

Co. Leitrim: Politics and War, 1912-1923.

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DECLARATION

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Abbreviations:

AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
BMH	Bureau of Military History
CDB	Congested Districts Board
CI	County Inspector (RIC)
CO	Colonial Office
DI	District Inspector (RIC)
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
IFU	Irish Farmer's Union
IG	Inspector General (RIC)
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
IV	Irish Volunteers
INV	Irish National Volunteers
NA	National Archives
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PRONI	Public Records Office of Northern Ireland
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
TTL	Town Tenants' League
UIL	United Irish League
TNA	U.K. National Archives, Kew, London

ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the ‘Irish Revolution’ through a systematic analysis of events at a regional level in Co. Leitrim between the years 1912 and 1923. Both political behaviour and military activity are examined from the introduction of the Home Rule Bill to the end of the Irish Civil War, a period of extraordinary upheaval and unrest at a national level. The contested historiography of the period is outlined, and its application to Leitrim is examined.

Aside from the 1919-1923 period of intense conflict across the country, the eleven-year period between 1912 and 1923 witnessed a massive political transformation with the collapse of the Irish Party and the rise of Sinn Féin. The study examines the party machines of constitutional and advanced nationalism at local level, and ascertains whether the political motivations and operations of both factions were based on narrow parochial and personal interests, rather than social class or ideology. The motivations and social status of participants, the interconnections of political factions, and what influenced the decline of these groupings constitute a major element of the study.

The effect of the First World War on the county is examined in detail. Recruitment patterns, casualties, motivation for enlisting, voluntary war work, and reactions to the war are outlined. The effect of the war on the social and economic fabric of society is also explored. A detailed examination of Leitrim’s experience of political violence in the 1919-1923 period is undertaken as part of the study. Military strategy, structures, and operations are examined in both the War of Independence and Civil War period.

In summary, the thesis charts the impact on local politics and society of the linked national and international conflicts of the period, examining the consequences of the Irish revolution for a small rural community in the north west of Ireland.

Introduction

As many historians now recognise, there has been a transformation in the historiography of the Irish revolution since the mid 1970s. One of the driving forces of this change has been the production of a wide-range of local, often county, studies. In 2012, when providing a foreword to a new series of local studies of the Irish revolution, David Fitzpatrick asserted that by ‘looking closely at the workings of communities, the careers of local activists, and the ways in which national issues were reduced to provincial practicalities, historians have discovered how little changed in the lives and attitudes of many who experienced the revolution’.¹ While this is true, works such as Peter Hart’s on Cork have revealed the considerable effects on communities of the violence that was unleashed during the period.² Hart’s Cork was an ‘active’ county, but this study explores the ‘Irish revolution’ through a systematic examination of events at a regional level in Leitrim, a ‘quiet’ county. It explores political behaviour and military activity, and aspects of civic society there, from the introduction of the Home Rule Bill in 1912 until the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923, a period of extraordinary upheaval and unrest at a national level. This thesis charts the impact on local politics and society of the linked national and international conflicts of the period, asking whether the consequences for a small rural county in the north west of Ireland were transformative or, in fact, quite limited.

Unlike other counties, Leitrim does not have a full academic study of the period. This may be a direct consequence of the county’s apparent quietness during this formative period. With the exception of the 1908 by-election, Leitrim never took a prominent role in national agitation or anti-government activity. During the War of Independence, Michael Collins berated local IRA commanders because of their inactivity. In his study of the conflict, Michael Hopkinson claimed that ‘by late 1920 IRA General Headquarters (GHQ) in Dublin regarded the neighbouring counties of Roscommon and Leitrim as ‘problem cases’.³ The Leitrim that emerges from this study may not have been the stage of sustained IRA activity during the War of Independence, but it was marked by violence both during that conflict and during the Civil War that followed. As a result, this study does ask what Leitrim has to tell us about patterns of violence during this period, but, further, it engages more broadly with the changing

¹ David Fitzpatrick, ‘Foreword’ in Michael Farry, *The Irish Revolution, 1912-23: Sligo* (Dublin, 2012), p. xiii.

² Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998).

³ Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Dublin, 2004), p. 143.

environment of Leitrim in order to ask what the so-called quieter counties have to tell us about this transformative period of Irish history.

The 1911 census revealed that the county had a total population of 69,343 people, a fall of nearly six thousand from that recorded in 1901. Like many other regions along the western seaboard, the county suffered the ravages of emigration, with 82,629 of its sons and daughters having departed since 1851. By 1911, 91.5 per cent of its inhabitants were Roman Catholic, 7.4 per cent were members of the Church of Ireland, and the remainder were members of the Methodist and Presbyterian faiths. The predominant role of agriculture was reflected in the census, with 19,034 (78%) of the 24,486 individuals who specified their occupations indicating that they worked on the land. Of the remainder, 2,996 were employed in industry, primarily textiles and mining, 1,137 were described as members of the domestic class, and 1,022 were described as professionals. Only 297 people were employed in the commercial sector, divided into 124 employed in commercial occupations and the remainder working in the ‘conveyance of men, goods and messages’.⁴

The county was comprised of 392,381 statute acres occupying 1.9 per cent of the land mass of Ireland. Leitrim was a poor county, primarily composed of marginal land, with 90% of farm holdings in the county under 50 acres.⁵ Nearly 84% of people, the second highest in Ireland, lived on holdings with a rateable valuation of less than £15 per annum.⁶ Only fifty-seven farm holdings were in excess of 200 acres in 1901, and sections of the northern part of the county were part of the region administered by the Congested Districts Board area.⁷

Leitrim had the unique distinction of being the only county in Ireland without a town with a population in excess of two thousand people. The largest was Carrick-on-Shannon (Carrick), the county town, with a population of 906. Ninety-four per cent of the population, the largest proportion in an Irish county, lived outside of towns with five hundred inhabitants or more.⁸ All of the principal towns were served by either the Cavan-Leitrim or the Great Northern railway network which facilitated the export of cattle, agricultural produce, and coal to neighbouring areas and further afield. For administrative purposes the county was divided

⁴ Census of Ireland 1911, *Area, Houses and Population*; H.C.1912-13. also *the Ages, Civil or Conjugal Condition, Occupations, Birthplaces, Religion and Education of the People, Province of Connaught, County of Leitrim*.

⁵ Terence Dooley, *The Land for the People. The Land Question in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 2004), p. 235.

⁶ David Fitzpatrick, ‘The Geography of Irish Nationalism, 1910-1921’, *Past and Present*, 78 (1978), statistical appendix, pp 138-9.

⁷ David Seth Jones, *Graziers Land Reform and Political Conflict in Ireland* (Washington, 1995), p. 221.

⁸ Fitzpatrick, ‘The Geography of Irish Nationalism’, pp 138-9.

into five rural districts, Carrick, Mohill and Ballinamore in the south, and Manorhamilton and Kinlough in the north. The geographic position of Lough Allen divided the county into two distinct units, north and south, and both areas had their own separate parliamentary constituency until 1918. Consequently, local populations in north Leitrim often identified more with neighbouring Sligo than with regions in the south of the county.

Though it was a small county, remote from metropolitan centres, Leitrim was the subject of an invaluable, sometimes a forbidding quantity of press reporting, official reports and other accounts which were generated during or about this period. This has facilitated the drawing of a detailed picture on the basis of a wide and deep excavation of a revealing body of primary sources. Perhaps the most important of these were local newspapers which provided a wealth of information for the study. The two newspapers published in the county, the *Leitrim Advertiser* and the *Leitrim Observer*, provided the obvious starting point for the study. The *Advertiser* and *Observer* were particularly invaluable in that they provided differing editorial stances on developments in the county, more especially in the post 1916 period when the *Observer* was perceived as sympathetic to Sinn Féin. Instead of proving to be a limitation, differing biases provide a valuable asset for comparative analysis of emerging events. Local Leitrim newspapers were supplemented by an examination of the newspapers from neighbouring counties as these carried news stories of events within Leitrim. *The Sligo Champion*, *Sligo Independent*, and *Fermanagh Herald* provided extensive news coverage of events in the north of the county. Events in the south of the county received coverage in the *Longford Leader*, *the Anglo-Celt*, and the *Roscommon Herald*. Although the political affiliation of the majority of the newspapers in the west and north midlands was pro-Irish Party, the *Herald*, owned by dissident nationalist Jasper Tully, provided widespread coverage of events in Leitrim, and an alternative perspective on both national and local politics.

The resources at the Military Archives at Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin, were used extensively in the course of the study. The Bureau of Military History (BMH) Collection, containing eight witness statements of Leitrim IRA men and two from Cumann na mBan activists provided a wealth of information related to the political and military activities of Leitrim republicans. In addition, the Collins Papers and Civil War operation and intelligence files provided an account of IRA GHQ's perspectives on local regions. Certain limitations were present in the course of the research, the most obvious being the inability to access the majority of pension records of Leitrim IRA veterans at the Military Archives. Nevertheless, 81 pension records were examined which both supplemented much of the material in the BMH witness

statements, and revealed new information. Of particular interest was the pension applications of female activists. Marie Coleman has argued that the role of women in the Irish revolution was marginalized by historians, but the release of the Bureau of Military History archive has revealed the vital role that women played in the military campaign.⁹ In the absence of direct interviews with participants, these resources provided valuable information for elements of the study. The Civil War files, which have not to date been used extensively by historians, provided unique insights into the protagonists on both sides, and have provided valuable new information, helping to put in the context, the fatalities that occurred during that conflict.

The extensive range of relevant material in the U.K. National Archives in Kew, London, was significant, more especially Colonial Office intelligence notes, Dublin Castle and War Office records, and the extensive range of records of the Irish Distress Committee and Irish Grants Committee. Together with the RIC county inspector monthly reports detailing the activities of organisations such as Sinn Féin, the United Irish League, the Irish Volunteers and other groups, they provided a unique and broad range of information on civil society in the county in the period. As a border county, the archives of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland were also accessed to gauge unionist perspectives of events in the period. Alternative insights into the conflict in Leitrim were provided by accessing the regimental history of the Bedfordshire and Staffordshire Regiment, which was involved in the two most significant operations in the county in the 1919-21 period.

The extensive collection of county and rural district council minutes in the Leitrim County Library provided a range of invaluable information on the political and social nuances of local communities. The records of both the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland dioceses in the region were accessed as part of the study in order to provide more detailed insights into the activities of certain clerics. Among the more significant private papers from a local perspective were those of Sean MacEoin, Ernie O'Malley, and Richard Mulcahy located at the University College Dublin archives. Both MacEoin and O'Malley operated extensively in the Longford/Leitrim/Roscommon region. The O'Malley notebooks, containing interviews with veterans of the War of Independence and Civil War concerning their wartime activities in Leitrim, were most informative. Minutes, dispatches, operational memoranda, intelligence reports, and contemporary observations provided valuable insights to activity in the region.

⁹ Marie Coleman, 'Violence against Women during the Irish War of Independence, 1919-21' in Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (eds), *Years of Turbulence, The Irish Revolution and Its Aftermath* (Dublin, 2015), pp 137-155.

While Mulcahy did not have any operational experience in the Leitrim region, his private papers contain an extensive range of relevant material, most especially brigade and intelligence reports. The private papers of Charles Eddie McGoohan located in the Leitrim County Library provided personal insights from one of the more controversial figures of the conflict. His involvement in the killings of members of the crown forces in 1921 is part of the collection, although more controversial aspects of his military career during the Civil War are omitted.

Local studies are now firmly established as a method of exploring the Irish revolution. This process emerged in David Fitzpatrick's seminal work, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: Provincial Experiences of War and Revolution*, which focussed on Co. Clare.¹⁰ The work undertaken by Peter Hart on Cork was another important reference point for the thesis.¹¹ While both of Michael Hopkinson's works, *Green against Green: The Irish Civil War* and *The Irish War of Independence*, were excellent national studies, they drew attention to the local and regional nature of the conflict, emphasising the chaos and confusion, and lack of coherent central direction from the main players in Dublin.¹² Hopkinson believed that while his work on the War of Independence detailed local conflict, he modestly suggested that his work on local areas was incomplete, and that there was a need for more detailed local studies. Local and regional variations were vital to the outcomes of the Irish revolution as they uncovered the multi-faceted range of national trends and unique local variations at play during the period.

A number of significant local studies of neighbouring counties during the Irish revolution have emerged. Marie Coleman's (2002) study of Longford, Michael Farry's (1992) study of Sligo, and Kathleen HegartyThorne's (2005) work on Roscommon have all acted as comparators for this thesis.¹³ All of these counties border Leitrim, and Leitrim IRA men travelled to these counties to engage in military activity against crown forces. The by-elections of 1917 in both North Roscommon and South Longford were also highly significant in the changing political landscape of Leitrim in the period. Joost Augusteijn's examination of counties Tipperary, Mayo, Derry, Wexford and Dublin also provides a comparative model for

¹⁰ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: Provincial Experiences of War and Revolution* (Dublin, 1977).

¹¹ Peter Hart, *The IRA at War 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003).

¹² Michael Hopkinson, *Green against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988); Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*.

¹³ Marie Coleman, *Longford and the Irish Revolution* (Dublin, 2002); Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921, A Chronicle of Conflict* (Trim, 1992); Kathleen Hegarty Thorne, *They put the flag a'flyin: The Roscommon Volunteers, 1916-1923* (Oregon, 2005).

a study of Leitrim, particularly given that three of these counties – Mayo, Derry and Wexford – were comparatively peaceful during the period.¹⁴ Michael Wheatley’s study of the Irish Party in five counties of the midlands and north-west between 1910 and 1916 included Leitrim, and this work was also a valuable reference point.¹⁵ In engaging with historical debate in relation to the 1912-1923 period, a comparative analysis of other local studies has been sought to compare events between these regions and Leitrim.¹⁶

The importance of such studies cannot be overestimated in offering new perspectives on Irish historiography. The particular traditions and experiences of particular regions clearly demonstrate that ‘where people lived, exerted a demonstrable influence on their world views and political behaviour’.¹⁷ These behaviour patterns are manifested in a wide variety of inconsistencies in the activities of local populations throughout the Irish revolution. In contrast to his earlier affirmation of local studies, Fitzpatrick criticised the proliferation of recent works as offering no more than an ‘infinite variety of revolutionary activity’.¹⁸ While his proposal to generate more statistical data capable of being mapped by region is laudable, such an approach can ignore certain peculiarities of particular counties. As Fitzpatrick has previously outlined, local studies have significantly undermined popular national narratives. Too often, national studies have ignored the complexity of local political, social and economic contexts in which political behaviour is generated.¹⁹ Recent local studies have contributed significantly to Irish historiography in a number of different ways, including the identification of the importance of local leadership, and the seamless transfer of political loyalty in the period based on particular local circumstances.

While the works of Coleman, Farry and Fitzpatrick have provided invaluable templates, the structure of this study differentiates it from others. As a broad based study of the Irish revolution in a local context, this thesis interrogates five major areas in the 1912-1923 period, enquiring how the ‘high politics’ of the national and international stage was played out in a

¹⁴ Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996).

¹⁵ Michael Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party: Provincial Ireland, 1910-1916* (Oxford, 2005).

¹⁶ John O’Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick, The Republican Campaign for Independence in Limerick, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 2012); Liam Ó Duibhir, *The Donegal Awakening, Donegal and the War of Independence* (Dublin, 2009); John White, *Revolution in Counties Carlow, Kildare and Wicklow? A Regional Study* (MA Thesis, Mater Dei Institute/Dublin City University, 2010).

¹⁷ John Crowley, Donal O’Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2017), p. xvii.

¹⁸ David Fitzpatrick, ‘The Geography of the War of Independence’ in Crowley, O’Drisceoil, Murphy, *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, p. 534.

¹⁹ Michael Farry, *The Irish Revolution, 1912-23: Sligo* (Dublin, 2010), pp xiii-xv.

small peripheral rural community in north-west Ireland. The approach adopted is both thematic and chronological, addressing the major issues that occurred in Leitrim including the 1912-16 period, the First World War, the rise of advanced nationalism, the War of Independence and the Civil War.

Chapter One outlines the political structures, cultures and key organisations that were present in the county in the early twentieth century. Although the significance of the 1908 North Leitrim by-election has been debated, the event itself brought the county to national prominence and marked one of the first attempts at changing the national political landscape, and ending the dominance of the Irish Party. While the demise of constitutional nationalism, and the subsequent transfer of support to Sinn Féin, has attracted many divergent views from a wide variety of sources including F.S.L. Lyons, Paul Bew and Michael Laffan, this chapter focuses on events in Leitrim, and the issues that preoccupied its people far away from the ‘high politics’ of Dublin and London in the 1912-1916 period.²⁰

The chapter assesses the political health of the Irish Party in Leitrim, asking whether it was, as outlined by Garvin, Lyons and Rumpf, a weakened party prior to the First World War, or reflected the opposite view enunciated by Bew, Maume, Fitzpatrick and O’Day, who argued that the Party was in a strong and representative position up to at least 1913.²¹ The chapter examines if Leitrim fitted into Michael Wheatley’s observation that much of the political conflict in middle Ireland had less to do with ideology or class politics, and more to do with personal disputes in local areas.²²

Both Fergus Campbell and Wheatley highlight the influence of the land question on local politics in rural Ireland.²³ By 1910, following an extensive period of land reform carried out by the British government under the influence of popular protest, most of the land holdings in Leitrim and across Ireland were in the ownership of former tenants. Wheatley’s study of middle Ireland argued that land reform resulted in a significant decrease in land agitation and

²⁰ F.S.L. Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party, 1890-1910* (London, 1951); Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Ulster Question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism 1912-1916* (Oxford, 1994); Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999).

²¹ Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin, 1981); Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party*; Erhard Rumpf and A. C. Hepburn, *Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Liverpool, 1977); Bew, *Ideology*; Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*; Alan O’Day, *Irish Home Rule, 1867-1921* (Manchester, 1998); Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation, Irish Nationalist Life 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999).

²² Wheatley, *Irish Party*, p. 37.

²³ Fergus Campbell, *Land and Revolution: Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland 1891-1921* (Oxford, 2005); Wheatley, *Irish Party*, pp 24-26.

political activism by farmers. Consequently, the activities of one of the local political machines of the Irish Party, the United Irish League, whose *raison d'être* was land reform, dissipated considerably. The strength of the UIL and the influence of agrarian issues is assessed.

Another significant political development in the county, the formation and subsequent demise of the Irish Volunteers is examined, asking if the county followed similar patterns of activity to those outlined by both Colin Reid and M.J. Kelly.²⁴ The chapter examines the post-Rising environment in the county, and the reactions of the local population to the rebels, one of whom, Sean MacDiarmada, was a Leitrim native. Changing public opinion towards the Rising was manifested in many ways, including the establishment of an Irish National Aid Association and Volunteer Dependents' Fund (INA&VDF) network across the county, which Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid believed played a crucial role in the transfer of political loyalty to advanced nationalism.²⁵

Chapter Two examines how Leitrim reacted to the First World War, and the experience of the county during the 1914-18 period. While Fitzpatrick's *Ireland and the First World War* outlined the importance of the conflict in Ireland's historical narrative, the recent comprehensive works of both John Horne and Keith Jeffery have further informed debate on Ireland's role in the conflict.²⁶ Both Coleman and Fitzpatrick have also highlighted the crucial role that the war played in the political transformation that enveloped Ireland in the period.²⁷

Among the issues highlighted in the chapter are the initial reactions to war, recruitment patterns, the growth of voluntary associations, and the effects of the war on women and wider civil society. Caitriona Pennell successfully challenged the myth of war enthusiasm in the early months of the conflict. She argued that a mixture of fear, hope and aspiration were present in both Britain and Ireland, and these emotions are examined in the context of the people of Leitrim.²⁸ The recruitment issue forms a central element of the study, and while Fitzpatrick, Staunton, Dungan and Codd outlined a range of factors influencing enlistment, both Horne and

²⁴ Colin Reid, 'The Irish Party and the Volunteers: Politics and the Home Rule Army, 1913-1916' in Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid and Colin Reid (eds), *From Parnell to Paisley: Constitutional and Revolutionary Politics in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2010); M.J. Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916* (Woodbridge, 2006).

²⁵ Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'The Irish National Aid Association and the Radicalization of Public Opinion in Ireland 1916-1916' in *The Historical Journal*, 55:3 (2012), pp 705-729.

²⁶ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000); John Horne, *Our War: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin, 2008).

²⁷ Coleman, *Longford*, p.4; Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p.47; David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1986), p. vii.

²⁸ Caitriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Ireland and Britain* (Oxford, 2012), pp 39, 55, 171.

Kelly argued that the economic boom in agricultural areas created by the war effort often prevented men from joining the colours.²⁹

Alongside military mobilisation, the conflict also witnessed the growth of voluntary associations in Leitrim, whereby non-combatant civilians contributed in a wide range of initiatives to support the war effort. While Clare O'Neill described voluntary war work as a nationwide humanitarian response, Caitriona Clear and Eileen Reilly identified the activity as being the preserve of middle-class women.³⁰ The role of Leitrim women is examined in the context of the voluntary civilian war effort, and of their role in wider society. Both Susan Grayzel and Fionnuala Walsh identified the role of women in wartime society, with Walsh arguing that a woman's wartime experience was dependent on a number of factors including geographic location.³¹ The effect of the war on civil society in Leitrim is examined in conjunction with Fitzpatrick's argument that the impact of the war on many areas of Ireland was quite limited.³²

Chapter Three outlines the political transformation in 1917-18 that witnessed the demise of constitutional nationalism and the growth of Sinn Féin. Among the issues highlighted are the growth of advanced nationalism in the county in the wake of the neighbouring South Longford and North Roscommon by-elections. Michael Laffan charted the growth of advanced nationalism in the period, arguing that the group dynamics at work within the broad republican family were complex and multi-faceted.³³ Part of Sinn Féin's growth strategy in Leitrim was the use of agrarian agitation. Campbell identified Sinn Féin agitation in Galway as finding roots in a long history of agrarian unrest within that county. In contrast, Fitzpatrick identified a

²⁹ Horne, *Our War*, p.9; Kelly, *Fenian Ideal*, p.242; James McConnel, 'Recruiting Sergeants for John Bull? Irish Nationalist MPs and Enlistment during the Early Months of the Great War', in *War in History*, 14:4 (2007); Myles Dungan, *Distant Drums: Irish Soldiers in Foreign Armies* (Belfast, 1993), p.54; David Fitzpatrick, 'The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918' in *The Historical Journal*, 38:49 (1995), pp 1017-1030; Pauline Codd, 'Recruiting and Responses to the War in Wexford' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1986), pp 15-26; Martin Staunton, 'Kilrush, Co. Clare and the Royal Munster Fusiliers' in *Irish Sword*, 15:65 (1986), pp 268-272.

³⁰ Eileen Reilly, 'Women and Voluntary War Work' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (eds), *Ireland and the Great War, 'A War to Unite Us All'?* (Manchester, 2002), pp 49-72; Caitriona Clear, 'Fewer ladies, more women' in Horne, *Our War*; Clare O'Neill, 'Unity in Adversity: Associational Culture in Ireland during the First World War' in Jennifer Kelly and R.V. Comerford (eds), *Associational Culture in Ireland and Abroad* (Dublin, 2010), pp 165-178.

³¹ Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (London, 1999); Fionnuala Walsh, 'The Impact of the Great War on Women in Ireland' (PhD Thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2015).

³² David Fitzpatrick, 'Home front and everyday life' in Horne (ed.), *Our War*, p.136.

³³ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, p.187.

relatively seamless transfer of political loyalty between the United Irish League and Sinn Féin in Clare.³⁴ Both arguments are considered in the context of Leitrim.

By December 1917, Leitrim had the second largest number of Sinn Féin clubs in the country per head of population.³⁵ This chapter examines the growth of advanced nationalism in the county, the strategies employed, and the reaction of the authorities to such growth. The chapter examines if Leitrim followed a similar pattern to that of its neighbours, or if other factors, including the anti-conscription campaign contributed to the rise of Sinn Féin. The chapter also traces the role of constitutional nationalism in the period, and tests the argument of McConnel (2004) as to the significance of the extension of the franchise as a factor in the defeat of the Irish Parliamentary Party at the 1918 general election.³⁶ The political processes and structures of the main protagonists, the interconnections of political groupings, and the factors that influenced the growth and decline of these groupings form a major element of this chapter.

Chapter Four examines the establishment of an alternative system of government within the county, and the reaction of the authorities and the local population to its development. The formation of Dáil courts, republican police and republican controlled local councils under the aegis of Dáil Éireann, not only challenged the authority of the crown, but also brought about its own operational issues for the new administrators. While Leitrim was not a prominent theatre of operation in the War of Independence, the importance of a campaign of civil disobedience was significant.

Both Mary Daly's *The Buffer State: The historical roots of the Department of the Environment* (1997) and Mary Kotsonouris' *Retreat from Revolution: The Dáil Courts 1920-24* (1994) provided a comprehensive account of the administrative revolution in a national context.³⁷ Arthur Mitchell also detailed the activities of the counter-state and, together with Daly, outlined the many issues faced by its rulers. Chapter Four outlines the unique challenges encountered by the counter-state in Leitrim, not only from the crown, but from the local

³⁴ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.99; Campbell, *Land and Revolution*, p.224.

³⁵ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, p.187.

³⁶ James McConnel, 'The Franchise Factor in the Defeat of the Irish Parliamentary Party, 1885-1918' in *The Historical Journal*, 47:2 (2004), pp 355-377.

³⁷ Mary Daly, *The Buffer State: The historical roots of the Department of the Environment* (Dublin, 1997); Mary Kotsonouris, *Retreat from Revolution: The Dáil Courts 1920-24* (Dublin, 1994).

population. The chapter examines how the Treaty was received in the county, and how republican administrators adapted to their role as formal rulers of the new state.³⁸

Chapter Five examines the War of Independence in the county, including the establishment of Irish Volunteer structures, the role of boycott, intimidation and civil disobedience, and patterns of state and republican violence. Although the years between 1919 and 1921 are viewed as the period that witnessed the most widespread conflict across Ireland, it is recognised that this violence was concentrated in only a small number of regions, predominantly in Munster and Dublin city.

Alongside Hopkinson's study of the War of Independence, Charles Townshend's two seminal works, *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (1975) and *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence* (2013), provide clear and dispassionate accounts of the conflict.³⁹ Yet, an over-emphasis by historians on recognising military conflict as an indicator of resistance has resulted in a consistent under-estimation of alternative resistance strategies. Both James Scott and Stathis Kalyvas outline a range of non-violent modes of resistance, and these are examined in the context of actions carried out in Leitrim in the 1919-21 period.⁴⁰ In their separate studies of the war against the RIC, Brian Hughes and William Lowe provided comprehensive accounts of the alternative issues to direct military engagement that the police encountered.⁴¹ While Peter Hart's *The IRA at War 1916-1923* has challenged much of the popular narrative on the activities of the IRA, his controversial assertions of widespread sectarianism has attracted debate. Hart includes a number of counties, including Leitrim, in his argument that much of the conflict was of a tit-for-tat nature with sectarian overtones.⁴² This chapter will address these issues in the context of Leitrim.

³⁸ Arthur Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government in Ireland, Dáil Éireann 1919-22* (Dublin, 1995); Daly, *Buffer State*.

³⁹ Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (Oxford, 1975); *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence* (London, 2013).

⁴⁰ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance, Hidden Transcripts* (Yale, 1990); Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war* (Cambridge, 2006).

⁴¹ W.J. Lowe, 'The War against the RIC 1919-1921' in *Éire-Ireland: a Journal of Irish Studies* (Fall-Winter 2002), p. 85; Brian Hughes, 'Persecuting the Peelers' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Terror in Ireland, 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012), p.207.

⁴² Peter Hart, 'The Protestant Experience of Revolution in Southern Ireland' in Richard English and Graham Walker (eds), *Unionism in modern Ireland : new perspectives on politics and culture* (New York, 1996); Miriam Moffitt, 'The Protestant experience of revolution in County Leitrim, 1911-1928' in *Breifne, Journal of Cumann Seanchais Bhreifne*, 12:46 (2011); David Fitzpatrick, 'Protestant Depopulation and the Irish Revolution' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 38:152 (2013), pp 643-670.

Chapter Six examines the course of the Civil War in the county, although the conflict that escalated in June 1922 traversed county bounds across the region. The emergence of Eoin Neeson's *The Civil War In Ireland* and Calton Younger's *Ireland's Civil War* attracted less debate than earlier, more obviously partisan accounts, as both writers recognised that the war was inevitable for a variety of reasons, including the many differing expectations of the various factions within advanced nationalism.⁴³ However, Hopkinson's *Green against Green* (1988) provided the first comprehensive academic account of the war, covering both the political and military aspects of the conflict, and arguing that old loyalties and local animosities influenced many people in their choices over the Treaty.⁴⁴

Among the local studies of the conflict to emerge in recent years have been Peter Hart and John Borgonovo's separate, yet widely divergent studies of Cork, and Michael Farry's study of Sligo.⁴⁵ Hart's more politicised analysis, including accusations of sectarianism, has proved controversial, and is addressed as part of the chapter. While the region followed the national pattern outlined by Hopkinson, of National Army successes in the late summer of 1922, and the adoption of guerrilla tactics by republicans, Gavin Foster has identified increasing levels of state violence.⁴⁶ Brutality and lawlessness was a feature of the conflict, perpetrated mainly by republicans based at Arigna, whose actions, Conor Brady argued, made it difficult to distinguish between political violence and criminality.⁴⁷

This thesis provides a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the experiences of Co. Leitrim and its people during a dramatic phase in Irish history. A broad based study, it challenges some dominant paradigms, and identifies and examines the socio-economic and cultural influences that shaped war and politics in one of the poorest and isolated counties in Ireland. Like other local studies, through detailed research, it also highlights the unique regional variations that have contributed to national and global frameworks of historical analysis. The late Leitrim writer John McGahern wrote that 'the dominant units in Irish society are the family and the locality. The idea was that the whole world would grow out from this small space'.⁴⁸ This study illuminates the revolution in Leitrim and places it in conversation

⁴³ Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic, A Documented Chronicle* (London, 1968); P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924).

