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An Irish nationalist adolescence: Na Fianna Éireann, 1909–23

Marnie Hay

In 1909 two Irish Protestant nationalist activists, Constance, Countess Markievicz (1868–1927) and Bulmer Hobson (1883–1969), established a nationalist youth organisation called Na Fianna Éireann, or the Irish National Boy Scouts.¹ It was designed to be an Irish nationalist antidote to Robert Baden-Powell's pro-British Boy Scout movement which had spread to Ireland in 1908.² For some members, participation in the Fianna merely served a social function, while for others it served as a recruitment and training ground for their future roles in the struggle for Irish independence. Although the Fianna was initially open to all Irish boys (and some girls) between the ages of eight and eighteen, membership was later limited to boys aged between twelve and eighteen. This restriction of membership to adolescent males was possibly a reflection of the increasingly militant activities of the organisation, particularly from 1916 onwards.

Irish historians have increasingly referred to a series of events that took place over the course of the decade 1913-23 as the 'Irish revolution', though this term and the exact time frame involved remain contentious.³ These events include the 1916 Easter Rising, a week-long rebellion against British rule in Ireland organised by the Military Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB); the War of Independence (or Anglo-Irish War; 1919-21), a guerrilla war that was fought between the IRA and British crown forces; and the Irish Civil War (1922-23). This chapter will explore the involvement of adolescents in Na Fianna Éireann during the period of the Irish revolution with particular emphasis on the organisation's philosophy and membership in the years 1909-23. It will draw on sources such as contemporary Fianna print propaganda, Bureau of Military History witness statements, and entries in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography (DIB)* relating to a sample [p. 103] of thirty-seven notable former Fianna members born between 1888 and 1912⁴ in order to address the following questions: what kind of philosophy did the Fianna promote; who joined the organisation; how did it influence its adolescent members; and what was it like to be a young Irish nationalist during the years of the Irish revolution?

I - The advent of uniformed youth groups – and adolescence

Na Fianna Éireann was officially founded on 16 August 1909 at a meeting held in a hall at 34 Lower Camden Street in Dublin, at which an initial executive council was elected. The first Fianna troop, *An Cead Sluagh*, was born out of this inaugural meeting. The youth group offered members a combination of military training, outdoor pursuits and Irish cultural activities.

Schoolmasters, family members, friends, and notices in nationalist newspapers encouraged youths to join the Fianna. For example Eamon Martin attended the first public meeting of the Fianna at the urging of his former schoolmaster William O'Neill of St Andrew's National School on what is now Pearse Street in Dublin.⁵ Markievicz had contacted O'Neill about her plans to start a nationalist youth group, asking him to recommend suitable boys, which he duly did.⁶ After Liam Mellows joined the Fianna in 1911 he also brought his brothers Barney and Fred into the organisation. Garry Holohan was recruited into the Fianna by his friend Joe Connolly who belonged to the first 'Irish-Ireland family' that Holohan had ever met.⁷ (Irish-Irelanders like the Connollys advocated an Irish cultural nationalism grounded on Catholic and Gaelic values.) Seamus MacCaisin attended the inaugural meeting of the Fianna after he spotted an announcement of the event in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the newspaper of the Gaelic League, an organisation founded in 1893 to revive the Irish language.⁸ Other potential recruits may have been intrigued by the flag-wielding Fianna boy who stood outside the organisation's main hall on Camden Street, ready to answer queries about the organisation and to direct boys inside.⁹

Over the coming months and years more troops were formed in Dublin and in other Irish cities and towns, such as Belfast, Waterford and Cork, as well as in Glasgow, London and Liverpool, where sizeable Irish emigrant communities existed. In response to this growth, the Fianna soon developed a formal organisational structure. It consisted of an executive, an *ard-fheis* (national convention), an *ard-choisde* (central council), district councils and *sluaigh* (troops).¹⁰ [p. 104]

The foundation of the Fianna was an Irish nationalist manifestation of the proliferation of 'pseudo-military youth groups' that occurred in many western countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These groups were not only part of the cult of discipline, training and manliness that grew out of the

increasing anticipation of a coming war in Europe,¹¹ but were also a reaction to a widely-perceived *fin-de-siècle* decadence. In the early years of the twentieth century, many Germans worried that ‘middle-class boys were effeminate’ and ‘the country lacked virile soldiers’.¹² Similarly, the British Army’s poor performance against a force of South African farmers during the Boer War (1899–1902) had provoked much concern that Britain was in a state of decline. Fearing that they were losing their competitive edge in industrial and military affairs and that their populations were deteriorating both physically and morally, western countries like Britain and Germany began ‘to look to the health, education and moral welfare of the rising generation’.¹³ The establishment of uniformed youth groups was one way of dealing with the perceived problem.

The best-known of these youth groups was the international Boy Scout movement founded by Baden-Powell in 1908. A British army officer, Baden-Powell started this movement in response to the interest that boys had shown in his 1899 army training manual *Aids to scouting*. He was also inspired by the model of the Boys’ Brigade, which was launched by William Alexander Smith in 1883 in Glasgow.¹⁴ Smith was a businessman and an officer in the Volunteers, a British part-time military force that was later replaced by the Territorial Army.¹⁵ He had used military drill and discipline as a way of providing guidance to the boys who attended his Scottish Free Church Sunday School.¹⁶ Though Smith ‘constantly stressed the inter-denominationalism of his Brigade’, his example inspired the formation of other boys’ brigades aimed at specific religious denominations, such as the Church Lads’ Brigade for Anglicans, the Jewish Lads’ Brigade, and the Catholic Boys’ Brigade.¹⁷ Baden-Powell, in contrast with Smith, put less *overt* emphasis on militarism. Instead he focused on outdoor activities and personal development in order not only to counter what he saw as the moral and physical decline of the upcoming generation, but also to train boys to be better citizens.¹⁸

The impetus for the outdoor element of scouting came from the American-based naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton and his Woodcraft movement, which promoted outdoor life and the lore of Native American tribes. Baden-Powell and Seton met in 1906, sharing their respective ideas on youth groups. Seton co-founded the Boy Scouts of America, subsuming his own Woodcraft movement into the new group; [p. 105] however, he objected to the Scout movement’s emphasis on patriotism and was forced out of the American organisation in 1915.¹⁹ Whether Baden-Powell’s main

concern prior to 1920 was training future citizens or soldiers has sparked much scholarly debate.²⁰ Tensions within the early Scout movement, as exemplified by Seton and others, suggest that Baden-Powell initially sought to train both.

British uniformed youth groups soon established themselves in Ireland. Although the Boys' Brigade came to Ireland first, the Boy Scout movement spread more quickly. The first Irish companies of Smith's Boys' Brigade were founded in Belfast in 1888 and Dublin in 1891.²¹ Boy Scout troops were in existence in Bray, Co. Wicklow, Dublin city and county, and Belfast from early 1908. Members of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, such as the 12th Earl of Meath, supported Baden-Powell's new youth movement from the beginning, often providing leadership and camping facilities on their estates.²²

Irish nationalists viewed the various boys' brigades and the Boy Scouts as British imports but also a threat that could be turned into an opportunity. In 1903 Arthur Griffith, the founder of the Sinn Féin ('Ourselves') movement, condemned the Catholic Boys' Brigades in Ireland as a recruiting ground for the British Army, but recognised that if 'properly conducted', boys' brigades could be turned into 'a great national force', contributing to 'the intellectual and physical good of the young'.²³ Griffith saw such potential in what might be seen as the first incarnation of Na Fianna Éireann.

