



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY IN SLIGO, 1914-1949

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abbreviations	ii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Protestant population of Sligo	22
Chapter Two: The First World War	63
Chapter Three: The War of Independence	138
Chapter Four: The Truce and the Civil War	201
Chapter Five: The economic commitments of Sligo Protestants	258
Chapter Six: The political interests of Sligo Protestants	299
Chapter Seven: Protestant Churches, education and confessional relations in Sligo	334
Chapter Eight: Protestant social and associational life in Sligo	369
Conclusion	422
Appendix I: Maps	429
Appendix II: Tables	432
Bibliography	444

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Abbreviations

A.C.A.	Army Comrades Association
A.G.M.	Annual General Meeting
A.O.H.	Ancient Order of Hibernians
A.P.L.	Unionist Anti-Partition League
A.S.U.	Active Service Units
B.L.G.B.	British Local Government Board
Capt.	Captain
C.S.B.	Crime Special Branch
Col.	Colonel
C.C.	Catholic Curate
C.E.D.	County Electoral Division
C.F.A.	Clare Farmers' Association
G.C.	Cumann na nGaedheal (Party)
<i>CM</i>	<i>The Connachtman</i>
Clr.	Councillor
C.O.	Colonial Office (Dublin Castle records)
Co. Co.	County Council
Dáil Éireann	Irish parliament
D.E.D.	District Electoral Division
D.E.L.G.	Dáil Éireann Local Government
Den.	Denominations
Dept.	Department
D.F.A.	Dublin Farmers' Association
D.I.	District inspector
D.L.	Deputy Lieutenant
F.	Farmers' (Party)
F.F.	Fianna Fáil
F.G.	Fine Gael
G.A.A.	Gaelic Athletic Association
G.H.Q.	General Head quarters
H.M.L.	His Majesty's Lieutenant

I.A.O.S.	Irish Agricultural Organisation Society
I.F.A.	Irish Farmers' Association
I.F.U.	Irish Farmers' Union
I.G.C.	Irish Grants Committee
I.L.A.	Irish Landowners Association
I.L.P.U.	Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union
I.M.A.	Irish Military Archives
Ind.	Independent
I.N.V.	Irish National Volunteers
I/O	Intelligence Officer
I.P.P.	Irish Parliamentary Party
I.R.A.	Irish Republican Army
I.R.B.	Irish Republican Brotherhood
I.T.G.W.U.	Irish Transport and General Workers Union
I.U.A.	Irish Unionist Alliance
I.V.	Irish Volunteers
J.P.	Justice of the Peace
Jun.	Junior
Lab.	Labour (Party)
Lieut.	Lieutenant
L.G.B.	Local Government Board
N/A	Not Available
N.A.I.	National Archives of Ireland
N.F.R.L.	National Farmer's and Ratepayers' League
N.L.I.	National Library of Ireland
N.S.	National School
M.P.	Member of Parliament
O/C	Officer Commanding
Oireachtas	(Irish) Legislature
P.P.	Parish Priest
P.R.	Proportional Representation
P.R.O.N.I.	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
R.C.B.L.	Representative Church Body Library (Church of Ireland)

R.D.C.	Rural District Council
Rep.	Republican
Rev	Reverend
<i>R.H.</i>	<i>Roscommon Herald</i>
R.I.C.	Royal Irish Constabulary
R.M.	Resident Magistrate
Saorstát Éireann	Irish Free State
<i>S.C.</i>	<i>Sligo Champion</i>
S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.	Sligo County Inspector R.I.C. Monthly Report
S.C.L.	Sligo County Library
Sec.	Secretary
S.F.	Sinn Féin
S.F.A.	Sligo Farmers' Association
S.I.	<i>Sligo Independent</i>
S.L.N.C.R.	Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway
<i>S.N.</i>	<i>Sligo Nationalist</i>
S.P.Y.P.G.	Sligo Presbyterian Young People's Guild
S.R.A.	Sligo Ratepayers Association
S.S.N.Co.	Sligo Steam Navigation Company
<i>S.T.</i>	<i>Sligo Times</i>
S.T.V.	Single Transferable Voting
S.U.C.	Southern Unionist Committee
Taoiseach	Irish Prime Minister
T.C.D.	Trinity College Dublin
T.D.	Teachta Dála (a member of Dáil Éireann)
T.N.A.	The National Archives (London)
U.C.D. A.D.	University College Dublin, Archives Department
U.D.	Urban District
U.I.L.	United Irish League
U.U.C.	Ulster Unionist Council
U.V.F.	Ulster Volunteer Force
<i>W.P.</i>	<i>Western People</i>
Vol.	Volunteer

Introduction

This thesis explores the Protestant community in Sligo from the start of the First World War in 1914 to the declaration of an Irish republic in 1949 and is a study of the local economic, social, political and cultural aspects of Protestant life in Sligo during this period. The study examines members of the Church of Ireland (Anglicans, Protestant Episcopalians), the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, the Congregational Church, the Plymouth Brethren and the members of other Protestant sects. This thesis will treat all Protestants in Sligo as a single group, as Protestants shared similar religious beliefs, and by and large they were unionist in politics. This study will not explore the fundamental religious differences between the Catholic and Protestant faiths. However, at times reference will be made to some ideological differences between the churches, which cast light on the different Protestant and Catholic social views.

As Sligo Protestants cannot be studied completely out of context from Sligo Catholics, nationalist organisations and Protestant and Catholic interaction will also form part of the study. Confessional differences in almost all aspects of life in Sligo during the period from 1914 to 1949 will form an integral part of this thesis. The information presented in the thesis is specific to Sligo. However, the evidence can hopefully fit in with existing studies and future works.

The year 1914 has been chosen as the starting point for the study as it marks the end of the campaign for Irish Home Rule and the start of the First World War, arguably a year which could be considered to be a major turning point for Protestants in Ireland. Many studies of the Protestant community in southern Ireland end with either the Truce that ended the War of Independence in July 1921 or with the cessation of hostilities in May 1923 marking the end of the Irish Civil War. The year 1949 has been chosen for the termination of this study as it was the year when an Irish republic was declared marking an end to the Irish Free State's constitutional connection with the rest of the United Kingdom.

The year 1949 has also been chosen as the date when this study ends as it was roughly a generation after the end of the Irish Civil War, and allows for an investigation of the fortunes of the Protestants in Sligo under the Irish Free State. Choosing the year 1949 as the termination of the study also allows an examination of the reactions of a local Protestant community to the changes that took place in the transition from British to Irish rule.

General works have been produced on Protestants in the 26 counties over the past few decades. Michael Viney in his work *The five per cent: a survey of Protestants in the*

Republic (1965)¹ and F.S.L Lyons's 'The minority problem in the 26 Counties' (1967)² have carried out general assessments of Protestants in the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland. Jack White's *Minority report* (1975)³ is a study from a national perspective on southern Irish Protestants. However, White's work has been superseded by Kurt Bowen's *Protestants in a Catholic state* (1983).⁴ Neither study engages a great deal with Irish Protestants provincially or locally. In his study *Crisis and decline: the fate of the southern unionists* (1997), R.B. McDowell discusses the twilight years of unionism and impact of the revolutionary years from 1919 to 1923 on the unionist and Protestant population in Ireland.⁵ He deals with unionism on a national level, and in his last chapter, 'staying on' he discusses Protestants and ex-unionists in independent Ireland.⁶ However, he only briefly mentions some provincial incidents.⁷

John Coakley's chapter, 'Religion, ethnic identity and the Protestant minority in the Republic', in William Crotty and David Schmitt (eds), *Ireland and the politics of change* (1998) gives a brief general history of Protestants in Ireland.⁸ Coakley does focus on Protestant political aspirations since 1922 but only mentions Protestant politics in Dublin, Cork and the border counties of Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan.⁹ However, he makes some interesting observations including acknowledging that there was no doubt that the southern Irish Protestant community has changed since independence but this must be seen within the context of changes within the Catholic majority population.¹⁰ Coakley also argues that the boundary between Protestants and Catholics cannot be described as an ethnic one and Protestants did not wish to see themselves as a separate national group from Catholics in southern Ireland.¹¹

A more recent assessment is Kenneth Milne's, 'Protestant Churches in independent Ireland' in James P. Mackey & Enda McDonagh (eds.), *Religion and politics in Ireland at*

¹ Michael Viney, *The five per cent* (Dublin, 1965).

² F.S.L. Lyons, 'The Minority problem in the 26 Counties', in Francis MacManus (ed), *The years of the great test 1926-39* (Cork, 1967), pp 92-103.

³ Jack White, *Minority report* (Dublin, 1975).

⁴ Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic state* (Dublin, 1983).

⁵ R.B. McDowell, *Crisis and decline* (Dublin, 1997).

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 163-96.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ John Coakley, 'Religion, ethnic identity and the Protestant minority in the Republic', in William Crotty and David Schmitt (eds), *Ireland and the politics of change* (London, 1998), pp 86-106.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 96-9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp 103-4.

the turn of the millennium (2003).¹² Milne's study also neglects local developments in the Protestant community after 1919. As does the chapter on the fate of the Protestant minority in Terence Brown's *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002* (2004).¹³ Another book published in 2004 is Toby Barnard's *A new anatomy of Ireland: the Irish Protestants, 1649-1770*.¹⁴ The book covers a period outside the parameters set for this study. However, it has been a useful source in that it gives a greater understanding of what brought many Protestants to Ireland and how they developed their own particular culture and society quite separate from the native Irish. Barnard deconstructs Protestant society and does not represent Protestants as one monolithic block.

Robert Kennedy's work *The Irish: emigration, marriage and fertility* (1973)¹⁵, Jeremiah Sexton and Richard O'Leary, *Analysis of the factors affecting population decline in minority religious communities in the Republic of Ireland* (1996)¹⁶ and Richard O'Leary's article 'Change in the rate and pattern of religious intermarriage in the Republic of Ireland' (1999)¹⁷, are studies that avail of statistical data to come to some conclusions on the decline in Protestant numbers in the Republic of Ireland. O'Leary makes plenty of use of tables and graphs, which help the reader relate the data to his conclusions.¹⁸

David Fitzpatrick's *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* (1977) is a very informative study on local conditions in Co. Clare, which also sheds some light on the small Protestant and unionist community in Clare.¹⁹ Liam Kennedy's first chapter in *Colonialism, religion and nationalism in Ireland* (1996), entitled 'the long retreat: Protestants, economy and society, 1600-1926', investigates Protestants in Co. Longford over quite a long period.²⁰ Terence Dooley's work, *The plight of Monaghan Protestants, 1912-26* (2000) is a very thorough local study on Protestants covering a traumatic period.²¹ Michael Farry's two books, *Sligo 1914-1921: a chronicle of conflict* (1994) and *The aftermath of revolution: Sligo 1921-23* (2000) analyse the War of

¹² Kenneth Milne, 'The Protestant Churches in independent Ireland' in James P. Mackey & Enda McDonagh (eds), *Religion and politics in Ireland at the turn of the millennium* (Dublin, 2003), pp 64-83.

¹³ Terence Brown, *Ireland* (London, 2004).

¹⁴ Toby Barnard, *A new anatomy of Ireland* (New Haven & London, 2004).

¹⁵ Robert E. Kennedy, *The Irish* (Berkeley, 1973).

¹⁶ J.J. Sexton, and Richard O'Leary, 'Factors affecting population decline in minority religious communities in the Republic of Ireland', in *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. Building Trust in Ireland* (Belfast, 1996), pp 259-332.

¹⁷ Richard O'Leary, 'Change in the rate and pattern of religious intermarriage in the Republic of Ireland' in *Economic and Social Review*, xxx, no. 2 (1999), pp 119-32.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977).

²⁰ Liam Kennedy, *Colonialism, religion and nationalism in Ireland* (Belfast, 1996), pp 1-34.

²¹ Terence Dooley, *The plight of Monaghan Protestants, 1912-26* (Dublin, 2000).

Independence and the Civil War in Sligo.²² Farry has included plenty of primary research material in *Sligo 1914-1921*. However, he has not footnoted any of the material in his book and it is difficult to ascertain where he gathered his information. In *Sligo 1914-1921* Farry briefly mentions the Protestant unionist minority in Sligo. However, he makes no assessment of the impact of events on Protestants or unionists in Sligo. A very positive aspect of *Sligo 1914-1921* is that Farry has presented a good deal of information on nationalist organisations, nationalist politics and land issues before and during the First World War and the War of Independence.

Farry's second work on Sligo, *The aftermath of revolution* is a much more detailed and well-referenced work that combines the political, military and social history of Sligo in the period 1921-23. Farry effectively uses Sligo as his case study to examine the insurgency and counterinsurgency of the Civil War. He covers some of the reasons why Sligo men participated in the fighting and their sympathies. Farry primarily focuses on the military aspects of the period from 1921 to 1923 and the strength of this study lies in his extensive statistical analysis of various aspects of the conflict and in his examination of the geographical distribution and socio-economic status of participants and the impact of hostilities on civilian life. Even though his work is wide ranging, only briefly at the end of his book does he mention Protestants in Sligo and their attitudes to the era of conflict in Sligo and their efforts to integrate into the political and economic structure of the new Irish Free State. Farry covers very little on how Protestants and Catholics engaged with each other culturally, politically and economically. In examining the Protestant minority, Farry claims that 'in Sligo town the non-Catholic population decreased by 35.6 per cent while in Galway city non-Catholics who represented only 2.7 per cent of the population dropped by almost 52 per cent during the same period. This may have been owing to the impact of violence during the troubled times but it is just as likely to be owing to lack of social amenities and pressure from mixed marriages'.²³ This is somewhat vague as to why the Protestant population declined and it is apparent that more detailed study of the social influences on Protestants in Sligo is required. This thesis will expand and develop Farry's initial research on Protestants in Sligo.

²² Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921* (Trim, 1994); Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

Peter Hart's two works, *The I.R.A. and its enemies* (1998)²⁴ and *The I.R.A. at war 1916-1923* (2003)²⁵, give some accounts of Protestant experiences during the revolutionary period. However, Hart's research on Protestants is confined to Co. Cork, and these works, much like many others, terminate in the 1920s. A much deeper analysis of Protestants locally, in Sligo especially, after 1923 may be beneficial in understanding some broader national issues. As yet there has been nothing on the scale of Marianne Elliot's *The Catholics of Ulster* (2000),²⁶ while the Church of Ireland in particular continues to engage the attention of authors, these have been more interested in analysing aspects of the church's theological and institutional past.²⁷

However, some interesting personal observations by some well-known Protestants in modern Ireland have been included in *Untold stories: Protestants in the Republic of Ireland* (2002)²⁸, which was edited by Lynne Adair and Colin Murphy and some recent interview material with Protestants brought up in southern Ireland is also analysed by Stephen Mennell, Mitchell Elliott, Paul Stokes, Aoife Rickard and Ellen O'Malley-Dunlop in 'Protestants in a Catholic state: a silent minority in Ireland', in Tom Inglis, Zdzislaw Mach and Rafal Mazanek (eds), *Religion and politics: east-west contrasts from contemporary Europe* (2000).²⁹ The authors discuss southern Protestant identity as 'outsiders' and their differences from the majority Catholic community.³⁰ However, in addition to discovering that the differences are less important in modern Ireland they also discovered the strong identification of southern Protestants with the Irish state and their widening differences with northern Protestants.³¹

Joseph Ruane & David Butler's 'Southern Irish Protestants: an example of de-ethnicisation?' (2007) is a recent paper suggesting that Protestants after independence did not simply change from being a British ethnic minority to an Irish religious one.³² The paper argues that Protestants in Ireland always had a strong Irish cultural and national

²⁴ Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies* (Oxford, 1998).

²⁵ Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at war 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003).

²⁶ Marianne Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster* (London, 2000).

²⁷ R.B. MacCarthy, *Ancient and modern* (1995); Alan Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland, 1691-1996* (Dublin, 1997); Toby Bernard & W.G. Neely (eds), *The clergy of the Church of Ireland 1000-2000* (Dublin, 2006).

²⁸ Lynne Adair & Colin Murphy (eds), *Untold stories* (Dublin, 2002).

²⁹ Stephen Mennell, Mitchell Elliott, Paul Stokes, Aoife Rickard, and Ellen O'Malley-Dunlop, 'Protestants in a Catholic state: a silent minority in Ireland', in Tom Inglis Zdzislaw Mach & Rafal Mazanek (eds), *Religion and politics* (Dublin, 2000), pp 68-92.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 79-85, 90-2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp 85-6.

³² Ruane, Joseph & Butler, David, 'Southern Irish Protestants: an example of de-ethnicisation?' in *Nations and Nationalism*, xiii, no. 4 (Oct., 2007), p. 620.

identity, which was quite separate to their previous allegiance to the British crown and empire.³³ Importantly the conclusion of the paper indicates that Irish Protestant identity comes from a distinct historical community.³⁴ This suggests that a study of a local Protestant community can illuminate the broader national dimension.

‘Protestants in a Catholic state: a silent minority in Ireland’ and *Untold stories* both comment upon the damaging effects of the *Ne temere* policy, which in effect required the offspring of a Catholic/Protestant marriage to be raised as Catholics. The two works mention the influence of Catholicism on the controversies surrounding the appointment of a Protestant librarian in Co. Mayo in 1931, the Mother and Child affair of 1951 and the Fethard boycott of 1957.³⁵ However, both works praise the treatment of the Protestant minority by the Irish state.³⁶

The first of the three controversies occurred in 1931 when Miss Letitia Dunbar-Harrison, a Protestant graduate of Trinity College Dublin, was nominated to the post of County Librarian in Mayo.³⁷ The library committee of the county council, which was dominated by the Catholic clergy refused to accept her appointment, maintaining that she did not have a sufficient knowledge of Irish, which was required for the post. Mayo County Council supported the library committee. However, it became apparent that the library committee did not wish to have a Protestant influencing reading material for the Catholic majority in the county. In fairness to the Cumann na nGaedheal government, they went ahead and installed her in the post. However, in the face of a successful boycott of library services in Mayo, organised by the Catholic clergy, the government was forced to transfer Miss Dunbar-Harrison to a post elsewhere.

The second controversy took place in 1951 when the Minister of Health at the time, Dr Noel Browne, proposed legislation to introduce a scheme of free medical care for mothers and their children.³⁸ For a variety of reasons the Catholic hierarchy opposed the measure. The Catholic hierarchy was against state interference in affairs they believed were the

³³ Ibid., p. 621.

³⁴ Ibid., pp 630-1

³⁵ Stephen Mennell, Mitchell Elliott, Paul Stokes, Aoife Rickard, and Ellen O’Malley-Dunlop, ‘Protestants in a Catholic state: a silent minority in Ireland’, in Tom Inglis Zdzishaw Mach & Rafal Mazanek (eds), *Religion and politics* (Dublin, 2000), p. 81, p. 83; Lynne Adair & Colin Murphy (eds), *Untold stories* (Dublin, 2002), pp 7-10.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., pp 8-9; Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic state* (Dublin, 1983), p. 36; Jack White, *Minority report* (Dublin, 1975), p. 100.

³⁸ Lynne Adair & Colin Murphy (eds), *Untold stories* (Dublin, 2002), pp 9-10; Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic state* (Dublin, 1983), p. 65; Jack White, *Minority report* (Dublin, 1975), p. 111.

responsibility of the family. More importantly the Catholic Church feared that women might be introduced to contraception or abortion in the course of maternal care by doctors. Browne's Mother and Child Scheme made no provision for contraception or abortion. However, the Catholic hierarchy complained to the Taoiseach, John A. Costello, who maintained that 'I, as a Catholic, obey my Church authorities and will continue to do so'.³⁹ This indicated to Protestants that the Catholic Church seemed to have a strong say in state policy in the Republic of Ireland.

The third controversy surrounded an incident in Fethard-on-Sea, Co. Wexford, in 1957.⁴⁰ In 1949 a Catholic farmer married a Protestant woman, and she had, under the *Ne temere* policy, promised to raise their children Catholic. In early 1957 she seemed to have changed her mind and moved to Belfast, only agreeing to return if her husband allowed the children to be raised as Protestants.⁴¹ It was believed that local Protestants had assisted her, and in retaliation, local Catholics initiated a boycott of Protestant businesses. The Catholic hierarchy did not condemn the boycott. However, the Taoiseach of the time, Eamon de Valera, protested against the boycott, which did not end until autumn 1957.

An observation of the past and current studies on Protestants in southern Ireland shows that there exists an opportunity for research on local Protestant communities in the history of Ireland after 1914 and during the period of the Free State. With the exception of Terence Dooley's work on Monaghan Protestants from 1912 to 1926 and some mention of the Protestant and unionist community by David Fitzpatrick in Co. Clare, by Peter Hart in Co. Cork, and by Michael Farry in Co. Sligo, research on Protestants in the Irish Free State has focused on the national perspective, and in particular the experiences of the Protestant community in the Dublin area, neglecting to a degree the fate of the Protestant minority in provincial towns, especially in Connacht and the West of Ireland.

Possibly as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland from the late 1960s to the 1990s⁴², a sizeable amount of research has been conducted on the Protestant majority⁴³ and the

³⁹ Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic state* (Dublin, 1983), p. 65.

⁴⁰ Lynne Adair & Colin Murphy, (eds), *Untold stories* (Dublin, 2002), p. 10; Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic state* (Dublin, 1983), p. 72.

⁴¹ Lynne Adair & Colin Murphy, (eds), *Untold stories* (Dublin, 2002), p. 10.

⁴² P. Kingsley, *Londonderry revisited* (Belfast, 1989); Niall Ó Dochartaigh, *From Civil Rights to armalites* (Cork, 1997); Bob Purdie, *Politics in the streets* (Belfast, 1990); Peter Rose, *How the Troubles came to Northern Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2000).

⁴³ Michael Farrell, *Northern Ireland* (2nd ed., London, 1980); Sarah Nelson, *Ulster's uncertain defenders* (Belfast, 1984); T. Brown, *The whole Protestant community* (Derry, 1985); Susan McKay, *Northern Protestants* (Belfast, 2000); Andrew Finlay, Defeatism and Northern Protestant 'Identity' in *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, i, no. 2 (Dec., 2001), pp 3-20.

Catholic minority⁴⁴ in Northern Ireland from 1920 to the present and a local based study of southern Protestants could possibly shed more light on larger national perspectives and place local issues within a national context. It has of course been noted that the Protestant population in Ireland generally and in western counties specifically did decline sharply after the foundation of the Irish State. However, in some pockets the native Protestant population remained reasonably significant, and this can be proved true in the case of Sligo.

The Protestant community in Sligo and Ireland were a powerful and influential political, cultural and economic minority up to 1919. However, historians have on the whole neglected the contribution of this community in the period after the formation of the Irish Free State from 1923 to 1949. This has occurred for many reasons; it is true that many Protestants left the Irish Free State and went to Britain and Northern Ireland but many influential and ordinary Protestants remained and worked hard to adapt to the changing situation. Southern Protestants also wished to keep a low profile in a state where they felt their traditions and culture were an embarrassment. Also it can be argued that the years from 1923 to 1949 have been perceived as a less eventful period for historical enquiry into local Protestant communities in Ireland. However, this has changed as can be seen from the contributions of various historians on the Protestant minority in southern Ireland in recent years.

About thirty to forty years ago, class and related economic issues along with national narratives were some of the most important ideas for historical research. At the present time Europe is experiencing the largest movement of population since the end of the Second World War and people are moving in significant numbers from Eastern Europe and parts of Africa to Western Europe. The ability of an established majority to co-exist with new and culturally different minorities is a major question in today's world, especially as culture can be closely linked with specific religious traditions. In only the past few years Ireland has become one of the most important destinations for culturally disparate minorities. This is not a unique experience for Irish people and Ireland has a long history of interaction between a Catholic majority and a Protestant minority. With so many new minority groups bringing a rich cultural diversity to this country and beginning to call Ireland home it may be fitting to conduct work on and reassess the contribution of Sligo's Protestant minority.

⁴⁴ Fionnuala O'Connor, *In search of a state* (Belfast, 1993); Mary Harris, *The Catholic Church and the foundation of the northern Irish state* (Cork, 1993); Eamon Phoenix, *Northern nationalism* (Belfast, 1994); Oliver P. Rafferty, *Catholicism in Ulster, 1603-1983* (London, 1994); John D., Brewer and Gareth I. Higgins, *Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland, 1600-1998* (London, 1998).

This may help to highlight the valuable contribution of all minorities to Irish social, political, economic and cultural life.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter analyses the changes in the Protestant population in Sligo town and county in the period from 1914 to 1949. Some comparisons are made with the decline of the Protestant population of the 26 counties of Ireland and with the other towns and counties in Connacht. The second chapter explores the participation and experiences of Sligo Protestants during World War I. The extent to which Sligo was a segmented society in 1914 and how inter-confessional relations were affected by the outbreak of the war and subsequent developments will form an important part of this chapter. The third chapter deals with the impact of the War of Independence on Protestants in Sligo and the main local issues at the end of the First World War in Sligo. The fourth chapter investigates how Protestants in Sligo responded to the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the Civil War. The fifth chapter explores Protestant economic interests in Sligo, while the sixth chapter assesses the involvement and influence of Sligo Protestants in local and national politics. Chapter six also investigates how Sligo Protestants engaged with the different political parties from the 1920s to the 1940s. The seventh chapter examines the Protestant Churches and educational institutions in Sligo, and especially their importance to the Protestant community in Sligo after the foundation of the Free State. Confessional relations and the strategies adopted by the Protestant Churches to stem the decline in their numbers will also form part of this chapter. Chapter eight assesses the importance of fraternities, clubs and sporting organisations for the Protestant community in Sligo and the significance of these organisations in facilitating inter-confessional relations, in particular after 1922.

The location for the study is the urban area of Sligo town and its immediate environment. However, the town of Sligo itself cannot be studied in isolation from the county of Sligo and so, where necessary, reference has been made to other towns and rural areas in Co. Sligo. Also in some cases national and regional evidence relating to both the Protestant and Catholic communities of Sligo town has been used to illuminate local issues.

Sligo town was founded at the mouth of the Garavogue River by Maurice Fitzgerald in 1245.⁴⁵ The geographical position of Sligo made it an important strategic site as it was situated on one of the main routes between the province of Connacht and the province of Ulster. Sligo had always been an important bridging point between the two provinces and building of castles and forts within the town made it an important centre for military activity

⁴⁵ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 15.

for hundreds of years after its foundation. The location of Sligo in northwest Connacht near the Ulster border resulted in a mix of cultures and traditions within the town.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Sligo became an important commercial and marketing centre and served a large hinterland of north Connacht and southeast Ulster.⁴⁶ As a result of the military and commercial significance of Sligo the first Protestant settlers in the town were Elizabethan soldiers and officials who had garrisoned the town during the wars of the sixteenth century and remained on after the wars had been concluded.

During the seventeenth century a large number of Scottish Protestant settlers came to Sligo.⁴⁷ They probably came to Ireland with the intention of settling as part of the Ulster Plantation of 1609. However, at the time large parts of Ulster were remote barren areas and the remaining Gaelic Irish subjected settlers to attacks. Many Scottish settlers who had arrived in parts of Donegal and Fermanagh would have found life there difficult and so were attracted to Sligo, which was an established commercial centre with a large port. Sligo was also a garrisoned town and offered protection for new settlers. In 1612 Sligo town was granted borough status which allowed for the election of local and national officials, making Sligo a key administrative centre in the northwest.⁴⁸ Economically, Sligo prospered during this period and strong trading ties were established with Ulster.

Before 1641 the population of Sligo town was estimated at 500, of which between 250 and 300 were British Protestants, many with Scottish surnames such as Crawford, Smith and Cox.⁴⁹ Most towns in Ulster at that time had populations of less than 200, so it seemed that Sligo was a more successfully planted town than many of the new towns of the Ulster Plantation. After the Confederate Wars of the 1640s more British Protestant settlers came to Sligo, especially settlers with Scottish surnames such as Gamble, Braxton, Johnston and Delap and by 1680 estimates put the number of Protestant families in Sligo town at about 200 along with 100 to 150 Irish Catholic families, which made Protestants the majority population.⁵⁰ As Toby Barnard has mentioned in his study, *A new anatomy of Ireland: the Irish Protestants, 1649-1770*, 'the town of Sligo exerted a magnetic appeal to the Protestants'.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Mary O'Dowd, 'Sligo' in Anngret Simms and J.H. Andrews (eds), *Irish country towns* (Dublin, 1994), p. 147.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 36.

⁴⁹ Mary O'Dowd, 'Sligo' in Anngret Simms and J.H. Andrews (eds), *Irish country towns* (Dublin, 1994), p. 149.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁵¹ Toby Barnard, *A new anatomy of Ireland* (New Haven & London 2004), p. 2.

Catholics and Protestants in Sligo took opposing sides in the wars at the end of the seventeenth century. Catholics supported James II while Protestants supported William.⁵² After the defeat of James, Catholic merchants in Sligo lost all power and influence and the Protestant merchant class took over.⁵³ Protestants in Sligo were not just a different religious group; they were also ethnically different, as they were English or Scottish as opposed to Gaelic Irish. The religious difference took on fundamental significance, whereas the difference in ethnic origins lived on through the religious differences and in many family names. As time passed, as Toby Barnard has argued, confessional labels became increasingly more important than ethnic ones.⁵⁴

Sligo town became the most Protestant part of Connacht and in 1749 the population of Sligo was 3,000, of which half were Protestant.⁵⁵ Links with Ulster remained strong, and Sligo became an important centre for the production and sale of linen in the late 1700s. A further link with Ulster is found in the fact that Methodism became established in Sligo during the second half of the eighteenth century, and John Wesley visited Sligo on no less than eleven separate occasions.⁵⁶ Sligo became one of the few places outside Ulster where Methodism won many converts.

Sligo had always been a significant military site and was an important 'garrison town' in the northwest. In the mid-eighteenth century there were four military barracks in Sligo, the Strand Barrack in Barrack Street, the Middle Barrack in Holborn Street, the Horse Barrack in Bridge Street and the Old Stone Fort Barrack in Quay Street.⁵⁷ During the nineteenth century, the Sligo Militia, the Sligo Rifles and the Sligo Artillery had been based in the Strand Barrack at various times.⁵⁸ The Strand Barrack was capable of accommodating seven officers and ninety non-commissioned officers and privates.⁵⁹ There was also a hospital with facilities for fifteen patients. By 1914 the Strand Barrack was the only military base in Sligo town.⁶⁰

⁵² Mary O'Dowd, 'Sligo' in Anngret Simms and J.H. Andrews (eds), *Irish country towns* (Dublin, 1994), p. 150.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Toby Barnard, 'Protestantism, ethnicity and Irish identities', in Tony Claydon and Ian McBride (eds), *Protestantism and National Identity* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 207.

⁵⁵ Mary O'Dowd, 'Sligo' in Anngret Simms and J.H. Andrews (eds), *Irish country towns* (Dublin, 1994), p. 150.

⁵⁶ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 144.

⁵⁷ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), p. 18.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

In the first half of the nineteenth century there was a spate of Protestant church building in Sligo town. The Cathedral of St John the Baptist on John Street had already been completed in 1730 and was designed by the famous German architect Richard Castle, who also designed Hazelwood House, the Wynne family home in Sligo, Westport House in Mayo, Powerscourt House in Wicklow, and Leinster House in Dublin.⁶¹ The original design of St John's Cathedral was influenced by the old basilica pattern of the early Roman architecture. However, many of these original features of the church were lost during extensive renovations carried out in 1812 and in 1883, when gothic features replaced much of Castle's work.⁶²

Calry Parish Church (Church of Ireland) was built in 1824 and was constructed in a plain gothic style with a tower and a tall spire.⁶³ The stones used in the construction of the church were quarried on the spot, which explained the somewhat low cost of £5,246 15s for the building works. In addition to the construction of the church itself the local building contractor, John Lynn, built a glebe house and a number of vaults beneath the church.⁶⁴ The Presbyterian Church was built in 1828 and gave its name to Church Street, on which the church is located. The church is a very simple limestone building with a attached school house which was built in 1883.⁶⁵

The earliest Methodist meetinghouse in Sligo was opened in Bridge Street in 1775 and it was described as 'a small tumble-down building with a thatched roof'.⁶⁶ In 1802, a new church was opened in Linenhall Street, and in 1832 this was replaced, at a cost of £800, by a plain limestone building in Wine Street, which is still in existence today.⁶⁷ The first Congregational church in Sligo was a small Union Chapel, which was built in Waste Garden Lane in 1791.⁶⁸ However, this proved to be inadequate and in 1849 a site on Stephen Street

⁶¹ *National inventory of architectural heritage: an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), p. 20.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), p. 163; *National inventory of architectural heritage: an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 92-4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 100-1; *Sligo Independent [S.I.]*, 1 Dec. 1928.

⁶⁶ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 114.

⁶⁷ *National inventory of architectural heritage: an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 100-1; *S.I.*, 23 Apr. 1932.

⁶⁸ *Sligo Champion [S.C.]*, 15 Aug. 1851.

was chosen for a new larger Congregational church.⁶⁹ The church, a limestone building with an adjoining manse and a school, was opened for service in August 1851.⁷⁰

Sligo was created a municipal and parliamentary borough in 1612, although the deed of incorporation did not come into effect until the Charter of 20 March 1613.⁷¹ Under the charter Sligo was incorporated under the name of the 'Provost and free Burgesses of the Borough of Sligo'.⁷² The corporate body consisted of a Provost and twelve free burgesses.⁷³ Under the Sligo Improvement Act of 1800 and the Sligo Town Government Act of 1803⁷⁴ commissioners were appointed, consisting of the representatives of the county and borough, the Provost and burgesses, and twenty-four others, resident in the town or within five miles of it and elected by the holders of houses of the yearly value of £20.⁷⁵ Their responsibilities were to maintain roads and pavements, lighting, repairs, regulate markets and improve the port and harbour; and the boundary of the town was set as one mile from the Market Cross in every direction.⁷⁶ Until the Act of Union in 1801 the Provost and burgesses of Sligo had the privilege of returning two members to the Irish Parliament, after which they returned only one member to the Westminster Parliament.⁷⁷

On 10 August 1840 the Municipal Corporations Act (Ireland), was passed by the parliament of the United Kingdom.⁷⁸ The ten reformed corporations, which were named in schedule A to the Act, were to be styled as Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses, with the exception of Dublin where the title Right Honourable Lord Mayor was retained. The ten towns were Belfast, Clonmel, Cork, Drogheda, Dublin, Kilkenny, Limerick, Londonderry, Waterford and Sligo. Under section 13 of the Act the remaining fifty-eight borough corporations were dissolved on 25 October 1840 and the extinguished boroughs were listed in schedules B and I of the Act. The Towns Improvement (Ireland) Act 1854 allowed electors of populous places to choose to establish town commissioners.⁷⁹ This enabled many newer communities that had never had municipal status to gain local government

⁶⁹ *National inventory of architectural heritage: an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), p. 100.

⁷⁰ *S.C.*, 15 Aug. 1851.

⁷¹ County Sligo Heritage and Genealogical Society, *County Sligo in 1837, a topographical dictionary*, extracts from 'A topographical dictionary of Ireland' by Samuel Lewis. (Carrick-on-Shannon, 2003), p. 22.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *An act for paving, cleansing, lighting and improving the streets, quays, lanes and passages in the town of Sligo in the county of Sligo* (43 Geo III, c. lx (11 June 1803)).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *An act for the regulation of municipal corporations in Ireland* (3 & 4 Vict., c. 108 (10 August 1840)).

⁷⁹ Mark Callanan & Justin F. Keogan (eds), *Local government in Ireland inside out* (Dublin, 2003), pp 20-1.

bodies. Sligo Corporation along with the other corporation towns mentioned in the Municipal Corporations Act (Ireland) of 1840 continued to operate under this act.⁸⁰

Under the terms of the Municipal Corporations Act (Ireland) 1840, Sligo borough was divided into three Wards for the purposes of election and each Ward was represented by two aldermen and six councillors, a total of twenty-four members.⁸¹ Expenditure increased significantly under this act and revenue was never sufficient to meet the shortfall. In 1865 the corporation owed over £1,200.⁸² Following the passing of the Sligo Borough Improvement Act by parliament on 26 July 1869, the corporation took over all the affairs of the town, including the maintenance of roads, bridges and other concerns which had been the responsibility of the Grand Jury.⁸³

The act declared that the corporation was to pay annually the Grand Jury a sum equivalent to approximately one-twelfth of the county-at-large-expenses.⁸⁴ The exact amount would be calculated proportionately according to the respective valuations of the borough and the county. The corporation acquired the power to strike and levy a borough rate not exceeding 4s 6d in the £, the right to hold markets and fairs and levy tolls and charges within the borough.⁸⁵ The Harbour Commissioners were established under this act to manage the affairs of Sligo port and harbour.⁸⁶ The act also provided for the extension of the borough and electoral wards. The sum of 4s 6d in the £ was never sufficient to meet the expenses of providing municipal services and annual deficits continued to mount. The matter came to head in the municipal financial crisis of 1917 and the Local Government Board was forced to conduct an inquiry.⁸⁷ A special bill was passed through parliament which removed the rate limit in the £ and also provided for the use of proportional representation in the municipal elections of January 1919 and made Sligo borough the first place in the United Kingdom to use the proportional representation voting system.⁸⁸

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *An act for the regulation of municipal corporations in Ireland* (3 & 4 Vict., c. 108 (10 August 1840)).

⁸² *Returns of local taxation in Ireland for year 1865; collected and compiled by direction of his excellency the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1867-8*, [C 4081], H.C. 1868, lviii, 14; *Report and evidence with appendices, local government and taxation of towns inquiry commission for Ireland ...*, part iii, 1877, [C 1787], H.C. 1877, xl, 37.

⁸³ *An act to make better provision for the local management of the borough of Sligo... (Sligo Borough Improvement Act)* (32 & 33 Vict., c.cxlvii (26 July 1869)).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *S.I.*, 1 Sept. 1917.

⁸⁸ *An act to amend the provisions for the local management of the borough of Sligo 1918 (Sligo Corporation Act)* (8 & 9 Geo. V, c.xxiii (30 July 1918)).

In August 1870, the Borough of Sligo, once described as ‘the most rotten borough in the kingdom’,⁸⁹ was disenfranchised and lost its parliamentary seat when the Sligo and Cashel Disfranchisement Act was passed by parliament.⁹⁰ In the period from 1800 to 1868 Sligo returned three members of parliament to Westminster, one for the borough and two for the county.⁹¹ However, as a result of bribery, corruption, violence and religious tension, especially following the election of November 1868, a report by a Royal Commission of Inquiry in October 1869 found ‘that at the last three elections of members to serve in parliament for the Borough of Sligo, corrupt practices have extensively prevailed’.⁹²

During the first half of the nineteenth century economic prosperity declined in Sligo. However, during the second half of the nineteenth century, after the Famine, prosperity returned to the town. Sligo’s transportation links improved, especially with the rail connection between Sligo and Dublin in 1862, Sligo to Enniskillen and Belfast in 1882, and Sligo to Limerick and Galway in 1895.⁹³ The rail network was an important infrastructural improvement for Sligo in aiding the transportation of raw materials and the movement of industrial and agricultural produce. However, Sligo port was always a vital ingredient of economic prosperity in the town and its significance increased in the latter half of the nineteenth century when Protestant owned shipping companies linked Sligo to ports such as Liverpool, Glasgow and Derry, and imported and exported goods to ports in the U.S.A., Russia, Scandinavia and the Baltic states.⁹⁴ Sligo port served a large hinterland in the northwest and a greater proportion of the exports from Sligo consisted of agricultural produce and livestock.

The increasing wealth of the merchant community in Sligo led to the construction of numerous civic and financial buildings, such as the town hall, the courthouse and bank branches in the 1860s and 1870s. Protestant merchant families began to be threatened by the growth of a new Catholic middle class. Growing Catholic prosperity and confidence in Sligo is shown by the number of Catholic buildings that were erected in Sligo in the second

⁸⁹ The Sligo Borough Improvement Bill: evidence of witnesses before House of Commons Select Committee, 1869 (S.C.L., Local Acts/Bills, ACT 30); *Copy of minutes of the evidence taken at the trial of the Sligo Borough Election petition, 1868-9*, [C 85], H.C. 1869, il, 1-156.

⁹⁰ *An act to disenfranchise the boroughs of Sligo and Cashel* (33 & 34 Vict. c. 38 (1 Aug. 1870)).

⁹¹ The Sligo Borough Improvement Bill: evidence of witnesses before House of Commons Select Committee, 1869 (S.C.L., Local Acts/Bills, ACT 30).

⁹² Report of the Commissioners into the existence of corrupt practices at Sligo Borough Election, 1870 (S.C.L., Elections, ELE 010).

⁹³ John C McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), pp 158-61. *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 30.

⁹⁴ John C McTernan, *Memory harbour* (Sligo, 2002), pp 38-42.

half of the nineteenth century. In 1846 the Dominican Friary and the Mercy Convent were built; the Ursuline Convent in 1850; Sligo Catholic Cathedral was finished in 1874; a Catholic Seminary College was founded in 1880; Summerhill College secondary school was completed in 1892 and the Marist Brothers came to Sligo in 1898.⁹⁵ Street names in Sligo were also changed to honour nationalist heroes such as Daniel O'Connell, Henry Grattan and Bartholomew Teeling.

The rising power and influence of the Catholic middle class along with the Home Rule movement's demands for self-government encouraged Protestants in Sligo town and county to become more involved in supporting the Union between Britain and Ireland especially during the times of the First and Second Home Rule Bills in 1886 and 1893, when the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union (I.L.P.U.) set up branches in Sligo to oppose the bills. The Local Government Act of 1898 had ended the power of the largely Protestant and unionist landed gentry and local government was now overwhelmingly in the hands of Catholic nationalists.⁹⁶ The electorate consisted of all those qualified to vote in the parliamentary elections, as well as similarly qualified women, who were not allowed to vote in the Westminster elections. Local government in Sligo consisted of Sligo Borough Corporation, Sligo County Council, the Rural District Councils and the Boards of Poor Law Guardians. The two most influential local bodies were Sligo Borough Corporation and Sligo County Council. Sligo Borough Corporation consisted of twenty-four councillors who were elected from the three wards, North, East and West, in the town. In January of each year a third of the corporation councillors had to offer themselves for re-election, this was done on an annual rotation basis, and the mayor was elected by a majority of the councillors at the end of January every year.

In the 1911 census, the last census before the outbreak of the First World War, statistics from Co. Sligo indicate that eighty-five per cent of people lived in rural districts, seventy per cent of employed people were involved in agriculture, fifty per cent of agricultural holdings in Sligo were fifteen acres or less, while 3.5 per cent were over 100 acres, which was close to the Connacht average.⁹⁷ Most of the arable land in Sligo was located along the rivers, Ballysadare/Unshin, Drumcliff, Garavogue, Owenmore, Owenbeg, and part of the Moy and along the coastal plains. In 1911 some of the main urban centres in the county

⁹⁵ Mary O'Dowd, 'Sligo' in Anngret Simms and J.H. Andrews (eds), *Irish country towns* (Dublin, 1994), p. 152.

⁹⁶ *An act for amending the law relating to local government in Ireland and for other purposes connected therewith* (61 and 62 Vict., c. 37 (12 August 1898)).

⁹⁷ *Census of Ireland for the year 1911, Province of Connaught, County Sligo*, p. 32; p. 211; pp 57-8; p. 63.

outside of Sligo town with their populations were; Tubbercurry, 2,698; Ballymote; 1,972, Collooney, 1,267; and Riverstown, 881.⁹⁸

In 1911 the population of Connacht was 610,984, while the total area of the province was 4,228,210 acres.⁹⁹ Thirty-one percent of the population of Connacht resided in Co. Mayo, followed closely by Co. Galway with thirty percent of the population; Co. Roscommon had fifteen percent of the population, while thirteen percent of the population of Connacht lived in Co. Sligo and ten percent resided in Co. Leitrim.¹⁰⁰ The largest county in Connacht in terms of area was Galway with thirty-five percent of the area of the province, the second largest county was Co. Mayo with thirty-two percent of the area of Connacht. The third largest county was Roscommon with fourteen percent of the area of the province. Co. Sligo was the fourth largest county in Connacht with ten percent of the land area, followed closely by Co. Leitrim with nine percent of the land area of the province.

A significant area of Co. Sligo was mountainous and covered by forest, bogs, marsh and lakes and was unsuitable for agriculture. The total area of the county was 452,356 acres, of which 440,541 acres consisted of land.¹⁰¹ Water including lakes and rivers made up 11,815 acres of the county.¹⁰² A total 354,478, or seventy-eight per cent was used for crops and grass.¹⁰³ This was the second highest percentage of the five Connacht counties; in Leitrim it was also seventy-eight percent, in Roscommon crops and grass took up seventy-nine percent of the land. Sixty-five percent of the land in Co. Galway was used for grass and crops; while only just over half the land in Mayo was used for grass and crops.¹⁰⁴

The marriage rate in Co. Sligo for the ten years ending 1911 was significantly lower than the national rate, while the emigration rate was higher than the national average.¹⁰⁵ Between 1901 and 1911 Co. Sligo had the fifth largest drop in population in Ireland, at 6.2 per cent. However, the population of Sligo town increased by 2.7 per cent in that period.¹⁰⁶

The total population of Sligo town in 1911 was 11,163 of which 1,750, or over fifteen percent were members of Protestant Churches.¹⁰⁷ This made Sligo town the second largest

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 78-89.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*; *Agricultural statistics of Ireland, 1911, General abstracts showing the acreage under crops and the number and description of livestock in each county and province, 1910-11*, [Cd 5886], H.C. 1911, c, 14-15.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*; *Census of Ireland for the year 1911, Province of Connaught*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Census of Ireland for the year 1911, Province of Connaught, County Sligo*, p. 32; p. 42; p. 97.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 211; p. 78; p. 224.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

urban area in Connacht after Galway city, which had a total population of 13,255 and a much smaller Protestant population of 802.¹⁰⁸ Sligo town had the largest Protestant population of any other urban centre in Connacht which provides an important reason why Sligo was chosen as the setting for this study.

Most Protestants in Sligo town, over ten per cent of the total population, belonged to the Church of Ireland, three per cent were Presbyterians, over one per cent were Methodist and 1.5 per cent belonged to the various other smaller Protestant denominations.¹⁰⁹ The total population of Co. Sligo at the time was over 84,000 and Protestants numbered about 8,000, or approximately ten percent of the total.¹¹⁰ The Church of Ireland community was the largest Protestant denomination in Co. Sligo at the time and accounted for almost seven per cent of the total population of the county.

Sligo Protestants were a dynamic and vibrant community and were politically and economically very active in the period before 1914. This thesis will argue that Sligo Protestants remained active in the period after 1914, and continued to be strongly involved in the political, economic and social life of Sligo during the period of the Free State, from the early 1920s to the late 1940s. This not only helped them to maintain their separate identity but also gave Protestants a sense of belongingness to the wider Sligo community.

This study applies the standard methodology of social history, identifying a broad range of sources and investigating them. By making use of a number of sources, a wider and more in-depth analysis can be obtained. Newspapers, especially the *Sligo Independent* and the *Sligo Champion*, have proven to be some of the most valuable sources of information throughout the study. The *Sligo Champion*, which was founded in 1836 and continues to be published, generally voiced the opinions of the Catholic and nationalist majority in Sligo. The *Sligo Independent*, published from 1855 to 1962, was a Protestant owned paper, which expressed pro-unionist views until 1921. The *Sligo Independent* is a very important source of information on the Protestant community as it largely represented Protestant opinion in Sligo. Another Protestant owned and operated newspaper was the *Sligo Times*. However, the newspaper was only published from 1908 to 1914. The *Sligo Nationalist*, published from 1902 to 1920, and the *Connachtman*, published from 1920 to 1925, were two Sligo based newspapers that were supportive of Sinn Féin. Robert G. Bradshaw, a Tipperary born Protestant member of the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) and Sinn Féin, edited both

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

newspapers. All the Sligo newspapers covered both town and county and provide on the whole an accurate barometer of social activity, covering all spectrums of political opinion. Newspapers were also vital for gauging the number of nationalists and unionists in the various political and semi-political organisations in Sligo.

The *Sligo Independent* and the *Sligo Champion* newspapers were indispensable as they detailed the annual Sligo Port Authority reports and the reported on the A.G.M.s of various companies with their headquarters in Sligo. Both newspapers included information on some of the smaller businesses in Sligo town in the form of detailed advertisements and articles on some businesses celebrating anniversaries. Newspapers also provided reports on individuals including marriage reports, letters and obituaries.

Local newspapers also provided information on the various sporting and fraternal clubs such as club meetings, annual reports, listed membership and activities. Protestant church functions and joint church celebrations between the various Protestant faiths were also recorded in the newspapers along with information relating to Protestant schools and education in Sligo. Newspaper reports also gave an indication of the interaction between Protestants and Catholics in Sligo. Newspapers can also provide a more in-depth coverage than minute books as they give opinions, debates and discussions, which are usually absent from minute books. However, some clubs or sports associations didn't send reports to the newspapers, as they may have not have been very popular or well attended.

Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.) Monthly Reports for Co. Sligo, which are can be found in the National Archives, London and are also on microfilm in the National Library of Ireland (N.L.I.) and in the John Paul II Library, N.U.I. Maynooth, have proven extremely beneficial in studying agrarian and political agitation in Co. Sligo and in assessing how the War of Independence impacted on Protestants in Sligo. R.I.C. records have also been useful in charting the rise of various political and national movements in Sligo, especially Sinn Féin and the Irish and National Volunteers, as the R.I.C. recorded numbers involved in some of the various political groups, the number of meetings held by a particular organisation in the course of a month and the attitudes of the general population towards political groups and leaders.

The Maurice Moore Papers in the N.L.I. has allowed for a study of how unionists became involved in the pro-Home Rule Irish Volunteers in Sligo and the split that developed in the volunteer movement at the beginning of the First World War. During the First World War John MacKay Wilson, a leading unionist, made two separate visits to

Sligo. Wilson was travelling around Ireland sounding out the opinions of unionists on various issues. Wilson's notes concerning his trips around Ireland are located in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (P.R.O.N.I.), Belfast. During his visits to Sligo he spoke to different Protestant unionists and asked them for their views on the First World War, Irish Home Rule, the Irish unionist organisations, the Sinn Féin movement and their attitudes towards the British government. Wilson's notes provide an invaluable insight into the minds of Protestants and unionists in Sligo at the time. Information on the Irish Unionist Alliance (I.U.A.) in the P.R.O.N.I. was also important for providing a glimpse into unionism in Sligo.

The papers of Charles O'Hara (1860-1947), who was appointed His Majesty's Lieutenant (H.M.L.) for Co. Sligo in 1902, in the N.L.I. provide a wealth of information and correspondence relating to his involvement in almost every aspect of life in Co. Sligo. Charles O'Hara was a prominent local unionist leader and his letter books contain detailed information relating to his membership of the I.U.A., and how he dealt with divisions within unionism and his reaction to political changes in the country in the period from 1914 to 1923. O'Hara's letter books also contain letters to members of Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. and show how he coped with the disruption caused by the War of Independence and the Civil War. Military reports from the Irish Military Archives (I.M.A.) and University College Dublin Archive Department (U.C.D. A.D.) and the Collins papers in the N.L.I., were useful for investigating some of the military commands issued to I.R.A. units in Sligo during the period of the War of Independence and the Civil War.

Department of Justice files and Department of Finance files in the National Archives of Ireland (N.A.I.) relating to compensation claims made by Protestants have proven to be an important source in assessing the impact of the War of Independence and the Civil War on Protestants and their property. Criminal Injury Claims Books in Sligo County Library (S.C.L.) and documents from the Irish Grants Committee (I.G.C.) in The National Archives (T.N.A.) in London are also helpful in analysing the claims for damages made by unionists, Protestants and Catholic loyalists in Sligo during the War of Independence and the Civil War, and in gauging the impact of agrarian agitation on Protestant and unionist landowners in Sligo in the period from 1914 to 1923. The I.G.C. was originally set up by the British government in May 1922 to assess claims from loyalists and award damages for injuries, which had occurred between the Truce on 11 July 1921 and the end of the Civil War on 12

May 1923.¹¹¹ The I.G.C. records were generated in the period from 1922 to 1930. The I.C.G. records are also important sources which indicate that during the War of Independence the Protestant community in Sligo were not forthcoming with information for the R.I.C. concerning I.R.A. activity in Sligo.

An important part of the methodology has included an examination of the 1911, 1926, 1936 and 1946 published censuses material and a comprehensive analysis of the manuscript household census returns in 1911 for Sligo. The 1911 manuscript household census returns provide a detailed and largely untapped amount of information on the socio-economic background of the Protestant community in Sligo. The Vestry Minute Books for St John's parish located in the Representative Church Body Library (R.C.B.L.), Dublin, have also helped to gauge Protestant numbers in Sligo town and provide an accurate picture of the decline in Protestant numbers.

Records listing the owners of land in Co. Sligo, information on property and land holdings, and estate papers pertaining to Protestant landowners, which can be found in S.C.L., P.R.O.N.I. and the N.L.I. were vital primary sources in assessing Protestant economic interests in Sligo. Information relating to co-operatives in Co. Sligo and the records of the Sligo and Connacht Manufacturing Societies, which are located in S.C.L. were also very useful. In order to assess Protestant businesses in Sligo town, the various trade directories in the period from 1912 to 1948, were also very beneficial.

Records of clubs and sporting associations, such as Sligo Tennis Club, the Co. Sligo Golf Club and Sligo Constitutional Club in S.C.L., along with records on the Sligo Masonic Lodge, located in the Grand Lodge of Freemasons Archive in Dublin and some information from the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland in Belfast has allowed for an investigation of Protestant social and cultural organisations in Sligo. Club records were also helpful in discovering if Protestants and Catholics were socialising in separate clubs or if they were joining the same organisations.

¹¹¹ Niamh Brennan, 'A political minefield: southern loyalists, the Irish Grants Committee and the British Government, 1922-31' in *I.H.S.*, xxx, no. 119 (May 1997), pp 406-20.

Chapter One: The Protestant population of Sligo

This chapter begins by comparing the decline of the Protestant population in Ireland with the reduction in Protestant numbers in Sligo in the period from 1911 to 1946 and analyses the decline in Protestant numbers in Sligo town and a number of other towns and counties in Connacht. This will also help put the decline in Protestant numbers in Sligo in context with the decline in their numbers nationally and regionally. An examination of the manuscript household census returns for Co. Sligo in 1911 and the general published census material from 1911 to 1946 will help reveal the changes in the Protestant population in Sligo town and county over time, especially after the disruption caused by the War of Independence and the Civil War.

In order to understand the nature of Protestant emigration from Sligo this chapter will explore the different Protestant age groups in Co. Sligo, and discover the number of younger Protestants in Sligo who may have been more inclined to emigrate just after or during the revolutionary period. An important part of this chapter will include an analysis of the fertility rates of Protestant and Catholic women in order to investigate in more detail the reduction of Protestant numbers. I also hope to discover if there were many marriages between Protestants and Catholics in Sligo town based on information drawn from the manuscript returns for Co. Sligo in 1911. The 1911 manuscript returns for Co. Sligo will also prove to be important in trying to gauge the potential for Protestant emigration that existed in 1911 and may also give an idea of those more inclined to emigrate in the period from 1919 to 1923.

As much of the evidence in this chapter is based on the statistical data recorded in both the manuscript census returns and in the published census records from 1911 the chapter begins by taking a closer look at how the census was recorded, collated and categorised at the time.

The first successfully completed census of Ireland took place in 1821 and for every ten years after that date until 1911, and subsequently in 1926, 1936 and 1946, and every five years after that year.¹ Both the 1901 and 1911 census household schedules are available for research and can be viewed in the N.A.I. in Bishop Street, Dublin.² Local census material relating to individual counties can also be accessed at county libraries and the manuscript returns are available for consultation on microfilm in S.C.L.

¹ *Irish Times*, Irish Ancestors, Census Records (<http://www.ireland.com/ancestor/browse/records/census/>) (10 Dec. 2006).

² *Ibid.*

Census gathering resulted in the production of different types of documents. Firstly, an enumerator, usually a policeman, would deliver Form A, which was called the 'Family Return' to each household. The form asked the head of the household to record all the members of this family and their visitors, boarders, servants, who slept or abode in the house on the night of Sunday, 2 April 1911. The details required included the Christian names, surnames, relation to head of family, religious profession, education (read and write/read only/cannot read), age, sex, occupation and marital status (married/widower/widow/single). In the case of married women further questions were asked relating to the number of years the present marriage lasted, the children born alive to present marriage and the total children born and the children still living. There was a section asking people to give their place of birth and people were also asked if they could speak Irish and/or English. Lastly information was requested concerning the physical and mental condition of an individual. Other forms employed in the census included Form B1, which requested information on each house and building in a particular street or townland and Form B2 noted out-houses and farm-steadings. Form M1 was used if a house was on the property of a landowner and Form N was the enumerator's general summary for a townland or street, and it showed the number of dwelling-houses, families and persons in a townland or street, and also the religious profession of the people. Form H was a return of the military, Royal Irish Constabulary and Metropolitan Police in barracks; and Form E was a return of inmates in a workhouse. The enumerator would then collect the census material and shortly after the information was gathered, reports were published presenting the collated information from the manuscript records.³ The information in the published reports was divided into territorial units and into various themes.⁴

Similar information was gathered for the 18 April 1926 census which included name and surname, relationship to head of household, age, sex, marriage details, children, birthplace, Irish language, religion and occupation. People were also asked for the name of their employer and the type of business. If a person was employed on a farm they also had to state the area of farm in statute acres. Apart from small changes, similar questions were asked for the 1936 and 1946 censuses on 26 April 1936 and 12 May 1946. The information was included in Form A. Form B related to house and building returns. Information was

³ Margaret E. Crawford, *Counting the people* (Dublin, 2003), p. 44.

⁴ *Ibid.*

gathered by county or county borough, district electoral division (D.E.D.), ward, townland, urban and district, town, village.

The results of the 1926 census were then published in nine subject volumes. The subject volumes of the report were: population, occupations, religions and birth-places, housing, ages and conjugal condition, industry, industrial status, Irish language and dependency. The final volume (X) was a summary of the leading facts and cross-analysis. For the 1901 and 1911 censuses, publication was made by geographical areas (counties and county boroughs).

The most important volume for this chapter and research on Protestants in Sligo was the third volume of the 1926 census, Religions and Birth-places. In the 1926 census population and religion was cross-classified by age groups, by occupations and in the case of farmers by the size of their farms. This was done by area down to D.E.D. level. For birthplaces we find the numbers who were born in the different foreign countries and also those born in the towns and counties in the Irish Free State in which they were residing. The birthplace figures are cross classified by age-groups, and by occupations. In volume three occupations were classified by religions and birthplaces (but not for towns and counties) only for the whole country.

The publication of the results of the 1936 and 1946 censuses was again by subject volumes and not by county and county borough volumes, as was the practice before the 1926 census. For the 1946 census publication religion and occupations for the whole country was put in volume two along with all the other information on occupations. Religious persuasion and farm acreage for individuals in Co. Sligo was not cross-classified for the 1946 census. In the published volumes for the 1926-46 censuses, religious persuasion and occupation for Sligo town was not cross-classified.

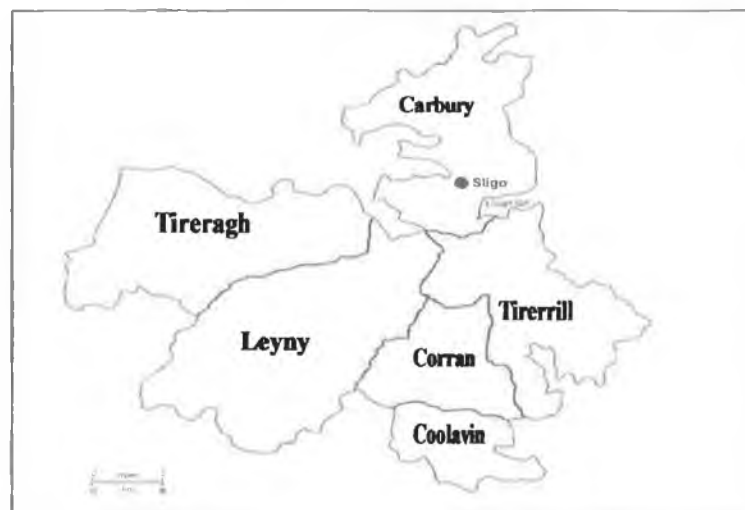
The published census tables from 1911 to 1946 do not break down religious persuasion and occupation for each county or town. For the 1911 census it was possible to find out the numbers of Protestants in each occupation by recording individual Protestants and their occupations in the manuscript census returns for Sligo town in 1911 and subtracting from the various occupational categories in the table in the published returns for the Sligo urban area in 1911. However, this was not possible for the 1926 to 1946 censuses as the manuscript returns are not available yet for these years.

The tables in volume three of the 1926 census are: table one showing the number of people in the state and religion; table two shows the number of males and females for each religion (Catholic, Protestant Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, Jew Baptist and

others); table three displays the number for each religion in each province; table four gives the number of males and of females of each religion in each province in Saorstát Éireann. Tables five, six and seven show the number of people for each religion in towns of more than 1,500. Tables eight, nine and ten show the numbers in each county by religion and population. Tables eleven and twelve show the number of people by urban and rural district electoral division by religion in towns of over 1,500. Table thirteen, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen show age groups classified by religion for the whole country and for each of the 26 counties and for larger towns. Table seventeen displays the number of males and females in each occupation by religion for Ireland. Table eighteen to twenty-two shows farmers, size of farm, farm relations and labourers by religion in each province, county and in the 26 counties as a whole.

For the 1911 census, results of the enumeration were published by counties, poor law unions, D.E.D. and townlands.⁵ The practice of issuing census publications in the form of county books was first adopted in 1871 and continued up to and including 1911. Including the four provinces and thirty-two counties, Ireland was broken down into different territorial divisions, most of which were used as spatial units in the census. The townland was the smallest territorial unit, which constituted about a thirtieth of a barony.⁶ Co. Sligo was divided into the six baronies of Carbury, Coolavin, Corran, Leyny (Leney), Tireragh (Tyreragh), Tirerrill (Tiraghrill).

Map of baronies in Co. Sligo.



Source: based on Sligo baronies map in John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 166.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

The Electoral Divisions were sub-divisions of poor law unions formed by grouping adjacent townlands.⁷ Superintendent Registrars' Districts and Registrars' Districts were districts created for the registration of births, marriages and deaths under the provisions set out for civil registration in 1864.⁸ The superintendent registrars' districts/poor law unions and registrars' districts were maintained for the 1901 and 1911 censuses.⁹ The Local Government Act (Ireland) 1898 introduced new territorial units and the 1901 census was the first to use them.¹⁰ Two separate sets of units were created, one was the County Electoral Divisions (C.E.D.), and the other was called County Districts and both were sub-divided into D.E.D.s.¹¹ These were sub-units of the county and did not cross county borders. The County Electoral Divisions (C.E.D.) were created to facilitate the election of members to the county councils, the successor of grand juries. The County Electoral Divisions for Co. Sligo were Aclare, Ballymote, Ballysadare, Banada, Castleconor, Cliffony, Collooney, Coolavin, Dromore, Drumcliff, Easkey, Kilmacowen, Kilmactranny, Kilshalvy, Lissadill, Owenmore, Sligo, Templevanny and Tubbercurry. The C.E.D.s were composed of both Rural and Urban Electoral Districts. In 1901 there were eighty-three Urban Districts (U.D.) and 212 Rural Districts (R.D.) in Ireland and in the census county districts replaced baronies and were used for presenting several sets of data.¹²

Map of Urban and Rural District Electoral Divisions in Co. Sligo



Source: based on Sligo Co. Council map of Co. Sligo showing county and district electoral divisions, rural district and union boundaries, 1898 (S.C.L., Maps, No. 984).

⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 40.

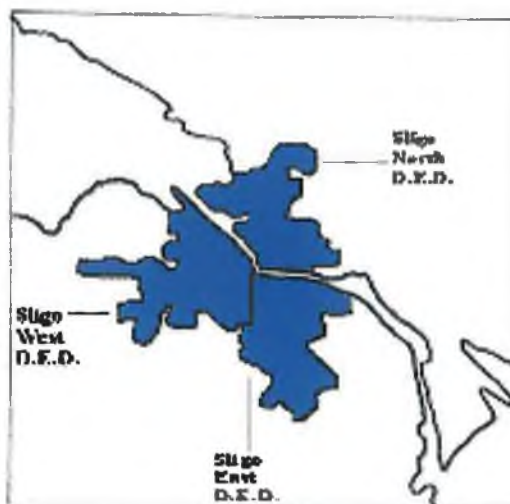
¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 41.

¹² Ibid., p. 40.

The five urban and rural districts for County Sligo in 1911 were Sligo U.D., Boyle No.2 R.D., Dromore West R.D., Sligo R.D., Tubbercurry R.D. Each rural district elected a Rural District Council (R.D.C.) from the area. The D.E.D.s were sub-divisions of C.E.D.s and county districts and in 1911 there was 3,673 in the whole country. The Sligo U.D. in the 1911 census corresponds to the Borough of Sligo town. Sligo Borough was broken down further into the three D.E.D.s of Sligo East Urban (East Ward), Sligo West Urban (West Ward) and Sligo North Urban (North Ward).

Map of Sligo Urban District Electoral Divisions



Sources: based on Sligo Co. Council map of Co. Sligo showing county and district electoral divisions, rural district and union boundaries, 1898 (S.C.L., Maps, No. 984) and Map of Borough Boundary of Sligo Town, 1910 (S.C.L., Maps, No. 996).

The published reports of the 1911 census recorded the collated information from the enumeration ledgers into territorial units and themes.¹³ Part I, vols i-iv listed themes concerning the condition of housing and population, marriages, births and deaths, occupations, education, ages, religious profession and literacy of the people. The themes were listed under the geographical areas of townland, town, county, city and large town, province, parliamentary division borough, poor law union, registrars' district, county electoral division, county district and district electoral division. The tables and themes from the 1911 census relating to the religious professions of the people were presented by parish, county, city, large town, and province. The education of the people, including the religious profession and literacy of the population was presented by county, city, large town, province, parliamentary division/borough and district electoral division and the ages and the

¹³ Ibid., p. 44.

occupations of the people presented by town, county, city and large town, province and the birthplace of the people presented by county, city, large town and province. Part II of the 1911 census was called the 'general report' with tables and appendix. The first series of the general report contained summaries of tables in county books on various themes. This information was geographically divided into tables for the province and country. Housing and population was recorded by D.E.D. and the birthplaces of the people which was recorded by province and country and also by county, city and large town. The second series was composed of special tables for general report on the various themes at various spatial levels.

The published census material indicates that the population of Ireland was in continuous decline in the years before 1911 and table 1.1A and 1.1B show that both the Catholic and Protestant populations declined at about the same rate, which was around twenty per cent for both in the years 1891 to 1911.¹⁴ The Protestant population experienced a greater percentage reduction than the Catholic population in the period from 1901 to 1911. However, the reduction was not as dramatic as the decline in the fifteen year period, 1911 to 1926, which included the revolutionary years from 1919 to 1923.

Table 1.1A. Population by Religion, 26 counties of Ireland, 1891-1926.

Year	Population		
	Total	Catholic	Protestant
1891	3,468,694	3,099,003	357,925
1901	3,221,823	2,878,271	330,440
1911	3,139,688	2,812,509	313,049
1926	2,971,992	2,751,269	208,024

Source: *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*, table 1A, p. 1. Protestant means Protestant Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist.

Table 1.1B. Population decline and Intercensal Change by Religion, 26 counties of Ireland, 1891-1926.

Year	Intercensal Change (thousands)			Intercensal Percentage Change		
	Total	Catholic	Protestant	Total	Catholic	Protestant
1891-1901	-246,871	-220,732	-27,485	-7.1	-7.1	-7.7
1901-1911	-82,135	-65,762	-17,391	-2.5	-2.2	-5.3
1911-1926	-167,696	-61,240	-105,025	-5.3	-2.2	-33.5

Source: *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*, vol. III, part 1, tables 1A and 1B, p. 1. Protestant means Protestant Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist.

¹⁴ *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, vol. III, part 1, table 1B, p. 1.

The 1926 census saw the Protestant population of the 26 counties of Ireland that became the Irish Free State decline by over a third, at thirty-four per cent,¹⁵ while during the same period the Catholic population fell by two percent. In the six counties of Armagh, Antrim, Derry, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone that became Northern Ireland, the Catholic population dropped by two percent in 1926, while the Protestant population increased by two per cent in the six counties.¹⁶

The 1901 and 1911 censuses show that Protestants had begun to leave the 26 counties in greater numbers and this made the position of those Protestants who remained even more tenuous and in 1911 the number of Protestants in Ireland was 313,049.¹⁷ Protestant economic dominance was steadily eroded in this period and they were losing influence to Catholic merchants and farmers. The growing power of Catholic tenants, who were able to purchase their lands in the period 1870-1909,¹⁸ and the increasing involvement of more Catholics in local politics, especially following the introduction of the 1898 Local Government Act, all encouraged Protestant emigration in the period before 1914.

The First World War, the War of Independence, 1919-21, the withdrawal of British troops, and the disbandment of the R.I.C. affected most Protestants in the south of Ireland, and they saw this as the end of any protection for themselves and their property. The further collapse of law and order in Ireland with the Civil War from 1922 to 1923 and the loss of connections with their co-religionists in the North convinced many of the need to leave southern Ireland. Research based on the 1926 census reports has led Sexton and O'Leary to estimate that around 90,000 Protestants and non-Catholics left the south of Ireland during the period 1911 to 1926 and a significant proportion of this outflow, around 30,000 people would have been as a result of the withdrawal of British forces and their families in early 1922, while the remaining 60,000 people were native born Protestants.¹⁹

In an examination of the census returns in 1911 for the Borough of Sligo town, I noted Protestants, recording their first name, surname, address, relationship to others in the house, gender, religion, their occupations, age, marital status, and their birthplace. It was found 1,152 Protestant Episcopalian, 286 Presbyterians, 153 Methodists, of the 164 listed as other denominations one Baptist, one Evangelist, one Free Thinker, forty-eight Brethren, twenty-

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *Census of Northern Ireland, preliminary report, 1926*, p. 25.

¹⁷ *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, vol. III, part 1, table 1A, p.1.

¹⁸ Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic state* (Dublin, 1983), p. 16.

¹⁹ J.J. Sexton and Richard O'Leary, 'Factors affecting population decline in minority religious communities in the Republic of Ireland', in *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation* (Belfast, 1996), p. 301.

eight members of the Church of England, fifty-one Congregationalists, five Jews, eighteen Plymouth Brethren, four who listed their denomination as Christian and seven members of the United Free Church of Scotland, which makes a total of 1,755.

The figure of 1,755 tallies with table XXXV, Religious Professions and Sexes of the inhabitants of the Principal Towns in the Province of Connacht in 1911 and with Table 125 (in the published reports of the 1911 census), showing by sexes the Religious Professions of the inhabitants of County Boroughs, Municipal Borough, Urban Districts, and Towns in Ireland with a population of 1,500 and upwards in 1911. The total population of the Borough of Sligo town was 11,163, the Catholic total was 9,408 and the Protestant was 1,750, not including the five who declared themselves Jews and were living in Sligo town at the time.²⁰ The age distribution of the Protestant and Catholic population of Sligo town in 1911 is displayed in table 1.2 below. The table shows that over one third of the Protestant population in Sligo town was under twenty years old. However, forty-one per cent of the Catholic population were under twenty years old.

Table 1.2: Age distribution and religious persuasion in Sligo town, 1911

Age Groups	Sligo Town Catholic Age Distribution		Sligo Town Protestant Age Distribution	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
under 15	2,798	30	421	24
15 & under 20	1,004	11	194	11
20 & under 25	810	9	165	9
25 & under 30	764	8	126	7
30 & under 35	693	7	125	7
35 & under 40	613	7	121	7
40 & under 45	526	6	121	7
45 & under 50	457	5	84	5
50 & under 55	399	4	99	6
55 & under 60	300	3	73	4
60 & under 65	283	3	78	4
65 & up	761	8	143	8
Total	9,408	100	1,755	100

Source: *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XVII, p. 44 and Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45). Note: the 5 Jews have been included with the Protestants.

The numbers of Protestant individuals are listed for each street where they lived in Sligo town in table 1.3 in the attached appendix II. The table shows that most Protestants were

²⁰ *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXXV, p. 32.

located in the North Ward. As can be observed in table 1.3 in appendix II Protestant individuals were concentrated on the Mall (North ward) where 132 resided, John Street (West ward) where 109 lived and Rathquarter (East ward) where ninety-three resided. There were also concentrations of Protestants in William Street (Wolfe Tone St.) (West ward), eighty-eight, Wine Street (West ward), eighty-four and Ballytivinan (North ward), eighty-one. The religious distribution of the population of Sligo town by wards is shown in the table 1.4 below. An idea of the location of the streets/areas can be found in the maps of Sligo town in the attached appendix I.

Table 1.4: The distribution of Protestants in Sligo urban wards, 1911.

Religion	East Ward	North Ward	West Ward
Catholics	3,291	3,042	3,075
Protestants	530	620	600
Jews	0	1	4
Total	3,821	3,663	3,679

Source: *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXXIII, p. 78.

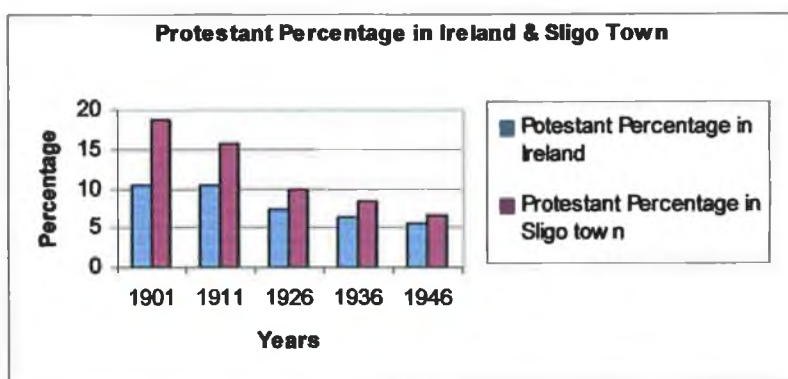
Using the published census information from 1901 to 1946 I compared the decline in the number of Protestants in Sligo town with their decline in southern Ireland. In table 1.5: Protestant numbers and Percentage of the Population in the 26 counties of Ireland and Sligo Town, 1901-46, on the next page, which was produced from the various census reports, it can be seen that the Protestant population of Sligo town in 1911 was 15.7 percent of the total population. That represented a drop of over three percent on the 1901 numbers and it can be observed that Protestant numbers were already declining before 1926. By 1926 the percentage of Protestants had fallen to 9.9 percent, which was a large drop from 15.7 in 1911, and if we glance at table 1.6 this represented a 35.6 percent drop, while table 1.6 also shows that Catholic numbers in the 1926 census for Sligo town had increased by 9.6 percent on their 1911 figures. If we look back at table 1.5 it shows us that the percentage of Protestants in the 26 counties of Ireland fell from 10.3 percent of the population in 1911 to 7.3 percent in 1926 and table 1.6 tells us that from the 1911 to the 1926 census the Protestant percentage decreased by 32.5 percent while the percentage of Catholics decreased by 2.2 percent in the same period. The percentage drop in the Protestant population in Sligo town in the period from 1911 to 1926 was slightly higher than for the whole of the 26 counties of Ireland over the same time. However, as can be observed from table 1.5, from 1901 to 1946 the percentage of Protestants in Sligo town was always higher than for Ireland in the same period and this is illustrated in graph 1.1.

Table 1.5: Protestant numbers and Percentage of the Population in the 26 counties of Ireland and Sligo Town, 1901-46.

Years	Protestant Numbers for 26 counties	Protestant Percentage for 26 counties	Protestant Numbers for Sligo Town	Protestant Percentage for Sligo Town
1901	330,440	10.3	2,048	18.8
1911	313,049	10.3	1,750	15.7
1926	208,024	7.3	1,131	9.9
1936	183,461	6.4	1,055	8.4
1946	157,516	5.6	855	6.6

Sources: *Census of Ireland, 1901, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, p. 36; *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, p. 32; *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*, p. 1, p. 8; *Census of Population of Ireland 1936*, p. 1, p. 10; *Census of Population of Ireland 1946*, p. 1, p. 8.

Graph 1.1: The percentage of Protestants in the 26 counties of Ireland and Sligo Town, 1901-46.



Source: Table 1.5.

Table 1.6: Percentage change in the Catholic and Protestant Population the 26 counties of Ireland and Sligo Town, 1901-26.

Years	Percentage Catholic change in 26 counties	Percentage Protestant change in 26 counties	Percentage Catholic change in Sligo town	Percentage Protestant change in Sligo town
1901-11	-2.3	-4.8	+6.6	-14.3
1911-26	-2.2	-32.5	+9.6	-35.6

Sources: *Census of Population of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, p. 32; *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*, p. 1, p. 8.

This section compares Sligo town with four other towns in Connacht in the period 1901 to 1946 to aid in an analysis of the Protestant decline. The towns decided on were Galway, which is the largest urban area in Connacht, Boyle in Co. Roscommon, Tuam in Co. Galway and Castlebar in Co. Mayo. These towns were selected because they represented a wide geographic spread in the province of Connacht and they were all towns above 1,500 inhabitants and were therefore mentioned in the various published census reports. Table 1.7A shows the numbers of Protestants in the five Connacht towns in the period 1901-46,

while table 1.7B shows the Protestant percentage in five Connacht Towns, 1901-46. Table 1.7A and 1.7B and graph 1.2 show that all five towns show a large drop in the Protestant population in the period 1901 to 1946. The largest drop in the Protestant population of the five Connacht towns was in the period 1911-26 and this can be observed in graph 1.3. An analysis of table 1.7B and table 1.8, the decrease in the Protestant population in five Connacht towns, 1911-26, shows that the percentage of Protestants in Galway in 1911 was 6.1 and in 1926 this dropped to 2.7, representing a drop of 51.9 percent on their 1911 figures. In 1911 Boyle had the next largest percentage of Protestants, with Protestants making up 11.1 percent of the population, this dropped to seven percent in 1926, representing a 45.3 percent drop. Five percent of the population of Tuam was Protestant in 1911 and 2.7 percent in 1926, representing a 41.3 percent drop. 5.6 percent of Castlebar's population was Protestant in 1911 and this dropped to 2.4 in 1926, representing a 49.5 percent drop. The most drastic drop in the Protestant population in the five towns occurred between the 1911 and the 1926 census and this can be seen in table 1.8 and graph 1.3. Even though the numbers of Protestants fell in Sligo town, the Protestant population always remained higher than in the other four other Connacht towns of Galway, Tuam, Castlebar and Boyle, and Sligo town's Protestant percentage of the population always remained a little higher than in the 26 counties of Ireland as a whole from the period 1901 to 1946.

Table 1.7A: Protestant numbers in five Connacht Towns, 1901-1946.

Towns	1901	1911	1926	1936	1946
Sligo	2,048	1,755	1,131	1,055	855
Galway	1,160	802	386	439	363
Boyle	344	298	163	157	103
Tuam	151	150	88	70	64
Castlebar	218	206	104	81	81

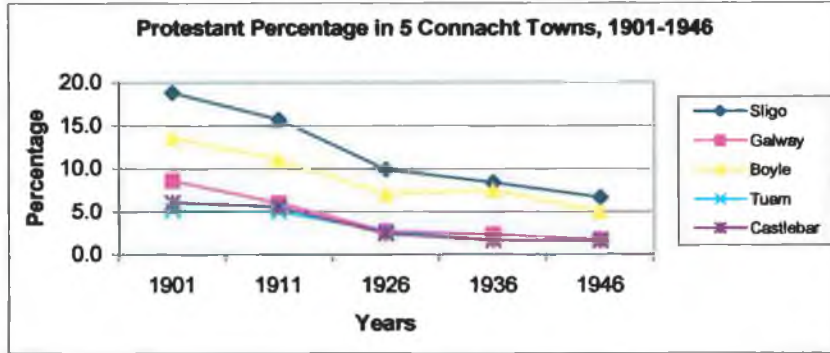
Sources: *Census of Population of Ireland, 1901, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXXV, p. 36; *Census of Population of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXXV, p. 32; *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, vol. III, part 1, table 7, pp 8-9; *Census of Population of Ireland, 1936*, vol. III, part 1, table 7, pp 8-9; *Census of Population of Ireland, 1946*, vol. III, part 1, table 7, pp 8-9.

Table 1.7B: Protestant Percentage in five Connacht Towns, 1901-1946.

Towns	1901	1911	1926	1936	1946
Sligo	18.8	15.7	9.9	8.4	6.6
Galway	8.6	6.1	2.7	2.4	1.8
Boyle	13.6	11.1	7.0	7.5	5.0
Tuam	5.2	5.0	2.7	1.7	1.7
Castlebar	6.1	5.6	2.4	1.7	1.6

Sources: same as table 1.7A.

Graph 1.2: Protestant percentage in five Connacht Towns, 1901-1946.



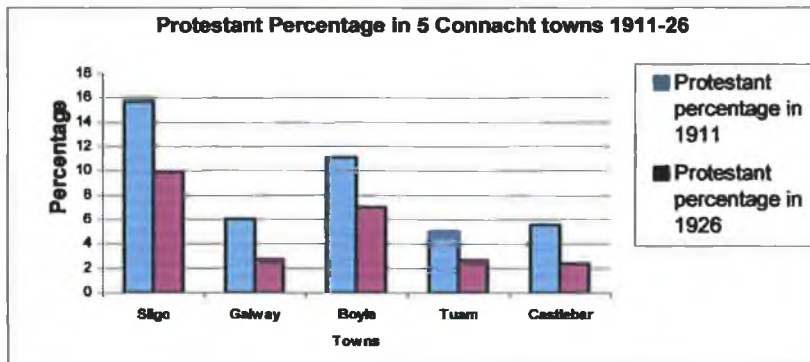
Source: Table 1.7B.

Table 1.8: Decrease in the Protestant Population in Five Connacht Towns, 1911-26

Towns	Total population in 1911	Total population in 1926	Protestant population in 1911	Protestant population in 1926	Protestant Percentage in 1911	Protestant Percentage drop 1911-26
Sligo	11,158	11,437	1,750	1,131	15.7	35.6
Galway	13,255	14,227	802	386	6.1	51.9
Boyle	2,691	2,323	298	163	11.1	45.3
Tuam	2,980	3,289	150	88	5.0	41.3
Castlebar	3,698	4,296	206	104	5.6	49.5

Sources: *Census of Population of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXXV, p. 32; *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*, vol. III, part 1, table 7, pp 8-9.

Graph 1.3: Protestant Percentage of Population in five Connacht towns, 1911-26.



Source: Table 1.8.

In order to take a closer look at the distribution of the various Protestant denominations in Sligo U.D., which corresponds to Sligo town and in the rural areas of Co. Sligo, and their decline in the period from 1911 to 1926, an examination of the published census material concerning the numbers of Church of Ireland, Presbyterians, Methodists and other Protestant denominations was carried out. The information was organised by County and District Electoral Divisions in Co. Sligo.

Table 1.9: showing number of each Protestant denomination in the five urban and rural districts in Co. Sligo and percentage of the total, 1911.

Co. Sligo District	Church of Ireland	Presbyterian	Methodist	Other denominations
Sligo Urban District	1152	286	153	164
	21 percent	42 percent	34 percent	58 percent
Boyle No. 2 Rural District	307	38	10	4
	6 percent	6 percent	2 percent	2 percent
Dromore West Rural District	1100	99	0	17
	20 percent	15 percent	0 percent	6 percent
Sligo Rural District	2222	228	290	74
	40 percent	33 percent	63 percent	26 percent
Tubbercurry Rural District	724	27	3	22
	13 percent	4 percent	1 percent	8 percent
Total	5505	678	456	281
	100 percent	100 percent	100 percent	100 percent

Source: *Census of Population of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, p. 78-89.

Table 1.10: showing number of each Protestant denomination in the five urban and rural districts in Co. Sligo and percentage of the total, 1926.

Co. Sligo District	Church of Ireland	Presbyterian	Methodist	Other denominations
Sligo Urban District	832	139	94	75
	20 percent	47 percent	30 percent	35 percent
Boyle No. 2 Rural District	216	8	0	21
	5 percent	3 percent	0 percent	10 percent
Dromore West Rural District	866	16	1	35
	20 percent	6 percent	0.5 percent	16 percent
Sligo Rural District	1808	125	215	60
	42 percent	42 percent	69 percent	28 percent
Tubbercurry Rural District	532	7	1	23
	13 percent	2 percent	0.5 percent	11 percent
Total	4254	295	311	214
	100 percent	100 percent	100 percent	100 percent

Source: *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*, p. 32.

As can be seen in table 1.1 below, between 1911 and 1926 Church of Ireland numbers in Co. Sligo fell by twenty-three percent, Methodists numbers fell by thirty-two percent, other Protestant denominations dropped by twenty-four percent while Presbyterians experienced the greatest decrease falling by a very large fifty-five percent. The Church of Ireland, with most of their population located in Sligo town, and in the Sligo rural area close to Sligo town, experienced a similar decline in most of the districts in the county.

Table 1.11: showing the numerical and percentage difference in the various Protestant denominations in the five Co. Sligo urban and rural districts between 1911 and 1926.

Co. Sligo District	Church of Ireland	Presbyterian	Methodist	Other denominations
Sligo Urban District	-320	-147	-59	-89
	28 percent decrease	51 percent decrease	39 percent decrease	54 percent decrease
Boyle No. 2 Rural District	-91	-30	-10	+17
	30 percent decrease	79 percent decrease	100 percent decrease	425 percent increase
Dromore West Rural District	-234	-83	+1	+18
	21 percent decrease	84 percent decrease	100 percent increase	105 percent increase
Sligo Rural District	-414	-103	-75	-14
	19 percent decrease	45 percent decrease	26 percent decrease	19 percent decrease
Tubbercurry Rural District	-192	-20	-2	+1
	27 percent decrease	74 percent decrease	67 percent decrease	5 percent increase
Total	-1251	-383	-145	-67
	23 percent decrease	57 percent decrease	32 percent decrease	24 percent decrease

Sources: figures based on tables 1.9 and 1.10.

In the period from 1911 to 1926 Presbyterian numbers were the hardest hit. A look at table 1.9 indicates that not many Presbyterians were located in the south of the county in Boyle No. 2 and Tubbercurry R.D.s in 1911. In 1911 most Presbyterians were located in Sligo town, and in fact the proportion of Presbyterians in Sligo town increased from forty-two in 1911 to forty seven in 1926 as can be seen in tables 1.9 and 1.10. Table 1.11 shows that the percentage of Presbyterians in the extreme south of the county in Boyle No. 2 and Tubbercurry R.D.s experienced a drop of seventy-nine and seventy-four respectively, and a large drop of eighty-four percent in the Dromore West R.D. in the extreme west of the county. Their population in Sligo town fell by a lower number of fifty-one percent and

forty-five in the Sligo R.D. close to Sligo town. Presbyterian numbers experienced a greater decline in the remoter areas of the county.

Michael Farry in his study on Co. Sligo during the Civil War period has argued that the isolated and dispersed Presbyterian community in the Dromore West area of Co. Sligo were located in an area where republicans held sway for most of the Civil War and he suggests that 'the more dispersed distribution of the Presbyterians made them prone to more pressure whether this was from hostile elements within the independence movement or from the greater necessity or possibility of intermarriage with other denominations'.²¹

In 1911 the Methodist population was more concentrated in Sligo town, in the area of Drumcliff and Lissadell north of Sligo town and in the region running south from Sligo town to Collooney, Ballymote and Riverstown areas of southeast Co. Sligo. There was only a very small number of Methodists in the west and extreme south of the county. In the period from 1911 to 1926 they experienced a thirty-nine per cent drop in Sligo town and their much smaller population also fell in the remoter isolated areas. The Methodist population in the Sligo town area experienced a large decline in the period from 1911 to 1926, dropping by thirty-nine percent. No similar decline was experienced in the rural areas of the east and south of the county and Michael Farry has indicated that the Methodist communities in the Collooney, Ballymote and Riverstown 'were in areas of relative peace during the Civil War where there were no concentrations of anti-Treaty forces'.²² However, as can be seen from table 1.9, not many Methodists lived in these areas in 1911, and in Boyle No. 2 district in the south of the county, all ten Methodists who lived in the area were gone by 1926 and no Methodists lived there any longer.

The other smaller Protestant denominations experienced their greatest percentage decline in Sligo town, at fifty-four percent. In 1911 the greatest percentage, fifty-eight per cent, of the other smaller Protestant denominations lived in Sligo town and this figure dropped to thirty-five in 1926. The other smaller Protestant denominations increased their percentage in all four rural areas in 1926. However, the numbers of other smaller Protestant denominations was always very small in Co. Sligo.

In the period from 1911 to 1926 the three main Protestant denominations experienced a large percentage decline in remote isolated areas and outside concentrated groups. However, all Protestant denominations in the Sligo town U.D. and in the Sligo R.D., where

²¹ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 181.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

many larger towns including Ballisodare, Ballymote, Collooney and Riverstown were located, experienced a large decline between 1911 and 1926. The Church of Ireland community experienced a similar percentage drop in all five districts of Co. Sligo. However, their greatest percentage drop in their population occurred in the Boyle No. 2 district, where their smallest community resided. The Church of Ireland community lost 320 people in Sligo town and 414 in Sligo R.D., which were areas where their concentration was high and they were less dispersed.

Presbyterians were widely scattered and suffered a greater loss as a result of this and the greatest percentage drop in their populations occurred in the R.D.s of Dromore West, Boyle No. 2 and Tubbercurry. As will be discussed in chapters three and four of this study there was no evidence to suggest that the decline was a result of a specific anti-Protestant campaign by the I.R.A in Sligo during the revolutionary period. The decline in the rural areas can be attributed to the general disruption caused by the conflict and ongoing agrarian trouble. The large decline in Sligo town where there was far less disruption than in the rural areas could be attributed to the fact that Protestants in the professions and skilled occupations emigrated. However, the departure of the military garrison from Sligo town at the beginning of 1922 must have also given the Protestant population cause for concern.²³

Table 1.12: Percentage change in the Catholic & Protestant Population of the 26 counties of Ireland and Co. Sligo, 1901-26

Years	Percentage Catholic change in Ireland	Percentage Protestant change in Ireland	Percentage Catholic change in Co. Sligo	Percentage Protestant change in Co. Sligo
1901-11	-2.3	-4.8	-5.3	-12.8
1911-26	-2.2	-32.5	-8.1	-26.7

Source: *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*, Vol. III, part 1, table 1A, p. 1; table 9, p. 17.

In the period 1911-1926 the Protestant population of Co. Sligo declined. However, it was less than the decline for the 26 counties of Ireland or in the other four Connacht counties. Table 1.12 shows that in the 1926 census there was a drop of 26.7 percent in the Protestant population of Co. Sligo and the Catholic population fell by 8.1 percent while the comparable figures for the 26 counties were 32.5 percent and fall of 2.2 percent for the Catholic population. Table 1.13 shows that in 1911 Co. Sligo, with a total of 6,920 had the largest number of Protestants living in the county than in any of the other four counties. Co. Leitrim had the next highest number of Protestants with a total of 5,423. Galway had 4,304

²³ *S.I.*, 28 Jan. 1922.

Protestants living in the county in 1911, Mayo has 4,108 and with the least number in Connacht, Co. Roscommon had a total of 2,225 Protestants. An analysis of table 1.13 shows that of the five Connacht counties, Sligo, with the largest percentage of Protestants in 1911, experienced the smallest percentage drop in the Protestant population in the period 1911 to 1926. Leitrim with the next largest percentage of Protestants had the second lowest drop in their numbers in Connacht. Galway with the smallest number of Protestants, at 2.4 percent, had the greatest percentage drop at 53.1 percent.

Table 1.13: Decrease in the Protestant Population of the Five Connacht Counties, 1911-26

Counties	Total population in 1911	Total population in 1926	Protestant population in 1911	Protestant population in 1926	Percentage Protestant in 1911	Percentage Protestant drop 1911-26
Galway	182,224	169,366	4,304	2,019	2.4	53.1
Mayo	192,177	172,690	4,108	2,479	2.10	39.7
Ros.	93,956	83,556	2,225	1,346	2.4	39.5
Leitrim	63,582	55,907	5,423	3,711	8.5	31.6
Sligo	79,045	72,388	6,920	5,076	8.8	26.7

Source: *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*, Vol. III, Part 1, Religions, Table 9, pp 16-17.

Table 1.14A shows the numbers of Protestants in the five Connacht counties of Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo, while 1.4B shows the percentage of Protestants in the five Connacht counties from 1901 to 1946. In 1901 out of the five Connacht counties, Sligo had the largest Protestant percentage of its population, which was 9.4 percent, followed very closely by Leitrim at 9.3 percent. The other three counties had a very low percentage of Protestants in their population in 1901, Galway at 2.8 percent, Roscommon at 2.7 percent and Mayo at 2.3 percent. All five counties experienced a drop in the 1911 census returns and a pattern of decline had already established itself before the large drop experienced in the 1926 census. In 1926 Co. Sligo still had the highest Protestant percentage of population at 7.1 percent, followed by Leitrim at 6.6 percent. There was a sharp difference between Sligo/Leitrim and the other three counties in 1926, which were all under two percent. As can be observed from the table 1.14A, table 1.14B and graph 1.4, this decline continued in the 1936 and 1946 censuses. A trend of decline can be observed in the pre-1926 censuses in the Protestant population of Co. Sligo and the other four Connacht counties. However, there is quite a drastic fall in the Protestant numbers in all five counties in the 1926 census and as can be seen in graph 1.4 where the rate of decline was gradual and it continued in the 1936 and 1946 census returns.

Table 1.14A: Numbers of Protestants in the Five Connacht Counties, 1901-1946

Connacht Counties	1901	1911	1926	1936	1946
Galway	5,329	4,304	2,019	1,801	1,486
Leitrim	6,483	5,423	3,711	2,993	2,254
Mayo	4,662	4,108	2,479	2,054	1,736
Roscommon	2,706	2,225	1,346	1,038	750
Sligo	7,937	6,920	5,075	4,350	3,633

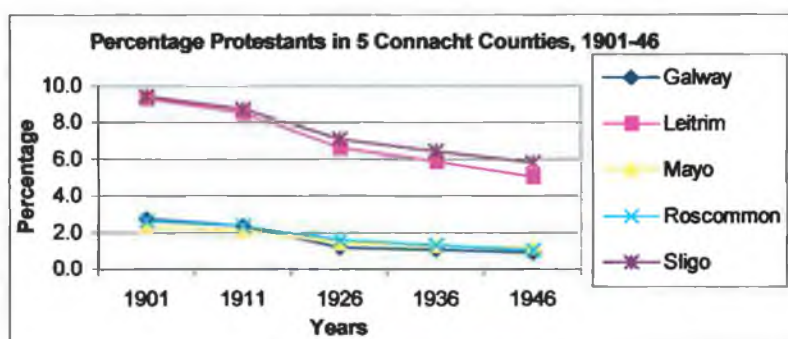
Sources: *Census of Population of Ireland 1936*, vol. III, part 1, table 9, pp 18-19; *Census of Population of Ireland 1946*, vol. III, part 1, table 8A, p. 10.

Table 1.14B: Percentage Protestant in the Five Connacht Counties, 1901-1946

Connacht Counties	1901	1911	1926	1936	1946
Galway	2.8	2.4	1.2	1.1	0.9
Leitrim	9.3	8.5	6.6	5.9	5.1
Mayo	2.3	2.1	1.4	1.3	1.2
Roscommon	2.7	2.4	1.6	1.3	1.0
Sligo	9.4	8.8	7.1	6.4	5.8

Source: table 1.14A.

Graph 1.4: The Percentage Protestant in Five Connacht Counties, 1901-1946.



Source: Table 1.14B.

The evidence shows that Protestant numbers were declining in the five counties in Connacht and in the five Connacht towns mentioned. However, this development was common to urban and rural areas across the Irish Free State. Table 1.15 shows the intercensal percentage change in the total rural and urban populations by religion in the 26 counties from 1911 to 1946, and indicates that from 1911 the Catholic population in the rural areas declined while it rose in the urban areas, which suggests that Catholics were moving from the countryside into the towns and cities. As Enda Delaney has maintained rural depopulation could indicate a reluctance of children to take over the family farm.²⁴ The Protestant population in both the rural and urban areas experienced a dramatic decline

²⁴ Enda Delaney, *Demography, state and society* (Liverpool, 2000), pp 234-5.

from 1911 to 1946 suggesting that Protestants were not only leaving the countryside areas, they were also moving from cities and towns as can be noticed country-wide from table 1.15.

Table 1.15: Intercensal Percentage Changes in the Total, Rural and Urban Populations by Religion, 26 counties of Ireland, 1911-1946.

Period	Total population		Urban Areas		Rural Areas	
	Catholic	Protestant*	Catholic	Protestant	Catholic	Protestant
1911-26	-2	-34	+8	-38	-6	-28
1926-36	+1	-12	+13	-8	-4	-14
1936-46	0	-14	+6	-14	-3	-14

Source: Robert E. Kennedy, *The Irish: emigration, marriage and fertility* (Berkeley, 1973), p. 122.

*Protestant Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodists and Baptist.

Table 1.16 below shows a comparison between the numbers of Protestants living in Sligo town and county between the years 1926 and 1946. Protestants in Sligo town accounted for between twenty-two and twenty-four per cent of the Protestant population of County Sligo in the years 1926 to 1946. Table 1.16 also shows that the numbers of Protestants living in Sligo town as a percentage of those Protestants living in the rural parts of Co. Sligo actually increased by two percent in the period 1926 to 1946. This could indicate that Protestants were moving from rural areas in Co. Sligo to Sligo town.

Table 1.16: Protestant Numbers in Sligo town and county, 1926-1946.

Years	Sligo Town	County Sligo	Sligo town as a percentage of Sligo County
1926	1,131	5,075	22
1936	1,055	4,350	24
1946	855	3,633	24

Sources: *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, vol. III, part I, table 11, p. 19; *1936*, vol. III, part I, table 11, p. 36; *1946*, vol. III, part I, table 10, p. 29. 'Protestant' means Protestant Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists and other denominations, as almost all the other denominations were smaller Protestant sects.

Table 1.17A shows that Protestants in Co. Sligo declined by one per cent, from seven to six per cent of the population of the county, in the period 1926 to 1946. Table 1.17B shows that the Protestant population was reduced by fourteen per cent on their 1926 numbers and by seventeen per cent on their 1936 numbers, while Catholic numbers were reduced by five per cent on their 1926 figures and by seven per cent on their 1936 numbers.

Table 1.17A: Population of Protestants and Catholics in County Sligo 1926-1946

Year	Numbers			Percentage		
	Catholic	Protestant*	Total	Catholic	Protestant	Total
1926	66,313	5,075	71,388	93	7	100
1936	63,097	4,350	67,447	94	6	100
1946	58,742	3,633	62,375	94	6	100

Sources: *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, vol. III, part I, table 8A, p. 10; *1936*, vol. III, part I, table 8A, p. 12; *1946*, vol. III, part I, tables 8A, p 10.

*Protestant Episcopalian, Presbyterians, Methodists and other denominations.

Table 1.17B: Decrease in Protestants and Catholics in County Sligo 1926-1946

Year	Numbers			Percentage change		
	Catholic	Protestant*	Total	Catholic	Protestant	Total
1926-36	-3,216	-725	-3,941	-5	-14	100
1936-46	-4,355	-717	-5,072	-7	-17	100

Source: table 1.17A.

Robert E. Kennedy has carried out research comparing age groups over the ten year intervals between censuses in Ireland and has commented in his study, *The Irish: emigration, marriage and fertility*, that declines in population are based on the two factors of mortality and emigration. If Protestants and Catholics had similar death rates, then a greater decline in the numbers of one religion could be attributed to emigration. Age/gender statistics are not available for Sligo town for the 1926 census to the 1946 census. However, figures are available for Co. Sligo from the published censuses material in the years 1926, 1936 and 1946. Table 1.18A in the attached appendix II shows the intercensal percentage increase or decline in the number of people in 'certain age cohorts' arranged by the birth years of cohort and religion for Co. Sligo and for the 26 counties of Ireland, 1926-46, while table 1.18B in appendix II displays the same information by age group at end of the intercensal period. The information in the tables was calculated by taking the decline in the number of persons in a given age group between the two censuses as a percentage of the total in the age group at the first census. Unfortunately no comparable age group and religious breakdown was possible for Co. Sligo and Ireland based on the 1911 census information.

From 1926 to 1936 it was discovered that in Co. Sligo Protestants experienced a larger decline than Catholics in the age group 35 to 44, a drop of twelve per cent as opposed to eight per cent. Nationally, Kennedy found the decline between Protestants and Catholics in the age group 35 to 44 to be closer at eleven per cent for Catholics and thirteen per cent for

Protestants.²⁵ In Co. Sligo the age groups of 25 to 34 and 20 to 24 experienced large-scale emigration in the period 1926 to 1936. In the 25 to 34 age group Catholic numbers declined by a third while Protestant figures dropped by twenty-nine per cent. For the country as a whole Kennedy found this to be true as well, where Protestants in the 25 to 34 age group declined by twenty-two per cent, while Catholics experienced a marginally greater decline, at twenty-four per cent.²⁶

In Co. Sligo, in the younger age group from 20 to 24, Protestants experienced a twenty-nine per cent reduction in numbers while Catholic numbers fell by twenty-four per cent. In the 15 to 18 age bracket, in Co. Sligo, Catholic numbers fell by eight per cent while Protestant figures went down by a lower five per cent and in the 10 to 14 age cohort Protestant numbers actually increased by six per cent and Catholics increased by one percentage point.

For Co. Sligo the figures don't seem to agree with Kennedy's argument that greater numbers of Protestants and their families emigrated from Ireland in the period 1926 to 1936.²⁷ Kennedy also found during the same period that nationally Catholic numbers were reduced by five per cent and Protestant figures by ten per cent in the 15 to 19 age category and Catholics declined by two per cent in the 5 to 9 age category while Protestant numbers in this age category declined by five per cent.²⁸

A dramatic decline within the three age cohorts of 20 to 24, 25 to 29 and 30 to 34 was noticed for Catholics and Protestants in the 1946 census figures for Co. Sligo. In the 30 to 34 age group Catholics declined by twenty-two per cent while Protestants declined by twenty-seven per cent. Catholic numbers were reduced by almost a third in the 25 to 29 age category while Protestant numbers within this age cohort experienced a dramatic decline of forty-five per cent, Kennedy found that the age group of 25 to 29 experienced a large decline nationally, with Protestants reduced by almost a third, at thirty-two per cent, and Catholics by over one-fifth, at twenty-two per cent.²⁹

In Co. Sligo Protestants numbers within the 20 to 24 age category were reduced by almost fifty per cent while Catholic numbers dropped by almost a third. This could mean that many Protestants and Catholics had emigrated to Britain to either join the armed forces

²⁵ Robert E. Kennedy, *The Irish* (Berkeley, 1973), p. 114.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 113-5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

or to work in the factories during World War II.³⁰ In the 1946 census Protestants increased by sixteen per cent in the 10 to 14 age group, which could suggest that families were not leaving Co. Sligo and could indicate that it was only young adults leaving for economic reasons.

Table 1.19A: Child/Women Ratios and Women of Childbearing Age as a Proportion of All Adults by Religion, 26 counties of Ireland, 1926-46.

Year	Children 0-4 per 100 Women aged 15-44		Protestant Child/Woman ratios as a percentage	Women aged 15-44 as a Percentage of all Persons 15 and over	
	Catholic	Protestant*	of Catholic	Catholic	Protestant
1926	47	31	66	30	28
1936	45	27	60	29	26
1946	48	36	75	29	25

Source: Robert E. Kennedy, *The Irish: emigration, marriage and fertility* (Berkeley, 1973), p. 117.

*Protestant Episcopalians and Other Religious Denominations.

Kennedy has also researched the fertility and age composition of Protestants and Catholics in Ireland. He found that after 1926 Protestant women had fewer children and there was also fewer Protestant females of childbearing age able to have children, which resulted in a smaller proportion of children in the Protestant than the Catholic population.³¹ Kennedy's results are shown in table 1.19A. As part of a comparison with Kennedy's study the proportion of women of childbearing age among all adults in Co. Sligo by religion has been calculated. As can be observed from table 1.19B below, between 1926 and 1946 the fertility of Protestant women in Co. Sligo ranged between fifty-seven and eighty-five per cent that of Catholic women, taking it that the death rate for both was the same.

Table 1.19B: Child/Women Ratios and Women of Childbearing Age as a Proportion of All Adults by Religion, Co. Sligo, 1926-46.

Year	Children 0-4 per 100 Women aged 15-44		Protestant Child/Woman ratios as a percentage	Women aged 15-44 as a Percentage of all Persons 15 and over	
	Catholic	Protestant*	of Catholic	Catholic	Protestant
1926	46	34	74	27	26
1936	44	25	57	26	25
1946	47	40	85	26	20

Sources: Calculated from *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, vol. III, part I, table 14, p. 109; *1936*, vol. III, part I, table 14, p. 113; *1946*, vol. III, part I table 12, pp 58-9.

*Protestant Episcopalians and Other Religious Denominations.

³⁰ Enda Delaney, *Irish Emigration since 1921* (Dublin, 2002), p. 5.

³¹ Robert E. Kennedy, *The Irish* (Berkeley, 1973), pp 117-8.

In 1926 the number of Catholic and Protestant women aged 15 to 44 as a percentage of all persons of their respective religions 15 and over in Co. Sligo was almost the same at twenty-seven per cent and twenty-six per cent respectively. In 1936 the number of Catholic women aged 15 to 44 as a percentage of all Catholics aged 15 and over was twenty-six per cent, while Protestant women aged 15 to 44 accounted for a quarter of all persons 15 and over. Catholic women aged 15 to 44 as a percentage of all Catholics 15 and over remained at twenty-six percent in 1946, while the percentage of Protestant women aged 15 to 44 declined to one-fifth of Protestants 15 and over. Protestant women had fewer children but proportionately there were fewer Protestant women within the population able to have children as time went on. The results can be seen in table 1.20A: distribution of population in three main age groups by religion, Co. Sligo, 1926-46, where for 1946 the proportion of children aged 0 to 14 in the Protestant population was twenty-one per cent, while the Catholic proportion was larger at twenty-six per cent. Kennedy's results for the 26 counties of Ireland, 1926-46 can be observed in table 1.20B.

Table 1.20A: Distribution of Population in Three Main Age Groups by Religion, Co. Sligo, 1926-46.

Religion and Year	Age in Years			Total
	0-14	15-44	65+	
Catholic				
1926	18,995	39,628	7,690	66,313
1936	16,563	38,718	7,816	63,097
1946	15,373	35,501	7,868	58,742
Protestant				
1926	1,148	3,239	688	5,075
1936	873	2,814	663	4,350
1946	747	2,285	601	3,633
Catholic Percentage Distribution				
1926	29	60	11	100
1936	26	62	12	100
1946	26	61	13	100
Protestant Percentage Distribution				
1926	23	64	13	100
1936	20	65	15	100
1946	21	63	16	100

Sources: Calculated from *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, vol. III, part I, table 14, p. 109; *1936*, vol. III, part I, table 14, p. 113; *1946*, vol. III, part I, table 12, pp 58-9.

Table 1.20B: Distribution of Population in Three Main Age Groups by Religion, 26 counties of Ireland, 1926-46.

Religion and Year	Age in Years			Total
	0-14	15-44	65+	
Number in thousands				
Catholic				
1926	817.9	1,687.0	246.4	2,751.3
1936	782.4	1,729.9	261.6	2,773.9
1946	846.9	1,708.6	287.8	2,786.0
Protestant				
1926	47.1	136.7	24.2	208.0
1936	35.6	123.4	24.5	183.5
1946	31.1	101.1	25.3	157.5
Catholic Percentage Distribution				
1926	30	61	9	100
1936	28	63	9	100
1946	28	62	10	100
Protestant Percentage Distribution				
1926	23	65	12	100
1936	19	68	13	100
1946	20	64	16	100

Source: Robert E. Kennedy, *The Irish: emigration, marriage and fertility* (Berkeley, 1973), p. 118.

The proportion of people in the 65 and upward age category was higher for the Protestant population than it was for the Catholic population in Co. Sligo in the period 1926 to 1946. In 1926 the proportion of Catholics in the 65 and older category was eleven per cent and this had stretched to thirteen per cent in 1946. Nationally Kennedy found that nine per cent of the Catholic population was 65 and above in 1926, while the percentage for Catholics in 1946 had risen by one percentage point to ten per cent.³² In Co. Sligo, the Protestant proportion of their population over 65 was always higher than the Catholic proportion of population and went from thirteen per cent in 1926 to sixteen per cent in 1946, this turned out to be similar to Protestants nationally, where the proportion of Protestants 65 years and above was twelve per cent in 1926, it had jumped to sixteen per cent in 1946.³³ Lower birth rates and higher emigration of young people (who would have had children) left an older and aging population of Protestants in Co. Sligo and in the Irish Free State.

Many researchers including Terence Brown, J.J Sexton and Richard O'Leary have argued that the *Ne temere* decree of 1908 made mixed marriages between Roman Catholics and

³² *Ibid.*, p. 118.

³³ *Ibid.*

non-Roman Catholics conditional on the approval of the church and allowed the church to impose conditions such as an obligation for any children to be baptised and brought up as Catholics, and in most cases for the non-Catholic partners to submit to religious education with the aim of converting them to Catholicism.³⁴ The strict enforcement of *Ne temere* meant that in Catholic-Protestant marriages the Protestant faith would die out after one generation. Sexton and O'Leary have concluded that mixed marriages were a very important factor in the decline in numbers of the minority religious communities especially as the children of these marriages were more often than not, brought up as Catholics.³⁵ In order to understand this we must take a closer look at the *Ne temere* decree.

The *Ne temere* decree came into effect on 18 April 1908. The *Catholic Encyclopaedia* states that 'by this decree all marriages everywhere in the Latin Church between Catholics and non-Catholics are invalid unless they take place in the presence of an accredited priest and two witnesses'.³⁶ Raymond Lee argues in his paper entitled 'Intermarriage, conflict and social control in Ireland: the decree "*Ne temere*"', that the decree was only concerned with 'the proper form for contracting marriages' and did not 'directly concern itself with any aspect of the church law other than validity'.³⁷ Before the *Ne temere* decree the Catholic Church had stated that in 'the issuing of a dispensation for a mixed marriage, the Church requires three conditions; that the Catholic party be allowed free exercise of religion, that all the offspring are to be brought up Catholics and that the Catholic party promise to do all that is possible to convert the non-Catholic'.³⁸

It appears that *Ne temere* did not demand a couple about to enter a mixed marriage to promise to baptise and raise their children as Catholics or make any insistence that the non-Catholic party convert to Catholicism and in June 1913 a later amendment to the *Ne temere* decree stated that 'the prescription of the decree '*Ne temere*' on the asking and receiving by the parish-priest, for the validity of marriage, of the consent of the parties, in mixed

³⁴ Terence Brown, 'Religious minorities in the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland (1922-1995)', in, *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation* (Belfast, 1996), pp 251-2; J.J Sexton and Richard O'Leary, 'Factors affecting population decline in minority religious communities in the Republic of Ireland', in *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation* (Belfast, 1996), p. 313.

³⁵ J.J. Sexton and Richard O'Leary, 'Factors affecting population decline in minority religious communities in the Republic of Ireland', in *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation* (Belfast, 1996), p. 293.

³⁶ Catholic Encyclopaedia online: Mixed Marriage (www.newadvent.org/cathen/09698a.htm) (10 Dec. 2007).

³⁷ Raymond M. Lee, 'Intermarriage, conflict and social control in Ireland: the decree "*Ne temere*"', *Economic and Social Review*, xvii, no.1 (Oct. 1985), p. 14.

³⁸ Catholic Encyclopaedia online: Mixed Marriage (www.newadvent.org/cathen/09698a.htm) (10 Dec. 2007).

marriages in which due guarantees are obstinately refused by them, henceforth does not apply'.³⁹

However, Lee goes on to state that '*Ne temere* made the presence of a priest and two witnesses a necessary condition of the validity of any marriage involving a Catholic'⁴⁰ and the effect of this 'was to make obligatory the promises regarding children' as 'a priest would not perform such a marriage until a dispensation from the impediment had been granted, and this a bishop would not do until the promises had been given'⁴¹ and it would seem that 'the promises became necessary for validity'.⁴² Lee explores some cases where parish priests demanded that couples promise to raise their children as Catholics before they entered into a mixed marriage.⁴³

So it would seem that many Catholic parish priests and their bishops in Ireland must have insisted that mixed marriage couples promise to raise their children as Catholics. An indication of the damaging impact of this insistence on the Protestant community in Ireland can be found in the book *Untold stories: Protestants in the Republic of Ireland, 1922-2002* (Dublin, 2002) edited by Lynne Adair and Colin Murphy. This book is a collection of stories by fifty-three Protestants and four Catholics on various themes related to Protestantism in Ireland. One of the most important issues discussed by the contributors to the book concerned mixed marriages between Protestants and Catholics.⁴⁴ Eighteen of the fifty-three Protestants who submitted stories and personal accounts to the book referred to the destructive effects on their religious community of the *Ne temere* decree. Some of the contributors noted that Protestants about to enter a mixed marriage with a Catholic were forced to sign a document promising to raise their children Catholic, while in other cases the Catholic clergy were reported to have kept a close eye on mixed marriage couples in order to make sure the children were being raised as Catholics.⁴⁵ References are also made to the bitterness felt by Protestants towards the enforcement of the *Ne temere* decree in Stephen

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Raymond M. Lee, 'Intermarriage, conflict and social control in Ireland: the decree "*Ne temere*"', *Economic and Social Review*, xvii, no.1 (Oct. 1985), p. 15.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., pp 14-25.

⁴⁴ Lynne Adair & Colin Murphy (eds), *Untold stories* (Dublin, 2002), xii.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 35, p. 41, p. 79, p. 153, p. 160.

Mennell's examination of the problems experienced by southern Protestants deriving from Catholic Church policies in 'Protestants in a Catholic state: a silent minority in Ireland'.⁴⁶

In order to assess the impact of the *Ne temere* decree in Sligo a closer look at the Protestant responses in the marital status section of the 1911 manuscript census returns for Sligo town is necessary. An analysis of the manuscript census returns for Sligo town in 1911 reveals that within the Protestant community 483 individuals were recorded as being married, which included sixteen mixed marriage couples, representing over six per cent of the total married couples. There were seventy-five widows mentioned in the census, which amounted to four per cent of the total Protestants in the Borough of Sligo town, and there were forty-one widowers representing two per cent of the total Protestants. A quite large 1,151 individuals were recorded as being single, which showed that sixty-six per cent of the total Protestant population were unmarried.

Table 1.21: Protestant marital status in Sligo town, 1911.

Marital Status	Numbers	Percentage
Single	1,151	66
Married	483	28
Widows	75	4
Widowers	41	2
Total	1,750	100

Source: Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45).

Of the sixteen couples in mixed marriages, where one of the partners was Catholic, there were eleven married couples that had children living with them. Of the thirty-five children recorded as the offspring of mixed religion marriages in Sligo town in 1911, all were listed as Catholics and all were married before the *Ne temere* decree of 1908. So it appears that the offspring of mixed marriages were being reared as Catholics in Sligo town before the *Ne temere* decree. Interestingly there was one Jewish male married to a Congregationalist and they had three children who were all registered as Congregationalists. The listed occupations of the male partners in the mixed marriages were: a general clerk, a cabinet maker, four carpenters, a plumber, two police pensioners, two customs official, a stevedore, two labourers, a slater, a shopkeeper/traveller. It was mostly working class Protestant males with trades such as carpenters, plumbers, slaters and labourers that were involved in mixed marriages, only one of the carpenters was a Catholic male. The customs officials were both

⁴⁶ Mennell, Stephen; Elliott, Mitchell; Stokes, Paul; Rickard, Aoife and O'Malley-Dunlop, Ellen, 'Protestants in a Catholic state: a silent minority in Ireland', in Inglis, Tom; Mach, Zdzishaw; Mazanek, Rafal (eds), *Religion and politics* (Dublin, 2000), p. 83.

Catholic males married to Protestant women, and one of the police pensioners was Catholic, while the other police pensioner was Protestant. One of the Protestant males, a carpenter, was married to a Catholic female who worked as a seamstress and they lived with her parents who were both Catholic.

With the increased likelihood that some Protestants from the six counties, Britain and elsewhere may have been more inclined to emigrate in the period from 1919 to 1923 and afterwards an analysis of the information from the 'where born' section of the 1911 returns for each of the Protestants then living in the Borough of Sligo town is necessary. Thirty-four were born in Armagh, thirty-one were born in Fermanagh, thirty-two were born in Tyrone, twenty-two were born in Antrim, eighteen recorded their birthplace as Co. Down, thirteen were born in Co. Derry and Belfast was recorded as the birthplace of twenty-seven Protestants. A total of 104 were born in England, seventy-four in Scotland, six in Wales, five in India or Ceylon and two from the U.S.A., one from Jersey, one from Alsace-Lorraine and one from Ascension Island.

Table 1.22: Numbers of Protestants 30 years or under and Protestants over 30 years born outside Free State and numbers of Protestants 30 years or under and Protestants over 30 years living in Sligo town.

	30 or under		Over 30		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Protestants born outside Free State	163	44	208	56	371	100
Total Protestants born in Sligo town	613	60	402	40	1,015	100
Protestants living in Sligo town	956	55	794	45	1,750	100

Source: Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45).

The total born outside the 26 counties that later constituted the Irish Free State was 371, this represented twenty-one per cent of all the Protestants in Sligo town recorded in the 1911 census. In 1911 the total number of Catholics in Sligo town born outside the 26 counties was 689. The total Catholic population of Sligo town in 1911 was 9,408 and the 689 represented seven percent of the total Catholic population of Sligo town.⁴⁷

Of the 371 Protestants born outside the 26 counties 163 were 30 years old or under, which represented nine per cent of all the Protestants in the Borough of Sligo in 1911, and these younger people may have been more inclined to emigrate as they were younger and could start over again in Northern Ireland or Britain where they may have had an original

⁴⁷ *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo, table XXIV, p. 65.*

connection. 613 of the 1,015 Protestants who gave their birthplace as Sligo were 30 years old or under in 1911, representing sixty per cent of the Protestants born in Sligo. 956 of the 1,750 Protestants in the Borough of Sligo were 30 years old or younger, representing fifty-five per cent of the total Protestant population and someone who was in their teens in 1911 would have been in their twenties in 1921 at the height of the revolutionary period and may have possessed the necessary energy, resources, skills and motivation to move and make a fresh start in either Northern Ireland or Britain.

Table 1.23: No. of Protestants and their families in selected government professions in Sligo town, 1911.

Profession	Individuals	Individuals plus family
R.I.C.	14	40
Prison Service	8	33
Army	9	31
Navy	5	21
Civil Servants	9	15
Total	45	140

Source: Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45).

Younger Protestants, and those who had been born in Britain or Northern Ireland may have felt more inclined to emigrate. However, it is also reasonable to suggest that the departure of a number of Protestants living in Sligo town in 1911 who were employed in British government jobs such as the R.I.C., the prison service, the civil service and the military, contributed to the decline experienced within the Protestant population of Sligo town in the period from 1911 to 1926. If we take a look at the numbers we find that fourteen Protestant R.I.C. men lived in Sligo town in 1911 and if we include their wives and children, then this figure rises to forty.

When it comes to military personnel, there were fourteen Protestants in the army or navy living in Sligo town in 1911 and fifty-two in all, if we include their families. Form H was returned for the Strand Barrack on Barrack Street in Sligo town. However, no soldiers were present in the barracks on the night of Sunday 2 April 1911. They may have been on manoeuvres, training in another location or temporarily reassigned. In 1914 the Strand Barrack was the only military base in Sligo town and was capable of accommodating seven officers and ninety non-commissioned officers and privates.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), p. 20.

Eight Protestant prison officers were stationed at Sligo Gaol, and thirty-three if their families are included in the numbers. In all a total of 140 Protestant R.I.C., prison staff, civil servants and military personnel and their families lived in Sligo town in 1911, and since the Protestant population of Sligo town in 1911 was 1,750, this represented eight per cent of the total Protestant population of Sligo town at the time, and if they all left in the period from 1919 to 1926, then this would have contributed to the reduction of Protestant numbers in Sligo town.

The impact of casualties in the First World War is another factor that may have accounted for the decline in the Protestant population of Sligo town in the period 1911 to 1926 and this subject will be analysed in more detail in chapter two. However, a total of 426 servicemen from the county and town of Sligo were killed in the war and of these 250 were from Sligo town and 176 were from the county.⁴⁹ A total of forty-three of the 250 men from Sligo town were Protestant, while 207 were Catholic. Of the 176 servicemen from the county of Sligo who died in the war, an estimated twenty-seven of them were Protestant, while 149 were Catholic.⁵⁰ So it is unlikely that the loss of seventy Protestants had a significant impact on the Protestant population of Sligo town and county.

Some evidence from local newspapers and vestry minute books from the large St John's Church of Ireland parish in Sligo town suggests that the Protestant Churches in Sligo weathered reasonably well the turbulent years from 1919 to 1923. Reports on church activities from the *Sligo Independent* in the years 1922 and 1923 make the point that the various Protestant Churches in Sligo town were experiencing good attendances at services and their finances were in a healthy position. In February 1922 at the 'Sligo Presbyterian Congregational Social' it was reported that 'finance was in a flourishing condition'.⁵¹ In addition to quite a number of visitors from other churches, 'there was a large attendance of members of the congregation, including practically all the young people of the Church'.⁵² Rev Moore, at the outset of the proceedings, expressed the 'great pleasure it gave him to see such a large attendance of the congregation'.⁵³ Thomas Stevenson, a local businessman and an elder in the Presbyterian church argued that 'he did not think they could find in any other church a more harmonious and zealous session than they had in Sligo. Speaking in a general way, the attendance at the church services every Sabbath had kept up well and he

⁴⁹ *S.I.*, 27 Dec. 1919; 8 Oct. 1921; 27 Oct. 1928; 3 Nov. 1928; 17 Nov. 1928; 13 Sept. 1947.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 11 Feb. 1922.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

challenged any other congregation of their size in the whole General Assembly to beat their subscriptions this year, which showed an increase of £70 on pre-war collections'.⁵⁴

In February 1923, at the 'Annual Reunion of Sligo Presbyterians and Friends', it was reported that the church's funds were in a healthy situation and 'in addition to the good attendance of the congregation – both old and young – there was a larger number than usual of friends from the other different Churches in the town'.⁵⁵ In March 1923 the Sligo Methodist Church reported a 'successful congregational social' and a 'gratifying financial report' with a credit of £45.⁵⁶ In reports from the vestry minute book of St John's parish, which covered most of Sligo town, record that in April 1921 'many [were] still attending and participating in church activities'.⁵⁷ Later that year it was noted that the parish was in a good financial position, with a sum of over £300 received in the first ten months of 1921 which included over £76 in increased subscriptions from old vestry members and a healthy £77 plus from new subscribers.⁵⁸ In early March 1922 new members joined the church bringing 'the total number of registered vestry men and vestry women up to approximately 200 as against 118 last year'.⁵⁹ Eight more members must have joined the church, as twelve months later it was reported that 'twenty-two names of persons who left the parish were entered into rent during the past year were taken off the list and a like number of new members added making the total 208, exactly [the] same as last year'.⁶⁰ In March of 1924 St John's parish had lost twenty-one vestrymen and women but had gained seven, making a total of 194,⁶¹ which was not a large reduction over an unsettling period for Protestants in Ireland and Sligo town. Peter Hart has estimated from the records of Protestant Sunday services in Co. Cork, that two-thirds of the decline in the Protestant population took place in the years 1921 and 1922.⁶²

From the census returns in 1911 for the Borough of Sligo town all but five individuals were either Protestant or Catholic. The five individuals who were Jewish were males ranging from twenty-two to forty-nine years old. Of the five, two were married and the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 24 Feb. 1923.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10 Mar. 1923.

⁵⁷ Vestry Minute Book, St. John's Parish, Sligo, 14 Apr. 1921 (R.C.B.L., Vestry Minute Book).

⁵⁸ *S.I.*, 27 Oct. 1921.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 Mar. 1922.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3 Mar. 1923.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 21 Mar. 1924.

⁶² Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at war 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), pp 225-6.

three others were single, one was a bank official, there was one shopkeeper, one cabinetmaker, one furniture manufacturer and one was a music teacher.

The published returns of the 1911 census listed occupations according to religious profession and they were divided into six classes: professional class, domestic class, commercial class, agricultural class, industrial class, indefinite or non-productive class, and sub-divided into eighteen orders and further divided into over eighty sub-orders. The tabulators of the 1911 census didn't record the occupations of Protestants in Sligo town in 1911. However, what was done in table XXI for Co. Sligo was list the total number of those males and females under twenty and over twenty years in Sligo urban area in each occupational category.⁶³ What I noted from the 1911 Sligo manuscript returns was how many Protestants were in each of the occupational categories and then I subtracted them from the totals in each category and this allowed me to discover the number of Catholics employed in each profession and the percentage of Protestants, I selected some of the categories which can be seen in table 1.24 and 1.25 of the attached appendix II. In the text below the total number of Protestants and Catholics employed in the various professions has been included in brackets.

In 1911 Protestants in Sligo accounted for 43 per cent of those employed in the higher civil service posts such as officers and clerks, which amounted to 13 out of 30. Protestant males weren't represented at all in the lower civil service posts such as messengers, which seemed to be dominated by Catholics. Protestants accounted for 46 per cent of prison officers (13) and 37 per cent of those on the police force (35). Protestants accounted for a lower percentage of local and county officials at 12 per cent and this could be interpreted as the result of the impact of the 1898 Local Government Act, which gave Catholics a greater chance of patronage for local government positions.