⁴⁴ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against Green, The Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988).

⁴⁵ John Borgonovo, *The Battle for Cork, July-August, 1922*, (Cork, 2011); Michael Farry, *The Aftermath of Revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000 Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*.

⁴⁶ Gavin Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society: politics, class and conflict* (New, York, 2015), p.5.

⁴⁷ Conor Brady, *Guardians of the Peace* (Dublin, 2000), p.137.

⁴⁸ John McGahern interview with Robert McCrum, *The Guardian*, 6 Jan. 2002.

with a wider revolutionary world allowing a deeper understanding of local nuances and offering a different perspective on the Irish revolution.

Chapter 1: Politics and Society 1912-1916

1.1 Introduction

Travelling through Leitrim during the Land War in the spring of 1882, Canadian journalist Margaret Dixon McDougall reflected that, ‘I listened to one tale after another of harassment, misery and thoughtless oppression in Kiltyclogher till my heart was sick’.¹ Such incidents were not unique in Leitrim, a county that witnessed widespread evictions, and amongst the highest levels of agrarian violence nationally during this period.² With the establishment of both the Home Rule Association and the Land League in the 1870s, the twin issues of land reform and the national question soon merged, and brought Ireland to the centre of British politics. While successive governments over the next twenty-five years responded to the land question with a series of Land Acts, the national question remained unresolved. Renewed optimism among Irish nationalists emerged following the 1910 general election, when the Irish Party held the balance of power in the House of Commons. The Party subsequently supported Herbert Asquith’s Liberal government, based on the assurance that Home Rule would be implemented, and an Irish Parliament would sit in Dublin for the first time since 1800. The fortunes of constitutional nationalism had undergone a dramatic transformation from the bitter divisions of the Parnellite split of the early 1890s, to the position of political power broker at Westminster. However, Ulster unionist resistance to Home Rule, a world war, and an Irish republican uprising would intervene to change the fortunes of the Party, and the course of Irish history.

The focus of this chapter is to examine the political landscape of Co. Leitrim from January 1912 to December 1916. In so doing, it provides an overview of the county’s main political and social groupings during the preceding years, a necessary task in this context because of the landmark 1908 North Leitrim by-election, one of the first challenges to the political hegemony of the Irish Party. While historians debate the roots of the evolution of advanced nationalist politics in the wake of the Easter Rising, dramatic change only became apparent in Leitrim with the release of republican prisoners at Christmas 1916. In the years prior to that transformation, a very different political environment was in place, both locally and nationally. What political structures and cultures existed in Leitrim? What issues preoccupied the people of this remote county in north-west Ireland, and what change, if any,

¹ Margaret Dixon McDougall, *The letters of Norah on her tour through Ireland* (Montreal, 1882), p.147.

²David Fitzpatrick, 'The Geography of Irish Nationalism', pp 113-144.

occurred in the political and social landscape of the county during the period? In order to answer these questions, this chapter is divided into three sections dealing with separate and distinct periods, the pre-1912 political and social environment, politics from 1912 to the Easter Rising, and finally Leitrim in the months from April to December 1916, a period of emerging political change.

1.2 Leitrim 1900-1912

This section will provide a brief overview of civic society in Co. Leitrim on the eve of the revolutionary period by charting the range of key political and cultural organisations in the county, and describing their influence on local politics. These organisations include the United Irish League, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Irish National Foresters, the Town Tenant's League, the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Gaelic League. The structures of both local government and the Catholic church in the county will also be examined.

Philip Bull argued that land was the driving force of revolution in late nineteenth century Ireland through the linking of the campaign for land ownership to the national question.³ Although the British government initially responded with a series of reforms, much of the early legislation created large ranch-type grazier holdings to the detriment of many smallholders and landless families. Responding to this sense of grievance, Nationalist MP William O'Brien founded the United Irish League (UIL) in 1898, and the organisation grew rapidly. In Leitrim, the UIL already had seven branches and 472 members in January 1899; within five months, seventeen branches with a membership of 2,530 were recorded in the county. By December 1900, police reported the existence of thirty-one branches and 7,602 members in Leitrim.⁴

In 1900, following the League's merger with a re-united Irish Party led by Waterford MP John Redmond, the twin forces of land agitation and nationalism were again re-ignited. Almost immediately, the UIL established itself as both the local constituency organisation for the Irish Party, and a driving force of land agitation for smallholders. Renewed calls for land reform were met by further Land Acts in 1903 and 1909, facilitating the transfer of land to tenant farmers. It was the League's attempts to break-up large grazier farms across Ireland that

³ Philip Bull, 'Land and Politics, 1879-1903' in D.G. Boyce (ed.), *The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923* (Dublin, 1998), p.45.

⁴ UIL Quarterly Returns, RIC Annual County Inspectorate reports of 'Secret Societies and Nationalist Associations', Dec. 1900 (TNA, CO 904/20).

preoccupied much of the organisation's activities. While the 'Ranch War' (1906-1909) was widespread in the neighbouring counties of Roscommon and Longford, agitation against graziers in Leitrim was non-existent in a county dominated by small farm holdings and few grazier farms.⁵ Nevertheless, the League was active, and when agitation did occur, it was directed at families who occupied evicted farms, or to assist those who faced eviction. In the Mohill district in June 1907, police reported the boycotting of an elderly man named McGarry because his daughter married a man who had occupied an evicted farm. Police reported that McGarry's milk was refused at the local creamery, and that 'it was with difficulty that he obtained the service of a bull for his cows'.⁶ Michael Wheatley has noted that the only incident of any significance in the county was a protracted dispute involving two Protestant brothers named McNeill who occupied an evicted farm at Aughavas on the Cavan/Leitrim border.⁷ UIL branches in both counties orchestrated a boycott campaign, preventing any shops in nearby towns supplying goods to the men. Local south Leitrim MP Thomas Smyth was active in the campaign against the McNeills, and police reported that in his calls to boycott the men, Smyth used 'most vicious and criminal language'.⁸ Despite occasional disturbances, police regularly reported that the county was peaceful with high levels of land purchase by tenant farmers.⁹ The RIC County Inspector in May 1911 noted that local farmers 'appear thrifty and contented and on the whole pay their instalments regularly. This extensive land purchase has had a marked beneficial effect on the welfare of the tenants.'¹⁰

The Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) also served as a local support organisation for the Irish Party, and it too was active in land agitation. Emerging at the end of the nineteenth century as a counter force to the Orange Order, police reported that this overtly sectarian oath-bound organisation was strong in Ulster and in counties Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan.¹¹ Membership of both the UIL and AOH was common, and both organisations often operated together in land agitation and boycott campaigns.¹² In 1908 the RIC County Inspector wrote of 'the terror which the UIL and AOH inspire in the minds of the people, deterring magistrates

⁵ David Seth Jones, *Graziers Land Reform and Political Conflict in Ireland* (Washington, 1995), p.221.

⁶ RIC County Inspector (hereafter CI Report), Monthly Report, Leitrim, Apr. 1907 (TNA, CO/904/20).

⁷ Wheatley, *Irish Party*, p.42.

⁸ CI Report, Leitrim, Jan. 1910 (TNA, CO 904/80).

⁹ Inspector General's Report, Crime Special Branch (hereafter CBS/IGCI Report), May 1907 (TNA, 1552/SN).

¹⁰ CI Report, Leitrim, May 1911 (TNA, CO 904/84).

¹¹ RIC Annual County Inspectorate Reports 'Secret Societies: Register of Home Associations', 1890-1893 (TNA, CO/904/16).

¹² Inspector General's Report, May 1908 (NAI, CBS/IGCI,2055/s).

and juries from enforcing the law in cases where agrarian matters are involved'.¹³ With its roots in the Defender and Ribbon organisations, the AOH was perceived as the more militant of the two groups, and by 1910 police reported that the AOH dominated the UIL in the county.¹⁴

One of the main reasons for the increasing influence of the AOH was its Belfast based leader Joe Devlin's success in ensuring that the AOH became an approved society under the National Insurance Act of 1911. This legislation provided state health insurance for low and middle income wage earners, making membership very attractive for a large element of the population. Mel Cousins has outlined the development of a network of associations in early twentieth century Ireland as a result of this Act. Though the Irish Party lacked clearly defined policies or ideology on a range of social issues as a result of trying to balance the interests of its various political groupings, this innovative social legislation gave the AOH a substantial membership boost, with national membership increasing from 10,000 members in 1905 to 170,000 by 1914.¹⁵ In Leitrim, AOH Divisions increased from 35 in 1910 to 41 in 1912, and by 1916 there were 4,283 registered members in the county.¹⁶

While one of its main functions was acting as a local political support group for the Irish Party, the AOH was active in providing a range of social activities for its members. An infusion of government funding to the AOH's Insurance Section to provide premises meant that these buildings were also used as AOH halls.¹⁷ Increased funding resulted in the opening of halls in Mohill, Lough Allen, Annaduff, Gortvagh, and Drumsna where local political leaders never lost an opportunity for speechmaking in favour of Home Rule. Social events at these halls reflected the ethos of the Hibernians, and were always of an exclusively Irish nature. Before speeches commenced at the official opening of Lough Allen Hall in April 1912, the assembled audience were entertained by 'a selection of Irish airs on a gramophone'.¹⁸

Although both the AOH and UIL dominated local politics, other organisations including the Irish National Foresters (INF) and the Town Tenants' League (TTL) had spasmodic existence in the county. Like the AOH, the INF was a Catholic benefit society and

¹³ Inspector General's Report, Sept. 1908 (NAI, CBS/IGCI,2172/s).

¹⁴ CI Report, Leitrim, May 1910 (TNA, CO 904/81).

¹⁵ Mel Cousins, 'The Creation of Association: The National Insurance Act, 1911 and Approved Societies in Ireland' in Jennifer Kelly and R.V. Comerford (eds), *Associational Culture in Ireland and Abroad* (Dublin, 2010), p161.

¹⁶ CI Report, Leitrim, Dec. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/101).

¹⁷ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation, Irish Nationalist Life 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999), p.125.

¹⁸ *Leitrim Observer (hereafter LO)*, 13 Apr. 1912.

social organisation under the umbrella of the Irish Party. While overlapping membership between organisations was common, no strong network of the Foresters emerged in Leitrim. Only three branches ever existed in the south of the county at Dromod, Ballinamore, and Carrick. It was not until August 1916 that the Carrick branch was formed, and among its aims was the provision of social facilities for the town's young people. The main promoters were local AOH leader Michael McGrath and parish priest Canon Thomas O'Reilly who believed that the provision of such facilities would overcome 'the many other evils and temptations, which at present confront them, and uplift the social status of and life of Carrick, which in recent years has greatly deteriorated in quality and rank'.¹⁹ By December 1916, INF membership in the county consisted of three branches with 143 members.²⁰

The advancement of land purchase legislation triggered the foundation of the Town Tenants' League in 1904, which campaigned for the rights of the tenants of town land and property. In Leitrim, branches were formed at Carrick, Mohill, Drumshanbo, Manorhamilton, and Drumkeerin, and co-operation between local organisations was common. AOH halls were provided on a regular basis for Town Tenants' meetings, and both organisations were involved in a number of tenancy issues. The Carrick branch was the most active in the county, and constantly campaigned on behalf of town tenants, most notably in its attempts to have town lands included in the sale of the local Whyte estate.²¹ Advocating for members in rent disputes and leading campaigns on a range of issues, including a lack of sanitary facilities in town houses, was a feature of branch activity. The League was also involved in preventing outsiders bidding against existing tenants of properties placed for sale by local landlords.²²

The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded in the county in 1889, with Thomas Fallon elected as its first chairman. Like many of his GAA counterparts, Fallon, a veteran of the Land League campaign, was imprisoned for his participation in land agitation in 1881. Despite the presence of eleven clubs in the county by 1891, 'all under Fenian control' according to the police, the GAA in the county was disorganized and riven with internal disputes.²³ Controlled at national and provincial level by the IRB, the organisation also attracted the wrath

¹⁹ *LO*, 23 Sept. 1916.

²⁰ CI Report, Leitrim, Dec.1916 (TNA, CO 904/101).

²¹ *LO*, 22 Apr. 1916.

²² Conor McNamara, 'A Tenants' League or a Shopkeepers' League? Urban Protest and the Town Tenants' Association in the West of Ireland, 1909-1918' in *Studia Hibernica*, 36 (2009-2010), pp 135-160.

²³ RIC Annual County Inspectorate Reports Report of 'Secret Societies and Nationalist Associations', Dec. 1900 (TNA, CSS/26, 268 51891).

of the clergy, with priests at Carraigallen in 1889 actively discouraging people from attending games.²⁴ Throughout the 1890s, occasional tournaments constituted the only form of GAA activity, and no county board was in existence for most of the decade. With the re-establishment of a county board structure in 1904, and the election of Thomas Smyth as chairman in 1905, attempts to reorganize championship football in the county proved difficult. Only six teams competed in the 1910 senior championship, but club activity increased in the following years. By 1911, police reported that eleven clubs were in existence, and were ‘solely for athletic purposes and have no IRB connection’.²⁵

Established in 1893 to counter the increasing Anglicisation of Irish society, and to conserve and revive Irish as a spoken language, the Gaelic League had mixed fortunes in a number of counties, including Leitrim. After a phase of growth in the early 1900s, Pádraig Ó Fearáil has highlighted a decline in Gaelic League branch numbers in Ireland from 964 in 1906 to 388 by 1913.²⁶ Wheatley argued that ‘it was so disorganised and amorphous that its activities flourished or decayed at different times in different towns and counties’.²⁷ Success was evident for a brief period in south Leitrim because of the work of a local organizer, Seán Ruadháin, and the appointment of a travelling teacher, Kathleen McGowan. While police reported the existence of eleven branches in South Leitrim in 1911, the departure of McGowan resulted in a decline to six branches by November 1912.²⁸ Timothy McMahon outlined different phases of growth and decline for the League in the early decades of the twentieth century, and observed that the organisation was not strong in counties Leitrim, Longford and Offaly.²⁹ The inactivity of the League in Leitrim was reflected in little or no coverage in police reports, nor in local newspapers.

Leitrim was administered by two Catholic dioceses, Kilmore in the north and Ardagh and Clonmacnoise (Ardagh) in the south. Church of Ireland parishes in Leitrim were governed by the Diocese of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh, while Leitrim’s Methodists were part of the Sligo District Synod of the Methodist Church of Ireland. Unlike many of their Protestant

²⁴ William Murphy, ‘The GAA during the Irish Revolution’, in Mike Cronin, William Murphy, Paul Rouse (eds), *The Gaelic Athletic Association 1884-2009* (Dublin 2009), pp 61-76.; Seán Ó Suilleabháin (ed.), *Scéal Liatrioma, Leitrim GAA Story 1886-1984* (Carrick-on-Shannon, 1984), pp 11-12.

²⁵ CI Report, Leitrim, May 1911 (TNA, CO 904/84).

²⁶ Pádraig Ó Fearáil, *The Story of Conradh na Gaelige* (Dublin 1975), p.17.

²⁷ Wheatley, *Irish Party*, p. 63.

²⁸ CI Report, Leitrim, May 1911 (TNA, CO 904/79); CI Report, Leitrim, Nov.1912 (TNA, CO 904/83).

²⁹ Timothy G. McMahon, *Grand Opportunity, The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society, 1893-1910* (Syracuse, 2008), p.88.

counterparts, the Roman Catholic hierarchy and clergy played an active role in politics. While Bishop Nicholas Conaty of Kilmore initially distanced himself from Isaac Butt's Home Rule Association because of the disparate groups involved, by the 1874 general election Conaty and his clergy endorsed Home Rule candidates.³⁰ Following the split in nationalist ranks in the wake of the Parnell divorce case, the church did not hesitate in attempting to influence political opinion. Bishop Woodlock of Ardagh proclaimed that accepting Parnell as their leader 'would condone his crime as an adulterer'.³¹ At a public meeting in Manorhamilton in June 1891, parish priest John Maguire told the assembled crowd that, 'Ireland would deserve the ridicule of the world if it tolerated Parnell as leader.'³² Following the establishment of the UIL, and the subsequent re-unification of the Irish Party, UIL branches were organised in every parish. While the clergy were supportive of the League, the church viewed the AOH with suspicion. The Order's perceived militancy, and its origins in the secret agrarian societies of the nineteenth century, did not endear it to the church.³³ At Drumkeerin in 1905, the establishment of a local AOH division was so strongly opposed by the local parish priest Father McMorrogh that the division's president had to resign, 'owing to abuse he received from the priest'.³⁴

Though a Home Rule parliament had not been established in Dublin, the Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898 did replace the ascendancy-dominated Grand Jury system of local government with locally elected county and rural district councils. In Leitrim, in addition to a county council, the Act established five rural district councils located in Ballinamore, Mohill, Carrick, Manorhamilton and Kinlough. Together with the Poor Law Unions/Board of Guardians, and financed by a budget from the Local Government Board and local ratepayers, these bodies were responsible for an array of local services including road maintenance, water supply, housing and sanitation. The management of the county's three workhouses at Carrick, Mohill and Manorhamilton, together with seven dispensaries, were the responsibility of the locally elected boards of guardians.³⁵ Immediately, councils and boards of guardians were dominated by supporters of the Irish Party, with members of the UIL creating new local political elites. According to Wheatley, local councils were entirely male, overwhelmingly Catholic, and middle aged where 'changes in their composition came about largely through old

³⁰ Daniel Gallogly, *The Diocese of Kilmore, 1800-1950* (Cavan, 1999), pp 182-186..

³¹ *LA*, 29 Jan.1891.

³² *SC*, 13 June 1891.

³³ Gallogly, *Kilmore*, pp 224-226.

³⁴ David W. Miller, *Church, State and Nation in Ireland 1898-1921* (Dublin, 1973), p.211.

³⁵ Jennifer Kelly, 'Popular attitudes to formal medical care in early-nineteenth-century County Leitrim' in *Breifne, Journal of Cumann Seanchais Bhreifne*, 10:44 (2008), pp 573-586.

age or death'.³⁶ In Leitrim, although this assessment is accurate in relation to age, religion and gender, approximately 40% of county council membership changed at the four local elections between 1899 and 1908. It was only at the 1911 and 1914 elections that membership change was minimal (approximately 20%). However, the range of occupations of members rarely changed, and included farmers, shopkeepers, publicans, drapers, a hotel proprietor and a solicitor. All were men from comfortable social backgrounds, with two long-standing members of the council, Chairman Thomas Fallon and Michael Murphy from Gortvagh, employing servants in their homes.³⁷

With no strong advanced nationalist tradition in the county, politics in Leitrim was dominated by the Irish Party and its local party political machines.³⁸ The county was divided into two constituencies, North and South Leitrim from 1884, with both P.A. McHugh in the north and Jasper Tully in the south representing the county in parliament until 1906. For the 1906 general election, McHugh transferred to the neighbouring North Sligo constituency, and was replaced unopposed by Charles Dolan from Manorhamilton. Thomas Smyth, a Mohill based auctioneer, was also returned unopposed, replacing Tully in South Leitrim. Both constituencies had their own distinct identities—the north aligned to Sligo, Fermanagh and Cavan, and the south to Longford and Roscommon. The county's physical geography, with Lough Allen dividing the regions, contributed to this situation, meaning that Leitrim's northern population had Sligo as their local large town, while many of their fellow countymen in the south looked to not only Carrick, but Longford.

After only fifteen months representing the Irish Party at Westminster, Dolan announced his intention to resign his seat and stand for re-election for the recently established Sinn Féin party because of the perceived futility of the Irish Party's position on the Home Rule question. Not only did the Party face embarrassment with Dolan's defection, but police also reported in June 1907, that the North Leitrim Executive of the UIL had 'passed a resolution in favour of the Sinn Féin policy by 37 votes to 13'.³⁹

³⁶ Wheatley, *Irish Party*, p.34

³⁷ Census of Ireland 1911, *Area, Houses and Population; H.C.1912-13. also the Ages, Civil or Conjugal Condition, Occupations, Birthplaces, Religion and Education of the People, Province of Connaught, County of Leitrim.*

³⁸ RIC Annual County Inspectorate Reports, 'Secret Societies: Register of Home Associations 1890-1893' (TNA, CO 904/16).

³⁹ Inspector General's Report, May 1907 (NAI, CBS/IGCI,1552/SN).

The campaign in North Leitrim throughout the winter of 1907-1908 was a protracted, violent and bitter affair. With Dolan's fellow Manorhamilton townsman Francis Meehan emerging as the Irish Party's candidate, divisions in the ranks of the UIL soon emerged.⁴⁰ At a UIL meeting on 11 February 1908, Killargue's parish priest, Fr. Charles Flynn, accused Dolan and 'his little Hungarian band of faction mongers' of living in 'a fool's paradise', and of 'insulting the clergy and the intelligent people of Leitrim'.⁴¹ Throughout the campaign, large numbers of election workers from across Ireland travelled to the county to support both candidates. Police reported that, 'the county is being stumped by orators including Bulmer Hobson and J. McDermott of Belfast'.⁴² McDermott, a native of Kiltyclogher who was also known as Seán MacDiarmada, became Dolan's election agent, and eight years later was executed as one of the leaders of the Easter Rising. Both Hobson and McDermott were active IRB organizers, and travelled the constituency in support of Dolan. Hobson's Quaker background was soon highlighted, and he was denounced in church, and described in one newspaper as being 'a Salvation Army preacher from Belfast, and an Orangeman'.⁴³

In their fight against Sinn Féin, the Irish Party used their extensive UIL and AOH support bases in North Leitrim. In addition, Joe Devlin employed his organisational skills to transport men from Belfast to disrupt Sinn Féin meetings and violence became widespread.⁴⁴ In spite of these obstacles, Dolan performed relatively well, polling 1,157 votes to Meehan's 3,103. Despite the loss, Sinn Féin leader Arthur Griffith wrote that, 'Ireland's resurrection would be dated from the day when 1,200 Irishmen in the poorest and most remote county in Ireland voted for Sinn Féin'.⁴⁵ Dan Gallogly believed that, 'when the cheers of victory had died away after a bitter and sometimes violent campaign, there was a salutary warning for the parliamentarians in Dolan's one thousand votes. They were as much a vote of censure on the Parliamentary Party for its failure to win Home Rule, as they were a vote for Sinn Féin'.⁴⁶

Both nationally and locally, Sinn Féin declined rapidly in the years following the North Leitrim by-election. By 1909, nearly half of the 106 branches in Ireland had failed to pay

⁴⁰ Ciaran Ó Duibhir, *Sinn Féin, The First Election 1908* (Manorhamilton, 1993), p.40.

⁴¹ Ó Duibhir, *First Election*, p.54.

⁴² Inspector General's Report, May 1907 (NAI, CBS/IGCI, 1552/SN).

⁴³ Marnie Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the Nationalist Movement in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Manchester, 2009), p.73.

⁴⁴ Ó Duibhir, *First Election*, pp 73-74.

⁴⁵ Laffan, *Resurrection*, pp 29-30.

⁴⁶ Gallogly, *Kilmore*, p.235.

affiliation fees, and only 581 members had paid the annual subscription of one shilling.⁴⁷ Only one of six Sinn Féin candidates, John O'Rourke, was elected in the 1908 Manorhamilton District Council electoral area, and the Party's sole candidate in the county council elections was defeated. The *Sligo Champion* reported that, 'the chief feature in connection with the elections in the Manorhamilton district was the sweeping defeat of the Sinn Féin candidates'.⁴⁸ In Leitrim, activity in the county's twelve branches rapidly dissipated, and by January 1910 the RIC reported that, 'no interest is now taken in this organisation'.⁴⁹

Despite, or perhaps because of, the absence of advanced nationalist opposition, inter-factional rivalry was a regular feature among Irish Party supporters. Newly elected MP Francis Meehan was among its first victims when he was defeated at the 1908 county council elections by local AOH leader John O'Donel. Commenting on the result, Meehan claimed that, 'Sinn Féin and conservatism ruled against him'.⁵⁰ At Carrick, tensions between UIL leader Patrick Flynn and his AOH counterpart Michael McGrath were a regular feature of the local political environment.⁵¹ During the 1911 county council elections, UIL/AOH rivalry was widespread throughout the campaign, which witnessed AOH county president Michael Carter defeat prominent UIL councillor Pat McManus in the Drumshanbo electoral area.⁵² Despite such divisions, county council chairman Thomas Fallon demonstrated a unified front at the first meeting of the incoming council declaring that, 'faction had no hold in their county and they were all true to the principles of the United Irish Party'.⁵³ While recognising that certain local and personal rivalries existed between both organisations, Hepburn claimed that, 'generally speaking the Order and the League worked well together'.⁵⁴ As the expectation of Home Rule grew in 1912, the *Leitrim Observer* called for co-operation between all groupings, advising that 'all the branches of the UIL and AOH to unite together and stand shoulder to shoulder behind the back of the Irish Party'.⁵⁵

In her analysis of neighbouring Longford, Marie Coleman believed that the only significant political movements until 1916 were those associated with Home Rule.⁵⁶ Although

⁴⁷ Laffan, *Resurrection*, pp 29-30.

⁴⁸ *Sligo Champion (hereafter SC)*, 6 June 1908

⁴⁹ CI Report, Leitrim, Jan. 1910 (TNA, CO 904/80).

⁵⁰ *SC*, 6 June 1908.

⁵¹ Wheatley, *Irish Party*, p.50.

⁵² *LO*, 13 May 1911.

⁵³ *LO*, 17 June 1911.

⁵⁴ A.C. Hepburn, *A Past Apart: Studies in the History of Catholic Belfast 1850-1950* (Belfast, 1996), p.161.

⁵⁵ *LO*, 30 Mar. 1912.

⁵⁶ Coleman, *Longford*, p.13.

Leitrim gained political prominence by providing one of the first challenges to the Irish Party through Charles Dolan's candidacy for Sinn Féin, the Irish Party's local political machines controlled Leitrim politics. The Party's support base at constituency level revolved around the AOH and UIL, both of which were active in any land agitation that took place in the county. Taking no part in the 'Ranch War', the county witnessed little land agitation, with the transfer of land ownership from landlords to tenant farmers proving to be relatively seamless. Rural Leitrim lay in a political slumber, best described by Wheatley's observation that 'in Leitrim and rural Sligo, politics appeared comatose in this period'.⁵⁷

1.3 Politics 1912-1916

With Herbert Asquith's plans to introduce a Home Rule Bill to the House of Commons, by 1912 nationalist Ireland saw Home Rule as inevitable. The *Leitrim Observer*, confident of a new era dawning, declared that 'the New Year comes with a brighter prospect for Ireland than many she has known through many a decade of her sad history. It comes with the prospect of victory certain, and soon for the cause of Ireland'.⁵⁸ The *Cork Examiner* was equally optimistic predicting that, 'Home Rule is as certain as Church disestablishment, land reform and franchise extension'.⁵⁹ Given Redmond's position as the power broker at Westminster, and the increasing political strength of constitutional nationalism both nationally and locally, such confidence was not surprising. However, within five years, a number of factors, including Ulster unionist resistance and a world war, would intervene to ensure Redmond's dreams of Home Rule would never be fulfilled. This section examines the health of the Irish Party and its apparent dominance of nationalist politics in Leitrim from 1912 to April 1916. The formation and subsequent demise of the Irish Volunteers is also examined. How strong was the UIL in the 1912-1916 period in the county? What was the relationship between the Irish Party centrally and its local party structures? How did the county respond to the formation of the Irish Volunteers?

With the introduction of the Home Rule Bill by Herbert Asquith's Liberal Government in 1912, proposing self-government for Ireland, much of the Protestant population of Ulster adopted a two pronged campaign of resistance; allying itself with the Tory opposition at Westminster, and threatening political violence in Ireland. Under the leadership of Edward

⁵⁷ Wheatley, *Irish Party*, p.252.

⁵⁸ *LO*, 13 Jan. 1912.

⁵⁹ Bew, *Ideology*, p.71.

Carson, a paramilitary group named the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), was established and armed in January 1913 to resist Home Rule. In response, Gaelic League activist Eoin MacNeill founded a counter nationalist organisation, the Irish Volunteers, in November 1913 to pressurise Britain to fulfil its political promise of Irish self-government. While John Redmond and his Irish Party initially opposed the Irish Volunteers, by early summer 1914 they had taken control of the organisation across Ireland with the assistance of their local party machines.⁶⁰

Despite its powerful position in British politics, F.S.L. Lyons believed that the Irish Party was not strong at a local level in the years prior to the First World War. Lyons described the pre-war UIL as ‘old, flabby and complacent’ which, apart from getting out the vote, had few functions.⁶¹ James McConnel described a similar mood of complacency and political apathy among Irish nationalists, citing the RIC Inspector General’s report of May 1912 which suggested that, ‘the Irish Government is not much discussed by the people who seem to care little where parliament is’.⁶²

The counter-argument outlined by David Fitzpatrick, Paul Bew and Alan O’Day has portrayed an image of a strong party that was representative of Irish public opinion. Bew believed that the pre-war Ireland ‘was one of an increasingly conservative and stable countryside as the progress of land reform became more and more marked’.⁶³ In Leitrim, police reports consistently noted a peaceful countryside, with no cattle drives reported as taking place throughout 1912.⁶⁴ Bew saw the emergence of this conservative stable society as a sign of political strength, not weakness for the Irish Party. He has argued that by 1914, following the Land Acts of 1903 and 1909, approximately seventy per cent of land was owned by former tenant farmers, which contributed to political stability. Observing the prevailing political environment, the novelist Canon Sheehan wrote that,

so long as there was a Cromwellian landlord to be fought and conquered, there remained before the eyes of the people some image of the country. Now the fight is over, and they are sinking down into the abject and awful condition of the French peasant who doesn’t care for king or country and only asks who is going to reduce the rates.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Kelly, *Fenian Ideal*, p.225.