This was a boys' hurling club, also called Na Fianna Éireann, founded by Bulmer Hobson in Belfast in 1902.²⁴ The excitement surrounding the club's inaugural meeting convinced Hobson that the fledgling organisation was something that could be moulded 'into a strong force to help in the liberation of Ireland'.²⁵ The first Belfast Fianna held inter-club hurling competitions and classes on Irish language and history, later expanding its activities to include Gaelic football and possibly drama.²⁶ The organisation's activities were designed to build up the boys' physical strength and fitness through participation in sport and to develop their sense of an Irish nationalist identity through a focus on aspects of traditional Irish culture, such as Gaelic games, the Irish language, and Irish history from a nationalist perspective. Hobson sought to mould the bodies and minds of what he hoped would be the future 'liberators' of Ireland. But due to lack of money and the pressures of his various cultural and political commitments, the Belfast organisation lapsed before it could live up to this dream.²⁷ [p. 106]

Spurred on by Markievicz's desire to counteract the growing popularity and influence of Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts, Hobson joined Markievicz in establishing a new version of Na Fianna Éireann in 1909 in Dublin as an Irish nationalist antidote to the Boy Scout movement. They were not the only Irish nationalists to recognise the value and appeal of uniformed youth groups in the early twentieth century. For instance, May Kelly and her sister Elizabeth²⁸ established the Clann na Gael Girl Scouts in Dublin circa 1910-11. This group catered for girls between the ages of eight and sixteen years, offering its members such activities as camping trips and military training.²⁹ The Kelly sisters may have been inspired by the foundation of the female equivalent of scouting, the Girl Guides Association, by Agnes Baden-Powell in 1910 and the subsequent formation of Ireland's first official Girl Guide company in Harold's Cross in Dublin in 1911.³⁰ Alternatively, they may have wanted to establish a girls' counterpart to the Fianna, as the Dublin Fianna did not accept female members, though a girls' *sluagh* existed in Belfast from 1911. The Clann na Gael Girl Scouts shared a meeting hall at 28 North Frederick Street in Dublin with the Hibernian Rifles, the militia wing of the Irish-American Alliance. This was the more radical, less sectarian section of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a Catholic friendly society that supported home rule for Ireland.³¹ The Ancient Order of Hibernians also established its own youth organisation, the Hibernian Boys' Brigade around 1912.³² The Fianna, however, are the best known and most historically significant of these Irish nationalist manifestations of the 'pseudo-military' youth group.

Many of the youth groups formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were designed to keep young working-class boys off the streets and provide them with a leisure-time activity that promoted order and discipline. The Boys' Brigade is a good example. Its founder, Smith, 'reasoned that a new uniformed organisation appealing to a boy's sense of patriotism and martial spirit would serve as a useful instrument for a primarily religious end'.³³ One early Brigade member recognised the important function that the organisation served for his age cohort:

When we reached thirteen most of us felt we were too big for the Sunday School, and there was a gap of a few years until we were able to join the YMCA at seventeen. To fill this gap period, many working-class boys ran wild, became hooligans and street-corner loafers. What else was there for them in those days, to do?³⁴ [p. 107]

Many teenage boys, like the Boys' Brigade member quoted above, welcomed the advent of uniformed youth groups because they gave them something enjoyable and constructive to do with their free time. The 'uniformed' aspect of such youth groups chimed with the romantic view of the military prevalent in the years prior to the First World War.

An underlying adult view of youth, particularly working-class youth, as a problem that required a solution also can be seen in the foundation of the Boy Scout movement. Influenced by his experience of the Boer War, Baden-Powell's decision to start the Boy Scouts reflected his fears of the moral and physical 'degeneration of the young and for the survival of the British Empire which they would have to maintain'.³⁵ One anonymous fan of the new movement argued that 'in the next generation there should be no overgrown lads standing idly and foolishly at the street corners, gaping after they know not what, smoking cigarettes ... there will be a new race of boys in England when the Scouts of today have little Scouts of their own.'³⁶

Thus, uniformed youth groups were seen as an important tool in the renewal of British society. As John Springhall has noted, 'the development of "character" and "esprit de corps" found in the [British] public schools was to be extended to the "lower ranks" in society through the agencies of the various boys' brigades and, later, the Boy Scouts.'³⁷ Such youth groups would transmit middle-class values of order and discipline to working-class boys.

Markievicz in particular recognised the value and appeal of the activities offered by the boys' brigades and the Boy Scouts, but wanted to provide Irish boys with an Irish nationalist alternative to what she viewed as British imperialist bodies. In essence, she was less interested in keeping Irish boys off the streets than in keeping them out of the meeting halls of the boys' brigades and the Boy Scouts. Where Baden-Powell and other British youth leaders saw boys as a potential resource for the British Army and for the maintenance of the British Empire, she and Hobson saw them as a potential resource for the Irish nationalist movement. The Fianna would provide members with the military training and nationalist nurturing to enable them to play an important role in the struggle for Irish independence.

The timing of the Fianna's foundation in the early twentieth century not only coincided with the advent of uniformed youth groups, but also with the contested 'discovery' of adolescence as a distinct stage of life. The modern view of adolescence

as an age group equated with the teen years was mainly the creation of American psychology scholar G. Stanley Hall and his associates at Clark University in Massachusetts. His influential two-volume *Adolescence: its psychology* [p. 108] *and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion and education*, which appeared in 1904, ‘transform[ed] earlier ideas of “youth” into the modern concept of “adolescence”’ and brought the term ‘adolescence’ into common parlance.³⁸

Historians have debated how far back an awareness of adolescence can be traced, with some citing ‘a number of institutions, nearly all of them male, that fulfilled in the [more distant] past at least some of the functions – mainly violence and mayhem – that we now attribute to adolescence’.³⁹ Such institutions served to channel such violence and mayhem, helping not only to reinforce order, but also to propose alternatives to the existing order.⁴⁰ The Fianna promoted order through its provision of training, education and discipline for nationalist youth, but in advocating a new political order in Ireland many members, particularly adolescents, experienced both violence and mayhem in the years 1909-23. Mayhem came in the form of aggressive behaviour towards the Royal Irish Constabulary and attacks on Baden-Powell Boy Scouts or members of the Boys’ Brigade who carried Union Jacks.⁴¹ During a raid on a boy-scout camp in Crumlin, the Fianna captured flags and military equipment and ordered the scouts back home to Liverpool.⁴² This was mere youthful high jinks in comparison to what was to come during the Irish revolution when many Fianna members were witnesses, victims and perpetrators of political violence.

II - The philosophy of the Fianna

The willingness of Fianna members to participate in the events of the Irish revolution can be linked to the philosophy promoted by the organisation in its early years. The Fianna sought to mould the minds – and bodies – of nationalist youth through such conduits as education and training initiatives, print propaganda, cultural activities, and informal social contacts. Each of these conduits will be discussed.

Inherent in the foundation of the Fianna was the recognition that youth were the future of the Irish nationalist movement. Therefore, the organisation was designed to provide young people with the education and training necessary to enable them to assume their place within that movement. The Fianna undertook this task through

regular activities, such as weekly meetings, route marches and camping trips, and through print propaganda published in the 1914 *Fianna handbook* and in articles in advanced nationalist newspapers, including *Bean na hÉireann* (1908–11), *Irish Freedom* (1910–14), and the *Irish Volunteer* (1914–16).⁴³ [p. 109]

Fianna members were taught Irish language and history, as well as military drill, marksmanship, first aid and other skills necessary for scouting and camping. Passing tests on these subjects enabled members to move up within the ranks of the Fianna.⁴⁴ The Fianna used lectures, newspaper articles, and chapters in its handbook to educate its members about Irish history (from an Irish nationalist perspective) and folklore in order to teach them about their own unique heritage, to familiarise them with the nationalist vision of Ireland's long struggle against British rule, and to introduce them to Irish heroes that the organisation deemed worthy of emulation. Practical instruction on topics such as signalling, map reading, topography, military strategy, handling weapons, and first aid was provided at weekly meetings, on camping trips, and in the handbook and articles included in the *Irish Volunteer* newspaper. Members also learned how to govern themselves by being responsible for the running of the organisation, preparing them for citizenship, possibly even leadership, in an independent Ireland.

Two members in their late teens, Percy Reynolds and Patsy O'Connor, took the initiative to produce a one-off Christmas annual entitled *Nodlaig na bhFiann* in 1914 and then a monthly newspaper called *Fianna*. The paper, which initially appeared from February 1915 until shortly before the Easter Rising, was not an official Fianna publication, but did have sanction from headquarters. In producing these publications, the pair demonstrated that Fianna membership could help youths to develop the ability and self-confidence to communicate the message of Irish nationalism and separatism to their own age cohort.

