. 1915.

the education of all children between the ages of 6 and 14. The magnitude of these changes was discussed in a paper delivered by Frederick Ryan to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland on April 1912 in which he pointed out that these changes affected 699,945 pupils or one-sixth of the population at the time.³⁴ This school programme aims were now the ‘formation of character, the training in good habits, and the development of intelligence.’³⁵

The introduction of compulsory school attendance in 1892 encouraged numbers to rise. Parents had to take responsibility for children up to the age of 14 and parents were fined for poor attendance. Funding by exam results was also abolished, which meant that funding was spread equally among schools and not just schools that continuously had a good exam score. There was a greater emphasis on Kindergarten education and more instructive subjects like drawing, singing and nature work were introduced. Teachers were also encouraged to be more creative in their teaching strategies: museum trips and the study of flora and fauna in natural habitat were suggested, encouraging learning through discovery among this younger generation.³⁶

In theory this was a positive development for primary education as it gave all children of school-going age a chance to experience an up to date and creative education: in reality, sadly, this was not the experience of most children. There were many loopholes and problems with these changes. The structure and subject change was too challenging for teachers to take on. There were also dismissals and changes

³⁴ Frederick W. Ryan, ‘School attendance in Ireland in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, xii, pt. xcii (1911–12), p. 583.

³⁵ *National report of the commission of National education. Seventy-seventh Report*. Vol. 583. Cd. 5903. 1911. p. 12.

³⁶ John Coolahan, *Irish education: history and structure* (Dublin, 2005), p. 34.

to salary arrangements for teachers, leading to a struggle to implement the programme change and significant levels of frustration. Furthermore, although the new programme was exciting, there was insufficient funding in Ireland to allow for its full and proper implementation. Other significant obstacles to progress were the fact that penalties for poor attendance were not being implemented in some locations and exemptions from compulsory school attendance were granted to children who lived over two miles away from a school. Children who were needed to help run family businesses, to collect crops or to work in the fisheries industry were also excluded.³⁷ In a country that was principally agricultural, many children could be absent from school. Furthermore, when a child was needed to assist with running a business or was the sole earner in his/her family in urban districts, s/he was also excused from attending under the legislation: children working as street vendors, factory workers and some labourers mostly did this. School attendance was to be regulated by inspectors who checked that the required amounts of schooling hours were being met, but again this only worked in some locations in Ireland.³⁸ In 1902 a major examination of child street vendors in Ireland was conducted, focussing on a range of locations including Belfast, Dublin and Cork. It was found that in certain parts of the country, street vendors were not even named on a school register and thus were bypassing the law. In Belfast and Cork inspectors prosecuted some individuals who did not meet the required hours of schooling.³⁹ Another issue that education inspectors in tenement districts encountered was the floating population with no permanent residence, a phenomenon that made tracking the educational record of this

³⁷ National Education (Ireland). *A bill to improve national education in Ireland*. 1892 (234). p. 1.

³⁸ Factories and workshops. *A bill to amend the Factory and Workshop Acts*. 1900 (111). p. 4.

³⁹ *Street-Trading Children Committee (Ireland). Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children During School Age, especially in street trading in the large centres of population in Ireland*, Vol. 49. 1902 [Cd. 1144]. p. vi.

particular group very difficult. Prosecuting parents for not sending their children to school also proved problematic: in 1912, for example, school attendance officers complained that cases of non-attendance were being dismissed when they came before the courts.⁴⁰

Secondary or superior schools also faced changes at this time. The Intermediate Education Act 1878 introduced three fundamental amendments to education in Ireland: these included allowing girls to attend superior schools; allowing the Irish language and literature to be added to the curriculum, and lastly, establishing an unrelated multi-denominational education board. With the abolition of the old payment-by-results system in 1899, second-level education improved along with primary education. The coincidence of new funding and scholarship schemes with the change in policies meant there was now greater opportunity for children to avail of continuing education.⁴¹

The earlier acts did not solve all the problems in intermediate education: for instance, the 1878 Act did not provide for the support, equipping or founding of new superior schools. There was no register or regulation of teachers for intermediate education, which meant that the training, salary and work ethic were different in every school. This remained the case until 1918.⁴² The education board struggled to balance its books under the new act and was also limited in the amounts awarded as scholarship, devising new programmes and conducting examinations.

⁴⁰ Ryan, 'School attendance in Ireland', p. 589.

⁴¹ P.J. Dowling, *A history of Irish education: a study in conflicting loyalties* (Cork, 1971), p.135.

⁴² Coolahan, *Irish education*, p. 55.

Schools outside of the system were in full operation during this period. The Christian Brother school, which was established in Ireland since 1802, remained illegal until the formation of the Free State in 1922. Other Catholic secondary schools such as Clongowes Wood College remained in private ownership.⁴³ Padraig Pearse also famously founded his own secondary school (St Enda's est. 1908) in Dublin, which focused on bilingual and modern education, albeit with a nationalist bent.⁴⁴

Although the school suffered after the 1916 Easter Rising when five of the principal teachers were executed, it continued until 1935. In 1916, Mary and Annie MacSwiney founded Scoil Íte in Cork, modelled on the principles of St Enda's.

Overall, the changes in education at this time resulted in a significant improvement in standards of literacy. Whereas in 1881, 25.5% of people in Ireland were illiterate, by 1911 that proportion had dropped to 11.9%.⁴⁵

Table 1.5 Levels of literacy among children aged five to seventeen (1901/11).

Province	1901/1911	1901/1911	1901/1911
	Read and write	Read only	Illiterate
Leinster	227,023/244,343	22,370/11,164	39,052/4,258
Munster	232,363/201,810	21,558/12,868	34,517/2,959
Ulster	326,618/468,438	26,099/17,791	36,995/5,753
Connacht	151,251/119,030	16,400/7,947	25,693/3,157
Total	937,255/1,033,631	86,427/49,770	136,257/16,127

⁴³ Dowling, *A history of Irish education*, p. 136.

⁴⁴ Elaine Session, *Pearse's patriots, St. Enda's and the cult of boyhood* (Cork, 2004), p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Census of Ireland*, 1911. General report, with tables and appendix. 1912-13 [Cd. 6663]. p. lii.

Source: *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Munster. 1912-13 [Cd. 6050]. p.1345; *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Leinster, 1912-13 [Cd. 6049] p.1901; *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Ulster 1912-13 [Cd. 6051]. p.1389; *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Connaught. 1912-13 [Cd. 6052] p. 804; *Census of Ireland*, 1901. Part II. General report with illustrative maps and diagrams, tables, and appendix 1902 [Cd. 1190]. pp 190-91.

As illustrated in Table 1.5, there was a major decline in illiteracy during the period 1901-11. This was at least in part a result of a default of the compulsory education provisions which allowed children who needed to work, access to part-time education, instead of being excluded from the system. Overall the average daily attendance rate showed little improvement between 1900 and 1919, increasing from 63% to 69%.⁴⁶

Concern over the welfare of working children is clear through many acts in relation to farm servants, labourers, factory workers and street vendors coming into practice at this time.

⁴⁶ Coolahan, *Irish education*, p. 35.

Table 1.6 Occupations of children (aged seven to seventeen) in the 1901 and 1911 censuses.

Occupation	1901	1911
Farm servant	46,735	34,617
Labourer	23,322	20,424
Factory worker	4,151	4,336
Street Vendor	70*	76*
Scholar	624,300	608,149
Total population	1,001,542	935,261

*known not to be the correct figure, as a report on street vendors, dated 1902, puts the number at 2,013 children in Cork, Dublin and Belfast alone.⁴⁷ This low figure could be due to a large proportion of street vendors, who would have been part of a floating or homeless population, recording no occupation on the census return form or alternatively recording their occupation under a different title.

Source: Figures received by searching key words, these would have to be approximate figures due to the search engine picking up actual spellings and titles of jobs on census forms. National Archives ‘Census of Ireland 1901, 1911’ (<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/>)(25 Nov. 2012).

Table 1.6 above shows that a large portion of children in the 1901/1911 censuses were farm servants. This is in line with the profile featured in Table 1.1, which shows that the majority of the population was rural based and agriculture was the principal occupation. The Education Act (1892) acknowledged that farm labourers were scarce in rural Ireland due to large-scale emigration. Children needed to make up this shortfall often worked on family farms or were employed in farms close by. Mutual assistance between families or ‘cooring’ was common. In some instances, children

⁴⁷ Street-Trading Children Committee (Ireland). *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children During School Age, especially in street trading in the large centres of population in Ireland*. Vol 49. 1902 [Cd. 1144]. p. vi.

who contributed to farm labour might not have been included in census figures.⁴⁸

This was after all a low status occupation and for some, it was a job between leaving school at fourteen and emigrating or marrying. A majority would have been travelling farm servants or non-resident farm servants, which meant that they moved from farm to farm, some being hired at fairs or markets.⁴⁹

Young farm servants' wages were considerably lower than an adult farm servant's wage. Age, experience and expertise were factors that affected wage rates in this occupation; consequently, there was no fixed amount. Some were lucky with the family and their working conditions but it was very common to be underpaid or paid in farm produce, to be badly housed and not to have set working hours.⁵⁰

Furthermore, many employers paid the wages directly to parents rather than to the child.

The second most common occupation of children listed in Table 1.6 is that of general labourer. The 1911 census describes this category in the following terms:

Artisan or labourer engage in several trades and manufactures; the workers of books, machines, houses, carriages and ships; dealers in food and lodging and spirituous drinks; persons working in wool, flax and other fibrous materials ... as well as undefined dealers, mechanics and labourers.⁵¹

This category included industrial labourers but also those in apprenticeships. Many were urban-based but some agricultural-based labourers would have been included in this category. In 1903 the Employment of Children Bill became law. This set down

⁴⁸ Richard Breen, 'Farm servanthood in Ireland, 1900-40' in *The Economic History Review*, new ser., 36, no. 1 (Feb. 1983), p. 87.

⁴⁹ Breen, 'Farm servanthood in Ireland, 1900-40', p. 90.

⁵⁰ J. Jackson, 'Ireland' in M. S. Archer and S. Giner (eds), *Contemporary Europe: class, status and power* (Littlehampton, 1971), p. 206.

⁵¹ *Census of Ireland, 1911*. General report, with tables and appendix. 1912-13 [Cd. 6663]. p. xxix.

strict regulations for what children could work at, when they could work, and so on. It also forbade the employment of children in labouring jobs that included heavy lifting and imposed heavy penalties on anyone found to be in contravention of the terms of the Bill.⁵² It also introduced county borough by-laws on child employment which would first be sent to the Secretary of State (Lord Lieutenant) for approval and which gave County Borough the power to set work hours, wages and standards of employment, as long as they were not in breach of the terms of the main Employment of Children Bill. The Bill also did not apply to exemptions of schooling under the 1892 Education Act; rather, its purpose was to improve the employment conditions of child labourers.

It should be pointed out that this was not the only Bill relating to child employment at this time; in 1900 there was a Factory and Workshops Bill which was intended to regulate conditions in factories and workshops and also to protect workers. This Bill raised the age of employment in factories to twelve years and older. Safety in the factories and the high-risk tasks that children undertook were explained and it was expressly stated that no child was to clean under or around moving machinery at any time.⁵³ Women and children were not allowed to work more than eight hours a day, meal times were regulated and no young person or woman should be employed without an interval of at least a half hour in every four hours worked. The annual reports by the chief inspector of factories and workshops cite continuous checks on factory regulations, which show that the government was trying to improve working conditions for all. These annual reports also show change in regulations that occurred over time and contain information on the time of the day children were allowed

⁵² Employment of children. *A bill to make better provision for regulating the employment of children.* 1903. Vol 7 (77).

⁵³ Factories and workshops. *A bill to amend the Factory and Workshop Acts.* 1900 (111). p. 6.

work following the outbreak of World War One. At that time nearly all work was aimed at the war effort: with 80,000 men enlisting in the first year of war and 20,000 Irish men already serving in the British army, the role of women and children became more important in factories.⁵⁴ The annual reports on factories and workshops by the Ministry of Munitions were extremely detailed. The 1918 report demonstrates that as time went on, increased attention was paid to employer's care: this is reflected in the growing size of the sections dedicated to safety, especially that of children under the age of 16, in the annual reports.⁵⁵ In short, while factory conditions were undoubtedly tough, nonetheless the government did legislate to regulate factories conditions and create a safer working environment for all, including children.

Table 1.6 shows the proportion of people whose occupation was that of street vendor to be small. This was partly due to the lack of regulation. A street vendor was defined in a 1902 report as providing the following: selling newspapers, flowers, fruit, matches, firewood, fish, vegetables, ice cream, second hand clothing, or organ grinding, shoe blackening, plying luggage carriages and delivering messages.⁵⁶ An academic paper delivered to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland by John Robert O'Connell in 1911, which examined children in this profession, expressed concerns about the lack of regulation and the growing numbers of children on Irish streets. At this time there had been no effort to regulate the work of the street

⁵⁴ '1916 commemorations – battle of the Somme' (http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Pdf%20files/1916Commemorations-BattleOfTheSomme.pdf) (6 Dec. 2012).

⁵⁵ Ministry of Munitions. *Health of Munition Workers Committee. Final report. Industrial health and efficiency*. Vol. 2. 1918 [Cd. 9065]. p.106.

⁵⁶ Street-Trading Children Committee (Ireland). *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children During School Age, especially in street trading in the large centres of population in Ireland, appointed by His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Together with minutes of evidence and appendices*. Vol xi, 1902 [Cd. 1144]. Pp 157, 170.

vendor except under the section on begging in the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act of 1889. In concluding that this child population was going unnoticed, O'Connell virtually replicated the assessment published in a British government commissioned report a decade before.

The Street-Trading Children Committee of Ireland was set up in 1902 to compile a report as part of a study focusing on children of school-going age who were working in this area. This 200-page report, published 1903 concentrates on three locations in Ireland - Dublin, Belfast and Cork, giving an insight into children working in this occupation and also making recommendations on how to improve their working conditions. One of the main recommendations was a prohibition on girls working in street trading without causing hardship. The report predicted that a life of street trading would be harder for girls than for boys and suggested as a security measure the introduction of trading badges so that street trader might be identifiable.⁵⁷ Upon examining the details given of each street vendor witness at the end of this report, it is striking that most of these girls were either sole or part-time carers for other siblings as well as working. Perhaps the most startling finding of the Committee was the fact that over 1,400 known children under the age of 14 years were working on the streets in Ireland at the time, which was 33% higher than the known number of over 14 years of age street vendors in Ireland.

The lack of clothing and the large number of children street vendors who

⁵⁷ Street-Trading Children Committee (Ireland). *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children During School Age*, p. 8.

were absent from school roll books caused alarm and there was a call from philanthropy societies to help in housing and clothing this population. However, the fact that John Robert O'Connell, the academic speaker, expressed concerns about these same issues ten years later indicates that little was done to regulate children's involvement in street trading at least in the immediate aftermath of the Committee's report.

Clearly there was a need for children to work, whether to provide a sole or second income, or to assist in running a family business. The British government took steps to regulate working conditions for children in a number of occupations so as to improve standards of health and safety across Britain and Ireland. As already stated, although provisions to work and attend school were in place, not all working children were being educated as some took advantage of exemptions or managing to avoid enrolment. As conditions slowly changed for working children, free times became more accessible. A development of pastimes and hobbies were afoot, some completely new to Ireland in the start of the twentieth century.

An examination of pastimes or hobbies that were popular at this time reveals that Irish society was become more liberal in certain respects. The emergence of scouting and the effect it had – inculcating in members a particular mindset – established a system of profiteering from children who were involved. In sport, the emergence of the Gaelic revival and the tendency for people to spend more of their leisure time outdoors and playing sports swelled numbers in both association football

and the Gaelic Athletic Association in the early twentieth century.

Robert Baden Powell introduced scouting in Britain quite spontaneously in 1908 with the publication of his six-part book titled *Scouting for Boys*.⁵⁸ Baden Powell had developed a scheme for training boys as military scouts in Mafeking, South Africa, and his book was based on that experience. Teachers, youth leaders and the Boys Brigade, a popular Christian youth group, used this scheme. To develop it for the wider public, Baden Powell invited twenty boys, half of them member of the Boy's Brigade, to a camp to Brownsea Island in Dorset in 1907. From this, Baden Powell published *Scouting for Boys* the following year.

Although the book proved popular, being effectively marketed through Baden Powell's own popularity and his role in the previous war, scouting also clearly provided a structure for a youth organisation that was needed in many societies. This organisation started as it meant to go on, spontaneous and with no set membership criteria: it was to be open to all boys. There was no youth movement available at this time that was this flexible. This organisation also offered boys an educational opportunity and presented society with a means to prevent the continuation of bad practices. The outdoor organisations did this by placing the emphasis on discipline and curbing the impulses of the self in the service of the community as a whole.⁵⁹ As a result by 1910 Baden Powell found himself in charge of a youth organization that spread across the world rapidly, with the first recorded Scout meeting in Ireland

⁵⁸ J. Anthony Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), p. 4.

⁵⁹ Michael Rosenthal, *The character factory, Baden Powell and the origins of the boy scout movement* (London, 1986), p. 7.

taking place in a house on 3 Dame Street in February 1908.⁶⁰

Unfortunately details of this first meeting have not survived but from general minute books and the existing log book of the Lesson Park (Christchurch) scouts in Dublin city centre we can see that every precaution was taken to make the organisation open to all boys in Ireland.⁶¹ A report in the *Dublin Evening Mail* in March 1909 stated over 500 boys scouts were seen assembling on St. Patrick's Day, indicating that this organisation was making rapid progress. The report also named over eight groups and several unattached patrols that took part in the day's activity.⁶²

In her *History of Scouting in Northern Ireland* Margaret Bell shows that several lone patrols also existed in Belfast and the north of Ireland. In Belfast, the YMCA played a role in enabling the boy scouts to become established, permitting them to hold meetings in their hall: the first and second Belfast troops were known to have started in his way.⁶³

As the organisation spread throughout Ireland, the popularity of its ideals can be seen in the backing it received from lords, earls and the military in Ireland. Many of the scouting troops were attached to military barracks, or named after British military figures and patrons of the movement such as Lord Aberdeen and Lord Holmpatrick.⁶⁴ Not surprisingly, therefore, nationalist movements assumed that Baden Powell's scouting activities serves as an early step into the British Army.

⁶⁰ 'History of Scouting Ireland' Scouting Ireland (http://www.scouts.ie/more/history_of_scouting_ireland-177.html) (1 May 2011).

⁶¹ 'Original rules of boy scouts 19th Dublin', Lesson park log book (SI Archives), p.3.

⁶² *Dublin Evening Mail*, 20 Mar. 1909.

⁶³ Margaret Bells, *A history of scouting in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1985), pp 6-7.

⁶⁴ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 26 July 1913.

The introduction of girl scouting or guiding was not long behind that of boy scouting. Gillian Finan states in her book *A hundred years a-growing: a history of the Irish Girl Guides* that acceptance of girl scouting was attributable to the efforts of the women's suffragist movement and to the growing tendency within society for girls and women to engage in male activities. The first sighting of girl scouts was at the first Baden Powell's scout rally at Crystal Park, London, 1909, where several hundred girls attended in homemade uniforms.⁶⁵ By 1910 Baden Powell and his sister, Agnes had founded girl guiding, which quickly spread to Ireland. The first known group established in Ireland was at Harold's Cross, Dublin, in September 1911, but it was not until 1917 that Irish girl guiding became an independent movement, having operated during its first few years under the organisational umbrella of British girl guiding.⁶⁶

In general, in the British empire there was minor backlash against girl guiding as it was seen as unbecoming of a young lady to roll around and play like a boy. People did not like the idea of girls taking part in boyish activities, as it did not fit the long accepted social norms. In response to this backlash, Baden Powell is known to have stated; 'Girls should be partners and comrades, rather than dolls.'⁶⁷ As women worldwide were challenging the traditional views of society, girl guiding became more accepted and membership grew steadily throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century.

As the ideals of scouting quickly became popular, many Irish nationalists

⁶⁵ Gillian Finan, *A hundred years a-growing: a history of the Irish Girl Guides* (Dublin, 2010), p. 20.

⁶⁶ Finan, *A hundred years a-growing*, p. 34.

⁶⁷ Finan, *A hundred years a-growing*, p. 25.

believed that it was the time to begin a nationalist Scouting organisation in Ireland. While there is much debate about who exactly founded Fianna Éireann, much of the credit is given to Bulmer Hobson. Hobson was an active nationalist who co-founded the Dungannon Clubs, and knowingly open front for the secret society of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). Countess de Markievicz, an Anglo-Irish aristocrat who became a prominent figure in the Gaelic League at this time, did attempt to establish her own Nationalist Boy Scout organisation called the Red Branch Knights in 1908. However, this was short lived, as efforts were already afoot to organise Fianna Éireann.⁶⁸ Later in 1908 Countess de Markievicz rented a hall in Lower Camden Street, and the Fianna Éireann Boy Scouts assembled for their first official meeting. Hobson, in his memoirs, puts the number at the meeting at one hundred young boys plus a handful of adults.⁶⁹

Robert Holland, who was twelve–years–old when he joined Fianna Éireann remembers Countess de Markievicz making her speech and stating;

the stronghold that an organisation known as the Baden Powell Boy Scouts had on the country's youth and put emphasis on the fact that the purpose of this organisation was really to prepare the youth of the country for the British Army and engendering British ideals into them.⁷⁰

The oath taken by boys joining Fianna Éireann supported the idea of a scouting organisation that was against the idea of Ireland's youth joining the British army; 'I promise to work for the independence of Ireland; never to join England's

⁶⁸ Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland*, p. 35.

⁶⁹ Bulmer Hobson, *Ireland yesterday and tomorrow* (Tralee, 1968), p.16.

⁷⁰ Robert Holland (MA BMH, WS280), p. 2.

force, and to obey my superior officers.’⁷¹ Members of Fianna Éireann were ‘recruits for the future armies of Ireland and on them the future of Ireland must depend’ indicating that it was the beginning of a possible children militant body.⁷² As branches of Fianna Éireann spread across the country, some *shluaighte* (which was the name given to a group of Fianna Éireann Boy Scouts troops) leaders allowed young girls to form branches of Fianna Éireann, as in Waterford and Belfast.⁷³ Ann Matthews briefly discusses the role of girls in Fianna Éireann in her book *Renegades*, pointing out that although Countess de Markievicz was involved in the founding of Fianna Éireann, girls were not allowed to join in Dublin. Matthews highlights a revealing statement attributed to Countess de Markievicz which complained about how ‘they always confuse, those dreadful girls’.⁷⁴ When as a child Molly Reynolds from Dublin once asked Bulmer Hobson why girls were not allowed to join Fianna Éireann, he replied that if she would like to set up a girls’ branch, he would fully support her. Reynolds said that she never had the confidence to do it.⁷⁵ On the basis of Reynolds’s testimony, it would appear that the absence of a female branch of Fianna Éireann in Dublin was mainly due to a lack of initiative rather than any other reason.

While there may not have been a female branch of Fianna Éireann in Dublin, there was another nationalist girls’ organisation founded in Dublin during this time. The Clan na Gael Girl Scouts were attached to the Hibernian Rifles, the latter having been a small military arm of the Ancient Order of Hibernians until they broke away in

⁷¹ Seamus Pouch (MA BMH, WS267), p. 2.

⁷² *Bean na hEireann* (Jan. 1909).

⁷³ Patrick Herne (MA BMH, WS1742), p.9

⁷⁴ Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish Republican women, 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010), p. 74.

⁷⁵ Molly Reynolds (MA BMH, WS195), p. 2.

1907 over what they viewed as the AOH's sectarian approach to membership.⁷⁶

Although few in numbers, the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts thought of themselves as the female equivalent to Fianna Éireann, as they had the same objectives and took the same oath.⁷⁷

Scouting was therefore an idea that was widely accepted in Ireland and internationally in the early decades of the twentieth century. While some groups had obvious agendas, the theory was still the same – informal education out of doors. Reflecting societal changes at this time, children could now embrace challenges that scouting provided, and girls could participate in outdoor activities.

In Ireland as elsewhere, sporting was a popular and long established past time ranging from children playing with makeshift balls on city streets of cities to professional games. As Neal Granham had observed, 'the urge for groups of young men to collect together and then to indulge in kicking an object of some sort in play seems to be a universal one.'⁷⁸ Although football seemed to have nearly disappeared as a past time in Ireland after the Great Famine, Irish association football was founded in November 1880 in Belfast and in the decade that followed, there was a moderate spread of football clubs outside Ulster. This had changed by 1901, when there were 259 known clubs and the Leinster and Munster football associations, which were for both young men and adults, had been founded. Improved literacy rates and the growing popularity of newspapers in Ireland resulted in sporting games being discussed and advertised; that in turn lead to increased attendance at games and

⁷⁶ Sean O'Mahony, *Frongoch: university of revolution* (Dublin, 1987).