⁶¹ F.S.L. Lyons, ‘The Two Faces of Home Rule’ in Kevin B. Nowlan (ed.), *The Making of 1916*, (Dublin, 1969). p.120.

⁶² James McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis* (Dublin, 2013), p.223.

⁶³ Bew, *Ideology*, p.80.

⁶⁴ CI Report, Leitrim, Dec. 1912 (TNA, CO 904/88).

⁶⁵ Canon Patrick Sheehan, ‘The Blindness of Dr Gray,’ quoted in Wheatley, *Irish Party*, p.42.

The absence of active political participation was noted at a series of poorly attended UIL meetings. At one such meeting of the UIL South Leitrim Executive at Fenagh in September 1912, when questioned about the absence of delegates, an angry Patrick Briody, the Executive's Secretary, retorted that 'when they wanted a bit of bog they came here'.⁶⁶

Recognising the need to reinvigorate an inactive Party structure, a renewed impetus from the UIL nationally, spearheaded by John Dillon, took place, which resulted in the reorganisation of branches across Leitrim. At the UIL North Leitrim Executive in February 1915, Meehan declared that 'never before within living memory were the prospects of the Irish people more bright or more full of hope. Apathy and dissension were the only thing that would destroy these prospects'.⁶⁷ Despite attempts at reorganisation, UIL branch meetings were very infrequent across the county, with only five branches from south Leitrim being affiliated to the UIL National Directory in December 1915.⁶⁸ Such an environment led Wheatley to observe that 'the overall conclusion, from both statistical and anecdotal evidence, has to be that the UIL was an organisation significantly in decline'.⁶⁹

In the absence of land agitation, the brief of the UIL soon extended to issues of morality. By 1912, the alleged dangers posed by modern literature and the British press were issues that preoccupied elements of Irish society.⁷⁰ The Drumsna branch of the UIL reported that the local 'Division Vigilance Committee' had discovered that evil literature had circulated in the parish, but was satisfied that 'no publications of an objectionable nature were sold'.⁷¹ The issue of objectionable literature was nothing new in Ireland. In many instances, it was presented by nationalists as another example of British attacks on the morality of Irish society and national integrity. Maurice Curtis believed that those groups who sought stricter control over imported literature had large support throughout the country.⁷² The history of formal vigilance associations can be traced back to the establishment of the Dublin White Cross Vigilance Association (DWCVA), and its affiliation with the National Vigilance Association in Britain in the 1880s. Much of the DWCVA's energies were concentrated on 'moral moonlighting' in

⁶⁶ *Anglo Celt (hereafter AC)*, 14 Sept. 1912.

⁶⁷ *LO*, 13 Feb. 1915.

⁶⁸ *LO*, 17 Feb. 1916.

⁶⁹ Wheatley, *Irish Party*, p.48.

⁷⁰ William Murphy, 'A Various and Contentious Country' in Paul Daly, Ronan O'Brien and Paul Rouse (eds), *Making the Difference? The Irish Labour Party 1912-2012* (Cork, 2012), p. 11.

⁷¹ *LO*, 24 Feb. 1912.

⁷² Maurice Curtis, *The Splendid Cause, The Catholic Social Movement in Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (Dublin, 2009), p.37; Maurice Curtis, *A Challenge to Democracy, Militant Catholicism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), p.33.

the red light districts of Dublin, and conducting non-denominational prayer sessions. The establishment of the Catholic Truth Society in 1899, and the Irish Vigilance Association in 1911, ensured, as Katherine Mullin noted, that ‘a new social purity association had emerged, with similar aims but a markedly different citizenship’.⁷³ While early purity campaigners, such as Lord Aberdeen, strongly supported the Irish Vigilance Association, the new body was modelled along Roman Catholic lines.

Moral guidance was also a feature of the temperance movement in which many local party representatives, including Thomas Smyth, were active. Large temperance meetings advocating sobriety were a regular feature of life in the county. In July 1916 a large temperance meeting on the shores of Lough Allen was initially mistaken by police as a republican gathering, as it was led by Father Mc Dermott from Glenfarne, a known Sinn Féin supporter.⁷⁴ Despite a substantial support base for the temperance movement amongst its ranks, the Irish Party had a long association with the representative body of Irish publicans, the Licenced Grocers and Vintners Protection Association (LGVPA). A range of issues including the patronage of public houses by women, opening hours, and the activities of the temperance movement featured in the parliamentary lobbying of the LGVPA.⁷⁵

The Town Tenants’ League (TTL) continued to remain active in the county. At Manorhamilton in September 1916, a local branch was reorganised, with Meehan elected president, and local Sinn Féin activist James Dolan as vice-president. By December 1916, police reports indicated League membership totalled 164 in all the major towns of the county.⁷⁶ Although the TTL was affiliated to the Irish Party, Conor McNamara argued that it failed to attract the support of the political establishment for the plight of town tenants. Citing a range of issues, including the fact that many Irish Party members were town landlords, McNamara believed, ‘that there was an ambiguity at the heart of the movement itself because of the desire of local branches to remain respectable in the eyes of rate-payers’.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the Carrick branch openly rebelled against the Irish Party by refusing to subscribe to the Home Rule Fund because two of the fund’s collectors were local landlords. The local TTL chairman, Michael

⁷³ Katherine Mullin, ‘Irish Chastity? British Social Purity Associations and the Irish Free State’, in Jennifer Kelly and R.V. Comerford (eds), *Associational Culture in Ireland and Abroad* (Dublin, 2010), p.147.

⁷⁴ CI Report, Leitrim, July 1916 (TNA, CO 904/100).

⁷⁵ Bradley Kadel, *Drink and Culture in Nineteenth Century Ireland, The Alcohol Trade and the Politics of the Irish Public House* (London, New York, 2015), pp 93-122, 150-190.

⁷⁶ CI Report, Leitrim, Dec. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/101).

⁷⁷ McNamara, ‘Tenants’ League’, p.158.

McGrath, condemned the stance of the Irish Party in relation to town tenants, claiming that they had done nothing for ‘the poor rack-rented town tenants’.⁷⁸ Despite some local successes in aiding purchases of town properties, McNamara concluded that the League had become increasingly irrelevant as it ‘struggled to find a place in the large number of organisations under the umbrella of nationalism’.⁷⁹

Compared to neighbouring counties in the north-west and midlands in the period, Wheatley believed that, ‘Leitrim was the quietest and most apathetic’.⁸⁰ However, the issue that revived political agitation among Leitrim farmers was the local rates levy. The issue revolved around the presence of the Cavan and Leitrim Railway running through the county, and the increasing level of rates imposed on Leitrim ratepayers to subsidise the privately owned, and Protestant controlled, railway company. The establishment of both the Farmer’s Protection Association and the Ratepayer’s Protection Association revived agitation among local farmers. Members of both the UIL and the AOH were active in these organisations, and the agitation was directed by two local farmers, James Geoghegan and Pat Gaffney, and by the AOH County President Michael Carter. While both local MPs supported the ratepayers, they also argued that the presence of the railway provided an opportunity for economic development and local employment through the development of Leitrim’s coal and mineral resources.⁸¹ The Leitrim rates issue proved, that while farmers could still become politically active and engage in agitation, this usually related to economic self-interest. While the ongoing rates issue was a source of political agitation, the RIC County Inspector reported in December 1913 that, barring a few cases of rent being withheld, Leitrim ‘was in a peaceful and orderly state during the year, and practically free from agrarian trouble.’⁸²

James McConnel argued that Irish parliamentary backbenchers in the pre-war period were curtailed and controlled by their party leadership.⁸³ While the *Leitrim Observer* was proud to report that, ‘Mr Francis E. Meehan was every day becoming a more popular member of the Irish Party and is at present very busy addressing meetings not alone in Leitrim but throughout Ireland’, there is little evidence to suggest that he was an influential representative at national

⁷⁸ *LO*, 20 Dec. 1913.

⁷⁹ McNamara, ‘Tenants’ League’, p.159.

⁸⁰ Wheatley, *Irish Party*, p.42.

⁸¹ *LO*, 13 Dec. 1913.

⁸² CI Report, Leitrim, Dec. 1913 (TNA, CO 904/91).

⁸³ McConnel, *Irish Parliamentary Party*, pp 218-9.

level.⁸⁴ Like many of his colleagues, Meehan's role as an MP revolved around addressing local meetings and Home Rule demonstrations, and attending to constituency issues. Thomas Smyth served a similar role for South Leitrim. When pressed by a member of Mohill Union at its meeting in September 1912 on the status of the Home Rule Bill, Smyth appeared to demonstrate his influence in the Party by stating that, 'those who might be expected to be in the know Messrs Redmond, Dillon and Devlin seem to be quite hopeful, and when they are hopeful and have reasons for being so, so we should be satisfied'.⁸⁵

In November 1912, Smyth was one of twenty-one Irish Party members who were not present at a vote on the Home Rule Bill, resulting in defeat in the House of Commons. The members of Leitrim County Council demonstrated their unhappiness with Smyth by passing a resolution condemning 'in the strongest manner the actions of those members of the Irish Party who absented themselves on the division on the Home Rule Bill'. The meeting called on Smyth to attend to his duties or to resign as MP.⁸⁶ At the South Leitrim Executive of the UIL in January 1913, Smyth apologised for his absence explaining that it was the result of a 'snap vote' called by the opposition while he and his colleagues were *en route* to London. In June 1913, although he was ill with tonsillitis, the *Leitrim Observer* reported that Smyth attended the vote for the Home Rule Bill accompanied to Westminster by two nurses.⁸⁷

Despite ongoing Unionist resistance, especially in the counties of the north east of Ireland, most Leitrim nationalists saw 1914 as the year during which Home Rule would be achieved. Addressing a Home Rule demonstration in Drumkeerin in January 1914, Francis Meehan told the crowd that, 'the year 1914 would be a memorable one in the history of their country'.⁸⁸ At the same meeting, John O'Donel, President of the Drumkeerin AOH, was equally optimistic when he stated that, 'in the year they were just entered upon, they would see the hopes and prayers of the heroes who died in '98, '48 and '67 realised'.⁸⁹ Following the formation of the Irish Volunteers in Dublin in November 1913, it was not until May 1914 that the first Volunteer unit was established in Leitrim at Manorhamilton, with a reported 250 men under the command of Thomas McGovern, chairman of the local district council.⁹⁰ The pattern

⁸⁴ *LO*, 17 Jan. 1912.

⁸⁵ *LO*, 28 Sept. 1912.

⁸⁶ *LO*, 16 Nov. 1912.

⁸⁷ *LO*, 20 June 1913.

⁸⁸ *LO*, 10 Jan. 1914.

⁸⁹ *LO*, 10 Jan. 1914.

⁹⁰ Quincey Dougan, *Leitrim: A County at War* (Carrick-on-Shannon, 2015), pp 11-12.

of Volunteer company formation that emerged in Leitrim reflected the changing political atmosphere in the country following the Larne gun running, the Curragh ‘mutiny’, and the possibility of partition. Leitrim followed the trend outlined by Kelly, who noted that the Irish Volunteers did not become a large body until the summer of 1914, when the Irish Party took effective control of the executive committee of the Irish Volunteers.⁹¹

With clear support for Volunteer formation emerging from the Irish Party, new companies began to emerge throughout the county in the summer of 1914. By June 1914, large Volunteer units were established at Carrick, Mohill, Manorhamilton and Drumshanbo. At the establishment meeting of Drumshanbo’s Volunteer branch, a resolution was passed declaring that ‘we stand solidly and united behind John Redmond’.⁹² In some instances, local branch meetings of the AOH and UIL facilitated the recruitment of Volunteers, and by June 1914 twenty-six Volunteer companies were established in the county. While the Volunteer movement in many regions contained many shades of political opinion, including advanced nationalist and labour activists, the main driving forces in Leitrim were the AOH and UIL.⁹³ Throughout the summer of 1914, a feature of many parish sports days and agricultural shows in the county were prizes for the best turned out Volunteer unit. Many clergy, including Fr. Kelly in Manorhamilton and Fr. McCabe in Drumkeerin, were active in Volunteer formation. Police noted the growing strength of the Volunteers, the active involvement of the Catholic clergy and reported that members were ‘very friendly with police.’⁹⁴

Organized unionism also existed, albeit less conspicuously, alongside nationalism in the county. As early as June 1912, Leitrim unionists met at Manorhamilton where a resolution condemning the Home Rule Bill was passed.⁹⁵ Unionist political organisation in the county revolved around thirteen branches of the Irish Unionist Alliance governed by two constituency executives in the north and south of the county.⁹⁶ Like their counterparts across Ireland, Leitrim’s unionists were vehemently opposed to the passing of the Home Rule Bill. In June 1912, a large meeting of Leitrim unionists took place at Manorhamilton where a resolution condemning the Bill was passed. Major James Crofton told the meeting that unionist opposition to Irish self-government was ‘doing them (nationalists) a good turn in

⁹¹ Kelly, *Fenian Ideal*, p.225.

⁹² LO, 27 June 1914.

⁹³ CI Report, Leitrim, June 1914 (TNA, CO 904/94).

⁹⁴ CI Report, Leitrim, July 1914 (TNA, CO 904/94).

⁹⁵ LO, 29 June 1912.

⁹⁶ Cormac Ó Súilleabháin, *Leitrim’s Republican Story 1900-2000* (Ballinamore, 2014), p.33, Quincey Dougan, *Leitrim: A County at War* (Carrick-on-Shannon, 2015), pp 6-8.

saving themselves from themselves'.⁹⁷ A month later, south Leitrim's unionists met in Mohill and condemned the proposed Home Rule Bill, and in September 1912 a large group of Leitrim unionists attended Ulster Day celebrations at Enniskillen where Edward Carson addressed a crowd of thirty thousand unionists from the north-west.⁹⁸

According to police reports, four branches of the Ulster Volunteer Force were established in the county, principally along the border with Cavan at Killegar and near Carraigallen. Attached to the Second West Cavan Battalion of the UVF, these units were present at several parades in Cavan in the summer of 1914. At least one UVF inspection took place in Leitrim at the home of Anna Godley at Carraigallen, and men from areas close to the border drilled with UVF units based in south Fermanagh.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, many Protestant clergymen including Bishop Alfred Elliot of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh, and Revd. Isaac Coulter, Dean of Kilmore cautioned against the threat of violent protest in the campaign against Home Rule. At Bohey in January 1914, Revd. Coulter told a gathering of unionists that 'we in the south and west have more faith in prayer and trust in God than in the clash of arms or garments rolled in blood'.¹⁰⁰

With Britain's entry to the First World War in August 1914, and a fragile political landscape evolving around the question of partition, local nationalists were still confident that Home Rule was imminent. Following Redmond's Woodenbridge speech in September 1914 in support of the Volunteers joining the war effort on the battlefields of Europe, the temporary arrangement whereby the Volunteer movement held together different shades of nationalism began to disintegrate. The minds of constitutional and advanced nationalists became focussed on their respective positions in relation to aiding Britain's war effort. In Leitrim, the County Inspector reported that the, 'people of the county were unanimously in favour of the British in the war, and hope Germany may be well beaten'.⁹⁹

Like many other areas of nationalist Ireland, there was no shortage of celebration in Leitrim with the official placement of the Home Rule Bill on the statute book of the House of Commons on 18 September 1914. At Mohill, bonfires were lit, and the Irish Volunteers marched through the town.¹⁰⁰ At a public meeting at Manorhamilton, Councillor J.P. Mc Guinness declared that after seeking independence for one hundred and fourteen years, 'the

⁹⁷ *Sligo Independent*, 16 June 1912.

⁹⁸ Miriam Moffitt, 'The Protestant experience of revolution in County Leitrim 1911-1928' in *Breifne, Journal of Cumann Seanchais Bhreifne*, 12:46 (2011), p.307.

⁹⁹ CI Report, Leitrim, July 1914 (TNA, CO 904/94).

¹⁰⁰ *LO*, 26 Sept. 1914.

struggle is ended and victory is ours'.¹⁰¹ The *Leitrim Observer* was more circumspect in its comments on the Home Rule Bill, observing that 'so we have got Home Rule at last, or in other words, a bill for the promotion of recruiting for the English army in Ireland'.¹⁰²

McConnel argued that Redmond and his supporters endeavoured to adapt to a mixture of paramilitary and parliamentary politics between 1913 and 1915. Arming the Volunteers was tactical, and in its initial stages, these actions were seen, 'as the continuation of the Home Rule struggle by other means, with war's end possibly heralding the return of Irish politics to the tense position of Summer 1914'.¹⁰³ By October 1914, the *Leitrim Observer* advised Volunteers that if they enlist, they must ensure to 'firmly resolved to fight for their freedom at home, and preserve the Home Rule Bill from further mutilation, as (sic) if we can silence the German guns, we can certainly silence the Belfast corner-boys, and no matter how the war ends, we must have Home Rule'.¹⁰⁴

At a joint AOH/UIIL meeting at Carraigallen in October 1914, UIL leader Patrick Briody told the assembled crowd that the purpose of the Volunteers was to 'defend our shores from invasion'.¹⁰⁵ While reluctant to actively support recruitment, the meeting condemned in the strongest possible terms the action of 'the self-constituted Committee of Dublin factionalists who tried to introduce again their Hungarian policy by issuing a mischievous manifesto to the National Volunteers'.¹⁰⁶ Similar sentiments were expressed by Drumkeerin UIL President, Myles McKenna, who condemned MacNeill's breakaway faction, and pledged the branch's 'whole hearted and undivided support to Mr John Redmond and the Irish Party in the reorganisation of the Volunteers, and the regeneration of our country'.¹⁰⁷ Despite such rhetoric, Volunteer activity declined both nationally and locally for fear of conscription (see Chapter Two). Nevertheless, Leitrim was unequivocal in its support for Redmond with no evidence of any separatist faction of significance emerging. Of the 4,216 members in forty-one Volunteers companies in the county, only ninety-five members in Leitrim supported MacNeill.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ *Fermanagh Herald (hereafter FH)*, 26 Sept. 1914.

¹⁰² *LO*, 19 Sept. 1914.

¹⁰³ James Mc Connel, "'Après la guerre": John Redmond, the Irish Volunteers and Armed Constitutionalism, 1913-1915' in *English Historical Review*, 131:553 (2016), pp 1445-1470.

¹⁰⁴ *LO*, 3 Oct. 1914.

¹⁰⁵ *LO*, 31 Oct. 1914.

¹⁰⁶ *LO*, 7 Nov. 1914.

¹⁰⁷ *LO*, 10 Oct. 1914.

¹⁰⁸ Kelly, *Fenian Ideal*, p.233.

Contrary to expectations in some quarters, the war was not over by Christmas 1914. While casualties increased on the battlefields of Europe, throughout 1915 constitutional nationalism was also becoming a casualty of the war. The suspension of Home Rule, and the formation of a coalition government in England composed of Liberals, Tories and Ulster unionists marginalised Redmond and the Irish Party's influence. Coleman believed that Redmond was badly treated by the government in its refusal to allow a separate Irish nationalist military division, and the War Office's refusal to offer any large contracts to southern Irish companies. She argued that, 'the continued suspension of Home Rule, Redmond's political impotence and his continued support for a war that grew increasingly less popular in Ireland meant that his party was in a precarious position even before the events of Easter 1916 in Dublin'.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, with no effective opposition in place, the Irish Party still seemed in a strong political position in the spring of 1916. Although doubts were raised as to the relative strength of the UIL in many areas, the Party had contested, and won all five by-elections in both urban and rural constituencies held in the period. Kelly argued that while Redmond led a movement that he believed promoted Irish nationality within the British Empire, it was also a movement with deep resentment towards the crown.¹¹⁰ Wheatley believed that antipathy to England was a feature of life in rural Ireland where, 'the passive background noise of day to day nationalist political rhetoric was suffused with a vocabulary of heroic struggle, suffering, grievance, injustice and enemies. Almost any dispute could arouse hostility to England'.¹¹¹

As Edward Carson led a focused political grouping in Ulster, Redmond was not in a similar position. Irish nationalism was not a broad unified movement, but an amalgam of groupings and factions with their own political and cultural agendas. Although the political health of the Irish Party in the 1912-16 period has been questioned, in the absence of any effective opposition, the political landscape in the county was dominated by the Party. Within this landscape, while Leitrim nationalists mobilised in large numbers in Irish Volunteer units throughout the summer of 1914, economic self-interest dominated the political environment. While the Irish Party's manipulation of the convention system ensured that local factionalism would not dominate national issues, this policy resulted in a command and control culture emerging. This obsession with discipline, and in the purging of dissidence, ensured compliance

¹⁰⁹ Marie Coleman, *The Irish Revolution, 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2014), p.11.

¹¹⁰ Kelly, *Fenian Ideal*, p.242.

¹¹¹ Wheatley, *Irish Party*, p.94.

from its MPs, but it created a significant risk of losing touch with the Party's grassroots support base.¹¹²

1.4 The Rising and its aftermath

Even as one of its native sons, Seán MacDiarmada, played a prominent role in separatist politics elsewhere, no significant advanced nationalist activity existed in the county on the eve of the Easter Rising. Referring to the membership of Leitrim County Council in November 1915, Patrick Flynn proclaimed that, 'we haven't any pro-Germans or Sinn Féiners on it'.¹¹³ While the rebellion of Easter Week 1916, carried out by a small minority of advanced nationalists, came as a surprise to the authorities, it was quickly suppressed by a superior military force. The deaths of more than two hundred civilians, and the destruction of the centre of Dublin, resulted in widespread condemnation of the rebels from many sections of Irish society. This section deals with the post-Rising political environment in Leitrim. How did the county react to the Easter Rising? How did the political climate change, and what factors influenced this change in the county?

In the immediate aftermath of the Rising, the actions of the rebels were condemned by most sections of society. The *Leitrim Advertiser* condemned James Connolly and Roger Casement and asked, 'who are the traitors who have plunged poor Ireland into revolt and rebellion when so many of her sons abroad are now fighting against the cruel Huns for real liberty'?¹¹⁴ In the north-west, news of local involvement in the Rising was not reported until the 13 May 1916 when the arrest of Constance Gore Booth (Countess Markievicz) of Sligo was noted. The *Leitrim Observer* reported that the Countess was of 'an artistic and highly strung temperament and was well known in theatrical and literary circles in Dublin'.¹¹⁵ In the following week's edition, the execution of Seán MacDiarmada from Kiltyclogher was carried in a short column: 'John Mc Dermott, or Seán MacDiarmada (sic), aged about 30 and a native of North Leitrim, was well known in Gaelic League circles and was reported as one of the organizers of the Sinn Féin movement and Irish Volunteers, of which he was at one time secretary'.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Mulvagh, *Irish Parliamentary Party*, p.271.

¹¹³ *LO*, 20 Nov. 1915.

¹¹⁴ *LA*, 4 May 1916.

¹¹⁵ *LO*, 13 May 1916.

¹¹⁶ *LO*, 20 May 1916.

No significant reaction to MacDiarmada's execution took place in his native county. The RIC County Inspector's Report for April 1916 noted that 'the Sinn Féin insurrection is deplored by most people in the county and has no supporters save a few in the neighbourhood of Manorhamilton who are without leaders or organizers'.¹¹⁷ Similar themes emanated from the Carrick Union when Patrick Flynn declared that, 'those who participated were only the dupes of others'.¹¹⁸ The meeting of the Sligo-Leitrim Asylum Committee expressed similar sentiments when Leitrim county councillor Thomas Fallon declared full confidence in John Redmond, stating that the Irish Party 'had gained practically everything for the people they represented. Landlordism had been wiped out, but it was not wiped out with the bayonet or sword'.¹¹⁹ Fallon predicted that 'in due course Sinn Féin would be wiped out by the people who were at the back of the Irish Parliamentary Party'.¹²⁰ At the monthly meeting of the Petty Sessions Court in Manorhamilton, a resolution proposed by John O'Donel was passed, condemning the rebels and calling on the Government to 'adopt such stringent measures as will at once put an end to lawlessness'.¹²¹ The local clergy also added their voices to the condemnation with Mohill's curate Fr. Pinkman telling his Sunday Mass congregation that 'the insurrectionists were a disgrace to themselves and Ireland'.¹²² Although Bishop Hoare of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise described the Rising as 'a mad and sinful adventure', he also appealed to the authorities to refrain from a policy of vengeance and reprisal.¹²³

While party stalwarts and local magistrates were condemning the Rising, a change in public opinion began to emerge. Although not agreeing with the actions of the insurgents, the *Roscommon Herald* blamed its origins on John Redmond's support for the war effort. The *Herald* was unequivocal in condemning the activities of army recruiters, and 'their wicked threats against farmer's sons and shop boys, that they would put petticoats on them, and take them by force by conscription were part of the machinery that turned these youth to the evil course of revolution'.¹²⁴

On 11 May, the *Leitrim Advertiser* reported that, 'it may not be out of place to note that there are no revolutionary Sinn Féiners in Mohill, nor throughout Leitrim generally.

¹¹⁷ CI Report, Leitrim, Apr. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/94).

¹¹⁸ *LO*, 13 May 1916.

¹¹⁹ *LO*, 20 May 1916

¹²⁰ *LO*, 20 May 1916.

¹²¹ *LO*, 20 May 1916.

¹²² *LA*, 4 May 1916.

¹²³ Colm O'Reilly, 'Bishop Joseph Hoare, A Conflicted Prelate and Patriot' in *Teathbha*, 4:4 (2017), pp 355-357.

¹²⁴ *Roscommon Herald (hereafter RH)*, 29 Apr. 1916.

Consequently, there have been no arrests or searches for arms in the county'.¹²⁵ In the weeks following the Rising, however, military activity increased across the county with searches and arrests in Carrick, Drumshanbo, Mohill and Manorhamilton. In Carrick, the editor of the *Leitrim Observer*, Patrick Dunne, and assistant clerk of the Carrick Union, Sam Holt, were detained for a brief period and released. At Manorhamilton, a detachment of the Sherwood Foresters billeted in St Clare's Hall were accused of a number of incidents ranging from criminal damage to pilfering tobacco and grocery provisions in raids and searches in the town. James Dolan (brother of 1908 Sinn Féin candidate Charles), Thomas Gilgunn, John Daly and Ben Maguire were among those arrested in north Leitrim. In total, there were eleven arrests in Leitrim, though four of the detainees were released within a few days. Such arrests, together with the executions of the leaders of the Easter Rising, were critical factors in the transformation of Irish public opinion.

Detecting the changing political mood in the county, and increasing sympathy with Sinn Féin, the County Inspector reported in June that, 'Sinn Féin badges are openly worn by many in the county'.¹²⁶ While the Catholic Church was slow in formulating a response to the Rising, the *Leitrim Observer* reported Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick's correspondence with John Maxwell, Commanding Officer of British Forces in Ireland: 'personally I regard your action with horror, and I believe that it has outraged the conscience of the country'.¹²⁷ Townshend identified the changing public mood as twofold, firstly a condemnation of the military proceedings, followed by a re-evaluation of the rebels resulting in ever-increasing sympathy.¹²⁸ While the arrests and executions contributed to a changing public mood, Asquith's attempts at a Home Rule settlement, and the impact of the collapse of the Lloyd George talks in the summer of 1916, was also a fatal blow to the credibility of Redmond because of his acceptance of partition. As a result, Alvin Jackson has argued that the politics of Home Rule and consent were discredited which created a space in the political landscape for radical alternatives.¹²⁹

While Leitrim's local councils, controlled by local Irish Party supporters, continued to pass votes of confidence in John Redmond and the Irish Party, a changing mood was emerging.

¹²⁵ LO, 11 May 1916.

¹²⁶ CI Report, Leitrim, June 1916 (TNA, CO 904/100)

¹²⁷ LO, 17 May 1916.

¹²⁸ Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916, The Irish Rebellion* (London, 2005), p.308.

¹²⁹ Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History 1800-2000* (Oxford, 2003), p.174.

A reprinted letter in the *Leitrim Observer* of 17 June 1916 from ‘an Elphin Man’ to the editor of the *Irish Independent* stated that:

In the nefarious swindle, the Irish Party, still true to their wanted subservience, and fed on the hackneyed and hollow votes of confidence of some of our public boards, UIL and AOH branches, bodies composed of men the vast majority of whom cannot see two yards beyond their own noses, and engaging themselves in the devilish work of bartering our country to the Orangemen of Ulster.¹³⁰

Dissidence, albeit on a small scale, soon emerged on local bodies. Thomas Flynn, a member of Carrick’s Board of Guardians declared that, ‘the men who died in Dublin for the betterment of their country were as good Irishmen as ever lived’.¹³¹ After a lengthy debate on partition at a meeting of the Carrick District Council in July 1916, the usual vote of confidence in the Irish Party was passed, but not without one dissenting voice stating that, ‘they were sick and tired of passing resolutions of confidence in Mr Redmond and the Irish Party’.¹³²

Frustration and disillusionment with the Irish Party was also emerging among nationalist supporters. Reflecting a changing political mood, Canon Thomas O’Reilly in Carrick observed that ‘if our country is to be regenerated it must be by a leader of sternness and independence of all political parties’.¹³³ The Canon’s fellow townsman, Dr. Patrick Doorly, held similar views declaring that ‘everybody in Ireland whose opinion is of value detested Partition, and rejoices now that the scheme is at an end. Our leaders in Parliament have landed our affairs in a muddle, from which it appears to me a younger and more enthusiastic group of men will be required to extricate them’.¹³⁴ The *Leitrim Observer* reported Archbishop of Dublin William Walsh’s stinging criticism of the Irish Party and its leadership: ‘the Irish Home Rule cause in Parliament was being led along a line that could only bring it to disaster’.¹³⁵ Reflecting on politics since the Easter Rising, the *Roscommon Herald* reported that, ‘the events of Easter week followed by Lloyd George’s intrigue to hand over Ulster to Sir Edward Carson opened the eyes of the Irish people, and they have now discovered that the so called Home Rule Act which remains buried in the Statute Book is only a sham of the worst type’.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ *LO*, 17 June 1916.