Fianna members were also encouraged to participate in the Irish cultural revival in the areas of language, sport, theatre and music. They were expected to learn Irish and play Gaelic games. Members with the requisite talent and inclination had opportunities to display their dramatic and musical abilities. Examples include a drama group called the Fianna Players, which performed Irish plays including Padraic Colum's *The Saxon shilling*,⁴⁵ and fundraising events, such as the Lang Benefit Concert held in early 1915 at which members were among the performers of Irish

songs, dances, recitations and sketches.⁴⁶ Participation in such cultural activities helped members to cultivate a sense of a separate Irish national identity.

In addition to providing an Irish nationalist education and military training, the Fianna endorsed suitable role models for Irish boys, particularly through its print propaganda. In general, it promoted an idealised image of Irish nationalist youth that emphasised the importance of patriotism and morality. A Fianna member was to learn [p. 110] ‘all about his country, its history and language, its resources and industries, and his one aim in life [was] to serve it to the best of his ability’. He should also keep his body and mind ‘clean and pure’.⁴⁷ Robert Holland recalled that Fianna leader Con Colbert ‘often lectured boys on how they should keep their bodies. He used to tell them that they should wash their feet as often as they washed their face.’⁴⁸ Fianna propaganda also urged members never to ‘do anything that would bring discredit upon Ireland or upon the Fianna’.⁴⁹

According to the Fianna Code of Honour, which was developed in 1921, members were to embody the following twelve traits: patriotism, reliability, diligence, kindness, obedience, cheerfulness, thrift, bravery, cleanliness, humility, temperance and punctuality.⁵⁰ Such qualities were similar to those promoted by Baden-Powell’s Boy Scouts, which included self-discipline, obedience, loyalty, sobriety and cleanliness.⁵¹ Despite these obvious parallels, however, advanced nationalist propaganda from this period highlighted a moral dichotomy between Ireland and Britain, criticising the alleged ‘degenerate and debased nature of British and pro-British people’.⁵²

As part of this idealised image of nationalist youth, Fianna members were to be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice to attain Irish independence. In her introduction to the 1914 *Fianna handbook*, Markievicz predicted that members of the Fianna would not ‘flinch’ if the ‘path to freedom’ led to their death, as it had for the Irish republican heroes Theobald Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet.⁵³ Those current or former members of the organisation who died as a result of their involvement in the Easter Rising, the War of Independence, or the Civil War were not only praised in post-1916 Fianna propaganda, but promoted as worthy role models for future generations.⁵⁴ For instance, a 1922 Easter Week commemoration souvenir programme declared that Fianna officers Sean Heuston and Con Colbert, who were executed for their roles in the 1916 rising, ‘met their deaths, happy that it was for Ireland, sure of

the heaven that awaited them. In boyish simplicity and purity, and with manly courage, they faced the firing squad.’⁵⁵

Future Fianna propaganda continued to glorify martyrs to the cause, with a Fianna Roll of Honour listing the names of 54 members ‘who gave their lives for Ireland’s freedom’ between 1915 and 1981.⁵⁶ The first name on the list is former *Fianna* editor Patsy O’Connor, whose death in 1915 at the age of eighteen was believed to have resulted from a head injury that he received when he was batoned by the police while administering first aid to a worker during the 1913 Lockout in Dublin.⁵⁷ However, the record of his interment in Glasnevin [p. 111] Cemetery in Dublin indicates that the alleged cause of his death was pneumonia.⁵⁸

The formal education and training initiatives, print propaganda, and cultural activities provided by the Fianna were not the only ways in which the organisation could influence its young members. Informal social contacts were also important. For instance, Garry Holohan often spent weekends at Hobson’s cottage at Balroddery near Tallaght in Co. Dublin with Hobson and fellow Fianna members Pádraic Ó Riain and Frank Reynolds. It was during these weekends away that Holohan first read the poetry of Ethna Carbery (the pseudonym of Anna Johnston MacManus). He later reported that:

I can assure you they did much to fan the fires of patriotism to white heat. From now on my outlook on life was completely changed. The Fianna was no longer a mere pastime or social function. It became a sacred duty, and I started to bend my every effort towards the freeing of Ireland. No task was too great or time too long.⁵⁹

Carbery herself had influenced Hobson in his youth, helping to lay the foundations for his future career as a nationalist.⁶⁰

Membership in the Fianna enabled adolescents to become part of a nationalist social network of like-minded individuals. Older members were often recruited into another nationalist network: the IRB, a secret society committed to the establishment of an Irish republic, through the use of physical force if necessary. The Fianna’s increasingly militant stance coincided with the recruitment of selected senior members into the IRB when they had reached the age of seventeen. Pádraic Ó Riain and Con Colbert joined at an early stage. Eamon Martin and Patrick Ward became members of

the IRB in 1911, while Liam Mellows, Michael Lonergan and Garry Holohan were sworn in the following year. Martin claimed that by 1913 practically every senior Fianna officer throughout the country had become a member of the IRB. The annual Fianna *ard-fheis* often served to endorse decisions already made at meetings of the Fianna circle of the IRB held the night before.⁶¹

An alternative social network revolved around Markievicz, who disapproved of secret societies like the IRB.⁶² A small group of Fianna members, who regularly gathered at her home on Leinster Road in Rathmines in Dublin, became known as ‘Madam’s Boys’ or ‘the Surrey House clique’. According to Seamus Pouch, the group consisted of himself, Patsy O’Connor, Harry Walpole, Jack Shallow, Eddie Murray and Andy Dunne. Although Pouch chose not to join the IRB on [p. 112] conscientious grounds, he was no less militaristic than his Fianna colleagues who belonged to the secret society. He served at Jacob’s Biscuit Factory during the Easter Rising, later recalling that after the surrender ‘I dumped my gun with the rest and it was the saddest parting I can remember.’⁶³

Through its education and training initiatives, print propaganda, cultural activities, and social networks, the Fianna sought to create a future army for Ireland. The adolescent male members of the Fianna were expected to be physically and mentally fit to fight for – even die for – Irish independence. They were exposed to a philosophy that valued and promoted Irish (as opposed to British) culture, military preparation, a separatist brand of nationalism, and a willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice for one’s country. In many ways Seán Heuston exemplified this philosophy with the following words: ‘Whatever I have done as a soldier of Ireland is what I believe to be my country’s best interest. I have, thank God, no vain regrets.’⁶⁴

III - The Fianna during the Irish revolution

In the summer of 1913, at the instigation of Hobson, a leading member of the IRB, Dublin members of the secret society began training in military drill in anticipation of the formation of an Irish nationalist paramilitary body in response to the formal establishment of the Ulster Volunteer Force in January of that year.⁶⁵ The Ulster Volunteers were formed as part of the Ulster unionist campaign to oppose the impending implementation of home rule in Ireland. Home rule would entail the creation of a Dublin-based parliament to deal with Irish domestic matters, while

maintaining Ireland's political connection with Britain. Unionists opposed any change to the current constitutional relationship between the two islands, fearing that home rule would not only be disadvantageous to their economic and cultural interests, but would lead to full Irish independence. It was against the backdrop of these political tensions between unionists and home rulers that Fianna officers began to put their military training to work and served as drill instructors for the IRB.

When Hobson helped to form the Irish Volunteers in November 1913, he recruited five senior members of the Fianna to the provisional committee of the new national paramilitary body: Pádraic Ó Riain, Con Colbert, Eamon Martin, Michael Loneragan and Liam Mellows. These young men visited various halls in the evenings, instructing the Volunteer officers and directing the course of training. Not surprisingly, [p. 113] most of these officers were IRB members who had received training from these Fianna officers prior to the formation of the Volunteers.⁶⁶

In addition to providing officers and instructors to the new paramilitary body, the Fianna contributed numerous rank-and-file Irish Volunteers. The Fianna introduced a new rule in which members who had reached the age of eighteen but had not achieved the rank of lieutenant were automatically transferred to the Volunteers.⁶⁷ This provided the Irish Volunteers with a crop of ready-trained recruits, such as Patrick Ward who was instructed to leave the Fianna and join the Volunteers shortly after the establishment of the latter body.⁶⁸ Among the thirty-seven ex-Fianna members in the *DIB* sample, twenty-seven are listed as joining the Irish Volunteers or their successor the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and two Cumann na mBan (the League of Women), which was founded in 1914 as a women's auxiliary to the Volunteers.⁶⁹ For some Fianna members, their foremost loyalty was to the labour movement rather than the nationalist movement. Instead of the Irish Volunteers, they chose to join the Irish Citizen Army which was formed in November 1913 to protect protesting workers during the Dublin Lockout. Examples include Andy Dunne and Joe Connolly.⁷⁰

The Fianna played a supporting role in many of the major events of the revolutionary period. They also appear to have viewed only adolescent males as suitable for active military service. This was the case during the Howth gunrunning in July 1914, when only Fianna boys over the age of twelve were mobilised to assist the Irish Volunteers in landing a consignment of 1,500 rifles and 45,000 rounds of ammunition at Howth harbour.⁷¹ While the adolescent boys were helping to unload the

cargo from a yacht named the *Asgard*, filling their trek-cart with ammunition and taking it back to Dublin, Markievicz was supervising a camp in the Dublin Mountains attended by Belfast Fianna girls and the younger boys. Ina Connolly, the daughter of labour leader and 1916 insurrectionist James Connolly, was angry and disappointed that the girls were excluded, recalling that 'it really looked as if we were not trusted ... Had I been a boy I would not have been overlooked.'⁷² Ina and her sister Nora, who were then aged eighteen and twenty-one respectively, were later delighted to be asked to smuggle guns to Belfast.⁷³ Efforts were also made to keep younger boys out of action by organising a camp for the 1916 Easter weekend.