In the legal profession Protestant males accounted for 57 per cent of all barristers (7) and solicitors and a high 71 per cent of law clerks and others connected with the law (17). When it came to the medical profession Protestants made up 55 per cent of physicians and surgeons (11), and Protestants accounted for 25 per cent of dentists (12). 50 per cent of medical students were Protestant and the 2 Catholic medical students were under twenty years (4). Protestant males accounted for a high 42 per cent in the teaching profession (26) and a half of civil engineers (6).

⁶³ *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXI, pp 61-3.

22 Catholics were employed in the 'hospital and institution service' category while no Protestants were. Protestants accounted for a very high 78 per cent of all merchants (23) in Sligo town and 80 per cent of accountants (5). 20 Protestant males listed their occupation as relating to the bank service (24), which accounts for a very high 83 per cent of all males in bank service who were living in Sligo in 1911. There were 3 bank managers, 1 financier, 1 commercial banker, 7 bank officials, 1 of whom was under twenty years, 7 bank clerks, and 1 cashier. Only 1 of the 6 involved in the insurance service was Protestant, accounting for 17 per cent of the total.

A low 6 per cent of those employed as railway engine drivers (36) and stokers were Protestant. However, Protestants accounted for a high 30 per cent of those who were employed as railway officials and servants (33). Only 1 of the 71 carmen, carriers or carters or draymen was Protestant, but 3 out of the 5 motor car drivers or chauffeurs were Protestants and of the 40 men involved as messengers, porters and watchmen not in railway or government service only one was Protestant representing 3 per cent of the total.

Protestant farmers seemed to predominate within the Borough of Sligo town and 59 per cent of farmers (41) were Protestant. There were no Protestant bailiffs, agricultural labourers, cottagers, shepherds or indoor farm servants and no Protestants were recorded as working with animals listed in the census. 42 per cent of watch/clockmakers (12) living in Sligo town in 1911 were Protestant. Of the trades, only 7 per cent of carpenters (97) and masons (30) were Protestant. All 11 plasterers were Catholic. However, 32 per cent of plumbers (19) and 23 per cent of painters (57) were Protestant. Protestants accounted for a very high 47 per cent of all chemists or druggists (17). 4 per cent of those involved in boarding and lodging (56), and 3 per cent of butchers (30) were Protestant.

In Sligo town a high percentage of bakers, confectioners and grocers were Protestant, with Protestants accounting for 33 per cent of bakers (46), 60 per cent of confectioners (5) and 39 per cent of grocers (69). At 53 per cent, over half the drapers (77) in the Borough of Sligo were Protestants. None of the 14 men involved in stone, clay and road making were Protestant. 32 per cent of those listed as shopkeepers (76) were Protestant. Catholic dominance in the category of 'general labourers' was shown by the statistic that a low 4 per cent of the general labourers (884) were Protestant. Overall Protestants were highly represented in the skilled occupations and professions, while they accounted for a very small proportion of those employed in the unskilled occupations. This could be explained by the fact that Protestants had greater access to education because of their more

comfortable financial situation and their greater connections in the world of commerce and industry.

When it came to the occupations of Protestant females in the Borough of Sligo town in 1911, 6 out of 6 of the civil service officers and clerks were Protestant, but all 5 local or county officials were Catholic. Protestants accounted for just over a quarter of females involved in the medical profession (53), all as nurses, while they made up 11 per cent of those employed in domestic service (483). Protestant females accounted for a very high 65 per cent of commercial clerks (43). No Protestant females were recorded as being involved in farming within the urban area of Sligo while 8 Catholic females were and no Protestant females were publishers, booksellers, librarians or bookbinders while they accounted for 38 per cent of those involved in drapery (34).

21 per cent of milliners and dressmakers (196) living in Sligo town were Protestant, while Protestant females accounted for 16 per cent of the total persons involved in the dress industry (277). Of the 8 stationers, 5 were Protestant, which was very high representing 63 per cent of the total. Of the 41 females involved as general shopkeepers or pawnbrokers nineteen were Protestants representing 46 per cent of the total involved. Of the 20 females involved as mechanics and labourers only 1 was a Protestant, which represented 5 per cent of the total involved in this category. Overall when it came to female occupations in Sligo town in 1911, a large percentage of Protestant females were employed in skilled occupations and the professions.

The manuscript household returns for 1911 were also useful for analysing information relating to Catholics and Protestant nurses and domestic servants employed Protestant businesses and homes in Sligo town. From the manuscript material relating to the Borough of Sligo town in 1911, it was found that 172 Catholic females worked as domestic servants or nurses in 117 Protestant homes, businesses and hotels. 15 Catholics were recorded as working in 3 different hotels in the town, while 38 Protestants worked as domestic servants, nurses and governesses in 31 separate houses and there were 6 houses where both Catholic and Protestant servants worked together.

4 Catholic nurses and nursemaids were employed to care for Protestant children and older people in their houses, and 3 Protestant governesses and 2 Protestant nurses worked in five separate Protestant households. Some Protestant businesses employed Catholics and from the manuscript returns I found that 2 Catholics worked in a Protestant stationery business, 2 Catholics were employed in a general store and five were recorded as working in

two different drapery businesses. 22 Protestant owned businesses and shops had 80 Protestant apprentices living in. These included apprentices, milliners, dressmakers, drapers, grocers, bakers, shop assistants and sales people.

Greater income and ability to secure greater access to education was a strong factor in the predominance of Protestants in the better paid jobs, and it can be seen from information in the 1911 manuscript census returns for Sligo that there was a high proportion of Protestants employed in the professions. Protestants also stayed for a longer period within the education system and therefore possessed the necessary skills and education levels to secure quite good employment in Ireland. In table 1.26 below from the 1911 census, the illiteracy rate in Sligo town stood at 11.2 per cent for the Catholic population of nine years and over. For Protestant Episcopalians the rate of illiteracy was a much lower 1.8 per cent while all Presbyterians, Methodists and members of other denominations, who were 9 year old or over were literate.

Table 1.26: Religious professions and Degrees of Elementary Education in Sligo Urban District, 1911.

	Total	Roman Catholic	Protestant Episcopalian	Presbyterian	Methodist	Other Religious Den.
Population at all ages	11,163	9,408	1,152	286	153	164
Read and write	8,589	7,008	1,028	265	138	150
Read only	281	266	11	3	0	1
Balance of population	2,293	2,134	113	18	15	13
Population 9 years and over	9,202	7,679	998	257	131	146
Number of Illiterate	880	862	18	0	0	0
Proportion per cent	9.6	11.2	1.8	0	0	0

Source: *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXXIII, p. 78.

The government manuscript census returns are not available yet for 1926 and it is impossible to compare the 1911 returns with them. However, in tables 1.27 and 1.28 in appendix II which contains information from the published reports of the 1926 census lists the number of males and females by religion in each occupation for the Irish Free State, it can be observed that Protestants in 1926 predominated in many of the most highly skilled professions. This was out of proportion to the percentage of all Protestants which stood at

7.3 per cent in the 26 counties and was 9.9 per cent in Sligo town in 1926.⁶⁴ As can be noted from table 1.27 in appendix II, the Protestant percentage of bank officials in 1926 in the 26 counties was very high at 52 per cent, the percentage of Protestant employers, managers and foremen of printers, bookbinders and photographers stood at 43 per cent. In 1926 Protestant males accounted for 40 per cent or more of navigating or engineering officers, heads of commercial sections of businesses, insurance clerks and chartered accountants. 30 per cent of the employers, managers and foremen of textile workers and 30 per cent of shopkeepers and managers of chemist shops and Protestant males still amounted to 22 per cent of shopkeepers and managers in hardware. Protestants accounted for only 7 per cent of all those males employed above the age of 12, and, as table 1.27, in appendix II, shows that Protestants in 1926 were still dominating some of the most highly skilled professions in Ireland, out of all proportion to their numbers in society at large.⁶⁵

The 1936 census shows that the percentage of Protestant males employed as bank officials was 44 per cent which was still very high in proportion to their numbers in the country, which stood at 6.4 per cent of the total population and Protestant males accounted for 6 per cent of the total occupied people aged 14 years and over.⁶⁶ Protestant males accounted for 43 per cent of navigating and engineering officers in 1936 and 49 per cent of the heads of commercial sections of businesses. As can be noted from table 1.27 in appendix II Protestant males accounted for over 30 per cent of the professional occupations of employers, insurance clerks, chartered accountants, brewery clerks, bank clerks, auctioneers and employers and foremen of printers, bookbinders and photographers. In the skilled occupations of watch and clock makers and repairers they were 32 per cent. Protestant males were also very strongly represented in the professions of chemists, solicitors and barristers, commercial travellers, civil engineers and surveyors, all above 20 per cent. They were underrepresented in the lower paid occupations of tailors, tailors machinists at 2 per cent, and as bricklayers, at 3 per cent, plasterers, 3 per cent and masons, 2 per cent and engine drivers at 4 per cent.⁶⁷

From table 1.27 in appendix II the 1946 census shows that Protestant males made up 5.6 per cent of the total population of southern Ireland and Protestant males accounted for 5 per

⁶⁴ *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, vol. III, part I, table 17, pp 114-129.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Census of Population of Ireland, 1936*, vol. III, part I, table 16, pp 116-131.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

cent of the working population, 14 years and over.⁶⁸ Protestant males were still highly represented at 30 per cent or over in the higher income occupations of bank officials and bank clerks, navigating and engineering officers and the employers and foremen of printers, bookbinders and photographers. In the professions, occupations of auctioneers, insurance officials and clerks and accountants, Protestant males amounted to 20 per cent or more of all males employed in these occupations. They were still underrepresented in the lower paid trades of carpenters, at 4 per cent, bricklayers, at 3 per cent, plasterers, at 2 per cent and masons, at 2 per cent and engine drivers, at 3 per cent.⁶⁹

From table 1.28 in appendix II it can be seen that in 1926 Protestant females accounted for 7 per cent of the total occupied persons 12 years or over.⁷⁰ The Protestant females tended to be well represented in the more skilled professions of music teachers, at 31 per cent, photographers, at 21 per cent, as nurses, at 15 per cent and midwives, at 14 per cent. 14 per cent were employed as telephone operators and 13 per cent in the civil service. They were slightly underrepresented in the lower paid professions of tailors' machinists, at 3 per cent, workers and makers of paper and cardboard, at 2 per cent, as domestic servants, at 5 per cent and as charwomen and office cleaners, at 4 per cent.⁷¹

In 1936, Protestant females accounted for 6 per cent of total occupied persons of 14 years and over.⁷² Table 1.28 in appendix II shows that Protestant women were well represented in the better paid jobs, such as music teachers, at 19 per cent, and teachers generally, at 13 per cent, photographers, at 18 per cent. 15 per cent of shop assistants in hardware and 12 per cent of nurses were Protestant. In the lower paid occupations Protestant women were quite underrepresented, for example they accounted for 4 per cent of dressmakers, 4 per cent of sewers and sewing machinists, 4 per cent of domestic servants and 3 per cent of charwomen and office cleaners.⁷³

Table 1.28 in appendix II shows that in 1946 the percentage of Protestant women 14 years and older who were in employment fell to 5 per cent.⁷⁴ However, they were still well represented in the hardware profession, at 12 per cent, as teachers, at 11 per cent, as music teachers at 17 per cent and managers of general drapery stores, at 10 per cent and as assistants in general drapery, at 10 per cent. They were underrepresented in manual and

⁶⁸ *Census of Population of Ireland, 1946*, vol. II, table 13A & 13B, pp 196-209.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, vol. III, part I, table 17, pp 114-129.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Census of Population of Ireland, 1936*, vol. III, part I, table 16, pp 116-131.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Census of Population of Ireland, 1946*, vol. II, table 13A & 13B, pp 196-209.

lower paid jobs such as dressmakers, at 2 per cent, domestic servants, at 3 per cent and charwomen and office cleaners, at 3 per cent.⁷⁵

W. B. Stanford has maintained in *Faith and faction in Ireland* that in the period following the establishment of the Free State the government did all it could to prevent discrimination when it came to the appointment of people for central government posts 'but the same cannot be said for some of the local government bodies and semi-state firms'.⁷⁶ However, with the poor condition of the economy in the 1930s and 1940s, Catholics on a whole faced more competition than Protestants for available jobs, especially in light of the fact that Protestant schools had close associations and connections with Protestant family run firms.⁷⁷ Kennedy has argued in *The Irish: emigration, marriage and fertility* that Protestant influence in several professions allowed them to continue to give preferential treatment to their co-religionists in hiring and promotions.⁷⁸ Chapter five on economics will investigate preferential employment in Protestant firms in Sligo town in more detail.

However, it is also possible that some younger Protestants emigrated and maybe young Protestants in Sligo town and those with previous connections with Britain or Northern Ireland may have seen emigration as a better option. It is also possible that the emigration of a number of those Protestants employed in British government jobs such as the R.I.C., the prison service, the civil service and the military, in Sligo town in 1911 negatively affected their numbers in the 1926 census.

In the period from 1911 to 1926 the three main Protestant denominations experienced a significant decline in both the urban and especially the rural areas of Sligo. However, information from local newspapers and Church of Ireland vestry minute books suggests that members of St John's Church of Ireland parish in Sligo did not leave the town in very large numbers in the period from 1919 to 1923.

It was noticed that the number of Protestants declined by a third in the period from 1911 to 1926 and this was found to be true for Sligo town as well. However, from 1911 to 1946, the percentage of Protestants in Sligo town was always higher than for the 26 counties in the same period. A comparison of Sligo town with four other Connacht towns of Galway, Tuam, Castlebar and Boyle in the period from 1911 to 1946 has proved that a drastic drop in the Protestant population in the five towns did occur between the 1911 and the 1926 census.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ W. B. Stanford, *Faith and faction in Ireland* (Dublin, 1946), p. 21.

⁷⁷ Terence Brown, 'Religious minorities in the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland (1922-1995)', in, *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. Building Trust in Ireland: Studies* (Belfast, 1996), p. 223.

⁷⁸ Robert E. Kennedy, *The Irish* (Berkeley, 1973), pp 131-2.

However, although the numbers of Protestants fell in Sligo town, the Protestant population always remained higher in Sligo town than in any of the other four other Connacht towns. The same was found to be true in a comparison of the Protestant decline in the five Connacht counties of Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Galway during the period from 1911 to 1946. The Protestant populations in all five counties experienced a decline, especially in the period 1911-26. However, Co. Sligo, with the largest percentage of Protestants of all the Connacht counties in 1911, experienced the smallest percentage drop in the Protestant population during this period and the decline was less than the drop in Protestant numbers in the 26 counties.

It was also discovered that in Ireland and Co. Sligo both Protestants and Catholics in the age groups of 20 to 24, 25 to 34, and 35 to 44 experienced large-scale emigration in the period 1926 to 1936. However, in the 15 to 19 age bracket in Co. Sligo, Catholic numbers fell by a larger percentage than Protestant figures and in the 10 to 14 age cohort Protestant numbers increased by a greater percentage than Catholic numbers. In Co. Sligo and Ireland it would seem that a good number of individual Protestants emigrated during the period 1926-36.

A dramatic decline was found within the three age cohorts of 20 to 24, 25 to 29 and 30 to 34 years for Catholics and Protestants in the 1946 census figures for Co. Sligo and Ireland. However, as in the period 1926-36, an increase in Protestants aged 10 to 14 years in Co. Sligo indicated that Protestant family groups were not emigrating. This could suggest that many individual Protestants emigrated to Britain to take advantage of the greater economic opportunities to be found there during the Second World War.

The people emigrating seemed to have been young Protestant males and females and in Co. Sligo and Ireland it was found that in the period 1926 to 1946 Protestant women had fewer children but proportionately there were few Protestant women within the population able to have children as time went on. In the period 1926-46 it was found that the proportion of people 65 years and more was higher for the Protestant population than it was for the Catholic in Co. Sligo. The combination of lower birth rates and the higher emigration of young Protestants resulted in an older and aging Protestant population in Co. Sligo.

With less Protestants left in Sligo and Ireland, many Protestant men and women married Catholics. As we have seen, although the *Ne temere* decree did not insist that mixed marriage couples raise their children as Catholic, in Ireland there appeared to have been a

strict enforcement by local clergy of what they believed the *Ne temere* decree should mean, and this meant that in Catholic-Protestant marriages the offspring would more than likely be brought up as Catholics. The *Ne temere* decree was a factor in the decline of the Protestant population in Ireland. However, even before the *Ne temere* decree of 1908 all the offspring of Protestant-Catholic mixed marriages in Sligo town were being raised as Catholics.

The 1911 census material on Sligo town indicates that Protestants were very well represented in the skilled occupations and professions, while proportionately more Catholics were employed in the unskilled occupations. Much of this can be explained by the fact that Protestants had greater access to and spent longer periods of time in education. Proportionately more Protestants were in a financially comfortable situation than Catholics and could therefore afford to send their children to second and third level education. Also it would seem, as a result of school, social and work connections, Protestants were also able to obtain important posts in the world of commerce and industry and this is a point that I wish to develop in more detail when I examine Protestant businesses in Sligo town in chapter five. In 1926 Protestant men and women were still dominating some of the most highly skilled professions in Ireland, out of all proportion to their numbers in society at large, and this situation was also observed in the 1936 and 1946 censuses.

Chapter Two: The First World War

This chapter explores Protestant participation and experiences during First World War and examines the various political and semi-political organisations in Sligo and some of the prominent people involved. An important part of the study will include Protestant opposition to Home Rule in the immediate period before the First World War and how this developed during the war. The form of unionist opposition to Home Rule in Sligo and the determination of the Sligo unionist population in opposing the Third Home Rule Bill will also be assessed in the first part of this chapter.

Patrick Buckland has maintained that until the outbreak of the First World War unionists in Connacht, Leinster and Munster were fiercely opposed to Home Rule.¹ However, he argues that after 1914 southern unionist opposition to Home Rule was less determined, as they 'became less suspicious of Irish nationalists and nationalism and increasingly disillusioned with the union and the British connection'.² Buckland's analysis indicates that unionist organisations cannot be studied in isolation and so an investigation of the nature of nationalism and nationalist organisations in Sligo is necessary. Was there was any interaction between unionists and nationalists in Sligo? Did they cooperate during the war, and if they did, how did this co-operation impact on both sides? Did both communities become closer because of their shared experience of the war or were fundamental differences between both groups merely lying just under the surface?

In the years before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, most of the Protestant population of Sligo town and county were campaigning in defence of the union between Ireland and Britain. The Protestant population of Sligo was more of a community than a class and many of the middle-class and lower-class Protestants that lived in Sligo town worked on a day-to-day basis with Catholics and the well-established Protestant merchant community were dependent on Catholics for a large majority of their business. The wealthy Protestant landowning class in the country areas was possibly in a slightly better position to isolate themselves from the Catholic community. However, for all Protestants in Sligo, their respective churches proved to be the most important for fostering community spirit and whatever their class status the majority of Sligo Protestants were unionist and were opposed to the Third Home Rule Bill. Before the First World War political beliefs in Ireland were

¹ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism I* (Dublin, 1972), p. 341.

² *Ibid.*

closely associated with religious persuasion and a 'rejection of unionism by a Protestant was socially as suicidal as that of nationalism by a Catholic'.³

The Third Home Rule Bill allowed Ireland only a small amount of local autonomy within the United Kingdom, and the Imperial parliament in London would still control defence and foreign affairs. However, unionists were concerned that a Dublin parliament, dominated by Catholic nationalists, would threaten the religious and economic freedoms of Irish Protestants. The Irish Unionist Party and the I.U.A. represented unionists in Ireland and led opposition to the bill. The I.U.A. had succeeded the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union (I.L.P.U.) in 1891 and as the Protestant population in the 26 counties of southern Ireland, which was later to become the Irish Free State, was only just over ten per cent, most of the local branches in southern Ireland were more 'propagandist rather than electoral organisations'.⁴ How organised was the unionist population of Sligo when it came to opposition to the Third Home Rule Bill?

In January 1912 unionist women in Sligo took the first steps to form a local organisation to campaign against the Third Home Rule Bill and formed the Sligo Women's Unionist Association, as part of the I.U.A., in Markree Castle with Miss Elsie Fowler as the honorary secretary. Two months later on 8 March, over 700 unionists, mostly women, held a meeting in Sligo Town Hall, where they endorsed their loyalty to the union.⁵ On 22 June 1912 a meeting of Sligo unionists against Home Rule was held in the town hall. One of the main reasons for the meeting was 'to remove the impression that exists on the other side of the channel that outside Ulster there is no real and solid opposition to Home Rule'.⁶

At the meeting, the chairman, Major Charles Kean O'Hara (1860-1947) criticised the Ulster unionists for viewing Home Rule as a threat to them only and he argued that unionist opposition to Home Rule was just as strong in Sligo and the rest of Ireland as it was in Ulster.⁷ O'Hara quoted a pledge made by Ulster unionists on 17 June 1892, at the time of the Second Home Rule Bill, promising cooperation with unionists in the south and west of Ireland in their resistance to Home Rule. O'Hara publicly maintained that he was sure that Ulster unionists would not withdraw their support for unionists in the south and he urged the gathered crowd to 'prove ourselves worthy of their support'.⁸ Privately O'Hara may have

³ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), p. 47.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵ *S.I.*, 16 Mar. 1912.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 29 June 1912.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

had doubts regarding long-term support from the Ulster unionists for the scattered southern unionist population. However, he could not afford to publicly express his doubts, as it would have undermined the unionist movement in Sligo.

Major O'Hara was one of the largest Protestant landowners in Co. Sligo, and in 1876 his family owned over 21,000 acres of land at Annaghmore.⁹ His military career began in 1881 when he joined the Sligo Militia and held a commission in the York and Lancaster Regiment. In 1883 O'Hara contested a by-election in Co. Sligo as a Liberal-Conservative, calling on the 'support of the men of Sligo of every class and creed'.¹⁰ However, he lost out by 500 votes to Nicholas Lynch of Dublin, a nationalist candidate. In 1886 he was selected for the office of High Sheriff of Co. Sligo and in 1902 he was made His Majesty's Lieutenant (H.M.L.) for Co. Sligo. O'Hara was a prominent member of the I.U.A. and had opposed the introduction of the First and Second Home Rule Bills.¹¹

Only in Ulster where the majority of Irish unionists lived was there any real hope of forming firm electoral opposition to Home Rule and as long as the southern unionists were able to combine their struggle with Ulster unionists they could at least remain optimistic that Home Rule could be defeated. Irish unionists had only two representatives (elected by Trinity College Dublin) at Westminster in 1912. However, the isolated and dispersed southern unionists were effective lobbyists for the unionist cause, and they were determined to continue their opposition to Home Rule. The Protestant Churches in Sligo and southern Ireland generally did not become as involved in the political opposition to Home Rule as the Protestant Churches did in Ulster and the main goal of the southern unionist movement was, according to David Fitzpatrick, 'to whip up active support for the cause among dormant sympathisers in Ulster and, even more, in Britain'.¹² It remained to be seen how far Ulster unionists would go to associate themselves with southern unionists.

Major Bryan Cooper (1884-1930) also spoke at the meeting of Sligo unionists on 22 June 1912, arguing that Protestant unionists would find it impossible to live in Ireland under a Home Rule administration. He believed that Home Rule would simply lead to more and more demands for greater Irish independence which would result in a continuous conflict

⁹ Owners of Land of one acre and upwards in Co. Sligo, 1876 (S.C.L., Miscellaneous Lists, LIS 028); *Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards, in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland*, [C 1492], H.C. 1876, lxxx, 322.

¹⁰ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), p. 304.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp 302-6.

¹² David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), p. 51.

between Britain and Ireland.¹³ Bryan Cooper was a typical example of many unionists from the south and west of Ireland at the time. He was a member of a large Protestant landowning family with over 34,000 acres based at Markree Castle in Co. Sligo.¹⁴ Cooper was a prominent and very active member of the I.U.A. and from 1912 to 1914 he was both president and honorary secretary of the junior branch of the I.U.A. in Sligo. Until December 1910 he had also been an M.P. representing south County Dublin, and had campaigned vigorously in both Britain and Ireland against the Third Home Rule Bill.¹⁵

Other prominent Sligo Protestant unionists who spoke at the meeting on 29 June 1912 were Charles Graham, a businessman who operated a large hardware store in Sligo town, Arthur Jackson, a large businessman, Sir Malby Crofton, a landowner and Philip Dudley Perceval, a large landowner of Temple House and Hazelwood in Co. Sligo.¹⁶ All men stressed the economic benefits offered by the Union and argued that Home Rule would bring more unnecessary taxation.¹⁷ In August 1912 Sligo unionists formed a junior branch of the I.U.A. and by February 1914 membership of the branch stood at 331 bringing the total membership of the I.U.A. in Sligo to over 3,000.¹⁸

Charles O'Hara, Bryan Cooper and Philip Perceval led the Sligo resistance to Home Rule and throughout 1913 and in early 1914 they organised meetings all over Co. Sligo protesting against Home Rule. On 9 June 1913 a large gathering of Sligo unionists took place in Collooney, Co. Sligo. At this meeting Charles O'Hara and Bryan Cooper argued that Home Rule would bankrupt Ireland while Philip Perceval maintained that unionism in Ireland was still a powerful and growing political force in the country.¹⁹

Cooper and Perceval were also active in representing Sligo unionists on the national stage. At the end of November 1913 Andrew Bonar Law, the leader of the Unionist Party in the House of Commons, along with Sir Edward Carson, leader of the Irish Unionist Party addressed unionists from the south and west of Ireland at a large meeting in Dublin.²⁰ The primary purpose of the meeting appeared to be to reassure unionists outside Ulster that the

¹³ *S.I.*, 29 June 1912.

¹⁴ *Owners of Land of one acre and upwards in Co. Sligo, 1876* (S.C.L., Miscellaneous Lists, LIS 028); *Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards, in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland*, [C 1492], H.C. 1876, lxxx, 320.

¹⁵ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), p. 19.

¹⁶ *S.I.*, 29 June 1912.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *S.I.*, 17 Aug. 1912; 28 Feb. 1914.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14 June 1913.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6 Dec. 1913.

unionists in the rest of the United Kingdom were firmly behind them.²¹ Thirty-nine local unionist groups were represented at the meeting which included the Sligo branch represented by Philip Perceval and Bryan Cooper. Cooper addressed the meeting before the arrival of Sir Edward Carson and assured the gathered crowd of the opposition of Sligo unionists to Home Rule.²² The *Sligo Champion* edition of 29 November 1913 was keen to list the twenty-seven prominent unionist businessmen from Sligo who signed an address at the unionist rally in Dublin condemning in particular the financial aspects of Home Rule.²³ The *Sligo Independent* editorial of 6 December 1913 defended the Sligo unionists for signing the document against Home Rule arguing that it was a criticism of the cost of Home Rule to Ireland and not an insult to the nationalists of Sligo.²⁴ However, the editorial went on to condemn nationalist groups in Sligo for encouraging their members to ‘take note’ of the unionist signatories and called on nationalists to respect the opinions of their political opponents, arguing that all should be allowed to express their views without ‘covert threats’.²⁵ It appeared that Sligo unionists were organised and obviously very resolute in their opposition to Home Rule but were they able to secure any electoral support for their cause?

Map of Co. Sligo Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries in 1914.



Source: Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921: a chronicle of conflict* (Trim, 1994), p. 4.

Sligo unionists, given their smaller numbers, found it impossible to secure representation at national level and, as David Fitzpatrick has argued ‘by 1914 Irish unionists, except in

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ *S.C.*, 29 Nov. 1913.

²⁴ *S.I.*, 6 Dec. 1913.

²⁵ Ibid.

Ulster, Britain and the cities had lost almost all political influence'.²⁶ At the general election in December 1910 Ireland returned 103 M.P.s from 101 constituencies. Eighty-three nationalists and twenty unionists represented Irish interests at Westminster. Most nationalists belonged to the Irish Parliamentary Party (I.P.P.) under the leadership of John Redmond.²⁷ Of the twenty unionist M.P.s only two were from southern Ireland and these were elected by Trinity College Dublin, the rest were elected from Ulster constituencies.²⁸ The prominent Sligo unionist Bryan Cooper had been M.P. for the constituency of south County Dublin from January to December 1910, when he lost his seat to William Francis Cotton of the I.P.P.²⁹

For the purposes of parliamentary elections County Sligo had been divided into two constituencies in 1881 and from 1885 onwards both had consistently returned nationalist candidates. In 1914 Thomas Scanlon represented north Sligo and John O'Dowd represented south Sligo at Westminster and both were loyal supporters of the I.P.P.

Thomas Scanlon (1874-1930), a journalist, lawyer, barrister and magistrate, was born in Dumcliffe, Co. Sligo in 1874 and came from a strongly nationalist family. He was educated at Summerhill College in Sligo and after his final exams he left for Scotland. He worked as a journalist and a later as a solicitor in Glasgow. On the death of P.A. McHugh in June 1909, Scanlon decided to return to Sligo and run as a candidate for the I.P.P.³⁰ P.A. McHugh (1858-1909) had been M.P. for north Leitrim from 1895 to 1906 and north Sligo from 1906 to 1909 and was the owner of the strongly nationalist and staunchly pro-I.P.P. *Sligo Champion* newspaper from 1885 to his death in June 1909.³¹

John O'Dowd (1856-1937) was born at Goldfields, Tubbercurry in 1856.³² At an early age he emigrated to the United States. He continued his education there and returned to Ireland in 1878, where he established his own business in the village of Bunninadden, south Co. Sligo. He was actively involved in the Land League, the Home Rule Movement and the U.I.L. He was a committed nationalist and along with P.A. McHugh he organised celebration to commemorate the 1798 Rebellion, and he addressed meetings all over Co.

²⁶ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), p. 48.

²⁷ Oliver Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath 1913-23* (Dublin, 1983), pp 10-11.

²⁸ R.B. McDowell, *Crisis and decline* (Dublin, 1997), p. 36.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁰ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 405-6.

³¹ John C. McTernan, *A Sligo Miscellany* (Dublin, 2000), p. 521; Íde Ní Liatháin, *The life and career of P.A. McHugh, a north Connacht politician, 1859-1909: a footsoldier of the party* (Maynooth Studies in Local History, 23) (Dublin, 1999).

³² John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), p. 397.

The local Catholic clergy in Sligo were heavily involved with the U.I.L. and in many cases they were presidents of the branches.³⁷ In January 1914 the following members of the Catholic clergy were presidents of U.I.L. branches: Rev Michael Doyle, P.P., Ballisodare and Corhownagh branch, Rev P.J. O'Grady, P.P., Keash branch, Canon B. Quinn, Ballymote branch, Fr George Coyle, P.P., Geevagh branch, Rev Smallhorne, C.C., Knocknarea, Rev P. Butler, C.C., Calry branch, Fr Donlon, P.P., Ballinacarrow, Rev John McGovern, C.C., Newbridge branch, Rev Canon Daly, C.C., Mullinabreena, Rev Thomas Kelly, C.C., Glenfarne, Rev McGuire, C.C., Killinumery and Rev B. Currid, was the vice-president of the Drumcliff branch.³⁸

David Fitzpatrick has maintained that support of Home Rule was 'a prerequisite for election to local bodies' and membership of the U.I.L. was vital for anyone seeking election.³⁹ Therefore some of the biggest contributors towards U.I.L. funds in Sligo apart from the local Catholic clergy were farmers, shopkeepers and rural and urban councillors. In January 1914 some of the main contributors included Rev M.J. Clarke, P.P., Dromore West, Rev D.J. O'Connor, C.C., Easkey, M. Doyle, P.P., Collooney, John O'Dowd, M.P., Thomas Scanlon M.P., John Mulligan, grocer and publican, P. Hargadon, grocer and publican, J & E.J. Tighe, baker, grocer, wine/spirit and corn merchant, Thomas Flanagan, grocer, wine/spirit merchant, B. McGoldrick, wine and spirit merchant, John Feeney, tailor and draper, John Feeney, butcher, M. Feeney, ironmonger, Michael Foley, provision merchants, E. McDonagh, grocer wine and spirit merchant, D. O'Connor, tea, wine and spirit merchant, T. Flannery, publican, T. Gunning, publican, and the corporation and county councillors; John Hughes, merchant, Patrick N. White, chemist, John Connolly, John Jinks, auctioneer, Edward Foley, merchant, J.P. Higgins, merchant, Edward J. O. Cooke, merchant, John Hennigan, farmer, William Rouse, shopkeeper, Jeremiah Mulrooney, farmer, Bernard J. Conlon, farmer, Peter Cawley, farmer, W.J. Caffrey, farmer, Patrick Cummins, farmer, James Flanagan, merchant and farmer and M Gallagher, farmer.⁴⁰

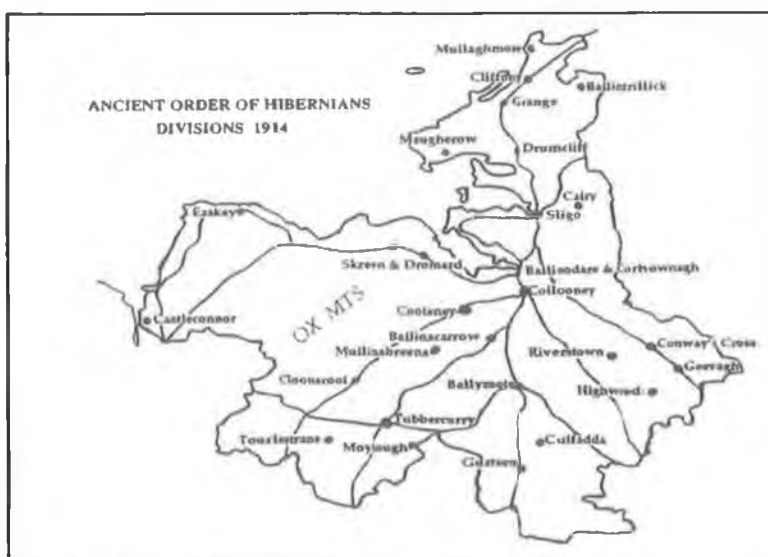
³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), p. 74.

⁴⁰ *S.C.*, 24 Jan. 1914.

Map of Co. Sligo Ancient Order of Hibernians Divisions in 1914.



Source: Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921: a chronicle of conflict* (Trim, 1994), p. 6.

Many members of the U.I.L. were also members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (A.O.H.), which was an organisation set up to protect and defend the rights of Irish Catholics. The A.O.H. grew up in opposition to the Protestant Orange Order and both organisations had their roots in the eighteenth century.⁴¹ At the end of the nineteenth century the A.O.H. was reorganised under its grandmaster Joseph Devlin, an I.P.P. M.P. from Belfast, and by January 1914 there were twenty-seven A.O.H. branches in Co. Sligo.⁴² The Catholic clergy and local politicians were also involved in the A.O.H. and there was much overlap in membership with the U.I.L.

At the beginning of 1914 P. Donlon, a member of Newbridge U.I.L. was president of Newbridge A.O.H.; Rev Thomas Kelly, C.C., president of Glenfarne U.I.L. was also a member of Glenfarne A.O.H. Rev P. Butler, C.C., president of Calry U.I.L. was also a member of Calry A.O.H. and chaplain of the Sligo town A.O.H. F.J. McDonagh was a member of both Calry U.I.L. and A.O.H., county councillor John Hennigan, was the president of both Drumcliff U.I.L. and A.O.H., P. Lavin, a member of Ballisodare and Cornhownagh U.I.L. was the president of Ballisodare and Cornhownagh A.O.H.; county councillor B.J. Conlon, member of Geevagh U.I.L. was also president of Geevagh A.O.H.; Henry Reilly, vice president of the north Sligo executive of the U.I.L. was also a prominent

⁴¹ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), p. 262.

⁴² *Ibid.*; S.C., 31 Jan. 1914.

Sligo town A.O.H. member. Corporation councillor P.N. White, aldermen Edward Foley, John Jinks and Daniel O'Donnell were members of the Sligo town U.I.L. and A.O.H.⁴³

Another significant political organisation in Sligo in 1914 was the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (I.T.G.W.U.). At the beginning of January 1909 James Larkin (1874-1947) founded the I.T.G.W.U. in Dublin to campaign for better pay and working conditions for dockers, carters and labourers.⁴⁴ In September 1911 a branch of the I.T.G.W.U. was founded in Sligo.⁴⁵ Sligo became one of the first branches established outside Dublin, along with branches in Belfast, Cork, Wexford and Waterford.⁴⁶

The Sligo I.T.G.W.U. branch was founded after the Sligo Trades Council, an organisation which protected skilled, unskilled and craftsmen and had been in existence since 1895,⁴⁷ invited Walter Carpenter, a national I.T.G.W.U. organiser, to speak and launch a branch.⁴⁸ The immediate circumstances surrounding the launching of the I.T.G.W.U. in Sligo related to a number of minor labour disputes in the town in the summer of 1911, which included a strike by workers at the Sligo Gas Company, labourers at Pollexfen's mills, and the participation of Sligo rail workers in a national strike.⁴⁹

There was some vocal opposition to the establishment of the I.T.G.W.U. in Sligo and the bishop of Elphin, Dr Clancy, who was very anti-socialist was strongly opposed the organisation and was reported to have said that he would drive the I.T.G.W.U. out of the town 'at the sacrifice of my life if necessary'.⁵⁰ Clancy found an ally in his opposition to the I.T.G.W.U. in the form of the unionist and conservative newspaper, the *Sligo Times*, which was owned and run by Robert Smylie was also opposed to what seemed a revolutionary organisation supporting worker rights and Smylie's editorial in the *Sligo Times* scorned Carpenter, and ridiculed him as a 'paid English agitator with his cockney accent'.⁵¹

Robert Smylie, a Presbyterian who was born in Scotland and had been on the staff of the *Sligo Independent* for almost twenty years before he founded the *Sligo Times* in December 1908.⁵² Smylie lived on Mail Coach Road in Sligo town and was elected as a representative of the East Ward to Sligo Corporation in January 1912. He later moved to Belfast and died

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 24 Jan. 1914; 31 Jan. 1914; 14 Feb. 1914; 21 Feb. 1914; 28 Mar. 1914; 18 Apr. 1914.

⁴⁴ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), p. 278.

⁴⁵ *S.C.*, 23 Sept. 1911; List of I.T.G.W.U. branches, 1909-1922 (N.L.I., I.T.G.W.U. Papers, MS 7782-7287).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ John Cunningham, *Labour in the west of Ireland* (Belfast, 1995), p. 67.

⁴⁸ *Sligo Times [S.T.]*, 30 Sept. 1911.

⁴⁹ *S.C.*, 24 June 1914, 29 July 1914, 26 Aug. 1914.

⁵⁰ *Roscommon Herald [R.H.]*, 28 Oct. 1911.

⁵¹ *S.T.*, 30 Sept. 1911.

⁵² John C. McTernan, *A Sligo miscellany* (Dublin, 2000), pp 529-30.

there in 1936. His eldest son, Robert M. ('Bertie') Smylie, moved to Dublin and became editor of the *Irish Times*.⁵³

The I.T.G.W.U. in Sligo quickly became closely allied to the A.O.H. and the U.I.L. through Henry Reilly, who was the president of the Trades Council, a prominent A.O.H. member and vice-president of the north Sligo executive of the U.I.L.⁵⁴ As Michael Wheatley has noted in *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, until his death in 1909, P.A. McHugh had been 'a noted campaigner of workers' rights'⁵⁵ and in 1910 the Sligo Trade Council lead the fundraising for a proposed memorial to P.A. McHugh.⁵⁶

Another important U.I.L./A.O.H ally of the I.T.G.W.U. in Sligo was Daniel O'Donnell (1853-1914). O'Donnell was the proprietor of the Imperial Hotel, alderman and mayor of Sligo in 1913 and he was Connaught provincial director and national trustee of the A.O.H. O'Donnell was an active supporter of Trades Council and promoted better housing for workers. When O'Donnell died in February 1914 alderman John Lynch the leader of Sligo I.T.G.W.U. and vice-president of the Trades Council saluted O'Donnell by calling him 'the greatest friend the workers of Sligo ever had'.⁵⁷

Alderman John Jinks (1873-1934) who was unanimously voted in as mayor in O'Donnell's place supported O'Donnell's encouragement for the I.T.G.W.U. John Jinks was originally from Drumcliff in north Sligo and had moved to Sligo town and entered the grocery trade. He set up his own business in Stephen St. as a publican, auctioneer and undertaker. He was first elected to Sligo Corporation in 1898 and was a strong supporter of the I.P.P. and its leader John Redmond. He was also a member of the A.O.H.⁵⁸ Fellow A.O.H. member and corporation councillor Patrick N. White, who was a chemist, bottler of 'Holy Cross' mineral water and a mill owner, was also a strong supporter of the I.T.G.W.U. All three men had been strong supporters of P.A. McHugh.

Michael Wheatley argues in *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, that the alliance between nationalism and labour was 'unsurprising, given that for many years the common enemy of Labour and nationalists had not been Catholic merchants and employers ... but the Protestant, unionist, commercial establishment which dominated Sligo's docks (the Harbour Commissioners), shipping (the Sligo Steam Navigation Company), and mills

⁵³ *Ibid.*; *Sligo Champion Sesquicentenary Supplement 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986). p. 39.

⁵⁴ *S.C.*, 13 May 1911.

⁵⁵ Michael Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party* (Oxford, 2006), p. 139.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *S.I.*, 21 Feb. 1914.

⁵⁸ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), p. 383.

(Pollexfen's).⁵⁹ He contends that 'Protestants in Sligo were self-confident, socially active, and politically assertive' and therefore 'in Sligo town as a result, Protestant/Catholic antagonism was always politically, close to the surface'.⁶⁰

A letter from 'Disgusted' printed in the *Sligo Champion* on 22 February 1913 appears to support the view that Protestants were still oppressing Catholics and controlled the civil service and the business and commercial life of Sligo.⁶¹ The letter catalogued the jobs in Sligo still occupied by Protestants including the lord lieutenant, his deputy, the high sheriff, the resident magistrate, the clerk of the crown and peace, his deputy, the R.I.C. Co. Sligo inspector and district inspector of national education, the local government inspectors, the postmaster, and his deputy, at least ten postal officials, the superintendent of the railway station, the harbour board chairman, including the harbour clerk and engineer, the managers of the Belfast, Provincial, Ulster banks, and most of the clerks in these banks, the clerk of the Asylum, the clerk of the Agricultural Society, the head of the Model School, six magistrates on the town bench and Protestants occupied most of the best jobs at Pollexfen's Mills and in Lyons's drapery store.⁶²

'Disgusted' painted a negative picture of Sligo town from a Catholic perspective. However, as can be seen from table 1.24 and 1.25 in appendix II, listing the occupations of males and females in Sligo town in 1911 seventeen of the thirty male officers and clerks in the civil service in Sligo were Catholic, representing 57 per cent of the total, all twenty-five civil service messengers were Catholic, and although the top posts in the R.I.C. were occupied by Protestants, twenty-two of the thirty-five policemen were Catholic, representing 67 per cent of the total; even though one of the two municipal, parish, union, district officers in Sligo was Catholic, Catholics accounted for fifteen of the seventeen other local or county officials in Sligo town, representing 88 per cent of the total. All six females civil service officers and clerks were Protestant. However, all five of the other local government/county officials were Catholic. All twenty-two in the hospital and institutional service were Catholic. Forty-three of the forty-six involved in the harbour, dock, wharf and lighthouse service were Catholic, representing 93 per cent of the total. Thirty-four of the thirty-six railway engineers and drivers were Catholic, representing 94 per cent of the total

⁵⁹ Michael Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party* (Oxford, 2006), p. 139.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁶¹ *S.C.*, 22 Feb. 1913.

⁶² *Ibid.*

and Catholics accounted for twenty-three of the thirty-three railway officials, representing 70 per cent of the total.

'Disgusted' was accurate in that Protestants dominated the legal profession and from table 1.25 in appendix II four of the seven barristers and solicitors in Sligo town were Protestant, representing 57 per cent of the total, while twelve of the seventeen law clerks and others connected with the law were Protestant, representing 71 per cent of the total. Eighteen of the twenty-two who labelled themselves merchants in the 1911 census were Protestant, representing 78 per cent of the total. Six of the eight corn, flour and seed merchants were Protestant, representing 75 per cent of the total. However, eighty-two of the 114 commercial clerks were Catholic, representing 85 per cent of the total, while only four of the twenty-four involved in the bank service were Catholic, representing 17 per cent of the total and eighteen of the thirty-one brokers, agent, auctioneers, accountant and insurance agents were Catholic, representing 58 per cent of the total.

Overall, however, most of the businesses in Sligo in 1913 were Catholic. Out of a total of 311 businesses in Sligo in 1911, a total of 212 were Catholic owned, representing sixty-eight percent of all businesses, while ninety-nine businesses, or thirty-two percent were Protestant owned.⁶³ From table 1.25 in appendix II, all six provision curers and dealers were Catholic, fifty-four of the sixty-six of hotel and boarding house owners were Catholic (84 per cent of the total), forty-one of the sixty-nine grocers, tea, coffee, chocolate dealers were Catholic (59 per cent of the total), three of the four timber merchants were Catholic (75 per cent of the total), fifty-two of the seventy-six general shopkeepers were Catholic (79 per cent of the total), seventeen of the twenty-two ironmonger/hardware merchants were Catholic (77 per cent of the total). From table 1.26, occupations of females in Sligo town, 1911, in appendix II, eleven of the fifteen board and logging were Catholic (73 per cent of the total), eight of the nine grocers, teas, coffee, chocolate were Catholic (89 per cent of the total), and twenty-six of the forty-one general shopkeepers were Catholic (63 per cent of the total).

Even though there were some large Protestant businessmen in Sligo in 1913 such as Middleton and Pollexfen flour mill owners and the proprietors of the Sligo Steam Navigation Company (S.S.N.Co.), Lyons, large drapery firm, Harper-Campbell flour milling (Protestant businesses will be covered in more detail in chapter five), many of the largest businesses in Sligo were Catholic owned. At the beginning of the twentieth century

⁶³ *Connaught Trade Directory, Extract for Sligo 1912.*

the Catholic businessmen O'Connor and Cullen owned one of the largest sawmills in Britain or Ireland.⁶⁴ O'Connor and Cullen also manufactured building materials and their business was primarily located at Union St. McNeil and Sons were large timber merchants and their business was located at Lynn's Place. They also manufactured materials for linen and wool factories and tools, such as picks, hammers and hatchets. However, by 1913 the company had changed hands a number of times and was in 1913 only a shadow of its former success.⁶⁵

The Catholic businessman Dudley M. Hanley had extensive saw mills in Old Market St and manufacturer of builders' materials at Lynns Dock and at Finisklin. Hanley was also an ironmonger and coal merchant.⁶⁶ Michael Foley was a large egg, butter, bacon and lard merchant and refiner and a grocer based in Water Lane in Sligo town.⁶⁷ Other noteworthy Catholic businessmen included James Scanlon, who had a significant business premises located on Bridge St. and High St. In addition to his building and monumental sculpturing businesses, Scanlon was also a grocer, wine and spirit merchant.⁶⁸ Edward J. Tighe was one of Sligo town's richest merchants and owned a bakery, grocery shop and a pub on High St.⁶⁹ Tighe was also a large corn and flour merchant. P.J. Flanagan had a large premises on Quay St. dealing in iron, coal, salt and heavy goods.⁷⁰ Four of the town's prominent Catholic businessmen included John Connolly who was one of the town's richest merchants, was tea, wine, spirit dealer and a grocer and publican. Thomas Flanagan, provision and coal merchant, James P. Higgins, owner of several bakeries, groceries, general stores and pubs and Edward Foley owner of the Riverside brewery, Sligo town's only brewery at the time.⁷¹ Connolly, Flanagan, Higgins and Edward Foley were politically active and were all aldermen on the corporation and were either U.I.L. or A.O.H., or both.

Undoubtedly Protestants had strong business interests in Sligo but they were clearly not dominating the business life of Sligo. The Catholic business community was very significant and politically well established and Catholic businessmen had much in common with Protestant businessmen and were not completely united with their fellow nationalist workers or fellow nationalist politicians. When in late May and early June 1912 a dispute

⁶⁴ *Sligo Champion Sesquicentenary Supplement 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 66.

⁶⁵ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), pp 525-6.

⁶⁶ *Connaught Trade Directory, Extract for Sligo 1912*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

over pay occurred between the dockworkers of the I.T.G.W.U. and the Sligo Steam Navigation Company, Higgins, Connolly, and Flanagan all joined the Employers' Federation set up by Protestant businessmen Middleton, Pollexfen, Harper-Campbell and others.⁷² Higgins later became vice-president of the Employers' Federation.

However, the mayor, Daniel O'Donnell along with John Jinks and Patrick N. White supported the workers.⁷³ The *Sligo Champion* also supported the strikers, praising their conduct and supporting their demands for more wages.⁷⁴ In July 1912 Larkin visited Sligo and attended a meeting supporting the strikers, which was held in the town hall, with Trades Council and I.T.G.W.U. members present including John Lynch and William Gibbons. Patrick N. White also attended the meeting.⁷⁵ This was Larkin's second visit to Sligo and on 24 March 1912 he had spoken at a meeting outside the town hall.⁷⁶ Dr Clancy had opposed the visit.⁷⁷ However, there was a large turnout for the meeting.⁷⁸ The Trades Council leaders and O'Donnell had not attended that time and although the *Sligo Champion* criticised Larkin's 'wild' character and questioned his concern for the 'men of Sligo',⁷⁹ the paper was keen to state that it opposed Larkin personally and not the labour movement.⁸⁰

In September 1912 at a meeting of Sligo Trades Club, Henry Reilly, Bernard McTernan, Edward Harte, who had replaced Reilly as president of the club, William Gibbons and John Lynch made a presentation to O'Donnell rewarding him for his support for the workers. O'Donnell thanked them saying that he supported the workers' 'right to a decent life and a fair wage'.⁸¹ Thomas Scanlon, M.P., who was present, tried to ingratiate himself with the working class claiming that as a member of the legal profession, he was also a trade unionist.⁸²

In December 1912 O'Donnell spoke at a meeting of the I.T.G.W.U. in Sligo. The annual corporation elections were coming up in January 1913 and so O'Donnell called for a 'one solid phalanx' at the forthcoming corporation elections.⁸³ In January 1913 O'Donnell and

⁷² *S.I.*, 15 June 1912.

⁷³ *S.C.*, 15 June 1912.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *S.T.*, 27 July 1912.

⁷⁶ *S.I.*, 30 Mar. 1912.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *S.C.*, 30 Mar. 1912.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *S.I.*, 14 Sept. 1912.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *S.C.*, 14 Dec 1912.

John Lynch spoke together at a meeting to support Labour/I.T.G.W.U.-A.O.H. candidates.⁸⁴ O'Donnell and Lynch were clearly using each other's influence to secure election. Lynch was associating himself with O'Donnell and the U.I.L. while O'Donnell allied himself with Lynch to secure worker support.

The Labour/I.T.G.W.U. and the A.O.H. candidates won all six seats. John Lynch was elected, as were two close associates of O'Donnell and both members of the A.O.H., Henry Monson, a furniture retailer, and vice-president of the Sligo town A.O.H. and Henry Depew, a carpenter and director of the Sligo town A.O.H. brass and reed band. Peter Heraghty, a trader, Thomas Hughes, a monumental contractor and William Gibbons, a plasterer, were the three other successful candidates. The three men were all I.T.G.W.U. members.⁸⁵ O'Donnell was unanimously elected mayor for a third term.

Table 2.1: Members of Sligo Corporation January 1913

Title	Name	Occupation	Political affiliation
Mayor and alderman	Daniel O'Donnell	Hotel owner	U.I.L./A.O.H.
Alderman	John Connolly	Merchant	U.I.L.
Alderman	Thomas Flanagan	Merchant	U.I.L.
Alderman	Edward Foley	Merchant	U.I.L./A.O.H.
Alderman	J.P. Higgins	Merchant	U.I.L.
Alderman	John Jinks	Auctioneer	U.I.L./A.O.H.
Councillor	John Lynch	Stevedore	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Thomas Scanlon	Tailor cutter	U.I.L.
Councillor	Dudley M. Hanley	Merchant	U.I.L.
Councillor	Edward Kelly	Merchant	U.I.L.
Councillor	John P. Foley	Merchant	U.I.L.
Councillor	Patrick N. White	Chemist	U.I.L./A.O.H.
Councillor	Robert Smyllie	Journalist	Unionist/Conservative
Councillor	William Gibbons	Plasterer	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Michael McDonagh	Shopkeeper	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	John Hughes	Merchant	U.I.L.
Councillor	Thomas Hughes	Monumental contractor	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Edward Harte	Carpenter	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Peter Keely	Clerk	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Peter Heraghty	Trader	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	James Gray	Dealer	U.I.L.
Councillor	Henry Monson	Furniture retailer	Labour/I.T.G.W.U./A.O.H.
Councillor	Henry Depew	Carpenter	Labour/I.T.G.W.U./A.O.H.
Councillor	Thomas Kivlehin	N/A	U.I.L.

Source: *S.C.*, 25 Jan. 1913.

⁸⁴ *S.T.*, 18 Jan. 1913.

⁸⁵ *S.I.*, 25 Jan. 1913.

In the first half of 1913 the increasing strength of the labour movement in Sligo, and the U.I.L. and A.O.H support for this, allowed labour concerns to become more important in Sligo than national issues. From March to May 1913 the second round of the dispute occurred at Sligo docks. The first round had been unresolved and this time the I.T.G.W.U. increased their demands, insisting on a unionised workforce and better pay and conditions for the workers. The strikers consisted of dockers, carters, seamen and mill workers. Nationalist support for strikers came especially from Jinks and White.⁸⁶ Jinks called on 'fellow workers' to stand up and win their fight, urging 'a long pull and a straight pull'.⁸⁷ Jinks maintained that as a U.I.L. man he would pressurise the employers to give in.⁸⁸ John Lynch and Marty Mulligan, secretary of the I.T.G.W.U. in Sligo, led the strike and they were supported by union organiser Patrick T. Daly.⁸⁹ The strikers were also assisted by the grocer/publican Thomas Connolly of Holborn St./Victoria Line who gave the dockers food on credit and by Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth, a prominent Protestant landowner and owner of the Connacht Manufacturing Company, a clothing company, who supplied bags of potatoes for the strikers.⁹⁰

Passions were high during the strike and it was a particularly violent strike, Patrick Dunbar, a striker, of Riverside, who was employed at Pollexfen's Mills was a married labourer and member of the I.T.G.W.U. was assaulted and later died from his wounds and there was an attack on Pollexfen's clerical workers, when strikers broke the windows of their offices.⁹¹ Other companies were dragged into the strike, and in April the Connacht Manufacturing Company which employed eighty women, closed in protest at being dragged into the strike.⁹²

By April over 350 policemen had been drafted into Sligo to control the strikers and protect non-union workers brought in to unload cargo at the docks.⁹³ The R.I.C. Co. Sligo inspector reported at the start of April that 'the local press of all shades of politics is against the strike'.⁹⁴ This was not entirely true and although the *Sligo Times* criticised the strikers claiming that 'women with hatchets' roamed the streets, and Smylie deplored their language

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 5 Apr. 1913.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 12 Apr. 1913.

⁸⁹ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 41.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Sligo County Inspector R.I.C. Monthly Report [S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.], 1 Apr. 1913 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8535).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

as the 'filthy of the filthy'⁹⁵ and the *Sligo Independent* condemned the violence,⁹⁶ the *Sligo Champion* while also denouncing the violence⁹⁷ supported the strikers' demand that employers not employ non-union men.⁹⁸ The Catholic Church did not become involved in the strike and Dr Coyne, the Bishop of Elphin, who had replaced Dr Clancy in early 1913, did not comment publicly on the strike, although the Sligo administrator, Rev. Doorly, was involved in trying to bring both sides together for settlement talks.

In early May talks chaired by T.A. Cooper, Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth's agent who had been seeking a solution to the strike after the close of the Connacht Manufacturing Company, were successful in bringing the strike to a conclusion.⁹⁹ The dockers won their demand of a closed shop across the quays and on 7 May 1913 they returned to work and the strike ended.¹⁰⁰

Michael Wheatley has argued that in Sligo 'it was the residual economic and political strength of the town's Protestant commercial elite which gave common cause to the Irish party and Labour'¹⁰¹ and the 'key leitmotif particular to Sligo town, of conflict between the town's Protestant minority and Catholic majority, confirming the unity of the latter, was played throughout'.¹⁰² However, it appears possible that Catholic businessmen were eager to exploit the Protestant/Catholic animosity in 1912 and 1913 to their advantage and convince their workers that it was Protestant businesses that were keeping the workers down and not Catholic businessmen such as them. They were also using this animosity to further their own political careers.

At the end of November 1913 the Catholic politicians and businessmen John Jinks and Henry Monson took the opportunity to condemn twenty-seven Protestant unionists from Sligo who had publicly supported an anti-Home Rule address in Dublin by the unionist leaders, Andrew Bonar Law and Edward Carson.¹⁰³ They also endeavoured to organise a boycott of Protestant unionist owned businesses in Sligo.¹⁰⁴ The *Sligo Champion* was keen to support the boycott and named the twenty-seven signatories.¹⁰⁵ At the same time the

⁹⁵ *S.T.*, 29 Mar. 1913.

⁹⁶ *S.I.*, 29 Mar. 1913.

⁹⁷ *S.C.*, 29 Mar. 1913.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12 Apr. 1913.

⁹⁹ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 41.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Michael Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party* (Oxford, 2006), p. 153.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁰³ *S.T.*, 6 Dec. 1913.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *S.C.*, 29 Nov. 1913.

Sligo Nationalist tried to highlight the 'intolerance' of Sligo town's Protestant business community by maintaining that Protestant businessmen encouraged Protestants from the north to work for them, while still relying on the 'tolerance' of their Catholic patrons.¹⁰⁶ However, the boycott was not well organised and was not very effective.

When the I.T.G.W.U. was founded O'Donnell, Jinks and others wished to harness worker support for themselves. Wheatley admits that Irish party politicians such as O'Donnell and Jinks supported the new dynamic labour movement to keep their profile and maintain their support base and that the support of Irish party leadership vital for labour success in Sligo.¹⁰⁷ O'Donnell used the I.T.G.W.U. and Sligo Trades Club as a political base. Jinks spoke in favour of the workers but he also sat on many public committees and was close to aldermen Connolly, Flanagan, Foley and Higgins.

Union leaders like Lynch were also content to ally with the U.I.L. and the A.O.H, and many of the union members were also U.I.L. and A.O.H. The labour movement and the nationalist organisation established a symbiotic relationship with each other. Even John P. Higgins, who had been the vice-president of the Employers' Federation had moved to support the workers demands in the 1913 strike, although he did not back the workers until late April/early May 1913, when the strike was practically over.¹⁰⁸ In January 1914 Lynch was so grateful that he declared of Higgins that 'if it were in my power I would not hesitate to put the crown of Ireland on his head'.¹⁰⁹ Lynch realised the advantages of U.I.L. support and the relationship was very beneficial for the labour movement and in addition to the successful strike from March to May 1913, by 1914 labour in Sligo had secured a fifty per cent pay rise for corporation workers, the end of all night work for bakers, a successful cabinet makers strike, action against tailors being sent out of town and better conditions for women workers.¹¹⁰

Labour and nationalism were the dominant political forces in Sligo in 1914 and the corporation elections of January 1914 confirmed their strength, which can be seen in table 2.2. However, unionists were able to secure representation through Robert Smylie and he was returned to the corporation for the north ward in 1914. When Smylie was first elected to the Corporation, his editorial of 13 January 1912 in the *Sligo Times* thanked the voters of

¹⁰⁶ *Sligo Nationalist* [S.N.], 6 Dec. 1913.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party* (Oxford, 2006), p. 154.

¹⁰⁸ *S.C.*, 3 May 1913.

¹⁰⁹ *S.I.*, 31 Jan. 1914.

¹¹⁰ *S.N.*, 21 Feb. 1914.

the North Ward for returning him.¹¹¹ He also expressed his 'recognition of the broad tolerance of the stalwart voters who in an overwhelming Nationalist division' who had voted for him.¹¹² He went on to praise Sligo for the 'welcome and honours even to those who profess a different political creed from the majority of its inhabitants'.¹¹³

Smylie had been elected to represent the North Ward. The highest number of Protestants in Sligo town lived in this ward, with 620 Protestants out of a total population for the ward of 3,663, representing seventeen percent of the total.¹¹⁴ His best chance for election lay in the north ward but Catholics/nationalist must have voted for him as well.

Table 2.2: Members of Sligo Corporation at the end of January 1914

Title	Name	Occupation	Political affiliation
Mayor and alderman	John Jinks	Auctioneer	U.I.L./A.O.H.
Alderman	John Connolly	Merchant	U.I.L.
Alderman	Edward Foley	Merchant	U.I.L./A.O.H.
Alderman	J.P. Higgins	Merchant	U.I.L.
Alderman	Daniel O'Donnell	Merchant	U.I.L./A.O.H.
Alderman	John Lynch	Stevedore	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	John Hughes	Merchant	U.I.L.
Councillor	Thomas Scanlon	Tailor cutter	U.I.L.
Councillor	Dudley M. Hanley	Merchant	U.I.L.
Councillor	Michael Burns	Cabinet-maker	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	John P. Foley	Merchant	U.I.L.
Councillor	Patrick N. White	Chemist	U.I.L./A.O.H.
Councillor	Robert Smylie	Journalist	Unionist/Conservative
Councillor	William Gibbons	Plasterer	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Michael McDonagh	Shopkeeper	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Patrick Farrell	Baker	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Thomas Hughes	Monumental contractor	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Edward Harte	Carpenter	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Peter Keely	Clerk	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Peter Heraghty	Trader	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	David McSharry	Cabinet-maker	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.
Councillor	Henry Monson	Furniture retailer	Labour/I.T.G.W.U./A.O.H.
Councillor	Henry Depew	Carpenter	Labour/I.T.G.W.U./A.O.H.
Councillor	Bernard McTernan	Journalist	Labour/I.T.G.W.U.

Source: S.C., 10 Jan. 1914.

There was no doubt about Smylie's unionist credentials. However, he was careful not to antagonise the nationalists of the North Ward or his nationalist fellow corporation members,

¹¹¹ S.T., 13 Jan. 1912.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Source: table 1.4 in chapter one.

and on 7 February 1912 when the Corporation discussed an application for a site to build a memorial to the late I.P.P. M.P. P.A. McHugh, he enthusiastically supported it and described himself as a personal friend of McHugh and declared that 'he would be very glad to see his memory honoured'.¹¹⁵

However, at the same meeting of the corporation nationalist councillor alderman John Jinks proposed a motion to congratulate a Presbyterian David Hogg, H.M.L., on his election as a Liberal M.P. for Derry, a victory Jinks believed was made possible by nationalist support.¹¹⁶ Smylie abstained justifying his decision by arguing that 'it would be ungenerous of me to offer any opposition to that resolution, as I am representing a nationalist constituency, and was placed here by the votes of nationalists'.¹¹⁷ The chairman at the meeting, nationalist alderman Edward Foley expressed his respect for councillor Smylie's principles, and added that councillor Smylie had never hidden views on the Union.¹¹⁸

In early 1912 the third Home Rule Bill passed a third reading in the House of Commons, but was rejected by the House of Lords and at the corporation meeting of 7 February 1912 alderman Jinks was keen to propose a motion at a the corporation meeting stating:

'that we the members of Sligo Corporation in meeting assembled, tender to Mr John Redmond our heartiest congratulations on the passing of the third reading of the Home Rule Bill through the House of Commons by such an overwhelming majority and we give our sincere thanks to our two parliamentary representatives for the way they attended to their duties, and that we hereby condemn in the strongest terms the actions of the House of Lords in rejecting the bill'.¹¹⁹

Smylie took the opportunity to jump in and declare that the Bill 'does not fully meet with the wishes of the people of Ireland. It does not deal with financial questions as they ought to be dealt with'.¹²⁰ Jinks argued that 'Mr Redmond had stated that he was perfectly satisfied with the bill and so were the Irish people'.¹²¹ The chairman, Edward Foley asked Smylie if he would 'be satisfied with Home Rule if the financial part of the measure were alright?'.¹²² Smylie responded diplomatically and carefully that so far as he was 'concerned as regards the nationalists of Ireland, I never had the slightest fear of them. They have

¹¹⁵ S.C., 8 Feb. 1912.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

always been my friends and I have no fear that they would treat me unfairly or wrongly. I will say that much'.¹²³ He then added that his statement had been made 'by the biggest conservative in Sligo'.¹²⁴ In the end Foley pronounced that the resolution was unanimously passed.¹²⁵

Clearly Smylie had to walk a political tightrope as his politics put him in a minority of one on the corporation and all he seemed to be able to do in Sligo between 1912 and 1914 was to subtly highlight his opposition to Home Rule. Smylie also used his editorial in the *Sligo Times* to continue his opposition to the Third Home Rule Bill and on 29 April 1912 he criticised the Home Rule Bill believing it would lead to confusion and inefficient government.¹²⁶ However, when Jinks was elected mayor at the corporation meeting on 23 January 1914, their political differences aside, Smylie was a supporter of Jinks and spoke highly of his character when voting for him.¹²⁷

Throughout 1914 Smylie and other unionists in Sligo town and county held meetings opposed to Home Rule. On 12 May 1914 a large meeting was held in Riverstown, Co. Sligo, which was attended by unionists from all over Co. Sligo. Bryan Cooper as president of the Sligo Junior Unionist Alliance and Lady Crofton, president of the Sligo Branch of the Women's Unionist Association both spoke strongly against Home Rule.¹²⁸

On 25 May 1914, despite the efforts of the Sligo unionists and the I.U.A., the I.P.P. achieved the goal of limited self-government for Ireland when the House of Commons passed the Irish Home Rule Bill for the third time, it then only required the king's signature to become law.¹²⁹ The British government had agreed to exclude six Ulster counties of Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone from Home Rule until an agreement could be reached between nationalists and unionists but most nationalists in Sligo were happy with the result and on 25 May a large parade through the streets of Sligo was held to celebrate the passing of Home Rule.¹³⁰

However, Irish unionists were determined to continue to resist Home Rule, especially in Ulster. To demonstrate their resolve against Home Rule, the unionists in Ulster had formed the Ulster Volunteer Force (U.V.F.) in January 1913. To ensure that Home Rule was

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ *S.T.*, 29 Apr. 1912.

¹²⁷ *S.C.*, 24 Jan. 1914.

¹²⁸ *S.I.*, 16 May 1914.

¹²⁹ *S.C.*, 30 May 1914.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

implemented, Irish nationalists had formed the Irish Volunteers (I.V.) in Dublin in November 1913 to guarantee that the British Liberal government would not renege on its promise of Home Rule. The Irish Volunteers had not been set up to oppose Britain and on 22 February 1914 the principal founder of the Irish Volunteers, Eoin MacNeill, argued at a meeting in Kells, Co. Meath 'that they were not anti-English but aimed to bridge the gulf created between Catholics and Protestants'.¹³¹

On 1 February 1914 a meeting was held at Sligo Town Hall, where over 450 men enrolled in the Sligo branch of the Irish Volunteers, which was one of the first in the country. The mayor, alderman John Jinks, took a leading role in the formation of the Volunteers in Sligo and he presided at the meeting on 1 February.¹³² Jinks had been unanimously elected mayor less than a week before the meeting and Canon Doorly, Sligo administrator, expressed the Catholic Church's satisfaction with Jinks's appointment as mayor.¹³³ Church support for Jinks and the presence of members of the Catholic clergy at the meeting on 1 February undoubtedly endorsed the movement in the eyes of many Catholics and nationalists in Sligo.

An indication of the popularity of the Volunteer organisation in Co. Sligo is shown by the fact that on 14 March 1914 the *Sligo Champion* started a 'Volunteer Notes' column containing reports from the county's Volunteer corps and by the end of April 1914 there were four corps of Irish Volunteers in Co. Sligo with a membership of 981.¹³⁴ When the House of Commons passed the Home Rule Bill in May 1914 the Volunteer movement in Sligo experienced a surge in membership when the national secretary of the A.O.H. instructed local organisers to draft Hibernians into the Volunteers.¹³⁵ The influence of the Catholic clergy in the formation of the Irish Volunteers in Sligo is revealed by the fact that on 11 May 1914 Fr P.J. O'Grady, along with other members of the Catholic clergy spoke at a meeting in Keash where over 200 enrolled in the Volunteers, which brought the number of Volunteers in Sligo to over 1,600 members in eight separate branches.¹³⁶

After the House of Commons passed the Irish Home Rule Bill, the two M.P.s, Tom Scanlon and John O'Dowd returned to Sligo.¹³⁷ The U.I.L. clubs in Sligo led by Fr P.A.

¹³¹ Oliver Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath 1913-23* (Dublin, 1983), p. 2.

¹³² *S.C.*, 7 Feb. 1914.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 31 Jan. 1914.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 14 Mar. 1914; S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 May 1914 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8536).

¹³⁵ *S.C.*, 16, 23, 30 May 1914.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*; 16 May 1914; S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 June 1914 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8536).

¹³⁷ *S.C.*, 6 June 1914.

Butler and other members of the Catholic clergy, publicly expressed their thanks for the hard work of both Scanlon and O'Dowd.¹³⁸ The public expression of gratitude to the I.P.P. may have also been an attempt by the Catholic clergy in the U.I.L. to get the party to support the Irish Volunteers, as in the early stages of the Irish Volunteer movement the U.I.L. clubs did not take any initiative in forming Volunteer corps. However, both Scanlon and O'Dowd along with their party leader Redmond must have been surprised by the spread of the Irish Volunteers, and they felt the need to control the movement and bring them under the control of the party. Redmond wished to nominate twenty-five members to the governing committee of the Volunteers.¹³⁹ Many within the movement were opposed to direct I.P.P. involvement. However, they eventually agreed to permit I.P.P. participation in the Volunteers.¹⁴⁰ The Mayor of Sligo John Jinks was selected by Redmond to join the governing committee of the Volunteers at the end of June.¹⁴¹

The direct I.P.P. involvement in the Irish Volunteers upset the unionist population in Sligo and they believed it was simply a takeover of the movement by the I.P.P. On 20 June 1914 the *Sligo Independent* editorial expressed displeasure at I.P.P. involvement in the Irish Volunteers and argued that 'there is now no doubt as to the real aim of those who have secured control of the Volunteers. For some time quite a number of enthusiastic Irishmen were engaged in organising that body on non-party and non-denominational lines and we believed they were honest enough in their intentions but during the past week they have made a miserable surrender of their forces to the party leaders and the last pretence of the National Volunteers to be a non-party organisation has gone by the board'.¹⁴²

Table 2.3: Growth of the Irish Volunteers in Co. Sligo February to September 1914

Month	Numbers
February	450
March	700
April	981
May	1,600
June	2,300
July	3,000
August	4,536
September	5,000

Sources: Sligo County Inspector R.I.C. Monthly Report, 1 Feb.-1 Oct. 1914 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8536-7) and S.C., Feb.-Sept. 1914.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 June 1914.

¹³⁹ Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), pp 500-1.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ S.C., 11 July 1914.

¹⁴² S.I., 20 June 1914.

However, once the I.P.P. took a leading role in the Irish Volunteers, it seemed to give the green light to many areas in Co. Sligo to start up local corps and the U.I.L. branches lead the way. John Jinks, a strong supporter of the I.P.P. had been involved in the formation of Volunteer corps since January 1914 but it appeared that many districts in Co. Sligo were cautious about forming a branch until the I.P.P. officially endorsed the movement. The *Sligo Champion* reported on 4 July 1914 that three U.I.L. branches, Skreen/Dromard, Riverstown and Ballymote, were planning to form corps.¹⁴³ Shortly afterwards corps were formed in eleven villages and town lands in Co. Sligo.¹⁴⁴

In July 1914 both Scanlon and O'Dowd became actively involved in starting branches and an indication of the dramatic increase in Volunteer membership in Co. Sligo is shown in table 2.3. At the beginning of July there were over 2,900 Irish Volunteers in Co. Sligo organised into fifteen separate corps.¹⁴⁵ At the start of August there were over 3,000 Volunteers and twenty-seven branches and by the end of the month there were thirty-eight Volunteer corps in Sligo with a membership of over 4,500.¹⁴⁶ At the end of September the organisation had forty-four corps in Co. Sligo with a membership of almost 5,000.¹⁴⁷ As the Irish Volunteer membership was spreading throughout Sligo and the rest of Ireland, both the Irish Volunteers and the Ulster Volunteers were gradually arming their recruits and preparing them for what seemed like an inevitable confrontation over the implementation of Home Rule.

Britain's declaration of war on 4 August 1914 prevented conflict between nationalists and unionists and both the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish Volunteers were encouraged by their political leaders to support Britain in wartime. The outbreak of war also prevented a potential split in unionism from occurring. Unionists in Ulster wished to support Britain during the war in order to prevent the implementation of Home Rule. However, if this proved to be impossible then Ulster unionists, by proving their loyalty to Britain, would insist that Ulster be excluded from any post-war self-government settlement for Ireland. The southern unionist population also wanted to support Britain in the war thereby forcing a revision of Home Rule. However, as their numbers in the provinces of Connaught, Leinster and Munster were much lower than in Ulster, southern unionists' greatest fear was that Ulster unionists would seek a separate settlement if Home Rule was put into practice after

¹⁴³ *S.C.*, 4 July 1914.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18 July 1914.

¹⁴⁵ *S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.*, 1 July 1914 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8536).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 Aug. 1914; 1 Sept. 1914.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct. 1914.

the war. Southern unionists comforted themselves at the beginning of the war with the belief that Home Rule would not be feasible without Ulster and the exclusion of the province would also be unacceptable to nationalists.¹⁴⁸

In order to guarantee Home Rule, Redmond wished to show that the nationalists of Ireland were behind Britain in the war and on 3 August 1914 he promised the support of the Irish Volunteers for Britain's war effort and their co-operation with unionists in defending Ireland. However, Home Rule was still not on the statute books when war was declared in August 1914 and the *Sligo Champion*, a strong supporter of John Redmond and the I.P.P., was keen to highlight this fact. In an editorial on 8 August 1914 the *Sligo Champion* expressed the belief that if Ireland was going to support Britain in the war, then the country should be treated with justice in peacetime.¹⁴⁹

Edward Carson had pledged the support of the Ulster Volunteers for Britain and in an editorial on 8 August 1914 the *Sligo Independent*, the chief unionist organ in Sligo, praised both Carson's 'patriotic offer' of the Ulster Volunteers, and Redmond's offer of the Irish Volunteers.¹⁵⁰ The *Sligo Independent* was always wary of the fact that it expressed the sentiments of the Protestant and unionist minority in Sligo and chose its words carefully in its support of the unionist cause and when war was declared the *Sligo Independent* wished to give the impression that the differences between nationalists and unionists were not as fundamental as many believed and the paper argued that Irishmen 'are bound together inseparably on one point and that is a passionate love for their native land and today they are joined together in one common brotherhood prepared if needs be to sacrifice their lives in defence of their country'.¹⁵¹

Patrick Buckland has argued that 'southern unionists contributed spontaneously and whole-heartedly to the needs of the war that broke out in August 1914, they enlisted in the regular forces and called for cooperation with the nationalist volunteers'.¹⁵² This meant going against the advice of unionist leaders in England who believed that cooperation with nationalists would undermine opposition to Home Rule. However, local unionists in southern Ireland took the lead in cooperating with nationalists and Sligo unionist leader Major Bryan Cooper was impressed by Redmond's promise of support for Britain and immediately informed the press of his intention to join the Irish Volunteers. Cooper stated

¹⁴⁸ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1* (Dublin, 1972), pp 134-5.

¹⁴⁹ *S.C.*, 8 Aug. 1914.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1* (Dublin, 1972), p. 342.

that 'out of the co-operation of the National and Ulster Volunteers for the defence of Ireland we may well hope to see the birth of a unity which will not be broken by appeals to bigotry and passion'.¹⁵³ He urged 'every unionist who is physically fit to do the same and to show the world that Irishmen can forget their quarrels and stand united against a common danger'.¹⁵⁴ Cooper, a passionate defender of the Union, may also have been under the impression that cooperation between nationalists and unionists in the war effort could possibly persuade nationalists to revise their position on Home Rule.

At the start of the war Sligo unionists were trying to gain the support of nationalists both militarily and politically in the war. In early August 1914, Philip Perceval, president of the Sligo Unionist Alliance approached the Mayor of Sligo, John Jinks with the suggestion that a meeting should be held to form a committee of unionists and nationalists 'for [the] relief of distress' and to assist the poor during the war.¹⁵⁵ This meeting took place on 5 August 1914, the day after the outbreak of war, in Sligo Town Hall and was attended by many leading nationalists and unionists. Influential Sligo unionists at the meeting included Philip Perceval, Sir Malby Crofton and Rev John Ardill, Church of Ireland rector of Calry Church in Sligo town.¹⁵⁶ John Jinks, a staunch supporter of Redmond and the I.P.P. readily embraced Perceval's suggestion.

Jinks spoke first at the meeting of Sligo nationalists and unionists on 5 August 1914 claiming that he was proud that 'all creeds and classes who had come together for the purpose of providing relief if necessary, for the poorer classes of the town and particularly the dependents of those who had gone further to fight our country's battle against Germany or any other country'.¹⁵⁷ Philip Perceval declared that the unionists of Sligo 'were prepared to do their part to see that the wives and families of those men as well as the poorer people in Sligo would be looked after during the present crisis'.¹⁵⁸

Alexander Crichton, a Protestant landowner, and unlike the majority of his class and religion in Sligo, a supporter of Home Rule, also spoke at this meeting stating 'that not long ago they in Ireland were divided, but now they were united, and so long as they remained

¹⁵³ *S.C.*, 8 Aug. 1914.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *S.I.*, 8 Aug. 1914.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

united, not only would the dangers of the war be very much lessened, but the differences and difficulties amongst themselves would be swept away'.¹⁵⁹

Nationalist councillor, alderman Edward Foley believed 'that they were all unionists now in the common cause of their country, and they were prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder and drive the enemy from their shores'.¹⁶⁰ Rev Ardill stated at the meeting that there was 'a sense in which they were all nationalists, because in his opinion, there could not be any higher definition of a nationalist than those who were prepared to assist the dependents of the man who had gone to fight the battles of his country'.¹⁶¹

This meeting seemed like a genuine effort by unionists to assist wartime distress and to work on an equal basis with nationalists and both nationalists and unionists had been eager to praise each other in their speeches. However, Philip Perceval, who was instrumental in organising the meeting was still a committed unionist and the meeting could also be interpreted as a tactic by Sligo unionists to actively engage nationalists in the war effort with the ultimate hope that collective involvement might erode old prejudices and persuade nationalists that if Ireland remained a part of the United Kingdom then the country could stand up against outside threats.

Another important meeting in August 1914 attended by many nationalists and unionists, was held in Calry village, four miles from Sligo town. The purpose of the meeting was to form a corps of Sligo unionists, which would be part of the Irish Volunteers.¹⁶² Philip Perceval, who was again the driving force behind this meeting, told the gathered crowd 'that all the unionists in County Sligo have thrown in their lot with their fellow countrymen because we have always been fellow-countrymen'¹⁶³ and he appealed to unionists and nationalists to sink their differences.¹⁶⁴ A Sligo unionist, Colonel Wynne took charge of the Corps and at the end of August about seventy men had joined the Sligo Unionist Volunteer Corps.¹⁶⁵ The war was proving to be an opportunity for unionists to gain influence in the Volunteer movement, an organisation originally set up to guarantee Home Rule.

At this time there was a shortage of nationalist officers in Sligo to train new Volunteers and many from the Protestant unionist landed families who had experience in drilling men

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., 15 Aug. 1914.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Sept. 1914 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8537).

offered their services to help organise and instruct the Volunteers. On 9 August 1914, one such man, Major Richard W. Hillas, a unionist and Protestant landowner of Donnecoy, Templeboy, Co. Sligo,¹⁶⁶ wrote to Colonel Maurice Moore, the commander of the Irish Volunteers, offering to train and organise the Irish Volunteers in Sligo.¹⁶⁷ On 11 August 1914, in the absence of a senior nationalist officer, Colonel Moore immediately appointed Major Hillas the County Inspection Officer for all Volunteers in Sligo.¹⁶⁸ On 12 August 1914 Major Hillas wrote to Moore emphasising the importance of defending Sligo's coastline and maintained that he would devote his initial attentions to coastal defence.¹⁶⁹ Hillas also submitted an article to the *Sligo Champion* encouraging Sligomen to join the Irish Volunteers saying: 'it is the bounden duty of every man fit to bear arms to enrol himself in the Irish Volunteers.'¹⁷⁰ The question now was, how would Sligo nationalists respond to the increasing unionist involvement in the Irish Volunteers?

On 22 August 1914 the *Sligo Champion* editorial expressed the concern that unionists were taking over the Volunteers and shaping the organisation to their own ends.¹⁷¹ Seamus T. Ó'Cinnéide of the Ballymote Volunteer Corps, Co. Sligo voiced concerns over the appointment of Major Hillas in a letter to Colonel Moore dated 18 August 1914.¹⁷² Ó'Cinnéide complained that some Sligo Volunteers were opposed to 'unionist officers' and they did not believe that Major Hillas was sympathetic to the aims of the Volunteer movement and some were refusing to serve under a unionist officer.¹⁷³ Ó'Cinnéide demanded the removal of Hillas maintaining that if he wasn't replaced then Volunteer commanders in the surrounding districts would endeavour to have their units attached to a neighbouring county's Volunteer Corps.¹⁷⁴

On 20 August 1914 Colonel Moore wrote to Ó'Cinnéide emphasising the difficulty of finding efficient and experienced officers with nationalist views willing to train Volunteer units and he maintained that 'it seems to be a choice between unionists officers or no

¹⁶⁶ Hillas Family Papers (of Seaview, otherwise Donecroy) (Sligo Co. Library [S.C.L.], Estate records, No. 589); Celeste Byrne, 'Hillas of County Sligo' in *The Irish Ancestor*, iv, No.1, (1972), pp 26-9; Bernard Burke, *History of the landed gentry of Ireland* (10th ed., London, 1904), p. 267.

¹⁶⁷ Major R. W. Hillas to Colonel Maurice Moore, 9 Aug. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁶⁸ Colonel Maurice Moore to Major R. W. Hillas, 11 Aug. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁶⁹ Major R. W. Hillas to Colonel Maurice Moore, 12 Aug. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁷⁰ S.C. 15 Aug. 1914.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 22 Aug. 1914.

¹⁷² Seamus T. Ó'Cinnéide to Colonel Maurice Moore, 18 Aug. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

officers'.¹⁷⁵ Colonel Moore took the long-term pragmatic approach towards Volunteer training in Co. Sligo and he asked the local commanders to work with Hillas for the moment arguing that 'when our officers are trained we can do as we like'.¹⁷⁶ This seemed like a reasonable request and Colonel Moore, as overall commander of the Irish Volunteers, could obviously see the benefits of using unionist officers, but would the local Volunteers accept his wisdom in permitting Hillas to impart his military experience?

When Hillas was appointed he wrote to fifteen Volunteer corps in Co. Sligo requesting information on training and logistics. However, on 2 September 1914 Hillas reported that he had only received five replies. He interpreted the slow response to his request for information as opposition to him and in a letter to Maurice Moore, dated 2 September 1914, he tendered his resignation, maintaining that 'it is too evident that people of my class are not required by certain supporters of the movement in the Irish Volunteers and these people have the power to nullify any effort that runs counter to their own ideas and utterly ignore orders from the governing body if it does not suit them to obey them. Under these circumstances the Irish Volunteers must always remain an undisciplined disorganised mob and I for one could not remain as a responsible officer of this force'.¹⁷⁷ Colonel Moore tried to calm Hillas and pleaded with him to wait and be patient with what he called the 'casual methods' of his subordinates.¹⁷⁸ Moore argued that the delay in answering the requests for information 'is due to carelessness rather than any presumed hostility'.¹⁷⁹ However, Hillas refused to see it from Moore's perspective and he was determined to resign arguing that when 'local commanders can pick and choose what orders they may obey, goodbye to all discipline and authority'.¹⁸⁰ Did Hillas act too impulsively?

Hillas may have been overly sensitive and it seemed that many strongly nationalist Volunteer Corps commanders in Sligo were determined to secure the best possible training for their units and some of them that responded promptly to Hillas's request for information later featured very prominently in the republican movement. In fact even before he received a request for information from Hillas, Alec McCabe (1886-1972), commander of the Keash Volunteers, Ballymote, wrote to Hillas on 18 August 1914 reporting himself as company

¹⁷⁵ Colonel Maurice Moore to Seamus T. Ó'Cinnéide, Ballymote Sligo Volunteer Corps, 20 Aug. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Major R. W. Hillas to Colonel Maurice Moore, 2 Sept. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁷⁸ Colonel Maurice Moore to Major R. W. Hillas, 3 Sept. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Major R. W. Hillas to Colonel Maurice Moore, 5 Sept. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

commander and added that he was 'delighted to have some sensible person placed at the head of affairs in the county'.¹⁸¹ On 23 August 1914, after he had received Hillas's letter requesting information McCabe responded with detailed information concerning the Keash Volunteer Corps.¹⁸² McCabe, the principal of Drumnagranchy N.S. near Keash was a member of the militant republican organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B.) and later commanded I.R.A. forces in Sligo during the War of Independence and Free State troops during the Civil War.¹⁸³ Two other commanders with strong nationalist views who responded promptly to Hillas were Owen Tansey, Gurteen Volunteers and Seamus Devins, Grange Volunteers.¹⁸⁴ Both men later took a very active role in the republican movement during the War of Independence and the Civil War. It seemed as if these men shared the pragmatism of Colonel Moore and were willing to accept training and organisation from a unionist officer at least until they themselves gained the necessary experience.

It also seemed that more than five Sligo Volunteer commanders responded to Hillas's request for information concerning the commanders, numbers, training and experience of their units by the time he resigned. In addition to Alec McCabe, Owen Tansey and Seamus Devins, seven other officers in the Irish Volunteers, representing six corps of the County Sligo Volunteers dated their replies to Hillas's enquiries before 31 August 1914. The Sligo Volunteer commanders, William Lipsett and Domnick Bree of the Collooney Corps, Michael McDonagh, Geevagh Corps, William Caffrey, Easkey Corps, Robert Anderson, Calry Corps, Thomas Clarke, Skreen/Dromard Corps and Tom Deignan, Maugherow Corps, all responded to Hillas before his resignation on 2 September 1914.¹⁸⁵ It is not known if Hillas received all the replies to his request for information before he took the decision to resign and Colonel Moore was probably correct when he asked Hillas to be patient with his subordinates.

However, there was undoubtedly some opposition to Hillas amongst the ranks of the Sligo Volunteer movement and it seemed to be enough to persuade him that he was not acceptable as the Irish Volunteers County Sligo Inspection Officer. In addition to his own

¹⁸¹ Alec McCabe to Major Hillas, 18 Aug. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 23 Aug. 1914.

¹⁸³ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 189-93.

¹⁸⁴ Owen Tansey to Major Hillas, 26 Aug. 1914; Seamus Devins to Major Hillas, 28 Aug. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁸⁵ William Lipsett, Collooney Corps to Hillas, 20 Aug. 1914; Domnick Bree, Collooney Corps to Hillas, 26 Aug 1914; Michael McDonagh, Geevagh Corps to Hillas, 21 Aug. 1914; William Caffrey, Easkey Corps to Hillas, 28 Aug. 1914; R. B. Anderson, Calry Corps to Hillas, 29 Aug 1914; Thomas Clarke, Skreen and Dromard Corps to Hillas, 31 Aug 1914; Tom Deignan, Maugherow Corps to Hillas, 31 Aug. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

complaints concerning the distrust of many within the Sligo Volunteers over his unionist politics and his Protestant landowning background, Hillas received a letter dated 2 September 1914, from Diarmiad Coffey, secretary to the chief of staff of the Irish Volunteers informing Hillas that two south Sligo Corps areas were now attached to the Ballina and Charlestown Corps of the Irish Volunteers in Co. Mayo.¹⁸⁶ No specific reason for this regional transfer is made apparent in the letter and it could quite possibly be due to an organisational change. However, it is more likely that the territorial change was the result of displeasure with Hillas within the Sligo Volunteers especially considering the earlier hostility expressed towards him by some Volunteers in south Sligo, represented in particular by Seamus Ó'Cinnéide's letter on 20 August 1914. On 1 September 1914 the Mayor of Sligo, John Jinks, who had earlier supported Colonel Moore's appointment of Major Hillas,¹⁸⁷ wrote to Moore expressing his sorrow at Hillas's decision to resign and recommended that a Captain Foley of Rossaville take his place.¹⁸⁸ In a letter to Jinks dated 2 September 1914, Moore, aware of the time constraints in preparing the Volunteers during wartime, immediately appointed Captain Foley as Inspector of the County Sligo Volunteers.¹⁸⁹ Foley later declined the offer of the position in the Volunteers, as he was preparing to serve in the British army.¹⁹⁰

There seemed to have been a hardening of nationalist attitude in Sligo at this time and on 29 August 1914 the *Sligo Champion* argued that Home Rule must be on the statute books before the Volunteers would fight for Britain, saying that 'if not, English legislators will find that the invitation to Irishmen to go to be shot to pieces for King and Country will not be responded to with any great enthusiasm'.¹⁹¹ On the same date a small piece appeared in the *Sligo Champion*, which was probably submitted by Ó'Cinnéide or a member of the Ballymote Volunteer Corps, declaring that the Volunteers should 'not be too sanguine to express opinions on the present European struggle. We don't know where we stand, and it is time enough for us to shout for our friends when we know who they are'.¹⁹² However, with the trouble over unionist involvement in the Irish Volunteers and the lingering doubts

¹⁸⁶ Diarmiad Coffey to Hillas 2 Sept. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁸⁷ John Jinks to Colonel Moore, 19 Aug. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 Sept. 1914.

¹⁸⁹ Colonel Moore to John Jinks, 2 Sept. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁹⁰ Captain Foley to Colonel Moore, 4 Sept. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

¹⁹¹ *S.C.*, 29 Aug. 1914.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

over Home Rule aside, the R.I.C. Inspector for Co. Sligo was able to report at the end of August 1914 that people's sympathies were with the British forces.¹⁹³

On 18 September 1914 Home Rule became law and was suspended until the end of the war, and even though the position of Ulster within the new settlement was still vague, and was sure to cause problems in the future, the *Sligo Champion* editorial of 19 September 1914 was able to say that 'nationalists are ready to forget all quarrels to welcome their old time enemies as friends'.¹⁹⁴ However, with the difficulties regarding Ulster in mind the editorial mentioned that 'Ireland is quite spacious enough for two parties, it is not large enough for two systems of government'.¹⁹⁵ With the nationalists fighting for Home Rule and unionists fighting against it, it remained to be seen how these two groups were to be mutually satisfied.

As Home Rule was now on the statute books a renewed appeal was made to nationalists in Sligo to join the army. Charles O'Hara, as president of the Sligo Recruiting Committee, used the opportunity offered by the passing of Home Rule to submit an article to the *Sligo Champion* encouraging nationalists to enlist in the army. O'Hara appealed to Sligomen to 'come forward in response to Lord Kitchener's call for men to uphold the interests of our Empire and to assist in the war which is being fought in the interests of civilisation'.¹⁹⁶

On 19 September 1914, the day after Home Rule was granted, Thomas Scanlon M.P., visited Sligo town and spoke to a large crowd outside the town hall declaring, 'Ireland is now and shall be for all times a nation once again'.¹⁹⁷ Scanlon argued that Ireland had received its freedom from a country at war and stressed Ireland's obligations to the British Empire. If Scanlon believed that his triumphant speech was going to go down well with all sections of Sligo society, he was sorely mistaken and the speech received a very mixed response from the crowd with some calling him a liar and shouting 'to Hell with the Empire'.¹⁹⁸ Fighting then broke out amongst the crowd, which was reported by the *Sligo Independent*. The meeting ended with the singing of 'A Nation Once Again' and the *Sligo Independent* mentioned that 'while this was in progress several members of the crowd in the street below engaged in a spirited bout of fisticuffs and the proceedings terminated

¹⁹³ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Sept. 1914 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8537).

¹⁹⁴ S.C., 19 Sept. 1914.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ S.C., 26 Sept. 1914; *S.I.*, 26 Sept. 1914.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

abruptly'.¹⁹⁹ However, the *Sligo Champion*, displayed a firm loyalty to Scanlon and the I.P.P. and neglected to mention how the meeting was ultimately concluded.

It appeared that John Lynch and other members of the I.T.G.W.U. and Sligo Trades Council including William Gibbons and Edward Harte led part of the crowd in heckling Scanlon at the town hall.²⁰⁰ On 21 September a meeting of Sligo Trades Council, with Lynch absent, repudiated the actions of Lynch, Gibbons and Harte.²⁰¹ However, the repudiation was reversed a week later when John Lynch and P.T. Daly were present.²⁰² Paul Bew in his work *Ideology and the Irish Question* has commented on the disruption caused by members of Sligo Trades Council arguing that 'in short, the nationalist sub-culture of Sligo Labour had made its point and stood its ground'.²⁰³ However, Michael Wheatley in his study *Nationalism and the Irish Party* disagrees contending that the nationalist/labour alliance 'had not been part of Sligo's nationalist 'sub-culture'; rather it had been central to the politics of the town throughout the pre-war period'.²⁰⁴ Wheatley is nearer the truth and the Trades Council, the I.T.G.W.U. and labour in Sligo were always part of the mainstream politics of the town, as can be interpreted from the close relationship between the U.I.L., the A.O.H and the labour movements in Sligo before the First World War.

In 1914 the Home Rule movement in Sligo embraced many groups, traditions and organisations including farmers, labourers, employers, businessmen, employees, Catholics, some Protestants, town and country dwellers, the U.I.L., A.O.H., the I.T.G.W.U., Sligo Trades Council and the Labour party and it would remain to be seen how these disparate groups would resolve their underlying differences. However, in the immediate short term these groups would have very different ideas on how Ireland was to use her new found legislative freedom and many surely harboured doubts about jumping into a war allied with a country that had suppressed this legislative freedom for so long.

John Redmond had no doubts on what Ireland should do in wartime and on 20 September 1914 he gave a speech at Woodenbridge, Co. Wexford, urging the Irish Volunteers to join the British army to guarantee the granting of Home Rule after the war.²⁰⁵ Would Redmond's support for the British war effort divide nationalists? Eoin MacNeill, the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.,

²⁰² Ibid., 3 Oct. 1914.

²⁰³ Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question* (Oxford, 1994), p. 121.

²⁰⁴ Michael Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party* (Oxford, 2006), p. 151.

²⁰⁵ *S.C.*, 26 Sept 1914.

founder of the Volunteers, and some Volunteer leaders did not support Redmond's position and the Volunteer movement was split between the majority, who now called themselves Irish National Volunteers (I.N.V.), and generally referred to as the National Volunteers, backed Redmond, and the minority, the Irish Volunteers, who remained under MacNeill's leadership. The chief nationalist organ in Sligo, the *Sligo Champion*, remained firm and supported the official party line of the I.P.P. and supported Redmond and the National Volunteers, declaring 'Mr Redmond and the Irish Party are the nearest thing to a government that we possess and simple commonsense demands that they should have the controlling voice in the direction of the Volunteer force'.²⁰⁶ If the majority of Catholics and nationalists in Sligo were to maintain their support for Redmond's stance then the Catholic Church must also give him its blessing. Fortunately for Redmond this blessing was forthcoming in late September 1914 when a conference of Catholic clergy in Sligo endorsed and thanked Redmond and the I.P.P. for obtaining Home Rule for Ireland and urged the people to continue to support Redmond's policies.²⁰⁷

The next step for the Redmond supporters in Sligo was to ensure that most Volunteers in the county joined the National Volunteers and not the Irish Volunteers, and on 30 September 1914 a meeting was held in Sligo Town Hall to form a County Board for the National Volunteers. The mayor, John Jinks, John O'Dowd and Thomas Scanlon, Sligo's two M.P.s, along with delegates from twenty-four Irish Volunteer Corps around Co. Sligo attended the meeting. The meeting was a success for the I.P.P. and showed that the majority of Volunteers in the county supported John Redmond's position. However, the meeting failed to form a working County Board for the Volunteers. Later in November Jinks wrote to Volunteer H.Q. regretting that a County Board had not yet been formed but he maintained that he was 'anxious to form one'.²⁰⁸ On 30 September 1914 the *Sligo Champion* argued that the majority of Volunteers in Co. Sligo took Redmond's side and Volunteers in Sligo were 'true to a man to Mr Redmond and the Party'.²⁰⁹ The various branches passed resolutions of support for Redmond in September and October.²¹⁰ The I.P.P. could breath a sigh of relief in Sligo, they had the support of the *Sligo Champion* and the Catholic Church and the majority of Volunteers backed Redmond and the party.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 Oct. 1914.

²⁰⁸ John Jinks to Colonel Moore, 21 Nov. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

²⁰⁹ *S.C.*, 3 Oct. 1914.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10 Oct. 1914; 17 Oct. 1914; 24 Oct. 1914.

However, support for the I.P.P.'s position was not universal. On 1 October 1914 John Lynch organized a public anti-recruitment demonstration in Sligo town with over 120 people present²¹¹ and although the U.I.L. in Co. Sligo seemed to have won over the majority of the Volunteer corps to Redmond's side, there was one corps in the county which remained defiant. On 8 October 1914 the Tubbercurry Irish Volunteer Corps passed a resolution, affirming their allegiance 'to the principles for which we were enrolled viz to defend the rights and liberties common to all Irishmen. As the provisional committee of which Mr John MacNeill is the chairman is the only national committee now adhering to the above principles we hereby affirm our allegiance to that committee'.²¹²

However, a letter from Charles McCoy, Ballylara near Tubbercurry to Volunteer headquarters in early November claimed that the 8 October meeting of Tubbercurry Volunteers was not representative.²¹³ McCoy believed that what he described as 'general apathy' had reduced active membership from 300 to seventeen and he claimed that the seventeen men were all of the 'Sinn Féin camp'.²¹⁴ According to McCoy the Tubbercurry Sinn Féiners were branding Redmond as 'the mercenary recruiting agent of the British Government'.²¹⁵ However, McCoy's real purpose seemed to be exploiting the opportunity to promote himself within the Volunteer movement and he mentioned 'that he would be prepared to undertake organising work in this county if the committee requires such', and listed out his credentials saying he had plenty of experience in organising men and that he was a retired R.I.C. sergeant.²¹⁶

It seemed that National Volunteer H.Q. did not take McCoy's concerns seriously and later on 22 February 1915 McCoy again wrote to Volunteer H.Q. complaining that they had done nothing in relation to his letter dated 8 October 1914 to revive the Volunteer Corps in Tubbercurry. He was convinced that in early 1915 he had ardent enemies among the Sinn Féiners and argued that there were no National Volunteers in Tubbercurry now. He believed that he could have done something if he had received 'assistance, guidance or encouragement from the executive authority to proceed'.²¹⁷ An R.I.C. report on the meeting

²¹¹ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Nov. 1914 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8537).

²¹² S.C., 10 Oct. 1914.

²¹³ Charles McCoy to Volunteer H.Q., 5 Nov. 1914 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Charles McCoy to Volunteer H.Q., 22 Feb. 1915 (N.L.I., Maurice Moore papers, MS 10550).

in Tubbercurry on 8 October mentioned that the meeting was attended by thirteen men who were opposed to Redmond's policy of support for Britain.²¹⁸

A small number of others were also opposed to Redmond and in late October 1914 anti-recruiting posters were found all over Sligo town dismissing Redmond's policy of cooperation and declaring that the Volunteers were for the defence of Ireland and 'that individual Volunteers must be true to their pledge and not desert Ireland or Ireland's army for England's army'.²¹⁹ At the end of October 1914 the R.I.C. Co. Sligo Inspector reported that three branches of the Volunteers, Keash, Tubbercurry and Grange, were remaining as Irish Volunteers and were supporting MacNeill.²²⁰ However, out of the estimated 5,000 members of the Volunteers in October 1914 only 280 supported MacNeill.²²¹ It is interesting to see that the R.I.C. were labelling those who supported MacNeill as 'Sinn Féiners', even though MacNeill and the Irish Volunteers had no official connection with the Sinn Féin Party. However, the Sinn Féin Party was completely opposed to Irishmen fighting for Britain, and it became convenient for those in authority to brand all those opposed to the war as 'Sinn Féiners'. From the I.P.P.'s perspective the numbers opposing them in Co. Sligo were very small and most probably did not concern them too much.

After the I.P.P. secured Home Rule and the declarations of support for Redmond, and the most enthusiastic members had joined up, there seemed to be no real role for the Volunteers and there was a falling off in support for the National Volunteers. Most of the skilled instructors joined up as well. Reports on local National Volunteer units in the *Sligo Champion* mention this and on 10 October only very small numbers were attending drill practice in Riverstown and Skreen/Dromard in Co. Sligo.²²² On 7 November 1914 reports in the *Sligo Champion* indicated that there was a general 'slacking off' in Volunteer units in the county.²²³

Why did it take so long to organise the Volunteers in Co. Sligo after the declaration of war? Much can be blamed on the lack of Volunteer interest after Home Rule was achieved and while many of the original members enlisted, few others seemed willing to take on the thankless and demanding task of organising the National Volunteers in Sligo and the trouble with Hillas had also delayed organisation at a crucial time. However, although there were

²¹⁸ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Nov. 1914 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8537).

²¹⁹ *S.I.*, 31 Oct. 1914.

²²⁰ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Nov. 1914 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8537).

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *S.C.*, 10 Oct. 1914.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 7 Nov. 1914.

local problems in organising the Volunteers, the British government could have done much more to help the National Volunteers in the country. After all the National Volunteers had been committed to supporting Britain in the war and had recruited thousands of men around Ireland for the British army. The British government never did much to encourage the National Volunteers, who had not joined the British army, in their efforts to become involved in home defence. As David Fitzpatrick has argued, most probably the government remained suspicious of all nationalists and refused to assign the defence of Irish shores to the National Volunteers.²²⁴

Nationalists were also feeling suspicious of unionists, and in the first few months of the war nationalists in Sligo believed they were enlisting in greater numbers than local unionists. An article, by recruiting campaigner R.J. Kelly, appeared in the *Sligo Champion* on 23 December 1914 claiming that unionists had waited for five weeks after war was declared before they arranged through their leaders to enlist, and then they did so not regularly and in the ordinary way, but on their own terms. He urged unionists and Orangemen to lay aside their prejudices and join nationalists in their attempts to fill the ranks of the Irish Brigade.²²⁵ Further criticism of unionist volunteering in Sligo came in late January 1915 when the *Sligo Champion* claimed that Sligo unionists were not volunteering in large numbers and those who did enlist had the influence to ensure that they were posted to areas away from the frontline.²²⁶ The *Sligo Champion* expressed the hope that 'Sligo unionists will very soon give more practical proof than they have hitherto given of their loyalty to the Empire and follow the noble and self-sacrificing example set them by the nationalists'.²²⁷

Sligo unionists were quick to defend themselves and the *Sligo Independent* reported on a meeting of the junior branch of the Sligo I.U.A., in February 1915 where the members expressed their annoyance regarding the *Sligo Champion's* criticism of unionist volunteering and in an eagerness to avoid offending the nationalist majority the *Sligo Independent* maintained that many from both communities in Sligo had joined the army.²²⁸ The Sligo branch of the I.U.A. also claimed that they had supported war charities saying that they had 'sent about £600 to relieve those who were in distress, they had sent something like £700 to the Prince of Wales Fund, and they had also raised about £1,200 to support the

²²⁴ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), p. 54.

²²⁵ *S.C.*, 19 Dec. 1914.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 Jan. 1915.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *S.I.*, 20 Feb. 1915.

Belgian Refugees'.²²⁹ In early November 1914, both Protestant and Catholic women were particularly involved in setting up a committee, the 'Town and County Association for War Work', under the chairmanship of Charles O'Hara, in an effort to help Belgians displaced by the war and in November 1914 twenty-four had arrived in Sligo and were accommodated in the military barracks.²³⁰ By early January 1915 there were fifty-six Belgian refugees in Sligo.²³¹

The *Sligo Champion* did not engage in any more criticism of Sligo unionist volunteering and the paper switched its criticism to the lack of Ulster unionist enlistment and over the course of 1915 editorials appeared in the *Sligo Champion* condemning the Ulster Division for remaining in Ireland while thousands of nationalists had gone abroad and were killed or wounded.²³² Concern over Ulster unionist recruitment and Home Rule was also expressed by Thomas Scanlon M.P. when he wrote to the branches of the U.I.L. in Sligo in February 1915 cautioning nationalists not to lose interest in the Home Rule movement and warning nationalists that 'the Ulster fanatics, notwithstanding the apparent truce between the different political leaders, are still threatening Civil War'.²³³

However, recruiting levels in Sligo town from August 1914 and up to mid February 1915 were high, while the county areas lagged behind. In the period 4 August 1914 to 15 February 1915, 350 recruits and 200 reservists had joined up from Co. Sligo and of the 350 recruits, Sligo town had supplied 279 of them, while 152 of the reservists were from Sligo town.²³⁴ It seemed that the town of Sligo was supplying most of the army recruits since the beginning of the war and complaints that Sligo farmers, both Protestant and Catholic, were not responding to the call to arms was expressed by nationalists and unionists at a recruiting meeting held in Sligo town on 8 April 1915.²³⁵ At this meeting Major Charles O'Hara, H.M.L., Thomas Scanlon, M.P. and William Russell Fenton (1852-1933), D.L. (Deputy Lieutenant), Clerk of the Peace and Crown and a member of the Sligo I.U.A., all called on farmers to enlist.²³⁶

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 21 Nov. 1914; Clare O'Neill, 'The Irish home front 1914-18: with particular reference to the treatment of Belgian refugees', Ph.D thesis, N.U.I., Maynooth, 2006.

²³¹ *S.I.*, 16 Jan. 1915.

²³² *S.C.*, 3 July 1915; 25 Sept. 1915.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 13 Feb. 1915.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 Mar. 1915.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 17 Apr. 1915.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

Why were Sligo farmers staying at home while many townspeople were joining up? Despite the efforts of prominent nationalists and unionists and the examples set by them to encourage enlistment, most farmers and their sons saw it as much more profitable to remain at home and obtain a good price for their produce in time of war, rather than join the army.²³⁷ By May 1915 it seemed that most recruits in Co. Sligo came from the labouring classes of Sligo and the other towns.²³⁸

With little in the way of industry in Sligo during the war, lack of employment encouraged men from Sligo town to enlist. One of the largest factories in Sligo town at the time was the Connaught Manufacturing Company, which was owned by Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth (1869-1944). Gore-Booth was a member of the Church of Ireland and was a large landowner based at Lissadell in Co. Sligo. Gore-Booth, as a passionate unionist, was strongly opposed to Irish Home Rule. In May 1915 the Connaught Manufacturing Company secured a contract from the War Office to produce 20,000 shirts for the army, which offered some employment.²³⁹ However, during the war economic activity at Sligo port was reduced because of wartime restrictions and German naval activity, and with a reduced need for labour at the port, many unemployed and semi-employed dockworkers were forced to join the army.

In April 1915 the Irish Guards band visited Sligo in order to stimulate recruitment and in June it was the turn of the Connaught Rangers band to attend recruitment meetings in Sligo.²⁴⁰ On both occasions large gatherings were held at Sligo Town Hall, where local nationalists and unionists appealed for more men to enlist and it proved to be an opportunity for both communities to unite in their praise of Sligo town's contribution of young men to the British army, while nationalists and unionists continued to complain that farmers' sons, both Protestant and Catholic, were not joining up.²⁴¹

However, unionists and nationalists in Sligo were not entirely united when it came to recruitment for the British army. At the end of 1915 the poor response of farmers' sons to recruiting developed into a contentious issue between the unionist *Sligo Independent* and the nationalist *Sligo Champion*. At the end of October and in early November 1915 the *Sligo Independent* made the accusation that farmers' sons were emigrating to the U.S.A. in order

²³⁷ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Mar. 1915 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8538).

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 June 1915.

²³⁹ *S.I.*, 29 May 1915.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 May, 19 June 1915.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

to avoid joining the army.²⁴² The *Sligo Champion* criticised the *Sligo Independent* for reporting on the emigration of farmers' sons and maintained that numbers emigrating to America from Ireland were actually lower in 1915 than they had been in previous years.²⁴³ The *Sligo Independent* backed down and claimed they were simply pointing out the poor response of the farming classes to recruiting.²⁴⁴

However, there were also differences within nationalism in Sligo which became more apparent at this stage of the war. The Irish Home Rule Act had made the I.P.P. redundant and local Home Rulers began to doubt their leaders, especially after May 1915 when the I.P.P. supported a new British coalition government, which included many stubborn unionists.²⁴⁵ An indication of the growing uncertainty of local Home Rulers with the I.P.P. policy of supporting Britain in the war can be found in the events surrounding the 1916 Sligo mayoral election.

Since the start of the war the mayor John Jinks was actively involved in recruitment for the army and he chaired many recruiting meetings in Sligo. His commitment to recruiting seemed to have become a key issue in the election for mayor in January 1916. Jinks must have been aware that his support for recruitment and the I.P.P. stance on the war was jeopardising his position locally and a few weeks before the vote he wrote to Charles O'Hara asking if he could use his influence with the military authorities to release two corporation members, Peter Keely and David McSharry, from service in France and allow them to return home on leave and support his candidature for mayor.²⁴⁶ O'Hara promised that he would do his best in the matter.²⁴⁷

At the corporation meeting on 24 January 1916 Jinks was proposed by Edward Foley and seconded by Peter Keely, who along with David McSharry had been allowed home on leave. D.M. Hanley opposed Jinks and although he did not speak out publicly against recruitment, and had in April 1915 lent his car for a county recruiting tour²⁴⁸, he made no statement of support for recruitment or the I.P.P. backing of the British war effort and many believed that he was privately against supporting Britain in the war. The election result proved to be close but Jinks was elected by eleven votes to nine.²⁴⁹ Hanley felt comfortable

²⁴² *S.I.*, 30 Oct., 6 Nov. 1915.

²⁴³ *S.C.*, 20 Nov. 1915.

²⁴⁴ *S.I.*, 27 Nov. 1915.

²⁴⁵ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), p. 94.

²⁴⁶ John Jinks to O'Hara, 7 Jan. 1916 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

²⁴⁷ O'Hara to John Jinks, 8 Jan. 1916 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

²⁴⁸ *S.N.*, 1 May 1915.

²⁴⁹ *S.I.*, 29 Jan. 1916.

enough with his stance to admit publicly after the election that while his initial protest was against the mismanagement of corporation finances, the campaign against Jinks had come to be fought on the issue of recruiting.²⁵⁰ Many of those who voted for Hanley were later to play active roles in Sinn Féin. Hanley was strongly supported by the Labour Party councillors, which was an early indication of the future cooperation between Sinn Féin and Labour.

Some nationalists may have been having doubts over supporting the British war effort, at the end of January 1916. However, Protestant unionists in Sligo seemed to have no such doubts and the *Sligo Independent* published the names and pictures of ten Protestant women from Sligo who were serving as nurses in France.²⁵¹ All the women were either the wives or daughters of Protestant landowners or businessmen in Sligo.²⁵² Other women from this background sacrificed their time and money to provide comforts for soldiers who were home in Sligo on sick leave or those soldiers who were so badly injured they were unable to return to combat. In February 1916 entertainment was organised by Lady Georgina Gore-Booth, wife of Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth, at Lissadell to raise funds 'to provide comforts for our soldiers'.²⁵³ In August 1916 twenty-three wounded Protestant and Catholic soldiers from Sligo town serving with the Connaught Rangers were invited to Hazelwood as the guests of Muriel Perceval, where they engaged in sports and boating activities.²⁵⁴

During the First World War the women of Sligo town and environs, especially the wives of businessmen and landed men, both Protestant and Catholic, all became deeply involved raising funds for Sligo prisoners of war held in Germany. A total of sixty-four prisoners from Sligo town and county were listed as prisoners of war in Germany and Turkey during the war.²⁵⁵ In December 1915 Christmas gifts were sent over to the prisoners of war held in Germany from the people of Sligo town and county.²⁵⁶ The donations and concern shown by Protestants and Catholics in Sligo for the prisoners of war proved to be an opportunity for both communities to combine their efforts in a common cause. Were both communities becoming closer because of their shared experience of the war or were old differences lying just under the surface?

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 29 Jan. 1916.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 26 Feb. 1916.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 Aug. 1916.

²⁵⁵ Charles Kean O'Hara's bound volume containing alphabetical list of prisoners of war from Co. Sligo held in Germany and Turkey, 1915-18 (N.L.I., O'Hara Papers, MS 36446/3).

²⁵⁶ *S.I.*, 15 Jan. 1916.

John MacKay Wilson provided an important insight into local unionist opinion in Sligo at this time. Wilson was travelling around Ireland gaining the opinions of anonymous or semi-anonymous unionists on various issues ranging from recruitment to the growth of the Sinn Féin movement. During his first visit to Sligo in February 1916 Wilson spoke to five different Protestant unionists.²⁵⁷ The five men interviewed were Alexander Lyons, a solicitor, Francis Nelson, a jeweller, William Fenton, the Clerk of Crown and Peace, businessman Arthur Jackson, and Major Charles O'Hara H.M.L.²⁵⁸

What was the attitude of Sligo unionists towards recruitment? All five men told Wilson that Sligo town had done well as regards recruiting, while Alex Lyons and Francis Nelson tried to claim that unionists had done more for recruiting in Sligo than nationalists.²⁵⁹ This claim did not seem to be true as the most prominent nationalist politicians in Sligo, including the mayor John Jinks, and the two nationalist M.P.s, John O'Dowd and Thomas Scanlon, were supporting the war effort and had been involved in recruitment since the start of the war. Francis Nelson and Arthur Jackson also mentioned that they believed the Catholic clergy were not doing enough to encourage recruitment.²⁶⁰ There is little evidence to suggest that the Catholic clergy in Sligo were opposed to recruiting at this time and when Mike O'Leary V.C., a lieutenant in the Connaught Rangers visited Sligo in November 1915 to encourage recruiting, Catholic clergy and members of the Sligo Catholic Institute provided entertainment for O'Leary, and the officers and men of the Connaught Rangers embarked on a recruiting campaign after they had attended mass at Sligo Catholic Cathedral.²⁶¹

What were their opinions on unionism and Home Rule? When Wilson visited Sligo he found that unionists were focused on supporting the war effort and was informed by the five unionists he interviewed that the Sligo branch of the I.U.A. was virtually inactive.²⁶² Francis Nelson pessimistically informed Wilson that he didn't believe that the unionist movement in Sligo could ever be reactivated again.²⁶³ On the other hand, Arthur Jackson maintained that 'unionists would again stand up', and that a settlement along federal lines was discussed by

²⁵⁷ J.M. Wilson's tour of Ireland, Co. Sligo, 24 Feb. 1916 (P.R.O.N.I., J.M. Wilson papers, D/989/A/9/7). On a sheet of notepaper, dated 24 Feb. 1916, Wilson named these five men as Mr A. – Lyons, local solicitor, who knows county well, Mr B. – Nelson, jeweller, Mr C. – Fenton, a government official, Mr D. – Jackson, a railway director, big merchant, and Mr E. – C. O'Hara, H.M.L.

²⁵⁸ J.M. Wilson's tour of Ireland, Co. Sligo, 24 Feb. 1916 (P.R.O.N.I., J.M. Wilson papers, D/989/A/9/7).

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *S.C.*, 13 Nov. 1915.

²⁶² J.M. Wilson's tour of Ireland, Co. Sligo, 24 Feb. 1916 (P.R.O.N.I., J.M. Wilson papers, D/989/A/9/7).

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

some Sligo unionists.²⁶⁴ The fact that some Sligo unionists were discussing the idea of a federal settlement indicated a change in attitude by unionists towards Home Rule. It later transpired that it was William Fenton that proposed a federal relationship between Britain and Ireland and he later requested that O'Hara approach the I.U.A. leadership with his suggestions.²⁶⁵

Unionists in Sligo also told Wilson that they were very dissatisfied with government policy and William Fenton informed Wilson that the Irish Chief Secretary Augustine Birrell, 'does not represent the loyalists of Ireland'.²⁶⁶ Wilson had received very similar responses concerning the decline in unionist activity since the start of the war and unionist bitterness towards the government when he had visited the counties of Clare, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford in January 1916.²⁶⁷

Of particular concern to the Sligo unionists interviewed by Wilson was the growth of the Sinn Féin movement. William Fenton told Wilson that 'Sinn Féiners' in Sligo were more numerous than people thought and that they wanted Germany to win the war. He also mentioned that Home Rulers in Sligo actually feared the 'Sinn Féiners' and 'would welcome their arrest'.²⁶⁸ O'Hara blamed Sinn Féin activity for the small number of recruits from the country areas of County Sligo and at the end of January 1916.²⁶⁹ However, the R.I.C. Co. Sligo inspector believed that Sinn Féin was damaging recruitment in Sligo, especially in the countryside.²⁷⁰

However, most nationalists in Sligo were generally supportive of recruiting and were not publicly opposing it and it would seem that the low number of recruits from the country areas had more to do with the attractiveness of staying on the land while agricultural prices were high. When it came to those opposing the war, Sinn Féin did not appear to have a large membership or support base in Sligo at the time. Over the course of the year 1915 the R.I.C. Co. Sligo Inspector consistently mentioned that Sinn Féin was gathering strength in the county. However, he could only point to the fact that 254 members of the estimated

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ O'Hara to George Stewart, vice-chairman of I.U.A., 8 June 1917 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ J.M. Wilson's tour of Ireland, Co. Wexford, 13 Jan. 1916; Co. Tipperary (South Riding), 16-18 Jan. 1916; Co. Waterford, 14-16 Jan. 1916; Co. Clare, 23 Jan. 1916 (P.R.O.N.I., J.M. Wilson papers, D/989/A/9/7).

²⁶⁸ J.M. Wilson's tour of Ireland, Co. Sligo, 24 Feb. 1916 (P.R.O.N.I., J.M. Wilson papers, D/989/A/9/7).

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Feb. 1916 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8540).

4,544 members of the Volunteers in Sligo were 'Sinn Féiners', which was not a very large number.²⁷¹

Part of the unionist exaggeration of the Sinn Féin threat in Sligo at the time may have been to try and rekindle unionist support during the war. On 11 March 1916 Sir Malby Crofton, landowner and a leading member of the Sligo I.U.A., wrote to Charles Beresford, honorary secretary of the I.U.A., complaining that while the government was demanding more recruits they were doing absolutely nothing to control Sinn Féin activists, who were frustrating recruiting meetings.²⁷² At a recruiting meeting at Sligo Town Hall on 25 March in 1916, Sergeant Prunty of the Recruiting Office strongly condemned Sinn Féin, and blamed them for discouraging men from joining the army.²⁷³ To blame Sinn Féin for low recruiting numbers was obviously easier than admitting that at this stage of the war, young men in Sligo were becoming rather reluctant to serve in a war that was now entering its third year with no immediate victory by either side in sight.

Unionists were not the only ones in Sligo concerned by the growth of Sinn Féin and at the Sligo County Council meeting of the 15 April 1916, John O'Dowd, M.P. attacked Sinn Féiners calling them 'a gang of non-entities'.²⁷⁴ At the meeting John Hennigan, a nationalist councillor from the Drumcliff area argued that Sinn Féin had countered conscription more effectively than any other group in Ireland. O'Dowd's assault on Sinn Féin was probably due to the fact that he felt that his seat would be threatened by Sinn Féin at the next election. Alex Lyons, in his interview with Wilson in February 1916, thought that O'Dowd would be defeated in south Sligo at the next election.²⁷⁵ The R.I.C. also believed that some 'Sinn Féiners' were present in south Sligo,²⁷⁶ although the term 'Sinn Féiner' was used loosely by the authorities in Sligo to refer to all those who opposed the war, regardless if they belonged to the Sinn Féin Party or not.

However, if the war continued for much longer, O'Dowd was an astute enough politician to be aware that Sinn Féin support would grow and his seat would be under threat by a Sinn Féin candidate at the next general election. At this time Sinn Féin did not seem to be aggressively opposing recruitment and when the Connaught Rangers visited Tubbercurry in

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan.-1 Dec. 1915.

²⁷² Sir Malby Crofton to Denis R. Pack-Beresford, Hon. Sec. I.U.A., 11 Mar. 1916 (P.R.O.N.I., J.M. Wilson papers, D/989A/8/6).

²⁷³ *S.I.*, 1 Apr. 1916.

²⁷⁴ *S.C.*, 15 Apr. 1916.

²⁷⁵ J.M. Wilson's tour of Ireland, Co. Sligo, 24 Feb. 1916 (P.R.O.N.I., J.M. Wilson papers, D/989/A/9/7).

²⁷⁶ S.C.I. R.I.C., M.R., 1 Dec. 1915 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8539).

south Sligo in March 1916 the *Sligo Independent* reported that 'throughout the visit the military received an enthusiastic reception despite the fact that Sinn Féinism is fairly prevalent in the district'.²⁷⁷ At this stage it still remained to be seen if Sinn Féin in Sligo would turn out to be the serious threat that Sligo unionists and John O'Dowd believed they would be.

Sinn Féin may have not been a serious threat, but there were some nationalists who were willing to take extreme measures to secure Irish independence from Britain and on 24 April 1916 units of the Irish Volunteers along with the Irish Citizen Army occupied some key positions around Dublin City Centre and staged a rebellion against British rule in Ireland. British troops and police heavily outnumbered the rebels and on 29 April the insurgents surrendered. The rebellion was later associated with Sinn Féin, even though the party had taken no active part in it. However, the term 'Sinn Féiner' was already in wide usage by the British government, the R.I.C., unionists and the I.P.P. before the rebellion in April 1916 and it proved to be a convenient blanket term to describe all those willing to endorse physical force to achieve greater Irish independence. How was the news of the rebellion received in Sligo?

The reports of the 1916 Rising and the unexpected attack on British rule in Ireland had surprised most of the unionist and nationalist population of Sligo town. Not surprisingly, the unionist *Sligo Independent* condemned Sinn Féin and described the uprising as a 'mad scheme'.²⁷⁸ The *Sligo Champion* editorial on 20 May did not condemn the rebels and instead criticised the revolutionary doctrine preached by Ulster unionists for the events leading to the Rising in Dublin.²⁷⁹ This could be indicative of a change in attitude of the nationalist press towards Irish involvement in the First World War or it could be that the paper sympathised with the frustration of many nationalists over the suspension of Home Rule for the duration of the war.

The actions of the British authorities following the Easter Rising were very heavy handed and while some of the leaders of the Rising in Dublin were executed, local leaders and members of the Irish Volunteers from around the country were arrested and imprisoned. The Irish Volunteers in Sligo at the time numbered about 136 men in three branches and some Irish Volunteer leaders in Sligo knew that the Rising was going to take place but because of confusion over the exact date when the insurrection would commence they were

²⁷⁷ *S.I.*, 1 Apr. 1916.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 6 May 1916.

²⁷⁹ *S.C.*, 20 May 1916.

unable to mobilise their units in time to take any action.²⁸⁰ However, British troops were sent to Sligo and they arrested fifteen men of the Cliffony Volunteers and allegedly found caches of arms and ammunition.²⁸¹

At first the Rising was not popular amongst the majority of the people in Sligo but the news of the execution of Irishmen by the British authorities swayed public sympathy in favour of Sinn Féin. On 20 May 1916 the *Sligo Champion* commented on the execution of the leaders of the 1916 Rising saying 'a sickening thud went through the heart of Ireland with each fresh announcement'²⁸² and a week later on 27 May, the paper's editorial argued that people from Sligo who had nothing to do with the Rising in Dublin were being arrested and this was resulting in 'a good deal of dissatisfaction'.²⁸³

In June some of the prisoners arrested in Cliffony were released and mayor Jinks welcomed them back to Sligo while he also demanded the release of the remaining Cliffony prisoners.²⁸⁴ On 26 June 1916, at a meeting of the Irish National Aid Association in Sligo, an organisation set up to help the families of those imprisoned and executed following the 1916 Rising, Jinks condemned the executions arguing that 'the Government has gone a bit too far with regard to taking the lives of fifteen true Irishmen'.²⁸⁵ This was a difficult period for politicians such as Jinks who had supported Redmond's backing of Britain in the war and now more than ever he had to be keenly sensitive of public opinion and to keep his pulse on the rapidly changing mood of the electorate.

Jinks was in a difficult position as regards his support for British army recruiting in Sligo and in May, June and July 1916 recruiting in the county had almost ceased.²⁸⁶ Jinks also had to be careful not to aggravate the Catholic hierarchy which was strongly opposed to violence in pursuit of Irish self-government. The majority of the Catholic clergy were opposed to the Rising but many were shocked by the actions of the British government in the wake of the rebellion. The Catholic Church, like the people, were not a homogenous group and although the Catholic hierarchy in Sligo condemned the actions of the rebels, a few younger Catholic priests in Sligo, who were well known to the authorities, were very supportive of Sinn Féin including Michael O'Flanagan, C.C. Grange, Brian Crehan C.C.

²⁸⁰ S.C.I. R.I.C., M.R., 1 Apr. 1916 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8540).

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1 June 1916.

²⁸² *S.C.*, 20 May 1916.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 27 May 1916.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 17 June 1916.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 July 1916.

²⁸⁶ S.C.I. R.I.C., M.R., 1 May-1 Aug. 1916 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8541).

Grange, Rev William O'Flaherty C.C. Sligo and Rev John O'Donoghue. P.P. Templeboy.²⁸⁷ Younger priests in Sligo may have been more inclined to support Sinn Féin than their older, more conservative superiors.