¹³¹ *LO*, 10 June 1916.

¹³² *LO*, 8 July 1916.

¹³³ *LO*, 29 July 1916.

¹³⁴ *LO*, 29 July 1916.

¹³⁵ *LO*, 29 July 1916.

¹³⁶ *RH*, 16 Sept. 1916.

Declining levels of support for the UIL were reflected in dwindling numbers of Leitrim branches which had paid the £3 annual affiliation fee to the UIL National Directory, with only 8 Leitrim branches affiliated in 1915 compared to 31 two years earlier. No Leitrim delegate had attended the Directory's annual meeting since 1912.¹³⁷ Like many of his fellow MPs, Meehan was conscious of the changing mood of the people. Recounting his battles with Sinn Féin at the 1908 North Leitrim by-election, Meehan declared that he held no animosity with opponents and declared that 'they all regretted the consequences of the rebellion. But it could be fruitful of none but evil results. At the same time he deeply deplored the loss of so many lives and regretted sincerely that a number of his constituents were at present interned in English prisons'.¹³⁸

Despite widespread criticism of constitutional nationalism throughout the summer and autumn of 1916, there was no organized political alternative to the Irish Party. While police reported emerging Sinn Féin sympathy, advanced nationalist activity was negligible across the county.¹³⁹ Both Maume and Jackson believed that there was still strong rural support for the Irish Party.¹⁴⁰ According to Jackson, Party victories in by-elections in the 1914-16 period broadly supports the view that Home Rule 'remained a viable creed until at least the Lloyd George failure, and even perhaps in its immediate aftermath'.¹⁴¹ The strategy of the Irish Party was to continue to ensure the reorganisation of local branches, and to reassure the people that constitutional nationalism had made many political gains. While attempting to reinvigorate his local supporters at a North Leitrim UIL Executive meeting, Meehan claimed in July 1916 that, 'the farmers of Ireland were never more prosperous than they were at the present time, and if they remained true and loyal to their leaders the Irish question would be settled to the general satisfaction of all Irishmen'.¹⁴²

Although John Keaveney, UIL regional organizer in Connaught, continued in his attempts to reorganize local branches in the county, declining support for the Party was evident. Following a re-organisation meeting held at Gowel in August 1916, police reported that there was 'little enthusiasm, and the meeting was more or less a failure. The people say they are tired

¹³⁷ UIL National Directory Minute Book, NLI, MS 708.

¹³⁸ LO, 15 July 1916.

¹³⁹ CI Report, Leitrim, July 1916 (TNA, CO 904/100).

¹⁴⁰ Maume, *Long Gestation*, p.171; Jackson, *Home Rule*, p.172.

¹⁴¹ Jackson, *Home Rule*, p.172.

¹⁴² LO, 15 July 1916.

of politics. Mr Redmond and his party are not now thought much of'.¹⁴³ At a similar meeting at Drumsna on 10 September 1916, local UIL stalwart Michael Shanley attacked the 'treachery of pseudo nationalists who have been disappointed in their political career, and who endeavour to promote disunion now'.¹⁴⁴ The message at public and party meetings was consistent in attacking advanced nationalism, and outlining the political and economic benefits, most notably land reform, gained by the Irish Party. At Drumsna, Keaveney declared that landlordism had disappeared, and that,

at no period of the country's history has the land of the country been more securely vested than at the present. Cottages have been built, grass ranches have been acquired and divided into economic holdings, other reforms have been accomplished, and best of all Home Rule has been put on the Statute Book. Mr Redmond and his Party have triumphantly vindicated themselves by the constitutional movement, while the revolutionary one, futile and disastrous has brought ruin in its train.¹⁴⁵

Despite the absence of an organized Sinn Féin structure in Leitrim, sympathy for advanced nationalism was emerging. The police reported that many people were openly wearing Sinn Féin badges, and that there was, 'a great deal of sympathy with the Sinn Féin movement but there is no open opinion given in favour of it'.¹⁴⁶

Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid has argued that the foundation of the Irish National Aid Association and Volunteer Dependents' Fund (INA&VDF) played a crucial role in the radicalization of Irish political life following the Rising.¹⁴⁷ While many separatist leaders were dead or jailed, a republican organisational apparatus was established across the country. Although its primary focus was welfare, Nic Dháibhéid argued that the INA&VDF 'played a decisive role in shaping the popular memory of the Easter Rising as well as laying the foundations for a reinvigorated political and military campaign after 1917'.¹⁴⁸ Initially, Kathleen Clarke's Irish Volunteers Dependents' Fund and George Sigerson's Irish National Aid Association were separate aid organisations with similar goals. The merging of both bodies under the INA&VDF banner in August 1916, gave many nationalists a focal point in the absence of an organized Sinn Féin structure in Leitrim.

¹⁴³ CI Report, Leitrim, Aug. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/100)

¹⁴⁴ *LO*, 16 Sept. 1916.

¹⁴⁵ *LO*, 16 Sept. 1916.

¹⁴⁶ CI Report, Dec. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/101)

¹⁴⁷ Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'Irish National Aid', pp 705-729.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.707.

The first INA&VDF functions in Leitrim were a series of open air dances in the Cloone area at the end of May 1916, organized by two local women, Katie Healy and Annie Doyle.¹⁴⁹ While Nic Dháibhéid argued that the participation of women in many branches cannot be seen as a victory for female political participation, nevertheless it was the first time that political structures were not exclusively controlled by men.¹⁵⁰ In Leitrim, women were particularly active in Mohill and Cloone, but less so in other districts. In Carrick, many AOH and UIL stalwarts such as Patrick Flynn and Michael McGrath, were prominent in organising and contributing to successful fundraising campaigns.¹⁵¹

A feature of the INA&VDF branches were large contributions from local clergy. At Ballinaglera, the local INA&VDF committee acknowledged subscriptions totalling £18-5-0, including £1 each from the two local priests. Rev P. King, and his curate Fr. P. Cahill.¹⁵² At Mohill, the nuns at the local Convent of Mercy and local clergy were the highest contributors to the fund.¹⁵³ The support of the clergy indicated the campaign's success among many of the moderate sections of Leitrim society. For sections of this group and others, Nic Dháibhéid argued that the INA&VDF also provided an alternative vehicle of political expression for sections of nationalist Ireland who were 'never wholly comfortable with the political philosophy of Redmondism'.¹⁵⁴ The broad based nature of support for the INA&VDF in the county was reflected in a collection in the parish of Gortvagh in July 1916. Donations ranging from ten shillings to six pence came from all socio-economic groups including the local priest, grocer, and national school teacher, with the majority of donations from small farmers in the area. Two of the donors were members of the Methodist and Church of Ireland congregations, and one was an RIC pensioner.¹⁵⁵

One of the first public demonstrations of collective sympathy for advanced nationalism was the celebration of a High Mass for Seán MacDiarmada in his local parish church in Kiltyclogher in November 1916. Large crowds from North Leitrim and the neighbouring

¹⁴⁹ *LO*, 29 May 1916.

¹⁵⁰ Nic Dháibhéid, 'Irish National Aid', p.727.

¹⁵¹ CI Report, Leitrim, July 1916 (TNA, CO 904/100).

¹⁵² *LO*, 22 July 1916.

¹⁵³ *LO*, 22 July 1916.

¹⁵⁴ Nic Dháibhéid, 'Irish National Aid', p.709.

¹⁵⁵ *LO*, 5 Aug. 1916.

counties of Sligo, Cavan and Fermanagh attended the mass that had over twenty priests as choir members and chanters.¹⁵⁶

While the activities of the English political and military establishment contributed to the demise of constitutional nationalism, it was the threat of conscription in the autumn of 1916 that gave the Irish Party a temporary political reprieve. The Irish Party's strident opposition, together with a call for the release of all untried prisoners still in detention following the Easter Rising, was an attempt to claim back some of the political ground lost to advanced nationalism. Commenting on the potential implementation of conscription, the *Leitrim Observer* had more confidence than most in the Irish Party, declaring that 'the Irish people are against the application of such a system to this country, and in the hands of the Irish Parliamentary Party we are certain their wishes will not be fraught (sic) against'.¹⁵⁷ Addressing his Waterford constituents in October 1916, Redmond declared that,

though malignant influences were at work, he could not believe that the Government would be insane enough to challenge a conflict of Irishmen on the matter of applying conscription to Ireland. So far from helping the Army and furthering the interests of the war, it would be the most fatal thing that ever happened. It would be resisted in every village in Ireland.¹⁵⁸

Police reports from Leitrim in November 1916 noted a strong opposition to conscription and sympathy towards Sinn Féin.¹⁵⁹ With the decision not to introduce conscription in Ireland, the Irish Party regained some lost political ground, but the threat of its implementation was always in place. In a further attempt at political rehabilitation, Redmond lobbied for the release of prisoners incarcerated after the Rising. In a letter to Asquith on 30 November 1916, Redmond assessed the situation in Ireland stating that, while he understood the dangers of releasing the prisoners into the current political climate, he believed that 'they can do much more harm as prisoners in Frongoch than at liberty in Ireland'.¹⁶⁰

Despite a changing political climate, the *Leitrim Observer* did not directly refer to the Easter Rising in a review of 1916. Instead, the last edition of the year carried stories of local

¹⁵⁶ SC, 9 Dec. 1916.

¹⁵⁷ LO, 28 Oct. 1916.

¹⁵⁸ LO, 21 Oct. 1916.

¹⁵⁹ CI Report, Leitrim, Nov. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/101).

¹⁶⁰ Redmond to Asquith, 30 Nov. 1916 (National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI), John Redmond Papers, MS 15262/9).

soldiers home from Europe on Christmas leave.¹⁶¹ The editorial gave a general welcome to the release of the Easter Rising internees by Britain's new Prime Minister Lloyd George, and proclaimed that their hope was that this act was 'an indication of greater things in anticipation by them for the material prosperity and advancement of Ireland'.¹⁶² The death of James J. O'Kelly, Irish Party M.P. for North Roscommon was also reported in the same newspaper. The resulting by-election caused by the death of O'Kelly would prove to be the first signs of the electoral demise of constitutional nationalism.

¹⁶¹ *LO*, 30 Dec. 1916.

¹⁶² *LO*, 30 Dec. 1916.

Chapter 2: The First World War

2.1 Introduction

When the United Kingdom declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, little did commentators realise the far reaching consequences for Ireland. Yet, according to Keith Jeffery, the First World War ‘was the single most central experience of twentieth century Ireland, not just, nor least, for what happened at the time, but in its longer term legacy’.¹ In the two years preceding the commencement of hostilities, the political landscape in Ireland was fragile as the very introduction of Home Rule and, increasingly the shape it would take, were contested. With two armed militias co-existing on the island of Ireland, the European war, not only avoided a potential civil war in Ireland, but gave Asquith a political reprieve in relation to the Home Rule question. Asquith’s dilemma was colourfully described by his confidante, Venetia Stanley, who described the situation as akin to, ‘cutting off one’s head to get rid of a headache’.² The headache of the Irish question was solved by Asquith announcing deferral of Home Rule until the cessation of hostilities in Europe, and promising special provision for Ulster in any future settlement.

In the early weeks of the conflict, both Redmond and Carson competed in their overtures of support for Britain’s war effort. Ronan Fanning argued that Britain’s entry to the war, ‘posed Redmond a new and dangerous question about Ireland’s role in the war and the compatibility of that role with nationalist aspirations’.³ Fanning argued that the Irish Party had lost more than it had gained by the autumn of 1914, observing that,

forty years after its foundation as a separate party, its members appeared to have achieved their goal and yet they had nothing to show for it: no parliament to set up in Dublin, no offices to fill, no patronage to dispense, no trappings of power to cover their impotence in the vortex of a war that sucked up all political energy for four long years.⁴

Following the outbreak of war, Redmond, and his supporters, saw the role of Irish Volunteers solely as defenders of the island of Ireland. As far as the Irish Party was concerned, this would afford regular British troops based in Ireland the opportunity to fight in Europe. Redmond believed that such a force would also aid recruitment to the British army where, ‘the military

¹ Jeffery, *Great War*, p.2.

² Ronan Fanning, *Fatal Path: British Government and Irish Revolution 1910-1922* (London, 2013), p.130.

³ Fanning, *Fatal Path*, p.135.

⁴ Ibid.

spirit would rapidly develop amongst them, and volunteers for Foreign Service would speedily become numerous from their ranks'.⁵ At Carraigallen in mid-August 1914, local Volunteer leader Patrick Briody told the local Volunteers that their training was in order to defend Ireland, and that, 'no man was asked to go out and fight the Germans who did not wish to do so'.⁶

By September 1914, Redmond's initial offering of a home defence role for the Irish Volunteers had extended to endorsing recruitment and full support for Britain on the battlefields of Europe. Redmond's address to Irish Volunteers at Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow on 20 September 1914, calling on them to go 'wherever the firing line extends', was a demonstration of support, in return for Asquith's policy on Home Rule. D.G. Boyce argued that,

the war was seen by John Redmond as a means of securing Ireland's place in the British Empire, of gaining Home Rule for Ireland, and of making Ireland the South Africa of the British Isles, presided over by himself, as the new Smuts or Botha: a restive and even rebellious nation now demonstrating its loyalty to the British Empire.⁷

John Horne believed that Redmond's support for the war effort, 'invoked the model of the loyal dominion, such as Australia or Canada, achieving national status within the empire'.⁸

The aim of this chapter is to examine how the First World War affected politics and society in Leitrim, a rural county far removed from the main theatre of political and military activity. The chapter will chart the activities of the Irish Party and the Irish Volunteers at a local level in the wake of the call to arms by Redmond. The response and experience of wider civil society to the outbreak of war will be outlined, including an analysis of the wartime experiences of different strata in Leitrim society. With a total dependence on voluntary recruitment to aid the war effort, the county's response to recruitment will be analysed, including the role of political, church and civil leaders in the recruitment campaign. The chapter will also examine recruitment patterns, motivations for enlistment, casualty rates, and compare the county's experience to that of its near neighbours. A range of voluntary associations to aid the military campaign also emerged during the conflict. The role, composition and motivation

⁵ Redmond note, n.d., (NLI, John Redmond Papers, MS 15,258/9/93/0).

⁶ AC, 22 Aug. 1914

⁷ D.G.Boyce, 'That party politics should divide our tents': nationalism, unionism and the First World War' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (eds), *Ireland and the Great War, 'A War to Unite Us All'?* (Manchester, 2002), p.195.

⁸ John Horne, *Our War: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin, 2008), p.11.

of these associations in Leitrim is examined. With the role of women in many belligerent European nations changing considerably during the Great War, this chapter charts the experiences of women in a rural society during the conflict. Across civil society in Ireland and Britain, the experiences of war varied considerably among communities, and this chapter examines if the county's experience of war was significant or quite limited. In weaving the local narrative of Co. Leitrim into the broader national context, the chapter will ask if Leitrim followed a similar pattern to other peripheral communities, or was its experience of the conflict unique?

2.2 Outbreak of war

As Europeans reacted with a broad range of emotions to the war in August 1914, what was the reaction and experience of the people of Leitrim upon its outbreak? Across the county, the immediate effect of the war on the local population was the cancellation of cheap train excursions to Lough Derg and Bundoran. This action was initiated by the authorities, who required passenger trains to transport troops to Dublin for embarkation to England and France.⁹ Almost immediately, local men who were army reservists were called up to join their regiments. These former soldiers, numbering over thirty thousand across Ireland, were required to bolster the British Expeditionary Force in France.¹⁰ At Mohill railway station, departing soldiers were cheered by family and friends, and were each given a packet of cigarettes by Duke Crofton, a retired naval officer and local landowner.¹¹ Similar scenes took place at Ballinamore where the *Anglo-Celt* reported a 'hearty send-off' to a party of reservists who were also members of the local Volunteer unit. As the train departed from the station, 'the Reservists gave three cheers for the Irish Volunteers, Home Rule and Redmond'.¹²

The *Roscommon Herald* predicted that, 'for Ireland, this war should mean big fortunes for the farmers who have bought out their lands'.¹³ The economic potential of the war for farmers was immediately felt when army purchasing agent George Hewson visited fairs at Mohill and Carrick in the early weeks of the war seeking suitable horses.¹⁴ Caitriona Pennell identified the early days of the war as a period characterized by disruption, dislocation and

⁹ *LA*, 6 Aug. 1914.

¹⁰ Philip Orr, '200,000 Volunteer Soldiers' in John Horne (ed.), *Our War, Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin, 2008), p.65.

¹¹ *LA*, 6 Aug. 1914.

¹² *AC*, 22 Aug. 1914.

¹³ *RH*, 8 Aug. 1914.

¹⁴ *LO*, 15 Aug. 1914.

rising prices.¹⁵ Shoppers at Mohill witnessed an immediate rise in the price of foodstuffs, with sugar doubling in price to 6d a pound within a week, and a bag of Indian meal rising from 16s-3d, to 27 shillings in the same period.¹⁶

The R.I.C. County Inspector reported the ‘people of the county unanimously (sic) in favour of the British in the war, and hope Germany may be well beaten’.¹⁷ Pennell argued that the great majority of Irish people, irrespective of their political affiliations, supported the war. She has contended that, ‘for whatever reasons—political expediency, hope, fear, gratitude, affiliation with Catholic Belgium, economic benefit, the war absorbed their attention and support’.¹⁸ Local newspapers were united in their support for Britain, and scathing towards perceived German aggression in Belgium. The *Leitrim Advertiser* reported that Germany’s perception of an imminent civil war in Ireland ‘may have led her into the belief that our power for effective intervention would be paralysed. If so, that miscalculation may prove a costly one’.¹⁹

By early October, in the wake of on-going German offensives in France, rumours of impending conscription resulted in a rapid exit to America of young men from the county. The *Roscommon Herald* believed that ‘the scare of the Ballot Act is said to have something to do with the exodus’.²⁰ The *Longford Leader* reported that,

hundreds of young men in Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon at once rushed to the emigration offices to book passages for America. All this week the trains were crowded with these timorous and deluded people rushing from a land in which they have plenty of work and food to a country where there is at present wholesale starvation for want of employment.²¹

The *Leitrim Advertiser* accused the emigrants of cowardice, and of, leaving ‘their old mothers at home to fight the Germans if they came to invade Ireland. Shame on them’.²² Although less scathing than its rival, the *Leitrim Observer* observed that,

¹⁵ Caitriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Ireland and Britain* (Oxford, 2012), p.51.

¹⁶ *LA*, 13 Aug. 1914.

¹⁷ CI Report, Leitrim, Aug 1914 (TNA, CO 904/94).

¹⁸ Pennell, *Kingdom United*, p.171.

¹⁹ *LA*, 6 Aug. 1914.

²⁰ *RH*, 24 Oct. 1914.

²¹ *Longford Leader*, 24 Oct. 1914.

²² *LA*, 22 Oct. 1914.

every sailing day draws numbers of the young men from Leitrim County, and if the tide continues very few will be left. It appears the country people dread forced service, and are flying before it overtakes them. It's a pity an amicable arrangement can't be made to keep a couple of German cruisers in the Atlantic.²³

Not all emigrants received condemnation for their actions. At Carrick, friends and colleagues assembled at a farewell party for Michael Devany, the foreman at Murray General Merchant's of Carrick. According to the *Leitrim Observer*, Devany belonged to, 'an esteemed Roscommon family, and was very popular in Carrick and district, and widespread regret is expressed at the departure of one whose place in the circle in which he moved will be hard to fill'. According to the newspaper, Devany was emigrating in order, 'to take up an important position in commercial circles in the United States'.²⁴

The spectre of emigration from poorer areas of the west of Ireland was a common feature of rural life. America, England and Scotland were the most common destinations for both seasonal workers and permanent emigrants, and consequently would-be emigrants had support networks in the cities of America and Britain.²⁵ By early 1915, emigration was curtailed, as many men were reluctant to emigrate to England for fear of conscription. In the first nine months of 1915, only 7,572 people had emigrated from Ireland compared to 17,057 emigrants in the corresponding months of 1914.²⁶ This downward trend continued for the duration of the war, with less than one thousand emigrating in 1918.²⁷

Despite an annual average of 755 Leitrim men and women emigrating in the years from 1901 to 1911, only 527 had emigrated in 1914, with only 390 emigrants leaving from the county in 1915. Calling the attention of potential emigrants to labour markets overseas, the Emigration Information Office warned that all steamers were liable to delay and risk, with changing labour markets and reduced wages.²⁸ Both Laffan and Fitzpatrick argued that the curtailment of emigration contributed to the growth of Sinn Féin with the presence of many young people in the community.²⁹

²³ *LO*, 24 Oct. 1914

²⁴ *LO*, 10 Oct. 1914

²⁵ Roger Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain 1815-1914, A documentary history 1815-1914* (Cork, 2002), p.10.

²⁶ *LO*, 16 Oct. 1915.

²⁷ W.E. Vaughan and A.J. Fitzpatrick, (eds), *Irish Historical Statistics Population, 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), p.263, p.336.

²⁸ *LO*, 16 Oct. 1915

²⁹ Laffan, *Resurrection*, pp 188-189; David Fitzpatrick, 'Home front', p.136.

Although Irish society broadly supported the war, the popular perception of enthusiasm and jingoism outlined by many historians has been contested. While Arthur Marwick observed that the British public demonstrated widespread enthusiasm for the war, more recently Pennell argued that there is a growing body of evidence that refutes the notion of mass bellicosity, noting a mixture of anxiety and panic prevalent in society.³⁰ Pennell's position reflects a growing body of literature on European responses to the war by scholars such as Becker (France), Verley (Germany), and Ferguson and Hoschild (Britain).³¹ Indeed Tim Bowman has argued that in August 1914, all belligerent populations experienced a mixture of behaviours, including, 'excitement, curiosity, escape from routine, and adventure in conjunction with suspicion, insecurity, depression and fear'.³² For Pennell, popular support for the war effort was often based on a sense of defiant duty rather than a desire for war.³³

Unlike continental European armies, Britain had to rely on voluntary enlistment until the introduction of conscription in January 1916. Adrian Gregory believed that it was only after the defeat at Mons in late August 1914, and a more urgent appeal for recruits, that Britons joined the rush to enlist.³⁴ Gregory has contended that the more practical issue of family welfare superseded any desire to enlist, arguing that many men, 'were not swept away by enthusiasm, but were more calculating in their decisions'.³⁵ The announcement in late August 1914, that Separation Allowances would be paid to the dependent relatives of enlistees, was a recognition that family welfare played an important part in enlistment decisions. In Leitrim, by September 1914 the local branch of the Soldier's and Sailor's Families Association were financially supporting twenty-four families of enlisted men pending the payment of separation allowances. The wife and family of Carrick soldier Patrick McGee were forced to apply for Poor Law Relief from the local Board of Guardians, before a separation allowance of 11s.10d per week due to them was received from the War Office.³⁶

³⁰ Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge, British Society and the First World War* (London, 1965), pp 333-334 ; Pennell, *Kingdom United*, p.55.

³¹ Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1998); Jean-Jacques Becker, *The Great War and the French People* (Paris, 1985); Jeffrey Verley, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge, 2000); Adam Hoschild, *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918* (Boston, 2011).

³² Tim Bowman, 'Propaganda, political rhetoric and identity' in Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton (eds), *1300-2000* (Stroud, 1999), pp 227-228.

³³ Pennell, *Kingdom United*, p.5.

³⁴ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (New York, 2008).

³⁵ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p.278.

³⁶ *LO*, 19 Sept. 1914.

While supporting the war, the *Leitrim Observer* reported that public opinion was still divided and noted that:

it's too bad that now when our people were beginning to realise the efforts of forty years of land agitation, and trying to enjoy some of the benefits which have been won by their sacrifices alone, that they should now be called on to give their life in a quarrel which is not of their making.³⁷

A letter writer to the newspaper in September 1914 questioned the availability of the RIC for enlistment, and asked, 'are the Government so silly as to think that our Irish boys will fight their battles, when you have a body, well fed and trained, having an easy time, while Tommy is having a hot time at the Front?'³⁸

The *Leitrim Advertiser*, a sister paper of the *Longford Independent*, was owned by the Turner family in Longford and published in Mohill. Unlike the *Observer*, it provided unstinting and unquestioned loyalty to the war effort. From the commencement of hostilities, it consistently supported the calls for voluntary recruitment. With increasing demands for more recruits in autumn 1914, the newspaper's editorials exhorted men to join the army asking, 'would not Irishmen be unworthy of the name of their liberty loving traditions if they did not take their share in the hazards of battle for the empire, particularly so that Ireland will shortly take her place as the newest of the federated self-governing colonies'.³⁹

Calls for young men in Leitrim to enlist were answered in the early months of the war. By November 1914, over fifty men from Mohill had joined the army, the majority of whom were Irish Volunteers, including three drill instructors.⁴⁰ Throughout Leitrim, Volunteer corps were still drilling and parading, but not in the same large numbers that were previously reported by police.⁴¹ In late September 1914, local MP Thomas Smyth received a consignment of fifty rifles for distribution among Volunteers. Columns of Mohill Volunteers marched through the town with their new rifles. The *Leitrim Advertiser* reported that the Volunteers cheered for Smyth and Home Rule, and, 'the men presented a fine military appearance, and some of them wished to get at the Germans'.⁴² Similar scenes were witnessed at Manorhamilton, where

³⁷ *LO*, 10 Oct. 1914.

³⁸ *LO*, 12 Sept. 1914.

³⁹ *LA*, 8 Oct. 1914.

⁴⁰ *LA*, 12 Nov. 1914.

⁴¹ CI Report, Leitrim, Aug. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/94)

⁴² *LA*, 26 Sept. 1914.

seventy-five men had enlisted from the town by October 1914, supporting Boyce's observation that at war's outbreak, the general public responded with a, 'naïve enthusiasm for war that now seems almost incomprehensible'.⁴³

Both Patrick Callan and David Fitzpatrick identified the months from August 1914 to February 1916 as peak periods for voluntary enlistments in Ireland. In this period, over 95,000 enlisted, compared to only a little in excess of 45,000 for the remainder of the war when conscription was in force in Britain.⁴⁴ By the autumn of 1914, the tragic consequences of war began to appear in local newspapers with stories of dead and wounded local men. Parke Dobson of the Royal Munster Fusiliers was the first man from Mohill reported killed in October 1914.⁴⁵ By December 1914, ten Mohill men had died in the conflict.⁴⁶ In the same period, Manorhamilton lost five men, and Leitrim's total of war dead had reached twenty-six.⁴⁷

Apart from rising prices, scarcity of certain goods and minor travel disruption, life in Leitrim changed little in late 1914. While the response of the population of Britain was less enthusiastic than previously assumed, the fear of defeat in the early months of the war ensured the formation of a united front against Germany. However, the number of men from Leitrim who enlisted appeared to have been fewer than those who ceased being active in the Irish Volunteers, or those who emigrated for fear of conscription. In its end of year message, the *Leitrim Advertiser* reported that large numbers of soldiers were home for Christmas on leave, and hoped that the new year of 1915 would, 'witness the downfall of the King's enemies as decisive as in 1815—this is the Happy New Year we want and pray for'.⁴⁸

2.3 Recruitment

An analysis of recruitment patterns in the county reveals certain similarities to Callan's six-monthly recruiting index.⁴⁹ While 250 men had enlisted by December 1915, figures decreased dramatically in the early months of 1916. By October 1916 only 522 men had been recruited from the county resulting in Leitrim having the lowest numbers of men, relative to total

⁴³ D.G. Boyce, *Nationalism, unionism*, p.193.

⁴⁴ Patrick Callan, 'Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War' in *The Irish Sword*, 17:66 (1987), pp 42-56; David Fitzpatrick, 'The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918' in *The Historical Journal*, 38: 49 (1995), pp 1017-1030.

⁴⁵ *LA*, 22 Oct. 1914.

⁴⁶ *LA*, 31 Dec. 1914.

⁴⁷ *Leitrim County Library*. Memorial Records.

⁴⁸ *LA*, 31 Dec. 1914.

⁴⁹ Callan, *Recruiting*, pp 42-56.

population, enlisting in Ireland. Over the course of the war, Leitrim ranked twenty-ninth of Ireland's thirty-two counties in the proportion of recruits to total population, with one in every 122 inhabitants enlisting. Only Donegal (one recruit for every 127 inhabitants), Kerry (one recruit from ever 132 inhabitants), and Mayo (one recruit for every 163 inhabitants), were less enthusiastic than Leitrim.⁵⁰ In this context, what strategies did the authorities employ to aid recruiting? What role did Leitrim's political, civil and religious leaders play in the recruitment campaign? What were the factors motivating men to join the army, or indeed in the case of Leitrim, to remain at home?