Many individuals associated with the Fianna served as leaders, combatants, scouts and messengers during the 1916 Easter Rising. For instance, older Fianna members played a prominent role in the attack on the Magazine Fort in Dublin's Phoenix Park that was meant to launch [p. 114] the insurrection. After kicking a football around in front of the fort, the young men rushed the sentry at the entrance, disarmed the guards in the guardroom, seized their rifles and bayonets, and blew up an ammunition store. The Fianna's twenty-two-year-old quartermaster Garry Holohan shot the fort commandant's eldest son as he ran to alert a policeman to the attack.⁷⁴ The youth died the next day.⁷⁵ As a result of their involvement in the rebellion, nine current and former Fianna members died, including Con Colbert (1888–1916) and Seán Heuston (1891–1916), who were executed for their roles in the rebellion at the respective ages of twenty-seven and twenty-five.

In the wake of the executions, the Fianna is reputed to have attracted an all-time high of over 30,000 members by June 1917;⁷⁶ however, contemporary police reports, though flawed, recorded only 359 members outside of Dublin city in that month, suggesting that the Fianna's figure is inflated.⁷⁷ It is also important to note that not all Fianna members were militarily active, and that the organisation's membership only represented a fraction of the adolescent males in Ireland during the revolutionary period, let alone those with advanced nationalist or republican views.

Fianna activism continued during the War of Independence and the Civil War, with twenty-one current and former members losing their lives between 1919 and 1922.⁷⁸ During the War of Independence, Cork Fianna boys, for example, not only volunteered as scouts and dispatch carriers for the IRA, but also raided private homes for arms, destroyed the stores of crown forces, and attacked individuals whom they

deemed 'enemy personnel'.⁷⁹ The targets of such activities probably viewed the boys as juvenile delinquents rather than young freedom fighters.

Even members of the IRA occasionally expressed disquiet about the Fianna's activities during the revolutionary period. A representative of the North Louth Battalion wrote to the IRA's headquarters in Dublin on 3 July 1920 complaining about the impact of the Dundalk Fianna's independent arms raids on the local community.⁸⁰ Recognition of the potentially dangerous consequences of overlapping arms raids by the two organisations, which had occurred in the autumn of 1920, was among the issues that resulted in negotiations between Dáil Éireann's Ministry of Defence⁸¹ and Fianna headquarters. A formal link between the Fianna and the IRA was finally forged in early 1921 to facilitate cooperation and a degree of control on the part of the IRA.⁸²

The 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty established an Irish Free State with dominion status within the British Commonwealth rather than a completely independent republic. This distinction contributed to a slide [p. 115] into civil war between former nationalist comrades. In June 1922, the month in which the Civil War broke out, Fianna membership was reported as 26,000, though this may be an inflated figure.⁸³ The Fianna as an organisation opposed the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and supported the anti-Treaty side during the Civil War. Individual members who accepted the Treaty appear quietly to have left the organisation, many to join the Irish Free State army.⁸⁴ Of the *DIB* sample, twenty former Fianna members are identified as anti-Treaty and six as pro-Treaty.⁸⁵

After the triumph of the pro-Treaty side in the Civil War, the Fianna were keen to emphasise their educational, rather than military, value within the republican movement, whose supporters maintained varying degrees of hostility toward the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. The June 1926 issue of the organisation's paper *Fianna* highlighted the perceived continuing need for the republican youth group alleging that there were 50,000 Freemasons and 36,000 Boy Scouts in Ireland, who represented 'the Vanguard of British imperialism in this country'.⁸⁶ Such membership figures, especially in relation to the Baden-Powell Scouts, were based more on perception than reality.⁸⁷ The subsequent history of the Fianna has tended to reflect the fortunes of (and splits within) the republican movement in Ireland.⁸⁸ For instance, the Fianna aligned themselves with the Provisional IRA during the Troubles, the period of political violence in Northern Ireland that lasted from 1969 until the Good Friday

Agreement of 1998.⁸⁹ More recently, the organisation has promoted itself as an ‘independent republican youth movement’.⁹⁰

IV - An analysis of Fianna membership

The focus will now shift to the membership of the Fianna in order to provide a general sense of who was welcome to join the organisation and who actually joined between 1909 and 1923. The Fianna initially purported to be a national organisation open to all Irish boys between the ages of eight and eighteen, no matter ‘what class, creed, or party that they or their fathers belong[ed] to’.⁹¹ Issues of gender, age, political affiliation, religion and occupational background had varying degrees of impact on the Fianna’s membership over the period in question.

Although the Fianna were officially for boys, some girls did get involved in certain parts of the country for limited periods of time. Prior to 1916, there was a girls’ *sluagh* in Belfast, in which James Connolly’s daughters Nora and Ina played an active role. The question of whether to admit girls to the organisation nationally was a source of controversy because many boys felt that there should be a separate organisation [p. 116] for girls. A 1912 *ard-fheis* decision to establish girls’ troops, in which Markievicz cast the deciding vote, was quickly reversed after the *ard-choisde* held a plebiscite in which the majority of *sluagh*te voted in favour of changing the constitution back to its original boys-only condition.⁹² Girls remained involved even if they had no official representation at the national level.⁹³

For instance, between late 1916 and early 1918 girls under the age of eighteen belonged to the Fianna in Waterford where Cumann na mBan and the Fianna shared premises. When Mrs Roche had established the Waterford Cumann na mBan branch in July 1916, novelist and nationalist activist Rosamond Jacob had predicted that she would ‘boss the girls like a mother’⁹⁴ and it appears she did just that, much to the girls’ annoyance. In October 1916 Jacob reported that ‘all the little girls had resigned (from Cumann na mBan) and decided to join the Fianna instead – thinking I suppose that they’d get dancing and drill every night with no work and no Mrs Roche to order them about.’⁹⁵ In early 1918 Fianna headquarters in Dublin informed the Waterford girls that they should join the Clann na Gael Girl Scouts instead.⁹⁶

A competition in the June 1922 edition of the newsletter *Fianna* betrayed the organisation’s continuing chauvinistic attitude towards the role of females in the

nationalist movement, despite Markievicz's position as Chief of the Fianna and the notable contributions made by women to the Irish revolution. The premise of the competition was that Kathleen, 'a good Irish cailín [girl]', needed help in choosing a husband on the basis of the answers provided by her suitors Kevin, Lorcan and Brendan to the question 'Why did you become a soldier of the IRA?' Entrants were to write an essay on which soldier gave the best answer to the question and by extension which man Kathleen should marry.⁹⁷ The competition depicted young women as potential marriage partners with republican loyalties rather than activists in their own right, echoing the Fianna's unwillingness to include girls among its ranks.