Fr P.J. O'Grady, P.P. in Keash since 1889 and an older member of the Catholic clergy in Sligo and an original founder of the U.I.L. and the Irish Volunteer movement in Sligo was a prominent supporter of John Redmond and the I.P.P. He had assisted in the reorganisation of the Irish National Volunteers in Sligo after the split over their involvement in the First World War. In July 1915 Fr O'Grady had Alec McCabe, a vocal Sinn Féin member, a commander in the Irish Volunteers and an opponent of Irish Volunteer involvement on Britain's side in the First World War, removed as principal of Drumnagranchy N.S. near Keash.²⁸⁸ It seemed that Fr Felix Bourke, Fr O'Grady's assistant, had complained about McCabe's lack of professionalism after a visit to Drumnagranchy N.S.²⁸⁹ Fr Bourke also recorded that he disapproved of McCabe on a personal level.²⁹⁰ Fr Bourke later joined the British army as a chaplain and served in France.²⁹¹ Following an enquiry in June 1915 Fr O'Grady sent a report to the Commissioners of National Education stating that McCabe had not carried out his duties as a teacher effectively and that he had a disrespectful attitude to Fr Bourke.²⁹²

However, it appeared that politics was behind the whole incident and importantly Fr O'Grady seemed to emphasise in his report to the Commissioners of National Education that McCabe was 'a recognised associate and leader of an objectionable and political society in the parish which has been the cause of disunity and outrage'.²⁹³ McCabe was removed as principal even though he had a lot of support from the local community including the parents of pupils. McCabe's republican sympathies were never in doubt and any hope of his reinstatement as principal of Drumnagranchy N.S. evaporated when he was arrested on 6 November 1915 by the R.I.C. at Sligo railway station with a revolver and a bag containing gelignite, fuses and detonators.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 Dec. 1916.

²⁸⁸ Drumnagranchy N.S. (N.A.I., Dept. of Education, ED 9/27111); Fr Bourke/McCabe Enquiry (N.A.I., Dept. of Education, ED 9/25402).

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *S.C.*, 27 May 1916.

²⁹² Fr Bourke/McCabe Enquiry (N.A.I., Dept. of Education, ED 9/25402).

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ Arrest of McCabe (N.A.I., Dept. of Education, ED 9/26346); S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Dec. 1915 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8539).

The U.I.L. in Sligo and the rest of the country had remained quiet publicly in the immediate aftermath of the Rising and the organisation neither condemned nor spoke in favour of the insurrection. In late June 1916 the U.I.L. tried to be as diplomatic as possible, and many Sligo branches of U.I.L. passed resolutions of support for Redmond and the I.P.P. and demanded the release of the Irishmen arrested after the Rising.²⁹⁵ What was the reaction of Sligo unionists to the Rising?

The Rising jolted the unionist movement into life again and some unionists demanded that the government should take a tougher stance on Irish nationalism. In a letter written during the Rising Charles O'Hara was so angry that he almost accused the government of collusion with Sinn Féin when he wrote: 'as these men have been allowed to go about Dublin fully armed and practice street fighting for some time past, we can all assume that the powers that be are in full sympathy with the Sinn Féin movement'.²⁹⁶ Nationally unionists were calling for the appointment of a hard-line Irish Chief Secretary opposed to Home Rule, and on 11 May 1916 J.M. Wilson wrote to Sir Edward Carson calling for martial law to be kept in force for at least six months and demanded determined action against all nationalist organisations in Ireland.²⁹⁷

The British government's reaction to the Rising was a mixture of coercion and conciliation and after the execution of the chief organisers of the Rising and the imprisonment of Sinn Féin and Irish Volunteer leaders, the British government wished to try and convince the various Irish parties to agree to self-government after the war. The Rising forced John Redmond and the I.P.P. to demand that Home Rule should be implemented immediately. The Rising also underlined the differences between Ulster and southern unionists. The unionists of north-eastern Ireland, now increasingly represented by the Ulster Unionist Council (U.U.C.) and not the I.U.A., wanted six Ulster counties to be excluded from Home Rule and would agree to the partition of the country on that basis. The government tried to convince the southern unionists, represented by the I.U.A., to agree to partition while promising certain safeguards for them. However, southern unionists were completely opposed to this. The southern unionists also resented the U.U.C.'s decision to accept partition, which would make Home Rule even more distasteful to them as it would separate them from the large unionist population in the north.²⁹⁸ Redmond agreed to

²⁹⁵ *S.C.*, 1 July 1916.

²⁹⁶ O'Hara to Miss MacDonnell, 28 Apr. 1916 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

²⁹⁷ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism I* (Dublin, 1972), pp 352-3.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 350-1.

partition for a limited period of time. However, he was completely opposed to the permanent partition of Ireland.

On 17 June 1916 the *Sligo Champion* backed Redmond declaring that three fourths of Ireland in the hands of Irishmen will not be bad for a start'.²⁹⁹ The exclusion of Ulster from Home Rule was not acceptable to all the local government supporters of Redmond and the *Sligo Champion* printed resolutions against the partition of Ireland from the Sligo Board of Guardians, Sligo District Council, Sligo Corporation and Tubbercurry Board of Guardians. Sligo Rural District Council passed the resolution demanding that Home Rule should be immediately granted for the whole of Ireland.³⁰⁰

On 1 July 1916 a meeting of the north Sligo Executive of the U.I.L. was held in order to assess the opinion of the U.I.L. clubs in the constituency and decided by fourteen votes to eight against the exclusion of Ulster from Home Rule and advised their delegate to the National U.I.L. Conference, John Jinks, to vote accordingly.³⁰¹ The *Sligo Champion*, a consistently loyal supporter of John Redmond refused to report on the meeting. At the National meeting on 10 July Jinks remained loyal to his party leader, John Redmond, and voted in favour of the exclusion of Ulster from Home Rule.³⁰² How would the news of Jinks's vote be received in Sligo?

Jinks, obviously aware of the repercussions of his actions did not attend the next meeting of the north Sligo Executive and instead sent a letter urging nationalists to remain loyal to Redmond.³⁰³ At the meeting Jinks and Thomas Scanlon, M.P. were heavily criticised for their support of Ulster's exclusion. Rev P.A. Butler tried to calm the meeting by calling for a resolution of confidence in the I.P.P. However, it did not go down well with the gathered crowd and a compromise resolution condemning the British government for deceiving Redmond and the I.P.P. was passed.³⁰⁴ At this point there was a serious breakdown in the U.I.L. and I.P.P. machine in Sligo and it represented a turning point for nationalism in the town and county.

In July 1916 the Co. Sligo R.I.C. Co. Inspector summed up the mood of the people in Sligo when he reported that 'no one seems pleased at the proposed partition of Ireland but

²⁹⁹ *S.C.*, 17 June 1916.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ *S.N.*, 8 July 1916.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 15 July 1916.

³⁰³ *S.C.*, 15 July 1916.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

the choice seems to be between following the Irish Party and absolute chaos'.³⁰⁵ At the end of July 1916, while under pressure from his supporters and when the full details of the Home Rule changes regarding Ulster were made public in the House of Commons, Redmond withdrew his support from the scheme to leave Ulster out of the Home Rule settlement. In its editorial on 29 July 1916 the *Sligo Nationalist* criticised the British government for going back on its word and the paper called on the people to support Redmond and the I.P.P.³⁰⁶

The trouble over Home Rule and the Ulster unionist acceptance of partition further assisted the growth of Sinn Féin in Sligo.³⁰⁷ In order to deflect criticism from Redmond's initial acceptance of partition, the *Sligo Champion* editorial of 22 July 1916 focused on the dispute between Ulster unionists and southern unionists over the amendments to Home Rule and the separate settlement advocated by Ulster unionists. The editorial criticised southern unionists for underestimating the lengths to which Ulster unionists would go to guarantee their exclusion from Home Rule and the Ulster unionists were accused of selfishly looking after their own interests at the expense of the southern unionists.³⁰⁸ Unionism in Sligo remained publicly silent on the dispute within the movement over partition and the *Sligo Independent* made no comment on the issue. At this time southern unionists could have cooperated with Redmond and the I.P.P. and sacrificed the unity with Ulster, but they decided not to do so.

Support for the Rising was beginning to grow in Sligo and on 9 August 1916 Sligo Corporation passed a resolution of deep regret at the execution of Roger Casement, one of those involved in the preparations for the 1916 Rising.³⁰⁹ In early September Thomas Scanlon M.P. gave a speech to the Sligo town branch of the U.I.L., and while he praised the nobility of the men during the 1916 Rising and the way they fought, he argued that they fought not only an impossible fight against the British Empire but they had fought 'against the national interests of Ireland'.³¹⁰ He respected their courage and determination but now he appealed for 'common sense' to prevail.³¹¹ His speech was appeasing and was more notable for what Scanlon didn't say, which was that Home Rule would be introduced after

³⁰⁵ S.C.I. R.I.C., M.R., 1 July 1916 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8541).

³⁰⁶ *S.N.*, 29 July 1916.

³⁰⁷ S.C.I. R.I.C., M.R., 1 July 1916 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8541).

³⁰⁸ *S.C.*, 22 July 1916.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 Aug. 1916.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9 Sept. 1916.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

the war, as a result of the painstakingly patient peaceful constitutional nationalism of the I.P.P. and rash actions by those that took part in the Rising had jeopardised decades of hard work.

At this time U.I.L. activity was declining in Sligo and R.I.C. reports at the end of June and July mention this and indicate that support for Sinn Féin was increasing in Sligo.³¹² In September an effort was made to reorganise the U.I.L. in Sligo and by the end of the month the U.I.L. appeared to be recovering.³¹³ However, this was probably more due to the fact that John Redmond was scheduled to visit Sligo on 29 October 1916 and by December Sinn Féin was again in the ascendancy in Sligo.³¹⁴

How active was the Sinn Féin movement in Sligo at this time? In November 1916 Sinn Féin set up a club in Sligo town and became intensely involved in anti-recruiting activities.³¹⁵ Early 1917 saw the Sinn Féin movement in Sligo become very active politically, and in January and February 1917 Sligo Sinn Féin Party members campaigned for Count Plunkett, father of the executed Joseph Plunkett who had participated in the 1916 Rising. Plunkett was elected Sinn Féin M.P. in the north Roscommon by-election in February 1917.

By 1917 all the councillors on Sligo Corporation, except John Jinks and John P. Higgins, who remained loyal to the I.P.P., belonged to either the Sinn Féin Party or the Labour Party.³¹⁶ Edward Foley had been a strong supporter of the U.I.L./I.P.P., and it is difficult to tell if he was Sinn Féin or not, although Sam Tarrant, in a letter to the *Sligo Champion*, claimed that Foley supported Count Plunkett's campaign.³¹⁷

The elections for Sligo Corporation took place in January 1917 and the Sinn Féin and Labour candidates won twenty-two of the twenty-four seats and Sinn Féin councillor Dudley Hanley was unanimously elected as Sligo town's new mayor.³¹⁸ One of the first actions of the new corporation was to invite Count Plunkett to Sligo to receive the Freedom of the Borough. On 11 March 1917 Charles O'Hara wrote to Sir Bryan Mahon, Commander in Chief of British forces in Ireland complaining that if the government did not prevent Count Plunkett from coming to Sligo, then the government would assist the growth

³¹² S.C.I. R.I.C., M.R., 1 July-1 Aug. 1916 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8541).

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct. 1916 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8542).

³¹⁴ *S.C.*, 4 Nov. 1916; S.C.I. R.I.C., M.R., 1 Dec. 1916 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8542).

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 Dec. 1916.

³¹⁶ *S.C.*, 13 Jan. 1917.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 Mar. 1917.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 Feb. 1917.

of the Sinn Féin movement. O'Hara went on to warn Mahon that the Sinn Féiners in Sligo have 'arms and ammunition in plenty and it was only from want of organisation that we escaped a rising in Sligo last year'.³¹⁹

In the end the authorities took no action to prevent Count Plunkett from receiving the honour and on 17 March 1917 Count Plunkett was made a Freeman of Sligo town.³²⁰ O'Hara may have been over exaggerating the military threat of Sinn Féin in order to get more troops sent to Sligo and although the R.I.C. believed that the Sligo Irish Volunteers were drilling and training in secret at this time, they did not believe that the Volunteers had many weapons.³²¹

However, the British government were now fearful that the growth in Sinn Féin popularity was jeopardising the war effort and in March 1917 the government proposed the idea that the various Irish parties should attend a convention and discuss all the issues relating to Irish self-government and the status of Ulster within a future settlement.³²² Many Sligo unionists were accepting the fact that some form of change in the legislative union between Britain and Ireland after the war was inevitable. In a letter to Charles O'Hara dated 26 March 1917 John O'Donell, a member of the I.U.A., argued that southern unionists should at least keep an open mind on Home Rule.³²³ O'Hara, a determined unionist, seemed to have been convinced to at least think about the idea of Irish self-government and he displayed a significant change of mind when he wrote to Sir Malby Crofton on 27 March 1917 expressing the view that the I.U.A. should consider entertaining any proposals made by the British government concerning Home Rule.³²⁴

On 1 June 1917 the I.U.A. agreed to participate in the proposed convention and authorised the unionist delegates to the convention to argue for the maintenance of the Union between Britain and Ireland. However, the I.U.A. also wanted the delegates 'to consider and discuss and possibly agree to such other solution as would safeguard imperial interests and the rights of the minority in the south and west'.³²⁵ The convention was scheduled to meet on 25 July 1917 in Trinity College, Dublin and Sir Horace Plunkett would chair the convention, while ninety-five members of the various Irish parties and

³¹⁹ O'Hara to Sir Bryan Mahon, 11 Mar. 1917 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

³²⁰ *S.C.*, 24 Mar. 1917.

³²¹ *S.C.I. R.I.C., M.R.*, 1 Apr. 1917 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8543).

³²² Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1* (Dublin, 1972), pp 351-2.

³²³ J. O'Donell to O'Hara, 26 Mar. 1917 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 36442/1).

³²⁴ O'Hara to Sir Malby Crofton, 27 Mar. 1917 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

³²⁵ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1* (Dublin, 1972), pp 356-7.

interest groups would attend. The British government selected ten delegates to represent southern unionist interests.³²⁶ Lord Midleton, a Cork landowner and chairman of the I.U.A. since 1909 would lead the southern unionist delegation.³²⁷

Midleton's deputy at the Irish Convention was George F. Steward, vice-chairman of the I.U.A., a prominent land agent and a director of the Bank of Ireland. Another I.U.A. representative at the Irish Convention was John Blake Powell, who was originally from Sligo town, and was a solicitor and a barrister. Powell was a Catholic and had been a supporter of Parnell and the Home Rule Movement but had become a strong supporter of southern unionism.³²⁸

Sinn Féin's electoral successes continued during the summer of 1917 and the party took two seats from the I.P.P. in by-elections in May and July 1917.³²⁹ On 9 May 1917 Joseph McGuinness secured the south Longford seat for Sinn Féin and on 10 July 1917 Eamon deValera was elected for Sinn Féin in east Clare.³³⁰ Sinn Féin supporters held celebrations in Sligo on both occasions. However, there were many men from Sligo who had supported Redmond's call for Volunteers in 1914 in order to secure Home Rule and their wives and the wounded soldiers home on leave tried to interrupt the Sinn Féin celebrations.³³¹ Despite the counter-protests many Home Rule supporters in Sligo were now turning to Sinn Féin's brand of nationalism and the party continued to expand in Sligo and by the end of July the number of Sinn Féin clubs had jumped to fifteen and the organisation had over 770 members in Co. Sligo. A Cumann na mBan branch was also founded in Sligo in July 1917 and had fifteen members.³³² Cumann na mBan was a republican movement for women and many members were also members of Sinn Féin.³³³ How did Sligo unionists feel about Sinn Féin's electoral successes?

Some evidence of unionist opinion can be assessed when Wilson made a return visit to Sligo in late June 1917. He discovered that many unionists were 'despondent as to the future'.³³⁴ Canon McCormick, a Church of Ireland clergyman in Grange, north Sligo,

³²⁶ R.B. McDowell, *The Irish convention 1917-18* (London, 1970), pp 218-27.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³²⁸ John C. McTernan, *A Sligo miscellany* (Dublin, 2000), p. 352.

³²⁹ *S.I.*, 12 May 1917; *S.C.*, 14 July 1917.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² S.C.I. R.I.C., M.R., 1 Aug. 1917 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8544).

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ J.M. Wilson's tour of Ireland, Co. Sligo, 28 June-18 July 1917 (P.R.O.N.I., J.M. Wilson's papers, D/989A/9/7).

informed him that the Sinn Féin Party in Sligo had 'spread like wildfire'.³³⁵ Other unionists in Sligo were feeling much more than despondency and Wilson mentioned a rumour he heard from a Colonel James Campbell, who was concerned that the next time Sinn Féin organised a rebellion, they had plans to take important men of rank hostage in each county. Wilson's general comment on unionists in Sligo at this time was that 'people seem to drift from day to day not knowing either what to expect, or what to hope for'.³³⁶ Which is a strong indication that Sligo unionists were feeling much more powerless to influence events and would have a lot of difficulty in reactivating their organisation after the war.

On 21 July 1917, a few days after Wilson left Sligo, Countess Markievicz, arrived in Sligo to receive the freedom of the Borough of Sligo.³³⁷ Countess Markievicz (1868-1927) was the daughter of the Protestant landowner Henry Gore-Booth of Lissadell and the sister of Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth, a leading member of the Sligo I.U.A. However, she disagreed with the unionist politics of her family and became involved in the republican movement.³³⁸ During Countess Markievicz's visit to Sligo in July 1917 the 'separation women', constantly tried to disrupt any events at which she appeared. The 'separation women' were the wives of serving soldiers who received money from the government.³³⁹ Countess Markievicz's visit highlighted the difficulty that many British soldiers' wives and families found themselves in after the Rising and Sinn Féin's electoral victories. Their men folk, mostly nationalist and supporters of the I.P.P. had enlisted with the view that they were securing Home Rule for Ireland after the war and now their wives found that a woman who had fought against men wearing the same uniform as their husband's was receiving the town's highest honour while they were still fighting in the war.

Countess Markievicz's visit gave the Sinn Féin Party a boost in Sligo and Charles O'Hara was obviously concerned when he wrote to Sir Bryan Mahon on 19 August 1917 requesting that more troops be posted to the county.³⁴⁰ At the end of November 1917, possibly in response to O'Hara's request, one hundred men were stationed in Sligo town.³⁴¹ This did little to halt Sinn Féin's expansion in Sligo and at the end of December 1917 the number of Sinn Féin clubs in Sligo stood at forty-three with a membership of over 2,700.³⁴²

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ S.C., 28 July 1917.

³³⁸ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 193-7.

³³⁹ S.C., 28 July 1917.

³⁴⁰ O'Hara to Sir Bryan Mahon, 19 Aug. 1917 (N.L.I, O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

³⁴¹ S.I., 1 Dec. 1917.

³⁴² S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Jan. 1918 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8545).

The almost meteoric rise of the Sinn Féin movement in Sligo in 1917, from a membership of just thirty in January to a membership of over 2,700 in December, can be observed in table 2.4. A jump in membership is particularly notable following the Sinn Féin electoral victories and after the visit of Countess Markievicz to Sligo in the summer of 1917.

Table 2.4: Growth of Sinn Féin in Co. Sligo, January to December 1917

Month	Numbers
January	30
February	100
March	220
April	240
May	260
June	283
July	770
August	773
September	1,747
October	2,000
November	2,300
December	2,762

Sources: Sligo County Inspector R.I.C. Monthly Report, 1 Jan. 1917-1 Jan. 1918 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8543-5) and S.C., Jan. 1917 – Jan. 1918.

With the rise in success of the Sinn Féin movement came the alternative drop in support for the two principal nationalist political organisations in Sligo, the U.I.L. and the A.O.H. How were the political changes in Sligo impacting on both these organisations? In the last part of 1917 Sinn Féin was successful in gaining membership from the A.O.H and was using A.O.H. halls to hold meetings and by January 1918 only ten A.O.H. divisions seemed to have been active in Sligo.³⁴³ Sinn Féin was also gaining membership from the U.I.L. in Sligo and began to hold meetings in halls previously used by the U.I.L.³⁴⁴ In January 1918 only five U.I.L. clubs seem to have been active in Co. Sligo.³⁴⁵ It appeared that at the end of 1917 both the U.I.L. and the A.O.H went into political meltdown and at the beginning of 1918 Sinn Féin was now by far the largest and most organised political force in Sligo. However, in order to maintain momentum the organisation needed a focus. This focus proved to be the long-standing problem of land hunger.

³⁴³ S.C., 20 Oct. 1917; 27 Oct. 1917; 24 Nov. 1917; 26 Jan. 1918.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 20 Oct. 1917.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 26 Jan. 1918.

For Protestant landowners and farmers the war was a boom time, the government encouraged production and prices went up for agricultural commodities. Landlords in Ireland still held three million acres land and only about half a million acres of untenanted and demesne land had been sold out of a total of 2.6 million acres.³⁴⁶ As Terence Dooley has maintained those who had retained tenanted estates and untenanted land were doing well during the war.³⁴⁷

Despite the complaints from various quarters in Sligo over enlistment from farmers during the war, by 1917 the government had in fact encouraged them to stay on the land and produce more foodstuffs by introducing a compulsory tillage order.³⁴⁸ Allied losses at sea were mounting and it was becoming much more difficult to import foreign wheat and in February 1918 further appeals were made to Sligo farmers to sow more wheat and the *Sligo Nationalist* urged farmers to 'till more land'³⁴⁹ while the *Sligo Independent* tried to keep the people focused on the war and expressed concern over the significant merchant shipping losses at sea.³⁵⁰

The Congested Districts Board, which had been set up under the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act of 1891 had made efforts to satisfy the demand for land among smallholders and the landless in the western counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway, Kerry and rural areas of Clare and Cork.³⁵¹ However, before 1923 Sligo landlords still retained over 70,000 acres of tenanted and untenanted land and as most of the smallholders and the landless in Sligo at the time were Catholic and nationalist, at the end 1917 and the beginning of 1918 land hungry men took extreme measures and began to confiscate land for tillage.³⁵² This became known as the 'conacre campaign'.³⁵³ At the end of 1917 cattle were driven off Colonel Duke's land near Ballymote in order to make the land available for tillage.³⁵⁴ Duke had over 900 acres of untenanted land.³⁵⁵ The actions of land hungry tenants were a spontaneous reaction to the economic conditions of the time.

³⁴⁶ Terence Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p 127; p. 119.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 199-20.

³⁴⁸ *S.I.*, 17 Nov. 1917; *S.C.*, 17 Nov. 1917; Terence Dooley, 'The land for the people' (Dublin, 2004), p. 33.

³⁴⁹ *S.N.*, 16 Feb. 1918.

³⁵⁰ *S.I.*, 16 Feb. 1918.

³⁵¹ Terence Dooley, 'The land for the people' (Dublin, 2004), p. 26.

³⁵² Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510).

³⁵³ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), p. 62; Terence Dooley, 'The land for the people' (Dublin, 2004), p. 28; Terence Dooley, *The big houses and landed estates of Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), p. 56.

³⁵⁴ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Dec. 1917 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8544).

³⁵⁵ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510).

However, Sinn Féin took advantage of the situation and Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers took over the conacre campaign and decided to 'cash in' on the agrarian discontent.

Local Sinn Féin activists encouraged poorer farmers to confiscate the lands of large landowners and graziers and grow their own crops on it.³⁵⁶ The Sinn Féin club in Ballymote passed resolutions in early January 1918 pledging to support any small farmers who refused to pay more than £4 per acre for conacre.³⁵⁷ The conacre campaign particularly affected the large land holdings of Protestants and unionists in isolated country areas and at least eight Protestant landowners in Sligo were directly affected by the conacre campaign in February 1918.³⁵⁸ In addition to Col Duke, Charles Phibbs with 1,384 acres, Gregory Wood-Martin with 337 acres, Henry Wood-Martin with seventy-seven acres, Thomas Patterson with 100 acres, Basil Phibbs with over 2,270 acres, Arthur O'Hara with about 200 acres and Jessie Hunter with ninety acres of untenanted land experienced trouble on their lands during the conacre campaign.³⁵⁹

The agrarian trouble over conacre was at first confined to the south of the county. However, at the beginning of February 1918 disturbances had spread to the whole of Co. Sligo and some farms were 'commandeered in the name of the Irish Republic'.³⁶⁰ By the end of the month large scale cattle driving was also taking place in Sligo as a means to convince owners to allocate land for conacre.³⁶¹

On 8 February 1918 Charles O'Hara wrote to Sir Bryan Mahon reporting that some parts of Co. Sligo were 'in a state of utter lawlessness' and he complained that the government was doing nothing to help landowners defend their property against Sinn Féin.³⁶² O'Hara complained that if the government had taken swift and stern action at the first sign of land seizing then 'it would have probably have been stamped out within a week'.³⁶³ The initial

³⁵⁶ Terence Dooley, *The land for the people* (Dublin, 2004), p. 33.

³⁵⁷ *S.C.*, 12 Jan. 1918.

³⁵⁸ O'Hara to Chief Secretary Henry Duke, 11 Feb. 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826); Charles Phibbs, Thomas Patterson, Gregory Wood-Martin, Arthur O'Hara, Henry Wood-Martin, Basil Phibbs, 17 Apr. 1918 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7).

³⁵⁹ Charles Phibbs, Thomas Patterson, Gregory Wood-Martin, Arthur O'Hara, Henry Wood-Martin, Basil Phibbs, 17 Apr. 1918 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7); Damage to lands belonging to Basil Phibbs at Ardculmer, Riverstown, Co. Sligo (N.A.I., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/214); Damage to property, C. Phibbs (N.A.I., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/215); Charles Phibbs (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/70); Jessica Hunter (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/51); Henry Roger Wood-Martin (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/78); Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-1922 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510).

³⁶⁰ *S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.*, 1 Feb. 1918 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8545); *Ibid.*, 1 Mar. 1918, *S.C.*, 23 Feb. 1918.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² O'Hara to Sir Bryan Mahon, 8 Feb. 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

³⁶³ O'Hara to Chief Secretary Henry Duke, 11 Feb. 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

inaction of the authorities to the agrarian trouble in Co. Sligo increased the perception of Protestant unionists that the government was indifferent to their plight as an isolated minority. However, it would seem that the authorities were not that slow in dealing with the trouble caused by the 'conacre' campaign and in late February and March 1918 the R.I.C. began to crack down on those involved in agrarian trouble. Twenty Sinn Féin and I.V. leaders were arrested and charged with 'unlawful assembly' connected to the conacre campaign.³⁶⁴

As the Sinn Féin movement was basically composed of previous members of the U.I.L. it was natural that some Sinn Féin members would become involved in and associated with the conacre campaign. Many of the same men who had been listed as members of the Sligo U.I.L. branches in the period January to April 1914 had, by early 1918, joined Sinn Féin clubs in Sligo.³⁶⁵ The U.I.L. had been composed of small farmers who wished to have the large ranches of untenanted land in Co. Sligo sold and divided up amongst the small holders. The U.I.L. had been a largely law abiding organisation although its members had frequently become involved in illegal activities such as cattle driving and land confiscation before and during the early years of the First World War in order to force the large landowners to sell their holdings and in mid January 1914 there had been two cases of cattle driving which were associated with the division of a large farm in south Sligo.³⁶⁶ In the period January to April 1914 U.I.L. branches had held meetings to discuss the question of dividing the large ranches belonging to Protestant landowners in Co. Sligo.³⁶⁷ Throughout 1914 and 1915 U.I.L. members took part in land agitation and intimidation in Co. Sligo and in many cases these campaigns were directed at large Protestant landowners.³⁶⁸

All the land agitation associated with the conacre campaign was nothing new in Co. Sligo and Sinn Féin merely used the conacre campaign to harness the age-old hunger for land among the poorer Irish peasantry just as the U.I.L. had done before it. However, the conacre campaign took on a life of its own and was supported by the Volunteers, an organisation that believed in a more physical-force approach to Irish independence. As Terence Dooley has also pointed out many young men joined both Sinn Féin and the

³⁶⁴ *S.C.*, 2 Mar. 1918; 23 Mar. 1918; 16 Mar. 1918.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 24 Jan. 1914; 14 Feb. 1914; 21 Feb. 1914; 28 Mar. 1914; 18 Apr., 1914; 12 Jan. 1918; 19 Jan. 1918; 26 Jan. 1918; 1 Feb. 1918; 8 Feb. 1918; 15 Feb. 1918.

³⁶⁶ *S.I.*, 24 Jan. 1914.

³⁶⁷ *S.C.*, 24 Jan. 1914; 14 Feb. 1914; 21 Feb. 1914; 28 Mar. 1914; 18 Apr. 1914.

³⁶⁸ *S.I.*, 14 Mar. 1914; 28 Mar. 1914; 4 Apr. 1914; 5 Sept. 1914; 19 Dec. 1914; 10 Apr. 1915; *S.C.*, 18 Apr. 1914; *S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.*, 1 Dec 1914 - 1 Mar. 1915 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8537-8).

Volunteers at the time of the conacre campaign, not for solely patriotic reasons but with the intention of increasing their chances of securing their own plot of land.³⁶⁹ However, the Sinn Féin leadership had to be sensitive to the problems created by land division and out of increasing political necessity, the party did not approve of the extremity of the attacks on landowners, as this would bring discredit on the organisation and turn potential Home Rule voters away from them. David Fitzpatrick has argued that nationally Sinn Féin wished to remain a respectable political organisation and it publicly distanced itself from the cattle drives and agrarian trouble.³⁷⁰ Terence Dooley has also noted that Sinn Féin had to remain keenly aware of the bigger political and social picture and 'by producing rural anarchy that would pit smallholders against strong farmers and labourers and the landless against both, agitation could undermine the primary aim of Sinn Féin to secure political independence'.³⁷¹

Sinn Féin had tried to bring the desire for land under its control. However, once the organisation had lent its support to this basic urge it proved difficult to control. Many of the land hungry tenants were more interested in getting their plot of land than in the national movement. What Sinn Féin really wanted to do was to carry out land division in an orderly way and preferably after independence had been secured. The local Volunteers were actively involved in the conacre campaign and they could largely operate independently of Sinn Féin. In March efforts were made by Volunteer General Headquarters (G.H.Q.) in Dublin to control local groups and in a national press release ordered that local Volunteer groups should not take part in cattle drives and seizing lands.³⁷²

To the R.I.C., unionists and many British observers the Sinn Féin Party and the Irish Volunteers appeared to be united in achieving their pursuit of self-government for Ireland at the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918. Volunteers were supporting and working towards electoral success for Sinn Féin and there was a general acceptance of a common political goal, cultural heritage and support for the Irish language. However, as Michael Hopkinson had argued the Sinn Féin Party had no direct political control over the Volunteers and had never been a 'tradition of political control of armed nationalism; nor had there been any experience of effective centralised control over armed movements'.³⁷³

By early March 1918, prosecutions of those involved in the conacre campaign were beginning to bring the disturbances under control and Charles O'Hara seemed to be satisfied

³⁶⁹ Terence Dooley, *The land for the people* (Dublin, 2004), p. 36.

³⁷⁰ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), p. 132.

³⁷¹ Terence Dooley, *The land for the people* (Dublin, 2004), p. 38.

³⁷² *Irish Independent*, 2 Mar. 1918; *S.C.*, 2 Mar. 1918; *S.I.*, 2 Mar. 1918.

³⁷³ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (Dublin, 1988), p. 4.

that the 'conacre' crisis was over when on 16 March 1918 he wrote to Chief Secretary Duke saying that 'matters as far as this county are concerned have greatly improved since you took action and I sincerely hope that the wave of lawlessness that recently seemed likely to overwhelm us appears to have receded for the present at any rate'.³⁷⁴ At the end of March 1918 the R.I.C. Inspector for Co. Sligo reported that 'the disorder caused by the commandeering of lands by Sinn Féin clubs for conacre has subsided and no fresh cases have arisen'.³⁷⁵

At the time of the conacre campaign local Irish Volunteer units, especially those in south Sligo, decided to use the disruption caused by the campaign to raid houses for arms. The most obvious choices were the houses of unionists in Sligo and in February 1918 Sligo Volunteers raided three houses belonging to Protestant unionists for arms.³⁷⁶ This was occurring all over Ireland and was causing trouble for the Irish Volunteers, so on 2 March an order was issued from Irish Volunteer G.H.Q. in Dublin forbidding Volunteers from raiding houses for arms.³⁷⁷

With the end of the conacre campaign of 1918, the Protestant and unionist landowners in Sligo could breathe a temporary sigh of relief and they could take some satisfaction that during the conacre campaign the Sinn Féin Party had received a setback in its electoral fortunes when a by-election held on 1 February 1918 in south Armagh resulted in a defeat for the Sinn Féin candidate, and a victory for the I.P.P. candidate.³⁷⁸

Many U.I.L. members in Sligo including John Jinks publicly praised the I.P.P. victory in south Armagh and confidently predicted the end of Sinn Féin's victories.³⁷⁹ However, Robert Kee has argued that the Sinn Féin victory did much to damage the credibility of the I.P.P. and many felt that unionists and nationalists in south Armagh had voted together to defeat Sinn Féin.³⁸⁰ In March 1918 Sinn Féin lost two by-elections, in east Tyrone and Waterford, to the I.P.P.³⁸¹ Kee again believes that unionists had voted for the I.P.P. in order to deny Sinn Féin the seats.³⁸² Also all three by-elections in early 1918 were fought before the extension of the franchise to all men over twenty-one and women over thirty and so it is

³⁷⁴ O'Hara to Chief Secretary Duke, 18 Mar. 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

³⁷⁵ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Apr. 1918 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8545).

³⁷⁶ *S.I.*, 9 Feb. 1918; 16 Feb. 1918; 20 Apr. 1918.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 Mar. 1918.

³⁷⁸ *S.C.*, 9 Feb. 1918.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 23 Feb. 1918.

³⁸⁰ Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 616.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp 616-7.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

not unreasonable to suggest that Sinn Féin was unable to access the votes of the younger generation, who were more likely to support an anti-establishment party.³⁸³ Another contributing factor in the Sinn Féin defeat may have been that in the aftermath of the conacre campaign, Sinn Féin had no immediate goal to rally the people.

However, Sinn Féin's lack of a goal was to change and in March 1918 with Allied losses mounting on the Western Front the British government proposed to extend conscription to Ireland. The proposed extension of conscription to Ireland presented itself as a golden opportunity for Sinn Féin. Many political movements in Ireland, including the I.P.P., who voted against the Conscription Bill in the House of Commons, were strongly opposed to conscription. However, the Sinn Féin Party had consistently opposed Irish involvement in the First World War and they benefited most from anti-conscription meetings. The U.I.L. and the A.O.H. came out strongly against conscription. However, these organisations no longer received the support they once had.

On 10 April 1918 Sligo Corporation passed a resolution against Conscription in Ireland and a week later Sligo County Council did the same, condemning conscription as an 'outrageous measure'.³⁸⁴ Nationalist councillor John Cawley called on all Irish people to oppose conscription arguing that 'the effect [of conscription] would be to unite Catholic and Protestant, Sinn Féin and nationalist in a shoulder to shoulder fight'.³⁸⁵ The Catholic clergy and local Sinn Féiners in Sligo spoke out strongly against conscription at a large meeting held on 15 April 1918 in Sligo Town Hall.³⁸⁶ Robert George Bradshaw (1885-1951) also attended this meeting and denounced conscription. At the start of the meeting Bradshaw was introduced as 'a man of unionist principles'.³⁸⁷ However, he strongly denied this saying that one of his parents was a Protestant and the other a Quaker but 'nationality is before everything'.³⁸⁸ Bradshaw, a member of the Church of Ireland, was originally from Lismoylan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary and had come to Sligo before the First World War to work in a post office owned by his relatives in north Sligo.³⁸⁹ On 21 April 1918 after Sunday mass local parish priests presided over anti-conscription meetings in Collooney, Drumcliff, Ballisodare and Ballinacarrow in Co. Sligo.³⁹⁰

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ *S.I.*, 13 Apr. 1918; 20 Apr. 1918.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*; John C. McTernan, *A Sligo miscellany* (Dublin, 2000), pp 309-10.

³⁹⁰ *S.C.*, 27 Apr. 1918.

Table 2.5: Growth of Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers in Sligo January to July 1918

Month	Numbers	
	Sinn Féin	Irish Volunteers
January	2,762	225
February	2,769	300
March	3,000	350
April	3,500	429
May	3,931	429
June	3,931	646
July	3,942	646

Sources: Sligo County Inspector R.I.C. Monthly Report, 1 Jan.-1 July 1918 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8545-6); S.C., Jan.-July 1918.

Sinn Féin were now associating themselves with the I.P.P. and the Catholic Church, the respectable and conservative elements in Irish society. However, it was Sinn Féin that benefited most from this national solidarity and 'recruits rushed not into the army but into Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers'.³⁹¹ The popularity of both the Sinn Féin movement and the Irish Volunteers in the period January to July 1918 can be observed in table 2.5. By May 1918 Sinn Féin membership in Co. Sligo stood at over 3,900.³⁹² Membership of the Irish Volunteers increased from 225 members in five companies in January 1918 to seven companies and 429 members in April 1918 and by July 1918 membership of the Irish Volunteers in Sligo stood at 646 in eight companies.³⁹³ The U.I.L. and A.O.H. branches continued to decline as many members joined Sinn Féin instead and in April 1918 the *Sligo Champion* notes on U.I.L. branches only contained information from five branches, while notes on only eight A.O.H. divisions were mentioned.³⁹⁴

Various anti-conscription meetings were held in Sligo in April 1918 and in late April 1918 an anti-conscription meeting was held in Maugherow, north Sligo, where nationalist councillors and the Catholic clergy urged the gathered crowd to resist conscription.³⁹⁵ Sir Josslyn Gore Booth gave a speech at this meeting appealing to the young men to join the British army, arguing that 'the war was as much that of the people of Maugherow as it was any of the allies'.³⁹⁶ However, his views were at variance to the majority and the crowd repeatedly heckled him.³⁹⁷ At the end of May the R.I.C. Inspector for Co. Sligo reported

³⁹¹ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), p. 127.

³⁹² S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 May 1918 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8546).

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan 1918; 1 Apr. 1918; 1 July 1918.

³⁹⁴ S.C., 13 Apr. 1918.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 Apr. 1918; 4 May 1918.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

that practically everyone in Sligo was against conscription and he believed that the fear of conscription had caused many to join Sinn Féin.³⁹⁸

Most of the people, the clergy and the press in Sligo were against the introduction of conscription. However, the *Sligo Independent* continued to support the British war effort and refused to criticise conscription. As a result of the determined opposition in Ireland and the end of the German Spring Offensive on the Western Front, the anti-conscription campaign came to a close in June 1918 and the British government decided not to extend conscription to Ireland.

In April 1918, during the conscription crisis, the Irish Convention, which had first met on 25 July 1917 in Dublin, was concluded. A majority of the delegates, forty-four votes to twenty-nine, at the convention agreed to a scheme of Irish self-government with safeguards for Ulster unionists and southern unionists.³⁹⁹ However, the scheme was not implemented as Sinn Féin and the Ulster unionists strongly opposed the agreement and there were differences over partition. The convention was an important milestone in that it was the first time the southern unionists, led by Lord Midleton had supported Home Rule.⁴⁰⁰ How did southern unionists react to the results of the Irish Convention?

The impact of the convention on the southern unionist organisation proved to be very significant and a small group of southern unionists encouraged by the Dublin barristers, John E. Walsh and William Jellett, who were both very sympathetic to Ulster unionists, disagreed with Midleton and on 20 February 1918 they formed themselves into a pressure group, the Southern Unionist Committee (S.U.C.) with Walsh as honorary secretary. They issued the 'Call to Unionists' reaffirming their support for the Union and rejecting self-government for Ireland. The S.U.C. sought close cooperation between Ulster unionists and southern unionists, which they believed was essential for successful resistance to Home Rule.⁴⁰¹

As part of the S.U.C.'s efforts to gain support among southern unionists, they wrote to Charles O'Hara protesting against Midleton's endorsement of Home Rule at the Irish Convention and arguing that the I.U.A was no longer representative of unionists.⁴⁰² O'Hara remained a firm supporter of Midleton and was against any division within the I.U.A

³⁹⁸ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 June 1918 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8546).

³⁹⁹ R.B. McDowell, *The Irish convention 1917-18* (London, 1970), p. 181.

⁴⁰⁰ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1* (Dublin, 1972), p. 352.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

⁴⁰² Charles D. Guinness to Charles O'Hara, 5 Feb. 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 36442/1).

membership arguing that 'we should support the alliance still further in these trying times'.⁴⁰³

O'Hara did his best to prevent division within southern unionism and in March 1918 he wrote to members of the I.U.A. in an effort to convince them of the merits of remaining within the organisation.⁴⁰⁴ The S.U.C. were advocating much closer cooperation between the southern unionists and the Ulster unionists in their opposition to Home Rule. However, O'Hara argued that southern unionists 'were cut adrift by the northern unionists, and told to look after ourselves'.⁴⁰⁵ O'Hara was completely against further division, although he was still opposed to Home Rule, as he feared Sinn Féin would dominate a Dublin parliament.⁴⁰⁶

However, members of the S.U.C. stepped up their campaign to win over southern unionists to their views and were determined to aggressively canvass for support. All through April and May 1918 the *Sligo Independent* published the S.U.C.s 'Call to unionists' encouraging unionists to speak out against Irish self-government.⁴⁰⁷ The paper appeared to support the sentiments expressed by the S.U.C. and the *Sligo Independent* editorial of 27 April reminded unionists of the looming threat of Home Rule and an appeal was made to speak out against Home Rule, arguing that under a Dublin parliament increased taxation would cause distress for farmers and merchants and urged their readers to respond to the S.U.C.'s 'Call to Unionists'.⁴⁰⁸

Despite O'Hara's efforts to discourage the S.U.C. from dividing southern unionism, S.U.C. supporters were successful in winning control of the executive committee of the I.U.A. in early June 1918.⁴⁰⁹ The battle lines between the two groups of southern unionists were becoming more entrenched and Midleton and the I.U.A. leadership were now deeply concerned about the division within southern unionism and the possibility that the S.U.C. would break away and officially form their own movement.⁴¹⁰

Much of the southern unionist worry over a Sinn Féin dominated Home Rule parliament at this time came from the election of the Sinn Féin leader Arthur Griffith in the east Cavan

⁴⁰³ O'Hara to Charles D. Guinness, 12 Feb. 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

⁴⁰⁴ O'Hara to William H. Mahon, 9 Mar. 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826); O'Hara to Charles D. Guinness, 18 Mar. 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826); O'Hara to J.B. Powell, 19 Mar. 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

⁴⁰⁵ O'Hara to Charles D. Guinness, 18 Mar. 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ *S.I.*, 6 Apr. 1918; 5 May 1918.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 Apr. 1918.

⁴⁰⁹ John E. Walsh to Charles O'Hara, 4 June 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 36442/1); O'Hara to Denis R. Pack-Beresford, Hon. Sec. I.U.A., 5 June 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826); John E. Walsh to Charles O'Hara, 11 June 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 36442/1).

⁴¹⁰ Lord Midleton to Charles O'Hara, 29 June 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 36442/1).

by-election, which had taken place on 20 June 1918,⁴¹¹ and fear over Sinn Féin's electoral successes possibly played into the hands of the S.U.C. In June and July 1918 Charles O'Hara wrote to Lord Midleton leader of the I.U.A. and George Stewart, vice-chairman of I.U.A., praising their work in reaching an agreement at the Irish Convention. O'Hara was also keen to mention that he did all he could to prevent division in the I.U.A.⁴¹² However, he argued that as a result of the agrarian trouble and the conscription crisis 'any form of Home Government would be unthinkable now as it would mean handing our country over to the Sinn Féiners'.⁴¹³ O'Hara may have believed that because the political situation in Ireland was undergoing rapid change, Midleton and Stewart could not be held accountable for anything that they had suggested at the convention. There is little evidence available to indicate the feelings of ordinary unionists in Sligo concerning the S.U.C. and unionists in general seemed to be focused on the war effort, and Charles O'Hara, although still against Home Rule, was loyal to the I.U.A. leadership.

However, with potential divisions in the unionist movement brewing, O'Hara decided to intensify his efforts to gain more recruits for the army and in August 1918 he wrote to Major Murphy, the recruiting officer in Sligo offering his support and assistance.⁴¹⁴ The conacre campaign and the trouble over conscription had damaged recruiting in Sligo and for the period January to July 1918 only thirty-three men joined up; the number for the same period of 1917 had been fifty-eight.⁴¹⁵ However, O'Hara was now swimming against the tide of popular opinion in Sligo and in early September 1918 a large Sinn Féin led crowd disrupted a recruiting meeting organised by O'Hara and Major Murphy.⁴¹⁶ In the last two months of the war the Sligo R.I.C. reported 'a widespread and deeply rooted spirit of disloyalty among a large section of the people'.⁴¹⁷

When the armistice to mark the end of the war was declared on 11 November 1918, the people of Sligo rejoiced and flags were displayed from the public buildings and from many shops, offices and houses.⁴¹⁸ Units of the British army based in Sligo led the parade through the streets lined with people waving flags, singing and cheering wildly and later that

⁴¹¹ *S.I.*, 23 June 1918.

⁴¹² O'Hara to George Stewart 29 June 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826); O'Hara to Lord Midleton, 8 July 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

⁴¹³ *Ibid*

⁴¹⁴ O'Hara to Major Murphy, 21 Aug. 1918 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

⁴¹⁵ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Jan.-1 Dec. 1918 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8540-2); 1 Jan.-1 Dec. 1917.

⁴¹⁶ *S.I.*, 14 Sept. 1918.

⁴¹⁷ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Sept.-1 Oct. 1918 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8546).

⁴¹⁸ *S.I.*, 16 Nov. 1918.

evening the occasion was celebrated with a fireworks display.⁴¹⁹ On 16 November 1918 the *Sligo Independent* editorial commented that 'the people of Sligo have played a noble part both with men and money in the winning of the war, and their great enthusiasm was only to be expected'.⁴²⁰

On 17 November 1918 Protestants in Sligo held a thanksgiving ceremony in St John's Church of Ireland Cathedral.⁴²¹ At this service much praise was accorded to the work carried out by Protestant women during the war. Later in November 1918 Major O'Hara was invited to address the last annual meeting of the Town and County of Sligo Association for War Work, by the president of the organisation, Lady Georgina Gore-Booth. O'Hara thanked 'the members of the Committee for their excellent and successful work'.⁴²²

Protestant women had worked hard in the fields of nursing and charity work and at the end of the war Muriel Perceval, the treasurer of the Sligo branch of the Red Cross reported that 'they raised upwards of £2,000'.⁴²³ The wives of many of Sligo's Protestant businessmen were also active in persuading 'all creeds and classes' to invest money in war bonds.⁴²⁴ The various contributions of women towards the war effort was recognised by the Church of Ireland and after 1920 the General Synod women were allowed to sit on the select vestries.⁴²⁵ The meetings and celebrations held at the end of the war had a particularly significant impact on the Protestant community in Sligo and not only endorsed their sacrifice for the British war effort but also convinced them that their support for the British cause and the Union was the right decision.

How many men from Sligo town had enlisted in the British forces during the war, and how many of these men were Protestants? Evidence from the *Sligo Independent* and the *Sligo Champion* point towards a figure of 1,000 men who joined the army from Sligo town, while 500 men joined from the county.⁴²⁶ Of the 1,500 men from Co. Sligo who served during the First World War, 426 names are contained on a list of men from Sligo town and county who gave their lives fighting for the various allied armed forces in the First World War.⁴²⁷ Of the 426 who died, 250 were from Sligo town and 176 were from Co. Sligo.⁴²⁸

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 23 Nov. 1918.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid., 9 Nov. 1918.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 3 Aug. 1918.

⁴²⁵ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 23 Apr. 1920.

⁴²⁶ *S.I.*, 26 Feb. 1916; 8 Oct. 1921; *S.C.*, 26 Feb. 1916; 8 Oct. 1921.

⁴²⁷ Lists of Sligo war dead with names and addresses, *S.I.*, 27 Oct. 1928; 3 Nov. 1928; 17 Nov. 1928.

Through the use of census material, local newspapers, R.I.C. records and memorial records a reasonably accurate figure of the number of Protestant males that joined the British army during the First World War can be ascertained. The 1911 census records 385 Protestant males living in the Borough of Sligo town who would have been between the ages of eighteen and forty in 1914 which was the age band for military service in the First World War.⁴²⁹ Information from war memorials and the names of soldiers with addresses in Sligo town which were recorded in local newspapers suggest that 282 Protestant males from Sligo town served in the First World War including forty-three who were killed.⁴³⁰ This evidence indicates that almost three quarters of Protestant males in Sligo town between the ages of eighteen and forty enlisted. The names of thirteen women from Sligo town who served as nurses during the First World War were also included on the war memorials.⁴³¹ This evidence shows the strong desire by the Protestant community in Sligo to support the British war effort.

Research conducted by David Fitzpatrick on the correlation between religious persuasion and enlistment in the thirty-two counties during the First World War has led him to argue that 'only about forty-three per cent of all Irish recruits were Protestants'.⁴³² Fitzpatrick has used this evidence to dismiss the argument that Protestant unionists were more patriotic than Catholic nationalists, and had therefore joined up in greater numbers.⁴³³

This was found to be true for the case of Sligo as well and the majority of recruits to the British armed forces in the period from 1914 to 1918 were Catholic. A total of 718 Catholic males from Sligo town enlisted in the British forces during the First World War and 207 of them died.⁴³⁴ A total of 176 servicemen from the county of Sligo died in the First World War, Protestants accounted for an estimated twenty-seven of these, while an estimated 149 Catholic servicemen died.⁴³⁵

When the war ended in November 1918, the British government planned an election for December 1918. Southern unionists were planning to contest nine constituencies, five in

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45).

⁴³⁰ War Memorials in Sligo Presbyterian Church, *S.I.*, 27 Dec. 1919; war memorials in Clary Parish Church and Sligo Grammar School, *S.I.*, 8 Oct. 1921; war memorials in St. John's Church of Ireland Cathedral, *S.I.*, 13 Sept. 1947; Lists of Sligo war dead, *S.I.*, 27 Oct. 1928; 3 Nov. 1928; 17 Nov. 1928.

⁴³¹ *S.I.*, 27 Dec. 1919; 8 Oct. 1921.

⁴³² David Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922' in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds.), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 389.

⁴³³ David Fitzpatrick, 'The logic of collective sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918' in *Historical Journal*, xxxviii, no.4 (1995), p. 1024.

⁴³⁴ *S.I.*, 27 Dec. 1919; 8 Oct. 1921; 27 Oct. 1928; 3 Nov. 1928; 17 Nov. 1928; 13 Sept. 1947.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

Dublin and east Wicklow, north Monaghan, east Donegal and Cork City.⁴³⁶ The unionists of Sligo also wished to reactivate their opposition to Home Rule. However, they were undecided on how to oppose either Home Rule or Sinn Féin. As no unionist candidate was going to run for election in either of the Sligo constituencies, the only plan the I.U.A. in Sligo came up with was to urge their supporters to completely boycott the election and on 30 November 1918 the *Sligo Independent* printed an advertisement issued by the Sligo branch of the I.U.A. addressed 'to the unionist electorate of north and south Sligo'⁴³⁷ advising them to vote for neither Sinn Féin nor the I.P.P.⁴³⁸ The advertisement stated that 'a unionist who supports Sinn Féin votes for the people who rebelled in 1916 thus assisting the Germans whom they called their 'gallant ally' and thereby attacking Great Britain' and 'if you vote for the nationalist you support a party pledged to Home Rule ... a party who during the major part of the greatest struggle in history maintained an attitude of callous indifference to the success or failure of the allied cause'.⁴³⁹

The comments directed at the I.P.P. by Sligo unionists were unfair and inaccurate and supporters of Redmond's policy of commitment to Britain during the war, such as alderman John Jinks, Thomas Scanlon M.P. and John O'Dowd M.P., had endured continuous criticism for their encouragement of recruitment and desire to see Britain win the war and grant Home Rule for Ireland. This unionist aloofness from politics in Sligo and the negative remarks directed at Sinn Féin and the I.P.P. was not going to gain them any sympathy for their plight as an isolated minority outside Ulster and the *Sligo Champion* took this opportunity to strongly criticise the apathy of Sligo unionists calling them a 'pampered and well-looked after section of the Irish community'.⁴⁴⁰

However, it is hard to imagine Sligo unionists adopting any other policy than abstention from the election. The small numbers of unionists dictated that they could not possibly hope to field a successful candidate in either Sligo constituency. As they were completely opposed to Sinn Féin policies, the only other party they could have supported was the I.P.P. The Labour Party was abstaining from the election as the party wished to give a free rein to the Sinn Féin candidates. The I.P.P. was a party that unionists believed to be completely indifferent concerning British victory in the war, and many unionists believed that the I.P.P. would have welcomed a British defeat in the war as much as Sinn Féin would have. Sligo

⁴³⁶ R.B. McDowell, *Crisis and decline* (Dublin, 1997), p. 67.

⁴³⁷ *S.I.*, 30 Nov. 1918.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁰ *S.C.*, 30 Nov. 1918.

unionists could have supported the I.P.P., which from their perspective was the lesser of two evils. However, the divisions within the ranks of southern unionism at the time along with their tradition of strong loyalty to the Union, shown by the numbers of Sligo Protestants who had fought in the war, and the elation felt by the unionists at the British victory in the war, prevented them from urging their supporters to vote for the I.P.P.

The actions of Sligo unionists and their indecisive approach towards defending the Union and opposing nationalism merely reflected the disagreements between southern unionists nationally. Lord Midleton and the I.U.A. leadership had reaffirmed their faith in the Union on 1 October 1918.⁴⁴¹ However, this was probably done to detract support from the S.U.C., who were against any form of Home Rule, and as an effort to try and unite unionism for the upcoming general election. Midleton had agreed to some form of self-government for Ireland at the Irish Convention and there were still differences within southern unionism over their policy towards the Ulster unionists and their demands for separate treatment within a Home Rule settlement. Many within the I.U.A. leadership, especially the vice-chairman of the organisation, George Stewart, were still very bitter towards Ulster unionists for their willingness to agree to partition in June 1916 in order to guarantee their own security and he felt that the Ulster unionists were selfishly abandoning the southern unionists.⁴⁴²

At the beginning of November 1918 the R.I.C. Co. Sligo Inspector believed that Sinn Féin would win seats in both north and south Sligo at the general election and he believed that the party was well prepared for the election. Sinn Féin was well organised in Co. Sligo and by November 1918 the party had established forty-seven clubs dotted around the county with almost 4,000 members.⁴⁴³ Nationalists were divided over the election and unionists were refusing to take part and while most of the Catholic clergy still supported the I.P.P., many others, especially the majority of the young people, including many of the younger Catholic clergy, were in favour of Sinn Féin.⁴⁴⁴ More people were entitled to vote in the 1918 election than in any previous election and the Representation of the People Act passed in February 1918 gave the vote to all males over twenty-one and most females over thirty, and this resulted in a very large increase in the electorate in Sligo. In 1911 the electorate in

⁴⁴¹ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism I* (Dublin, 1972), p. 368.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 353.

⁴⁴³ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Nov. 1918 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8547).

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 Dec. 1918.

Co. Sligo stood at just over 15,000, but by 1918 the electorate had increased to almost 36,500.⁴⁴⁵

On 14 December 1918 the general election took place and resulted in a massive defeat for the I.P.P. who only held six seats while Sinn Féin won seventy-three and the southern unionists managed to secure three seats, the two Trinity College seats and the south County Dublin constituency of Rathmines.⁴⁴⁶ In the south Sligo constituency there were only two candidates, Alec McCabe for Sinn Féin and John O'Dowd the sitting I.P.P. M.P. McCabe had an easy victory receiving eighty-two per cent of the votes cast while John O'Dowd received only eighteen per cent of the poll.

In north Sligo John J. Clancy was the Sinn Féin candidate while Thomas Scanlon was the sitting I.P.P. M.P. Clancy received sixty-eight per cent of the votes, while Scanlon got thirty-two per cent.⁴⁴⁷ The difference between the candidates was much closer in north Sligo than in south Sligo. The higher vote for Sinn Féin in south Sligo could be attributed to the fact that the Sinn Féin organisation was much more organised in this part of the county and Alec McCabe was a well-known republican from Keash, near Ballymote.⁴⁴⁸ A possible explanation for Sinn Féin's lower vote in the north Sligo constituency, was that the Sinn Féin candidate, J.J. Clancy, although a prominent member and organiser of the Sinn Féin movement in the county was from Collooney in south Sligo. The north Sligo constituency, which included Sligo town, was also home to a larger number of Protestant unionists and many of them may have gone against the wishes of the Sligo Unionist Alliance and voted for the I.P.P. candidate.

Table 2.6: December 1918 General Election Results for the north Sligo Constituency
One seat and an electorate of 18,488

Candidate	Party	Votes	Percentage share
John Clancy	Sinn Féin	9,030	68.04
Thomas Scanlon	I.P.P.	4,242	31.96
Total poll		13,272	71.79
Majority	Sinn Féin	4,788	36.08

Source: Elections Ireland, General Election, north Sligo constituency results, 14 Dec. 1918 (<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1918&cons=205>) (1 June 2006).

⁴⁴⁵ S.C., 2 Mar. 1918.

⁴⁴⁶ R.B. McDowell, *Crisis and decline* (Dublin, 1997), p. 69.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁸ S.C., 4 Jan. 1919.

Table 2.7: December 1918 General Election Results for the south Sligo Constituency
One seat and an electorate of 18,013

Candidate	Party	Votes	Percentage share
Alec McCabe	Sinn Féin	9,113	82.09
John O'Dowd	I.P.P.	1,988	17.91
Total poll		11,101	61.63
Majority	Sinn Féin	7,125	64.18

Source: Elections Ireland, General Election, south Sligo constituency results, 14 Dec. 1918
(<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1918&cons=206>) (1 June 2006).

Many Protestants and unionists were dismayed by Sinn Féin's electoral success in Sligo and in the rest of the country and what it might mean for the country's future. However, Major Bryan Cooper, who had served in the Connaught Rangers during the war and had fought with distinction at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli and Salonika,⁴⁴⁹ expressed one of the few optimistic notes for the future at the end of the war. Cooper, who had been a vocal and a passionate defender of unionism before the war returned to Sligo a profoundly changed man as a result of his war experience and in 1918 he wrote in his book, *The Tenth Irish Division at Gallipoli*, that: 'the bond of common service proved so strong and enduring that Catholic and Protestant, unionist and nationalist, lived and fought and died side by side like brothers. Little was spoken concerning the points on which we differed and once we had tacitly agreed to let the past be buried we found thousands of points on which we agreed'.⁴⁵⁰

In 1920 Cooper returned to politics and was only one of a handful of Protestant ex-unionists in the Irish Free State to take an active part politically at national level and in 1923 he was elected as an independent T.D. for County Dublin. The Protestant writer, Terence De Vere White, said of Bryan Cooper that 'instead of reacting bitterly to the changed scene or shrugging Ireland off, he looked deeper and was far ahead of his class in his time'.⁴⁵¹ Cooper was very popular amongst his fellow deputies and was a strong debater who used wit and humour in 'his passionate desire that Ireland should forget old quarrels and look to the future rather than the past'.⁴⁵² In 1927 he was re-elected as a T.D., this time for the Cumann na nGaedheal Party. In July 1930, after a short illness, he died at his home in Dalkey, Co. Dublin and his remains were taken back to Collooney, Co. Sligo for burial. His

⁴⁴⁹ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), p. 19.

⁴⁵⁰ Bryan Cooper, *The Tenth (Irish) Division in Gallipoli* (London, 1918), p. 253.

⁴⁵¹ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), p. 20.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

coffin was draped in the Tricolour and the Union Jack, representing the two nations and traditions to which he had dedicated his lifework.⁴⁵³

In the years before the First World War, Sligo unionists had become well organised and were determined in their opposition to Home Rule. Prominent Protestant landowners such as Charles O'Hara, Bryan Cooper, Malby Crofton and Philip Perceval and Protestant businessmen such as Arthur Jackson and Charles Graham provided strong and effective leadership. Their numbers restricted their electoral opportunities and they found it impossible to secure local parliamentary representation. However, Bryan Cooper had represented southern unionists at Westminster from January to December 1910 and Robert Symlie, a Protestant unionist, was a member of Sligo Corporation. The I.P.P. had two M.P.s representing north and south Sligo and the U.I.L. was well organised in the county and could count on the support of the vast majority of the Catholic population in Sligo. However, this did not deter Sligo unionists and they were determined to continue their opposition to Home Rule until the outbreak of the First World War.

After the outbreak of the First World War Protestants and unionists in Sligo threw their support behind the British war effort. The I.P.P. and local nationalist councillors in Sligo urged the people to support the British war effort, especially after the Third Home Rule Bill was passed by parliament. However, the fact that Britain was delaying the implementation of Home Rule until after the war angered some nationalists and the local Irish Volunteer movement was split. However, the majority of Volunteers formed the National Volunteers and supported the British war effort, at least until 1916, in order to secure Home Rule for Ireland.

Even though many nationalists were supportive of the early efforts by Sligo unionist officers to become involved in the local Volunteer movement, others disagreed with unionists acquiring command positions in an organisation originally set up to defend Home Rule. There was much apathy within nationalism following the passing of the Home Rule Bill and as many of the enthusiastic Volunteers joined the British army, the formation of a Volunteer County Board for Sligo proved difficult. The U.I.L. also lost its *raison d'être* after Home Rule had been promised and during the war many Sligo nationalists began to develop concerns about supporting the British war effort.

When J.M. Wilson visited Sligo in February 1916 he found that the I.U.A. was inactive and Protestant unionists were neglecting political action in favour of supporting the war

⁴⁵³ Ibid., p. 23.

effort. A large proportion of Protestant and unionist young men, especially in Sligo town, enlisted in the army and older Protestants and unionists became involved in recruitment campaigns, while unionist women in Sligo signed up as nurses or organised charities to help soldiers and refugees during the war. Most unionists and nationalists in Sligo initially greeted the news of the 1916 Rising with a sense of shock. However, in the wake of draconian actions by the British government, support for Sinn Féin, the organisation that had become associated with the Rising, grew dramatically in Sligo. Unionists became alarmed at the growth of Sinn Féin and the party's expansion in Sligo threatened both the I.P.P. and the unionists. Sligo unionists blamed government inaction for the growth of Sinn Féin and made little effort to come to any consensus with the I.P.P. on how to oppose Sinn Féin. Sinn Féin began to undermine the U.I.L. and the A.O.H. in Sligo and many members of both organisations joined Sinn Féin, especially after Sinn Féin's electoral successes in 1917.

As many members of the U.I.L. had joined Sinn Féin, the organisation became involved in the conacre campaign of early 1918, which was fuelled by the increased agricultural prices and by the British government's demands that farmers convert more land to tillage. Large Protestant landowners were particularly affected by the conacre campaign and they turned their frustration on the government whom they believed was doing little to help them. Initially Sinn Féin saw it as an opportunity to gain more support. However, the organisation did not want to be tainted by the violence and general disruption caused by the campaign, and Sinn Féin tried to distance itself with the more extreme activities of smallholders and the landless.

Sinn Féin was defeated in three by-elections in early 1918. However, the crisis created by the British government's proposal to introduce conscription in Ireland had unified Irish people and the I.P.P., the Labour Party, the Catholic Church and Sinn Féin condemned the measure. However, it was Sinn Féin which benefited most from the conscription crisis and the association of the I.P.P. and the Catholic Church with Sinn Féin gave the organisation an increased amount of respectability in the public's eyes.

When the Irish Convention wound up in April 1918 it left unionists divided, while the I.P.P. were compromised over their acceptance of partition and the result only increased support for the intransigent positions of Sinn Féin and the Ulster unionists. Southern unionists were paralysed by their acceptance of a form of Home Rule at the convention and the organisation split into two separate movements shortly afterwards. No effort was made

by Sligo unionists to capitalise on the agreements regarding Irish self-government reached by the I.U.A. at the Irish Conference, and Charles O'Hara argued that considering the condition of the country in 1918, Home Rule would prove impossible to implement.

By the end of the war Protestants and Catholics from Sligo had joined the British army in large numbers. Protestants, from Sligo town in particular had joined in very large numbers considering their smaller population. In November 1918 Protestants and unionists in Sligo were isolated both politically and socially from their Catholic and nationalist neighbours and the co-operation hoped for between the two communities at the start of the war had never really materialised. The anti-conscription campaign further isolated unionists and many Protestants in Sligo, as they were largely the only ones left encouraging recruitment. In 1918 unionists were totally out of touch with the sentiments of the majority in Sligo and while Sinn Féin, the I.P.P. and the Catholic clergy were strongly opposed to the introduction of conscription, Charles O'Hara and other unionists were arguing that conscription should have been introduced earlier in order to prevent the growth of Sinn Féin. The divisions within southern unionism on a national level also blunted the effectiveness of the unionist organisation locally and the political apathy shown by Sligo unionists at the general election after the war only increased the alienation of the unionist population in Sligo. However, not all Protestants and unionists felt themselves to be politically and socially alienated and Bryan Cooper who had been a staunch unionist was optimistic for Ireland's future in 1918 and took an active part in the social and political life of post-war Ireland.

Chapter Three: The War of Independence

This chapter examines the impact of the War of Independence on Sligo Protestants and the main local issues at the end of the First World War in Sligo. The chapter investigates if Sligo Protestants organised any opposition to Home Rule following the war and assesses the reactions of Sligo unionists to the divisions within the I.U.A. and discovers if Sligo Protestants or unionists engaged in local politics after the war, and if they did, what shape or form their involvement took.

An analysis of the impact of the I.R.A. campaign and the affects of continuing agrarian agitation on the Protestant community in Sligo will also form part of this chapter. Did anybody in Sligo assist the authorities in controlling the activities of the I.R.A. and with Sligo unionists caught in the middle of the conflict and with two separate political systems competing for the loyalty of the people, what did the I.U.A. and other unionist organisation do to help southern unionists?

After the success of the Sinn Féin Party in the general election of 1918, the electorate of Sligo turned their attention to the municipal elections for Sligo Corporation. The financial deprivations caused by the First World War had proved to be a significant catalyst for accelerating the already unhealthy financial situation of Sligo Corporation. In June 1914 a delegation of eight liberal and six unionist workingmen from Leicestershire in England had arrived in Ireland as part of a visit organised by the I.U.A. Many Irish unionists at the time were trying to gain the support of the British people and politicians in their campaign against Home Rule. For the first week in June the delegation visited various towns and cities in Ireland, including Dublin, Sligo, Enniskillen and Belfast, where members of all political parties and social classes were interviewed to gain their views. The report based on their interviews led them to believe that 'the condition of the rates in the south and west of Ireland, particularly in Dublin and Sligo, and of local government generally, was in a very unsatisfactory condition, and compared most unfavourably with the state of things in Belfast and Enniskillen'.¹

The tour only lasted one week, from 1 June to 7 June 1914, so it is hard to believe they could have conducted any intensive investigation of the municipal affairs of any of the towns they visited. Only interviews were conducted and there was no detailed analysis of the municipal accounts, or an examination of the standing orders or the local laws and

¹ Typescript of a report by a deputation of workingmen from the Loughborough division of Leicestershire following their visit to Ireland organised by the Irish Unionist Alliance, 1-7 June 1914, (P.R.O.N.I., Irish Unionist Alliance Papers, D/989C/1/20).

procedures. However, the report of the group did admit that 'from personal observation, from the inspection of various works, and from the information obtained, the deputation found it impossible to compare the state of Ulster with other parts of Ireland regarding industry, cleanliness and prosperity'.²

The tour organised by the I.U.A. in June 1914 seemed to have been purposely designed to try to highlight the poor financial condition of Sligo Borough and some other nationalist controlled boroughs in Ireland. Firstly the British visitors were taken to certain counties and towns in southern Ireland where the local councils were experiencing financial problems of one kind or another. They were then taken to Ulster and shown certain financially successful unionist controlled councils which was supposed to illustrate the incompetence of nationalist dominated councils, thus proving that Home Rule would bankrupt Ireland.³

However, the finances of Sligo Borough appeared to have been in a bad state before the First World War and the war simply compounded the situation. During the war the local newspapers in Sligo criticised the depressing financial administration of Sligo Borough.⁴ In January 1915 councillor Dudley Hanley, and councillors Sam Tarrant and John Roche, both U.I.L. members, who had defeated Edward Harte and William Gibbons both of Labour/I.T.G.W.U. in the January 1915 corporation election, launched an attack on the mayor, John Jinks, blaming him for the poor state of the corporation's finances.⁵

It was hardly Jinks's fault alone, and expansion of the town, increased demand for services such as cleaning, lighting, providing water and sanitary facilities all put a drain on municipal resources. Also property in the borough needed to be re-evaluated as some property owners were paying too much and others were not paying enough.⁶

When J.M. Wilson visited Sligo in June and July 1917 he was keen to comment that Sligo was 'a bankrupt borough at best, owing to the disgracefully bad administration of the corporation'.⁷ In August 1917 James Drury, a Local Government Board Inspector conducted an official inquiry into the corporation's financial affairs. The inquiry blamed the poor financial situation of the corporation on 'the neglect of proper administrative procedures'.⁸ Drury suggested that the corporation should take legal steps to curb financial

² Ibid.

³ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1* (Dublin, 1972), pp 163-64.

⁴ *S.C.*, 23 Jan 1915; *S.I.*, 15 Jan 1916; *S.C.*, 24 June 1916; *S.I.*, 19 May 1917; *S.C.*, 18 Aug 1917.

⁵ Ibid., 23 Jan. 1915.

⁶ Ibid., 1 Sept. 1917.

⁷ J.M. Wilson's tour of Ireland, Co. Sligo, 28 June 1917-18 July 1917 (P.R.O.N.I., J.M. Wilson's papers, D/989A/9/7).

⁸ *S.I.*, 1 Sept. 1917.

spending and recommended the repeal of the Sligo Borough Improvement Act of 1869, which was severely limiting the corporation's ability to raise enough revenue, as it limited the corporation's power to strike and levy a borough rate not exceeding 4s 6d in the £.⁹ This act restricted the corporation's ability to levy rates for municipal purposes and raise sufficient funds to cover the rising costs of providing more services in the town with the result that the corporation was falling further into debt each year.

Criticism of conditions in Sligo town also came from the press in Britain and in late 1917 the *Daily Mail* printed an article on Sligo, maintaining that the streets of the town were the dirtiest in any part of the world.¹⁰ The *Daily Mail* criticised local councillors in Sligo, blaming the financial crisis of the borough on 'the utter lack of business instinct'.¹¹ What could be done to remedy the finances of Sligo Borough? The answer came from the group who were contributing the most towards the upkeep of the town, the top ratepayers, who were largely Protestants.

The ratepayers believed that they must achieve political representation on the corporation in order to address the financial problem of Sligo borough. At the end of 1917 many of the more prominent ratepayers, including the Protestants and unionists James Campbell, a merchant, the businessman Arthur Jackson, Hal R. Wood-Martin, land and property owner, James Hamilton, shop owner, P.C. Kerr, shipping agent and merchant, Harper Campbell-Perry, flour merchant, James Nelson, shop owner, Hugh Sinclair, grocer, Young Warren, tea merchant and the Catholic businessmen John Noone, T.J. Begley, Thomas Flanagan, James Connolly, John Finan, Edward J. Tighe, Thomas Mahon, Bernard McDonagh and William Conmey, refused to pay charges, and they publicly registered their dissatisfaction with corporation maladministration.¹² The ratepayers also decided to take their protest further and make an organised effort to remedy the finances of the borough and in November 1917 they, along with some leading citizens in Sligo town, formed the Sligo Ratepayers Association (S.R.A.). The organisation was largely composed of businessmen, including many Protestants and unionists, and proved to be an important step in reviving the interest of the Sligo Protestant community in local government affairs.

This was not the first incarnation of the Sligo Ratepayers' Association and in early 1911 Protestant businessman, including James Campbell, Arthur Jackson, Col. Wood-Martin,

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 57; *Daily Mail*, 14 Dec. 1917.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *S.I.*, 17 Nov. 1917; 24 Nov. 1917; 1 Dec. 1917.

James Hamilton, P.C. Kerr, and Harper Campbell Perry, had formed a similar organisation and secured a local plebiscite to get a parliamentary bill to restructure the corporation's finances.¹³ However, the effort got caught up in the nationalist-unionist politics of the time and the plebiscite was defeated by 744 votes to 433.¹⁴ Shortly before the plebiscite alderman John Jinks condemned the Ratepayers' Association and publicly thanked God that Sligo had a 'Catholic corporation' and asked 'are the Tories in this town to walk upon the Catholics of Sligo?'¹⁵ Later in May 1911 Thomas Scanlon, M.P. called the Ratepayers' Association 'a gang of slum landlords' and John O'Dowd, M.P. dubbed them 'a gang of narrow Orange bigots'.¹⁶

By 1917 the attitude of nationalists in Sligo had changed, and with corporation finances in a bad way, the S.R.A. were able to win the support of all sections of Sligo society. In order to have general appeal and win the support of the nationalist majority in the town, the members of the S.R.A. could do with the support of the Catholic hierarchy. The S.R.A. were lucky in this regard and at the first meeting of the S.R.A. a well respected member of the Catholic clergy, Canon P.A. Butler, who had long been involved in various political organisations in Sligo, including the U.I.L. and the A.O.H., supported the organisation arguing that 'political sympathies and religious differences are happily cast aside in a common effort and whole hearted desire to render whatever help we can to those who are charged with the destinies of this grand old town, and of safeguarding the destinies of its citizens'.¹⁷

With the support of the Catholic Church, the well-known Protestant and unionist businessman, Arthur Jackson was elected as chairman of the S.R.A. and eight others, including Canon P.A. Butler, were elected to the S.R.A.'s committee. At the first meeting the committee decided that it could achieve more by putting pressure on the corporation rather than challenging it directly. The committee passed a resolution stating 'that the Association was formed not for the purpose of crushing the present corporation in any way. On the contrary, it was formed for the purpose of rendering them assistance and to help them by every means in their power to get out of the awful financial difficulty in which the corporation was placed at the present time'.¹⁸ On 10 November 1917 the *Sligo Independent*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 18 Mar. 1911.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *S.C.*, 13 May 1911.

¹⁷ *S.I.*, 10 Nov. 1917.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

editorial appealed to the citizens of Sligo 'irrespective of creed, class, or politics, to lend their enthusiastic support and hearty co-operation to the newly formed Ratepayers Association'.¹⁹ The question now was would the sitting councillors of Sligo Corporation listen to the advice of the S.R.A. or would they sit tight and hope that the organisation melted away? It seemed that at first the corporation agreed to work with the S.R.A. However, they refused to make any alterations to the rates.²⁰

Ultimately the corporation had to accept that some kind of action was necessary and in January 1918, after much discussion, the corporation and the S.R.A. came to an agreement and with the help of the Local Government Board (L.G.B.) they arranged to have a parliamentary bill drafted and submitted to the House of Commons which would increase the powers of the corporation and a new system of election to Sligo Corporation would also be introduced. The new system of election agreed upon was Proportional Representation (P.R.) with Single Transferable Voting (S.T.V.) and quota counting.²¹

P.R. was not an entirely new idea to Ireland and on 20 April 1911 the Proportional Representation Society of Ireland had been established and up to the outbreak of war in August 1914 its members had campaigned for the introduction of P.R.²² Tadhg Kilgannon, a photographer and a nationalist member of Sligo Corporation was a strong supporter of P.R. Kilgannon argued that P.R. was a much fairer method of election for the representation of minorities than the 'first-past-the-post' system and in late 1917 he submitted numerous articles to the *Sligo Champion* explaining P.R. and advocating its introduction.²³

The 'first-past-the-post' system is a simple majority voting system, where a candidate is deemed elected if they secure more than half the votes.²⁴ This meant that Protestants, most of whose sympathies lay with Protestant/unionist candidates and who amounted to around fifteen per cent of the population of Sligo Borough found it very difficult to obtain representation on the corporation.

Sligo Borough was divided into three separate wards and eight councillors represented each ward, although only two councillors in each ward had to offer themselves for election each January. They were usually only opposed by two other candidates and it was a straight vote to decide the winners in each ward. The two candidates who received the highest and

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 17 Nov. 1917; 24 Nov. 1917; 1 Dec. 1917.

²¹ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 528.

²² Cornelius O'Leary, *Irish elections, 1918-77* (Dublin, 1979), pp 5-6.

²³ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 528.

²⁴ John Coakley & Michael Gallagher (eds), *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1993), p. 67.

second highest number of votes would be deemed elected, while the section of the electorate who voted for the other two candidates would receive no representation. P.R. would mean that all eight councillors in each ward would have to go forward for election and many candidates could oppose them. A Single Transferable Vote (S.T.V.) would allow the voter to indicate their preferences on the ballot paper, marking a one for the first preference, a two for their second and so on as to complete the list on the ballot paper. Once a candidate was elected and achieved the quota, their surplus votes could be transferred to second preferences on the ballot paper and this would allow minority groups greater representation.²⁵

At a meeting on 13 February 1918 the members of Sligo Corporation agreed to the drafting of a parliamentary bill to use P.R. in corporation elections and also to amend the Sligo Borough Improvement Act of 1869. The amendment to the act would allow the corporation much more freedom to adjust rates as they saw fit. On 25 February members of S.R.A. met at the Temperance Hall, Sligo, and voted in support of P.R. and the proposed amendments to the 1869 Act. On 28 February a meeting of the citizens of Sligo took place and also voted in favour of the new parliamentary bill. Thomas Scanlon, M.P. for north Sligo was also present at this meeting and he gave his support to the proposed changes. In early July 1918 Scanlon introduced the bill to the House of Commons and on 30 July 1918 it received the Royal Assent and the Sligo Corporation Act of 1918 came into operation allowing the use of P.R. in Sligo Borough elections.²⁶

Elections for Sligo Corporation were scheduled to take place on 15 January 1919 and in early December 1918 the members of the S.R.A. who were eager to participate in the election selected eighteen candidates, eleven Protestant unionists and seven Catholic nationalists.²⁷ The S.R.A. would pose a threat to the other parties in the election and it was with this in mind that at the end of 1918 the mayor, D.M. Hanley, who had been unanimously elected as the town's first Sinn Féin mayor in January 1917, made a point of publicly attacking S.R.A. calling it an 'overwhelmingly unionist' organisation.²⁸ However, this did not seem to be the case as sixty-three nationalists and fifty unionists were registered

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 67-9.

²⁶ *An act to amend the provisions for the local management of the borough of Sligo 1918 (Sligo Corporation Act)* (8 & 9 Geo. V, c.xxiii (30 July 1918)).

²⁷ *S.I.*, 7 Dec. 1918, *ibid.*, 28 Dec. 1918; Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45).

²⁸ *S.I.*, 14 Dec. 1918.

members of S.R.A.²⁹ This indicated that the organisation appealed to both political groups and both political traditions were almost equally represented.

In the weeks before the election the *Sligo Independent's* sympathies lay firmly with S.R.A. and the paper called on its readers to vote for the S.R.A. candidates.³⁰ As Sligo town was the first municipality in the United Kingdom to employ P.R. as an electoral system, the election drew great interest from all over Britain and Ireland.³¹ There were a total of twenty-four seats on the corporation and forty-eight candidates put their names forward. The S.R.A. fielded eighteen candidates. Sinn Féin put forward thirteen candidates, Labour also put forward thirteen candidates and four independents sought election. The U.I.L./I.P.P. did not take part in the election. However, John Jinks, a supporter of the U.I.L., went forward as an independent candidate.³²

At this stage Sinn Féin had largely superseded the U.I.L. and in effect the I.P.P. was no longer the main voice of Irish nationalism in the county. The only alternative to Sinn Féin, S.R.A. or the independents, was the Labour Party. Labour was well established in Sligo and had a strong electoral pool to draw on which consisted of unemployed ex-servicemen, who had just returned to Sligo at the end of the war and a considerable number of semi-employed dockworkers from Sligo port, which at its height before the war had employed hundreds of men on a fulltime and part-time basis. However, a large number of these voters may have also been inclined towards Sinn Féin, and the Sligo labour movement had a strong leaning towards republicanism, which had stretched back to the strike which had affected Sligo and particularly the port in 1913 and some of the I.T.G.W.U./Labour Party councillors on Sligo Corporation had expressed strong republican views since the 1916 Rising.³³ It also seemed that while the Labour Party in Sligo wished to maintain its own separate identity, the party members agreed with the Sinn Féin policy of Irish self-determination.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 4 Jan. 1919; 11 Jan. 1919.

³¹ *S.C.*, 25 Jan. 1919.

³² Ibid.

³³ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 41.

Table 3.1: January 1919 Sligo Borough Election, West Ward
8 seats; valid poll: 940; quota: 106.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
Harper Campbell Perry	S.R.A.	169	Elected
Henry Depew	Labour	94	Elected
James Connolly	S.R.A.	91	Elected
Percy Campbell Kerr	S.R.A.	82	Elected
Edward John Tighe	S.R.A.	79	Elected
William Hande	Labour	56	Elected
John Hughes	Sinn Féin	56	Eliminated
William Joseph Feeney	Sinn Féin	55	Elected
James Hamilton	S.R.A.	51	Not Elected
Patrick J. Flanagan	Sinn Féin	44	Elected
Jordan H. Roche	Labour	40	Eliminated
Samuel Tarrant	Sinn Féin	38	Eliminated
John Finan	S.R.A.	34	Eliminated
John Lambert	Independent	18	Eliminated
Thomas Daniel Howley	Sinn Féin	18	Eliminated
Andrew Thompson	Independent	15	Eliminated

Source: S.C., 25 Jan. 1919.

In the West Ward sixteen candidates, six S.R.A., five Sinn Féin, three Labour and two independents, contested the eight seats. A total of 940 votes were cast in the West Ward and 106 was the declared quota. The S.R.A. gained 506 first preference votes, Sinn Féin got 233, Labour gained 165, while the independents did poorly and only got thirty-six first preference votes. Harper Campbell Perry, the S.R.A. candidate topped the poll with 169 and was elected after the first count. Over two-thirds of his transfers went to his fellow S.R.A. members, Percy Campbell Kerr, helping him get elected on the second count, and Edward J. Tighe, who was elected on the seventh count. The fourth candidate to reach the quota was Henry Depew of the Labour Party and the fifth candidate was James Connolly for the S.R.A. Transfers from Sinn Féin and Labour candidates helped to get Sinn Féin and Labour candidates elected. Patrick J. Flanagan of Sinn Féin was sixth candidate elected followed by William Hande of Labour and the final candidate elected was William J. Feeney of Sinn Féin. Both of the Labour candidates elected were recognised to have a strong association with Sinn Féin. The voters of the West Ward had elected four S.R.A., two Labour and two Sinn Féin councillors. The S.R.A. won half of the available seats in the West Ward and this reflected the strong middle class electorate in this area of Sligo town.

In the East Ward sixteen candidates, six S.R.A., four Sinn Féin, four Labour and two independents competed for the eight available seats. In total 726 votes were cast and the quota was eighty-one. Sinn Féin received 343 first preference votes, which was by far the

highest number in this ward, followed by 124 for the two independent candidates. The S.R.A. got 105 and Labour gained 103 first preference votes. The mayor, Sinn Féin's D.M. Hanley, got 160 first preference votes which was almost twice the number of the quota. Luke Gilligan was next elected for Sinn Féin and Hanley's transfers helped his fellow Sinn Féin Party member Thomas Fitzpatrick, to get elected. An independent candidate White was next elected followed by Michael Nevin for Labour. Young Warren and Bernard McDonagh, two S.R.A. candidates were next elected and an independent candidate James Gray was the last to be elected. In the East Ward Sinn Féin won three seat, the S.R.A. won two, the independents got two and Labour secured one seat. This distribution of seats reflected the split working class/middle class electorate in this part of Sligo town.

Table 3.2: January 1919 Sligo Borough Election, East Ward
8 seats; valid poll: 726; quota: 81.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
D.M. Hanley	Sinn Féin	160	Elected
Luke Gilligan	Sinn Féin	87	Elected
Thomas Fitzpatrick	Sinn Féin	73	Elected
P.N. White	Independent	71	Elected
Michael Nevin	Labour	56	Elected
James Gray	Independent	53	Elected
Young Warren	S.R.A.	51	Elected
James J. Nelson	S.R.A.	41	Not Elected
Bernard McDonagh	S.R.A.	35	Elected
Henry Reilly	Labour	25	Eliminated
Henry Monson	Labour	23	Not Elected
Costello	Labour	18	Eliminated
Hugh R. Sinclair	S.R.A.	16	Eliminated
William Conmey	S.R.A.	8	Eliminated
Thomas Mahon	S.R.A.	5	Eliminated
O'Riordian	Sinn Féin	4	Eliminated

Source: S.C., 25 Jan. 1919.

In the North Ward sixteen candidates, six S.R.A., four Sinn Féin, four Labour and two independents campaigned for eight seats. A total of 542 votes were cast and the quota was sixty-one. The six S.R.A. candidates gained 161 first preference votes between them, followed by 154 votes for the two independents. Labour got 128 first preference votes and Sinn Féin gained ninety-eight first preference votes. The large number of independent first preference votes was accounted for by the high number cast for John Jinks who gained 123 first preference votes and put him sixty-two votes over the quota. The other independent, James Devins was associated with Sinn Féin although he was not an official Sinn Féin Party

candidate. Labour's John Lynch, with seventy-two votes had also exceeded the quota and was elected on the first count. Arthur Jackson and Hal R. Wood-Martin, both members of the S.R.A. were the next two to reach the quota. Nally, Sinn Féin, was the fifth to be elected after picking up transfers from many candidates especially from Sinn Féin and Labour candidates. James Devins was next elected after picking up transfers from Jinks and picking up votes from eliminated Sinn Féin and Labour candidates. A Labour candidate, Heraghty, was declared elected without reaching the quota; he had received transfers from Sinn Féin and Labour candidates. The final candidate declared to be elected without reaching the quota was Costello for Sinn Féin. The North Ward was largely a working class area of Sligo and this is reflected in the distribution of seats. The Labour Party won two seats, Sinn Féin got two, independent Sinn Féin secured one, the independent, John Jinks, got a seat and the S.R.A. got two.

Table 3.3: January 1919 Sligo Borough Election, North Ward
8 seats; valid poll: 542; quota: 61.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
John Jinks	Independent	123	Elected
John Lynch	Labour	72	Elected
Arthur Jackson	S.R.A.	55	Elected
Hal R. Wood-Martin	S.R.A.	53	Elected
Nally	Sinn Féin	43	Elected
James Devins	Independent Sinn Féin	32	Elected
J. Costello	Sinn Féin	31	Elected
James Campbell	S.R.A.	30	Not Elected
Heraghty	Labour	22	Elected
J. Kelly	Labour	19	Eliminated
Derrig	Labour	15	Eliminated
Feency	Sinn Féin	12	Eliminated
W.J. Kelly	Sinn Féin	12	Eliminated
T.J. Begley	S.R.A.	9	Eliminated
Thomas Flanagan	S.R.A.	7	Eliminated
John Noone	S.R.A.	7	Eliminated

Source: S.C., 25 Jan. 1919.

The elections passed off very peacefully and there was an absence of any trouble in the lead up to the election or on polling day. As a result of the media hype, the turnout for the election had been very high. A total of 2,208 of the 2,750 who were entitled to vote in the three wards went to the polls, which represented eighty percent of the electorate.³⁴ The S.R.A. had done very well at the polls and had received 823 first preference votes in all

³⁴ S.C., 25 Jan. 1919.

three wards, gaining eight seats for the party. Sinn Féin gained 674 first preference votes and got seven seats. Labour got 432 first preference votes and five seats while the independents got 279 first preference votes and gained four seats.³⁵

The voting patterns indicate that voters who chose a S.R.A. candidate for their first preference largely picked another S.R.A. candidate for their second or third preference, while there were many transfers between the Sinn Féin and Labour candidates. The seven Sinn Féin councillors could count on the support of the five Labour councillors, many of whom identified themselves with republicanism and James Devins, an independent councillor, was closely associated with Sinn Féin. This gave Sinn Féin and Labour thirteen seats on the new corporation, while the S.R.A. and the other independents had eleven seats between them.

The S.R.A. had secured thirty-seven per cent of the vote and eight successful candidates, five Protestants and three Catholics, were elected for the party. The successful candidates were the Protestant unionists, Harper Campbell Perry, Percy Campbell Kerr, Young Warren, Arthur Jackson, and Hal R. Wood-Martin, and the Catholics, Edward J. Tighe, a merchant; James Connolly, a merchant and an agent for a shipping company, and Bernard McDonagh, a draper.³⁶ The results of the election proved to be very positive for the Protestants and unionists in Sligo and offered hope for continued Protestant involvement in local government affairs in Sligo.

The Sligo Corporation elections were the first to use P.R. in Britain or Ireland and the election results attracted plenty of interest. The P.R. Society of Ireland praised the results as a triumph and the *Sligo Independent* saluted Mr Humphreys, the secretary of the P.R. Society of Ireland maintaining that the 'success of the system was largely due to the enthusiasm and energy of Mr Humphreys'.³⁷ Humphreys had visited Sligo before the election and explained in full the details of P.R. S.T.V.³⁸

The Dublin and Sligo newspapers of all shades and opinions were quick to applaud the success of the new electoral system. The *Sligo Champion* declared that 'the system has justified its adoption. We saw it work; we saw its simplicity; we saw its unerring honesty to the voter all through; and we saw the result in the final count; and we join in the general expression of those who followed it with an intelligent interest. It is as easy as the old way;

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.; Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45).

³⁷ *S.I.*, 18 Jan. 1919.

³⁸ Ibid.

it is a big improvement and it is absolutely fair'.³⁹ The *Sligo Independent* proudly stated that 'Sligo has the honour of being the first municipality in Ireland to adopt the principle, and everyone agrees that it was a great success'.⁴⁰

The Dublin based newspapers were equally impressed and the *Irish Times* argued that the election 'has established beyond dispute two big things in favour of proportional representation. The first is that it is a thoroughly workable system ... The other big thing - and it is really big - is the proof that in proportional representation we have the Magna Charta of political and municipal minorities'.⁴¹ The *Freeman's Journal* praised the fairness of the new system saying that 'the first elections, on the principle of proportional representation by the single transferable vote, have resulted in the fair representation of all parties',⁴² while the *Irish Independent* called for P.R. to be introduced countrywide arguing that 'proportional representation has given Sligo a model council. There is no reason why it should not be equally successful in Dublin and other cities and towns in Ireland'.⁴³

The extraordinary success of the Sligo election was quickly followed by the adoption of P. R. at national level under the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1919, which extended the principle to the election of 126 town and urban district councils and 200 other local authorities, including county councils and rural district councils.⁴⁴

From 1919 to 1923 the S.R.A., along with the support of some independents, were able to form strong and constructive opposition to Sinn Féin and Labour and allowed the Protestant community in Sligo to reactivate their interest in and make a strong contribution to local municipal affairs. Since the 1898 elections under the Local Government Act, Sligo Corporation had been under nationalist control with no real opposition and in January 1919 although Sinn Féin effectively controlled the corporation there was now a strong S.R.A. led opposition.

On 23 January 1919 Sligo's new corporation met in the town hall to elect a mayor. The outgoing mayor, alderman D.M. Hanley was proposed by the Sinn Féin members while Edward J. Tighe, was proposed by Arthur Jackson and supported by the S.R.A. Nationally, at this time, Sinn Féin was keenly aware of the importance of securing international

³⁹ *S.C.*, 18 Jan. 1919.

⁴⁰ *S.I.*, 18 Jan. 1919.

⁴¹ *Irish Times*, 18 Jan. 1919.

⁴² *Freeman's Journal*, 18 Jan. 1919.

⁴³ *Irish Independent*, 20 Jan. 1919.

⁴⁴ *An act for amending local government in Ireland (Local Government (Ireland) Act 1919)* (9 & 10 Geo. V, c. 19 (3 June 1919)).

sympathy for Irish self-determination and the party had been distancing themselves from the more violent methods advocated by the Volunteers. However, this policy was more difficult to implement locally and James Devins, who was elected as an independent, as he advocated more extreme methods to achieve a republic, voted for Hanley, arguing that he did so because Hanley was a member of the Volunteers. White and Jinks abstained from the vote. Both White and Jinks had been members of the U.I.L., and maybe neither felt able or willing to vote against Sinn Féin. However, their abstention from the vote merely aided Hanley's election. All the S.R.A. councillors voted for Tighe, while the Sinn Féin and Labour councillors voted for Hanley, with the result that Hanley was elected mayor by a vote of twelve to eight. Councillor Lynch of the Labour Party was the only councillor not present at the vote as he was in jail.⁴⁵ This was a further indication that some of those within the Labour Party in Sligo were firmly committed to republicanism.

Of course the *Sligo Independent* editorial of 25 January 1919 expressed strong dissatisfaction with the election of Dudley Hanley as mayor.⁴⁶ However, the British government was eager to point to the success of P.R. in the Sligo elections and argued that the electoral system would assist in gaining representation for the Protestant and unionist minority in southern Ireland.⁴⁷ In reality P.R. seemed to do more for independents, municipal reformers and Labour than it had done for the unionist minority in the south, as in most cases their numbers were too small and widespread for them to achieve adequate representation, unless as in Sligo the former unionists allied themselves with members of the U.I.L. and formed local municipal parties.

Nevertheless many southern unionists were impressed by the results of the Sligo elections and were keen to point to the success of P.R. in securing the representation of unionist minorities. Southern unionists believed that P.R. would allow unionists to take an active part in local affairs, and they advocated the introduction of the voting system in local government elections throughout Ireland. Ulster unionists on the other hand were completely against the introduction of P.R. for local government elections, fearing that it would jeopardise slim unionist majorities in Fermanagh and Tyrone and dilute the unionist vote in some of the other city and town councils in Ulster.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *S.C.*, 25 Jan. 1919.

⁴⁶ *S.I.*, 25 Jan. 1919.

⁴⁷ *S.C.*, 25 Jan. 1919.

⁴⁸ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1* (Dublin, 1972), p. 135.

A comparison of the Sligo Borough Election of January 1919 with urban elections in the rest of the country shows some interesting contrasts. The municipal elections for the rest of the country to be held under P.R. did not take place until a year later in January 1920. Excluding the four north-eastern counties of Ireland of Antrim, Armagh, Derry and Down, where the unionist vote was disproportionately high and they won a large majority of the seats, Sinn Féin captured 572 seats to the 872 won by unionists, nationalists of the I.P.P., municipal reformers and independents.⁴⁹ Oliver Coogan's research of the January 1920 local election results for the Urban District Councils in Co. Meath has found that Sinn Féin gained the votes of less than twenty per cent of the electorate, which was less than the votes cast for the Labour candidates.⁵⁰

David Fitzpatrick's research of the same local elections for the Kilrush Urban District Council in Co. Clare has revealed that Sinn Féin did not win any seats, even though the party was very strong in the rural districts of the county. The Kilrush electorate returned the seven sitting supporters of the I.P.P. and five Labour councillors. In the county town of Ennis Sinn Féin and the I.P.P. representatives gained six seats each, while four Trade Union representatives were returned, along with one independent Labour councillor and one ex-soldier who declared himself a 'Comrade of the Great War'.⁵¹

Where Sinn Féin and the municipal reform parties had done well in Sligo town in 1919, they had not done as well in the urban areas of Meath and Clare a year later. Voters in the urban districts of Clare had remained much more loyal to the I.P.P. than voters had in Sligo a year earlier and Labour had done well in Meath. This could be due to local conditions in Clare but taken along with the elections in Meath and the rest of the country it is an indication that nationalist voters may have become more moderate in light of the violence and disruption caused in the early stages of the War of Independence.

Table 3.4: Seats won by main parties in five large Irish cities in the January 1920 urban elections.

	Dublin	Belfast	Cork	Limerick	Waterford
Sinn Féin	42	5	30	26	20
Nationalists	9	5	15	0	13
Labour	15	13	3	5	3
Unionists	1	37	0	0	0
Independents	13	0	8	9	3
Total	80	60	56	40	39

Source: *S.I.*, 28 Feb. 1920.

⁴⁹ R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p. 497.

⁵⁰ Oliver Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath 1913-23* (Dublin, 1983), p. 205, p. 253.

⁵¹ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), pp 101-2.

However, in January 1920 Sinn Féin did win control of eleven out of the twelve cities and boroughs of Ireland. A look at the five largest cities in Ireland shows that in Dublin City Sinn Féin won a majority with forty-two seats, while Labour won fifteen seats, nationalists got nine seats, the independents won thirteen seats and the unionists managed to get one seat.⁵² In Belfast, the unionists got thirty-seven seats, Sinn Féin got five seats, Labour got thirteen seats, and the nationalists got five seats, while the independents were squeezed out and did not win any seats. In Cork, Limerick and Waterford the unionists did not win any seats. In Cork Sinn Féin won thirty seats, Labour got three, the nationalists fifteen and the independents won eight. In Limerick Sinn Féin got twenty-six seats, Labour gained five seats, and the independents won nine seats. In Waterford Sinn Féin secured twenty seats, Labour won three seats, the nationalists secured thirteen seats, and the independents got three seats.

Sinn Féin won a majority in four of the principal Irish cities and only in Belfast did unionists secure most of the seats. However, the municipal elections for the rest of the country were different in January 1920 than they were for Sligo in January 1919. By 1920 the country was in the grip of the War of Independence and on the issue of self-determination the Labour Party was now much more identified with Sinn Féin. Robert Kee has argued that in early 1920 Sinn Féin was trying to distance themselves from the more extreme activities of the Volunteers, especially as regards the arms raids and the agrarian trouble, a process started in 1918 and later frowned upon by the Sinn Féin leadership.⁵³

The dispute amongst unionists concerning P.R. was only one of many disagreements within Irish unionism at the time, and at an I.U.A. meeting on 24 January 1919 factions within the unionist organisation were disagreeing over their approach towards Home Rule and the separate six county partition settlement demanded by Ulster unionists. Lord Midleton, the I.U.A. leader, and his supporters within the movement, were insisting that members of the I.U.A. from the six Ulster counties of Antrim, Down, Armagh, Derry, Fermanagh and Tyrone should not be permitted to take part in I.U.A. deliberations concerning partition.⁵⁴

The S.U.C., the group within the I.U.A. who were still completely against any form of Home Rule for Ireland, believed that close cooperation between southern unionists and Ulster unionists was vital in the strategy for the successful resistance of Home Rule. At a

⁵² *S.I.*, 28 Feb. 1920.

⁵³ Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 666.

⁵⁴ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism I* (Dublin, 1972), pp 368-9.

meeting of the I.U.A. in Dublin on 24 January 1919 Midleton introduced a proposal to exclude Ulster unionists which was defeated by a large majority and in protest he resigned from the I.U.A. and immediately formed the unionist Anti-Partition League (A.P.L.).⁵⁵ The S.U.C. was left in control of the remainder of the I.U.A. and on 5 March 1919 the S.U.C. intensified their efforts to resist Home Rule by setting up a committee in London to campaign on behalf of the Union and mobilise British support for Irish unionism.⁵⁶ How did unionist leaders in Sligo react to this development?

Charles O'Hara was generally a strong supporter of Lord Midleton. However, he was in favour of keeping the Ulster unionists on board and he disagreed with barring the Ulster unionists from the I.U.A. meetings.⁵⁷ O'Hara maintained that the majority of unionists elected to the House of Commons were from the six counties of Ulster and he argued that it was important for unionism to be represented at Westminster where they could forward Irish unionist interests in Britain.⁵⁸ On 17 October 1919 O'Hara received letters from John E. Walsh, the secretary of the S.U.C., requesting his subscription to a special fund for propaganda work against Sinn Féin.⁵⁹ O'Hara appeared quite supportive and he confirmed his support for the propaganda work, promising a contribution.⁶⁰ O'Hara was not alone in supporting the S.U.C. and five other Sligo unionists, Arthur O'Hara, Basil Phibbs, Bryan Cooper, Alex Perceval and William Fenton were also interested in supporting the request.⁶¹

O'Hara's support of both Midleton and Walsh suggested that Sligo unionists, in common with many other southern unionists, were becoming increasingly bewildered with the future development of Irish unionism and O'Hara seemed to want to remain on good terms with both groups by steering a conciliatory path. The split in southern unionism was very confusing for local unionists and at this early stage it should not be interpreted that O'Hara's support for Ulster unionists was turning him away from supporting Midleton.

The I.U.A. were deeply concerned with the growth of Sinn Féin, a party that was demanding much more independence for Ireland than the I.P.P. had. The results of the December 1918 election left Sinn Féin as the largest nationalist party in Ireland. The party had won seventy-three seats, while the I.P.P. had only managed to obtain six seats.⁶²

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 372.

⁵⁷ O'Hara to Denis R. Pack-Beresford, 22 Jan. 1919 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ John E. Walsh to O'Hara, 17 Oct. 1919 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 36442/2).

⁶⁰ O'Hara to John E. Walsh, 20 Oct. 1919 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16826).

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985* (Cambridge, 1989), pp 40-1.

However, Sinn Féin M.P.s refused to take their seats in the House of Commons and adopted a policy of 'abstentionism', and instead the party met in Dublin and convened the first Dáil on 21 January 1919.⁶³ Sinn Féin was determined to secure international recognition for Ireland as an independent nation and the party sent representatives to the Paris Peace Conference, where the post war settlement of Europe was being discussed.⁶⁴ Sinn Féin did not wish to turn international opinion against the idea of Irish independence by advocating violent revolutionary methods and for the most part they committed themselves to a political strategy.

In January 1919 the *Sligo Champion* maintained that Sinn Féin Party's main concern was to gain support for their appeal to the Peace Conference arguing that 'the most ardent Sinn Féiners' were opposed to violent methods that may jeopardise this.⁶⁵ Harry Osbourne, a member of the Sligo Young Republican Club, a branch of the Sinn Féin youth movement, submitted an article to the *Sligo Champion* advocating that Sinn Féin should capitalise on its gains at the elections by consolidating its position within Sligo Corporation and other public bodies. Osbourne argued that Sinn Féin should 'demonstrate that in all things concerning the people's will we are the most law-abiding people in Europe'.⁶⁶

Sinn Féin had no long-term political policies apart from the separation of Ireland from Britain and the hope that through abstentionism and pleas to the Paris Peace Conference Ireland would achieve self-determination. By May 1919 it was obvious that Irish appeals to the Paris Peace Conference had ended in failure, as the victorious nations in the war were uncomfortable with the fact that Sinn Féin had allied themselves with the defeated Germans.⁶⁷

The political cause was beginning to lose momentum and the initiative was passed to those within the movement who were advocating more extreme methods to achieve independence.⁶⁸ Many within the republican movement already believed that only through military action would Ireland ever achieve independence and, even as the first Dáil met on 21 January 1919, a group of Irish Volunteers ambushed two policemen in Soloheadbeg, Co. Tipperary, taking their arms and the dynamite they had been escorting. The men had not

⁶³ Cornelius O'Leary, *Irish elections, 1918-77* (Dublin, 1979), p. 8.

⁶⁴ J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 41.

⁶⁵ *S.C.*, 4 Jan. 1919.

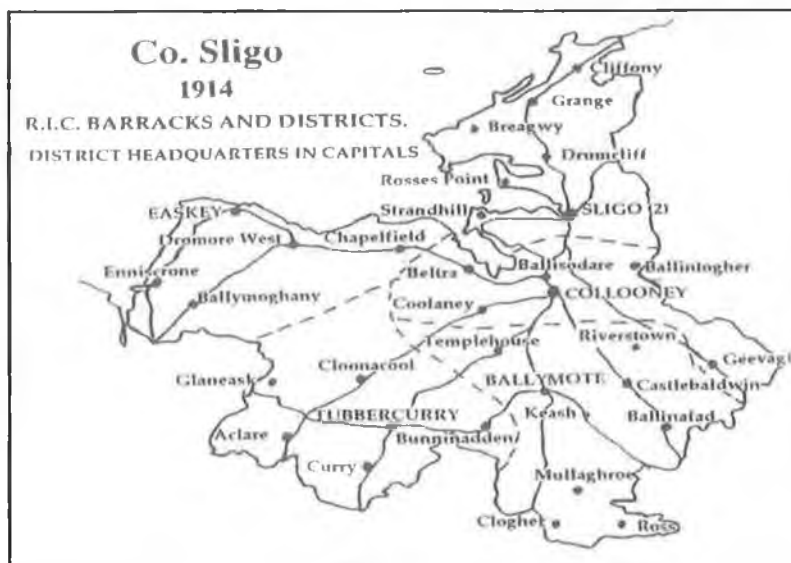
⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 11 Jan. 1919.

⁶⁷ Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 640.

⁶⁸ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (Dublin, 1988), p. 6.

received the approval of the Dáil or Volunteer G.H.Q. in Dublin for their action. However, the incident at Soloheadbeg is usually seen as the first episode in the War of Independence.⁶⁹

Map of R.I.C. barracks and Districts in Co. Sligo, 1914.



Source: Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921: a chronicle of conflict* (Trim, 1994), p. 12.

Sligo Volunteers were also eager to strike at the British administration in Ireland. However, in early 1919 the Sligo Volunteers did not seem prepared to fight a war and they lacked weapons and material. Local Volunteers held regular meetings, which kept up morale and provided contact, but the organisation needed confrontation to survive. The R.I.C. was the most obvious face of British occupation in Co. Sligo and presented the best target for Volunteer action. Before the outbreak of the First World War there were thirty-four R.I.C. barracks in Co. Sligo with over 200 men.⁷⁰

Many of the officers were Protestant and unionist, although a large proportion of the R.I.C. rank-and-file and junior officers were Catholic and many sympathised with the nationalist cause. Before the ambush at Soloheadbeg Irish Volunteers in Ballymaghney Co. Sligo had attacked and wounded R.I.C. Sergeant James McLoughlin on 12 December 1918.⁷¹ In January 1919 the R.I.C. reported that the people in Sligo were disloyal and distrusted the government.⁷² However, there were no further acts of violence against the

⁶⁹ Eunan O'Halpin, 'The army in independent Ireland' in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds.), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), pp 407-8.

⁷⁰ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Jan. 1914 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8546).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan. 1919.

⁷² *Ibid.*

police.⁷³ The Volunteers in Sligo at this time were not strong enough to launch any serious attacks against the R.I.C. as they lacked not only weaponry but also effective leadership.

This changed in March 1919 when Sligo Sinn Féin leaders, J.J. Clancy, Alec McCabe and J.J. O'Connell were released from prison in Britain. During the month all three addressed meetings in Sligo calling on the people to support 'a free and independent Irish Republic'.⁷⁴ However, McCabe and O'Connell, who were also members of the Volunteers, advocated more direct military action against the British authorities.⁷⁵ The R.I.C. immediately recognised the threat and by the end of March Clancy had been rearrested along with William (Liam) Pilkington, the officer commanding (O/C) the Sligo town Volunteers.⁷⁶ At this stage the R.I.C. probably thought they had done enough to discourage the Volunteers in Sligo and they did not arrest Countess Markievicz when she visited Sligo on 11 April although she had spoken at two meetings condemning the R.I.C. and boasting that she had killed policemen. However, Countess Markievicz's visit to Sligo encouraged more women to join the Cuman na mBan movement and at the end of April there were seven branches of the organisation in Sligo with about 200 members.⁷⁷

In early April 1919 the British government reorganised and expanded their forces in Sligo and the Sussex Yeomanry replaced the Essex Regiment.⁷⁸ Later in the month the Norfolk Yeomanry arrived in Sligo to augment the British forces already stationed in the town, bringing the number of British troops stationed in the county to between 600 and 700.⁷⁹ Throughout the month of May 1919 the military increased their build up in Sligo and in June a destroyer and a minesweeper arrived in Sligo and sixty marines were stationed at Rosses Point, a coastal village located about five miles from Sligo town.⁸⁰ This could have been an attempt by the British authorities to prevent the importation of arms into Sligo by sea. The authorities were also keenly aware that Sligo was an important communications centre and occupied a key geographic position between the two provinces of Connacht and Ulster, and control of the town and hinterland was a vital part of their overall defensive strategy for the region.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ *S.C.*, 22 Mar. 1919.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ *S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.*, 1 Apr. 1919 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8548).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1 May 1919.

⁷⁸ *S.I.*, 5 Apr. 1919.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 19 Apr. 1919.

⁸⁰ *S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.*, 1 July 1919 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8549).

In the rural areas of Sligo, unionist landowners, especially in the south of the county, became increasingly concerned over Sinn Féin's policy to distribute large farms amongst smallholders and the landless. The importance of land division to people in Sligo was shown at a Dáil meeting on 4 April 1919. Alec McCabe, T.D. for south Sligo proposed a resolution, which was seconded by Countess Markievicz, to redistribute 'the vacant land and ranches of Ireland among the uneconomic holders and landless men'.⁸¹ The proposal was later withdrawn although McCabe argued that 'it was essential for the Dáil to take up a definite stand with a view to securing the land for the people'.⁸² This also indicates the differences between the Dáil and the demands of local landless tenants in Sligo of which McCabe would have been only too aware. However, Sinn Féin had learned from the previous experience of the 'conacre' campaign in 1918 that agrarian agitation, especially when it is led by committed Volunteers like McCabe, can potentially damage the reputation of the party when it gets out of control.

From May to July 1919 Protestant farmers in south Sligo were particularly affected by agrarian trouble and some were under police protection after they claimed to have been intimidated by people they believed to be members of Sinn Féin.⁸³ On 29 May 1919 a crowd of about 200 people held a meeting near the Dunmoran ranch owned by Richard Hillas to encourage him to divide the large holding amongst small farmers in the area.⁸⁴ Hillas had 2,194 acres of untenanted land.⁸⁵ In July 1919 most of the fourteen reported agrarian offences during the month had occurred in south Sligo. The offences included cases of firing into dwelling houses, cattle maiming, and intimidation by armed and masked men. The objective of the attacks was probably to force landowners to give up their land and the R.I.C. were convinced that Sinn Féin activists were behind all these offences.⁸⁶ Sinn Féin's previous support for landless tenants which favoured the poorer farmers over the wealthier, had done much to increase the party's strength in south Co. Sligo. However, the Sinn Féin Party was careful not to allow trouble arising from local land hunger to harm the party's image.

⁸¹ *Dáil Éireann*, 18 June 1919, vol. i, *diospóireachtal páirliminte* (parliamentary debates); *tuairisc oifigiúil* (official report), (<http://www.historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/>) (26 May 2006).

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Aug. 1919 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8550).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 June 1919.

⁸⁵ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510).

⁸⁶ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Aug. 1919 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8550).

Sinn Féin was keen to limit agrarian agitation and in September the Co. Sligo R.I.C. Inspector reported a decrease in agrarian crime.⁸⁷ As a result of pressure from the activists some large farmers in south Sligo who were experiencing intimidation, sold part or all of their holdings, which were subsequently divided up among local smallholders under Sinn Féin supervision. Sinn Féin members singled out a small number of Protestant farmers for persistent intimidation in the south Sligo area to force them to surrender part of their lands. Three Protestant farmers in the south Sligo area, Palmer J. McCloghery, with over 620 acres of untenanted land and Alex Reid and Richard G. Bell with smaller amounts of land, were all regularly intimidated and forced to sell land on terms dictated by the local 'Sinn Féiners'.⁸⁸ It also indicated that the Dáil and the local Sinn Féin leadership were never able to effectively control local agrarian activity and were probably unable to completely dissuade their members from becoming involved.

In the summer of 1919 Sinn Féin was a party which consisted of many different groups, large and small farmers, employers, employees and others, each with their own particular grievances and reasons for supporting the party and it would prove difficult to reconcile and unite all these disparate groups. Sinn Féin tried to consolidate the party's position in Sligo by holding *Aeríoctaí* (open air meetings). In the period June to August seven large *Aeríoctaí* were held throughout the county.⁸⁹ Sometimes the police and military tried to frustrate these meetings. However, generally the R.I.C. did not interfere with the gatherings and it is possible that they did not wish to inflame the already potentially volatile political situation in Sligo. There may have also been the unofficial belief that if the police did not aggravate Sinn Féin supporters, then the diverging groups within the movement may break it apart.

However, Sligo unionists, such as Charles O'Hara and the military authorities in Sligo appeared to believe that Sinn Féin was one homogenous group representing the interests of cultural Gaelic nationalists, the Irish Volunteers, and other national groups. Even though there was much overlap in membership between the various nationalist organisations, the Volunteers were committed to achieving a republic by force of arms, with little regard for

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 Sept. 1919.

⁸⁸ Palmer J. McCloghery, 15 Apr. 1919 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7); Palmer J. McCloghery, 20 Oct. 1919 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7); Palmer J. McCloghery (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/63); Alex Reid, 20 Oct. 1919 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7); Richard G. Bell (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/205); Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510).

⁸⁹ *S.C.*, 29 June 1919, 5 July 1919; 10 Aug. 1919; 24 Aug. 1919; 6 Sept. 1919.

the political repercussions. In August 1919 an organiser was sent from Volunteer G.H.Q. in Dublin to assist with the formation of new Irish Volunteer battalions, especially in the south Sligo area.⁹⁰ The authorities were aware of the reorganisation and the increased activity of the Volunteers and in September the R.I.C. carried out raids for arms, which were concentrated in south Sligo.⁹¹

The R.I.C. and the army in Sligo were determined to uncover any weapons held by the Volunteers and in tandem with this the authorities in Sligo decided to crack down on the pro-Sinn Féin press and in September and October 1919 they repeatedly raided the offices of the *Sligo Nationalist* newspaper offices in Stephen Street.⁹² The *Sligo Nationalist* became the most vocal republican newspapers in Sligo at the time. Robert Bradshaw, who had been a prominent Protestant anti-conscriptionist, was the editor of the *Sligo Nationalist* and he regularly published strongly republican material.⁹³ The actions of the authorities seemed to drive Sinn Féin and the Volunteers closer together and made it more apparent to the moderates within Sinn Féin that the more extreme views expressed by the Volunteers towards the British government were justified.

At the end of 1919, despite or possibly as a result of the government's raids and restrictions, Sinn Féin was the dominant political organisation in Sligo and was well established, with a membership of over 4,330 in fifty-two clubs around the county.⁹⁴ With the support of many Labour Party councillors, Sligo Corporation, Sligo County Council and other public bodies had Sinn Féin majorities.⁹⁵ The Irish Volunteers, who were now becoming known as the I.R.A., although the term 'Volunteers' continued to be in use, had been divided into six battalion areas, Ballymote, Collooney, Gurteen, Riverstown, Sligo town and Tubbercurry, and the R.I.C. were preparing for an escalation in the conflict.⁹⁶ At the end of 1919 the R.I.C. began the process of evacuating several of the smaller rural police stations around the county in order to 'augment the remaining stations with a view to resisting any sudden attack'.⁹⁷

In January 1920 the political situation in Sligo was quite volatile and the R.I.C. Co. Inspector believed that people who were 'not in sympathy with Sinn Féin are living in a

⁹⁰ Sligo Brigade Material (N.L.I., Collins papers, P 914).

⁹¹ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Oct. 1919 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8550).

⁹² S.C., 20 Sept. 1919.

⁹³ S.N., 20 Sept. 1919; 8 Nov. 1919.

⁹⁴ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Jan. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 Dec. 1919.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

state of terror'.⁹⁸ On 10 January an attack took place on the Sligo Engineering Company's garage on Adelaide and George Street.⁹⁹ Cars were damaged and hundreds of gallons of petrol were destroyed. The company, which was owned by Arthur P. Jackson jun. of Lisroyan, the son of local Protestant businessman and corporation councillor, Arthur Jackson, was one of five garages attacked on the night and five cars belonging to Protestant businessmen in Sligo were damaged. The injured parties later sought compensation amounting to £1,329.¹⁰⁰

The destruction of the cars owned by Protestant businessmen in Sligo was blamed on Sinn Féin supporters and at the corporation meeting on 14 January 1920, alderman Kerr, while criticising the raids for arms on defenceless houses by the Volunteers, proposed a resolution strongly condemning the destruction of the motor cars and property, which was supported by the S.R.A. councillors. However, the Sinn Féin members of the corporation refused to condemn the attacks.¹⁰¹ On 24 January 1920 the *Sligo Independent* editorial praised the courage of alderman Kerr and the councillors who backed him.¹⁰² The damage inflicted on the cars and garages owned by Protestant businessmen was most probably an attempt by members of the I.R.A. to intimidate the businessmen and Sinn Féin's refusal to condemn the action fostered ill feeling between the two communities in Sligo and caused further anxiety for Protestants.

The manner in which alderman Kerr introduced the resolution also angered Sinn Féin members, and gave them the excuse they needed in refusing to condemn the incident. Kerr had made references to raids for arms by the I.R.A. and inferred that republicans were to blame for all the trouble in the country. Kerr's verbal attack opened the door for the Sinn Féin councillors to blame the British presence in Ireland for the present troubles, while independent members on the corporation concentrated on blaming the poor policies of the British government for the country's present troubles.¹⁰³

On 30 January 1920 Sligo Corporation met to select a new mayor for the year and the outgoing Sinn Féin mayor, Dudley Hanley proposed fellow Sinn Féin councillor Thomas Fitzpatrick.¹⁰⁴ Fitzpatrick was a chemist from Knox Street in Sligo and was also a member

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 Feb. 1920.

⁹⁹ *Cook and McNeilly Ltd. and Arthur Jackson*, 27 Mar. 1920 (S.C.L., *Criminal Injuries Book*, L7); S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Feb. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *S.I.*, 24 Jan. 1920.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 7 Feb. 1920.

of Sligo Harbour Board. The Protestant unionist councillor, alderman Perry of the S.R.A. protested the nomination of councillor Fitzpatrick arguing that a member of the S.R.A. should have been given the chance to become mayor, since the S.R.A. represented 'three-fourth of those who pay the rates'.¹⁰⁵ The protest made little difference and Fitzpatrick was elected mayor.

The S.R.A. councillors, Kerr and Jackson, acknowledged that they strongly differed in political opinion from the outgoing mayor, Dudley Hanley. However, they both praised his fairness as mayor and congratulated the new mayor.¹⁰⁶ In accepting his new role, councillor Fitzpatrick declared that as mayor he would 'never receive or entertain a British delegation' and was convinced that 'the Irish people, if given the opportunity, are capable of managing their own affairs without interference from outside'.¹⁰⁷ Councillor Fitzpatrick was also adamant that he would take not an oath of allegiance to Britain or enforce British law in Sligo.¹⁰⁸ Fitzpatrick's statements must have aggravated the S.R.A. councillors. However, they had no real alternative other than to remain silent and continue to work within the system and hope that a situation would arise when they could better influence events.

On 7 February 1920 the *Sligo Independent* editorial maintained that it was the only paper that was impartial in its representation of the views of all political opinions in Sligo.¹⁰⁹ The editorial praised alderman Perry's protest on behalf of the S.R.A. and criticised Sinn Féin and the mayoral election believing it was more important that the corporation should focus on the financial situation of the borough and 'promote the welfare of the town generally' rather than just further the interests of Sinn Féin.¹¹⁰ The paper used the opportunity offered by the mayoral election to argue for the preservation of the Union between Britain and Ireland and questioned whether an independent Irish republic would in any way advance the prosperity of Sligo town, arguing that under the British government, local councils in Ireland already had plenty of freedom in controlling their own affairs.¹¹¹

The *Sligo Independent* was somewhat smug in its boast to be the only newspaper that represented the views of all political persuasions in Sligo, as the paper was much more

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

inclined to represent the views and values of the S.R.A. However, the paper served a very useful purpose in that its editorials largely represented the Protestant viewpoint in Sligo.

On 25 February 1920 the British government formally introduced the new Government of Ireland Bill into the House of Commons.¹¹² The bill provided for the establishment of two parliaments in Ireland, one for the 26 counties of Southern Ireland and another one for the six counties of 'Northern Ireland'. Each region would control the internal affairs in its respective district while the Imperial parliament in London would still have responsibility for all the external affairs of Ireland, including control of the armed forces, coinage and relations with foreign powers. A number of M.P.s from both Northern and Southern Ireland would continue to attend the imperial parliament and vote on issues relating to their respective regions.¹¹³

How did the bill go down with the Irish people that it was supposed to please? The I.U.A. wished to completely oppose the Government of Ireland Bill and continue their total opposition to any form of Irish Home Rule. However, the I.U.A. received very little support from British politicians and the hoped for alliance with Ulster unionists evaporated on 10 March 1920 when the Ulster Unionist Council (U.U.C.) refused to oppose the bill and although they were unhappy about partitioning the country, the Ulster unionists were ultimately content to have their own parliament in which they could strengthen their position in the northeast of Ireland.¹¹⁴

Midleton and the A.P.L. leadership were not satisfied with many of the terms contained in the Government of Ireland Bill and on 13 March 1920 they wrote to Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, criticising the bill.¹¹⁵ The A.P.L. claimed that the bill only contained protection for the unionists in Ulster and the division of Ireland into two separate areas would establish the permanent partition of Ireland. They also had problems with the financial provisions in the bill, maintaining that the bill introduced a system of double taxation, whereby wealth generated in southern Ireland would be taxed by both the Dublin and Westminster parliaments. The A.P.L. argued that even with the benefit of P.R., the scattered unionist population in southern Ireland could only hope to secure one or two seats

¹¹² Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1* (Dublin, 1972), p. 374.

¹¹³ Nicholas Mansergh, 'The Government of Ireland Act, 1920: its origins and purposes. The workings of the 'official mind'' in J.G. Barry, *Historical Studies*, no. 9 (Belfast, 1974), pp 44-6.

¹¹⁴ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1* (Dublin, 1972), pp 374-5.

¹¹⁵ *S.I.*, 20 Mar. 1920.

in an Irish House of Commons. Southern unionists maintained that they could only be assured of representation if there was a nominated senate.¹¹⁶

Sinn Féin wanted much more independence than just merely more Home Rule and while the I.P.P. were happy with the increased legislative powers of the bill, they were completely against any form of partition for Ireland. Sinn Féin completely ignored the Government of Ireland Bill and decided to use the elections stipulated in the bill to establish the Second Dáil and reaffirm nationalist support for their demands. The I.R.A. passed little remarks of the bill and were continuing with their armed struggle and to some extent this also muted the Sinn Féin response to the bill, as physical force nationalism was to the fore in the country at this time. It seemed that a bill, which was introduced to appease the demands of such a variety of groups in Ireland, was destined to satisfy no one and almost everybody was unhappy with it.

How active were the I.R.A. in Sligo at this time? By the end of January 1920 regular mail trains from Sligo to Ballyshannon and from Ballymote to Sligo had been discontinued owing to a number of attacks by the I.R.A. during the month.¹¹⁷ However, the main concern for the Sligo I.R.A. at the beginning of 1920 was the acquisition of arms for their men and in order to secure weapons the I.R.A. raided the houses of Protestants and unionist sympathisers in Sligo, especially those located in the country areas. During January and February 1920 the I.R.A. raided fourteen houses belonging to Protestants and unionists including Major Eccles, Charles Graham, and Major Alex Perceval, Templehouse, Co. Sligo.¹¹⁸ At the end of February a government proclamation officially declared that seven Irish counties, including Sligo, were 'in a state of disturbance' and police reinforcements were required to re-establish control.¹¹⁹ There were two main reasons why the I.R.A. targeted Protestants and unionists in raids for arms rather than Catholics. Firstly most Protestants happened to hold unionist political views and were therefore completely opposed to the aims of the I.R.A., and were perceived as soft targets. Secondly, many wealthier Protestants were more likely to own guns for hunting purposes and many had also served in the military and had retained firearms after they had left the service.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 Jan. 1920.

¹¹⁸ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Feb.- 1 Mar. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551); Major A. Perceval, 23 Mar. 1920 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7); *S.C.*, 31 Jan. 1920; *S.I.*, 28 Feb. 1920; 6 Mar. 1920; *S.C.*, 13 Mar. 1920.

¹¹⁹ *S.I.*, 13 Mar. 1920.

At the end of February 1920 Sinn Féin was the dominant political organisation in Co. Sligo and the party's membership in Sligo had swelled to over 4,500 while I.R.A. membership in Sligo was estimated at 615 men.¹²⁰ Over the course of March and April 1920 the R.I.C. continued withdrawing from isolated barracks in Co. Sligo.¹²¹ Many of the barracks were just houses in villages and presented an easy target for attack. On 15 March 1920, Coolaney barracks in south Sligo was closed.¹²² On 20 March 1920 the *Sligo Independent* editorial criticised the R.I.C. withdrawal and argued that law-abiding people in Co. Sligo had been left without any protection.¹²³ As the R.I.C. withdrew the I.R.A. destroyed the buildings previously occupied by the police.¹²⁴

Sligo Protestants happened to own many of the buildings, which had been occupied by the R.I.C., and they suffered indirectly as a result of the I.R.A. attacks. Six R.I.C. barracks belonging to Protestants were destroyed in the period April to May 1920.¹²⁵ Eleanor G. Phibbs, John Fairbanks, William Parke, Susan Fawcett, Lucy Middleton, Mary Ormsby, Henry D. Middleton and Major Charles O'Hara owned the buildings.¹²⁶ Charles O'Hara suffered most and was awarded almost £3,000 in compensation.¹²⁷

At the time the R.I.C. probably did not regard their withdrawals as permanent and initially they were concentrating on establishing better defensive positions in the urban areas and forming highly mobile patrols. Sligo I.R.A. had not played a very significant part in what Robert Kee labels the first phase of the War of Independence which was ran from January 1919 to the beginning of March 1920. Up to April 1920 no R.I.C. casualties had been sustained in Co. Sligo.¹²⁸ Ironically it was the R.I.C. withdrawal from rural stations which allowed the I.R.A. to demolish the buildings occupied by the R.I.C., and actually increased the morale of the organisation in Sligo and allowed them to take a more active role in what Kee calls the second phase of the War of Independence which covered the period March 1920 to October 1920 and was marked by a widespread breakdown in law and

¹²⁰ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Mar. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 1 Mar.–1 May. 1920.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 1 Apr. 1920.