The immediate impact of Redmond's Woodenbridge speech on Irish nationalism was the disintegration of the Volunteer movement, with Eoin Mac Neill and a small minority of the Volunteers opposing Redmond's support for the war effort. While the Irish Party was officially endorsing army recruitment, its local party machines were less inclined to follow their party leader's position. The pre-Woodenbridge positioning of the Irish Volunteers as defenders of Ireland's shores was a constant theme of nationalist political meetings. At a joint AOH/UIIL meeting in October 1914 at Manorhamilton, both Meehan and Smyth denied claims that Redmond was a recruiting officer for the British Army. The meeting heard that the sole purpose of the Volunteers was to 'defend our shores from invasion'.⁵¹ While both men emphasised home defence, they did not hesitate in condemning the young men of the locality who had left Ireland for fear of conscription.⁵²

Although large numbers chose to support Redmond by joining the newly established National Volunteers, Reid has argued that 'the organisation became moribund at a rapid rate'.⁵³ Citing police reports of a force that even before the split was disorganised, and with no effective leadership, he claimed that it was no surprise that problems soon emerged. Reid cites the intransigence of the War Office in not facilitating Redmond's requests for a territorial army, a prolonged war, increasing casualties, and fear of conscription as major factors in the demise of the National Volunteers.⁵⁴ At the end of December 1914, the National Volunteers boasted 156,750 members, but by December 1915 it was reported that the, 'movement is practically dead in this country'.⁵⁵ In Leitrim, a similar theme emerged with a complete absence of

⁵⁰ Brendan MacGiolla Choille (ed.), *Intelligence notes 1913-1916* (Dublin, 1966), pp 181-82.

⁵¹ *LO*, 31 Oct. 1914.

⁵² *LO*, 7 Nov. 1914

⁵³ Reid, *Irish Party and the Volunteers*. p.46.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ CI Report, Leitrim, Dec. 1915 (TNA, CO 904/98).

volunteer activity in local newspapers. The *Leitrim Observer* relayed a report from a Jamestown correspondent in January 1915, ‘on the alleged depletion in the ranks and the absence of drills which he states are sad features of Carrick-on-Shannon, Gowel and other Corps of the Irish National Volunteers’.⁵⁶ A consistent theme of monthly RIC County Inspector’s reports during 1915 was the ongoing depletion of the Irish National Volunteers. Branches were reported to have collapsed across the county in areas such as Gortlettragh, Gortvagh, Newbridge, Bornacoola, Drumreilly, and most notably the county town of Carrick. The collapse of the Volunteers was attributed, by the police, to fear of being conscripted to the war effort. In January 1915, 30 branches with 3,011 members existed, but by the end of 1915 only 18 branches with a membership of 1,747 were still in place.⁵⁷ The lack of activity in the county was best reflected when Thomas Smyth, the local MP, returned thirty Mauser rifles to Dublin in March 1915 to John D. Nugent, AOH National Secretary.⁵⁸

Although the Irish Parliamentary Party officially endorsed Redmond’s Woodenbridge speech, McConnel argued that the majority of Irish Party MPs did not encourage recruitment.⁵⁹ Reid believed that the Party was divided on the issue of recruitment, with the grassroots more reserved than the Redmondite leadership.⁶⁰ Bowman also claimed that recruitment was not supported at Party grass roots level, with many nationalists believing that enlistment was too high a price to pay for the manner in which Home Rule was granted.⁶¹ Such sentiment was reflected in the *Leitrim Observer*, who believed that Asquith ‘wants hundreds of thousands of Irishmen to die fighting for England in return for his Home Rule Bill’.⁶²

The first attempts at recruitment in Leitrim took place in late August 1914 when a recruiting sergeant visited Mohill, where a ‘good many recruits offered themselves for service’.⁶³ While there was no national or county-wide strategy to encourage recruitment until 1915, all the institutions of state were utilised, albeit in an *ad hoc* manner, to encourage enlistment. Unlike in Britain, where a parliamentary committee was responsible for recruitment, the army were initially tasked with the promotion of recruitment in Ireland. One

⁵⁶ *LO*, 16 Jan. 1915.

⁵⁷ CI Report, Leitrim, Nov.1914-Jan. 1915 (TNA, CO 904/95-96).

⁵⁸ CI Report, Leitrim, Mar. 1915 (TNA, CO 904/96).

⁵⁹ James McConnel, ‘Recruiting Sergeants for John Bull? Irish Nationalist MPs and Enlistment during the Early Months of the Great War’, in *War in History*, 14:4 (2007), p.424.

⁶⁰ Reid, *Irish Volunteers*, p.47.

⁶¹ Bowman, ‘Propaganda’, pp 227-228

⁶² *LO*, 19 Sept. 1914.

⁶³ *LA*, 27 Aug. 1914.

of its first actions was the appointment of recruiting officers for each region. Retired army officer James Murphy was appointed with the rank of Major, with responsibility for recruitment in the counties of Roscommon, Sligo and Leitrim. Another former soldier, John O'Donel, a member of both the AOH and Leitrim County Council, was commissioned as an officer in the South Irish Horse Regiment, and appointed as a Recruiting Officer for Leitrim. Despite these appointments, no public meetings to promote recruitment took place through the autumn and winter months of 1914.

While O'Donel, based at Boyle barracks, travelled extensively around Leitrim, and used every opportunity to promote enlistment, his methods were questionable. In a letter to the *Leitrim Advertiser* in December 1914, O'Donel wrote, 'Oh shame on those who are fit to join and don't do so at once; and remember that this was a war that was forced on us and must be fought to a finish, for our freedom depends on its result'.⁶⁴ Supporting O'Donel's 'patriotic letter', Captain Duke Crofton from Mohill, an ardent promoter of recruitment, and member of the local gentry, noted the difficulties of recruiting in a rural area with high emigration, observing that, 'this dearth of young Irishmen in rural places is only too visible in the harvest season of the year, when labour is scarce'.⁶⁵

Like many of their fellow Party parliamentary representatives, both Smyth and Meehan found themselves in a dilemma: should they openly support recruitment or stay silent? Although Meehan cancelled a political meeting because he 'did not want to give the impression we were encouraging the young men to join the army', he was a strong supporter of the war effort.⁶⁶ By early 1915, unlike many of their Irish Party colleagues, both Meehan and Smyth were publicly endorsing recruitment at public meetings across the county.⁶⁷

It was not until January 1915 that a public meeting to promote recruitment was held in the county. Then, at Dromahair on 19 January 1915, a broad range of speakers including Thomas Fallon and Francis Meehan called for young men to enlist in the fight against "German barbarism". Local Church of Ireland rector, Rev. Dean Coulter, reminded the large crowd assembled that despite political differences between nationalism and unionism, when it came to the defence of their country, all Irishmen were united. Coulter observed that, 'if 50,000 Germans landed at Galway, Donegal or Rosses Point, they could march to Dublin in a few

⁶⁴ *LO*, 5 Dec. 1914.

⁶⁵ *LA*, 10 Dec. 1914.

⁶⁶ McConnel, *Recruiting*, p.424.

⁶⁷ *LO*, 21 Aug. 1915.

days, and would level all their churches and cathedrals, caring not whether they were Catholic or Protestant'. Meehan told the assembled crowd that all classes and creeds were now united with a common purpose to defeat Germany. Supporting Meehan, Thomas Fallon, Chairman of Leitrim County Council, declared that men were needed, 'to assist in the great struggle that was going on in Belgium and France. They (Irishmen) had a duty to perform in this crisis'.⁶⁸

Clerics from Protestant denominations played a key role in supporting the war effort, but support was also widespread among the Catholic clergy. Police reported that, 'the Catholic clergy throughout the country in general supported the policy of the Irish Party in relation to the war and recruiting'.⁶⁹ Horne noted that, 'Presbyterian or Church of Ireland clergy invoked British traditions of religious liberty while the Catholic clergy denounced the German oppression of Catholic Belgium and most (but not all) the bishops endorsed the national crusade'.⁷⁰ In early 1915, in his attempts to aid recruitment, Bishop Bernard Coyne of Elphin temporarily donated his car to the military to convey recruits to Boyle from areas of Roscommon and Leitrim.⁷¹ Clergymen like Canon Thomas O'Reilly of Carrick were also active in recruiting campaigns, with one of O'Reilly's curates, Father Patrick Clancy, joining the army in March 1916. Clancy, who previously served at Drumshanbo, was presented with a purse of sovereigns by the people of that town before leaving for France.⁷² While Clancy was the only Leitrim-based priest to volunteer, police reported few instances of clerical opposition to the war. Only two priests in the county, Fr. Dolan at Drumlease and Fr. O'Reilly at Killanumery, were identified as not in favour of recruitment. At a sermon on 19 January 1915, O'Reilly called on people neither to join the army or attend recruitment meetings.⁷³ In contrast, O'Reilly's neighbour, and fellow clergyman, Rev. William Morris from Drumkeerin was appointed Protestant chaplain to the Ulster Division of the Royal Irish Rifles in September 1915.⁷⁴

The establishment of the Central Council for the Organisation of Recruiting in Ireland (CCORI) in April 1915 was an attempt to assist local committees to co-ordinate recruitment drives. The presence of local dignitaries on recruiting platforms supported Osbourne's

⁶⁸ LO, 23 Jan. 1915.

⁶⁹ Miller, *Church*, p.311.

⁷⁰ Horne, *Our War*, p.8

⁷¹ LA, 11 Mar. 1915

⁷² LO,, 18 Mar. 1916.

⁷³ MacGiolla Choille, *Intelligence Notes*, p.171.

⁷⁴ LO, 18 Sept. 1915.

argument that, ‘little official encouragement was needed for men of influence to wholeheartedly assist recruiting’.⁷⁵ The provision of speakers and travelling recruiting officers was a further attempt to stimulate recruitment among the local population. With no permanent army barracks located in the county, recruitment strategies under the aegis of CCORI consisted of public meetings attended by MPs, public representatives, military personnel and other prominent locals. Recruiters were often accompanied by a military band, and on occasion by local soldiers serving in various regiments. The defence of small nations and alleged German atrocities against women, children and members of religious orders were recurring themes on recruiting platforms.⁷⁶

Meetings like those at Ballinamore and Mohill in April 1915 coincided with fair days which helped attract large crowds. At Ballinamore on 6 April, a well-attended recruitment meeting was supplemented by the Pipers Band of the Royal Irish Regiment who played Irish national airs and marches throughout the day. Despite a large crowd, Thomas Fallon observed that he did not, ‘see the same fire in men’s eyes that might be in them just now’. Fallon told those assembled to, ‘remember it is not at home that we ought to get our politics from an odd Sinn Féiner at the corners, but we all should go into the fray with open arms, and say we will fight if wanted’.⁷⁷ Local MP Thomas Smyth told the meeting that while Leitrim had played its part, men who could not enlist should join the National Volunteers. Women were requested to aid voluntary associations and encourage their menfolk to enlist.⁷⁸

Calling for support for the British Army who were now fighting for ‘justice and rights’, Meehan referred to the ‘Curragh Mutiny’, where British officers refused to confront Unionist resistance in Ulster in 1914. Meehan recalled the actions of the British officers claiming that, ‘up to this we never had a reliable British Army. It was rotten to the core’.⁷⁹ Meehan’s comments received a swift public retort from fellow speaker Major Murphy, informing the assembled crowd that, ‘he took exception to’ Meehan’s remarks.⁸⁰

At a recruitment meeting in Mohill on 22 April 1915, Smyth reminded the crowd that a German victory in the war would ensure that Ireland would witness the same atrocities that Belgium suffered. He asked men who were undecided about enlisting to join the National

⁷⁵ John. M. Osbourne, *The Voluntary Recruiting Movement in Britain, 1914-1918* (London, 1982), p.13.

⁷⁶ *LO*, 23 Jan. 1915; *AC*, 10 Apr. 1915; *FH*, 28 Aug. 1915.

⁷⁷ *AC*, 10 Apr. 1915.

⁷⁸ *AC*, 10 Apr. 1915.

⁷⁹ *RH*, 10 Apr. 1915.

⁸⁰ *AC*, 10 Apr. 1915.

Volunteers in order to, ‘defend their own country on their own shores if necessary’. Appealing to all sections of the population, Smyth advised that aged farmers would be doing their duty, ‘as well as if they went to the front’, by increasing tillage on their land.⁸¹

Claiming that 117 men had enlisted from his home town of Manorhamilton, Meehan requested men of military age to,

take pattern and join that great body—The Irish Brigade—drill and become equipped and fight for our country in such a noble cause. I hope now young men you will do what your leaders have spoken to you about and when the time comes Leitrim will not be last on the list in connection with the war.⁸²

Pressure was directed by speakers on the platform at family members who were allegedly preventing their loved ones from enlisting. In appealing to parents, Major Murphy asked, ‘let those mothers who are trying to prevent their boys joining to stop that sort of work’.⁸³ While sympathising with reluctant parents, Captain Duke Crofton requested that they, ‘put these sad feelings aside and joyfully assist their men to choose the path of duty’.⁸⁴ Fitzpatrick has argued that the attitudes and behaviour of friends and family was a great influencer in motivation for enlistment.⁸⁵ Across Leitrim, pleas from recruiting officers in Leitrim to mothers, wives and girlfriends to encourage their men folk to enlist supports Fitzpatrick’s hypothesis.

Despite the pleas at Mohill for more recruits, only eight men enlisted after the meeting.⁸⁶ The weak response at Mohill prompted four Connaught Rangers from the town, who were serving in France, to appeal through the local newspaper for increased enlistment. Recalling their disappointment, the soldiers wrote that, ‘it would encourage us a little more to see a few more of our townneys out here’.⁸⁷

At a recruitment meeting at Manorhamilton on 8 May 1915, Meehan reminded the crowd that the recent sinking of the passenger liner *Lusitania* off the Irish coast, on which two Manorhamilton natives lost their lives, demonstrated how near the Germans were to Ireland. Speakers called on the young men of Manorhamilton to join Irish regiments in the army, and

⁸¹ *LO*, 24 Apr. 1915.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Fitzpatrick, ‘Collective Sacrifice’, pp 1017-1030.

⁸⁶ *LA*, 29 Apr. 1915

⁸⁷ *LA*, 17 June 1915.

‘assist in crushing despotic German militarism forever’.⁸⁸ Recruiting Officer Major Murphy warned the crowd that in the event of not enough voluntary recruits enlisting, ‘as sure as God was in Heaven above there would be conscription if they did not get the men without it’.⁸⁹ Similar warnings were echoed in neighbouring Cavan where recruitment was also low. By September 1915, Cavan’s RIC County Inspector delivered an obvious foreboding of conscription by declaring that, ‘the young men of this county will not go until they are brought’.⁹⁰

Despite the calls from local MPs and a broad range of local notables, recruitment was slow and sporadic, more especially from rural areas. Stephen Gwynn reported that in Galway in 1915, ‘the whole middle class of clerks and shop assistants seemed, however, to have completely dropped out of touch with the profession of arms’.⁹¹ A similar trend was identified at a recruitment meeting in Manorhamilton in June 1915 when Captain Cheevers of the Connaught Rangers claimed that in addition to the farmers, that there were men who were members of the “scissors brigade”, men who stand from morning to night behind the counter doing work at which women could be better employed.’⁹²

All levels of the judiciary and the judicial system gave their support to recruitment. At the Spring Assizes of 1915, a resolution of the Grand Jury was passed declaring that ‘we fully and cordially appreciate the action of those young men in our county who have joined the forces, and hope their patriotic action will be still more largely followed’.⁹³ The Petty Sessions were utilised in a variety of guises to promote the war, and to provide men for enlistment. In his capacity as a local magistrate at the Manorhamilton Petty Sessions, O’Donel commented on the large number of assault cases before the court, stating that ‘if they wanted fighting and they went to him he would send them where there was plenty of fighting to be done’.⁹⁴ When postman Patrick McDaid was charged with stealing two postal orders valued at 15 shillings each, Judge Brown at Carrick Quarter Sessions bound the defendant to the peace for two years as it was his intention to join the army.⁹⁵ Before discharging McDaid, the Judge told him that, ‘I think you may congratulate yourself that you are not in prison garb. When you have

⁸⁸ LO, 15 May 1915.

⁸⁹ LO, 13 Apr. 1915.

⁹⁰ CI Report, Cavan, Sept. 1915 (TNA, CO 904/98).

⁹¹ *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 23 Jan. 1915, in Bew, *Ideology*, p.135.

⁹² LO, 19 June 1915.

⁹³ LO, 27 Feb. 1915.

⁹⁴ LO, 8 Apr. 1916.

⁹⁵ AC, 23 Oct. 1915.

undertaken to help your King and country, there is no reason why you may not get a medal for distinguished conduct, and so retrieve your character, which to a certain extent has suffered'.⁹⁶ The Petty Sessions at Mohill provided suggestions for bolstering recruitment when a local man, Patrick Woods was convicted of having no light on his cart. Woods asked the court to 'look at all the fine police we have here in this peaceable country with nothing else to do but this work—that old women could do—instead of being out now fighting the Germans'.⁹⁷

A fair day meeting at Manorhamilton in September 1915 was unique, as it was the first where heckling could be heard. Comments about having the harvest to save, and 'put Home Rule in operation and you will get twenty recruits', were heard from the assembled crowd.⁹⁸ In general, such scenes were uncommon, and aside from some minor heckling on the non-implementation of Home Rule, there was no apparent hostility towards recruitment touring parties. The *Leitrim Observer* reported that O'Donel was very popular, and was received well locally despite at first being met, 'with a little opposition from a few insignificant Sinn Féiners'.⁹⁹

Throughout 1915 various national and local initiatives were undertaken to bolster recruitment. In June 1915, Leitrim County Council established a recruitment committee, whose objective, according to Councillor James Kiernan, was 'simply to get as many voluntary recruits as possible' while insisting that conscription would not be introduced.¹⁰⁰ In response to declining recruitment levels from 6,000 per month in March 1915 to 2,000 per month in September 1915, CCORI was replaced in the autumn of 1915 by the Department of Recruiting for Ireland (DRI), headed by the Viceroy, Lord Wimborne.¹⁰¹ According to Osbourne, the reason for the policy change was that, 'emotion was no longer productive and that modern warfare demanded modern organization'.¹⁰² Part of Wimborne's new recruitment strategy in October 1915 was a direct postal campaign to men of military age. These letters reportedly caused, 'a considerable stir among the people and it is thought a good many of the farming class liable for military service will emigrate to America'.¹⁰³

⁹⁶ LO, 23 Oct. 1915.

⁹⁷ LO, 22 Apr. 1916.

⁹⁸ LO, 20 Sept. 1915.

⁹⁹ LO, 9 Oct. 1915.

¹⁰⁰ LO, 19 June 1915.

¹⁰¹ Novick, *Conceiving Revolution*, p.21.

¹⁰² Osbourne, *Voluntary Recruiting*, p.132.

¹⁰³ CI Report, Leitrim, Oct. 1915 (TNA/CO 904/98).

The next phase of the DRI's campaign to bolster recruitment was the organisation of a nationwide tour in late 1915 for war hero and Victoria Cross holder, Lieutenant Michael O'Leary. Accompanied by the band of the Fourth Battalion of the Connaught Rangers, and a group of recruiting officers, O'Leary visited Leitrim in November 1915. Welcoming O'Leary to Carrick, Thomas Fallon claimed that his visit was, 'an honour conferred on the county'.¹⁰⁴ At Mohill, on 18 November, O'Leary claimed that in answering the call for recruitment, 'the cities have done well, but the farmer's sons had not', and that soon, 'we will have to raise a battalion of women to defend Ireland'.¹⁰⁵ Referring to the death of local man Bernard Reynolds, a member of the Connaught Rangers, Major Murphy told the crowd that, 'it was a most glorious death, and that in dying for his country, the name of Reynolds will be memorable in Mohill for years to come'.¹⁰⁶ Several days later at Manorhamilton, O'Leary pleaded with the crowd to 'give us the men and we will do the work'. Major Murphy told the meeting that there would be no conscription, 'as long as the Allies got sufficient support from the country'.¹⁰⁷

Bowman argued that farmers believed that, 'their loyalty was better expressed through increased agricultural output than by enlistment to the army'.¹⁰⁸ Lord Wimborne observed a similar trend noting that farmers believed that they were part of an essential industry contributing to the war effort, regarding agriculture, 'as a public service'.¹⁰⁹ With ever-increasing demand for agricultural produce, Jeffery argued that the economic benefits of war to farmers, 'undermined the economic impulse for enlistment in the British army'.¹¹⁰ Pennell has also stated that men from farming families were discouraged from enlisting owing to the negative impact this would have on communal farm income.¹¹¹ Despite travelling to every major town in the county, O'Leary's tour was a failure, with police reporting that, 'some recruits were obtained but not many. Farmers sons are still slow at joining'.¹¹²

The tour's failure was raised at Westminster by Laurence Ginnell, dissident nationalist MP for Westmeath. Ginnell enquired about the cost of the tour, consisting of twenty-four men and officers of the Connaught Rangers, and seven touring cars, and the reason for its failure.

¹⁰⁴ *RH*, 20 Nov. 1915

¹⁰⁵ *LO*, 27 Nov. 1915.

¹⁰⁶ *LA*, 25 Nov. 1915

¹⁰⁷ *SC*, 27 Nov. 1915.

¹⁰⁸ Bowman, 'Propaganda', p.191.

¹⁰⁹ *Army Report on Recruiting in Ireland*, 14 January 1916, NLI.

¹¹⁰ Jeffery, *Great War*, p.31

¹¹¹ Pennell, *Commemoration*, p.39

¹¹² CI Report, Leitrim, Nov. 1915 (TNA, CO 904/98).

While the Under Secretary for War, Harold Tennant, did not provide costings, he claimed that he could not explain the low numbers of men enlisting without, ‘a more intimate acquaintance with the psychology of the inhabitants’.¹¹³ Criticising Ginnell, Meehan observed that his parliamentary colleague was being used by, ‘a small section of Sinn Féiners who have made a catspaw of my honourable friend for the purpose of retarding recruitment in the county’.¹¹⁴ Ginnell, a fervent critic of recruiting, had earlier asked a parliamentary question in relation to the activities of John O’Donel while recruiting in the county. Ginnell asked if the War Office would take responsibility for the ‘scandalous conduct’ of O’Donel for his dancing in the public street with ‘drunken women of ill repute, who were fined at the following petty sessions for drunkenness’.¹¹⁵

Despite meetings, county-wide tours, and an extensive advertising and poster campaign, recruitment numbers did not increase substantially. By December 1915, only 238 men had enlisted from the county.¹¹⁶ Ireland was following a similar trend to that of Britain, which witnessed ‘the gradual transition from innocent enthusiasm to increasing ambivalence, and even outright resistance to the war effort’.¹¹⁷ The decline in recruitment was due to a number of factors, including reports of increasing numbers of casualties in the local newspapers. While Thomas Dooley argued that the ‘pomp of military life and an infectious militarism’ influenced many young men to enlist in the early months of the war, Ben Novick observed that by the autumn of 1915, the sight of military uniforms in Ireland was no longer a novelty. He argued that following the heavy casualties by Irish regiments at Gallipoli in the spring and summer of 1915, a fear and reluctance developed to enlist for a dangerous war.¹¹⁸ Fitzpatrick observed that, ‘while most Irishmen professed to approve of other’s fighting, they preferred not to participate in person’.¹¹⁹

As a result of the low levels of voluntary recruitment, the question of conscription was being discussed in the autumn of 1915 and early 1916. Locally, elected members of councils followed the position of their national leaders, by opposing the principle of conscription yet continuously encouraging army recruitment. Thomas Fallon, Chairman of Leitrim County

¹¹³ *FH*, 1 Jan. 1916.

¹¹⁴ *RH*, 1 Jan. 1916.

¹¹⁵ *RH*, 20 Nov. 1915.

¹¹⁶ MacGiolla Choille, *Intelligence Notes*, p.181.

¹¹⁷ Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela (eds), *Empires at War* (Oxford, 2014), p.8.

¹¹⁸ Tom Dooley, ‘Politics, bands and marketing: army recruitment in Waterford City, 1914-1915’ in *Irish Sword*, 18:72 (1991), pp 205-219;. Novick *Conceiving Revolution*, p.24.

¹¹⁹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.92.

Council, and an ardent supporter of the recruitment cause, declared that the Council was ‘all in favour of recruiting, but not in favour of conscription’.¹²⁰ At the Carrick Board of Guardians, UIL stalwart Patrick Flynn described conscription as ‘disastrous to the interests of the Empire and Ireland’.¹²¹

In March 1916, following the introduction of conscription in Britain, Redmond invited MPs to attend a conference to promote recruitment in Ireland. Corresponding with Redmond, Westport based William Doris, MP for Mayo, outlined the dilemma for many in the Irish Party, stating that ‘as to this western part of the county, I fear we have very little chance of getting recruits, and the calling of public meetings for the purpose would only show our weakness in this respect’.¹²² At local level in Leitrim, as a result of the failure of the county council’s recruitment committee to increase enlistment, a meeting chaired by Canon O’Reilly to establish a wider countywide forum took place in Carrick-on-Shannon in March 1916. The members present included the two local MPs, the military, the RIC, the AOH and UIL, together with a broad representation of the county’s middle classes. The meeting appointed Fallon as Director of Recruiting for the county. A strategy was developed, which included the establishment of fifteen committees for each town and district, and the appointment of a recruiting officer in every large town. Addressing the meeting, Captain Kelly praised the recruitment work of the two local MPs who ‘had done much for the cause of recruiting when it was not fashionable to do so’.¹²³ The intervention of the Easter Rising a month later, and the suspension of army recruitment tours ended this new initiative.

The dynamics of Ireland’s social class structure were reflected in the activities of many communities when sending men to war. Codd outlined the class distinction of Wexford society where the enlistments and deaths of different men received significantly varied press coverage.¹²⁴ At the Spring Assizes at Carrick on 13 July 1916, the Grand Jury of County Leitrim passed resolutions of sympathy to the family of Leitrim born British diplomat Hugh O’Beirne who perished with Lord Kitchener on board H.M.S. Hampshire. The Jury also passed a further resolution of sympathy to the family of local solicitor Thomas Corscadden, whose son had died while fighting in France.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ *LO*, 23 Oct. 1915.

¹²¹ *LO*, 23 Oct. 1915.

¹²² William Doris to John Redmond, 8 Mar. 1916 (NLI, Redmond Papers, MS 15262/3).

¹²³ *LO*, 11 Mar. 1916.

¹²⁴ Codd, ‘Wexford’, pp 22-23.

¹²⁵ *LO*, 15 July 1916.

Like Wexford, stories of the middle classes of Leitrim society joining the army received widespread newspaper coverage. The middle classes of the county were feted by their peers prior to their departure to the front. Gifts were presented, suppers served and speeches made praising men who were prepared to serve their King and country. The *Leitrim Observer* praised local veterinary surgeon Thomas Gordon from Mohill for ‘sacrificing a large and lucrative practice’, by choosing to volunteer. Before his departure to England for training, Gordon received a gold wrist watch from Edward Geelan, Clerk of Mohill Guardians, at a farewell supper in Kelly’s Hotel.¹²⁶ A similar pattern marked the departure of F.R.S. Peters, a cashier at Mohill’s Northern Bank, with a presentation of a purse of sovereigns and a silver cigarette case prior to his departure.¹²⁷

With over three hundred Irish medical doctors holding an officer commission in the Royal Army Medical Corps at the turn of the twentieth century, it was no surprise that the medical profession responded favourably to the call for recruits at the outbreak of hostilities.¹²⁸ Three Leitrim doctors, Charles Pentland from Mohill, Samuel Armstrong and P.J. Rooney from Manorhamilton volunteered their services to the war effort. Before leaving Mohill, Pentland was presented with a gold watch, a sword, a gold ring and a service revolver from a variety of local friends, including those in the Masonic Lodge and local RIC for ‘his noble action’.¹²⁹ The *Fermanagh Herald* reported that two prominent North Leitrim men, J.P. McGuinness, a local District Councillor for Manorhamilton, and P.J. McGoey from Glenade were enlisting. At a farewell supper in the Commercial Hotel, ‘speeches were delivered by several prominent citizens who wished both gentlemen every success’. McGuinness said that, ‘he came to the conclusion that he was not doing his duty by remaining at home’.¹³⁰

Class issues were also identified by CCORI as hindering recruitment from the farming and commercial classes of Ireland. The Committee observed that, ‘we are satisfied that a much larger number of recruits could be obtained from the classes named were it not for their reluctance to enter upon their training with recruits from the labouring classes. This class prejudice is probably much more pronounced in Ireland than elsewhere in the United

¹²⁶ LA, 4 Feb. 1915.

¹²⁷ LO, 14 Oct. 1914.

¹²⁸ P.J. Casey, K.T. Cullen, J.P. Duignan, *Irish Doctors in the First World War* (Sallins, 2015), p.1.

¹²⁹ LA, 9 Dec. 1915.

¹³⁰ FH, 2 Oct. 1915.

Kingdom'.¹³¹ Prominent Longford loyalist, J.M. Wilson, outlined similar reasons for the reluctance of farmers to enlist, observing that,

the small farmer has been brought up to think it beneath his dignity to serve in any of His Majesty's forces, and I quite confidently say that recruiting from that element is perfectly nil. From the labouring class there has been a fair number, and I have discovered symptoms of intense jealousy between the labourers and the farmers owing to the refusal of the latter to enlist, and I confidently assert that a compulsion Bill would be welcome as a whole by the labourers who would rejoice to see the farmers able to serve.¹³²

Following the pattern of other counties, enlistment into the army was concentrated in the major towns with only small numbers enlisting from rural areas. Towns such as Mohill, Ballinamore, Drumshanbo, Carrick and Manorhamilton witnessed significant numbers of men joining the army.¹³³ Reporting the large numbers of men enlisting from Manorhamilton, the *Sligo Champion* noted that, 'from the return shown, this is the largest percentage of men who joined the colours from any town of the size and population of Manorhamilton in the United Kingdom'.¹³⁴ In her study of Wexford, Pauline Codd argued that factors such as poverty were a greater motivating factor for many men, compared to patriotism and missionary zeal.¹³⁵ Unlike many of their farming neighbours, men in many rural towns did not benefit from the fruits of a booming agricultural economy.