⁷⁷ Mary McLaughlin (MA BMH, WS934), p. 1.

⁷⁸ Neal Garnham, *Association football and society in pre-partition Ireland* (Belfast, 2004), p. 2.

growth in popularity of the sport. At a time when the ideal of being physically fit for work and for the Empire was in vogue, association football was regarded as a way to do this.⁷⁹ However, after this promising start, association football took a hit in January 1905 when the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) instituted ban on its members' involvement in any games of football or rugby. This adversely affected the football clubs: in Munster in 1907 there were 270 GAA clubs and less than ten association football clubs. By contrast, association football was strongest in Ulster and Dublin where many British military posts or government officials were based. Throughout this period the football remained a popular game played by children, a fact evidenced by references in police records to children causing disturbances in the streets by playing football.⁸⁰

The GAA was founded specifically to revive and celebrate traditional forms of Irish sport, especially Gaelic football and hurling. In 1884 Michael Cusack held the first meeting of the GAA in Thurles to decide the approach and rules for this new association. Although slow to develop due to the public belief that it was a political body rather than a sport organisation, a restructuring took place in 1887 and by 1890 the Gaelic Athletic Association had an impressive 557 clubs established throughout Ireland, more than half of which were based in Leinster.⁸¹ The progress of the GAA and association football was due to their popularity with the Irish press, the increasing amount of leisure time and, in particular, the emergence of the Gaelic revival. As time went on and Gaelic Irish culture became more popular, the GAA became increasingly

⁷⁹ Garnham, *Association football*, p. 13.

⁸⁰ Street-Trading Children Committee (Ireland). *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children During School Age*, p. 162.

⁸¹ Marcus De Burca, *The GAA: a history* (Dublin, 1999), p. 43.

political, though unsuccessful attempts to stop this were made by certain prominent members. Sport training sessions and meetings of this association were being used to propagate nationalist agendas and training a possible war. The GAA was the leading physical nationalist organisation in the country and was identified as a vehicle for militant national bodies such as Irish Volunteers, Irish Republican Brotherhood and Fianna Eireann to recruit members. This is reflected in the Association's current website which includes the 1916 Easter rising in their historical timeline, stating that although the GAA was not officially involved, many of its members took part in the Rising, as a result of which many sporting activities throughout the country came to a halt when these men were imprisoned.⁸²

Within a context of changes in employment policies and growing emphasis on health and fresh air, outdoor activities and opportunities for participation in leisure time hobbies at the turn of the twentieth century, both scouting and sporting activities in Ireland were on the increase. While both pastimes struggled to establish themselves for various reasons, including political agendas, the overall numbers participating in these activities, including children, grew steadily as Ireland entered a period of revolution.

In this chapter, the milieu in which children in early twentieth-century Ireland lived their lives has been sketched. From this examination of various aspects of society that directly impacted the lives of children, namely housing conditions, educational, employment and recreational opportunities, and efforts on the part of the authorities

⁸² 'History timeline 1884-1945' (<http://www.gaa.ie/about-the-gaa/gaa-history/history-timeline/timeline-1884-1945/>) (21 May 2012).

to improve those conditions and opportunities, all of which are set in the context of broader societal changes, it has been shown that contemporaries recognised that a child had an important place in Irish society in the early 1900s. That importance grew significantly in the lead up to World War I and in contemporaries' acknowledgement that children were the future of Britain and Ireland.

As the survey of the state of Irish housing highlighted, there was a clear need to help Irish families living in sub-standard housing. As the appalling state of housing conditions in urban areas in particular were more widely publicised in reports that typically emphasised the adverse impact on children, both government and philanthropic societies endeavoured to tackle the problem from when onwards and brought about some modest improvement in the living conditions of families in urban settings. Their impact was limited by the fact that several of these schemes were not suited to the population or were selective about those deemed worthy of assistance. Simultaneously there were attempts at tackling the high mortality rate of children in Ireland. Through a combination of measures – government policy changes, the setting up of semi-government-body babies clubs, improved health education and housing conditions (the main cause), the lives of children slowly began to improve over time, though this was only for a small margin of the pulpous. However, in the later part of the period covered in this study, war, civil unrest and the outbreak of a number of epidemics would take their toll on this generation.

Although loopholes remained in the education system, affording children an opportunity to avoid attending school, overall educational provision and regulation improved around the turn of the century and literacy standards increased slowly. These advances appear to have impacted positively on Irish children's education. The introduction of pragmatic policies, which permitted children to work and be educated, removed a source of pressure from many children's lives. This was helped by the implementation of strict regulations regarding safety, work hours, age requirements to work and in particular by the measures introduced under the Employment of Children Acts passed 1902-1906.

With this wider context of significant societal change, increasing emphasis on health and fresh air, growing popularity of outdoor activities and greater opportunities for hobbies, both sport and scouting became significant phenomena in Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries respectively, together with a wide range of other pastimes. With the passage of time, these pastimes assumed great importance in the eyes of political activists, as evidenced by the formation of Fianna Eireann. Therefore, it is clear that children were recognised as having a very important role to play in Irish society, not only as future citizens, but as individuals who from a young age could be trained and educated to shape the future of the country.

Chapter two:

Youth and influence within the Nationalist community

‘Only the most extreme families had enrolled their sons in the Fianna.’¹

The importance attributed to children in early twentieth-century Irish society in general was also evident within the Nationalist community. The focus will now shift to identifying influences at work within the community that shaped children’s decision to support the Nationalist organisations to which they became affiliated. By examining family influences, the strength of communal bonds, educational attainment, religious denomination, and the upsurge in Gaelic popular pastimes, the strength of various influences that enveloped a child within this Nationalist community will be assessed. In so doing, this chapter will explore why members of the younger generation joined the militant wing of Nationalism, drawing largely on personal accounts, memoirs and notes written by community members, together with personal accounts offering reasons for childhood involvement in militant activities that are borne out in secondary literature. This chapter will also introduce several individuals whose experiences are central to this thesis. These people were children based throughout the country during the period under review and have been selected on the strength of the high quality of their testimonies which are supported by other personal accounts, newspaper coverage and government documents.

The Irish Nationalist community was comprised of a group of organisations, bound together in a nationwide movement. Within the family, a child’s primary environment, adult-child transactions and family-orchestrated child experiences,

¹ Áine Ceannt (MA BMH, WS398), p. 12.

which include daily routines, family social network and discussions at home profoundly influence the life of the child and the formation of his/her opinions.² Not surprisingly, therefore, the most popular reason for interaction within the Nationalist community is, therefore, familial connection. Whether they were constantly told about their Gaelic family history, or followed family members into organisations, there was a second and third generation of Fenianism in the majority of the children involved in the Nationalist youth organisations during the early 1900s. Patrick Mullooly from Strokestown, County Roscommon, is one of this generation who grew up knowing that generations before him had fought for independence. In his personal account, his first statement was to explain his connection to the Young Irelander Rebellion (1848) through his grandfather, and then he further emphasised his Nationalist credentials by citing his uncle's subsequent involvement in the struggle for independence and his family's relationship to Charles Stewart Parnell. Mullooly had grown up listening to his father and friends argue and debate over Home Rule and old-age pensions and he concluded his family history with the proud declaration 'It will be seen that the rebel strain was in my blood from both sides of my family tree.'³

Like Mullooly, Daniel Mulvihill from Milltown, County Kerry, was also heavily influenced by his family, in this case, his mother. His opening statement ran:

I would say that my Mother was one of the greatest Irishwomen I ever knew. She never spared anything during the Tan time and Civil War. She knew more about Irish history than anyone I have ever met since.⁴

Mulvihill's evident pride in his mother was well founded. He grew up in a house that was heavily frequented by Volunteers and travellers who stayed the night. Mrs

² Michael J. Guralnick, 'Family influences on early development: integrating the science of normative development, risk and disability, and intervention' in K. McCartney and D. Phillips (eds), *Handbook of early childhood development* (Oxford, 2006), p. 46.

³ Patrick Mullooly (MA BMH, WS955), pp 1-2.

⁴ Daniel Mulvihill (MA BMH, WS938), p. 1.

Mulvihill taught her children to be proud of their Irish heritage: so successful was she that all six of them (four boys and two girls) became involved in the Irish Volunteers or Cumann na mBan. After his mother's involvement in billeting and feeding men on the run and hiding throughout the Revolution, the family fell into debt by 1924 and had to sell their farm.⁵

It is clear from others cases too that the idea of fighting for one's country was instilled from an early age. Eamon Price described his parents as 'staunch nationalists', recalling how 'My father on Sunday, around Dublin, would lead me to the historic spots and relate the deeds of glory of the past and so the seed was sown.'⁶ Roger E. McCorley, who with his brother, lived with his aunt and uncle in Belfast, remembered joining Fianna Éireann at 11 years of age in 1912. This seemed 'natural' as Roger had been taught that some day, when he grew up, he would have the honour of 'Striking a blow for Ireland'.⁷

A commonly acknowledged influence among many of the young people involved in militant youth movements was that of family members with Nationalist affiliations. This was true in the case of Mary McLaughlin who lived at 5.3 North King Street, Dublin, together with her parents, four brothers and a sister. Sean McLaughlin, one of her elder brothers, was particularly active. As well as being in the Irish Volunteers with his other brothers, he was also involved in the running of Fianna Éireann, while Mary was a member of Cumann na nGael.⁸ She refers to her family, especially her brother, Sean, throughout her personal account and it is clear

⁵ Mulvihill Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Kerry/Shronowen/Tullamore/274344/>) (5 Apr. 2013); Daniel Mulvihill (MA BMH, WS938), p. 1.

⁶ Eamon Price (MA BMH, WS995), p. 2.

⁷ Roger E. McCorley (MA BMH, WS389), p. 1.

⁸ McLaughlin Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Inns_Quay/King_s_St_North/34165/) (5 Apr. 2013); Mary McLaughlin (MA BMH, WS934), p. 1; Sean McLaughlin (MA BMH, WS290) (48 pages in total).

that it was Mary's pride in her brother's role in the movement that influenced her to become involved. The case of Seamus Bevan, of 58 Dominick Street, Dublin, where he lived with his parents, two older brothers and two sisters, is similar. Given that his father and both of his elder brothers were involved in the Irish Volunteers and took part in the Easter Rising 1916, it is hardly surprising that he followed suit.⁹ Áine Ceannt, wife of Éamonn Ceannt (Easter Rising leader), made an important observation about the type of families whose children joined Fianna Éireann, commenting that 'Only the most extreme families had enrolled their sons in the Fianna.'¹⁰ This is an intriguing point as many did encourage their children to follow in their footsteps and join various organisations, including militant organisations.

Overall, there appears to have been a consensus among Nationalist families to encourage the next generation to become involved, as they believed that it was the duty of the family and that it was the time to fight. This was reflected in the spread of Fianna Éireann and the foundation of *slugaithe* across the country, especially after Easter 1916. The community in which children are raised and socialised, including family friends, neighbours and celebrated heroes, also influences the paths that they follow. Thomas Dwyer of 15 Drumgold, Enniscorthy, County Wexford, was one of six children of May Ann and James Dwyer.¹¹ Dwyer recalled the effect of growing up around 'Antwerp', the nickname given to the local Irish Volunteer Hall that served as a base for many Nationalist movements. The hall was always busy with groups running Irish language and history classes, as well as singing and dancing and concerts. According to Dwyer 'Antwerp' was:

⁹ Bevan Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Rotunda/Dominick_Street_Lower/41577/) (5 Apr. 2013); Seamus Bevan (MA BMH, WS1059), p. 2.

¹⁰ Áine Ceannt (MA BMH, WS398), p. 12.

¹¹ Dwyer Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Wexford/Enniscorthy_Rural/Drumgold/679352/) (6 Apr. 2013).

the breeding ground of rebellion, for here was instilled into our youthful minds the hatred of the Sassenach, and there grew in us a burning desire to see our country freed from the chains of bondage ... We longed for the day when we too might join in the fight against our common enemy.¹²

‘Antwerp’ Irish Volunteer Hall was known throughout the community and indeed the country at large, with many stopping by to visit it on their travels. From Dwyer’s testimony one can see the impact that the symbolism and influence of an environment that was so highly valued by the older generation had on a community’s young people. In Londonderry, the same was true. Liam Brady was from a large family who lived on 24, Waterloo Street, together with his eight siblings and parents. (His uncle, William, captain of the Irish Volunteers and later the IRA, also lived on this street.¹³) Remembering what it was like for him growing up in that city, Liam Brady recalls one incident that for him best captures the sense of community to which he belonged:

With the boys of Waterloo Street where I lived, we would play our childish games, hide-and-peek, being very popular with us. We would go to the United Irish League Rooms at the bottom of the Street and there we would hide by mixing with the men who were gathered around the fire chatting and debating. Sometimes we forgot to return to our playing and would sit listening to the older men discussing the Irish question.¹⁴

Clearly the young Brady absorbed all the discussion and workings around him, learning the inner workings of the GAA, the Gaelic League, the Irish Volunteers, Fianna Éireann and Cumann na mBan within the community.

The influence of elders is significant, but the influence of peers is also

¹² Thomas Dwyer (MA BMH, WS 1198), p. 2. ‘Antwerp’ mentioned in several personal accounts.

¹³ Brady Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Londonderry/Londonderry_Urban_4_/Waterloo_S_treet/604274/) (6 Apr. 2013); Uncle William Brady; Brady Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Londonderry/Londonderry_Urban_4_/Waterloo_S_treet/604256/) (6 Apr. 2013); Liam Brady (MA BMH, WS 676), p. 13

¹⁴ Liam Brady (MA BMH, WS 676), p. 12.

commonly cited as a determining factor, which prompted young men and women to join militant youth movements. Patrick Herne explained how it was his friend, Liam Walsh, who first brought him to a Fianna Éireann meeting. Walsh was associated with Liam Mellows at this time. Mellows was a teenager who recently moved to Dublin for work and sought out Tom Clarke and Nationalist circles. He travelled to Waterford and attended many of Mellows' meetings.¹⁵ Mellows was also a prominent figure within Fianna Éireann. Within months of joining Fianna Éireann, he had been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant and met socially with significant people within Nationalist circles. At 17 years of age, Mellows was experiencing years of knowledge from Tom Clarke, James Connolly and many others. With these new mentors, it is evident the influence they had on shaping his life.¹⁶ Patrick Herne's case is interesting since Waterford was a garrison, with two British barracks; and a significant proportion of the city's population were the families of British soldiers working in the barracks. As a result, the Nationalist organisations in the city had to be very careful. Interestingly, the Irish National Foresters' Organisation helped Nationalist movements in Waterford, rent rooms to Fianna Éireann.¹⁷

The age profile of the Nationalist community was also a significant factor in its success. Of the 501 people who provided their date of birth accurately in their personal statements to the Bureau of Military History, a clear pattern in terms of the age range of participants in militant action emerges:

¹⁵ C. Desmond Greaves, *Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution* (London, 1971), p. 50.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁷ Patrick Herne (MA BMH, WS1742).

Table 2.1 Birth years of members of Nationalist community

Year range of Births	Number of people
1869- 1879	8
1880- 1889	61
1890- 1899	333
1900- 1906	99
Total: 1869-1906	501

Source: Information compiled from 501 witness statements from the Military Bureau, Military Archives, Rathmines, Dublin.

As is evident in Table 2.1 the majority of these were in their twenties in 1916. A profile of some of the most prominent and widely remembered Nationalist community members indicate that educated, middle-class Catholics were becoming increasingly influential. Con Colbert was aged 27 when he was executed for his involvement in the 1916 rebellion. A clerk in Kennedy's Bakery in Dublin, Colbert was recognised as bright, educated and intelligent and thus, like Mellows, he quickly scaled the ranks of Fianna Éireann.¹⁸ Sean Houston was aged 25 when he was executed for his role in the Easter Rising: he too rose through the ranks of Fianna Éireann because of his character and intelligence. (Houston worked as a railway clerk before he moved to Dublin to focus on Fianna Éireann.¹⁹) Another figure that rapidly scaled the ranks within the Nationalist movement was James Ryan who by 1917 was a qualified doctor with a practice in Wexford. Ryan was elected in the General elections of 1918 by 51.5% of the votes for the Wexford South constituency.²⁰ A significant factor that impacted the age profile of this Nationalist community was the lack of emigration due

¹⁸ Miss Elizabeth M. Colbert (MA BMH, 856), pp 2-6.

¹⁹ John Gibney, *16 lives. Sean Heuston* (Dublin, 2013), pp 36- 48

²⁰ Thomas Maier, *The Kennedys: America's emerald kings. A five-generation history of the ultimate Irish-Catholic family* (Dublin, 2004), pp 223-4; Election Ireland 'Wexford South County Constituency' (<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1918&cons=234>) (20 July 2013).

to World War One as those who might otherwise have left the country stayed and this impacted the direction taken by the Nationalist community, especially during the War of Independence.

Under the Intermediate Education Act (1878), Gaelic studies and the Irish language were introduced into school programmes for the first time. When the Gaelic League was founded in 1893, the advancement of bilingual teaching became a more realistic prospect. In 1904 bilingual teaching was allowed in Gaeltacht areas.²¹ Both the Gaelic revival and the emergence of increased numbers of Irish speakers during the early twentieth century were largely due to the exertions of the Gaelic League organisation which began to thrive in earnest during the early 1900s. At first it was politically neutral but that only lasted until 1913. Douglas Hyde stepped down as president of the movement as he was opposed to its increasing politicisation. The popularity of the movement can be seen in the strength of its branch numbers: in 1898 there were 58 branches and this had increased to 600 by 1904.²² Local branches of the Gaelic League focused on running classes and social evenings, organising a wide-ranging educational programme of Irish folklore, history, music and dance. They ran language lessons; they also visited schools to promote the Irish language and sent travelling teachers (*timiri*) throughout the country. In addition, the Gaelic League ran summer Irish colleges, though these were not as popular as their local activities.²³

²¹ Coolahan, *Irish education*, p. 3.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Michael Tierney, 'What did the Gaelic League accomplish?: 1893-1963' in *An Irish Quarterly Review*, 52, no. 208 (Winter 1963), p. 342.

Table 2.2 Bilingual (Irish and English) competence of the population aged under 17 years (1901/1911).

Province	1901	1911
Leinster	5,146	17,509
Munster	35,958	64,466
Ulster	19,714	26,424
Connacht	44,824	47,280
Total	105,642	155,679

Source: *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Munster. 1912-13 [Cd. 6050]. p. 46; *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Leinster, 1912-13 [Cd. 6049]. p. 44; *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Ulster 1912-13 [Cd. 6051]. p. 59; *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Connaught. 1912-13 [Cd. 6052]. p. 32; *Census of Ireland*, 1901. Part II. General report with illustrative maps and diagrams, tables, and appendix 1902 [Cd. 1190]. p. 72.

Table 2.3 Irish-speaking population aged under seventeen (1901/1911).

Province	1909	1911
Leinster	0	3
Munster	317	243
Ulster	1,611	2,175
Connacht	3,222	2,643
Total	5,150	5,064

Source: *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Munster. 1912-13 [Cd. 6050]. p. 46; *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Leinster, 1912-13 [Cd. 6049]. p. 44; *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Ulster 1912-13 [Cd. 6051]. p. 59; *Census of Ireland*, 1911. Area, houses, and population: Also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations,

birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Connaught. 1912-13 [Cd. 6052]. p. 32; *Census of Ireland*, 1901. Part II. General report with illustrative maps and diagrams, tables, and appendix 1902 [Cd. 1190]. p. 72.

It is evident from the above tables that in provinces with small Gaeltacht areas, the numbers of children who spoke Irish had increased in the decade between 1901 and 1911. This growth was due to several factors: the allowance for bilingual teaching in schools; the publication of Father Grouney's simple lessons in Irish and many other Irish literacy publications which became very popular, and growing popular support for an independent Ireland and the embrace and acceptance of Irish culture.²⁴ As the Gaelic League became more politicised and the country entered a period of civil unrest, the Gaelic revival became more popular.

As illustrated in Chapter one, there was growing recognition that education was more relevant and crucial to the life and life chances of Irish children at the start of the twentieth century. Educating the younger generation about the history of the country and its folklore, as well as teaching them Irish language, were matters of real importance to the Nationalist community. The influence of a schoolteacher is one of the most commonly cited reasons given for involvement in this community and later militant activities. Denis Houston from Dungloe in County Donegal was taught by Hugh Doherty: Houston directly attributes his national outlook and his militant role a few years later to Doherty's Irish history instruction.²⁵

Although National Schools or Christian Brother schools were the most frequently named educational institutions named in personal accounts, there was a

²⁴ Arthur E. Clery, 'The Gaelic League, 1893-1919' in *An Irish Quarterly Review*, 8, no. 31 (Sept. 1919), p. 402.

²⁵ Denis Houston (MA BMH, WS1382), p. 1.

string of other schools that subscribed to Nationalist beliefs. The previously mentioned St. Enda's school was founded by Padraig Pearse in 1908. A far-sighted educationalist, Pearse created an environment that promoted independent learning and discussion, along with structured classes in several subjects. In his school prospectus of 1911 he explained that his school has the 'object of providing a secondary education distinctively Irish in complexion, bilingual in method and of high modern type generally, for Irish catholic boys.'²⁶ The prospectus named the subjects and teaching styles. In languages, Irish was 'a spoken and literacy tongue to every pupil.' All modern languages were taught in the direct method, just as Irish would have been taught to beginners. French, German, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek and Old Irish were listed, the last three under classical studies. The subject list was extensive: History, geography, nature study, experimental science (chemistry, and physics) Mathematics (arithmetic, algebra, Euclid – Geometry, and trigonometry), hand writing, drawing, manual instruction, hygiene and first aid, book keeping, shorthand, type writing, elocution, vocal and instrumental music, dancing, and physical drill.²⁷

Instilling a sense of responsibility in pupils was also an important priority in the approach to learning advocated at St Enda's. The school had a library and museum, both quite extensive, and it was the students' duty to run these themselves. They elected their peers to several roles within the school, including school captain, vice-captain, a secretary, a librarian, keeper of the museum, a master of games, a captain for sport teams, and the house committee. In terms of outdoor pursuits, sports and nature subjects were strongly encouraged. The school had its own Fianna

²⁶ Scoil Eanna prospectus, 1901-1911 (UCD archives, P 43-1).

²⁷ Ibid.

Éireann *shuagh*. It also had its own hurling, Gaelic football and handball teams that competed in championships with other minor teams established in the city. Within the grounds of St. Enda's there was a walled garden in which a range of fruit and vegetables were grown; each student was encouraged to help maintain this. The grounds also had a manmade lake for swimming and trees of various species. In the arts, the school provided music lessons in the form of choral and solo singing but also lessons with the instruments – violin, harp, piano and pipes, for an extra fee. Sculpture and painting, along with modelling and carpentry, were available and encouraged. Overall, this school had much to offer and also had an open informal educational manner that impressed many. One of these admirers was Robert Baden Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts. In the early stages of the school, Baden Powell wrote to Pearse as his school was very close to the educational ideals that he espoused. He asked Pearse to consider contributing a piece to a boy-scouting book and to lend his support towards setting up his own Baden Powell Scout Group but to no avail.²⁸ Among other admirers who visited St Enda's was Dr Douglas Hyde who gave a lecture on the language movement in 1909.²⁹

In his *Boy Republic: Patrick Pearse and radical education* Brendan Walsh emphasises that although Pearse was principally an educator by profession, barely anyone refers to that side of his life.³⁰ Yet, in personal accounts, memoirs written in the later years, his friends remember him primarily as an educator. St Enda's educated its students and gave them freedom to learn. It was also a seedbed for inculcating democratic Nationalist thinking, in which Pearse gave many of his radical-thinking friends a chance to educate the younger generation on freedom for

²⁸ Michael Rosenthal, *The character factory: Baden Powell and the origins of the boy scout movement* (London, 1986), p. 42.

²⁹ *An Macaomh (or An Macaomh) Vol. 1* no. 2 (Christmas 1909) (UCD archives, P43/3, p. 50).

³⁰ Brendan Walsh, *Boy Republic: Patrick Pearse and radical education* (Limerick, 2013), p. xi.

Ireland. It is worth bearing in mind that five of its teachers were executed in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising – Thomas McDonagh, William Pearse, Con Colbert and Patrick Pearse himself. Not surprisingly, many former students of St Enda’s school became heavily involved as militant Nationalists and rose rapidly through the ranks. For instance, ex– pupil Eamon Bulfin was Vice–Commandant of his battalion in Wexford in 1918: he would have been aged 26 at that time.³¹ Pearse’s influence as educator extended beyond St Enda’s as he inspired other schools, with the same ethos, to be founded.