¹²³ *S.I.*, 20 Mar. 1920.

¹²⁴ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 May 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551).

¹²⁵ Eleanor G. Phibbs, 20 May 1920, John Fairbanks, 28 Sept 1920, William Parke, 4 Oct. 1920, Susan Fawcett, Lucy Middleton, Mary Ormsby, and Henry D. Middleton, 4 Oct. 1920, Major Charles O'Hara, 28 Sept. 1920 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7), *S.I.*, 9 Oct. 1920.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Major Charles O'Hara, 28 Sept. 1920 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7).

¹²⁸ Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 698.

order in Ireland and a more extreme approach to the war by both sides.¹²⁹ However, while the Sligo I.R.A. were organising themselves for much more ambitious targets, Sinn Féin was preparing for the Sligo County Council elections, which were scheduled for the end of May.

Sinn Féin was very well organised for the election and from February to April 1920 the party had held meetings throughout Co. Sligo where the various Sinn Féin clubs in each electoral area met and decided on the same number of candidates as there were available seats in order to maximise the votes and to avoid rivalry between supporters and inter-Sinn Féin contests.¹³⁰ In late April some Sinn Féin selections were changed as the British government released Sinn Féin and I.R.A. prisoners as a gesture of conciliation for the upcoming elections.¹³¹ However, it had the effect of ensuring that the Sinn Féin election candidates were from the more extreme wing of the party, with many also in the I.R.A.

Six Sinn Féin candidates were selected; two for the Sligo urban area were John Lynch and James (Seamus) McGowan. John Hennigan and Laurence McHugh were chosen to represent the Clary and Drumcliff/Rosses Point respectively. P.J. Rooney and Denis Leonard were selected for the Cliffony and Grange districts.¹³² All the Sinn Féin candidates had to sign a pledge affirming that they recognised 'the republic established by the will and vote of the Irish people as the legitimate government of Ireland'.¹³³ Only the S.R.A. planned to oppose Sinn Féin and only in the Sligo town area. The only two other organisations in the county that could hope to oppose Sinn Féin were the U.I.L. and the Labour Party. The Labour Party in Sligo was working closely with Sinn Féin at this time, while the U.I.L. in the county had all the appearance of a spent force. The U.I.L. branches in Co. Sligo had declined from a membership of 4,174 in 33 branches at the general election in December 1918 to a membership of 535 in 6 clubs in May 1920.¹³⁴

On 28 May 1920 the elections for Sligo County Council took place and this allowed Sinn Féin to use the opportunity to demonstrate its strength in Sligo. Voting took place under the P.R. system of election and under the 1898 Local Government Act the county was divided into four electoral areas, the Sligo and Ballymote areas elected six councillors each, while Tubbercurry and Dromore each elected four councillors. Most of the existing county

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *S.C.*, 14 Feb. 1920; 3 Apr. 1920; 10 Apr. 1920.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 24 Apr. 1920.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.*, 1 Dec. 1918 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8547); *Ibid.*, 1 May 1920.

councillors did not go forward for re-election and only six were re-nominated. There were reports of Sinn Féin intimidation leading up to the election and some existing councillors may have agreed with the *Sligo Champion* editorial on 22 May 1920 which argued that 'the present is no time for giving any encouragement to disunion or dissent in the ranks of nationalists. There is only one policy before the country'.¹³⁵ This call to the nationalist voters of Sligo had a familiar ring and before the First World War the *Sligo Champion* had made similar announcements in the run up to elections when the paper had called for nationalists to vote for U.I.L./I.P.P. candidates at the local and general elections.

The Volunteers policed the elections and the *Sligo Independent* made the claim that 'there was wholesale personation'.¹³⁶ However, there was no real determined opposition to the Sinn Féin candidates and probably no need for personation. All the Labour candidates had declared themselves as Sinn Féiners in the election.¹³⁷ In the Sligo electoral area ten candidates contested six seats. There were six Sinn Féin candidates, three S.R.A. and one independent. John Hennigan, an outgoing councillor, who had converted from supporting the U.I.L./I.P.P. to Sinn Féin, topped the poll with 1,256 votes, 377 votes above the quota of 879. P.J. Rooney, Sinn Féin, who received 957 votes and alderman John Lynch, who had been elected for the Labour Party to Sligo Corporation, but was now running for Sinn Féin in the county council elections, also got 957 votes, and both were elected on the first count. Denis Leonard who got 876 first preference votes, Laurence McHugh who received 707 and Seamus McGowan who got 705 were next elected. Sinn Féin took the six seats with a very even distribution of votes, and Sinn Féin transfers went to the Sinn Féin candidates.

Considering the success of the S.R.A. in the January 1919 corporation election, the party had the potential to do well in the Sligo electoral area. However, the reverse was the case. The votes recorded for Hal Wood-Martin, Percy Kerr, Patrick Jordan and the independent candidate John Jinks together did not even make one quota. Of the four candidates, John Jinks, an outgoing councillor and a former supporter of the I.P.P., did the best, gaining 302 first preference votes. Of the S.R.A. candidates, Kerr got 186 votes, Wood-Martin got 126 votes, and Jordan only received seventy-six votes.

¹³⁵ *S.C.*, 22 May 1920.

¹³⁶ *S.I.*, 5 June 1920.

¹³⁷ *S.C.*, 22 May 1920.

Table 3.5: Sligo Electoral area, County Council Election, May 1920.

6 seats; valid poll: 6,148; quota: 879.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
John Hennigan	Sinn Féin	1,256	Elected
P.J. Rooney	Sinn Féin	957	Elected
John Lynch	Sinn Féin	957	Elected
Denis Leonard	Sinn Féin	876	Elected
Laurence McHugh	Sinn Féin	707	Elected
Seamus McGowan	Sinn Féin	705	Elected
John Jinks	Independent	302	Not elected
Percy Kerr	S.R.A.	186	Not elected
H.R. Wood-Martin	S.R.A.	126	Not elected
Patrick Jordan	S.R.A.	76	Not elected

Source: S.C., 5 June 1920.

In the Dromore area six candidates, four Sinn Féin and two independents, contested the four seats. The total valid poll for the area was 3,890. 3,613 went to Sinn Féin, while only 277 went to the independents. The quota was 779, and after the first count the Sinn Féin candidates Michael J. Hanley, topped the poll with 1,194 first preference votes while J.J. Clancy, M.P. was second with 914 votes and D.M. Hanley was third with 818 votes. All three had reached the quota and their surpluses, a combined 399 from the other Sinn Féin candidates, guaranteed that the fourth Sinn Féin candidate, Daniel Kilcullen, on 687 first preference votes, reached the quota and was elected. Peter Cawley, who ran as an independent in the area was a long serving nationalist councillor from Coolaney. Cawley only received 129 first preference votes, and in common with many other supporters of the U.I.L./I.P.P. lost his seat on Sligo County Council. The other independent, Alex Crichton of Carrowgarry, a Protestant farmer who had been a supporter of Home Rule, got 148 first preference votes.

Table 3.6: Dromore Electoral area, County Council Election, May 1920.

4 seats; valid poll: 3,890; quota: 779.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
Michael J. Hanley	Sinn Féin	1,194	Elected
J.J. Clancy	Sinn Féin	914	Elected
D.M. Hanley	Sinn Féin	818	Elected
Daniel Kilcullen	Sinn Féin	687	Elected
Alex Crichton	Independent	148	Not Elected
Peter Cawley	Independent	129	Not Elected

Source: S.C., 5 June 1920.

In the Ballymote area there were six seats available. Alec McCabe, Bernard Conlon, John (Séan) McMorrow, Tom O'Donnell, Michael Finn and Michael Gray, were the Sinn Féin candidates. Patrick McManamy, an outgoing councillor who was seeking re-election ran as an independent Sinn Féin candidate. Two others, James Wynne and James Gildea, ran as independent candidates. In the area there were about 9,000 on the register and only about half of these voted and the quota was 683. Alec McCabe topped the poll with 1,056 first preference votes and three other Sinn Féin candidates reached the quota, Conlon, with 1,040 votes, McMorrow with 944 and Tom O'Donnell with 868. Finn with 322 and Gray with 316 first preference votes received the vast majority of the surplus votes from the elected Sinn Féin candidates and were both elected without reaching the quota. Gray had been the only outgoing councillor seeking re-election and no doubt his conversion to Sinn Féin had allowed him to be re-elected. McManamy, the independent Sinn Féin candidate received 189 first preference votes while Wynne got twenty-six first preference votes and Gildea had only received fifteen first preference votes.

Table 3.7: Ballymote Electoral area, County Council Election, May 1920.
6 seats; valid poll: 4,776; quota: 683.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
Alec McCabe	Sinn Féin	1,056	Elected
Bernard Conlon	Sinn Féin	1,040	Elected
John McMorrow	Sinn Féin	944	Elected
Tom O'Donnell	Sinn Féin	868	Elected
Michael Finn	Sinn Féin	322	Elected
Michael Gray	Sinn Féin	316	Elected
Patrick McManamy	Independent Sinn Féin	189	Not elected
James Wynne	Independent	26	Not elected
James Gildea	Independent	15	Not elected

Source: S.C., 5 June 1920.

There were four seats in the Tubbercurry area. However, the area was uncontested and the Sinn Féin candidates John P. (Jack) Brennan, James Gilligan, John F. Mullarkey and Thomas Murrice were declared to be the new councillors. There had been six nominations in the area, five Sinn Féin and an independent, P.J. Henry, the only outgoing councillor who was seeking re-election. However, on 3 May 1920 Henry was visited by masked gunmen, probably I.R.A. members, and told to withdraw his nomination, as he was

told that the four seats 'were needed by the Irish Republic'.¹³⁸ Henry withdrew, as did James Cahill, the remaining Sinn Féin nomination.¹³⁹

Table 3.8: Tubbercurry electoral area, County Council Election, May 1920.

4 seats; valid Poll: N/A; quota: N/A

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
John P. (Jack) Brennan	Sinn Féin	Uncontested	Elected
James Gilligan	Sinn Féin	Uncontested	Elected
John F. Mullarkey	Sinn Féin	Uncontested	Elected
Thomas Murrícane	Sinn Féin	Uncontested	Elected

Source: S.C., 5 June 1920.

The election confirmed the downfall of the U.I.L. and the Sinn Féin candidates won all twenty seats on Sligo County Council, which secured the party's dominance in Sligo. The elections could hardly have been considered to be completely free, as the I.R.A. had intimidated the independent candidates and their supporters and anyone who expressed anti-Sinn Féin views were regarded as anti-Irish. However, the elections still proved that Sinn Féin had significant popular support for its campaign in Co. Sligo.

On 21 June 1920 the new county council met for the first time and immediately passed a resolution acknowledging the authority of Dáil Éireann and supporting the revival of the Irish language.¹⁴⁰ Only two of the elected councillors held high rank in the I.R.A.; Jack Brennan was a company captain in the Tubbercurry battalion and Commandant Alec McCabe was O/C of the Ballymote battalion.¹⁴¹ However, all the co-opted and ex-officio members of the county council except one, Henry Cavanagh, held the rank of commandant in the I.R.A. The ex-officio members were the chairmen of the R.D.C.s and included Commandant Frank O'Beirne, chairman of Sligo R.D.C. and O/C Collooney battalion, Commandant Frank Carty, chairman of Tubbercurry R.D.C. and O/C Tubbercurry battalion, Commandant Jim Hunt, chairman of Boyle No. 2 R.D.C., O/C Gurteen battalion and Henry Cavanagh, chairman of Dromore West R.D.C.¹⁴² The co-opted members of Sligo County Council were Commandant Seamus (James) Devins for north Sligo and Commandant Michael J. Marren for south Sligo.¹⁴³ Devins was O/C Grange battalion and Marren was O/C Ballymote battalion. Marren had been promoted O/C Ballymote battalion when

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 May 1920.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 26 June 1920.

¹⁴¹ Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921* (Trim, 1994), pp 177-8.

¹⁴² S.C., 26 June 1920; Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921* (Trim, 1994), pp 177-8; pp 202-3.

¹⁴³ Minutes of N. Sligo Comhairle Ceanntair Sinn Féin, 13 June 1920 (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, CLU 011).

McCabe was arrested in September 1919.¹⁴⁴ The fact that so many councillors held key positions in the I.R.A. signified that the organisation would have a strong influence on council decisions. It was also an indication that the more moderate Sinn Féin councillors would have to rely heavily on the I.R.A. campaign in the country in order to implement their policies.

Sinn Féin could also afford to be generous to the Protestant minority now that they controlled Sligo County Council and at the council's first meeting on 21 June 1920 they were keen to demonstrate their religious tolerance when they invited the Church of Ireland clergymen, Rev Nunan of Drumcliffe and Rev Rainsford of St John's Church, Sligo Town, to participate on two county council committees set up by the party.¹⁴⁵ On 17 July 1920, at the next meeting of the county council, a resolution was passed requiring that all able bodied men between the ages of eighteen and forty join the I.R.A.¹⁴⁶

At the end of August the British Local Government Board (B.L.G.B.) cut off funding to Sligo County Council for declaring allegiance to the Dáil.¹⁴⁷ This forced the county councillors to use the I.R.A. to collect rates, which were not being collected owing to the disturbed condition of the county. The county council was plagued by inadequate revenue for the remainder of the War of Independence and the reliance on the I.R.A. to collect rates put them in a strong position and may have led to a dispute between Sinn Féin councillors and the I.R.A. and possibly led to the resignation from Sligo County Council of D.M. Hanley in January 1921.¹⁴⁸ J.J. Clancy and Sean McMorrow, who were respectively the chairman and vice-chairman of the county council also resigned from the council in February 1921.¹⁴⁹ This may have been due to the fact that both men were not members of the I.R.A. and they did not seem to fully endorse the I.R.A. campaign in the county.

Sligo Corporation had also pledged allegiance to Dáil Éireann, although by May 1920 despite having a Sinn Féin mayor, D.M. Hanley, the corporation had still not severed its ties with the B.L.G.B. There were many differences between Sinn Féin councillors on Sligo Corporation over their approach to the B.L.G.B. and at the corporation meeting on 28 April Sinn Féin councillors Nevin and Devins argued that the corporation should have nothing to do with compensation claims for malicious injuries which had been received by the

¹⁴⁴ Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921* (Trim, 1994), p. 178.

¹⁴⁵ *S.I.*, 26 June 1920.

¹⁴⁶ *S.C.*, 24 July 1920.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 Sept. 1920.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 22 Jan. 1921.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 Feb. 1921.

corporation, while two other Sinn Féin councillors, William Feeny and Patrick Flanagan, who had previously been supporters of the U.I.L./I.P.P, argued that the corporation should refer them to the corporation solicitors for further advice.¹⁵⁰ This may indicate that many had changed their political colours in order to get elected on the Sinn Féin ticket. However, they still held the more moderately nationalist views of the I.P.P. The solicitors recommended that the majority of claims, which were for damages inflicted on R.I.C. stations, should be defended in the courts. On 8 May 1920 most of the corporation councillors agreed with their solicitors' advice and wished to defend the claims.¹⁵¹ On 15 May 1920 the corporation received a letter from the Crown Solicitor, Mr Argue notifying the corporation that the malicious injury cases were to be adjourned.¹⁵²

On 13 May 1920 the Dáil Éireann Minister for Local Government, William T. Cosgrave, wrote to Sligo Corporation expressing his dissatisfaction with the fact that the corporation had still not severed ties with the B.L.G.B. and he complained that the corporation had applied to the B.L.G.B. for a loan in relation to malicious injury claims.¹⁵³ At a meeting on 30 June Sligo Corporation passed a motion acknowledging the authority of Dáil Éireann 'as the duly authorised government of the Irish people and formally undertake to give effect to all decrees duly promulgated by the said Dáil Éireann'.¹⁵⁴ The only S.R.A. councillor present at this meeting was alderman Kerr and he registered his opposition to the motion.¹⁵⁵

In the period March to July 1920 twenty-two raids for arms took place, with thirteen raids taking place in the month of May alone.¹⁵⁶ Protestants suffered disproportionately as a result of these raids, as they were known to have guns in their houses.¹⁵⁷ Raids and robberies of arms continued throughout the summer of 1920 and the R.I.C. reported twelve cases in July 1920.¹⁵⁸

In July 1920 the I.R.A. issued warnings against traders dealing with the police in the Tubbercurry area. The I.R.A. had already issued a general warning in May 1920 against people communicating with the police.¹⁵⁹ Most people seemed to have obeyed the warnings

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 May 1920.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15 May 1920.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 22 May 1920.

¹⁵³ Chief of Inspection to Local Government Inspector, Sligo, 13 May 1920 (N.A., Dáil Éireann Local Government files, DELG 26/9).

¹⁵⁴ *S.I.*, 10 July 1920.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 June 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551).

¹⁵⁷ John C. Godley, 28 Sept. 1920 (S.C.L., *Criminal Injuries Book*, L7).

¹⁵⁸ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 31 July 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551).

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 Aug. 1920.

and Peter Gallagher, a Catholic R.I.C. constable, who had joined the force in April 1918 and was stationed in Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, claimed that before the War of Independence people respected the R.I.C. However, once the trouble started people refused to have anything to do with the police.¹⁶⁰ Did anybody in Sligo assist the R.I.C. at this time?

From evidence provided to the Irish Grants Committee later in the 1920s it appears that at least two Protestant businessmen and one Catholic businessman from Sligo town and a Protestant shop owner from Co. Sligo had helped the R.I.C. by providing information during the War of Independence.¹⁶¹ Joseph Graham, a Protestant businessman in Sligo town, claimed to have given assistance to the police which was confirmed by John Russell, an ex-District Inspector (D.I.) of the Sligo R.I.C.¹⁶² Another Protestant businessman from Sligo town, George R. Williams, a flour merchant, also claimed to have assisted the R.I.C. which John Russell also confirmed.¹⁶³ A Catholic businessman, John R. Keating, who owned a hardware store on Castle Street in Sligo town also assisted the R.I.C.¹⁶⁴ John Russell later stated that Keating and J. Walpole-Boyers, a Protestant shopowner from Rosses Point in Co. Sligo, 'were of great assistance to the R.I.C. during the War of Independence'.¹⁶⁵

George R. Williams was building contractor and flour merchant in Sligo town and described himself as 'one of the leading Protestant loyalists in Sligo'.¹⁶⁶ In his employment as a flour merchant his travels took him frequently around the counties of Sligo, Mayo and Roscommon where he was able to pick up a good deal of information concerning I.R.A. activity which he passed onto the R.I.C. during the War of Independence. As a result his business was repeatedly attacked by the I.R.A.¹⁶⁷ In February, May and July 1920 property in Sligo town belonging to Williams was damaged by the I.R.A.¹⁶⁸ The I.R.A. targeted Williams, as they believed he was offering his property for rent to members of the R.I.C. and a Resident Magistrate (R.M.) who was conducting cases against I.R.A. members. The I.R.A. may have also been aware that Williams forwarded information to the police. Williams later claimed that he had indeed supplied information to the R.I.C. and had not

¹⁶⁰ John D. Brewer, *The Royal Irish Constabulary* (Belfast, 1990), p. 81.

¹⁶¹ Joseph Graham (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/205), George R. Williams (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/197); John R. Keating (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/201); J. Walpole-Boyers (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/202).

¹⁶² Joseph Graham (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/205).

¹⁶³ John Russell ex-D.I. Sligo R.I.C., re. George R. Williams, 1 Oct. 1928 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/195).

¹⁶⁴ John R. Keating (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/201).

¹⁶⁵ John Russell ex-D.I. Sligo R.I.C., re. J. Walpole-Boyers, 3 Feb. 1927 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/202).

¹⁶⁶ George R. Williams (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/195).

¹⁶⁷ John Russell, re. George R. Williams, 1 Oct. 1928 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/195).

¹⁶⁸ George R. Williams, 27 Mar. 1920, 28 May 1920, 4 Oct. 1920 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7).

only rented accommodation to the R.I.C. and an R.M. but had also offered employment to former members of the R.I.C.¹⁶⁹ Other Protestant businessmen in Co. Sligo who were believed to be supplying either information or goods to the R.I.C. who were boycotted during the War of Independence under orders from the I.R.A. included Thomas E. Guthrie, Joseph Graham, R.S. Allen, John Anderson, H.T. Evans.¹⁷⁰

Some Catholic shopkeepers had their businesses attacked because they were friendly with the police and the I.R.A. believed they were supplying information to the R.I.C. or they had expressed anti-Sinn Féin views. Businesses belonging to the former I.P.P. M.P. for south Sligo, John O'Dowd, and the I.P.P. supporters, P.J. McDermott and John P. Jordan, suffered on account of their opposition to Sinn Féin,¹⁷¹ and Annie Brennan, a Catholic shopkeeper from Tubbercurry in south Sligo, maintained that she had been boycotted after she had supplied the R.I.C. with goods.¹⁷²

The R.I.C. had hoped that Protestants would be more forthcoming with information on I.R.A. movements. However, this did not prove to be the case and Peter Gallagher mentioned that the vast majority of Protestants in Sligo avoided the police altogether as they were afraid they would be accused of assisting the R.I.C.¹⁷³ Throughout Ireland the same was found to be true and Protestants were reluctant to be seen assisting the security forces in any way and very few Protestants in the south and west of the country gave information to the police. Protestants even refused to give information when they were the victims of republican attacks.¹⁷⁴ Peter Hart's research on Protestants in west Cork confirm the impression that many people were loyalist in name only and although a few gave information, most Protestants did nothing to help the security forces during the War of Independence.¹⁷⁵

The R.I.C. in Sligo were boycotted by a large majority of the population and the I.R.A. had burned down some abandoned R.I.C. barracks in certain parts of the county, but until June 1920 the Sligo I.R.A. had not caused the R.I.C. any casualties and had not assaulted

¹⁶⁹ George R. Williams (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/195).

¹⁷⁰ Thomas E. Guthrie (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO762/40); Joseph Graham (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/205); Robert S. Allen (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/134); Patrick E. Rogers, solc. Dublin to the Secretary of Provisional Govt., re. John Anderson, 8 Sept. 1922 (N.A.I., Dept. of Finance, FIN 1/1067); H.T. Evans (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/68).

¹⁷¹ John O'Dowd (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/156); Letter from John O'Dowd to Charles K. O'Hara, 24 Oct. 1928, (N.L.I., O'Hara Papers, MS 36440/8); P.J. McDermott (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/10); John P. Jordan (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/20).

¹⁷² Annie Brennan (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/108).

¹⁷³ John D. Brewer, *The Royal Irish Constabulary* (Belfast, 1990), p. 82.

¹⁷⁴ Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at war 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), pp 229-30.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 230-1.

any defended R.I.C. barracks, which was in stark contrast to some other parts of the country, notably Cork and Dublin. It was in fact the withdrawal of the R.I.C. from many of the rural barracks to the larger urban areas that allowed the I.R.A. in the county the space to organise and prepare their forces to attack the R.I.C. In the period June to August 1920 the Sligo I.R.A. attacked three manned stations.¹⁷⁶ However, their assaults were unsuccessful.¹⁷⁷ Ten R.I.C. stations and two courthouses in Co. Sligo were burned in September and October 1920.¹⁷⁸ Some of the property belonged to Protestants such as Bryan Cooper and Charles O'Hara.

By the end of 1920 there were only eight manned barracks in Co. Sligo.¹⁷⁹ The withdrawal of the R.I.C. from the rural areas of Co. Sligo left large areas without police supervision and as well as offering the I.R.A. the chance to become far more active in the county, many criminals were also taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the R.I.C. withdrawal. Agrarian offences were most common and ironically the various I.R.A. units were forced to take over the duties of the R.I.C.¹⁸⁰ Apart from trying to replace the R.I.C. in Co. Sligo what was Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. proposing to do to restrain the activities of ordinary criminals and administer local agrarian disputes in Sligo?

In May 1920 Sinn Féin set up courts in at least five locations in Co. Sligo to legislate on agrarian disputes and criminal activities.¹⁸¹ Terence Dooley has argued that agrarian activities such as cattle driving, the destruction of agricultural property and attacks on individuals were not co-ordinated throughout the country at this time, and there was a 'higher degree of separation between the land movement and the national movements'¹⁸² even more so than there had been at any time in the past.¹⁸³ Sinn Féin was also concerned that agrarian conflict would divide the I.R.A. and the national movement.¹⁸⁴ The Sinn Féin courts were an effort to not only control land agitation and focus the national movement on the struggle for independence they also helped to undermine British authority. On 9 May 1920 a proclamation was placed on the chapel door at Gurteen, Co. Sligo, announcing the

¹⁷⁶ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 July 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551). *Ibid.*, 31 July 1920. S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Sept. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct. 1920; *S.I.*, 25 Sept. 1920; 9 Oct. 1920; Richard T. Kerr-Taylor, 11 Jan. 1921 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7); Charles O'Hara, 11 Jan. 1921 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7); Arthur O'Hara, 11 Jan. 1921 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7); Bryan Cooper, 4 Oct. 1920 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7).

¹⁷⁹ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 31 Dec. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8552).

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 June 1920.

¹⁸¹ *Irish Bulletin*, 13 May 1920; *S.C.*, 29 May 1920.

¹⁸² Terence Dooley, *The land for the people* (Dublin, 2004), p. 40.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

establishment of a Sinn Féin court in the area and warning people to have nothing to do with the British courts from now on.¹⁸⁵

In June 1920 Sinn Féin was by far the largest political organisation in Co. Sligo and the organisation had fifty-three clubs in the county with over 6,220 members while I.R.A. membership had increased to over 1,700.¹⁸⁶ This gave the local republican administration the means and the support to enforce the decisions of the Sinn Féin courts. However, with the War of Independence against the British in full swing across the country the Dáil discouraged people from becoming involved in land disputes and urged the people to focus on the struggle against the British authorities.¹⁸⁷ This seemed to have an effect and by the end of August the R.I.C. Co. Sligo Inspector reported that although the county was in a very disturbed state 'landlord/tenant' relations were good and there was very little agrarian trouble.¹⁸⁸

Despite the improvement in landlord/tenant relations in Sligo, Sinn Féin courts were forced to operate in the county in order to legislate on ordinary criminal activities such as robberies and assaults. In September and October 1920 Sinn Féin courts were held in at least seven separate locations in Co. Sligo.¹⁸⁹ In order to make sure the decrees of the court were obeyed and to punish transgressors the 'republican police' were set up to enforce the decrees passed by the Sinn Féin courts. The republican police were supposed to be independent of the I.R.A. but in effect members belonged to both organisations. It seemed that by and large the republican police were fair in their enforcement of the court's decisions and during the months of June and July 1920 the republican police arrested men on charges of robbing mail trains, houses, bicycles, cars, and for producing alcohol without a licence.¹⁹⁰ At various public events in Sligo in June and July 1920 republican police kept order and patrolled the streets of some towns and villages.

How did the Sinn Féin courts and the republican police treat Protestants? Generally the Sinn Féin courts were tough on crimes committed against Protestants. In May 1920 a Sinn Féin court in south Sligo found a number of men guilty of injuring property belonging to local Protestant residents and stiff sentences and fines were imposed upon them.¹⁹¹ In

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *S.I.*, 1 July 1920.

¹⁸⁷ *Dáil Éireann*, 29 June 1920, vol. i, *diospóireachtaí páirliminte* (parliamentary debates); *tuairisc oifigiúil* (official report), (<http://www.historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/>) (26 May 2006).

¹⁸⁸ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 31 Aug. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8552).

¹⁸⁹ *S.I.*, 17 July 1920; 28 Aug. 1920; *S.C.*, 11 Sept. 1920; 18 Sept. 1920; *S.I.*, 23 Oct. 1920.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12 June 1920; *Irish Bulletin*, 27 June 1920; 18 July 1920.

¹⁹¹ *S.I.*, 29 May 1920.

October 1920 the republican police arrested three men involved in an attempt to burn down a Protestant church in Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo and a Sinn Féin court in the area ordered them to pay a fine to the rector of the church.¹⁹² A Protestant graveyard in Tubbercurry had also been desecrated in January 1920, in an action believed by many to be an attempt by the I.R.A. to intimidate the Protestant community in the town. However, the I.R.A. strongly condemned the attack and punished those involved.¹⁹³ Sinn Féin also wished to appoint Church of Ireland Rev Mr Wagner, St Anne's Rectory, Strandhill as an arbitrator at the Sinn Féin court at Knocknarea. However, he was forced to decline the invitation. He believed that it might cause trouble with his church authorities maintaining that 'in the interests of the unity and harmony of my parish, I must therefore resign, with regret, my membership of the Court'.¹⁹⁴ It seemed that the Sinn Féin leadership in Sligo was keen to demonstrate that the organisation was not anti-Protestant and the Sinn Féin courts took crimes committed against Protestants seriously.

On 30 June 1920 the Sligo Co. R.I.C. Inspector reported that people were boycotting the British courts in favour of the Sinn Féin courts. He mentioned that many loyalists had cases heard and settled there.¹⁹⁵ Loyalists, by which the R.I.C. Inspector meant most Protestants, but also some Catholics, who were loyal to the Union, were forced to settle agrarian disputes in Sinn Féin courts. However, it seemed that many loyalists appeared before Sinn Féin courts not out of choice but out of necessity. In many cases loyalists went before the Sinn Féin courts after constant intimidation by I.R.A. and they had no alternative but to go to the Sinn Féin courts, as British courts were not operating or if they had appealed to the British court system they would have been punished by the I.R.A.

John Lougheed, a Protestant farmer from the Riverstown area, provides one such example. On 9 June 1920 Lougheed received notice that his farm was requested for division and two of his labourers were threatened by armed and masked men and ordered to leave the area. Lougheed had about seventy-five acres of untenanted land and he was forced to sell two of his farms to the 'Irish Republic' by November 1920.¹⁹⁶ Other Protestants, especially in parts of south Sligo, continued to be harassed and there is no evidence to suggest that republican police did very much to help them. On 23 May 1920

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 2 Oct. 1920.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 17 Jan. 1920.

¹⁹⁴ *S.C.*, 18 Sept. 1920.

¹⁹⁵ *S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.*, 30 June 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551).

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

armed and masked men visited the houses of men who worked for the Protestant landowner Charles Graham, near Bunninadden, and told them to quit.¹⁹⁷ Little was done to dissuade the intimidation of workers on Col. J.C. Duke's estate near Ballymote, at the end of May 1920.¹⁹⁸ Duke had over 900 acres of untenanted land.¹⁹⁹ The workers had been warned not to continue working on Duke's estate, and it was hard to tell if it was the I.R.A. or local people carrying out this intimidation.

Charles O'Hara also did not seem to be getting any Sinn Féin justice and when in early September 1920 he became aware that poteen cases were going to be tried at the next Coolaney Petty Sessions in the courthouse there, which was his property, he wrote to R.I.C. D.I. John Russell on 11 September 1920 asking him to have the courthouse closed 'until the county is in a more peaceful state as there was no police living in the Petty Sessions district'.²⁰⁰ O'Hara told Russell that he had been informed that if the case was heard there then the courthouse would be burned down. He maintained that 'I know it is useless to look to the Government to protect it', and he believed that 'surely we have trouble enough without the Government going out of their way to excite the people to these burnings'.²⁰¹ Despite O'Hara's warning, on 14 September 1920 the courthouse was burned down and it is not clear if it was related to the poteen case or part of the I.R.A. campaign to frustrate the British court system.²⁰² However, O'Hara submitted a claim for £4,000 in damages to Tubbercurry Rural District Council.²⁰³ Members of Sinn Féin dominated the council and they ordered that the claim itself was to be burned!²⁰⁴

Years later in the mid to late 1920s the Protestant unionist landowner, Bryan Cooper, commented that with the disruption caused by the War of Independence the police in Sligo seemed to be powerless to prevent crime and he maintained that the British troops were concentrated in the larger towns, leaving the lives and property of unionists in the countryside at the mercy of criminals.²⁰⁵ Cooper argued that the government was 'either unwilling or unable to protect' the people and he maintained that Sinn Féin was at least

¹⁹⁷ *S.I.*, 29 May 1920.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (*S.C.L.*, Estate records, No. 510).

²⁰⁰ O'Hara to John Russell, R.I.C. D.I. Sligo, 11 Sept. 1920 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16827).

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *S.I.*, 2 Oct. 1920.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Bryan Cooper, undated statement quoted in Lennox Robinson, *Bryan Cooper* (London, 1931), p. 126.

trying 'to prevent anarchy and maintain order'.²⁰⁶ He believed that unionists were impressed by the actions of Sinn Féin and pointed out that the 'thieves have been apprehended, welshers punished, persons endeavouring to use intimidation for their own private ends dealt with as 'bringing discredit on the Irish Republic' and this has made a considerable impression on the unionist mind'.²⁰⁷ Cooper also maintained that at the time there was 'a growing tendency among those whose main desire is a quiet life to say, "the government can't protect us or govern the country. Sinn Féin is doing the latter and seems disposed to do the former. Won't it suit my book to make friends with Sinn Féin?"'²⁰⁸

It did appear that people of all political and religious persuasions availed of the Sinn Féin courts and in November 1921 the North Sligo Republican Court, in a case possibly relating to owed debts, found in favour of the Western Wholesale Company, which was owned by the Protestant businessman Arthur Jackson and the Pollexfen family.²⁰⁹

So there may have been some truth to Cooper's argument. However, it must also be noted that Cooper who had been a strong defender of the Union before the First World War, had become much more sympathetic to the nationalist position after his service in the war. After the end of the war in 1918, Cooper had re-entered national politics as an independent and he may have wished to appear more conciliatory towards nationalists and although some property occupied by the R.I.C. and owned by Cooper, was attacked by the I.R.A. during the War of Independence, Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. did not specifically target Cooper's lands in Co. Sligo for division. Cooper could easily have become a target for division as during the War of Independence he still had over 14,000 acres of tenanted and untenanted land in 174 separate holdings, most of which he later sold to his tenants and other small farmers in the Collooney area.²¹⁰ Some other Protestant/unionist landowners with large untenanted holdings at the time included Robert Arthur F.N. Caddell with 1,100

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Western Wholesale Co. Ltd. v Tolan (N.A.I., Dáil Éireann Courts Commission, DE 6/4161).*

²¹⁰ *Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510); Land registry: record of applications lodged at Sligo registry, 1 vol., 1904-18 (S.C.L., Legal records, L9); Land registry: Index of names, Sligo Office, 4 vols, 1902-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, L10); Land registry: dealings with registered land lodged at the Sligo registry 6 vols., 1904-14, 1914-19, 1919-24, 1924-29, 1929-34, 1934-36 (S.C.L., Legal records, L11); Sligo Land Claim Book, record of claims under the Landlord & Tenant Act, 1870-1932 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 740); Land Registry Sligo, 1911-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 744); Land Registry, Co. Sligo Letter Book, 1907-10 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 742); Letter Books relating to the operation of various Co. Sligo Estates, 1883-1925 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 511); Rentals and valuations of various Co. Sligo estates from Robinson's Estates Office, Stephen St., Sligo (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 588); *Twenty fourth annual report of the Congested Districts Board for Ireland*, [Cd 8356], H.C. 1916, vi, 564-586; Appendix viii, 55.*

acres, Baron Harleck with over 1,400 acres, Henry T.H. Hewetson with over 1,760 acres, Arthur G. Knox with 1,395 acres, Major C.K. O'Hara with 956 acres, Mrs Muriel Perceval with 3,297 acres, Basil Phibbs with 2,358 acres, Charles Phibbs with 1,384 acres, Alexandrina Sim with 1,084 acres and Jas. Henry Walker with 1,169 acres.²¹¹ These farmers/landowners did not experience agrarian trouble during the War of Independence. However, later during the Civil War Charles Phibbs and Basil Phibbs experienced some agrarian related difficulties.²¹²

Some loyalists and former unionists in Sligo seemed to turn to the Dáil courts for justice. However, in light of the disruption and the reduced number of patrols carried out by the R.I.C., unionists and loyalists, especially in the rural areas, had very little alternative but to turn to the Sinn Féin courts for protection. Some also appealed to the Sinn Féin courts to settle agrarian disputes. However, it would seem after months of intimidation by people who wished to subdivide their lands among smaller farmers, unionist and loyalist large farmers had no alternative but to go to the Sinn Féin courts and come to some agreement with Sinn Féin activists regarding the sale of parts of their holdings. In the House of Lords, the unionist Lord Monteagle admitted that Sinn Féin courts respected the rights of property and he praised the fairness and high standard of justice and equity of the Sinn Féin courts.²¹³ Generally most Protestant unionist landowners and in Sligo were probably forced to adopt a position of pragmatism at the time and although most of them were supportive of the British presence in Ireland they more than likely accepted the fact that if the British government was now incapable of protecting law abiding citizens then they must come to some sort of accommodation with the Sinn Féin and the I.R.A.

The most chronic problem the I.R.A. in Sligo and the rest of the country faced in June 1920 was a shortage of arms and in particular ammunition.²¹⁴ During the month the I.R.A. carried out over thirty raids for arms in Co. Sligo alone. The R.I.C. Co. Sligo Inspector argued that 'police stations are too few and the force too small to cope with the state of affairs' and he requested stronger military measures and more troops to deal with the

²¹¹ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510).

²¹² Charles Phibbs (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/70); Damage to property, C. Phibbs (N.A.I., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/215); Damage to lands belonging to Basil Phibbs at Ardumber, Riverstown, Co. Sligo (N.A.I., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/214).

²¹³ Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 679.

²¹⁴ Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Dublin, 2002), p. 77.

situation.²¹⁵ He also feared that Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. were preparing for an aggressive campaign against the police in the coming months.²¹⁶

The inspector may have been painting a bad picture as part of his efforts to acquire more resources. However, his intelligence was accurate enough, and in July 1920 the Sligo I.R.A. began to attack R.I.C. personnel for the first time in the War of Independence. Police patrols were the main target of the I.R.A. in Sligo at this time, as it was very difficult and extremely risky for the I.R.A. to assault a heavily fortified barracks, whereas a lightly armed police patrol proved to be an easier target. In July and August the Sligo I.R.A. ambushed three R.I.C. cycling patrols and weapons were captured, however, no fatalities were recorded.²¹⁷ At the end of July the R.I.C. Co. Inspector reported that 'they [I.R.A.] have now got possession of large areas of the county which cannot be patrolled owing to the lack of police and military transport'.²¹⁸

In response to the R.I.C.'s pleas for more men, in July 1920 the British government began to recruit for a special Auxiliary Division of the R.I.C.²¹⁹ The Auxiliary Division was a paramilitary unit and was a direct response to the I.R.A.'s use of guerrilla tactics, and although it was nominally part of the R.I.C., the Auxiliary Division was allowed to operate relatively independently, especially in rural areas. The Auxiliary Division was divided up into companies of over 100 strong and their mission was to act as a mobile strike force in the most troubled areas. At the end of September 1920 there were about five companies, almost 600 men, in Ireland and by the end of June 1921 the division was over 1,500 strong.²²⁰ In addition to new recruits, police forces operating in Ireland received new powers and on 9 August 1920 the R.I.C. came under the jurisdiction of the Restoration of Order (Ireland) Act, which allowed for increased police powers such as internment and the court martial of civilians suspected to be members of the I.R.A.²²¹

Over the course of the summer of 1920, the Government of Ireland Bill was discussed at Westminster. What was the reaction of Sligo unionist leader Charles O'Hara to the bill? O'Hara was generally supportive of the A.P.L. and their efforts to argue for greater conditions for southern unionists under the bill. On 13 August 1920 R.N. Thompson,

²¹⁵ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 July 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551).

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Patrick Rushe, 28 Sept 1920 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7); S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Aug. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551); S.C., 14 Aug. 1920.

²¹⁸ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 Aug. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8551).

²¹⁹ Charles Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921* (Oxford, 1975), pp 210-12.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare* (Amsterdam, 1994), p. 160.

secretary of the A.P.L. wrote to O'Hara maintaining that the A.P.L. represented the majority of unionists in southern Ireland and argued that they were still committed to supporting the Union. Thompson criticised the British government for failing to secure law and order in Ireland and claimed that the government had lost 'the confidence of all classes'²²² and although the Government of Ireland Bill was unacceptable to many Irish unionists, Thompson argued that it presented the only hope of ending the anarchy in Ireland and 'will give effect to the desire of the majority of the Irish people for self-government with an adequate control of all local affairs including taxation'.²²³

On 18 August 1920 Thompson again wrote to O'Hara asking him as H.M.L. of Co. Sligo to discover if there was support in Co. Sligo for the Government of Ireland Bill and the provisions contained in it for southern unionists.²²⁴ O'Hara's opinion of the Government of Ireland Bill was quite negative and in a letter dated 30 October 1920 to a fellow H.M.L. of Co. Louth, Sir H. Bullingham, he failed 'to see what benefit can be derived from 'self-government' in this country until law and order has been restored'.²²⁵ He also believed that most of his Deputy Lieutenants (D.L.) in Sligo could not be relied on to speak for the different sections of the population 'as with a few exceptions they do not represent the people in parliament or on any public board'²²⁶ and he maintained that a general election would also be completely unrepresentative and would in his opinion be a 'big fiasco'.²²⁷

A *Sligo Independent* editorial on 21 August 1920 largely agreed with O'Hara and argued that only the Union could maintain the 'unity of Ireland and the strategic safety of the British Isles'.²²⁸ Unionists were divided over the benefits of the Government of Ireland Bill and many were still completely committed to the Union with Britain and believed that the bill would fail in the climate of anarchy in Ireland at the time. However, there seemed to be little doubt that some form of change was necessary. The majority of Irishmen desired greater political separation from Britain and the pragmatists within the Sligo unionist camp, such as Bryan Cooper, who were willing to accept this, longed for a return of normality and an end to violent political activity.

²²² R.N. Thompson, sec. of A.P.L. to O'Hara 13. Aug. 1920, (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 36,443).

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18. Aug. 1920.

²²⁵ O'Hara to Sir H. Bullingham, H.M.L. The Castle, Castleblaney, Co. Louth, 30 Oct. 1920 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 16827).

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *S.I.*, 21 Aug. 1920.

Regardless of what unionists wanted, Sinn Féin behaved as if they were in control of the country and Dáil Éireann continued to meet and pass legislation for the country. On 6 August 1920 the Dáil imposed a boycott of Belfast goods in response to the forced expulsion of about 5,000 Catholic shipyard workers in Belfast, in addition to a further 11,000 Catholics who were forced from their jobs in Northern Ireland.²²⁹ It seemed that by imposing a boycott on Belfast goods the Dáil also wished to demonstrate that partition would prove to be unworkable and a southern embargo on goods from Northern Ireland would severely damage the economy of the six-counties.

What were the reactions of Catholics and Protestants in Sligo to the sectarian attacks in Belfast and the Dáil boycott of Belfast goods? People in Sligo immediately wished to express their views and discuss measures to be taken in relation to the violence in Belfast. On 3 September 1920 a public meeting was held in Sligo town, condemning the pogrom on Catholics in Belfast and the meeting passed a resolution in favour of breaking off relations with Belfast, demanding that the victims of the attacks be compensated.²³⁰ When the embargo on Belfast goods was debated in the Dáil there were many dissenting voices including Ernest Blythe, a Presbyterian from Armagh and later Minister for Finance from 1923 to 1932, who argued that the embargo on northern goods would 'destroy for ever the possibility of any union' between Northern and Southern Ireland.²³¹ Countess Markievicz agreed with Blythe believing that an embargo was 'playing into the hands of the enemy and giving them a good excuse for partition'.²³²

Within a short space of time, the southern Irish boycott of Belfast goods had succeeded in injuring Belfast's economy. However, it did not succeed in its goal of returning Catholics to work and a worldwide economic depression at the time actually forced many Protestants in Northern Ireland out of work. Michael Laffan has also argued that instead of reuniting Ireland, the embargo emphasised the psychological dimension of the border and forced people to think in terms of Northern Ireland and southern Ireland.²³³ Michael Hopkinson has maintained that an effective way to oppose the partition of the country would have been if

²²⁹ Michael Laffan, *The partition of Ireland 1911-25* (4th ed., Dundalk, 2004), p. 76.

²³⁰ *S.C.*, 4 Sept. 1920.

²³¹ Michael Laffan, *The partition of Ireland 1911-25* (4th ed., Dundalk, 2004), p. 77.

²³² *Dáil Éireann*, 6 Aug. 1920, vol. i, *diospóireachtaí páirliminte* (parliamentary debates); *tuairisg oifigiúil* (official report), (<http://www.historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/>) (26 May 2006).

²³³ Michael Laffan, *The partition of Ireland 1911-25* (4th ed., Dundalk, 2004), pp 76-7.

Southern Ireland had continued to participate at the Westminster parliament and that the Belfast boycott, greatly reinforced the division between north and south.²³⁴

However, the Catholic population in Sligo were deeply concerned by the religious strife in Belfast and on 10 September 1920 a public meeting was held in Sligo Town Hall, with the intention of setting up a 'Council of Action' in order to coordinate Sligo's response to the Belfast riots and the sectarian attacks on Catholics.²³⁵ The Sinn Féin mayor, Thomas Fitzpatrick, proposed using economic pressure and he called on Sligo businessmen to cease dealing with Belfast firms. J.J. Clancy, member of the Dáil for north Sligo, believed that both Catholics and Protestant workers were suffering in Belfast at the hands of employers who were refusing to accept that Belfast and Ulster were part of the Irish Republic. Clancy argued that the rebellion in Ireland was 'not a religious war',²³⁶ and he mentioned that Catholics and nationalists in Sligo 'live very happily with those of the community who differ from us religiously and politically'.²³⁷ However, he argued that 'there are Protestant traders in this town of Sligo and they have not yet opened their mouths or issued a protest against the treatment of our co-religionists in Belfast' and he appealed to the Protestant businessmen in Sligo to add their voice to the protest against the actions in Belfast and to participate in the boycott, a boycott which he hoped when over would never occur again 'for religious or political reasons'.²³⁸

Clancy was clearly putting pressure on Sligo Protestants and it wasn't long before they began to speak out against the atrocities in Belfast. On 11 September 1920 the Select Vestry of Calry Church of Ireland parish in Sligo town held a meeting which discussed the attacks on Catholics in Belfast and passed a unanimous resolution stating that 'the Select Vestry of Calry parish, realising that a large amount of distress and suffering has occurred in Belfast owing to the recent disturbances, wish to record our thorough disapproval of any victimisation of workers who are earning their daily bread, no matter what cause may be assigned for same, and suggest the opening of a parish fund for the purpose of helping to relieve those who are in distress'.²³⁹

²³⁴ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (Dublin, 1988), pp 21-2.

²³⁵ *S.C.*, 11 Sept. 1920.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18 Sept. 1920.

A Belfast Relief Fund was set up and subscriptions were sent to Rev John Ardill, Philip Perceval, Roger Parker, C. Bellew, and C.A. Fowler.²⁴⁰ The various other Protestant congregations also organised funds to assist people in Belfast.²⁴¹ Catholic parishes in Sligo town were also collecting money for the Belfast Relief Fund and on Sunday 12 September £300 was collected by 'all creeds and classes' on church gates in Sligo town.²⁴² On 19 September 1920 Rev Dr Wagner, the Church of Ireland rector of St Anne's Parish in Strandhill gave a sermon condemning the actions of the Unionist Party in Belfast for forcing workmen to sign allegiance to a political doctrine which they did not believe in.²⁴³ Wagner called on Protestants and Catholics to assist each other as Christians and he asked his congregation to subscribe to a fund in aid of the workmen in Belfast who were forced out of work.²⁴⁴ Of course most Protestants must have been genuinely concerned over the attacks on Catholics in Belfast. However, their strong condemnation of the violence and the church collections held towards the alleviation of suffering in Belfast must also have been motivated by the fear that they themselves could easily have become targets for retribution.

It was from about October 1920 to the end of hostilities in July 1921 that the War of Independence entered what Robert Kee describes as its third and most harsh phase. It was a period in which the R.I.C. and Auxiliaries were most active and had been well reinforced and the rebel Irish administration and I.R.A. were forced underground.²⁴⁵ The period in Sligo began with a successful I.R.A. ambush on 30 September 1920, which resulted in the death of James Joseph Brady, Sligo R.I.C. D.I. and the injury of constable Michael J. O'Hara, and particularly brutal reprisals by Crown forces.²⁴⁶ This was the first recorded death of an R.I.C. member in Co. Sligo. In retaliation the R.I.C. and Auxiliaries burned down Tubbercurry, Achonry and Ballymote creameries in Co. Sligo. However, no civilians were killed.²⁴⁷ Both the Catholic and Protestant Churches led the condemnations of the ambush and the reprisals.²⁴⁸

As Robert Kee has argued, fighting terror with much more harsh counter terror was never going to win sympathy from the people for the government, and although many

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *S.I.*, 25 Sept. 1920.

²⁴² *S.C.*, 25 Sept 1920.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 699.

²⁴⁶ *S.C.*, 2 Oct. 1920 and Michael J. O'Hara, 11 Jan. 1921 (*S.C.L.*, *Criminal Injuries Book*, L7).

²⁴⁷ *S.C.*, 9 Oct. 1920.

²⁴⁸ *S.I.*, 2 Oct. 1920.

people disagreed with the actions of the I.R.A., they were bound to choose their own extremists over the government's extremists.²⁴⁹ In Sligo this was also true and most of the people who had suffered economic hardship as a result of the reprisals in Tubbercurry and the surrounding area were innocent bystanders in the war.

In mid October 1920 in order to re-establish law and order, the R.I.C. stationed an Auxiliary force at Coolavin in Co. Sligo.²⁵⁰ On 15 October 1920 Auxiliary units arrived in Sligo town and announced their presence by parading through the streets.²⁵¹ On the night of 22 October 1920 the Auxiliaries visited the Ballymote area and carried out large-scale searches for arms and made some arrests.²⁵²

However, the Sligo I.R.A. were determined to follow up on their successful ambush in south Sligo and possibly in an attempt to out-smart the Crown forces they switched their efforts to north Sligo and on 25 October 1920 a group of local I.R.A. ambushed a nine-man police patrol at Moneygold, near Grange in north Sligo and killed four policemen and seriously injured two.²⁵³

This proved to be the most successful I.R.A. ambush in Co. Sligo during the War of Independence and the reaction of the authorities to the ambush was predictable. The R.I.C. and the Auxiliaries immediately launched an operation to find the men responsible and reacquire the weapons taken from the ambush site by the I.R.A. Auxiliaries stationed in Coolavin, Co. Sligo went to north Sligo and in the process of searching for I.R.A. members, the Auxiliaries carried out some attacks on property owned by local Sinn Féin members. The Auxiliaries burned down the Ballintrillick Creamery and the Sinn Féin Hall in Clifffony.²⁵⁴ People in the Grange and Clifffony area who had nothing to do with the I.R.A. were assaulted and a week after the ambush the military was still burning property belonging to I.R.A. and Sinn Féiners in the area. At the end of October 1920, the R.I.C. in Sligo believed that with the assistance of the Auxiliaries stationed in Boyle, Co. Roscommon, in Coolavin, Co. Sligo and in Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, they were gaining the upper hand in their struggle with the Sligo I.R.A.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁹ Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 652.

²⁵⁰ *S.I.*, 23 Oct. 1920.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 30 Oct. 1920.

²⁵³ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 31 Oct. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8552); *S.I.*, 20 Oct. 1920; *S.C.*, 20 Oct. 1920.

²⁵⁴ *S.C.*, 30 Oct. 1920.

²⁵⁵ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 31 Oct. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8552); *S.I.* 20 Oct. 1920; *S.C.*, 20 Oct. 1920.

On 21 November 1920 the R.I.C. accompanied by a detachment of Auxiliaries recovered the weapons captured by the I.R.A. at the Moneygold ambush.²⁵⁶ The arms were recovered at a police checkpoint near Ballisodare in south Co. Sligo.²⁵⁷ The loss of these weapons and ammunition was a serious blow to any future I.R.A. operations in the county.

On 22 November 1920 the Auxiliaries arrived in Sligo town, and while patrolling the streets they physically assaulted many innocent townspeople. The actions of the Auxiliaries did much to turn both the Protestant and Catholic communities in Sligo against them and both groups were vocal in their criticism of the Auxiliaries. On 27 November 1920 both the *Sligo Champion* and the *Sligo Independent* editorials condemned actions of the Auxiliaries.²⁵⁸ Actions such as this and reprisals by the Auxiliaries and the R.I.C. in the wake of the I.R.A. ambushes did the most to convert moderates, those who had been Home Rulers and those who had had been opposed to I.R.A. violence, to the argument that extreme measures by the government could only be met with extreme measures by Irishmen. As Robert Kee has argued, although many politicians and newspapers in Britain and Ireland criticised the lawlessness of the I.R.A., they were far more critical of the lawlessness of the British government.²⁵⁹

Both Protestants and Catholics in Sligo were critical of the Auxiliaries. However, it seemed that their presence had an effect on I.R.A. activity and the number of outrages declined from fifty-eight in November 1920 to thirty-three in December 1920, although it is difficult to ascertain if all these outrages were a direct result of I.R.A. activity.²⁶⁰ Also in December 1920 eighteen prominent members of the I.R.A. were arrested and the R.I.C. had some success in recovering a large amount of arms and war material.²⁶¹ No major political meetings or demonstrations were held during the month of December. However, this could just be interpreted that Sinn Féin was more cautious and restricted public gatherings while their membership continued to grow in Co. Sligo and was estimated at over 6,200 members at the end of 1920.²⁶² It also meant that the I.R.A. and physical force nationalism was now to the fore in the struggle for Irish independence, while Sinn Féin and political action was forced to take a back seat.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 30 Nov. 1920.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *S.C.*, 27 Nov. 1920; *S.I.*, 27 Nov. 1920.

²⁵⁹ Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 690.

²⁶⁰ *S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.*, 30 Nov. 1920, 31 Dec. 1920 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8552).

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 1 Jan. 1921.

In late 1920 the highly mobile Auxiliary patrols were conducting frequent patrols in Sligo and adopted the tactic of 'search and destroy' in areas where the I.R.A. were active; this involved sending large numbers of heavily armed Auxiliaries, sometimes backed up by the military into areas believed to contain I.R.A. activists. The I.R.A. was quick to counter these new tactics and they introduced the concept of 'flying columns' or Active Service Units (A.S.U.). The 'flying columns' were small groups of I.R.A. men who lived on the run and usually based themselves in the remoter mountainous or forested areas of Co. Sligo.²⁶³

In late 1920 politics was forced to take a back seat but what was the situation with local government and in particular with Sligo Corporation at the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921? In December 1920, as a result of the absence of many Sinn Féin councillors, the S.R.A. councillors on Sligo Corporation brought Sligo municipality back under the control of the B.L.G.B. At a corporation meeting on 1 December, councillor Perry proposed that the corporation should reply to a letter from the B.L.G.B. The Sinn Féin members disagreed with this proposal as it would mean recognising the B.L.G.B. and they argued that the corporation was now answerable only to Dáil Éireann. A vote on the issue resulted in a three – three draw and the subject was adjourned until the next meeting.²⁶⁴

The next meeting of the corporation took place on 15 December 1920 and the corporation councillors passed a motion by five votes to four to recognise the B.L.G.B.²⁶⁵ Those in favour of the motion to recognise the B.L.G.B. were the S.R.A. councillors, Perry, Wood-Martin, Kerr, Jackson and McDonagh. Those opposed to the motion were the Sinn Féin and Labour councillors, Nevin, Fitzpatrick (mayor), Lynch and Costello.²⁶⁶ The S.R.A. were able to have the motion passed due to the poor attendance by the Labour and Sinn Féin members. At the same meeting a motion proposed by councillor Perry to defend malicious injury claims in British courts was also passed. Councillor Nevin wished to have both motions rescinded at the next corporation meeting when he hoped that more Sinn Féin and Labour councillors would be in attendance and councillor Perry followed this by a motion that the corporation's accounts be submitted for audit to the B.L.G.B.²⁶⁷

At the next meeting of the corporation on 5 January 1921, all the Sinn Féin and Labour members were present.²⁶⁸ Alderman Perry once again proposed the motion to recognise the

²⁶³ Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921* (Trim, 1994), p. 268.

²⁶⁴ *S.I.*, 4 Dec. 1920.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 18 Dec. 1920.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 Jan. 1921.

B.L.G.B. and while making a couple of facetious remarks concerning the absence of councillors at past meetings, mentioning that he had almost forgotten what their faces looked like since they were elected, and adding that 'obviously the question to be voted on ensured a good attendance!'²⁶⁹ Councillor Wood-Martin seconded the proposal. The mayor, Fitzpatrick and councillor Michael Nevin led the Sinn Féin and Labour opposition to the motion arguing that that the corporation had already declared its allegiance to Dáil Éireann and refused to recognise the authority of the B.L.G.B. The S.R.A. councillors and the independent councillor John Jinks were all in favour of recognising the B.L.G.B. The town clerk informed the corporation members that it was his duty to warn the members of the corporation that it was illegal for a local government body to sever its connection with the B.L.G.B. When the vote was taken, Perry, Wood-Martin, Jinks, Kerr, Tighe, Connolly, McDonagh all voted in favour of motion while Lynch, Gilligan, Nally, Costello, Nevin, Feeney, Flanagan, Hande, Depew and the mayor Fitzpatrick voted against it. The motion to recognise the B.L.G.B. was rescinded by ten votes to seven.²⁷⁰ D.M. Hanley refused to vote arguing that the corporation had already declared allegiance to Dáil Éireann and therefore councillor Perry's motion was illegal.²⁷¹ Sinn Féin and Labour had now regained control of Sligo Corporation.

On 23 December 1920 the Government of Ireland Act was passed by Westminster. Sinn Féin was ignoring the implications of the Government of Ireland Act, but how were the unionists in Sligo reacting to the Act? On 1 January 1921 the *Sligo Independent* editorial argued that the Act gave Irish people 'as much control over their own affairs as they can possibly get' and although the paper maintained that the Act of Union was better for Ireland, the editorial admitted that the Government of Ireland Act offered the best possible hope for an end to the trouble in Ireland.²⁷² In the light of the violence of the last months of 1920, and the fact that Westminster had voted in favour the Government of Ireland Act, the *Sligo Independent* seemed to adopt a more conciliatory view concerning the Act. The paper was no longer completely dedicated to the maintenance of the Union in its old form and was now arguing that the Act could create the conditions for peace in Ireland.²⁷³

Ulster unionists were quick to see the advantages that the Act offered them and they immediately began to employ the Government of Ireland Act in the six counties of Northern

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ *S.C.*, 8 Jan. 1921.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² *S.J.*, 1 Jan. 1921.

²⁷³ Ibid.

Ireland. The Ulster unionists could now introduce legislation that would secure the government of the six counties for the Protestant and unionist majority there. However, as Michael Laffan has argued, it was ironic that an area of Ireland where most of the inhabitants were so determined to oppose Home Rule was actually the first to put home government into operation.²⁷⁴

On 29 January 1921 the *Sligo Independent* editorial praised the enterprise shown by the Ulster unionists in their implementation of the Government of Ireland Act and argued that the south should learn from their example.²⁷⁵ With the Ulster unionist acceptance of the Act, Lord Midleton and the A.P.L. were in favour of implementing the Act in the south. The I.U.A. were now the only group of unionists opposing the Act, and on 3 February 1921 J.E. Walsh wrote to southern unionists declaring that the I.U.A. was reconsidering its opposition to self-government for Ireland.²⁷⁶ The acceptance of Home Rule by the Ulster unionists dealt the I.U.A. a humiliating blow and now all southern unionists were forced to come to grips with the repercussions of this.

At this time Sligo unionists were much more concerned with local politics than with national developments, which seemed to be beyond their control. Protestant unionists of the S.R.A. had won a minor victory over Sinn Féin when their mayoral candidate, John Jinks, an independent, was elected on 31 January 1921. Nine councillors had voted for Jinks, while Michael Nevin, the Sinn Féin candidate, had received eight votes.²⁷⁷ The S.R.A. and Jinks were able to achieve this narrow majority because some Sinn Féin councillors were absent as they were either on the run or were in jail.

The *Sligo Independent* editorial of 5 February 1921 expressed great satisfaction with the result and claimed that 'nationalists, unionists, and independents' all showed their independence by voting for Jinks, 'whom they considered, in their own hearts and consciences, the best man to elect in the interests of the future welfare of the town and the ratepayers, while others had to act at the bidding of the henchmen of Sinn Féin, which prates about freedom and liberty, and at the same time rules with the tyrant's rod'.²⁷⁸

On 5 February 1921 the editorial by Robert Bradshaw in the pro-republican *Connachtman* newspaper expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the election of Jinks whom they called 'the minority mayor' and the paper criticised the S.R.A. accusing them of being

²⁷⁴ Michael Laffan, *The partition of Ireland 1911-25* (4th ed., Dundalk, 2004), p. 70.

²⁷⁵ *S.I.*, 29 Jan. 1921.

²⁷⁶ J.E. Walsh to O'Hara, 3 Feb. 1921 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, MS 36,442/2).

²⁷⁷ *S.I.*, 5 Feb. 1921.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

'a political party bitterly opposed to the republic'.²⁷⁹ The R.I.C. in Sligo believed that Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. had been dealt a blow by the election of Jinks²⁸⁰ and although some Sinn Féin councillors were temporarily absent, allowing Jinks to win the vote for the mayorship of Sligo, the incident lifted the morale of the Protestant community in Sligo during a particularly bleak period. The true success of the vote also lay in the fact that both Protestants and moderately nationalist Catholics, such as John Jinks, could work together in a positive political way for the mutual benefit of both communities.

At the end of January 1921 the authorities also seemed to be achieving much more success in the war against the I.R.A. and as a result of information received by the R.I.C. a cache of arms and ammunition was discovered and thirteen men were arrested.²⁸¹ In February and March the Co. Sligo R.I.C. arrested twenty-six members of the I.R.A. including three I.R.A. officers.²⁸² This dealt the I.R.A. in Sligo a major blow and led to complaints from I.R.A. G.H.Q. in Dublin.

In March 1920 I.R.A. G.H.Q. in Dublin complained that the Sligo I.R.A. were not active enough.²⁸³ The criticism by G.H.Q. levelled at the Sligo brigade seemed unfair and although in March 1921 the Sligo brigade had over 1,100 men in thirty-four companies, only between eighty and one hundred were continuously active and they were spread over the whole county.²⁸⁴ Michael Farry has argued that the I.R.A. in Sligo possessed a very low amount of war material, especially up-to-date modern weaponry and ammunition of all kind and the 3rd Western I.R.A. Division of which the battalions in Sligo were part of was one of the poorest armed divisions in the country.²⁸⁵ The 3rd Western I.R.A. Division had 949 guns, almost 700 of which were shotguns, and included only eighty-one modern rifles and two Thompson machine guns.²⁸⁶ Ammunition was also scarce and the 3rd Western I.R.A. Division had only twenty-two rounds per rifle and seventeen small arms ammunition.²⁸⁷

The I.R.A. were opposed by over 200 R.I.C. men augmented by about forty recruits from Britain known as Black and Tans (for this number I am estimating a figure of five extra men for each of the eight occupied barracks in Co. Sligo) and 100 Auxiliaries at Coolavin, Co.

²⁷⁹ *Connachtman [CM]*, 5 Feb. 1921.

²⁸⁰ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 31 Jan. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8553).

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 28 Feb. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8553); S.C., 5 Mar. 1921; 31 Mar. 1921.

²⁸³ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 14.

²⁸⁴ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 31 Mar. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8553).

²⁸⁵ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 14.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Sligo and 100 others operating out of Boyle in Co. Roscommon which frequently patrolled areas in south Sligo.²⁸⁸ Over 700 British soldiers and marines were also based in Co. Sligo, which brings the total crown forces in the county during the War of Independence to over 1,100 men.²⁸⁹ The crown forces had a much greater numerical advantage over the I.R.A. forces and were undoubtedly better-trained and possessed superior weapons and equipment. The crown forces were also highly mobile and had better access to transport. All the advantages seemed to lie with the police and military. However, the local I.R.A. operated in familiar terrain. The geography of Co. Sligo also suited the I.R.A. guerrilla campaign as many parts of the county were remote mountainous and forested areas which could provide safe base areas, especially for the A.S.U.s. It is hard to see what more the I.R.A. in Sligo could have done, after all they were attacking R.I.C. barracks and R.I.C. patrols reasonably regularly, mail trains had been ambushed, roads blocked, bridges demolished and they were policing areas which had been abandoned by the R.I.C.²⁹⁰ Importantly, the I.R.A. could not have achieved so much and survived for such an extended period of time if it had not been for the support of a significant amount of the local population.

In early March 1921, just before the Sligo Spring Assizes were held, the reasonably good relations between Protestants and Catholics in Sligo received a blow when armed and masked men kidnapped some Protestant jurors in order to prevent their attendance at court.²⁹¹ However, the men were later released unharmed and claimed they had been well treated. Despite the detainment of the jurors the assizes were held at Sligo Courthouse on 4 March 1921 and the judge's opening remarks to the court outlined the deteriorating situation in the county and he especially criticised the raids on trains.²⁹²

The general disruption in the country and the operation of both Sinn Féin and British courts in the county, all resulted in much disorder and uncertainty in Co. Sligo. On 12 March 1921 a *Sligo Independent* editorial on 'law and order in Ireland' argued that the Sinn Féin and British courts operating simultaneously in the country was causing a lot of confusion and 'the citizens of Sligo irrespective of their religious or political views had great difficulty in knowing whether to obey the laws of the Irish Republican Volunteers or

²⁸⁸ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 31 Mar. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8553); Despatch from D.I. Sligo to D.I. G.H.Q. containing info. as to strengths and location of R.I.C., Black and Tans and military in Sligo area, 5 Apr. 1921 (I.M.A., Collins Papers, A/0747).

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 31 Mar. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8553).

²⁹¹ *S.I.*, 5 Mar. 1921.

²⁹² Ibid.

the laws of England'.²⁹³ Interestingly the *Sligo Independent* did something the paper had never attempted before and now began to criticise the British government for allowing this situation to develop.²⁹⁴

At this stage of the conflict southern unionists were caught in the middle between the British troops and R.I.C. on one hand and Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. on the other. With two separate systems competing for the loyalty of the people what was the I.U.A. and the A.P.L. doing to help southern unionists? At a meeting in Dublin on 24 March 1921, the I.U.A. urged the government not to negotiate with Sinn Féin, as this would encourage more violence in the country.²⁹⁵ The I.U.A. had still not accepted that Sinn Féin represented a large portion of Irish people and the I.U.A. argued that a negotiated peace settlement would be a betrayal of the law-abiding subjects to the forces of terror. On the other hand the A.P.L. were trying to convince southern unionists to support them and accept the inevitability of some form of change in British-Irish relations. At the A.G.M. of the A.P.L. in Dublin on 22 April 1921 the Sligo unionist and Corporation councillor, Arthur Jackson, argued 'that the unionist Anti-Partition League is worthy of the support of southern unionists'.²⁹⁶ Jackson also called 'upon all residents in southern Ireland who approve of our principles and actions to support us financially and enable our work to be carried to a successful conclusion'.²⁹⁷ The A.P.L. supported the Government of Ireland Act, although they were opposed to any attempts to bring it into operation in the south of Ireland while the country remained volatile.

The violence continued in Co. Sligo and in April 1921 thirty-eight outrages were reported in the county, which included the murder on 14 April of Thomas Walker, Ballinafull, Co. Sligo, a 72 year old Protestant civil bill officer of Sligo County Court.²⁹⁸ The R.I.C. believed that the murder might have been related to a raid on Walker's house on 11 March 1921. Walker had identified some of the men and the R.I.C. later arrested seventeen men involved in the incident.²⁹⁹ However, none of the men were charged with Walker's murder. Walker had been warned twice by the I.R.A. to discontinue his activities on behalf of Sligo County Court and there were claims that the I.R.A. shot him as a spy.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 12 Mar. 1921.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26 Mar. 1921.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 Apr. 1921.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 30 Apr. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8553).

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

However, the R.I.C. were inclined to believe that the I.R.A. were not responsible for Walker's murder and it would appear that he was killed without the approval of the I.R.A. leadership in Sligo as local I.R.A. members, in particular Patrick Farrell, the I.R.A. Intelligence Officer (I/O) in the area had earlier claimed that Walker was 'harmless'.³⁰⁰ The incident was the only recorded case of a Protestant murder in Co. Sligo during the War of Independence.

At the time Co. Monaghan had a much more numerous Protestant population than Sligo and about one quarter of Monaghan's population was either Church of Ireland or Presbyterian.³⁰¹ Terence Dooley's research on Co. Monaghan in the period from 1919 to 1922 has discovered that in June 1920 eight of the seventeen crimes reported in the county were directed against Protestants, which included the burning of an Orange hall and other cases of arson and intimidation along with raids for arms on Protestant homes.³⁰² In July 1920 ten of the seventeen reported crimes in Monaghan were perpetrated against Protestants.³⁰³

The attacks on Protestants in Monaghan resulted in a meeting in September 1920 in Monaghan town, which was attended by many Protestants including the local Protestant clergy. The speakers at the meeting called on Protestants in the county to defend themselves against these assaults and they condemned the attacks on Protestant homes while also criticising the Catholic clergy for not speaking out against the attacks.³⁰⁴ Attacks on Protestants continued in Monaghan in 1921 and on 10 March 1921, a Protestant railway worker, with no connections to the police and military was shot and wounded.³⁰⁵ At the end of March 1921 a Protestant farmer and his son were shot dead in front of the rest of their family, and in April 1921 a particularly brutal attack occurred when a middle-aged Protestant spinster was murdered as a spy.³⁰⁶ Sinn Féin and I.R.A. policy during the war was opposed to harming women and the murder of the middle-aged Protestant woman indicates the depth of sectarian bitterness in Monaghan.

As a result of the attacks on their community Protestants in Monaghan were forced to be much more militant and they formed town guards while others joined the Ulster Special

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Terence Dooley, 'Monaghan Protestants in a time of crisis, 1919-22' in R. V. Comerford, M. Cullen, J. Hill, and C. Lennon (eds.), *Religion, conflict and coexistence in Ireland* (Dublin, 1990), p. 235.

³⁰² Ibid., p. 239.

³⁰³ Ibid., pp 239-40.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., pp 241-2.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 240.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

Constabulary and by April 1921 there were 620 Monaghan Protestants serving in the force.³⁰⁷ The War of Independence took on a sectarian tone in Monaghan, which was largely absent in Sligo, and there is no record of Sligo Protestants forming or joining any armed groups to oppose the I.R.A. Of course the Protestant population of Sligo was less numerous than in Co. Monaghan and Monaghan was also closer to the proposed border between Northern and Southern Ireland and Monaghan Protestants would have wished to be included in Northern Ireland. Sligo did not have any chance of inclusion in Northern Ireland and therefore Protestant unionists in Sligo were forced to accept this.

On 3 May 1921, two separate Irish states, Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland were set up under the Government of Ireland Act and elections to the new parliaments of Northern and Southern Ireland were scheduled to take place on 24 May 1921.³⁰⁸ The electoral boundaries were changed and the constituencies of north and south Sligo were abolished and a five-seat Sligo-east Mayo constituency was set up and the electoral system to be employed was P.R.³⁰⁹ Sinn Féin had no intention of taking their seats in parliament and were just going to use the election to endorse their campaign for Irish independence and use it to select the Second Dáil. In the 26 counties 124 Sinn Féin candidates and four unionists (for Trinity College) were elected unopposed.³¹⁰

Within the Sinn Féin organisation there was a struggle between those moderates who believed that I.R.A. violence would jeopardise international and especially American sympathy for an Irish republic and the extremists within the movement who believed that only through violence would Britain be persuaded to negotiate with Irish representatives. One of the sitting T.D.s in Sligo, J.J. Clancy, was not nominated on this occasion. The selection committee consisted of local I.R.A. commanders and they probably did not believe that Clancy was active enough during the War of Independence. Clancy seemed to be distancing himself from the actions of the I.R.A. and he had only reluctantly paid the I.R.A. for collecting rates and had resigned his county council seat in protest at I.R.A. interference in civil affairs.³¹¹ The R.I.C. Co. Inspector also noticed this and he believed that Clancy was not selected 'because his views were not extreme enough – he did not approve of police murders etc'.³¹²

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 242-3.

³⁰⁸ Michael Laffan, *The partition of Ireland 1911-25* (4th ed., Dundalk, 2004), p. 69.

³⁰⁹ *S.C.*, 21 May 1921.

³¹⁰ J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 47.

³¹¹ *S.C.*, 16 Apr. 1921.

³¹² *S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.*, 31 May 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8554).

The election was held on 24 May 1921 and the Sinn Féin candidates Alec McCabe, Frank Carty, James Devins, Thomas O'Donnell and Francis Farran, from Foxford in Co. Mayo, and were all elected unopposed in the Sligo-east Mayo constituency.³¹³ Further evidence that the I.R.A. was able to wield control over political decisions in Co. Sligo is revealed by the fact that all the men selected in the Sligo-east Mayo constituency, apart from Francis Farran, who was from Mayo, occupied key positions within the ranks of the Sligo I.R.A. Devins was O/C the Grange Battalion, Tom O'Donnell was Adjutant of the Gurteen Battalion, Frank Carty was the O/C the Tubbercurry Battalion and Alec McCabe was O/C the Ballymote Battalion and one of the chief organisers of the I.R.A. in the county. No elections were held and all five men along with 119 other Sinn Féin candidates were returned to make up the Second Dáil.³¹⁴ As a result of the I.R.A. struggle and the fact that the organisation was instrumental in securing the nomination of the more extreme nationalists, the Second Dáil was composed of more hard-line republicans.³¹⁵ The results of the election endorsed the more extreme wing of Sinn Féin and in effect backed the physical force side of the republican movement in Sligo.

In the period April to July 1921 the I.R.A.'s military struggle in Sligo continued with some success. In April there were thirty-two outrages which included the murders of two members of the R.I.C. Constables Kelly and Heatherington at Ballisodare train station on 19 April.³¹⁶ In May the number of outrages in Co. Sligo had increased to thirty-nine including the murder on 17 May 1921 of Corporal Williams a Royal Marine near Sligo town by the I.R.A.³¹⁷ However, by the end of June 1921 many of the key I.R.A. leaders had been arrested and two important arrests in the south Sligo area were Frank O'Beirne, O/C Collooney battalion on 27 May and Tom Deignan, O/C Riverstown battalion on 4 June 1921.³¹⁸

The I.R.A. in Co. Sligo were able to conduct small opportunistic raids, especially with 'flying columns' which did not disband after attacks, and were supplied by sympathetic locals. The 'flying columns' operated on their own initiative and so were hard to pin point and tie down by the Crown forces. I.R.A. G.H.Q. issued directives on the formation of

³¹³ S.C., 28 May 1921 and Elections Ireland, General Election 16 June 1922 Sligo-east Mayo (<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1922&cons=563>) (1 June 2006).

³¹⁴ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), p. 425.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 30 Apr. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8554).

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 31 May 1921.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30 June 1921; S.C., 4 June 1921; 11 June 1921.

flying columns. However, the columns usually arose spontaneously in reaction to local developments. In June 'flying columns' in the remote areas of Co. Sligo ambushed and killed three R.I.C. men in two separate raids.³¹⁹ On 1 June constables Higgins and King were killed after an ambush in Cullens and on 26 June Constable Patrick Clarke was killed in an ambush in Cliffoney.³²⁰ The authorities received a set back in 28 June 1921, when three prominent I.R.A. commanders, Tom Deignan, Frank O'Beirne and Charles Gildea, who were being held in Sligo Gaol, were rescued.³²¹

It seemed that as desperate as the I.R.A. were to inflict casualties on the R.I.C. and military, they did not seem to want to physically harm the Protestant population. However, on 6 July the I.R.A. kidnapped twelve jurors, mostly Protestant landowners, in order to prevent their appearance at Sligo Court.³²² The men were well treated by their captors and were detained not because they were Protestants but as the I.R.A. wished to inflict the maximum amount of disruption on the British legal system in Sligo.

In July 1921 talks were taking place between the British government, Sinn Féin, and southern unionists led by Midleton took an active part in brokering a ceasefire between the I.R.A. and Crown forces.³²³ On 9 July 1921 a Truce between the British authorities and the I.R.A. came into effect.³²⁴ The *Sligo Independent* editorial of 16 July 1921 bestowed great praise on the efforts of Lord Midleton to broker a deal between the Sinn Féin leader Eamon de Valera and the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George to end the war.³²⁵ The editorial argued that unionists in the south of Ireland were anxious to work with Sinn Féin as long as the rights of unionists were respected and expressed the desire of the A.P.L. to reunite Ireland while insisting that Ulstermen 'must realise that they are an integral part of Ireland', and urged them to 'co-operate with their fellow countrymen in the south and west for the social and industrial welfare of Ireland as a whole'.³²⁶ In the wake of the Truce it would now become increasingly more apparent that southern unionists and Sinn Féin would have more in common in that they both wanted to see a united and economically prosperous Ireland, while at the same time the Truce underlined the diverging interests of southern and Ulster unionists.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4 June 1921; 2 July 1921.

³²⁰ S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R., 1 July 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8554).

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² *Ibid.*, 31 July 1921.

³²³ Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 716.

³²⁴ *S.I.*, 16 July 1921.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

At the time of the Truce in July 1921 Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. in Sligo dominated local government in the county. The republican police had shown that they could do the work previously carried out by the R.I.C. and Sinn Féin had established a court system which although basic in operation, had in most cases dispensed efficient and effective justice. The number of deaths related to the conflict in Co. Sligo during the War of Independence was low in comparison to some other counties and only nineteen people were killed in Co. Sligo.³²⁷ The Crown forces in Sligo had incurred seventeen fatalities and only one I.R.A. member and one Protestant civilian were killed. The police and military had carried out reprisal actions against property in Co. Sligo and civilians were treated roughly. However, no civilians lost their lives in reprisal attacks by Crown forces. In the neighbouring county of Mayo forty Crown forces and twenty-two I.R.A. men were killed.³²⁸ In Co. Clare thirty-seven policemen, nine soldiers and six I.R.A. men were killed, and five civilians were killed as informers.³²⁹ Cork suffered particularly badly and 190 Crown forces, 135 I.R.A. men and 167 civilians, many of whom were Protestant, were killed.³³⁰ There was no overall victory by either the Crown forces or the I.R.A. and as Michael Hopkinson has argued, 'at best the I.R.A. achieved a military stalemate'.³³¹

The Protestant community in Sligo had emerged relatively unscathed from the War of Independence. The war had not taken on a sectarian tone in Sligo and the I.R.A. condemned attacks on Protestants and on the property of Protestant Churches. A Protestant civilian was killed. However, this action was carried out against the wishes of the I.R.A. leadership in Sligo. During the War of Independence some Protestant farmers had suffered intimidation and Protestant property owners had incurred damages, which in many cases was related to the fact that they owned property which had been used by the R.I.C. However, the large businesses in Sligo town and the landed Protestant families in Co. Sligo had not been targeted, although Muriel Perceval, Hazelwood, Sligo was awarded £250 in compensation for an arson attack on a corn mill on her property at Hazelwood, about two miles from Sligo town, which had occurred on 14 August 1920.³³²

The S.R.A. also gave Protestants in Sligo town a political voice during the period. The vast majority of Protestants in Sligo had kept their heads down as much as they could during

³²⁷ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 15.

³²⁸ Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare* (Amsterdam, 1994), p. 33.

³²⁹ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), p. 226.

³³⁰ Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies* (Oxford, 1998), table 7, p. 87.

³³¹ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (Dublin, 1988), p. 9.

³³² Muriel Perceval, 4 Oct. 1920 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7).

the War of Independence, and did their best to avoid all contact with the R.I.C., the I.R.A. and the British forces. Protestants as well as loyal Catholics were disgusted with some of the heavy-handed tactics of British forces and were even more disinclined to assist the police.

Protestants in other parts of Ireland were also reluctant to give information to the police and Peter Hart has argued that, while Protestants in Cork were supportive of the Union during the War of Independence, very few were willing to provide the R.I.C. with intelligence. In the period from 1919 to 1921 most Protestants in Sligo town and county were also reluctant to give information to the authorities concerning local I.R.A. units. The vast majority of Protestants did not assist the R.I.C. but at least four people in Co. Sligo did share information with the authorities.³³³

The financial troubles of Sligo Corporation provided Protestant and Catholic businessmen with the opportunity of becoming directly involved in local politics through the formation of the S.R.A. and for the first time many Protestants were able to take an active part in local government. The success of the S.R.A. candidates in the Sligo Corporation election in January 1919 was also important in unifying Sligo unionists at this time, as differences within the I.U.A. finally split the movement.

In the aftermath of Sinn Féin's success in the general election of late 1918, the party pinned much of its hopes for Irish self-government on recognition at the post-war Paris Peace Conference. However, the party's hopes at the conference went unfulfilled and the British government was unwilling to negotiate with Sinn Féin. The intransigence of the British government allowed militant republicanism to come to the fore in the movement for Irish independence.

There is evidence to suggest that only some Protestant unionist farmers/landowners such as John Loughheed, Richard Hillas, Palmer J. McCloghery, Alex Reid, Richard G. Bell and Col. J.C. Duke were targeted by landless tenants in 1919 and early 1920 and as in the conacre campaign of 1918 many Volunteers were involved. Sinn Féin was again fearful that too much trouble would damage the appeal of the movement and its principal struggle for Irish independence. It was hard for Sinn Féin to control all the activities of its members as the organisation consisted of many different groups.

When the more extreme members of the republican movement were released from prison by the British government in April 1920, the militant side of the republican movement was

³³³ I.G.C. papers (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762).

allowed to gain control of Sinn Féin in Sligo before the May 1920 local government elections. Sinn Féin won all twenty seats in Sligo County Council elections, and it was the more extreme members that got elected. Unlike in the January 1919 Corporation election, no S.R.A. candidate was able to get elected. The non-Sinn Féin candidates and their supporters were intimidated during the election, although the elections still proved that Sinn Féin had plenty of popular support for its campaign in Co. Sligo. The new county council immediately pledged its allegiance to Dáil Éireann and cut ties with the B.L.G.B. Sinn Féin was also willing to demonstrate religious tolerance and the party appointed Protestant clergymen to Sligo County Council committees. However, the county councillors needed the I.R.A. to collect the withheld rates and this gave the organisation a lot of leverage and influence in local government. Many within Sinn Féin disagreed with this. However, efforts by moderates within Sinn Féin to gain control over the more extreme activities of the I.R.A. were not successful.

The I.R.A. established control over many parts of Co. Sligo and threatened traders who were dealing with the police and told people not to give information to the R.I.C. Only a very small number of Protestants gave information to the police, and those who did suffered attacks on their property as a result. With the R.I.C. withdrawal from large areas of the county and a reduction in patrolling, the I.R.A. took over policing duties while Sinn Féin established courts to deal with land disputes and ordinary crime. Bryan Cooper praised the fairness of the Sinn Féin courts, and the courts showed their impartiality by finding in favour of Protestants who came before them and forced republicans who had attacked the property of Protestant Churches in Sligo to pay fines to the church authorities, although some Protestants were still targeted as part of land agitation and were forced into selling part of their holdings as a result of decisions made by Sinn Féin courts.

Sligo Protestants in general wanted to keep out of trouble and most wished to keep their views to themselves. However, in September 1920 Protestants in Sligo did speak out against sectarianism in Belfast and both Catholic and Protestant congregations in Sligo raised funds to assist Catholics in Belfast who had been forced from their jobs, and although generous in actions and words Sligo Protestants must also have been motivated by the fear that they themselves could have become targets for retribution.

During the summer of 1920 the Sligo I.R.A. began to attack R.I.C. patrols and in October and November 1920 reprisals by the Crown forces in both north and south Sligo were conducted in response to fatal attacks by I.R.A. units on the R.I.C. The Catholic Church

and the local and international press strongly condemned the violence. However the media was much more critical of the British counter terror and heavy-handed tactics by the Crown forces did much to alienate ordinary people, including many Protestants in Sligo.

When the Government of Ireland Act was passed in December 1920, Sligo unionists were now generally supportive of Irish self-government, possibly as a result of the increased violence in the last quarter of 1920. Sligo unionists including Charles O'Hara publicly questioned the wisdom of introducing the act while the country was still in disorder, although they seemed more concerned with local politics, where ironically they were in a much stronger position. In December 1920, with so many Sinn Féin councillors absent from Sligo Corporation, the S.R.A. had a temporary majority and was able to put the corporation back under the control of the B.L.G.B. However, in early January Sinn Féin was able to successfully reject the B.L.G.B. Despite this, by the end of January 1921, the S.R.A. were successful in securing the mayoral election of their candidate, an independent John Jinks. This was an important victory for the Protestant community in Sligo during a difficult period and also augured well for a future where moderate nationalist Catholics and ex-unionist Protestants could cooperate.

During the War of Independence Protestant jurors were kidnapped and a Protestant man was shot as a spy. However, the I.R.A. leadership in Sligo maintained they had not sanctioned the killing and they condemned the action. The situation was much worse for Protestants in other parts of the country where the War of Independence took on a very sectarian undertone, which seemed to be largely absent in Sligo. Also, during the War of Independence Protestants and Catholics in Sligo were firmly united in their condemnation of the indiscriminate tactics employed by the Auxiliaries. The number of deaths in Sligo during the War of Independence was low in comparison to some other counties and although some Protestants had suffered intimidation and destruction of property, most had survived relatively unscathed.

Chapter Four: The Truce and the Civil War

The last chapter explored the impact of the War of Independence on Protestants in Sligo. This chapter investigates how Protestants in Sligo responded to the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the Civil War which followed. R.B. McDowell has argued that ‘the reactions of the southern unionists to the Treaty were varied – relief, shocked surprise, pessimistic acquiescence and the intention of making the best of a *fait accompli*’.¹ This chapter analyses the reactions of Protestant unionists in Sligo to the Truce and assesses the attitudes of both the Catholic and Protestant communities towards the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and discusses the impact of the debate on the Treaty on the Protestants and unionists in Sligo and examines the arguments for and against the Treaty in Sligo. Were there any other local organisations in Sligo that could speak for Protestants and unionists apart from the southern unionist organisations, which were divided and had become largely powerless?

Peter Hart has argued that at the end of the War of Independence, the young men of the I.R.A. believed that ‘Protestant unionists were traitors’.² This chapter investigates the attitude of the I.R.A. in Sligo towards politicians, the Catholic Church and towards the Protestant community in Sligo and explores the impact of the Treaty on local politics in Sligo, and discovers if there was any opposition to Sinn Féin in local and national elections. How did the Sligo Protestant community deal with the evacuation of the British army from Sligo, a force in which many of them had served and believed had protected them for so long and gauge if the sectarian trouble in Northern Ireland reinforced the differences between Protestants and Catholics or presented an opportunity for Protestants and Catholics in Sligo to work together.

Small groups of I.R.A. men were still active in the more remote areas of Co. Sligo when the Truce came into force in July 1921. The I.R.A. believed that they had been victorious over the British forces and the general population treated the I.R.A. with great respect, affording them the status of honoured guests at many social functions.³ It was also at this time that the differences between the politicians of Sinn Féin and the military wing represented by the I.R.A. became much more noticeable. As Michael Farry has argued in his study, *The aftermath of revolution: Sligo 1921-23*, the military side of the republican

¹ R.B. McDowell, *Crisis and decline* (Dublin, 1997), p. 109.

² Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies* (Oxford, 1998), p. 291.

³ *S.C.*, 17 Sept. 1921.

movement believed that they had single-handedly defeated the British, while they maintained that the politicians had contributed little to the struggle.⁴

Many I.R.A. commanders also held political office and now that the Truce was in force they began to stamp their authority over the civilian population of Sligo after the end of the War of Independence. On 4 September 1921 Frank Carty, I.R.A. commander and T.D. for Sligo- east Mayo argued that 'he was not a man of words but, as perhaps others knew, a man of action'⁵ and James (Seamus) Devins, also an I.R.A. commander and T.D. for Sligo- east Mayo, maintained that 'he did not profess to be a public speaker. He belonged to the section who believed deeds rather than words counted'.⁶ Later in October 1921 Devins declared that 'he did not happen to belong to the side of the organisation from which the speeches came', arguing that the gunmen 'had brought things to the condition they were in now'.⁷ The I/O of the Sligo battalion of the I.R.A., Robert Bradshaw, argued that people had taken advantage of the troubled times to express nationalist views but when 'other conditions were prevailing', these people could not be heard.⁸ Bradshaw, like many within the Sligo I.R.A., were of the opinion that they had shouldered the brunt of the War of Independence and the politicians within the Sinn Féin organisation, especially on Sligo County Council, had done very little to further the independence of Ireland.

As discussed in chapter two many I.R.A. men had been co-opted onto Sligo County Council, and this meant that the military men were bestowed with much more political power than had been granted to them by the electorate. In June 1920, following the county council elections in May 1920, the ex-officio members nominated to the county council were Frank O'Beirne, Sligo R.D.C., Frank Carty Tubbercurry R.D.C., Jim Hunt, Boyle No. 2 R.D.C. and Henry Cavanagh, Dromore West R.D.C.; two men, Seamus Devins and Michael Marren were co-opted onto the county council.⁹ The ex-officio and co-opted members, except for Cavanagh, were part of the I.R.A. leadership in Co. Sligo. In March 1921 Michael Nevin, I/O Sligo battalion I.R.A., was co-opted onto the county council in place of Michael Marren.¹⁰ As a result of the War of Independence there was much overlap

⁴ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 17.

⁵ S.C., 10 Sept. 1921.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct. 1921.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 22 Oct. 1921.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Minutes of N. Sligo Comhairle Ceanntair Sinn Féin, 13 June 1920 (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, CLU 011); S.C., 26 June 1920.

¹⁰ S.C., 5 Mar. 1921; CM, 5 Mar. 1921.

in membership between Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. in Sligo, and it would prove hard to disentangle the political from the military and re-establish civilian control over the I.R.A.

For the moment the I.R.A. was directly involved in the decision-making process and had a strong controlling influence in local government in Co. Sligo. The organisation had the power to have a councillor removed from Sligo County Council for not showing the proper respect during a resolution regretting the death of the I.R.A. O/C of the Ballymote battalion, Michael Marren, and they were also able to use their influence on the council to get the people they wanted co-opted on.¹¹ The I.R.A. recommended men favourable to them for the positions of rate collector for the Ballintogher area and Tubbercurry areas of Co. Sligo.¹² Both men selected for the posts were later appointed.¹³ As Michael Farry has argued, Sinn Féin politicians who had not been members of the I.R.A. on Sligo County Council and Sligo Corporation were ignored by the I.R.A., who believed that only 'people of sound republican principles were only to be found among the ranks of the I.R.A.'¹⁴

The I.R.A. may not have had much time for politicians, but what was their attitude towards the Catholic Church in Sligo? Many priests who had been supportive of the Sinn Féin campaign continued to attend Sinn Féin meetings. However, not all the clergy were supportive of the I.R.A. and in October 1921 a dispute developed between the I.R.A. and Canon O'Connor, P.P. Gurteen over a minor incident involving seating arrangements in the church. Canon O'Connor opposed I.R.A. interference in his parish.¹⁵ In November 1922 Fr Durkin, C.C. in the Collooney area incurred the wrath of the I.R.A. after he refused to allow a teacher to use schools in his parish for the teaching of the Irish language arguing that some people were putting the teaching of Irish above the salvation of their souls.¹⁶ The I.R.A. supported the Irish teacher and the disagreement continued until April 1922.¹⁷

With the I.R.A. so powerful in Sligo during the Truce period, what was their attitude towards the Protestant community? By and large it seemed that the I.R.A. did not interfere with the vast majority of Protestants in Sligo town and county during the Truce. However, in August 1921, during the Truce period, many Sligo Protestant businessmen were

¹¹ O/C of Sligo Brigade to Adjutant General, 14 Sept. 1921, and Inspector's report, 12 Oct. 1921, (N.A.I., Dáil Éireann Local Government Records, DELG 26/7).

¹² *S.C.* and *S.I.*, 1 Oct. 1921; Minutes of Sligo Co. Council meeting, 24 Sept. 1921, (*S.C.L.*, Sligo Co. Council Minute Book).

¹³ *S.I.*, 15 Oct. 1921; *S.C.*, 15 Oct. 1921.

¹⁴ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 30.

¹⁵ Correspondence dealing with the dispute between Gurteen Battalion and Canon O'Connor, P.P., 19 Oct.-22 Nov. 1921 (U.C.D. A.D., Mulcahy papers, P7/A/33).

¹⁶ *CM*, 3 Dec. 1921.

¹⁷ *S.C.*, 8 Apr. 1922.

requested to contribute to the Sligo branch of the White Cross. The White Cross was set up in February 1921 to assist republicans and their families who were suffering hardship because of their involvement in the War of Independence. The Sligo branch was established on 9 August 1921 and its chairman was the Sinn Féin corporation councillor, Michael Nevin.¹⁸ The published list of contributors revealed that Sligo Protestant businessmen had been quite generous in their donations to the White Cross. Arthur Jackson, Harper Campbell, the Pollexfen family and Lieutenant Colonel Campbell each gave £25. Henry Lyons, Messrs W.T. & G. Johnston, Arthur McArthur & Son, Cook and McNeilly, R. Gorman, Union Street, Sligo, each gave £20, while Messrs R. Brown & Co., John Street, each gave £10.¹⁹

Contributions were supposed to be entirely voluntary, although the generosity of the Protestant community must have been motivated by the desire to avoid the wrath of the local I.R.A. Indeed for many republicans the contributions of the more affluent Protestants did not go far enough. In an editorial on 27 August 1921 the pro-republican *Connachtman* expressed dissatisfaction with the contributions from Protestant businessmen, promising that some of them would be revisited 'to see that those who have suffered little or not at all should contribute in strict accordance with their means'.²⁰ However, the same edition of the newspaper praised a Protestant unionist, Charles Phibbs of Doobeg, Tubbercurry, for his contribution of £5.²¹ A few Protestants also claimed publicly that they were pressurised into contributing money. However, the White Cross Committee promised to return the contributions of those who claimed to have given money under duress and two Protestants, E.F. Brown, who had contributed £10 and Dick Brown, Ballytivnan who had contributed £1 were refunded the money in October 1921.²²

During the Truce period although the Sinn Féin court system was heavily reliant on the I.R.A. to impose its decisions, the Sinn Féin courts were able to expand their influence in Co. Sligo and at the end of September 1921 Sinn Féin courts were held in Sligo town and in various locations around the county.²³ The I.R.A. was also consolidating its position in the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 Aug. 1921.

¹⁹ *S.C.*, 3 Sept. 1921; *CM*, 3 Sept. 1921.

²⁰ *CM*, 27 Aug. 1921.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 8 Oct. 1921; 15 Oct. 1921.

²³ Reports by R.I.C. of Breaches of the Truce from Co. Sligo, Sinn Féin Courts, 25 Sept. 1921 to 30 Sept. 1921, (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8562); Republican Courts, south Sligo (N.A.I., Dáil Éireann Courts Commission, DE 10/58). Republican Courts, north Sligo (N.A.I., Dáil Éireann Courts Commission, DE 10/57).

county and in September 1921 the organisation set up camps around Co. Sligo and began to train recruits in rifle practice and in the use of explosives. I.R.A. G.H.Q. in Dublin still considered Sligo 'a hostile town and an enemy area of influence'.²⁴ However, the organisation was generally quite successful in controlling its members and in avoiding confrontation with police or military forces stationed in Co. Sligo during the Truce period.²⁵

The I.R.A. continued to occupy buildings and neither the military nor the police interfered with this and although the R.I.C. saw the occupations as breaches of the Truce agreement, the I.R.A. argued that their understanding was that both sides were allowed to train and organise during the ceasefire. In August 1921 the I.R.A. began to set up fixed training camps in Sligo and on 29 August 1921 the I.R.A. took possession of Rahilly House, which was owned by Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth, and in early September the I.R.A. occupied Longhill Lodge, Cloonacool, Co. Sligo, the property of Major Charles O'Hara.²⁶ By mid-October sixteen I.R.A. training camps were located around the county with numbers attending ranging from twenty-five to the 120 based at Cloonamahon sanatorium near Collooney.²⁷

In November 1921 I.R.A. G.H.Q. sent organisers to report on and advise I.R.A. officers and men in Sligo. Five brigade areas established in the area, south Sligo, north Sligo, north Roscommon, east Mayo and north Leitrim, and the brigade areas were incorporated into the 3rd Western Division. The officers for the 3rd Western Division were almost entirely drawn from the Sligo brigade and as most of the men in the Sligo brigade were later opposed to the Treaty it may partially account for the fact that most of these areas were anti-Treaty during the Civil War. As Michael Farry has argued, the added prestige for the I.R.A. in Sligo and the fact that there was no opposition to the I.R.A. in the county meant that the I.R.A. were not going to take orders from any civil power.²⁸

Under the terms of the Truce the I.R.A. and the Crown forces were to avoid all contact with each other. Both the I.R.A. and the Crown forces were eager to steer clear of each other anyway. However, there were a few reported cases of friction between the I.R.A. and British forces during the Truce period. On 10 August 1921 an incident developed between

²⁴ Report on Sligo area, n.d. (U.C.D. A.D., Mulcahy Papers, P/7/A/32).

²⁵ Reports by R.I.C. of Breaches of the Truce from Co. Sligo, I.R.A. Drilling and Camps, 23 Sept. 1921 to 5 Oct. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904; microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8562).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Report on Officer's Training Camp, 22 Aug. 1921 to 27 Aug. 1921 (I.M.A., Collins Papers, A/0747); Inspection report by Capt. T. Burke to G.H.Q., 17 Oct. 1921 (I.M.A., Collins Papers, A/0747).

²⁸ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), pp 32-3.

an I.R.A. officer E.J. Bofin and some marines while he was attempting to clear a public house in Rosses Point of its customers. Shots were fired when the marines tried to disarm him. However, no one was injured in the engagement.²⁹ Another incident occurred at the end of September 1921 when an I.R.A. unit drilling at Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo fired shots at the R.I.C.³⁰

The Truce did not stop the I.R.A. from punishing people they believed had collaborated or had associated with the R.I.C. or the military and in September 1921 a family that had been friendly with the police had their hay burned and two female members of the family had their hair cropped.³¹ There was little agrarian trouble in Sligo at this time and in many cases agrarian incidents which were blamed on the I.R.A. probably had more to do with long running land disputes as was the case of the maiming of some cattle belonging to William Fenton in early November 1921. The Fenton family owned 273 acres of untenanted land in the Easkey area in west Co. Sligo.³² The I.R.A. denied responsibility for the action and it was most likely related to old issues regarding land division in the area, or possibly in relation to Fenton's occupation as Crown Solicitor for Sligo.³³

In order to equip the new camps in the county the I.R.A. was forced to requisition supplies, and they were instructed by I.R.A. G.H.Q. in Dublin to raid Protestant and unionist businessmen for materials.³⁴ The I.R.A. G.H.Q. believed that Sligo unionists 'should be subject to comprehensive requisitions of every kind - food, implements, clothing, billets if thought suitable, fuel, bedding, animals and vehicles. It must be brought home to them unmistakably that the English are helpless to protect them and in all respects Sligo can be treated as mainly a hostile town and an enemy area of influence'.³⁵ From August to December 1921 the I.R.A. raided at least three Protestant shops for supplies in Sligo.³⁶ During this period armed and masked men also raided the houses of at least seven Protestants or loyalists and took various items of property.³⁷ On 15 September 1921 the

²⁹ Report by John Russell, Breaches of the Truce, Miscellaneous, 11 Aug. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8562).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3 Oct. 1921.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 13 Sept. 1921.

³² Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510).

³³ S.C., 19 Nov. 1921.

³⁴ Report on Sligo area, n.d. (U.C.D. A.D., Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/32).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Richard T. Kerr-Taylor (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/48); Thomas Hunt (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/202); Charles Graham (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/90).

³⁷ Mary Feeney (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/20); John Scanlon (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/20); Gilbert J. Hanley (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/50); John Barlow (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/54); Palmer

I.R.A. were able to acquire a large amount of supplies when they raided the Goods Store at Sligo Railway Station.³⁸

After the War of Independence the I.R.A. did not single out Protestants or unionists for any form of physical punishment in Sligo town although the I.R.A. did have orders from G.H.Q. to steal supplies from unionists/Protestants and the Sligo I.R.A. kept a close watch on those Protestants they believed to be a threat. On 24 October 1921 the Sligo I.R.A. reported to I.R.A. G.H.Q. that they were monitoring the movements and correspondence of three prominent Sligo Protestant loyalists describing them as 'unionists of the bitter type and men of considerable means'.³⁹ The men referred to were Philip Perceval, a landowner, Thomas Brien, an auctioneer and land agent and the well-known businessman and corporation councillor, Arthur Jackson.⁴⁰

During the Truce period the Protestant community in Sligo seemed to have been able to display loyalties to their traditions in particular in the commemoration of war dead. In October 1921 the *Sligo Independent* reported on an 'impressive and historic ceremony in Sligo' when 'war memorials to the dead of the Great War were dedicated in Calry Church and in Sligo Grammar School'.⁴¹ A memorial service was also held in Calry Church on Armistice Day 1921, and was attended by the band of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment.⁴² Even though they would have generally disagreed with the symbolism associated with these events republicans in Sligo did not interfere or publicly condemn Protestants for honouring the war dead.

However, the I.R.A. saw well-off Protestants as a potential source of income and in September and in October 1921 the I.R.A. in south Sligo used the sectarian trouble in Belfast to justify their actions. On 27 September 1921 traders in Ballymote received notices against doing business with the Ulster Bank and on 2 October 1921 they received notices ordering them not to do business with Belfast based companies.⁴³ Many Protestants and unionists had accounts with the Ulster Bank and Robert Beattie, a Protestant from Ballymote later stated that "I always kept my account at the Ulster Bank with my brother

McCloughrey (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/63); Bartholomew Sweeney (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/84); George R. Williams (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/197).

³⁸ Report by John Russell, Breaches of the Truce, Intimidation, 27 Sept. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8562).

³⁹ Sligo Brigade I/O to H.Q.R.S. I/O, 24 Oct. 1921 (I.M.A., Collins Papers, A/0747).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *S.I.*, 8 Oct. 1921.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 12 Nov. 1921.

⁴³ Report by John Russell, Breaches of the Truce, Intimidation, 3 Oct. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8562).

Orangemen which being the Orangeman's bank was definitely marked out for reprisals through the troubled times".⁴⁴ Many traders immediately withdrew their money as the I.R.A. threatened to fine those dealing with the Ulster Bank. Despite this, the I.R.A. imposed fines on many Ballymote traders regardless of whether they withdrew their money from the Ulster Bank or not.⁴⁵

The Belfast Boycott was strictly enforced in Ballymote and eleven shopkeepers and businessmen including seven Protestants were forced to pay fines to the I.R.A.⁴⁶ On 20 July 1923 a Sligo solicitor, W.J. O'Reilly acting on behalf of nineteen farmers and traders from Ballymote, wrote to the Free State Secretary of Finance claiming compensation ranging from £10 to £50.⁴⁷ A majority of claimants, thirteen of the nineteen, were Catholic and six of the nineteen were Protestant. O'Reilly claimed that his clients had been fined in October 1921 for dealing with the Ulster Bank during the time that the bank was boycotted in connection with the general boycott of Belfast based companies.⁴⁸ He argued that his clients had never got the opportunity to make any defence at the time and they were forced to pay the fines.⁴⁹ The Free State government refused to pay any compensation.⁵⁰ On 11 February 1925 twelve businessmen and landholders from Ballymote claimed compensation for amounts ranging from £12 to £200.⁵¹ Nine of the twelve businessmen and farmers who had made claims on the 11 February 1925 were the same people that had previously made a claim on 20 July 1923. The three new names were the Protestants W.P. McElroy, Henry J. Gilmour and J.J. Rogers.⁵² The claimants argued that although they all had removed their

⁴⁴ Robert Beattie (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/66).

⁴⁵ Belfast Boycott, Ballymote claims, 1922 (N.A.I., Dept. of Finance, FIN 1/1110-1114); M.C. Kevins to John Hennigan, re. Fines imposed by the Republican Army on persons dealing with the Ulster Bank, 11 Feb. 1925 (N.A.I., Dept. of Finance, F 837/4).

⁴⁶ Robert S. Allen (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/134 Robert Beattie (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/66); Joseph Flanagan (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/168); John R. Gorman (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/172); Richard Gorman (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/174); Thomas Hunt (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/202); M.C. Kevins (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/169); John R. McKim (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/75); Joseph Murray (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/173); Christopher Smith (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/173) and J. Walpole-Boyers (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/202).

⁴⁷ W.J. O'Reilly Solr, Sligo to Dept. of Finance, re. Fines imposed by the Republican Army on persons dealing with the Ulster Bank, 20 July 1923 (N.A.I., Dept. of Finance, FIN 1/3471).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Minister of Finance to W.J. O'Reilly, 6 Nov. 1923 (N.A.I., Dept. of Finance, FIN 1/3471).

⁵¹ M.C. Kevins to John Hennigan, T.D., re. Fines imposed by the Republican Army on persons dealing with the Ulster Bank, 11 Feb. 1925 (N.A.I., Dept. of Finance, FIN 1/3471).

⁵² *Ibid.*

accounts from the Ulster Bank, the I.R.A. had fined them.⁵³ Once again the Free State refused to pay any compensation.⁵⁴

Ballymote seemed to have been the exception in Sligo and the Belfast Boycott was not imposed on traders in Sligo town or anywhere else in the county at this time or later during the Civil War. I.R.A. G.H.Q. in Dublin may have left the decision to local I.R.A. commanders whether to enforce or ignore the Belfast boycott. The commander of the Ballymote battalion of the I.R.A. at this time was Alec McCabe and the overall commander of I.R.A. units in south Sligo was Frank Carty, and neither man is on record as expressing anti-Protestant views or had publicly argued for a strict imposition of the Belfast boycott. It may have been quite possible that certain individual members of the I.R.A. simply decided to use the opportunity presented by the Belfast boycott to obtain funds.

Between July and December 1921 the Treaty negotiations were taking place and neither the I.U.A. or the A.P.L. were invited to take part. Only delegates from the British government and Sinn Féin took part in discussions relating to the future of Ireland. The I.U.A. were forced to accept that efforts to maintain the Union had failed and on 6 December 1921 British and Irish delegates signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty.⁵⁵ The Anglo-Irish Treaty bestowed even greater powers on a Dublin parliament that had been promised by the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. Ireland did not become republic, as Sinn Féin demanded, but would be known as the 'Irish Free State' and was granted the status of a self-governing dominion within the British Empire.⁵⁶ A governor-general would represent the king in Ireland and an oath of allegiance had to be taken by all members of the Irish parliament.⁵⁷ The Treaty applied to the thirty-two counties. However, the parliament of Northern Ireland was given the option of opting out.

The concessions won by southern unionists in the 1920 Act relating to unionist representation in the second chamber were absent from the Anglo-Irish Treaty.⁵⁸ What was important from a southern unionist perspective is that they felt completely abandoned and betrayed by the British government and by Ulster unionists and with the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, unionism in the 26 counties came to an end as a political force. In 1922 the A.P.L. ceased to exist and in 1926 the I.U.A., after trying to assist loyalists who

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Minister of Finance to J. Hennigan, 22 May 1925, (N.A.I., Dept. of Finance, FIN 1/3471).

⁵⁵ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1* (Dublin, 1972), p. 385.

⁵⁶ J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 50.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp 50-1.

⁵⁸ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1* (Dublin, 1972), p. 385.

had suffered in the War of Independence and the Civil War, was finally disbanded.⁵⁹ The question was how would the people who had fought for greater Irish freedom greet the news of the Treaty?

From 14 December 1921 to 7 January the Dáil discussed the implications of the Treaty. Those who opposed the Treaty argued that it did not give Ireland the status of a republic, which they believed they were fighting for.⁶⁰ The anti-Treaty group also believed that as the British king was still the head of the Irish state, and T.D.s would have to take an oath to him, Britain could still continue to interfere in Ireland.⁶¹ Those who supported the Treaty maintained that if the Treaty was not accepted then the British would renew the conflict, which would undoubtedly bring more suffering.⁶² Michael Collins, I.R.A. Director of Intelligence and in practice the organisation's commander during the War of Independence, argued that the Treaty 'gives us freedom, not the ultimate freedom that all nations desire and develop to, but the freedom to achieve it'.⁶³

What was the attitude towards the Treaty in Sligo? The people of Sligo, much like the country at large, were bitterly divided over the Treaty and on 29 December 1921 the Mayor of Sligo, John Jinks, called a special meeting of Sligo Corporation to discuss the Treaty and Jinks proposed a resolution supporting the Treaty.⁶⁴ He argued that a vote in favour of the Anglo-Irish Treaty would bring peace and prosperity to Ireland.⁶⁵ The S.R.A. councillors agreed and councillor Arthur Jackson urged people to 'get rid of those wretched political and sectarian differences' and to unite in advancing the prosperity of the country'.⁶⁶ Alderman Campbell Perry, admitted to being 'a life-long unionist'.⁶⁷ However, he welcomed the Treaty and appealed to members of the corporation to vote in favour of it.⁶⁸ Councillor Wood-Martin also admitted he was a lifelong unionist and argued that a vote for the Treaty was a vote for peace, and in his opinion the alternative could only mean war.⁶⁹

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 389.

⁶⁰ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p. 506.

⁶¹ Patrick Lynch, 'The Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland, 1921-66', in T.W. Moody, and F.X. Martin, (eds), *The course of Irish history* (Cork, 2001), p. 272.

⁶² R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p. 502.

⁶³ Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins* (London, 1990), p. 301.

⁶⁴ *S.C.*, 31 Dec. 1921.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Former Sinn Féin mayors of Sligo Thomas Fitzpatrick and Dudley Hanley also spoke in favour of the Treaty arguing that the Treaty gave Ireland a republic in all but name.⁷⁰

Michael Nevin led the opposition to the resolution and spoke against some of the terms of the Treaty especially the oath of allegiance to the King of England and ominously ended his argument by declaring that 'we had war before and we were equal to it and we will be able to continue war with equal success'.⁷¹ The Protestant councillors were still unionists at heart they realised that any further pursuance of the Union was now futile and they pledged their support for the Treaty as did a majority of the Sinn Féin and Labour members of the corporation and in the end a resolution was passed in favour of ratifying the Treaty by fourteen votes to five.⁷²

It is interesting to note how compromise with Britain had forced a division in the ranks of both Sinn Féin and the I.U.A. After the Treaty was negotiated the Sinn Féin movement began to split into an extreme minority who wished to remain loyal to republicanism, the anti-Treaty group, and those who wished to reach some form of compromise with Britain over the future government of Ireland, the pro-Treaty group. Just in the same way that after the Irish Convention in 1918 southern unionists split into the S.U.C. (later being left in control of the I.U.A.), who wished to remain committed to the *status quo* of the Union and the A.P.L., a group that saw compromise as the only way forward.

Apart from southern unionist organisations, which were divided and largely powerless, were there any groups that could speak for unionists and Protestants, especially at a local level? In Sligo there was, of course, the S.R.A., which had Protestant and Catholic members, many of whom were former unionists or former supporters of the I.P.P. The S.R.A. had voted in favour of the Treaty at the Sligo Corporation vote on 29 December 1921. There was another group in Sligo which was representative of the views of Protestants, Catholics, former unionists and former home rulers. This organisation was the Co. Sligo Farmers' Association (S.F.A.) and it was part of the Irish Farmers' Union (I.F.U.) also known as the Irish Farmers' Association (I.F.A.), which was a country-wide organisation set up to protect the interests of both Protestant and Catholic farmers, large and small, and prided itself on the fact that it was a non-sectarian and non-political group. The organisation was modelled on the structure of the Dublin Farmers' Association (D.F.A.) and after the 1916 Rising branches of the organisation spread across the country. The D.F.A.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

established an office and a secretary for the I.F.A., which allowed for the formation of associations at county and district level.⁷³

By the end of 1921 the S.F.A. had branches in Dromore West, Collooney, Ballisodare, Ballintogher, Tubbercurry, Clary, Drumcliff and branches were being formed at the time in other parts of Co. Sligo. Michael Finn from Clary, Co. Sligo was the president of the S.F.A. at the time, and the membership of the organisation included many former unionists and nationalists and former supporters of the I.P.P. Protestant unionists, including Malby Crofton and Charles O'Hara, had been presidents of the S.F.A. and Alfred Rowlette, another Protestant unionist, had become actively involved in the movement and this resulted in accusations by some Sligo Sinn Féin members that the S.F.A. was a front for the I.U.A. and the Irish Landowners Association (I.L.A.). The I.L.A. was an organisation that had represented some of the largest landowners in Ireland, and a large proportion of its members had been Protestant unionists.

However, the prominent roles adopted by many former unionists in the S.F.A. did not mean that ex-unionists were using the S.F.A. to reinvigorate the unionist organisations and they appeared to be quite genuinely using the organisation to further the interests of the farming community as a whole. As David Fitzpatrick has argued, unionists and Protestants joined the Clare Farmers' Association (C.F.A.) in order to 'escape their past rather than to recapture their stranglehold over the unruly lower classes'.⁷⁴ Much as the Protestants and ex-unionists who had become involved in the S.R.A. were using the organisation to associate with like-minded individuals regardless of national political views, in order to manage economic changes, the Protestant and ex-unionists in the S.F.A. seemed to be identifying with nationalists and Catholics in the same economic sphere. Whereas unionist organisations had unified all those opposed to the Union regardless of their class and economic status the S.R.A. and S.F.A. seemed to have been seeking to unite Protestant unionists and Catholic nationalists of similar professions. The S.F.A. tried not to get involved in agrarian disputes between large and small farmers and simply focused on advancing the interests of the farming community as a whole.

During the War of Independence the I.F.U. had condemned the destruction of creameries and dairies, the cutting of roads, rail and communications.⁷⁵ As republicanism had disassociated itself from agrarian agitation and began to defend law and order, Sinn Féin

⁷³ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), p. 221.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

started to have more in common with the farmers' associations. The S.F.A. had joined Sinn Féin and unionist landowners in condemning British government's methods during the War of Independence, especially the banning of markets and fairs in areas where the I.R.A. were active. The I.F.U. believed that more damage was caused to the country by British reprisals, and the I.F.U. campaigned to get government compensation.⁷⁶ By 1921 the I.F.U. had become a fairly powerful lobby in Irish politics and along with lobbying the British government, the I.F.U. also lobbied the Dáil.⁷⁷ During the War of Independence the I.F.U. were forced by the troubled situation in the country to adopt a pragmatic view and members used the republican or Sinn Féin courts to settle disputes.⁷⁸

On 31 December 1921 the S.F.A. held a meeting in Sligo Town Hall in order to discuss the organisation's reaction to the Anglo-Irish Treaty.⁷⁹ There was a mix of Catholic nationalist and Protestant unionist farmers at the meeting. The president of the S.F.A. and chairman at the meeting, Michael Finn, urged the gathered farmers to support the ratification of the Treaty. Jim Kilgallen representing the Dromore West branch believed that the Treaty was not 'a final settlement' but 'it would lead to a final settlement'.⁸⁰ He proposed the resolution that the S.F.A. 'call upon our representatives in Dáil Éireann to vote for the ratification of the Treaty'.⁸¹ Michael Gallagher representing the Collooney branch seconded the resolution arguing that if the Treaty 'wasn't accepted it meant chaos, blood, and murder all over the country'.⁸² Edward Moran from the Ballintogher branch and Frank Martin representing the Rathrippon branch also spoke in favour of ratifying the Treaty.⁸³

The Protestant and unionist farmers were also keen to register their support for the Treaty and Sir Malby Crofton from Beltra in Co. Sligo also spoke at the meeting, firstly admitting that 'all his life he had been opposed to the great majority of them in his political opinions'.⁸⁴ However, he now believed that 'they as Irishmen – in order to bring peace and unity, should loyally abide by that settlement'.⁸⁵ Crofton argued that the Treaty promised peace, and 'they, as farmers, depended entirely on peace and law and order and they hadn't

⁷⁶ *S.I.*, 15 Jan. 1921.

⁷⁷ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 1977), pp 228-9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

⁷⁹ *S.I.*, 7 Jan. 1922.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

those things for a long time past'.⁸⁶ Alfred Rowlette, a Protestant farmer from Co. Sligo, argued 'that if the Treaty was not ratified there would be confusion and bloodshed such as they had never seen before in Ireland'.⁸⁷ He maintained that 'they had got a chance to make Ireland a great country and they should take advantage of it and work together for its progress and prosperity'.⁸⁸ C.J. Bentley, a Protestant farmer from Clary, maintained that conservatives and unionists in Ireland had much in common with their fellow-Irishmen. Bentley believed that the farmers in Co. Sligo would unanimously support the Treaty and in fact the motion to support the Treaty was passed by a large majority.⁸⁹ Overall the meeting was an important step in uniting Protestant and Catholic, nationalist and unionist farmers in Sligo following the War of Independence and allowed both communities to explore common economic and political ground.

After the Christmas break the Dáil met on 7 January 1922 and approved the Treaty by sixty-four votes to fifty-seven. How did the Sligo press welcome the news of the Dáil vote? The anti-Treaty *Connachtman* editorial on 14 January 1922 was forced to admit that the majority of Irish people were in favour of the Treaty.⁹⁰ However, the editorial was 'convinced that as time goes on they would realise that their judgement has been badly at fault'.⁹¹ The *Sligo Champion* endorsed the Dáil vote and established itself as the leading supporter of the Treaty in Sligo.⁹² The formerly pro-unionist *Sligo Independent* in its editorial of 21 January 1921 warned that self-government will bring 'an entire new order of things' and was keen to point out that 'its readers may have no opportunity of voicing their opinions through any other source except the medium of this newspaper'.⁹³ However, the editor of the *Sligo Independent*, William David Peebles, felt reasonably confident that 'the destiny of Ireland is now in the hands of Irishmen themselves'.⁹⁴ Peebles, a member of the Church of Ireland, had been associated with the *Sligo Independent* since 1915 and he had taken over as owner of the paper in October 1921.⁹⁵ The *Sligo Independent*, under Peebles, had now moved away from arguing in favour of the Union and expressed the changed sentiments of the vast majority of Protestants and ex-unionists in Co. Sligo. As a small

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *CM*, 14 Jan. 1922.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *S.C.*, 14 Jan. 1922.

⁹³ *S.I.*, 21 Jan. 1922.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ John C. McTernan, *A Sligo miscellany* (Dublin, 2000) pp 527-8; *S.I.*, 15 Oct. 1921.

minority they had little alternative other than to accept the changes in southern Ireland. However, Protestants were now willing to publicly accept Irish self-government and seemed eager to openly register their support for the new agreement as the best possible compromise.

The majority of ex-unionists and Protestants gave their support to the Treaty. However, the debate in Sligo between the pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty advocates raged throughout January and February 1922. What arguments did the Sligo anti-Treaty group use against an acceptance of the Treaty? The arguments against the Treaty largely focused on the terminology used in the document. The main republican newspaper in Sligo town, the *Connachtman*, continued to insist upon the importance of the republic arguing in an editorial on 14 January 1922 that 'the republic still lives and shall continue to live as long as the spirit of nationality endures in our people'.⁹⁶ On 21 January 1921 the *Connachtman* editorial claimed that the Free State was 'simply the British government masquerading in a new guise'.⁹⁷ The *Connachtman* also argued that Britain still had a strong control over Irish affairs through the oath of allegiance and the governor general.⁹⁸

Personalities became very important in the debates concerning the Treaty and as Michael Hopkinson has argued this largely arose from the fact that during the War of Independence the lack of central political or military control along with 'the importance of local initiative in guerrilla warfare, meant there was a considerable reliance on local leadership'.⁹⁹ A similar situation developed in Sligo where the I.R.A. leaders were treated as heroes in the county as they personified Irish nationalism, and their opinions on the Treaty could result in entire communities either supporting or opposing the Treaty. At the end of February 1922 Sligo I.R.A. leader Frank Carty, addressed an anti-Treaty meeting in Tubbercurry arguing that 'we were elected as republicans and not as Free Staters or Home Rulers'.¹⁰⁰ Carty maintained that he had already taken an oath to the republic and could not now take an 'oath pledging fealty to the British king'.¹⁰¹ He believed that the 'so-called Treaty would give Ireland merely a mutilated dominion status and make the Irish subjects of the British crown'.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ *CM*, 14 Jan. 1922.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21 Jan. 1922.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green* (Dublin, 1988), p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ *CM*, 25 Feb. 1922.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Considering Sligo's proximity to the proposed border and the town and county's economic connections with Ulster it is curious that the anti-Treaty faction failed to make a strong case against the conditions within the Treaty relating to partition.¹⁰³ The pro-Treaty camp, and in particular Alec McCabe, echoed Michael Collins's argument that the Treaty should be viewed as a stepping stone to the republic. McCabe believed that Irishmen had 'secured practically complete control of the army and natural resources, and these were things which no republican in his sober moments could or should refuse to accept'.¹⁰⁴ He urged the people to accept the Treaty and avoid further suffering.¹⁰⁵

Overall the media in Sligo was overwhelming supportive of the Treaty and this proved to be unsettling for the anti-Treaty camp. At the corporation meeting on 30 January 1922 Michael Nevin argued that 'the press was trying to stampede the country to get the people to accept the Treaty'.¹⁰⁶ In Sligo, only the *Connachtman* continued to criticise the Treaty arguing that the electorate had been 'blinded by a dust cloud of false issues, stampeded by a consistently hostile and bitter press, coerced and intimidated by threats of war'.¹⁰⁷ However, free speech was respected by both sides in Sligo during the debate concerning the Treaty and there was no attempt by either side to disrupt meetings or physically attack newspaper premises. With the election of a new mayor for Sligo coming up at the end of January 1922, would the councillors divide along pro and anti-Treaty lines in selecting a new mayor or would it be possible for them to agree upon a non-partisan mayor?

A large crowd was in attendance at the corporation meeting on 30 January 1922 and it seemed that the vast majority of them were supporters of Michael Nevin's candidature for mayor. During the proceedings the crowd frequently interrupted those who held different political views.¹⁰⁸ Councillor Devins immediately began the meeting by proposing Nevin as mayor. Alderman Lynch, who in the course of a long speech saluting Nevin's struggle for Irish independence and his commitment to labour values, seconded Nevin's nomination. Lynch was also keen to demonstrate his religious tolerance and he argued that if 'his Protestant fellow-countrymen weren't going to benefit by a free and independent Ireland he for one would not have it. They too, were Irishmen'¹⁰⁹ and he maintained that the difference

¹⁰³ *S.C.*, 10 Jan. 1922.

¹⁰⁴ *S.I.*, 7 Jan. 1922.

¹⁰⁵ *R.H.*, 21 Jan. 1922.

¹⁰⁶ *S.C.*, 31 Jan. 1921.

¹⁰⁷ *CM*, 14 Jan. 1922.

¹⁰⁸ *S.C.*, 4 Feb. 1922.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

between Protestants and Catholics 'was only very small after all'.¹¹⁰ Lynch argued that both communities should work together to create better opportunities for the workingman in Sligo.¹¹¹

Alderman Hanley proposed councillor Depew and praised him as a 'Labour man' and a great supporter of the cause of the working classes in Sligo and of the Irish cause.¹¹² Henry Depew was a tradesman, and a founding member of the Sligo branch of the I.T.G.W.U. and a Labour councillor since 1913.¹¹³ He had also been one of the original founders of the Sinn Féin movement in Sligo town, and was a firm supporter of the Treaty. Councillor McDonagh seconded Depew for mayor, and while saluting his credentials McDonagh was interrupted from the crowd. However, he went on to outline the amount of work that needs to be done in Sligo with regard to better housing for the workers. It seemed strange that after Lynch's own speech saluting Nevin's commitment to labour values, he interrupted McDonagh, arguing that it didn't matter what mayor was elected, 'as the workers could get nothing'.¹¹⁴ Monson supported Nevin although he admitted to differing with Nevin 'regarding how the freedom of Ireland might be obtained'.¹¹⁵ Feeney argued that although he differed from Nevin in political views he supported him. Jinks, as usual and not for the last time, played it safe and used his excuse as the mayor not to cast his vote for either candidate.

In the final vote Nevin received votes from aldermen Lynch and Hughes, councillors Silke, Devins, Costello, Heraghty, Monson, Gray, Flanagan, Hande, and W.J. Feeney, eleven in all. Aldermen Hanley, Perry, Kerr, councillors A. Jackson, Woodmartin, McDonough, and James Connolly, seven in all, voted for councillor Depew. Both Nevin and Depew themselves did not vote, and Fitzpatrick and the mayor, Jinks declined to vote. Two councillors, P.N. White and E.J. Tighe, were absent.¹¹⁶

When accepting the mayorship, Nevin, argued that the only authority he recognised was 'the republican government of Ireland'.¹¹⁷ The S.R.A. councillors voted for Depew. However, Nevin received votes from many who were pro-Treaty and Michael Farry has argued in his study *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* that Nevin's election

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ S.C., 4 Feb. 1922.

indicated that disagreements over the Treaty in Sligo could have been settled peacefully and need not have led to conflict.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless Depew and his supporters had come to the meeting in order to secure the mayorship and to back the Treaty. As Depew said himself after the election, 'he had come to the meeting with the intention of supporting the people who expressed themselves in favour of the Free State',¹¹⁹ while Nevin and his supporters came with the purpose of getting elected in order to oppose the Treaty. Why else would Nevin have packed the meeting with his own supporters and said when accepting the mayorship that he only recognised the 'republican government of Ireland'?¹²⁰

The *Sligo Independent* editorial was disgusted with the outcome of the vote and complained that 'young men possessing republican views' created an atmosphere 'bordering on intimidation' at the corporation mayoral election.¹²¹ The editorial went on to argue that 'under a Free State or a republic we have been promised greater freedom than ever before and why is it so difficult to permit this liberty at the election of a mayor which should be lifted higher than mere politics?'¹²² However, it appeared that a couple of pro-Treaty councillors had given ground and voted for Nevin in order to avoid conflict and to try and maintain some unity within the ranks of nationalists in Sligo.