The predominance of men in the army from towns and villages, as opposed to rural areas, is reflected in the Absent Voters' Register of October 1918.¹³⁶ Of eighty-nine men on the list from the Carrick area, only nineteen were from rural districts, and only three of the nineteen were farmers' sons. Similar patterns emerge in Mohill with thirty-five of fifty-three soldiers from the town, and Ballinamore with less than a third of the thirty-one men from rural areas. Manorhamilton was the only district where nearly equal numbers enlisted from the local town and surrounding rural areas.¹³⁷

¹³¹ E.A. Aston to Maurice Moore, 11 Aug. 1915, (NLI, Maurice Moore Papers, MS 10561/1).

¹³² Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI), J.M. Wilson Papers, D989/A/9/7.

¹³³ Dominic Rooney, 'Manorhamilton's Irish Volunteers 1914', *Leitrim Guardian* (2001), p.47.

¹³⁴ *SC*, 3 Apr. 1915.

¹³⁵ Codd, 'Wexford', p.26.

¹³⁶ This list was published by the County Registrar indicating eligible voters for the forthcoming 1918 General Election who were absent from their homes and serving abroad in the armed forces.

¹³⁷ Leitrim County Library. Absent Voters' Register, October 1918.

While acknowledging the fact that many recruits were in the 18-21 year-old age category, the Absent Voters' Register identified only 483 Leitrim men serving with the British armed forces.¹³⁸ As a county with high levels of emigration, many Leitrim born men served in a various regiments in the British Army. An analysis of the 306 Leitrim war dead reveals that the deceased men belonged to over fifty different army regiments, ranging from the Connaught Rangers to Australian and Canadian units.¹³⁹ On the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916, ten Leitrim soldiers were killed in action. Among the dead were Mohill-born soldiers Corporal Thomas McNamara and Sergeant James Healy of the Northumberland Fusiliers, and Bernard Morahan from Carrick, a member of the Hampshire Regiment. Private William Rodgers, a member of the Connaught Rangers, was another Leitrim fatality at the Somme on the first day of the offensive. Rodgers' death marked the second war casualty for that Carrick family, as his brother Daniel was killed at Ypres in November 1914 serving with the same regiment. The Reynolds family from Mohill also lost two sons as a result of the war. Twenty-three year old Michael Reynolds died at home in March 1915 while recuperating from injuries received at Neuve Chappelle in November 1914, while his younger brother, Bernard, also died at home in October 1916 while recuperating from the effects of a gas attack at Ypres. According to the *Leitrim Advertiser*, Mr Reynolds, a former soldier, still had another son in the army and 'was now a pensioner on the miserable pittance of 1s-1d a day'.¹⁴⁰

Although both Fitzpatrick and Staunton rejected the argument that economic factors were a major influence on enlistment, the appeal of a steady income was an attractive option for many men in towns and cities.¹⁴¹ Myles Dungan believed that economic arguments explain the large concentration of soldiers from cities and rural towns with large populations of unskilled and unemployed young men.¹⁴² While many who joined were in gainful employment, a steady job with generous separation allowances for dependants was a major motivating factor for enlistment. Social and economic reasons for enlisting, or remaining at home revolved around a wartime agricultural boom for the farming classes, and possible economic hardship for their neighbouring townsmen. Economic factors and family welfare were recognised by the authorities, and a vast array of newspaper and poster advertisements focussed their message on increased Separation Allowances for the dependants of soldiers.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Margaret Connolly, *Leitrim War Dead*, Leitrim County Library.

¹⁴⁰ *LA*, 12 Oct. 1916.

¹⁴¹ Fitzpatrick, 'Collective Sacrifice', p.1030; Staunton, 'Kilrush', pp 268-272.

¹⁴² Dungan, *Distant Drums*, p.54.

Horne believed that while widespread poverty remained, ‘a scourge of the unskilled working class, and the congested districts of the rural west, farm incomes rose and farmers were well satisfied with high prices’.¹⁴³ According to Kelly, this economic boom in agricultural areas, paradoxically ensured a reluctance for young men to enlist, which was deemed disloyal by the authorities.¹⁴⁴ Fitzpatrick observed that, ‘while economic hardship may seldom have driven men into the trenches, a comfortable situation provided a powerful incentive for staying at home’.¹⁴⁵

A widely accepted moral justification for going to war against Germany also motivated some Irishmen.¹⁴⁶ Calls to defend the nation in a war against German oppression appealed to many, including Nationalist MP Tom Kettle. Kettle wrote that, ‘men (including himself) went because the cause was a just one’.¹⁴⁷ According to Kettle, ‘this was for Britain a just and holy war, and they were engaged in it to defend their independence’.¹⁴⁸ Not all recruits were preoccupied with a moral justification for enlisting. While Ferguson attributed old school honour and patriotism as reasons for volunteering, he believed that many young men joined the army for simply ‘something to do’.¹⁴⁹ Many of these young men joined for the same reasons as future IRA leader Tom Barry, who recalled that, ‘I went to war for no other reason than that I wanted to see what war was like, to get a gun, to see new countries and to feel a grown man’.¹⁵⁰ Jeffery argued that a wide range of motivations: moral, political, economic, social and psychological were among the reasons why men joined the colours.¹⁵¹ Recognising the complexity, and broad range of motivations for enlistment, Pennell argued that, ‘it was grounded in the men’s perception of the national cause, the nature of the enemy, and the necessities of modern warfare. It was also rooted in the geography and social makeup of the many communities from which they came’.¹⁵² The reasons for not enlisting could be characterized in a similar manner.

While the power of the state grew, and many individual rights were suspended at the outset of the war, its effects on rural Ireland were not clearly evident until after the Easter

¹⁴³ Horne, *Our War*, p.9.

¹⁴⁴ Kelly, *Fenian Ideal*, p.242.

¹⁴⁵ Fitzpatrick, ‘Collective Sacrifice’, pp 1017-1030.

¹⁴⁶ Jeffery, *Great War*, p.10.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Bew, ‘The Politics of War’ in Horne, *Our War*, p.98.

¹⁴⁹ Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p.202.

¹⁵⁰ Tom Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Tralee, 1962), p.i.

¹⁵¹ Jeffery, *Great War*, p.10.

¹⁵² Pennell, *Kingdom United*, p.162

Rising. Changing public opinion in the aftermath of the Rising ensured that England would no longer receive near universal support for her actions in Europe. Stephen Garton noted that, ‘the ferocity of the British response to the rebels in 1916, and their martyrdom sapped enthusiasm for the war effort and ultimately side-lined Redmond’.¹⁵³

In a strongly worded editorial, the *Roscommon Herald* admonished Redmond for allowing recruiters to make ‘wicked threats against farmers sons and shop boys, that they would put petticoats on them and take them by force by conscription were part of the machinery that turned these youths to the evil courses of revolution’.¹⁵⁴ The changed political environment following the Easter Rising resulted in the war becoming a largely forgotten issue in local media. With the exception of syndicated news pages in some local newspapers, the European war was relegated to brief reports of local men who were killed or injured in the conflict. In nearby Cavan, Reilly has observed similar trends where, ‘war news was relegated to small insignificant columns, usually derived from other newspapers’.¹⁵⁵

Horne observed that as the war progressed, the major dangers confronting belligerent governments and military commands were declining morale, and ‘a counter mobilization in favour of peace and even revolution which would challenge the war effort directly’.¹⁵⁶ This counter mobilization took place at a rapid pace throughout Ireland in 1917 and 1918, with an ongoing anti-conscription message ensuring increasing support for advanced nationalists. Not only did the Easter Rising promote the cause of advanced nationalists, it also forced the authorities to suspend recruitment tours and public meetings to aid the war effort. While 238 men enlisted in Leitrim in 1915, only fifty-one joined the colours from March to December 1916. The rising tide of political support for Sinn Féin throughout 1917 greatly diminished Ireland’s support for Britain’s war effort, with only forty-two Leitrim men enlisting in 1917.¹⁵⁷ This trend continued throughout 1918 with only ten men enlisting in the first four months of the year.¹⁵⁸

With the passing of the Military Service Act in April 1918, a broad coalition of constitutional nationalists, republicans and clergy across Ireland united against British

¹⁵³ Stephen Garton, ‘The Dominions, Ireland and India’ in Robert Gerwath and Erez Manela (eds), *Empires at War 1911-1923* (Oxford 2014), p.158.

¹⁵⁴ *RH*, 29 Apr. 1916.

¹⁵⁵ Reilly, *Cavan*, p.190.

¹⁵⁶ John Horne, *State, Society and Mobilisation in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997), p.14.

¹⁵⁷ CI Reports, Leitrim, Jan.-Dec. 1917 (TNA, CO 904/102-105).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* No Leitrim police reports are available for the May-September 1918 period.

government plans to enforce conscription. Calls for political unity among nationalists was the common theme at meetings across the county (see Chapter 3). At a Sinn Féin organised anti-conscription meeting at Dromahair on 5 May 1918, local clerics Fathers Galligan and Prior made a plea that party politics should not destroy nationalist unity against ‘the basest treachery’ that was conscription.¹⁵⁹ The presence of so many clergy at anti-conscription platforms ensured, as the RIC County Inspector observed, that ‘all were conducted in an orderly manner’.¹⁶⁰ While the meetings were peaceful, Sinn Féin was the main beneficiary of the anti-conscription campaign with party numbers and support increasing dramatically in the period.¹⁶¹

As a result of the large scale level of opposition to conscription from all sections of Irish society, the British government did not proceed with its enactment in Ireland. As a compromise, the Government requested that Ireland supply 50,000 voluntary recruits to the war effort. The launch of a renewed recruitment campaign in August 1918 proved to be more successful nationally than previous campaigns with 9,845 men joining between August and November 1918, compared to 5,812 recruits in the preceding six months.¹⁶² Despite the surge in recruiting in some areas in the final months of the war, Leitrim’s RIC County Inspector reported in October 1918 that, ‘voluntary recruitment for the army is still very poor’.¹⁶³

Across Leitrim, the resumption of recruitment meetings in the late summer and early autumn of 1918 provided advanced nationalists with the opportunity to defy government policy. At Dromahair on 4 September 1918, prior to a fair day recruitment meeting organised by John O’Donel, posters were erected warning young men not to join the army. *The Sligo Champion* reported that the majority of young men rushed home before the arrival of the recruiting party. O’Donel told the small crowd that he was ashamed of the young men who had not remained, accusing them of being ‘afraid to come and listen to God’s truth, but he supposed they would rather listen to a lot of lies told them by some rebel or other’.¹⁶⁴ Despite the low turnout, there were no interruptions unlike at other towns across the county. At Ballinamore on 1 October 1918, a meeting was interrupted by locals, and police baton charged a group of forty young men who continued to cheer and sing after the meeting ended. The

¹⁵⁹ SC, 11 May 1918.

¹⁶⁰ CI Report, Leitrim, Apr. 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105).

¹⁶¹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.127.

¹⁶² Patrick Callan, *Voluntary Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War* (PhD Thesis, University College Dublin, 1984).

¹⁶³ CI Reports, Leitrim, Jan.- Apr. 1918, October 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105, CO 904/107).

¹⁶⁴ LO, 5 Oct. 1918.

interruptions resulted in the arrest and subsequent imprisonment of three local men, Con Gallogly, Patrick McAviney and Michael McHugh. At their trial on 5 October 1918, Judge Browne condemned the defendants declaring that, ‘If these young men have a stomach for fighting or drilling, there are a hundred opportunities for them in the army or flying corps, and if they joined up and faced the real enemies of Ireland they would be of some service to their native land’.¹⁶⁵

Despite Canon O’Reilly warning people not to interfere with recruitment meetings at Carrick, interruptions took place at fair day meetings in the town on both 11 and 21 October 1918. Prior to the 11 October meeting, the front of the local recruiting office was covered by tar. On the following day, Captain Phillips condemned the act and accused Sinn Féin leaders of treason. Phillips told the crowd that ‘the Irish people had turned down the Irish Party, who got them all that they enjoyed, in favour of a Spaniard’.¹⁶⁶

While the early months of the war witnessed large numbers of men enlisting, most notably from the larger towns of the county, by late 1915 recruitment figures were in sharp decline. While the county’s two MPs, other local public representatives and clergy of all denominations endorsed Redmond’s message to support the war effort, the men of the county showed no enthusiasm to join the colours. Despite a number of local and national initiatives to promote recruitment, numbers remained low, and support for the war steadily declined. The activities of the British authorities in the wake of the Easter Rising, the non-implementation of Home Rule, and the ever-present threat of conscription further reinforced antipathy to Britain. A prolonged war, mounting war casualties, the diminishment of early enthusiasm, and a prosperous agricultural economy at home were clearly major deterrents for any would-be Leitrim soldiers.

2.4 Voluntary Associations

Although the question of military mobilisation remained to the fore, the period also witnessed the growth of voluntary associations supporting the war effort. The scale of this mobilisation of civil society was unprecedented, whereby thousands of non-combatant civilians, mainly women, contributed in a broad variety of ways to aid frontline troops and refugees. Clare O’Neill described the work as ‘a nationwide response, a putting aside of differences and pulling

¹⁶⁵ *LO*, 5 Oct. 1918.

¹⁶⁶ *RH*, 19 Oct. 1918.

together as one, in a major humanitarian gesture'.¹⁶⁷ How did this unique feature of the war manifest itself in Leitrim, and how did the county respond to the mobilisation? As gender roles in European society altered as a result of civil mobilisation and the broader wartime experience, what were the wartime experiences of women in Leitrim?

A number of initiatives, ranging from refugee aid to providing tobacco for soldiers, emerged with the establishment of local war support committees across Ireland. Within weeks of the declaration of war, a range of Comfort and Relief Funds were established in Leitrim in support of the war effort. A Red Cross Society was established in Mohill by Amy Crofton, daughter of local landlord and magistrate Duke Crofton. At a meeting in the local Church of Ireland Hunt Hall, Miss Crofton called for support, stating that, 'I believe that men of all classes whose duties keep them at home and who cannot sew, will be glad to help by contributions however small, towards the cost of the necessary materials which we women will gladly make up into garments'.¹⁶⁸ Maeve O'Riordan has argued that the motivation of the women of the local aristocracy to contribute to the war effort was born, not out of a desire to break free of restrictive societal gender roles, but to 'fulfil their "natural" roles as local leaders within the patriarchal tradition, and to demonstrate their loyalty'.¹⁶⁹

From the beginning of the war, financial appeals to aid soldiers and their families were a regular feature of local newspapers. Support for the Prince of Wales Relief Fund organised by Leitrim's Lord Lieutenant Harlech, was requested by the *Leitrim Advertiser* which reported that, 'the appeal is a very deserving one, and one which we are sure will meet with a generous response from all creeds and classes in Co. Leitrim'.¹⁷⁰ Despite the newspaper's endorsement of the Fund, donations were generally not large and confined to the middle classes of Leitrim society. An examination of contributions to army regiment comfort funds reveals a relatively low subscription base. While Maude Crofton collected a total of £5-1s-2d for the Royal Irish Regiment Comfort Fund, a collection by Miss Evelyn Notley, for the Belgian Relief Fund received £24-12s-7d. Miss Notley's collection had contributions ranging from £1 by Rev. Geraghty, to numerous 6d contributions from members of the general public.¹⁷¹ A member of

¹⁶⁷ O'Neill, 'Unity in Adversity', p.170.

¹⁶⁸ *LA*, 10 Aug. 1914.

¹⁶⁹ Maeve O'Riordan, 'Titled Women and Voluntary War Work in Ireland during the First World War: a case of Ethel, Lady Inchiquin' in *Women's History Review*, 27:3 (2016), pp 360-378.

¹⁷⁰ *LA*, 20 Aug. 1914.

¹⁷¹ *LA*, 17 Dec. 1914.

the Church of Ireland, Notley was the eldest daughter of Dromod shopkeeper and farmer Robert Notley, and remained active in voluntary war work throughout the course of the war.

Funds established to aid the relief of Belgian refugees attracted the most popular public support. As with most charitable activities, Peter Whearity argued that it was the socially advantaged members of society that were primarily involved in assisting Belgian refugees.¹⁷² Noting the disproportionate number of females on local reception committees in Britain, Peter Cahalan argued that women of a certain social class helped refugees for ‘quite spontaneous and unpolitical reasons’, as they had very limited opportunities to express their patriotism.¹⁷³ The support of the Bishop of Kilmore, Patrick Finegan, for Belgian Relief Funds also contributed to the success of public appeals.¹⁷⁴ Leitrim, like other counties in Ireland, provided housing and job opportunities for some of the 3,000 Belgian refugees who arrived in Ireland in the early autumn of 1914. By February 1915, Leitrim County Council had established a Belgian Relief Committee to co-ordinate the work of local committees across the county. The purpose of the committees was to aid the Belgian people who were ‘ruthlessly driven from their once happy homes by an implacable and ruthless enemy, who is our enemy also’.¹⁷⁵ Two Belgian families arrived at Ballinamore in May 1915, and were provided with housing and employment at the nearby Arigna mines.¹⁷⁶

The work of Lady Aberdeen, wife of the former Viceroy, in a range of health promotion causes since the 1880s was continued throughout the war. The foundation of the Women’s National Health Association (WNHA) in 1907, with an extensive national branch network, was specifically aimed at eradicating tuberculosis, and the promotion of a healthy nation. Government supported maternity and child welfare schemes in the war years expanded WNHA activity, and combined with increased employment and agricultural prosperity, contributed significantly to improved infant and maternal survival rates.¹⁷⁷ Eileen Reilly believed that the war also provided the WNHA with an opportunity to aid the war effort, by the organisation of

¹⁷² Peter Whearity, ‘“Come and find sanctuary in Eire”’. The experiences of Ireland’s Belgian refugees during the First World War’ in *Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, 34:2 (2016), pp 192-209.

¹⁷³ Peter Cahalan, *The Treatment of Belgian Refugees in England during the Great War* (PhD Thesis, McMaster University, 1977), p.176.

¹⁷⁴ AC, 3 Oct. 1914.

¹⁷⁵ LO, 27 Feb. 1915.

¹⁷⁶ LO, 15 May 1915.

¹⁷⁷ Fionnuala Walsh, ‘“Every human life is a national importance”: the impact of the First World War on attitudes to maternal and infant health’ in David Durnin and Ian Miller (eds), *Medicine, health and Irish experiences of conflict 1914-45* (Manchester, 2017), pp 15-27.

instruction in nursing skills and ambulance driving.¹⁷⁸ This initiative was carried out on behalf of the British Red Cross, and also included organising volunteers to produce garments and bandages, and provide comforts for soldiers. A nursing class held on three evenings a week, was established in Carrick in early October 1914 by the local WNHA branch under the instruction of Dr. Kieran Delany. The well attended classes ensured that women would ‘be in a position to offer their services to the War Office, for the treatment of our wounded soldiers in the hospitals at the front, and at home’.¹⁷⁹

Despite having no hospital, ambulance, or nursing presence in the county, the Red Cross was one of the few charities that received continued support throughout the course of the conflict. A county-wide committee was established, with Captain Duke Crofton from Mohill acting as County Director. At Carrick Town Hall on 16 September 1914, the local Red Cross Society held a fundraising dance, at which ‘all the business people of the town were actively associated with the movement, and did their utmost to make it the success that it was’.¹⁸⁰ Elsie Allen, daughter of Richard Allen, Leitrim’s Crown Clerk, reported in December 1914, that the £32/7s/10d she collected enabled her ‘to find materials sufficient to make 372 garments and comforts’.¹⁸¹ At Manorhamilton, a concert to aid the Red Cross Ambulance Fund in November 1915 was so well attended that many had to be turned away.¹⁸² The popularity of the cause of the Red Cross was again demonstrated at Leitrim village on 21 January 1916, where local Church of Ireland vicar Rev. George Peyton organized ‘one of the best and most successful concerts held for many years’.¹⁸³ Despite the changing political environment in the aftermath of the Easter Rising, the Red Cross collected £534/18s/6d in Leitrim during its 1917 annual collection, the highest in Connaught outside of Galway.¹⁸⁴ The British Red Cross Society recognised the broad support base that the organisation had across Ireland, reporting that, ‘contributions from Ireland represent all social grades of the people, and all religious denominations’.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁸ Reilly, ‘Women and Voluntary War Work’ in Gregory and Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War*, p.195.

¹⁷⁹ *LO*, 24 Oct. 1914.

¹⁸⁰ *LO*, 19 Sept. 1914

¹⁸¹ *LO*, 26 Dec. 1914

¹⁸² *LO*, 4 Dec. 1915.

¹⁸³ *LO*, 29 Jan. 1916.

¹⁸⁴ Margaret Downes, ‘The Civilian Voluntary Aid Effort’ in Fitzpatrick, *Ireland and the First World War*, p.32.

¹⁸⁵ *War record of the St John’s Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society in Leinster, Munster and Connaught, 1914-1918* (Dublin, 1919).

Decreasing support for the civilian war effort was attributed by Clare O'Neill, not to the Easter Rising, but to the increasing casualty rates in 1917, and Sinn Féin's anti-conscription campaign. While O'Neill believed that disenchantment with the war precipitated support for advanced nationalism, there is little evidence to support her argument in Leitrim.¹⁸⁶ In the months following the Rising, the only significant fundraising events in the county were Irish National Aid functions, and door-to-door collections for the dependants of republican prisoners.¹⁸⁷

While Margaret Downes described volunteers as 'ordinary civilians', Reilly has noted the class based nature of volunteer activity, observing that, 'a robust and ambitious middle class, conscious of the tantalising immediacy of Home Rule, and anticipating imperial accomplishment, responded positively to the summons to arms'.¹⁸⁸ Reilly argued that class, religion and politics were influential factors in the adoption of voluntary war work. Voluntary war work, requiring an investment of time with no monetary reward, ensured that such work became the preserve of 'the titled ladies of the landed gentry, and the wives and daughters of senior officials, politicians, businessmen, clergymen and professionals'.¹⁸⁹ Watson has identified a similar trend in Britain among the middle and upper classes, where the war provided opportunities which 'were different in particulars but generally similar to the philanthropic work they had been brought up to take for granted as their social duty'.¹⁹⁰ Although Caitriona Clear believed that Catholic women proved as enthusiastic as Protestant women in the massive mobilisation of charitable activity, it was 'a particular domain of middle and upper class women' that were to the forefront of such work.¹⁹¹ The womenfolk of the middle classes of Leitrim society, such as the Croftons and Smiths of Mohill, the Rainsfords and Allens of Carrick, and the Andersons of Manorhamilton were among those actively involved in charitable war work. These women were primarily the family of the landed gentry and professional classes, and were predominantly members of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian or Methodist communities. In his praise of a group of Manorhamilton women led

¹⁸⁶ Clare O'Neill, *The Irish Home Front 1914-1918 with particular reference to the Treatment of Belgian Refugees, Prisoners-of-War, Enemy Aliens and War Casualties* (PhD Thesis, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2006), p.187.

¹⁸⁷ *LO*, 5 Aug. 1916.

¹⁸⁸ Reilly, 'Women and Voluntary War Work' in Gregory and Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War*, p.66.; Downes, *Civilian Effort*, p.37.

¹⁸⁹ Reilly, 'Women and Voluntary War Work', p.66.

¹⁹⁰ J.S.K. Watson, 'Khaki Girls, VAD's and Tommy's Sisters: gender and class in First World War Britain' in *International History Review*, 19:2 (1997), pp 32-51.

¹⁹¹ Caitriona Clear, 'Fewer ladies, more women' in Horne, *Our War*, p.163.

by his wife, who knitted socks for Indian soldiers, Francis Meehan MP claimed that the gesture ‘showed how broadminded the people of Manorhamilton were’.¹⁹²

Despite many women entering employment in wartime industries in urban areas of Britain and Ireland, the dominant discourse of early twentieth century Ireland was that a woman’s role was that of wife and mother, who were economically dependent on their menfolk. Caitriona Clear recognised that the expansion of employment opportunities for women in Ireland was not as dramatic due to the absence of conscription, with traditional patterns of female employment remaining close to pre-war levels.¹⁹³ Fionnuala Walsh argued that, overall the war had a negative effect on Irishwomen, with many of the pre-war perceptions of women’s role in society remaining unchanged after the conflict. She believed that geographic location was a significant factor in determining opportunities for female employment, and that the war’s impact varied enormously depending on the region, socio-economic status and whether one had a relative serving in the armed forces.¹⁹⁴ While speakers on recruiting platforms, and army recruitment newspaper advertisements, requested that ‘women of Ireland, do your duty’ and influence loved ones to enlist, traditional societal roles for women remained broadly intact.¹⁹⁵ However, throughout the war, authorities had no issue with women deviating from their prescribed societal roles to support the war effort. In an effort to increase enlistment, John O’Donel advocated the boycotting of businesses that employed young men at work that could be undertaken by women.¹⁹⁶ Similar sentiments were expressed at a recruitment meeting at Mohill in November 1915, where Colonel Harrison of the Connaught Rangers criticised young male shop assistants for not doing their duty, declaring that ‘there are thousands of women in Ireland who are capable of doing that sort of work’.¹⁹⁷

With the introduction of Separation Allowances in 1914 to support soldier’s dependents, many working class women received a regular income for the first time in their lives. While Separation Allowances were seen in a broadly positive light in France, in rural Annecy-le-Vieux some people believed that the allowance ‘encouraged sloth, and loose living in many a home’.¹⁹⁸ In Britain and Ireland, the independence that this income permitted raised

¹⁹² *LO*, 27 Mar. 1915.

¹⁹³ Clear, ‘Fewer Ladies, more women’, p.165.

¹⁹⁴ Fionnuala Walsh, ‘The Impact of the Great War on Women in Ireland’ (PhD Thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2015).

¹⁹⁵ *LO*, 13 Mar. 1915.

¹⁹⁶ *LO*, 21 Aug. 1915.

¹⁹⁷ *LA*, 25 Nov. 1915.

¹⁹⁸ Becker, *French People*, p.19.

some concerns, when ‘separation women’ appeared before the courts on drunkenness and public order offences. Social norms determined that the act of drinking alcohol was perceived to be a male preserve, while drunkenness and its associated violence was largely associated with the working classes. In a period of danger associated with war, the emphasis on being good war-time mothers was reinforced by propaganda emphasising the role of motherhood in support of the war effort. Any transgressions of appropriate behaviour were met with widespread disapproval and condemnation.¹⁹⁹

In June 1915, three ‘separation women’ in Leitrim, Brigid Woods, her daughter Kathleen, and Mary McDonagh were fined three shillings and costs at Mohill Petty Sessions for public disorder and drunkenness. The court heard that all three women were drunk and were ‘abusing each other and using very bad language’.²⁰⁰ Increasing instances of drunkenness by Separation Women resulted in the issuing of a circular to Resident Magistrates threatening the withdrawal of the Allowance for repeat offenders.²⁰¹ Fining Eliza Manning, Mary Manning and Jane Conboy 2/6d and costs for public drunkenness, local magistrate Captain Duke Crofton admonished the three women stating that, ‘it is a shame to you behaving like this, drinking your Separation Allowance while your husbands are away fighting for their country’.²⁰²

Susan Grayzel argued that the authorities attempted to tie the receipt of Separation Allowances to the control of women’s morality and behaviour in wartime society.²⁰³ After convicting both Mary Foley and Ellen Quinn of being drunk and disorderly in Mohill in May 1916, Magistrate Crofton issued warnings that Separation Allowances’ would be stopped if the women persisted in such conduct.²⁰⁴ However, Holly Dunbar believed that cases of female drunkenness were grossly exaggerated, while Pennell claimed that ‘whilst the reality of the situation was that women were not inebriated, the perception was exaggerated, highlighting what was at stake in the defence of the nation’.²⁰⁵ Novick also identified, that as opposition in

¹⁹⁹ Walsh, ‘Women’, p.90.

²⁰⁰ *LO*, 26 June 1915

²⁰¹ *LA*, 24 Nov. 1915.

²⁰² *LO*, 28 Oct. 1915.

²⁰³ Susan R. Grayzel, *Women’s Identities at War, Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (London, 1999), pp 90-91.

²⁰⁴ *AC*, 13 May 1916.

²⁰⁵ Pennell, *Kingdom United*, p.83; Holly Dunbar, ‘Women and Alcohol during the First World War in Ireland’ in *Women’s History Review*, 25:6 (2016), p.18.

Ireland to the war increased, ‘separation women’ became a ‘frequent target for advanced nationalist vituperation’.²⁰⁶

Just as other communities acted in a variety of different ways to aid the war effort, the people of Leitrim responded similarly. Although regimental comfort funds attracted a relatively narrow support base in the county, initiatives to aid the Red Cross and Belgian refugees were well supported by all sections of the population. As a consequence of the unpaid and voluntary nature of the work, the main organizers were women from the middle and professional class of the county, who alongside their menfolk, remained consistent supporters of the war effort. While the wartime experience of many women witnessed a social transformation in their societal roles, the evidence from Leitrim seems to confirm that for most women in rural Ireland, gender roles remained firmly fixed at pre-war levels.

2.5 Civil society

Across Britain and Ireland, the shared experiences of war varied considerably in both urban and rural communities. While the east coast of Britain experienced enemy bombardment, and the constant threat of invasion, many other regions remained relatively unaffected by the conflict.²⁰⁷ What was the experience of civil society in a rural community in Ireland during the war, and did this experience mirror other peripheral regions?

Within days of the declaration of war in August 1914, a raft of legislation including the Aliens Restriction Act, the Defence of the Realm Act, and the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act was passed. A demand to intern all ‘alien’ males of military age surfaced regularly during the war. Panikos Panayi argued that, ‘it operated against the background of an ideology fuelled by both the newspapers and several novelists about the potential damage which male enemy aliens at liberty could inflict upon the British war effort’.²⁰⁸ Among the ‘secret enemies in our midst’, identified by publications in July 1915, were Germans, syndicalists and the Papacy. *Vigilant* warned the British people of German spies, and that ‘Germans naturalised or

²⁰⁶ Ben Novick, ‘Propaganda: Advanced Nationalist Propaganda and Moralistic Revolution, 1914-18’ in Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution 1913-1923* (New York, 2002), p.41.