Among these was St Ita’s, a mixed bilingual school established in Cork City as a reaction to 1916 Easter Rising. Máire MacSwiney, along with her sister Eithne, ran this school, based on the same ideals as St Enda’s.³² The prospectus for St Ita’s set out its aims as follows:

... that Irish children could be taught Irish standards and the Irish language without losing any of the cultural advantages to be gained from England, France or any other foreign country.³³

According to Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh in her article ‘A quiet revolution: women and second-level education in Ireland, 1878–1930’, the Mac Swiney sisters’ republican influence influenced the teaching of some subjects. Mary O’Sullivan, Professor of Education in UCC during the 1930s, recognised the influence that this school had on children. She claimed that whenever she met a new class of students, she could always pick out the St. Ita’s pupils after a few weeks, as there was something

³¹ Patrick Riordan (MA BHM WS 1688), p. 1; St Enda School Census, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Whitechurch/Haroldsgrange_/57819/) (6 Aug. 2013).

³² *Prospectus of Scoil Ite* (Máire Mac Swiney papers, UCD archives P139/2).

³³ *Ibid.* (Máire Mac Swiney papers, UCD archives P139/1).

different about them.³⁴ This was due to the school's distinctive non-formal approach to education and its encouragement of free thought. Despite its short life, St Ita's clearly shaped the outlooks of a several hundred children as it maintained a steady average of a 100 students every year during the years 1916-21.

Louise Gavan Duffy was another educator who was spurred on by Pearse to establish her own school. Having started her career as a teacher in Cullenswood, Pearse's original location for his school, Gavan Duffy worked in Pearse's short-lived girls' equivalent to St Enda's, named Scoil Ida, before establishing her own school in 1917.³⁵ Scoil Bride was founded in Dublin City Centre, with the aim that the schools' pupils 'would develop a deep respect for their Gaelic culture', become 'enquiring' and 'open-minded [with] strong self- esteem and self- confidence.'³⁶ Gavan Duffy's school is interesting as Scoil Bride was the first in the country to teach only through the medium of Irish.³⁷ This ethos was obviously successful as it is still in existence, unlike St Enda's, Scoil Ita or Scoil Ida . As a result of its city centre location and the teaching staff's heavy involvement in the Nationalist Community, the school was raided several times during 1917- 21; as a result the pupils experienced the struggle for independence first-hand.³⁸

Christian Brother schools (CBS) also had their distinctive impact on the younger generation of the Nationalist community. Many men who attended CBS schools in their youth directly identify the local priest or a brother as the individual

³⁴ Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh, 'A quiet revolution: women and second-level education in Ireland, 1878–1930' in *New Hibernia Review*, 13, no. 2 (Samhradh/Summer 2009), pp 36-51, 48.

³⁵ Unpublished memoirs. Typed by herself. 'Self-portrait' (NLI, MS 46,271, paper of Louise Gavan Duffy).

³⁶ Scoil Bhride Comóradh 75 bliain Scoil Bhride ragnaillach 'prospectus of original Scoil Bride 1917' (NLI, MS 46,271, p. 14 paper of Louise Gavan Duffy).

³⁷ *Irish Times*, 15 Dec. 1969.

³⁸ Louise Gavan-Duffy (MA BHM WS 216), pp.16-17.

who influenced them to join a Nationalist organisation. Patrick O'Dwyer traces his interest in Nationalist affairs back to his time as a pupil in the Christian Brother Secondary School in Thurles, County Tipperary;

One of my teachers there, a Brother Wall, was a sterling Irishman who hated everything English. He infused into his pupils a national spirit, and through him we learned to appreciate the history, language and culture of our country.³⁹

O'Dwyer was not alone in attributing his beliefs to his Christian Brothers education. Seán Gibbons, an active member of Irish Republican Brotherhood and Irish Volunteers in west Mayo, attended the Christian Brothers School in Westport and describes the brothers as 'violently patriotic'.⁴⁰

Catholicism was immensely important within Irish society, and particularly so for the Nationalist community and parish priests wielded significant influence and control over their congregations' lives, including their political beliefs and activities. Until the start of the twentieth century, priests and teachers were usually the most educated in the locality, and the population consulted them for guidance. P. J. Dowling in *A history of Irish education: a study in conflicting loyalties* describes the role of the priest as multi-purpose; he could range between being 'parent's letter writer, lawyer, and general advisor'.⁴¹ Adults and children gravitated towards and respected local priests. William McCabe, who lived at 36 Ballybunion, County Kerry along with his parents and younger sister, recalls how the intervention of his local priest changed his course of action. McCabe remembers how after he finished serving at Mass, he and some other boys were rushing to leave so they could join the newly-established Baden Powell scouts in the area. But, the priest's remark that 'If Parnell

³⁹ Patrick O'Dwyer (MA BHM WS1432), p. 1.

⁴⁰ Seán Gibbons (MA BHM, WS927), p. 1.

⁴¹ P. J. Dowling, *A history of Irish education: a study in conflicting loyalties* (Cork, 1971), p. 95.

were alive it is not the Baden Powell Scouts you would be joining’ dissuaded the boys from joining the scouts. Within a few weeks a Fianna Éireann branch was established in the town and McCabe joined on its opening night.⁴²

As briefly discussed above, the Gaelic League played an important role in the education of people who wanted to learn the Irish language and culture. *Timré* worked at grassroots level, constantly travelling and teaching classes. Sometimes they also held other roles: for instance, whilst Eithne Coyle was teaching in Donegal and Roscommon during the Revolution, she also worked as messenger and set up Cumann na mBan branches throughout this area, mostly recruiting girls in her Irish classes.⁴³ Christopher Byrne describes his Gaelic League Irish teacher Pat O’Loughlin as an old Fenian and I.R.B. man who used to tell his classes that ‘if we wanted to free Ireland we would have to fight for it’. Byrne claims that this in turn became the attitude of O’Loughlin’s pupils.⁴⁴

Michael Tierney in his article ‘What did the Gaelic League accomplish?: 1893-1963’ presents a somewhat pessimistic view of what the Gaelic League achieved in terms of resurrecting the Irish language. Of course, this was not the only method that the Gaelic League used.⁴⁵ After Douglas Hyde resigned, it is true that the Irish Republican Brotherhood unofficially took over the running of this cultural Nationalist movement, which did aid the promotion of militant activities; but that is not the only role that the League fulfilled within the community. Its social activities such as *aeríocht* (open air concerts), *feisanna* (arts and cultural festivals) and *céilis* (Irish dances or music sessions) were popular within the community, serving as the

⁴² McCabe Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Kerry/Killehenry/Ballybunion_Town/271638/) (6 Apr. 2013) William (Liam) McCabe (MA BHM WS1212), p. 1.

⁴³ Mrs. Bernard O’Donnell (Eithne Coyle) (MA BHM WS 750), p. 2.

⁴⁴ Christopher Byrne (MA BHM WS 167), p. 1.

⁴⁵ Tierney, ‘What did the Gaelic League accomplish?’, p. 342.

main fora for socialising with like-minded people. Martin Murphy discusses the impact that the Gaelic League had on his Nationalist principles in his personal statement. Through the League, Murphy attended *feisanna* and *aeriochts* to participate in language competitions. It was at these events that he met people like Padraig Pearse, Fionán MacColum and Peadar O’Hanrahan, who influenced and inspired him. He also refers to his teacher, who had originally encouraged him to join the Gaelic League, stating ‘My sound foundation on national principles may be due to the education I received at Lislehan National School from Seán Ó Cadhla.’⁴⁶

Patrick McHugh grew up in a Nationalist revivalist household in Dundalk, County Louth. He states that his house was used as a meeting place for ‘Gaels’ in the early days of the Gaelic League, so it would have been ‘unnatural’ if he had not joined the League as well.⁴⁷ Music was also a great influence on McHugh. Both of his parents were musicians and he began playing a violin at 10 years of age, in local and national *feiseanna* and *aeriocht*.

Music was seen by the Gaelic League as an integral component of Irish-language culture, and in some ways central to the life of the organisation’s branches. The League’s dance occasions were called ‘*céilithe*’ or ‘*céilis*’. Charlotte Jacklein in her article ‘Rebel songs and hero pawns: music in *A Star Called Henry*’ elaborates on the importance of music in Ireland, seeing it as the cornerstone of Irish identity and having a powerful ability to instigate and document social change. Songs, she emphasises, are a significant means of communicating historical events and political sentiments.⁴⁸ William King, who lived with his older brother John, Aunt and Uncle in 4 Culligh Beg in Galway, states that whereas politics did not animate his interest as

⁴⁶ Martin Murphy (MA BHM WS1375), p. 1.

⁴⁷ Patrick McHugh (MA BHM WS677), p. 1.

⁴⁸ Charlotte Jacklein, ‘Rebel songs and hero pawns: music in *A Star Called Henry*’ in *New Hibernia Review*, 9, no. 4 (Geimhreadh/Winter 2005), p. 131.

a child like it did some others, he was attracted to patriotic songs, and he tried to learn them all.⁴⁹ King remembers that before 1916, the Sinn Féin club gave out free songbooks featuring patriotic songs, printed in English and published by Felix MacGlennon of Dublin. Thomas Dwyer also understood the lure of Irish ballads for a youth. He recalls the first time he heard ‘Skibbereen’:

I shall never forget listening to the singing of Irish songs, and it was here, for the first time, that I heard the ancient ballad, “Skibberee[n]”, being sung, and the passing of thirty-six years has not erased the knowledge of that beautiful song.⁵⁰

The song ‘Skibbereen’ is mentioned by many in their personal statements as they describe incidents in their lives dating from this time. This song is about a dialogue between a father and son, in which the father explains why he left Skibbereen and Ireland. It references the Great Famine, evictions, and the death of family members and also the Young Irelanders Movement and the rebellion of 1848.⁵¹ Another song mentioned many times is ‘The Bold Fenian Glen’ which is believed to be now known as ‘Down by the Glenside’. Peadar Kearney, most famous for being the author of the Soldiers’ Song, wrote this song. He continued to write Irish ballads until his death in 1942. ‘Down by the Glenside’ is an interesting song as it is from the perspective of a woman looking out on the glenside, remembering the previous generation of rebels and their hopes. It is effectively a call to arms for a generation of Irishmen accustomed to political Nationalism. Thomas Reidy’s memory of this song was of it being sung during wintertime by older members of his community as they sat around the fireside at dances that were frequently held in his home in Skibbereen, County Cork. (Both ‘Micheal Dwyer’ and ‘Down by the Glenside’ would be sung at these

⁴⁹ William King (MA BHM WS 1381), p. 2.

⁵⁰ Thomas Dwyer (MA BHM WS 1189), pp 7-8.

⁵¹ Lyrics mode ‘Skibbereen’ (http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/w/wolfe_tones/skibbereen.html) (10 Aug. 2013).

events.)⁵² Patrick Glynn recognises the influence that these inspiring ballads had on him: ‘Through those songs I got my first lessons in Irish History and learned enough from them to realise something of the fight put up by my countrymen against the invader.’⁵³

Ballads and songs were used for entertainment but also for subtle recruitment. People learned a form of history from the Irish ballads, passed from generation to generation, but they also learned a message – to fight for a free Ireland. This method, which was effective with children, frightened the government. In 1917 people were arrested by member of the Royal Irish Constabulary for singing ‘seditious songs’ (‘The Green Flag’ and ‘The Soldier’s Song’) at a concert in Dublin. Peadar Kearney had only recently written these songs, which quickly gained popularity among the growing Nationalist community after the Easter Rising.⁵⁴ Ireland’s long musical tradition has created a large repertoire of songs, in the form of both folk tradition and music hall numbers. The lyrics of many of these songs dealt with historic and current events of Ireland, making them a powerful force that has united people in difficult circumstances, or alternatively motivated some listeners to participate in militant action.

Another significant development within the Nationalist community was the revival in Gaelic games. Although there is not much evidence of sport having influenced the youth to joining militant activities, the Gaelic Athletic Association still played a significant role in their lives. This sporting organisation was an integral part of Irish life, and through its primary function of Gaelic football, hurling,

⁵² Lyrics mode ‘The Bold Fenian Glen’ (http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/d/dubliners/down_by_the_glenside.html) (10 Aug. 2013); Thomas Reidy (MA BHM WS 1555), p.1.

⁵³ Patrick Glynn (MA BMH WS 1033), p. 1.

⁵⁴ Laurence Nugent (MA BMH WS 907), p. 81; Joseph E. A. Connell, ‘Countdown to 2016 : a Soldier’s Song/ Amhrán na bhFiann’ in *History Ireland*, 21, no. 2 (Mar./Apr. 2013), p.

camogie, and handball, the Gaelic Athletic Association, like the Gaelic League, provided a major social outlet. Wherever a League branch was established, a hurling or football team was established also. Physical fitness and activity were among the values encouraged by the Gaelic revival movement; as a result, the majority of children who were introduced to militant activities via Gaelic League and Gaelic Athletic Association, already had a good standard of fitness. The blossoming of the Gaelic Athletic Association during the 1910s can be attributed to its links with the newly-formed Irish Volunteers. Although non-political in its objectives, the Gaelic Athletic Association allowed the Irish Volunteers to attend and recruit at their annual convention in 1914. The conference finished with a short address from Robert Page, on behalf of the Irish Volunteers, asking the delegates on their return to their clubs to promote the objectives of the Volunteer movement.⁵⁵ That this relationship was tangible and strong is evidenced by the fact that post-1916, many prominent sportsmen were arrested along with the rebel leaders. This is not surprising as every Gaelic Athletic Association executive council meeting between 1911 and 1916 was watched and recorded by the Royal Irish Constabulary in their 'suspicious persons records'.⁵⁶ In 1910 the Gaelic Athletic Association also founded a junior league, which meant a school league was established. Elaine Sisson in *Pearse's patriots: St Enda's and the cult of boyhood* connects the importance attributed to both Fianna Éireann boy scouts and the Gaelic Athletic Association, as both provided leading fitness models for youth at the time and both focused to a large extent on teaching the importance of health and taking care of one's body. The fact that the Gaelic Athletic Association was already so embedded part of both school and social life

⁵⁵ Meeting was on 12 Apr. 1914, City Hall, Dublin. 'Cumann Lúit cleas gaedéal ardmiontuiriscí' (GAA Archives, 27-3-1911 ó 11-9-1925, p. 155).

⁵⁶ CO904/AS941.5/ 13, RIC files 'Anti-government organisations, 1882-1921', Jan. 1911-Mar. 1916. Prominent suspects and suspicious strangers.

may be the reason why so few of the youth researched for this study refer to GAA as influencing their decision to join a youth nationalist organisations.⁵⁷

As Ireland experienced significant political and social tension during the early decades of the twentieth century, it is clear that some among the youth were influenced by literature and political debates but also by unfolding political events. Sean Gibbons considered himself ‘a good paper reader’ as a young boy and kept up to date on the international situation. Gibbons distinctly remembers the feeling he had after reading about the Bachelor Walk shootings: he recalled the headline “While Europe talks of war, men and women are being shot down in Dublin streets!”⁵⁸ Annie O’Brien was also spurred on to action by a political event – O’Donovan Rossa’s funeral. After participating in the procession, she joined her local Cumann na mBan branch.⁵⁹ Political awareness came more into play as an influence post-1916, with many of the youth getting caught up in the excitement of the Rising, general election and conscription, which will be evaluated later.

Overall it is clear that the main forms of influence on the younger generation were family, friends and educators in their lives. Their participation in cultural hobbies organised by Gaelic League, as well as their involvement with music, sports and literature, impacted their decision-making; this was minor compared to the family influence. With many families proudly laying claim to their Fenian antecedents, it was inevitable that their children would follow the path to militant Nationalism. Indeed it is clear that most families actively encouraged this course of action and when this did not happen, other local community figures often stepped into the breach. In school, the new generation of young teachers and priests inspired and heavily influenced the youth to become involved. That so many in

⁵⁷ Sisson, *Pearse’s patriots: St Enda’s and the cult of boyhood*, p. 118.

⁵⁸ Seán Gibbons (MA BMH WS927), p. 2.

⁵⁹ Annie O’Brien (MA BMH WS805), p. 2.

their personal statements name teachers as their guide shows clearly how influential an adult in a leadership role could be in shaping the decision-making processes of a youth. The clergy too were influential. These, combined with the cultural hobbies organised by the Gaelic League and GAA, created an environment in which the youth of Ireland learned about politics, history and what their role was to be in future.

Chapter three:

The transition to revolution

‘I held up a Fianna boy I knew with the revolver. With that an elderly man put his hand on my shoulder, saying “Don’t do that to anyone even in fun.”’¹

As already emphasised in this study, the Nationalist community, though small in relation to the total population of Ireland, was nonetheless strong and exerted significant influence over the decision-making of the young generation during the 1910s. The period between 1910 and Easter 1916 was especially important for this community as Ireland entered a period of heightened tension and hostility in political and labour circles. As tensions rose, there was a corresponding increase in the number of militant bodies formed within the Nationalist community, notably the Irish Volunteers, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Cumann na mBan, the Irish Citizen’s Army and Fianna Éireann.

Tension characterised the early to mid-1910s as a series of many minor events coincided during this six-year time span. It was not until the Easter Rising in 1916 that the Nationalist movement, as a nationwide community, staged a show of defiance against the British authorities and, following the executions and mass arrests of many involved (or not involved) in the uprising, popular support for an Irish Republic began to grow significantly.

Internal tensions also divided the Nationalist community itself, as many were torn between supporting the third Home Rule Bill and a desire for more

¹ Mary McLaughlin (MA BMH, WS934), p. 4

favourable terms: this in turn evolved into a dispute over whether to fight for a free Ireland or to fight with the British Army in World War One. Although both political and social issues are important, this chapter will focus specifically on the role of youth in the Nationalist community and their need to be involved in the campaign for independence. The study will begin with an examination of the training undertaken by individuals within their organisations, bearing in mind that after 1913 young people under the age of seventeen appeared in both Nationalist scouting and adult militant organisations. Drawing upon the assistance of many men and women who possessed wealth of knowledge – including professionals – this younger generation learned a range of skills. This chapter explores how they put those skills to use. By reviewing their fundraising and leaflet campaigns, the role that youth organisations played in schemes that had long since been established is revealed. In a context in which major fundraising campaigns were organised in the United States of America, and the women's auxiliary ran collections on a regular basis, the contribution made by youths operating in this arena is assessed. The reasons behind some of their leaflet campaigns during the early part of this decade are also explored.

A large amount of arms were secretly imported into Ireland at this time. Only one gun-running – the Howth Gun Running – was carried out in daylight and with such determination to be visible. All other movement of equipment was carried out by the highest command within the Irish Republican Brotherhood. It is widely known that Fianna Éireann Boy Scouts played a significant role in the Howth operation: this chapter will, therefore, examine the reasons why the younger generation were permitted to be involved in this particular episode.

Parading and marches represent important opportunities for shows of propaganda and during the period 1910–16 in Ireland, there were many occasions when funerals were used to propagate political views. In these contexts, the roles played by young people in the media and in their respective organisations will be evaluated with reference to the necessity for such interventions and their influence on the overall advancement of the Nationalist ‘cause’. Finally, the Easter Rising will be reviewed and the role the youth played will be discussed in detail. Their functions ranged from couriers to full military roles but in the context of this study, gauging the reactions of the adults surrounding them sheds light on the perceived need for the younger generation to be entrusted with such significant roles during the insurrection. Firsthand accounts, memoirs and biographies penned by people involved in the 1910s, together with other personal accounts and newspaper articles, form the evidence base for this chapter.

Following the views enunciated by Michael Cusack, good health and fitness became central to the Gaelic ideal, though not exclusively so since this was also a feature of late Victorian society where the additional leisure time that people had was devoted to sporting activities; in Ireland, nationalists followed this pattern. While the Irish education system was failing in its provision of physical education in schools, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Gaelic League and Fianna Éireann all promoted values of masculinity, teamwork, and heroism.² Members of the younger generation who were involved in militant organisations engaged in a variety of training activities, and for the Nationalist youth, physical fitness was the principal priority.

² De Burca, *The GAA: a history*, pp 14–15; Sisson, *Pearse’s patriots*, p. 119.

This was evident when at the end of the nineteenth century the Gaelic League opened sporting clubs attached to its branches. It can also be seen in the recruitment undertaken by the Irish Volunteers through the Gaelic Athletic Association Annual Convention on 12 April 1914. The recruitment drive was conducted in the belief that those attending Convention were likely to be at the height of their physical fitness. As emphasised in chapter two, despite the fact that the GAA was a non-political athletic club, the Irish Volunteers addressed the conference and asked delegates returning to their clubs to promote support for their force.³

Chapter one highlighted the increasingly significant role that youth began to play in Irish society and the growing recognition that they were the future of an independent Irish nation. This was given expression by Countess de Markievicz in *Bean na hEireann* when she stated that the youth would be the future army of Ireland. Under the guise of training it became clear that some of the youth within the age range under investigation (approximately 9-17 years of age) automatically joined the Irish Volunteers, while others joined Fianna Éireann and stayed within that organisation until they reached their early twenties. It was similar for females, as some were known to be in Clan na nGael Girl Scouts, female Fianna Éireann *sluaighte* and also Cumann na mBan. In reality there was not much difference between training in adult and youth organisations, except for the fact that Fianna Éireann had a longer established training regime.

In the witness statements that the Bureau of Military History gathered during the decade 1947–57, men and women who had been part of the revolutionary period

³ Gaelic Athletic Association, Cumann Lúit Cleas Gaedéal Ardmiontuiriscí, 12 Apr. 1914 (GAA Archives, P155); Sisson, *Pearse's patriots*, p. 118.

listed many training activities, particularly referring to events they felt were of importance. From this it is clear that the priority for those adults involved was training the youth with a view to equipping them with a specific skillset; it is also clear that there were multiple levels to the training that young militants received. The commitment among adults to these youth movements suggests that as early as 1909, the youths involved were already being viewed as members of a future army and the adults certainly felt empowered to exercise a lot of control and influence minors.

Lectures on many subjects were conducted across the country at *sluaighte* and general meetings. Topics covered included historic figures and events, personal experiences of war and also on Gaelic culture and the Irish language. In the main, the speakers were travelling teachers and Nationalist leading figures. Inspections or speeches from Bulmer Hobson, Countess de Markievicz, Liam Mellows and The O'Rahilly were recorded in Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Derry and Belfast.⁴ This practice continued throughout the early 1910s. Patrick Hearne from Waterford city was 13 years old when he joined Fianna Éireann. He recalled Con Colbert and Liam Mellows both visiting from Dublin and giving lectures on Irish history.⁵ *Bean na hEireann* reported on the many guest lecturers who came to speak to Fianna Éireann *sluaighte* in Dublin. Councillor Pat MacCartan gave a lecture on 'the boy heroes of '98' as part of a series of history lectures organised in 1909; other lecturers included Seumas Deakin, a Mr Gregan and Countess de Markievicz.⁶ In rural areas too, the

⁴ Liam O'Callaghan (MA BMH, WS47), p. 2; Patrick Hearne (MA BMH, WS1742), p. 1; Gearóid Ua h-Uallachain (MA BMH, WS 382), p. 35.

⁵ Hearne Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Waterford/Waterford_No_3_Urban/Parliament_Street/672313/) (15 Apr. 2013); Patrick Hearne (MA BMH, WS1742), p. 1.

⁶ *Bean na hEireann*, vol.1-3, Jan., Feb., Mar. 1909.

cultural organisations joined with Fianna Éireann and the Irish Volunteers to co-host lectures on similar topics.

Training in general scouting skills fell into three main categories – map work, rope and knot work and signalling. James Fulham from Dublin joined Fianna Éireann when he was 13 years old and soon after was selected to attend separate signalling classes.⁷ Due to his young age, he admits that he did not appreciate the lessons he received in Morse coding: neither he nor the other boys took it seriously at the time.⁸ First Aid was also taught across the board within both female and male organisations. Liam O’Callaghan from Cork City, who was aged 12 when he joined Fianna Éireann, refers to a Dr. D. J. O’Sullivan teaching his Fianna Éireann *sluagh* First Aid.⁹ In Dublin, Robert Holland, who was also aged 12 when he joined Fianna Éireann, recalled in his Witness statement how Dr Kathleen Lynn acted as First Aid instructor for his *sluagh*. Cumann na mBan in Cork and Dublin also trained their young members in First Aid.¹⁰ Rose McNamara of the newly-established Cumann na mBan in Dublin remembered Seamus Pouch of Fianna Éireann coming to teach in her branch, and that his instruction included drills.¹¹

As Nationalist youth-orientated organisations started to emerge in reaction to the English Boy and Girl Scouts, camping featured largely in their programme and training. Joseph O’Shea from Cork recalled going on frequent weekend camps with

⁷ Fulham Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Wood_Quay/St_Nicholas_Place/68383) (15 Apr. 2013).