The age range of Fianna members did not remain static throughout the period in question, nor was it as precise as the organisation's rules stipulated. The Fianna was initially aimed at boys aged between eight and eighteen. Apparently the parents of the younger members were willing to allow their sons to enrol in the youth group because they found the presence of a woman in the leadership reassuring.⁹⁸ By June 1922 only boys aged between twelve and eighteen were eligible for membership.⁹⁹ The restriction of membership in the Fianna to adolescents in the later years of the Irish revolution probably reflected the expectation after the experience of the 1916 Rising that Fianna members could [p. 117] or would be combatants. Furthermore, some of the officers remained in the organisation into their twenties even though the official age limit for Fianna membership was eighteen. For instance, the Fianna members who attacked the Magazine Fort in Dublin's Phoenix Park at the beginning of the Easter Rising were in their late teens and early twenties.¹⁰⁰ There was also some overlap between the older members of the Fianna and the Volunteers. An example is Patrick O'Daly who was already a member of the Volunteers when he moved to Tuam, Co. Galway in his mid-twenties. There he found that the local Fianna *sluagh* was more actively engaged in military training than the Volunteers, so he joined the youth group and remained a member when he returned to Dublin.¹⁰¹ Overlapping membership between the Fianna and adult organisations was also the case in Belfast where Fianna member Nora Connolly helped to establish Cumann na mBan.

Members of the Fianna tended to be products of families with nationalist sentiments of various degrees. Áine Ceannt, wife of 1916 insurrectionist Éamonn Ceannt, recalled that 'only the most extreme families had enrolled their sons in the Fianna'.¹⁰² The youth group may have attracted members from a wider nationalist spectrum after the establishment of the Irish Volunteers in November 1913 because

many sons of Volunteers joined.¹⁰³ Prior to the split in the organisation in September 1914 between those who supported or opposed Irish Parliamentary Party leader John Redmond's call for Volunteers to fight in the First World War, the Irish Volunteers included home rulers as well as republicans and Sinn Féiners. Of the thirty-seven former Fianna members in the *DIB* sample, eight definitely came from Fenian or republican families and three had fathers who supported home rule.¹⁰⁴ Occasionally, boys joined the Fianna despite parental opposition. For instance, Austin Hogan's father, a Royal Irish Constabulary pensioner, disapproved of republicanism.¹⁰⁵

Unlike other youth groups of the period, such as the various boys' brigades, religion played no official part in the Fianna, probably because its Protestant founders not only recognised how politically divisive religion was in Ireland, but also did not want Catholic parents to fear proselytism. As nationalism tended to be associated with Catholicism, the majority of Fianna members came from Catholic families, but nationalists of other religions also joined the organisation. For instance, the *DIB* sample includes Archie Heron, who was Presbyterian, George and James Plant, whose specific protestant denomination is not stipulated, and Robert Briscoe, who was Jewish.¹⁰⁶ The religion of other former Fianna members in the *DIB* sample is either stated or implied as being Catholic. [p. 118]

A family commitment to advanced nationalism or republicanism was often reinforced by the schools and clubs that Fianna boys attended. Seventeen members of the *DIB* group attended Christian Brothers' schools, while three others went to St Enda's School set up by Patrick Pearse, the writer and progressive educator who was one of the leaders of the Easter Rising.¹⁰⁷ These schools were notable for their emphasis on providing an overtly Irish education for students, particularly through the teaching of history, geography and the Irish language. Many Fianna members, such as Eamon Martin and Patrick Ward, were also involved with cultural nationalist organisations such as the Gaelic League and hurling clubs.¹⁰⁸

Some members of the Fianna had already left school and were earning a living. This is not surprising given that in 1911 almost nineteen percent of the total workforce in the United Kingdom consisted of those aged between ten and twenty.¹⁰⁹ Over the course of his Fianna membership Patsy O'Connor made the transition from twelve-year-old schoolboy to eighteen-year-old electrician.¹¹⁰ Séamus Kavanagh had just left school and started working as an 'apprentice cash-boy' in a drapery shop on Camden Street when he joined the Fianna in his early teens.¹¹¹ Among the older members were

Con Colbert and Seán Heuston, who were employed as clerks at Kennedy's Bakery and the Great Southern and Western Railway Company respectively, and carpenter Patrick O'Daly.¹¹² Colbert and Heuston were aged twenty and nineteen when they first joined the Fianna while O'Daly was in his mid-twenties.

The occupational backgrounds of members' fathers varied. Examples of fathers include labour leader and 1916 insurrectionist James Connolly, journalist W. P. Ryan, university professor Eoin MacNeill, and Harold's Cross builder George Walsh, who, like MacNeill, was a member of the Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers.¹¹³ Atypically, the fathers of Alfie White and Patrick O'Daly were members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, one an inspector and the other a constable.¹¹⁴ Another unusual case was that of the Mellows brothers whose father and paternal grandfather were soldiers in the British Army. Despite being educated at military schools, Liam Mellows 'disappointed his father's wish that he join the [British] army' and instead became a clerk.¹¹⁵ Any military impulses fostered by his upbringing were directed towards Irish paramilitary organisations.

Many former Fianna members who joined the youth group during the years of the Irish revolution went on to notable careers after independence. Of the *DIB* sample, ten became deputies in Dáil Éireann, two for Sinn Féin, six for Fianna Fáil, and two for the Labour Party.¹¹⁶ [p. 119] Fianna Fáilers Thomas Derrig and John Ormonde held cabinet portfolios.¹¹⁷ Four of the group became senators.¹¹⁸ Seven were active in the labour movement, including – not surprisingly – Nora Connolly O'Brien.¹¹⁹ Four joined the Irish Free State army or the Defence Forces. For instance, Michael Brennan served as Army Chief of Staff between 1931 and 1940 and Hugo McNeill retired as a major-general.¹²⁰ In contrast, George Plant remained a member of the IRA and was executed by the Irish state in 1942 for the murder of a fellow IRA associate.¹²¹ Six became journalists, another five became businessmen, and two others were teachers.¹²² Dan Dowd and Martin Walton promoted Irish traditional music both as musicians and as an uilleann pipe-maker and the owner of several music businesses respectively.¹²³ John Joe 'Purty' Landers and John Joe Sheehy distinguished themselves as Gaelic footballers.¹²⁴ One former member, Maurice MacGonigal, went on to become a celebrated artist and is buried in Roundstone, Connemara next to Hobson, who was responsible for encouraging him to join the youth group.¹²⁵

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, adolescents who already harboured advanced nationalist or republican views were attracted to the Fianna in the years 1909-23. But it would be surprising if involvement in the organisation did not reinforce or intensify these views. The preceding group suggests that membership in the Fianna and exposure to the philosophy it promoted helped to generate active participants in the struggle for Irish independence. In the longer term former Fianna members grew up to become political, military and business leaders as well as individuals who were in a position to shape public opinion through their employment in journalism and education. Others contributed to the cultural life of the country. Involvement in the Fianna surely left an imprint on those other former members whose achievements did not merit inclusion in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.

Examining the history of Na Fianna Éireann in the years between 1909 and 1923 provides some insight into what it was like to be an Irish nationalist adolescent during the years of the Irish revolution. The evenings and weekends of Fianna members were filled with meetings, camping trips, route marches, shooting practice, hurling matches, concerts, and occasional skirmishes with policemen and members of pro-British youth groups. Members might be called upon to administer first aid to protesting workers, guard a trek-cart full of ammunition, smuggle arms up north, carry despatches between garrisons, or attack the Magazine Fort in Phoenix Park. They might even be called upon to kill or be killed. [p. 120]

Notes

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¹ For more in-depth discussion of the Fianna, see J. Anthony Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland* (Dublin: Kingdom Books, 2006), 33–77; Marnie Hay, ‘The foundation and development of Na Fianna Éireann, 1909–16’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 36:141 (2008), 53–71; Damian Lawlor, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish revolution, 1909 to 1923* (Rhode, Co. Offaly: Caoillte Books, 2009); and John R. Watts, ‘Na Fianna Éireann: a

case study of a political youth organisation' (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1981).

² Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland*, 5.

³ Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), viii.