At the same time as the debate over the Treaty was taking place British forces were preparing to evacuate their bases in Sligo. How would Protestants deal with the evacuation of the British army, a force in which many of them had served and they believed had protected them for so long? On 30 January 1922 a large congregation attended the services in Calry Church marking the departure of the British army from Sligo. The *Sligo Independent* editorial of 4 February 1921 argued that 'the soldiers added to the social and general life of the town'¹²³ and the military's departure from Sligo would result in 'a big loss to Sligo' and apart from the social and musical contribution, the presence of the military in Sligo had been of great benefit to the business community.¹²⁴

When stationed in Sligo the band of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment had contributed towards many charitable events and during the Truce period the regimental band had played at concerts raising money for the Sligo branch of the St John's Ambulance

¹¹⁸ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 44.

¹¹⁹ *S.I.*, 4 Feb. 1922.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 28 Jan. 1922.

Brigade and other local charities.¹²⁵ In early January 1922 the officers of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment were invited to the town hall as the guests of prominent Sligo Protestant businessmen and landowners.¹²⁶ On 13 January 1922 the members of St John's Church of Ireland parish held a farewell party for the Regiment in St John's Hall.¹²⁷ On 27 January a farewell dance for officers and N.C.O.s of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment was held in the town hall.¹²⁸ There was little doubt that the Protestant community in Sligo lamented the departure of the British soldiers from the town and would miss the social and economic benefits associated with them, although the *Sligo Independent* editorials appeared reasonably confident regarding the future of Protestants in Sligo.¹²⁹ Of course there was little the Sligo Protestant community could do to prevent the troops from leaving and many probably felt that to publicly express their confidence in the future was the best policy.

On the 1 and 2 February 1922 the 270 strong garrison of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment left Sligo and their barracks was occupied by the I.R.A. under William Pilkington.¹³⁰ On 9 March both police stations in Sligo were evacuated and taken over by the I.R.A.¹³¹ The majority of the I.R.A. units in Sligo were anti-Treaty and the military withdrawal left the anti-Treaty forces in control of the military installations in Sligo town and county. The British forces had no idea they were handing over their bases to anti-Treaty I.R.A. units as their orders were to merely evacuate the facilities.

A week after the military departure an incident occurred in Sligo, which must have made the Protestant community much more uneasy concerning the departure of British forces. In the early hours of 8 February 1922 a number of prominent Protestant citizens in Sligo town were kidnapped and held in Sligo Military Barracks. The men were kidnapped in order to guarantee that three republicans, who were awaiting a death sentence in Derry Jail, would not be executed. The kidnappings were part of a strategy to get the three republicans released and I.R.A. raiding parties kidnapped over forty Protestants from Derry, Tyrone and Fermanagh.¹³² The men kidnapped in Sligo were Robert Dodd, an agent for the local drapery firm of Henry Lyons, alderman Percy C. Kerr, an agent for the Laird Shipping Line

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 22 Oct. 1921; 19 Nov. 1921; 14 Jan. 1922.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 7 Jan. 1922.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 14 Jan. 1922.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 Jan. 1922.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 28 Jan. 1922; 4 Feb. 1922.

¹³⁰ *S.C.*, 4 Feb. 1922.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 11 Mar. 1922.

¹³² Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy* (Oxford, 2005), pp 98-9.

and a member of the corporation, George Lewis, a manager in the milling company Pollexfen & Co., Christie Bellew, a local businessman and Tom Brien, an auctioneer.¹³³ Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth of Lissadell, Co. Sligo may also have been taken captive at the same time. A failed attempt was also made to capture Captain Fitzpatrick, ex-R.M. from his residence at Mount Shannon, near Sligo town. As it turned out the Derry prisoners were reprieved and an officer of the I.R.A. freed the Sligo men at about 3 p.m. and apologised for the inconvenience caused to them. All the captured men reported that they were well treated by the I.R.A. while in their custody.¹³⁴

However, an editorial in the *Sligo Independent* of 11 February 1922 described the kidnappings as 'a very bad omen for the future of Ireland for such things can only add to the flames of bitterness and turmoil in the country to the detriment of everybody no matter to what creed or class or political party they may belong'.¹³⁵ The editorial argued that the kidnapping of Protestants was a 'poor response to the willingness with which the minority in the south and west of Ireland had agreed to work with their fellow-countrymen in the interests of peace and progress and prosperity for the whole of Ireland'.¹³⁶ A rumour later circulated suggesting that the kidnapped Protestants, many who were members of the Freemasons, had passed a resolution and signed a petition for the execution of the execution of the Derry republicans. This was strongly denied by all the men and even the pro-republican *Connachtman* newspaper did not attach any belief to the accusations against the men.¹³⁷

On 25 March 1922 the *Connachtman* stressed that only 'Irish people will stand by the republic' and listed 'shoneen, unionist, British subject, recruiting sergeant, loyalist, castle hack and place hunter' as groups who would never support an Irish republic.¹³⁸ At the time some within the Irish republican movement had a very narrow view on national identity and were very suspicious of Protestants, most of whom had been loyal to the Union with Britain. They were of the opinion that in order to be Irish one had to be a Catholic and a nationalist. Disagreements within nationalism over the Treaty had further narrowed the view and pro-Treaty supporters were also marked as traitors and British collaborators. Most Protestants in Sligo and throughout the rest of southern Ireland believed they were Irish and although

¹³³ *S.I.*, 11 Feb. 1922.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *CM*, 25 Feb. 1922.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 Mar. 1922.

the majority of Protestants had supported the Union, once the Treaty was signed, Protestants were determined to support the more conservative and less revolutionary Irish Free State and resist the narrow view of nationality. When speaking in support of the Anglo-Irish Treaty at a meeting of the S.F.A. on 31 December 1921 the Protestant unionists Malby Crofton, Alfred Rowlette and C.J. Bentley consistently referred to themselves as Irishmen.¹³⁹

At this time Protestants in the south of Ireland and those in the north were drifting even further apart. The sectarian trouble in Belfast reinforced the differences between Ulster Protestants and southern Irish Protestants. The attacks on Catholics in Belfast, which seemed to have been condoned by the unionist Northern Ireland government proved to be the opportunity for Sligo Protestants to publicly record their views on the trouble in Northern Ireland. On 29 March 1922 a meeting organised by Sligo Constitutional and County Club, a club dominated by Protestant businessmen and farmers, was held in Sligo town to 'express their abhorrence of recent crimes in Belfast' against Roman Catholics, in particular the murder of four members of the McMahon family.¹⁴⁰ It was a very well attended meeting and there were 'high tributes to [the] toleration and friendship of their Roman Catholic fellow countrymen'.¹⁴¹

The chairman of the meeting, Arthur Jackson, condemned the recent murders of Catholics in Belfast and went on to contrast the situation in the north and the rest of Ireland with Sligo town maintaining that 'in Sligo, where they were living in a small minority and in a community where the majority of the people differed from them in many respects in matters of religion and politics, and it was agreed that during perhaps the greatest political upheaval that had ever occurred in Ireland no Protestant member of the community had been injured and certainly no one had lost his life. He did not know if that could be said of any other town of over 10,000 inhabitants in the south and west'.¹⁴² However, although it had occurred a few miles north of Sligo town, the Protestant court official, Thomas Walker, had been murdered in April 1921.¹⁴³ Jackson concluded his argument by urging Protestants in Belfast to condemn the atrocity on the McMahon family.

James Nelson proposed the motion 'that this public meeting, representatives of Protestants of the town and county of Sligo, desires to give expression to its abhorrence of

¹³⁹ *S.I.*, 7 Jan. 1922.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 Apr. 1922.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *S.I.* 23 Apr. 1921; *S.C.*, 23 Apr. 1921; *S.C.I. R.I.C. M.R.*, 31 Apr. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8554).

the murders of our fellow-countrymen and the reprisals resulting there from, and in particular to the awful tragedy in Belfast last week by which four members of a Roman Catholic family were foully murdered and two seriously wounded; such happenings we regard as a disgrace to our common Christianity'.¹⁴⁴ Nelson blamed the British government for the sectarian trouble in Ireland, arguing that legislation passed by the government 'had set up barriers of religious hatred which centuries could not remove'.¹⁴⁵ He went on to question the British government's policy in setting up two separate legislative regions in Ireland and argued that it 'was the main cause of the trouble in Ulster at the present time'.¹⁴⁶

Alderman Percy Kerr was perplexed as to the 'sectarian bitterness' being displayed in Ireland at the time, 'and he condemned it no matter what side it came from'.¹⁴⁷ He was also keen to point out that 'in all his life he never had a single dispute with his Roman Catholic fellowmen on religious matters'.¹⁴⁸ Sir Malby Crofton agreed with alderman Kerr and maintained that 'he had lived for over sixty years in peace and friendship with his Roman Catholic neighbours, and they had never given him the smallest trouble or slightest offence'.¹⁴⁹

Philip Perceval, of Hazelwood, who had been a very vocal unionist before the First World War and who served with the Connaught Rangers in the war, reaching the rank of captain, believed that 'the Protestants of the town and county of Sligo had always lived on terms of the greatest regard and esteem – and he might say affection – with their Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen. They had always lived peaceably and well together, and he was sure every Protestant in that room was looking forward to a stable government in Ireland whereby they could live in harmony and prosperity, no matter by whom, or what party, it was controlled'.¹⁵⁰ Perceval's comments regarding the future government of Ireland also indicated his acceptance of a change in the status of the union between Britain and Ireland. Dr MacDowell, a surgeon with the Co. Sligo Infirmary since 1877, argued that 'although he had strong opinions of the unionist type, he was able to testify to the extraordinary kindness and sympathy he had received from his fellow-countrymen of all creeds and classes all over the town and county of Sligo'.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴ *S.I.*, 1 Apr. 1922.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

The portrayals of admiration for their Catholic neighbours in Sligo town by Protestants could be interpreted as a public declaration of genuine respect, although they must have also been motivated by the concern that they would become the targets of Catholic retaliation for Protestant attacks on Catholics in the north, especially in light of the kidnappings of Sligo Protestants in February 1922. Protestants in Sligo were not the victims of physical attacks in Sligo at this time. However, Protestants encountered much violence in Cork. Peter Hart's research on Cork during the revolutionary period has revealed that in April 1922, in the space of two weeks ten Protestant men were shot in the Dunmanway area of Cork.¹⁵² Many explanations have been put forward for these killings including a conspiracy theory of loyalists plotting against the republic and the perception that Protestants were simply traitors. Some also believed that the murders were acts of retaliation for the attacks on Catholics in the north and the actions of Auxiliaries in Cork during the War of Independence.¹⁵³

However, it does highlight the fact that there existed at the time a much stronger sectarian bitterness in Cork and some other parts of Ireland that seemed to be absent in Sligo at the time. Also the War of Independence was more intense in Cork than in Sligo and the I.R.A. inflicted more casualties on the Crown forces in Cork than they had done in Sligo. The war took on a more brutal tone and tit for tat killings were common in Cork, where Protestant ex-unionists provided easier and more accessible targets for I.R.A. retaliation in response to attacks by Crown forces on republicans.

If Protestants in Sligo were not the subjects of violent action, were they completely immune to attack? Protestants were not physically attacked in Sligo, but some Protestants in Co. Sligo were the targets of petty crime and on 17 April 1922 five armed men stole Malby Crofton's car from outside his residence at Longford House.¹⁵⁴ On 6 May 1922 it was reported that a Protestant farmer, William Broder, was robbed at Clonsilla, near Gurteen.¹⁵⁵ On 20 May 1922 a car belonging to another Protestant farmer, Basil Phibbs, was burned in Coolaney. However, the crimes were not the product of any sectarian hatred and it was most probably criminals taking advantage of the trouble and in fact Phibbs was described as being very popular in the area and both sections of the I.R.A. condemned the

¹⁵² Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies* (Oxford, 1998), p. 276.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp 273-92.

¹⁵⁴ *S.I.*, 22 Apr. 1922.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 6 May 1922.

action.¹⁵⁶ Phibbs did own over 2,270 acres of untenanted land and perhaps the destruction of his car was in relation to agrarian trouble back at the time of the conacre campaign in 1918.¹⁵⁷ On 3 June 1922 it was reported that bicycles owned by Protestants in Riverstown area were stolen and armed men also stole a car belonging to Arthur O'Hara, D.L., Coopershill.¹⁵⁸ O'Hara owned almost 200 acres of untenanted land in the Collooney area and possibly the crimes committed were also in relation to trouble on his lands stretching back to the conacre campaign in 1918.¹⁵⁹ During the week of 12 to 16 June 1922 bicycles and money were stolen from Protestants in the Ballisodare and Beltra areas. The I.R.A. also condemned these incidents and the organisation claimed that they were conducting inquiries and were endeavouring to bring the culprits to justice.¹⁶⁰

Around this time a Protestant farmer, Charles Phibbs, with about 1,384 acres of untenanted land, experienced trouble on his lands at Doobeg, Bunninadden.¹⁶¹ He had encountered trouble during the Truce period and his farm buildings and his hay were burned in January 1922, although he was considered to be a popular man in the district.¹⁶² His workers were threatened, cattle driven from his lands, shots fired at his house and his farm equipment was also stolen and vandalised. The disruption on his farm continued until May 1925 when he sold his holdings and moved to Wales where he also owned property.¹⁶³

Jessie Hunter, a Protestant farmer from Riverstown in Co. Sligo also had trouble on her farm at this time and she had experienced agitation on her lands since the conacre campaign of 1918. Hunter had over ninety acres of untenanted land in the Riverstown area.¹⁶⁴ In May 1922 smallholders confiscated part of her farm.¹⁶⁵ Under pressure she sold the confiscated part of her land for £1,000, which she estimated to be half its value. However, she retained

¹⁵⁶ *S.C.*, 20 May 1922.

¹⁵⁷ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (*S.C.L.*, Estate records, No. 510); Basil Phibbs, 17 Apr. 1918 (*S.C.L.*, Criminal Injuries Book, L7).

¹⁵⁸ *S.I.*, 3 June 1922.

¹⁵⁹ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-1922 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-1936 (*S.C.L.*, Estate records, No. 510); Arthur O'Hara, 17 Apr. 1918 (*S.C.L.*, Criminal Injuries Book, L7).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 17 June 1922.

¹⁶¹ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (*S.C.L.*, Estate records, No. 510).

¹⁶² *Western People [W.P.]*, 14 Jan. 1922.

¹⁶³ Protection of lands at Bunninadden (N.A.I., Dept. of Defence, A3642); Damage to property of C. Phibbs, Doobeg, Bunninadden (N.A.I., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/215); Charles Phibbs (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/70).

¹⁶⁴ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (*S.C.L.*, Estate records, No. 510).

¹⁶⁵ Jessica Hunter (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/51).

most of her land and she continued to farm in Sligo after the Civil War.¹⁶⁶ In her claim to the I.G.C. in 1927, her solicitor argued that 'from 1920 to the end of 1923 isolated loyalists were made a shuttlecock for the worst and most desperate of the revolutionary element and that our client (Miss Jessie Hunter) received a liberal share of their attention and her treatment was due entirely to her support of and unswerving loyalty to British rule in Ireland previous to 11 July 1921'.¹⁶⁷ Jessie Hunter herself maintained that she was attacked because she was a well known 'supporter of British rule in Ireland' and she argued that the outrages committed against her were 'part of a campaign of loyalist extermination'.¹⁶⁸

Corporation councillor Hal R. Wood-Martin, a Protestant landowner and land agent claimed that republicans had used some of his land at Lavalley, Bloomfield, Ballintogher, Co. Sligo, which had been occupied by Sinn Féin supporters from November 1920 to 1923.¹⁶⁹ Wood-Martin had about seventy-seven acres of untenanted land in the Ballintogher area.¹⁷⁰ Wood-Martin was awarded £248 in damages by the I.G.C. as he was denied income from the property during the period.¹⁷¹ Wood-Martin was well known as an outspoken unionist and Robert Chambers, manager of the Bank of Ireland in Sligo, described him as 'a staunch and firm loyalist' while John Russell, ex-D.I. R.I.C., believed that Wood-Martin was 'one of the best known loyalists in the Province of Connaught'.¹⁷² Russell maintained that Wood-Martin and other loyalists in Sligo were the victims of 'the campaign of loyalist extermination which was being intensely carried out by the revolutionary element at the time' and he argued that Wood-Martin, as a 'well known loyalist in this country was selected for exceptionally bad treatment'.¹⁷³

In June 1922 Joseph Graham, a Protestant businessman in Sligo town reported that a serious attempt was made on his life and he believed that his business was targeted for boycotting by the I.R.A. Graham was also a Justice of the Peace (J.P.) for over thirty years and was a member of the I.U.A. He had helped with recruiting during the First World War

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Letter from St. G. Robinson solicitors, Sligo, 27 Jan. 1927 and letter from J. Russell ex-D.I. R.I.C. Sligo, re. Jessica Hunter, 3 Feb. 1927 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/51).

¹⁶⁸ Jessica Hunter (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/51).

¹⁶⁹ Henry Roger Wood-Martin (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/78).

¹⁷⁰ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510).

¹⁷¹ Henry Roger Wood-Martin (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/78).

¹⁷² Robert P. Chambers, re. Henry Roger Wood-Martin, 26 May 1927 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/78); Statement John Russell, ex-District Inspector R.I.C., re. Henry Roger Wood-Martin, 24 May 1927 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/78).

¹⁷³ John Russell, ex-District Inspector R.I.C., re. H.R. Wood-Martin, 24 May 1927 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/78).

and spoke out against the 1916 Rising and had assisted the R.I.C. During the years 1919 to 1921 Graham 'took a very active part in bringing to justice the perpetrators of crime and assisting the police'.¹⁷⁴ A Protestant auctioneer in Sligo, Thomas Brien, described Graham 'as an outspoken and fearless loyalist' and as a 'consistent supporter of British Rule in Ireland'.¹⁷⁵ John Russell confirmed that Graham had assisted the police and was prepared to speak on his behalf.¹⁷⁶ Graham blamed his loss in trade on the intimidation of his customers by the I.R.A. and in 1926 he sold his business and moved to Boyle, Co. Roscommon.

Richard Kerr-Taylor, a Protestant farmer with over 151 acres of untenanted land in Castlebaldwin, Co. Sligo also argued that a 'campaign of loyalist extermination' was waged in Co. Sligo during the revolutionary period.¹⁷⁷ Kerr-Taylor and other Protestant claimants were at pains to convey their loyalist credentials and the persecution that they had received on account of this. This of course is a common theme in the applications to the I.G.C. and it is important to note that in order to receive compensation from the British government's I.G.C., applicants had to prove that they had suffered as a result of their loyalty to the Union and not for any other reason.¹⁷⁸ So it is very likely that in many cases any trouble the applicants experienced, be it related to their loyalism or not was exploited to the full when it came to applying for compensation. Of course this is not to suggest that Protestants did not suffer hardship and some Protestants in Co. Sligo were the victims of theft and intimidation in the period April to June 1922. However, the I.R.A. in Sligo were never anti-Protestant, nor did they wish to drive Protestants from the county and they condemned those who attacked Protestant property. Terence Dooley has emphasised the importance of agrarian issues in attacks on Protestants in Ireland during the revolutionary period, arguing that land hunger and not politics or religion was the primary motivator for the attacks and in many cases Protestants were attacked not as revenge for attacks on Catholics in Belfast but because the Protestants were landowners.¹⁷⁹

Catholic landowners in Co. Sligo were also subjected to intimidation and attack. On 11 May 1922 a Catholic farmer, John Ormsby Cooke, with over 100 acres of untenanted land

¹⁷⁴ Statement and estimate of Thomas Brien, Auctioneer & Valuer, Sligo, re. Joseph Graham, 9 Aug. 1928 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/205).

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Joseph Graham (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/205).

¹⁷⁷ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510); Richard T. Kerr-Taylor (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/48).

¹⁷⁸ Niamh Brennan, 'A Political Minefield: Southern Loyalists, the Irish Grants Committee and the British Government, 1922-31' in *I.H.S.*, xxx, no. 119 (May 1997), pp 406-20.

¹⁷⁹ Terence Dooley, *The land for the people* (Dublin, 2004), pp 44-5.

in Kilturra, Bunninadden, was tied up, robbed and beaten by armed men after he had put land up for auction.¹⁸⁰ Cooke later moved to Bray, Co. Wicklow.¹⁸¹ It is not known for sure if he was a supporter of the Union. However, local tenants maintained that Cooke was an unfriendly person and they disliked his efforts to ingratiate himself with the local Protestant gentry, who in fact actually avoided him.¹⁸² Cooke's property had been damaged on a previous occasion in October 1920 and most probably some small farmers in the area were endeavouring to make life uncomfortable for Cooke, with the hope that he would leave and sell his land at a reduced rate to local landholders.¹⁸³

In some other parts of the country Protestants were made to feel very unwelcome in their hometowns. In May 1922 the anti-Treaty I.R.A. supporters printed notices demanding that all Protestants leave the town of Ballina, Co. Mayo.¹⁸⁴ However, many citizens of the town did not agree with this and on 4 May 1922 they wrote a letter to Arthur Griffith, president of Dáil Éireann, asking him to take immediate steps to prevent the expulsion of 'prominent Protestant merchants and businessmen'.¹⁸⁵

Protestants did not have the same level of local support in Co. Galway, and in June 1922 Protestant families were ordered to leave the neighbourhood in Ballinasloe.¹⁸⁶ On 16 June 1922 an article in the *Church of Ireland Gazette* stated that in Ballinasloe 'Presbyterians and members of the Church of Ireland, poor and well-to-do, old and young, widows and children, all alike have suffered intimidation, persecution and expulsion'.¹⁸⁷ In June 1922 Protestant shops and traders in Mullingar were attacked after they had received notices ordering them to leave the town and in June 1922 a large number of Protestant refugees from north Leitrim were reported to have fled to Enniskillen in Co. Fermanagh.¹⁸⁸

If Protestants were to have left Sligo in large numbers in the revolutionary period, there is a good chance they would have also fled to Fermanagh, which is the closest county in Northern Ireland to Co. Sligo. Evidence from a private census in 1925, which was conducted for the benefit of the Boundary Commission in 1925, found that of the 2,117

¹⁸⁰ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510); Robbery and ill treatment of J. Ormsby Cooke at Kilturra, Bunninadden, Co. Sligo, 1922 (N.A., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/269).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² Interview with Martin Kelleher, Doocastle, The History of Kilturra and Bunninadden, recording made on 5 Nov. 1959 by Owen B. Hunt, transcript in S.C.L.

¹⁸³ John Ormsby Cooke, 11 Jan. 1921 (S.C.L., Criminal Injuries Book, L7).

¹⁸⁴ Expulsion of Protestants in Mayo, 4 May 1922 (N.A.I., Dept. of the Taoiseach, S565).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 16 June 1922.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *S.I.*, June 17 1922; Army Truce 1922, Breaches (N.A.I., Dept. of the Taoiseach, S572).

Protestants who left southern Ireland and were living in Fermanagh in 1925, records that fifty-one Protestants came from County Sligo, 292 from Leitrim are mentioned, fifty-five from Galway, thirty-four from Mayo and six from Roscommon¹⁸⁹, while 454 fled from Monaghan.¹⁹⁰ Terence Dooley has maintained that the movement of over 2,100 Protestants from the Free State to Co. Fermanagh in the years from 1920 to 1925 'effectively suggests that migration was heaviest during the revolutionary period'.¹⁹¹

Table 4.1: Decrease in the Protestant Population of the Five Connacht Counties, 1911-26

County	Prot. pop. in 1911	Prot. Pop. in 1926	Percentage Prot. in 1911	Percentage Prot. drop 1911-26	Prot refugees to Fermanagh-county of origin	Percentage Prot. refugees relative to pop. in each county in 1911
Galway	4,304	2,019	2.4	53.1	55	1.3
Mayo	4,108	2,479	2.10	39.7	34	0.8
Ros.	2,225	1,346	2.4	39.5	6	0.3
Leitrim	5,423	3,711	8.5	31.6	292	5.4
Sligo	6,920	5,076	8.8	26.7	51	0.7

Sources: *Census of Ireland 1926*, Vol. III, Part 1, Religions, Table 9, pp 16-17. Census enclosed with a letter from James Cooper, Solicitor, Enniskillen to the Irish Boundary Commission, 15 May, (N.L.I., Irish Boundary Commission papers, POS 6515); Terence Dooley, 'Protestant migration to Northern Ireland, 1920-25: a private census for County Fermanagh' in *Clogher Record*, xv, no.3 (1996), pp 87-132.

Table 4.1 shows the numerical and percentage decrease in the Protestant population of the five Connacht counties in the period from 1911 to 1926. It also gives the number of Protestant refugees in Co. Fermanagh from the five Connacht counties, recorded in the private census for the Boundary Commission in 1925. The final column of the table indicates the percentage of Protestant refugees in Fermanagh relative to the 1911 Protestant population in each of the five counties. The largest number, 292, of refugees came from Co. Leitrim. This represents 5.4 percent of the Protestant population of Leitrim in 1911. The second largest number of refugees, fifty-five, came from Galway, representing 1.3 percent of the Protestant population of the county in 1911. Fifty-one Protestant refugees came from Co. Sligo, representing 0.7 percent of the Protestant population in 1911. However, Co. Sligo had the largest Protestant population of the five counties in 1911, and at 26.7, experienced the smallest percentage drop. Thirty-four Protestant refugees left Co. Mayo for Co. Fermanagh, representing 0.8 percent of Mayo's Protestant population in 1911. Only six

¹⁸⁹ Census enclosed with a letter from James Cooper, Solicitor, Enniskillen to the Irish Boundary Commission, 15 May, (N.L.I., Irish Boundary Commission papers, POS 6515); Terence Dooley, 'Protestant migration to Northern Ireland, 1920-25: a private census for County Fermanagh' in *Clogher Record*, xv, no.3 (1996), pp 87-132.

¹⁹⁰ Terence Dooley, 'Monaghan Protestants in a time of crisis 1919-1922' in R.V. Comerford, Mary Cullen, J.R. Hill, Colm Lennon (eds), *Religion, conflict and coexistence in Ireland* (Dublin, 1990), p. 249.

¹⁹¹ Terence Dooley, 'Protestant migration to Northern Ireland, 1920-25: a private census for County Fermanagh' in *Clogher Record*, xv, no.3 (1996), p. 87.

Protestant refugees from Roscommon left for Fermanagh, representing 0.3 percent of the Protestant population of Roscommon in 1911.

Table 4.2: Names and occupations of Protestant refugees from Co. Sligo living in Fermanagh in 1925.

Name	Where from	Occupation	Fermanagh Address, 1925
James Hogg Mrs Hogg Six children	Grange, Co. Sligo	Labourer	Lisduff
Mrs Chambers	Sligo	Married woman	Knockroe
Albert Law	Sligo	Shop assistant	Newtownbutler
John Moore Mrs Moore Four children	Riverstown, Co. Sligo	Labourer	Blaney East
John McMunn Mrs McMunn Four children	Easkey, Co. Sligo	Farmer	Mullaghlevin
Miss E.E. Lawson	Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo	Parlour maid	Derrygore
Miss Annie Brown	Sligo	Teacher	Sedan Tce.
Miss Fanny Brown	Sligo	Teacher	Sedan Tce.
Miss Ruby Brown	Sligo	Teacher	Sedan Tce.
Ernest Moore	Sligo	Bank official	Bridge St.
John Magee Mrs Magee	Collooney, Co. Sligo	Railway clerk	Railway Tce.
Thomas Emerson	Sligo	Man. of boot shop	Mill St.
Maud Walker	Sligo	Governess	High St.
Mrs Moore Two children	Sligo	Private	Darling St.
Bertie Carson	Collooney, Co. Sligo	Labourer	Knocknashangan
Alexander Carson	Collooney, Co. Sligo	Labourer	Knocknashangan
Thomas Anderson Mrs Anderson Two children	Collooney, Co. Sligo	Station master	Belcoo
Miss Eva Henry	Sligo	Nurse	Irvinestown
Robert Keeler Mrs Keeler Six children	Collooney, Co. Sligo	Farmer	Whitepark
Francis Glendenning	Sligo	R.I.C. pensioner	Ardoss
George Glendenning	Sligo	R.I.C. pensioner	Ardoss

Sources: Census enclosed with a letter from James Cooper, Solicitor, Enniskillen to the Irish Boundary Commission, 15 May, (N.L.I., Irish Boundary Commission papers, POS 6515); Terence Dooley, 'Protestant migration to Northern Ireland, 1920-25: a private census for County Fermanagh' in *Clogher Record*, xv, no.3 (1996), pp 87-132.

Table 4.2 lists the fifty-one Protestant refugees originally from Sligo fled to Co. Fermanagh and were recorded in the private census for the Boundary Commission in 1925. In some cases the census only gives Sligo as their previous address. However, from the 1911 manuscript household census returns we can find out if they came from Sligo town or county. Francis Glendenning was listed as an R.I.C. pensioner from Sligo in the 1925 census.¹⁹² In 1911 Francis Glendenning was forty-one years old and was listed as living in

¹⁹² Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45).

Chapel St. in Sligo town.¹⁹³ He was a member of the Church of Ireland. George Glendenning was listed as an R.I.C. pensioner in the 1925 census. In 1911 George Glendenning was thirty years old and was also a member of the Church of Ireland from Chapel St. in Sligo town.¹⁹⁴ There was a Mrs Chambers who listed herself as a married woman in the 1925 census. In 1911 there were two married Chambers females in Sligo town; Mary Chambers, forty-six, from Stephen St. who was married to John Chambers, sixty-one, an army pensioner and Rebecca Chambers, fifty-nine, from Wine St., married to James Chambers, sixty, a club secretary. Miss Annie Brown, a teacher.¹⁹⁵ The 1911 census records an Annie Browne, twenty-five years old, a Methodist, living in John St. in Sligo town.¹⁹⁶ Miss Fanny Brown, a teacher and Miss Ruby Brown, also a teacher were listed in the 1925 private census. There was a Ruby Brown, a sister of Annie Brown, nineteen years old, a Methodist from John St. in Sligo town in 1911.¹⁹⁷ Fanny Brown was possibly a sister of the other two Browns, although she didn't live in the same house as the other two in Sligo town in 1911.¹⁹⁸ In the 1925 census Ernest Moore, Sligo, is listed as a bank official. The 1911 census records an Ernest Moore, seventeen years old, a member of the Church of Ireland and living as a boarder on the Mall in Sligo town, possibly a student in the Grammar School at the time.¹⁹⁹ Out of the fifty-one Sligo Protestants recorded as living in Fermanagh in the private census of 1925, there were five from Sligo town and possibly another two. The occupations of the Sligo refugees to Fermanagh ranged from farmers and labourers to professions such as teachers and officials. However, most of them seem to have been from skilled occupations. While the number of Sligo Protestant refugees to Fermanagh was not large, it does suggest some level of fear of attack.

Some of the attacks on Protestants in southern Ireland were probably in direct response to attacks on Catholics in the north. In March, April and May, the *Church of Ireland Gazette* published material condemning the outrages on Catholics in the north.²⁰⁰ Protestant ministers in Sligo called on all citizens to resist sectarianism and Rev Wagner, the rector of St Anne's, Strandhill, Co. Sligo pleaded 'that everyone of us should set our faces eternally against the very shadow of intolerance. Let us get rid of it, wipe it out, and be done with

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 31 Mar. 1922 7 Apr. 1922; 13 Apr. 1922; 26 May 1922.

it'.²⁰¹ Of course the sentiments expressed by Protestant clergymen in Sligo and elsewhere in southern Ireland could also be interpreted as means to avoid retaliation for the treatment of Catholics by Protestants in Northern Ireland.

During the Truce period some pragmatic minded Protestants in Sligo believed that by recognising the authority of the local I.R.A. commanders, and by establishing a relationship with them, they could avoid trouble. In October 1921 Charles O'Hara was one of the first Protestants to do so in Co. Sligo when he wrote to Frank O'Beirne, the I.R.A. O/C the Collooney battalion, asking him to use his influence to control the activities of some I.R.A. personnel who were interfering with business in Co. Sligo.²⁰² When O'Hara's car was stolen in June 1922, he wrote to Frank Carty, commander of the anti-Treaty I.R.A. forces in south Sligo asking for his assistance in recovering the vehicle.²⁰³ Carty took action concerning the car and on 26 June 1922 O'Hara wrote to Carty thanking him for recovering the car,²⁰⁴ which is an indication that the I.R.A. leadership in Sligo were not anti-Protestant.

During the Truce period the I.R.A. seemed to focus much of its activity on the intimidation of former members of the R.I.C. The I.R.A. had always treated the R.I.C. as an occupying force and in the months before the organisation was formally disbanded at the end of August 1922, many I.R.A. activists still viewed active R.I.C. personnel as well as former R.I.C. members as legitimate targets.²⁰⁵ In May 1922 the I.R.A. attacked houses owned by ex-R.I.C. in the Casdebaldwin and Gurteen areas of south Sligo.²⁰⁶ However, many of the ex-R.I.C. men had already left and in Gurteen notices were placed on the local church warning any remaining former R.I.C. members to vacate the area.²⁰⁷ In November some cars belonging to R.I.C. men were reported stolen by the I.R.A. in south Sligo.²⁰⁸ On 17 June 1922 John Brehony was shot dead near Ballymote when he recognised I.R.A. members sent to question his brother, an ex-R.I.C. constable.²⁰⁹ In late August 1922 James Cullen, a former R.I.C. constable was killed by the I.R.A. near Bunninadden.²¹⁰ There is an absence of any evidence of intimidation of R.I.C. members living in Sligo town at the time

²⁰¹ *S.I.*, 17 June 1922.

²⁰² O'Hara to Frank O'Beirne, 13 Oct. 1921 (N.L.I., O'Hara Papers, MS 16827).

²⁰³ O'Hara to Frank Carty, 20 June 1922 (N.L.I., O'Hara Papers, MS 16827).

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 26 June 1922.

²⁰⁵ Chief Secretary, Dublin Castle to the Provisional Government, re. persecution of ex-members of the R.I.C., 22 June 1922 (N.A.I., Dept. of the Taoiseach, S1842).

²⁰⁶ *R.H.*, 20 May 1922; *S.C.*, 3 June 1922.

²⁰⁷ *S.C.*, 3 June 1922.

²⁰⁸ Report by John Russell, Breaches of the Truce, I.R.A. Outrages Against Police, 30 Nov. 1921 (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8562).

²⁰⁹ *W.P.*, 24 June 1922.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2 Sept. 1922.

and some former R.I.C. members actually moved to Sligo town from the county areas after they had received threats and some ex-R.I.C. personnel from Co. Sligo were later awarded compensation by the British government.²¹¹

A general election was scheduled for June 1922 and the pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty groups had begun campaigning in March 1922.²¹² The pro-Treaty camp kicked off the campaigning when their supporters held a conference in Collooney on 13 March 1922, which was presided over by Alec McCabe, and directors and organisers for the election were appointed for in the various parts of the Sligo-east Mayo constituency.²¹³ The anti-Treaty supporters met in Tubbercurry and three outgoing T.D.s, Frank Carty, Seamus Devins and Francis Ferran, all declared their opposition to the Treaty and set up an executive committee for the constituency.²¹⁴ On 19 and 26 March 1922 pro-Treaty meetings addressed by Tom O'Donnell T.D. and James Gilligan were held in south Sligo.²¹⁵ On 17 March 1922 the anti-Treaty camp held their first campaign meeting in Swinford, east Mayo. Michael Nevin, the Mayor of Sligo, addressed the meeting arguing that 'Sligo still stood staunchly by the republic'.²¹⁶ Before the pact was signed the pro-Treaty held fourteen meetings while the anti-Treaty only held one. Most of the anti-Treaty leaders were I.R.A. members and military concerns rather than political matters were always more of a preoccupation for them, especially at this time.

The pro-Treaty forces, now known as the National Army, were also beginning to occupy positions in Sligo and on 10 April 1922 pro-Treaty troops under the command of Commandant Jim Hunt took over Ballymote courthouse.²¹⁷ On 15 April 1922 National forces under the command of Colonel Alec McCabe occupied Sligo jail. However, at this time most of the other important buildings in Sligo town were under the control of anti-Treaty forces.²¹⁸ A ban was placed on political meetings by anti-Treaty forces in Sligo at the time. However, on 16 April 1922, President Arthur Griffith defied the ban and spoke to a large gathering in Sligo. Pro-Treaty forces under the command of J.J. O'Connell were

²¹¹ Simon Grumbleton (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/23); Michael Mullaney (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/41); Martin Gilroy (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/44); Jeremiah O'Sullivan (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/82); Charles Graham (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/90); Peter Healy (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/118); Charles O'Donnell (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/157); Delia McKeon (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/172).

²¹² *S.I.*, 25 Mar. 1922; 1 Apr. 1922.

²¹³ *S.I.*, 25 Mar. 1922; *S.C.* 25 Mar. 1922.

²¹⁴ *S.I.*, 25 Mar. 1922.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*; *S.C.*, 1 Apr. 1922.

²¹⁶ *CM*, 25 Mar. 1922; *S.I.*, 1 Apr. 1922.

²¹⁷ *S.C.*, 15 Apr. 1922.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 22 Apr. 1922.

present at the meeting and although most of Sligo town was under the control of Liam Pilkington's anti-Treaty forces, the pro-Treaty meeting passed off without any incident.²¹⁹

Michael Hopkinson has described Griffith's meeting in Sligo as the tensest of all the public gatherings in the country at the time and has argued that 'all the ingredients for an armed confrontation seemed established'.²²⁰ However, Pilkington's non-enforcement of the ban was seen by many republicans as a failure and alternatively as a victory by supporters of the Treaty. Hopkinson has maintained that the ban on political meetings also reinforced the idea in the minds of many Sligo republican commanders that if they were to be successful in resisting the Treaty they must keep their commands independent of any central interference.²²¹

Michael Farry in his study *The aftermath of revolution: Sligo 1921-23* argues that the lack of action by anti-Treaty forces to prevent or interfere with the Griffith meeting boosted the morale of the pro-Treaty forces and undermined the confidence of anti-Treaty forces in Sligo.²²² After Griffith's meeting the Sligo Citizens' Association was set up and passed a resolution asking the Provisional Government to take steps 'to secure the citizens of our town ample protection for life and property and we do hereby undertake to give any assistance which the Government may consider necessary for this purpose'.²²³ Many of the leading businessmen of the town and clergymen of different denominations were in attendance at this meeting.²²⁴ On 1 May 1922, with a renewed sense of confidence, the pro-Treaty forces occupied the Customs House, the Bond Stores and the Bank of Ireland in Sligo town.²²⁵ In early May the pro-Treaty camp felt sufficiently secure to officially announce their candidates for the upcoming general election. Alec McCabe and Jim Hunt were selected in the south Sligo area, John Hennigan and Seamus McGowan in north Sligo and Tom O'Donnell in east Mayo. Alec McCabe and Tom O'Donnell were two of the outgoing candidates.²²⁶

The build up of pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty forces in Sligo town obviously caused some friction, as both sides jockeyed for control of key strong points. On 13 May 1922 the *Sligo Champion* reported that 'not a night has passed but rifle fire and revolver shots have been

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29 Apr. 1922.

²²⁰ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (Dublin, 1988), p. 76.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), pp 61-2.

²²³ *S.I.*, 29 Apr. 1922.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *R.H.*, 6 May 1922.

²²⁶ *S.C.*, 13 May 1922.

heard in Sligo much to the terror of the citizens.²²⁷ On 2 June pro-Treaty forces were forced to abandon their plan of occupying the town hall in Charlestown when anti-Treaty forces took it over.²²⁸ At the same time 500 anti-Treaty troops under Frank Carty forced about forty to fifty pro-Treaty troops to surrender Dromore West Workhouse.²²⁹ However, Carty allowed the pro-Treaty troops to return to Sligo with their weapons.²³⁰ On 2 June pro-Treaty troops from Sligo Jail occupied the courthouse and the town hall while pro-Treaty troops under the command of Brigadier Jim Hunt later went on to occupy Bryan Cooper's residence at Markree Castle.²³¹

The Catholic hierarchy in Sligo remained publicly silent on the dispute over the Treaty. However, in the only recorded public statement at the time by a Catholic cleric, the Rev P.A. Butler, a founding member of S.R.A., argued in favour of the Treaty and against violence and what he described as 'the rule of the gun' in Irish society. He condemned those who wished 'to spill the blood of their brothers in the pursuit of a phantom republic'.²³²

In order to avoid escalating the tensions and to give a veneer of unity between the pro and anti-Treaty groups, Michael Collins and Eamon de Valera organised a Sinn Féin election pact on 20 May 1922 in which the two groups would jointly fight the election campaign and form a coalition government following the election.²³³ The pact stipulated that a national Sinn Féin panel of pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty candidates would form one slate of nominees based on their existing strength, of sixty-four for, and fifty-seven against the Treaty, in the Dáil.²³⁴ After the election the two groups would form a coalition. In theory the pact removed the Treaty as an issue and cleared the way for other parties, especially Labour to fight the election on purely domestic matters. However, Sinn Féin called on other parties to stand down in place of the national interest, but unlike in the general election of May 1921 when they had stood aside, the Labour Party, the Farmers' Party and independents were determined, now that the British were gone, that they would enter the ring again and fight the election on the day-to-day problems of the people such as housing, unemployment, education and agrarian issues.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ W.P., 10 June 1922.

²²⁹ S.C., 10 June 1922.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 3 June 1922; 10 June 1922.

²³² *Ibid.*, 6 May 1922; R.H., 6 May 1922.

²³³ J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 58.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

The pact agreement allowed for other parties to field candidates. However, Robert Kee has argued that the pact was sure to result in the return of a greater number of anti-Treaty candidates than would have been the case had the pact not existed.²³⁵ De Valera and the anti-Treaty section had most to gain from the pact. However, the pact must be understood in the context of the time, and Collins was desperate to avoid a civil war as he did not wish to take up arms against his former comrades but also because he wanted to form a united front in the south in order to effectively combat the unionists in the north and protect the Catholic and nationalist community in the six-counties.²³⁶ Kee has also argued that Collins believed that the pact might have put the emphasis back on the democratic process and might have prevented the breakdown of law and order and aid the reestablishment of Dáil control over the I.R.A.²³⁷

The pact prevented the Irish electorate from voicing their opinion on the Treaty, and on 27 May 1922 an editorial in the pro-Treaty *Sligo Champion* criticised the pact believing it was a 'means to an extent the muzzling of the Irish electorate' and went on to argue that the 'coalition executive implies the complete wiping out of the Provisional Government and the abandonment of the election on the Treaty'.²³⁸ The *Sligo Champion* editorial maintained that de Valera and the anti-Treaty group had the most to gain from this alliance.²³⁹

The pact was warmly welcomed in Sligo by the anti-Treaty *Connachtman* newspaper and an editorial on 27 May 1922 maintained that the anti-Treaty group in Sligo 'will carry out the terms of the pact in the spirit in which it has been entered into'.²⁴⁰ After the pact the anti-Treaty side in Sligo felt more confident and called a meeting in the town hall on 11 June 1922. Pro-Treaty candidates were invited but did not attend.²⁴¹ The anti-Treaty candidates called on the people to vote for the panel candidates. Eamon deValera visited Sligo in mid-June 1922 and spoke at several meetings in the county and urged the electorate to vote for Sinn Féin panel candidates.²⁴² On the Sunday before the election anti-Treaty advocates, Robert Bradshaw and Seamus Devins, spoke at six meetings in north Sligo asking the electorate to vote for panel candidates, while pro-Treaty Martin Roddy also

²³⁵ Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 736.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 737.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *S.C.*, 27 May 1922.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ *CM*, 27 May 1922.

²⁴¹ *S.C.*, 17 June 1922.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

spoke at a separate pact meeting in north Sligo.²⁴³ With Sinn Féin trying to monopolise the election for their candidates, was there any opposition to the Sinn Féin panel candidates in the Sligo-east Mayo constituency?

A condition of the Collins-de Valera pact stated 'that constituencies where an election is not held shall continue to be represented by their present deputies'²⁴⁴ and it was expected that the outgoing T.D.s, three anti-Treaty and two pro-Treaty T.D.s, would be nominated for the Sligo-east Mayo constituency. This posed no problem for the anti-Treaty side as only the three outgoing T.D.s, Frank Carty, Seamus Devins and Francis Ferrans of Foxford, Co. Mayo had been selected.²⁴⁵ However, the pro-Treaty side had selected five candidates and after much discussion, only the outgoing T.D.s, Alec McCabe and Thomas O'Donnell, were re-selected at a pro-Treaty convention in late May 1922. John Hennigan, who was a Sinn Féin county councillor and was the representative of the Drumcliff branch of the S.F.A. and along with Seamus McGowan, who occupied a prominent position in the Sligo labour movement and was also a Sinn Féin county councillor, were dropped as Sinn Féin candidates in the forthcoming election. Both men immediately announced that they were standing as independent candidates and this meant that the electorate would be asked to register their votes on election day.²⁴⁶

The general election caused some disunity in the ranks of the labour movement in Sligo. On the one hand the movement was very supportive of the national initiatives taken by the Labour Party and the 'National Anti-militarism Strike' called by the party in April 1922 was strongly enforced by the party in Sligo and a meeting in the town chaired by William Reilly passed resolutions opposing military interference in civil life and asking for political parties to honour the democratic programme.²⁴⁷ However, one of the most prominent labour leaders in Sligo, John Lynch, was not in attendance at this meeting. John Lynch's sympathies lay with the anti-Treaty side and presumably he was also in favour of military action in opposing the Treaty. Seamus McGowan, a strong Labour activist, had chosen to run as a pro-Treaty independent candidate in the election, and he no doubt hoped to secure a significant amount of the Labour vote.

A joint manifesto from the three anti-Treaty and two pro-Treaty Sinn Féin candidates criticised the independent candidates for forcing an election in Sligo-east Mayo, declaring

²⁴³ Ibid., 17 June 1922.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 27 May 1922.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 3 June 1922.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 22 Apr. 1922.

that 'a contested election has been forced upon us by two candidates claiming to be independent and any person or party who at this moment forces personal or party issues on electors is acting against the best interests of Ireland and contrary to the spirit of the Collins-de Valera agreement'.²⁴⁸ The independents were criticised in particular by the anti-Treaty *Connachtman* newspaper and by the anti-Treaty members of Sligo Corporation, notably councillors Michael Nevin and John Lynch.²⁴⁹ Where would support for the independent candidates in Sligo come from?

The independent candidates were both pro-Treaty and claimed to represent the interests of workers and farmers in Sligo. Seamus McGowan received support from William Reilly, chairman of the Sligo branch of the Labour Party. Reilly was also an election agent for both independents.²⁵⁰ The other independent candidate, John Hennigan, a farmer from Grange in north Sligo was chairman of the Grange branch of the S.F.A. On 11 June 1922, a meeting of the S.F.A., chaired by Hennigan, asked local branches to hold collections in aid of the independent candidates.²⁵¹ It seemed most probable that Protestant and former unionists members of the S.F.A. would give their support to Hennigan at the election, as he was pro-Treaty and would further the interests of the S.F.A. The Sligo branch of the Labour Party unanimously endorsed both independent candidates.²⁵² Councillor John Lynch was now the only prominent Labour leader in Sligo who supported the anti-Treaty stance.²⁵³

The independents also had the support of a newspaper in Sligo and on 10 June 1922 the *Sligo Independent* put its support firmly behind the non-aligned pro-Treaty independent candidates. Its editorial argued that 'the independent candidates deserved to be elected as they were the only ones who represented the agricultural, commercial and industrial interests of Ireland'.²⁵⁴ The independent candidates held some meetings in Sligo, which at times they had to abandon due to interference, and their canvassers 'mainly confined themselves to distribution of literature and the canvassing of voters'.²⁵⁵ However, before the election things got worse for the independent candidates.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1922.

²⁴⁹ *CM*, 10 June 1922.

²⁵⁰ *S.C.*, 10 June 1922.

²⁵¹ *R.H.*, 17 June 1922.

²⁵² *S.C.*, 10 June 1922.

²⁵³ *CM*, 17 June 1922; *S.C.*, 17 June 1922.

²⁵⁴ *S.I.*, 10 June 1922.

²⁵⁵ *CM*, 17 June 1922; *S.C.*, 17 June 1922.

In the week before the election some Protestant supporters of the independent candidates were intimidated in the Drumcliff area of north Sligo.²⁵⁶ A typed letter received by Protestant voters in the Drumcliff area stating that 'the bordermen expect that the unionists will kindly stay at home next Friday If they do not it will mean some night duty for us next week. Please convey these instructions to your neighbours'.²⁵⁷ On polling day some agents acting on behalf of the independent candidates were kidnapped, which included John P. Jordan, a grocer and publican from north Sligo who was held in Sligo Military Barracks until late afternoon.²⁵⁸ The independent candidates withdrew at the counting stage 'as a protest against the gross impersonation and intimidation which was practised on and before the day of the poll and the kidnapping of impersonating agents'.²⁵⁹

The intimidation and the anti-democratic methods used against the independents, who were supported by the *Sligo Independent* must have convinced some people in Sligo that was no real alternative to the Sinn Féin panel candidates. The *Sligo Independent* complained about personation and intimidation.²⁶⁰ However, some degree of personation probably happened at every election in the past. When it came to intimidation it must be remembered that the majority of the I.R.A. in Sligo were anti-Treaty and no doubt their presence and the actions of some of their members made the electorate apprehensive and Alec McCabe admitted after he was elected for the pro-Treaty camp that 'certain circumstances were not what they might have been'.²⁶¹

On 24 June 1922 the national results were announced, fifty-eight pro-Treaty Sinn Féin candidates were elected out of the sixty-six nominees and only thirty-five anti-Treaty Sinn Féin candidates were elected out of fifty-nine nominees put forward. This was a strong endorsement of the Treaty by the electorate. The Labour Party, which also supported the Treaty, did very well and seventeen Labour candidates were elected. Arthur Mitchell has argued that 'the great success of the Labour candidates was partly due to their emphasising social and economic issues, problems which the other parties hardly touched on at all. More important was that many voters, tired of the wrangling over the Treaty and fearful of violent developments, voted for candidates who were obviously peaceful and outside the dispute'.²⁶²

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 24 June 1922.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 July 1922.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 24 June 1922.

²⁶⁰ *S.I.*, 24 June 1922.

²⁶¹ *S.C.*, 24 June 1922.

²⁶² Arthur Mitchell, *Labour in Irish politics 1890-1930* (Dublin, 1974), p. 162.

Other groups supporting the Treaty also did well and the Farmers' Party and the independents got seven seats each, while the southern unionists only managed to win four seats.²⁶³ A total of ninety-three of the 128 members of the Dáil were in favour of the Treaty. In the Sligo-east Mayo constituency, the five outgoing Sinn Féin panel T.D.s were re-elected with the three anti-Treaty candidates receiving fifty-six per cent of the vote while the two pro-Treaty candidates secured thirty per cent. The Sligo-east Mayo was the only constituency in the country where the anti-Treaty candidates received a majority of the votes.²⁶⁴ However, despite the intimidation and dominance of the Sinn Féin Party, the independents managed to gain fourteen per cent of the vote in the Sligo-east Mayo constituency.²⁶⁵

Table 4.3: June 1922 General Election - Sligo east Mayo Constituency
5 seats; electorate: 62,509; quota: 5,750.

Candidate	Party	Count 1	Count 2 Transfer of McCabe surplus	Count 3 Transfer of Devin surplus	Count 4 Transfer of Ferrans surplus	Count 5 Transfer of Carty surplus	Count 6 Transfer of eliminated McGowan
Alex McCabe	Pro-treaty S.F.	7,759	-2,009 5,750	5,750	5,750	5,750	5,750
James Devins	Anti- Treaty S.F.	7,370	7,370	-1,620 7,370	7,370	7,370	7,370
Francis Ferrans	Anti- Treaty S.F.	6,752	6,752	6,752	1,002 6,752	6,752	6,752
Frank Carty	Anti- Treaty S.F.	5,335	+276 5,611	+1,491 7,102	7,102	-1,352 5,750	5,750
Tom O'Donnell	Pro-treaty S.F.	2,434	+1,140 3,574	+55 3,629	+905 4,534	+1,107 5,641	+681 5,046
John Hennigan	Ind.	3,841	+357 4,198	+55 4,253	+69 4,322	+43 4,322	+681 5,046
Seamus McGowan	Ind.	1,008	+236 1,244	+19 1,263	+28 1,291	+26 1,317	-1,317 Eliminated
Non-transferable papers not effective						+176	+155
						176	331
Total valid		34,499	34,499	34,499	34,499	34,499	34,499

Source: Elections Ireland, General Election, Sligo-east Mayo, 16 June 1922

(<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1922&cons=563>) (1 June 2006).

An analysis of the election indicates that fifty-five per cent of the voters in the Sligo-east Mayo constituency took part, while only forty-five per cent of those entitled to vote turned

²⁶³ S.C., 24 June 1922.

²⁶⁴ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (Dublin, 1988), p. 110.

²⁶⁵ S.C., 24 June 1922.

out nationally.²⁶⁶ Alec McCabe, a pro-Treaty candidate topped the poll with 7,759 votes, which was 2,009 votes above the quota, and of these 1,140 were transferred to Tom O'Donnell his pro-Treaty running mate. 357 of his votes went to independent candidate John Hennigan, while 336 went to Seamus McGowan, the other independent. Fifty-seven per cent of Alec McCabe's surplus went to Tom O'Donnell, pro-Treaty, fourteen per cent to Frank Carty, anti-Treaty, while twenty-nine per cent of McCabe's surplus went to the independents. Hennigan got eighteen per cent and McGowan, eleven per cent. McCabe's entire surplus was transferable. The transfer of McCabe's surplus seemed to indicate that pro-Treaty voters were more inclined to give their lowest preferences to the anti-Treaty candidates.

James Devins, anti-Treaty candidate, with 7,370 votes received the second highest number of first preference votes. 1,491 of Devins's surplus of 1,670 went to anti-Treaty Frank Carty, while fifty-five went to Tom O'Donnell, pro-Treaty, fifty-five to John Hennigan and nineteen to Seamus McGowan. Ninety-two per cent of Devins's surplus went to the anti-Treaty candidate Frank Carty, 3.4 per cent to the pro-Treaty Tom O'Donnell and 4.6 per cent to the two independent candidates. The anti-Treaty candidate Francis Ferrans's surplus of 1,002 was distributed next. Tom O'Donnell, the pro-Treaty received 905 of these, just over ninety per cent, while the independents John Hennigan received sixty-nine transfers and Seamus McGowan only got twenty-eight. The transfer of Ferran's surplus indicates that anti-Treaty voters were more inclined to adhere to the terms of the Collins-deValera pact and give their lowest preferences to the independents.

Frank Carty's surplus of 1,352 was next distributed. Tom O'Donnell, pro-Treaty got most of this, 1,107 transfers, while Hennigan got forty-three and Seamus McGowan got twenty-six. After Frank Carty was elected, there were no remaining anti-Treaty candidates in the field and thirteen per cent of his surplus was declared to be non-transferable. Eighty-two per cent of his surplus had gone to the only remaining pro-Treaty candidate Tom O'Donnell and only six per cent to the independents. As in the case of the transfer of Ferran's surplus, the transfer of Carty's surplus indicates that anti-Treaty voters were more inclined to adhere to the pact and give their lowest preferences to independents candidates.

Seamus McGowan with the lowest number of votes was eliminated and 481 went to Tom O'Donnell, while his fellow independent John Hennigan got 681, which was fifty-two per

²⁶⁶ Elections Ireland, General Election 16 June 1922 Sligo-East Mayo (<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1922&cons=563>) (1 June 2006).

cent of the transfers. If Hennigan had received all of McGowan's 1,317 eliminated votes he would have been elected. However, only 1,162 votes were transferable and even if Hennigan had received all of these he still would have not got enough votes to get elected. Tom O'Donnell with 6,122 votes was declared elected.

Michael Farry has argued that the anti-Treaty voters in the Sligo-east Mayo constituency maintained a greater party solidarity than was the case nationally and demonstrated 'a failure on the part of pro-Treaty voters to observe the spirit of the electoral pact'.²⁶⁷ Overall the anti-Treaty voters were more loyal to the terms of the Collins-de Valera pact and while they were more inclined to vote for the anti-Treaty candidates first and to give their remaining preferences to the pro-Treaty candidates, the pro-Treaty voters voted for their own candidates first and then for the pro-Treaty independents, giving their last preferences to the anti-Treaty candidates.

The Collins-deValera pact practically guaranteed the election of the five outgoing candidates. However, Farry has argued that the anti-Treaty candidates received such a high percentage because the candidates were strategically located. Frank Carty came from south Sligo, Seamus Devins from north Sligo and Frank Ferran came from the east Mayo part of the constituency, and so were well-placed to maximise their votes in their own areas. Frank Carty and Seamus Devins were also very well known as a result of their activity as I.R.A. commandants during the War of Independence.²⁶⁸ The pro-Treaty candidates Alec McCabe and Tom O'Donnell suffered, as they were both located within ten miles of each other in south Sligo, and only Alec McCabe had been active in the I.R.A. during the War of Independence. Alec McCabe had also been elected for Sinn Féin in the general election of 1918. There were no pro-Treaty candidates from north Sligo or east Mayo. The anti-Treaty side had also stepped up their election campaign after the Collins-deValera pact.

The electoral pact only seemed to delay and not to prevent the confrontation between the two groups and although the pact had aided the anti-Treaty side in Sligo, the publication of the new Free State constitution which endorsed the Treaty by the Provisional Government on the eve of the election did much to negate the pact for the anti-Treaty side.²⁶⁹ The *Connachtman* editorial of 24 June maintained that the results were positive from the anti-Treaty standpoint.²⁷⁰ However, the editorial expressed annoyance with the pro-Treaty side

²⁶⁷ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 72.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²⁶⁹ *CM*, 24 June 1922.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

and criticised the new Free State constitution maintaining that 'such a constitution would be an unqualified surrender and abandonment of the nation's rights and would constitute a voluntary acceptance and acknowledgement of the status of slavery by the Irish people. The pact has been broken and with it has disappeared any immediate prospect of a settlement. The verdict of the polls is clearly not one of peace'.²⁷¹ Seamus Devins, a strong opponent of the Treaty, argued that he was opposed to differences between Irishmen but was keen to add that the struggle was only just beginning.²⁷²

The relative success of the independent candidates gave some hope for many voters especially ex-unionists and those who disagreed with Sinn Féin. It was also an optimistic sign for the future when less inhibited elections could be held. However, what was most important to the Protestant and ex-unionist community in Sligo was that the anti-Treaty supporters refused to accept the electoral outcome and continued their preparations to resist the pro-Treaty forces. Michael Hopkinson has argued that 'the anti-Treaty I.R.A. was showing a disregard for general opinion. Thanks to the association of anti-Treaty units with commandeering, looting, censorship and compulsory levies, the Provisional Government was increasingly able to use the virtues of majority rule and law and order as major planks'.²⁷³

The election results gave the Provisional Government the mandate they needed to enforce the Treaty and on 28 June the Free State forces moved against the positions occupied by the anti-Treaty forces, or the republican forces as they were also called, in the Four Courts in Dublin. On 30 June 1922, after two days of bombardment, the republicans were forced to surrender their positions.²⁷⁴ On 2 July the republican forces in Sligo went on the offensive and they captured Free State positions in Collooney, Co. Sligo and took fourteen Provisional Government soldiers prisoner. Republicans also took the government outpost at Riverstown and made numerous sniping attacks on Markree Castle,²⁷⁵ but although republican forces were strong in Sligo town, they made no attempt to exploit this advantage and in fact on 1 and 2 July they evacuated their positions and set up their H.Q. in Rahelly House, which was part of the Gore-Booth estate at Lissadell in north Sligo.²⁷⁶ The republican forces in Sligo made little effort to coordinate their attacks and continued to

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² S.C., 24 June 1922.

²⁷³ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (Dublin, 1988), p. 69.

²⁷⁴ T. W. Moody, and F. X. Martin, (eds), *The course of Irish History* (Cork, 2001), p. 422.

²⁷⁵ S.C., 8 July 1922.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

repeat the tactics employed during the latter stages of the War of Independence. As Michael Farry has argued the republican forces, instead of taking the offensive against the Free State troops, adopted the strategy of passive defence, and returned to guerrilla warfare.²⁷⁷

At the start of the conflict the anti-Treaty I.R.A. in Sligo, as in many other parts of the country, had more experienced men and officers and more extensive military experience. However, through indecision and the lack of a centralised directive they lost their advantage. As Michael Hopkinson has argued the best time for military opposition to the Treaty was before the election but this opportunity was never seized because many within the anti-Treaty camp wanted to prevent a split.²⁷⁸ Hopkinson has argued that the anti-Treaty forces lacked direction and they had no coherent policy as regards preparation in the months before the outbreak of the Civil War and only seemed to occupy barracks in order to gain arms.²⁷⁹ It seemed that the anti-Treaty commanders in Sligo, much like in the rest of the country, had no co-ordinated or overall strategy and they had no sense of direction.

Government forces occupied most of Sligo town while some republicans continued to occupy the ex-R.I.C. barracks on Wine Street.²⁸⁰ On 5 July government reinforcements along with the 'Ballinalee' armoured car arrived in Sligo town and took the ex-R.I.C. station in Wine Street.²⁸¹ However, anti-Treaty forces were quite active in the early stages of the Civil War in Sligo and under Frank Carty's command they mounted a successful attack on the pro-Treaty base at Market House in Collooney capturing thirty-four prisoners along with their weapons and supplies. Carty successfully attacked a number of pro-Treaty soldiers at Carricknagat and on 13 July the republican forces scored a great success when they captured the 'Ballinalee' in an ambush at Rockwood, about four miles south of Sligo town, killing five pro-Treaty troops and wounding two others in the process.²⁸² The source of Carty's success seemed to lie in the fact that he operated independently of any central authority and used his own initiative in choosing targets and in the general prosecution of the war. At the end of July over 400 Free State troops occupied Collooney after a four hour attack and by the end of the month Free State troops had occupied the main towns in Co. Sligo while Carty and the anti-Treaty forces evacuated the towns and villages in their possession and

²⁷⁷ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 76.

²⁷⁸ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (Dublin, 1988), p. 59.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²⁸⁰ *S.C.*, 8 July 1922.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 15 July 1922.

had reverted to guerrilla warfare.²⁸³ However, anti-Treaty forces were in control of large areas of the countryside, and would prove hard to track down.

From August 1922 the anti-Treaty forces operated in three main areas in Co. Sligo. Frank Carty and his column were focused on the Tubbercurry area and used the Ox Mountains as a base when put under pressure by Free State forces. Ned Bofin concentrated his command in the Arigna area, occasionally launching raids in Sligo and Leitrim. Liam Pilkington established his headquarters at Rahelly House on the Gore-Booth's land near Lissadell in north Sligo and from time to time he launched attacks on Sligo town and the surrounding district.²⁸⁴

The outbreak of the Civil War was a blow for Protestants in Sligo. They had witnessed the disruption caused by the War of Independence and they were forced to abandon unionism and accept self-government, in the form of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. However, the hoped for peace proved to be illusory and anti-Treaty supporters were now determined to use physical force to resist the Treaty. Protestants, as former unionists and supporters of the Treaty, feared that they would be the targets for possible anti-Treaty reprisals. On 22 July 1922 the *Sligo Independent* editorial lamented that 'civilisation is practically gone. Life is not worth living, and all are asking when will it all end, and praying for peace, perfect peace, so that Ireland might be glorious and free'.²⁸⁵ This was a pretty grim view and the beginning of the Civil War and represented a low point for Protestants in Co. Sligo, who had hoped, as the former unionist Malby Crofton had argued in late March 1922, that 'Irishmen should work together for the peace and prosperity of their country in the future'.²⁸⁶

In August 1922 it seemed as if the war would be drawn out as the government forces lacked supplies, reinforcements and the experience to launch major offensives in Co. Sligo and although government troops were in control of many towns and villages including Sligo town, the republican anti-Treaty forces were able to make frequent raids into the town using the 'Ballinalee' armoured car, and occasionally captured some government positions.²⁸⁷ Free State forces achieved some success against anti-Treaty groups in south Sligo by using 'flying columns', which were mobile units commanded by Alec McCabe from his base in Ballymote. Free State troops were also in occupation of the important strategic position of

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5 Aug. 1922.

²⁸⁴ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (Dublin, 1988), p. 159.

²⁸⁵ *S.I.*, 22 July 1922.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 Apr. 1922..

²⁸⁷ *S.C.*, 5 Aug. 1922.

Markree Castle, Co. Sligo, the home of Bryan Cooper.²⁸⁸ In October republican forces were on the defensive in Sligo, while government forces were plagued by supply and reinforcement problems and were unable to take advantage of the weakened anti-Treaty position. In November 1922 some pro-Treaty officers, including Alec McCabe, were forced to admit that the guerrilla tactics of the anti-Treaty columns were proving quite successful, and the ability of the anti-Treaty groups to raid at will was undermining the confidence of the general population in the Provisional Government²⁸⁹ and it would take a large offensive backed up by hundreds of Free State troops to eliminate the anti-Treaty military effort in Co. Sligo.

Meanwhile, in many areas of Co. Sligo anti-Treaty forces were causing a lot of destruction to property and in July 1922 considerable damage was inflicted to a rented house and a woollen mill in Collooney village belonging to Alexandrina Sims, Camphill, Collooney.²⁹⁰ The house and woollen mill had been occupied at various times by both republican and Free State troops.²⁹¹

In October 1922 a Protestant shopkeeper and farm owner, Charles Graham, Knockalassa, Co. Sligo, was arrested and questioned by anti-Treaty I.R.A., on account of his unionist sympathies in the past.²⁹² Graham had endured continuous intimidation by groups of armed men during the War of Independence and the Civil War. On 11 December 1920, his house and shop were damaged and some of his stock and other possessions were taken²⁹³ and although he had paid a £200 fine to the I.R.A. during the Truce, his business was boycotted from October 1921. Armed men, most likely anti-Treaty I.R.A. raided his shop four times in 1922.²⁹⁴ Charles Graham closed his shop in December 1922 and his property was attacked twice in early 1923. However, Graham remained in Sligo and began trading again after the Civil War.²⁹⁵

In October 1922 armed men, believed to have been anti-Treaty supporters, raided two houses, one at Drumdoe, Co. Sligo and the other Hollybrook House, near Ballinafad, Co. Sligo. Both houses belonged to Lord French, ex-Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.²⁹⁶ However,

²⁸⁸ *S.I.*, 9 Sept. 1922.

²⁸⁹ *S.C.*, 25 Nov. 1922.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4 Nov. 1922.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² Charles Graham, 11 Jan. 1921 (*S.C.L.*, Criminal Injuries Book, L7).

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *S.I.*, 9 Sept. 1922.

²⁹⁵ Charles Graham (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/90).

²⁹⁶ *S.I.*, 21 Oct. 1922.

the anti-Treaty forces were not the only ones causing damage to property and while Free State forces were stationed at Markree Castle during the Civil War they caused an estimated £10,000 worth of 'wanton, mischievous and filthy damage'.²⁹⁷

At this time the Civil War in Co. Sligo took on a more brutal and sinister character and on 5 November 1922 two Catholic men, Matthew Hunt and James O'Connor from the Tubbercurry area were found dead at the side of the road with a note 'Convicted spy, I.R.A.' on them.²⁹⁸ Frank Carty's anti-Treaty forces killed the men, as they were convinced that Hunt and O'Connor had been responsible for supplying information which had led to the arrest of republicans on 1 November 1922. The action was also taken to deter others from informing on anti-Treaty movements. In December 1922, with a renewed vigour and a confidence that people were too afraid to inform on them, republican forces made repeated attacks on Free State bases at Collooney and Markree Castle and disrupted road and rail communications in the county.²⁹⁹ In early December the Free State garrison of only seventy-five men in Sligo town was unable to prevent north Sligo republicans from capturing Sligo Town Hall. The republicans withdrew escaping with twenty-one rifles, four revolvers and 1,300 rounds of ammunition.³⁰⁰

From September to December, apart from the odd 'raid in force' by anti-Treaty troops, a sort of military stalemate existed in Sligo. Anti-Treaty forces were unable to mount any serious threat to the Free State troops, although they had launched some successful raids into Free State positions. However, the Free State army was in occupation of the urban centres but was unable to effectively counter anti-Treaty guerrilla warfare and as long as the republican forces continued to exist in the field and carry out the odd raid or two, they were going to undermine the confidence of the people in the Free State government.

In January 1923 the majority of the Free State army was deployed in the south of the country and Michael Farry has argued that Sligo was one of the few other areas of the country where anti-Treaty forces were still quite active.³⁰¹ On the night of 10-11 January 1923 armed men destroyed Sligo railway station when they sent engines down the line towards the goods yard. Forty I.R.A. men of the 1st Battalion of the 3rd Western Division carried out the operation. In all seven engines were damaged along with forty carriages.

²⁹⁷ Lennox Robinson, *Bryan Cooper* (London, 1931), pp 138-39; *S.I.*, 9 Sept. 1922.

²⁹⁸ *S.C.*, 11 Nov. 1922.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 Dec. 1922.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 90.

The entire cost of damage to the station was estimated at between £70,000 and £100,000.³⁰² The pro-unionist sympathies of the S.R.A councillor, Hal R. Wood-Martin, were still evident when he commented on the incident in a letter to a friend of his in England, Sir Douglas Newton, that 'I only wish that some of the late politicians who handed over this country were in this town last Wednesday night. A band of irregulars came in, burned the station to the ground and sent six engines down the line ... the rest of the night was made hideous by gunfire'.³⁰³

From January to March the republican forces launched guerrilla attacks on relatively soft targets, such as communications links and mail trains, while roads were trenched and railway lines to Sligo were damaged.³⁰⁴ The I.R.A. did not target the large estate houses of Unionists in Sligo and although during the Truce period I.R.A. G.H.Q. in Dublin instructed the Sligo I.R.A. that 'in the event of enemy outrages, the homes of the principals of these [Unionists] should be promptly destroyed'³⁰⁵, there is no evidence to suggest that estate houses in Co. Sligo were attacked and destroyed by the I.R.A.

However, in the period January to the end of April 1923 thirteen private houses were damaged or burned by republicans in Co. Sligo, while one house was burned in reprisal by Free State forces; an estimated six of the fourteen houses belonged to Protestants, which included Rahilly House which belonged to the Gore-Booth family; Longhill Lodge, Cloonacool, Co. Sligo, which was the property of Charles O'Hara, Lough Gill Lodge which was also owned by O'Hara; Cabra Lodge, Coolaney which was the property of Thomas Williams, a Crown Solicitor based in Sligo, and was situated on a mountain side three miles to the west of Coolaney village; a vacant Protestant rectory near Kilfree Junction in south Sligo and a house owned by Charles Rogers near the village of Carney one mile west of Drumcliff on the main Sligo to Bundoran road and about five miles from Sligo town.³⁰⁶

The I.R.A. had originally occupied many of these properties during the Truce period as they were situated in isolated locations and so proved useful for training and organising.³⁰⁷

³⁰² S.C., 13 Jan. 1923.

³⁰³ H.R. Wood-Martin to Sir Douglas Newton, England, 12 Jan. 1923 (S.C.L., Estate records, 511).

³⁰⁴ S.C., 27 Jan. 1923; 3 Feb. 1923; 31 Mar. 1923.

³⁰⁵ Report on Sligo area, n.d. (U.C.D. A.D., Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/32).

³⁰⁶ Information on houses burned from 1 Jan to 28 Apr. 1923, 3rd Western Division Material, (U.C.D. A.D., Twomey Papers, P69/33); Communications report, operations by 4th Brigade, 3rd Western Division, 14-28 Feb. 1923, (I.M.A., Western Command Papers, CW/Ops/7); S.C., 6 Jan to 28 Apr. 1923; Diary of Activities for fortnight ended 15 Mar. 1923, 1st Brigade, 3rd Western Division, (U.C.D. A.D., Twomey Papers, P69/30/166-9).

³⁰⁷ Reports by R.I.C. of Breaches of the Truce from Co. Sligo, I.R.A. Drilling and Camps, 23 Sept. 1921 to 5 Oct. 1921, (T.N.A., CO/904: microfilm, N.L.I., POS 8562).

There seemed to have been no apparent sectarian motivation behind these burnings and the houses or lodges were burned as they either belonged to supporters of the Free State or to deny them as a base for Free State troops. This seemed to have been the case when on 17 January 1923 the republican commander Liam Pilkington, under pressure from Free State troops in north Sligo, ordered the burning of Rahelly House, which had been his H.Q. The house was situated on the Gore-Booth estate ten miles from Sligo. Pilkington burned it down in order to deny its occupation by Free State troops.³⁰⁸

During the Civil War republican G.H.Q. were largely unable to control local I.R.A. units in Sligo and many operations were conducted on the initiative of local commanders and seldom was there even cooperation between dispersed local groups and they never coordinated their attacks to inflict the maximum damage on Free State troops or installations and as Michael Hopkinson has argued 'there is rarely any evidence of republican local units responding to central direction, either from their division or G.H.Q., and the vexed problem of communication between fighting units in a guerrilla war was never resolved'.³⁰⁹

Hopkinson has maintained that the Free State troops had their own problems and 'there were enormous problems involved in the transition from a volunteer locally based guerrilla force to a regular, professional, government-controlled army'.³¹⁰ It took time to put in place a professional, trained and well disciplined army and until this occurred the I.R.A. were able to remain active in Co. Sligo. However, unlike the situation during the War of Independence, the I.R.A. in Sligo did not now have the same support from the majority of the civilian population and in most cases the irregulars were not able to win over the local population. People were annoyed when anti-Treaty groups took supplies and didn't pay for them and the inhabitants of towns such as Collooney and Sligo were more angry at the anti-Treaty forces for occupying buildings and bringing destruction upon their homes than with the Free State troops, who in fact caused much of the destruction while trying to retake the towns.³¹¹

However, by early March 1923 Free State troops were becoming much stronger throughout Co. Sligo and they were able to repair damage much more regularly.³¹² From 6 to 13 April 1923 government forces launched sweeps into remote areas of Co. Sligo, especially the Ox Mountains, in order to deny the republicans secure bases to carry out

³⁰⁸ *S.I.*, 20 Jan 1923.

³⁰⁹ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (Dublin, 1988), p. 174.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³¹¹ *S.C.*, 20 Jan 1923; 24 Feb. 1923.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 17 Mar. 1923.

raids.³¹³ Throughout Ireland only small groups of republicans continued to defy the government forces and republicans still found opportunities to settle old scores. In April 1922 Tom O'Donnell T.D. lodged a claim for £1,000 compensation for the burning of his dwelling house and contents by republican forces.³¹⁴ With no hope of military success the republican forces declared a ceasefire in early May 1923, and called on their supporters to dump their arms, thus bringing the Civil War to an end.³¹⁵

Michael Farry's research on the Civil War in Sligo has indicated that fifty-four people were killed in Co. Sligo during the Civil War, twenty were members of the Free State army, twenty-three were anti-Treaty and eleven were civilians.³¹⁶ The only Protestant death in Sligo during the Civil War was the murder of twenty-three year old Edwin Williams from Skreen in the west of the county on 15 April 1923. The death of Williams did not appear to be a political or a sectarian motivated murder and seemed to be the result of a long-running agrarian dispute with a neighbour, which had stretched back to December 1920.³¹⁷ There were no reported attacks on Protestants or Protestant property in Sligo after the end of the Civil War. However, in some other counties criminal activity had continued and in October 1923 the *Sligo Independent* reported that a Protestant farmer, Robert Geelan, from Newtownforbes in Co. Longford was tied up by armed and masked men. The men took large sum of money including items from the house and they stole twenty-six head of cattle.³¹⁸

The financial and psychological impact of the conflict between Irishmen over the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty had made it even more difficult for the Free State government to honour promises made to the small ex-unionist population. However, even before the outbreak of the Civil War, Lord Midleton had been dissatisfied with the failure of the Free State government to deliver on their promises with regard to the powers of the Irish Senate. Midleton believed that the Senate would allow the Protestant and ex-unionist minority a strong political say in the new state. However, the powers of the Senate were very limited and all the legislative powers remained with the Dáil. Midleton refused to accept a seat in the Senate and on 24 November 1921 he resigned as chairman of the A.P.L. claiming that

³¹³ *S.I.*, 21 Apr. 1923.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 May 1923.

³¹⁵ T.W. Moody, and F.X. Martin, (eds), *The course of Irish History* (Cork, 2001), p. 442.

³¹⁶ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 93.

³¹⁷ *S.I.*, 21 Apr. 1923.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20 Oct. 1923.

both the British and Irish governments had reneged on their promises to ensure some legislative powers for ex-unionists.

Some other prominent and influential unionists were willing to seek an accommodation with the Free State and two leading businessmen, Andrew Jameson and Henry Guinness, gave their support to the Free State government. These men were both directors of the Bank of Ireland and were able to secure funding for the Provisional Government. For their part the government were grateful to accept the financial assistance offered by ex-unionists but there would be no extra political powers for them.³¹⁹ Southern unionists supported the Free State government and wished for a return to more settled times, as did Charles O'Hara in Sligo. Charles O'Hara's correspondence from May 1923 suggests that he was happy the fighting was over so that economic conditions could return to normal and the new government could get down to the business of running the country.³²⁰

Did Sligo Protestants take an active part in the Civil War fighting? The majority of Sligo Protestants took no part in the Civil War although they generally supported the Free State as the better alternative. At least one Protestant from Sligo was killed while serving with the Free State army and on 9 December 1922 the *Sligo Independent* reported that the funeral of Sergeant Jack Carter, originally from Strandhill, Co. Sligo, had taken place in St John's Church, Sligo town.³²¹

The Protestant poet William Butler Yeats, who immortalised Sligo in much of his poetry and prose, was a strong supporter of Irish self-government and the Free State, although he took no part in fighting during the War of Independence or the Civil War. W.B. Yeats was a strong supporter of the I.P.P. However, his brother Jack, a gifted artist, was an advocate of much greater independence for Ireland. Jack Yeats attended Sinn Féin meetings from 1910, although he like the other members of the Yeats family, did not sponsor violence as a means to secure Irish independence.³²² W.B. Yeats supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the Provisional Government and he later backed the Cosgrave government. Yeats was later appointed a member of the Irish senate, which first sat on 11 December 1922, and he remained a member until 1928.³²³

There were very few Protestant supporters of the republican anti-Treaty cause in Sligo. Countess Markievicz is probably the best known, and she like the other women deputies in

³¹⁹ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (Dublin, 1988), pp 195-7.

³²⁰ O'Hara to Mr I. Sullivan, Income Tax Inspector, 29 May 1923 (N.L.I., O'Hara Papers, MS 16827).

³²¹ *S.I.*, 9 Dec. 1922.

³²² William M. Murphy, *Family Secrets* (Dublin, 1995), p. 301.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

the Dáil opposed the Treaty.³²⁴ Countess Markievicz disagreed with the attempt by Arthur Griffith to protect former unionists and argued against setting up of what she called ‘a privileged class’ in the new state.³²⁵ She also believed that Britain could still influence Irish affairs through the oath of allegiance to the king.³²⁶ On the 5 February 1923 Countess Markievicz was elected president of Cumann na mBan and in June 1923 she was elected a republican T.D. and she remained a committed republican until her death in 1927.³²⁷

Another well-known Protestant republican in Sligo was Robert G. Bradshaw, the editor of the staunchly pro-republican *Connachtman* newspaper. During the Truce period he was appointed the I/O for the Sligo Brigade of the I.R.A. He frequently addressed meetings opposed to the Treaty and in 1922 while operating with anti-Treaty forces, Bradshaw was captured and spent the remainder of the Civil War in jail. In 1938 he was appointed Town Clerk of Sligo and remained a republican until his death in 1950.³²⁸

Robert Basil Anderson was another Protestant from Sligo who took a very active role in the War of Independence and the Civil War. He was the eldest son of Robert and Margaret Anderson of Colga House, Clary. The family were wealthy and in addition to lands at Calry and Ballinode, they also owned a brewery in Bridge Street, Sligo. Anderson was educated at Sligo Model School and Preston Grammar School and spent many years teaching and travelling around Europe. When the First World War broke out in 1914 he returned to Sligo with the intention of joining the British army.³²⁹ On 9 August 1914 he spoke at a meeting, which was held in Calry to form a corps of Sligo unionists, which were to have been a part of the Irish Volunteers. Anderson argued that the war united ‘Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and unionist’ and he urged both communities to try ‘to understand the view-point of those who see and think differently’.³³⁰

However, Anderson did not join the British army and instead he joined Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers. In 1917 he was promoted to the rank of Captain in the Irish Volunteers and in June 1918 he chaired a meeting in Clary, Co. Sligo where he spoke in favour of Sinn Féin and while on the run from British authorities he spoke at numerous republican

³²⁴ *Dáil Éireann*, 3 Jan. 1922, vol. iii, *díospóireachtaí páirliminte* (parliamentary debates); *tuairisg oifigiúil* (official report), (<http://www.historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/>) (26 May 2006).

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 193-7.

³²⁸ John C. McTernan, *A Sligo miscellany* (Dublin, 2000), pp 309-10.

³²⁹ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), p. 318.

³³⁰ *S.I.*, 15 Aug. 1914.

meetings.³³¹ On 9 December 1918 he was arrested in Dromore West and in March 1919 he was sentenced to six months hard labour for 'unlawful assembly' and using treasonable and seditious language'.³³² He later opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty and fought for the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War and was arrested and imprisoned in Sligo Gaol. After the Civil War he returned to teaching and travelling, later moving back to Sligo and settled at Lisheen, near Ballisodare.³³³

Jim Heuston was another Protestant member of the I.R.A., who fought in Sligo during the War of Independence and the Civil War. Heuston was a Presbyterian, originally from Belfast, who had studied to be a minister and later worked in the Belfast shipyards where he had witnessed a brutal attack on a Catholic worker.³³⁴ In 1914 he moved to Ballymote, Co. Sligo with his wife Isobelle, a Presbyterian from Glasgow. He worked as a skilled painter for Murray's Coach Builders and later joined the Irish Volunteers, while his wife joined Cumman na mBan. Heuston disagreed with the Anglo-Irish Treaty and fought for the anti-Treaty forces in the Civil War. In 1922 he was captured and interned for the rest of the war. After the Civil War Heuston lived in Ballymote and in 1947 he moved to Sligo town.³³⁵ It is interesting to note that the Protestants, Countess Markievicz, Robert G. Bradshaw, Robert Anderson and Jim Heuston, all took the anti-Treaty side during the Civil War and it could be argued that in order to prove beyond doubt their nationalist credentials, these four Protestants felt that they had to subscribe to the purist republican traditions and in effect be more nationalist than the nationalists themselves. The experiences of Countess Markievicz, Robert G. Bradshaw, Robert Anderson and Jim Heuston during the revolutionary period were not typical of the experiences of the majority of Protestants in Co. Sligo and many Protestants were fearful for their lives and property. However, the vast majority of Protestants in Sligo survived the War of Independence and the Civil War. But how much did Protestants suffer during the Truce and Civil War in Sligo?

An indication of the nature of the suffering endured by people during the Truce and Civil War period is given by claims to the I.G.C. Claimants had to prove their loyalty to the Crown by providing references from R.I.C. officers, churchmen or respectable local people. They also had to prove the extent of their damages with reasonably detailed assessments

³³¹ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), p. 319.

³³² S.C., 14 Dec. 1918; 22 Mar. 1919.

³³³ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 319-20.

³³⁴ Catherine Finn, 'Jim Heuston' in *The Corran Herald*, no. 16 (Ballymote, 1988), p. 1.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

from auctioneers, valuers or accountants. A local lawyer usually dealt with the claim and acted as the intermediary between the claimant and the I.G.C. authorities.³³⁶

Michael Farry's research on claimants to the I.G.C. has indicated that sixty-nine people from Co. Sligo registered claims for various amounts of compensation. Thirty-six Protestants out of the sixty-nine people claimed compensation from the I.G.C. while thirteen claimants of the sixty-nine were Catholics. The religion of the remaining twenty claimants could not be identified.³³⁷ Thirty-six Protestant claimants represented a very small proportion of the 1,755 Protestants who lived in Sligo town and of the 6,920 Protestants living in Co. Sligo.³³⁸ Of the thirty-six Protestant claimants to the I.G.C., only six were refused awards. An R.I.C. member was awarded no damages, as the I.G.C. believed that he had already been adequately compensated. Four other Protestants claimed for damages, which had occurred before the Truce. The I.G.C. refused to pay compensation to another claimant, as his claim was not covered by the committee's remit.³³⁹ Only fourteen Protestant shopkeepers and businessmen of the thirty-six Protestant claimants from Co. Sligo made claims for losses to the I.G.C. Only two businessmen from Sligo town claimed and there is an absence of claims from any of the larger Protestant businesses in Sligo town.³⁴⁰ A small number of Protestants, fifteen, and Catholics, fourteen, in Co. Sligo made claims from the Irish Free State for destruction of property during the Civil War. However, most were unsuccessful in receiving any compensation.³⁴¹

John Russell ex.-D.I, R.I.C. Sligo mentioned that during the War of Independence he could only speak for the loyalty of eight Protestants and mentioned that four had given information to the R.I.C.³⁴² The I.R.A. in Sligo never conducted a pogrom of any kind

³³⁶ Niamh Brennan, 'A Political Minefield: Southern Loyalists, the Irish Grants Committee and the British Government, 1922-31' in *I.H.S.*, xxx, no. 119 (May 1997), pp 406-20.

³³⁷ I.G.C. Papers (T.N.A., I.G.C. Papers, CO 762); Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 193.

³³⁸ *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXXV, p. 32; table 121, p. 211.

³³⁹ I.G.C. Papers (T.N.A., I.G.C. Papers, CO 762).

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ Victimised loyalists, John Anderson, Clifony, Co. Sligo, 1922 (N.A.I., Dept. of Finance, FIN 1/1067); Belfast boycott, Ballymote claims, 1923 (N.A.I., Dept. of Finance, FIN 1/1110-1114); Fines imposed by the Republican Army on persons dealing with the Ulster Bank, 1923 (N.A.I., Dept. of Finance, FIN 1/3471); Damage to lands belonging to Basil Phibbs at Ardcumber, Riverstown, Co. Sligo (N.A.I., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/214); Damage to property, C. Phibbs (N.A.I., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/215); Robbery and ill treatment of J. Ormsby Cooke at Kilturra, Co. Sligo, 1922 (N.A.I., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/269); Robbery of property near Collooney, Bryan Cooper, 1923 (N.A.I., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/639).

³⁴² John Russell could speak for George Williams, Edith Anderson, J.W. Boyers, Joseph Graham, Mrs Walker, R.G. Bell, A Burke and Wood-Martin. Wood-Martin, Joseph Graham, G.R. Williams, Walpole Boyers gave information to the R.I.C. Letter from St. G. Robinson solicitors, Sligo, 27 Jan. 1927 and letter from J. Russell ex-D.I. R.I.C. Sligo, re. Jessica Hunter, 3 Feb. 1927 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/51); John Russell ex-D.I.

against Protestants and of the Co. Sligo claimants to the I.G.C. only four, Edith Anderson, Charles Phibbs, Thomas Guthrie and Joseph Graham, seemed to have left Co. Sligo permanently while Palmer McCloghery moved to Sligo town.³⁴³ Most of the Sligo claims to the I.G.C. were for looting and boycotting rather than for physical assault and the I.R.A. also targeted Catholic shopkeepers.³⁴⁴

There is little evidence that Protestant landowners in Sligo were singled out for special punishment during the War of Independence and Civil War and most claims to the I.G.C. and the Free State government consisted of smaller claims for low level agrarian agitation, as in the case of Basil Phibbs's claim from the Free State government for cattle driving and the temporary occupation of part of his lands near Riverstown, Co. Sligo, which took place during the Civil War.³⁴⁵ None of the numerous larger landowners such as the Coopers, the Percevals, the O'Haras and the Gore-Booths, were specifically targeted for long term or intensive attacks during the War of Independence and the Civil War. In March 1923, during the Civil War, Bryan Cooper did ask the Provisional Government for assistance in relation to the theft of timber from Union Wood on his estate and for the illegal grazing of cattle on his land.³⁴⁶ However, no serious trouble resulted from these incidents and it was most probably some local people taking advantage of the disturbed condition of the county at the time.

In the period from 1920 to 1923 Protestants in some other parts of Ireland suffered much worse and thirty-six per cent or over seventy of the 204 civilians shot by the I.R.A. in Co. Cork were Protestant.³⁴⁷ Peter Hart has maintained that very few of those killed were British or R.I.C. informers and many were killed simply as a warning to others.³⁴⁸ In the same period eighty-five per cent or ninety-six of the 113 houses burned by the I.R.A. in Co. Cork

Sligo R.I.C., re. J. Walpole-Boyers, 3 Feb. 1927 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/202); John Russell ex-D.I. Sligo R.I.C., re. George R. Williams, 1 Oct. 1928 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/195); John Russell, ex-District Inspector R.I.C., re. H.R. Wood-Martin, 24 May 1927 (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/78).

³⁴³ Edith Anderson (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/62); Charles Phibbs (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/70); Thomas Edward Guthrie (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/40); Joseph Graham (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/205); Palmer J. McCloghery (T.N.A., I.G.C. papers, CO 762/63).

³⁴⁴ I.G.C. Papers (T.N.A., I.G.C. Papers, CO 762).

³⁴⁵ Damage to lands belonging to Basil Phibbs at Arcdumber, Riverstown, Co. Sligo (N.A.I., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/214).

³⁴⁶ Robbery of property near Collooney, Bryan Cooper (N.A.I., Dept. of Justice, JUS/H5/639).

³⁴⁷ Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at war 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), p. 234; Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies* (Oxford, 1998), p. 295.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

belonged to Protestants.³⁴⁹ Hart has argued that this represented not only a religious but also a class bias, as most of the houses destroyed belonged to the gentry or aristocracy.³⁵⁰

After the Truce came into effect in July 1921, the I.R.A. in Sligo was in a very strong position. Groups of I.R.A. men in 'flying columns' had survived in the field and saw themselves as victorious over the Crown forces. The predominantly nationalist population treated them with great respect and they were able to take advantage of their position to stamp their authority on local government in the county. Many within the I.R.A. also looked with distain upon the Sinn Féin politicians and clashed with the Catholic Church on a number of occasions. The Sinn Féin court system was heavily reliant on the I.R.A. to enforce its decisions, which increased the influence of the military wing of republicanism over the political wing in Co. Sligo.

From August to September 1921 Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. consolidated their positions in Sligo and while Sinn Féin courts were held in various towns, the I.R.A. established training camps around the county. The I.R.A. did not single out Protestants for purely sectarian reasons in Sligo. However, they did raid the businesses of both Protestants and loyalist Catholics for supplies. Some of the wealthier Protestant businessmen in Sligo town were also encouraged to contribute to republican charities. However, a small number who claimed to have contributed under duress were reimbursed. In Ballymote some members of the I.R.A. were also keen to enforce the boycott of Belfast goods and the ban on dealing with the Belfast based Ulster Bank and many Protestant and Catholics were fined various amounts of money by the I.R.A. in the town.

The I.U.A. and A.P.L. were not invited to take part in the discussions concerning the Anglo-Irish Treaty in the period from July to December 1921, and when it was signed the Sinn Féin Party was divided over many of its terms. Most southern unionists were in favour of accepting the Treaty as they hoped it would bring an end to trouble, which had plagued Ireland for the past few years. Councillors Jackson, Campbell Perry and Wood-Martin of the S.R.A. urged the members of Sligo Corporation to accept the Treaty and on 29 December 1921 the corporation passed a resolution in favour of ratifying the Treaty by fourteen votes to five. The S.F.A., which included many Protestant unionist farmers and landowners also argued for the acceptance of the Treaty.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

³⁵⁰ Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at war 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), p. 234.

On 7 January 1922 the Dáil approved the Anglo-Irish Treaty and although the Protestant councillors and farmers in Sligo were still unionists at heart, they were realistic enough to see that the days of the Union were numbered and they registered their support for the Treaty as did a majority of the Sinn Féin and Labour councillors.

The Protestant community in Sligo were concerned by the withdrawal of the British forces from Sligo and within a week of the withdrawal some prominent Protestant politicians and businessmen were kidnapped, and although they were later released, Protestants were obviously concerned over their future. However, during the Truce period and later during the Civil War, some pragmatic Protestants such as Charles O'Hara were prepared to recognise the authority of local I.R.A. leaders and establish a working relationship with them, which to a large extent they succeeded in accomplishing.

During the War of Independence and the Civil War some republicans had a narrow view of what it meant to be Irish. Despite this, most Protestants in Sligo saw themselves as Irish, and although most Protestants had supported the Union, once the Treaty was ratified they put their support behind the new state and were keen to resist any narrow perception of nationality. The actions of many Protestants and unionists towards Catholics in Northern Ireland did not bode well for Protestants and unionists in the south of Ireland. At the end of March 1922 Sligo Protestants met in the largely unionist Sligo Constitutional and County Club to register their condemnation of attacks on Catholics in the north and to praise the religious tolerance of their fellow Catholic towns people.

Of course the portrayals of respect for their Catholic neighbours in Sligo town was primarily motivated by the fear that they could easily become the targets of Catholic retaliation for the sectarianism being displayed by many Protestants in the north at the time. Protestants in Sligo were right to be worried and in April 1922 attacks took place on many Protestants in southern Ireland. In the period from April to June 1922 some minor robberies of Protestants took place in Co. Sligo. However, the I.R.A. condemned these actions and the number of physical assaults on Protestants in Sligo during the Civil War seemed to have been very low.

During the general election campaign in May and June 1922 the *Sligo Independent* and many Protestants supported the independent candidates. The independent candidates and their supporters in Sligo were threatened and hassled by Sinn Féin. Despite the intimidation and dominance of the Sinn Féin Party, the independents still managed to gain fourteen per cent of the vote in the Sligo-east-Mayo constituency, and this boded well for the future

when more unrestricted elections could be held. The results of the election in the constituency also showed that anti-Treaty voters gave their higher preferences to anti-Treaty candidates and their lower preferences to the pro-Treaty candidates, while they gave their lowest preferences to independents. It was discovered that pro-Treaty voters gave their first and second preferences to pro-Treaty candidates and their third and fourth to the independents while their last choices were for anti-Treaty candidates.

Supporters of the Treaty won a majority of seats in the county. However, the anti-Treaty group refused to accept the election results and they prepared for war. When the Civil War broke out, anti-Treaty forces in Sligo were in a strong position and they made some early gains against the unprepared Free State troops. Most Protestants in Sligo put their support behind the Free State. However, after sacrificing their unionism and accepting the Treaty they now feared that republican forces would cause more suffering for them. Much damage occurred in Sligo during the Civil War and fifty-four people were killed. Only one Protestant was killed in Co. Sligo and this seemed to have been neither a sectarian nor a politically motivated killing and appeared to have been the result of a long running agrarian dispute.

Evidence suggests that only four Protestants from Sligo fought for the I.R.A. during the War of Independence and they all took the anti-Treaty side during the Civil War. However, the majority of Protestants in Sligo took no part in the Civil War, and most supported the Free State as the best alternative for peace. Few Protestants suffered during the Civil War and Protestants were never singled out because of their religion and only a very small number claimed for damages from the I.G.C. Most large Protestant landowners were not attacked, and the situation was far worse for Protestants in some other counties during the Civil War, especially in Cork and although some Protestant experiences of the Civil War in Sligo were not positive, the community had survived relatively intact and most Protestants were sufficiently confident concerning their future in Sligo and most remained after the Civil War.

Chapter Five: The Economic commitments of Sligo Protestants

This chapter explores Protestant economic interests in Sligo. The initial main economic enterprises in Sligo were agricultural and as Protestant landlords controlled much of the early economic activity in Sligo in the nineteenth century, they were therefore well placed to become involved in commercial and industrial developments in the twentieth century. This chapter investigates the main Protestant families and individuals behind the economic activity in Sligo town and county and what the principal manufacturing and commercial concerns of Protestant businessmen in Sligo. The chapter examines Protestant involvement in Sligo port, which provided a large amount of employment for Sligo town, and the development of the railway in the county will also form part of the study.

Jack White has commented in 1975 that Protestant businessmen were encouraged by the policies of the Irish Free State after the Civil War.¹ However, this chapter investigates if this was the case in Sligo and if Protestant businessmen felt comfortable in continuing their business operations in the town. In order to assess this an examination of the key Protestant entrepreneurs in Sligo in the 1920s and 1930s is necessary. Did Protestant ownership of businesses in Sligo town increase or decrease in the period 1923 to 1949 and what did Protestants do to further their business interests in Sligo and did they display any confidence in the town as a future centre for commerce after 1922?

This chapter begins by exploring the background of a small selection of the most prominent Protestant landlords in Sligo before 1914. Many of these families possessed the necessary capital and so were the first to become involved in the early agricultural and industrial initiatives in Sligo. In 1876, twenty-seven Protestant landlords owned over 3,000 acres each in Co. Sligo and of these twenty-seven, fourteen resided in Co. Sligo, while five of the thirteen who lived outside of Co. Sligo lived in counties adjacent to Sligo.²

From the 1880s to the 1920s most of these landowners had transferred their holdings to the former tenants.³ However, as over fifty percent of the large landowners were resident in

¹ Jack White, *Minority report* (Dublin, 1975), p. 92.

² Owners of Land of one acre and upwards in Co. Sligo, 1876 (S.C.L., Miscellaneous Lists, LIS 028); *Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards, in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland*, [C 1492], H.C. 1876, lxxx, 298-324.

³ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510); Land registry: record of applications lodged at Sligo registry, 1 vol., 1904-18 (S.C.L., Legal records, L9); Land registry: Index of names, Sligo Office, 4 vols, 1902-1927 (S.C.L., Legal records, L10); Land registry: dealings with registered land lodged at the Sligo registry 6 vols., 1904-14, 1914-19, 1919-24, 1924-29, 1929-34, 1934-36 (S.C.L., Legal records, L11); Sligo Land Claim Book, record of claims under the Landlord & Tenant Act, 1870-1932 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 740); Land Registry Sligo, 1911-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 744); Land Registry, Co. Sligo Letter Book, 1907-1910 (S.C.L., Legal

Sligo and not absentee landowners, they considered Sligo their home and invested in the agriculture and later businesses and manufacturing concerns. They also continued to invest in the local economy after 1922, as their names are recorded at meetings of Sligo based companies, in agricultural organisations, and in sporting and fraternal clubs.⁴ Six prominent Protestant landowning families that contributed capital and effort to developing agriculture, industry and commerce in Sligo were the Wynne, the Perceval, the Wood-Martin, the Cooper, the O'Hara and the Gore-Booth families. The contribution of these landowning families to early economic and industrial operations in Sligo was significant. All six families lived within a short distance of Sligo town, and their family homes along with the family homes of other landed families in Sligo were not destroyed during the revolutionary period. Five of the six families remained in Sligo after 1923.

Map showing the location of six main Protestant landowning families in Co. Sligo



Source: taken from Owners of Land in Co. Sligo, 1876, (S.C.L., Owners of Land, No. 1125).

From the late seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century Protestant businessmen controlled much of the commercial activity in Sligo town while most of the large agricultural and manufacturing concerns, such as the linen and milling industries were

records, No. 742); Letter Books relating to the operation of various Co. Sligo Estates, 1883-1925 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 511); Rentals and valuations of various Co. Sligo estates from Robinson's Estates Office, Stephen St., Sligo (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 588).

⁴ Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway A.G.M. 1930, *S.I.*, 8 Mar. 1930; Co. Sligo Agricultural Society, *S.I.*, 17 Aug. 1946; Co. Sligo Tennis meeting, *S.I.*, 9 June 1928; Sligo Constitutional Club: Account Books, Vol. 2: 1933 to 1954 (S.C.L., Sligo Constitutional Club, No. 350).

introduced and operated by Protestant landowners in Co. Sligo.⁵ One of the most powerful of these families during this period was the Wynne family. Owen Wynne I came to Ireland in 1658 as part of Cromwell's army and originally established himself at Lurganboy, Co. Leitrim.⁶ In 1722 Owen Wynne II (c.1665-1737) purchased the Hazelwood estate of about 14,500 acres in Co. Sligo for £20,000.⁷ In c.1731 Owen Wynne II built Hazelwood House, which is located about two miles from Sligo town on the shore of Lough Gill.⁸ The house was based on the designs of Richard Cassel (or Castle), the famous German architect who settled in Ireland c.1728. Castle also designed Leinster House in Dublin, Powerscourt House in Wicklow, Westport House in Mayo and St John's Church of Ireland Cathedral in Sligo.⁹

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Owen Wynne V (1755-1841) encouraged his tenants to grow flax by supplying equipment and materials to his tenantry.¹⁰ The tenants on the Wynne estate became quite prosperous from the linen industry and the Wynne family accumulated a large fortune through their involvement in the milling and linen industries and through their right to tax revenue on the holding of markets in Sligo.¹¹ The family were intimately involved in local and national political life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and members of the Wynne family represented Sligo in parliament and were High Sheriffs of Co. Sligo at various times.¹² There was also a strong military tradition in the family and members of the family served in the army and the local Sligo Militia.¹³ The Wynnes were regarded as 'improving' landlords, and they introduced new technology and new agricultural methods, thus making their estate very productive. Owen Wynne VI (1843-1910) was the last in the line of Wynnes and by the time of his death in 1910 the vast majority of the extensive estates of 15,000 acres in Co. Leitrim and 14,000

⁵ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo Long Ago* (Dublin, 1998), p. 154; pp 354-86; p. 447.

⁶ Winston Guthrie-Jones, *The Wynnes of Sligo and Leitrim* (Manorhamilton, 1994), p. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30. Deeds relating to Wynne lands in the baronies of Corran, Leyny, Tireragh and Tirerrill, Co. Sligo, 18th-19th centuries (P.R.O.N.I., Wynne papers, D/16,694-719), Wynne Papers, 17th-20th centuries (N.L.I., Wynne papers, Nos. 83 & 426).

⁸ National inventory of architectural heritage: *an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 18-20; Terence Dooley, *The big houses and landed estates of Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), p. 122.

⁹ National inventory of architectural heritage: *an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 18-20.

¹⁰ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 166.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 313-6, pp 65-9; Sir Bernard Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic history of the landed gentry of Ireland* (London, 1912) pp 780-2; Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd (ed.), *Burke's Irish Family Records* (London, 1976), pp 1226-31.

¹³ *Ibid.*

acres in Co. Sligo had been sold to tenants under the terms of the various land acts.¹⁴ The land at Hazelwood passed to Owen Wynne's eldest daughter Muriel, who was married to Philip Perceval, the youngest son of Alexander Perceval of Templehouse, Co. Sligo. In 1912 the Hazelwood estate consisted of 900 acres of arable land.¹⁵ In 1922 Muriel Perceval sold the livestock and machinery.¹⁶ Muriel Perceval also owned an additional 3,297 acres of untenanted land in Co. Sligo, which she sold by 1936.¹⁷ Muriel and Philip Perceval left Sligo following the Civil War and Hazelwood House and the remaining part of the estate was sold to the Land Commission in 1937.¹⁸

From 1923 to 1930 the house was empty. In 1930 Mr Berridge, a retired tea planter, rented the house and carried out some renovations and in 1937 the house and remaining land was sold to the Land Commission and the State Forestry Department. The contents of the house were sold separately. The Land Commission share was subdivided among smallholders. During the Second World War the Irish army occupied the house. In 1946 the Land Commission put the house up for sale. The terms of sale stipulated that all the material had to be removed from the house and the site levelled. As an encouragement to buyers the advertisement of sale made it known that the roof had a high quality of lead.¹⁹ The editor of the *Sligo Champion* was one of the few to oppose the potential destruction of the house, condemning the Land Commission's policy of acquiring houses in order to demolish them and arguing sarcastically that: 'In Ireland the value of such a house is

¹⁴ Rentals of the estate of Owen Wynne VI in Counties Sligo and Leitrim, c.1900-09 (P.R.O.N.I., Wynne papers, Mss 16,131-2); *Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards, in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland*, [C 1492], H.C. 1876, lxxx, 324; *Return of untenanted lands in rural districts, distinguishing demesnes on which there is a mansion, showing: rural district and electoral divisions; townland; area in statute acres; poor law valuation; names of occupiers as in valuation lists*, H.C. 1906, c, 177, 392; Rentals of Wynne estate, 1900-06 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 588); Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510); Land registry: record of applications lodged at Sligo registry, 1 vol., 1904-18 (S.C.L., Legal records, L9); Land registry: Index of names, Sligo Office, 4 vols, 1902-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, L10); Land registry: dealings with registered land lodged at the Sligo registry 6 vols., 1904-14, 1914-19, 1919-24, 1924-29, 1929-34, 1934-36 (S.C.L., Legal records, L11); Sligo Land Claim Book, record of claims under the Landlord & Tenant Act, 1870-1932 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 740); Land Registry Sligo, 1911-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 744); Land Registry, Co. Sligo Letter Book, 1907-10 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 742); Letter Books relating to the operation of various Co. Sligo Estates, 1883-1925 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 511).

¹⁵ Winston Guthrie-Jones, *The Wynnes of Sligo and Leitrim* (Manorhamilton, 1994), p. 89.

¹⁶ Sale catalogue of Hazelwood estate, 1922 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 581).

¹⁷ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-1922 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-1936 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510).

¹⁸ Winston Guthrie-Jones, *The Wynnes of Sligo and Leitrim* (Manorhamilton, 1994), p. 91.

¹⁹ Winston Guthrie-Jones, *The Wynnes of Sligo and Leitrim* (Manorhamilton, 1994), p. 91.

measured by the contents of lead in the roof²⁰, while in England the National Trust was committed to preserving them.²⁰

Fortunately the house did not attract much interest and in May 1946 the house was saved from destruction when the Mental Hospital Committee in Sligo took over the house and made it part of St Columba's Mental Hospital.²¹ In 1969 an Italian textile company, Snia, bought the house and built a factory extending from the back of the house and created 500 jobs making nylon yarn.²² In 1983 the company closed.²³ In 1987, four years later, Saehan Media Corporation, a Korean company, manufacturing videotapes, acquired the site.²⁴ The company employed 500 people and started production in June 1991.²⁵ However, almost fifteen years later, in April 2006, Saehan Media closed and the house's future is still uncertain.²⁶

The Perceval family was another large landowning family in Co. Sligo that were involved in the linen and milling industries. The Percevals originally came to Ireland with Cromwell's army and they were granted over 7,000 acres of land near Ballymote, Co. Sligo in 1665 and established a residence at Templehouse.²⁷ In c.1825 the Perceval family had a Classical Georgian limestone mansion built, which was extended and embellished in 1864 by Colonel Alexander Perceval (1787-1858), who was M.P. for Co. Sligo from 1831 to 1841.²⁸ He also built stables, a boathouse and hunting lodges.²⁹ The Percevals were also very popular landowners in the area and took a keen interest in developing the full potential of their estates.³⁰ Most of the estate was sold to their tenants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, land purchase agreements were not finally completed until 1935 and the Percevals retained 1,200 acres of untenanted demesne land.³¹ The Percevals

²⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 92.

²¹ *S.I.*, 11 May 1946.

²² Winston Guthrie-Jones, *The Wynnes of Sligo and Leitrim* (Manorhamilton, 1994), pp 91-2.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *S.C.*, 3 May 2006.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Owners of Land of one acre and upwards in Co. Sligo, 1876 (*S.C.L.*, Miscellaneous Lists, LIS 028); The Perceval Family, (P.R.O.N.I. the Templehouse papers, MIC/597); A.P.W. Malcomson, 'Templehouse papers' (<http://www.proni.gov.uk/records/private/temph.htm>), (24 Nov. 2006).

²⁸ National inventory of architectural heritage: *An introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 78-9; John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 51-6.

²⁹ National inventory of architectural heritage: *An introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 78-9.

³⁰ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 51-6.

³¹ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (*S.C.L.*, Estate records, No. 510); Land registry: record of applications lodged at Sligo registry, 1 vol., 1904-18 (*S.C.L.*, Legal records, L9); Land registry: Index of names, Sligo Office, 4 vols, 1902-27 (*S.C.L.*,

were continuously involved in the political, military and economic life of Sligo and in particular the Co. Sligo Agricultural Society.³² The Percevals remained in Sligo after the Civil War and descendants of the family are still living in Sligo at Templehouse today, which is run as a family owned 1,200 acre country manor and guesthouse.³³

The Woods and the Martins were two other Protestant families with a strong military tradition who were awarded lands in Sligo for their service in the late seventeenth century. The Wood family were granted land at Woodville in Sligo, while the Martin family received over 5,000 acres at Cleveragh in Sligo.³⁴ The Martin family were involved in many commercial enterprises during the nineteenth century and they established a large distillery at Riverside, Sligo. In c.1815 Abraham Martin (1772-1853), who built Cleveragh house in the early part of the nineteenth century, set up the Martin Distillery or the Sligo Distillery as it became known and it was described at the time as 'a very considerable undertaking, providing a considerable quantity of the spirits consumed locally'.³⁵ In 1834 he leased the distillery to his son Gregory Cuffe Martin and by 1837 the distillery produced 120,000 gallons of whiskey per annum and employed over fifty people.³⁶

The Wood and Martin families were united by marriage in the late nineteenth century, and the Wood-Martins were actively involved in the development of Sligo port and in the improvement of agriculture in Co. Sligo.³⁷ Most of the Martin estate at Cleveragh was sold off through the various land purchase schemes in the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries.³⁸ The last member of the family to reside at Cleveragh was

Legal records, L10); Land registry: dealings with registered land lodged at the Sligo registry 6 vols., 1904-14, 1914-19, 1919-24, 1924-29, 1929-34, 1934-36 (S.C.L., Legal records, L11); Sligo Land Claim Book, record of claims under the Landlord & Tenant Act, 1870-1932 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 740); Land Registry Sligo, 1911-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 744); Land Registry, Co. Sligo Letter Book, 1907-10 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 742); Letter Books relating to the operation of various Co. Sligo Estates, 1883-1925 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 511); Rentals and valuations of various Co. Sligo estates from Robinson's Estates Office, Stephen St., Sligo (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 588).

³² John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 51-6.

³³ Temple House, Co. Sligo (<http://www.templehouse.ie>) (24 Mar. 2008).

³⁴ Owners of Land of one acre and upwards in Co. Sligo, 1876 (S.C.L., Miscellaneous Lists, No. LIS 028); *Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards, in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland*, [C 1492], H.C. 1876, lxxx, 298, 305, 322, 324.

³⁵ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), p. 82.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.85.

³⁷ Sir Bernard Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic history of the Landed Gentry of Ireland* (London, 1912), pp 463-464, U. H. Hussey deBurgh, *The Landowners of Ireland: an alphabetical list of the owners of estates of 500 acres or £500 valuation and upwards in Ireland* (Dublin, 1878), p. 307; p. 482.

³⁸ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510); Land registry: record of applications lodged at Sligo registry, 1 vol., 1904-18 (S.C.L., Legal records, L9); Land registry: Index of names, Sligo Office, 4 vols, 1902-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, L10); Land registry: dealings with registered land lodged at the Sligo registry 6 vols., 1904-14, 1914-19, 1919-24, 1924-29, 1929-34, 1934-36 (S.C.L., Legal records, L11); Sligo Land Claim Book, record of

the famous antiquarian and local historian, William Gregory Wood-Martin (1847-1917). He was the son of James Wood of Woodville (1797-1873), J.P. and High Sheriff and Anne Martin of Cleveragh (daughter of Abraham Martin), who had been married in 1842.³⁹ Anne Martin inherited Cleveragh on the death of her brother James Martin in 1860, on the condition that she retained the Martin name.⁴⁰ William Gregory Wood-Martin was a J.P., High Sheriff and D.L. of Sligo in 1877.⁴¹ He was also a Colonel in the Duke of Connaught's Own Sligo Artillery.⁴²

William Wood-Martin had four sons, the eldest, James Wood-Martin (1874-1915), was a captain in the Northants Regt., and was killed at Neuve Chapelle, France in 1915.⁴³ The second son was Henry (Hal) Bromhead Wood-Martin who died in 1933. The third son, Francis Winchester Wood-Martin (1880-1915), was a lieutenant in the Suffolk Regt. and was killed in action in France in 1915.⁴⁴ The youngest son, Gregory Gonville, was a commander in the Royal Navy during the First World War. He married Dorothy Hosie in 1925 and had a son Richard Wood-Martin.⁴⁵ The remainder of the Wood-Martin estate, 300 acres, was sold to Sligo Corporation in 1947 and a large part of it turned into a public park.⁴⁶ Descendants of the family still live at Woodville about two miles west of Sligo town where Richard and Linda Wood-Martin run a farm.⁴⁷

The Coopers of Collooney were another Protestant family with a strong military tradition who were also actively involved in the agricultural and commercial life of Sligo. The lands at Markree Castle, Collooney, Co. Sligo were originally granted to Edward Cooper an officer in Cromwell's army as payment for his service in the mid-seventeenth century and by the early eighteenth century the Coopers were in possession of over 40,000 acres in Co.

claims under the Landlord & Tenant Act, 1870-1932 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 740); Land Registry Sligo, 1911-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 744); Land Registry, Co. Sligo Letter Book, 1907-10 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 742); Letter Books relating to the operation of various Co. Sligo Estates, 1883-1925 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 511); Rentals of Wood-Martin estate, 1879-82, 1883-95, 1898-1902, Robinson Collection (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 588).

³⁹ Lilian M. Jeffery, 'An account of the family of Wood, Co. Sligo, and their descendants' in *Irish Genealogist*, iii, no. 8, (Oct., 1963), pp 304-5.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*; William G. Wood-Martin, *History of Sligo, vol. II* (Sligo, 1892), pp 267-9; p.279.

⁴³ Lilian M. Jeffery, 'An account of the family of Wood, Co. Sligo, and their descendants' in *Irish Genealogist*, iii, no. 8, (Oct., 1963), pp 304-5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ John C. McTernan, *A Sligo miscellany* (Dublin, 2000), pp 304-5.

⁴⁷ Top Visitor Farms of Ireland, Woodville Farm

(<http://www.esatclear.ie/~turoefarm/top/farms.htm#Woodville>) (1 May 2008).

Sligo.⁴⁸ In addition to their economic concerns the Coopers were passionately involved in the political life of Co. Sligo and almost continuously from 1695 to 1865 a member of the Cooper family represented Co. Sligo in the Irish parliament or later at Westminster.⁴⁹

In 1802 the architect Francis Johnson remodelled an earlier three-storey house into a Romantic Gothic Castle and extensive remodelling and extensions took place up to 1866 with a Gothic style gate house, entrance columns and bridges.⁵⁰ The Coopers were considerate landlords and assisted their tenants in improving the productivity of their holdings.⁵¹ In 1876 the Cooper estate consisted of over 34,000 acres.⁵² However, through land purchase schemes most of this land was transferred to local tenants by 1932 and Bryan Cooper retained only 300 acres of land around Markree Castle.⁵³ Today Markree Castle is a hotel run by Charles and Mary Cooper, the tenth generation of the family to live there.⁵⁴

Another Protestant landowning family residing in the Collooney area were the O'Haras. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the O'Haras of Annaghmore, Collooney, Co. Sligo

⁴⁸ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 270-4.

⁴⁹ Record of the Coopers of Markree as extracted from *Sligo County and other Irish histories, 1935* (S.C.L., local history, No. 263); Sir Bernard Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic history of the Landed Gentry of Ireland* (London, 1912), p. 131; Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd (ed), *Burke's Irish Family Records* (London, 1976), p. 273; L.G. Pine (ed), *Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Ireland* (4th ed., London, 1958), pp 178-9.

⁵⁰ National inventory of architectural heritage: *an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 82-9. Mark Bence-Jones, *A guide to Irish country houses* (London, 1988), p. 201; Knight of Glin, D. J. Griffin, & N.K. Robinson (eds), *Vanishing country houses of Ireland* (Dublin, 1989), p. 131.

⁵¹ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 19-23.

⁵² Owners of Land of one acre and upwards in Co. Sligo, 1876 (S.C.L., Miscellaneous Lists, No. LIS 028); *Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards, in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland*, [C 1492], H.C. 1876, lxxx, 320; U. H. Hussey deBurgh, *The Landowners of Ireland: an alphabetical list of the owners of estates of 500 acres or £500 valuation and upwards in Ireland* (Dublin, 1878), p. 97.

⁵³ *Return of untenanted lands in rural districts, distinguishing demesnes on which there is a mansion, showing: rural district and electoral divisions; townland; area in statute acres; poor law valuation; names of occupiers as in valuation lists*, H.C. 1906, c, 177, 393; *Twenty fourth annual report of the Congested Districts Board for Ireland*, [Cd 8356], H.C. 1916, vi, 564-586; Appendix viii, 55; P.J. Duffy, 'The Congested Districts Board (including list of lands acquired in county Sligo under the Wyndham Act)' in *Corran Herald*, XXXIV (2001-2002), pp 6-7; Letter Books relating to the operation of various Co. Sligo Estates, 1883-1925 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 511); Rentals and valuations of various Co. Sligo estates from Robinson's Estates Office, Stephen St., Sligo (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 588); Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510); Rentals of the Cooper Estate, Markree, 22 vols., 1893-1932 (S.C.L., Cooper estate, No. 523); Accounts & rent books of Cooper estate, 1924-42 (S.C.L., Cooper estate, E754); Land registry: record of applications lodged at Sligo registry, 1 vol., 1904-18 (S.C.L., Legal records, L9); Land registry: Index of names, Sligo Office, 4 vols, 1902-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, L10); Land registry: dealings with registered land lodged at the Sligo registry 6 vols., 1904-14, 1914-19, 1919-24, 1924-29, 1929-34, 1934-36 (S.C.L., Legal records, L11); Sligo Land Claim Book, record of claims under the Landlord & Tenant Act, 1870-1932 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 740); Land Registry Sligo, 1911-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 744); Land Registry, Co. Sligo Letter Book, 1907-10 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 742).

⁵⁴ Markree Castle (<http://www.markreecastle.ie>) (1 May 2008).

owned some 16,000 acres in County Sligo.⁵⁵ The family was one of the few Gaelic land-owning families in Ireland that succeeded in retaining their estates after the Cromwellian and Williamite plantations. This was largely accomplished through the family's conversion to Protestantism in the early seventeenth century. The family was influential in local and national affairs for over three hundred years and heads of the family served as High Sheriffs of Co. Sligo and represented the county in the Irish parliament and at Westminster. The O'Haras had a strong reputation as 'improving' landlords and made successful attempts to introduce mining, milling and linen weaving to the estate. In the late eighteenth century Charles O'Hara (1746-1822) encouraged his tenants to grow flax and constructed a bleach mill and settled weavers and bleachers from Ulster on part of his estate near Coolaney.⁵⁶ The promotion of linen by O'Hara and other Protestant landowners provided a stimulus to the Protestant merchant families in Sligo town.⁵⁷

Charles O'Hara was also involved in the mining industry and he initiated the mining of lead and zinc on his lands at Abbeytown, Ballisodare in the period 1747-52.⁵⁸ He brought over engineers from England and found a market with the result that small-scale mining operations took place in the area over the next few years.⁵⁹ From 1786 to 1806 the mines had various owners.⁶⁰ The mines were not worked with much success in this period. Between 1806 and 1872 the mines were not worked. However, a Protestant businessman from Sligo town, William Middleton, who was also part owner of a Sligo based shipping company and numerous milling operations, bought and reopened the mines at Abbeytown in 1872.⁶¹ In 1914 the British Ministry of Munitions spent £600 on prospecting at Abbeytown and from 1917 to 1921 the mines were extensively worked.⁶² In the aftermath of the Second World War lead was in short supply and that made it economical to mine. In March 1949, a company known as the Abbeytown Mining Co. Ltd, with a nominal capital of £50,000, was formed to operate the Ballisodare mines. At the peak of operations between 280 and 300 tons of ore passed through the mill daily and 400 tons of concentrates were exported

⁵⁵ Sir Bernard Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic history of the Landed gentry of Ireland* (London, 1912), p. 533; Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd (ed.), *Burke's Irish Family Records* (London, 1976), pp 915-6.

⁵⁶ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 46-51.

⁵⁷ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 154.

⁵⁸ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), p. 571.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 572.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp 573-4.

monthly.⁶³ The initial involvement of O'Hara in the mining of lead and zinc on his lands was an important factor in the development of mining in the area.

In c.1820 Charles O'Hara completed the two-storey Annaghmore House in the Georgian style.⁶⁴ The house was designed by William Farrell and was remodelled in Italianate style in 1860 by James Franklin Fuller.⁶⁵ In 1864 Charles William O'Hara built a nine bay two-storey stable block.⁶⁶ Today the house is set in 1,100 acres of woodland, bog and grassland about nine miles south of Sligo town and descendants of Charles Kean O'Hara still live there.⁶⁷

Over the course of the nineteenth century the O'Hara family had increased their business interests and landholdings through their intermarriage with the Coopers and through strategic purchases. In 1876, in addition to property in Dublin and London, Charles William O'Hara owned over 21,000 acres in Co. Sligo.⁶⁸ Charles Kean O'Hara inherited the estate on the death of this father in 1897. In 1902 he was appointed Lord Lieutenant for the County and during the First World War he played a prominent role in the recruiting campaign and after the war he worked hard to secure employment and pensions for ex-servicemen and their families.⁶⁹ Following the Land Purchase Acts of 1903 and 1909, the O'Haras began to sell part of their estate through the Land Commission, but it was not until the 1920s and 1930s that most of the O'Hara lands finally passed into the hands of the former tenants.⁷⁰

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 574.

⁶⁴ National inventory of architectural heritage: *an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), p. 80.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 80-1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; Terence Dooley, *The big houses and landed estates of Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), p. 162.

⁶⁷ Annaghmore (<http://annaghmore.com>) (10 May 2008).

⁶⁸ Owners of Land of one acre and upwards in Co. Sligo, 1876 (S.C.L., Miscellaneous Lists, LIS 028); *Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards, in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland*, [C 1492], H.C. 1876, lxxx, 322.

⁶⁹ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 302-6.

⁷⁰ Correspondence of Charles Kean O'Hara, relating to the sale of the O'Hara estate in County Sligo, 1907-35 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, Ms 36,336 /1-11); Correspondence of Charles Kean O'Hara concerning the proposed sale of portions of his estate in County Sligo to his tenants, 1903-8, also newspaper cuttings relating to the response of his tenants to the proposed terms of the sale, 1903-8 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, Ms 36,345 /10); Estate and family papers relating to the O'Hara Family of Annaghmore, Co. Sligo, 1585- 1967 (N.L.I., O'Hara papers, 66); *Return of untenanted lands in rural districts, distinguishing demesnes on which there is a mansion, showing: rural district and electoral divisions; townland; area in statute acres; poor law valuation; names of occupiers as in valuation lists*, H.C. 1906, c, 177, 396; Land registry: record of applications lodged at Sligo registry, 1 vol., 1904-18 (S.C.L., Legal records, L9); Land registry: Index of names, Sligo Office, 4 vols, 1902-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, L10); Land registry: dealings with registered land lodged at the Sligo registry 6 vols., 1904-14, 1914-19, 1919-24, 1924-29, 1929-34, 1934-36 (S.C.L., Legal records, L11); Sligo Land Claim Book, record of claims under the Landlord & Tenant Act, 1870-1932 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 740); Land Registry Sligo, 1911-27 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 744); Land Registry, Co. Sligo Letter Book, 1907-10 (S.C.L., Legal records, No. 742).

In 1860 Charles King O'Hara (1785-1860) died without an heir and his nephew, Charles William Cooper (1817-97) inherited his estate.⁷¹ He was the son of Arthur Brooke Cooper of Coopershill, who had married Charles King O'Hara's sister, Jane Francis O'Hara and a condition of the inheritance was that Charles William took the name O'Hara. In 1860 Charles William Cooper changed his name to Charles William O'Hara and Coopershill then became an O'Hara property.⁷² The Coopers of Coopershill had been landowners in Sligo but on a much smaller scale than the O'Hara's. The Coopers appear to have not been related to the Coopers of Markree and their family crests are different. The Cooper family home, Coopershill House is a limestone house built in the Georgian style and was begun by A.B. Cooper in 1755 based on a design by the architect Francis Bindon.⁷³ However, the house was not completed until 1774 and in addition to the house there are stables and a coach house.⁷⁴ Today the estate consists of 500 acres of wood and farmland owned by Brian and Lindy O'Hara, descendants Charles Kean O'Hara.⁷⁵

The Gore-Booths were another industrious Protestant landowning family in Co. Sligo who were granted lands in north Sligo in the seventeenth century. Between 1830 and 1835 Sir Robert Gore-Booth (1805-1876) built Lissadell House in the Greek revival style on a design by the architect Francis Goodwin.⁷⁶ The house remained in the Gore-Booth family until it was sold in 2003 by Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth (1950-), the grandson of Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth (1869-1944) and the son of Angus Gore-Booth (1920-1996), to Constance Cassidy and Eddie Walsh.⁷⁷ In June 2004 the couple opened the house to the public.⁷⁸

Sir Henry William Gore-Booth (1843-1900) took over the estate in 1876 and like the O'Haras he became involved in mining. In 1889 Henry Gore-Booth set up a company to develop the barites deposits which lay on part of his estate.⁷⁹ From 1895 the Gleniff Barytes firm was successfully run by Henry and later by his son, Josslyn. Josslyn sold the Gore-Booth interests in the mines in 1911 to the Gleniff Barytes Company of Glasgow.⁸⁰ By

⁷¹ Sir Bernard Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic history of the Landed gentry of Ireland* (London, 1912), p. 533; Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd (ed.), *Burke's Irish Family Records* (London, 1976), pp 915-6.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ National inventory of architectural heritage: *an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 21-2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Coopershill House (<http://www.coopershill.com>) (1 June 2008).

⁷⁶ National inventory of architectural heritage: *an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 70-5; Mark Bence-Jones, *A Guide to Irish country houses* (London, 1988), p. 188.