⁸ James Fulham (MA BMH, WS630), p. 1.

⁹ O’Callaghan Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Cork/Cork_No_4_Urban_part_of_/Blarney_Street/389951/) (15 Apr. 2013); Liam O’Callaghan (MA BMH, WS47), p. 2.

¹⁰ Nora Cunningham (MA BMH, WS 1690), p. 3; Margaret Kennedy (MA BMH, WS185), p. 2.

¹¹ Rose McNamara (MA BMH, WS482), p. 4.

his *sluagh* and named one place, near ‘Healy’s Bridge’ just outside Cork City, where the woman who owned the land supplied them with free eggs and milk. However, she clearly mistook them for Baden Powell scouts as her house ‘was covered in Union Jacks and had picture of the Royal Family’.¹² James Allen from Busby in Cork city also remembers camping trips: his brother Jerome, who was also in Fianna Éireann, remembered how his *sluagh* went camping in Clashwood, Little Island.¹³ In Dublin, Robert Holland recalled that his favourite places to camp were Ticknock, St Enda’s school grounds, and Malahide. Gearóid Ua h-Uallachain (also known as Garry Holahan) discussed his camping experiences in his witness statement, recounting how shortly after joining, he went on his first camp to Belcamp in north County Dublin (the grounds of Countess de Markievicz’s home).¹⁴ Belcamp served as camp site for many *sluaigh* throughout the country and was the location where the Countess’s clique spent most their time.¹⁵ From their accounts of the activities that went on at the Countess’s house, it is clear that certain members of the younger generation of Nationalists received some training in the use of guns before the Easter 1916 Rising. In discussing the boys that she met at the Countess’s house and their experience of training with the Countess, in the use of guns, Margaret Skinnider recalls how excellent their training was. She relates a conversation between a British officer and the Fianna Éireann boys who surrendered at Mendicity Institute following their leaders’ surrender:

“Who taught you to shoot like that?” he asked them. “The Countess [de] Markievicz”, came the answer. “How often did she drill you?”. “Only on Sundays”, was the reply. “And these great lumps of mine”, exclaimed the

¹² O’Shea Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Cork/Cork_No_4_Urban__part_of_/Roches_Buildings/388720/) (15 Apr. 2013); Joseph O’Shea (MA BMH, WS21), p. 2.

¹³ Allen Busby (MA BMH, WS1628), p. 2.

¹⁴ Holahan Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Mountjoy/Findlater_Place/23800/) (15 Apr. 2013); Gearóid Ua h-Uallachain (MA BMH, WS328), pp 3-4.

¹⁵ Margaret Skinnider, *Doing my bit for Ireland* (New York, 1917), pp 17-20;

officer in disgust, “are drilled twice a day and don’t yet know their left foot from their right!”¹⁶

This is obviously a case of select memory or the work of a good imagination, but nonetheless it highlights the profoundly positive impression that the Countess and her close circle of boys left on Skinnider. James Allan Busby and Liam O’Callaghan both mention that the Cork City *sluighte* owned guns from an early stage but there is no mention in the sources of actual gun-training taking place.¹⁷

By 1915 there is evidence that the boys’ and girls’ movements were in training and preparing for an attack against the English forces in Ireland. This is also borne out by the fact that many older Fianna Éireann members were given greater responsibilities and invited to participate in practise drills organised by the Irish Volunteers. Busby and Holland both mention that many of their older city scouts used to train with the Irish Volunteers.¹⁸ The fact that many adults were involved at different levels of training for youth members demonstrates the control they had on the youth organisations and also suggests they had designs for how they could deploy these young people and their skills to support their military campaigns.

With many new Nationalist militant and women auxiliary organisations trying to establish themselves and fund their activities, fundraising became a major concern. In the main, fundraising was carried out in the United States of America but a lot of low-key work was also ongoing at home with collections and fundraising being organised on a constant basis. Both female and male youth movements helped the Irish Volunteers to fundraise. In Cork, for example, the youth group attached to the Macroom Cumann na mBan, held concerts and plays, and collected on flag days, all

¹⁶ Skinnider, *Doing my bit for Ireland*, pp18-19.

¹⁷ James Allen Busby (MA BMH, WS1628), p. 3; Liam O’Callaghan (MA BMH, WS47), p. 2.

¹⁸ James Allen Busby (MA BMH, WS1628), p.2; Robert Holland (MA BMH, WS280), p. 3.

in support of the Volunteers.¹⁹ The Royal Irish Constabulary reported on various concerts held during the period 1911–15. One concert, held in the Town Hall in Dundalk, County Louth, was jointly organised by the local Sinn Féin party and Fianna Éireann *sluagh*. This particular fundraiser was of interest to the Royal Irish Constabulary as the Countess de Markievicz was present and she was under police surveillance at the time.²⁰

As mentioned previously, recruitment for service in the British Army after the outbreak of World War One led many Nationalist organisations to join forces in staging anti-recruitment campaigns: this became a large part of Fianna Éireann's activities in the years before 1916. In Cork in particular, Fianna Éireann was heavily involved in sustaining the anti-recruitment campaign. Liam O'Callaghan and Sean Healy both describe distributing flyers and holding protests with the Volunteers. On one occasion 'the boys' went to a screening of a recruitment film and battered the screen with eggs before fleeing.²¹ In Dublin, Seamus Pouch recalls that his *sluagh* ran a printing press specifically for generating anti-recruitment posters and leaflets and that at the time of the royal visit in July 1911, 'We undid a lot of festive decorations and generally opposed any attempt to let the visit pass off quietly'.²²

Under the title 'anti-government organisations', the Royal Irish Constabulary recorded details of this incident. Countess de Markievicz and 30 Boy Scouts are said to have distributed leaflets along the road from Dundrum to Sandyford village. It is also stated that 'the purpose of these leaflets was that Ireland would never regain her

¹⁹ Nora Cunningham (MA BMH, WS 1690), p.1.

²⁰ CO904/AS941.5/13 RIC Files 'Anti-government organisations 1882-1921', Jan. 1911. Prominent suspects and suspicious strangers.

²¹ Sean Healy and Liam O'Callaghan (MA BMH, WS47), p. 2.

²² Seamus Pouch (MA BMH, WS267), p. 6

legislature as long as the men and woman of Ireland stand in the streets of Dublin to cheer the King of England and crawl to those who oppress and rob them.²³ Pouch, who made it known that he was a member of Countess de Markievicz's clique, was most likely among this group of scouts.

As previously discussed, the original Boy Scouts, dubbed Baden Powell Scouts, together with the Girl Scouts, experienced rapid growth in membership during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Scouting was the first non-denominational youth organisation of its kind and offered a new pastime for Irish children. In order to understand the changing roles played by these scouting organisations in Ireland during World War one, their stance on recruitment to the British Army needs to be explored.

As international tensions mounted, eventually culminating in the outbreak of World War I, recruitment for service in the British Army in Ireland gained significant pace in 1904. Thirty-five Boy Scouts of the First Port Dublin Sea Scout Troop travelled to Belfast and enlisted within just one week of the outbreak of war. Fourteen of this group were called to a higher service; most served as signallers in the British Navy.²⁴ Those involved in sea scouting who were not old enough to enlist contributed by helping the depleted coast guard, many of whom had enlisted; the youths' sea skills proved vital in enabling them to fulfil this supplementary role.

Throughout Ireland, Baden Powell Scouts and their leaders began to enlist

²³ CO904/AS941.5/13 RIC Files 'Anti-government organisations 1882-1921', Jan. 1911. Prominent suspects and suspicious strangers.

²⁴ Bereford Webb, 'Scouting achievements' in George and William Nash, *Boys of fortune: the first sea scouts troop in the world* (Melbourne, 1986), pp 11, 13, 15.

recruits for service in the British Army. Over 52 members of a small troop known at the time as 6th South Dublin, Lesson Park, fought in World War one; five of them were killed in action.²⁵ Several of those scouts who stayed in Ireland also became involved. This is understandable as the National Education Commission had started a programme in which a record of school attendance was given to all engaged in war service. Within scouting circles, in both Britain and Ireland, a badge scheme was introduced and Scouts could earn badges by completing various war service tasks.

By late August 1914 the *Evening Mail* Scouting Column was highlighting zones within Ireland where boy scouts were needed and, based on group location, allocated work that needed to be completed by the various Dublin scout groups, as shown in Table 3.1. below:

Table 3.1- Assigned war service per Dublin Scout Troops

Dublin Troops	Assigned role
1 st and 2 nd troop	Castle yard; work as aforesaid with a number of smart cyclists.
3 rd and 4 th troops	On duty at Alexander Basin and North Wall, where the keen eyesight and alertness are of much value.
5 th troop	Garrison Headquarters, Phoenix Park.
6 th troop	Kingsbridge Station
7 th troop	Islandbridge Barracks
8 th and 10 th troops	held in reserve to do duty as required.

Source: *Evening Mail*, 29 Aug. 1914.

Scouts war service duties mostly involved telephone and message work, as there was a serious dearth of people capable of fulfilling these roles in Ireland. The Baden Powell

²⁵ 6th South Dublin logbook, dating from 1909- contin. Handmade Memorial plaque P.1 (SI Archives).

Scouts went one route, supporting recruitment into service of the British Army in World War One while those involved in the parallel Fianna Éireann organisation went another route, becoming increasingly involved in militant campaigning.

Girl Scouts also assumed new and important roles during wartime, collecting sphagnum moss to make dressings, knitting for soldiers, acting as hospital orderlies, and helping in canteens. Numerous Dublin troops were also involved in sewing for Belgian refugees, while Girl scouts in Bray, County Wicklow knitted blankets for the troops. Girl scouts also organised a range of fund-raising and relief efforts throughout the country: for example, the Portarlinton troops organised a sale of work in 1915.²⁶ In parallel, Clan na nGael girl scouts were acting more as a boy's organisation, continuing messaging and couriering work for the nationalist organisations.

Although the Nationalist scouting organisation invested some effort in fund-raising, most of the younger generation's energies were channelled into collecting and moving equipment as they were generally willing and obeyed orders; crucially, because of their age, they were unlikely to be stopped by Crown forces whilst engaged in operations. For instance, the Dublin branches of Fianna Éireann took part in the Howth Gun Running. Bulmer Hobson explains in his memoirs and his witness statement that the boy scouts involved played an 'important role in landing of arm in Howth 1914' as they were 'the only body on whose discipline I could rely'.²⁷ Hobson explains that he charged the Fianna Éireann members with responsibility for carrying 2,000 rounds of ammunition back to various locations in Dublin. No Irish Volunteer member was given ammunition in case he tried to use it along with the guns they had

²⁶ Finan, *A hundred years a-growing*, p. 38.

²⁷ Hobson, *Ireland yesterday and tomorrow*, pp 18, 62; Bulmer Hobson (MA BMH, WS53), p. 6.

just procured, against the police.

Robert Holland explains how he and a small number of Fianna Éireann members were approached on the day of gun running by Captain Jack White, who required help with decoding. It was so far from Captain White's mind that Holland and five others could be involved in the operation that they were brought up the hill in Howth and asked to relay the message 'we are ready, are you?' in semaphore to the yacht waiting out in the Howth Harbour.²⁸ It has been noted in many different accounts of the gun running that the Irish Volunteers had marched this route several times during the weeks beforehand; this is probably why there was such a large delay on the Crown forces' side in reacting. As explained during the House of Commons discussion about the episode on 27 July 1914, by the time the order was given to go to Howth, the Irish Volunteers has already left with the arms.²⁹ This particular gun running episode became famous since Hobson deliberately planned it as a daytime manoeuvre instead of the usual night-time affair in order that it would unfold in a 'sufficiently spectacular manner'.³⁰ He believed that marching 1,500 Volunteers to Howth, arming them, and then marching them back to Dublin would be 'beyond the powers of either police or soldiery'.³¹

The *Irish Times* described it as a 'sensational gun-running coup' involving an 'innocent-looking yacht ... a young-lady being at the helm'.³² Hobson succeeded in eliciting the reaction he had planned from both the press and the Nationalist

²⁸ Robert Holland (MA BMH, WS280), p. 20.

²⁹ 1914, *August session, The parliamentary debates*, fifth series, House of Commons, 1909-42 (vols i-cccxciii, London, 1909-42); continued as *Parliamentary debates (Hansard)*, House of Commons, 1942-81 (vols cccxciv-m, London, 1943-82).

³⁰ Hobson, *Ireland yesterday and tomorrow*, p. 60.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³² *Irish Times*, 27 July 1914.

movement and could use this as part of its propaganda against the Crown Forces. The Irish Volunteers praised the planning of the operation. Frank Henderson called it 'rather clever' as after the police spent some time watching them carry out a few marches, go to a new location, have lunch and then march home, they gave up their surveillance.³³ The Howth gun running is an instructive example of youth and adult organisations working together: it also showed the role that the younger generation played within the Nationalist militant organisations. Nearly all accounts of this event highlight the role of Fianna Éireann on this day, with some noting that the boys had to fight the Irish Volunteers off the trek cart as they attempted to gain possession of ammunition. None of the accounts of the boy scouts mention any trouble from the Irish Volunteers. The success of this operation was due to the control the adults had over the younger generation and their confidence that the youth would carry out the operation effectively and without arousing the suspicious attention of the Crown forces.³⁴

On the evening of the Howth gun running, 26 July 1914, the Bachelor's Walk shootings took place in the heart of Dublin city. This incident occurred when soldiers from the Scottish Borderers were returning to their barracks. When they reached Bachelor's Walk, they came across an unarmed but hostile crowd who baited them. An officer who had joined them en route was unaware that their arms were prepared to fire, and gave the order to face the crowd. While he was addressing the civilians, a shot was fired by one of the troops and this was followed by a volley. Three people died and over 32 people were injured. After a very detailed enquiry, the transcript of which was published in many Irish newspapers, it was deemed to have been an

³³ Frank Henderson (MA BMH WS 249), p. 6.

³⁴ Major General Aodh MacNeill (MA BMH, WS1377), p. 9; Peter Paul Galligan (MA BMH, WS170), p. 3.

isolated event in which the Irish Volunteers were not involved.³⁵ During the ensuing enquiry, numerous witnesses said that all that they saw was young girls and boys throwing orange and banana peels at the soldiers: other accounts claimed that they shouted obscenities at the soldiers.³⁶ While reports of these soldiers shooting unarmed civilians shocked the general public, news of the victims' ages added significantly to the sense of outrage. Of the 15 people wounded, three died – Mary Duffy, aged 50, Patrick Quinn, aged 46 and James Brennan, aged 18.³⁷ All victims had bullet wounds: some sustained multiple wounds. Of the 12 that lived, eight were aged 18 or younger. Many within this age group had sustained multiple shots to their legs, back and torso: a 10 year old boy named Luke Kelly was shot in one of his lungs.³⁸ From newspaper reports and letters to the *Freeman's Journal* at the time, it is clear the families of the injured could not afford the hospital costs.

In recognition of this, on 1 August Lorcan G. Sherlock, Lord Mayor of Dublin, placed a notice in the *Freeman's Journal* in which he asked those among the 'Sunday victims' who were not receiving medical treatment to let him know about their circumstances and assured them that he would arrange to have a doctor visit them. The Lord Mayor also donated 100 pounds to cover hospital costs of the victims.³⁹ The Bachelor's Walk 'massacre' as it became known was publicised as an iconic event by Nationalist political parties in their propaganda to gain support. 'Remember Bachelor's Walk' was a familiar refrain during election campaigns and in newspaper articles. Recruitment advertisements for the Irish Volunteers were

³⁵ 1914, *August session*, The parliamentary debates, fifth series, House of Commons, 1909-42 (vols i-cccxciii, London, 1909-42); continued as Parliamentary debates (Hansard), House of Commons, 1942-81 (vols cccxciv-m, London, 1943-82).

³⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 31 July 1914.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5 Aug. 1914.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 July 1914.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 Aug. 1914.

deliberately placed alongside articles about the Bachelor's Walk 'Massacre'.⁴⁰

Nationalist bodies also took steps to ensure that the funerals of the three people killed in the episode were a major affair. Representatives from all Nationalist bodies walked in procession to Glasnevin Cemetery.⁴¹ The *Daily Express* reported that over 50 Roman Catholic clergy joined a crowd of thousands who flocked to Bachelor's and Ormond Quays. Among the other groups who participated were the National Boy Scouts who were 'conspicuous at intervals in the procession'.⁴² Alongside these scouts, the Irish Volunteers carried rifles.⁴³ This represented a timely opportunity for a show of Nationalist propaganda.

This was not the first public funeral in this period to be used for propaganda purposes. The Nationalist community had some practice after the tragic death of Alice Brady in Dublin city in January 1914. Brady was a member of the Irish Women Workers' Union who was shot in the hand during a minor riot in Great Brunswick Street. She died a month later from her wounds. She became a martyr and one of many victims of the violence during the 1913 Lock Out. But what marked her apart was her young age: she was only 16 years old at the time of her death.⁴⁴

In reporting on Alice's funeral, the *Freeman's Journal* remarked the large size of the procession: 500 members of the Irish Women Workers' Union were in attendance and several Nationalist organisations were represented. James Larkin, James Connolly, Delia Larkin and Countess de Markievicz walked behind Alice's

⁴⁰ Ibid., 28 July 1914.

⁴¹ Gearóid Ua h-Uallachain (MA BMH, WS 382), p. 41.

⁴² *Daily Express*, 30 July 1914.

⁴³ *Nenagh News*, 1 Aug. 1914; *Freeman's Journal*, 30 July 1914.

⁴⁴ Yeates, *Lockout Dublin 1913*, pp 487, 497; *Irish Times*, 1, 7 Jan. 1914.

parents in the procession, and the graveside orations were delivered by both Larkin and Connolly. Larkin said that their sister had been sacrificed at the altar of sweating misery and degradation; with her great strength of character, she would have been a great woman. When offering his sympathies to the parents, Larkin also sympathised with representatives of the Irish Women Workers' Union on their loss. He finished by saying that they would leave her graveside more determined than ever to have an Ireland free from slavery thralldom, while James Connolly stated that the blame for her death was on every 'scab' and employer of a 'scab'.⁴⁵

Funerals became extravagant public affairs during this time and were significant occasions for the dissemination of Nationalist propaganda for a free Ireland. The strong Nationalist presence at funerals proved a successful recruitment strategy: Annie Cooney from Dublin explains that at the age of 18 she joined Cumann na mBan soon after attending the funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. She was not alone as many youth present were similarly inspired. Padraig Ua Floinn and friends were so profoundly impressed by what they saw and heard at the funeral (especially the sight of the Irish Volunteers, armed and marching in uniform to the point) that they returned to Fethard, County Waterford determined to start an Irish Volunteer company.⁴⁶

In 1915 when Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, the Fenian leader, who had been exiled to America in 1870 for his involvement in militant nationalism in the 1860s, passed away, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, particularly Tomas Clarke, recognised the propaganda opportunity that his funeral would present in Ireland. At

⁴⁵ *Irish Times*, 5 Jan. 1914.

⁴⁶ Mrs. Annie O'Brien (MA BMH, WS805), p.1; Padraig Ua Floinn (MA BMH, WS1221), p. 2.

the funeral both male and female Nationalist organisations marched in procession throughout Dublin at what is acknowledged to have been one of the largest funerals the city had seen.⁴⁷ Dermott O’Sullivan from 89 Emmet Road was one of four Fianna Éireann members picked to form as guard of honour at each corner of the coffin in City Hall.⁴⁸

O’Sullivan remembered it because he was very young (14 years of age) at the time and they held position day and night with small breaks.⁴⁹ The presence and indeed visibility of the younger generation is a striking feature of the O’Donovan Rossa funeral. It is, for instance, very strikingly obvious in the graveside photographs that survive, demonstrating the Nationalist movement’s determination to make the most of youth participation in order to maximise the propaganda impact of the funeral.

As these examples have shown, using youths for Nationalist propaganda purposes was popular during this period. In the context of the 1913 Lockout, both newspapers and public speakers framed their comments so that the plight of children would gain most attention. The media constantly emphasised the negative effects that living in slums and forced reliance on child-begging in the capital had on the youth in society. Attacks on paper boys were highlighted by William Martin Murphy in both the *Herald* and the *Irish Independent* while in the *Freemans’s Journal*, letters to the

⁴⁷ Nina Ranalli, ‘‘The Dust of Some’’: Glasnevin cemetery and the politics of burial’ (PhD, SIT Ireland, 2008), p. 25.

⁴⁸ O’Sullivan Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/New_Kilmainham/Emmet_Road/56968/15 Apr. 2013).

⁴⁹ Dermot O’Sullivan (MA BMH, WS508), pp 2-3.

editor constantly refereed to the poverty that children faced.⁵⁰

As drills were an important activity at most meetings, parading was a common activity for Nationalist youth organisations. Many of these parades and marches had specific purposes as Dermot O’Sullivan explains in his witness statement of the Military Bureau. During the summer of 1915, his *sluagh* travelled to Limerick City to help the local Fianna Éireann branch. Their purpose was to stage a show of respect for Nationalism as they knew Limerick to be ‘Anti-Irish’. O’Sullivan describes how they marched down the main street, armed with guns. In his view, this parade had a positive effect on public support for the Irish Volunteers, as he believes that it brought about a noticeable improvement in people’s demeanour towards them.⁵¹ The Dublin *slauighte* was not the only one participating in the Limerick parade; both Cork and Tipperary were represented as well.⁵² Patrick O’Connell from the Limerick City *sluagh* was aged 16 at the time and recalls the excitement of having thousands of Fianna Éireann and Irish Volunteer members in the city for the parade. Although past members of Fianna Éireann failed to mention the reception they received when marching, both the newspapers and members of the Irish Volunteers like Joseph V. Lawless, did note that they were jeered and targeted with stones by the crowd.⁵³ The *Connacht Tribune* and *Irish Independent* both recorded that Volunteers were attacked with stones and resorted to shooting blanks.⁵⁴ In the end no arrests were made and all returned home on their respective trains. The Limerick parade is yet another example of Fianna Éireann being deliberately deployed by adult Nationalists

⁵⁰ Kate Cowan ‘‘The children have such freedom, I might say, such possession of the streets’: the children of Dublin 1913’ in Francis Devine (ed.), *1913 A capital in conflict: Dublin city and the 1913 Lockout* (Dublin, 1913), pp 129-31.

⁵¹ Dermot O’Sullivan (MA BMH, WS508), p. 2.

⁵² Joseph V. Lawless (MA BMH, WS1048), p.15.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵⁴ *Connacht Tribune*, 29 May 1915; *Irish Independent*, 24 May 1915.

to advance National radicalism.

Nationalist youth movements in some parts of the country also participated in religious processions and commemoration ceremonies: for instance, Cork City *sluaighte* featured in Catholic processions in the city.⁵⁵ Occasionally their participation resulted in their arrest: this was the case of May O’Kelly in Dublin, who was arrested along with 50 other Clan na nGael Girl Scouts, for marching from their headquarters in North Fredrick Street to Glasnevin Cemetery in 1916. News of their particular arrest made it to the *Irish Times* as May and two other Girl Scouts applied for *Habeas Corpus*.⁵⁶

Some members of Fianna Éireann had previously been in the Boy Scouts but once they joined Fianna Éireann, many of the boys developed a rivalry or hatred for the Baden Powell Boy Scouts. This is evidenced by Seamus Pouch’s account of a hostile exchange between Fianna Éireann scouts and visiting English scouts who were camping in Crumlin to the west of Dublin’s city centre in 1913. Pouch’s *sluagh* heard that English scouts were over from Liverpool and decided they would attack the camp, and order them to go home. Pouch boasted about the incident, recalling how, although the police were called, none of the Fianna Éireann scouts were caught.⁵⁷ It is clear that he was also pleased that a report of the episode was carried in the *Evening Mail*’s weekly column for scouts:

It is most regrettable that incidents such have occurred at Dolphin’s Barn lately should have happened. We trust that our brother scouts will not judge us by the conduct of a few loafers.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ James Allen Busby (MA BMH, WS1628), p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Weekly Irish Times*, 19 Aug. 1916.

⁵⁷ Seamus Pouch (MA BMH, WS267), pp 4-5.

⁵⁸ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 2 Aug. 1913.

It is equally clear that the Irish Baden Powell Scouts were embarrassed by the conduct of the Fianna Éireann boys and felt compelled to distance themselves from the latter.