⁴ James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) (accessed online 7–8 Feb. 2011). A search of the online version of the *Dictionary of Irish Biography (DIB)* generated a list of the following former Fianna members born between 1888 and 1912 who joined during the years of the Irish revolution: Seán Brady (1890–1969), Michael Brennan (1896–1986), Robert Briscoe (1894–1969), Basil Clancy (1907–96), Con Colbert (1888–1916), Thomas Derrig (1897–1956), Dan Dowd (1903–89), Joe Groome (c. 1908–77), Stephen Hayes (1902–74), Archie Heron (1894–1971), Ina Connolly Heron (1896–1980), Seán Heuston (1891–1916), Austin Hogan (né Dilloughery) (1906–74), Paddy Holohan (1897–1946), Garry Holohan (1894–1967), John Joe 'Purty' Landers (1907–2001), John McCann (1905–80), Maurice MacGonigal (1900–79), Hugo McNeill (1900–63), Liam Mellows (1892–1922), Thomas Mullins (1903–78), Nora Connolly O'Brien (1893–1981), Tommy O'Brien (1905–88), Peter O'Connor (1912–99), Patrick O'Daly (1888–1957), John Ormonde (1905–81), Cathal O'Shannon (1890–1969), George Plant (1904–42), James Plant (born c. 1903), Augustus 'Percy' Reynolds (1895–1983), Séamus Robinson (1890–1961), Desmond Ryan (1893–1964), Eugene Sheehan (1903–86), John Joe Sheehy (1897–1980), Joseph Walsh (1905–92), John Walsh (born c. 1900), and Martin Walton (1901–81). Please note: 1) some of these individuals do not have *DIB* entries of their own but are included in a sibling's entry; 2) *DIB* entries were written by different authors who had access to differing amounts of source material, so they do not always allow for a comprehensive comparison of the backgrounds of former members; 3) there may be other former Fianna members included in the *DIB*, but their membership is not mentioned in their entry; and 4) the entry for Joseph Walsh is unclear as to whether he was indeed a member of the Fianna. As his father promoted the youth group in Waterford and his older brother John was a Fianna captain, his membership is likely.

⁵ Eamon Martin, witness statement, 1 Oct. 1951 (National Archives of Ireland [NAI], Bureau of Military History [BMH], WS 591).

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- ⁶ Anne Marreco, *The rebel countess* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), 114; Sean McGarry, witness statement, 15 Apr. 1950 (NAI, BMH, WS 368).
- ⁷ Garry Holohan, witness statement, 7 Dec 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 328). [p. 121]
- ⁸ Seamus MacCaisin, witness statement, 8 June 1947 (NAI, BMH, WS 8).
- ⁹ Seamus Pouch, witness statement, 15 June 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 267).
- ¹⁰ Hay, 'Foundation and development', 56-9.
- ¹¹ David Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922' in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffrey (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 382-3.
- ¹² Andrew Donson, *Youth in the fatherless land: war pedagogy, nationalism and authority in Germany, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 49.
- ¹³ Colin Heywood, *A history of childhood: children and childhood in the west from medieval to modern times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 29-30.
- ¹⁴ Richard A. Smith, 'Robert Baden-Powell' in John Cannon (ed.), *The Oxford companion to British history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 72; Robert A. Smith, 'Boy Scouts' and 'Boys' Brigade' in Cannon, *Oxford companion*, 119
- ¹⁵ John Springhall, *Coming of age: adolescence in Britain, 1860-1960* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986), 39.
- ¹⁶ Smith, 'Boys' Brigade' in Cannon (ed.), *Oxford companion*, 119.
- ¹⁷ Paul Wilkinson, 'English youth movements, 1908-30', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4:2 (1969), 6. In addition, see Richard A. Voeltz, "'... A Good Jew and a Good Englishman': The Jewish Lads' Brigade, 1894-1922", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23:1 (1988), 119-127.
- ¹⁸ Smith, 'Boys' Brigade' in Cannon (ed.), *Oxford companion*, 119; Henry Collis, Fred Hurl and Rex Hazlewood, *B.-P.'s Scouts: an official history of the Boy Scouts Association* (London: Collins Press, 1961), 48, 55.
- ¹⁹ Brian Morris, 'Ernest Thompson Seton and the origins of the Woodcraft movement', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5:2 (1970), 185, 187-8.
- ²⁰ See Michael Rosenthal, 'Knights and retainers: the earliest version of Baden-Powell's Boy Scout scheme', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 15:4 (1980), 603-17; Allen Warren, 'Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout movement and citizen training in Great Britain, 1900-1920', *English Historical Review*, 101:399 (1986), 376-98; John

Springhall, 'Baden-Powell and the Scout movement before 1920: citizen training or soldiers of the future?', *English Historical Review*, 102:405 (1987), 934–42; Anne Summers, 'Scouts, Guides and VADs: a note in reply to Allen Warren', *ibid.*, 943–7; Allen Warren, 'Baden-Powell: a final comment', *ibid.*, 948–50.

²¹ Donald M. McFarlan, *First for boys: the story of the Boys' Brigade, 1883-1983*, 14, 19-20, available at <http://www.boys-brigade.org.uk/first-for-boys.htm> (accessed online 15 May 2014).

²² Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland*, 5-8.

²³ *United Irishman*, 24 Jan. 1903, 1.

²⁴ Among the members of the first incarnation of the Fianna was Séamus Robinson, a future member of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), a Sinn Féin deputy in Dáil Éireann in 1921–2, and a senator in the Irish Free State Senate between 1928 and 1935. See Marie Coleman, 'Robinson, Séamus' in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish biography* (accessed online 8 Feb. 2011).

²⁵ Bulmer Hobson, *Ireland yesterday and tomorrow* (Tralee: Anvil Books, 1968), 15.

²⁶ For a discussion of Hobson's early Belfast Fianna, see Marnie Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the nationalist movement in twentieth-century Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 28-29. [p. 122]

²⁷ For discussion of Hobson's activities as an advanced nationalist activist, see Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the nationalist movement in twentieth-century Ireland*.

²⁸ According to the 1911 Irish census, May and Elizabeth Kelly were scholars aged 12 and 14 respectively. Originally from Co. Cork, the Kelly family resided at 40 Elizabeth Street in Drumcondra. Their father Thomas was listed as an unemployed carpenter. See

http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Drumcondra/Elizabeth_Street/249321/ (accessed online 28 May 2014).

²⁹ Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish republican women, 1900-22* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2010), 109; Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, 'A short history of the Hibernian Rifles, 1912-1916', 31 March 2013, available at <http://www.theirishstory.com/2013/03/31/a-short-history-of-the-hibernian-rifles-1912-1916/#.UjHVCNKOSuI> (accessed online 14 Aug. 2013); Mary McLoughlin, witness statement, circa Feb. 1954 (Military Archives [MA], BMH, WS 934). In some contemporary documents, the organisation's name is spelled Clan na Gael and its members are called Girl Guides. Although Joseph E.A.

Connell, Jr, states that Markievicz joined the Kelly sisters in forming the Clann na Gael Girl Scouts, I have found no contemporary reference to Markievicz's involvement in the endeavour. See Connell, Jr., 'Inghinidhe na hÉireann / Daughters of Ireland, Clan na nGaedheal / Girl Scouts of Ireland', *History Ireland*, 19:5 (Sept./Oct. 2011), 66.

³⁰ Irish Girl Guides, 'History of Irish Girl Guides', 2009, available at <http://www.irishgirlguides.ie/index.php/history-of-irish-girl-guides> (accessed online 14 May 2014).

³¹ Ó Ruairc, 'A short history of the Hibernians Rifles'.

³² The earliest contemporary references that I have found for the Hibernian Boys' Brigade are from 1912. For instance, a notice in the *Freeman's Journal* requested members of the Glasnevin branch to take part in the funeral of a member who accidentally drowned in the Tolka river in north Dublin. See 'Hibernian Boys' Brigade (Glasnevin Co.)', *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Sept. 1912, 2.

³³ John Springhall, *Youth, empire and society* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1977), 24.

³⁴ William Wylie cited in Springhall, *Youth, empire and society*, 24.

³⁵ Springhall, *Youth, empire and society*, 56.

³⁶ M. W. quoted in Springhall, *Youth, empire and society*, 56.

³⁷ Springhall, *Coming of age*, 64.

³⁸ Springhall, *Coming of age*, 13, 28.

³⁹ Heywood, *A history of childhood*, 28.

⁴⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The reasons of misrule: youth groups and charivaris in sixteenth-century France', *Past and Present*, 1:1 (1971), 74.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Colbert, witness statement, 8 June 1953 (NAI, BMH, WS 856); Garry Holohan, witness statement, 7 Dec. 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 328).

⁴² Seamus Pouch, witness statement, 15 June 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 267).