⁷⁷ *S.C.*, 17 Dec. 2003.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 2 June 2004; Lissadell House (<http://www.lissadellhouse.com>) (10 June 2008).

⁷⁹ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 278-83.

⁸⁰ Dermot James, *The Gore-Booths of Lissadell* (Dublin, 2004), pp 69-70.

1928 the barytes mine was producing 50,000 tons of ore per year, which was half the amount used in the British Isles annually. The mine employed sixty to eighty men and an eight-mile railway line brought ore from the mine to the harbour at Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo.⁸¹ The mines operated throughout the 1930s and experienced a boom during the Second World War when the material was in high demand.⁸² In August 1942 operations were expanded and a barytes works was established at Sligo quays.⁸³ At the end of the war the management of the company expressed optimism concerning the mine's future.⁸⁴ The development of the mining industry by Gore-Booth had proved to be vital in the future success of the mining industry in north Sligo.

In the 1870s the Lissadell estate had totalled more than 32,000 acres.⁸⁵ Sir Josslyn Gore Booth took over the management of Lissadell on his father's death in 1900.⁸⁶ Josslyn Gore-Booth had a passionate interest in farming, commercial forestry and horticulture. He was also a notable cattle breeder and like his father Henry, Josslyn was also involved in the Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway (S.L.N.C.R.).⁸⁷ It was under Josslyn Gore-Booth that most of the Lissadell estate was transferred to the former tenants. Under the terms of the Wyndham Land Act 1,000 tenants bought 28,000 acres⁸⁸ and 1,000 acres was later sold to the tenants, while Josslyn Gore-Booth retained 3,000 acres.⁸⁹ In 1968, 2,600 of

⁸¹ *S.I.*, 6 Oct. 1928.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 13 June 1942.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5 Sept. 1942.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 May 1945.

⁸⁵ Owners of Land of one acre and upwards in Co. Sligo, 1876 (S.C.L., Miscellaneous Lists, LIS 028); *Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards, in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland*, [C 1492], H.C. 1876, lxxx, 320; U. H. Hussey deBurgh, *The Landowners of Ireland: an alphabetical list of the owners of estates of 500 acres or £500 valuation and upwards in Ireland* (Dublin, 1878), p. 45.

⁸⁶ Title deeds, leases, purchases sales and correspondence relating to the Gore-Booth family of Lissadell and their estates in Co. Sligo 1882-1944, 1853-1939 (P.R.O.N.I., Lissadell papers, D/4131); Lissadell papers (P.R.O.N.I., Lissadell papers: Microfilm, N.L.I., P.9729-9740); Miscellaneous newspaper cuttings relating to Gore-Booth estate, 1840s-1950s (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 535).

⁸⁷ Letters and papers relating to the Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway, 1874-c.1939 (P.R.O.N.I., Lissadell papers, D/4131).

⁸⁸ P.J. Duffy, 'The Congested Districts Board (including list of lands acquired in county Sligo under the Wyndham Act)' in *Corran Herald*, XXXIV (2001-2002), pp 6-7.

⁸⁹ Sligo estates purchased by the Congested Districts Board, 1902-22 and untenanted estates, Co. Sligo, 1923-36 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 510); Letter Books relating to the operation of various Co. Sligo Estates, 1883-1925 (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 511); Rentals and valuations of various Co. Sligo estates from Robinson's Estates Office, Stephen St., Sligo (S.C.L., Estate records, No. 588); *Return of untenanted lands in rural districts, distinguishing demesnes on which there is a mansion, showing: rural district and electoral divisions; townland; area in statute acres; poor law valuation; names of occupiers as in valuation lists*, H.C. 1906, c, 177, 395; *Twenty fourth annual report of the Congested Districts Board for Ireland*, [Cd 8356], H.C. 1916, vi, 564-586; Appendix viii, 60.

land, mostly woodland, was sold to the Land Commission and 400 acres was left around the house.⁹⁰

After 1903 Sir Josslyn grew crops on a large scale, concentrating on cereals and potatoes. He also developed the forestry potential of Lissadell and he began to plant various species of trees and constructed a saw mill. By 1906 he employed over 200 people at Lissadell and paid out salaries of £6,000 per annum.⁹¹ During the First World War he was involved in recruitment and established a small munitions factory at Lissadell.⁹² However, one of the most important of Josslyn Gore-Booth's legacies to Sligo was his deep interest and continued involvement in the co-operative movement.

In 1894 Horace Plunkett founded the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (I.A.O.S.) with the purpose of spreading the co-operative movement throughout Ireland. Protestant landlords in Co. Sligo were keen to establish the co-operative movement in the county. Josslyn Gore-Booth was one of the first to set up a co-operative in Sligo when he helped establish the Drumcliff Co-operative Creamery in 1896. Josslyn established three further co-operatives in his locality, at Ballintrillick, Ballinafull and Kilasnet and virtually all the farmers in those areas became members.⁹³ Between 1895 and 1898 Josslyn Gore-Booth, Alexander J. Crichton of Carrowgarry, Charles O'Hara and others set up co-operative creameries at Achonry, Ballymote, Collooney, Gurteen, Riverstown, Seafin and Tubbercurry, in addition to a number of subsidiaries, or 'separating stations' which were managed and owned by share-holding farmers.⁹⁴ The Collooney Co-operative, established in 1897 by Florence Cooper of Markree Castle, had over 1,000 members and was described in *'Irish Homestead'*, the official organ of the I.A.O.S., as 'the largest venture as yet formed upon co-operative principles, as far as dairying is concerned in Ireland'.⁹⁵ In addition to helping establish dairy co-operatives, Josslyn Gore-Booth set up a co-operative clothing factory in Sligo and a furniture factory on his Lissadell estate, which provided much needed employment during the first half of the twentieth century. The capital, commitment and organisational skills of Protestant landowners proved to be very important in the success of the co-operative movement in Co. Sligo and led to an improvement in the financial position

⁹⁰ Dermot James, *The Gore-Booths of Lissadell* (Dublin, 2004), p. 103.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 24-8.

⁹³ Dermot James, *The Gore-Booths of Lissadell* (Dublin, 2004), p. 106.

⁹⁴ List of Co-operative Societies in Co. Sligo, 1895-1955, with foundation date of each (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, No. 367).

⁹⁵ *Irish Homestead*, 27 Mar. 1897.

of many small farmers as well as an increase in the quality of agricultural produce in the county.

Closely associated with the co-operative movement in Co. Sligo were the farming societies and during the nineteenth century landowners in Sligo set up various agricultural and farming societies. The main aim of the societies was to improve farming methods and animal husbandry and increase farm productivity. Protestant landlords took a keen interest in agricultural societies and in 1842 John Wynne of Hazelwood, William Phibbs of Seafield, Edward J. Cooper, Charles K. O'Hara, Sir Robert Gore-Booth and John Ffolliott set up the Sligo Union Agricultural Society. In March 1882 the society was reformed as the Co. Sligo Agricultural Society. Once again Protestant landowners took a prominent role in the society, however, there were now six Catholics on the organisation's committee of eighteen.⁹⁶

The organisation held an annual agricultural show from 1907 to the late 1940s. Protestants dominated the organisation and Charles Kean O'Hara, Philip D. Perceval and Edward Rowlette were very involved from the start. In the 1930s the Co. Sligo Agricultural Show was one of the most important provincial shows in the country and attendances at the shows averaged around 8,000 until the outbreak of the Second World War. Following the war in 1946 there were an average of over 1,500 annual entries. In 1946 Protestants still dominated the society and while Major C.K. O'Hara was the president, Major A.A. Perceval and Lieutenant-Commander E.F. Cooper were the vice-presidents and twenty-nine Protestant members were present on the organisation's committee of fifty-six.⁹⁷ The large number of Protestants involved in the organisation in the 1940s was a strong indication that Protestants were still determined to play an active part in agriculture in Sligo.

Protestant landowners in Sligo were some of the first to become involved in the modernisation and development of Sligo port. The port was always very important in the industrial and commercial life of Sligo and during the nineteenth century public funds and private investment built over a mile of quays, slips, wharfs and storage warehouses.⁹⁸ In the first part of the nineteenth century a large proportion of the funds required for the extension and construction projects at the port were obtained from landowners. In March 1844 John Wynne of Hazelwood set up a committee, which became known as Sligo Harbour Commission, to control and develop the port. The functions of Sligo Harbour Commission

⁹⁶ *S.C.*, 18 Mar. 1882.

⁹⁷ *S.I.*, 17 Aug. 1946.

⁹⁸ John C. McTernan, *Memory harbour* (Sligo, 2002), p. 6.

included raising capital for the improvement and expansion of Sligo port and the levying of import and export dues at the port under the terms of the '1803 Act for Improving and Regulating the Port and Harbour of Sligo'.⁹⁹

Sligo Harbour Commission consisted of the resident gentry of Co. Sligo, including Charles K. O'Hara, Sir Robert Gore-Booth, William Phibbs, John Ffolliott, M.P, Sir Alexander Crichton, James Wood, Jemmet Duke and John W. King, and the leading Protestant and Catholic merchants and traders including John Martin, Peter O'Connor, Edward Kelty, Andrew Walker, James Harper, H.T. Lyons. Hugh Leighton, Robert Culbertson and Thomas Hudon.¹⁰⁰ Most of the large contributions came from Protestant landowners and merchants, although Catholic merchants were also keen to contribute. On 6 April 1844 the *Sligo Champion* editorial maintained that 'it's very gratifying to find men of different political opinions pulling together with such unfeigned cordiality and unanimity of purpose for the public good'.¹⁰¹ From a very early stage in the development of the modern port of Sligo there had been a tradition of Protestant and Catholic businessmen working together for the improvement of the local economy.

Two key Protestant merchants associated with Sligo port in the nineteenth century were William Middleton, jun. (1819-1882) and his brother-in-law, William Pollexfen (1816-1892).¹⁰² William Middleton was a merchant, shipowner and granduncle of the Yeats brothers. William Middleton was the son of William senior by his wife Elizabeth Pollexfen. His father died from cholera in August 1832 and he took over the business.¹⁰³ In 1833 he entered into partnership with William Pollexfen. They founded the firm of messers Middleton and Pollexfen, shipowners and flour millers. He died at Merville House, the suburban home of the Pollexfens.¹⁰⁴ Middleton, Pollexfen, Lyons, Nelson, Smith, Campbell and Johnston were some of the chief Protestant merchant families in Sligo in the 1800s and they will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

At the end of the nineteenth century Sligo port was prospering and seemed to have a bright future. In March 1895 the *Sligo Independent* mentioned that 'vessels of 5,000 to 6,000 tons' were berthing in Sligo harbour and the total receipts in 1894 exceeded £8,000,

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁰² John C. McTernan, *A Sligo miscellany* (Dublin, 2000), pp 342-3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

which was the largest amount the harbour board had ever received in one year.¹⁰⁵ In 1898 a railway line connected with the main station at Sligo allowed goods from the port to be transported on the Northern, Midland, and Southern Railways. Grants from the Treasury aided the development of the port and in 1908 a grant of £20,000 assisted with further improvements.¹⁰⁶

In the five years before the First World War Sligo port handled over 117,000 tons of imported maize, coal, flour, wheat and sugar and handled over 34,000 tons of exported pigs, sheep, cattle, and dairy produce.¹⁰⁷ Revenues at the port averaged £7,000 annually in the years preceding the First World War.¹⁰⁸ During the First World War the income of the port fell to almost nil.¹⁰⁹ In late 1919 the chairman of the Sligo Harbour Board, Arthur Jackson, reported the first increase in trade since the outbreak of the First World War.¹¹⁰

Arthur Jackson (1853-1938) was involved in many businesses in Sligo and had been born in Belfast but settled in Sligo following his marriage to Alice Pollexfen, the youngest daughter of William Pollexfen (1816-1892). On the death of William Pollexfen in 1892 Jackson took over the management of W. & G.T. Pollexfen. He was a very hardworking and energetic man and in addition to his flour merchant business he was the managing director of the S.S.N.Co., a director of the Sligo Gas Company and the Great Southern Railways Company, and he was also chairman of Sligo Harbour Board. Jackson was a magistrate of Co. Sligo, a member of the grand jury and a Governor of the Sligo Asylum as well as a high sheriff of Co. Sligo in 1899. In 1886 he became a member of the harbour board and as chairman of the port he spearheaded many important developments and improved the facilities at Sligo port.¹¹¹

In 1920 as chairman of Sligo Harbour Board, Jackson reported that coal and large corn vessels from South America resumed their operations to Sligo and coastal and cross channel trade was also restarted.¹¹² At a meeting of Sligo Harbour Board on 7 December 1922

¹⁰⁵ *S.I.*, 9 Mar. 1895.

¹⁰⁶ John C. McTernan, *Memory harbour* (Sligo, 2002), p. 19.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur Jackson, *The port of Sligo* (Sligo, 1924), pp 9-10.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 8-9; Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 6, 28 Jan. 1915–31 Dec. 1925 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 42).

¹¹⁰ *S.I.*, 5 Nov. 1919. Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919–58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67); Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 6, 28 Jan. 1915–31 Dec. 1925 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 42).

¹¹¹ *S.I.*, 15 May 1926.

¹¹² John C. McTernan, *Memory harbour* (Sligo, 2002), p. 21.

Arthur Jackson was re-elected as chairman.¹¹³ He maintained that he was 'optimistic about the future, and he hoped that before long they would have some settled peace in the country'.¹¹⁴

On 8 March 1923 at a meeting of Sligo Harbour Board the chairman, Arthur Jackson, reported a 'gratifying statement of accounts considering state of country'.¹¹⁵ The disruption caused by the last year of the War of Independence had significantly hindered trade at the port. In 1921 revenue had been over £19,600, while in 1922 it had dropped by more than half to £9,200.¹¹⁶ In addition to Arthur Jackson, other Protestant businessmen and politicians including alderman Harper Campbell Perry, alderman Percy Kerr, P. Macarthur, J.C. Cole, W.J. McMullen, G.R. Williams, Hal R. Wood-Martin, and the secretary, J.A. McLoghry, dominated Sligo Harbour Board.¹¹⁷ The Civil War further impacted on trade and in 1923 the revenues collected at the port amounted to just over £8,000, but by 1924 it had increased to over £8,500.¹¹⁸

It seemed that the harbour commissioners were encouraged by the higher receipts at the port in 1924 and an indication of their determination to develop and invest in the port is shown by their willingness to invest over £5,000 to expand the deep water berths to accommodate vessels up to 450 feet long and reclaim wasteland adjoining the harbour.¹¹⁹ Throughout the 1920s Protestant businessmen continued to dominate Sligo Harbour Board. However, the Catholics alderman J. Lynch, and W.J. McMullen were also members.¹²⁰ Revenue at the port steadily increased in the latter part of the 1920s and in 1927 it was over £9,500, in 1928 the total revenue collected at the port was over £10,478 and by the end of

¹¹³ *S.I.*, 9 Dec. 1922.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10 Mar. 1923; Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919–58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67).

¹¹⁶ *S.I.*, 10 Mar. 1921.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Arthur Jackson, *The port of Sligo* (Sligo, 1924), p. 10; Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919–58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67).

¹¹⁹ Arthur Jackson, *The port of Sligo* (Sligo, 1924), p. 10; Sligo Harbour Board, letter book, 11 Oct. 1926–26 Nov. 1929 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 55).

¹²⁰ *S.I.*, 9 Feb. 1924; 7 Dec. 1929.

1929 it had reached almost £11,000.¹²¹ At the end of 1930 revenue amounted to £11,132 and by the end of 1931 it had increased to almost £11,500.¹²²

The increase in revenue seemed to vindicate the determination of the harbour commissioners to keep improving the port and with revenue increasing all the time the commissioners felt confident that the future prospects were good. In 1931 the commissioners conducted a survey which advocated the construction of new walls and the extension of existing quays and wharfs and new railway line and cranes.¹²³ At a meeting of the harbour board in April 1932, the chairman, Harper Campbell Perry argued that the success of Sligo port should encourage more investment and he demanded that more government money should be allocated to Sligo just as the government did for ports like Galway and Limerick.¹²⁴ The 'Harbour Board Development Plan of 1932' estimated that necessary improvements to the port would cost in the region of £50,000. Some of the cost could be raised locally and the commissioners also applied for a government grant. The government refused to grant any capital and the plan was never implemented.¹²⁵ However, it displayed the willingness and commitment of the largely Protestant membership of Sligo Harbour Commissioners to continue to try and develop the port and stimulate the local economy.

The damaging effects of the Economic War between Britain and Ireland not only reduced the amount of trade at the port but also resulted in the indefinite postponement of the plans for development of the port. In December 1932 Harper Campbell Perry, chairman of the harbour board was forced to admit that 'owing to the strained commercial relations existing between the British and Irish governments the trade of the port has been damaged'.¹²⁶ He blamed the reduction in trade on the tariffs imposed on Irish livestock by the British government and he condemned the Irish government for starting the Economic

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 9 Feb. 1929; 7 Dec. 1929; Sligo Harbour Board, cash book, 1 Jan. 1921 – 31 Dec. 1929 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 18); Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919-58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67); Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 7, 18 Mar. 1926 – 27 Dec. 1935 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 17); Sligo Harbour Board, secretary's register of dues, ballast, etc., 26 May 1927–7 Aug. 1939 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 32).

¹²² *S.I.*, 6 Dec. 1930; 6 Dec. 1931. Sligo Harbour Board, cash book, 1 Jan. 1930 – 31 Dec. 1939 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 19); Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919-58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67); Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 7, 18 Mar. 1926 – 27 Dec. 1935 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 17).

¹²³ John C. McTernan, *Memory harbour* (Sligo, 2002), p. 24.

¹²⁴ *S.I.*, 23 Apr. 1932.

¹²⁵ John C. McTernan, *Memory harbour* (Sligo, 2002), p. 22.

¹²⁶ *S.I.*, 10 Dec. 1932.

War arguing that 'the counter tariffs imposed by our own government has hit us even harder, so that we are losing at both ends'.¹²⁷

In February 1933 the harbour board reported that revenue at Sligo port for the year 1932 was down to just over £11,000.¹²⁸ Considering the effect of the Economic War the port was doing well. However, at the end of November 1934 the harbour commissioners confirmed that the future prospects of the port were under threat because of government policies.¹²⁹ In November 1935 Sligo Harbour Commission reported that revenue at the port during the year amounted to just over £10,000.¹³⁰ In 1936 the poor situation in the port was causing a reduction in the commercial and economic prosperity of the town, which was highlighted by the *Sligo Champion* in an article which criticised the Irish government's economic policies stating that 'up to recent years Sligo harbour was unfettered by tariffs and free from the stranglehold of fiscal madness; was sufficiently flourishing to imbue those in control with a sense of security towards the future, and encourage them to embark on intensive schemes of improvements at frequent intervals'.¹³¹ However, the article praised the Sligo Harbour Commissioners, maintaining that 'despite the shackles wrapped around it by a native government, the commissioners have not lost courage; they are still pushing forward an ambitious plan for improvement and development'.¹³² This is an important indication of the harmful effects of the Economic War on trade at Sligo port. A large number of Protestants and Catholics wrote to the *Sligo Champion* praising the article and revealed that the criticism of Fianna Fáil economic policies were effective in uniting people of all political and religious persuasions in Sligo.¹³³

In the period 1919 to 1939 the port received no government assistance and had to rely solely on locally raised capital and a significant total of £41,000 was spent on the port.¹³⁴ However, the outbreak of the Second World War put an end to any further improvements.¹³⁵

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4 Feb. 1933; Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919-58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67); Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 7, 18 Mar. 1926 – 27 Dec. 1935 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 17).

¹²⁹ *S.I.*, 6 Dec 1934.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7 Dec. 1935; Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919-58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67); Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 7, 18 Mar. 1926 – 27 Dec. 1935 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 17).

¹³¹ *Sligo Champion centenary number, 1836-1936* (Sligo, 1936), p. 30.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ John C. McTernan, *Memory harbour* (Sligo, 2002), p. 24; Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919-58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

The war did provide an initial stimulus to trade between Sligo port and some British ports and on 1 February 1940 Sligo Harbour Board reported that income from the port amounted to £6,635, which when compared with 1938 represented an increase of £226.¹³⁶ In February 1941 total revenue received from the port amounted to £8,821.¹³⁷ However, after 1941 the revenue declined steeply and in 1943 the harbour board collected only £1,500.¹³⁸ In February 1945 Sligo Harbour Board reported a debit balance of over £600.¹³⁹ In April 1947 Sligo harbour received a government grant of over £3,000.¹⁴⁰ However, the grant did not reverse the poor fortunes of the port and on 6 May 1948 the chairman of Sligo Harbour Board, P.A. MacArthur, a Protestant businessman, reported that expenditure at the port amounted to over £4,211, while the revenue received was only just over £3,574.¹⁴¹

A company particularly affected by the reduction in trade at Sligo port was the Sligo Steam Navigation Company (S.S.N.Co.). The firm had been founded in 1833 as a partnership between Protestant businessmen William Middleton and his brother-in-law, William Pollexfen.¹⁴² The company operated freight and passenger services with the ports of Glasgow and Liverpool, some other Irish ports, and for a while operated transatlantic services. In 1865 the Sligo Steam Navigation Co. became a limited company. William Middleton and William Pollexfen remained the majority shareholders. However, Catholic merchants also purchased shares in the company. In January 1910 Arthur Jackson was the

¹³⁶ *S.I.*, 3 Feb. 1940. Sligo Harbour Board, cash book, 1 Jan. 1940–31 Dec. 1957 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 20); Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919–58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67); Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 8, 16 Jan. 1936–22 Dec. 1949 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 43); Sligo Harbour Board, secretary's register of dues etc., July 1939–Dec. 1977 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 35).

¹³⁷ *S.I.*, 8 Feb. 1941; Sligo Harbour Board, cash book, 1 Jan. 1940–31 Dec. 1957 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 20); Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919–58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67); Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 8, 16 Jan. 1936–22 Dec. 1949 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 43).

¹³⁸ *S.I.*, 5 Feb. 1944; Sligo Harbour Board, cash book, 1 Jan. 1940–31 Dec. 1957 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 20); Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919–58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67); Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 8, 16 Jan. 1936–22 Dec. 1949 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 43).

¹³⁹ *S.I.*, 3 Feb. 1945. Sligo Harbour Board, cash book, 1 Jan. 1940–31 Dec. 1957 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 20); Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919–58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67); Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 8, 16 Jan. 1936–22 Dec. 1949 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 43).

¹⁴⁰ *S.I.*, 5 Apr. 1947; Sligo Harbour Board, cash book, 1 Jan. 1940–31 Dec. 1957 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 20); Sligo Harbour Board, abstract of accounts, 1919–58 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 67); Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 8, 16 Jan. 1936–22 Dec. 1949 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 43).

¹⁴¹ *S.I.*, 8 May 1948; Sligo Harbour Board, agenda for meetings, July 1944–7 July 1953 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 34); Sligo Harbour Board, ledger number 8, 16 Jan. 1936–22 Dec. 1949 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 43); Sligo Harbour Board, letter book, 21 Mar. 1940–29 Nov. 1960 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 57).

¹⁴² William M. Murphy, *Family Secrets* (Dublin, 1995), p. 10.

chairman of the company and there were six Catholic shareholders out of a total of twelve. A decade later, in 1921, two of the seven directors of the company were Catholic.¹⁴³ In the early 1930s Arthur Jackson was both chairman and managing director of the company while his son, Arthur P. Jackson, jun. was the assistant managing director.¹⁴⁴ The destructive impact of the Economic War in the 1930s and Fianna Fáil economic policies had a severe impact on the company's passenger and cargo routes with Britain and certain routes were discontinued.¹⁴⁵

The strong Protestant involvement in Sligo port was vital to the port's prosperity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Catholic merchants and politicians were also involved in the early modernisation of the port. However, Protestant businessmen continued to dominate Sligo Harbour Commission. Protestant commitment to the port did not wane after 1923 and successive Protestant chairmen of Sligo Harbour Commission continued to expand the port and encourage investment. The economic depression of the 1930s did not deter Harper Campbell Perry from trying to develop the port and P.A. MacArthur worked hard in the 1940s to turn around the declining fortunes of the port. Along with the port, the economic development of an area during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was very dependent on the establishment of a railway system. Sligo became a very important railway communications centre in 1862 when the railway arrived. But how significant was the Protestant contribution to the establishment of the railway in Sligo?

From an early stage Protestant merchants and landlords were active in campaigning for the extension of the railway line from Dublin to Sligo. In 1857 Sligo Corporation in conjunction with meetings organised by Protestant and Catholic Sligo merchants, landlords and local M.P.s convinced the British parliament to authorise the Midland Great Western Railway to extend their line from Longford to Sligo and by December 1862 services between Sligo and Dublin commenced.¹⁴⁶

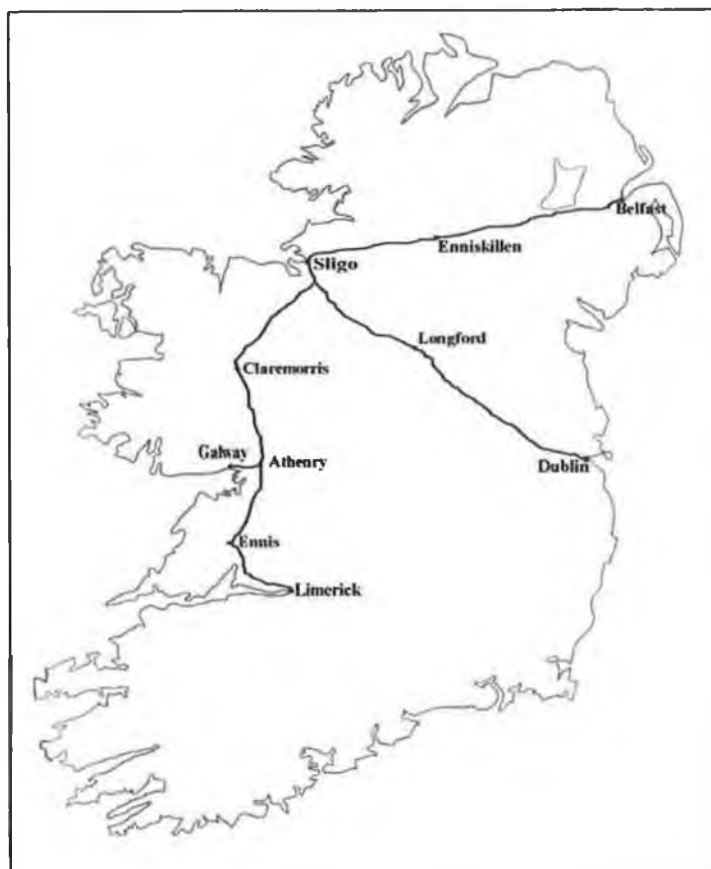
¹⁴³ John C. McTernan, *Memory harbour* (Sligo, 2002), pp 40-2.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁴⁵ *S.I.*, 1 Aug. 1936.

¹⁴⁶ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), pp 156-9.

Map showing rail connections between Sligo and some other Irish towns and cities.



Sources: routes taken from Dermot James, *The Gore-Booths of Lissadell* (Dublin, 2004), pp 70-74 and John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), pp 153-61.

In addition to the connection between Sligo and Dublin and the link between Sligo and Enniskillen, which commenced in 1882, the Great Southern Railway extended its line from Claremorris to Sligo in 1895 linking Galway and Limerick with Sligo.¹⁴⁷ Protestant businessmen benefited directly by investing in the railways and indirectly through the increased access to markets created by the railways.¹⁴⁸ This resulted in great commercial success for the Protestant merchant community in Sligo and many prominent public buildings, including the town hall and the courthouse, were erected in Sligo in the 1860s and 1870s. The railway was also an important stimulus to the founding of various bank branches in Sligo.¹⁴⁹

However, Protestant landowners were most actively involved in the rail connection between Sligo and Belfast. In the 1860s after the success of the Sligo to Dublin rail

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

¹⁴⁸ Mary O'Dowd, 'Sligo' in Anngret Simms and J.H. Andrews (eds), *Irish country towns* (Dublin, 1994), pp 151-2.

¹⁴⁹ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 11.

connection became apparent, Protestant landlords including Henry Gore-Booth and Owen Wynne along with some other interested parties canvassed for a connection between Sligo and Enniskillen, which already had a link with Belfast.¹⁵⁰ In September 1874 a public meeting was held in Sligo to discuss the link to Enniskillen. Gore-Booth and Wynne attended the meeting and while a host of alternative routes were suggested, Gore-Booth's proposal to have the line from Enniskillen go through Manorhamilton and link up with the existing line at Collooney was unanimously agreed to. The S.L.N.C.R. was incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1875 and in 1882 the line linked up with Sligo. Henry Gore-Booth was appointed chairman of the company in 1882, and when the company ran into financial trouble in 1894 he was instrumental in resisting a takeover by the Midland Great Western Railway and in drafting a plan which reorganised and streamlined the company.¹⁵¹

By 1896 the company had a declared profit of just over £4,400. When Henry Gore-Booth died, his son Josslyn took over as chairman of the S.L.N.C.R. until 1931 and was then succeeded by Captain George Hewson who informed the shareholders in 1932 that 'it was very largely owing to the way in which he [Josslyn Gore-Booth] had conducted himself at the helm, that the company had been able to avoid the storms that had afflicted the railways in general for the last few years. They had tried to persuade Sir Josslyn to stay with them but unfortunately his health could not stand it'.¹⁵²

On 7 March 1930 the S.L.N.C.R. Company held its A.G.M. in the Southern Hotel, Sligo. The chairman of the board, Sir Josslyn Gore Booth, presided. Also in attendance were the principal directors and shareholders, a large majority of whom were Protestant including George Hewson, H. Campbell Perry, W. Chism, H. Wynne and H. Bracken. The company reported an increase in profits of £130. This was a very small profit margin and the number of passengers and tons transported by the railway reveals a clearer indication in the decline of the company's revenue. The number of passengers using the railway in 1913 was 162,342, and income from these passengers stood at £10,457 in 1913. The number of passengers in 1929 had dropped to 78,667 and income from these passengers stood at £6,759. Between 1913 and 1929 the tonnage transported by the railway dropped by about half from 25,433 tons to 12,957 tons.¹⁵³ Gross receipts for the S.L.N.C.R. in 1925 were

¹⁵⁰ Dermot James, *The Gore-Booths of Lissadell* (Dublin, 2004), p. 70.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁵³ *S.I.*, 8 Mar. 1930.

£40,763 and by 1930 this dropped by a small amount to £39,281.¹⁵⁴ By 1935 the gross receipts dropped by a significant amount to £26,654.¹⁵⁵ However, the company complained that this was as a result of customs affecting trade at the border. The border undoubtedly had a negative economic impact on railway companies operating between both Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State.¹⁵⁶

In 1936 Arthur P. Jackson, jun. joined the board with the intention of improving the company's profits.¹⁵⁷ Arthur P. Jackson, jun., the son of Arthur Jackson, was the owner of the 'Sligo Motoring and Engineering Company', a garage and car retailing company, founded in 1919.¹⁵⁸ Jackson worked hard to increase profits of the S.L.N.C.R. company. However, his changes took time to impact on the company's balance sheet and on 5 March 1937 the Sligo the company was forced to declare losses of over £4,181, despite the fact that passenger traffic had increased by 10,000.¹⁵⁹ By the end of the following year Jackson had turned the company around and on 24 February 1938 the S.L.N.C.R. declared an increase of £2,099 in receipts at their A.G.M. in the Great Southern Hotel, Sligo.¹⁶⁰

The Second World War stimulated trade between Sligo and Belfast and at the 1944 A.G.M. of the company, which was held in the Great Southern Hotel in Sligo on 24 February 1944, the board declared profits of £4,526 for 1942 and £2,736 for 1943.¹⁶¹ In 1944 the company was still dominated by Protestant businessmen and shareholders. Protestants also still occupied the top management positions in the company and while Captain William J. French was the chairman of the company, J.W. MacMullen was the deputy chairman and F.W. Crawford was the managing director. J.E.J. Fawcett and R.H. Campbell Perry represented the principal shareholders. However, Catholics did occupy some of the chief positions in the company, and the chief engineer was R.H. Egan, while J. Mullen was the company's accountant.¹⁶²

The war years were the last heydays of the company and by March 1949, the chairman of the company, William J. French, declared that the company was in a 'perilous financial

¹⁵⁴ Report of S.L.N.C.R. directors for year ended, 31 Dec. 1931 (S.C.L., Commerce/Industry/Transport, COM 89).

¹⁵⁵ *S.I.*, 2 Feb. 1935.

¹⁵⁶ Terence Dooley, *The plight of Monaghan Protestants, 1912-26* (Dublin, 2000), pp 53-4; Frank Sweeney, 'The Letterkenny and Burtonport extension railway, 1903-47: its social context and environment', Ph.D. thesis N.U.I., Maynooth, 2004.

¹⁵⁷ *S.I.*, 29 Feb. 1936.

¹⁵⁸ Tadgh Kilgannon, *Sligo and its surroundings* (Sligo, 1926), pp 318-9.

¹⁵⁹ *S.I.*, 6 Mar. 1937.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 26 Feb. 1938.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 26 Feb. 1944.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

position' having sustained losses of over £8,000 in the years 1946 and 1947.¹⁶³ The railway struggled on until September 1957, when it was forced to close as the Northern Ireland government closed the Belfast to Enniskillen route depriving the company of its Belfast business.¹⁶⁴ However, the strong involvement of Protestant merchants and landowners in the early development of the railway industry in Sligo was vital in the successful establishment of Sligo as an important communications hub and commercial centre in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century. The continuing involvement of Josslyn Gore-Booth and Arthur P. Jackson in the S.L.N.C.R. Company after the end of the Civil War confirmed that Protestant landowners and businessmen wished to continue to see Sligo as a centre for business after 1923.

The milling industry in Sligo was one of the most important industries established by Protestant landowners and businessmen, which lasted into the twentieth century and resulted in much long term employment for Catholics and Protestants. In order to take a closer look at the milling industry in Sligo, an investigation of the families and individuals involved is necessary. In addition to the extensive milling interests of the Protestant businessman Arthur Jackson, the four most important Protestant milling families in Sligo were the Sims, the Middletons, the Pollexfens and the Campbells.

Along with their efforts in helping set up the co-operative movement in Co. Sligo the Sim family were one of the first Protestant business families to become involved in the milling industry in Sligo. The family established mills in Sligo, Ballisodare and Collooney. In 1830, Alexander Sim, a native of Aberdeen in Scotland, and a member of a prominent seafaring family, settled in Sligo.¹⁶⁵ He took his hand to milling and in 1836 set up a corn mill in Ballisodare and employed twenty-five workers.¹⁶⁶ Two years later in June 1838 he founded a bleach mill and corn mill in Collooney.¹⁶⁷ The Sims also established woollen mills in Collooney, which were later taken over by the Protestant owned company of Henderson and Eadie in 1929. Henderson and Eadie continued in operation until the outbreak of the Second World War.¹⁶⁸

Alexander J. Sim (1854-1918) and his brother Allison also founded the Irish Calcium Carbide Company for the production of acetylene gas in the late 1890s. However, the

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 5 Mar. 1949.

¹⁶⁴ Dermot James, *The Gore-Booths of Lissadell* (Dublin, 2004), p. 74.

¹⁶⁵ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), pp 447-8.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 454-5.

reduced demand for carbide after the First World War led to the closure of the mills but they were re-opened for a brief period in the 1930's by Wilbram A. Middleton (1898-1960).¹⁶⁹ Middleton installed modern machinery and up to date methods were introduced. In addition to maize the company produced 'Fatenol' cooked food and oatmeal. The giant turbines used by the company were also used to light not only the company's premises but also the town of Collooney. The mills ceased operation on the retirement of Wilbram A. Middleton in 1956.¹⁷⁰ In 1923 Middleton had also taken over the 'bleach mill' in Collooney, which had been owned by the Sim family.¹⁷¹ In 1929 Middleton reopened the 'bleach mill' and manufactured ladies' clothing, blankets, flannels, rugs and yarn.¹⁷²

The Pollexfen family of Sligo was one of the dominant business families of Sligo for many years. In 1862 the Pollexfens established a partnership with the Middleton family and acquired the Ballisodare mills in the same year. After the death of William Middleton in 1882 the partnership was dissolved and Messrs. W. & G. T. Pollexfen bought the mills. Arthur Jackson married Pollexfen's daughter and became the general manager of the Pollexfen business interests. The firm operated three extensive mills in Sligo; one was located in Sligo town and the other two in the village of Ballisodare, five miles from Sligo town.¹⁷³ The Pollexfens also operated a large warehouse at the junction of Wine Street and Adelaide Street in Sligo town known as the Western Wholesale Company which stored and distributed tea, coffee, alcohol, fruit, vegetables and other foodstuffs. The milling interests owned by the Pollexfen family became a limited company in 1913 and was thereafter known as Messrs. W. & G. T. Pollexfen and Co. Ltd. The Sligo mills were located at Victoria Bridge and by 1926 the production output was one hundred tons of maize per day.¹⁷⁴ In 1927 the Sligo Mills were closed and the business was transferred to the firm's other mills at Ballisodare. In 1927 the Ballisodare mills produced forty tons of flour, 120 tons of maize meal and twenty tons of cattle feed per day which was transported to counties all over Ireland. A railway line connected the two mills with the station at Ballisodare and water turbines supplied the power for the mills while the surplus energy was used to provide

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 66.

¹⁷³ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), pp 357-8.

¹⁷⁴ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 66.

electric light for the village of Ballisodare. By 1935 over one hundred local people found employment at the Ballisodare mills.¹⁷⁵

The firm of Harper Campbell was one of the main industrial concerns in Sligo town. The company was founded in 1842 and was formed into a private limited company in 1892. The company processed flour, grain, maize, and exported their products not only to other cities in Ireland, Britain, and Europe but also to the United States of America. The company's steam mills were originally located on Knox Street in 1847. When Harper Campbell died in 1899, his eldest son Col. James Campbell (1850-1924) took over the company and the business quickly expanded under his directorship. In 1906 new mills were built near Sligo harbour and new markets for the company's products were opened up. Col. James Campbell served for fourteen years as a successful chairman of the harbour board and used his organisational skills to help the port survive the troubled years of the Great War from 1914 to 1918. Col. Campbell was a D.L. of Co. Sligo and was also a director of the S.S.N.Co. and the S.L.N.C.R.¹⁷⁶ The firm of Harper Campbell Ltd. employed the most up to date technology in the construction of the new mills in order to facilitate export. In 1926 it was reported that 'in addition to the milling, a very extensive trade is carried on in flours, grain of all kinds and feeding stuffs' and the company was also one of the main importers of coal in the northwest.¹⁷⁷ In 1926 the company had between sixty and seventy full time employees and some other part time labour during busier periods.¹⁷⁸

Harper Campbell Perry (1866-1935), the grandson of Harper Campbell and the nephew of Col. James Campbell, took control of the company on the death of his uncle. He was another hardworking and successful Sligo Protestant businessman who continued to contribute towards the prosperity of the town during the 1920s and up to his death in 1935. In addition to his own business concerns he was active in the development of Sligo port and became a harbour commissioner in 1906 and served on the harbour board for the rest of his life. He was a director of the S.S.N.Co. and a director of the S.L.N.C.R. Campbell Perry topped the poll in January 1919 when he ran as a nominee of the S.R.A. and was senior alderman of the borough.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ *S.I.*, 27 Sept. 1924.

¹⁷⁷ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 66.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ *S.I.*, 23 Mar. 1935.

Another major milling concern in Sligo town from its founding in 1909 was the 'Basic Slag Mills' at the Quayside in Sligo which was established by Arthur Jackson. 'Basic slag' was a type of agricultural fertiliser produced from various processed mineral and organic materials. The land on which the mills and buildings were built had been reclaimed from the sea and the output in 1909 was between twenty-five and thirty tons a day. A railway line connected the warehouses with the station. Jackson invested a large amount of capital in the enterprise and the factory operated the most up to date technology of the time and in the 1920s they were the only slag mills in Ireland. The War of Independence did not prove to be a major barrier for Protestant business interests in the town and in 1921 two large mills increased production to between sixty and seventy tons a day. Two warehouses next to the mills had the capacity to store 13,000 tons and by 1936 over forty men were employed there and many more were indirectly employed securing the raw materials for the mills.¹⁸⁰

Table 5.1 gives the total number of males involved in manufacturing industries in the Sligo urban area (Sligo town) in the period 1901 to 1946. The manufacturing industries represented include those working in milling, mining, textiles, clothing, footwear, food processing, wood manufacturing, engineering, electrical, printing, publishing, chemicals, concrete products and stone work. Table 5.1 shows that the number of males involved in the manufacturing industries in Sligo town had increased significantly from almost 679 in 1901 to 1,006 in 1936 and had declined to 909 in 1946. If the Sligo Shoe Company, which will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, hadn't burnt down in March 1939, with the loss of 250 jobs, the number of males employed in manufacturing in Sligo town would possibly have been higher in the 1946 census. The table also shows that the percentage of males involved in manufacturing increased from thirteen percent in 1901 to fifteen percent in 1946 but the percentage of males employed in manufacturing had been seventeen percent in 1926. In 1946 a drop in the total male population of Sligo town was noticed, which was possibly due to emigration to Britain during the Second World War, while the female population had increased by almost 500 on the 1936 figures.

¹⁸⁰ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 66.

Table 5.1: Males/females involved in manufacturing related industries in Sligo urban area 1901-46.

Year	Total pop.	Total male pop. of Sligo urban area	Total female pop. of Sligo urban area	Total males in manufact.	Total females in manufact.	Percentage of males involved in manufact.	Percentage of females involved in manufact.
1901	10,870	5,209	5,661	679	98	13	0.2
1911	11,163	5,430	5,733	889	106	16	0.3
1926	11,437	5,600	5,837	922	139	17	2.4
1936	12,565	6,131	6,434	1,006	84	16	1.3
1946	12,920	5,993	6,927	909	112	15	1.6

Sources: *Census of Ireland, 1901, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXXIV, p.36, table XXI, pp 56-65; *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXXV, p. 32, table XXI, pp. 56-63; *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*, Vol. II, table 7, p 97, p. 107; 1936, Vol. II, table 7, p. 113, p. 125; 1946, Vol. II, table 8, pp 112-21.

Table 5.1 also shows that the number of females employed in manufacturing in Sligo town increased from ninety-eight in 1901 to 112 in 1946, and in 1926 stood at 139. If the Connacht Manufacturing Company, which will be covered later in the chapter, had not burned to the ground in September 1926 with the loss of eighty jobs, mostly females, then the number of females employed in manufacturing in Sligo town by the time of the 1936 census would possibly have been higher. The table also shows that the percentage of females involved in manufacturing decreased from 1.7 percent in 1901 to 1.6 percent in 1946. However, the percentage of females employed in manufacturing had been 2.4 at the time of the 1926 census before the factory was burned down in September of that year.

Table 5.2: Males/females involved in manufacturing related industries in Galway urban area 1901-46.

Year	Total pop.	Total male pop. of Galway urban area	Total female pop. of Galway urban area	Total males in manufact.	Total females in manufact.	Percentage of males involved in manufact.	Percentage of females involved in manufact.
1901	13,426	6,542	6,884	953	154	15	2.2
1911	13,255	6,446	6,809	1,205	223	19	3.3
1926	14,227	7,056	7,171	1,729	321	25	4.5
1936	18,294	8,900	9,394	2,084	346	23	3.7
1946	20,370	9,647	10,723	1,778	409	18	3.8

Sources: *Census of Ireland, 1901, Province of Connaught, Co. Galway*, table XXXIV, p.36, table XXI, pp 56-65; *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Galway*, table XXXV, p. 32, table XXI, pp 56-63; *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*, Vol. II, table 7, p 97; p. 107; 1936, Vol. II, table 7, p. 113; p. 125; 1946, Vol. II, table 8, pp 112-21.

For the purposes of comparison table 5.2 shows the numbers and percentages of males involved in manufacturing industries in the Galway urban area in the period 1901 to 1946. Galway was the largest urban area in Connacht, while Sligo was the second largest urban area. As can be seen from the table in 1901 fifteen percent of males (953) were involved in manufacturing, while the percentage for females was 2.2 (154). By 1946 the percentage of males in manufacturing had risen to eighteen percent (1,778) and the percentage of females rose to 3.8 (409). However, the percentage of males in manufacturing in Galway in the period 1901 to 1946 had been highest in 1936 when twenty-five percent of males (2,084) were involved in manufacturing, while the percentage for females was highest at 4.5 (321) in 1926. However, overall the number of females in manufacturing in Galway increased from 154 employed in 1901 to 409 in 1946.

As many of the manufacturing concerns in Sligo were owned and operated by Protestant businessmen such as Jackson, Middleton, Campbell, Pollexfen, Gore-Booth and others during the first part of the twentieth century, it is clear that these manufacturing families played a significant role in promoting employment in Sligo town. The commitment of the Sim, Middleton, Pollexfen and Campbell families to the establishment in particular of the milling industry in Sligo in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was very important. However, what was most significant was the continuing involvement of the Campbells, the Middletons and Arthur Jackson to milling in Sligo after 1922 and their efforts to ensure the success of the industry in Sligo from the 1920s to the 1940s.

An important provider of industrial employment in Sligo in the first quarter of the twentieth century was the Sligo Manufacturing Society. The company was a co-operative concern and was set up following a public meeting in the Town Hall in December 1901. The Roman Catholic bishop of Elphin, Dr John Clancy chaired the meeting and he encouraged people to invest in the enterprise. The main advocates included Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth, Edward Foley, a local Catholic businessman and the Mayor of Sligo, alderman T. McCarrick and A.J. Crichton, a Protestant landowner from Carrowgarry, Co. Sligo. A committee of management consisting of prominent Protestant and Catholic businessmen and landowners was formed. Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth was elected as chairman of the company's committee and John Connolly, Arthur Jackson, Robert Gorman, Thomas Scanlon, John

Finan, Bernard MacDonagh and Philip Doherty were elected to the management committee at the meeting. The committee decided to establish a shirt and clothing factory.¹⁸¹

In February 1902 the company leased a site in the Market Yard from Sligo Corporation and Bishop Clancy was invited to open the factory in June 1902.¹⁸² In October 1903 sixty women, mostly Catholic, were employed in the company and by December 1904, over seventy people were employed.¹⁸³ In the company's first year of production income stood at £1,169 and by 1905 annual turnover had risen to £5,473.¹⁸⁴ However, in 1906 it fell back to £3,840 and despite large investment by Gore-Booth and many others, lack of investment capital impeded the company's plans to expand its operations.¹⁸⁵ In July 1907 the company's directors announced that they had reached a point where they were confronted with the alternative of either reconstructing the Society and obtaining increased capital, or of abandoning the venture altogether. The directors believed that with £2,500 additional capital and a turnover of £8,000 they could cover expenses and make a slight profit. Josslyn Gore-Booth was prepared to invest £1,000, provided that others also invested.¹⁸⁶ However local investment was not forthcoming and in September 1907 a meeting of shareholders was convened to wind up the society.¹⁸⁷

However, when the company went into liquidation Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth stepped in and offered to take over the business and pay the outstanding debt, which was agreed to by all the shareholders.¹⁸⁸ Gore-Booth received great praise locally for his commitment and in December 1907 he formed the Connacht Manufacturing Company, with himself as the sole owner. Over seventy jobs were saved and Gore-Booth proceeded to install new machinery and carried out the production of clothing.¹⁸⁹

The First World War proved to be a successful period for the company. Through Gore-Booth's efforts the company secured a contract with the War Office to produce 800 shirts a week for the army and by April 1917 the factory had turned out over 40,000 shirts.¹⁹⁰ The First World War proved successful for the company, but owing to a decline in demand, Gore-Booth was forced to close the factory in 1925. In September 1926 the factory was

¹⁸¹ *S.C.*, 28 Dec. 1901.

¹⁸² Original lease, 13 May 1902, (*S.C.L.*, Clubs/Societies, C516); *S.I.*, 25 Jan. 1902.

¹⁸³ *S.I.*, 31 Oct. 1903; 17 Dec. 1904.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 17 Dec. 1905.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 16 Dec. 1906.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 27 July 1907.

¹⁸⁷ *S.C.*, 14 Sept. 1907.

¹⁸⁸ Mayor to Michael Keane, 11 Sept. 1907 and 13 Nov. 1907, (*S.C.L.*, Clubs/Societies, C516).

¹⁸⁹ Original Deed of Release, 13 Dec. 1907, (*S.C.L.*, Clubs/Societies, C516).

¹⁹⁰ *S.I.*, 14 Apr. 1917.

burned to the ground, with the loss of about eighty jobs.¹⁹¹ An estimate of damage by James Scanlon, a local builder and contractor reported that it would cost over £2,000 to rebuild the factory.¹⁹² The premises and machinery were under-insured and in December 1926, Gore-Booth surrendered the lease to the corporation.¹⁹³ In 1928 Sligo Corporation made an attempt to revive the Connacht Manufacturing Company. However, in the absence of investment capital, nothing came of their efforts.¹⁹⁴ This lack of further investment by Gore-Booth or by Protestant or Catholic businessmen proved to be more motivated by the fact that reinvestment in the firm would not lead to successful returns and not by the idea that they were not interested in investment in the local economy. The Sligo and later Connacht Manufacturing Company provides evidence that Protestants were promoting economic development which was fully supported by both Catholic and Protestant businessmen and also by the Catholic Church and was an important provider of employment in Sligo for over a quarter of a century.

However, the demise of the Connacht Manufacturing Company did not mark the end of Protestant investment in local manufacturing concerns in Sligo and the Sligo Shoe Company provides a good example of Protestant businessmen willing to invest capital in a large enterprise in Sligo in the 1930s. From about July 1933 the Protestant businessman George R. Williams proposed that a shoe factory should be established in Sligo and he endeavoured to find suitable premises for the factory.¹⁹⁵ By 1936 Williams's efforts were beginning to pay off and local Protestant and Catholic entrepreneurs raised capital in the region of £12,000 to start the company, which was later increased to £20,000. Four of the five directors of the company included the Protestants S.H. Derham, who was the chairman of the company, A.B. Woods, A.P. Jackson and the managing director, W. Hayworth. The company acquired a large five-storey building on Lower Quay Street, for the production of slippers and shoes.¹⁹⁶

On 27 January 1937, Sean Lemass, Minister for Industry and Commerce officially opened the factory. The factory initially employed fifty people and by January 1937 the factory employed over one hundred and fifty and output stood at one thousand pairs of

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 18 Sept. 1926.

¹⁹² Estimate of James Scanlon, builder and contractor, Bridge St., Sligo, 18 Sept. 1926, (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, C516).

¹⁹³ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 474.

¹⁹⁴ *S.I.*, 4 Feb 1928.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20 July 1933.

¹⁹⁶ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 475.

shoes a week. It seemed that as part of their policy of Irish self-sufficiency, the Fianna Fáil government of the time were keen to encourage Irish industry through direct government involvement and allowed the new factory tax incentives. Many of the Protestant investors in the factory, including George Williams and A.P. Jackson were generally not supporters of Fianna Fáil policies, as will be argued in the section on Sligo Protestants and politics, but the Fianna Fáil government's interest in promoting the factory was obviously welcomed by them and displayed the positive side of Fianna Fáil's policy of promoting native industry.

By early 1939 the company employed 250 and produced 10,000 pairs of shoes a week. However, disaster struck on 17 March 1939 when the factory was burned down with damage estimated at £40,000.¹⁹⁷ The directors tried to find alternative premises, maintaining that they needed an additional £10,000 to rebuild the factory.¹⁹⁸ Over the next couple of months the company's directors urged the people of Sligo to invest in a new shoe factory. Despite the best efforts of the Protestant directors of the company and local businessmen in Sligo less than £6,000 was raised.¹⁹⁹ However, by the end of the summer of 1939 the company's directors were prepared to try and rebuild the factory but the outbreak of World War II forced them to abandon the project.²⁰⁰ The destruction of the factory in 1939 was a major blow to employment in Sligo, especially when the company seemed to have a bright future. However, the efforts of the largely Protestant directors and shareholders to rebuild the factory displayed a strong faith in Sligo as a centre of business.

In addition to the strong Protestant involvement in milling, manufacturing, industrial and transport concerns in Sligo at the beginning of the twentieth century, Protestants accounted for a large number of the owners of both small and large businesses in Sligo. In order to get an idea of the numbers and nature of business in Sligo an examination of the extracts of Sligo businesses from the *Connaught and Thom's Trade Directories* from 1912 to 1948 is necessary. The *Connaught and Thom's Trade Directories* from 1912 to 1948 list all the businesses operating in Sligo during the period and the information is represented in table 5.3.

¹⁹⁷ *S.I.*, 25 Mar. 1939.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3 June 1939.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 Aug 1939.

²⁰⁰ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 475.

Table 5.3: Protestant businesses in Sligo town, 1911-1948.

Year	Total number of businesses	Number of Protestant businesses	Protestant percentage of businesses
1912	311	99	32
1931	335	70	21
1936	341	73	21
1948	386	73	19

Sources: *Connaught Trade Directory, Extract for Sligo 1912*, *Thom's Trade Directories, Co. Sligo, 1931, 1936, 1948*.

As can be observed from table 5.3, 311 businesses and professions in Sligo town were listed in the *Connacht Trade Directory* in 1912. The percentage of Protestant owned businesses and professions in Sligo town accounted for thirty-two percent of those listed. The Protestant owned percentage of business in Sligo town did not appear to change much in the period between the years from 1931 to 1948. In 1931 of the 335 separate businesses and professions listed in the extracts of *Thom's Trade Directory* for Sligo and seventy of them were owned by Protestants which corresponds to twenty-one percent of the total. This represented a drop of eleven percent in the proportion of Protestant businesses in Sligo town in the period from 1912 to 1931. In 1936, 341 businesses and professions were listed and in fact the number of Protestant owned businesses increased by three on the 1931 figures to seventy-three, although the Protestant percentage remained at twenty-one percent. Twelve years later, in 1948, out of a total of 386 businesses and professions, seventy-three of them were still Protestant owned and the percentage of Protestant business and professions had dropped by only two percent to nineteen percent. However, the number of Protestant owned businesses remained at seventy-three, so it seemed that Protestants still maintained strong ownership of business in Sligo. This is quite significant in light of the fact that during the period from 1926 to 1946 the Protestant percentage of the population of Sligo town fell by from almost ten percent in 1926 to 6.6 percent in 1946²⁰¹ while in 1948 Protestants still accounted for nineteen percent of the businesses and professions listed in *Thoms Trade Directory* for Sligo.

In order to conduct a closer investigation of Protestant firms in Sligo town in the period from 1914 to 1949 three businesses have been selected. The first is the large furniture manufacturing and retailing firm of Henry Lyons & Co., which was one of the most successful and long established Protestant businesses in the town; the second is the

²⁰¹ *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, vol. III, part 1, table 7, pp 8-9; *1936*, vol. III, part 1, table 7, pp 8-9; *1946*, vol. III, part 1, table 7, pp 8-9.

hardware store, Nelson & Son, and the third is the large family run drapery, clothing and shoe ware company of W. T. & G. Johnston & Co.

In 1835 Henry Lyons (1806-1870) founded the firm of Henry Lyons & Co., which was originally located on Market Street and later moved to Victoria Bridge in Sligo town.²⁰² Over the next few years the company expanded and made extensive improvements to their premises, including the building of a café. In addition to the manufacture and sale of furniture the company had various departments for the sale of men's and ladies clothing and foot-ware. The company was also involved in tailoring and dressmaking and employed over 100 people, both Catholic and Protestant.²⁰³ Nevertheless, on the anniversary of the company in 1935, all the directors appeared to be Protestant and most of the higher staff positions were occupied by Protestants such as Robert Henry, Thomas Duncan, Archibald Duncan, Thomas Irwin, George Elliot, Edwina Henry, Thomas Harte, Thomas Johnston, Robert Irwin, Joseph Goulden, Leslie Gillan, Alfred Kerr, John Bagnall, Frederick Elliot and Annie Chambers.²⁰⁴ The directors of the company included Henry Cecil Lyons, managing director, J. Blennerhassett, Alex M. Lyons, and Sir William McLintock.²⁰⁵

However, the company was well respected locally and in March 1935 on the centenary of the founding of the company a large public ceremony to mark the occasion was held in the town hall where the mayor, alderman Michael Nevin, now of Fianna Fáil, praised the contribution the company had made to the local economy.²⁰⁶ The owner of the firm at the time was Henry Cecil Lyons (1884-1945), the grandson of the founder, and the son of Henry Lyons (1843-1923), who had managed the company before him. In addition to his role as managing director of the company, Henry Cecil Lyons was a member of Sligo Harbour Board. He was also a founding member of Sligo Chamber of Commerce and in 1942 he was elected a member of Sligo Corporation, as a member of the Sligo Ratepayers' Association. When he died on 30 March 1945 the tricolour was flown at half-mast at the town hall 'to symbolise the sorrow of the people of Sligo at the passing of one of its most popular citizens'.²⁰⁷

²⁰² Local History projects No. 2, story of five businesses (Barton Smith, Nelson Brothers, Henry Lyons, Johnston Brothers, Mullaney's) in Sligo town (S.C.L., History, HIS 83).

²⁰³ Tadgh Kilgannon, *Sligo and its surroundings* (Sligo, 1926), p. 346.

²⁰⁴ *S.I.*, 5 Mar. 1935,

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 5 Mar. 1935.

²⁰⁷ *S.C.*, 7 Apr. 1945.

Another large Protestant owned business was the firm of Nelson & Son, Ltd., on Castle Street, which was formed before the First World War and specialised in everything from jewellery, cutlery, guns, fishing equipment, and a variety of tools and building materials.²⁰⁸ The founder of the firm was James Nelson and after his death in 1935 his son Francis Nelson took over the business. James Nelson was described as 'a staunch supporter of the British regime while it lasted, but loyally supported the Free State from its foundation'.²⁰⁹ The company employed over twenty people, and although the Nelson family members carried out much of the work, Catholics as well as Protestants were regularly employed as shop assistants.²¹⁰

The third firm, W. T. & G. Johnston & Co., on O'Connell Street, was founded in 1874 and employed over forty Protestants and Catholics, in both the production and sale of drapery, men and women's clothing and shoe and boot ware.²¹¹ Many of the Catholics were employed as tailors and seamstresses in the firm and occupied the lower sales positions in the company while Protestants occupied the higher management positions such as Lillian Henderson, David Williamson, James Cook, Thomas Lipsett, Albert Dennison, Frederick and George Sibberry.²¹²

Also two of the largest garages in Sligo town were owned and operated by Protestant businessmen. The Sligo Motor and Engineering Co. Ltd. was located at the junction of George's Street and Adelaide Street and was established in 1919 by lieutenant Arthur P. Jackson and J. H. Chute. The company was described in 1926 as one of the largest motoring firms outside Dublin.²¹³ Up to date technology and extensive contacts throughout the province made them a very successful firm. The other garage was Henderson's Motoring and Engineering Works on Wine Street and Union Place, which was considered to be one of the best equipped garages in Ireland.²¹⁴ Both garages employed about twenty people between them and it appeared from some names of employees in the local newspapers that Catholics as well as Protestants worked for both companies.²¹⁵ Smaller family run Protestant businesses in the period 1911 to 1948 included Blackwood & Co. Ltd,

²⁰⁸ Local History projects No. 2, story of five businesses (Barton Smith, Nelson Brothers, Henry Lyons, Johnston Brothers, Mullaneys) in Sligo town (S.C.L., History, HIS 83).

²⁰⁹ *S.I.*, 30 Nov. 1935.

²¹⁰ Local History projects No. 2, story of five businesses (Barton Smith, Nelson Brothers, Henry Lyons, Johnston Brothers, Mullaneys) in Sligo town (S.C.L., History, HIS 83).

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*; *S.I.*, 15 Dec. 1928.

²¹³ Tadgh Kilgannon, *Sligo and its surroundings* (Sligo, 1926), pp 318-9.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *S.C.*, 23 Feb. 1924; *S.I.*, 23 Feb. 1924.

specialising in groceries, fruit, vegetables and confectionary, John Meldrum and Sons, decorators, glazing contractors, ironmonger and hardware merchants, James Hamilton Bacon Curer, grocer, tea, wine, spirit merchant, and Barton Smith, gunsmith and fishing goods.²¹⁶

Generally in the smaller Protestant businesses most of the employees appeared to have been family or extended family, although Catholics were also employed.²¹⁷ In the larger Protestant firms such as Lyons Ltd. the majority of the employees seemed to have been Catholic. However, Catholics seemed to have been largely found amongst the lower positions in the Protestant owned firms, while Protestants occupied a higher proportion of the directorships and positions of responsibility. There does not seem to be much evidence that this ever caused a major problem as in the period from 1914 to 1949 seventy to eighty percent of companies and businesses in Sligo were Catholic owned and there were plenty of opportunities for skilled or educated Catholics to reach higher positions in the Catholic owned companies.

Con Fallon, a Catholic employed by a Protestant owned credit company based in Sligo in the early 1950s provides further evidence that Protestant firms in Sligo favoured the promotion of co-religionists over others. In an interview with Con he mentioned that he was approached by a senior staff member of the company who told him that he had been overlooked for promotion on numerous occasions because of the fact that he was a Catholic and that Protestants were favoured for higher positions in the firm.²¹⁸ He later left the company and found employment elsewhere.

Protestants were a well-established business community in Sligo town before the First World War, but did they do anything to promote their collective business interests after the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922? The Sligo Protestant business community and in particular Arthur Jackson and Henry Cecil Lyons were instrumental in the setting up Sligo Chamber of Commerce. On 26 October 1922 Jackson first suggested the idea of a establishing a chamber of commerce at a meeting of the Sligo Harbour Commissioners.²¹⁹ The *Sligo Independent* supported his suggestion and argued that a chamber of commerce

²¹⁶ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p.66; *S.I.*, 24 May 1924; 15 Dec 1928; 30 Nov. 1935; *Connaught Trade Directory, Extract for Sligo 1912*, *Thom's Trade Directories, Co. Sligo, 1931, 1936, 1948*. Local History projects No. 2, story of five businesses (Barton Smith, Nelson Brothers, Henry Lyons, Johnston Brothers, Mullaney's) in Sligo town (S.C.L., History, HIS 83).

²¹⁷ Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45).

²¹⁸ Interview with Con Fallon, Sligo, 14 Jan. 2008 (transcript in the possession of the author).

²¹⁹ *S.I.*, 4 Nov. 1922.

would 'not only be good for commerce and industry, but also for the workers'.²²⁰ On 29 December 1922 Protestant and Catholic businessmen met to form a chamber of commerce. Most of the businessmen who attended were Protestant, however, there were a few Catholics. The businessmen in attendance at the first meeting included the Protestants alderman Harper Campbell Perry, senator Arthur Jackson, George R. Williams, Hal R. Wood-Martin, F.G. Coulter, J.J. Nelson, J. Elliot, Henry C. Lyons, Thomas Stevenson, A.H. Henderson, W.C. Fair and the Catholics W.J. MacMullen, P.J. McHale, W.J. Tolan, M. Foley, F. Nally, P.J. Henry, T.P. Toher, M. Downs, W. Howley, and the mayor, alderman Dudley M. Hanley. At the first meeting the mayor, D.M. Hanley, of Sinn Féin, gave the Sligo Chamber of Commerce his full support and argued that all businessmen should support the organisation. Harper Campbell Perry was unanimously elected as the first president of the chamber of commerce.²²¹

In January 1923 Sligo Chamber of Commerce adopted a set of draft rules, which included the selection of a committee of nine. Six of the nine members of the first chamber of commerce committee were Protestant. Those elected were alderman Hanley, A.C. Cooke, H.C. Lyons, senator Arthur Jackson, A.H. Henderson, Martin Downs, John Gilbride, Hal Wood-Martin and R.S. Gorman, while the two Protestant solicitors, William R. Fenton and A.M. Lyons, were selected as legal advisers to the chamber. In fairness to the chamber of commerce, they wished to be representative of both Protestant and Catholic businessmen and a Protestant member, J.J. Nelson, argued that the chamber should increase their membership in order to make the body truly representative of all trades and denominations in Sligo. The suggestion was agreed to unanimously and it was decided that all those joining before the 1 March 1923 would be regarded as original members, and the organisation committed itself to encouraging all businessmen in Sligo to become members.²²²

However, not all the businesses and traders in Sligo immediately joined the chamber of commerce and at the end of 1923 only fifty-three out of over 300 businesses in Sligo had become members.²²³ The issue with joining did not seem to be due to any membership fee, as in order to encourage businesses to join, membership of the chamber was free. Maybe Catholic businessmen viewed the chamber of commerce as a 'Protestant club' or it could be

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid., 6 Jan. 1923.

²²² Ibid., 27 Jan. 1923.

²²³ Ibid., 12 Jan. 1924.

simply due to the fact that the idea of a Sligo Chamber of Commerce would take time to catch on. However, the members of the chamber of commerce were determined to give the impression that the organisation was prepared to fight for the business community in general and seemed to genuinely wish to see a unified business community in Sligo. In January 1924, the president of Sligo Chamber of Commerce, alderman Harper Campbell Perry, argued that 'every businessman should be a member'.²²⁴ He claimed that 'a large amount of important work in the interest of the trade and commerce of this town has been dealt with and the chamber can justly claim its share of credit in securing important improvements in the mail, telephone, and railway, accommodation and many other public services'.²²⁵ During 1923 the chamber criticised the high government taxes on businesses and became involved in raising funds to reopen rail connections with Sligo after the disruption caused by the Civil War.²²⁶ The chamber also lobbied the government for more investment in the Sligo area.²²⁷

Throughout the 1920s the chamber of commerce worked hard to push business interests in Sligo.²²⁸ However, the organisation remained dominated by Protestant businessmen.²²⁹ In April 1930 only thirty-seven businesses in Sligo, or about seven percent of the total, were members of the chamber of commerce.²³⁰ However, in June 1935 Dudley M. Hanley, of Fianna Fáil and an ex-Sinn Féin Mayor of Sligo, was elected president of chamber of commerce in place of Harper Campbell Perry and he did much to broaden the appeal of the organisation.²³¹ Sligo Chamber of Commerce lobbied the government for improved transportation connections for Sligo and pressurised the corporation over rises in rates.²³²

In February 1946 the chairman of Sligo Harbour Board and local Protestant businessman, George Pettigrew complained that the government was not properly assisting Sligo port and he argued that it was a natural port for one-fifth of the country because of its location. Pettigrew praised Sligo Corporation, Sligo Co. Co. and Sligo Chamber of Commerce for all their work in promoting the economy of the town and county.²³³ In June 1948 there was a roughly even split between Protestants and Catholic members of Sligo

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid., 27 Feb. 1926; 11 Feb. 1928.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid., 5 Apr. 1930.

²³¹ Ibid., 8 June 1935.

²³² Ibid., 4 Mar. 1944.

²³³ Ibid., 2 Mar. 1946.

Chamber of Commerce and a third of the businesses in Sligo were members of the organisation.²³⁴ The organisation had taken a while to appeal to all businessmen. However, the initial establishment of Sligo Chamber of Commerce and the continuing commitment of the Protestant business community in the town to the organisation showed that in the early 1920s Protestant entrepreneurs had been confident of future business opportunities in Sligo.

This chapter has established that there was a strong Protestant tradition of investment in agriculture in Sligo before the twentieth century. Protestants were actively involved in promoting economic activity related to agriculture and they were instrumental in establishing farming societies and organisations to promote agrarian related industries. It was of course much easier for Protestant landowners to become involved in agriculturally related activities in the nineteenth century as they had owned most of the land in the county, and had the surplus time and capital. As most of the tenants, who were largely Catholic, began to purchase their holdings, more Catholics became involved in the agricultural societies. However, Protestant landowners in Sligo remained very active in all facets of agricultural life, in particular after the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922.

In the mid-nineteenth century Protestant landowners and businessmen along with some Catholic businessmen raised the funds to properly develop and expand Sligo port. However, more Protestants were involved and they dominated Sligo Harbour Commission, the organisation set up to run and promote the port of Sligo. Arthur Jackson, Harper Campbell and Harper Campbell Perry served as harbour commissioners from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s. After the foundation of the new state the Protestant businessmen did not lose interest in the port and in fact took an even greater interest in the harbour after 1922. They made strenuous efforts to invest capital and help the port remain profitable, especially during the economic downturn in the 1930s and despite the lack of government assistance they continued to make efforts to upgrade the port in the late 1930s and 1940s.

Protestant investment in railway building in Sligo in the last part of the nineteenth century was very important for the economy of Sligo town and hinterland. The keen interest displayed by the Gore-Booth and Wynne families helped establish an important connection between Sligo and Belfast. The railway connection between Sligo and Belfast suffered after 1922, but this was not due to a lack of Protestant interest in the line and had much more to do with the destructive economic effects of partition. Despite the best efforts

²³⁴ Ibid., 3 July 1948.

of Arthur P. Jackson to turn the S.L.N.C.R.'s profits around, an achievement in which he was partially successful during the late 1930s, the 1940s proved to be a difficult time for the company and the line to Enniskillen was closed in 1957. However, Protestant directors and shareholders were involved in the company to the end.

There were many companies in Sligo that had been established by Protestant businessmen and landowners in Sligo in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century and they continued to operate successfully and provide employment from the 1920s to the 1940s. Josslyn Gore-Booth's Connacht Manufacturing Company operated until the mid-1920s before closing. However, in the 1930s Protestant businessmen were willing to invest capital in new enterprises in Sligo, notably the Sligo Shoe Company, and although the proportion of Protestant businesses dropped by eleven percentage points in the period 1912-31, in the years from 1931 to 1948 the proportion of Protestant businesses only fell from twenty-one percent to nineteen percent. This represented a very low drop considering that the Protestant percentage of population in Sligo town fell from ten percent to just over six and half percent of the total in the period from 1911 to 1946. There were many very successful large and small businesses Protestant owned firms, which provided employment opportunities for both Catholics and Protestants. However, Protestants occupied many of the better-paid management positions in all of the Protestant firms, such as directorships of companies and heads of departments in clothing firms, while Catholics filled many of the lower positions.

At the beginning of 1923, during the Civil War Protestant businessmen met to form the Sligo Chamber of Commerce which demonstrated a strong commitment to business in Sligo and a willingness to remain in the town in difficult circumstances and promote their business interests. In the early stages there were only a small number of Catholic firms in the chamber of commerce. However, by the end of the Second World War more Catholics had become members. Most of those running Sligo Chamber of Commerce were Protestant, although by the late 1930s the former Sinn Féin Mayor of Sligo D.M. Hanley had been elected chairman. The chamber did a lot to assist the business community in Sligo and made efforts to lobby the government for more investment in the Sligo area. This indicates that the Protestant business community in Sligo built on the fair treatment by the Free State following the Civil War and continued to play a prominent role in the economic life of the town and county. The next chapter discovers if Sligo Protestants augmented their economic concerns with an involvement in local and national politics.

Chapter Six: The political interests of Sligo Protestants

In the last chapter we saw that Protestants were closely involved in the economics of Sligo town and county before 1914 and continued their interest in promoting business interests in Sligo after the foundation of the Free State. This chapter assesses Protestant participation in local and national politics, in particular during the first decade of the new state.

F.S.L. Lyons has argued that one of the greatest failings of Protestants after independence was their lack of interest in the politics of the new state.¹ Jack White has made a similar point when he argued that the Protestant 'voice is rarely heard' and 'their approach to public life is tentative and wary'.² As political activity can be closely linked with economic involvement, this chapter investigates local Protestant participation in the political process in the period from 1923 to 1949. In a notable speech in January 1922 Kevin O'Higgins, the Minister of Home Affairs, argued that the Protestant and the ex-unionist minority were 'part and parcel of the country', and 'that we wish them to take their share of its responsibilities'.³

Some questions this chapter hopes to address are: what were the political preferences of Sligo Protestants and what happened to the Sligo Ratepayers' Association (S.R.A.) after 1923? Did any Sligo Protestants become involved in the smaller 'single-issue' parties, such as the Farmers' Party or political parties founded on the promotion of business or purely economic interests? Did Protestants in Sligo adopt the policy of 'lie low, say nothing, wait and see'⁴ or did they stand up, speak out and take an active part in the political life of Sligo?

To be fair to William Cosgrave, the leader of the pro-Treaty Cumann na nGaedheal party, he did his best to give the Protestant minority a degree of political representation and of the thirty members of which he was permitted to nominate to the first Irish Senate, more than half were Protestants.⁵ Overall including elected and nominated members of the Senate, there were twenty-four non-Catholics on a roll of sixty, two of whom were Protestants from Sligo, W.B. Yeats, the well-known poet and Arthur Jackson, the businessman. Jack White has argued that Protestants generally agreed with Cosgrave's conservative policies, especially with regard to the economy of the country and relations with Britain and he realised the value of his generous policy towards Protestants as the

¹ F.S.L. Lyons, 'The minority problem in the 26 Counties', in Francis MacManus (ed), *The years of the great test 1926-39* (Cork, 1967), p. 100.

² Jack White, *Minority report* (Dublin, 1975), p. 91.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ W.B. Stanford, *A recognised church* (Dublin, 1944), p. 16.

⁵ Jack White, *Minority report* (Dublin, 1975), p. 93.

minority.⁶ They were well represented among the large businessmen and bankers in the country and he wished to get them on board as investors in the new state. Cosgrave also wished to show Protestants in Northern Ireland that they did not have to fear religious persecution from a Dublin government, which was particularly important for Sligo Protestant politicians and businessmen, as Sligo was situated close to the border.⁷

The first general election after the end of the Civil War was scheduled to take place on 27 August 1923. On 28 July 1923 Cosgrave arrived in Sligo as part of his pre-election national tour.⁸ The S.R.A. were actively supporting the Cumann na nGaedheal party and at various meetings held throughout the town and county during the last week in July. Many members of the S.R.A. formed the Cumann na nGaedheal election committee for the constituency and Canon P.A. Butler, a member of the Catholic clergy and the president of the S.R.A., along with other members of the S.R.A. spoke supporting the Cumann na nGaedheal government and presumably many of their supporters who happened to be Protestant also endorsed the government. Protestant S.R.A. councillors Wood-Martin, Kerr and Campbell-Perry also spoke at many meetings arguing that the Anglo-Irish Treaty guaranteed democratic freedom and protected private property.⁹

On 5 August 1923 a convention of the Co. Sligo Farmers' Association (S.F.A.) was held in Sligo with county councillor John Hennigan presiding.¹⁰ The meeting was held in order to select candidates to represent farmers' interests in the upcoming election. The meeting was well attended with delegates present from twenty-four branches, including Protestant landowners such as Malby Crofton, Charles O'Hara, Alfred Rowlette and C. J. Bentley, who were still very active in the movement.¹¹ John Hennigan shocked the meeting by immediately announcing that he was going to run as a Cumann na nGaedheal candidate and not as a representative of the Farmers' Party. Most of the members were disappointed with Hennigan's decision and pleaded with him to reconsider. Michael Neary, the S.F.A. county organiser, argued that 'it was absolutely essential to the farmers' interests that they should seek representation in the government of the country'.¹² The members agreed and a ballot at

⁶ Ibid. p. 94.

⁷ Ibid., pp 94-5.

⁸ *S.I.*, 4 Aug. 1923.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 11 Aug. 1923.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

the end of the meeting selected James Gilligan from south Sligo and Martin Roddy from north Sligo to run for the Farmers' Party in the upcoming general election.¹³

The six Cumann na nGaedheal candidates for the Sligo-Leitrim constituency were James Dolan, Alec McCabe, Thomas Carter, John Hennigan, Thomas O'Donnell and Jeremiah O'Connell. On 7 August 1923, at an S.R.A. meeting in the town hall, the organisation fully supported Jeremiah O'Connell, an S.R.A. councillor in the upcoming election.¹⁴ Councillor Hal Wood-Martin backed him arguing that O'Connell best represented the interests of the business community in Sligo.¹⁵ What is interesting about this first general election following the Civil War is that it indicated that a division between Protestant voters was beginning to develop. The members of the S.R.A. in Sligo town were supporting the Cumann na nGaedheal candidates while the Protestant farmers of the S.F.A. in the county were supporting the Farmer's Party, although the members of the S.F.A. would have been in broad agreement with Cumann na nGaedheal land policies. However, the general election signified that politics in Sligo was not going to develop along confessional lines and was in fact developing more naturally along economic and regional issues.

The two main newspapers in Sligo, the *Sligo Champion* and the *Sligo Independent*, both encouraged their readers to vote for the Cumann na nGaedheal candidates. From the time he had taken over as owner of the *Sligo Independent* in October 1921 the editor William Peebles maintained that the policy of the paper was 'the advancement of agriculture, commerce and industry with the object of making Sligo the 'Chief City', or the Centre of the West'.¹⁶ Peebles wished that the paper would be 'free and independent of any creed or class, section or political party'.¹⁷

However, the paper was never completely independent and consistently supported the interests of the business and farming communities and remained a strong supporter of the S.R.A., the S.F.A. and the conservative foreign and economic policies of the Cumann na nGaedheal Party, while criticising anti-British economic and foreign policies. In fact following and even before the end of the Civil War both the *Sligo Independent* and the *Sligo Champion* were largely in agreement over all the main issues affecting business and

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 15 Oct. 1921.

¹⁷ Ibid.

economic issues in the town and county at this time¹⁸ although the *Sligo Champion* proved to be a stronger supporter of the Cumann na nGaedheal Party.¹⁹

In the August 1923 election the *Sligo Independent* editorials expressed disappointment that no completely independent or business candidate was running in the Sligo-Leitrim constituency.²⁰ The *Sligo Champion* argued that the ‘only hope of avoiding a reoccurrence of the horrors of civil war and the absolute ruin of the country’ was to return the Cumann na nGaedheal candidates, and was very critical of Eamon de Valera.²¹ The Cumann na nGaedheal Party proved to be successful in the general election and won sixty-three seats, Sinn Féin gained forty-four seats, Labour got fourteen seats, the Farmers’ Party did well with fifteen seats, and seventeen independents won seats. Cumann na nGaedheal did not win an overall majority. However, Sinn Féin refused to take their seats leading to a very weak opposition in the Dáil.²²

Table 6.1: 27 August 1923 General Election – Sligo/Leitrim Constituency
7 seats; total poll: 45,646; quota: 5,706.

Candidate	Party	First Pref.	Share	Quota	Count	Status
Alex McCabe	C.G.	8,087	17.72%	1.42	0	Elected
James Dolan	C.G.	5,556	12.17%	0.97	0	Elected
Frank Carty	S.F.	5,197	11.39%	0.91	0	Elected
Sean Farrell	S.F.	5,014	10.98%	0.88	0	Elected
Thomas Carter	C.G.	4,505	9.89%	0.79	0	Elected
Martin McGowan	S.F.	3,756	8.23%	0.66	0	Elected
John Hennigan	C.G.	2,431	5.33%	0.43	0	Elected
William Pilkington	S.F.	2,089	4.58%	0.37	0	Unknown
Martin Roddy	F.	1,470	3.22%	0.26	0	Unknown
John Lynch	Lab.	1,470	3.22%	0.26	0	Unknown
James Gilligan	F.	1,286	2.82%	0.23	0	Unknown
James O’Rourke	F.	901	1.97%	0.16	0	Unknown
Laurence Hayden	F.	745	1.63%	0.13	0	Unknown
Jeremiah O’Connell	C.G.	740	1.62%	0.13	0	Unknown
Henry Depew	Ind.	735	1.61%	0.13	0	Unknown
Patrick O’Neill	F.	679	1.49%	0.12	0	Unknown
Tom O’Donnell	C.G.	562	1.23%	0.10	0	Unknown
Denis Mulcahy	S.F.	423	0.93%	0.07	0	Unknown
		45,646	56.05%			

Source: Elections Ireland, General Election, Sligo/Leitrim, 27 Aug. 1923
(<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1923&cons=154>) (5 Mar. 2008).

¹⁸ *S.I.*, 25 Aug. 1923; *S.C.*, 25 Aug. 1923.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *S.I.*, 25 Aug. 1923.

²¹ *S.C.*, 25 Aug. 1923.

²² *S.I.*, 1 Sept. 1923.

In the seven-seater Sligo-Leitrim constituency Alex McCabe, James Dolan, Thomas Carter and John Hennigan for Cumann na nGaedheal, and Frank Carty, Sean Farrell and Martin McGowan won seats for Sinn Féin. The votes of the various Farmers' Party candidates were largely transferred on elimination to the Cumann na nGaedheal candidates. The *Sligo Independent* editorial of 1 September 1923 expressed satisfaction with the results and maintained that 'we hope the people will now settle themselves down and concentrate their attentions on the future progress and prosperity of the nation'.²³

Local elections were held in Sligo in June 1925 and campaigning began early for them. On 18 January 1925 two Cumann na nGaedheal government ministers, Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Justice and Patrick Hogan, Minister for Agriculture, visited Sligo and outlined government policy to a very large crowd. John Hennigan T.D. and many S.R.A. politicians who supported the government attended the meeting.²⁴ At the meeting, president of the S.R.A., Catholic Canon P.A. Butler, praised the Cumann na nGaedheal party while he criticised Sinn Féin, maintaining that because the party had refused to take the oath and enter the Dáil they had 'absolutely disenfranchised their various constituencies'.²⁵ Canon Butler urged the gathered crowd to 'stand solidly behind the Government' by returning councillors who would support Cumann na nGaedheal policy.²⁶

Kevin O'Higgins must have appealed to many Protestant businessmen and farmers when he argued that the priority of the Irish government was to build up the country's wealth and gain international recognition for Ireland.²⁷ Meanwhile Hogan urged Irishmen to get down to the business of running the country and he maintained that the present Cumann na nGaedheal government were the only responsible party in the country capable of creating the conditions for economic success. He blamed republicans for the destruction which had occurred during the Civil War.²⁸ Hennigan was keen to point out the success of the government over the last two years since the end of the Civil War and that the country could not afford more conflict. He argued that the government had assisted tenants in acquiring more economic holdings, and he referred to the various house building projects initiated by

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *S.C.*, 24 Jan. 1925.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

the government.²⁹ He urged the people to support Cumann na nGaedheal and vote 'for peace, progress and prosperity'.³⁰

On 7 March 1925 the *Sligo Champion* editorial urged its readers to vote for Cumann na nGaedheal arguing that it was merely 'political sanity' to do so.³¹ The *Sligo Independent* maintained the same view and asked the electorate to support the S.R.A. and the Cumann na nGaedheal candidates in the forthcoming local elections. However, a week later on 14 March 1925 the *Sligo Independent* editorial reminded the government that Ireland should play to its strengths as an agricultural nation and the government should make Ireland the number one supplier of agricultural goods to England. The *Sligo Independent* maintained that this was the best policy for both countries and Britain would see the advantages of keeping her market open to Irish goods as in case of war Britain could easily be cut off from her dominions, as almost happened in the Great War.³² When in April 1925 Cumann na nGaedheal announced that they were not running candidates in the local elections in June the *Sligo Independent* editorial of 4 April 1925 expressed satisfaction with the announcement and urged the electorate to support the S.R.A.³³

On the 26 March 1925 the Local Government Act was passed by the Oireachtas and dealt with a range of issues concerning local government in Ireland, such as abolishing rural district councils, financial issues and powers of local government.³⁴ The Cumann na nGaedheal government were determined to standardise, centralise and 'clean up' local government.³⁵ As Tom Garvin has argued the Cumann na nGaedheal government wished to introduce 'a national, standardised set of criteria for local officials', while reforming local government and preventing corruption at a local level.³⁶ As part of this Cumann na nGaedheal wished to keep the national political parties from interfering in local government.

The S.R.A. did very well in the election and twelve out of the twenty-four candidates elected to Sligo Corporation belonged to the S.R.A.³⁷ The electoral success of the S.R.A. made it the largest party on the corporation. Those from the S.R.A. who were elected were

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 7 Mar. 1925.

³² *S.I.*, 14 Mar. 1925.

³³ Ibid., 4 Apr. 1925.

³⁴ *An act to amend the law relating to local government and for other purposes connected therewith*, (26 March 1925) Irish Acts Number 5 of 1925. (Irish statute book, Acts of the Oireachtas, Local Government Act 1925, <http://www.irishstatuebook.ie/1925/en/act/pub/0005/print/html>) (1 Mar. 2008).

³⁵ Tom Garvin, *1922* (Dublin, 2005), p. 92.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

³⁷ *S.I.*, 20 June 1925.

the Protestants Arthur P. Jackson, P.C. Kerr, H.C. Perry, James Hamilton, Henry Cecil Lyons, Hal Wood-Martin and the Catholics John Jinks, James Gray, Thomas Fitzpatrick, William Feeney, Jeremiah A. O'Connell, Henry Depew.³⁸ Sinn Féin won seven seats, the Labour Party won four seats and John Lynch, who described himself as belonging to republican Labour, won a seat.³⁹

Since the last corporation election in January 1919 the S.R.A. had attracted some prominent new members and Thomas Fitzpatrick and William Feeney had been members of the Sinn Féin Party, Henry Depew had been a member of the Labour Party and James Gray and John Jinks had both been independents. In June 1925 William Fraser Browne, a Protestant coachbuilder from John Street was elected as a councillor for the West Ward. Browne was a member of Sinn Féin and indicated that not all Protestant politicians in Sligo were members of the S.R.A. or supporters of Cumann na nGaedheal.

Table 6.2: 24 June 1925 Sligo Borough Election, East Ward
8 seats; valid votes: 622; quota: 70.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
Michael Nevin	Sinn Féin.	119	Elected
Michael Feeney	Labour	103	Elected
James Gray	S.R.A.	84	Elected
Thomas Fitzpatrick	S.R.A.	80	Elected
William J. Feeney	S.R.A.	72	Elected
Jeremiah A. O'Connell	S.R.A.	54	Elected
John Hughes	Sinn Féin	39	Elected
James Monaghan	Labour	35	Elected
James Keaveney	Sinn Féin	26	Not elected
Michael Kerrin	Sinn Féin	10	Not elected

Source: *S.C.*, 27 June 1925.

Table 6.3: 24 June 1925 Sligo Borough Election, West Ward
8 seats; valid votes: 881; quota: 98.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
James Hamilton	S.R.A.	172	Elected
Henry Depew	S.R.A.	116	Elected
William F. Browne	Sinn Féin	113	Elected
Charles P. Roche	Sinn Féin	96	Elected
H.C. Perry	S.R.A.	87	Elected
P.C. Kerr	S.R.A.	74	Elected
Patrick Flanagan	Sinn Féin	60	Not elected
Arthur P. Jackson	S.R.A.	51	Elected
J.J. Clancy	Sinn Féin	43	Not elected
James Hunt	Labour	41	Elected
John Lambert	Independent	28	Not elected

Source: *S.C.*, 27 June 1925.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 June 1925.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Table 6.4: 24 June 1925 Sligo Borough Election, North Ward
8 seats; valid votes: 743; quota: 71.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
Michael Conlon	Labour	N/A	Elected
William Costello, jun	Sinn Féin	N/A	Elected
John Gilbride	Sinn Féin	N/A	Elected
John Jinks	S.R.A.	N/A	Elected
John Lynch	Lab./Rep.	N/A	Elected
Henry Cecil Lyons	S.R.A.	N/A	Elected
Michael Silke	Sinn Féin	N/A	Elected
Hal Wood-Martin	S.R.A.	N/A	Elected

Source: *S.C.*, 27 June 1925.

The new council met in late June and the most important item on the agenda was the election of a mayor. Two men were nominated for the position, Thomas Fitzpatrick and the newly elected William Browne. Fitzpatrick received the votes of his fellow S.R.A. councillors and Jinks, Hamilton, Depew, Wood-Martin, Lyons, W. Feeney, O'Connell, Gray, Jackson, Kerr, Perry, all voted for him, giving him a total of eleven votes. Browne gained support from the Sinn Féin and Labour members of Sligo Corporation and Lynch, Nevin, M. Feeney, Silke, Costello, Conlon, Hughes, Monaghan, Hunt, Roche, ten in total, voted for Browne. The election of a S.R.A. member as mayor marked a significant development for the party.⁴⁰

On 6 July 1925 the S.R.A. held a meeting in Sligo Town Hall in order to discuss the goals of the association. Canon Butler argued that 'despite the fact that for a number of years circumstances prevented them from discharging the functions for which they were originally called into being, the results of the recent elections had shown one thing very clearly, and that was there was no waning of the measure of public confidence which the Association enjoyed'.⁴¹ Butler maintained that the citizens of Sligo believed in the honesty of the ratepayers' representatives and that the S.R.A.'s strengths lay in the fact that it 'was non-political and non-sectarian and was not an association formed for the protection of any one particular class of citizens'.⁴² The S.R.A. continued to work through their members on the corporation and raised issues concerning all affairs relating to the Borough of Sligo. What is interesting about the S.R.A. is that non-elected members of the association held very frequent meetings, which were attended by S.R.A. councillors.⁴³ It appeared that Butler was the main advocate of the necessity of regular meetings between the S.R.A.

⁴⁰ *S.C.*, 4 July 1925.

⁴¹ *S.I.*, 11 July 1925.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 6 Dec. 1925.

councillors and the ordinary members of the association. The most likely reason behind this was that he probably did not want the views of the politicians to become too far removed from the wishes of the members.

Members of the Protestant community in Sligo were keen to publicly praise the initiatives taken by the Free State government to promote industry and agriculture. On 30 November 1930 at a meeting of Sligo Presbyterians in the Grand Hotel, Sligo, Thomas Stevenson gave a long speech, echoing a speech he had earlier given in January 1930, supporting the policies of the Free State and arguing that Sligo Protestants ‘as constitutionalists were all supporters of the Free State’.⁴⁴ He believed that ‘it was their duty to do all in their power to advance it agriculturally, commercially and industrially’.⁴⁵ Stevenson also spoke on the partition of Ireland, maintaining that ‘he could speak for all the denominations in saying that he was very sorry that there was ever a crooked line drawn through Ireland. However, so far as their church was concerned there was no crooked line’.⁴⁶ Stevenson praised the tolerance of the Irish government and mentioned that ‘as Protestants they in the Free State had received as much protection as any other citizen’.⁴⁷ Stevenson argued that ‘he saw a great future for the Free State’ and that ‘the people who invested their money in it were shrewd people and that certainly spoke well for the stability of the country’.⁴⁸

Thomas Stevenson was an important Sligo businessman and was chairman of Blackwood & Co., a large grocery outlet of O’Connell Street and Grattan Street in Sligo. He was a founder member of Sligo Chamber of Commerce and was actively involved in the Co. Sligo Agricultural Society and various local Protestant and Catholic charitable organisations including the *St Vincent de Paul* Society and the local branch of the Irish Red Cross Society. He was also a Mason and a founder member of the Sligo Constitutional Club.⁴⁹

By the time of the June 1927 general election a new party, Fianna Fáil, had been founded under the leadership of Eamon de Valera, after he broke with Sinn Féin over the party’s abstention from the Dáil. Fianna Fáil, like Sinn Féin, was opposed to the Anglo-Irish Treaty but the new party was prepared to work within the legislative and constitutional methods to

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 Dec. 1926.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 17 Apr. 1948.

achieve their republican goal.⁵⁰ In the run up to the election the *Sligo Champion* editorials were supportive of Cumann na nGaedheal and the 4 June 1927 editorial was very critical of de Valera and expressed doubts over his commitment to the democratic constitution of the Free State. The paper urged the people to support the Cumann na nGaedheal Party, arguing that they have proven to be a solid party and have worked hard for the past few years under difficult circumstances.⁵¹ Who were Sligo Protestants going to support in the election?

The S.R.A., which had a large Protestant membership and six Protestant corporation councillors, put their support behind John Jinks, who was running as a National League candidate. William Redmond and Thomas O'Donnell had founded the National League Party in 1926 in support of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The party advocated a close relationship with Britain and was committed to membership of the Commonwealth.⁵² The party's policies seemed to be more appealing to former unionists and former supporters of the I.P.P., which is indicated by the fact that some of the members of the S.R.A., including councillors Wood-Martin and Perry spoke in favour of Jinks at election meetings around Co. Sligo. Jinks ran a strong campaign, arguing that if he were elected he would endeavour to help change the laws in favour of businessmen.⁵³

Table 6.5: 9 June 1927 General Election – Sligo/Leitrim Constituency
7 seats; total poll: 49,809; quota: 6,227.

Candidate	Party	First Pref.	Share	Quota	Count	Status
*Martin Roddy	C.G.	7,677	15.41%	1.23	1	Elected
*Frank Carty	F.F.	4,958	9.95%	0.80	5	Elected
*James Dolan	C.G.	4,383	8.80%	0.70	11	Elected
Michael Carter	F.	4,081	8.19%	0.66	14	Elected
*Sean Farrell	S.F.	3,455	6.94%	0.55	(15)	Not Elected
E.R. Robinson	F.	2,956	5.93%	0.47	(13)	Eliminated
*John Hennigan	C.G.	2,943	5.91%	0.47	12	Elected
Patrick Briody	C.G.	2,434	4.89%	0.39	(10)	Eliminated
Ben Maguire	F.F.	2,398	4.81%	0.39	(7)	Eliminated
*Samuel Holt	F.F.	2,384	4.79%	0.38	15	Elected
John Jinks	N.L.	2,224	4.47%	0.36	15	Elected
Archibald Heron	Lab.	2,171	4.36%	0.35	(9)	Eliminated
James Gilligan	C.G.	2,154	4.32%	0.35	(6)	Eliminated
Andrew J. Mooney	C.G.	1,939	3.89%	0.31	(5)	Eliminated
Eugene Gilbride	F.F.	1,770	3.55%	0.28	(4)	Eliminated
James McGowan	Ind.	1,359	2.73%	0.22	(3)	Lost Deposit
W.J. Tolan	Ind.	523	1.05%	0.08	(2)	Lost Deposit
		49,809				

Source: Elections Ireland, General Election, Sligo/Leitrim, 9 June 1927
(<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1927jun&cons=154>) (5 Mar. 2008). *outgoing T.D.

⁵⁰ J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985* (Cambridge, 1989), pp 151-2.

⁵¹ *S.C.*, 4 June 1927.

⁵² F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), p. 497.

⁵³ *S.C.*, 28 May 1927.

However, Protestants did not universally unite behind Jinks and while many of the members of the S.R.A. backed Jinks, many members of the S.F.A. supported Michael Carter, a representative of the Farmers' Party.⁵⁴ When the results of the election were declared on 18 June 1927, John Jinks and Michael Carter, as well as three Cumann na nGaedheal and two Fianna Fáil candidates were elected, and Cumann na nGaedheal were returned to power with the support of the Farmers' Party, the National League Party and the independents.⁵⁵ The government only held power by a slim majority and in the face of a strong opposition led by Fianna Fáil, who under de Valera had taken their seats in the Dáil, the government narrowly escaped a no confidence vote led by Fianna Fáil and Labour.⁵⁶ The National League Party supported the vote of no confidence. However, John Jinks in a famous incident failed to turn up and vote against the government along with the rest of his party. The Farmers' Party and independents voted for the government, the vote was tied and only the casting vote of the chairman saved the government.⁵⁷ When Jinks returned to Sligo he found a telegram awaiting him, it was addressed 'To the ruler of Ireland', and stated that: 'God saved Ireland through friend Jinks'.⁵⁸

Before the vote of no confidence in the Cumann na nGaedheal government, Jinks believed that the majority of his constituents in Sligo were supportive of the government.⁵⁹ Tim Pat Coogan has suggested in his study *Ireland since the Rising* that the two Protestants and former unionists from Sligo, Bryan Cooper T.D. and Bertie Smyllie, the editor of the *Irish Times*, 'a man who thought the heavens would fall if Fianna Fáil got into power'⁶⁰, influenced Jinks's abstention.⁶¹ However, this appears unlikely and it was not the first time that Jinks had evaded a difficult vote. In July 1916 he had avoided attending a north Sligo Executive U.I.L. meeting after he had backed his party leader John Redmond and had voted in favour of partition and the exclusion of Ulster from Home Rule at a National U.I.L. Conference. This was against the wishes of a majority of the north Sligo U.I.L. clubs, who had asked Jinks to vote against the measure. In another incident, at the contentious January 1922 Sligo Corporation meeting, which had been held to elect either a pro or anti-Treaty mayor, Jinks had abstained from the vote.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 June 1927.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 18 June 1927.

⁵⁶ *S.I.*, 16 July 1927.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), p. 385.

⁵⁹ *S.I.*, 16 July 1927.

⁶⁰ Tim Pat Coogan, *Ireland since the Rising* (London, 1966), p. 65.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp 65-6.

The *Sligo Champion* editorial of 20 August 1927 supported Cosgrave and praised Jinks for saving the Free State government.⁶² Following the vote, Cosgrave called another election in September and both the *Sligo Independent* and the *Sligo Champion* urged their readers to support the Cumann na nGaedheal Party.⁶³ William Peebles's editorial of 3 September 1927 in the *Sligo Independent* maintained that the paper was non-political and was solely interested in agriculture, commerce and industry. However, he argued that there was no real alternative but to vote for the government.⁶⁴ The *Sligo Champion* editorial of 10 September 1927 asked readers to vote for the Cumann na nGaedheal Party.⁶⁵ The results of the election returned Cumann na nGaedheal to power in a coalition government with the Farmers' Party and the independents and both the *Sligo Independent* and *Sligo Champion* editorials of 24 September 1927 were delighted with the result.⁶⁶ Four Cumann na nGaedheal and three Fianna Fáil candidates were returned from the Sligo/Leitrim constituency. However, both Carter and Jinks lost their seats, Carter only narrowly failed to get elected, while Jinks got the least amount of first preference votes of all the candidates.

Table 6.6: 15 September 1927 General Election – Sligo/Leitrim Constituency

7 seats; total poll: 51,848; quota: 6,482.

Candidate	Party	First Pref.	Share	Quota	Count	Status
Martin Roddy	C.G.	7,829	15.10%	1.21	0	Elected
James Dolan	C.G.	5,500	10.61%	0.85	0	Elected
Frank Carty	F.F.	5,162	9.96%	0.80	0	Elected
Samuel Holt	F.F.	4,883	9.42%	0.75	0	Elected
Patrick T. Reynolds	C.G.	3,958	7.63%	0.61	0	Elected
Ben Maguire	F.F.	3,826	7.38%	0.59	0	Elected
Michael Carter	F.	3,479	6.71%	0.54	0	Unknown
John Hennigan	C.G.	3,336	6.43%	0.51	0	Elected
Albert Robinson	F.	3,107	5.99%	0.48	0	Unknown
James Gilligan	C.G.	2,948	5.69%	0.45	0	Unknown
William Browne	F.F.	2,550	4.92%	0.39	0	Unknown
Archie Heron	Lab.	2,163	4.17%	0.33	0	Unknown
Edward Hannon	F.F.	1,601	3.09%	0.25	0	Unknown
John Jinks	Ind.	1,506	2.90%	0.23	0	Unknown
		51,848				

Source: Elections Ireland, General Election, Sligo/Leitrim, 15 Sept. 1927

(<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1927sep&cons=154>) (1 June 2008).

⁶² *S.C.*, 20 Aug. 1927.

⁶³ *S.I.*, 27 Aug. 1927; *S.C.*, 27 Aug. 1927.

⁶⁴ *S.I.*, 3 Sept. 1927.

⁶⁵ *S.C.*, 10 Sept 1927.

⁶⁶ *S.I.*, 24 Sept. 1927; *S.C.*, 24 Sept. 1927.

The 1928 Sligo Corporation elections were significant, not for the result but for the fact that the S.R.A. decided not to run official candidates. Many of the older members, including all the Protestant councillors had chosen to retire and did not go forward as candidates in the election. Along with the mayor Thomas Fitzpatrick and councillors Feeney and Gilbride, all the Protestant councillors on Sligo Corporation announced at a meeting of the S.R.A. on 11 June 1928 that they were retiring from public office. Alderman Wood-Martin, alderman Hamilton, councillors Kerr, Lyons, Jackson and Campbell Perry declared that they would not run in the election.⁶⁷ Their fellow S.R.A. councillors publicly urged them to seek re-election and John Jinks pleaded with his fellow S.R.A. councillors to 'reconsider their decision'.⁶⁸ Wood-Martin, Hamilton, W. Feeney, Lyons, Jackson and Campbell Perry gave the collective excuses that they were either too old or too busy with business commitments in order to continue to attend corporation meetings.⁶⁹

An examination of the 1911 manuscript census returns confirms that many of these men were in their late fifties or early sixties and Lyons, Jackson and Campbell-Perry had not only extensive business interests to look after but were also members of Sligo Harbour Board and were directors of a number of other companies in Sligo, and so must have had very little time to devote to corporation business.⁷⁰ In fact Lyons admitted that one of the main reasons for his retirement was that his attendance at corporation meetings since the election in 1925 had been very poor due to his busy workload.⁷¹ Councillor Depew argued that the 'it would be a great pity if the biggest ratepayers in the town, viz: Messrs. Wood-Martin, Campbell-Perry, Kerr did not go forward' maintaining that it would be 'a great loss to the town if they did not'.⁷² Even members of other parties appealed to the S.R.A. councillors to run again and councillor Devins, a member of Fianna Fáil, also spoke in favour of the S.R.A. councillors urging them to run again.

However, this was the first election in Sligo, which was going to be contested by the Fianna Fáil Party, and many of the S.R.A. councillors may have also felt that they stood little chance against a party, which, although it had not secured power, had been very successful in the September 1927 general election. It is not unfair to suggest that the S.R.A.

⁶⁷ *S.I.*, 16 June 1928.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45); *S.I.*, 16 June 1928; Biographical information on the three men in John C. McTernan, *A Sligo miscellany* (Dublin, 2000), pp 332-3; pp 350-1; *S.C.*, 7 Apr. 1945.

⁷¹ *S.I.*, 16 June 1928.

⁷² *Ibid.*

councillors, many of whom were contributing significant rates towards local government in Sligo, felt that they stood little chance of opposing the popular spendthrift policies of the Fianna Fáil and Labour councillors.

However, Kerr hinted that there was more to the retirement of the councillors than simply old age when he expressed the view that the S.R.A. members were 'fed up with the present position as regards the corporation and that was what had given rise to the statement that they were retiring'.⁷³ Kerr argued that one third of the members of the corporation paid no rates and they were the ones advocating to recklessly spend money.⁷⁴ The eight members that Kerr was referring to were William Browne, John Lynch, Michael Feeney, William Costello, Michael Conlon, James Monaghan, James Hunt and Charles Roche, who were either Labour councillors or had joined the new Fianna Fáil Party. The policies of both these parties largely advocated greater spending by local authorities on social and municipal services, and this may have concerned councillor Kerr.

Kerr proposed more reform of the system of local government. However, he did not receive any support from the other members of the S.R.A. and his suggestions were ignored. The mayor, Thomas Fitzpatrick of the S.R.A. also argued at the S.R.A. meeting on 11 June 1928 that local merchants 'wanted services better than would be found in London', but would not contribute to funds to realise this.⁷⁵ It appeared that many of the merchants in Sligo were demanding more spending by the corporation. However, they were not prepared to tolerate an increase in rates and the S.R.A. councillors were torn between the desire to control spending and keep rates down and the wishes of townspeople to increase spending on services while keeping rates down.

Despite the presence of a new party, Fianna Fáil, and debates concerning the rates and spending of local government income that had seemed to occupy much of the business of the corporation and the S.R.A. meetings, there was a general feeling of apathy and lack of interest in the run up to the election. Only sixteen men put their names forward as candidates, eight in the East Ward and eight in the West Ward of Sligo town, while ten candidates were nominated for the North Ward. This meant that an election would take place only in the North Ward.

The nominations for the East Ward were Michael Kerrin, Fianna Fáil, Michael Hande, Labour, John Gilmartin, Fianna Fáil, Maurice O'Regan, Fianna Fáil, Matthew Joyce, an

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

independent, and the existing councillors, Jeremiah O'Connell, of the S.R.A., John Hughes, Fianna Fáil, and Michael Nevin, Fianna Fáil.⁷⁶ Nominations for the West Ward were Thomas Kavanagh, Fianna Fáil, James Cawley, Cumann na nGaedheal, James Keaveney, Fianna Fáil, Thomas Kelly, Fianna Fáil and the existing councillors, William Browne, Fianna Fáil, James Hunt, Cumann na nGaedheal, Henry Depew, S.R.A., and Charles Roche, Labour.⁷⁷

In the lead up to the election the *Sligo Champion* editorials expressed disappointment at the news that the S.R.A. councillors were not going forward and praised the success of the S.R.A. members of the last corporation in gaining government grants and improving the administration of the borough.⁷⁸ The *Sligo Champion* also strongly urged people to put themselves forward for election and take more of an interest in local politics.⁷⁹ However, in the absence of any more candidates in the East and West Ward, the sixteen nominations were elected unopposed.

Table 6.7: 28 June 1928 Sligo Borough Election, North Ward
8 seats; poll: 489; quota: 55.

Name	Party	First preference Votes	Result
John Jinks	S.R.A.	181	Elected
John Lynch	Ind. Republican	129	Elected
Michael Conlon	Labour	43	Elected
James Kelly	Labour	32	Elected
Patrick Fowley	Fianna Fáil	30	Elected
William Costello	Fianna Fáil	26	Elected
Joseph McMorrow	Cumann na nGaedheal/Labour	19	Elected
Patrick Derrig	Fianna Fáil	12	Elected
John Walls	Fianna Fáil	11	Not Elected
Michael Feeney	Labour	6	Eliminated

Source: *S.C.*, 30 June 1928.

The election for the North Ward took place on 28 June 1928, and resulted in the two long serving members, John Jinks and John Lynch receiving 210 votes between them, which represented over forty percent of the total votes cast and indicated that the electorate had favoured existing councillors over the new ones, regardless of party affiliation. The S.R.A. candidate John Jinks topped the poll with 181 first preference votes, while John Lynch, formerly of the Labour Party and now running as an independent republican, received the second highest number of first preference votes with 129. The distribution of Jinks surplus

⁷⁶ *S.C.*, 16 June 1928.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

gave Costello thirty, who was representing Fianna Fáil, and was also an existing councillor; Fowley (Fianna Fáil) got twenty-nine, Conlon (Labour) the other existing councillor got an extra twenty-three votes, McMorrow, who labelled himself Cumann na nGaedheal/Labour, possibly in an effort to maximise his vote, although many of the other Labour councillors were associating themselves with Fianna Fáil, got nineteen, Kelly (Labour) got thirteen, Derrig (Fianna Fáil) got ten and Feeney (Labour) got four. Which resulted in Conlon, Costello and Fowley being elected in that count. It seemed as there was no other S.R.A. candidate in the North Ward and Jinks's surplus went to many other parties, although existing councillors did well from his surplus along with McMorrow of Cumann na nGaedheal/Labour.

Of Lynch's surplus, Kelly (Labour) got 29, Derrig (Fianna Fáil) got 18, Walls (Fianna Fáil) got twelve, Feeney (Labour) got eight and McMorrow (Cumann na nGaedheal/Labour) got seven. Kelly reached the quota and was elected. Kelly's surplus gave Walls (Fianna Fáil) nine, Derrig, seven, Feeney, two and McMorrow, one. When Feeney was eliminated McMorrow got eight, Walls, two, and Derrig, one. Derrig and McMorrow were declared elected without reaching the quota. Walls was not elected. Eleven Fianna Fáil, five Labour, three S.R.A., two Cumann na nGaedheal, one independent, one independent republican and one who had labelled himself Cumann na nGaedheal/Labour, now made up the new corporation. Previous members of the S.R.A. returned to the corporation included John Jinks, Henry Depew and Jeremiah O'Connell, while many of the new councillors represented the Fianna Fáil Party including William Fraser Browne, who was later elected unopposed as Mayor of Sligo.⁸⁰

Overall, at this time, when it came to national politics the Protestant community in Sligo seemed to have been reasonably content with the policies pursued by the Cumann na nGaedheal government. At a function organised by Sligo Presbyterian Church in association with the other Presbyterian Churches in the west, on 22 January 1930, Thomas Stevenson in proposing a toast to the governor-general and the prosperity of the Free State 'regretted that he could not include the whole of Ireland, and he hoped and trusted the time would soon come when they would be again united on a fair and equitable basis'.⁸¹ Stevenson praised the Free State's lack of discrimination and expressed pride at the esteem with which the politicians of the Free State held the Protestant founder of the Gaelic

⁸⁰ *S.I.*, 14 July 1928.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 25 Jan. 1930.

League, Douglas Hyde, pointing out to the crowd that Hyde had been born in Kilmactranny in Co. Sligo and had spent the first seven years of his life in the county.⁸²

The general election of 1932 was an important one in the history of the Free State. De Valera's Fianna Fáil Party was to provide the main opposition for Cumann na nGaedheal, and although the Cosgrave government had made some constitutional changes since they had come to power they had done this in the framework of the Commonwealth, which Protestants had approved of.⁸³ Cumann na nGaedheal had endorsed many Catholic teachings and prohibited divorce, contraception and had passed censorship laws on certain types of literature and although Protestants were largely in agreement with the conservative moral laws, they believed it was a matter for the individual and not the government to legislate on these matters.⁸⁴ However, De Valera seemed to 'threaten them with a regime which would be more republican, more Gaelic and even more Catholic'.⁸⁵ Peebles's editorial in the *Sligo Independent* editorial on 13 February 1932 maintained that he was not going to influence people on how to vote in the upcoming general election. However, he argued that 'the Government in office has worked – and worked successfully – in the interests of the people'.⁸⁶

Table 6.8: 16 February 1932 General Election – Sligo/Leitrim Constituency

7 seats; total poll: 55,108; quota: 6,889.

Candidate	Party	First Pref.	Share	Quota	Count	Status
Frank Carty	F.F.	8,145	14.78%	1.18	0	Made Quota
Martin Roddy	C.G.	7,382	13.40%	1.07	0	Made Quota
Ben Maguire	F.F.	7,356	13.35%	1.07	0	Made Quota
Mary Reynolds	C.G.	5,317	9.65%	0.77	0	Elected
Stephen Flynn	F.F.	4,988	9.05%	0.72	0	Elected
James Dolan	C.G.	3,699	6.71%	0.54	0	Not elected
William Browne	F.F.	3,490	6.33%	0.51	0	Elected
John Hennigan	C.G.	3,378	6.13%	0.49	0	Elected
Thomas Armstrong	C.G.	3,266	5.93%	0.47	0	Not elected
Eugene Gilbride	F.F.	2,979	5.41%	0.43	0	Not elected
Michael Carter	Ind.	1,984	3.60%	0.29	0	Not elected
Hugh O'Donnell	Lab.	1,934	3.51%	0.28	0	Not elected
Andrew J. Mooney	Ind.	1,190	2.16%	0.17	0	Not elected
		55,108				

Source: Elections Ireland, General Election, Sligo/Leitrim, 16 Feb. 1932

(<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1932&cons=154>) (10 June 2008).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Jack White, *Minority report* (Dublin, 1975), p. 103.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp 115-28.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 104.

⁸⁶ *S.I.*, 13 Feb. 1932.

Following the election Fianna Fáil with the support of the Labour Party was able to form a new government.⁸⁷ The Sligo/Leitrim constituency returned four Fianna Fáil deputies and three Cumann na nGaedheal T.D.s. The *Sligo Independent* editorial of 27 February 1932 argued ‘that many people who gave their votes to Fianna Fáil made allowances for a certain amount of exaggeration of policy’ and the paper advocated giving the party a chance at government.⁸⁸ The *Sligo Champion* editorial of 6 March 1932 was less understanding of the Fianna Fáil victory and expressed strong dissatisfaction with the party’s election. The paper argued that Fianna Fáil was an extreme party and the paper feared that Fianna Fáil would cause friction between Britain and Ireland.⁸⁹ Fianna Fáil was advocating a very different approach to economic affairs than Cumann na nGaedheal and the party was determined to put an emphasis on economic self-sufficiency, higher taxes on higher income, tariffs on imports, enforced industrialisation and less weight on agriculture as the means of production in Ireland.⁹⁰ Terence Dooley has also attributed the success of Fianna Fáil in the general election to the party’s desire to introduce more land reform and award more land to smallholders at the expense of larger graziers, some of whom were Protestant.⁹¹

An examination of farm sizes in the 1926 census reveals that in Co. Sligo 37.5 per cent of Protestant farmers and 6.5 per cent of Catholic farmers owned farms of 50 acres or more.⁹² Forty-nine per cent of Protestant farmers and fifty-four per cent of Catholic farmers had farms of between 15 and 50 acres and twelve per cent of Protestant farmers and thirty-nine per cent of Catholic farmers had farms of less than 15 acres.⁹³ Overall Protestant farmers had larger acreages of land than Catholic farmers and so Fianna Fáil’s policy of more land redistribution would impact on them more severely and therefore they were generally opposed to further land distribution.

Many of the Protestant businessmen and farmers in Sligo feared the implications of the Fianna Fáil economic policy of self-sufficiency. Sligo businessman George Williams believed that he spoke for Protestant farmers and businessmen in Sligo when he argued that higher taxes on the wealthy would discourage investment, while tariffs would impact on their businesses which relied on imported goods, and if Britain placed tariffs on Irish

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 12 Mar. 1932.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 Feb. 1932.

⁸⁹ *S.C.*, 6 Mar. 1932.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Terence Dooley, *The land for the people* (Dublin, 2004), p. 101.

⁹² *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, Vol. III, part I, Table 21 p. 137.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

agricultural products in response to Irish tariffs on British products, Irish agricultural produce would be uncompetitive in the British market.⁹⁴ For the rest of 1932 Peebles's editorials in the *Sligo Independent* strongly criticised the Fianna Fáil government and accused de Valera's and Fianna Fáil of hindering trade with Britain and causing unemployment in Sligo and the rest of the country.⁹⁵

On 6 September 1932 a dinner dance was organised by Cumann na nGaedheal in Sligo Town Hall.⁹⁶ Those present at the dance included Batt O'Connor, T.D., Liam Burke General Secretary of Cumann na nGaedheal, and the Sligo/Leitrim Cumann na nGaedheal T.D.s, Martin Roddy and John Hennigan. Clr. Henry Depew, was chairman at the dance, and had been returned to the corporation in June 1928 for the S.R.A. but was now a member of the Cumann na nGaedheal Party. Shortly before the opening of the dance and dinner, a group of men entered the town hall and removed the tri-colour from the clock tower. Martin Roddy blamed the removal of the tricolour on the mayor, John Lynch, and the Fianna Fáil Party in Sligo. The speakers on the night condemned Fianna Fáil and Liam Burke used the opportunity to call for the formation of a branch of the Army Comrades Association (A.C.A.) in Sligo.⁹⁷ Not long after, on 9 October 1932, a branch of the A.C.A. was founded in Sligo Town Hall. The branch was formed by Henry Depew and Dr. T.F. O'Higgins, who was travelling around the country organising branches.⁹⁸

The A.C.A. had been formed in Dublin on 9 February 1932.⁹⁹ The A.C.A. was organised by commandant Ned Cronin and the objective of the organisation was to uphold the state and honour the Irish Volunteers who died in the War of Independence.¹⁰⁰ According to Maurice Manning the movement attracted little attention until Dr T.F. O'Higgins, a Cumann na nGaedheal T.D., and brother of Kevin O'Higgins, took over as leader of the organisation on 11 August 1932.¹⁰¹ T.F. O'Higgins reorganised the movement and increased its popularity.¹⁰² Even though the A.C.A. claimed to be non-political it was strongly associated

⁹⁴ *S.C.*, 11 June 1932.

⁹⁵ *S.I.*, 2 Jan. 1932; 11 June 1932; 16 July 1932; 8 Oct. 1932; 15 Oct. 1932; 12 Nov. 1932; 10 Dec. 1932.

⁹⁶ *S.C.*, 10 Sept. 1932.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 Oct. 1932.

⁹⁹ Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin, 1987), p. 23.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24, p. 28.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp 28-9.

with the Cumann na nGaedheal Party and provided security at Cumann na nGaedheal meetings.¹⁰³

In October 1932, in what must have been in response to a Fianna Fáil's economic policies, a nationwide effort was made to amalgamate the various branches of the Ratepayers' Associations and the Farmers' Associations around the country into one universal organisation, the National Farmer's and Ratepayers' League (N.F.R.L.). The organisation was formed at a meeting in the Mansion House, Dublin on 6 October 1932.¹⁰⁴ A central executive in Dublin, including a president and a vice-president, a general convention, and a standing committee of twenty-six was established.¹⁰⁵ The N.F.R.L.'s main goals were to promote the interests of agriculture, establish markets abroad, attract capital to Ireland, reduce public expenditure, protect property rights, promote good feeling between the classes and to 'discourage a provocative attitude towards other countries'.¹⁰⁶ Both the *Sligo Champion* and the *Sligo Independent* embraced the goals of the N.F.R.L.¹⁰⁷

The organisation spread quickly in Sligo and by December 1932 sixteen branches of the Sligo Farmers' and Ratepayers' League had been formed in the county.¹⁰⁸ The branches were located in Collooney, Gurteen, Carnaree, Coolaney, Calry, Sligo Town, Kilglass, Ballymote, Skreen, Dromore, Riverstown, Dromard, Mullinabreena, Corhownagh, Killaville, Templeboy.¹⁰⁹ Michael J. Finn was elected as secretary of the League in Sligo and Michael Gallagher, a county councillor was elected president of the organisation in the county.¹¹⁰ There were many Protestant members on the list of those who attended the first meeting of the League in Sligo and many were the representative delegates for their local branches including William McElroy, Carnaree, James East, Sligo town area, Edward Shaw, Skreen, McKim Williams, Killaville and Thomas Hamilton, Gurteen. George Williams the well-known Protestant businessman from Sligo town was one of the most outspoken members and argued that although the government's economic policies were 'terrible; we must not break the law to oppose them'.¹¹¹ Williams was referring to the case of farmers who were threatening not to pay land annuities to the government and he argued that as a

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁴ *S.C.*, 15 Oct. 1932.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *S.C.*, 15 Oct. 1932; *S.I.*, 15 Oct. 1932.

¹⁰⁸ *S.C.*, 10 Dec. 1932.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

result of Fianna Fáil economic policy and British government tariffs, the ability of farmers to sell agricultural produce at a profit was disappearing.¹¹² The leading role adopted by many Sligo Protestants in the N.F.R.L. was an important indication that the community wished to take an active role in local politics. The N.F.R.L. was also significant in that it once again united Protestants residing in Sligo town and those living in the countryside for a common economic purpose.

At the end of 1932, Frank MacDermott, the leader of N.F.R.L., proposed that the League should form a new party, the Centre Party, which would be independent of Cumann na nGaedheal or Fianna Fáil. On 7 January 1933 William Peebles's editorial in the *Sligo Independent* welcomed the proposal while at a meeting of the branches of the Sligo N.F.R.L. in the second week of January 1933 Protestant members Edward Shaw, Thomas Hamilton and George Williams spoke in favour of the idea arguing that the new party would form an important part of the opposition to Fianna Fáil while ensuring the connection with Britain and guaranteeing good trade.¹¹³

Throughout January both the *Sligo Independent* and the *Sligo Champion* criticised de Valera and Fianna Fáil. The *Sligo Independent* editorial of 14 January 1933 maintained that 'the greatest mistake ever made in Irish politics was that of Mr deValera in trying to revolutionise commerce, industry and agriculture by their present methods thus causing severe hardship to businessmen, employers, the workers, and the farmers'.¹¹⁴ A week later the *Sligo Champion* editorial on 21 January 1933 argued that Fianna Fáil policies were bankrupting the country.¹¹⁵ The *Sligo Independent* editorial on the same day expressed support for the N.F.R.L. and the new Centre Party arguing that the party offered a better hope for farmers and businessmen.¹¹⁶

The National Centre Party was established under the leadership of James Dillon, the son of John Dillon, the former leader of the I.P.P., and Frank MacDermott. One of the principles of the party was the acceptance of the reality of partition, a position no other party at the time respected. The party also advocated tariffs on foreign agriculture in order to protect Irish farmers and argued that the Irish economy would benefit by remaining a part of the British Commonwealth.¹¹⁷ The party appeared to have a moderately pro-British outlook

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ *S.I.*, 7 Jan. 1933; 14 Jan. 1933.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 14 Jan. 1933.

¹¹⁵ *S.C.*, 21 Jan. 1933.

¹¹⁶ *S.I.*, 21 Jan. 1933.

¹¹⁷ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), p. 526.

which presented another reason why ex-unionist Protestants in Sligo found it easy to put their support behind its aims.

Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil kicked off their election campaign in north Sligo by foolishly holding their respective opening campaign meetings on the same evening and in the same place. On 8 January 1933, Fianna Fáil held their meeting at Ballintrillick, north Sligo, and after the meeting had concluded, a group of Fianna Fáil supporters remained in order to be present for speeches by Cumann na nGaedheal Party members, John Hennigan, T.D. and John Scanlon of Ballymote, Co. Sligo.¹¹⁸ During Scanlon's speech, a group of Fianna Fáil supporters disrupted began to cause disruption in the crowd.¹¹⁹ About twenty A.C.A. members from Sligo town led by Major Lawlor were also present at the meeting. Fighting broke out between both groups of supporters.¹²⁰ However, the A.C.A. were well outnumbered by Fianna Fáil supporters. Two A.C.A. men were injured in the fight, P.J. Gallagher, Mail Coach Road, Sligo town and T. Gaffney, Calry, both A.C.A. members. T.J. Cahill, Sligo secretary of the Cumann na nGaedheal Election Committee and an ex-Free State officer was also injured.¹²¹ In all five Cumann na nGaedheal supporters were injured. Both sides blamed each other for starting the trouble. However, it appears that the Fianna Fáil supporters had remained after their own meeting in order to initiate trouble at the Cumann na nGaedheal gathering.

Table 6.9: 24 January 1933 General Election – Sligo/Leitrim Constituency
7 seats; total poll: 57,225; quota: 7,1154.

Candidate	Party	First Pref.	Share	Quota	Count	Status
Ben Maguire	F.F.	8,861	15.48%	1.24	0	Made Quota
Frank Carty	F.F.	7,581	13.25%	1.06	0	Made Quota
Martin Roddy	C.G.	6,173	10.79%	0.86	0	Elected
Patrick Rogers	N.C.	6,001	10.49%	0.84	0	Elected
Stephen Flynn	F.F.	5,731	10.01%	0.80	0	Elected
James Dolan	C.G.	5,114	8.94%	0.71	0	Elected
John Hennigan	C.G.	4,630	8.09%	0.65	0	Not elected
Mary Reynolds	C.G.	4,555	7.96%	0.64	0	Not elected
William Browne	F.F.	4,492	7.85%	0.63	0	Elected
Andrew Conway	F.F.	3,185	5.57%	0.45	0	Not elected
Maurice O'Regan	Lab.	902	1.58%	0.13	0	Not elected
		57,225				

Source: Elections Ireland, General Election, Sligo/Leitrim, 24 Jan. 1933
(<http://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1933&cons=154>) (10 June 2008).

¹¹⁸ S.C., 14 Jan. 1933.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

William Peebles encouraged the readers of the *Sligo Independent* to support the National Centre Party candidate, Patrick Rogers, a farmer from Ballymote, Co. Sligo and a member of the N.F.R.L. in the general election which was to be held on 24 January 1933.¹²² De Valera had called the general election to try and secure an overall majority in the Dáil.¹²³ Of the seven seats available in the Sligo-Leitrim constituency, Fianna Fáil won four, Cumann na nGaedheal two and with over 6,000 first preference votes, Rogers got the seventh seat. His nearest rival, John Hennigan of Cumann na nGaedheal got over 4,600 first preference votes.¹²⁴ The results of the election returned Fianna Fáil to power with a slim majority.¹²⁵ However, the election of a member of the Sligo N.F.R.L. was an important achievement and must have given the Protestant members of organisation a sense that they could play a crucial role in both local and national politics.

In May 1933, with Rogers as one of the T.D.s representing the Sligo-Leitrim constituency, the leaders of the Centre Party, Frank McDermott and James Dillon visited Sligo.¹²⁶ On 25 May 1933 they attended a meeting of the Sligo branch of the N.F.R.L. Many Protestant farmers and businessmen, including Edward Shaw and George Williams voiced concerns relating to the Fianna Fáil policy of economic self-sufficiency. Frank McDermott argued that an important principle of the party was to put 'the political atmosphere, antagonism and hatred that arose from the civil war' behind them while P.J. Rogers argued that the Centre Party wanted to unite the business and agricultural communities.¹²⁷

It appeared that Sligo Protestants were generally opposed to Fianna Fáil's economic policies and took any opportunity to publicly air their feelings. In early June 1933 a discussion took place at the Presbyterian Assembly in Derry on the economic depression that was hitting Irish industry and Thomas Stevenson from Sligo and some other delegates argued that 'agriculture, the main industry, was never in a more deplorable plight' and that 'businessmen and shopkeepers found it difficult to adjust themselves to the ever-increasing list of tariffs'.¹²⁸ During the rest of 1933 the media in Sligo kept up its attack on the economic policies of the Fianna Fáil government. The *Sligo Champion* editorial of 12 May

¹²² *S.I.*, 14 Jan 1933.

¹²³ J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985* (Cambridge, 1989), pp 178-9.

¹²⁴ *S.C.*, 4 Feb. 1933.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *S.I.*, 27 May 1933.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1933.