Such clashes were not confined to Dublin. In Ballybunion, County Kerry, William McCabe, who was 15 years old when he joined Fianna Éireann scouts, remembers an incident between the local boy scouts and Fianna Éireann scouts in Kerry in 1914. During a march to demonstrate support for the Manchester Martyrs, there was a scuffle, from which McCabe claims the Fianna Éireann boys emerged victorious, so much so that he did not remember their rivals coming out in uniform again.⁵⁹

The Easter Rising of 1916 can be viewed as another failed rebellion against English control in Ireland that was spared from being a complete failure by the execution of several of its leaders. Arthur Griffith placed the Rising in perspective, stating ‘ultimately it was the British that saved Padraig Pearse from complete failure’; this was due to the British key errors after the Rising.⁶⁰ Certainly some people outside the Irish Republican Brotherhood circle knew that a Rising was in the offing, but not very many, and so a common aspect of the experience of both female and male youth organisation members was one of confusion on Easter Monday. This was not helped by the fact that many were on camp or at home when fighting actually broke out early on Easter Monday afternoon.

Mary McLaughlin from Dublin is a case in point. She went on a routine march

⁵⁹ McCabe Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Kerry/Killehenny/Ballybunion_Town/271638/) (15 Apr. 2013); William McCabe (MA BMH, WS1212), p. 2.

⁶⁰ Townshend, *Ireland the 20th century*, p. 76.

to Three Rock Mountain in the Dublin/Wicklow Mountains on Easter Monday together with the Clan na nGael girl scouts. It was not until the group tried to get the train back into the city from Dundrum that they realised the Rising had begun. After walking to Stephen's Green, her captain, May Kelly, asked if they could join the soldiers at the Green. McLaughlin states that some of the younger girl scouts grew scared at this point so their parents came and collected them.⁶¹ This shows just how young some members of Clan na nGael actually were. It also conveys an impression that at least some of the girls who stayed behind may not have realised the seriousness of the situation.

Still focussing on Dublin, O'Sullivan explained that none within his *sluagh* was aware that a rising was to take place. They knew that there was to be a march on Easter Sunday, but this was cancelled at the last minute on Saturday night. It was only when he was playing football near Mountjoy prison on Easter Monday that he heard a rising was taking place.⁶² In Waterford the Fianna Éireann pipers band were getting ready to visit the Dublin Fianna Éireann pipers' band as they had done the previous Easter. Patrick Hearne maintained that their President did not know about the rising until they tried to get a train to Dublin on Easter Sunday, only to discover that they were all cancelled.⁶³ This echoes O'Sullivan's statement that many members of his *sluagh* were involved in the Dublin piper's band. Thus, it was not only Nationalist youth members that were confused about what was happening in Dublin. James Stephens wrote in his diary on Easter Monday that 'this [the Rising] had taken everyone by surprise. It is possible, that, with the exception of their staff, it has taken

⁶¹ Mary McLaughlin (MA BMH, WS934), p. 1.

⁶² Dermot O'Sullivan (MA BMH, WS508), p. 4.

⁶³ Patrick Herne (MA BMH, WS1742), p. 6.

the Volunteers themselves by surprise ...'⁶⁴ Stephens was quite right; the city and a lot of the Volunteers were indeed taken by surprise.

Many people involved in the National movements went away for the bank holiday weekend, only to find out that there was a rising, and rushed back to Dublin. Eileen McGrane was spending the Easter weekend in Kildare but found out about the rising and made it to Dublin late on Easter Monday.⁶⁵ Both the *Irish Times* and *London Times* printed diary entries and telegraphs from civilians in Dublin during Easter week. These entries mention that Easter Monday began normally: trams were full of families heading to the Zoological Gardens in the Phoenix Park or people were out walking, enjoying the fine weather. Both make the point that the Volunteers were marching down O'Connell Street but as people were used to seeing the 'Sein Féiners' out marching, they did not take much notice.⁶⁶ This clarifies an important point about this rising. As mentioned previously, when the Irish Republican Brotherhood was revived in 1878, it was decided that the IRB's Supreme Council could not engage in war unless they had the support of the majority of Irish people. From the evidence and reactions to Easter Monday, it is evident that the IRB did not have the support of the Irish people. As many within the wider Nationalist movement were not even aware of the planned rising, it is not surprising that confusion enveloped the youth's understanding of what was happening at the start of Easter week.

Although the majority of the girl and boy scouts did not know about a planned Rising, there was a select few within the Dublin Branch of Fianna Éireann that were given jobs in the days leading up to Easter Monday. Seamus Pouch recalled that 'our

⁶⁴ James Stephens, *The insurrection of Dublin* (London, 1916), p. 1.

⁶⁵ Ryan, *Witnesses inside the Easter Rising*, p. 64.

⁶⁶ *Irish Times*, 25 Apr. 1916; *London Times*, 29 Apr. 1916.

[his *sluagh*'s] job was to break up any attack launched by the enemy troops advancing from Wellington Barracks'. Robert Holland was part of this having been asked by his superiors to stand alongside the gate of Wellington Barracks .⁶⁷ If he saw the soldiers mobilising sooner than 11.15am, he was to cycle to Emerald Square (present day Cork Street, Coombe area) and inform the Volunteers. If nothing happened he was to stay there until 11.58am and then proceed to Ardee Street Brewery.⁶⁸ There was no movement within the barracks during the time he was stationed outside, so he headed straight for the brewery in the end.

Both boys and girls of various Nationalist organisations began to join the rising as it spread throughout the city on Easter Monday. Their main duties were to act as couriers or messengers. After she helped the younger girl scouts return home, McLaughlin began running a personal errand for a Volunteer named Joe O'Reilly who needed extra ammunition that he had left in his house in Drumcondra. McLaughlin was 15 years old at the time⁶⁹ and she reported to the GPO and acted as messenger for both James Connolly and Padraig Pearse until the Thursday of Easter week.⁷⁰

Seamus Bevan also spent Easter week delivering messages, but he was based with Commandant Edward Daly, as messenger, in the Four Courts. His older brothers and his father were involved in the Rising. In Bevan's statement, there is a reminder of how young he was during the Rising as he talked about walking past the GPO and

⁶⁷ Seamus Pouch (MA BMH, WS267), p. 8.

⁶⁸ Robert Holland (MA BMH, WS280), p. 19.

⁶⁹ McLaughlin Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Inns_Quay/King_s_St_North/34165/)(15 Apr. 2013).

⁷⁰ Mary McLaughlin (MA BMH, WS934), pp 2-4.

getting distracted for a while because he liked looking at the flag that was flying on top of the building. In her statement McLaughlin's recalled being scolded by her older brother in the GPO firstly for not being at home, where it was safe, and secondly, for playing with a gun that she had found. Tom Clarke reminded her that she had to be careful not to hurt anyone with it or point it at anyone inside the GPO in case it went off.⁷¹

The youngest-looking youths were picked to deliver messages by the leaders because they would easily get through the barricades and not be suspected by English soldiers. In this, they were right. McLaughlin travelled throughout the city during Easter week but was only stopped on the Friday because an English officer worried about her safety. The officer brought her to the home of a soldier to be minded until the fighting was over.⁷²

Along with dispatching messages for the leaders, many scouts were sent to look for food as there was a shortage by mid-week. James Stephens wrote in his diary on Friday and Saturday that the city had no milk, bread, eggs or newspapers.⁷³ Holland remembered being grateful to the 'Fianna boy' who delivered a few dead chickens to him and the other men and women, stationed in the houses near Wellington Barracks. McLaughlin was also sent out to deliver food from the GPO to the Royal College of Surgeons but had to get help from Dr Kathleen Lynn to carry it.⁷⁴ The shortage of food is one of the many issues that concerned civilians and caused anger at the end of the rising; this is clearly shown in James Stephen's diary.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 5.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Stephens, *The insurrection of Dublin*, p. 52.

⁷⁴ Mary McLaughlin (MA BMH, WS934), p. 4; Robert Holland (MA BMH, WS280), p. 19.

Many Volunteers also remembered experiencing hunger during the rising. Young Cumann na mBan members must also be mentioned, as on numerous occasions they are referred to or highlighted for their service in providing food, nursing wounds and cheerfulness. In Easter 1916, Emily O’Keeffe was 17 years old and based at Watkins’ Brewery on Ardee Street. Holland describes how Emily and her sister provided food, water and provided information on Holland’s family throughout the four days he was on sniper duty.⁷⁵

In Cork, there was much confusion among the Fianna Éireann scouts as to what was happening on Easter Sunday. James Allen Busby was camping with a fellow senior scout during that weekend but received a message on the Saturday to report immediately to the Volunteers Hall on Sheare’s Street. When he arrived he described the scene as ‘a hive of industry’, with volunteers coming and going.⁷⁶ He remained there until Easter Sunday when fellow Fianna Éireann scouts joined them. Its members were armed, marched with the Volunteers to the train station and headed by train to Crookstown. From there, they marched onwards to Macroom where they found that the parade had been cancelled. All Fianna Éireann scouts were instructed to head back for the city.

Both Liam O’Callaghan and Sean Healy admitted that they did not notice anything different in this particular march, and the tension it engendered resembled other mobilisations that they may have experienced.⁷⁷ The following morning, Busby was handed a double barrel gun and told to take up a post on the roof of the Volunteer Hall. He stayed here the whole day and was relieved at night. On Tuesday

⁷⁵ Robert Holland (MA BMH, WS280), p. 19.

⁷⁶ James Allen Busby (MA BMH, WS1628), p. 4.

⁷⁷ Liam O’Callaghan and Sean Healy (MA BMH, WS47), p. 4

he remembered a handful of Volunteers and older Fianna Éireann heading on bicycles to join the fighting in Dublin.⁷⁸

Back in the capital, credit for the Magazine Fort attack is given to a group of mostly Fianna Éireann members, mainly officers, all over the age of 18, although Eamon Martin, commander of this operation, gives the age range as lower. This group of Fianna Éireann officers was to attack and blow up the Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park, thereby initiate the Easter Rising. The commander of this mission made it clear in his witness statement that the fort was not blown up, not because of a failure on the part of his men, but because no high-strength explosives were being stored in the barracks during this time. Martin and his fellow Fianna Éireann members pretended to be a practising football team, and played football until they got close enough to attack the guard at the entrance and then rushed the guardroom.⁷⁹ Many of the Fianna Éireann officers from this group, which totalled 35 people, went on to fight with the 1st Battalion, Companies A, B and C for the rest of Easter Week. They covered Brunswick Street, the Four Courts, North Dublin Union, North Kings Street and the Mendicity Institute. It is believed that this group was aged between 12 and 25 years, though an examination of the census data shows that most were over 17.⁸⁰

One character remarked upon by several people who were either stationed at or passed through the Stephen's Green-College of Surgeon's area is Tommy Keenan. Keenan, from 6 Camden Row, where he lived with his parents, two sisters and his

⁷⁸ James Allen Busby (MA BMH, WS1628), p. 5.

⁷⁹ Eamon Martin (MA BMH, WS592), p. 5.

⁸⁰ Joseph E. A. Connell Jnr., *Where's where in Dublin: a directory of historic locations, 1913-1923* (Dublin, 2006), p. 170. These lists of names come from several Witness statement including Eamon Martin (MA BMH, WS592), p. 5; Captain Seán Prendergast (MA BMH, WS755), pp 70-75; Sean McLoughlin (MA BMH, WS 290), p. 20; Robert Holland (MA BMH, WS280), p. 19.

brother, was 13 years old during the Easter Rising and looked his age.⁸¹ Seamus Kavanagh states that he asked both Tommy Keenan and his own younger brother to go home when the fighting began. He describes Keenan as being ‘very upset’ and claims that they went away.⁸² This was not the case, though. Margaret Skinnider in her memoir acknowledges the ‘invaluable’ role that Keenan played at the College of Surgeons. She describes his role as running errands for food and medicine, and claims that because he was so little, he never attracted attention.⁸³

Interestingly she describes the time when Keenan came to the conclusion that he should visit home. It was over 24 hours before he returned because his father had locked him in his room. She explained that they (being the older generation at the College of Surgeons) sympathised with the father. In the end, Keenan had snuck away when a family friend took him for a walk and returned to the College of Surgeons.⁸⁴ On Saturday 29 April Padraig Pearse surrendered to the British forces. At the end of the week of fighting, 457 people had been killed and over 3,500 ‘dangerous Sinn Féiners’ were arrested throughout the country.⁸⁵ Of the 457 people killed, 59 had been rebels. Among these rebel, 7 were members of Fianna Éireann, more than 3 being killed while delivering dispatches. Also over 30 children were killed out of the 318 civilian casualties recorded.⁸⁶ Out of the 7 Fianna Éireann members killed, 4 were under the age of 17 years.

⁸¹ Keenan Household, 1911 Census, available at: National Archives Ireland (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Fitzwilliam/Camden_Row_South_Side/78594/) (15 Apr. 2013).

⁸² Captain Seamus Kavanagh (MA BMH, WS 1670), p. 35.

⁸³ Skinnider, *Doing my bit for Ireland*, pp 139-40.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁸⁵ Townshend, *Ireland: the 20th century*, p. 80.

⁸⁶ Matthews, *Renegades*, p. 144; *Irish Times*, 21 May 1916.

Sean Bernard Howard, of 26 Temple Cottages, Broadstone, was a Fianna Éireann piper's band member. He was 17 years old when he was shot on Church Street: he died later in the Richmond Hospital.⁸⁷ Similarly James Fox, of 74 Thomas Street, was a member of Fianna Éireann. Aged 16, he was killed in a trench on Stephen's Green near the College of Surgeons.⁸⁸ John Healy, of 188 Phibsborough Road (one of a family of ten), was a member of Fianna Éireann and was acting as a messenger during the Rising. It is said that Thomas McDonagh sent him home as he was 14 years of age. Healy was shot in the head close to home and died from his injuries two days later in the Mater Hospital.⁸⁹ Charles Darcy, of 4 Murphy's Cottages, was a member of the Citizen's Army. Aged 15, Darcy was killed on the roof of Liberty Hall on the 25 April 1916. Sadly it is told by his father that he had asked him to make a choice that week between his family and 'Liberty Hall'.⁹⁰

Many of the younger generation who participated in the rising in Dublin returned home at the end of the fighting.⁹¹ Holland, who turned 19 in the course of the rising, recalls being taken into a large hall with the Volunteers who had fought during the week. The British officers asked anyone who was under 18 years of age to cross the hall: most of the Fianna Éireann boys, who acted as messengers, did this. Holland mentions that some of the boys did not move, as they wanted to stay with their brothers or fathers.⁹²

In the aftermath of the rising, the general public were initially angry, as there

⁸⁷ Capt. R. Henderson (MA BMH, WS1686), p. 22; John Kenny (MA BMH, WS 1693), p. 1. Volunteers killed in action, Irish medals (<http://irishmedals.org/gpage41.html>) (20 Apr. 2013).

⁸⁸ Joe Duffy, 'Children of the revolution' RTE Radio (<http://www.rte.ie/radio1/liveline/generic/2013/0215/367956-special-features/>) (22 Apr. 2013).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland*, p. 10.

⁹² Robert Holland (MA BMH, WS280), p. 45.

was mass destruction caused to buildings in the capital. Then the British government began authorising the execution of several leaders of the Rising. Among the sixteen men that were executed was Con Colbert (aged 27), Edward Daly (aged 25) and Sean Heuston (aged 25), all of whom were actively involved in Fianna Éireann. Within a week public sentiment had changed from anger at the leaders of the rising, to anger at the British government's excessively repressive response. National newspapers had dubbed the rising as the 'Sinn Féin Rebellion', which was untrue; nonetheless, the political party used this to their advantage.

This chapter has examined the training undertaken by individuals within militant Nationalist organisations in the early to mid-1910s, showing that through contact between adult and youth groups within the Nationalist community, knowledge was passed on to this younger generation. Although most funding came from projects in the United States of America and the Women's Auxiliary collections on a regular basis, the youth did play a minor fundraising role by holding concerts and fundraising events. It became clear that it was the anti-British activities that the younger members enjoyed, including attacking Baden Powell Scout campsites and handing out anti-British leaflets during the king's visit. Keeping in mind that most arms moved into the country at this time was through covert activities and under cover of night, the Howth gun running was an exceptional operation in which Fianna Éireann played a vital role. Funerals, parading and marches served as propaganda opportunities during this period. Following the norms of the time, young people were used in both death and life situations. The funeral of Alice Brady, and the use of Fianna Éireann scouts as guards for O'Donovan Rossa's wake in City Hall, are just two examples of the

extremes to which element within militant Nationalist circles were prepared to go.

Finally, the Easter Rising has been reviewed to highlight the significant roles played by many of the youth involved, ranging from couriers, to armed combatants, and to highlight the death toll of over 30 minors. Young people within the Nationalist community played a vital part during this period of tension and also stepped up to fulfil more prominent and significant roles during the Easter Rising. The contribution of youth to militant Nationalist campaigning developed in the period from training to actual direct participation, and those who were not involved directly in combat fighting still played a vital role. The duration of the Rising can be directly associated with the role of the younger generation. The services they provided in the form of couriers, messengers and forgers for food, provided valuable support for the fighting Volunteers. This was a turning point for the younger generation; their role within the Nationalist movement rapidly evolved from espousing a political ideology to direct military engagement.

Chapter four:

The evolution of youth responsibility

‘However, our youthful minds were more interested in arms than in Irish.’¹

In the immediate aftermath of the 1916 Rising, public sentiment changed to anger directed at the British Government as the latter took a number of decisions that gave the Nationalist community and the Sinn Féin party enough reasons to stir up public sentiment against it. Their efforts proved effective in the general election of 1918, as Sinn Féin won 73 out of 105 seats. After the rising, the Nationalist community advanced towards pursuing militant action rather than peaceful political means. Thus, the final phase covered by this study spans the period May 1916 to December 1921. This chapter will elaborate on the major changes and growth that occurred within the Nationalist community, focussing in particular on the youth who were vital to this community and who were profoundly impacted by its changed nature. Whilst discussing the community at large, the concentration will be assessing changes in young people’s environment and tracing how their position in Irish society evolved in this period.

Through the restructuring of the Irish Volunteers and Fianna Éireann, it becomes clear that for some contemporaries, age was less an obstacle and more of an advantage in the War of Independence campaign. This pattern varied according to different localities and local Volunteer leaders; for instance, in Munster more of the young people discussed joined the Irish Volunteers at a young age. Highlighting the cases of individual boys, this study will show how the youth involved in Nationalist

¹ Thomas Dwyer (MA BMH, WS1198), p. 8.

organisations were given greater roles of responsibility in the movement during the War of Independence and that levels of participation in guerrilla warfare varied, with some boys engaging in fighting at a young age in a very limited number of cases, while others only became involved when needed. This chapter will demonstrate the price that these youth paid for their role in the military campaign.

All involved experienced consequences of the war – including physical hardship, and fear of arrest, home burnings, prison sentences, and their own death or that of their friends. The following analysis draws extensively on a selection of first-hand accounts, memoirs and biographies composed by participants in the Revolution. Other contemporary personal accounts and newspaper articles are used to corroborate details of events in which youths were involved, while government records on the state of affairs in Ireland throughout the War of Independence are also vital to the analysis.

Following the un-conditional surrender of the leaders of the Easter uprising in Dublin, throughout the country thousands of men and women were rounded up, taken from work and their homes without notice, and arrested under regulation 14B of the Defence against the Realm Act (1916). This was an act passed just as World War One began (but which had various additions in years after) to help the British Empire in time of war. Initially, 3,430 men and 79 women were arrested on the grounds of supposed connections to the rising. This caused outrage as many had no involvement.²

² Townshend, *Ireland: the 20th century*, p. 80.

The House of Commons sessions offers an interesting insight into the disorganised fashion in which these arrests were carried out. In the month of May alone, 287 different cases of arrests were cited and questioned by Irish parliamentary members.³ Some of these exposed the rash judgement of the Crown forces in their rush to suppress the rising. For instance, three teachers in the Christian Brother's school in Charleville, County Cork were arrested whilst teaching their classes. In addition, Mortimer O'Connor, an American citizen visiting his sisters, and Michael Doyle, a 75-year-old invalid from Dublin who had no connection to nationalism, were arrested during this period and sent to England to prison without a trial. At the end of May, the Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith was still unable to answer questions about which prison the American, Mortimer O'Connor had been sent to, but promised his release as soon as possible.⁴ Asquith and the War Office backed this decision for action taken by General Maxwell during earlier sessions of the House of Commons. However, by the end of May, MPs were questioning many of his decisions around quelling insurrection in Ireland.

Michael Dineen, aged 16 years at the time, recalls four members of the Volunteers being arrested and the nervousness that this caused among the rest of the company. He remarked how 'Following these raids and arrests I did not sleep at home for some weeks until things had quietened down somewhat and then raids were discontinued.'⁵ Dineen was a lone boy scout, attached the Lyre Company in Cork. He played no part in the rising but witnessed many of those involved in Nationalist movements being arrested.

³ *The parliamentary debates*, fifth ser., House of Commons, May 1916 (vols LXXXI, LXXXII, London, 1909-42).

⁴ *The parliamentary debates*, fifth series, House of Commons, 15 May, 30 May 1916 (vols LXXXI, LXXXII, London, 1909-42).

⁵ Michael Dineen (MA BMH, WS1536), p. 4.

One MP implored the government to take note of the ‘dissatisfaction that [was] being caused in all parts of Ireland owing to the whole-sale arrests of those of the labour and Gaelic movement’ and to limit the arrests of innocent people. This statement alone exposes the chaos and misunderstandings behind most arrests at this time. Arrests, raids on homes and businesses were taking place throughout the country were practised under the terms of the Rising rebels and Defence against the Realm Act (1916).

As stated previously, the public were on the whole opposed to the rising down to the point when executions started. It was clear to the public, the media and also parliament that the rush to execution was turning public sentiment against them rapidly.⁶ By the time the executions were halted, the damage had been done in the Irish public’s eyes. Many of those who wrote personal accounts and memoirs about their experience of this time as youths could recall where they were when they heard news of the executions and the effect that this had on them. Sorcha McDermot had begun work in the central office of the Gaelic League when she heard about the executions. She recalls how men present in the office cried on hearing the news.⁷ Elizabeth Bloxham, a student in Dublin and a volunteer during the rising, remembers how frequent the executions became, and how the news was conveyed in the broadsheets on a daily basis;

Then came the time when each day’s paper brought news of the executions ... later on the woman of the house told me that whenever she entered my room at that time she felt I was as one watching by [that is, observing] the dead.⁸

Bloxham’s acute fear is understandable given that many of the executed men

⁶ *The parliamentary debates*, fifth series, House of Commons, 15 May 1916 (vols LXXXI, LXXXII, London, 1909-42).

⁷ Sorcha McDermot (MA BMH, WS945), p. 1.

⁸ Elizabeth Bloxham (MA BMH, WS632), p. 24.

had been her personal friends. Kevin R. O'Sheil eloquently describes the effects of the executions on Irish society in his witness statement in 1956:

The executions played a prime part in changing the opinion and sympathies of the country. Long drawn-out and lingering as they were, it took them to wipe out completely and in a remarkably short time the hostile attitude of Irish Nationalist and Catholic thought to the Easter Rising. Before the last execution had been carried out ... a profound and radical psychological revolution had begun in a people that was and is notoriously conservative, in some ways to an almost obscurantist extent, and that had, after great toil, been wholly won round to purely constitutional agitation. And, within a year or two of the Rising, that psychological revolution was completed. Irish nationalism was, in that small space of time, transformed from constitutionalism and a pro-Empire outlook, not only to a violent anti-English and separatist outlook, but! to a total renunciation of parliamentary methods, and a return to those of physical force and Meagher's "Sword"; a revolution even more remarkable, and infinitely more speedy, than that which it replaced.⁹

This 'radical psychological revolution' in society saw Nationalist organisations of all kinds, from cultural to sporting, and political to military, swept up in a wave of popular support for major change. This in turn resulted in increased support for the Irish National Aid Fund towards the end of 1916. Two separate funds (the Irish National Aid Fund and the Volunteers Dependents Fund) were established in the immediate aftermath of the insurrection to help the families of men and women imprisoned or lost during the struggle; the two were merged by August 1916.¹⁰

Within months, this fund had raised a very substantial sum. Fundraising was done throughout the country; mostly it involved small groups of women and young people spontaneously organising concerts, dances and collections of food parcels and clothes. Subscription-style fundraising was also in use. This fund ran until the last prisoners were released from jail in July 1917. At that point, they closed their accounts, having raised a total of £134,520. This fund was used by Nationalist movements to

⁹ Kevin R. O'Sheil (MA BMH, WS1700), p. 525.