⁴³ For more on the Fianna's print propaganda, see Marnie Hay, 'This treasured island: Irish nationalist propaganda aimed at children and youth' in Mary Shine Thompson and Celia Keenan (eds), *Treasure islands: studies in children's literature* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), 33–42; Hay, 'The propaganda of Na Fianna Éireann, 1909–26' in Mary Shine Thompson (ed.), *Young Irelands: studies in children's literature* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011), 47–56; and Hay, 'What did advanced nationalists tell Irish children in the early [p. 123] twentieth century?' in Ciara Ní Bhroin and

Patricia Kennon (eds), *What do we tell the children?* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 148–62.

⁴⁴ See Pádraic Ó Riain (ed.), *Fianna handbook* (Dublin: Central Council of Na Fianna Éireann, 1914), 17–21.

⁴⁵ Seamus MacCaisín, witness statement, 8 June 1947 (NAI, BMH, WS 8). A writer associated with the Irish literary revival, Padraic Colum's play *The Saxon shilling* had been rejected previously by the Irish National Theatre Society, a forerunner of the Abbey Theatre, on the grounds that it was merely anti-military recruitment propaganda (Robert Welch (ed.), *The concise Oxford companion to Irish literature* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 64–5). The play's message was in keeping with the promise made by Fianna members 'never to join England's armed forces' ('Na Fianna Éireann', *Irish Freedom*, Sept. 1912, 6).

⁴⁶ Photocopy of Lang benefit concert programme (MA, BMH, James FitzGerald Collection, CD 91/5).

⁴⁷ Fianna Code of Honour (1929) (National Library of Ireland [NLI], MS 10,910).

⁴⁸ Robert Holland, witness statement, 18 July 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 280).

⁴⁹ Ó Riain (ed.), *Fianna handbook*, 14.

⁵⁰ Fianna Code of Honour (1929) (NLI, MS 10,910).

⁵¹ Lieut. General R. S. S. Baden Powell, *Scouting for boys: A handbook for instruction in good citizenship*, fifth impression (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1908), 266.

⁵² Ben Novick, *Conceiving revolution: Irish nationalist propaganda during the First World War* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 169.

⁵³ Markievicz, 'Introduction' in Ó Riain (ed.), *Fianna handbook*, 8. Tone and Emmet were both members of the radical Society of United Irishmen. Generally viewed as one of the fathers of modern Irish republicanism, Tone died of self-inflicted wounds in prison after he was captured with a French force off the Irish coast during the 1798 rebellion. Emmet was executed for his leading role in the 1803 rebellion.

⁵⁴ See Fianna Éireann Dublin Brigade, *Easter Week 1916–1922 Commemoration Aeridheacht Souvenir Programme*, 23 April 1922 (Dublin: Fianna Éireann Dublin Brigade, 1922), and Cathal O'Shannon (ed.), *Souvenir of the golden jubilee of Fianna Éireann, Aug. 16, 1909–Aug. 16, 1959* (Dublin: Na Fianna Éireann, 1959).

⁵⁵ *Easter Week 1916–1922 Commemoration Aeridheacht souvenir programme*, 7.

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- ⁵⁶ ‘Fianna Roll of Honour’ in Robert Holland, *A short history of Fianna Éireann*, 25–6 (NLI, MS 35,455/3/12A). Although Holland’s memoir was written in 1949, the Fianna published this photocopied booklet no earlier than 1981.
- ⁵⁷ Willie Nelson [Pádraic Ó Riain], ‘Na Fianna Éireann’, *Irish Volunteer*, 26 June 1915, 8; Pádraig Mac Fhloinn, ‘The history and tradition of Fianna Éireann’ in *Fianna Éireann Handbook* (Dublin: Fianna Éireann, 1988), 10.
- ⁵⁸ Interment record for Patrick O’Connor, died 15 June 1915, Glasnevin Cemetery, available at <http://www.glasnevintrust.ie/genealogy/> (accessed online 22 Mar. 2014).
- ⁵⁹ Garry Holohan, witness statement, 7 Dec. 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 328).
- ⁶⁰ Hobson, *Ireland yesterday and tomorrow*, 2–3.
- ⁶¹ Eamon Martin, witness statement, 1 Oct. 1951 (NAI, BMH, WS 591); Patrick Ward, witness statement, 30 Mar. 1955 (NAI, BMH, WS 1,140); Garry Holohan, witness statement, 7 Dec. 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 328). [p. 124]
- ⁶² Jacqueline Van Voris, *Constance de Markievicz in the cause of Ireland* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), 89–90.
- ⁶³ Seamus Pouch, witness statement, 15 June 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 267).
- ⁶⁴ *Easter week commemoration programme*, 1932, 12 (MA, BMH, Kathleen Clarke Collection, CD 163/4).
- ⁶⁵ Hobson, *Ireland yesterday and tomorrow*, p. 43.
- ⁶⁶ Eamon Martin, witness statement, 1 Oct. 1951 (NAI, BMH, WS 591).
- ⁶⁷ Eamon Martin, witness statement, 1 Oct. 1951 (NAI, BMH, WS 591).
- ⁶⁸ Patrick Ward, witness statement, 30 Mar. 1955 (NAI, BMH, WS 1,140).
- ⁶⁹ The *DIB* lists the following former Fianna members as having joined either the Irish Volunteers or the IRA: Seán Brady, Michael Brennan, Robert Briscoe, Con Colbert, Thomas Derrig, Joe Groome, Stephen Hayes, Archie Heron, Seán Heuston, the Holohan brothers, John Joe ‘Purty’ Landers, Maurice MacGonigal, Hugo McNeill, Liam Mellows, Thomas Mullins, Tommy O’Brien, Peter O’Connor, Patrick O’Daly, Cathal O’Shannon, the Plant brothers, Séamus Robinson, Desmond Ryan, Eugene Sheehan, John Joe Sheehy and Martin Walton. Nora and Ina Connolly joined Cumann na mBan.
- ⁷⁰ Séamus Kavanagh, witness statement, 9 Sept. 1957 (MA, BMH, WS 1,670). Dunne and Connolly served in St Stephen’s Green during the 1916 rising.
- ⁷¹ Robert Holland, witness statement, 18 July 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 280).

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- ⁷² Ina Connolly Heron, witness statement, 25 Jan. 1954 (NAI, BMH, WS 919).
- ⁷³ Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable revolutionaries: women and Irish nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1989, 1995), 105–6.
- ⁷⁴ Garry Holohan, statement regarding Easter Week 1916 (MA, BMH, John F. Shouldice Collection, CD 20/8).
- ⁷⁵ Shane Hegarty and Fintan O'Toole, *The Irish Times book of the 1916 rising* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2006), 44.
- ⁷⁶ Mac Fhloinn, 'The history and tradition of Fianna Éireann', 14.
- ⁷⁷ County Inspectors' Confidential Reports, June 1917 (The National Archives, Kew, CO 904/103).
- ⁷⁸ 'Fianna Roll of Honour' in Holland, *A short history*, 25–6 (NLI, MS 35,455/3/12A).
- ⁷⁹ Charles Meaney, witness statement, 11 June 1957 (MA, BMH, WS 1,631).
- ⁸⁰ North Louth Battalion IRA to Adjutant General, 3 July 1920 (MA, Collins Collection, A/0472/27).
- ⁸¹ The Dáil first met on 21 Jan. 1919 and consisted of the 73 Sinn Féin candidates elected in the 1918 general election. They abstained from taking their seats in the British parliament and instead established their own legislative assembly in Dublin. This new Irish parliament initially consisted of a unicameral assembly and a ministry (or cabinet) headed by a president. Defence was one of the departments within the ministry. Despite being proscribed by the British government in Sept. 1919, the Dáil continued to function throughout the War of Independence. See Deirdre McMahon, 'Dáil Éireann' in S. J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford companion to Irish history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 133–4.
- ⁸² Fianna GHQ Dublin to Fianna officers, Feb. 1921 (MA, BMH, Michael Kilmartin Collection, CD 144/1/20); Joseph Reynolds, witness statement, 31 Jan. 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 191). [p. 125]
- ⁸³ 'Report of the Fianna convention', *Fianna*, June 1922, 5.
- ⁸⁴ Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland*, 57.
- ⁸⁵ The anti-Treatyites were: Seán Brady, Robert Briscoe, Thomas Derrig, Dan Dowd, Joe Groome, Stephen Hayes, the Holohan brothers, John Joe Landers, Liam Mellows, Thomas Mullins, Nora Connolly O'Brien, Peter O'Connor, John Ormonde, the Plant brothers, Séamus Robinson, Eugene Sheehan, John Joe Sheehy and Martin Walton.