1933 was critical of the state's economic policy and demanded a 'free market' for agriculture.¹²⁹ The *Sligo Independent* editorial of 26 August 1933 criticised the government's economic policy arguing that 'it would seem that the best and wisest business for us, when we have a market in Great Britain for the sale of our cattle and other things, is to pursue what we can produce better than any other country in place of wheat that other countries have to burn to get rid of'.¹³⁰ Peebles editorial in the *Sligo Independent* on 2 December 1933 urged the government to negotiate with Britain.¹³¹ Peebles argued that Britain, as a reasonable country, would be willing to accommodate Irish wishes if the Irish government abandoned the politics of the past and entered into negotiation.¹³²

A new party, Fine Gael, was formed in September 1933 by an amalgamation of Cumann na nGaedheal, the National Centre Party, the National Guard and some other groups, with General Eoin O'Duffy as president and W.T. Cosgrave, James Dillon and Frank MacDermott were three of the vice-presidents of the new party.¹³³ The party had very similar policies to Cumann na nGaedheal, the National Centre Party. The party sought an end to Partition and a reunification of Ireland but insisted that the country remain a part of the British Commonwealth.¹³⁴ The party was strongly opposed to Communism and wished to establish industrial and agricultural corporations.¹³⁵ On 20 July 1933 General Eoin O'Duffy, who had fought during the War of Independence and the Civil War and was commissioner of police, had taken over the leadership of the A.C.A. from O'Higgins.¹³⁶ In March 1933 the A.C.A. had adopted the blue shirt as their uniform and became known as 'Blueshirts'.¹³⁷ When O'Duffy became leader, he changed the name of the A.C.A. to the National Guard and opened up membership to all Irish citizens, not just ex-soldiers of the National Army.¹³⁸

The new Fine Gael Party injected a fresh dynamism into Irish politics and when it was formed the Sligo branches of the N.F.R.L. backed the new party, and the majority of the nineteen branches approved of the merger of the Centre Party and Cumann na nGaedheal

¹²⁹ *S.C.*, 12 May 1934.

¹³⁰ *S.I.*, 26 Aug. 1933.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 2 Dec. 1933.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin, 1987), pp 92-3.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 99-100.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

and the formation of Fine Gael.¹³⁹ Some of the prominent Protestant members of the N.F.R.L. including William McElroy, James East, Edward Shaw, McKim Williams, Thomas Hamilton and George Williams, were all in favour of the merger of the organisation with the Centre Party and Cumann na nGaedheal and the formation of a new party.¹⁴⁰

The party were determined to do well in the June 1934 local government elections and at the beginning of year Eoin O'Duffy was travelling around the country at the time trying to whip up support for Fine Gael. On 4 March 1934 O'Duffy spoke at a meeting in Sligo town condemning Fianna Fáil's economic and foreign policies, and saying how impressed he was by the level of support for Fine Gael in Sligo.¹⁴¹ Over 10,000 people attended the meeting, including the Fine Gael Sligo/Leitrim T.D.s, county councillors and corporation councillors.¹⁴² The level of support for the Blueshirt organisation in Sligo was also high as 1,200 men in blue shirts and 200 girls in blue blouses turned out for the meeting.¹⁴³

With the local elections scheduled for June 1934 both newspapers in Sligo stepped up their criticism of the government and the *Sligo Independent* editorial of 7 April 1934 argued that 'we think that it is unfortunate, whatever party is responsible, that party politics should come into what is really a matter of business in the management of the people's affairs'¹⁴⁴ while the *Sligo Champion* editorial of 26 May 1934 criticised the placing of tariffs on foreign goods, and complained that the counter tariffs placed on Irish agricultural products by Britain was destroying Irish agricultural markets abroad.¹⁴⁵

The local government elections for Sligo Borough Council and the County Council took place on 27 June 1934.¹⁴⁶ In the East Ward Fine Gael won three seats, Fianna Fáil won three and Labour won two; those elected were Michael Nevin (F.F), John Fallon (F.G.), P. Gallagher (F.G.), R. Rooney (Lab.), T. O'Hara (F.F.), P. Keighron (Lab.), J. Hughes (F.F.) and J.A. O'Connell (F.G.), a former member of the S.R.A. In the West Ward Fine Gael secured four seats, Fianna Fáil three and Labour got one seat; those elected were the Protestant businessman George R. Williams (F.G.), a former member of the S.R.A., Henry Depew (F.G.) also a former member of the S.R.A., M. Hughes (F.F.), W.F. Browne (F.F.), P. Flanagan (F.F.), M. Joyce (Lab.), P O'Hara (F.G.) and George Finan (F.G.). In the North

¹³⁹ *S.I.*, 16 Sept. 1933.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *S.C.*, 7 Mar. 1934.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *S.I.*, 7 Apr. 1934.

¹⁴⁵ *S.C.*, 26 May 1934.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 30 June 1934.

Ward Fine Gael won three seats, Fianna Fáil got two, Labour secured two and John Lynch, the independent republican, who was closely associated with Fianna Fáil, was re-elected. The following were elected for the North Ward: John Jinks (F.G.), J. Lynch (Ind. R.), M. Mulligan (F.G.), F.J. Broderick (F.F.), W.J. Tolan (F.F.), J. McMorrow (F.G.), M. Conlon (Lab.) and J. Kelly (Lab.).

Table 6.10: 27 June 1934 Sligo Borough Election, East Ward
8 seats; valid votes: 743; quota: 83.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
Michael Nevin	F.F.	141	Elected
John Fallon	F.G.	100	Elected
Pat Gallagher	F.G.	88	Elected
M. Rooney	Lab.	73	Elected
P. Keighron	Lab.	53	Elected
P. Coyle	Ind.	41	Eliminated
J.A. O'Connell	F.G.	40	Elected
J. Hunt	Ind. Lab.	38	Eliminated
T. O'Hara	F.F.	37	Elected
M. Kerrin	F.F.	32	Eliminated
Thomas Mitchell	F.F.	29	Eliminated
John Hughes	F.F.	29	Elected
A Ward	F.F.	23	Eliminated
Mrs. A Furlong	F.F.	19	Eliminated

Source: S.C., 30 June 1934.

Table 6.11: 27 June 1934 Sligo Borough Election, West Ward
8 seats; valid votes: 1,085; quota: 121.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
George R. Williams,	F.G.	138	Elected
Henry Depew	F.G.	127	Elected
W.F. Browne	F.F.	107	Elected
M. Hughes	F.F.	102	Elected
Patrick Flanagan	F.F.	94	Elected
George Finan	F.G.	77	Elected
J.J. Cahill	Ind.	67	Eliminated
John Lynch	Lab.	64	Eliminated
M. Joyce	Lab.	62	Elected
Patrick O'Hara	F.G.	58	Elected
Thomas Kavanagh	F.F.	36	Eliminated
Patrick Ryan	F.F.	36	Eliminated
Mrs. N. McCrann	F.F.	36	Eliminated
Robert Hogge	F.F.	28	Eliminated
Thomas O'Connell	Lab.	24	Eliminated
J. Keaveney	Ind.	22	Eliminated

Source: S.C., 30 June 1934.

Table 6.12: 27 June 1934 Sligo Borough Election, North Ward
8 seats; valid votes: 743; quota: 71.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
John Jinks	F.G.	143	Elected
John Lynch	Ind. Rep.	112	Elected
F.J. Broderick	F.F.	60	Elected
M. Mulligan	F.G.	54	Elected
W.J. Tolan	F.F.	42	Elected
J. McMorrow	F.G.	40	Elected
M. Conlon	Lab.	36	Elected
James Kelly	Lab.	27	Elected
James Flynn	Ind.	25	Eliminated
Martin Mooney	F.F.	21	Eliminated
Patrick McVey	Ind.	20	Eliminated
Patrick Carroll	F.F.	18	Eliminated
Thomas Blake	Lab.	15	Eliminated
William Costello	Ind.	8	Eliminated

Source: S.C., 30 June 1934.

Overall in the Sligo Borough election Fine Gael had done well winning ten seats of the twenty-four available on the corporation. Fianna Fáil won eight seats, Labour secured five and John Lynch, the independent Republican was returned to the corporation. Fine Gael may have had the most seats on the corporation but the Fianna Fáil/Labour alliance had a majority, and the parties could also count on the support of John Lynch.

The first order of business for the new corporation on 6 July 1934 was the election of a mayor for the year.¹⁴⁷ Councillor P. Gallagher of Fine Gael appeared at the meeting wearing a blueshirt. However, that was not to be the only controversial incident that occurred at the meeting. The outgoing mayor, John Lynch was the chairman of the meeting. The contest came down to a vote between two candidates, Michael Nevin and John Jinks. Michael Nevin received votes from J Lynch (Ind. R.), F.J. Broderick (F.F.), T. O'Hara (F.F.) J. Kelly (Lab.), R. Rooney (Lab.) M Conlon (Lab.), P. Keighron (Lab.), W.F. Browne (F.F.) and P. Flanagan (F.F.), a total of nine. John Jinks received votes from J. Fallon (F.G.), George R. Williams (F.G.), H. Depew (F.G.), M. Mulligan (F.G.), J. McMorrow (F.G.), P. Gallagher (F.G.), J.A. O'Connell (F.G.), P. O'Hara (F.G.) and George Finan (F.G.), a total of nine and a tie.

Not all of Nevin's fellow Fianna Fáil councillors voted for him and M. Hughes (F.F.), J. Hughes W.J. Tolan and M. Joyce of Labour abstained. There were shouts and calls from

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 7 July 1934.

the public gallery to 'make them vote' and 'they should be made vote, they came looking for our vote'.¹⁴⁸ However, they refused to vote and break the deadlock.

However, Jinks had one last trick up his sleeve. On occasions in the past Jinks had either tactically avoided voting or had conveniently been absent for key votes but this time he claimed that as senior alderman (had received more votes than anyone else in all three wards) he had the casting vote, and recorded it in his own favour, electing himself Mayor of Sligo! John Lynch, the chairman allowed it 'subject to legal confirmation'.¹⁴⁹ Jinks's questionable activities had made national and international headlines again but the election was later proved to be legally invalid.¹⁵⁰ However, the matter was not pursued because of Jinks's failing health and within a few weeks, on 12 September 1934, John Jinks, the 'self-elected' mayor and one time 'rule of Ireland' had passed away.¹⁵¹

The county council elections took place on 27 June 1934, the same day as the borough elections. The results proved to be very impressive for Fine Gael. In the Sligo electoral area Fine Gael won five seats of the eight available seats. John Hennigan, M. Roddy, John Jinks, J.H. Gilmartin, and J.J. McGoldrick were elected for Fine Gael. Eugene Gilbride, M. Nevin and W.F. Browne secured three seats for Fianna Fáil.

Table 6.13: 27 June 1934 Sligo County Council Election, Sligo electoral area
8 seats; valid poll: 5,787; quota: 635.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
Eugene Gilbride	F.F.	787	Elected
John Hennigan	F.G.	640	Elected
M. Roddy	F.G.	635	Elected
John Jinks	F.G.	537	Elected
J.H. Gilmartin	F.G.	509	Elected
J.J. McGoldrick	F.G.	491	Elected
M. Nevin	F.F.	395	Elected
W.F. Browne	F.F.	389	Elected
John Lynch	Ind.	331	Not Elected
John McGowan	F.F.	216	Not Elected
M. Mulligan	F.G.	213	Eliminated
Michael Hughes	F.F.	172	Eliminated
M. Conlon	Lab.	126	Eliminated
Thomas Mitchell	F.F.	126	Eliminated
George Finan	F.G.	113	Eliminated
Thomas Kavanagh	F.F.	80	Eliminated
Patrick Fowley	F.F.	27	Eliminated

Source: S.C., 30 June 1934.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 14 July 1934.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 15 Sept. 1934.

In the Dromore West electoral area Fine Gael won four seats, while Fianna Fáil secured two. Those elected for Fine Gael were W.J. Caffrey, M. Gallagher, F.W. Higgins and J.J. Conway. E. Hannon and W. McDonagh were elected for Fianna Fáil.

Table 6.14: 27 June 1934 Sligo County Council Election, Dromore West
6 seats; valid poll: 4,191; quota: 599.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
W.J. Caffrey	F.G.	533	Elected
M. O'Beirne	F.F.	513	Eliminated
M. Gallagher	F.G.	510	Elected
E. Hannon	F.F.	471	Elected
W. McDonagh	F.F.	431	Elected
F.W. Higgins	F.G.	421	Elected
J.J. Conway	F.G.	379	Elected
J. Maughan	F.G.	363	Eliminated
Jas. Tully	F.F.	328	Eliminated
M. O'Neill	Ind.	213	Eliminated
Jas. Bradley	Ind.	29	Eliminated

Source: S.C., 30 June 1934.

Fine Gael also won four of the six available seats in the Tubbercurry electoral area. Charles McDonnell, William Johnston, Patrick Kilcoyne and James Gilligan won seats for Fine Gael, while Thomas McCarrick and T.J. Henry were elected for Fianna Fáil.

Table 6.15: 27 June 1934 Sligo County Council Election, Tubbercurry
6 seats; valid poll: 3,440; quota: 534.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
Charles McDonnell	F.G.	548	Elected
William Johnston	F.G.	487	Elected
Thomas McCarrick	F.F.	484	Elected
Patrick Kilcoyne	F.G.	318	Elected
James Gilligan	F.G.	399	Elected
T.J. Henry	F.F.	263	Elected
Henry Donoghue	F.G.	253	Eliminated
Patrick McGoldrick	F.G.	203	Eliminated
Patrick Nicholson	F.F.	189	Eliminated
Thomas Gallagher	F.G.	174	Eliminated
Francis Higgins	Ind.	122	Eliminated

Source: S.C., 30 June 1934.

Fine Gael did very well in the Ballymote electoral area winning five of the eight available seats. P.J. Rogers, James Flanagan, Hugh O'Donnell, T.J. Casey and James Benson were elected for Fine Gael. Edward Boles, Bernard Farry and Joe Tansey secured three seats for Fianna Fáil.

Table 6.16: 27 June 1934 Sligo County Council Election, Ballymote
8 seats; valid poll: 6,838; quota: 760.

Name	Party	First preference votes	Result
P.J. Rogers	F.G.	865	Elected
James Flanagan	F.G.	722	Elected
Edward Boles	F.F.	557	Elected
Hugh O'Donnell	F.G.	503	Elected
Bernard Farry	F.F.	489	Elected
T.J. Casey	F.G.	487	Elected
Joe Tansey	F.F.	483	Elected
Patrick Rushe	F.F.	430	Eliminated
P.J. McDermott	F.G.	396	Eliminated
Bernard Conlon	F.G.	388	Eliminated
James Benson	F.G.	365	Elected
Patrick Dowd	F.F.	354	Eliminated
John Cryan	F.F.	260	Eliminated
J.J. Curran	F.F.	217	Eliminated
M.J. Dodd	F.G.	203	Eliminated
A.J. Robinson	F.F.	119	Eliminated

Source: S.C., 30 June 1934.

Overall Fine Gael did extremely well in the county council election, securing eighteen of the twenty-eight seats, while Fianna Fáil secured ten seats.¹⁵² The total number of first preference votes cast for Fine Gael in the Sligo County Council elections numbered 11,505, Fianna Fáil got 7,808, the independents got 1,235 and Labour managed to get only 126.¹⁵³

Countrywide Fine Gael hadn't done as well as in Co. Sligo and after the local elections of 1934 Fianna Fáil was the majority party and was the largest party on fourteen councils.¹⁵⁴ Fine Gael was the largest party on only six; Carlow, Cork, Dublin, Wexford, Wicklow and Sligo and on three councils, Kildare, Limerick and Westmeath the parties were equal in strength.¹⁵⁵ A Fianna Fáil/Labour alliance ensured Fianna Fáil control of fifteen councils, while Fine Gael controlled seven.¹⁵⁶ The numbers of seats won by the main parties on all the councils throughout the country are shown in the table below.

Table 6.17: Number of seats won by main parties in June 1934 local government elections

Party	Number of Seats
Fianna Fáil	728
Fine Gael	596
Labour	185
Others	371

Source: Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin, 1987), p. 135.

¹⁵² Ibid., 30 June 1934.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin, 1987), p. 135.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

There does not appear to be much evidence of strong Protestant political activity in Sligo in the period of Fianna Fáil rule from 1934 to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. However, two of the most outspoken Protestant voices in Sligo during the period were the Protestant businessman and councillor George Williams and William Peebles, editor of the *Sligo Independent*. In 1934 Peebles criticised the economic policies of the Fianna Fáil government arguing that farmers and the business community were paying a heavy price for de Valera's economic plans.¹⁵⁷ At the end of the year he maintained that the Anglo-Irish Economic War was also creating an atmosphere of 'bad feeling between Irish and English'.¹⁵⁸ In 1935 Peebles blamed the economic troubles of the country on Fianna Fáil's policy of high taxation, and tariffs on imports and exports.¹⁵⁹ In July 1936 Williams was very critical of Fianna Fáil's housing and building programmes, arguing that the government was not doing enough to provide housing in Sligo and the rest of the country.¹⁶⁰ However, in May 1938 both men praised the government for signing the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which ended the Economic War and normalised trading between the two countries.¹⁶¹ By November 1938 the *Sligo Independent* reported that trade between Britain and Ireland was improving and exports in 1937 exceeded those of 1932 by over £18 million, and the local economy in Sligo was doing very well.¹⁶² With economic conditions improving once again, Protestant businessmen may have seemed less reluctant to become involved in political issues in the late 1930s.

However, during the Second World War Protestants in Sligo once again became more directly involved in local politics. On 20 July 1942 a joint meeting of the Sligo Chamber of Commerce, Sligo Civic Committee, and Sligo Citizen's Association was held in Sligo Town Hall to select candidates for the 19 August corporation elections. The meeting reactivated the S.R.A. and seemed to have been motivated by increases in local rates and taxes due to the corporation. It may also have been motivated by the fact that Fianna Fáil, a party's economic policies of which many Protestant and Catholic businessman had opposed, had been in power for over ten years. Protestant and Catholic businessmen in Sligo could have also been disappointed with Fine Gael in opposition and felt the need to activate a local organisation which would better represent their interests.

¹⁵⁷ *S.I.*, 4 Aug. 1934; 13 Oct. 1934.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 Dec. 1934.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 Mar. 1935; 2 Nov. 1935.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 25 July 1936.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7 May 1938.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 12 Nov. 1938.

By the time of the August 1942 local elections the government had passed the Local Government Act of 1941. The act introduced changes to local government, changing the number of members on local government councils and amending the constitution and election of certain urban authorities, boroughs and urban districts.¹⁶³ The act altered the number of seats on Sligo Borough Council, reducing them from twenty-four to twelve.

The S.R.A. selected nine candidates for the upcoming corporation election including the Protestant businessmen John Charles Cole, a Tea and coffee agent from Finisklin in Sligo, H.C. Lyons, Alex P. MacArthur, a businessman and the owner of a large bakery in Sligo town, and the proprietor of the *Sligo Independent*, William D. Peebles while the election committee of eighteen was composed of ten Protestants.¹⁶⁴

However, only the two Protestants, Henry Lyons and John Cole were elected for the S.R.A.¹⁶⁵ The other aldermen and councillor elected to the corporation in August 1945 were the aldermen, W.J. Tolan (F.F.), John Fallon (F.G.), A.J. Dolan (F.G.) and Michael Nevin (F.F.). The councillors were J. Gallagher (F.G.), J. Flynn (Lab.), W.F. Browne (F.F.), HC Lyons (Ratepayers), M. Hughes (F.F.), J.C. Cole (Ratepayers), P. Flanagan (FF) and P.C. O'Hara (F.G.).¹⁶⁶ In all five were elected for Fianna Fáil, four for Fine Gael, one for Labour and two for the S.R.A. The *Sligo Champion* was very satisfied with the results and praised the electorate.¹⁶⁷ However, the paper urged the councillors to reduce local expenditure.¹⁶⁸

Cole was able to keep his seat at the next corporation election in June 1945, and by then was the only Protestant S.R.A. member of the corporation.¹⁶⁹ The members of Sligo Corporation who won seats in the election of June 1945 were the aldermen W.J. Tolan (F.F.), J. Fallon (F.G.), J.C. Cole (S.R.A.) and J. Gallagher (F.G.); councillors J. Flynn (Lab.), A.J. Dolan (F.G.), M. Nevin (F.F.), M. Hughes (F.F.), Mrs Flanagan (F.F.), P. O'Hara (F.G.), M. Rooney (Lab.) and M. Conlon (Lab.).¹⁷⁰ Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael had four seats each, Labour had three and the S.R.A. had one.

¹⁶³ *An act to make further and better provision in relation to local government and to make certain amendments in the law relating to local government* (23 September 1941) Irish Acts Number 23 of 1941 (Irish statute book, Acts of the Oireachtas, Local Government Act 1941, <http://www.irishstatuebook.ie/1941/en/act/pub/0023/print.html>) (13 Mar. 2008).

¹⁶⁴ *S.C.*, 25 July 1942.

¹⁶⁵ *S.I.*, 29 Aug. 1942.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *S.C.*, 29 Aug. 1942.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *S.I.*, 23 June 1945.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

In early 1948 a general election resulted in an end to sixteen years of Fianna Fáil rule and a Fine Gael led coalition under John A. Costello took power.¹⁷¹ William Peebles praised Costello's signing of a trade agreement with Britain in August 1948.¹⁷² In September on a visit to Canada, Costello announced that the government intended to repeal the External Relations Act with Britain and declare an Irish republic.¹⁷³ The British government although surprised by the announcement did not oppose it and in 1949 the British parliament passed the Ireland Act under which Irish citizens would continue to be treated the same as British subjects.¹⁷⁴ William Peebles of the *Sligo Independent* made no comment concerning the announcement and simply expressed satisfaction that Britain would not regard Éire as a foreign country.¹⁷⁵ It seemed to permanently establish partition and cut any legal and constitutional connections between northern and southern Protestants. Much had changed in the thirty-five years since 1914 when Sligo unionists had campaigned so vigorously for the Union with Britain and now that Ireland had finally severed its constitutional link with the United Kingdom and had declared a republic not even a dissenting whisper was heard publicly from any member of the Protestant community in Sligo.

Politically Protestants and in particular Protestant businessmen in Sligo town were well represented through the work of the S.R.A. In the period from 1919 to 1925 five of the eight S.R.A. councillors on Sligo Corporation were Protestant. The party continued to prove to be very popular with the business community generally and in the period following the Civil War many more Catholics began to join the party, which indicated strongly that politics in Sligo was not going to divide along sectarian lines. In fact the S.R.A. proved to be an important organisation in uniting Protestants and Catholics with a common economic purpose outside the pro and anti-Treaty politics of Cumann na nGaedheal and Sinn Féin. However, the Cumann na nGaedheal Party seemed to broadly represent many of the interests of the S.R.A. and many Protestant members of the S.R.A. supported the Cumann na nGaedheal candidates in the general elections following the Civil War. Before the Civil War the *Sligo Independent* and *Sligo Champion* editorials had moved closer together in their opinions and both papers were strong supporters of the S.R.A. and the Cumann na nGaedheal Party after 1923.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 14 Feb. 1948.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 7 Aug. 1948.

¹⁷³ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), pp 565-7.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 568-9.

¹⁷⁵ *S.I.*, 11 Sept. 1948; 27 Nov. 1948.

In the corporation elections of 1925 both the *Sligo Independent* and the *Sligo Champion* supported the S.R.A., and the results of the election proved to be very significant as all twelve candidates of the S.R.A. were elected. Six Protestant and six Catholic candidates of the party took their seats in Sligo Corporation and it was an even more successful election for the S.R.A. than the first elections held under P.R. in 1919.

Overall in the 1920s and early 1930s the Sligo Protestant community publicly supported the foreign and economic policies of the Irish Free State. An S.R.A. councillor, John Jinks, ran in the 1927 general election as a National League candidate. The National League policies seemed to appeal to the Protestant and ex-unionist community as they advocated the economic opportunities offered by a closer cooperation with Britain. However, Protestant support for Jinks was not universal and in the 1927 general election Protestant members of the S.F.A supported Michael Carter, the Farmers' Party candidate in the Sligo-Leitrim constituency. Both Jinks and Carter were elected, which allowed Protestant interests in agriculture and business to be represented at national level.

The emergence of the Fianna Fáil Party had an impact on the S.R.A. and many of the party's councillors did not run in the 1928 corporation elections. In the years following the Civil War, Protestant councillors of the S.R.A. had taken an active interest in local politics, and worked hard to promote local issues. However, the Protestant community in Sligo did not appear to be a group that were shunning their civic duties and responsibilities in the new state.

The new Fianna Fáil Party did very well in the local elections of 1928. However, it seemed that Protestant businessmen generally were not supporters of Fianna Fáil's economic strategies and were quite satisfied with the policies of the Cumann na nGaedheal government. Thomas Stevenson in particular publicly praised the Free State's foreign and domestic policies in the early 1930s. When Fianna Fáil won the 1932 general election, the Protestant editor of the *Sligo Independent*, William Peebles, disapproved of the result and continued to criticise Fianna Fáil's economic and foreign policies in the 1930s.

When the amalgamation of the Ratepayers' Associations and the Farmer's Associations was suggested, William Peebles welcomed the idea and Protestants publicly spoke in favour of the merger. Protestants such as George Williams, William McElroy, James East, Edward Shaw, McKim Williams and Thomas Hamilton were prepared to air their views publicly, many of them representatives of their respective branches. William Peebles was keen to maintain a vocal political commentary and frequently passed comment on local and national

political developments especially in his support of the S.R.A., the S.F.A., Cumann na nGaedheal and later Centre Party and Fine Gael policies.

In the 1940s, Protestants were at the forefront of reactivating the S.R.A. for the corporation elections and two Protestant candidates were elected for the party. The declaration of a republic went practically unnoticed by Protestants in Sligo and there was no public Protestant opposition to the severing of the constitutional link with Britain, unlike during the 1914 Home Rule crisis. Sligo Protestants now saw themselves for better or worse as part of the Irish state. The strong Protestant interest and activity in local political movements and in national organisations proves that Protestants in Sligo did take on their share of political responsibilities in the new state and did not simply 'lie low, say nothing, wait and see'.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ W.B. Stanford, *A recognised church* (Dublin, 1944), p. 16.

Chapter Seven: Protestant Churches, education and confessional relations in Sligo

This chapter explores the various Protestant Churches and educational institutions in Sligo and the importance in maintaining a sense of Protestant culture and heritage. Terence Brown has argued that 'church life, church schooling, both at primary and secondary level' in addition to 'a plethora of religious and semi-religious youth organisations' allowed Protestants to maintain a separate way of life.¹ Jack White maintains that 'the system of dual institutions – school, university, hospital – enabled some Protestants to live in a kind of mental reservation, secure from any real contact with Catholics'.² The arguments of these historians use the Protestant community in Dublin as the main platform for their argument. There were no Protestant controlled hospitals or third level institutions in Sligo. However, the chapter investigates how Protestant Churches protected their congregations and how they interacted with Sligo society at large, especially in the period from 1922 to 1949.

The first part of this chapter examines the structure of the various Protestant Churches in Sligo and the influence of Protestant Churches on their congregations. Did the churches continue to provide a separate sense of identity for the Protestant community in Sligo or did they allow their congregations to submit to the Gaelicisation policies of the new state? An analysis of the strategies, if any, the church authorities in Sligo employed to protect the Protestant ethos of their communities will form part of this chapter. Linked with the preservation of a Protestant culture was the Protestant school system and this chapter investigates the significance of the Protestant schools in providing a sense of tradition and social cohesion for the Protestant community in Sligo. This chapter also examines inter-confessional interaction in Sligo and the type of relationship that existed between the Catholic and Protestant Churches, especially in the period after 1922.

The Irish Church Act of 1869 disestablished the Church of Ireland.³ Before that date the Church of Ireland was funded by tithes or local taxes and all religious denominations were obliged to pay to it. After disestablishment the Church of Ireland set up its own decision making council in 1870 which was called the General Synod and the Representative Church Body was also set up to manage the finances of the Church.⁴ Despite the political division of Ireland into Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State in 1922, the Church of Ireland continued to operate seamlessly across the border between the two states. The basic

¹ Terence Brown, 'Religious minorities in the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland (1922-1995)', in, *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation* (Belfast, 1996), p. 227.

² Jack White, *Minority report* (Dublin, 1975), p. 165.

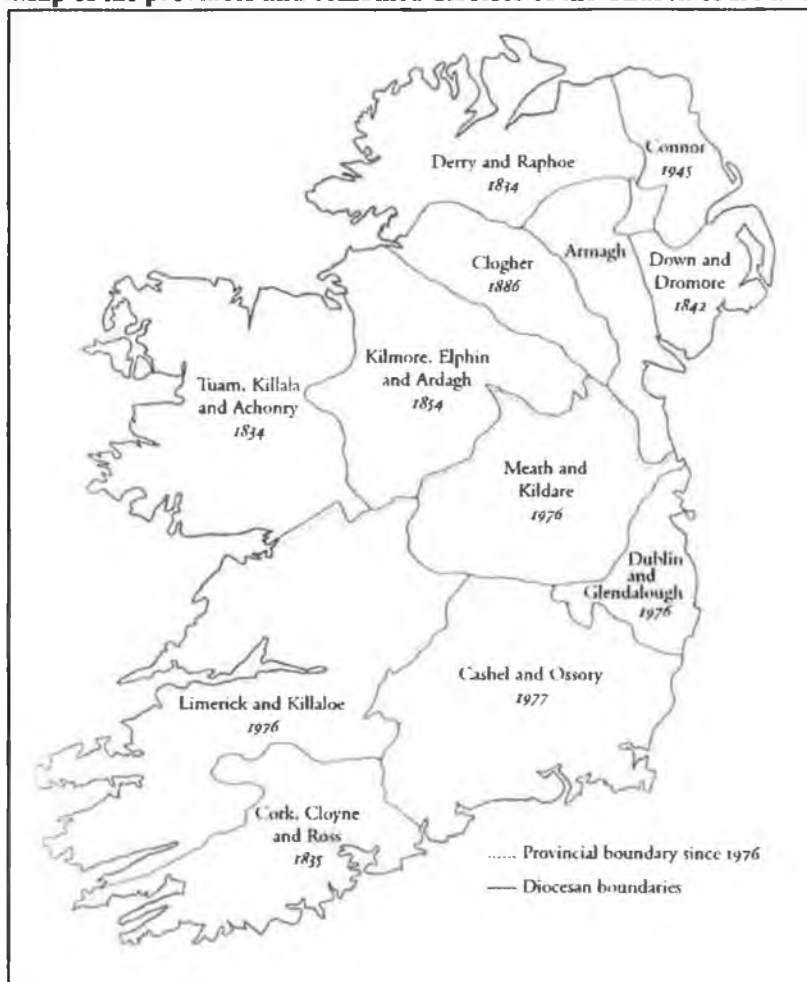
³ Alan Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland, 1691-1996* (Dublin, 1997), p. 201.

⁴ Raymond Refausse, *Church of Ireland Records* (Dublin, 2000), pp 27-8.

structure of the church is a system of geographical parishes organized into dioceses. Before 1833 there were four archbishoprics or provinces, Armagh, Dublin, Cashel and Tuam and twenty-two bishoprics or dioceses.⁵

In 1833 the dioceses were combined into twelve, each one headed by a bishop.⁶ Two provinces of the Church of Ireland, Armagh, and Dublin were created. As can be seen in the map of the provinces and dioceses of the Church of Ireland with Co. Sligo on the next page, dioceses crossed county boundaries and Co. Sligo is located in the combined diocese of Tuam, Killala and Achonry, which was created in 1834 and the dioceses Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh, which was created in 1854.

Map of the provinces and combined dioceses of the Church of Ireland

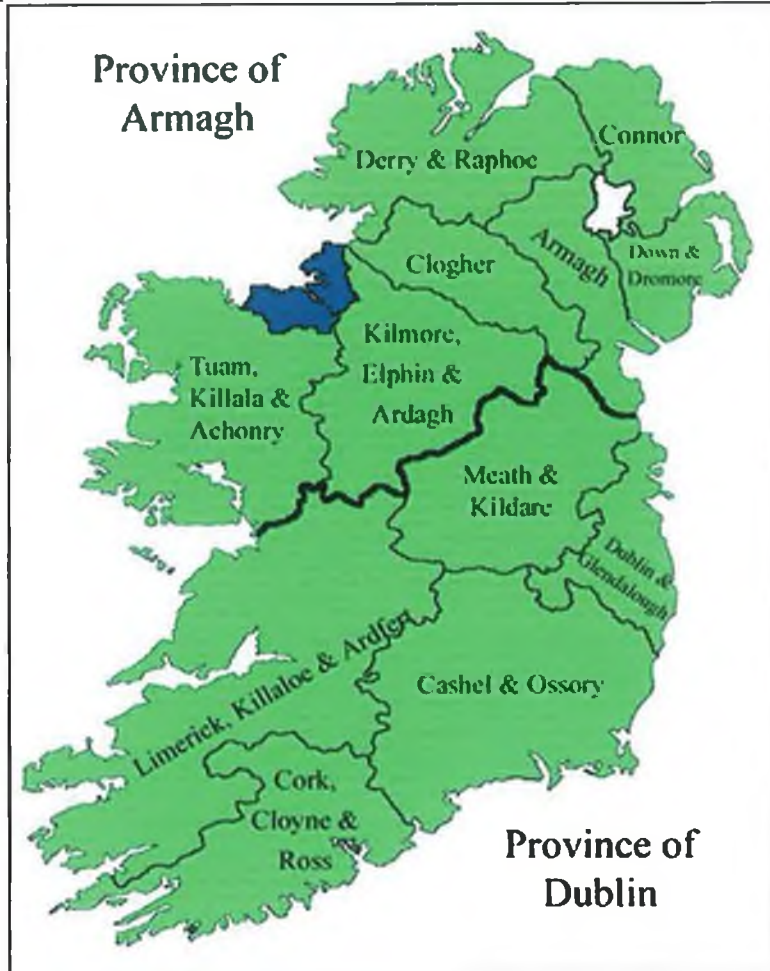


Source: Alan Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland, 1691-1996* (Dublin, 1997), p. 145.

⁵ Alan Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland, 1691-1996* (Dublin, 1997), p. 144.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Map of the provinces and combined dioceses of the Church of Ireland with Co. Sligo in blue.



Source: edited from the Church of Ireland website (<http://www.ireland.anglican.org/>) (29 Nov. 2007).

Map of the Church of Ireland dioceses in Co. Sligo



Source: edited from the Church of Ireland website (<http://www.ireland.anglican.org/>) (29 Nov. 2007).

The head of the five southern bishops is the archbishop of Dublin and the head of the seven northern ones is the archbishop of Armagh; these are styled primate of Ireland and primate of All Ireland respectively. The archbishop of Armagh is respected as the church's general leader and spokesman, and is elected in a process different from those for all other bishops.⁷ Canon law and church policy are decided by the church's General Synod and changes in policy must be passed by both the House of Bishops, and the House of Representatives which is composed of both clergy and laity.⁸ The most important changes relating to the Church of Ireland must be passed by a majority of two-thirds. The House of Representatives usually votes publicly, while the House of Bishops has tended to come to vote in private, coming to a decision before matters reach the floor of Synod. The General Synod of the Church of Ireland meets annually and any proposed changes in policy must be passed by both the House of Bishops, which is composed of all the bishops from the various dioceses and the House of Representatives which is composed of both members of the clergy and the laity from each of the dioceses.⁹

As can be seen in the map of the Church of Ireland dioceses and the map on the next page the Boyle and Riverstown, Calry, Sligo and Drumcliffe group of parishes are located in the diocese of Elphin, which is officially part of the combined diocese of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh. The seat of the bishop of the diocese of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh is St. Fethlirnidh's Cathedral, Kilmore, Co. Cavan. Part of the Killala group of parishes and the Skreen group of parishes in west Sligo are located in the diocese of Killala, which is part of combined diocese of Tuam, Killala and Achonry. The Ballisodare and Tubbercurry groups of parishes are located in the diocese of Achonry. The seat of the bishop of the Diocese of Tuam, Killala and Achonry is St. Mary's Cathedral, Tuam, Co. Galway.

⁷ Raymond Refausse, *Church of Ireland Records* (Dublin, 2000), pp 27-8.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Map of the Church of Ireland parishes in Co. Sligo



Source: edited from The Church of Ireland website (<http://www.ireland.anglican.org/>) (29 Nov. 2007).

The administrative structure of the parish consist of the clergy, which are a parish priest and possibly a curate, who assist the parish priest, two churchwardens, a parish clerk, a parish schoolmaster, and the select and general vestries.¹⁰ The chief officer of the cathedral in a diocese is the dean and the canons are clergy who staff the cathedrals.¹¹ The bishop appoints the clergy and the principal functions of the bishops are to ordain and appoint clergy and to visit their dioceses.¹² The bishop also appoint archdeacons who assist him in his diocese.¹³ Bishops are also responsible for the discipline of those that they had appointed.¹⁴ The vestry is composed of local members of the church who meet to discuss parish business. The general vestry is responsible for parish services and poor relief.¹⁵ The churchwardens are the principal officers of the general vestry.¹⁶ The select vestry is responsible for the maintenance of church buildings and the payment of parish officers.¹⁷

The various manuscripts and documents of the Church of Ireland are not held in one single repository and manuscripts can be found locally with the clergy, church officers,

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 12.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁷ Ibid.

parishes, dioceses, cathedrals and organisations that created the records. The R.C.B. Library, which is situated in Braemor Park, Churchtown in Dublin, is the Church of Ireland's principal repository for its archives and manuscripts and holds records from some 660 parishes, seventeen dioceses, and fifteen cathedrals, mostly in the Republic of Ireland.¹⁸ The N.A.I., N.L.I., the P.R.O.N.I., Trinity College, Dublin, and the Royal Irish Academy also contain many manuscripts and documents relating to the Church of Ireland.¹⁹

The N.A.I. hold the original records of a number of parishes, the tithe applotment books for parishes in the Republic of Ireland, the surviving records of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Irish Church Temporalities Commissioners and the indexes to matrimonial and testamentary records, collections of wills, a body of miscellaneous extracts and certified copies from parish registers, and copies of various diocesan and cathedral records.²⁰

The County Sligo Heritage and Genealogy Centre, located at Aras Reddan, Temple Street, Sligo, houses baptismal records, marriage records and burial records relating to the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church and some other religious denominations in Co. Sligo.

The Royal Irish Academy, located in Dawson Street, Dublin, holds many manuscript collections; one collection that contains much about the Church of Ireland is the Ordnance Survey memoirs and related papers.²¹ These contain detailed accounts of many of the parishes of Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century and include valuable information about buildings which had been or continued to be used as Church of Ireland churches and cathedrals.

The P.R.O.N.I. in Belfast contains copies of many church registers from the province of Ulster (9 counties) and some other parts of Ireland, the 'Householders Index' of surnames, Griffith's Primary Valuation, Tithe Applotment Books for Ulster, testamentary record transcripts and abstracts and many other records.²² Another repository that possesses much information on the architectural dimension of the Church of Ireland is the Irish Architectural Archive Merrion Square, Dublin. This archive holds files of the *Irish Builder*.²³

¹⁸ Ibid., pp 46-7.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 43.

²¹ Raymond Refausse, *Church of Ireland Records* (Dublin, 2000), pp 45-6.

²² Ibid., p. 44.

²³ Ibid., p. 26.

The types of records of the Church of Ireland include parish registers, vestry and cess records, applotment books, records of the Board of First Fruits, preachers books, Episcopal correspondence, visitation books, church publications and the records of local associations linked with the Church of Ireland. The parish registers record the traditional Christian rites of baptism, marriage, and burial. The survival rate of modern parish records has not been good and the fire in the Public Record Office of Ireland in 1922 destroyed the parish collections which had been deposited there. Surviving parish records can be found in the N.A.I. and the P.R.O.N.I. in Belfast and a number of parishes still retain custody of their own records. The most recent published listing of parish registers is Noel Reid's *A table of Church of Ireland parochial records and copies*.²⁴ The records of some 1,006 parishes were destroyed in 1922, but the registers of 637 parishes were at that time held in local custody.²⁵

Vestry records are an enormously valuable source of information on clergy, local families and their wealth and status, church buildings and exercise of religion, and what we now think of as local government services.²⁶ Other records that may illuminate local Church of Ireland life would include cess records, tithe applotment records, the preachers' books, the correspondence between bishops and clergy and between bishops of the Church of Ireland and state officials, subscription rolls, visitation books, records of the Board of First Fruits, the records of local societies and associations which were linked with the Church of Ireland and maps and drawings of Church of Ireland buildings.

The First Fruits was a tax paid to the papacy; after the Reformation it was transferred to a Board of First Fruits in Dublin, used to build and repair churches etc.²⁷ The Preachers' Books are another beneficial source, they record the dates and types of services, which were held in each church, the names of the officiating clergy, church income, the numbers in the congregation and comments on local events.²⁸ Another important source of information on local clergy are the subscription rolls, which record the ordinations of clergy and the appointment of parish officers and they also contain the nature and date of the appointment and the signature of the appointee.²⁹ The Diocesan registers record the appointments of clergy to the various parishes and the licensing of curates and parish registers may sometimes note the consecration of a new church or graveyard.

²⁴ Noel Reid, (ed.), *A table of Church of Ireland parochial records and copies* (Naas, 1994).

²⁵ Raymond Refausse, *Church of Ireland Records* (Dublin, 2000), p. 14.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 15-16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

As mentioned in the introduction the two Church of Ireland churches located in the bounds of Sligo town are St John's Cathedral and Calry Church. The Elphin Cathedral of St John the Baptist was built in 1730 by Richard Castle.³⁰ The original design of St John's Cathedral was influenced by the old basilica pattern of the early Roman architecture. However, many of these original features of the church were lost during extensive renovations carried out in 1812 and in 1883, when gothic features replaced much of Castle's work.³¹

The second church, Calry Parish Church, was built in 1824 and was constructed in a plain Gothic style with a tower and a tall spire.³² The stones used in the construction of the church were quarried on the spot, which explained the somewhat low cost of £5,246 15s for the building works. In addition to the construction of the church itself the local building contractor, John Lynn, built a glebe house and a number of vaults beneath the church.³³

The second largest Protestant denomination in Sligo is Presbyterianism and the religion was introduced to the town after 1609 by settlers from the Ulster Plantation and after the wars of the 1640s and 1690s.³⁴ Sligo is one of the oldest Presbyterian congregations in Ireland and the Rev Samuel Henry took charge of the Sligo congregation in 1695.³⁵ Sligo Presbyterians worshiped in various locations around the town until the present Sligo Presbyterian Church was built in 1828 and gave its name to Church Street. The church is a very simple limestone building with an attached school house dating from 1883.³⁶ Smaller communities of Presbyterians were based in Ballymote, in south Sligo and Dromore West in the western part of Co. Sligo.³⁷

Presbyterianism is a method of church governance whereby local congregations are governed by Presbyteries which are made up of representatives from the local congregations. There are no bishops in Presbyterianism as the Presbyterian polity was developed as a rejection of governance by hierarchies of single bishops (Episcopal polity),

³⁰ *National inventory of architectural heritage: an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), p. 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), p. 163. *National inventory of architectural heritage: an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 92-4.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Mary O'Dowd, 'Sligo' in Anngret Simms and J.H. Andrews (eds), *Irish country towns* (Dublin, 1994), p. 149.

³⁵ *General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, A history of congregations in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1610-1982* (Belfast, 1982), p. 753.

³⁶ *National inventory of architectural heritage: an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 100-1; *S.I.*, 1 Dec. 1928.

³⁷ *General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, A history of congregations in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1610-1982* (Belfast, 1982), pp 753-5.

but also differs from the Congregationalist polity in which each congregation is independent.³⁸

Specific roles in church services are reserved for an ordained minister or pastor. However, assemblies of presbyters, or elders, rule Presbyterian churches and each local church is governed by a body of elected elders usually called the session. A higher assembly of elders known as the presbytery governs groups of local churches and Presbyteries in Ireland join together to form the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Every minister is a member of the general assembly, and every congregation sends one lay elder. Every year the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church installs a new Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, who acts as a presiding officer for the rest of the session. After the Assembly concludes at the end of the week, the Moderator spends much of the rest of the year as its ambassador.³⁹

The third largest Protestant denomination in Sligo is Methodism. Rev John Wesley introduced Methodism to Sligo, visiting the town a total of eleven times between 1758 and 1789.⁴⁰ A small number of his followers opened a meetinghouse in Bridge Street about 1775. It was described as 'a small tumble-down building with a thatched roof'.⁴¹ In 1802, a new church was opened in Linenhall Street, and in 1832 this was replaced, at a cost of £800, by a plain limestone building in Wine Street, which is still a significant centre for Methodist worship in Sligo.⁴²

The Methodist Church in Ireland works on a democratic structure. Local congregations are the smallest units in the Methodist Church and congregations can be linked with up to six or seven other congregations in the local area to form what is called a 'circuit'.⁴³ The direction of a circuit is guided by the Quarterly Board, composed of one senior minister (Circuit Superintendent), other ministers, local preachers and a group of leaders from the member congregations.⁴⁴ In the period from 1914 to 1949 there were five Methodist Church areas in Co. Sligo. These areas were Sligo/Ballincar, Drumcliff/Carney/Moneygold/Ballinful, Riverstown/Behy, Collooney/Gortlowan,

³⁸ Finlay Holmes, *The Presbyterian Church in Ireland* (Dublin, 2000), pp 10-11.

³⁹ The Presbyterian Church in Ireland website (<http://www.presbyterianireland.org>) (29 Nov. 2007).

⁴⁰ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 114.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *National inventory of architectural heritage: an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), pp 100-1; *S.I.*, 23 Apr. 1932.

⁴³ The Methodist Church in Ireland website (<http://www.irishmethodist.org/>) (29 Nov. 2007).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

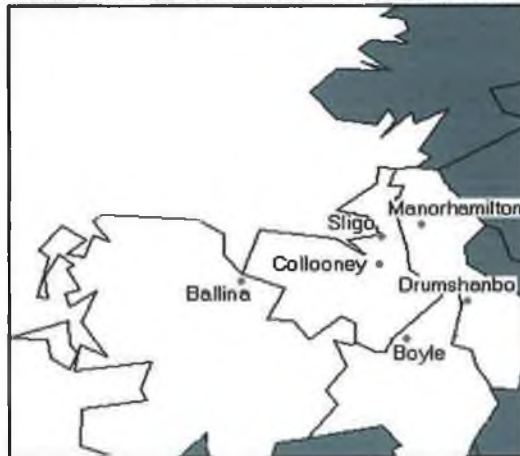
Ballymote/Tubbercurry. They formed part of the North Connacht Circuit of the Irish Methodist Church.⁴⁵

Map showing the five Methodist Church areas in Co. Sligo



Source: estimated from information in *S.I.*, 23 April 1932.

Map of North Connacht Circuit of the Irish Methodist Church



Source: The Methodist Church in Ireland (<http://www.irishmethodist.org/>) (29 Nov. 2007).

There are no bishops or ordained hierarchy in the Methodist Church. However, there are ordained ministers who conduct specific church services. Authority in the church is vested in the annual conference and the trustees. Today there are seventy-three Methodist circuits on the island of Ireland, which have been gathered into eight 'districts' to co-ordinate and

⁴⁵ *S.I.*, 23 Apr. 1932.

motivate at a more general geographical level.⁴⁶ Each district appoints a Superintendent and a Secretary to oversee the work and provide pastoral support to clergy. An annual conference, usually held over the second weekend of June, brings people from all over the island. Each year the conference elects an administrative and representative president for twelve months. The Irish Methodist Church is divided into eight districts Dublin, Midlands and Southern, Enniskillen and Sligo, North West, North East, Belfast, Down, Portadown.⁴⁷

Map of districts of the Irish Methodist Church



Source: The Methodist Church in Ireland website (<http://www.irishmethodist.org/>) (29 Nov. 2007).

The Congregational or Independent Church as it is also known formed the fourth largest Protestant denomination in Sligo. Andrew Maiben, a Scotch Presbyterian who was engaged in the linen trade, established the Sligo Congregational Church.⁴⁸ Around 1750 Maiben disagreed with Presbyterian doctrine and started his own prayer meetings in the crumbling ruins of Sligo Castle.⁴⁹ The Congregational Church proved popular and to cope with an increasing number of followers a small Union Chapel was built in Waste Garden Lane in 1791. However, this proved to be inadequate and in 1849 a site on Stephen Street was

⁴⁶ The Methodist Church in Ireland website (<http://www.irishmethodist.org/>) (29 Nov. 2007).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *S.C.*, 15 Aug. 1851.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

chosen for a new larger Congregational church.⁵⁰ The church, a limestone building with an adjoining manse and a school, was opened for service in August 1851.⁵¹

Protestantism in Sligo as in the rest of Ireland had been closely associated with the maintenance of the Union between Britain and Ireland. However, as Kenneth Milne has argued, most Irish Protestants saw their Irishness 'as belonging in an imperial setting'.⁵² The Protestant sense of 'duty to empire' is evident in the second chapter, 'Sligo Protestants and the First World War', where they formed, as we have seen, a very large proportion of recruits to the British forces in proportion to their numbers in Sligo. In the two years before the Great War, the Church of Ireland had opposed Home Rule and although the president of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, Archbishop Crozier of Armagh, had maintained in 1912 that 'our church knows no politics',⁵³ he was also keen to argue that Irish Home Rule would result in 'the political annihilation of the Protestants in Ireland'.⁵⁴ Leaders of the Church of Ireland in Sligo endorsed Crozier's view and in June 1912 Rev John Ardill, rector of Clary Church of Ireland parish in Sligo town, declared his church's opposition to Home Rule at a large anti-Home Rule meeting in Sligo.⁵⁵

The Presbyterian Church had also argued that the Union was in Ireland's best interests.⁵⁶ Thomas Stevenson, a grocery store owner and an elder in the Sligo Presbyterian Church frequently argued against Home Rule mentioning that the majority of his church was opposed to it.⁵⁷ In April 1912 the Methodist Church had also declared that they were officially opposed to Home Rule.⁵⁸ Members of the Methodist Church in Sligo, including Thomas Williams, a solicitor, Robert Coulter, a grocer, and Alfred Rowlette, a large farmer, frequently attended and sometimes spoke at anti-Home Rule meetings.⁵⁹

However, when the 26 southern Irish counties received legislative independence from Britain Archbishop John Gregg of Dublin, publicly urged members of the Church of Ireland

⁵⁰ *National inventory of architectural heritage: an introduction to the architectural heritage of county Sligo* (Dublin, 2007), p. 100.

⁵¹ *S.C.*, 15 Aug. 1851.

⁵² Kenneth Milne, 'The Protestant churches in independent Ireland' in James P. Mackey & Enda McDonagh (eds.), *Religion and politics in Ireland at the turn of the millennium* (Dublin, 2003), p. 65.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 65-6.

⁵⁵ *S.I.*, 29 June 1912.

⁵⁶ Kenneth Milne, 'The Protestant churches in independent Ireland' in James P. Mackey & Enda McDonagh (eds.), *Religion and politics in Ireland at the turn of the millennium* (Dublin, 2003), p. 66.

⁵⁷ *S.I.*, 17 Aug. 1912; 15 Feb. 1913.

⁵⁸ Kenneth Milne, 'The Protestant churches in independent Ireland' in James P. Mackey & Enda McDonagh (eds.), *Religion and politics in Ireland at the turn of the millennium* (Dublin, 2003), p. 66.

⁵⁹ *S.I.*, 29 June 1912; 17 Aug. 1912.

to support the new Free State.⁶⁰ At the beginning of January 1922 a united service of Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists was held in Sligo, where all the ministers endorsed the Free State and urged their congregations to support it.⁶¹ Later in the month Rev Ardill appealed to members of the Church of Ireland in Sligo to support the new constitutional changes.⁶²

Protestants in Sligo seemed to have accepted the change in government. However, they were politically separated from the large Protestant population in both Britain and the six counties of Northern Ireland.⁶³ The unionist political leaders in Southern Ireland, who were mostly entrepreneurs or landowners, returned to their business and agricultural interests, while southern Irish unionist organisations such as the I.U.A. and A.P.L. dissolved shortly after independence.⁶⁴

The Protestant Churches were the most obvious remaining institutions which could provide some sort of umbrella for the preservation of a separate Protestant identity. Terence Brown has argued that in southern Ireland Protestant bishops and ministers provided 'the kind of leadership in the community that had hitherto been provided by the landed gentry and substantial businessmen'.⁶⁵

In chapter six it was argued that some Protestant businessmen and landowners continued to provide a form of political leadership and direction for the Protestant community in Sligo through their involvement in the S.R.A. and the S.F.A, and did not entirely withdraw from public life. But what kind of leadership did the Protestant Churches in Sligo provide and what matters did they provide leadership on?

In the first decade of the Irish Free State the new government passed a raft of legislation prohibiting divorce, controlling the importation of contraception into the state and establishing a Censorship Board which outlawed certain literary works.⁶⁶ To many Irish Protestants the introduction of such laws was a clear indication that the Irish Free State was implementing the teachings of the Catholic Church and to many Protestants it appeared that

⁶⁰ Kenneth Milne, 'The Protestant churches in independent Ireland' in James P. Mackey & Enda McDonagh (eds.), *Religion and politics in Ireland at the turn of the millennium* (Dublin, 2003), p. 66.

⁶¹ *S.I.*, 7 Jan. 1922.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 28 Jan. 1922.

⁶³ R.B. McDowell, *Crisis and decline* (Dublin, 1997), p. 110.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 111-2.

⁶⁵ Terence Brown, 'Religious minorities in the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland (1922-1995)', in *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation* (Belfast, 1996), p. 226.

⁶⁶ Jack White, *Minority report* (Dublin, 1975), p. 114; pp 116-7; p. 120.

the old anti-nationalist maxim of 'Home Rule meant Rome Rule'⁶⁷ was beginning to be realised. It was not that Protestants were completely opposed to such laws, and many Protestant Churches largely agreed with Catholic teachings on morals and Protestant clergymen frequently preached a very similar moral code. However, when it came to issues such as divorce and contraception, Protestant Churches would have preferred to leave the choice to an informed individual. Protestant Churches were against the right of the state to legislate on private individual matters and disagreed with state interference in matters that were perceived by them to be private concerns.⁶⁸

There is an absence of any sermons or public statements by Protestant churchmen in Sligo regarding the strict moral legislation introduced by the Free State in the 1920s. However, Presbyterian and Methodist ministers in Sligo did make references in their sermons to what many Protestants regarded as the most destructive Catholic teaching affecting their communities, the 1908 *Ne temere* decree.⁶⁹ As we have seen in chapter one, this decree did not contain any obligation for the children of mixed marriages to be baptised and brought up as Catholics. However, in practice it seemed that local Catholic clergy insisted that the children of Protestant-Catholic marriages be raised as Catholics. The strict enforcement of this idea of what *Ne temere* was believed to mean meant that in Catholic-Protestant marriages the Protestant faith would die out after one generation. However, examination of the household schedules from Sligo in the 1911 census indicate that the offspring of mixed marriages were being raised as Catholics even before *Ne temere* in 1908.

In February 1925 Rev Charles Jackson of Sligo Presbyterian Church expressed concern over the possible effects on the congregation of those marrying outside of the church⁷⁰ and in March 1925 Rev S.G. McIntyre echoed Jackson's view mentioning the damaging effect of intermarriage on the small Methodist population in Sligo town.⁷¹ The greatest fears of the Protestant Churches in Sligo seemed to revolve around the continuing survival of a small minority, rather than any particular issue with the state's support for Catholic teachings. In order to examine how the Protestant Churches in Sligo dealt with the decline in the Protestant population in Sligo, I am going to take a look at the health of the various

⁶⁷ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), p. 288.

⁶⁸ Terence Brown, 'Religious minorities in the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland (1922-1995)', in, *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation* (Belfast, 1996), p. 229.

⁶⁹ *S.I.*, 28 Feb. 1925; 14 Mar. 1925.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 28 Feb. 1925.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 14 Mar. 1925.

Protestant denominations and their strategies to halt the dwindling numbers and in particular how they tried to transmit the traditions and values of their church to the young people.

As outlined in detail in chapter one, Protestants numbers in Sligo did not decline drastically in the immediate period after 1922. However, a decline in Protestant numbers from 1,131 to 855 in Sligo town was observed in the period from 1926 to 1946.⁷² However, in October 1925 the Rev Charles Rainsford of St John's Church was able to report that the Church of Ireland in Sligo was in a good financial position and had regular and large congregations.⁷³ However, some of the congregations in the rural parishes near Sligo town, such as the parish of Knocknarea, were declining and so were amalgamated with the Church of Ireland parish of St John's at the beginning of 1927.⁷⁴ The amalgamation of parishes by the Church of Ireland may also have been part of a process to combine local ecclesiastical units in a more efficient administrative framework.

The Church of Ireland in Sligo placed a strong emphasis on church youth organisations and this seemed especially significant after 1919. In March of every year from 1920 to 1949 a report appeared in the pages of the *Sligo Independent* outlining the activities of youth groups associated with the church with a particular weight attached to the annual charity sale organised by either the Sligo Girl's Friendly Society or the St John's Young People's Guild which were both connected with St John's parish. The event was usually held in the church hall where a sale of donated gifts and artistic displays of foods and materials made by young members of the church were sold, with the proceeds going to help various church projects.⁷⁵ In the period from 1920 to 1949 the members of the various Church of Ireland youth groups ranged from forty to sixty members and many Protestant boys in Sligo were also members of the 'Boy's Brigade' scouting organisation and throughout the period 1914-49 numbers involved in the Sligo Boy's Brigade ranged from thirty to fifty boys.⁷⁶

When it came to ensuring that young people in the Church of Ireland were imbued with the culture and heritage of the church, one of the most important institutions was the Co. Sligo Protestant Orphan Society. The society was a charitable organisation and had been established in 1839 and with an objective to provide for 'the orphans of deceased Protestants who had lived and died in the county leaving no adequate provision for their

⁷² *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*. vol. III, part 1, table 7, p. 8; *1936*. vol. III, part 1, table 7, p. 10; *1946*. vol. III, part 1, table 7, p. 8; *1946*, vol. III, part 1, table 1A, p. 1.

⁷³ *S.I.*, 17 Oct. 1925.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 29 Jan. 1927.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 6 Mar. 1920.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 7 Mar. 1914; 20 Mar. 1920; 14 Apr. 1934; 22 Apr. 1949.

widows and children'.⁷⁷ The organisation endeavoured to provide the orphans with a good home, clothes, food and an education. In order to raise funds for this purpose an annual bazaar was held, usually close to Christmas where stalls with goods were donated for sale with the proceeds going to the organisation. In March 1913 the president of the society was Sir Malby Crofton, and that year the society was responsible for a total of forty-nine orphans. The wives of Protestant gentry and businessmen were most actively involved.⁷⁸ As time went on, and Protestant numbers in Sligo declined, it became increasingly important that the orphans were educated in the Protestant faith and traditions and were fostered by Protestant families.

During the First World War the activities of the Society were curtailed. However, in 1919 the organisation was reactivated and in December 1920 a bazaar held in the Town Hall was described as being very well attended by 'all creeds and classes'.⁷⁹ In December 1920 there were forty-one orphans on the roll.⁸⁰ During the Civil War the society organised concerts and entertainment in order to raise funds, which were very well attended by both Protestants and Catholics.⁸¹ In March 1925 Crofton reported that the number of orphans under the care of the society had dropped from forty-one to thirty-seven and the annual bazaar had raised £554.⁸² In March 1926 it was reported that thirty-nine children were on the roll and the annual bazaar had raised over £411.⁸³ In February 1927 the number of orphans being looked after by the society increased to forty-five and the annual bazaar raised over £425.⁸⁴ In February 1930, the president of the society, Charles O'Hara, reported that the annual bazaar raised over £378 and there were now only twenty-eight orphans on the roll.⁸⁵

Catholics as well as Protestants contributed funds to the Protestant Orphan Society and the Church of Ireland Archdeacon George McCormick mentioned that of the forty-six subscribers to the society in his parish, 'one-third were the names of Roman Catholics' and that 'it was a great tribute to those Roman Catholic people that they were so ready to help

⁷⁷ Tadgh Kilgannon, *Almanac and Directory of County Sligo* (Sligo, 1907), p. 71.

⁷⁸ *S.I.*, 29 Mar. 1913.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 11 Dec. 1920.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12 Jan. 1923.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 28 Mar. 1925.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 27 Mar. 1926.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 Feb. 1927.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 8 Feb. 1930

the work of the society'.⁸⁶ The well-known businessman Harper Campbell Perry also 'referred to the support they had received from their Roman Catholic countrymen and women' adding that it was 'a good sign for the future of the country'.⁸⁷ It seemed that Catholic support for the organisation continued throughout the 1930s and 1940s and the number of orphans on the list declined steadily from twenty-eight in 1930 to eleven in 1949.⁸⁸ Catholic support for a Protestant charity, which ensured that Protestant orphans were raised as Protestants, is an important example of generosity on the part of a number of individual members of Sligo's Catholic community and is a significant example of respect by some Catholics in Sligo for the Protestant community. As the individual Catholic contributors are not named publicly, they may have possibly have been close business associates with Protestants or were even members of the same fraternal associations. In the 1930s and 1940s some Catholics joined the largely Protestant Sligo Constitutional Club, a subject which will be explored in more detail in chapter eight, 'Protestant social and associational life in Sligo'.

By the mid 1940s the Church of Ireland in Sligo was still vibrant and active. In January 1945 the bishop of the combined dioceses of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh, Dr A.E. Hughes, argued that one of the strengths of the Church of Ireland was the fact that it was a minority church in the 26 counties, and could therefore maintain its integrity and unity.⁸⁹ He maintained that 'the finances and management being largely in the hands of the laity, a sense of responsibility and co-operation had developed amongst their people since the disestablishment'.⁹⁰ Hughes was probably trying to take the emphasis off the declining numbers in his diocese. However, he claimed that in Sligo 'their people [Church of Ireland] were loyal to their church and took an interest in the affairs of the parishes',⁹¹ and his argument seemed to suggest that the Protestant community in Sligo was showing a strong interest in church matters.

In July 1949 St John's Hall, Sligo was chosen as the venue for the annual Church of Ireland Synod. At the meeting concern was expressed by many bishops over the finances of the church. However, they praised the health of the Church of Ireland community in Sligo

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 7 Feb. 1931; 6 Feb. 1932; 11 Feb. 1933; 6 Feb. 1943; 5 Feb. 1944; 10 Feb. 1945; 12 Feb. 1945.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 13 Jan. 1945.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

and in particular the range of social and cultural events organised by the young people of the parish.⁹²

The Sligo Presbyterian Church was also very active in preventing the decline in their numbers in the period from 1914 to 1949. In 1911 the numbers in the church in Sligo town stood at 286 and the church experienced a decline in the period after the Civil War.⁹³ As we have seen in chapter one on the Protestant population in Sligo, the Presbyterian population of Sligo town stood at 139 in 1926.⁹⁴ The church authorities did their best to stem the decline and they were determined to run social and cultural events to help the church survive.

In early February 1922 the church was still able to hold well-attended church socials and by March 1924 Sligo Presbyterian Church was able to report that the finances of the church were 'sound'.⁹⁵ Just as in the Church of Ireland, one of the most important strategies of the Presbyterian Church was to engage with the young members of the congregation and the various Presbyterian youth groups were particularly important in this regard. During his time as Presbyterian minister in Sligo from April 1918 to March 1922, Rev William Moore⁹⁶ had been instrumental in promoting youth groups in the church and he was particularly involved in the Sligo Presbyterian Young People's Guild (S.P.Y.P.G.). The main goal of the S.P.Y.P.G. was to promote Christian fellowship amongst the young people of the church through the holding of socials and musicals.⁹⁷ In March 1923 it was reported that the S.P.Y.P.G. has had a very studious and successful season, and in spite of unsettled circumstances, it has been doing very good work'.⁹⁸ By March 1926 it was reported that 'the Guild, with new blood and rising generation has stood these trials wonderfully'.⁹⁹

The Presbyterian Girls Auxiliary also played an important part in the church and in March 1926 it was reported that the numbers joining Presbyterian groups were increasing.¹⁰⁰ In November 1928 the young members of the Presbyterian Church played a very important role in the centenary celebrations of the church.¹⁰¹ By the 1930s, the Presbyterian Church in

⁹² *Ibid.*, 16 July 1949.

⁹³ *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXXV, p. 32.

⁹⁴ *Census of Population of Ireland 1926*, vol. III, part 1, table 7, p. 8.

⁹⁵ *S.I.*, 11 Feb. 1922; 29 Mar. 1924.

⁹⁶ General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, *A history of congregations in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1610-1982* (Belfast, 1982), p. 754.

⁹⁷ *S.I.*, 27 Nov. 1920.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31 Mar. 1923.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15 Mar. 1924.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 6 Mar. 1926.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1 Dec. 1928.

Sligo seemed to have been doing well and Rev A.W. Neill, on a visit from Belfast in May 1933, praised the Sligo Presbyterian Church mentioning Sligo's importance in providing a 'little sanctuary for scattered Presbyterians' in the south and west of the country.¹⁰² By the 1940s although the numbers of Presbyterians in Sligo had declined to about 100, the Sligo Presbyterian Church was able to report 'large attendances' at church youth socials¹⁰³, so there still seemed to have been an active interest by the congregation in church events.

The Methodist congregation in Sligo was smaller than the Church of Ireland or the Presbyterian Church. The Methodist Church in Sligo experienced a significant decline in the period from 1911 to 1926 with numbers falling from 153 in 1911 to ninety-four in 1926.¹⁰⁴ However, an indication of the Methodist Church's vitality is seen during the Civil War period and in March 1923 Sligo Methodist Church held a 'successful congregational social', and mentioned a 'gratifying financial report'.¹⁰⁵ Young people in the Methodist Church were also encouraged to take a leading role in church celebrations and were instrumental in organising social and musical events for the church.¹⁰⁶ In October 1923 Sligo Methodist Church reported that services were regularly 'well attended' and 'generous offerings were taken at all the services in aid of church funds'.¹⁰⁷ In March 1924 the Sligo Methodist Church at their annual church social was doing very well and over £700 was raised during the year for all purposes.¹⁰⁸ The following year in October 1925 the Methodist Church in Wine Street was reported as being 'well filled'.¹⁰⁹

In October 1925 the Sligo Methodist Church was also keen to emphasise the church's link with the wider Protestant community in Britain and Ireland and in a sermon praising the hard work of the Methodist community and their contribution to Sligo, the Methodist minister, Rev John Ritchie, ended by stating that 'we have membership in the Commonwealth of an Empire on which the sun never sets'.¹¹⁰ Ritchie's sermon, in addition to thanking his parishioners, was probably also intended to comfort the remaining members of his church by reminding them that although they were citizens of the new Irish Free State, with its Catholic majority, they were not isolated. The continuing political link

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 13 May 1933.

¹⁰³ *Census of Population of Ireland 1946*, vol. III, part 1, table 7, p. 8; *S.I.*, 8 Feb. 1941.

¹⁰⁴ *Census of Ireland, 1911, Province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXXV, p. 32; *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, vol. III, part 1, table 7, pp 8-9.

¹⁰⁵ *S.I.*, 10 Mar. 1923.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 31 Mar. 1923.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 13 Oct. 1923.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 29 Mar. 1924.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 17 Oct. 1925.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

between the Irish Free State and Britain was undoubtedly important to the remaining Protestants in the 26 counties.

However, Methodist numbers in Sligo continued to decline and in March 1928 although the finances of the Methodist Church in Sligo were described as 'very satisfactory',¹¹¹ John Good, an elder in the church, argued 'that owing to the number of staunch supporters of the Circuit funds who had left Sligo during recent years, the funds suffered in consequence and he earnestly suggested that there be no falling off in contributions by friends of the Sligo Methodist Church'.¹¹²

Possibly as a result of the decline in numbers the Methodist Church took the lead in organising joint celebrations between the various Protestant denominations. In early March 1925 Rev S.G. McIntyre of Sligo Methodist Church held a well-attended Congregational Social, which was open to members of all Protestant faiths.¹¹³ Joint services between the Presbyterian, the Methodist and the Congregationalists became a regular occurrence. The Methodist Church had adopted the strategy of organising joint celebrations when in January 1921, during the War of Independence, the Methodist Church in Wine Street held a 'united evangelistic service' with Presbyterians and Congregationalists, the two smaller Protestant denominations in Sligo.¹¹⁴ In the last week of October 1925, Rev H.M. Watson, from Belfast, when attending a joint Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian service in Sligo, spoke of the strength of the Methodist Church in Sligo.¹¹⁵ The joint services were important in providing a collective spirit amongst the smaller Protestant denominations in Sligo.

The Methodist Church had active youth groups, but the church had a much more aging population¹¹⁶ and there is evidence to indicate that the Methodist Church held more meetings geared towards the older members of the church. The Sligo Methodist Recreation Club organised outings, trips, card competitions and some sporting activities, made a strong contribution to church activities in the late 1930s and 1940s.¹¹⁷

The Sligo Methodist congregation also formed an important part of the Methodist community in Ireland and this is shown by the fact that during the last week in October 1930 the 'Junior Ministers' Convention of the Irish Methodist Church' was held at the

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3 Mar. 1928.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 14 Mar. 1925.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8 Jan. 1921.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7 Nov. 1925.

¹¹⁶ *Census of Population of Ireland 1936*. vol. III, part 1, table 7, p. 10; *1946*, vol. III, part 1, table 7, p. 8; *1946*, vol. III, table 1A, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ *S.I.*, 7 May 1938; 16 Dec. 1939; 6 Apr. 1940; 20 Dec. 1941.

Methodist Church in Wine Street, where forty junior ministers from all over Ireland attended'.¹¹⁸ Rev J.L. Cairns from Belfast argued that Methodism in Sligo had a bright future.¹¹⁹ Sligo again became the venue for the 'Junior Ministers Convention' during the last week in October and the first week in November 1949. A total of forty-five Methodist ministers from all parts of Ireland attended the convention.¹²⁰ The Methodist community in Sligo was small, although it was able to make a strong contribution to Methodism in Ireland, and despite the decline in numbers the Sligo Methodist community remained a vibrant one.

Possibly the most important institutions which preserved a separate sense of identity for the Protestant community in Sligo and equipped young people with a sense of Irish Protestant heritage were the primary and secondary school systems. The sense of belonging to a community that shared a collective social heritage, belief system and values was important to the Protestant minority and in particular Protestants put a strong emphasis on the idea of individual action through a freedom of conscience which they argued determined ethical and social behaviour.¹²¹ As Marie-Claire Considere-Charon has argued in her paper, 'Protestant schools in the Republic of Ireland', the 'focus of Protestant teaching was on individual values, as opposed to the more collectivist and dogmatic traditions of the Roman Catholic Church'.¹²²

In 1831 the British government established a new national school system for Ireland.¹²³ In 1836, the Christian Brothers, who had initially put some of their schools under the control of the state, withdrew from it.¹²⁴ By 1839 the Church of Ireland set up its own independent school system and by 1849 the Catholic Church became strongly opposed to the national school system as the church disagreed with mixed education and Catholics were forbidden from attending state schools and teacher training colleges.¹²⁵ However, the Presbyterian Church also strongly resisted attempts to impose a national school system in Ireland, and generally the only plan that all the churches could agree on was that their respective churches should control the education of the younger members of their flocks.¹²⁶ Considere-

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 Nov. 1930.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5 Nov. 1949.

¹²¹ Marie-Claire Considere-Charon, 'Protestant schools in the Republic of Ireland: heritage, image and concerns' in *Studies*, lxxxviii, no. 345 (1997), p. 16.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹²³ Adrian Kelly, *Compulsory Irish* (Dublin, 2002), p. 2.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*; R. V. Comerford, 'Nation, nationalism and the Irish language' in Thomas Hachey and Lawrence McCaffrey (eds), *Perspectives on Irish nationalism* (Lexington, 1989), pp 20-41.

¹²⁶ Donald H. Akenson, *The Irish education experiment* (Dublin, 1970), pp 163-78.

Charon has maintained that 'a cultural and social separation was then perpetrated through generations, whose purpose was to educate children in an environment consonant with the religious values and the political options of each community'.¹²⁷ She has also argued that Protestant schools were 'regarded as a shelter from the Gaelicising policies of the new State', and 'mainly considered as providing English culture and Irish history from a unionist perspective'.¹²⁸ With this idea in mind I wish to take a look at Protestant primary and secondary education in Sligo and discover how important the school system was in Sligo in maintaining a Protestant ethos.

By 1914 primary school education for Protestants in Co. Sligo was provided by a number of mostly Church of Ireland schools including, Achonry, Aclare, Ardagh, Ardnabrack, Ballinful, Ballymote, Ballisodare, Calry, Carney, Carrowkeel, Cliffony, Collooney, Coolaney, Drumcliff, Easky, Gurteen, Killerry, Kilmactige, Kilmactranny, Kilmore, Mount Temple, Seafort, Seaview, Templehouse, Templevanny, Tubbercurry and Skreen.¹²⁹ Three schools run by the Church of Ireland were located in Sligo town, along with a school run by the Presbyterian Church and a school run by the Methodist Church.¹³⁰ Sligo town also had a large model school, which was one of the most important primary schools in the Sligo town area.

The history behind Sligo Model School stretches back to the year 1831 when the Commissioners for National Education or the National Education Board as it was also known was established.¹³¹ The National Education Board was set up to manage a fund of £30,000 for the purpose of providing education for the poor in Ireland and was responsible for the allocation of grants to existing schools, for the payment of teachers, for the purchase of new equipment and was in charge of the appointment of pay inspectors.¹³² The board was also authorised to establish a model school for the training of teachers.

Initially only one central model school was planned in Dublin, which was built in 1834.¹³³ However, in 1846 the board planned to establish thirty-two local model schools in

¹²⁷ Marie-Claire Considere-Charon, 'Protestant schools in the Republic of Ireland: heritage, image and concerns' in *Studies*, lxxxviii, no. 345 (1997), p. 15.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹²⁹ IrelandGenWeb Project, Timeline of schooling in County Sligo (<http://www.rootsweb.com/~irlsli/school6.html>) (20 Aug. 2007).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Guide to sources on National Education, Commissioners for National Education (http://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/Nat_Schools/natschs.html) (17 Nov. 2007).

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

Ireland, one for each county.¹³⁴ The schools were to be managed by the local inspectors, while the National Board of Education would directly appoint the teachers. From 1868 to 1870 a Royal Commission on Education in Ireland found that the training of teachers through the model schools was too expensive and the practice of using the various model schools to train teachers was discontinued from about 1883.¹³⁵ However, the model schools continued to function as ordinary national schools. In 1922, with the foundation of the Irish Free State, the National Education Board was dissolved and its functions were taken over by the Minister for Education. In 1924 the Department of Education was set up and became responsible for all national and secondary schools in the Free State.¹³⁶

Sligo Model School was set up in 1863 as a multi-denominational co-educational school.¹³⁷ The building occupied about one acre of ground on the Mall in Sligo, which was an area dominated by residential housing and small businesses owned by Protestants. The walls of the model school were made from limestone, while the dressings on the front windows and the ornamental extras on the building were fashioned from Mountcharles sandstone.¹³⁸ The entire frontage was 150 feet and it was 125 feet in depth. The front of the building was in Italian character, with circular-beaded and deeply recessed windows. The building had a heavy eave, which was course round and cantilever blocks gave the building support. Sligo Model School consisted of a central block and two wings with an additional corridor connecting the building to kitchen apartments to the east and to the yards in the centre and to the boy's school and classrooms on the west. The contractor was P. Keighron from Sligo town and J. H. Owen was the architect. The structure cost about £7,000 to build.¹³⁹

Separate religious education was provided for both Catholics and Protestants.¹⁴⁰ However, Catholic bishops decreed in 1863 that no Catholic was to send their children to the model schools.¹⁴¹ In 1864 there were no Catholic pupils attending Sligo Model School.¹⁴² However, by the late 1880s there were a total of sixteen Catholics attending the Sligo Model School, along with 163 members of the Church of Ireland, thirty-four

¹³⁴ Donald H. Akenson, *The Irish education experiment* (Dublin, 1970), p. 147.

¹³⁵ Guide to sources on National Education, Commissioners for National Education (http://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/Nat_Schools/natschs.html) (17 Nov. 2007).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Sligo Chronicle*, 22; 29 Aug. 1863.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*; *Dublin Builder*, June 1862.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Donald H. Akenson, *The Irish education experiment* (Dublin, 1970), p. 305.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² William G. Wood-Martin, *History of Sligo, vol. III* (Sligo, 1892), p. 417.

Presbyterians and eighty-three members of other denominations. All denominations were represented on the teaching staff and the headmaster of the boy's section of the school was a Catholic.¹⁴³ It seemed that Catholics were attending the school because of the shortage of Catholic primary schools in Sligo town. However, in 1898 the Marist Brothers returned to Sligo after an almost twenty year absence and proceeded to establish a large primary school on Quay Street.¹⁴⁴ By the start of the twentieth century there were no Catholics among the 250 pupils in Sligo Model School, and Catholics were also absent from the teaching staff.¹⁴⁵ From 1914 to 1949 the numbers of pupils attending the Model school remained high, ranging from 160 to 170 students.¹⁴⁶

In 1931 the Marist Brothers were allocated two rooms in the Model school, which they occupied until 1972. The Marist school, which became known as St Mary's, was a preparatory school for entrance to the Catholic Summerhill College secondary school. About eighty Catholic pupils annually attended St Mary's during the period 1931 to 1972. Brother Felim, who taught in St Mary's from 1934 to 1948, and was interviewed in 1997, maintained that the two schools were strictly segregated and had separate entrances and playgrounds. He mentioned that 'the Catholics kept to their own school and the Protestants kept to their own school'.¹⁴⁷ However, Brother Felim maintained that there was no trace of sectarianism or animosity between the two schools and he said that he had a very friendly relationship with the principal of the Model school, Tom Guy and his wife, who also taught in the school. Both schools were physically separated from the start. However, according to Brother Felim 'they would co-operate in sport'.¹⁴⁸ Brother Felim also mentioned that there was a big inter-school sporting competition once a year in Sligo where all the local schools would take part, and the Model school and St Mary's would usually compete as one school.¹⁴⁹ So although primary schools were strictly segregated when it came to education, both schools co-operated freely on sporting occasions.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Brother Felim, interview as part of Sligo Model Arts Centre: History Research Project, 20 Aug. 1997 (transcript in the possession of the author), and *Centenary of the Marist Brothers, Sligo, 1862-1962* (Sligo, 1962), p. 14.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Isma Ewing, interview as part of Sligo Model Arts Centre: History Research Project, 15 Aug. 1997 (transcript in the possession of the author).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Brother Felim, interview as part of Sligo Model Arts Centre: History Research Project, 20 Aug. 1997 (transcript in the possession of the author).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

Secondary education for Protestant boys in Sligo town was provided by Sligo Grammar School, on the Mall in Sligo town, which had been founded 1907, as a successor to two other schools, Primrose Grange and the Sligo Diocesan School.¹⁵⁰ In January 1911 the Thornhill School for Girls, in Ardmore House on the Victoria Line in Sligo town, which later became known as the Protestant Girls High School was set up to provide an education for Protestant girls aged eleven to eighteen.¹⁵¹ Margaret Willis was the headmistress of the school from its inception to 1947. In the period from 1911 to 1947 the annual number of students in the school ranged from thirty in the first year to a total of ninety-nine in 1931 and an average of about seventy overall, about twenty-five percent of the students were boarders.¹⁵² The school had a very good record in the Leaving Cert examination and all sixteen girls enrolled in the year 1934 to 1935 achieved honours in their exams.¹⁵³ The school continued to educate girls until 1947, when it was amalgamated with Sligo Grammar School.¹⁵⁴

The first headmaster of the Grammar School in 1907 was Lieutenant-Colonel Caldwell, who later served in the First World War and was then succeeded by John Bennett. In the period from 1907 to 1921 between about forty to seventy boys, about seventy percent of them boarders, of various Protestant denominations, attended the school.¹⁵⁵ The school was always important to the Protestant community of Sligo. However, it became increasingly significant after independence, when the education of Protestant boys in the traditions of the Protestant community became fundamental to the preservation of a separate identity.

In May 1923 John Bennett, the headmaster of the Grammar School, reported that for the year 1922-23 the school was doing well financially, which he maintained was due to the increase in numbers and of educational grants earned by examinations.¹⁵⁶ The numbers attending the Grammar School had increased from about forty in 1919 to almost seventy in 1922. Bennett mentioned that the school 'spends its endowments on the boys, so that every pupil gets back much more than the value of his fees'.¹⁵⁷ He was proud to state that the Grammar School 'gained the highest distinctions in all the examinations for which it

¹⁵⁰ *S.I.*, 8 Oct. 1921.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28 Jan. 1911.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 1 July 1933; 26 June 1937; 4 July 1942; 26 July 1947.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 22 June 1935.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 June 1948.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 26 May 1923.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

competes'.¹⁵⁸ The following are some of the chief successes gained by Grammar students in 1922 – A.N.G. Kelly obtained a first-class exhibition (£40) at his Entrance to Trinity College, while in the Intermediate Examination (Middle Grade) G. Woods was awarded a £15 exhibition in the English and Mathematics group. He qualified for a £15 exhibition in another group.¹⁵⁹ W. Blackmore gained a £8 special prize in Latin composition. In the Junior Grade, H.B. Crawford won a £15 exhibition in the English and Mathematics group. He also qualified for a £10 exhibition in another group. T.J. Bradley was awarded a £3 prize in English and Mathematics and qualified for a £5 prize in another group. J.H. Boyce was awarded a £3 prize in English and Mathematics and qualified for a £3 prize in another group. J.N.K. Buchanan was awarded a £2 prize in English and Mathematics and qualified for a £1 prize in another group. J.H. Forbes was awarded a £2 prize in the English and Mathematics group.¹⁶⁰ Overall in 1922 the Grammar did well in state exams and seventy-five percent of those who sat the state exams achieved a pass grade; the percentage for the Ireland was forty-nine percent. Twenty-five percent of the Grammar School's students achieved an honours grade, while the percentage for the country was eight percent.¹⁶¹

Irish independence impacted on the school as a result of partition and Bennett, noted at the end of term in May 1924 that they had lost all six-counties pupils.¹⁶² Despite this development Bennett reported that 'our numbers have continued to show a steady increase' and during the 1923 to 1924 school year seventy-six pupils attended the school, which included fifty-eight boarders.¹⁶³ The finances of the school also showed a healthy improvement and in 1919 the income of the school was £300 and by 1923 the amount received by the school had increased to almost £600.¹⁶⁴ In fact the Irish government were very generous to both Protestant primary and secondary schools and state grants proved to be extremely important in aiding the continuance of Protestant schools, and Sligo Grammar School was no exception.¹⁶⁵ By 1924, as the number of students attending the school had increased, the amount of fees received by the school had risen by £1,000.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., 31 May 1924.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic state* (Dublin, 1983), pp 137-8.

¹⁶⁶ *S.I.*, 31 May 1924.

At the end of the school year in May 1924 the school seemed to be doing very well academically and over ninety-three per cent of the students passed the state Intermediate Certificate Examination, while the average for the country was much lower at sixty-three per cent.¹⁶⁷ Most of those who completed their education in the school, and could afford to, attended the third level colleges with a Protestant tradition such as Trinity College Dublin or Queen's College Belfast.¹⁶⁸ By the end of 1925 sixty boarders and twenty-six day boys attended the school, a total of eighty-six in all, and the headmaster, John Bennett, described it as the 'highest number ever reached by the school'.¹⁶⁹

The school was obviously benefiting from increased income and grants. After that numbers fell slightly, although from 1930 to 1939 the number of students attending the Grammar School remained high, ranging annually from sixty-five to seventy-five boarders and day pupils.¹⁷⁰ Throughout the 1930s the school continued its academic success and in 1930 the Grammar achieved an eighty-two percent pass rate in the Intermediate Certificate Exam; the pass rate for the country was seventy-six percent.¹⁷¹ In 1933 the Grammar School was tied for first place when it came to the highest number of passes with honours in the Intermediate Certificate Exam among the Protestant schools in the Irish Free State. In 1934 the school was fourth and every year from 1935 to 1939 the school achieved second place.¹⁷² These achievements were impressive when it is considered that the larger Protestant schools in Dublin were also included in the results.

The Grammar School was successful, and offered a wide range of subjects on the school's curriculum, but there was an issue over the state's policy on the Irish language. The Irish state was determined to use the school system as the chief vehicle for overthrowing the cultural dominance of the English language. An important part of the new state's ideology was that following the overthrow of Britain's political hold on the country, the British cultural grip should also be loosened. After 1922 the Irish Free State placed Gaelic culture, heritage, history, music and language at the centre of the curriculum and insisted that all students were required to pass Irish in order to obtain either an Intermediate or Leaving Certificate.¹⁷³ Terence Brown has argued 'that many in the Protestant minority

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.,

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 3 July 1926.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 28 June 1930; 30 June 1935; 25 June 1938.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 28 June 1930.

¹⁷² Ibid., 27 May 1939.

¹⁷³ Adrian Kelly, *Compulsory Irish* (Dublin, 2002), p. 8; p. 18.

felt that the language revival policy as it was developed by the Department of Education was an assault upon their English language cultural identity'.¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Dr John Gregg, archbishop of Dublin, made great efforts to cooperate with the state's policy on the Irish language and in 1926 he set up a preparatory training college to prepare Protestant teachers for the Church of Ireland training College in Dublin, which after 1922 prepared teachers from all Protestant denominations.¹⁷⁵

However, as Adrian Kelly has argued the Protestant community 'made no secret of their opposition' to compulsory Irish and they seemed unable to understand the desire of Irish nationalists to make an effort to revive the Irish language¹⁷⁶ and in May 1924, John Bennett, headmaster of Sligo Grammar School, complained about the state's insistence on compulsory Irish.¹⁷⁷ In May 1939, Thomas Blackburn, who took over as headmaster of the Grammar School in 1929, spoke about the significance of the Irish language in the education system arguing that 'it cannot be too strongly emphasised that Protestants in Éire are not opposed to Irish'.¹⁷⁸ However, he admitted that many within the Church of Ireland were questioning the policy of the government when it came to the restoration of the Irish language and he echoed the wish of the 1938 General Synod of the Church of Ireland calling on the government to conduct an enquiry into the education system.¹⁷⁹

Blackburn seemed to be at pains to indicate that an enquiry into the Irish education system implied 'no hostility to the government's educational policy in general or to the teaching of Irish in particular' and he maintained that Protestants were 'some of the greatest advocates of the language'.¹⁸⁰ He especially expressed pride and respect for President Douglas Hyde, one of the founders of the Gaelic League.¹⁸¹ Sligo Grammar School had always scored very well in the national pass rates for the Intermediate Certificate, and in 1938 the school had achieved one of the eighty-four available scholarships from the Department of Education valued at between £80 and £40.¹⁸² A pass in Irish was necessary

¹⁷⁴ Terence Brown, 'Religious minorities in the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland (1922-1995)', in, *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation* (Belfast, 1996), p. 227.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 229. Enda Delaney, *Demography, state and society* (Liverpool, 2000), pp 82-3.

¹⁷⁶ Adrian Kelly, *Compulsory Irish* (Dublin, 2002), p. 29.

¹⁷⁷ *S.I.*, 31 May 1924.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 May 1939.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

for the award of the scholarship.¹⁸³ However, it seemed clear that Blackburn believed that the Irish language should not be a compulsory subject.

The Second World War impacted on the amount of government funding available for secondary education and the reduced funding available for Sligo Grammar School was beginning to affect the ability of the school to continue.¹⁸⁴ Even though the school still had a high attendance rate of around seventy pupils during the war years, at the end of the school term in May 1947 there was a fear that the Grammar School would close due to insufficient funds.¹⁸⁵ However, the councillors on Sligo Corporation, all Catholic apart from J.C. Cole, called on their fellow councillors to support a motion in favour keeping the school open. At the corporation meeting on 10 May 1947 alderman John Fallon of Fine Gael proposed that Sligo Grammar School should be kept open.¹⁸⁶ Fallon argued that ‘the people in authority had a moral and a financial responsibility to keep the school going because it was a great concern and had produced brilliant men from barristers down to ordinary clerks’.¹⁸⁷ He claimed that the government should be made aware of the importance of the school to Sligo as a whole and not just to the Protestant community of the town, maintaining that the school had a good academic record and made a large contribution both directly and indirectly to the local economy.¹⁸⁸

The motion received cross party support on the corporation and alderman William Tolan of Fianna Fáil argued that ‘the closing of the Grammar School would be a calamity’¹⁸⁹ while councillor Michael Conlon of the Labour Party also spoke in favour of the motion maintaining that the school was ‘very convenient for boys all over the western counties’.¹⁹⁰ The corporation passed a resolution calling on the government to take action on the school.¹⁹¹ This indicated that regardless of political and religious background, councillors in Sligo realised the importance of the Protestant Grammar School to the community as a whole in Sligo town. It can also be argued that it displayed some evidence of respect for Protestant traditions, as it showed that Catholics understood the importance of the school to

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 2 June 1945.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 15 May 1947.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

the Protestant community. However, it could also be argued that the councillors understood the significance of the school for Sligo generally.

The efforts of Sligo Corporation in highlighting the advantages of the school for the local community paid off and through government assistance and grants from the Church of Ireland the school was kept open. However, it seemed an additional strategy in ensuring the survival of the school was its amalgamation with the Sligo Protestant Girls High School in 1948.

On 3 June 1948 the primate of All Ireland, Dr John Gregg, in the presence of a very large crowd, officially opened the amalgamated Sligo Grammar and High School. He spoke of the great contribution made to education by both Sligo Grammar School and the Girl's High School. With a surplus of over £6,000 and a combined student population of almost 150, the new school seemed to augur well for Protestant secondary education in Sligo.¹⁹² Today there are approximately 449 pupils at the school, consisting of 103 boarders and about 346 day pupils.¹⁹³ The role of Sligo Grammar School in absorbing the sudden impact of the change from British rule, which protected Irish Protestantism and British culture, to the imposition of a self-governing Irish nation, in which emphasis was placed on Gaelic culture and Catholicism, was extremely important to the Protestant community in Sligo.

So far this chapter has examined the importance of the various Protestant church organisations in providing leadership and structure for the Protestant community in Sligo, and the strategies employed by the Protestant Churches in preparing the young Protestant boys and girls in Sligo for a future in the church, especially in the period after independence. Sligo Model School and Sligo Grammar and High School proved to be vital educational institutions for imbuing young people with the Protestant ethos and heritage and in providing a bulwark against the Gaelic, nationalist and Catholic influence of the majority and allowing for a deeper sense of community amongst the Protestants in Sligo. However, I would like to examine the relationship between the Protestant and Catholic Churches in Sligo and ascertain if there was any interaction between the two churches. In order to gauge this I have taken a look at some charitable events held by Catholic and Protestant Churches, and have also discovered some evidence of public statements by Protestant and Catholic clergy directed towards one another.

¹⁹² Ibid., 5 June 1948.

¹⁹³ Sligo Grammar School (<http://www.sligogrammarschool.org/historyschool.htm>) (10 Feb. 2008).

An example of both communities working together was shown in 1928 when a committee was organised to raise funds for much-needed repairs to the Catholic Cathedral in Sligo. In July 1928 a 'Grand carnival' was held on the grounds of Summerhill College, the main Catholic secondary school for boys in Sligo, to raise money. On 15 July, the first day of the carnival, Edward Doorly, the Catholic bishop of Elphin, stated that 'one of its most pleasing features is the evidence it provides of the spirit of friendship which exists between the Catholic and Protestant people in the district. Naturally the Catholic people are supporting it to the very utmost and they are pleased to acknowledge that it is also receiving no inconsiderable support from the Protestants of the town'.¹⁹⁴ During the course of the week 15 to 22 July over 5,000 attended the carnival and it seemed that there were many Protestant names among the lists of subscribers to the repair fund and it was reported that the attendance each day included a large number of Protestants.¹⁹⁵ The bishop of Elphin argued that the contribution of Protestants towards the fund had facilitated the 'development of friendly feeling between the different denominations' in Sligo and he maintained that it was 'exceedingly gratifying, and it is a very happy augury for the future of our country'.¹⁹⁶

A couple of weeks later, on 13 August 1928, Catholic Rev Fr O'Beirne spoke of the cooperation shown by the people of Sligo in raising money for the Catholic Cathedral Repair Fund and he particularly praised the generosity of 'our non-Catholic friends' and expressed his gratitude 'to all, irrespective of class or creed, for the splendid spirit of generosity which they displayed'.¹⁹⁷ Protestants it seemed proved to be generous in their support of Catholic charities and charitable assistance did not appear to be one sided.

Less than a year later when it was reported that St John's Church of Ireland building was in need of repairs, Catholics were keen to reciprocate the generosity of the Protestant community. From 17 to 18 April 1929 the Church of Ireland parish of St John's held a bazaar in order to raise £1,600 to repair the church. On the opening day of the bazaar William Fenton, began by mentioning the 'good feeling between all creeds and classes in Sligo' and reported that even before the bazaar 'they had received very substantial assistance from their Roman Catholic neighbours and friends, and he would not like the occasion to pass by without expressing the thanks of the Protestant parishioners of St John's for the material support both in money and kind given them by the Roman Catholic people

¹⁹⁴ *S.I.*, 21 July 1928.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28 July 1928.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21 July 1928.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18 Aug. 1928.

of the town and district. The good feeling which existed in this part of Ireland, and particularly in Sligo, was really wonderful'.¹⁹⁸ Rev C.A. Rainsford, rector of St John's, who was also present at the opening of the bazaar maintained that the Catholics and Protestants of Sligo had always been eager to support charitable events organised by their respective churches.¹⁹⁹ The bazaar was very well attended and between donations, sales and contributions, a total of £1,100 was raised.²⁰⁰

In November 1946 Rev C.J. Tyndall of the Church of Ireland showed a similar acknowledgment of gratitude after over £500 was raised to renovate Calry Church on the Mall in Sligo. Tyndall thanked the members of the various denominations in Sligo, particularly the generosity shown by the Catholic community in the town.²⁰¹ By examining these three significant charitable events in the period from 1922 to 1949, there appeared to have been a mutual spirit of charity amongst the Protestant and Catholic communities in Sligo, which provides important evidence of interconfessional support in Sligo.

Besides mutual assistance in charitable endeavours, there was also a general feeling of respect among the leaders of the various denominations in Sligo, which is apparent at some public occasions. On 15 January 1930 the Presbyterian Church in Sligo held a luncheon in the Grand Hotel in order to welcome Rev T.A. McElfrick as the new minister. He had come from Ballymena to take up the post in Sligo and he admitted that he had 'hesitated about taking up his residence in a district where the majority of the inhabitants belonged to a different religious denomination'.²⁰² However, he went on to mention that the 'first and most cordial greetings came from the Catholic bishop of the diocese'.²⁰³ As well as praising the reception he received from Edward Doorly, the Catholic bishop of Elphin, he seemed quite surprised by the familiarity between Catholics and Protestants in Sligo.²⁰⁴ The Rev Alan Stewart of St John's Church, who was also present at the meeting to welcome McElfrick to Sligo argued that he was not surprised by the reception maintaining that 'there was good fellowship and friendship, which could not be beaten by any other town in Ireland and as well as help from their own people, they would also get help and kindness from the members of the Roman Catholic Church with their undertaking'.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20 Apr. 1929.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30 Nov. 1946.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 18 Jan. 1930.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

The feeling of respect by the Catholic clergy for the Protestant clergy in Sligo was also evident at the funerals of some Protestant ministers. When Rev Hugh Montgomery Knox, a minister for thirty-five years in the Ballymote Presbyterian Church, died in October 1923, members of the Catholic clergy attended the funeral.²⁰⁶ The funeral was well attended and Knox was popular with his congregation and with the members of other congregations in the area. The *Sligo Independent* reported that in addition to ministers of the Presbyterian Church, ministers from the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church were present in the procession to the graveyard at Carrownanty. Revs T. Quinn and C. Gallagher of the Catholic Church were also in attendance.²⁰⁷ They did not seem to have been at the service in the church but it appears from the report that they were part of the procession present at the graveside.

When Rev George McCormick, the Church of Ireland rector of Collooney and Archdeacon of Killala and Achonry, died in January 1935 large numbers of Protestants and Catholics from around Sligo attended the funeral, which was held in St Paul's Church in Collooney. The *Sligo Independent* mentioned that the church was 'packed to overflowing' and reported that 'huge crowds being unable to get inside the building at all'.²⁰⁸ The *Sligo Independent* also reported that the Catholic Rev Canon Cawley, parish priest in Collooney, was among the clergymen present at McCormick's funeral. Cawley had mentioned his fondness for George McCormick in a sermon on the previous Sunday, mentioning that 'as a clergyman, his transparent sincerity and unassuming modesty endeared him to all'.²⁰⁹ However, Cawley seemed to have been the only Catholic clergyman present at the funeral, and as both McCormick and Cawley had administered to their respective flocks in the small rural parish of Collooney, they probably became quite friendly with each other. It must also be remembered that this was the same George McCormick that publicly praised the generosity of Catholics in Sligo for their financial contribution to the Protestant Orphan Society in February 1930, and so Sligo Catholics may have had a particular respect for him.

However, it did not seem to be the norm for members of the Catholic clergy to attend the funerals of Protestant ministers and there may have been a change in protocol by the late 1940s. When Rev John Roche Ardill, the very popular and well known rector of Clary Church of Ireland died in January 1947, members of various Protestant denominations were

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3 Nov. 1923.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 26 Jan. 1935.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

present at the funeral, which took place in Calry Church.²¹⁰ However, no members of the Catholic clergy were reported to have been present at the funeral.²¹¹ There is also no indication that any members of the Catholic clergy were present in May 1947 at the well attended funeral of Rev William Popham Hosford, who had been the rector of St John's Cathedral from 1933 and had been Canon of Elphin since 1939.²¹²

Nevertheless members of Protestant denominations in Sligo were keen to record publicly their respect for the Catholic clergy and A.F. Moody, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, noticed the respectful relationship between the Catholic and Protestant faiths in Sligo, when he visited the north west in early March 1936. Moody remarked at a reception on 10 March 1936, which was held by Rev McElfattrick, minister of Sligo Presbyterian Church that 'he was especially struck by the warm relationship between the different denominations in Sligo'.²¹³

In early March 1948, the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian and the Methodist Churches held a meeting to welcome Brian Liddell, the new Presbyterian minister to Sligo.²¹⁴ At the meeting great tribute was paid by the representatives of the three denominations to the Catholic Church in Sligo.²¹⁵ Rev C.C.W. Brown, rector of St John's Church of Ireland maintained that 'Mr and Mrs Liddell will find a very friendly spirit on all sides'²¹⁶ while Rev B.H. Taylor, a junior minister of the Methodist Church maintained that 'he had found much unity and co-operation amongst all the churches, the Roman Catholic Church included.²¹⁷ Thomas Stevenson, a senior elder of the Presbyterian Church maintained that 'there was a great friendliness amongst all denominations in Sligo and he hoped that spirit would grow rather than diminish'.²¹⁸

Overall in the period from 1922 to 1949 there seemed to have developed a mutual respect between Protestants and Catholics towards their respective positions in Sligo society. It could be argued that both communities were endeavouring to understand that there were plenty of issues on which they could at least come to some form of accommodation on, especially as regards charitable undertakings. However, there is no

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25 Jan. 1947.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*, 3 May 1947.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 14 Mar. 1936.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6 Mar. 1948.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

evidence to suggest that the Catholic and Protestant clergy made any effort to entertain one another or become involved in ecumenical discussions.

It seemed that in the period 1922-49 Sligo Protestants were defending their traditional heritage and through their churches and educational institutions were maintaining a distinct cultural separateness and although the three main Protestant Churches in Sligo experienced a drop in numbers in the period from 1926 to 1946, the churches remained vibrant and continued to maintain a strong grip on the spiritual and material well being of their congregations, both young and old.

Chapter Eight: Protestant social and associational life in Sligo

This chapter explores Protestant social organisations and sporting clubs in Sligo and assesses how important these organisations were in aiding the transition from British rule to Irish independence for the Protestant community in Sligo and in acclimatising Protestants to the changed political situation in Ireland. Many historians have previously commented upon this aspect of the Protestant community in Ireland. Terence Brown has argued that sports and clubs such as 'tennis and golf clubs, rugby teams, the Masonic Lodges, all operated to allow Irish Protestants to maintain their social distinctiveness'.¹ F.S.L. Lyons has made a similar point arguing that Protestants and ex-unionists divided themselves from Catholics by a kind of social or psychological apartheid, where 'in all their social activities the minority would keep to themselves' and that Protestant parties, sports and clubs tended to be confined to Protestants.² This chapter attempts to discover if Protestants tried to maintain a separate associational life in Sligo, especially in the period 1922 to 1949 and investigate the importance of these organisations.

As this chapter progresses it aims to assess the importance of the themes of integration and assimilation as regards the relationship between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Sligo in the period 1914-49. The concept of assimilation implies that Protestants were losing their cultural heritage and were beginning to be incorporated into the larger Catholic community, while integration suggests that Protestants and Catholics grew closer by re-evaluating their differences.³ Also important in this regard is the idea of deference, by which is meant that Catholics as the majority were willing to give precedence to the minority Protestant community in certain areas.

A separation of faith and education for Protestants and Catholics may have been possible. However, fraternal and sporting activities might have allowed for more interaction between Protestants and Catholics in Sligo in the period 1914-49. This chapter identifies the main Protestant organisations and fraternities in Sligo and discovers if there were clubs where Protestants mixed with Catholics and if there were exclusively Protestant associations, which either Catholics were not permitted to join or felt uncomfortable joining. Sporting clubs are important in providing a sense of identity and in maintaining the cultural heritage of a community and sports such as hunting and horseracing, boating, tennis, golf,

¹ Terence Brown, 'Religious minorities in the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland (1922-1995)', in, *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation* (Belfast, 1996), p. 227.

² F.S.L. Lyons, 'The minority problem in the 26 Counties', in Francis MacManus (ed), *The years of the great test 1926-39* (Cork, 1967), p. 100.

³ Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic state* (Dublin, 1983), p. 204.

rugby, cricket and soccer may have allowed Protestants and Catholics to mix. An important part of the investigation of the Protestant associational life in Sligo will include an analysis of the impact of the Second World War on Protestant organisations. Musical endeavours were an area of interest in which both Protestants and Catholics in Sligo cooperated closely, and the chapter begins by taking a look at this area of cooperation between the two communities.

Sligo town always had a strong tradition of musical activity and in 1876 the town's first musical society, the Sligo Choral Union, was founded.⁴ In 1883 Dr John Froggatt, a member of the Sligo Choral Union and the organist in St John's Church formed the Sligo Musical Society, which organised concerts and musical recitals, and by the end of the 1880s the Sligo Choral Society had been formed.⁵

Another important figure in the early years of the Sligo Musical Society was John Delaney, the organist in Sligo Catholic Cathedral. Delaney had come to Sligo in 1880 and organised classes in piano and singing in various schools in Sligo. In June 1918 on the death of Delaney, Frank Manley came from Dublin and took up the post of organist in the cathedral and he conducted St Mary's Choral Society and is famous for giving the renowned tenor Count John McCormack his first singing lessons while McCormack was a student in Summerhill College.⁶ When John Froggatt left Sligo, Henry Loretto took over the Musical Society, which he carried on for more than thirty years. Henry Loretto had moved to Sligo in 1886 to be organist of Calry Church. He subsequently became both organiser and conductor of the Sligo Musical Society.⁷

Many of the Protestant Churches, in particular the Church of Ireland parishes of Calry and St John's in Sligo town and the Presbyterian Church, had their own choirs and participated in singing festivals with Catholic church choirs.⁸ However, they all cooperated under the umbrella of the Sligo Orchestral Society, which was founded in 1909 and appeared to have had a very evenly mixed Protestant and Catholic membership.⁹ In 1923 the Sligo Orchestral Society merged with the Sligo Musical Society.¹⁰

⁴ *Sligo Feis Ceoil Syllabus 1963* (Sligo, 1963), p. 61.

⁵ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 538; *Sligo Feis Ceoil Syllabus 1963* (Sligo, 1963), pp 61-2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 539.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 538-40.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The Sligo Musical Society seemed to be an integrating force in Sligo society. However, the organisation continued to have a strong Protestant involvement in the early decades of the twentieth century and even in the 1920s and 1930s the vast majority of those organising and attending musical events were Protestants although there was always a small group of Catholics.¹¹ A study of the names attending a large meeting of the Sligo Musical Society on 3 March 1926 in the town hall reveals that there were fourteen Catholics and forty-one Protestant participants.¹² By the mid 1940s Protestants still dominated the organising committee of Sligo Musical Society and ten members of the twelve were Protestant.¹³

One of the most important people involved throughout the period 1914 to his death in 1948 was Henry Franklin. Franklin was born in Manchester and moved to Ireland when he was a young man. He was a music teacher in Castlebar before he moved to Sligo in the 1890s and became one of the chief musical organisers in Sligo until his death in 1948. He was a leading violinist with the Sligo Musical Society and was the founder of the Sligo Orchestral Society in 1909 and performed symphonies and overtures winning first prize on three occasions at the Feis Ceoil in Dublin.¹⁴ He also taught music in Summerhill College, the Ursuline Convent and the Protestant Girl's High School. His wife and two sons were also involved in music and his son Mark was an organist in St John's Church. In January 1922 Mark Franklin became conductor of the Sligo Musical Society and continued in this role until his death in 1948.¹⁵

However, it was Henry Loretto that laid the foundations for one of the most successful and long lasting cultural organisations in Sligo. In 1903 Loretto began to organise an annual Feis in Sligo on the lines of Feis Ceoil, which had been organised in Dublin in 1897. He had been persuaded to do so by the visit of the famous Irish-American baritone, Denis O'Sullivan, to Sligo in early 1903.¹⁶ O'Sullivan had been invited by the Sligo Musical Society as a guest artiste at one of their concerts and encouraged the gathered crowd to form a musical competition along the lines of Feis Ceoil in Dublin. Some of the most prominent founding members of Feis Ceoil included the Protestant unionists, Mr and Mrs Henry Loretto, Mr and Mrs Henry Franklin, Mr and Mrs Alex Crichton of Carrowgarry, Mr and Mrs Robert Smylie and Mr Arthur Jackson, and the Catholics, Mr Frank Manley, organist,

¹¹ *S.I.*, 8 Mar 1924.

¹² *Ibid.*, 23 Mar. 1924.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 14 Apr. 1945.

¹⁴ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 539.

¹⁵ *S.I.*, 31 Jan. 1948.

¹⁶ *Sligo Feis Ceoil Syllabus 1963* (Sligo, 1963), p. 63.

Sligo Cathedral and Mr P.J. Murray, organist at the Holy Cross Dominican Church in Sligo.¹⁷

Protestant unionists dominated the Feis Ceoil committee and the Feis received notable publicity from the *Sligo Independent*, where Robert Symilie worked at the time before founding his own newspaper.¹⁸ However, the nationalist *Sligo Champion* was also keen to support the new Feis and both called on the Sligo public to take part in Feis Ceoil.¹⁹

The first competitions held by Sligo Feis Ceoil took place over two days in June 1903 and consisted of vocal and instrumental music and Irish dancing. Some years later, an elocution section was added and the feis was extended to four or five days.²⁰ Feis Ceoil proved to be very popular with Protestant and Catholic musicians, singers and dancers, especially in the period after the Civil War. In April 1924 the president of Feis Ceoil was Lady Georgina Gore-Booth, and the vice-presidents were Mrs Alice Jackson and the Catholic Rev Fr P. O'Leary. At this time the Executive Committee of Feis Ceoil consisted of thirteen Protestants and only three Catholics. The musical sub-committee consisted of Alex Crichton, Henry Franklin and eight other Protestants and two Catholics. The secretary of the Ladies Committee was Miss Madeline Wynne and six Protestant women and two Catholic women assisted her. In the early 1920s Protestants dominated the various committees of Feis Ceoil.²¹ This did not seem to have been because of any form of discrimination and had more to do with the fact that the feis simply had a strong tradition of Protestant involvement.

At the concluding day of Feis Ceoil at the end of April in 1925 the vice-president, Rev Fr O'Leary praised the hard work and commitment of the president Lady Gore-Booth and the secretary Madeline Wynne.²² By June 1929 there were more Catholics on the list of committee members.²³ However, it still seemed to be a particularly Protestant organised Feis and in July 1939 some of the more active members of the Feis Ceoil committee included the president Georgina Gore Booth and the vice-president Louisa Crofton. Of the other fifteen active members of the committee, twelve were Protestant.²⁴ In 1939 the Feis

¹⁷ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 34.

¹⁸ *S.I.*, 12, 21 Mar. 1913.

¹⁹ *S.C.*, 12 Mar. 1903.

²⁰ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 34.

²¹ *S.I.*, 26 Apr. 1924.

²² *Ibid.*, 25 Apr. 1925.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1 June 1929.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 July 1939.

proved to be very popular and that year they had received over 1,000 entries.²⁵ In April 1945 the Feis received a record number of entries, 1,300, and there were four centres of competition around Sligo town; the Catholic Gillooly Hall, St John's Church of Ireland Hall, the Methodist Hall and Presbyterian Hall. A list of the competitors' names indicates that they were from mixed religious backgrounds.²⁶ Georgina Gore Booth was still the president and the officers of the organising committee were still largely Protestant. However, the Catholic Rev Vincent Hanley was one of the vice-presidents.²⁷

The other major music festival held in Sligo was held under the auspices of Feis Shligigh and the feis was always closely associated with the Sligo Branch of the Gaelic League. The Gaelic League, founded in 1893, was an organisation committed to placing the Irish language at the heart of Irish nationalism. The movement was successful in making Irish a compulsory matriculation subject for the National University of Ireland, and was influential in gaining the support of both nationalist politicians and their followers for the revival of the Irish language.²⁸

The Sligo branch of the Gaelic League traces its formation back to 1899 when the Bishop of Elphin, Dr Clancy, invited Fr M.P. O'Hickey, Professor of Irish at Maynooth College, to give a public lecture in Sligo on the aims and objectives of the Gaelic League. In 1903 the Sligo Branch of the Gaelic League was formed under the presidency of Fr John Hayes, who later became president of University College Galway.²⁹ By 1907 the Sligo Branch of the Gaelic League succeeded in getting Irish taught in all the Catholic primary and secondary schools in Sligo town, as well as in many of the rural districts in the county.³⁰

However, in 1907 the local historian and businessman and nationalist councillor, Tadgh Kilgannon noted that the Gaelic League had 'not succeeded in having the national language introduced into the schools of any other denomination'.³¹ A possible reason for this was the predominance of Catholic clergy in the Sligo Branch of the Gaelic League. A list of the prominent members of the Sligo Branch of the Gaelic League in 1907 included the president of the branch Rev J. Hynes, the three vice-presidents, Rev P. Forde, nationalist councillor

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ S.C., 7 Apr. 1945.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ R. V. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003), p. 141.

²⁹ Tadgh Kilgannon, *Almanac and directory of County Sligo* (Sligo, 1907), p. 73.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Daniel O'Donnell and John Conroy, the two secretaries, Rev T. O'Kelly, M. F. Conlon, and the treasurer D. Grimes.³²

R.V. Comerford has maintained that the Gaelic League 'was not from the beginning a sign of division between nationalist and unionist. As proselytising missionaries, as scholars, and as revivalists, Protestants had been strongly associated with the Irish language throughout the century'.³³ However, he also notes that in the early part of the twentieth century Catholicism was becoming increasingly associated with the Irish language and nationalism and although it was never the intention of the Gaelic League propagandists, the language issue was being absorbed into the 'wider politics of the period'.³⁴

In September 1903 Feis Shligigh was launched by Fr John Hayes and was opened by Dr Clancy, the Catholic Bishop of Elphin. Pádraig Pearse delivered a lecture entitled 'The Saving of a Nation' at a meeting in Sligo Town Hall.³⁵ The key founding members were members of the Catholic clergy and included Fr John Hayes, Dr Clancy, Dean Hynes and Fr Crehan. However, Douglas Hyde, a member of the Church of Ireland and the son of a minister, who had been born in Kilmactranny in Co. Sligo and had spent the first seven years of his life in the county, had a particular association with the Gaelic League in Sligo. No doubt the foundation of Feis Ceoil had encouraged the nationalists of Sligo to set up Feis Shligigh and a strong aspect of Feis Shligigh was its focus on the Irish language.³⁶ However, there was never any animosity between Feis Shligigh and Feis Ceoil and at their first A.G.M. the Feis Ceoil committee passed a vote of congratulations 'to our sister Feis'³⁷ on the success of their first festival and the *Sligo Champion* and *Sligo Independent* reported on both Feiseanna³⁸ while Sligo Protestants also took part in the competitions from the very start, especially in the musical competitions.³⁹ However, they were not involved in the organising committee.⁴⁰

Feis Shligigh attracted many competitors in connection with its vocal and instrumental classes, which included both traditional and modern Irish music. The syllabus offered valuable trophies for several competitions of local interest and the strong association with

³² Ibid.

³³ R.V. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003), p. 142.

³⁴ Ibid., pp 142-4.

³⁵ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 34.

³⁶ *S.C.*, 12 Sept. 1903; 16 Sept. 1903.

³⁷ *S.I.*, 10 Oct. 1903.

³⁸ *S.C.*, 17 Oct. 1903; *S.I.*, 17 Oct. 1903.

³⁹ Ibid., 4 July 1903; *S.C.*, 4 July 1903.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Gaelic culture ensured that both Pádraig Pearse and Dr Douglas Hyde adjudicated the Irish language competitions for the first two years of the feis.⁴¹ From 1904 to 1909, Feis Shligigh held competitions during Easter week. Both Feiseanna claimed record entries in the two years 1908 and 1909, but in 1910 Feis Shligigh experienced a decline in interest. The *Sligo Champion* expressed concern over the loss of Feis Shligigh and in particular the Irish language dimension.⁴² However, in 1910 Feis Ceoil began to hold an Irish language competition, and indicated that a feis dominated by Protestant unionists was eager to embrace Gaelic heritage and provides evidence of cultural integration. However, Robert Smyllie, the editor and owner of the *Sligo Times* and a founding member of Feis Ceoil and himself a participant in singing competitions, argued that 'the Feis Ceoil was organised for the purpose of propagating Irish music, and music in general'.⁴³ Smyllie was keen to promote the Irish musical cultural aspect of the Feis and not of course the desire of some Irish nationalists whose wish was to use the Feis movement to develop the political dimension the Irish language.⁴⁴

In 1929 a Feis Shligigh committee was formed and on Easter Sunday, 1930, Feis Shligigh was revived under the auspices of Sligo Corporation and opened by the mayor, William Fraser Browne, a member of the Fianna Fáil Party. The Feis Shligigh committee included Matt Joyce, Joe McMorrough, Frank Morrison, W.J. Tolan, D.A. Mulcahy, Sean Carroll, Pearse Devins, Jimmy Keaveney, Charlie Dolan, Sean Power, William Fraser Browne, Frank Browne, May Glynn, May McGowan and Gabriel Fallon.⁴⁵ Through many of the committee members, and in particular through Robert Bradshaw, who had encouraged the resumption of an Irish language focused feis in the *Connachtman* in the early 1920s⁴⁶, Feis Shligigh was once again strongly associated with Irish nationalism and the feis was opened in memory of 'Sligo's Noble Six'.⁴⁷

Sligo's Noble Six were Vol. Joseph Banks, Vol. Thomas Langan, Lieut. Paddy Carroll, Capt. Harry Benson, Brigadier Seamus Devins, T.D., and Adjutant Brian MacNeill, son of Provisional Government minister Eoin MacNeill.⁴⁸ They had all been members of the anti-Treaty I.R.A. forces and were killed by pro-Treaty troops in September 1922 during the

⁴¹ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 540.

⁴² *S.C.*, 2 Apr. 1910.

⁴³ *S.T.*, 16 June 1911.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; R.V. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003), p. 141.

⁴⁵ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 34.

⁴⁶ John C. McTernan, *A Sligo miscellany* (Dublin, 2000), p. 309; p. 532.

⁴⁷ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 34.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Civil War in the Ballintrillick-Glencar area of north Sligo. According to an official government report they were surprised and killed while preparing an ambush.⁴⁹ The anti-Treaty forces claimed that they were shot after they had surrendered and had been disarmed. The action was carried out by pro-Treaty troops from the Midland Division who left the area after the shootings and although conclusive evidence is lacking, local historian Joe McGowan and Michael Farry in his study on Sligo during the Civil War have maintained that the anti-Treaty version of events is the most reliable.⁵⁰

Either way the six men were declared to be martyrs by anti-Treaty supporters, and for many years after the Civil War there were pilgrimages to the place of their deaths. The fact that the feis was opened in their memory reflects the political make-up of Sligo Corporation at this time, which was dominated by members of the Fianna Fáil Party, many of whose members had passionately opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty. In his speech, the mayor, William Fraser Browne, made a plea for the Irish language, traditions and customs. Even though the original committee members of Feis Shligigh were almost exclusively Catholic, energetic committee members included the Protestants, Nellie Thompson, Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) Matron, who successfully managed the Feis's finances, and was described by the *Sligo Champion* as 'the best collector of members' subscriptions'⁵¹ and Frank Browne and his brother, William Fraser Browne who was mayor, were very active in promoting and advertising the Feis.⁵²

In addition to music, Protestant social and fraternal clubs such as the Y.M.C.A., the Sligo Constitutional Club and the Freemasons also formed a very important part of Protestant culture in Sligo. This chapter examines the significance of these institutions for the Protestant community of Sligo town and county in easing the transition for Protestants from political Union with Britain to an independent Free State and to investigate if any Catholics joined these clubs in the period from 1914 to 1949.

The Y.M.C.A. was founded in Sligo in 1867 and meetings took place in the Protestant Hall, which was a plain limestone building at the end of an archway next to the Congregational Church on Stephen Street in Sligo town.⁵³ The main aims of the organisation were to promote the moral, physical, and intellectual improvement of young

⁴⁹ Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 84.

⁵⁰ Joe McGowan, *In the shadow of Benbulbin* (Manorhamilton, 1993), p. 134; Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), pp 84-5.

⁵¹ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 34.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Tadgh Kilgannon, *Almanac and directory of County Sligo* (Sligo, 1907), p. 72.

men. Meetings were usually held once a week from October to April and the organisation had a good mix of classes and professions including businessmen, clergymen of the various Protestant denominations, clerks, bankers, agents, editors and government officials.⁵⁴ The organisation held debates, essays, papers, concerts, billiard and card competitions.⁵⁵ In 1884 a branch of the Young Women's Christian Association had been founded in Wine Street Sligo.⁵⁶ In 1913 the chief organising force behind the Y.M.C.A. was the Protestant landowner Philip Perceval. All Christians, regardless of denomination, were permitted to join the association, although it appeared that the membership was exclusively Protestant and by May 1914 the Y.M.C.A. had a total of 150 members.⁵⁷

It seemed that young Catholic men in Sligo were more inclined to join fraternal organisations such as the Catholic Institute, which had been established in 1880 as the Catholic Literary Society in Temple Street.⁵⁸ The Catholic Institute was a similar organisation to the Y.M.C.A. and met on a weekly basis. One of the most important objectives of the organisation was to improve the educational opportunities of young Catholics in Sligo. The Catholic Institute met once weekly and offered classes and lectures in various subjects. In 1914 the membership of the Catholic Institute was around 100, and stood at about that figure until the late-1940s.⁵⁹

Table 8.1: Y.M.C.A. membership numbers in selected years 1914 to 1949.

Year	Membership numbers
1914	150
1915	150
1918	150
1925	95
1926	112
1931	89
1935	80
1939	90
1944	100
1949	100

Source: *S.I.*, May 1914-May 1949.

During the First World War members of the Y.M.C.A. in Sligo joined the army in large numbers and by January 1916 seventy-three members of the Y.M.C.A. were serving in the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵⁷ *S.I.*, 8 Mar. 1913; 17 May 1913.

⁵⁸ Tadgh Kilgannon, *Almanac and directory of County Sligo* (Sligo, 1907), p. 71.

⁵⁹ *S.C.*, 16 May 1914; 2 May 1925; 11 May 1935; 21 Apr. 1945; 21 May 1949.

British armed forces.⁶⁰ The activities of the club were largely suspended during war and as a result the finances of the organisation suffered.⁶¹ When J.M. Wilson visited Sligo in February 1916 William Fenton informed him that he believed that 'seventy-five per cent of Y.M.C.A., who had a good business appointment, have gone to the colours'.⁶² By the end of the war in November 1918, 100 members of Sligo Y.M.C.A. out of a total of 150 had served in the British armed forces.⁶³ This provides further evidence of the strong commitment of Protestant young men in Sligo to the British war effort, and especially of young men associated with fraternal organisations.

At the end of the war the president of the Y.M.C.A., Philip Perceval was determined to reactivate the organisation.⁶⁴ In 1919 the organisation's finances were reported to be in good condition and Perceval was re-elected president.⁶⁵ Despite the difficulties presented by the War of Independence the members of the Y.M.C.A. made a great effort to continue their regular meetings and social events.⁶⁶ With the end of the War of Independence the Y.M.C.A. was able to reactivate the organisation in earnest and by the end of October 1921 the Y.M.C.A. were holding meetings 'with the hall packed to overflowing'.⁶⁷

In November 1921 Perceval, in outlining the aims and goals of the Y.M.C.A., argued that the association was now more important than ever in assisting 'the activities of the various churches, clubs, and to the other institutions for social and educative work which exist'.⁶⁸ He maintained that the aim of the association was 'to promote the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the young people of the town, irrespective of creed, political opinion, or social standing'.⁶⁹ The organisation was keen to advertise itself as open to membership from all citizens, although Catholics did not appear to join the Y.M.C.A., possibly because Catholics had their own organisations such as the Catholic Institute or maybe because of the Y.M.C.A.'s traditional connection with the Protestant faith. However, the Y.M.C.A. proved

⁶⁰ *S.I.*, 22 Jan. 1916.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 21 Oct. 1916.

⁶² J.M. Wilson's notes on his tour of Ireland in 1915-17, Co. Sligo, 28 June 1917-18 July 1917, (P.R.O.N.I., J.M. Wilson's papers, D/989A/9/7).

⁶³ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), p. 57.

⁶⁴ *S.I.*, 15 May 1920.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 30 Apr. 1921; 5 Nov. 1921.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 Nov. 1921.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

to be very popular with young Protestants and in May 1922 the Sligo Y.M.C.A. reported that the organisation was in a 'flourishing financial position'.⁷⁰

Despite the Y.M.C.A.'s exclusively Protestant membership, the organisation was not isolated from the rest of Sligo society and in the 1920s the Y.M.C.A. and the Sligo Trades Club began to compete with each other in a billiards tournament, which proved to be very popular during the Civil War.⁷¹ The Sligo United Trades Club held similar events as the Y.M.C.A. but was an organisation specifically set up in 1895 as a collective association for the members of all the trades in Sligo including bakers, carpenters and joiners, painters, printers, plasterers, plumbers, smiths, tailors and others.⁷² The club held its meetings at 20 Market St., Sligo and in 1914 the president, Patrick Farrell, the secretary was Michael McGowan and the treasurer was John McLoughlin. In the period 1914 to 1949 it appeared that the Trades Club had a largely Catholic membership.⁷³ Table 8.2 below gives an idea of the number of possible members of other trade associations in Sligo at the time of the 1911 census.

Table 8.2: Males in selected trades, by religion, Sligo Town, 1911.

Occupations	Total	Protestants	Catholics	Protestant percentage
Carpenter, Joiner	97	7	90	7
Bricklayer	2	0	2	0
Mason	30	2	28	7
Slater	10	3	7	30
Plasterer	11	0	11	0
Plumber	19	6	13	32
Painter	57	13	44	23
Baker	46	15	31	33
Tailor	69	10	59	14
Blacksmith	20	4	18	20

Source: *Census of Ireland for the year 1911, province of Connaught, Co. Sligo*, table XXI, pp 56-60; Manuscript census returns, Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R 35-45).

Some records exist for the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and in 1914 it was one of the largest trades associations affiliated with the Trades Club.⁷⁴ In 1914 the president of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners was Harry Depew; the

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 May 1922.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 17 Mar. 1923.

⁷² Tadgh Kilgannon, *Almanac and directory of County Sligo* (Sligo, 1907), p. 73.

⁷³ *S.I.*, 9 Jan. 1926; 13 Jan. 1935; 30 Jan. 1949.

⁷⁴ Sligo Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joinery, membership account books, vol. 2, 1900-26 and vol. 3, 1937-49 (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, No. 351).

secretary was James Mullin and the treasurer, Michael Keaveney.⁷⁵ In 1914 there were twenty-eight members of the Sligo Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joinery.⁷⁶ Three of the twenty-eight, George Robinson, Church St., John Dykes, John St. and James Monds, Union Place, were Protestants.⁷⁷ The other four Protestant carpenters in Sligo town in 1911 were Sam McGoff, Ballytivinan, John Middleton, Market St., Samuel Richardson, Emmett's Place and J.L., a prisoner in Sligo Gaol.⁷⁸ By 1937 the organisation had changed its name to the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, and sixty-four carpenters and woodworkers were members, including five Protestants, Tom Taylor, Tom Cooper, George Rowley, C. Murryfield and Tom Meldrum.⁷⁹ In 1949 there were fifty-five members, of which three were Protestant, Tom Cooper, P.J. Linsey and Tom Meldrum.⁸⁰

The Y.M.C.A. also organised billiards tournament with the Catholic Institute and both clubs were involved in 'whist drives'. The close relationship between the Y.M.C.A. and the Catholic Institute was shown by the words of gratitude offered by Richard Dodd, president of the Y.M.C.A., at the A.G.M. of the organisation in June 1923 when he thanked 'the members of the Catholic Institute for their kind co-operation, which made the drives a success'.⁸¹ The joint whist drives held between the two clubs proved to be very popular with the members and became an annual occurrence and they were also financially beneficial to both clubs.⁸²

However, both clubs were not simply focused on their mutual financial positions and they were actively involved in joint charitable ventures. In February 1925 the Y.M.C.A. and the Catholic Institute organised a fancy dress party for children in the town hall. Following the party, William McCrea, the honorary secretary of the Y.M.C.A., paid tribute to David Flemming of the Catholic Institute and their members for their contribution to the successful night.⁸³ In the 1920s the fancy dress dances for children became an annual event

⁷⁵ Sligo Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joinery, membership account books, vol. 2, 1900-26 (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, No. 351).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.; Manuscript census returns, Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R 35-45).