¹⁰ F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (Waukegan, 2009), pp 381-2.

grow their numbers and so enabled Sinn Féin as a political party to grow.¹¹

Whilst in prison, the men had the time to reflect on the need to restructure the Irish Volunteers. They were in a unique situation; young men (the majority in their twenties or early thirties) from all over the country were now in a place that afforded them a lot of time to debate and plan.¹² Hundreds of ordinary Nationalist revivalists, with interests in literacy, politics and sports, and little previous involvement in organizations such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood or the Irish Volunteers, were imprisoned together. There, they were brought into contact with emerging revolutionary political doctrine. As the releases began to happen in the summer of 1916, all Nationalist organisations began to become politically radicalized.¹³

Because many youths escaped arrest or were sent home for being too young, both Fianna Éireann and Cumann na nGael experienced a growth in numbers. James Allen Busby describes having to split the Cork City *sluagh* into two *sluaighte* since they had more than 80 boys on the books.¹⁴ In Dublin, with the rapid growth of the Nationalist and military organisations and most of its commanding officers either executed or in prison, an executive council was elected to keep the Nationalist movement running. Those elected were Éamon Martin (aged 24) as Chairman, Seamus Pouch, Liam Staines, Theo Fitzgerald and Joe Reynolds (aged 18). By July 1917 Dublin *sluagh* was organised into two battalions, following the Irish Volunteers and standard army practice. Each was positioned on either side of the

¹¹ Matthews, *Renegades*, p. 176; *Leitrim Observer*, 29 July 1916.

¹² O'Mahoney, *Frongoch: university of revolution*.

¹³ Richard McElligott, '1916 and the radicalization of the Gaelic Athletic Association' in *Éire-Ireland*, 48, 1 & 2 (Spring /Summer 2013), pp 101-02; Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, p. 375.

¹⁴ James Allen Busby (MA BMH, WS1628), p. 2.

River Liffey, and divided into 13 *sluaighte*.¹⁵

While the cities had large populations from which to create new *sluaighte*, boys throughout Ireland with an interest in making some contribution were trying to join the established Irish Volunteer Company in their local towns. Michael Ó Donnchadha of Cappoquin, County Waterford (aged 16 at the time), asked to join the Volunteers, but was told that he was too young. He was not alone: in Cappoquin, a Fianna Éireann branch of that Volunteer Company was founded for 5 youths who were interested in participating in the campaign.¹⁶ William McCarthy had been a member of the original Fianna Éireann *sluagh* in the town before the rising. After it was disbanded and reorganised in the aftermath of Easter week, he re-joined with Ó Donnchadha.¹⁷ This closely resembled the situation for Thomas (‘Nuts’) O’Connor, aged 15 at this time, in Tralee, County Kerry. The large membership in Fianna Éireann was closely linked to a number of Irish Volunteer companies in the Tralee area and they did almost all of their drilling and training together with the Volunteers.¹⁸ According to Richard Russell of Innishannon in County Cork, who was aged 13 in 1916, his Fianna Éireann *sluagh* was also attached to the local company and worked with it closely.

In other, more rural areas, members of youth organisations simply joined with the Irish Volunteers, despite the age differential. Andrew Kirwan, of Bunmahon, County Waterford, was the same age as Ó Donnchadha when he joined the local Irish Volunteer company. It was common practise that each company decided upon the

¹⁵ Damian Lawlor, *Na Fianna Eireann and the Irish Revolution, 1909-1923* (Offaly, 2009), p.119; Joe Reynolds (MA BMH, WS191), p. 9.

¹⁶ Michael Ó Donnchadha (MA BMH, WS1741), p. 19.

¹⁷ William McCarthy (MA BMH, WS778), p. 1.

¹⁸ Thomas O Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), p. 1.

role that youth members should fulfil and also fixed the age restriction. William King of Leeane, County Mayo was only 14 years of age and still attending school when he joined the local Irish Volunteer company. Although it is not stated, he might have been accepted at that age due to that fact that his brother John (who was 17 years of age) brought him along to join the company.¹⁹ Daniel Kelly of Skibbereen, County Cork, joined his local Irish Volunteer company aged 15 years. Similar cases are to be found across the country: both James McCarthy of Ardgoom, County Cork and Andrew Kavanagh of Arklow, County Wicklow were 16 when they joined. John Crimmins of Milford, County Cork was 15 while and Con Spain of Nenagh, Tipperary, was only 14 years old.²⁰ John Crimmins's case was similar to William King's since he too joined along with his brother.

Making the transfer from the youth movements to the Irish Volunteers was not so informal in all parts of the country. In Belfast, Roger E. McCorley had a quite different experience from the others as he had to submit his name for appeal to join the Volunteers in the city, which he did in 1916, at 15 years old age. In 1917 he was invited to attend a meeting.²¹ In Londonderry Liam Brady had been a member of the local Fianna Éireann organisation prior to the rising, though he did experience some resistance as the organisers considered him too young. In 1914, aged 13, he went to the local Fianna Éireann meeting, expecting to join, but was turned away and told to wait a few years. Ten months later, he was back again and on this occasion he was accepted. Some were exceptionally young: Thomas Dargan of Limerick City who had been associated with Fianna Éireann before the Rising was only 11 years of age when

¹⁹ William King (MA BMH, WS1381), p. 3.

²⁰ Daniel Kelly (MA BMH, WS1590), p. 1; Andrew Kavanagh (MA BMH, WS1471), p. 1; John Crimmins (MA BMH, WS1039), p. 1; Con Spain (MA BMH, WS 1464), p. 1.

²¹ Roger E. McCorley (MA BMH, WS389), p. 2.

the Rising took place.

As the release of prisoners began, a reorganisation of the militant movements took place, spurred on by the Sinn Féin convention in October 1917. As part of that event, an Irish Volunteer convention was held at Croke Park to plan the reorganisation of its structure. An executive council was elected, comprising of seven ‘resident’ members in Dublin and three representatives from each province. Soon after this convention, a professional staff team were hired to ensure that the organisation continued to function. As the delegates returned to their communities, changes took place within their localities with battalions being formed and Irish Volunteer companies restructuring. Joseph Murray was aged 17 at this time and remembers a new ‘C’ company being formed in Belfast based on members of Sean MacDermott Branch of Sinn Féin. Roger McCorley also became involved in this company after the restructuring of the Belfast battalion took place.²²

Symbolically, the move to be organised into an army-based structure similar to that of the British Army, affected how the young generation viewed their involvement and importance in the campaign for independence. From their personal accounts, it is clear that these boys were proud to be carrying out the duties assigned to them in their designated roles within the companies. For instance, in Skibbereen, Daniel Kelly became a dispatcher for communication between the companies within his battalion in Cork, cycling to each company in order to pass on information.²³ Also in Cork, James McCarthy was in charge of cleaning and taking care of the rifles captured by the Eyries Company. At 16, this was a dangerous job as evidenced by the

²² Joseph Murray (MA BMH, WS412), p. 1; Roger E. McCorley (MA BMH, WS389), p. 2.

²³ Daniel Kelly (MA BMH, WS1590), p. 2.

fact that in 1919 a Fianna Éireann member in Cove named Joe Reid, shot himself accidentally when cleaning a revolver at his home.²⁴

As the Nationalist organisations became structured, routine parades and marches began to take place weekly and local communities grew accustomed to seeing the Volunteers circulating in their midst. In the Clonakilty area of County Cork, Michael Dineen and his company would march to visit other local companies on a regular basis and vice versa. In Enniscorthy, County Wexford the local Fianna Éireann and Irish Volunteer company paraded together in uniform to a *féis* at which Thomas Dwyer's *sluagh* had a hurling team that played against a team from Waterford.²⁵

As the community grew more accustomed to the presence of Nationalist militants in their midst, the latter's participation in Gaelic cultural events was increasingly sought after. *Aeriochts*, *féiseanna* and local concerts were organised by local Gaelic League or Sinn Féin clubs were attended by many members of Irish Volunteers and Fianna Éireann. In some cases they turned out in case trouble with the local Royal Irish Constabulary should erupt.

In Gallbally, County Cork, Amos Reidy recalled an *aeriocht* that was to have been held at Mitchelstown in the same county. The authorities at the time issued a proclamation prohibiting the holding of the *aeriocht* in the town or surrounding district. According to Reidy, the reason for the event was to mark 'the anniversary of a day in Land League history when the famous slogan "don't hesitate to shoot" was

²⁴ Kevin Murphy (MA BMH, WS1629), p. 5; Lawlor, *Na Fianna Eireann*, p. 125.

²⁵ Thomas Dwyer (MA BMH, WS1198), p. 8.

the British order of the day.’ The Scottish Borderers were stationed at Kilworth camp close by and arrived in Mitchelstown on the day of the event, complete with full war equipment - armoured cars, ambulances, and machine guns mounted on lorries. They also began to search people in the area. The Galbally Company acted as dispatch riders throughout the county, taking the news that the *aeriocht* had been moved to Anglesboro, about six miles from Mitchelstown and also calling in local companies. In the end, the *aeriocht* passed off peacefully in the changed venue.²⁶

In Derry, the local clubs would hold *ceilidhes* nearly every Sunday night in the Volunteers’ halls. All the community would attend these and Brady remarked that it represented a time ‘when the Irish people stood as one solid block’, and had fond memories from this time, in the safety of the local company.²⁷ Dwyer and members of his *sluagh* attended a *féis*. It was significant for him as he had an opportunity to wear his new uniform at the event, and also participated in a hurling game, *sluagh* against *slaugh*. When the boys returned, Captain Kehoe appealed to them to improve their Irish, as they had not done very well at the *féis*. Dwyer ends this story with an intriguing antidote; ‘However, our youthful minds were more interested in arms than in Irish.’²⁸

In these years, many of the youth participated in activities that they believed would help advance the Nationalist agenda in Ireland: in some cases, they did make a significant contribution. As a real war began within the country, there is clear evidence that certain youths set out to cause mayhem, not all necessary part of the nationalist movements. Andrew Kavanagh in Arklow, County Wicklow worked with

²⁶ Amos Reidy (MA BMH, WS1015), p. 2.

²⁷ Liam Brady (MA BMH, WS676), p. 28.

²⁸ Thomas Dwyer (MA BMH, WS1198), p. 8.

other younger members of his company: he seized and burned British newspapers, which, he claimed carried reports of ‘several spectacular stunts in that respect.’ They began delivering papers outside Arklow to be collected by the RIC but the boys used to go to Woodenbridge or Avoca station and burn them before the RIC arrived.²⁹ In Derry city, when the curfews (working 10.30pm- 5.30am) came into practice, the children of the city began to place pranks for the curfew patrols. One of the pranks was a few minutes before curfew, tying strong thin black rope across the various streets and scattering broken glass and barbed wire which they had cut into lengths of about 1 foot, so that Military Patrols would run into the ropes or puncture their tires on the broken glass or the prongs of the barbed wire. In other cases, when the nights grew darker, some children removed the lids of the manholes of the City sewers especially in Lecky Road and Rosville Street.³⁰ The *Irish Times* reported the case of May O’Kelly in Dublin who would had been arrested along with 50 more of her fellow Clan na nGael members for marching from their head-quarters in North Fredrick Street to Glasnevin Cemetery. O’Kelly and two other girls applied for *habeas corpus*.³¹ These incidents are just a few samples of the significant retaliation that began against the Crown forces by children who sensed a shift in Ireland’s loyalty to the British Empire.

By 1917, Fianna Éireann started arming themselves. They began collecting arms, much to the displeasure of some within the ranks of the Irish Republican Army who were, themselves, constantly grappling with a lack of munitions. In other cases, the younger generation organised and participated in arms raids directly for the IRA. In Limerick, Dargan’s *slaugh* started to raid the city for arms in early 1918. He

²⁹ Andrew Kavanagh (MA BMH, WS1471), p. 1

³⁰ Liam Brady (MA BMH, WS676), p. 63.

³¹ *Weekly Irish Times*, 19 Aug. 1916.

described their success ‘at the beginning was anything but good’.³² This he attributed to a lack of good information and the fact that the average age within the group was 15, the majority of whom had no experience of combat. Dargan considered the group’s early years as training or practise for the war situation which erupted in early 1919. In one incident, the group raided the local stores called Messrs. Bannatyne’s, located on Roches Street. Around 12 of the boys, along with Dargan, were involved. But this was also a location used by Dargan’s employer for storage of supplies. On the afternoon of the raid, Dargan was back in work at the *Limerick Chronicle*: needing to find out the current prices for flour, bran and selection of other foodstuff, he proceeded to the stores. He describes how, going back into the stores, he met a man who:

... looked at me in surprise as I had held him up that morning. He started to give me the prices when in came a party of RIC and tans. I was beginning to feel a bit nervous at this time, but when I looked at the clerk behind the counter, I thought he was going to faint.³³

This slightly humorous end to the story highlights an interesting situation. The clerk may not have reported the crime, as he was just as nervous as Dargan in the situation. Though not all of society was in support of a war against the British, some just did not react in either way. Either way, it was still interpreted as support for the IRA. James McCarthy was deployed for reconnaissance in operations in Eyries, County Cork as part of arms raids. One particularly significant incident occurred on St Patrick’s Day 1918 when it was decided to raid the barracks while all were out. McCarthy scouted at the barracks at first and discovered there was an orderly on duty; he then proceeded to the local pub, on the outskirts of the village, to watch for the arrival of other RIC members. Joseph McKenna describes this incident in his book *Guerrilla warfare in*

³² Thomas Dargan (MA BMH, WS 1404), p. 3.

³³ Ibid., p. 5.

the Irish War of Independence, 1919-1921 as typical of arms raids, as this was a small barracks with a sergeant and three constables.³⁴ In Enniscorthy, County Wexford Thomas Dwyer also did scouting work during raids at this time. He watched over the barracks a number of times; his job was to report immediately if there was any movement during their munitions raids. On one occasion Commandant Seamus Rafter sustained serious injuries whilst moving munitions. Dwyer sat with a few others for over 17 days and nights, watching the barracks and movements of the R.I.C. This was due to their fear that as a result of loud explosion in which Rafter was hurt, the R.I.C. would come to investigate; they never did in the end.³⁵

There were sustained efforts to enforce curfews and to organise raids and arrests all over the country as General Maxwell clearly struggled to stem the growing tide of popular support for militant Nationalists. Some Sinn Féin candidates were arrested for giving speeches; many went on hunger strike while in prison. James Allan Busby remembered how during the hunger strikes at Cork Gaol in 1917, he and fellow Fianna Éireann members delivered clothes to the strikers and also gave food to those prisoners who were not on hunger strike.³⁶

The Representation of the People Act (1918) made electorate changes that would have a significant impact on the role and influence of young people in Irish political life. This Act gave women over the age of 30 years, all men over the age of

³⁴ James McCarthy (MA BMH, WS1567), p. 3; McKenna, *Guerrilla warfare in the Irish War of Independence*, pp 57-8.

³⁵ Thomas Dwyer (MA BMH, WS1198), p. 8.

³⁶ James Allan Busby (MA BMH, WS 1628), p. 5. The hunger strikers!received significant media coverage; *The Irish Times* had nearly daily updates at one point during late 1917. The media focused on the hunger strikes after the death of Thomas Ashe in Dublin's Mountjoy Gaol. Ashe died from being force-fed and after his death hunger strikers were released under doctor's orders when their health was in danger. In some cases this meant that men were released after four days: see *Irish Times*, 20 Nov. 1917; Tomás Ó Maoileoin (MA BMH, WS 845), p. 27; Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, p. 386.

21 years and men in the military over the age of 19 years the right to vote. Due to World War One the 1915 election did not take place, which meant that there was a ten-year gap since the last vote. This grew the Irish electoral pool from 701,474 to 1,936,673.³⁷ World War One had also halted youth emigration from Ireland. These factors combined to create a situation in which the young adult generation between the ages of 21 and 29, through voting, could swing the results of elections. As stated before it was this generation that more sympathetic towards militant Nationalism, so Sinn Féin had the backing of a large cohort of this generation in Ireland 1917. Also in its favour was the fact that the majority of its candidates were young, among them Michael Collins who was 28 years old when elected in the south Cork Constituency, Liam Mellows who was 26 years old when elected in both Galway east and Meath north Constituencies, Ernest Blythe who was 29 years old when elected in the Monaghan north Constituency and also James Ryan who was 27 years old when elected in the Wexford south Constituency.³⁸

Aged 16, Andrew Kirwan spent most of 1918 carrying out election campaigning duties with his Company in Waterford; his efforts were rewarded when Cathal Brugha won by 75% of the votes.³⁹ In Galway where the IRA campaigned in pairs, Thomas Donnellan, then aged 14, campaigned on behalf of Sinn Féin candidate Dr Brain Cusack. Cusack won the Galway North constituency with 68% of the votes.⁴⁰ Amos Reidy helped with the campaign for Sinn Féin candidate Dr Dick

³⁷ Francis Costello, *The Irish Revolution and its aftermath, 1916- 1923: years of revolt* (Dublin, 2003), p. 37.

³⁸ Dáil Éireann Members Database, 'First Dail' (<http://www.oireachtas.ie/members-hist/default.asp?housetype=0&HouseNum=1&disp=mem>) (8 June 2013).

³⁹ Andrew Kirwan (MA BMH, WS1179), p. 1; General election 1918 (<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1918&cons=227>) (8 Aug. 2013).

⁴⁰ General election 1918 (<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1918&cons=126>) (8 Aug. 2013); Thomas Donnellan (MA BMH, WS1378), p. 1.

Hayes in Newcastle West. On the day of election voting, both he and his father lost their jobs in Phelan's Stores due to his father having voted for the Sinn Féin candidate. Reidy was 15 years old at the time. After this, he remembers people in the locality boycotting Phelan's due to their dismissal. His contention appears to be borne out by the election result: the Sinn Féin candidate won with 77% of the votes for the Limerick east constituency.⁴¹ William King (aged 14 at the time) recalls his excitement as a boy during the election campaigns on the Mayo/Galway border in Leenane. He participated in selling 'green white and orange badges bearing photographs of the executed and imprisoned 1916 leaders' for campaign funds and recalls how;

I remember that at the time green, white and gold ties were worn by a big number of boys. I was then a young boy I was very proud to wear my green, white and gold badge and tie. I collected the slogans and learned them off by heart... One of the slogans I now remember was: "Two men now call you for your vote, Two of the O'Malley clan, As William trusts in England still, So Pádraig is your man".⁴²

King's uncle, with whom he was living at the time, went out on horse and cart to bring people to the polling booths on voting day. The efforts of the local nationalist community paid off as Padraic Ó Maille won the Galway Connemara constituency with 77% of the votes.⁴³

Con Spain from Nenagh, Tipperary, describes the 'bitter contest' that took place in South Tipperary at this time and mentions that eight men from the company went to Waterford City to help with 'the preservation of law and order in that city

⁴¹ Amos Reidy (MA BMH, WS1015), p. 3; General election 1918 (<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1918&cons=159>) (8 Aug. 2013).

⁴² William King (MA BMH, WS1381), p. 4.

⁴³ William King (MA BMH, WS1381), p. 4; General election 1918 (<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1918&cons=121>) (8 Aug. 2013).

during the campaign'.⁴⁴ The pig-farmers of Waterford clashed with the Irish Volunteers at the time of the election. Indeed, Spain recalls that the clashes continued after the election at the Fair in Nenagh. Richard Russell of Innishannon in County Cork also remembers his Company sending five men to Waterford City for 'protection duty'. On 15 March the *Freeman's Journal* published a letter from the Rev Dr Hackett, a prominent priest in Waterford City, in which he urged Catholics not to become embroiled in the politics of the day since 'intimidation or violence, no matter by whom practiced, cannot be defended ... and gives our enemies an opportunity to sneer at and despise us'.⁴⁵

In the end, even though this help was sent from many places, Captain William Redmond, an Irish Parliamentary party candidate, won the election in Waterford City. Redmond sat in the House of Commons after the election but fought hard against conscription being introduced in Ireland. By contrast, in Tipperary constituencies, all Sinn Féin candidates won their elections.⁴⁶ Like King, Brady found campaigning and election day in Londonderry inspiring and goes into detail in his witness statement. He describes the efforts of the Nationalist community on the day; Sinn Féin had cars to get people to voting booths; every booth had a representative of the party there and Cumann na mBan were seen going from booth to booth with refreshments all day. He finishes his description of the day stating; 'The Tricolour flew freely in the city'.⁴⁷ Yet, although this seems like a strong campaign and the Sinn Féin candidate, Eoin MacNeill, emerged victorious, his margin was slim - just over 2%.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Con Spain (MA BMH, WS1464), p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 15 Mar. 1918.

⁴⁶ Richard Russell (MA BMH, WS1591), p. 2; Con Spain (MA BMH, WS1464), p. 2; General election 1918 (<http://electionsireland.org/results/general/01dail.cfm>) (8 Aug. 2013).

⁴⁷ Liam Brady (MA BMH, WS676), p. 30.

⁴⁸ General election 1918 (<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1918&cons=161>) (8 Aug.

Out of the 105 elected members of parliament for Ireland, 73 were Sinn Féin members. In all, 25 of these ran unopposed, 17 of these being in the province of Munster. Four of these candidates ran in multiple places so over 69 individual Sinn Féin candidates were elected. On 21 January 1919, 30 out of a possible 105 members representing 30 constituencies answered the roll of Dáil Éireann the Irish for ‘Assembly of Ireland’.⁴⁹ From the sources it is evident the Sinn Féin party was having an impact in a majority of local communities at this point. The alternative government had the support of the majority who backed Sinn Féin’s decision to boycott Westminster completely. This became more evident when the threat of conscription loomed over the island.

After the Dáil Eireann sat for the first time, the Irish Volunteers officially became known as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Fianna Éireann becoming a militant branch of this new army.⁵⁰ After years of deliberation, the British government decided to press ahead with conscription in Ireland. The general election showed the British government that the electorate in Ireland was changing their view on British control, but the threat of conscription united many elements across Irish society like never before. The bill was passed on 16 April 1918.⁵¹ Two days later, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Laurence O’Neill, hosted a conference bringing together the leaders of Sinn Féin, the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Irish Trade Union Congress. A pledge against conscription was agreed by all present. On the same evening the Roman Catholic bishops were holding their annual meeting and denounced

2013).

⁴⁹ Costello, *The Irish Revolution and its aftermath*, p. 39.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁵¹ 1918 (19) Military service. A bill [as amended in committee] to make further provision with respect to military service during the present war; Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, p. 391.

conscription as an oppressive and unjust law.⁵² Within days, pledges were signed throughout the whole island and preparations were made for large-scale strikes and violence if needed.

Across the country, recruitment to the ranks of the IRA and Fianna Éireann soared, though both James McCarthy and William King acknowledge that the increases in their companies were only temporary. The youth were heavily involved in the anti-conscription campaign, working actively with all branches of the Nationalist movement. The majority of younger members were involved in obtaining signatures for the pledge against conscription in their local areas and parishes. Anti-conscription funds were collected and leaflet campaigns commenced: in Dublin Fianna Éireann ran their own printing press to generate anti-conscription literature.⁵³

In Londonderry, Brady was once again out working with Cumann na mBan. They distributed anti-conscription literature by leaving it on chairs and tables in all of the city's churches and halls. The Nationalist community in the city also arranged a meeting in St Columba's Hall for those opposed to the Conscription Act to register their protest and sign the pledge.⁵⁴

Orders came from GHQ to prepare for a possible war so IRA companies across the country began collecting arms and received instructions to make pikes (long wooden thrusting poles with a single spike craved at the top). In both Cork

⁵² (<http://www.firstdail.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/firstdailbookletweb.pdf>); Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, p. 391.!

⁵³ Seamus Pouch (MA BMH, WS267), p. 6.

⁵⁴ *Weekly Irish Times*, 27 Apr. 1918; Liam Brady (MA BMH, WS676), p. 28.

and Tipperary, pikes were made by a select few within the company. McCarthy and his IRA Company had the support of local tradesmen so their pikes were made in local carpentry shops.⁵⁵ In Tipperary, one Lieutenant made a pike for every member of the battalion of Nenagh, although Spain does not remember any of the weapons actually being used. In Milford, County Cork, Joe Crimmins recalls a large rush to gather guns within their company and in the locality in case they needed to use them.⁵⁶ By June 1918 the conscription scare was disappearing as the United States of America joined the allies in World War One, and the British Government turned away from their campaign for conscription in Ireland. The role that the youth played in this particular campaign is significant as the conscription campaign was an important development in the Revolutionary decade. It also served as an important benchmark for the youth as it showed their emerging influence in Irish political life.

The War of Independence began on 21 January 1919 with the ambush on an RIC barracks in Soloheadbeg, County Tipperary that ended in two RIC fatalities, the first since 1916.⁵⁷ Although this attack did at first outrage some members of Dáil Eireann, its members in *An t-Óglach* declared a state of war between Ireland and Britain on the 31 January 1919.⁵⁸ The role of youth in the War of Independence can be categorised according to distinct levels of involvement as messengers, intelligence agents, couriers, participants in raids and guerrilla warfare: some already had experience of these activities before the War of Independence. These roles were distributed according to need in each area, with only minor attention given to the

⁵⁵ James McCarthy (MA BMH, WS1567), p. 5.