The pro-Treatyites were: Michael Brennan, Archie Heron, Hugo McNeill, Patrick O'Daly, Cathal O'Shannon and Desmond Ryan.

⁸⁶ 'Editorial', *Fianna*, June 1926, 1.

⁸⁷ I would like to thank Dr Margaret Scanlon for pointing out the inflation of the figures for Boy Scout membership.

⁸⁸ For an overview of the Fianna's history from the Civil War to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, see Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland*, 55–74.

⁸⁹ Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland*, 68.

⁹⁰ Fianna poster viewed on Dame Street, Dublin, 15 Mar. 2011 (photo in possession of Marnie Hay).

⁹¹ Ó Riain (ed.), *Fianna handbook*, 23.

⁹² For more detail on the gender controversy, see Hay, 'Foundation and development', 60–1.

⁹³ It would be many years before girls could join the Fianna on an equal footing with the boys. In the early 1930s Cumann na mBan established Cumann na gCailíní, the Irish National Girl Scouts, which still served as the female counterpart to the Fianna in 1964 (See Na Fianna Éireann, *The young guard of Erin: iris-leabhair na bhFiann: the Fianna handbook* [3rd edn., Dublin: Na Fianna Éireann, 1964], 145). The Fianna finally accepted girls in 1968–9 (See Watts, 'Na Fianna Éireann: a case study of a political youth organisation', 295–6). A statement from the leadership of the republican movement published in the 1988 *Fianna Éireann handbook* hailed one of the most welcome and progressive moves within the Fianna as the opening of the organisation to young women and girls, remarking that 'there could not be a more appropriate memorial to your founder, Constance Markievicz' (*Fianna Éireann handbook*, 1–2).

⁹⁴ Rosamond Jacob's diary, 6 July 1916 (NLI, Rosamond Jacob Papers, MS 32,582 (30)). I would like to thank Dr Clara Cullen for the references from Jacob's diary.

⁹⁵ Jacob's diary, 10 Oct. 1916 (NLI, Jacob Papers, MS 32,582 (30)).

⁹⁶ Leeann Lane, *Rosamond Jacob: third person singular* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2010), 123.

⁹⁷ 'Fianna-tion', *Fianna*, June 1922, 10.

⁹⁸ Helena Molony, witness statement, 19 May 1950 (NAI, BMH, WS 391).

⁹⁹ 'HQ Notes and Orders', *Fianna*, June 1922, 2.

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- ¹⁰⁰ Patrick O'Daly, witness statement, 6 Apr. 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 220).
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰² Áine Ceannt, witness statement, 27 May 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 264).
- ¹⁰³ Holland, *A short history*, 19 (NLI, MS 35,455/3/12A).
- ¹⁰⁴ Michael Brennan, Con Colbert, the Connolly sisters, Joe Groome, Peter O'Connor, Séamus Robinson and Martin Walton are listed as coming from families with Fenian/republican sympathies. The fathers of Robert Briscoe [p. 126] and the Walsh brothers were supporters of home rule. The political persuasion of the subject's family is not always included in *DIB* entries.
- ¹⁰⁵ See Lawrence William White, 'Hogan (Dilloughery), Austin' in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB* (accessed online 7 Feb. 2011).
- ¹⁰⁶ See Lawrence William White, 'Briscoe, Robert Emmet', Diarmaid Ferriter, 'Heron, Archibald ('Archie')', and Lawrence William White, 'Plant, George' in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB* (accessed online 7–8 Feb. 2011).
- ¹⁰⁷ The following former Fianna members attended Christian Brothers' schools: Seán Brady, Con Colbert, Thomas Derrig, Joe Groome, Stephen Hayes, Seán Heuston, Austin Hogan, John Joe 'Purty' Landers, John McCann, Maurice MacGonigal, Tommy O'Brien, Peter O'Connor, John Ormonde, Percy Reynolds, Séamus Robinson, Desmond Ryan and John Joe Sheehy. The ex-St Enda's pupils were Hugo McNeill, Thomas Mullins and Desmond Ryan.
- ¹⁰⁸ Eamon Martin, witness statement, 1 Oct. 1951 (NAI, BMH, WS 591).
- ¹⁰⁹ Springhall, *Coming of age*, 65.
- ¹¹⁰ Willie Nelson [Pádraic Ó Riain], 'Fianna Éireann', *Irish Volunteer*, 26 June 1915, 8; Interment record for Patrick O'Connor, died 15 June 1915, Glasnevin Cemetery.
- ¹¹¹ Séamus Kavanagh, witness statement, 9 Sept. 1957 (MA, BMH, WS 1,670).
- ¹¹² Robert Holland, witness statement, 18 July 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 280); Patrick O'Daly, witness statement, 6 Apr. 1949 (NAI, BMH, WS 220); David Murphy, 'Heuston, Seán (John J.)' in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB* (accessed online 7 Feb. 2011).
- ¹¹³ Eamon Martin, witness statement, 1 Oct. 1951 (NAI, BMH, WS 591).
- ¹¹⁴ Holland, *A short history*, 10 (NLI, MS 35,455/3/12A); Lawrence William White, 'O'Daly (Daly), Patrick' in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB* (accessed online 8 Feb. 2011).

¹¹⁵ Marie Coleman and William Murphy, ‘Mellows, William Joseph (‘Liam’)' in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB* (accessed online 7 Feb. 2011).

¹¹⁶ The following former Fianna members became deputies of Dáil Éireann: Seán Brady (Fianna Fáil), Robert Briscoe (Fianna Fáil), Thomas Derrig (Fianna Fáil), Archie Heron (Labour), John McCann (Fianna Fáil), Liam Mellows (Sinn Féin), Thomas Mullins (Fianna Fáil), John Ormonde (Fianna Fáil), Cathal O’Shannon (Labour) and Séamus Robinson (Sinn Féin).

¹¹⁷ Pauric J. Dempsey, ‘Derrig, Thomas (Ó Deirig, Tomás)’ and Anne Dolan, ‘Ormonde, John Michael’ in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB* (accessed online 7–8 Feb. 2011). Derrig served as Minister for Education, Lands, and Posts and Telegraphs, while Ormonde also held the latter portfolio.

¹¹⁸ The senators were Thomas Mullins, Nora Connolly O’Brien, John Ormonde and Séamus Robinson.

¹¹⁹ The following are listed as labour activists: Archie Heron, Austin Hogan, Paddy Holohan, Nora Connolly O’Brien, Peter O’Connor, Cathal O’Shannon and Desmond Ryan.

¹²⁰ The following individuals served in the Free State Army or the Defence Forces: Michael Brennan, Paddy Holohan, Hugo McNeill and Patrick O’Daly. See James Quinn, ‘Brennan, Michael’ and Patrick Long, ‘McNeill, Hugh Hyacinth (‘Hugo’)' in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB* (accessed online 7–8 Feb. 2011). [p. 127]

¹²¹ See Lawrence William White, ‘Plant, George’ in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB* (accessed online 8 Feb. 2011).

¹²² The journalists were Basil Clancy, John McCann, Tommy O’Brien, Cathal O’Shannon, Desmond Ryan and Joseph Walsh. The businessmen were Seán Brady, Robert Briscoe, Joe Groome, Percy Reynolds and Martin Walton, while Thomas Derrig and John Ormonde were teachers before entering politics.

¹²³ Paul Rouse, ‘Dowd (O’Dowd), Dan’ and Lawrence William White, ‘Walton, Martin’ in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB* (accessed online 7–8 Feb. 2011).

¹²⁴ Sean Kearns, ‘Landers, John Joe (‘Purty’)' and Marie Coleman, ‘Sheehy, John Joe’ in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB* (accessed online 8 Feb. 2011).

¹²⁵ Carmel Doyle and Lawrence William White, ‘MacGonigal, Maurice Joseph’ in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB* (accessed online 8 Feb. 2011); email from Ciarán MacGonigal to Ivar McGrath, 17 Nov. 2009 (in possession of Marnie Hay). [p. 128]