²⁰⁷ Pennell, *Kingdom United*, p.228.

²⁰⁸ Panikos Panayi, *Prisoners of Britain, German civilian and combatant internees during the First World War* (Manchester, 2012), p.235.

unnaturalised have probably been active in signalling on our coasts to enemy submarines, and have been largely the cause of their success'.²⁰⁹

Pennell noted the prevalence of spy-mania and fear of invasion among sections of Ireland's population where 'a volunteer spirit, an obsession with spies, a fear of enemy infiltration, and a sense of national community in wartime were becoming the basis of British wartime society'.²¹⁰ In response to spy-mania, Irish society acted in a broadly similar fashion to its British counterpart. In Dublin, crowds attacked and boycotted a number of German business premises.²¹¹ Within weeks of the commencement of hostilities, two strangers were arrested at nearby Tarmonbarry in Co. Longford, close to the Leitrim border, on suspicion of being German spies who 'had some evil design on the bridge over the Shannon at the village'. Upon further investigation, it was discovered that the 'spies' were travelling Russian salesmen.²¹² The fear that enemies could be living in the region, prompted John O'Donel to have the issue raised at Leitrim County Council on 27 October 1914. O'Donel proposed a motion to request that the government 'give immediate direction to the RIC to detain all Austrians and Germans whether nationalised or not', as they were 'a menace to the Allies and a danger in our district'.²¹³ The sound of distant artillery gunfire alarmed the population of Carrick in October 1914 who feared imminent invasion. Assuaging the fears of locals, the *Leitrim Observer* reported the source to be a naval training exercise in Clew Bay.²¹⁴ Further fears of invasion were witnessed at Mohill on 21 October 1914, when residents believed that a German airship was hovering above the local railway station. On further investigation, the *Roscommon Herald* reported that, 'the object however proved to be a kite which some wags put up for the purpose of surprising some of the townspeople who are in the advanced stages on the war scare, and it was rendered the more conspicuous by two lights being attached'.²¹⁵

At the Petty Sessions at Carrick in March 1915, the prosecution and subsequent discharge of William Winter under the Registration of Aliens Act caused a minor sensation in the local press. Winter, a German national and motor mechanic, was employed by local businessman and UIL leader Patrick Flynn. In presenting evidence, RIC District Inspector

²⁰⁹ *Pamphlets, 1004, European War History, (NLI).*

²¹⁰ Pennell, *Kingdom United*, p.56.

²¹¹ O'Neill, *Home Front*, pp 88-89.

²¹² *LO*, 29 Aug. 1914.

²¹³ *LA*, 5 Nov. 1914.

²¹⁴ *LO* 31 Oct. 1914.

²¹⁵ *RH*, 24 Oct. 1914.

Hussey claimed that Winter ‘belongs to that accursed race, and steps should be taken to have them put out of the Kingdom’.²¹⁶ Several weeks later, Winter was before the courts again on a charge of being in possession of a motor car in Carrick on 5 March 1915. The District Inspector told the court that a German chauffeur could ‘do as he wished with a car when in possession of the wheel and do infinite damages blowing up bridges’.²¹⁷ The case against Winter was dismissed, although many of his fellow countrymen residing in Ireland had different experiences. During the war, in excess of one thousand Germans and Austrians were repatriated, and a further thousand were detained in alien internee camps, initially at Arbour Hill, Dublin, Templemore, Co. Tipperary, and Oldcastle, Co. Meath.²¹⁸ By June 1916, many of these internees were transferred to Britain, however 579 German civilians still remained in detention at Oldcastle.²¹⁹

Fitzpatrick argued that the Irish experience of war ‘was in some respects muted by comparison with the dramatic transformation of everyday life in Britain, France, Russia or Germany’.²²⁰ While the war had a major political impact on nationalist Ireland, its social and economic impact was quite limited in most rural areas. As large towns and cities initially suffered from severe unemployment, Ireland’s rural economy ‘prospered in the course of satiating British appetites’.²²¹ While some commodities such as bread and alcohol became scarcer and more expensive during the war, the state intervened by introducing price controls and rationing. At Carrick Union, the introduction of margarine to the local Workhouse was approved in October 1915 at a saving of thirty shillings a week because, according to Councillor Patrick Flynn, ‘the price of butter is gone out of all reason at 1s-6d per lb’.²²² Although the *Leitrim Observer* reported in December 1916 that, ‘a great scarcity of flour, butter and salt exists in Carrick and the surrounding districts’, the county did not suffer from serious food shortages at any period during the war.²²³ In its Christmas message of 1916, the *Leitrim Advertiser* reported a dull Christmas, with a ‘slackness in business’ as a result of ‘a scarcity and dearness of many items’.²²⁴

²¹⁶ *LO*, 13 Mar. 1915.

²¹⁷ *LA*, 1 Apr. 1915.

²¹⁸ O’Neill, *Home Front*, p.17.

²¹⁹ John Smith, ‘The Oldcastle Prisoner of War Camp 1914-1918’ in *Riocht na Midhe, Records of Meath Archaeological and Historical Society*, XX1, (2010), pp 212-250.

²²⁰ Fitzpatrick, ‘Home Front’, p.136.

²²¹ Fitzpatrick, ‘Home Front’, p.137.

²²² *LO*, 23 Oct. 1915.

²²³ *LO*, 22 Dec. 1916

²²⁴ *LA*, 28 Dec. 1916.

While Ian Miller observed, that from August 1914, food prices rose and the fear of famine escalated in Ireland, there were never any serious food shortages in rural areas.²²⁵ Nevertheless, throughout 1917 and 1918, advanced nationalists exploited the emotive threat of famine for electoral gain.²²⁶ Ironically, in spite of war, Dewey argued that as a result of a state interventionist policy of price control and rationing, nutrition improved resulting in a decline in infant mortality.²²⁷ Neither was there an issue with the supply of clothing. Advertisements for various assortments of clothing items appeared continuously throughout the war. In preparation for the 1914 Christmas market, Manorhamilton draper John McGuinness advertised ‘the largest consignment of drapery goods ever landed in Manorhamilton’.²²⁸ However, alcohol remained in scarce supply throughout the war, with police reporting declining levels of drunkenness, ‘owing to high prices for liquor, and scarcity of same’.²²⁹

While war raged on mainland Europe, Leitrim’s countryside remained peaceful. The presentation of white gloves (indicating little or no serious crime) was awarded to Leitrim continuously throughout the period with crime confined to a range of minor offences. Among the list of cases before Carrick Petty Sessions in January 1915 were malicious damage to a sire goat, the sentencing of a tramp to one month’s hard labour for abusive language and damage to property, and several cases of locals being fined for having no lights on their carts. One defendant, Patrick Heslin, pleaded in his defence of having no light, that he was delayed because, ‘it was a very slow donkey I had that day, in fact I had to drag him part of the way’.²³⁰ In his report to Lord Justice Rowan, the local RIC County Inspector reported that, ‘there is no boycotting, no one getting protection, and the condition of the county is satisfactory’.²³¹ Only one man, James Kerrigan, was prosecuted under the Defence of The Realm Act (DORA) in August 1915, when he was fined £1 at Manorhamilton Petty Sessions for interrupting a recruiting meeting in the town, ‘in a manner calculated to prejudice the appeal for recruits’.²³²

At the outbreak of hostilities, strict censorship laws, focussing primarily on newspaper coverage and postal correspondence, were enacted to control the flow of information through

²²⁵ Ian Miller, *Reforming Food in Post-Famine Ireland, Medicine, Science and Improvement, 1845-1922* (Manchester, 2004), p.175.

²²⁶ Novick, *Conceiving Revolution*, pp 181-187.

²²⁷ P.E. Dewey, ‘Nutrition and Living Standards in Wartime Britain’ in Richard Wall and Jay Winter (eds), *The Upheaval of War, Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1988).

²²⁸ *FH*, 28 Nov. 1914.

²²⁹ CI Report, Leitrim, Apr. 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105).

²³⁰ *LO*, 30 Jan. 1915.

²³¹ *LO*, 27 Feb. 1915.

²³² *AC*, 21 Aug. 1915.

society. Only on one occasion, in December 1916, did a Leitrim newspaper attract the attention of the censor. In correspondence with the editor of the *Leitrim Observer*, the censor advised the newspaper not to insert the names of individual sailing ships in travel advertisements, ‘in order that the enemy may not be aware what ships are sailing’.²³³ Only one Leitrim native, “John McDermott” (Séan MacDiarmada), attracted any significant attention from the authorities in the pre-Rising period. McDermott’s Dublin home at 15 Russell Avenue, Drumcondra, was a target of ongoing police surveillance and postal censorship. By January 1915, the authorities temporarily ceased the postal censorship of McDermott’s home, and that of his fellow IRB colleague Thomas J. Clarke, because according to police, ‘evidently these use other addresses, or receive correspondence indirectly fearing censorship’.²³⁴

The extent to which the war interrupted the norms of Irish social life has been the focus of some study. Across Britain and Ireland, organized sport was a victim of the war because of the curtailment of fixtures, transport difficulties, and men enlisting in the army.²³⁵ In 1915, Drumshanbo GAA club reported that, ‘many of our members are serving in Kitchener’s army’.²³⁶ Among those to die was Irish Guardsman Jimmy Clyne from Ballinamore, who was killed at Vermilles in October 1915. When his body was recovered, one of the few items found in his possession, was his GAA Leitrim senior county championship medal won in 1913.²³⁷ Twenty-one year old Private Thomas Dockery from Carrick, a member of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was another victim of the conflict, ‘and prior to joining the colours was a prominent member of the local football club’.²³⁸ Despite members of the GAA enlisting, many stayed at home, and incurred the wrath of John O’Donel in his attempts to promote recruitment in the county. At Carrick in July 1915, having been denied admission to a GAA football game when he refused to pay the admission fee, O’Donel retorted that he would prefer to throw the money in the river Shannon.²³⁹ At a poorly attended recruitment meeting at Carrick in August, O’Donel condemned young sportsmen who ‘were acting the fool rather than enlisting’, and added that only conscription would ‘bring these laggards out’.²⁴⁰

²³³ Press Censor’s Office to Editor of *Leitrim Observer*, 30 Dec. 1916 (NAI, 3/722/15)

²³⁴ Letter from H.Q. Irish Command to Under Secretary Dublin Castle, 25 Jan. 1915 (TNA/CO 904/164).

²³⁵ Ross O’Carroll, ‘The GAA and the First World War, 1914-18’ in Gearoid O’Tuathaigh (ed.), *The GAA and Revolution in Ireland* (Cork, 2015), p.87.

²³⁶ Sean Ó Súilleabháin, *History of Leitrim GAA 1886-1984* (Ballinamore, 1985), p.21.

²³⁷ Dan Gallogly, *A History of Sean O’Heslin’s* (Cavan, 1984), p.32; *Sunday Independent*, 25 Oct. 2015; *LO*, 4 Nov. 2015.

²³⁸ Ronan McGreevey, *Wherever the Firing Line Extends, Ireland and the Western Front* (Dublin, 2016), p.237.

²³⁹ *AC*, 28 Aug. 1915.

²⁴⁰ *LO*, 21 Aug. 1915.

The growth of the GAA in the period was facilitated by many athletic events like those at Carrick in July 1916 being conducted ‘under GAA rules’.²⁴¹ Ó Súilleabháin argued that, despite the war and the Easter Rising, the decade from 1910-1920 witnessed major growth in the GAA within the county. He also noted that a vast array of other sports including athletics, horse and pony racing, and cycling were part of annual parish sports days. Unlike in Britain, which witnessed major disruption to organized sport, local sports events in Leitrim continued to take place during the war. The major impediment to sporting events in the county was not the European war, but the period of martial law declared after the Easter Rising. By July 1916, the *Leitrim Observer* noted that General Maxwell had amended the order banning organised gatherings, which permitted ‘sports meetings without written authority’.²⁴²

Fitzpatrick believed that the effect of the imprint of the war on Irish life is best understood through the trivial details of life recorded in local newspapers.²⁴³ Leitrim’s local newspapers revealed a seamless continuation through the war of sports events, dances, social events, fair days and agricultural shows. By the summer of 1915, the *Leitrim Observer* reported the resumption of cheap train excursions to the seaside resort of Bundoran, though it noted that the lack of people at the seaside, as ‘perhaps they are afraid of being shelled by German submarines’.²⁴⁴ While some dances, like that at Carrick Golf Club in February 1916, were organized to support the British Red Cross, most dances and social events were community gatherings, supporting a variety of local initiatives. A large and successful concert took place at Mohill in January 1915 in support of the local hall fund. In the same month, Eslin Hall hosted ‘a dance and cinematograph entertainment’ for the people of the parish.²⁴⁵ Mohill traders organized a Commercial Ball in Mohill in October 1916 at the local Canon Donohue Hall, which was reported as ‘the largest ever seen at a dance there before’.²⁴⁶ While normal social life continued across the county, concern was raised by the Catholic Church to certain social gatherings. In his Lenten message of March 1916, Bishop Hoare warned parents to protect their children ‘against bad and immoral literature of every description, dance houses, and the

²⁴¹ *LO*, 1 July 1916.

²⁴² *LO*, 1 July 1916

²⁴³ Fitzpatrick, ‘Home front’, p.140.

²⁴⁴ *LO*, 10 July 1915.

²⁴⁵ *LO*, 30 Jan. 1915

²⁴⁶ *LO*, 28 Oct. 1916.

attending at Picture Palaces of children and elders to see bad, or indecent, or suggestive pictures that might happen to be shown'.²⁴⁷

Like many areas of rural Ireland, Leitrim witnessed high levels of indifference and apathy to the war. In Cavan, Reilly believed that 'the issues that concerned those at home were domestic ones'.²⁴⁸ In wartime Britain, Bowman and Gregory noted similar sentiments to the war in isolated rural areas.²⁴⁹ Unlike many urban areas of Britain and Ireland, rural Ireland rarely encountered mass casualties, communal grief and the associated realities of war. While the war was bringing economic benefit to the agricultural classes of Leitrim, civil society operated close to its pre-war structures. With the exception of those with family members directly involved in the conflict, the effect of the war on most sections of the population was limited.

Leitrim's limited interaction with the war was reflected in the county's reaction to the cessation of hostilities on 11 November 1918. Carrick was the only town that witnessed any level of public celebration, with a hoisting of the union jack at the main post office, and a parade through the town by soldiers and supporters of the war effort. Later that night, a crowd assembled at a bonfire at the Town Clock singing and cheering. In a changing political environment, Sinn Féin supporters also gathered singing republican songs, and despite orders from the RIC to disperse, they refused to do so.²⁵⁰

Welcoming the end of the war, the *Sligo Champion* observed that,

it cannot be forgotten that during most of the war period, owing to the perversity of British statesmen, the minds of Irishmen were busily occupied in combating militarism and tyranny in their own land. Their fight was for humanity and freedom on every front. To a large extent they succeeded. By sheer determination and unity they nullified the tyrannical threat of conscription.²⁵¹

In the wake of the Easter Rising, the relationship between civil society and the state changed remarkably in the county. This change was facilitated by arrests, searches and repression in a county that had demonstrated no advanced nationalist tendencies in the months

²⁴⁷ *LO*, 18 Mar. 1916.

²⁴⁸ Eileen Reilly, 'Cavan and the Great War' in Raymond Gillespie (ed), *Cavan, Essays of the History of an Irish County* (Kildare, 1995), p.190.

²⁴⁹ Bowman, 'Propaganda', p.219; Gregory, *Last Great War*, pp 11-12.

²⁵⁰ *LO*, 16 Nov. 1918.

²⁵¹ *SC*, 16 Nov. 1918.

and years preceding the Rising. Increasing war casualties and the ever present threat of conscription increased political tension, and drove the local population towards advanced nationalism. A combination of war weariness and political ineptitude ensured that the Great War would forever remain a peripheral event in the lives of the majority of the people of Leitrim.

In the four years from 1914 to 1918, the face of Ireland changed forever. While over three hundred Leitrim men lost their lives in the conflict, their comrades returned to an Ireland where their sacrifices on the battlefields of Europe received neither recognition nor appreciation from many of their countrymen.

Chapter 3: The Rise of Sinn Féin

3.1 Introduction

As Irish republican prisoners, detained in the post-Rising arrests, arrived home at Christmas 1916, they were returning to an Ireland more sympathetic to the cause of advanced nationalism. Their places of detention in prison camps across Britain became ‘universities of new nationalism’, with many of the graduates becoming indoctrinated and committed to a more radical means of resistance to British rule in Ireland.¹ Almost immediately, these men and women set about reorganizing the political and military arms of advanced nationalism, which would transform the face of Irish nationalist politics forever. Within two years, Sinn Féin displaced the Irish Party as the voice of Irish nationalism, an act aided and abetted by a combination of political efficiency and ineptitude by both Irish and British politicians. This chapter charts this political transformation in Leitrim, and outlines the strategies employed by political activists in the county from early 1917 to the general election of 1918. Section One outlines the growth of advanced nationalism within the county throughout 1917, the reaction of the Irish Party to these developments, and the strategies employed by Sinn Féin in their quest to become the dominant voice of Irish nationalism. Land agitation formed part of Sinn Féin’s strategy, and this, together with the growth of the labour movement within the county is examined in Section Two. Section Three examines the attempted introduction of conscription within the county, and the reaction of political, religious and civic groups to these developments. By 1918 many areas of Ireland were experiencing political violence, and Section Four examines the political environment in Leitrim throughout the year, including the landmark 1918 general election.

3.2 A changing political environment

While a by-election was looming in the nearby constituency of North Roscommon, local issues dominated the early months of 1917, with a call for government aid for farmers to alleviate damage caused by floods on the river Shannon. At a mass meeting of farmers in Carrick on 7 January 1917, local UIL stalwart Patrick Flynn pledged support for the agitated farmers, and declared that the community strongly supported the Irish Party, who had handled their

¹F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939* (Oxford, 1982), p.100.

grievances effectively in the past thirty-five years.² Despite Flynn's optimistic tone, the political environment was changing across Ireland with the Irish Party losing support from many sections of the population. How did these events affect Leitrim, and how did the Irish Party and its supporters react to these developments?

In its first edition of 1917, the *Leitrim Observer* reported the speculation in the Dublin daily newspapers on a replacement candidate for the recently deceased north Roscommon MP, James J. O'Kelly. The newspaper reported that, 'the Sinn Féiners would nominate a man now serving a term of penal servitude in England for his connection with the recent Rebellion'.³ While a prisoner was not chosen to contest the election, the eventual selection of Count Plunkett, father of Joseph Mary Plunkett, an executed 1916 leader, proved a wise choice. Although not an official Sinn Féin candidate, Plunkett was the representative of advanced nationalism, and the first opponent of the Irish Party in the constituency since the 1890s. With news of the election outcome in North Roscommon, victory parades were held at Mohill, Ballinamore, Drumshanbo and Ballinaglera. At a victory celebration at the Bush Hotel in Carrick, Arthur Griffith declared the election as 'the greatest victory since Clare returned Dan O'Connell'.⁴ The local division of the AOH at Drumlion congratulated Plunkett, and thanked 'the young men of Carrick-on-Shannon for the admirable work they did during the recent election'.⁵ Commenting on the Roscommon result, the *Leitrim Observer* noted, that it was a timely warning for the Irish Party, suggesting that, 'the disregard by the Liberals and Tories of Ireland's demand for self-government, and the belief in the "wait and see" policy by Mr Redmond and his Party were amongst the reasons for North Roscommon deciding by so big a majority'.⁶

² *LO*, 13 Jan. 1917.

³ *LO*, 6 Jan. 1917.

⁴ *LO*, 10 Feb. 1917.

⁵ *LO*, 10 Feb. 1917.

⁶ *LO*, 10 Feb. 1917.

Police reported that Count Plunkett's supporters 'appeared to work much harder than those of the other candidates, but one of the principal features of the election is that many persons including a number of priests who had not hitherto shown Sinn Féin sympathies identified themselves on this occasion with the Sinn Féiners'.⁷ Michael Laffan identified a generational divide, both lay and clerical, that was present during the campaign in north Roscommon.⁸ Noting that nationalists as a body still supported the Irish Party, the Inspector General questioned the depth of that support, and observed that, 'much reliance cannot be placed on their allegiance to Mr Redmond, and in this connexion (sic), I desire to invite attention to the numerous instances of disloyalty placed by the junior Roman Catholic clergy'.⁹

Commenting on the growing popularity of Sinn Féin, the RIC Inspector General reported in March 1917 that the party consisted 'for the greater part of idealists, including many Roman Catholic curates, and of young men who find in its doctrines convenient excuses for shirking their duty in the trenches'.¹⁰ By early 1917, Leitrim was following the national trend, with police reporting that 'sympathy for Sinn Féin was increasing'.¹¹

On 15 April 1917, two former Frongoch internees, James Dolan and Ben Maguire established Leitrim's first post-Rising Sinn Féin Club at Manorhamilton. Dolan (brother of the 1908 Sinn Féin candidate Charles) and Maguire were instrumental in the formation of Sinn Féin clubs throughout the county in the following months. In April 1917, republican flags were erected and subsequently removed by police in Dromod and Carrick.¹² Flags were erected in a number of counties in early 1917, including Clare where in February 1917 twenty republican flags were hoisted on trees, schoolhouses and telegraph wires in the county.¹³ James C. Scott argued that aside from conspicuous and open resistance to oppressive rule, many societies which may appear acquiescent, often adopt multiple modes of less apparent strategies against their rulers. Placing seditious flags or comments in public areas is a form of 'hidden transcript', reflecting an invisible resentment to oppressive rule.¹⁴

⁷ Inspector General's Report, Jan. 1917 (TNA, CO 904/102).

⁸ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.67.

⁹ Inspector General's Report, Jan.1917 (TNA, CO 904/102).

¹⁰ Inspector General's Report, March 1917 (TNA, CO 904/102).

¹¹ CI Report, Leitrim, Feb. 1917 (TNA, CO 904/102).

¹² CI Report, Leitrim, Apr. 1917 (TNA, CO 904/102).

¹³ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.111.

¹⁴ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance, Hidden Transcripts* (Yale, 1990), pp 2-4.

In March 1917, Plunkett issued a manifesto proposing abstention from Westminster, and an invitation to all members of county and district councils to meet at Dublin's Mansion House. These were not well received by the Irish Party dominated locals councils across Ireland. Referring to Plunkett's previous position as Director of the National Museum, Councillor Bernard Connolly, at a meeting of Kinlough District Council, declared that the manifesto should be burned and called Plunkett 'a discredited Castle hack, who never did a day's work in the service of Ireland'.¹⁵ In rejecting Plunkett's overtures, Manorhamilton District Council followed the trend of many councils, and passed a resolution renewing confidence in Redmond and the Irish Party.¹⁶

In nearby South Longford, the impending by-election caused by the death of John Phillips MP, was giving a fresh impetus to advanced nationalism.¹⁷ South Longford had no history of advanced nationalism, and the Irish Party campaigned strongly to retain the parliamentary seat. Both of Leitrim's MPs, Meehan and Smyth, played prominent roles as part of the Irish Party campaign machine during the by-election, the first contested election in the constituency since 1892. Both constitutional and advanced nationalist supporters travelled from all parts of Ireland to campaign for their respective candidates. Sinn Féin's Joe McGuinness's victory by the narrow margin of thirty-seven votes led to celebrations across neighbouring Leitrim. Sinn Féin flags were flown from buildings in Ballinamore, and crowds thronged the streets. A torchlight procession headed by the Drumreilly and Aughnasheelin pipe bands led the marchers through the town. In reference to Smyth's support for recruitment for the war effort, shouts were heard from the crowd that, 'we want no recruiting sergeants representing us in South Leitrim'.¹⁸ McGuinness's victory in South Longford was significant, given the dominance of the Irish Party in an area with no tradition of advanced nationalism. Marie Coleman noted that 'political allegiances were changing rapidly in Longford, especially among the younger generation'.¹⁹

Both Eamon de Valera's victory at a by-election in East Clare, and William Cosgrave's victory at Kilkenny in July 1917 gave further impetus to the growth of Sinn Féin. In its editorial, the *Sligo Champion* recognised the significance of de Valera's victory, and warned that if

¹⁵ SC, 14 Apr. 1917.

¹⁶ SC, 21 Apr. 1917.

¹⁷ CI Report, Leitrim, April 1917 (TNA, CO 904/102).

¹⁸ RH, 26 May 1917.

¹⁹ Marie Coleman, 'Mobilisation: The South Longford By-Election and its Impact on Political Mobilisation' in Augesteijn, *The Irish Revolution*, p.62.

something was not done promptly by government to conciliate Irish sentiment, ‘Sinn Féin will take the place of constitutionalism, and the fires which flared on the hills of Clare in honour of the victory of Eamon de Valera, will be ablaze in every part of Ireland’.²⁰ Charting the growth of Sinn Féin, Laffan observed that,

from the precise details provided every week by *Nationality* it would seem that the party's “take-off” came in late April and early May; by the end of the first week in May the paper claimed to have received requests for information from fifty-eight districts. In a mood of contagious enthusiasm new branches appeared all over the country; Sinn Féin was the fad or the craze of 1917.²¹

By July 1917, Leitrim had followed the national trend, and sixteen clubs with a membership of 728 had been established.²² Large public meetings organized by Sinn Féin were held in Ballinamore and Mohill that month. At Ballinamore, a resolution was passed congratulating the electors of East Clare on returning de Valera and for ‘striking a blow at the deceivers of the Irish people who carried on nothing but jobbery and bossism’.²³ An anti-recruiting theme was evident at Ballinaglera on 19 August when the meeting, under the auspices of the local Sinn Féin club, heard maverick MP Laurence Ginnell and James Dolan declare that the £400 per annum salary made MPs more English than the English themselves. The meeting condemned Redmond for espousing the cause of England, and noted that ‘his representatives went around the country as recruiting sergeants’.²⁴ While Meehan continued to remain prominent in his constituency, Smyth’s absence is noticeable in the south of the county. With the exception of his attendance at anti-conscription meetings in 1918, his attendance was not reported at district council, board of guardians, or any other political meetings during the period. New Sinn Féin clubs were formed on a continual basis throughout the late summer of 1917, with most named after executed 1916 leaders. At the inaugural meeting of the Seán Mac Diarmada Sinn Féin Club in Carrick on 19 August, Michael Collins was the main speaker. Collins urged clubs to be formed in every district in order to gain power at local council level, with the ultimate goal of capturing the parliamentary seat. Earlier that day, Collins attended

²⁰ *SC*, 14 July 1917.

²¹ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.94.

²² CI Report, Leitrim, July 1917 (TNA, CO 904/100).

²³ *RH*, 21 July 1917.

²⁴ *LO*, 8 Sept. 1917.

mass in Gowel, and spoke at the local Roger Casement Sinn Féin club outlining the main policies of Sinn Féin, and its underlying principles.²⁵

Aeraíochtaí, open-air Irish concerts, were common features of Sinn Féin gatherings in the county. One at Ballinamore on Sunday, 2 September, was ‘one of the biggest gatherings of people ever witnessed in any part of South Leitrim’. They gathered to welcome newly elected MP for South Longford Joe McGuinness and Harry Boland to Leitrim.²⁶ On the journey to Ballinamore the previous night, hundreds of people gathered at Mohill, Gorvagh and Fenagh to welcome McGuinness to the county. McGuinness dismissed claims that Sinn Féin was a new phenomenon that would disappear quickly. According to McGuinness, Sinn Féin was a political party with a policy ‘that was advocated for seven hundred and fifty years and was not a new movement’.²⁷ He called on the people to ensure that Sinn Féin represented them on local councils, and to make their local clubs intellectual centres where Irish language and history would be taught. In supporting the meeting’s call for Thomas Smyth to resign, McGuinness condemned Smyth’s record and the lack of development of the Cavan and Leitrim Railway, and the nearby Arigna coal mines. By the end of September 1917, Sinn Féin had established two executive structures for the north and south of the county presiding over twenty-eight clubs with a membership of nearly fifteen hundred people.²⁸ James Dolan presided over the North Leitrim Sinn Féin Executive, while former UIL member and long serving councillor Michael Murphy from Gorvagh presided over its southern counterpart.

The death of Thomas Ashe at Mountjoy Jail in September 1917, from force-feeding while on hunger strike, brought widespread condemnation across Ireland. The thousands who attended Ashe’s funeral demonstrated the widespread support for advanced nationalism. In Leitrim, condemnations of the nature of Ashe’s death, and expressions of sympathy to his family, were passed by Sinn Féin clubs throughout the county. Within the ranks of constitutional nationalism, the local AOH Division in Annaduff described Ashe as ‘a martyr for Ireland, done to death at the hands of the unscrupulous rulers of this country’.²⁹ A similar motion was passed by the Carrick Branch of the Irish National Foresters at their meeting on 14 October 1917.³⁰ Popular sympathy for Ashe continued into October 1917, memorial masses

²⁵ *RH*, 25 Aug. 1917.

²⁶ *LO*, 8 Sept. 1917.

²⁷ *LO*, 8 Sept. 1917.

²⁸ CI Report, Leitrim, Sept. 1917 (TNA, CO 904/104).

²⁹ *RH*, 13 Oct. 1917.

³⁰ *LO*, 20 Oct. 1917.

were held in Mohill and Carrick, and shops closed in both towns during the ceremonies as expressions of sympathy.