⁵⁶ Con Spain (MA BMH, WS1464), p. 2; Joe Crimmins (MA BMH, WS 1039), p. 2.

⁵⁷ Hopkinson, *The War of Independence*, p. 25; Costello, *The Irish Revolution and its aftermath*, p. 50; Dan Breen, *My fight for Irish freedom* (Dublin, 1924), pp 27-9; Joe Reynolds (MA BMH, WS 191), p. 22

⁵⁸ *An t-Óglach*, 31 Jan. 1919.

issue of age. Some of the youth involved suffered great consequences for their involvement, including having to go on the run, serve prison sentences, or even the loss of their lives. As both this thesis and Joost Augusteijn's work *From public defiance to guerilla warfare* have shown, the younger generation were not as attracted to Gaelic revival as they had been in the pre-1916 era. Rather, they had become more attracted to drills, uniform and parades after the Rising and that gravitation towards military campaigning continued thereafter.⁵⁹

As the War of Independence began in early 1919, the scramble for weapons became a major priority for the Volunteers. In Waterford and Cork at the start of 1919, both Cappoquinn and Innishannon were grappling with the problem of a lack of guns for their ever-growing companies. Raids on loyalist houses within their areas commenced, but their returns were poor: they only rounded up a dozen or so shotguns, pistols, and rifles per company.⁶⁰ In Limerick, some of the Fianna Éireann members even dared to hold up a British officer one Sunday morning, in the busiest street of Limerick, and succeeded in 'capturing' his 45 Webley pistol. In Nenagh, County Tipperary, there was collection of arms in the community during which most handed over their guns willing, though this representation may have altered over time.⁶¹ In Derry City, the Fianna broke into Ebrington Military Barracks to take ammunition. They were assisted in doing so by the fact one of the boys lived in the barracks along with his family and therefore knew 'every nook and corner of the place'. Six boys crept in and filled their pockets with what they could, and on their way back out, they were almost discovered. They escaped into a nearby field before

⁵⁹ Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996), p. 69.

⁶⁰ William McCarthy (MA BMH, WS778) p. 3; Richard Russell (MA BMH, WS1591), p. 6.

⁶¹ Thomas Dargan (MA BMH, WS 1404), p. 4; Con Spain (MA BMH, WS1464), p.5.

the guard on duty had blown his whistle to call out the whole military guard. The next day, the boys laughed when they heard the rumours that it was an IRA company that had attacked the barracks.⁶²

Liam Brady, in Londonderry explains that the city had become dangerous. He recounts how on 13 February 1919 the Sinn Féin Hall on Richmond Street was the target of a bomb scare. When the message came through, an Irish-language class was in progress in the upper portion of the building, with an estimated 70 people attending, others were scattered through-out the building. Brady, in his witness statement, relates;

When a bomb came crashing in through one of the windows and landed near the men at the fire. Someone shouted “a bomb” and all made for the door and down the stairs. I grabbed hold of Andy McDermott, the caretaker, who was totally blind and took him into the street. The alarm was raised and the people upstairs were hurried down. brownish thick clouds coming near one of the windows, realised that the missile was a smoke bomb ... A few men were posted at the corner outside to prevent a re-occurrence. Had it been a time bomb or a hand grenade the consequences would have been disastrous for the explosion most certainly would have taken place before any of the people would have had time to get out of the Hall.⁶³

At the start of 1920 Amos Reidy (aged 17) assumed a new role in the newly-established Dáil Courts at Newcastle West, County Limerick, under the charge of the IRA and judge Fr. Michael Hayes. His role was to collect subscriptions in the town for the purpose of paying the vigilance police. Reidy briefly describes other punishments administered at this time, referring to a memory of two local ‘girls’ who had their hair cut by the IRA for their association with the military.⁶⁴

At Easter 1920 Roger E. McCorley received IRA sanction for his first ‘real’

⁶² Liam Brady (MA BMH, WS676), pp 43-5.

⁶³ Ibid., pp 45-6.

⁶⁴ Amos Reidy (MA BMH, WS1021), pp 4-5

activity. This involved burning the Income Tax offices in Belfast, and in turn led on to burning various other offices across the city, though his focus was confined to burnings on North Street, Belfast. McCorley describes this operation as successful as they lost no men to arrests or injury.⁶⁵

Tomas O'Connor, then aged 16, and still a member of Fianna Éireann, had begun monitoring patrol movements including the delivery schedule of gear via Glenbeigh railway station in Kerry. He also monitored the route taken by the local RIC after they collected new equipment together with the movements of British forces in the district. Patrick P. Fitzgerald, a Commanding Officer in the local company in Fenit, county Kerry, recalls O'Connor's gathering intelligence and reporting the planned attack a fortnight before its date.⁶⁶

Maintaining communication between battalions, companies and flying columns was vital to the Volunteers' guerilla campaign. This job was given to the Fianna and the younger generation of what was now known as the IRA. In Limerick, Thomas Dargan's *slaugh* was running a full dispatching service in support of the battalion HQ. Their operational centre for dispatches was the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union Hall, O'Connell Street, Limerick City. The area covered by this *slaugh* was extensive: cyclists have to cover between 3 and 9 miles per dispatch. By the end of 1920 the road that they travelled around Limerick had become dangerous having a heavy British Military presence. Dargan, aged 15 at the time, took pride in the fact that his *slaugh* only ever lost one dispatch.⁶⁷ O'Connor began his involvement in the war as a member of Fianna Éireann engaged in delivering

⁶⁵ Roger E. McCorley (MA BMH, WS389), p. 4; *Irish Times*, 5 Apr. 1920.

⁶⁶ Thomas O'Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), p. 4; Patrick P. Fitzgerald (MA BMH, WS1079), p. 21.

⁶⁷ Thomas Dargan (MA BMH, WS 1404), p. 7.

dispatches throughout Kerry. He and the other members of his *slaugh* were ‘constantly on the road carrying dispatches to and from the different battalion officers in the area, Brigade Active Service Unit and Brigade Staff’.⁶⁸ This group of young boys was also responsible for the collection of all dispatches from General Head Quarters (GHQ), which arrived in Limerick at the railway station. This was an organised partnership between the train staff and the boys. Messages for Head Quarters were delivered to Dublin by the same procedure.⁶⁹

Patrick Hearne was still involved in Fianna Éireann when the War of Independence broke out. He recalled 4 of the scouts being picked to run dispatches between the IRA units, as they were the youngest looking. Some days, they cycled across the country even though they were all under 14 years of age.⁷⁰ The Restoration of Peace Bill came into effect in 1920. This Bill meant that anyone caught working with the IRA in any way could be jailed or even executed for treason.⁷¹ Delivering dispatches therefore involved significant risk for all involved, and youths were no exception.

Carrying supplies, especially through cities, where martial law was strictly imposed, was also highly dangerous as one could be stopped and searched at any time. As in the 1916 Rising, the youth were once again employed for carrying out this task again as it was thought that they were least likely to be stopped by the Crown forces. In Londonderry City, Brady, then aged 17, was picked to be a courier for the IRA. This meant that he did not attend any more Fianna Éireann meetings, so he

⁶⁸ Thomas O’Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), p. 4.

⁶⁹ Thomas Dargan (MA BMH, WS 1404), p. 8.

⁷⁰ Patrick Herne (MA BMH, WS1742), p. 11.

⁷¹ *Restoration of order in Ireland. A bill to make provision for the restoration and maintenance of order in Ireland.* 1920 H.C (195) V.221.

would not be under suspicion. Brady took on the role of delivering guns and hiding supplies in his house. He was not the only person in his *sluagh* engaged in this work. James Lynch who was described as ‘a good soul with a quiet unassuming disposition’ had also been keeping guns in his house from very early in the campaign. Another boy in their *slaugh*, named Paddy Lafferty, had an arms dump made at the back of his yard. This concealed large supplies of ammunition, hand grenades, rifles, and small arms. Luckily, during the course of the numerous raids on his home, the British forces walked over those supplies without ever finding them.⁷²

One incident Brady could not forget and he recalls the episode in a humorous manner in his witness statement. One day he was asked to deliver a parcel of ammunition across the city to a tobacconist’s shop on Strand Road. As he was leaving, the IRA officer asked him to deliver a parcel of tobacco to the canteen in the R.I.C. barracks on the Strand Road but told him to deliver the ammunition parcel first. On his way to deliver the parcels, Brady met with boys whom he knew and became distracted. As he was passing the barracks, he dropped in the parcel. The two parcels looked the same and were close to the same weight, but on his way to deliver the second parcel, he noticed that he had the tobacco parcel still and panicked. Luckily staff at the barracks had not opened their parcel so he was able to switch them back. However, he describes how afterwards;

I hadn’t gone far when my whole body started shivering and I could feel my knees getting weak ... After a few minutes I became all right again and as I delivered my parcel to Ned McDermott he asked me what was wrong with me, or did I see a ghost as my face was very white.⁷³

In the end he had to tell Ned McDermott (owner of the tobacconist’s shop, Strand

⁷² Liam Brady (MA BMH, WS676), pp 58;

⁷³ Ibid., pp 56-7.

Road and an prominent IRA member) the truth due to the latter's growing concern. This incident showed how dangerous couriering could be. In Kerry, some of the activists' siblings were also brought in to help with couriering. Molly Myles, one of nine children, was 15 years old when she did most of her work with the Fianna Éireann boys. Her brother, Billy Myles, was in O'Connor's *sluagh*. In 1920 Molly Myles delivered and hid the guns that the boys had collected that year.⁷⁴

Shadowing individual members of the Crown forces was also a common practice. In Limerick, the dispatch network which was run by the local Fianna Éireann *sluagh* also carried out intelligence work on occasion. For instance, late in 1920 G.H.Q. issued instructions to the Mid-Limerick Brigade to trace the movements of Brigadier General Cyril Prescott-Decies. At this time Prescott-Decies was in command of the Black and Tans in the south of the country. The boys were told that he was considered a very dangerous man and they were instructed to report to the Brigade immediately if he was seen in the city. A member of this *sluagh* spotted him entering William Street Barracks and from then on, the barracks was under surveillance.⁷⁵ According to Dargan, that operation proved significant in providing the *sluagh* with some valuable information.⁷⁶

A good deal of useful intelligence was also gathered by the younger generation in their place of work. Thomas O'Connor recalled that many members of

⁷⁴ Thomas O'Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), p. 4; Myles Household National Archives Census (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Kerry/Tralee_Urban_part_of_/Moyderwell/282134/) (7 Aug. 2013).

⁷⁵ Thomas Dargan (MA BMH, WS 1404), p. 8; 'Pupils at the United Services College 1874 - 1911; Brigadier General Cyril Prescott-Decies'. (<http://www.haileybury.com/medals/dso%20USC.htm>) (10 Oct. 2013).

⁷⁶ Thomas Dargan (MA BMH, WS 1404), p. 10.

Fianna Éireann secured jobs in the Post Office. There, they could copy telegraph messages being transmitted from several Kerry RIC Barracks to Dublin Castle. They were also able to gain possession of decoding files and learned how to decode messages.⁷⁷ O’Leary recounted how in Autumn 1920 a ‘Fianna boy’ named Billy Conway, who was an apprentice tailor in Tralee, was one day pressing a man’s coat when he discovered a document inside the pockets. It was a reply to an application for membership of the Auxiliaries which had been made by an ex-British Army officer named Murphy living in Tralee. This he copied and reported to the nearest Officer Commanding (OC).⁷⁸ In Limerick, some of the boys were employed as messengers in addition to doing dispatches for the IRA. In an incident related to the tailing of Brigadier General Prescott-Decies in late 1920, one member was employed as a messenger in Herbert’s, a hotel in Limerick city. During his work, a Fianna boy discovered that Prescott-Decies was staying there and broke into his bedroom in order to carry out a search for documents. Finding a diary in a coat pocket, he took it, had it copied and returned it.⁷⁹

An interesting dimension to studying the roles played by the younger generation in the War of Independence is the carefree approach of the youth to various dangerous situations in which they found themselves during the conflict. Patrick Hearne and his fellow Fianna Éireann members introduced mayhem in Waterford City in April 1920, burning and stealing English newspapers, vandalising government buildings, burning papers and records, and even staging a raid on the Tax Office. *The Irish Times* reported ‘Rowdism in Waterford’ during the middle of April as a result of which many businesses were destroyed and the police were said

⁷⁷ Thomas O’Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), p. 4.

⁷⁸ Michael O’Leary (MA BMH, WS1167), p. 10.

⁷⁹ Thomas Dargan (MA BMH, WS1404), p. 11.

to have been unable to assert control over the situation.⁸⁰

The term ‘capturing’ is recurrent in reports about the theft of equipment throughout this period but among other items that were stolen or ‘captured’ at this time were bicycles, food, petrol, blankets, hospital equipment, batteries, water bottles and field telephones. Dargan and his fellow Fianna Éireann members in Limerick staged an ingenious operation in the city in 1920. As the boys realised that they were in need of more bicycles for their dispatch services they began to watch military messengers travelling to and from the General Post Office. When these messengers went inside the Post Office, leaving his bicycle outside, one of the two Fianna Éireann boys on watch would take it and cycle to the Fianna Hall. There, another group of boys would immediately strip the bicycle of all military equipment and repaint it. When the Crown forces became aware of this ploy, the Fianna Éireann switched to ‘capturing’ bicycles on O’Connell Street instead. Overall this tactic is thought to have yielded up to 60 bicycles.⁸¹

By the 1920s the IRA had set up a self-funding scheme called the Army Levy Fund. In Knockroe, County Cork, Richard Russell, aged 16 years, was part of a patrol in his battalion who collected money from people who refused to subscribe voluntarily to this fund. These were mostly retired British officers and other loyalists living in the Innishannon area of west Cork. Cattle and other valuable goods were taken under duress from these households. The cattle were usually sold at fairs in the area, mainly at Timoleague.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Irish Times*, 17 Apr. 1920.

⁸¹ Thomas Dargan (MA BMH, WS1404), p. 6.

⁸² Richard Russell (MA BMH, WS1591), p. 15.

In Kerry, Thomas O'Connor, aged 17 years, worked with the IRA and took part in raids on military trains delivering supplies to a number of Kerry Barracks. These supplies included field telephones, batteries, hospital equipment, machine guns, ammunition but also petrol in drums. On one occasion, O'Connor recalls the men put the petrol drums on wagons and set fire to the petrol outside the train station.⁸³

Amos Reidy, then aged 17, acted as a scout for a flying column that was passing through the area of Limerick and Cork border. On 27 May 1920, he and two other boys watched to make sure there was no RIC activity at the crossroads of Cork and Kilmallock. On this occasion the youths were armed with revolvers and shotguns. The next day they learned that having been assisted by these boys, the column had proceeded to Kilmallock where they launched an attack on the barracks which was widely reported in all major newspapers in Ireland and for which the local town hall, built by the townspeople in 1916, was burnt down two days later in what was likely to have been a retaliatory attack.⁸⁴ Such tit for tat retaliations were commonplace during the War of Independence. Another example was the large-scale revenge ordered following the death of hunger striker Terence MacSwiney on 25 October 1920.

At the end of October 1920 the first Kerry Battalion, Tralee, of which Thomas O'Connor was a member, received the order from the I.R.A. G.H.Q. to carry out an attack on enemy forces in Tralee on 31 October. All battalions across the country received the same order. O'Connor participated in an attack, shooting and wounding three uniformed wireless operators attached to Ballymullen Military

⁸³ Thomas O'Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), p. 4.

⁸⁴ *Donegal News*, 5 June 1920; *Irish Independent*, 31 May 1920; *Freeman's Journal*, 30 May 1920; University of Limerick, 'Kilmallock Barracks' (<http://www.ul.ie/wic/content/ric-barracks-kilmallock>) (8 Aug. 2013); *Freeman's Journal*, 29, 30 May 1920.

Barracks. O'Connor admits that because it was dark, he made the mistake of shooting at the men who he thought were members of the British Army.⁸⁵ In Cork, Richard Russell also experienced an operation that went wrong for his flying column. In August 1920 it was decided that the column should attack a cycle patrol on the Innishannon to Bandon Road. From 8am to 12pm, no patrol travelled the road. The decision was therefore taken to send Russell and another younger members into Bandon to see if the patrol made it there; meanwhile the others moved to a different road. When Russell saw the patrol in town, he ran to the new position to warn the column; however, the military were already on their way. The patrol spotted the men and fire was exchanged for several minutes until both sides withdrew. As far as Russell was aware there were no casualties but according to the *Irish Independent* report of 23 August 1920 one man had fallen and another was detained.⁸⁶ These examples show that the youth were often involved in what were serious, even fatal, manoeuvres. It also illustrates that the inexperience and rash judgement of a child can sometimes jeopardise manoeuvres. Joost Augusteijn, in his book *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare* was one of the first scholars to highlight the problems experienced by young inexperienced volunteers, some of which resulted in fatalities. For example, he cites a death within the Westport Battalion, the result of new recruits playing with revolvers which they assumed were unloaded. Their captain was shot dead in the incident. Although this shocked their battalion, just a few days later another volunteer in the battalion was accidentally shot, again as a result of inexperience in handling weaponry.⁸⁷

The effects of protracted war on the lives of the youth and on Irish society as

⁸⁵ Thomas O'Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), p. 3.

⁸⁶ Richard Russell (MA BMH, WS1591), pp 8-9.

⁸⁷ Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 146.

a whole can be clearly seen in 1920. Due to his involvement in the IRA, Amos Reidy's parent's house in Newcastle West Limerick, was raided on several occasions. In one instance, his poor judgement in stealing an RIC man's bicycle from the village led to his home being raided for the second night in a row. His youthful bravado and innocence is apparent in his defensive statement that his Battalion Commandant had told him to 'capture' it. Reidy's luck ran out at the end of 1920 on Christmas Eve, when his house was not only raided but also burnt to the ground. Apart from his father's role in local campaigning in the General election, there is no evidence of Reidy's family having any role in the War of Independence. It would appear that this was a reaction solely to his militant activities. At his young age – he was 17 years— this was an extreme circumstance in which to find himself: his family of his parents and 4 siblings were left homeless for Christmas. Perhaps significantly, Reidy does not refer to his family or his home after that.⁸⁸

Other young men went on the run in order to avoid capture. Thomas Dwyer, who was aged 18 in 1920, did so, together with several local men. He emphasises the kindness and selflessness of the local people who gave them much needed shelter;

We took to the mountains and, from that night onwards, we lived on the generosity and hospitality of the people of the country. It would be an impossible task to mention the names of all those good people who afforded us refuge when we needed it most during this time and until the Truce. They are deserving of the greatest praise, for, in sheltering us wanted men, they were taking the chance of having their homes wrecked and their houses burnt. Amongst all those names are a few outstanding people by whom we were always welcomed with open arms. If their houses were raided, we could nearly always manage to escape, but for them there was no escape. Hence the ultimate success of the war of independence was due in no small measure to such great people.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Amos Reidy (MA BMH, WS1021), pp 6, 8, 9.

⁸⁹ Thomas Dwyer (MA BMH, WS1198), p. 19.

Retaliation by the Crown forces for aiding the IRA was harsh, burning property being the most common tactic. Reidy relates the incident that forced him to go on the run and which in turn ended in the destruction of his family home. On 17 July 1920 an RIC man named James Matterson was shot in his car as he travelled from Newcastle West to Limerick city. Although he had not been involved in this attack, Reidy's place of employment, the office of the local newspaper *The Weekly Observer* was wrecked by the Crown forces. Furthermore, the local library and creamery were burned down, and several houses were broken into. Through fear and a sense of responsibility for all of the destruction that he was seen to have brought on his local community, Reidy felt forced to go on the run.⁹⁰

William King, of Leenane, County Galway was forced to do likewise in late 1920: in his case, this was due to his brother's high-profile involvement in a local Flying Column. At 16 years of age, King recalled that on the day of his Confirmation by Archbishop Thomas Gilmartin, the church was guarded by two members of the IRA Leenane Company.⁹¹ King happily relates his experiences of being on the run, referring to people he met and new skills he learned. It is clear that although King was innocent when first he was forced to go on the run, as the year progressed, he became involved directly with guerrilla warfare.⁹²

At the start of 1921 there is an obvious shift in responsibilities for some of the boys in the role they play in this war. Seen as reliable or in other cases, due to the many fatalities and arrests, some of the discussed children began to take on larger

⁹⁰ Amos Reidy (MA BMH, WS1021), p. 9; *Irish Times*, 30 July 1920.

⁹¹ William King (MA BMH, WS1381), p. 7.

⁹² *Ibid.*

roles, fully involved in raids and executions. Thomas O'Connor of Tralee, County Kerry, then aged 17 years, was sufficiently trusted to be allowed transport guns for his battalion and buy guns for his own *sluagh*. On one occasion he purchased around three dozen long and short Webley revolvers from a soldier in Ballymullen Barracks in County Kerry.⁹³ Interestingly, the IRA subsequently reported O'Connor's Fianna Éireann captain, Michael O'Leary, to GHQ about arming his *slaugh* mostly because he refused to hand the guns over to them. O'Leary later received a letter from Countess de Markievicz asking him to hand all the guns that were bought over to the IRA.⁹⁴

Also in January 1921 Richard Russell, then aged 16 years, had become a fully active member of his flying column. On the 26th of the month when his column attacked the Innishannon barracks, he served as a scout appointed to make sure that all routes south of the barracks were blocked. He was then asked to accompany the party in order to set up the explosive at the barracks door, but after this failed to explode and a round of shots were fired in the town, the mission was countermanded.⁹⁵ There is no news report about this attack but in the following two weeks there was a series of incidents, several of which resulted in the deaths of civilians. In one case, 2 February 1921, the bodies of two young brothers were found on the roads, with a note that read 'traitor' pinned to their night wear. A few days before, there was a train raid in which 8 people were killed and 12 wounded. Both of these were believed to be IRA attacks.⁹⁶ Soon after his initial operation, Russell took part in an attack on a two-man RIC patrol in February 1921. After opening fire on them from high ground, one

⁹³ Thomas O'Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), p. 4.

⁹⁴ Ibid.; Michael O'Leary (MA BMH, WS1167), p. 11.

⁹⁵ Richard Russell (MA BMH, WS1591), pp 15-16.

⁹⁶ These men were aged 19 and 22 years. *Irish Independent*, 15, 16 Feb. 1921.

RIC patrol member was wounded but both successfully made it back to the barracks. In the space of just three weeks, within a small area stretching from Innishannon to Bandon, one can see clearly how intense the fighting had become by February 1921. At 16 years of age, Russell was heavily involved in all IRA activities. Later on, in November, then aged 17 and after a battalion member died, Russell was promoted to Battalion Lieutenant of Signalling. In this role he travelling around to companies in order to insure that their training in signalling was regular and correct. He also ensured the maintenance of communications with neighbouring battalions. He was not the only young man to be promoted at this time; Joe Crimmins, in Milford, Cork was made Quartermaster at 17 years of age.⁹⁷

By 1921 Richard Russell's responsibilities had evolved to executions. He relates details of a spy Fredrick C. Stennings' execution. Stennings, by March 1921, had been 'established' as a spy, though no details of the evidence are given by Russell. A party was assembled from within the battalion to carry out this execution. Russell (aged 17 at this time) was to take up position at the rear of the Stennings' house. Other men knocked the door and when Stennings answered and discovered the men, he ran and drew his revolver. However, he did not get far into the hall before he was shot.⁹⁸ In Russell's account it is not clear who fired the killing shot to Stennings but this event was obviously significant for Russell in his memories for the war, as he goes into great detail about that night and the lead up to it. It is clear though that Russell's jump to execution party was most likely due to need of soldiers rather than his maturity at this time.

⁹⁷ Richard Russell (MA BMH, WS1591), pp 14-16; John D. Crimmins (MA BMH, WS1039), p. 4.

⁹⁸ Richard Russell (MA BMH, WS1591), p. 21.