⁷⁹ Sligo Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joinery, membership account books, vol. 3, 1937-49 (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, No. 351).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ *S.I.*, 9 June 1923.

⁸² Ibid., 2 Feb 1924; 30 May 1925.

⁸³ Ibid., 30 May 1925.

and proved to be another opportunity for the members of the Y.M.C.A. and the Catholic Institute to work together.⁸⁴

The Y.M.C.A.'s membership increased from ninety-five in 1925 to 112 in May 1926.⁸⁵ However, in the late 1920s the membership of the club trickled off and by June 1931 the club membership had dropped to eighty-nine.⁸⁶ The reason for the falling off in membership may have had something to do with the drop in Protestant numbers in Sligo at this time and the fact that there seemed to have been a general lack of interest in the activities of the organisation in the late 1920s. The economic depression in the 1930s did not help the club and members seemed to have had trouble in paying their subscription fees.⁸⁷ The aging membership of the committee also seemed to have led to a certain amount of stagnation in the club. When a new committee under local Protestant businessman A.H. Henderson and William Peebles of the *Sligo Independent* took over in November 1935, the organisation began to thrive again.⁸⁸ Some of the financial concerns of the organisation also seemed to have been addressed by 1938 when the president A.H. Henderson reorganised the association and was able to purchase the meeting hall.⁸⁹ By 1939 the organisation was doing well again and income increased.⁹⁰ During the Second World War membership once again increased and by 1944 club membership stood at 100.⁹¹ In the late 1940s the club began to organise more sporting events and consequently its financial position improved.⁹²

A Protestant fraternal institution, which had been popular in Sligo in the late nineteenth century, especially with landowners, was the Orange Order. The Orange Order had been founded in 1795 with the aim of defending Protestant interests in Ireland. The organisation also became strongly associated with the maintenance of the Union between Britain and Ireland.⁹³ The Orange Order was much more prominent in the Ulster counties than in the rest of the country. However, Protestant interest in the Order was evident in Sligo and in 1875 Sligo elected five grand officers to the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland.⁹⁴ At the time of the First and Second Home Rule Bills in the 1880s and 1890s the leading members of the

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 20 Feb. 1926; 9 Feb. 1929.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 May 1926.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 20 June 1931.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 Oct. 1935; 23 Nov. 1935; 26 Sept. 1936.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 23 Nov. 1935.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 28 May 1938.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6 May 1939.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 29 Apr. 1944.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 12 May 1945; 21 May 1949.

⁹³ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), p. 291.

⁹⁴ Report of the proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland containing the registered Orange Lodges, 1875 (Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland Library, Belfast, Grand Orange Lodge reports).

Orange Order in Sligo were mostly Protestant landowners in the county, including names such as Gore-Booth, Ffoliott, Cooper, Crofton and Wood-Martin and some Protestant merchants such as Pollexfen and Middleton.⁹⁵

The Orange Order was founded at Loughall, Co. Armagh in September 1795.⁹⁶ However, there is evidence to indicate that Orangemen and Freemasons shared the same lodge before that date. On 19 December 1793 a piece appeared in the *Sligo Journal* addressed to the members of the 'Knights Templars and Royal Orange Lodge, No. 626'.⁹⁷ The advertisement requested 'the brothers' of the lodge 'to attend the Lodge Room on Friday the 27th inst, in order to celebrate the Festival of their Patron Saint'.⁹⁸ It appears that this was Masonic lodge as the 27th December is the feast day of St John the Evangelist, who is the patron saint of the Masonic Order, and Masonic Lodge No. 626 operated in Sligo town from 1784 to 1815.⁹⁹

In the early part of the nineteenth century the members of the Sligo Orange lodges celebrated St Patrick's Day with a large banquet in Nelson's Hotel on Corkran's Mall in Sligo.¹⁰⁰ It is likely that members of the Orange lodges in Sligo continued to mark important dates in their calendar with a quiet celebration as there is a lack of evidence of the Orange Order marking the Twelfth of July publicly with parades or marches in Sligo town. However, it is also fair to suggest that considering Sligo's proximity to Ulster, where Orange lodges would have been more inclined to organise a march on the Twelfth, members of Sligo Orange lodges may have journeyed north in order to participate in the more overt displays of Orangeism in Ulster.

By the twentieth century the Orange Order in Sligo town and county seemed to have been largely inactive. However, in the early part of the twentieth century there were nine Orange Lodges registered in Co. Sligo. Six Orange Order Lodge warrants were cancelled in 1910, signifying that six lodges were closed.¹⁰¹ In the period 1910 to 1921 three Co. Sligo Orange Lodges were registered with the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland. One operated in Sligo town, Lodge No. 464, one in Ballymote, Lodge No. 795 and one in Riverstown,

⁹⁵ *S.I.*, 13 Mar. 1886; 11 Mar. 1893.

⁹⁶ Jonathan Bardon, *A history of Ulster* (Belfast 1997), pp 225-6.

⁹⁷ *Sligo Journal*, 19 Dec. 1793.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), p. 472.

¹⁰⁰ *Sligo Journal*, 22 Mar. 1823.

¹⁰¹ Report of the proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland containing the registered Orange Lodges, 1910 (Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland Library, Belfast, Grand Orange Lodge reports).

Lodge No. 1733.¹⁰² There was also a chapter of the Royal Arch Purple which was associated with the Orange lodge in Riverstown.¹⁰³ Lodge No. 477, which was based in Dromahaire, Co. Leitrim was also associated with the Sligo returns to the Grand Orange Order of Ireland, possibly as it had some Sligo based members.¹⁰⁴

In 1921 the grand master for Co. Sligo was John Milliken of Rusheen, Riverstown, the district grand master was Robert Taylor, Aughamelta, Dromahair, Co. Leitrim, the secretary was John Shannon, Church Street, Sligo and the treasurer was John Mullen, Chapel Street, Sligo. There are no references to Orange lodges in Co. Sligo in the records of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland after December 1921.¹⁰⁵ In fact the Orange Order was never strong in Sligo town in the twentieth century and there is no mention publicly of its activities in the town or county in the period from 1914 to 1921. Protestant unionists seemed to have associated themselves more with Sligo Constitutional Club, which was dominated by Protestant businessmen and landowners.

In the period from 1914 to 1949 Sligo Constitutional Club, which had been established in 1881 with fifty members, was one of the most popular fraternal organisations in Sligo.¹⁰⁶ The Constitutional Club building was located on Stephen Street, opposite the Protestant Hall, which was the meeting place of the Y.M.C.A. The building had a grand entrance with Doric style Greek columns and a pediment over the doorway. The club was described as 'a commodious and well-furnished establishment'¹⁰⁷ and in addition to a room for newspapers and periodicals, it also had a billiard room and a library containing over 1,500 volumes.¹⁰⁸

In 1907 the membership of the Constitutional Club consisted almost exclusively of Protestant landowners, merchants, professionals and farmers. The membership of the club at this time was about 100, including two Catholic members, John Kelly, who was involved in the grocery trade and Thomas Ginnelly, who worked for the Midland and Great Western Railway.¹⁰⁹ Most of the members seem to have been unionist or conservative supporters and by the early part of the twentieth century local author Tadgh Kilgannon described the Constitutional Club as 'the headquarters of Conservatism in Sligo'¹¹⁰, probably due to the

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 1910-21.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 1921.

¹⁰⁶ *Sligo Constitutional Club*, membership list 1882, (S.C.L., Miscellaneous Lists, LIS 025).

¹⁰⁷ Tadgh Kilgannon, *Almanac and directory of County Sligo* (Sligo, 1907), p. 71.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Sligo Constitutional Club*, register of candidates, 1905-29 (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, CLU 008).

¹¹⁰ Tadgh Kilgannon, *Almanac and directory of County Sligo* (Sligo, 1907), p. 71.

fact that most of the members were businessmen and landowners. A large proportion of the membership consisted of Protestant businessmen from Sligo town and in 1907 the club's committee included Colonel William G. Wood-Martin, Lieutenant-Colonel James Campbell, G.T. Pollexfen, J. Graham, H. Lyons, P.C. Kerr, J.J. Nelson and J. Chambers.¹¹¹

During the Home Rule crisis of 1912-14, most of the active unionists in Sligo were members of the Constitutional Club. Club meetings were largely suspended during the First World War. However, members were determined to reactivate the club in 1919 and P.C. Kerr, Hal Wood-Martin and Harper Campbell worked hard to keep the activities of the club going during the turbulent years of the War of Independence.¹¹² The club seemed to keep its connections with politics in Sligo town and county and many councillors of the S.R.A. and representatives of S.F.A., were members of the club and undoubtedly used the club to promote their political ideas. However, the club was very much involved in social activities and in the early 1920s sponsored cups for golf, billiards and snooker and other sporting events.¹¹³ In May 1925 Arthur P. Jackson, junior, was the chairman of the club and the solicitor W.H. Argue was the secretary.¹¹⁴ During the 1920s membership increased, possibly in response to the more stable political environment and the fact that ex-unionists and Protestants may have found more security in an organisation of like-minded people.

Table 8.3: Sligo Constitutional Club membership numbers 1933 to 1949

Year	Total membership	Protestant members	Catholic members
1933	94	90	4
1934	94	90	4
1935	102	98	4
1936	104	100	4
1937	105	100	5
1938	108	103	5
1939	100	95	5
1940	100	94	6
1941	106	99	7
1942	106	99	7
1943	103	95	8
1944	114	103	11
1945	121	109	12
1946	123	111	12
1947	127	115	12
1948	135	122	13
1949	144	128	16

Source: Sligo Constitutional Club, account books, vol. 2, 1933 -54 (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, CLU 009).

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² *S.I.*, 22 Jan 1921.

¹¹³ Ibid., 21 Oct. 1922; 6 Oct. 1923; 11 Oct. 1924.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 16 May 1925; 8 May 1926.

During the 1930s membership increased steadily and there was never a restriction on Catholics joining the club, and as can be seen in table 8.3, in 1933 there were four Catholic members of the club out of a total of ninety-four.¹¹⁵ The four Catholic members in 1933 were D.J. Dunne, grocer and publican, Dr J.P. Moran, D. MacCarthy, solicitor and P.J. Brady, publican.¹¹⁶ Membership increased through the 1930s and in 1935 there were 102 members. At the end of 1937 there were 105 members including five Catholic members. The Second World War impacted on membership and by the end of 1939 membership dropped to 100. However, at the end of 1939 the chairman, A.M. Lyons, described the club as being in a 'highly satisfactory financial position'.¹¹⁷ No Catholic names were present on the nine-member committee of the Constitutional Club in 1939.¹¹⁸ However, Catholic membership of the club continued to increase and by the 1943-44 period there were eleven Catholic members of the club out of a total of 114. At the end of 1945 membership of the club stood at 121, including twelve Catholics.

At the end of the war A.M. Lyons was still the chairman/president and in December 1946 he described the club as being in a 'flourishing financial position'.¹¹⁹ Membership of the club increased steadily in the 1940s, rising to 123 in 1946 and 127 members in 1947, which included twelve Catholics.¹²⁰ In 1948 there were 135 members, including thirteen Catholics and in 1949 club membership increased to 144 members, including sixteen Catholics.¹²¹ The Catholic members were drawn from various occupational fields including businessmen involved in the grocery trade, publicans, builders, doctors, solicitors and those involved in the financial sector. However, they all seemed to be middle class and upper middle class. The professions of the Protestant membership consisted of similar middle class and upper middle class occupations including farmers, businessmen, doctors, solicitors, bankers, insurance agents, newspaper editors and senior clerical officers in companies and financial institutions.

The increase in the number of Catholic members of the club could be interpreted as a sign of integration between Protestants and Catholics. However, there were still only a small number of Catholic members and they all seemed to have been middle class and

¹¹⁵ Sligo Constitutional Club, account books, vol. 2, 1933-54 (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, CLU 009).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ *S.I.*, 23 Dec. 1939.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 21 Dec. 1946.

¹²⁰ Sligo Constitutional Club, account books, vol. 2, 1933-54 (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, CLU 009).

¹²¹ Ibid.

involved in the financially better off professions. It could also be argued that the increase in Catholic membership of the Constitutional Club could be a result of wealthier Catholics, endeavouring to be associated with a traditionally Protestant club for the better off professional class; a class in which some Catholics would have possibly had more in common with than many of their fellow religionists. Many Protestant members of the Constitutional Club also belonged to the Masonic Order in Sligo.

The Masonic Order was born with the foundation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717 and eight years later in 1725 the Grand Lodge of Ireland was formed in Dublin.¹²² Local Sligo historian John McTernan has discovered that the first Masonic Lodge in Sligo, No. 566, received its warrant in 1719 and thirteen lodges have operated in Sligo town and county at various periods from 1719 to the present.¹²³ Since the foundation of the Masonic Order a number of papal pronouncements have been issued against Freemasonry. The first was Pope Clement XII's *In Eminentissimi* on 28 April 1738; the most recent before 1914 was Pope Leo XIII's *Ab Apostolici* on 15 October 1890.¹²⁴ The 1917 Code of Canon Law explicitly declared that joining Freemasonry entailed automatic excommunication.¹²⁵

Some Protestant Churches also banned their congregations from joining the Masonic Order. However, this did not include the Church of Ireland. It is also fair to suggest that many Irish Catholics may have also been reluctant to join the Masonic Order as to many outsiders the Masonic Order and the anti-Catholic Orange Order appeared to share similar structures and rituals. However, on a number of occasions in the late 1920s, Arthur Jackson, the provincial grand master of north Connacht, argued that the Masonic Order was not anti-Catholic and maintained that all members had to believe in God.¹²⁶ Jackson argued that Sligo Masons were also socially active and made contributions to charities and to schools in the county and assisted many people who were not masons.¹²⁷ However, it appears that the charities and schools assisted by the masons included Protestant primary schools, the Protestant Grammar School and the Protestant Orphan Society.¹²⁸

¹²² John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), p. 457.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Catholic Encyclopaedia online: Masonry (Freemasonry) (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09771a.htm>) (24 Mar. 2007).

¹²⁵ Catholic Canon Law on Freemasonry: Canon 2335, 1917 Code of Canon Law from Canon Law regarding Freemasonry, 1917-1983 (<http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/anti-masonry/canon.html>) (20 Apr. 2007).

¹²⁶ *S.I.*, 5 June 1926; 11 June 1927.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

In the early part of the twentieth century Sligo town was the home of two Freemason lodges, Lodge 20, the Light of the West Lodge, which had been formed in 1833, and Lodge 165, which had been founded in 1895. On 21 October 1897 a ceremony dedicating Lodge 165 to the uses of masonry, which was situated on the Mall in Sligo town, was held by the provincial grand master for north Connaught, Lord Harlech and the new lodge was named 'The Harlech' Masonic Lodge in his honour.¹²⁹ The lodge was a very attractive and distinct building and contrasted with the generally grey limestone appearance of most other public buildings in Sligo at the time. The building was described as 'old English' in style.¹³⁰ The outer walling was faced with red perforated bricks and this contrasted with the green-slatted roof. The roof of the tower above the main entrance was covered with red tiles with bell-shaped eaves. Inside the building the principal lodge room and the dining hall each measured forty feet by twenty feet. George Kerr, a local Sligo contractor, carried out the building contract.¹³¹ Seventy-eight brethren attended the dedication ceremony and many transferred from Lodge 20 to the Harlech Lodge and by 1900 membership of Harlech Lodge stood at fifty-two, and included many prominent Protestant businessmen and professionals in Sligo such as Arthur Wood, James Blennerhassatt, Robert Smylie, Henry Loretto, William Griffith, Nicholson Ormsby, William Middleton and William Rowlette.¹³²

In 1914 many of the more affluent Protestant merchant families in Sligo, including members of the Campbell, Jackson, Lyons, Nelson and Pollexfen families were members of Lodge 20, while many shop assistants were members of Lodge 165.¹³³ This may have been due to the fact that Lodge 20 was an older and more established lodge and a sort of social bias had formed with many of the wealthier Protestant members joining Lodge 20 while Lodge 165, as a new lodge, had a more liberal ethos towards membership and social standing. More clerks were members of Lodge 20 than Lodge 165, although most of those clerks were employed in companies owned by the better off Protestant businessmen, who were also members of Lodge 20.

There is a lack of Protestant landed names such as O'Hara, Cooper, Crofton or Gore-Booth on the membership lists of both lodges, although the landowners Philip Perceval and

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 23 Oct. 1897.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 165: membership registers, 1895-1900 (Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Dublin, Masonic Lodge membership registers).

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 1914, Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 20: membership registers, 1914 (Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Dublin, Masonic Lodge membership registers).

Alex Crichton were members of Lodge 20.¹³⁴ The absence of Protestant landed names on the membership lists of both lodges maybe due to the fact many landowners were already members of the Sligo Constitutional Club and they possibly felt that the club sufficiently fulfilled their social requirements. It is also possible that Freemasonry had developed a more egalitarian ethos, as opposed to one of a landowning ruling elite. Also the Freemasons in Sligo seemed to have been dominated by Protestants involved in business and the professions from the urban area, and Protestant landowners may have perceived the Masonic Order in Sligo as an association more suited to the commercial and professional classes of the town. The landowner Hal Wood-Martin was a member of Lodge 20. However, he lived within the Borough of Sligo and he had business interests in the town and was actively involved on the board of Sligo Harbour Commission.

Table 8.4: Numbers joining the two Sligo Masonic Lodges, Lodge 165 and Lodge 20, 1910 to 1923

Year	New members
1910	14
1911	11
1912	8
1913	8
1914	6
1915	5
1916	4
1917	5
1918	5
1919	12
1920	15
1921	17
1922	7
1923	6

Sources: Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 165: membership registers, 1910-23 and Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 20: membership registers, 1910-23 (Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Dublin, Masonic Lodge membership registers).

Numbers joining the two Sligo lodges declined in the years before the First World War with an average number of just over nine joining each year in the period from 1910 to 1914.¹³⁵ In the period 1915-18 the average number of new members dropped to fewer than five per year. However, in 1919 twelve new members joined the two lodges in Sligo and in 1920 fifteen joined the two Sligo lodges, while in 1921 seventeen joined both lodges. The records indicate that all the new members, as well as the old members were Protestant and

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 165: membership registers, 1912-14 (Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Dublin, Masonic Lodge membership registers). Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 20: membership registers, 1912-14 (Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Dublin, Masonic Lodge membership registers).

many Protestants may have perceived the Masonic Order as an organisation which could preserve a sense of identity and familiarity during the turbulent time of the War of Independence. After that the average number of new members joining the Masonic Order in Sligo returned to similar levels seen before the First World War, with seven joining in 1922 and six in 1923.¹³⁶

Table 8.5: Numbers joining Sligo Masonic Lodge No. 165 in the period 1902 to 1949

Years	New members	Average number of new members per year
1902-1911	53	5
1912-1914	17	6
1915-1918	12	3
1919	10	10
1920	12	12
1921	11	11
1922	7	7
1923	5	5
1924-1929	35	6
1930-1939	34	3
1940-1949	47	5

Source: Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 165: membership registers, 1895-1949 (Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Dublin, Masonic Lodge membership registers).

Lodge 165 was the most recently established and most active lodge in Sligo and therefore seemed to have attracted the majority of the new members to the Masonic Order in Sligo. For these reasons a closer look at its membership is necessary. In the period 1902-11 fifty-three new members joined, while in the period January 1912 to September 1914 seventeen joined.¹³⁷ During the First World War the number of members joining only totalled twelve for the four years. However, membership picked up significantly in the three years following the First World War. In 1919 ten joined and in 1920 twelve joined, while eleven joined in 1921. The number of members joining the club during the Civil War declined and in 1922 seven joined, while in 1923 five joined. After the Civil War, the number of members joining the lodge increased again and thirty-five joined in the period 1924-29, an average of about six per year. Thirty-four joined in the period 1930-39, an average of just over three per year. After 1939, membership increased again and forty-

¹³⁶ Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 165: membership registers, 1922-23 (Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Dublin, Masonic Lodge membership registers). Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 20: membership registers, 1922-23 (Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Dublin, Masonic Lodge membership registers).

¹³⁷ Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 165: membership registers, 1902-14 (Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Dublin, Masonic Lodge membership registers).

seven members joined Lodge 165 in the period 1940-49, an average of almost five per year.¹³⁸

Table 8.6: Average attendance per meeting of Sligo Lodge No 165, 1914 to 1949

Period	Average attendance per meeting
Aug. 1912 – Aug. 1914	28
Sept. 1914 – Nov. 1918	27
Jan. 1919 – Apr. 1923	36
May 1923 – Aug. 1939	52
Sept. 1939 – Nov. 1949	46

Source: Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 165: attendance books, 1912-1949 (Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Dublin, Masonic Lodge attendance books).

In the period 1914-49 people were not just joining Lodge 165 in significant numbers, they were also very active members and evidence of this can be found in the average attendance at meetings of Harlech Lodge. In the two years before the First World War attendances at meetings averaged twenty-eight members per meeting. In the period from September 1914 to November 1918 average attendances were twenty-seven per meeting. In the period from January 1919 to April 1923 average attendances were thirty-six. From May 1923 to August 1939 average attendances at meetings increased to fifty-two and from September 1939 to November 1949 average attendances at meetings stood at forty-six.¹³⁹

By 1949 Lodge 165 had become the largest lodge in the province of Connacht and Sligo masons rose to prominence in the organisation. Col. James Campbell had been provincial grand master of north Connaught from 1911 to 1919, the most important position in Freemasonry in the region.¹⁴⁰ Arthur Jackson, of Lodge 20 was deputy provincial grand master of north Connaught from 1906 to 1910, and in 1919 became provincial grand master for the region and his son, Arthur P. Jackson, jun., was elected provincial grand master in 1938.¹⁴¹ Jackson and Harper Campbell Perry, who came from a long line of masons of Lodge 20 were elected members of the Supreme Council of the Masonic Lodge in Ireland and William Albert Griffith, a member of Harlech Lodge and managing director of Harper Campbell Ltd., became deputy provincial grand master in 1935 and was provincial grand master from 1939 to his death in 1942.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1914-49.

¹³⁹ Masonic Lodge No. Lodge 165: attendance books, 1912-1949 (Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Dublin, Masonic Lodge attendance books).

¹⁴⁰ Dermot Gilleece, *Co. Sligo Golf Club* (Rosses Point, 1994), p. 14.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁴² John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), pp 457-73.

Membership of the Freemasons in Sligo proved beneficial to those Protestants involved in economic and social activities in Sligo by facilitating contacts between members. However, more significantly the Freemasons were important in providing the Protestant membership with a common sense of cultural heritage and helped to facilitate a smooth transition from Union to Free State. As Catholics did not join the organisation, the Masonic Order in Sligo did not provide a forum for integration.

In addition to the Y.M.C.A., with a membership dominated by young apprentices in the financial, commercial and legal professions, fraternities such as Sligo Constitutional Club, with a membership drawn from the landowning/farming class and the fields of medicine, law and business, and the Freemasons, dominated by businessmen and those employed in commercial and financial concerns, provided a social outlet for the middle and upper class sections of the Sligo Protestant community. The Y.M.C.A. and its close association with the Catholic Institute and Sligo Constitutional Club in particular allowed Protestants and Catholics to interact closely in a social environment. However, many Protestants and Catholics were members of the Sligo Branch of the British Legion. So did the British Legion prove to be an aid to assimilation or integration between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Sligo?

Nuala Johnson has suggested in her book, *Ireland, the Great War*, that it proved difficult to 'create a landscape of remembrance' in Ireland because of the War of Independence, the partition of the island in 1921 and the subsequent Civil War in the Irish Free State.¹⁴³ She has maintained that in 1919 the symbolism of British flags, uniforms and the British anthem were associated with British militarism in Ireland, and many Irish people did not see that as appropriate.¹⁴⁴ However, Johnson notes that in 1919 Irish people discriminated 'between the veteran and the regular soldier'.¹⁴⁵

On 30 June 1919 Sligo ex-servicemen formed the Sligo branch of the Comrades of the Great War at a meeting in Sligo Courthouse.¹⁴⁶ Major Charles O'Hara presided at the meeting and notable individuals present included Rev Canon Ardill, Josslyn Gore-Booth, Malby Crofton, Dr McDowell, Dr Flanagan, Dr Gilcriest, Lieutenant Arthur P. Jackson, Major Alex Perceval, Captain Philip Perceval, Lieutenant Ritty, Lieutenant Ardill, Captain Douris, Lieutenant Robert Gorman, Sergeant-Major A. Burnside, Sergeant P. Fallon,

¹⁴³ Nuala C. Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War and the geography of remembrance* (Cambridge 2003), p. 13.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 78-9.

¹⁴⁶ *S.I.*, 5 July 1919.

Sergeant M.J. Nicholson, Private David McSharry, Private W. Durkin, Private Martin Moffatt V.C., J. Kelly, J. Mulligan, F. Greene, M. Tiernan, James Hamilton and John Keating, apologies were received from Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell, A.C. O'Hara, H.G. L'Estrange, J. Noone and M. Downs.¹⁴⁷

In addition to finding suitable employment for all discharged and demobilised men, the aims of the Sligo branch of the Comrades of the Great War included the maintenance of 'strong, stimulating, united and democratic comradeship among all those who had served in any capacity on the sea, land, and air forces during the Great War so that neither their efforts nor their interests shall be forgotten nor neglected'.¹⁴⁸ Protestants and Catholics occupied key positions on the committee of the Sligo branch of the Comrades of the Great War. The Protestants Lieutenant Arthur P. Jackson was elected commandant of the organisation and Lieutenant Robert Gorman was appointed treasurer.¹⁴⁹ However, the Catholics Private W. Durkin was appointed a joint treasurer and M.J. Nicholson was made the secretary.¹⁵⁰ The rest of the committee of the Sligo branch of the Comrades of the Great War consisted of the Catholics Private Martin Moffatt, Company Sergeant-Major A. Burnside, Sergeant P. Fallon, Private David McSharry, J. Kelly, J. Mulligan, F. Greene and M. Tiernan.¹⁵¹ In July 1919 a total of 250 Protestant and Catholic ex-service men joined the organisation.¹⁵²

Throughout the War of Independence and the Civil War, the Sligo branch of the Comrades of the Great War continued to meet and further the interests of the ex-servicemen while also marking 11 November, which was Armistice Day and also became known as Remembrance Day, with services in St John's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Calry Church, Sligo Presbyterian Church, Sligo Methodist Church and Sligo Catholic Cathedral.¹⁵³

However, it was not until the end of the Civil War that the Sligo branch of the Comrades of the Great War began to organise in earnest. This followed a visit by Major Cheeseman, the national organiser of the British Legion in Ireland, to Sligo in October 1923.¹⁵⁴ The British Legion had been founded in 1921 to represent the interests of ex-servicemen. One of the main objectives of the organisation was to assist ex-servicemen and their families in

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 26 July 1919.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 July 1919.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 10 July 1920; 13 Nov. 1920; 2 July 1921; 19 Nov. 1921; 18 Nov. 1922; 30 Dec. 1922.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 6 Oct. 1923.

matters relating to pensions, housing and health issues.¹⁵⁵ Cheeseman came to Sligo to explain to the aims and objectives of the British Legion to ex-servicemen. Cheesman noted that there were an estimated 207,000 ex-servicemen in the Free State in 1923 and about 1,500 were located in Sligo town and county.¹⁵⁶ Cheeseman must have taken the figure of 1,500 from enlistment numbers from Sligo at the end of the war and appears not to have deducted the number of Sligomen who had died in the conflict. Evidence from the *Sligo Champion* and the *Sligo Independent* indicates that 1,000 men from Sligo town and 500 men from the county served in the First World War.¹⁵⁷ However, 426 from Sligo town and county had been killed during the war, leaving about 1,000 who could have joined.¹⁵⁸

Shortly after Cheesman's visit the Sligo branch of the Comrades of the Great War, became affiliated with the British Legion.¹⁵⁹ Richard Gorman was elected as president of the Sligo branch of the British Legion while the other committee members were Captain Hal R. Wood-Martin, Major Charles O'Hara, Major Bryan Cooper, Major G.A. Benson, Captain G. Hewson, Major A.A. Perceval, Lieutenant F.W. O'Hara and Lieutenant Arthur P. Jackson, jun.¹⁶⁰ It appeared that following the affiliation of Sligo ex-servicemen with the British Legion the committee consisted of members of prominent Protestant landowning and business families in Sligo and there is an absence of Catholics. However, this may have been due to the fact that committee members were all officers and many Protestant landed and business families in Sligo had a long tradition of serving as commissioned officers in the British army, but Catholics had dominated the committee of the Sligo branch of the Comrades of the Great War before its affiliation with the British Legion. Initially the Sligo branch of the British Legion held meetings in a plain building on a street named 'Waste Gardens' in Sligo town, later becoming more established in a large building on Old Market Street, which became known as 'the Hall' or 'the Club rooms'.¹⁶¹

On the 9 November 1924 the Sligo branch of the British Legion held their first Remembrance Day parade in Sligo town.¹⁶² One of the main organisers of the event was Corporal John Fallon, who had served in the Connaught Rangers in the Gallipoli and Salonika campaigns. Hundreds of ex-servicemen and their families marched in the parade

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 Feb. 1916; 8 Oct. 1921; *S.C.*, 26 Feb. 1916; 8 Oct. 1921.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 Oct. 1928; 3 Nov. 1928; 17 Nov. 1928.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 Nov. 1923.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 24 Nov. 1924.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 13 Nov. 1926.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 15 Nov. 1924.

which left from the town hall and took in the main streets of the town, terminating back at the town hall. On 7 November 1924, about a week before the parade, the first poppies were sold in Sligo town.¹⁶³ The sale of poppies was organised by the British Legion in order to raise funds for ex-servicemen. The poppy flower emblem was chosen because of the fact poppies bloomed across some of the battlefields in Flanders during the First World War and their red colour was an appropriate symbol for the bloodshed of war. The money raised from the sale of the poppies was expended locally for the benefit of ex-servicemen and their families.¹⁶⁴

Table 8.7: Sligo Branch Comrades of the Great War and branch of British Legion of ex-Serviceman, membership in selected years 1919 to 1949

Year	Members
1919	250
1926	365
1927	431
1928	435
1929	435
1931	400
1935	385
1940	340
1946	300
1949	300

Source: *S.L.*, 5 July 1919-24 Mar. 1949.

As can be seen from table 8.7, the Legion was quite popular with ex-servicemen in Sligo in the mid to late 1920s. On 7 November 1926 over 250 members of the Legion held a parade from the Legion's club in Old Market Street to Sligo Town Hall and large services were held in St John's Church, Calry Church of Ireland and in Sligo Catholic Cathedral.¹⁶⁵ In January 1927 there were a total of 431 members on the roll. Richard Gorman expected membership to be higher in that about 1,000 men from Sligo town and 500 men from Co. Sligo had joined the British army during the First World War.¹⁶⁶ An estimation of the number of Catholic members of the Sligo branch of the British Legion can be ascertained from those members who regularly attended Legion meetings and war remembrance

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 8 Nov. 1924.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 13 Nov. 1926.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 29 Jan. 1927.

ceremonies and it appears that about forty percent of the Legion's members were Catholic.¹⁶⁷

Gorman argued that 1,000 men from Sligo town and 500 from the county had joined the British forces in the First World War. Of the 1,000 from Sligo town I have discovered from chapter two that 282 Protestants and 718 Catholics served in the British forces. A total of 250 men from Sligo town died in the war, of which forty-three were Protestant and 207 were Catholic. This leaves 239 Protestants and 511 Catholics from Sligo town that could have joined the British Legion, so it seemed that Catholic ex-servicemen did not join the British Legion in the same numbers as Protestants and this may have been due the organisation's strong association with the British connection and in the wake of the War of Independence many Catholic ex-servicemen may not have wished to be seen joining a British organisation. Catholic ex-servicemen in Sligo may have been less inclined to join the British Legion but they were still determined to remember their fallen comrades with Remembrance Day services in Sligo's Catholic Cathedral.

Keith Jeffery in his work *Ireland and the Great War* notes that before 1925 there were two separate Remembrance Sunday parades in Cork City.¹⁶⁸ One was organised by the British Legion, which was a more Protestant body while the other parade was organised by the almost entirely Catholic and nationalist Cork Independent Ex-Servicemen's Club.¹⁶⁹ Both parades marched to the same destination, the Boer War Memorial in the western part of the city centre.¹⁷⁰ However, after the unveiling of a memorial to those who had died in the Great War on St Patrick's Day 1925, both groups celebrated together.¹⁷¹ There never seemed to have been any public disagreements among nationalist, unionist, Catholic or Protestant ex-servicemen in Sligo and both belonged to the same organisation.

However, that is not to say that the Legion's wish to honour men who had served and died in the First World War met with universal approval in Sligo. In November 1927 the Sligo branch of the British Legion submitted an application to Sligo Corporation to erect a monument to the memory of Sligomen who had lost their lives in the Great War.¹⁷² The Legion wished to have the memorial situated in a prominent place in Sligo town. The

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 6 Oct. 1923; 8 Nov. 1924; 15 Nov. 1924; 3 Oct. 1925; 13 Nov. 1926; 29 Jan. 1927; 2 July 1927; 25 Jan. 1930; 1 Feb. 1930; 21 Feb. 1931; 28 Feb. 1931; 22 Apr. 1933; 4 Mar. 1939; 6 Apr. 1940; 15 Nov. 1941; 6 July 1946; 24 Mar. 1949.

¹⁶⁸ Jeffery, Keith, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 129.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 129-30.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁷² *S.I.*, 19 Nov. 1927.

corporation suggested that the monument should be located on a site near the Ulster Bank, on Stephen Street near the town centre. The Legion agreed to the location and commissioned Charles McDermott of Harmony Hill, a monumental sculptor and ex-serviceman, to design a suitable monument.¹⁷³ One week before the planned unveiling of the monument, which was scheduled for Sunday 21 October 1928, it was discovered that a watermain run just below the site. The Legion insisted that a new site should be found as close as possible to the original.¹⁷⁴

The mayor, William Fraser Browne, a member of Fianna Fáil, who although he did not seem to be opposed to the memorial, was not all that enthusiastic about it arguing that 'it was not a matter of great urgency as the war had ended over ten years ago'.¹⁷⁵ Browne was also keen to mention that it was the previous corporation that had granted permission and that the new members who had been elected in June 1928 would have to be fully informed about the memorial issue and he insisted that a meeting of the corporation must be held to discuss the subject.¹⁷⁶

In the previous corporation the S.R.A., who would possibly have been much more sympathetic to commemorating Sligomen who had served in the British army during the Great War, as many members of the organisation were Protestant ex-unionists, occupied twelve of the twenty-four seats and the mayor had been chosen from their party. However, after the election in June 1928, the new republican party, Fianna Fáil, along with John Lynch, an independent republican who also supported many Fianna Fáil policies, occupied twelve of the twenty-four seats and it is clear that members of the party would not have been comfortable with British militarism and the imperial symbolism associated with the British Legion.

However, on the 16 October 1928 Browne called a special meeting of the corporation to discuss the location of the memorial.¹⁷⁷ Councillor Thomas Kelly, Fianna Fáil, proposed that an alternative site should be granted. However, he maintained that 'they [British Legion] are not going to make propaganda out of the unveiling of the memorial on Sunday. We don't want Major Cooper or any of those people making propaganda out of it .. We don't want bands playing 'God Save the King' or 'God Save the country' because God gave me brains to think and I have come to the conclusion that if there were less kings and

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 20 Oct. 1928.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

queens, Coopers and Hickies there would be less men dead and there would be no need for this memorial'.¹⁷⁸ The 'Hickies' and 'Coopers' that Kelly was referring to were General William Hickie, president of the British Legion in Ireland and Major Bryan Cooper, Cumann na nGaedheal T.D. and a prominent member of the Sligo branch of the British Legion. Councillor Joseph McMorrow, Cumann na nGaedheal, seconded the motion.¹⁷⁹ However, he believed that there was no 'British Imperialism' surrounding the dedication of the monument, while councillor Matthew Joyce, an independent, was of the opinion that the band could play whatever music they wished.¹⁸⁰

Gordon McCormick of the Sligo Branch of the British Legion was invited to speak at the meeting and he informed the members of the corporation that Robert Gorman, the president of the Sligo Branch of the British Legion had agreed that if no other location could be agreed upon, then part of his property at Eden Hill, just outside the town at the junction of Mail Coach Road and Pearse Road could be used for the memorial.¹⁸¹ McCormick argued that 'it will be a place where in the future we can hold our Services of Remembrance without inconveniencing or offending anyone'.¹⁸² The new location was acceptable to both the Legion and the corporation. The fact that the memorial would now be located outside the town probably satisfied any objections about the connection of the monument with British symbolism.

However, now that the site of the new monument had no connection with the corporation, some councillors were eager not to appear to be opposed to the Legion's remembrance of Sligo's war dead and councillor McMorrow hoped that 'the relatives of the Fallen will not think that we are in any way responsible for not having the memorial at the Ulster Bank'¹⁸³ and councillor Henry Depew, S.R.A., was also determined that the corporation should not be tarnished in any way by the problems surrounding the memorial, when he noted that 'the corporation has got a very bad name over this matter, and we must ask the Press to make it clear that we were quite willing to grant an alternative site'.¹⁸⁴ However, it seemed that no other site had been suggested, and had it not been for Gorman's

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

timely offer, the location of the memorial in Sligo town had the potential to cause problems for the corporation and between corporation members.

Swift work prepared the site at Eden Hill and on 21 October 1928 General William Hickie unveiled the war memorial, which was dedicated to the more than 400 Sligo men who had died in the Great War. Several hundred ex-servicemen, wearing their decorations, who along with a group of Boy Scouts from Sligo Grammar School, had marched to the Memorial from the Legion Rooms in Old Market Street, were present at the unveiling.¹⁸⁵ The British Legion headquarters band and the Sligo Town Band were also present at the unveiling. The war memorial was a plain Celtic Cross of Irish limestone bearing the inscription, 'In Glorious Memory of the Men of the Town and County of Sligo who gave their lives in the Great War, 1914-1918'.¹⁸⁶

Hickie congratulated Sligomen for 'defending against the pan-Germanic aspirations of the Central Powers'¹⁸⁷ while the *Sligo Independent* editorial of 27 October 1928 maintained that 'there can be no doubt about it, the foul feet of the hideous monster of militarism would have stamped over our land ... Some do not believe in spending money on memorials of this kind ... it is right, fitting and natural that there should be something tangible, something for everyone to see ... as a symbol of the stout and hardy Sligomen whose supreme sacrifice should not be forgotten while time endures ... Never in the history of the world was there a juster cause'.¹⁸⁸

The highly moral and almost propagandistic language used at the dedication of the memorial must be understood in the context of the time. Many of the members of the British Legion and the owners and editors of the *Sligo Independent* over the years would have been supportive of the British war effort regardless of who the enemy was. However, in the context of a changed a political environment in Ireland since the First World War, where Protestants and Catholics, nationalists and ex-unionists, had to learn to live together in a new state, it was probably seen as a more prudent policy by the British Legion and others, even though it was then ten years after the defeat of the Germany and her allies, to once again demonise the enemy, while praising the physical and moral strengths of all Sligomen and avoiding any reference at all to British militarism.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 Oct. 1928.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Table 8.8: Sligo Women's Branch of the British Legion, membership in selected years 1929 to 1949

Year	Members
1929	160
1930	134
1931	130
1932	125
1933	120
1935	110
1937	100
1939	96
1946	85
1949	80

Source: *S.I.*, 25 Jan. 1929-19 Mar. 1949.

In January 1929, following the successful dedication of the Sligo War Memorial, the wives, sisters and daughters of ex-servicemen founded the Sligo Women's Branch of the British Legion with 160 members.¹⁸⁹ On 21 January 1930 they held their first A.G.M.¹⁹⁰ The president, Lady Louisa Crofton, announced that the membership dropped to 134 and during the past year they had conducted charity work and poppy sales on behalf of ex-servicemen.¹⁹¹ An examination of the committee and the membership lists of the organisation indicates that a large majority of the women joining the organisation were the wives and daughters of Protestant businessmen and landowners who had served during the First World War. Protestant names such as Cooper, Stevenson, Wilson, Jackson, O'Hara and L'Estrange occupied the higher positions such as president, vice-presidents, secretary and treasurer in the organisation.¹⁹² However, by 1949 there were two Catholic women, Mrs Fallon and Mrs Maloney on the sixteen member committee.¹⁹³ There appears to have been only a small number of Catholic names on the membership list and Protestants accounted for about seventy-five per cent of the membership of the association in the period 1929-49.¹⁹⁴ As can be seen in table 8.8 membership of the organisation dropped off in the 1930s. In 1931 it stood at 130, while in March 1933 membership dropped to 120 and by the end of 1939 membership declined to ninety-six and by 1949 the membership had dropped to eighty.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 25 Jan. 1930.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Minute book of the Sligo Branch of the British Legion (women's branch), 1949-60 (S.C.L., Clubs/Societies, CLU 004).

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*; *S.I.*, 25 Jan. 1930.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7 Mar. 1931; 11 Mar 1933; 16 Dec. 1939; 12 Mar. 1949.

At the A.G.M. of the Sligo Branch of the British Legion (Men's section) on 24 February 1931 a national organiser for the British Legion, Major J. Tynan described Sligo as 'one of their best branches – one of the very best in the British Legion'.¹⁹⁶ However, despite the best efforts of the Legion's organisers, a similar decline in the number of members was experienced by the men's branch of the British Legion in Sligo in the early 1930s and by October 1935 the organisation had only 385 members out of the hundreds that had served from the county, and only about 150 of these members actively participated in British Legion events.¹⁹⁷ The Legion continued to be successful in raising money for ex-servicemen and their dependents and in March 1939 the Legion had a credit balance of almost £600.¹⁹⁸

The Legion supported British involvement in the Second World War as did many local Protestant ministers and a few weeks before the outbreak of war in September 1939, Rev T.A. McElfrick of Sligo Presbyterian Church gave a sermon on the political situation in Europe describing Hitler 'as evil' and a threat to peace.¹⁹⁹ McElfrick also believed that war was imminent and that 'everything that could have been done to secure peace has been done'.²⁰⁰ He argued that 'never was the Empire so united' and that Britain should be supported in the war.²⁰¹ Following Britain's declaration of war on 3 September 1939 Rev John Ardill, rector of Calry Church of Ireland spoke of the justice and virtue of Britain's decision and urged people to support Britain and her empire in the struggle against aggression.²⁰²

It is also clear from some of the charitable events held by members of the Protestant gentry in Sligo that their sympathies lay with Britain and her empire. In a successful sale held at Lissadell by Lady Georgina Gore Booth on 20 November 1940 in aid of 'The Lord Mayor's London Air Raid Distress Fund', over 300 people, both Catholics and Protestants attended.²⁰³ Many of the sons of Protestant landowners and businessmen in Sligo had joined the British forces, and Josslyn and Georgina Gore-Booth's two sons, Brian and Hugh, were killed in the Second World War.²⁰⁴ Some of the other sons of Protestant landowners and businessmen who served in the Second World War included J.W. Lyons, son of H.C. Lyons,

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28 Feb. 1931.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 Oct. 1935.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4 Mar. 1939.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 Aug 1939.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 30 Sept. 1939.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 23 Nov. 1940.

²⁰⁴ *Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986* (Sligo, 1986), pp 74-5.

John W. Campbell, the son of Harper Campbell Perry and Henry Owen L'Estrange, the son of Henry L'Estrange, Lisnalurg.²⁰⁵

During the war the British Legion had continued to help ex-servicemen and facilitated young men joining the British forces. After the war the membership of the British Legion stood at 300 and at the Silver jubilee of British Legion in late June 1946, the secretary of the British Legion, alderman John Fallon estimated that about 1,000 men, mostly Catholics, from Co. Sligo had volunteered for the Second World War.²⁰⁶ The Second World War proved to be another opportunity for the British Legion and the Protestant community to show its solidarity with the British war effort. However, as the Irish Free State was neutral, public displays of loyalty for Britain were not seen as appropriate.

The British Legion provided a sense of community for all ex-servicemen, Protestants dominated the organisational committee and Catholics did not seem to join in large numbers, especially considering the large number of Catholic men who had served in the First World War. However, integration between Protestants and Catholics did take place within the British Legion as a result of their shared experience of combat in the British armed forces.

Organisations such as the British Legion, the Y.M.C.A., Sligo Constitutional Club and the Freemasons were beneficial in providing a sense of belonging for the Protestant community in Sligo. However, it was Sligo Constitutional Club and the British Legion that allowed for much more interaction between Protestants and Catholics.

Next this chapter covers sport and the Protestant community in Sligo and in particular examines some of the longer established sports such as hunting and horseracing and the more recent sports which were established towards the end of the nineteenth century.

As Terence Dooley has maintained 'during the winter months landlords and their families indulged in what was arguably their favourite form of outdoor leisure pursuit, fox-hunting'.²⁰⁷ Fox and stag hunting had traditionally been upper class recreations and many Protestant landlords in Sligo kept packs of hounds.²⁰⁸ Fox hunting was largely the domain of wealthier landowners as it was an expensive pastime and pack owners had to build kennels, pay for the upkeep of horses and prepare parts of their estate to facilitate the

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*; *S.L.*, 7 Dec. 1940; 4 July 1942.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 6 July 1946.

²⁰⁷ Terence Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p. 56.

²⁰⁸ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), pp 539-40.

breeding of foxes.²⁰⁹ In the nineteenth century Sir Robert Gore-Booth owned a pack of hounds known as the Lissadell Harriers, which became the County Sligo Club Hounds, or the County Sligo Harriers on his death in 1876. The County Sligo Harriers first met on 4 November 1878, and held meetings in the north and west of the county.²¹⁰

Tom Hunt in his study on sport in Co. Westmeath in the period 1850-1905 has argued that hunting 'was the essential compound that bound a particular community together and set them apart from other groups'.²¹¹ In Sligo, before the First World War, most of the members of the Sligo Hunt Club were part of Protestant landowning or business families including Gore-Booth, L'Estrange, Wynne, Eccles, Robinson, Petrie, Irwin, Rowlette, Phibbs, Hall, Williams and Simpson.²¹² However, two Catholic businessmen, P.W. Connolly and Edward Foley, were also members of the club before 1914.²¹³ The presence of wealthier Catholics in the hunting club could be interpreted as an effort by them to become associated with the 'well-to-do' status associated with the sport. However, membership of the club largely remained Protestant in the period after the First World War and when the club held a hunt at Carrowmore in November 1947, out of a total of fourteen riders, only two were Catholic. Names on the list of members still included Protestant farming and business families such as Stevenson, Rowlette, MacArthur, Perceval, Nesham, Gore-Booth, Derham, Browne and Dodd.²¹⁴

The other important hunting pack in Sligo in the nineteenth century was the O'Hara Hounds, operated by the O'Hara family of Annaghmore. The pack hunted mostly in the south of the county and along with members of the O'Hara family, other members of the club included Protestant landed families such as L'Estrange, Phibbs, Neynoe and Ormsby.²¹⁵ When Charles William O'Hara died in 1898, his son, Charles Kean O'Hara inherited the mastership of the Annaghmore Harriers and he carried on the tradition until his death in 1947. In 1948 a new club called the South County Hunt Club was formed under the joint mastership of Col. E.F. Cooper and James Dorran. On 5 November 1948 the new club first met at Claragh and thirteen of the twenty-one people who took part in the hunt were members of the nine Protestant families, Cooper, Dorran, Nesham, Perceval, Bracken,

²⁰⁹ Terence Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p. 57.

²¹⁰ John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), p. 541.

²¹¹ Tom Hunt, *Sport and society in Victorian Ireland* (Cork, 2007), p. 37.

²¹² John C. McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), p. 541.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 544.

Lyons, Hall, McCormick and O'Hara.²¹⁶ The Catholics were McGarry, O'Grady, Lang, Gallagher, Finn, Flannery, Toher and McMullan.²¹⁷ So although hunting remained a largely Protestant sport, it can be argued that a minority of wealthier Catholics were participating in a sport with Protestants of a similar socio-economic background.

Another important pastime for the Protestant landed gentry and the wealthy professional class was the sport of horseracing. Despite the significance of hunting for the Protestant gentry, it has not been an area of interest for historical research. However, Tom Hunt and Fergus D'Arcy have conducted research on the sport.²¹⁸

As noted by Terence Dooley 'it was very much a natural progression for landlords who were enthusiasts of fox-hunting to become involved in national hunt racing'.²¹⁹ In Co. Sligo horseracing was also closely associated with the fox hunting clubs. The main families involved in breeding and training horses and in organising race meetings in the later part of the nineteenth century were the Ormsbys, Fentons, Gore-Booths, O'Haras, Coopers and Wynnes and although Protestants dominated the sport, Catholics took a very keen interest in the sport and attendances at race meetings were always very high.²²⁰

In 1898 Owen Wynne turned land at Hazelwood into a racecourse and in the period from 1898 to 1914 annual race meetings were held there.²²¹ In 1898 a race committee was formed consisting of nine Protestants and two Catholics. By 1914 the meeting at Hazelwood was proving to be tremendously popular and a list of stewards and those organising the event included a total of twenty; thirteen Protestants and seven Catholics. Prominent Protestant landed families such as the Percevals, O'Haras and Coopers took a leading role in organising the meeting.²²² However, it seemed that by the start of the First World War Catholics were much more involved than earlier in the organising and running of meetings at Hazelwood.

During the First World War there were no official race meetings in Sligo. However, race meetings were resumed at Hazelwood in April 1919.²²³ On 15 April 1919 a large crowd attended the meeting. Possibly because of the popularity of racing for all classes and

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 546.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Tom Hunt, *Sport and society in Victorian Ireland* (Cork, 2007), pp 39-74; Fergus A. D'Arcy, *Horses, lords and racing men* (The Curragh, 1991).

²¹⁹ Terence Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p. 59.

²²⁰ *Sligo Chronicle*, 13 May 1871; *S.C.*, 19 Apr. 1873; *S.I.*, 24 Apr. 1875; 8 May 1886; *S.C.*, 5 Apr. 1898.

²²¹ *S.C.*, 5 Apr. 1898; *S.I.*, 16 May 1914.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid., 19 Apr. 1919.

political persuasions, the War of Independence did not result in the cancellation of race meetings. In the 1920s there were more Catholic names present as stewards and organisers of race meetings and in April 1920, out of a total of fifteen names organising the committee, seven were Catholic. As R.V. Comerford has argued in his study *Ireland*, horseracing did not become a politicised sport.²²⁴

In April 1920 Protestants continued to take a large share of the responsibility in organising racing events in Sligo.²²⁵ However, Sinn Féin councillor Dudley Hanley, Sinn Féin Mayor Thomas Fitzpatrick and Sinn Féin M.P. John J. Clancy were officers and secretaries at the meeting along with Protestant businessmen such as Arthur Jackson and Protestant landlords such as Charles Kean O'Hara, Philip Perceval and Major Bryan Cooper.²²⁶ In the mid-1920s Sligo Hunt Club held point-to-point races at Oakfield, Co. Sligo where fifteen of the seventeen organisers and officials were Protestant.²²⁷ In the mid-1920s point-to-point races were also held at Claragh racecourse where a majority of the officials and organisers were still Protestant.²²⁸

In the 1930s races were usually held during the month of March or April and were very popular with both Catholics and Protestants. At the end of March 1933 Sligo Hunt Club held a race meeting at Oakfield, which was described as 'possibly the most successful since the War'.²²⁹ However, most of the race officials were still Protestant.²³⁰ Protestant names still dominated the list of organisers at the April 1939 race meeting held at Hazelwood²³¹ and an important aspect of the Protestant dominance of horseracing must have been Catholic deference to the leading role of a predominantly Protestant elite within the sport.

During the Second World War the only one significant race meeting was reported to have taken place at Hazelwood. This occurred on 8 April 1942, although Sligo Hunt Club frequently held small race meetings during the war.²³² Protestants continued to dominate the organisation of horseracing meetings in Sligo in the period 1923 to 1945 and after the war horse racing continued to be very popular with both the Catholic and Protestant

²²⁴ R.V. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003), p. 235.

²²⁵ *S.I.*, 10 Apr. 1920.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 Mar. 1924; 28 Mar. 1925; 17 Apr. 1926.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 26 Apr. 1924; 2 May 1925; 11 Sept. 1926.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 Apr. 1933.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 15 Apr. 1939.

²³² *Ibid.*, 11 Apr. 1942; 23 Mar. 1940; 27 Mar. 1943; 25 Mar. 1944; 24 Mar. 1945.

communities in Sligo.²³³ Terence Dooley has shown in his study, *The decline of the big house in Ireland*, that Protestant landowners had a strong influence on national horseracing bodies and 'from 1914 to 1945, the background of stewards of the Irish Turf Club remained essentially the same as it had been in the pre-war era. Of the seventeen men who at various times, held office as stewards of the Irish Turf Club in the period 1914-45 all were peers, officers in the British army or former landlords or their representatives'.²³⁴ However, overall it seemed that in Sligo throughout the period 1914-49 horse racing attracted a variety of people from both communities, and for different reasons ranging from gambling to training and it must surely be counted as a pastime in which both communities could share a common interest.

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century rowing, yachting, tennis, golf, cricket, rugby, soccer and Gaelic football clubs were founded in Sligo. This section takes a look at each of these sports in turn and analyse the confessional and class divisions of the participants and chart the membership over the period 1914 to 1949.

There were a number of rowing and yachting clubs in Sligo in the twentieth century. However, this section focuses on one in particular, the Sligo Rowing and Yachting Club, as it was not only one of the largest clubs in the area but unlike the other clubs it submitted regular reports on its activities to the local papers. The Sligo Rowing and Yachting Club was founded in 1870 and by 1907 there were 100 members and officers of the club, which consisted predominantly of Protestant businessmen and professionals from Sligo town.²³⁵ By 1911 the membership had increased to 108.²³⁶ Philip Perceval of Hazelwood House was an important member and patron of the club and both he and his wife organised social events in aid of the club.²³⁷

At the beginning of the First World War the club was doing pretty well financially. However, the club membership had fallen to eighty-eight.²³⁸ The club participated every year in an annual regatta held on the August Bank Holiday on Lough Gill. There were over twenty events, which included sailing and yachting races. The Sligo Rowing and Yachting Club competed against other rowing and sailing clubs in Sligo, which included the Catholic

²³³ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligoe* (Dublin, 1995), pp 216-7.

²³⁴ Terence Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p. 266.

²³⁵ Tadhg Kilgannon, *Almanac and directory of County Sligo* (Sligo, 1907), p. 72.

²³⁶ *S.I.*, 12 Aug. 1911

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 Aug. 1914.

Institute, Hibernians, Gaelic Wanderers, Hazelwood, and the Independent club.²³⁹ From an examination of the lists of members of the other clubs taking part in competitions against the Sligo Rowing and Yachting Club, it appeared that the other clubs had an exclusively Catholic membership, except the Hazelwood club which seemed to have at least two Protestant members.²⁴⁰

Rowing and yachting was suspended during the period of the First World War and was not reactivated until 1919. In that year the Y.M.C.A. took over the organisation of the Sligo Rowing and Yachting Club, with local businessman, George Williams, as the chief organising force.²⁴¹ The club began to work closely with the other rowing and yachting clubs in Sligo and by August 1920 a 'United Regatta Committee' was formed and four representatives from each of the six clubs, Sligo Rowing and Yachting, Catholic Institute, Hibernians, Gaelic Wanderers, Hazelwood, and Independent were organised into one solid committee.²⁴² The Perceval family took an active interest in water sports and provided the facilities every August at Hazelwood for the annual regatta.²⁴³ Protestants still took a very active part in the United Regatta Committee and in 1935 six Protestants and eight Catholics were present on the committee with local Catholic priest Fr Fannon as president, while the Protestants Dr Thomas Rouse and Mrs William Peebles were the vice-presidents.²⁴⁴ United regattas continued to be held in the late 1930s and 1940s²⁴⁵, and there was a sense of strong cooperation between the various clubs, which provides a clear example of integration between Protestants and Catholics in Sligo.

Water sports in Sligo may have provided an arena for integration between Protestants and Catholics, but could the same be said to be true for the sport of tennis? The Co. Sligo Lawn Tennis Club was founded at Ardhowen in 1912.²⁴⁶ The club had four grass courts and was located on the Mall beside the Grammar School. The club held an annual championship and before the First World War staged singles, doubles, handicap and open events. In the years before the war the club members were all Protestant. The most active players included members of the Crichton, Crofton, Chesterman, Dobbyn, Dunlop, Fowler, L'Estrange, Kirkwood, Moore, Mylie, Phibb, Robinson, Shannon, Sim, Turlington-Tulloch,

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 May 1913.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 22 May 1920.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 7 Aug. 1920.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10 Aug. 1935.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12 Aug. 1939; 13 Aug. 1949.

²⁴⁶ Sligo Lawn Tennis Club, annual tournament results, vol. 1, 1912-14 (S.C.L., Sport, SPO 048).

Wood-Martin and Wynne families.²⁴⁷ In the years 1912 to 1914 the secretary of the club was Hal Wood-Martin, while Col. Campbell, Dr Macdowl, William Fenton, Colonel Wynne, A.C. Fowler, Harper Campbell Perry, G. L'Estrange, were the most active members on the organising committee of the club and there seemed to have been no Catholic members of the club at this stage.²⁴⁸ Tennis meetings, like several other sports in Sligo, were suspended for the duration of the First World War.

On 27 July 1920 Co. Sligo Lawn Tennis Club was revived after five years. The club celebrated its revival with a tournament at Ardaghowen and it seemed that practically all the participants were Protestant.²⁴⁹ The following year, on 25 July 1921, there was a much larger turnout and the tournament was described as 'almost a typical pre-War local society gathering'.²⁵⁰ All the players came from Protestant landed, business and legal families such as Wynne, Crofton, L'Estrange, Wood Martin, O'Hara, Perceval, Jackson, Campbell, Lyons, Phibbs, Fenton, Barton and Nelson.²⁵¹

However, Catholics began to join the club and at the July 1922 tournament there was one Catholic, Miss Flanagan, daughter of the businessman Thomas Flanagan, out of a total of thirteen ladies, although in the period from 1923 to 1926 the players were virtually all Protestant.²⁵² At the beginning of June 1928 the Y.M.C.A. Club took over the running of the Co. Sligo Lawn Tennis Club.²⁵³ The club moved to new tennis courts at Finisklin in Sligo and Protestants dominated the club committee.²⁵⁴ However, Robert Dodd, the vice-president of the club, maintained that while the new club was 'controlled by the Y.M.C.A., it was not confined to any creed, and he was glad to say that they had members of every creed, which, all would agree was a very gratifying feature'.²⁵⁵

However, in the late 1920s, the Y.M.C.A. Tennis Club seemed to have a virtually exclusive Protestant membership.²⁵⁶ In 1928 the club started the year with a membership of sixty but by May 1929 this had increased to 100 and the seven member committee of the Y.M.C.A. Tennis Club were all Protestant.²⁵⁷ By November 1929 a further twenty-one

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *S.I.*, 31 July 1920.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 6 Aug. 1921.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² Sligo Lawn Tennis Club, annual tournament results, vol. 2, 1920-26 (S.C.L., Sport, SPO 048).

²⁵³ *S.I.*, 9 June 1928.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3 Nov. 1928.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 May 1929.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3 Nov. 1928; 4 May 1929.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 Nov. 1928.

members had joined the club, making a total of 121 members²⁵⁸ and although not all the club's members are listed in the newspapers, it seemed that from an examination of those taking part in the club's competitions that most of the club membership seemed to have been Protestant.²⁵⁹ Despite a decline in club membership to 105 in 1935, possibly as a result of the economic depression, by October 1936 there were a total of 125 members.²⁶⁰

An indication that some Catholics were joining the Y.M.C.A. tennis club is shown at the A.G.M. of the club on 21 March 1939, when the president Ron Perry expressed his 'sincere sympathy with those other members of the club who belonged to a sister church in the loss they and the whole Christian world had sustained by the death of Pope Pius XI, and joined in congratulating them on the selection of such a splendid successor as the present Pope'.²⁶¹ In March 1940 there were 145 members of the Y.M.C.A. Tennis club and all the committee members were Protestant.²⁶² The Second World War impacted on membership and numbers had fallen to eighty-three members in September 1946 and the club still had the same number of members in June 1948, the greater majority of who it seemed were Protestant.²⁶³ Those taking part in club competitions suggests that the club was overwhelmingly Protestant and only a small number of Catholics joined the club in the period 1922-49 and their surnames indicate that they were members of Catholic business families such as Mulligan, Connolly and Flanagan.

The other tennis club in Sligo in the early part of the century was the Merville Club at Rose Hill. The club was formed in 1907 and originally had a solely Protestant membership.²⁶⁴ However, in the 1920s and 1930s some Catholics began to join the club, as Catholic surnames, especially Catholics from Sligo business families, begin to appear in the lists of those taking part in club competitions.²⁶⁵ The committee of the club remained exclusively Protestant but by April 1941 the membership of the club stood at 137 an increase of thirty on the previous year and some of the new members were Catholic.²⁶⁶

As with the Y.M.C.A. Tennis Club, the Second World War impacted on the Merville club and in April 1944 membership had dropped to ninety and by April 1946 membership

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 23 Nov. 1929.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 24 Oct. 1936.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 25 Mar. 1939.

²⁶² Ibid., 16 Mar. 1940. Tom Higgins, *The history of Irish tennis, vol. III* (Sligo, 2006), pp 1640-4.

²⁶³ *S.I.*, 7 Sept. 1946; 5 June 1948.

²⁶⁴ Sligo Champion sesquicentenary supplement, 1836-1986 (Sligo, 1986), p. 104.

²⁶⁵ *S.I.*, 1 Apr. 1928; 7 Apr., 16 Dec. 1933; 1 Apr. 1939; Tom Higgins, *The history of Irish tennis, vol. III* (Sligo, 2006), p. 1566.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 5 Apr. 1941.

had fallen to sixty-eight.²⁶⁷ Both the Y.M.C.A. Tennis Club and the Merville Club had a strong tradition of Protestant membership before 1914. However, small numbers of Catholics began to join both clubs in the 1920s. It appeared from the names of those taking part in tennis competitions that Catholics never achieved anything close to a parity of membership with Protestants in either of the clubs in the period 1914-49. It also seemed that despite the membership of some men and women from Catholic business families in Sligo, tennis did not prove to be a major vehicle for integration between Protestants and Catholics in Sligo. However, it can be argued that tennis was facilitating integration for a minority of Catholics from a certain socio-economic class into a traditionally Protestant sport.

If tennis was aiding the integration of wealthier Protestants and Catholics, was the sport of golf providing a similar environment for Protestant and Catholic integration? The first golf clubs founded in Ireland were established in Belfast and Dublin in the 1880s and it was believed that golf was introduced from Scotland.²⁶⁸ Golf spread to Sligo in the 1890s and proved to be a tremendously popular sport. Some local historians have argued that British soldiers based in Sligo town introduced the sport of golf and the Sligo Militia did much of its training at Rosses Point where a golf club was later situated.²⁶⁹ Others have argued that the strong masonic connection with golf was more responsible for its foundation in Sligo.²⁷⁰ The link between these two arguments is the figure of Col. James Campbell, who was Master of the Light of the West, Lodge 20. Campbell was the driving force behind forming an 18-hole golf club at Rosses Point in 1894, which turned out to be the first club in Connacht.²⁷¹ Campbell acquired a lease of a certain portion of the Greenlands camp at Rosses Point, which was an area of land close to the sea and was used by the Sligo Militia as a training ground. Tom Ewing, a well-known local Protestant businessman, owned the Greenlands site and the Greenlands Hotel, which was located close by. Ewing also allowed the use of part of the Greenland's Hotel as a clubhouse.²⁷² In 1910 an extensive one-storey Tudor style clubhouse was built and was later renovated in the mid 1930s.²⁷³

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 8 Apr. 1944; 6 Apr. 1946.

²⁶⁸ Daniel Mulhall, 'A gift from Scotland: golf's early days in Ireland' in *History Ireland*, xiv, no. 5 (Sept./Oct., 2006), p. 32.

²⁶⁹ Paul Gunning & Padraic Feehily (eds), *Down Gallows Hill* (Sligo, 1995), p. 198.

²⁷⁰ Steven Reid *Get to the point at County Sligo Golf Club* (Naas, 1991), pp 60-1; Dermot Gilleece, *Co. Sligo Golf Club* (Rosses Point, 1994), p. 14.

²⁷¹ Steven Reid *Get to the point at County Sligo Golf Club* (Naas, 1991), pp 60-1.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *S.I.*, 31 Dec. 1910; 18 Apr. 1936.

Dermot Gilleece in his study on Rosses Point Golf Club has argued that Freemasonry made a vital contribution to the foundation of golf in Sligo.²⁷⁴ Prominent among the ninety-six founder members of Rosses Point Golf Club were Protestant businessmen and landowners, most of whom were masons.²⁷⁵ There seemed to have been no Catholics among the founder members and it appeared that Sligo Masonic Lodge 20 was very important in the formation of the club and of the forty-three members of the Light of the West (Lodge 20), thirty-five members were founders of Rosses Point Golf Club.²⁷⁶ Some of the founder members had resigned by 1899; due it seemed to the fact that they were elderly. However, the members of Lodge 20 had made a significant contribution to the formation of the club. By 1907 the committee controlling Rosses Point Golf Club was in the hands of Protestant businessmen and landowners.²⁷⁷ The most significant committee members included the president, Col. Campbell, who was a mason; captain of the club, Arthur Jackson, also a mason and the vice-presidents, Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth and Owen Wynne, both of whom did not belong to the Masonic Order.²⁷⁸

During the First World War the activities of Rosses Point golf club, in common with most other clubs around the country, were suspended as many of the members joined the army.²⁷⁹ Golf had been associated with Protestants and in particular the financially better off businessmen and landowners, and was therefore not a sport in which many Catholics seemed to have become involved. That of course is not to say that Catholics in Sligo avoided the sport completely, and as it was believed that golf had Scottish origins, there was never a restriction by the Gaelic Athletic Association (G.A.A.) on playing the sport²⁸⁰ and some Catholics in the professions did join Rosses Point Golf Club after the end of the Civil War.²⁸¹

After the revolutionary period Rosses Point Golf Club became the venue for the West of Ireland Championship.²⁸² The Club's prominent members in the 1920s and 1930s were Protestant, although a small number of Catholic members from business families and an

²⁷⁴ Dermot Gilleece, *Co. Sligo Golf Club* (Rosses Point, 1994), p. 11.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁷⁷ Tadhg Kilgannon, *Almanac and directory of County Sligo* (Sligo, 1907), p. 73.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ Daniel Mulhall, 'A gift from Scotland: golf's early days in Ireland' in *History Ireland*, xiv, no. 5 (Sept./Oct., 2006), p. 34.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 35-6.

²⁸¹ *S.I.*, 27 June 1925.

²⁸² *Ibid.*; 15 Apr. 1939.

increasing number of Protestant female players joined the club.²⁸³ The club attracted Catholics, although it seemed that the sport maintained its status as a game for the fairly well off Protestant community.²⁸⁴

However, Rosses Point was not the only golf club in Sligo in the period 1914-49 and in 1931 a club was established at Strandhill in Co. Sligo, which was also called the Walker Golf Club.²⁸⁵ Strandhill Golf Club was a smaller club than Rosses Point and during the period 1931 to 1949 it had only a nine holes. One of the reasons for the founding of the club may have had something to do with the fact that Rosses Point Golf Club was much more associated with financially better off Protestants and Catholics and the fees in Rosses Point Club may have been too high for some people, especially during the economic depression of the 1930s and the shortages of the Second World War. In addition to the cost of membership fees, there was also the expense of golfing equipment and transportation to the club. Sean Fallon, who played much of his golf at Rosses Point, although he was also a member of Strandhill Golf Club since the late 1940s and played there too, recalled that membership was about ten shillings for a year, while the annual membership of Rosses Point Golf Club was over a £1.²⁸⁶

Lists of players taking part in competitions at Strandhill Golf Club indicate that the Club attracted mostly Catholic players from largely middle class professions.²⁸⁷ Sean Fallon maintained that he doesn't recall many Protestants playing at Strandhill, although he indicated that there were a lot of Protestant members of Rosses Point club.²⁸⁸ This was also probably due to a tradition of Protestant association with Rosses Point Golf Club.

Other sports dominated by Sligo Protestants in the period 1914-49 included hockey, cricket and rugby. However, some information available from local newspapers suggests that there were a very small number of Catholics involved, especially in rugby.²⁸⁹ Hockey seemed to have remained very much a Protestant sport in the period 1914-49, while the sport of cricket was very popular in the early part of the twentieth century and there were some Catholic members of Co. Sligo Cricket Club including the businessmen William O'Flanagan and E.J. Tighe.²⁹⁰ However, after the First World War the sport appears to have

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 26 June 1926.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 22 Aug. 1936.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 July 1939.

²⁸⁶ Interview with Sean Fallon, Sligo, 3 Jan. 2008 (transcript in the possession of the author).

²⁸⁷ *S.C.*, 27 July 1935; 15 July 1939; 24 July 1948.

²⁸⁸ Interview with Sean Fallon, Sligo, 3 Jan. 2008 (transcript in the possession of the author).

²⁸⁹ *S.I.*, 27 June 1914; 7 Aug., 1920; 5 July 1930; 9 July 1938; 27 Aug. 1949.

²⁹⁰ Tadgh Kilgannon, *Almanac and directory of County Sligo* (Sligo, 1907), p. 73.

been exclusively Protestant. In the 1930s both cricket teams in Sligo, the Co. Sligo Cricket Club and the Grammar School Cricket team, were Protestant.²⁹¹ Co. Sligo Rugby Football Club was very active before the First World War and the sport was Protestant dominated, although J.J. Clancy, a Catholic nationalist was an active player in 1913 and 1914.²⁹² After the First World War very few Catholics participated in the sport.²⁹³

Soccer or association football, as it was known, on the other hand proved to be extremely popular with both Catholics and Protestants in Sligo. The game was introduced to Sligo by British army regiments stationed in the area in the 1880s, and locals quickly took to the game.²⁹⁴ The Irish Football Association was founded in 1880 and Alan Bairner has highlighted the importance of the military in introducing soccer into Ireland, while Neal Garnham has indicated that the military appear to have been significant in spreading and standardising the game of soccer.²⁹⁵

Association football took hold first in the garrison towns of Ireland and Sligo, as a garrison town with a permanent military barracks, was no exception.²⁹⁶ The first football match under the new association football code of rules played in Sligo in 1883 was between the Lancashire Regiment and the Sligo Hare and Hounds Athletic Club in a field close to the Showgrounds, which later became the home ground of Sligo Rovers Football Club.²⁹⁷

In the period after the Civil War there were ten teams on a league table of Sligo clubs, Stars, St Mary's, Celtic, Rangers, Rovers, Seaview, Corinthians, Old United, Distillery, and the Y.M.C.A. soccer team.²⁹⁸ By the late 1940s further teams including Hibernians, Foundry, Glenview, MCR, Trades, Rosses Point and Bohemians had been formed and joined the Sligo League. Some larger businesses in Sligo town such as Lyons Ltd., Denny's Meats, McArthur's Bakery and others also organised soccer teams and both Catholic and Protestant employees were members of those teams.²⁹⁹ The Y.M.C.A. team was all Protestant and Protestant players could also be found on the teams of Stars, Rangers,

²⁹¹ *S.I.*, 9 May 1931; 17 June 1939.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 13 Sept. 1913; 4 Apr. 1914.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 7 Mar. 1925; 13 Apr. 1935, 20 May 1946; 26 Mar. 1949.

²⁹⁴ T. Reid, *History of Sligo Rovers* (Dublin, 1981), pp 1-4.

²⁹⁵ Neal Garnham, *Association football and society in pre-partition Ireland* (Belfast, 2004), p. 7; Alan Bairner, 'Ireland, sport and empire', in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *An Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996), pp 18-21; Neal Garnham, *Association football and society in pre-partition Ireland* (Belfast, 2004), pp 18-21.

²⁹⁶ Alan Bairner, 'Ireland, sport and empire', in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *An Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996), p. 61; Dave Hennigan, *The garrison game* (Edinburgh, 1998).

²⁹⁷ *S.C.*, 6 Oct. 1883; Paul Gunning & Padraic Feehily (eds), *Down Gallows Hill* (Sligo, 1995), p. 195.

²⁹⁸ *S.I.*, 23 Aug. 1924.

²⁹⁹ Interview with Sean Fallon, Sligo, 3 Jan. 2008 (transcript in the possession of the author).

Corinthians and Old United.³⁰⁰ A team representing Sligo town, 'Sligo Rovers' was founded in 1928, and in 1937, the year the club won the Irish Free State League Championship, the club regularly recorded crowds of between 3,000 and 5,000 at the Showgrounds.³⁰¹

Many Protestants were strongly involved in soccer locally and William Peebles of the *Sligo Independent* sponsored the *Sligo Independent Cup*, which was a competition between local soccer clubs in Sligo. From the 1920s to the 1940s soccer games were very well attended around Sligo town and both Protestants and Catholics are to be found on the player lists of most teams throughout the period 1914 to 1949.³⁰² At about the same time soccer was taking hold in Sligo town, organised Gaelic games were beginning to be played in the town and county. So what was the impact of Gaelic sports in Sligo and did confessional divisions arise?

R.V. Comerford has argued that it was not 'until the 1880s that sport in Ireland was politicised, in the sense that the individual's choice of sport and of sporting organisation was made to appear as a political or confessional act. This was brought about by the invention of Gaelic games'.³⁰³ The rebirth of interest in, and the codifying of Gaelic games in the 1880s was strongly associated with the process of forming a distinct national Irish identity, and was linked by other cultural and political initiatives taking place in the late nineteenth century.³⁰⁴

On 1 November 1884 the G.A.A. was established by Michael Cusack (1847-1902) at a meeting in Thurles, Co. Tipperary, to foster and encourage the playing of national games and pastimes Ireland, including hurling, football, handball and track and field events. A branch of the G.A.A. was founded in Collooney, Co. Sligo in January 1885 with fifty members and local clubs were quickly established throughout the county.³⁰⁵ From the very start the G.A.A. in Sligo was closely associated with Irish nationalism, and many of those involved included nationalist politicians, members of the Catholic clergy and some of the earliest organisers of the movement in Sligo were involved in militant republican organisations such as the I.R.B.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁰ *S.I.*, 23 Aug. 1924.

³⁰¹ T. Reid, *History of Sligo Rovers* (Dublin, 1981), p. 11.

³⁰² *S.I.*, 19 Apr. 1924; 11 May 1929; 28 Apr. 1935; 16 Apr. 1949.

³⁰³ R.V. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003), p. 217.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ John C. McTernan, (ed.), *Sligo G.A.A., a centenary history, 1884-1894* (Sligo 1984), p. 8.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21; p. 23; pp 24-5.

In August 1885 Sligo town formed a branch of the G.A.A. in the town hall and the majority of the officers and committee members were nationalist members of Sligo Corporation and four were aldermen; ald. Francis Higgins (chairman), Michael Miloe (vice chairman), ald. P.A. McHugh (secretary), Thomas Connolly (treasurer), ald Bernard Collery, ald. John Connolly and E.J. Tighe.³⁰⁷ The Mayor of Sligo P.A. McHugh was the president of the first county convention held in Sligo Town Hall on 27 December 1887 and there were six clubs at the meeting; Sligo, St John's, Knocknarea, Ballintogher, Ballymote and Collooney.³⁰⁸

In the period from 1888 to 1892 the R.I.C. kept a close watch on all G.A.A. activities in Co. Sligo as they believed clubs were used as a recruiting ground and a meeting point for I.R.A. members and the District Inspector Alan Bell of the Crime Special Branch (C.S.B.), Midland Division reported that the I.R.B. were closely involved with the G.A.A. in Sligo.³⁰⁹ In September 1888 they named P.A. McHugh as occupying a leading position in the I.R.B. and the G.A.A. and in Spring 1889 the C.S.B. maintained that Sligo was worse than neighbouring counties, reporting that 'the G.A.A. is extending its branches and is now beginning to display its military organisation' and that 'the organisation is extending itself and assuming a purely I.R.B. complexion'.³¹⁰

At championship games in Sooeey and Tubbercurry in March 1890 the police believed there were nine I.R.B. members, all prominent G.A.A. officials, present; they included John Phillips (Collooney), Pat Flynn (Sooeey), James McGloin (Knocknarea), J.J. Conroy (Sligo), P.J. Gorevan (Ballintogher), James Flanagan (Ballymote), Luke Armstrong (Tubbercurry), Nicolas Devins and John O'Dowd (Bunninadden).³¹¹

John O'Dowd was chosen by a north Sligo U.I.L. convention as an M.P. for the constituency in February 1900, on the resignation of Bernard Collery, M.P., and he was elected for south Sligo in the autumn of 1900.³¹² However, in 1890 the authorities believed he was an I.R.B. member and he had spent six months in prison from November 1881 to May 1882 for activities relating to his Land League membership.³¹³

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid., pp 23-4.

³¹² John C. McTernan, *Worthies of Sligo* (Sligo, 1994), pp 398-9.

³¹³ Ibid.

By January 1891 there were a total of eighteen G.A.A. clubs in Sligo with a membership of 1303 and the C.S.B. believed that I.R.B. members controlled the clubs of Collooney, Bunninadden and Sooley, while I.R.B. involvement was less in the others.³¹⁴ The Catholic clergy were also heavily involved in the G.A.A. in Sligo and in 1889 at least twelve clubs had clergymen as presidents, and they were quite active in the organisation.³¹⁵ The C.S.B. noticed the close relationship between clergy and G.A.A. and in 1891 Rev P. Filan, P.P. was president of Gurteen G.A.A. club, Rev E. H. Connington, C.C., was president of Curry G.A.A. club and Rev canon John McDermot was president of Ballymote G.A.A. club.³¹⁶ In 1891 Rev P. Conlon, Keash, was unanimously elected vice-president of the Co. Sligo Board of the G.A.A.³¹⁷

The G.A.A. was always open to members of all faiths and creeds. However, R.V. Comerford has noted that as the G.A.A. usually held sporting events on Sunday and 'in the second half of the nineteenth century, the evangelical spirit was sufficiently strong for many Protestants to find participation in Sunday sports impossible on conscientious grounds'.³¹⁸ The Catholic Church had no problem with Sunday sports and as long as parishioners attended mass, they were free to pursue sporting interests on the Sabbath. So by providing sports on Sunday, Catholics were free to engage fully with G.A.A. activities, while most Protestants were self-excluded.³¹⁹

However, the strong association of the G.A.A. with Irish nationalism and its support for Irish nationalist issues and causes³²⁰ also discouraged many Sligo Protestants from supporting the organisation and the existence of the Sligo Hare and Hounds Club, which had been founded in September 1883 and whose members were largely Protestant and unionist, probably also dissuaded many Protestants from joining the G.A.A.³²¹ The Sligo Hare and Hounds Club held an annual sports meeting at Finisklin in Sligo town and in addition to athletics, members also focused on playing soccer and rugby.³²²

The G.A.A. in Sligo was closely associated with Irish nationalism and Catholicism, although this did not stop local Protestant landowners, such as the Gore-Booths of Lissadell,

³¹⁴ John C. McTernan, (ed.), *Sligo G.A.A., a centenary history, 1884-1894* (Sligo 1984), pp 389-91; p. 24.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 389-91.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³¹⁸ R.V. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003), p. 218.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Brendan MacLua, *The steadfast rule* (Dublin, 1967), pp 39-41.

³²¹ *S.C.*, 29 Sept. 1883.

³²² John C. McTernan, (ed.), *Sligo G.A.A., a centenary history, 1884-1894* (Sligo, 1984), p. 8.

the Crichtons of Carrowgarry and Major Hillas of Doonecoy, from giving permission to some Sligo G.A.A. branches to play matches on their land.³²³ However, the permission given to the G.A.A. by Protestant landowners may have had more to do with fostering good relations with their predominately Catholic and nationalist tenants rather than any specific interest by Protestant landowners in G.A.A. sporting activities.

The various Sligo G.A.A. branches were very active during the First World War. However, there was a sharp decline in G.A.A. activities during the politically turbulent revolutionary period from 1919 to 1923.³²⁴ During the 1920s Gaelic football in particular became tremendously popular in Co. Sligo.³²⁵ An indication of the popularity of the G.A.A. is shown by the extensive coverage of Gaelic football in the local newspapers such as the *Sligo Champion*, the *Sligo Nationalist* and the *Connachtman*. However, the popularity of the G.A.A. amongst the Protestant community in Sligo seemed to have remained low and it was not until the mid-1930s that the *Sligo Independent*, which consistently reported on soccer in Sligo, published information concerning G.A.A. activities, when one of its correspondents under the pen name 'Garavogue' contributed reports on local G.A.A. clubs.³²⁶ An examination of the detailed lists of the players, officers, and committee members involved in the various Sligo G.A.A. local and county clubs, which can be found in John McTernan's *Sligo G.A.A., a centenary history, 1884-1894*, suggest that until about the mid-1930s there is an absence of Protestant surnames.³²⁷ However, after 1935 a very small number of Protestant surnames begin to appear in Sligo G.A.A. player, officer and committee member lists.³²⁸

However, the biggest barrier to Protestants joining the G.A.A. was the association's constitutional rule barring its members from participating or watching what were deemed to be 'foreign sports' such as cricket, rugby or soccer.³²⁹ The list of 'acceptable sports' for nationalists and the G.A.A. changed over time. R.V. Comerford has maintained nationalists and the inventors of national identity define a nation 'by selective rejection' and for the Archbishop Thomas Croke (1824-1902) of Cashel, an important patron of the G.A.A., tennis, polo, croquet and cricket were on the 'foreign' list of sports.³³⁰ However, over time

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 44-51.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 56-71.

³²⁶ *S.I.*, 6 Apr. 1935.

³²⁷ John C. McTernan, (ed.), *Sligo G.A.A., a centenary history, 1884-1894* (Sligo, 1984), pp 91-116.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), pp 226-7.

³³⁰ R.V. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003), p. 220.

tennis was dropped from the 'foreign' list and soccer and rugby were added, sports that Croke originally had not made any reference to.³³¹ Tom Hunt attributes the decline in the popularity of cricket in Co. Westmeath in the period 1880-1905 to 'the expansion of the G.A.A. from 1900 onwards'.³³² He maintains that 'cricket, soccer and other sports designated as foreign were identified as snobbish pretensions of middle-class 'West Britons''.³³³ By January 1906 the G.A.A. had also excluded the police and the military from the membership of the G.A.A.³³⁴

The G.A.A. taboos on participating in 'foreign' sports generally referred to sports that originated or were codified in England and it is reasonable to suggest that Protestants in Sligo, who had had at one time or other held unionist or pro-British sympathies, would have been uncomfortable with the anti-English connotations of G.A.A. rules. More importantly exclusivist rules prevented many Protestants in Sligo who enjoyed cricket, rugby and soccer from participating in the G.A.A. and undoubtedly formed an impediment to further integration in sports.

It also became a major issue for Catholics, especially as many Catholics in Sligo enjoyed playing soccer and were also interested in participating in Gaelic football. At a meeting of Sligo G.A.A. in April 1924 the issue was raised and some members argued that the G.A.A. rule forbidding members from participating in foreign sports was being evaded. A representative from south Sligo, John Henry maintained that 'he did not think the G.A.A. could suffer in the least by deleting the two rules, but on the contrary, he believed that would get a great many excellent players into the association'.³³⁵ However, the rule remained in force and Sligo town suffered particularly from the G.A.A. rule on foreign games, as the town was a major soccer stronghold in the northwest.

The rule on playing 'foreign' games seemed to have been strictly enforced in Sligo town, especially in the case of soccer. In the 1940s Sean Fallon mentions that the G.A.A. in Sligo employed members to go and watch soccer matches to make sure that G.A.A. players and members were not participating, and if they were they were forced to leave the organisation.³³⁶ The G.A.A. ban on members participating in soccer was hypocritical, as R.V. Comerford notes the people 'appointed to police the ban were themselves permitted to

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² Tom Hunt, *Sport and society in Victorian Ireland* (Cork, 2007), p. 29.

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ Brendan MacLua, *The steadfast rule* (Dublin, 1967), pp 43-8.

³³⁵ *S.I.*, 26 Apr. 1924.

³³⁶ Interview with Sean Fallon, Sligo, 3 Jan. 2008 (transcript in the possession of the author).

attend foreign games in order to spy out transgressors. Particularly in provincial towns with thriving local soccer competition, appointment as an invigilator was much sought after as a licence to enjoy forbidden fruit'.³³⁷ In addition to frustrating those who wished to play both G.A.A. and soccer, the rule seemed to have facilitated a sort of rural/urban divide, with many Catholics and Protestants in Sligo town becoming involved in soccer while Catholics in the rural areas became involved in G.A.A. activities.

In the period 1914-49 both Catholics and Protestants had their own separate musical groups based on their respective parishes although they co-operated very closely under the Sligo Musical Society. However, a largely Protestant committee dominated the Society. The majority of those organising the events in from 1914 to 1949 seemed to have been Protestant. Feis Ceoil had a strong Protestant tradition although Catholics participated in all the competitions run by the Feis. Feis Shligigh was originally a branch of the Gaelic League, which was closely associated with Irish nationalism, although Protestants made a large contribution to Feis Shligigh, especially those from unionist backgrounds. In the musical field in general there is evidence to suggest a significant amount of integration and possibly even assimilation took place between Protestants and Catholics.

The importance of Protestant fraternal associations such as the Y.M.C.A., Sligo Constitutional Club and the Freemasons was crucial in preserving a sense of common Protestant culture and social activity and in providing a setting to ease the transition from Union to Free State. Catholics were always permitted to join the Y.M.C.A. However, they had their own fraternal organisations such as the Catholic Institute and the Y.M.C.A. remained a Protestant association. There was also the Sligo Trades Club, where it seemed that working class Protestants and Catholics mixed to some extent, although there appeared to have been only a very small number of Protestant members. There also seemed to have always been a good relationship between Protestant and Catholic clubs, in particular the Y.M.C.A. and the Catholic Institute, and they held competitions in order to raise funds and organised joint charitable events.

The members of Sligo Constitutional Club had a tradition of involvement in unionist politics and the club was very popular with Protestants. However, Catholics were beginning to join the organisation in the 1930s and by the 1940s they formed almost ten per cent of the membership of the club. This does suggest that integration was taking place, although those Catholics who joined the club were financially better off and were possibly joining the club

³³⁷ R.V. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003), p. 224.

in an attempt to identify with a Protestant club which had traditionally been frequented by wealthier Protestants.

The Masonic Order provided a common sense of security and familiarity for Protestants and proved to be an association for Protestant businessmen. Membership increased over time and especially in the turbulent period of 1919 to 1921. The organisation continued to be popular after 1921 and attendances at meetings remained high. As a result of Catholic doctrine opposing Catholics from joining the Masonic Order, Catholics in Sligo may not have been comfortable joining the Order and Freemasonry did not prove to be a setting for assimilation or integration.

However, the British Legion offered a vehicle for integration between Protestants and Catholic ex-servicemen in Sligo. The organisation seemed to have been particularly popular with Protestant servicemen and their wives and Protestant businessmen and landowners controlled the committee of the British Legion, and the organisation gave the Protestant community in Sligo a strong sense of belonging to a wider imperial community through the symbols, rituals and commemorations associated with the legion. However, about forty percent of the membership was Catholic and many Catholic ex-servicemen were keen to work hard for the Legion and attend annual Remembrance Day services. Despite the changed political situation and Ireland's neutrality in the Second World War, the sons of Protestant landowners and businessmen in Sligo were still keen to join the British forces in 1939 and Protestants held social events to raise money for those suffering in Britain as a result of the war.

Traditionally Protestant sports, such as hunting, seemed to remain Protestant dominated in the period 1914-49. However, a minority of wealthier Catholics began to participate in hunting. An interest in horse racing proved to offer an environment for integration and was very popular with both Protestants and Catholics from various walks of life. However, Protestant landowners still formed a majority of those involved in breeding and training horses in Sligo and in the period from 1914 to 1949 they formed a majority of the organisers of race meetings and indicated a Catholic deference to the principal role of Protestants in the sport.

The more recently established water sports attracted Protestants and Catholics, although Protestants and Catholics generally had separate rowing clubs. However, yachting and boating provides an excellent example of Protestant/Catholic integration in Sligo as all the clubs co-operated closely on joint committees in order to hold regattas and competitions.

The Co. Sligo Lawn tennis Club and the Merville Tennis Club were the only two tennis clubs in Sligo and Catholics were always free to join the clubs. However, both traditionally had a large Protestant membership and most of those involved were from financially better off Protestant landowning or business families. Some Catholics also joined Merville Tennis Club, which indicates that tennis presented an environment for integration although the Catholics seemed to have been from the wealthier business community in Sligo.

Golf was another traditionally Protestants dominated sport in Sligo and in particular was associated with wealthier Protestants. Protestants dominated the committee of Rosses Point Golf Club and although Catholics were free to join, and it seemed that a very small number of better off Catholics did join, they always formed a small minority of the membership. However, Catholics from a broader social spectrum began to play golf after Strandhill Golf Club was set up in the 1930s and Catholics were possibly more comfortable joining this club. Other sports including hockey, cricket and rugby remained Protestant dominated sports, although, in the early part of the twentieth century Catholics had been involved in rugby and cricket. However, after 1919 rugby and cricket seemed to be almost exclusively Protestant.

When it came to the G.A.A., the organisation seemed to remain almost exclusively Catholic, at least until the 1930s when some Protestants seemed to begin to take part in Gaelic football. The G.A.A. ban which prevented both Catholics and Protestants who enjoyed 'foreign' sports from participating in Gaelic games impacted more on Protestants with a tradition of involvement in other sports, and the ban proved to be a barrier to integration in sports generally. However, both Protestants and Catholics appeared to have participated in and supported local soccer teams and the sport proved to be very popular in Sligo town in the period of the 1920s to the 1940s and provided a strong forum for integration.

It seemed that in the period 1922-49 Sligo Protestants were definitely not being assimilated in large numbers into the majority Catholic community. Protestants in Sligo did not have to switch to an Irish identity after independence; it appeared that they had always considered themselves Irish. However, it was arguably their own sense of Irishness distinct from the Catholic Gaelic culture of the majority. Through their churches, clubs and sports Protestants were maintaining their distinct cultural separateness. In the case of some cultural organisations such as Feis Shligigh and Ceoil, Protestants appear to have been assimilating into the Catholic culture. However, on closer inspection Protestants had always

had a strong involvement in music, dance and literature. Integration also seemed to have taken place in some traditionally Protestant organisations and sporting clubs, especially amongst Protestants and Catholics from similar socio-economic backgrounds. In a small town like Sligo it proved impossible to completely isolate a section of the population and social integration between Protestants and Catholics did begin to take place in particular after the foundation of the Irish Free State.

Conclusion

By the start of the twentieth century the Protestant community had been associated with the town and county of Sligo for over three hundred years. In that time they had come to dominate the political, economic and social life of Sligo. However, in the latter half of the nineteenth century Catholics and nationalists had become far more organised and were beginning to become politically and economically significant. In the short period before the outbreak of the First World War Sligo Protestants had largely united under the banner of unionism and were strongly organised and vocal in their opposition to Irish Home Rule, and were part of a wider unionist group in both Ireland and Britain. In 1914 the religious, social and political gap between Protestants and Catholics in Sligo was wide.

The first chapter discovered that between 1911 and 1926 one third of Protestants left Sligo. The emigration of young skilled Protestants and those with connections abroad may have contributed to this decline. However, the drop in the Protestant population was found to be greater in the four other large Connacht towns of Galway, Castlebar, Boyle, Tuam and the Sligo Protestant population was always greater than those towns. In the period 1926-46 it was found that it was more likely for individual Protestants to leave Sligo than large family groups. In the rest of the 26 counties of Ireland it seemed to have been more likely for entire family groups to leave. The fact that the proportion of older Protestants increased in the population of Sligo, which resulted in lower birth rates for Protestants, negatively affected the numbers of Protestants in Sligo over time. The effect of mixed marriages also impacted on the Protestant population and in the 1911 census it was found that the offspring of mixed marriages were being raised as Catholics. However, it appeared that the children of mixed marriages in Sligo town were being raised as Catholics even before the *Ne temere* decree. It was also discovered that the Protestant proportion of the working population was high in the more skilled occupations, as many Protestants could afford to stay longer in education. It also appeared that in the period from 1926 to 1946 the number of Protestants in the higher skilled occupations remained significant.

The second chapter revealed that Sligo Protestants supported the British war effort in large numbers and neglected unionist politics, which allowed for the decline in opposition to Home Rule. During the war things got worse for Sligo Protestants and the more extreme nationalism of Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers came to the fore in local politics. Southern unionism was split by the agreements reached at the Irish Convention of 1918. The chapter argued that Sligo Protestants made no effort to work with moderate Sligo

nationalists in order to oppose Sinn Féin and through their unquestioning support of British interests Protestants and unionists further alienated themselves from the majority in Sligo. Protestant unionists felt that their sacrifice in the First World War would protect them from Home Rule. This belief led to their political apathy and refusal to adapt to changing circumstances in 1918, which isolated them from Catholics and nationalists in Sligo at the end of the war. Bryan Cooper, a leading Sligo Protestant and unionist who had served in the First World War had a more positive view for the future and he believed that Protestants and Catholics, nationalists and unionists, could work well together.

It seemed that many Sligo Protestant unionists were prepared to adapt to changing circumstances and in the third chapter it was found that Cooper's optimism proved to be well founded. The success of the S.R.A. and Protestant involvement provided focus and direction and unified local unionists especially after the division in the I.U.A. and the local electoral success of Sinn Féin and the rising militarism of Irish nationalism. Importantly the S.R.A. was composed of both Catholics and Protestants, who believed in the economic well being of Sligo and were prepared to work together outside of the main nationalist and unionist political parties and although the S.R.A. failed to secure representation in the June 1920 county council elections, the S.R.A. councillors were, from time to time, able to influence corporation decisions and in January 1921 the S.R.A. mayoral candidate was elected.

However, the War of Independence in Sligo was a difficult period for some Protestant unionists and while Sinn Féin targeted some lands for division, the I.R.A. made a number of raids on unionist and Protestant houses for arms. Sinn Féin and I.R.A. in Sligo were not sectarian and there is evidence to suggest that I.R.A. members were punished for attacking Protestant property and the I.R.A. leadership made statements that the organisation was not anti-Protestant. Sinn Féin courts seemed to deal very fairly with cases of injury against Protestants and Bryan Cooper later praised the impartiality of the Sinn Féin courts when dealing with cases of land division. However, it must be noted that many cases of division of Protestant land were taken after years of agitation and during a very disturbed time. No matter how fair the decisions were many Protestant landowners were forced against their will to sell part of their lands.

Sligo Protestants spoke out publicly against attacks on northern Catholics and this was probably motivated by the fear that they themselves would become targets. However, Protestants and Catholics were united in their mutual condemnation of the heavy handed

and very destructive tactics of the R.I.C. Auxiliary forces and their conduct during the War of Independence. Only a small number of Sligo Protestants seemed to have given information to the R.I.C. during the War of Independence and only one Protestant was shot during the War of Independence and evidence suggests that the I.R.A. leadership were not involved in his murder. The vast majority of Sligo Protestants had not suffered very badly during the War of Independence and it seemed that in many other counties it had been worse for Protestants.

The fourth chapter traces the fortunes of Sligo Protestants during the Truce and Civil War period. At the end of the War of Independence the Sligo I.R.A. were in a very strong position. The Sligo I.R.A. raided both Protestant and Catholic shops for supplies and money was extorted from Protestant traders in the Ballymote area of Co. Sligo in relation to the Belfast boycott. The I.R.A. sanctioned raids against any traders they believed to have been loyal to the British administration, whether they were Catholic or Protestant. It also seemed that the Belfast boycott was imposed only in Ballymote and there is no record of local I.R.A. commanders sanctioning the actions.

Most Sligo Protestants were in favour of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and both Protestant members of the S.R.A. and the S.F.A. spoke publicly in favour of the Treaty. During the Truce period Protestants expressed sorrow over the withdrawal of regular British forces from Sligo. The British army, while based in Sligo had made a large contribution to the economic and social life of Sligo. However, Protestants were also keen to express publicly their optimism for their future in Sligo. The I.R.A. kidnapped some prominent Protestants during the Truce period. However, they were quickly released unharmed. Protestant leaders in Sligo such as Charles O'Hara tried to establish a relationship with the I.R.A., and in this he was largely successful.

In March 1922 Sligo unionists were eager to condemn attacks on Catholics in the north and praised fellow Sligo people, and although they probably did this to dissuade the I.R.A. from targeting them, the sentiments expressed seemed to be genuine and Protestants also made contributions to Catholic charities in the north. In the June 1922 election Protestants supported the independent pro-Treaty candidates and they did well considering that there were reports of intimidation. During the Civil War period most Protestants supported the Free State, and although a small number fought for the anti-Treaty side, the majority of Protestants took no part in the fighting. Only a very small number of Sligo Protestants

claimed for losses at the end of the Civil War and like the War of Independence, it seemed to have been far worse for Protestants in some other counties.

In the fifth chapter it was found that Protestant landowners and businessmen, along with Catholic businessmen had a strong tradition of investment in agriculture, industry and communications in Sligo. Protestant businessmen had extensive milling and manufacturing interests and more importantly continued to increase their involvement in Sligo manufacturing in the 1920s, 1930s and the 1940s. The number of Protestant businesses in Sligo remained high during the period from 1922 to 1949, even though the Protestant population of Sligo town declined. There also seemed to have been plenty of employment opportunities for Protestants in Protestant owned companies. An important indication of Protestant optimism for the future of their business interests in Sligo was the founding, by Protestant businessmen, of Sligo Chamber of Commerce in January 1923, during the Civil War. The organisation later became popular with Catholic businessmen and it did much to promote business interests in Sligo during the economically difficult period of the 1930s and 1940s.

The sixth chapter has argued that after the foundation of the Free State Sligo Protestants were keen to continue their strong interest in politics, especially in the S.R.A., and the organisation continued to expand, with many more Catholics joining in the 1920s. In Sligo politics did not divide along sectarian lines and was sectional. In the county areas Protestant farmers became very actively involved in the S.F.A. Generally Protestant traders in Sligo town and Protestant farmers in Co. Sligo seemed to have been strong supporters of the conservative Cumann na nGaedheal policies. Protestant businessmen praised Cumann na nGaedheal and condemned Fianna Fáil's economic policies. Some smaller national parties, founded in the 1920s and 1930s attracted the support of Sligo Protestants, as they were largely based on economic issues, and in 1927 a National League member of the S.R.A. was elected as T.D. for Sligo, while a S.F.A. member elected T.D. for the Farmers' Party. Both candidates had received public support from Protestant members of the S.R.A. and the S.F.A. Active involvement in economic and political activities undoubtedly helped Protestants feel more a part of the Irish state.

The seventh chapter maintains that the Protestant Churches were vital in maintaining a sense of unity for Sligo's Protestant community against the dominant Catholic ethos. Protestant primary and secondary education allowed for the transmission of Protestant traditions. The eighth chapter investigated the various Protestant fraternities and sporting

clubs in Sligo. These organisations provided Protestants with a separate heritage and were very helpful in absorbing the psychological impact of the political changes of the early 1920s. However, some associations also allowed Protestants to mix with Catholics and although some traditionally Protestant clubs remained dominated by Protestant members, integration did take place in some cultural, sporting and fraternal associations, especially in those that allowed Protestants and Catholics from similar socio-economic backgrounds to interact.

This examination of the Protestant community in Sligo has provided some insight into the ability of Protestants and Catholics in southern Ireland to interact positively and for the minority Protestant community to maintain its cultural and traditional differences while also adapting to a society with a largely Catholic and Gaelic ethos. By the end of the period 1914-49, Sligo Protestants had pragmatically adapted to the changes in the period and had ditched unionism in favour of more economic and interest based politics. They had weathered well the difficult periods of the War of Independence and the Civil War. The change in government was not disastrous for Sligo's Protestant population and two-thirds had remained in Sligo after the Civil War and they continued to take an active interest in, and make a large contribution to the political and economic life of Sligo. There is no doubt that the transition to independence was a traumatic experience for Sligo Protestants but it also offered an opportunity to break with the past and allowed the possibility of a new beginning. Protestants and ex-unionists in Sligo were able to work together with their Catholic and nationalist neighbours, while also being able to honour their heritage and traditions and remaining loyal to their own groups and clubs which gave rise to a socially healthy community with a feeling of belongingness to a new state.

The Protestant community in Sligo was composed of a mixed socio-economic population with a business and professional middle class, and a working class, and not just a rich landowning elite and it is fair to suggest that positive confessional relations in Sligo were facilitated by the fact that Sligo society was by nature conservative. However, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century there was a good deal of land agitation in connection with the estate of George Keogh near Geevagh in south Sligo.¹ In January 1908 there was some trouble in the area which included the withholding of rents, cattle driving and arrests all relating to earlier evictions of tenants and the slow sale of the

¹ John C. McTernan, *Olde Sligo* (Dublin, 1995), pp 489-95.

estate under the terms of the Wyndham Land Act.² On 29 October 1908 the R.I.C. opened fire on a crowd of 100 cattle drivers at Ardculmer, Co. Sligo killing John Stevenson.³ These incidents were part of the Ranch War, which occurred between January 1907 and June 1908, and was conducted in order to pressurise landlords and large graziers to sell their holdings for prices determined by the tenants.⁴ Overall though it appeared that in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century Sligo was largely free from major conflict between the predominantly Protestant landowners and their mostly Catholic tenants that was evident at the time in certain other parts of Ireland.

In his memoirs the Protestant landowner Colonel John Ffolliott (1824-94), of Hollybrook House, Ballinacree, Co. Sligo, has commented that 'County Sligo was always more free from disturbances than most of those in the West and South of Ireland. Landlords and tenants lived mostly on good terms and there was very little of the eviction of tenants to turn the land into grazing farms, as there has been in other districts'.⁵ This indicates that possibly an aspect worthy of further study is the impact on Protestant and Catholic relations in Sligo of the politically and economically volatile period in the last part of the nineteenth century when the Home Rule movement and the Land League were agitating and campaigning for reforms.⁶

This thesis has attempted to examine in detail a significant minority Protestant community and its interaction with the majority Catholic community in a town on the northwest coast of Ireland, and hopefully the evidence produced in this study contributes to the historiography of Irish Protestants and confessional relations in general and specifically in the period from 1914 to 1949. As more local and regional studies on the Protestant community in the first half of the twentieth century, similar to the one attempted here, are conducted, it may be possible to make further quantitative generalisations on the

² Ibid.

³ Fergus Campbell, *Land and revolution* (Oxford, 2005), p. 174.

⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

⁵ The reminiscences of Col. John Ffolliott of Hollybrook, 1894 (S.C.L., biographies, BIO 070).

⁶ Land: F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), pp 164-77; Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), pp 364-75; L.P. Curtis, *Coercion and conciliation in Ireland, 1880-92* (Princeton & London, 1963); Michael Davitt, *The Fall of feudalism in Ireland* (London & New York, 1904); B. Solow, *The Land Question and the Irish economy, 1870-1903* (Cambridge, Mass., & London, 1972); N.D. Palmer, *The Irish Land League crisis* (New Haven, 1940).

Home Rule: Eugenio F. Biagini, *British democracy and Irish nationalism, 1876-1906* (Cambridge, 2007); F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), pp 178-201; Robert Kee, *The green flag* (London, 1972), pp 376-90; Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell and his party, 1880-90* (Oxford, 1957); Michael Hurst, *Parnell and Irish nationalism* (London, 1968); F.S.L. Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party, 1890-1910* (London, 1951); F.S.L. Lyons, *The fall of Parnell, 1890-1901* (London, 1960).

characteristics of the Protestant community in the 26 counties and especially in the western part of the country.

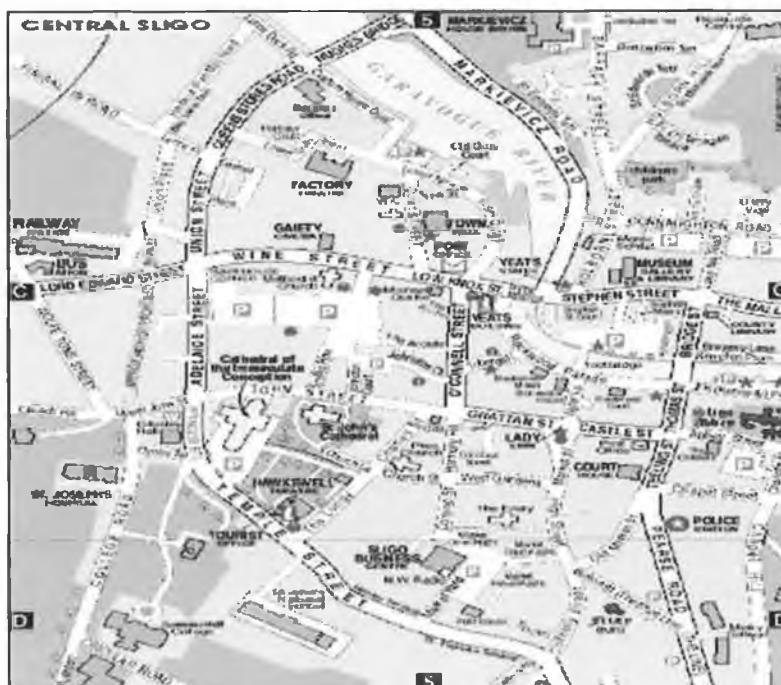
Appendix I: Maps

Map of Co. Sligo.



Source: Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), xviii.

Map of Sligo Town (Central)



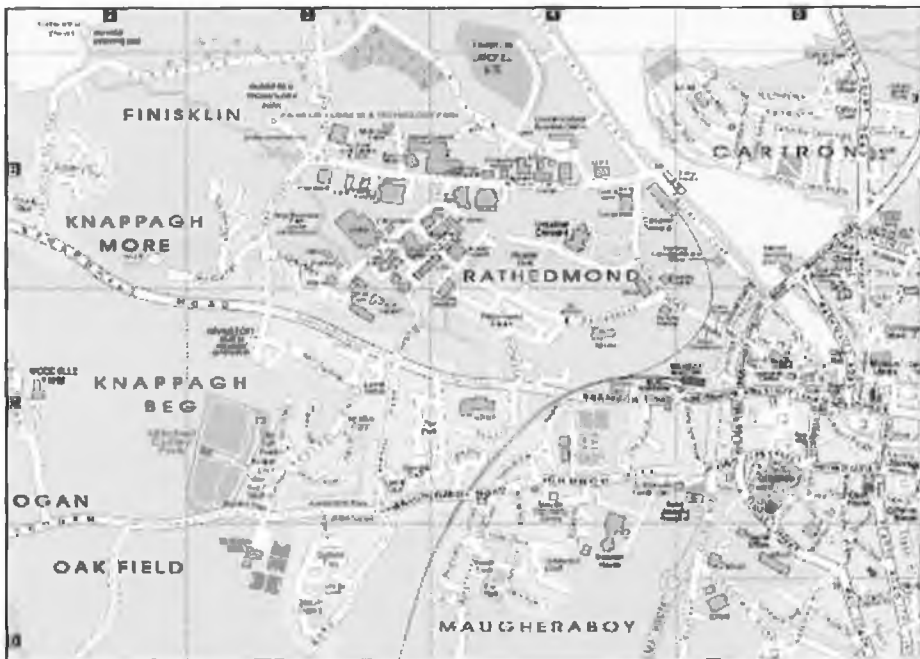
Source: http://www.jointhemap.co.uk/pages/sligo/sligo_centre.html

Map of Sligo Town (East)



Source: http://www.jointhemap.co.uk/pages/sligo/sligo_east.html

Map of Sligo Town (West)



Source: http://www.jointhemap.co.uk/pages/sligo/sligo_west.html

Map of Sligo Town (South)



http://www.jointhemap.co.uk/pages/sligo/sligo_south.html

Appendix II: Tables

Table 1.3: List of number of Protestant individuals and the streets/urban area (and the urban ward) where they resided as recorded in the 1911 census for the Borough of Sligo town.

Streets/urban areas	No. of individual Protestants
Abbeyquarter (East ward)	33
Abbey Street (East ward)	8
Adelaide Street (West ward)	15
Albert Road (East ward)	17
Ballincar (North Ward)	7
Ballydoogan (West ward)	11
Ballytivinan (North ward)	81
Barrack Street (North ward)	33
Bridge Street (North ward)	17
Bridgefoot Street (East ward)	1
Cartron (North ward)	8
Castle Street (East ward)	61
Chapel Street (East ward)	61
Charles Street (West ward)	14
Church Hill (West ward)	13
Church Street (West ward)	21
Cleveragh Demesne (East ward)	20
College Road (West ward)	3
Corckran's Mall (East ward)	12
Cornageeha (Est ward)	15
Cranmore Street (East ward)	8
Derrydarragh/Oakfield (West ward)	14
Emmetts Place (North ward)	3
Finisklin (West ward)	61
Finisklin Road (West ward)	16
Gallows Hill (West ward)	6
Gratten Street (West ward)	44
Harmony Hill (East ward)	5
High Street (East ward)	22
Holburn Street (North ward)	26
John Street (West ward)	109
Knaggs Row (North ward)	20
Knappagh Beg (East ward)	19
Knappagh Road (West ward)	12

Knocknaganny (East ward)	23
Lord Edward St. (George's St.) (West ward)	29
Lungy Street (West ward)	2
Lynns Place (West ward)	13
Lower Knox Street (North ward)	27
Lower Quay Street (North ward)	3
Mail Coach Road (East ward)	2
Market Street (East ward)	29, 3 Jews
Maugheraboy (West ward)	20
New Quay (North ward)	1
O'Connell Street (West ward)	44
Old Market Street (East ward)	8
Quay Street Upper (North ward)	6
Rathedmond (West ward)	38
Rathbroughan (North ward)	16
Rathquarter (North ward)	93
Riverside (East ward)	3
Shannoneigher (North ward)	31
Sligo Harbour (North ward)	11
Stephen Street (North ward)	63, 1 Jew
Teeling Street (East ward)	30
Temple Street (West ward)	31
Thomas Street (East ward)	24
The Mall (North ward)	132
Union Place (West ward)	52
Union Street (North ward)	17
Upper New Street (North ward)	2
Vernon Street (East ward)	2
Waste Gardens (West ward)	10
William St. (Wolfe Tone St.) (West ward)	88, 1 Jew
Wine Street (West ward)	84
Grand Total	1,755 (includes 5 Jews living in the Borough of Sligo town).

Source: Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-

Table 1.18A: Intercensal Percentage Increase/Decline in the Number of Persons in Certain Age Cohorts Arranged by Birth Years of Cohort and religion, Co. Sligo and 26 counties of Ireland, 1926-46.

	Co. Sligo		26 counties of Ireland	
	Intercensal Percentage Increase/Decline and, in Parentheses, Age of Cohort at End of Period		Intercensal Percentage Increase/Decline and, in Parentheses, Age of Cohort at End of Period	
Birth Years of Cohort and Religion	1926-36	1936-46	1926-36	1936-46
1901-1892				
Catholic	-8	-12	-11	-12
Protestant*	-12	-15	-13	-16
	(35-44)	(45-54)	(35-44)	(45-54)
1911-02				
Catholic	-33	-9	-24	-10
Protestant	-29	-11	-22	-15
	(25-34)	(35-44)	(25-34)	(35-44)
1916-12				
Catholic	-24	-22	-14	-19
Protestant	-29	-27	-16	-26
	(20-24)	(30-34)	(20-24)	(30-34)
1921-17				
Catholic	-8	-32	-5	-22
Protestant	-5	-45	-10	-32
	(15-19)	(25-29)	(15-19)	(25-29)
1926-22				
Catholic	+1	-31	-2	-18
Protestant	+6	-48	-5	-28
	(10-14)	(20-24)	(10-14)	(20-24)
1931-27				
Catholic	NR	-11	NR	-6
Protestant	NR	-10	NR	-14
	(5-9)	(15-19)	(5-9)	(15-19)
1936-32				
Catholic	NR	-1	NR	-2
Protestant	NR	+16	NR	-5
	(0-4)	(10-14)	(0-4)	(10-14)
1941-37				
Catholic	NR	NR	NR	NR
Protestant	NR	NR	NR	NR
		(5-9)	(5-9)	
1946-42				
Catholic	NR	NR	NR	NR
Protestant	NR	NR	NR	NR
		(0-4)	(0-4)	

Sources: Calculated from *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, Vol. III. Part I, table 13A, p. 99; table 14, p. 109; *1936*, Vol. III, Part I, table 13A, p. 103; table 14, p. 113; *1946*, Vol. III, Part I table 11A, p. 32; table 12, p. 58-9; Robert E. Kennedy, *The Irish: emigration, marriage and fertility* (Berkeley, 1973), p. 114.

*Protestant Episcopalians and Other Religious Denominations.

Table 1.18B: Intercensal Percentage Increase/Decline in the Number of Persons in Certain Age Cohorts Arranged by Age Group at End of Intercensal Period and Religion, Co. Sligo and 26 counties of Ireland, 1926 to 1946.

	Co. Sligo		Ireland	
	Intercensal Percentage Increase/Decline and, in Parentheses, Birth Years of Cohort		Intercensal Percentage Increase/Decline and, in Parentheses, Birth Years of Cohort	
Age at End of Intercensal Period and Religion	1926-36	1936-46	1926-36	1936-46
10-14 years				
Catholic	+1	-1	2	2
Protestant	+6	+16	5	5
	(1926-22)	(1936-32)	(1926-22)	(1936-32)
15-19 years				
Catholic	-8	-11	5	6
Protestant	-5	-10	10	14
	(1921-17)	(1931-37)	(1921-17)	(1931-37)
20-24 years				
Catholic	-24	-31	14	18
Protestant	-29	-48	16	28
	(1916-12)	(1926-22)	(1916-12)	(1926-22)
25-29 years				
Catholic	NA	-32	NA	22
Protestant	NA	-45	NA	32
		(1921-17)		(1921-17)
30-34 years				
Catholic	NA	-22	NA	19
Protestant	NA	-27	NA	26
		(1916-12)		(1916-12)

Sources: Calculated from *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, Vol. III, Part I, table 13A, p. 99; table 14, p. 109; 1936, Vol. III, Part I, table 13A, p. 103; table 14, p. 113; 1946, Vol. III, Part I table 11A, p. 32; table 12, p. 58-9; Robert E. Kennedy, *The Irish: emigration, marriage and fertility* (Berkeley, 1973), p. 116.

*Protestant Episcopalians and Other Religious Denominations.

Table 1.24: Occupations of Males in Sligo Town, 1911.

Occupations	Total		Protestants		Catholics		Protestant % all Ages
	Under 20 Years	20 Years and upwards	Under 20 Years	20 Years and upwards	Under 20 Years	20 Years and upwards	
Civil Service (Officers and Clerks)	1	29	0	13	1	16	43
Civil Service Messengers	9	16	0	0	9	16	0
Prison officer	0	13	0	6	0	7	46
Police	0	35	0	13	0	22	37
Municipal, Parish, Union, District - Officer	0	2	0	1	0	1	50
Other Local or County Officials	0	17	0	2	0	15	12
Army (at home)	1	14	0	9	1	5	60
Navy Ashore or in Port	1	9	1	4	0	5	50
Barrister, Solicitor	0	7	0	4	0	3	57
Law Student	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Law Clerk & others connected with Law	3	14	1	11	2	3	71
Physician, Surgeon, General Practitioner	0	11	0	6	0	5	55
Dentist, Assistant	5	7	0	3	5	4	25
Medical - Student, Assistant	2	2	0	2	2	0	50
Subordinate Medical Service	1	3	0	0	1	3	0
Teachers	2	24	1	10	1	14	42
Civil Engineer	0	6	0	3	0	3	50
Musician; Musicmaster	0	8	0	3	0	5	38
Domestic service	5	62	1	21	4	41	33
Hospital and Institution Service	0	22	0	0	0	22	0
Merchant	1	22	0	18	1	4	78
Broker, Agent, Factor	0	15	0	6	0	9	40
Auctioneer, Appraiser, Valuer, House Agent	0	5	0	2	0	3	40
Accountant	0	5	0	4	0	1	80
Commercial Clerk	12	92	6	10	6	82	15
Bank Service	1	23	1	19	0	4	83
Insurance Service	0	6	0	1	0	5	17

Railway Engine - Driver, Stoker	3	33	1	1	2	32	6
Railway Guard	0	9	0	1	0	8	11
Other railway officials and Servants	2	31	1	9	1	22	30
Carman, Carrier, Carter, Drayman	5	66	0	1	5	65	1
Motor Car Driver, Chauffeur	0	5	0	3	0	2	60
Seaman (Merchant Service)	1	40	0	12	1	28	29
Harbour, Dock. Wharf, Lighthouse - Service	2	44	0	3	2	41	7
Messenger, Porter, watchman (neither Railway nor Government)	29	11	0	1	29	10	3
Farmer, Grazier	0	41	0	24	0	17	59
Farm Baliff	0	3	0	0	0	3	0
Agricultural Labourer, Cottager	2	15	0	0	2	15	0
Shepherd	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Farm Servant (indoor)	1	8	0	0	1	8	0
Gardener (not Domestic)	0	17	0	4	0	13	24
Working with Animals	4	59	0	0	4	59	0
Publisher, Bookseller, Librarian, Printer	10	39	0	4	10	35	8
Watch Maker, Clock Maker	2	10	1	4	1	6	42
Builder	0	10	0	2	0	8	20
Carpenter, Joiner	12	85	0	7	12	78	7
Bricklayer	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
Mason	1	29	0	2	1	27	7
Slater, tiler	1	9	0	3	1	6	30
Plasterer, Whitewasher	3	8	0	0	3	8	0
Plumber	3	16	0	6	3	10	32
Painter, Glazier	11	46	2	11	9	35	23
Furniture and Fittings	9	32	0	9	9	23	22
Carriages & harness	15	38	2	2	13	36	8
Chemist, Duggist	3	14	1	7	2	7	47
Board and lodging	9	47	0	2	9	45	4
Butcher	0	30	0	1	0	29	3
Provision - Curer, dealer	0	6	0	0	0	6	0
Poulterer, Game Dealer	0	1	0	0	0	1	0

Corn, Flour, Seed - Merchant, Dealer	2	6	0	6	2	0	75
Corn Miller	1	4	0	0	1	4	0
Baker	5	41	0	15	5	26	33
Confectioner, Pastry Cook	0	5	0	3	0	2	60
Grocer; Teas, Coffee, Chocolate - Maker, Dealer	13	56	4	23	9	33	39
Draper, Linen Draper, Mercer	22	55	11	30	11	25	53
Tailor	11	58	2	8	9	50	14
Shirtmaker	0	1	0		0	1	0
Shoe, Boot - Maker, Dealer	5	41	0	8	5	33	17
Wig Maker, Hair Dresser	3	8	0	0	3	8	0
Timber, Wood - Merchant, Dealer	1	3	0	1	1	2	25
Sawyer	2	10	0	0	2	10	0
Cooper; Hoop - Maker, Bender	0	6	0	0	0	6	0
Coal/Gas Service	1	14	0	5	1	9	33
Stone, Clay and Roadmaking	4	10	0	0	4	10	
Blacksmith	0	20	1	3	1	17	20
Ironmonger; Hardware Dealer, Merchant	5	17	0	5	5	12	23
General Shopkeeper, Dealer	12	64	4	20	8	44	32
Manufacturer, Manager, Superintendent (undefined)	0	5	0	4	0	1	80
Mechanics and Labourer (general or undefined)	111	773	8	24	103	749	4

Source: *Census of Ireland for the year 1911* (province of Connaught, County of Sligo) Occupation of the people - Table XXI – occupations of males/females under 20, and 20 years and upwards in each county district in the County of Sligo, pp. 56-60 and Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45).

Table 1.25: Occupations of Females in Sligo Town, 1911

Occupations	Total		Protestants		Catholics		Protestant % all Ages
	Under 20 Years	20 Years and upwards	Under 20 Years	20 Years and upwards	Under 20 Years	20 Years and upwards	
Civil Service (Officers and Clerks)	1	5	1	5	0	0	100
Prison officer	0	2	0	1	0	1	50
Other Local or County Official	0	5	0	0	0	5	0
Nurse, Assistant, Midwife	0	53	0	14	0	39	26
Teachers	11	44	0	15	11	29	27
Musician; Musicmistress	0	4	0	3	0	1	75
Domestic Indoor Servant	109	329	6	41	103	289	11
Other Services	1	21	0	1	1	20	5
Commercial Clerk	13	30	9	19	4	11	65
Farmer, Grazier	0	6	0	0	0	6	0
Agricultural Labourer, Cottager	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Others engaged in, or connected with, Agriculture	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Publisher, Bookseller, Librarian	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Bookbinder	2	2	0	0	2	2	0
Furniture and Fittings	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
Coachmaker	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Board and lodging	0	15	0	4	0	11	27
Butcher	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Confectioner, Pastry Cook	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
Greengrocer, Fruiterer	0	6	0	0	0	6	0
Grocer; Teas, Coffee, Chocolate - Maker, Dealer	1	8	0	1	1	7	11
Draper, Linen	14	20	1	12	13	8	38
Tailoress	5	13		1	5	12	6
Milliner, dressmaker	59	137	15	26	44	111	21

Shirtmaker, Seamstress	15	46	0	3	15	43	5
Hosiery Manufacture	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Shoe, Boot - Maker, Dealer	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Overall total involved in 'Dress'	79	198	15	30	64	168	16
Stationer, Law Stationer	2	6	1	4	1	2	63
General Shopkeeper, Pawnbroker	5	36	7	12	2	24	46
Mechanics and labourers (general or undefined)	8	12	0	1	8	11	5

Source: *Census of Ireland for the Year 1911* (Province of Connaught, County of Sligo) Occupation of the people - Table XXI – Occupations of Males/Females under 20, and 20 years and upwards in each County District in the County of Sligo, pp 61-63, and Manuscript census returns for Co. Sligo, 1911 (N.A.I., 1911 Census: Microfilm, S.C.L., M.F./R. 35-45).

Table 1.27: Number and Percentage of Males in Certain Occupations, 26 counties of Ireland, 1926-46*

	1926	1936	1946
Occupation	Percentage Protestant	Percentage Protestant	Percentage Protestant
Bank officials (not Clerks)	52	44	35
Employers, managers and foremen of printers, bookbinders, photographers	43	36	30
Navigating, engineering officers	42	43	33
Heads of commercial sections of businesses	41	49	35
Insurance clerks	40	31	20
Chartered Accountants	40	34	27
Brewery clerks	38	32	Not included
Analytical chemists	37	29	Not included
Solicitors, barristers	36	26	19
Bank clerks	35	33	30
Watch & clock makers and repairers	34	32	22
Auctioneers & valuers	34	32	25
Commercial travellers	33	27	22
Civil engineers, surveyors	32	28	21
Insurance officials (not clerks)	30	27	26
Employers, managers and foremen of textile workers	30	30	25
Tailors & tailor's Machinists	3	2	2
Shopkeepers & Managers of Chemist Shops	30	22	16
Dentists	28	23	Not included
Medical doctors	20	16	13
Shopkeepers & Managers in Hardware	22	24	23
Shopkeepers & Managers in General Drapery	15	15	15
Mechanics	27	24	16
Plumbers	15	11	9
Skilled Workers in Chemical processes	22	20	20
Wood & Furniture – employers, managers and foremen	15	15	13
Carpenters	7	6	4
Cabinet makers	7	7	3
Employers & managers in Building	17	12	12
Bricklayers	4	3	3
Plasterers	3	3	2
Masons	3	2	2

Painters & Decorators – employers, managers & foremen	18	20	16
Painters & Decorators (house, ship & general)	8	8	5
Railway – Stationmasters & railway officials (not clerks)	10	15	11
Railway – locomotive engine drivers	5	4	3
Total occupied	7	6	5

Sources: *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, Vol. III, Part I, Table 17, pp 114-129; *Census of Population of Ireland, 1936*, Vol. III, Part I, Table 16, pp 116-131;

Note: total occupied is 12 years and over for 1926-26 and 14 years and over for 1946.

*Protestant Episcopalian, Presbyterians, and Methodists; selected occupations of Protestant males.

Table 1.28: Number and Percentage of Females in Certain Occupations, 26 counties of Ireland, 1926-46*

	1926	1936	1946
Occupation	Percentage Protestant	Percentage Protestant	Percentage Protestant
Employers & managers in tailoring & Dressmaking	6	9	6
Tailors & Tailor's Machinist	3	2	2
Dressmakers	5	4	2
Sewers & sewing machinists	5	3	2
Milliners	8	8	3
Photographers	21	18	9
Workers/makers of paper & cardboard	2	3	4
Telephone Operators	14	9	4
Shopkeepers/managers – grocery	5	5	3
Shopkeepers/managers – General Drapery	12	10	10
Shopkeepers/managers – vegetable & fruit	4	2	2
Civil Service officials & Clerks	13	6	4
Shop assistants in Hardware	14	15	12
Shop assistants in paper & stationary	10	8	7
Shop assistants in grocery	7	5	3
Midwives	7	5	4
Sick Nurses	15	12	8
Teachers (not music)	14	13	11
Music Teachers	31	19	17
Shop assistants in general drapery	14	12	10
Domestic Servants	5	4	3
Charwomen & office cleaners	4	3	3
Total occupied persons 12 years & over	7	6	5

Sources: *Census of Population of Ireland, 1926*, Vol. III, Part I, Table 17, pp 114-129; *Census of Population of Ireland, 1936*, Vol. III, Part I, Table 16, pp 116-131; *Census of Population of Ireland, 1946*, Vol. II, Table 13A & 13B, pp 196-209.

Note: total occupied is 12 years and over for 1926-26 and 14 years and over for 1946.

*Protestant Episcopalian, Presbyterians, and Methodists; selected occupations of Protestant females.

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