In Kerry Thomas O'Connor's role had evolved by 1921 at which point he was invited to participate in operations with local flying columns on a regular basis. On 19 March 1921 there was an operation planned to attack a RIC patrol, with four IRA patrols, two on either side of the road. O'Connor, who was based near the schoolhouse, had a rifle in hand. The IRA stayed in position all day but no patrol came along the road. The next day one man accidentally discharged his gun around 10am and by 3pm the IRA were caught completely off guard. O'Connor acknowledges that their position might have been given away. The British Army drove to half a mile down the road from the IRA's positions and then surrounded both sides of the road, coming in from the fields. O'Connor's captain shouted at him to blow a whistle and when he did, the Army thought that this was their superior's signal to them to retreat, which they did. One of the IRA men, Tom Ashe, was killed and two others were wounded in this attack: one of these died later. Five IRA men were also arrested. O'Connor recalls how about a fortnight afterwards he saw District Inspector Hamilton who tried to stop him. However, O'Connor ran through the nearest house and made good his escape.⁹⁹

Intelligence gathering was essential for success in this guerrilla war; the correct intelligence on locations and numbers meant the difference between life and death in some cases. The fact that the younger generation tended to go unnoticed whilst discussions about warfare were in progress allowed youths to operate as intelligence gatherers and messengers without much change of detection by the Crown forces. Intelligence collected in this way led to deaths in the British military. For example, in Galway in April 1921 Thomas Donnellan, aged 17 years, and

⁹⁹ Thomas O'Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), pp 5-6; *The Kerryman*, 16 Apr. 1921.

another boy of the same age, Lawrence Sullivan, routinely sat in the village and took note of all RIC movements, including what time they carried out their patrols, how many went together and what route they would take. Donnellan had some difficulty in identifying patterns in the RIC men's routes since they did not always follow the same route.¹⁰⁰ In Kerry, Thomas O'Connor and two others were tasked with shadowing Major McKinnon, Head Constable Benson and as well as a local Black and Tan soldier called Shea. Major McKinnon was selected to be shadowed as the IRA believed he was directly implicated in the deaths of two I.R.A. men at Ballymacelligott, in a roadside attack.¹⁰¹ After the boys trailing him for a few weeks, the intelligence that they gathered on him led to his execution by the IRA on 15 April 1921. The three boys were present as they were keeping watch while four IRA men shot him point blank, while Major McKinnon played a round of golf. His death was reported in *The Irish Times* very briefly, discussing his achievements.¹⁰²

In May 1921 train robberies were common practice and youths such the members of Patrick Hearne's *sluagh* in Waterford were involved in these operations in which military supplies were captured, although any food taken was given to the poor afterwards.¹⁰³ Youths were also actively involved in staging attacks on RIC patrols. Also in May 1921 Amos Reidy's flying Column was billeting in the area of Shraharla, County Cork, One Sunday, five members of his column attended Mass in a local church. When they heard gun fire, the rest of the column ran out to the road where they found several Crown forces lorries and Black and Tans who proceeded to open fire on them. Reidy describes the chaos,

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Donnellan (MA BMH, WS1378), pp 3-4.

¹⁰¹ Thomas O'Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), p. 3; Michael O'Leary (MA BMH, WS1167), p. 25.

¹⁰² Thomas O'Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), p. 3; Patrick P. Fitzgerald (MA BMH, WS1079), p. 7; *Irish Times*, 16 Apr. 1921.

¹⁰³ Patrick Herne (MA BMH, WS1742), p. 17.

which ensued, and it became matter of ‘every man for themselves’ as the fire intensified when the IRA began to fight back.¹⁰⁴

Reinforcements in the form of the Mitchelstown Barracks RIC arrived, accompanied by an aeroplane. The IRA had difficulty trying to escape the firing line through the fields as the aeroplane kept spotting them. When they reassembled as a column, five of the members were missing. Three men had been killed, and two more were arrested and executed in Cork Gaol within days of the incident. The *Freeman’s Journal* reported on 8 June 1921 that the two men had been arrested, and stated that their charge was under regulation 14B of the Defence against the Realm Act (1916), they having been arrested for possession of arms and ammunition.¹⁰⁵ This event shows the extremes of the war and also how far immersed Amos Reidy had become.

As previously mentioned, in Galway Thomas Donnellan and Lawrence Sullivan, both aged 17, were engaged in intelligence gathering for their company as their IRA comrades were planning an attack on Milltown Barracks in the following months. On 26 July 1921, as noted in previous intelligence work, the patrol left between 9am and 10pm. Donnellan ran to notify their men that they had changed route. Both Patrick Walsh and John McCormack, who were involved in the IRA operation, commended the boys’ for their good work.¹⁰⁶ They took up position at the Post Office in the village, believing that there was nowhere else to stage an ambush on this route. Only 2 RIC patrol members were on patrol and both were killed outright. On the sound of the shooting, soldiers from the barracks came out

¹⁰⁴ Amos Reidy (MA BMH, WS1015), pp 13-14.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.; *Freeman’s Journal*, 8 June 1921.

¹⁰⁶ Patrick Walsh (MA BMH, WS1329), pp 5-6; John McCormack (MA BMH, WS 1400), p. 8.

and opened fired on the IRA from behind. At this point O'Connor describes how his scouting partner, Lawrence Sullivan, 'had a bad time'. According to O'Connor, Sullivan 'had to crawl on his stomach until he got cover in a fold in the ground. The firing from our men did not affect me as I [O'Connor] was with the attacking party after having told them that the patrol was close at hand.'¹⁰⁷

This was a very close call for Sullivan's part, though to have been a casualty of one's own side was common enough. O'Connor and the other boys mention throughout their statements accidents that led to comrades' losing their lives. Thomas Donnellan managed to escape arrest by running through a nearby field to home. Donnellan claims that he believed he would not have been arrested due to his youth.¹⁰⁸ As already stated, this operation was widely publicised in national newspapers. The *Irish Times* and the *Donegal News* reported that two constables were injured seriously in the attack, one having sustained head and leg wounds from 40 pellets which had to be extracted from his body. Over a month after the attack, the *Freeman's Journal* published a report on the inquiry due to the fact both RIC that were injured died from their wounds. Curiously, witnesses of the attack state that there were no trace of 'rebels' on the attack, in the sense that neither the rifles nor the ammunition of the dead police were not taken.¹⁰⁹

During 1921 there was a steadily increase in arrests and executions. Although it is hard to track which minors ended up being arrested and serving prison sentences, it is known that many served time in jail, like their adult counterparts. Among these was Mary Bowles from County Cork. Following her arrest, she

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Donnellan (MA BMH, WS1378), pp 2-4.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas O'Connor (MA BMH, WS1189), p. 8; Thomas Donnellan (MA BMH, WS1378), p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Irish Times*, 8 Apr. 1921; *Donegal News*, 23 Apr. 1921; *Freeman's Journal*, 29 June 1921.

attracted a lot of public attention. An incident occurred in January, in which Mary, then aged 16-year-old (though she is reported in newspapers to have been even younger), went to throw a gun under a fence but was spotted by Black and Tans officers. On being searched Mary Bowles was found to have been wearing steel body armour strapped to her shoulders and fastened at the sides; she was also in possession of a service revolver and an automatic pistol. Mary was arrested and brought to Cork Military Barracks, where she was interrogated without success. In the end she was sent to Cork Goal and stayed there until the end of the War of Independence.¹¹⁰ The discovery of the armour baffled both newspapers at the time and historians in more modern times.

Thomas Dargan, aged 16, was arrested on 22 May 1921 and remained in prison until February 1922.¹¹¹ Dargan's case was reported in the *Freeman's Journal* 14 June 1921, where it is stated that the police acted on information. They found the group in the woods with a man whom they assumed was giving instructions on the use of guns. Over ten boys were mentioned in the arrest and were sentenced.¹¹² Whereas the basic facts match Dargan's statement, he had described himself as one of the instructors of this class and stated that he arrived late.

Dargan's description of his interrogation is disturbing. He recalls listening to the screams of the boys as they were beaten and also the treatment he received when he was interrogated:

¹¹⁰ Comd't. P.J. Murphy (MA BMH, WS 869), pp 25-26; Laura Ryan, 'Reforming and reframing: newspaper representations of Mary Bowles and the War of Independence, 1919-21' in Gillian McIntosh and Diane Urquhart (eds), *Irish women at war: the twentieth century* (Dublin, 2010), pp 41-43.

¹¹¹ Thomas Dargan (MA BMH, WS 1404), pp 12, 16.

¹¹² *Freeman's Journal*, 14 June 1921

I was asked my name and, on replying, I got a blow on the side of the head and fell off the form. As I was on the floor I got a kick and was told to get up. The usual questions were asked and with every question some-thing happened to me. The Tan at the table asked what was the colour of my eyes and another Tan said they were brown, and immediately hit me over the eye and then exclaimed: “change that, they are black now”.¹¹³

Having spent the night being interrogated and listening to each others’ screams, the boys were brought to the washroom to clean up. There, he describes being told to open his mouth and having something put in; he was then slapped. Afterwards he realised that he had been forced to swallow soap. In the course of the next few months, Dargan was moved to five different locations. From Limerick he was transferred to Cork Detention Centre, where he was ‘struck’ by the silence of the place. Later he found out that 6 of the 40 men detained at the time were on sentence of death.¹¹⁴

Throughout the War of Independence there were many casualties on both sides. By the time the treaty negotiations began in December 1921, over 1,400 people had been killed during the War of Independence, 752 of these were civilians and IRA, though these figures vary.¹¹⁵ J. Anthony Gaughan in *Scouting in Ireland* states that many Fianna Éireann members were interned during this time for their involvement but only four were reported to have died during this war.¹¹⁶ However, this contention is flawed as it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between the deaths of children and those of innocent by-standers on the one hand from those of individuals involved in fighting the war. Therefore, it is essential to discuss the circumstances of each child’s death separately.

¹¹³ Thomas Dargan (MA BMH, WS 1404), p. 13.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

¹¹⁵ Hopkinson, *The war of independence*, p. 201.

¹¹⁶ J. Anthony Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), p. 54.

Francis Murphy, a member of Fianna Éireann, was shot dead 23 August 1919 in Ennistymon, County Clare; he was 15 years old. He died as a result of bullet wounds received while sitting by the fire in his kitchen, reading a book. The inquest into his death found that the British Army was responsible but after the Army carried out an extensive investigation, this was refuted.¹¹⁷ There was no reason for why the shots were fired near his home the night of his death; it would seem that his involvement in Fianna Éireann was not related to his death. Another 15 year old, P. J. Linnane, from Rineen in County Clare was shot dead 22 September 1920. As he went to do a message for his mother he was caught in the crossfire of an ambush. His body, with 4 bullet wounds, was found near the barracks.¹¹⁸

John Clifford, aged 17, was shot dead on 6 November 1920 by the Crown forces. His death is suspicious as his relative's claim he was shot before curfew (starting at 10.30pm) while police witnesses gave evidence at the inquest that they heard the shots five minutes after curfew. A poignant aspect of this case was Mrs Clifford, John's mother's statement to the inquest that John was her only surviving son, her other son having been killed in France during the War.¹¹⁹

Annie O'Neill was 8 years old when she was shot dead by a British Army officer as he chased a number of young men in Dublin. On 13 November 1920 O'Neill was playing outside her house when the incident happened. Annie's mother, hearing the shots, ran outside and picked up her daughter. The fact that no procession was allowed for her funeral, and no flag was to be draped on her coffin

¹¹⁷ *Irish independent*, 23 Aug. 1920.

¹¹⁸ T.S. McDonagh (MA BMH, WS 1540), p. 10.

¹¹⁹ *Irish independent*, 11 Oct. 1920.

may intimate that these or similar propaganda tactics had previously been used at children's funerals.¹²⁰

Peter Hanley's death on 27 November 1920 was one in a series of murders that took place in the Grattan Road area of Cork City. This was carried out by the RIC and the murders were covered extensively in the *Freemans Journal*. Hanley lived in 2 Board Street with his mother and older sister.¹²¹ At 17 years of age, he was the sole earner for the family; he was also a member of Fianna Éireann. Another Fianna Éireann boy named Charlie O'Brien was also shot on his street but survived. O'Brien had been shot in the mouth while running out of his room to check on his mother.¹²² It was never identified if they were targeted for their membership to Fianna Éireann or that the road that was raided was all-supportive of militant nationalism.

In South Londonderry Joseph Doherty was found dead outside a schoolhouse on the night of 29 December 1920 following a raid on the hall during a dance. Doherty was aged 16 and the blame for his death was attributed to confusion and the fact that he did not listen to orders to put his hands up. The RIC tried to justify the bullet wound in the head but newspapers editorials took a different view on the death.¹²³ On 24 June 1921, 6 years old Patrick Morrissey was shot dead at Duggan's Shoe Shop in Ennis, Clare. When two 'Civilians' tried to disarm an RIC officer, who

¹²⁰ Ibid., 19 Nov. 1920.

¹²¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 19 Nov. 1920; Hanley household (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Cork/Cork_No_7_Urban_part_of/Broad_Street_except_3_and_10/396502/) (20 Aug. 2013).

¹²² George Hurley (MA BMH, WS1630), pp 4-5; *Freeman's Journal*, 19 Nov. 1920.

¹²³ *Nenagh News*, 1 Jan. 1921; *Freeman's Journal*, 30 Dec. 1920.

was out shopping, he fired, shooting Morrissey dead.¹²⁴ Morrissey is an obvious civilian victim in this war. Another innocent victim, caught in crossfire, was Denis Bennett, a cleaner who worked for the railway company in Mallow, County Cork. On 1 February 1921 Bennett was shot dead, together with a number of other civilians. In an attack by the IRA who were reported to have been trying to murder County Inspector King, the British Army returned fire and inadvertently shot Bennett.¹²⁵

The death of another youth, Kathleen Kelleher, from Chapelizod, County Dublin caused great suspicion among the newspapers; the *Freeman's Journal* reported the case for over a month. Kelleher was 17 years old and the sole earner for her family as her mother was an invalid. On 2 July 1921 Kelleher left home at 3pm to go for a walk in the Phoenix Park, where she is reported to have met two friends and walked with them until she met a man and walked with him. The next day, a non-uniformed Constable from the Dublin Metropolitan Police called at the Kelleher's home to inform Kathleen's mother that her daughter's body had been found and was at Dr Steeven's Hospital. Kathleen had died from bullet wounds to the temple. Over a month later, John McCane, an RIC recruit, was arrested for her murder.¹²⁶ Kelleher was a member of Cumman na mBan but this does not seem to be relevant to the case. This murder seems to be one of a crime of passion, although it is listed many times under the bracket of civilian casualties of this war.

Many of those whose deaths were reported in the newspapers during the period 1919-21 were in their late teens or twenties. So concerned was the *Donegal*

¹²⁴ *Nenagh Guardian*, 2 July 1921.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 5 May 1921.

¹²⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 5 July, 19 Aug. 1921.

News at the number of young people being shot, that in March 1921 it carried a feature on those young people. Most of those named were the age of 23 years. In researching this subject for the present study, it was rare to find anyone over the age of 37 years having died in the conflict. The age bracket of fatalities in this war was that of the young adult in their twenties and early thirties.

Irish society experienced a rapid change in political outlook after the 1916 Rising. The failings of the British government, the effects of misinformation in the media and the quick thinking of many Nationalist organizations, notably the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin, together with Cumann na mBan and youth organizations (Fianna Éireann), created a new outlook among an expanding electorate that called for independence from Britain. The Nationalist agenda popularity can be seen in the results of the General Election and public reaction against the Conscription Bill.

The number of young people who joined the ranks of militant Nationalist organisations increased dramatically after the executions in the wake of the Easter 1916 Rising. In the period 1916–1918, it is clear that some younger members were more essential to the cause than others, depending on their location in the country. As this study has shown, whereas Thomas Dargan and his *slaugh*'s dispatch and intelligence work in Limerick City was essential to the running of the battalion, William King was just enjoying being involved in the election campaign in Galway.

Young people, both within and outside the Nationalist community, created mayhem as part of their contribution to the Volunteers' campaign. This occurred

throughout the country, in the form of minor nuisance activities ranging from burning newspapers to removing sewer tops so that the curfew patrol might fall through these. All of these activities served to increase tensions between the Crown forces and the Volunteers.

The Volunteers' ongoing need of arms created a situation in which the younger generation could participate in guerrilla warfare. While Thomas Dargan and Liam Brady were running their own operations in Fianna Éireann, others were scouting for older comrades engaged in arms raids. The situation changed dramatically and decisively for all in 1919 outright war began and the services of everyone became essential. Regardless of whether guerrilla warfare was successful and un-successful for those discussed in this thesis, all paid a price for their involvement.

Overall it clear that the War of Independence presented opportunities to both the older and younger generations to allow the latter to have an increasingly significant role in Irish public affairs, making the most of their innocence and age. As this thesis has shown, intelligence and dispatch work became very dangerous during the War, but on the strength of their training and intelligence transfer activities in the years preceding 1919, many youths had become imbued with notions of invincibility. As members of the Irish Volunteers died, were arrested, or killed in the course of the campaign, the younger generation rose through the ranks, some faster and with greater success than others. The War of Independence affected the status of young people in the campaign for freedom: they became crucial to the fight and as is clear from contemporary sources, their involvement certainly shaped (and

occasionally determined the outcome to) Volunteer manoeuvres and ambushes. The role played by these youths is frequently acknowledged in witness statements but their involvement was not highlighted in same way as that of their older comrades in histories of the War. The young generation's status in Irish society in changed dramatically, as the population of Ireland began to notice the loss of their young people in this decade of revolution and world wars, and began to consider the role they had been playing in the work force and as family providers.

Conclusion

The dawn of the twentieth century in Ireland launched a modern ideal that children were essential to a properly functioning and sustainable society. Steps aimed at ensuring greater preservation of children's lives slowly began at the end of the nineteenth century as the British government introduced far-reaching changes in education, health and working conditions. At the start of the new century, however, the effects of these changes were slow in manifesting themselves. Many children in Ireland, aged seventeen years and under, lived their lives in challenging circumstances. They were taken out of education early to work and some were the sole earner in their family. Many endured dire health and living conditions. The burden of responsibility that the older generation placed on these children in these roles only increased during the 1900s and 1910s as they were trained for service in the campaign to achieve independence for Ireland.

The majority of the youth discussed in this thesis grew up with a long and typically negative family tradition and memory of British governance. In this context, the influence of parents or grand-parents is constantly referred to as a motivation for becoming involved by those who were involved in Nationalist youth organizations at this time. Reading their statements one sees clearly that this new up and coming generation was viewed as the future army of Ireland.

The dissemination of this notion that these youths were the future of Ireland and in some cases more specifically the future soldiers of Ireland, necessarily impacted how the youths themselves viewed their place within the overall context of

Nationalist politics. Responsibility, or a family tradition of fighting for Irish independence, could be heavy weights to carry. In the midst of this period of profound and rapid change, the excitement spurred many members of the younger generation into action. However, one must keep in mind the influence that adults had over the lives of children at that time, a fact clearly spelled out in the latter's personal accounts. Whereas Countess de Markievicz never made a secret of her vision for the Fianna Éireann boys, the same cannot be said for all adults, some of whom struggled with the prospect of involving this enthusiastic younger generation that were eager to participate in the Volunteers' guerrilla warfare campaign and in Nationalist politics, including electioneering. These youths were acutely conscious of what they had to offer their elders and were aware of the opportunities their assumed innocence presented for the Volunteers in the conduct of their military campaign. Although it is easy to assume that children were 'used' by the older generation, based on the individuals featured in this study, many appear to have been 'streetwise', adept in manipulating situations and their Volunteer comrades to their advantage as and when the need arose.

As illustrated in this study, the use of children in Nationalist propaganda was considered an influential tool as many organisations capitalized on the injuries and deaths of young people, ranging from companies involved in the Dublin Lockout, to newspapers and Nationalist organisations, through to the media and processions. This concept of youth was constantly manipulated in order to suit the cause being advocated. This could be seen in the case of the *Donegal News* article in March 1921 which styled all of those killed in action as youths even though the majority were in fact in their twenties. It is clear that the criteria for defining a child or youth could be

malleable, depending on what an individual commentator needed to portray: in the case of *The Donegal News* the message was the high death toll among young people during the War of Independence.¹

When it became clear to both the Volunteers and the youth the nature and range of services that the latter could provide in advancing the campaign for Irish independence, this generation emerged as essential participants. There is no doubt that many of the decisive events in the Nationalist campaigns during the 1910s would not have been successful without the involvement of trusted youths. Without much argument on the Howth gun running, Bulmer Hobson clearly states, in two separate accounts (that being his witness statement and also his autobiography) that the operation would not have been successful without the discipline of the youth. Their eagerness to please and their readiness to take orders from their commanding officers resulted in their increased involvement in processions and parades such as at O'Donovan Rossa's funeral.

The Easter Rising effectively demonstrated how successful the involvement of children could be. The impression given in Chapter one that the children owned the streets of Dublin is borne out by reports of the rising in Dublin which remark how countless young people continuously rambled through the city and gained passage through barricades. Children were also shown to have played a vital role in enabling the rebel leaders to maintain communications. As Volunteers across the city ran out of foodstuffs, youths scavenged for food or arrived with food parcels to help them. It is obvious that the uprising would have ended days earlier had it not been for the

¹ *The Donegal News*, 20 Mar. 1921.

efforts of these young people.

In the aftermath of the Easter Rising and executions, as public opinion swung in favour of the rebels, the excitement of this era of profound and rapid change gripped both adults and young people alike. During the period 1917-21 mayhem created by children became widespread and it was apparent that from this point onwards, these youths were only interested in joining militant activities. From the youth of Londonderry playing tricks on the curfew patrol to Thomas Dargan and his fellow boy scouts stealing over forty bicycles for 'the cause' in Limerick, this generation were as willing as they were needed.

As Michael Collins embarked on a new style of war based on intelligence and smart ambushes, most young people were engaged in intelligence gathering. They did this either through carrying out their regular jobs, or shadowing British officials, or sitting for hours at a time outside barracks. Time-consuming and sometimes dangerous, intelligence gathering was an important task entrusted to many young people during the war, especially in rural Ireland. Countless reports in personal accounts refer to hours of work, which involved following subjects, listening and watching their targets. The stamina and loyalty of the youth who were permitted to be involved in intelligence is impressive. Indeed, the extremes that some of the young generation went to in order to deliver messages, including cycling cross country, together with the risk of being arrested whilst in possession of incriminating documentation, shows the extent of their commitment. By the early 1920s, delivering communications had become a serious offence against the British government; yet many Irish children across the Nationalist militant movement still continued to make

deliveries, evidently believing themselves to be invincible at their young age.

The ideal of a free Ireland was instilled in this emerging generation of Irish children, many of whom found it difficult and in some instances impossible to accept the treaty that was formulated in 1921. In the ensuing Civil War, many of those who were children during the War of Independence participated as adults. Moulded by the improved educational provision and Nationalist ideals of their day, it is clear that a new generation of politicians and civil servants were emerging towards the end of this formative decade of Revolution.

Perhaps the most telling example of these youths is Seán Francis Lemass, who was aged just 15 when he joined the Irish Volunteers in Dublin, following in the footsteps of his brother. Lemass was in the GPO during the 1916 Rising and having avoided deportation afterwards, he went on to become heavily involved in the War of Independence.² Frank Aiken (b.1898, from Armagh), Patrick Smith (b. 1901, from County Cavan) and Brian Brady (b. 1903, from County Donegal) were also among those children who fought in 1916 and the War of Independence and subsequently moved into politics.³

Pádraig Pearse, the educator, is sometimes forgotten in history's retelling of this revolutionary period though is essential to understanding the impact he had on Nationalist education. At basic level, his school inspired many schools to be founded, even in the latter period such as Ardscoil Eanna and Scoil Bride, both still in

² Bryce Evans, *Sean Lemass: democratic dictator* (Dublin, 2012), p. 8.

³ Oireachtas website '7th Dail members' (<http://www.oireachtas.ie/members-hist/default.asp?housetype=0&HouseNum=7&disp=mem>) 20 Sept. 2013.

existence. Another aspect to consider is the alumni of St Enda's itself. Though many were from Nationalist families, the non-formal education style taught at Pearse's school can be clearly seen as effective when considering the schools alumni. Elaine Sisson in *Pearse's patriots: St Enda's and the cult of boyhood* discusses former pupils and their successes in their fields. Desmond Ryan, one of Pearse's first students became a published historian, with many written successes. Denis Gwynn and John Dowling also became published authors and journalists. Joe Sweeney became Major General in the Irish army and brothers Fred and Vincent O'Doherty became successful doctors to name but a few past pupils who excelled in their chosen fields. All mentioned were heavily involved in the struggle for independence after leaving St Enda's.

It is interesting to note, whether it was volunteering in World War One or volunteering in the Irish struggle for independence, that fighting was a rite of passage to this generation of boys. As fewer sources give evidence of the girl's situation, it is clear from the male sources that militant activities, was an obvious stage on the path to adult masculinity. The lack of young female sources is important to note. Though there are many older female sources, including Margaret Skinnider and Countess Markievicz, females that were youths during the period discussed did not seem to write down their experiences or come forward to give witness statements. This is could have been due to women's position in society at the time or the shame attached for some as they would have went against social protocols to take part in the sturggle.

This study has highlighted what might be called a 'forgotten generation' who had a significant impact on the campaign for an independent Ireland during the

1910s and early 20s. After this extensive study, it is evident that this decade of revolution would not have been successful without the input of this generation.

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