Over eighteen hundred people attended an Aeríocht at Carraigallen on 7 October 1917 to hear Arthur Griffith speak. Reminiscing on the 1908 North Leitrim by-election, Griffith told the crowd that the Irish Party had large resources available to defeat Sinn Féin. Now, Griffith claimed that the roles were reversed, and ‘people who believed in the Party and who supported it with unstinting loyalty have found that Party out for what we had found it out ten years ago, and they are determined to get rid of it’.³¹ A similar theme was evident in Griffith’s address at Manorhamilton on 1 November where he reminded the large crowd that Manorhamilton was the first town in Ireland spanned by arches bearing the motto ‘No London Parliament’. He added that ‘in the future history of the Sinn Féin movement, the name of Leitrim would be forever associated as the vanguard and pioneer of the movement’.³² Prominent national speakers continued to visit the county, including William Cosgrave and Darrell Figgis who spoke at an Aeríocht in Dromod.³³ Coleman detected a similar pattern in nearby Longford, observing that the work of local organisers ‘was boosted by that of prominent national figures in Sinn Féin and the Volunteers who travelled around the country during the summer of 1917.’³⁴

Newly elected Sinn Féin President Eamon de Valera and Harry Boland spoke as part of an Aeríocht organised by the local Edward Daly Sinn Féin Club in Mohill on 18 November 1917. Arriving the previous evening, the visitors were escorted by thirty horsemen and a torchlight procession to a reception in the local Canon Donohue Hall. At the beginning of the public meeting the following day, de Valera thanked the local Board Of Guardians for their formal welcome, and identified the changing political loyalties across Ireland in many local councils, ‘because they show clearly that these bodies, although the people had not yet the chance of electing these bodies, have changed, or should he say have changed in their allegiance to a Party that was running the country to ruin’.³⁵ In his speech to the thousands of people gathered, de Valera referred to the European war as a battle for England’s trade supremacy, and declared that ‘John Bull with the bible in one hand and the sword in the other

³¹ *LO*, 13 Oct. 1917.

³² *SC*, 10 Nov. 1917.

³³ *LO*, 10 Nov. 1917.

³⁴ Coleman, *Longford*, p.71.

³⁵ *LO*, 24 Nov. 1917.

has brought more ruin on this earth than any other nation'.³⁶ At Mohill, he condemned Sinn Féin's political opponents who he claimed, 'try to brand this movement of ours which is as pure and good a National movement as there ever was in any country, they try to brand it as immoral'.³⁷ At a meeting in Drumcong during the following week, James Dolan conveyed a similar message, telling the crowd that, 'it is said that Sinn Féin is out for red ruin and revolution. Nothing of the kind. Sinn Féin is the policy laid down by Parnell when he declared that, no man was to set the boundary to the onward march of a nation'.³⁸

Throughout 1917, many Irish Party supporters were transferring allegiance to the political doctrine of republicanism. Following a countrywide tour in early 1917, Inspector General of the National Volunteers, Maurice Moore, claimed that most young people were Sinn Féin supporters, and while some farmers and shopkeepers remained loyal to the Irish Party, both groups were moving towards Sinn Féin.³⁹ On public bodies, a transfer of loyalty, albeit incremental, was also emerging. As early as March 1917, Mohill District Councillor John Mulligan condemned John Redmond for endorsing recruitment into the British army. Fellow councillor Patrick Woods rebuked Mulligan, declaring that English law was the best in the world, and if people had not joined the army, 'the Turks would be here now'.⁴⁰ At the Leitrim County Council meeting of 30 May 1917, a heated discussion ensued when councillors Thomas McGivney and Michael Murphy proposed a motion congratulating McGuinness on his election victory in south Longford.⁴¹ Both Murphy (who, as noted in Chapter Four, would become Chairman of the South Leitrim Comhairle Ceantar of Sinn Féin) and McGivney were UIL stalwarts, and long standing members of Leitrim County Council. While the resolution was defeated by eleven votes to five, it demonstrated that division had emerged on a public body which had consistently supported the Irish Party. The re-election of UIL stalwart Patrick Flynn to the Chair of Carrick District Council, saw the new Chairman issuing a conciliatory statement calling for a new policy to reunite the different strands of nationalism, and declaring that 'it was sad enough to think unfortunate differences existed in the Nationalist ranks'.⁴² The

³⁶ *LO*, 24 Nov. 1917.

³⁷ *LO*, 24 Nov. 1917.

³⁸ *LO*, 8 Dec. 1917.

³⁹ Maurice Moore to John Dillon, 4 Mar. 1917 (NLI, Maurice Moore Papers, MS 10561/9).

⁴⁰ *RH*, 24 Mar. 1917.

⁴¹ *LO*, 9 June 1917.

⁴² *RH*, 16 June 1917.

meeting passed resolutions on prisoner releases, and demanded that those prisoners detained in the post-Rising arrests be treated as prisoners-of-war.

Fitzpatrick's argument that political loyalty was freely transferred from the local Irish Party machine to Sinn Féin is supported in several instances throughout Leitrim during the period.⁴³ In his study of Co. Clare, Fitzpatrick identified many similarities at local level in membership and ideology between advanced and constitutional nationalists, arguing that, 'the political culture of nationalist Ireland re-emerged, draped in a tricolour that barely obscured the outline of a golden harp'.⁴⁴ In some counties, AOH branches openly supported Sinn Féin, and by May 1917 the AOH National Secretary J.D. Nugent suspended the Roscommon county board, 'in view of the open antagonism shown by some of the County Officers recently, when the unity and discipline of the organisation was jeopardised'.⁴⁵ This transfer of allegiance and the emergence of overlapping political loyalty was also evident within AOH structures in Leitrim. Following the Longford by-election victory, the AOH Gortvagh Division passed a motion, 'that we the members of this Division congratulate the electors of South Longford on the election of Mr McGuinness'.⁴⁶ At an Aeríocht at Eslin in September 1917, the *Leitrim Observer* reported that, 'a notable feature in connection with the meeting was that some of the flags carried by the contingents were those which were used in the days when the Irish Party was the leading light of the Irish People'.⁴⁷ At Drumsna, the local suspended AOH Division decided to dissolve and having paid all monies due, transferred its funds to the local Sinn Féin club. When the question of the use of the local AOH hall was discussed, the Chairman did not foresee any issue, 'as the same party would be in charge'.⁴⁸ The village of Cloone witnessed a similar development when the local AOH Division unanimously decided to dissolve, and join the Sinn Féin club.⁴⁹ While some AOH members transferred their political allegiance freely, others such as the Gowel AOH Division resolved to continue to support Hibernianism, but passed a motion wishing 'the Gowel Sinn Féin Club every success, as we believe we are working for the same noble cause'.⁵⁰

⁴³ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.107.

⁴⁴ David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Ireland's* (Oxford, 1998), p.69.

⁴⁵ *RH*, 26 May 1917.

⁴⁶ *RH*, 9 June 1917.

⁴⁷ *LO*, 29 Sept. 1917.

⁴⁸ *LO*, 10 Nov. 1917.

⁴⁹ *LO*, 17 Nov. 1917.

⁵⁰ *LO*, 13 Oct. 1917.

In an attempt to thwart the advance of Sinn Féin, Lloyd George attempted to reconcile the different strands of political thought in Ireland with the establishment of the Irish Convention, which convened in July 1917. Consisting of representatives of the Irish Party, Southern Unionists, Ulster Unionists and some independents, the forum attempted unsuccessfully to propose a system of self-government for Ireland. Jackson argued that Sinn Féin's decision not to take part in the nine month deliberations gave it an opportunity to further consolidate its political support.⁵¹ At a Sinn Féin public meeting at Ballinamore in July 1917, the Irish Party's support for the Irish Convention was condemned. Calling on Thomas Smyth to resign, the meeting also demanded that Thomas Fallon, who had been nominated as Irish Party delegate, 'not to go to the bogus Convention as representing the people of Leitrim, as we do not approve of recruiting orators representing us'.⁵²

Attacks on political opponents were not the sole preserve of advanced nationalists. Commenting on the growth of Sinn Féin, Fallon declared that, 'the young men of this country were being misguided and misled by a certain clanned party in Dublin that were never any good for anything'.⁵³ At a UIL reorganisation meeting in Glencar on 24 June 1917, Francis Meehan described both Count Plunkett and Laurence Ginnell, 'as the very dregs of place hunting'.⁵⁴ Meehan claimed that he had fought against Plunkett and McGuinness in the Longford and Roscommon by-election campaigns in order 'to withstand those who, however good their motives might be, were wreckers and disturbers'.⁵⁵ Tensions were also present in some areas between the different strands of nationalism. Newspapers reported that Sinn Féin members had been heckled in Newtownmanor, and refused lifts unless they removed Thomas Ashe badges from their clothing.⁵⁶ Members of the newly formed Drumshanbo Sinn Féin Club warned members 'not to be drawn into street brawls or rows by parties opposed to Sinn Féin'.⁵⁷

By the end of 1917, forty-three Sinn Féin clubs, with a membership of almost 2,300, were established in Leitrim, the second largest number of clubs per head of population in Ireland. Charting the growth of Sinn Féin nationally, Laffan believed that the movement 'tended to flourish in areas which were distant from Dublin, had a recent tradition of agrarian

⁵¹ Jackson, *Home Rule*, p.208.

⁵² *RH*, 21 July 1917.

⁵³ *SC*, 17 Mar. 1917.

⁵⁴ *SC*, 30 June 1917.

⁵⁵ *SC*, 30 June 1917.

⁵⁶ *RH*, 5 Jan. 1918.

⁵⁷ *LO*, 13 Apr. 1918.

unrest or political confrontation, and had a high percentage of the population working on small farms'.⁵⁸ Leitrim fitted into these three categories, with a prior tradition of association and organisation being turned to new ends. In charting the growth of Sinn Féin in 1917 and early 1918, the transfer of political loyalty from constitutional to advanced nationalism is evident throughout the county. While the AOH still had a large membership and support base, the thin line between both strands of nationalism, and an underlying culture of Anglophobia, was evident. Sinn Féin's growth can be explained by a continued disillusionment with the old order, and an active cadre of party organisers across the county. A continuous series of Aeríochtaí and public meetings, supplemented by a range of high profile national speakers, contributed to the growing support for republicanism in the county.

3.3 Land and labour

As it had done so often in the past, land agitation once again became a political issue in the early months of 1918. Although the Land Acts of 1903 and 1909 had ensured that an estimated two-thirds to three-quarters of former tenant farmers owned their land by 1914, Bew identified the development of a new land hunger in early 1918 which was exacerbated by the cessation of emigration during the war.⁵⁹ Fergus Campbell believed that the concern over wartime food supplies, and the inadequate response of large farmers to compulsory tillage orders gave the impetus for land takeover by smallholders and landless men.⁶⁰ Rumpf and Hepburn argued that Sinn Féin took the political initiative and attracted support from a land hungry rural proletariat noting that 'Sinn Féin clubs, previously devoid of an agrarian policy, marched out of their villages with spades in order to commandeer grazing land 'in the name of the Irish republic'.⁶¹ What was the level of land agitation in Leitrim in the period, and how did the authorities respond to such developments?

Although Dooley believed that the agitation of 1918 was an attempt to reignite a campaign for the sale and division of grasslands, the background to much of the tension was the perceived threat of famine in the country.⁶² Ian Miller argued that, during the First World War, the threat of famine and mass starvation seemed tangible and realistic.⁶³ From late 1917

⁵⁸ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.187.

⁵⁹ Paul Bew, 'Sinn Féin, Agrarian Radicalism and the War of Independence 1919-1921' in D.G. Boyce (ed.), *The Revolution in Ireland 1879-1923* (Dublin, 1988), p.225.

⁶⁰ Campbell, *Land and Revolution*, p.242.

⁶¹ Rumpf and Hepburn, *Nationalism and Socialism*, p.21.

⁶² Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland: a study of Irish landed families* (Dublin, 2001), p.128.

⁶³ Ian Miller, *Reforming food*, p.173.

Sinn Féin had established a Food Committee which campaigned to halt exports of a wide range of farm produce. The intrusion of the state upon Irish food production was seen by critics as serving British imperial needs rather than those of the Irish people. As early as August 1917, the North Leitrim Sinn Féin Executive condemned the level of food restrictions being imposed by the Food Controller, and demanded the establishment of an Irish mercantile marine fleet.⁶⁴ Miller argued that Sinn Féin exploited the fears of the people and that, ‘the potential of starvation, whether real or imagined, offered a remarkably effective trope for nationalists, who played upon concern over the vulnerable Irish body to legitimate their anti-Union position’.⁶⁵ As elsewhere, Sinn Féin in Leitrim politically exploited the fear of famine and land hunger to garner support. While in some instances agreement was reached with landowners to rent land on a con-acre basis, by late February 1918 farms at Manorhamilton, Dromahair and Kiltoghert were forcibly taken over by local people without agreement, and with local Sinn Féin support. At a farm takeover at Dromahair, Sinn Féin leader James Dolan argued that conserving food was important in order to protect the country from famine.⁶⁶ A similar theme emerged at Fearglass, when the local Sinn Féin club urged the public not to sell their farm produce to England, reminding people that, ‘if you sell your food to England now, you cannot satisfy your hunger later with the paper money you got in exchange, so hold the harvest and remember 46’ (sic) and 47’.⁶⁷

One of the more prominent land seizures in the county involved the occupation of a forty acre farm at Kiltoghert, the property of Grand Juror J.A. Ormsby Lawder. After the owner refused a request from the Drumsna and Gowel Sinn Féin Clubs to discuss a letting agreement, the land was seized by a large crowd on 23 February 1918, ‘in the name of the Irish Republic’.⁶⁸ The close relationship between elements of Sinn Féin and the AOH was evident at Kiltoghert, when the *Leitrim Observer* reported that prominent members ‘of the AOH and enthusiasts in the UIL joined the Sinn Féiners in the commandeering of the farm’.⁶⁹ Following the Kiltoghert incident, the police took a more hard line approach during the following week, when a large police and military presence prevented seizures at Cashel, Emlagh and Woodbrook. At Woodbrook, the Drumlion Band were not permitted to play their instruments, and the crowd

⁶⁴ *Nationality*, 8 Sept. 1917.

⁶⁵ Miller, *Reforming food*, p.190.

⁶⁶ *SC*, 2 Mar. 1918.

⁶⁷ *RH*, 23 Feb. 1918.

⁶⁸ *LO*, 2 Mar. 1918.

⁶⁹ *LO*, 2 Mar. 1918.

were prevented from marching in military formation.⁷⁰ At Manorhamilton, seventy extra police were drafted into the town on 28 February 1918 in anticipation of a land raid by the local Sinn Féin club. Some landowners, such as George Stuart, resorted to court action, by obtaining a court injunction preventing local activist Patrick Waters, and nineteen other locals, from trespassing on his lands at Killanumery.⁷¹ Landowners such as Patrick McKenna from Carrick adopted a more philanthropic approach; donating plots of land and manure to locals free of charge.⁷²

In comparison to the number of land seizures in neighbouring counties with large numbers of grazier farms, including Roscommon and Sligo, seizures in Leitrim were few and minor, with only five attempted seizures countywide. Police reported the negotiated and consensual nature of many of the land transfers, but observed that ‘there are indications that the more responsible people are beginning to tire of this practice, and the prospect of having to pay large sums in compensation will have an effect’.⁷³ Calls for a more firm administration of justice came from some large landowners. At the Spring Assizes in Carrick, on 5 March 1918, Grand Jurors J. A. Ormsby Lawder and Captain John O’Donel proposed a resolution to direct Government to restore ‘law and order, unless they wish to turn this country into another Russia’.⁷⁴

As a result of the seizure of the Lawder farm at Kiltoghert, six men, Thomas Duignan, Secretary of Gowel Sinn Féin, Michael Lynch, Thomas Keaveney, T.P. Mc Nabola, J. Murray and Michael Carter were convicted and bound to the peace at Carrick Assizes. The trials of the men attracted large crowds and a strong police presence at the courthouse. At the trial, R.I.C. County Inspector Ross Rainsford testified that no further land seizures had occurred since the February incidents, and he was confident that none would reoccur in the future. Despite requests from their defence solicitor that they be released under the First Offender’s Act, five of the six defendants told the court that they would go to jail instead of paying a fine. After persuasion by their solicitor, the men finally agreed to pay the sureties and were released to loud cheering. Local UIL stalwart and Justice of the Peace, Patrick Flynn, claimed that, ‘it was

⁷⁰ *LO*, 2 Mar. 1918.

⁷¹ *LO*, 16 Mar. 1918.

⁷² *LO*, 2 Mar. 1918.

⁷³ CI Report, Feb. 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105).

⁷⁴ *LO*, 9 Mar. 1918.

owing to the tempest which swept the country that these young men were carried away, and he believed there would be no more such acts'.⁷⁵

Despite calls from Sinn Féin meetings for his resignation, Meehan remained in his role as MP, and continued to advocate on land issues. At a meeting in Tullaghan on 7 October 1917, organised to discuss the sale of the local Dickson and Reynolds estates, Meehan warned about land grabbers and urged the locals to form a committee under the auspices of the local UIL. Condemning Sinn Féin, he claimed that 'they had no policy except that of destruction, bluff and flag waving'.⁷⁶

While the land question remained important in a rural community, attempts were made to organize labour in the county in 1918. The impetus came from the Sligo office of the Irish Transport Workers Union, and the appointment of local councillor and tailor, William Reilly, in March 1918 as a full time secretary and organiser. Reilly established Leitrim's first branch in Manorhamilton in April 1918, and at the inaugural meeting in the town he impressed on all workers to join the union. It took nearly another six months to form the county's second branch in Carrick on 16 September 1918, when Reilly addressed a large meeting in the Town Hall, declaring that,

they could not see why the workers of Carrick-on-Shannon should not be as well paid for their labours as the men of Sligo and elsewhere. The conditions of the workers as he understood them was of the slave status, but they had now he was glad to see resolved that they would be free men and not slaves and take their place in a free Ireland.⁷⁷

The newly formed branch in Carrick attracted both skilled and unskilled workers, and by November 1918, the branch reported that membership had increased 'into three figures'.⁷⁸ The union continued to grow across the county, and by March 1919 the RIC County Inspector reported that Sinn Féin and the Irish Transport Workers Union were the only active political organisations in the county, with a union membership of 281 in four branches.⁷⁹ With a low industrial base, and few farm labourers, organized labour would never reach a position of influence within the political structures of the county.

⁷⁵ *LO*, 23 Mar. 1918.

⁷⁶ *SC*, 13 Oct. 1917.

⁷⁷ *LO*, 21 Sept. 1918.

⁷⁸ *LO*, 9 Nov. 1918.

⁷⁹ CI Report, Leitrim, March 1919 (TNA, CO 904/108).

Although Campbell identified large numbers of land takeovers in Galway, Roscommon and Sligo, the scale of seizures in Leitrim was modest due to the small number of large grazier farms in the county.⁸⁰ With the exception of a small number of takeovers at Kiltoghert, Manorhamilton and Dromahair, the scale of such incidents in the county was minimal. While a number of attempted land seizures did occur in the north and south of the county, these were dealt with swiftly by police, and Leitrim remained relatively peaceful in the period. The absence of agrarianism was matched by little or no labour agitation in the county. Despite a growing union membership in the major towns, the lack of a large industrial base ensured limited possibilities for the trade union movement in Leitrim.

3.4 Conscription and repression

While a series of by-election victories for the Irish Party in South Armagh, East Tyrone and Waterford city in the early months of 1918 temporarily slowed the Sinn Féin bandwagon, the results were not representative of Irish public opinion. Within a short number of months, any hoped-for political gains would be dashed by the actions of the British government in attempting to introduce conscription, and the efficiency of the Sinn Féin political machine in reacting to such ineptitude. How did the people of Leitrim, and its political and religious leaders, react to this series of events in 1918?

The election victory of Irish Party candidate Patrick Donnelly in Armagh in February 1918, with the aid of support from sections of the unionist population, gave Irish Party supporters a rare opportunity to celebrate. At Manorhamilton District Council on 14 February 1918, a motion was passed congratulating ‘Mr Donnelly on his magnificent victory in Armagh over the powers of disruption and anarchism’.⁸¹ At a large Sinn Féin rally in Elphin, Co Roscommon on 3 February 1918, Carrick Sinn Féin leader Sam Holt attributed Donnelly’s victory to ‘an unholy and unnatural alliance founded on political perfidy and doomed to national repudiation’.⁸²

On 6 March 1918, after a short illness John Redmond died in London. Throughout Ireland, votes of sympathy were passed by Irish Party dominated district councils and boards of guardians on the death of the leader of constitutional nationalism. At Manorhamilton, the

⁸⁰ Campbell, *Land and Revolution*, p.242.

⁸¹ *SC*, 16 Feb. 1918.

⁸² *LO*, 9 Feb. 1918.

local AOH branch meeting described Redmond's death as a 'national calamity'.⁸³ Mohill Board of Guardians passed a resolution of sympathy, but Patrick Woods cautioned that, 'if they don't elect a leader in his place who will see the Convention will get us Home Rule, I am afraid it will make Sinn Féiners of us all'.⁸⁴ The assessment of Redmond's legacy in local newspapers varied from praise to criticism of a man who 'failed to rise to the occasion'.⁸⁵ Following the election of John Dillon as Redmond's successor, the *Sligo Champion* called for unity between Sinn Féin and the Irish Party and advised that, 'if the one and only objective be full Colonial self-government, without prejudice to the means and methods, the Ulster barrier would collapse, and in the present condition of England, the Irish demand would be irresistible'.⁸⁶

The by-election in Waterford, following John Redmond's death, was won by Redmond's son William, a serving British Army officer. Commenting on Redmond's victory, Gortvagh's Seán MacDiarmada Sinn Féin club condemned 'the voters of Waterford in returning Captain Redmond as their MP, a man in khaki that sought his votes like the Irish Party for conscription'.⁸⁷ Reporting on the Waterford result, the *Leitrim Observer* noted that, 'considering that the Sinn Féiner had to fight the issue against the Unionist and nationalist vote combined, a powerful fight was made'.⁸⁸

Less than two weeks after Redmond's death, the contrasting fortunes of advanced and constitutional nationalism were evident in Leitrim at a series of public meetings on St. Patrick's Day. At Drumkeerin a UIL/AOH meeting with Leitrim's two MPs as the main speakers, condemned proposed attempts at introducing conscription, and called on the Irish Party 'to use all means in their power in not having a compulsory military service scheme applied to this little almost depopulated country of ours'.⁸⁹ Meehan called on the people to support constitutional nationalism and advised that 'there was really no use running their heads against stone walls – it was enough for the Revolutionary Party to be doing that'.⁹⁰ Adopting a more conciliatory tone, Thomas Smyth outlined all the concessions that the Irish Party had received for Ireland, and told the crowd, 'he did not blame these people who were connected to the Revolutionary Party, because he had always maintained that everybody was entitled to his or

⁸³ *SC*, 16 Mar. 1918.

⁸⁴ *LO*, 9 Mar. 1918.

⁸⁵ *SC*, 9 Mar. 1918; *RH*, 9 Mar. 1918.

⁸⁶ *SC*, 16 Mar. 1918.

⁸⁷ *RH*, 30 Mar. 1918.

⁸⁸ *LO*, 30 Mar 1918.

⁸⁹ *SC*, 23 Mar. 1918.

⁹⁰ *SC*, 23 Mar. 1918.

her own opinion, but Ireland could never be made free by physical force'.⁹¹ Less than ten miles away at Dromahair twelve hundred people attended a Sinn Féin meeting addressed by Seán O'Reilly from Dublin. Police reported that the result of the Dromahair meeting 'will be probably to strengthen Sinn Féin in the neighbourhood'.⁹²

In the south of the county, the largest political gathering in Co. Leitrim on St Patrick's Day 1918 was at an Aeríocht at Cloone where four thousand people attended to hear Rory O'Connor from Dublin, Peter Paul Galligan from Cavan, and local Sinn Féin activist John Mc Donald address the crowd. Commenting on the shifting political loyalties locally, O'Connor told the assembled crowd:

I am very glad to know that the AOH has joined and fallen into line with the Sinn Féin movement, and I am very glad to be able to tell you that Mr Mc Donald and one of the recent secretaries of the United Irish League not far from this district have informed me that the League and Hibernians have transferred funds.⁹³

From the outbreak of the First World War, the question of the conscription of the Irish civilian population into the British army was deemed unacceptable to all shades of Irish nationalism. The issue arose periodically during the course of the conflict, but legislation was never enacted. By early 1918, as a result of increasing military losses in France and Belgium following a new German offensive, the British government proposed extending conscription to Ireland, and parliament passed the Military Service Bill on 10 April 1918. A sense of outrage swept Ireland, and the Irish Party MPs returned from the House of Commons to join the opposition to conscription at home. At an all-party anti-conscription conference in the Mansion House, the Act was condemned, a one day national strike organised, and an anti-conscription pledge was formulated by the Catholic hierarchy. The support and approval of the pledge by the Catholic hierarchy which was to be taken in every parish after Sunday mass ensured the formation of a nationwide movement of opposition. While Sinn Féin was part of a wide coalition of opposition, the party did not lose the opportunity to gain political advantage as Sinn Féin statements in local newspapers noted that, 'the decision of the English Government to enforce conscription on Ireland in defiance of the expressed will of the nation has demonstrated beyond dispute the futility of the policy of Irish representation at Westminster'.⁹⁴

⁹¹ *SC*, 23 Mar. 1918.

⁹² *CI Report*, Leitrim, March 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105).

⁹³ *LO*, 23 Mar. 1918.

⁹⁴ *LO*, 4 May 1918.

One of the first actions of Sinn Féin in Leitrim after the conscription announcement was the South Leitrim Executive's order that, 'no dances will be permitted to be held during the present crisis through which the country is passing, and no club meetings are to be summoned, or reported in the Press without the sanction of the Executive'.⁹⁵ Heated responses to conscription were evident at local councils and boards of guardians. Carrick Board of Guardians believed it would 'lead to bloodshed, disaster and the ruination of all the success achieved here for the past two years in food production'.⁹⁶ Across the county, prayers were said at all masses 'that God might save this country from inevitable ruin and destruction which would follow its enforcement'.⁹⁷

At Bornacoola on 14 April 1918, a crowd of nearly five thousand people attended an Aeriocht with Frank McGuinness from Longford as the main speaker. He appealed to both unionist and nationalist opponents to join the anti-conscription cause, and declared that 'I am prepared as one man to allow them into our ranks, and I am prepared to never say a word that will give one of them offence'.⁹⁸ The local I.N.F. branch at Dromod reacted with caution to the plea for unity, observing that, 'we have heard talk recently of burying the hatchet. Coming as it does from those who have always been using the hatchet, we would be inclined to take it as an indication of repentance'.⁹⁹

At a large meeting in Carrick Town Hall on 16 April 1918, a campaign of passive resistance was proposed. Local parish priest Canon Thomas O'Reilly called for unification under one anti-conscription banner, and claimed that, 'it took a century to give a Home Rule Bill, and it took only two or three days to conscript the young men of Ireland'.¹⁰⁰ On 21 April 1918, a series of after-Mass meetings took place across the county, with clergy and political leaders again calling for a policy of passive resistance to conscription. At a meeting at Bornacoola, local cleric Fr. Guinan took the pledge from over one thousand people. Local Protestant Home Ruler, Robert Thompson, told the meeting that 'the people of my Church have in the past held aloof from the popular movements carried on by their Catholic fellow countrymen. This, we must say is not a dignified position to adopt, for I believe there is not

⁹⁵ *LO*, 27 Apr. 1918.

⁹⁶ *LO*, 13 Apr. 1918.

⁹⁷ *LO*, 20 Apr. 1918.

⁹⁸ *RH*, 20 Apr. 1918.

⁹⁹ *RH*, 4 May 1918.

¹⁰⁰ *LO*, 20 Apr. 1918.

one of them who does not hate conscription'.¹⁰¹ Praising the support of Thompson, local Sinn Féin leader John Mc Donald declared that, 'I am pleased to say our Protestant neighbours are with us in the struggle against the latest blood tax'.¹⁰² At Drumalease, a large crowd heard a local curate, Fr. Prior, call on the people to follow their spiritual and political leaders and urged that, 'the Irish Volunteers, the chief hope of our country, must obey all orders from their leaders and officers'.¹⁰³ The meeting ended with the crowd marching in military formation led by Fr. Prior, 'with drums beating and Sinn Féin and AOH flags waving'.¹⁰⁴

Calls for political unity among nationalists were common themes at meetings across the county. At a Sinn Féin organised anti-conscription meeting in Dromahair on 5 May 1918, local clerics Father Galligan and Father Prior made a plea that party politics should not destroy nationalist unity against conscription 'as it would be an act of the basest treachery that ever was committed towards Ireland'.¹⁰⁵ Protestant Sinn Féiner Bertie Anderson from Calry in Co. Sligo advised the Volunteers to get properly disciplined and organised, and do nothing that would discredit the cause, stating that 'the enemy would like nothing better than see disunion and dissension in our ranks at this most critical time in our country's history'.¹⁰⁶ Police reported that the presence of clergy at anti-conscription meetings ensured that gatherings were peaceful and 'conducted in an orderly manner'.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the conscription scare ensured that the ranks of Sinn Féin and the Volunteers were filled with new members, with the party membership of the former in the county increasing from 2,470 to 3,340 between January and May of 1918.¹⁰⁸

As a result of the large scale level of opposition to conscription, the British government relented and did not proceed with its enforcement. In its attempts to enforce conscription on Ireland, the government had by then provided Sinn Féin with renewed political impetus, and inflamed anti-British sentiment among the Irish people. The conscription crisis produced an unequivocal challenge and threat to British authority in Ireland, and ensured the further demise of constitutional nationalism, and the triumph of Sinn Féin over its nationalist rival.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ *RH*, 4 May 1918.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *SC*, 27 Apr. 1918.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *SC*, 11 May 1918.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ CI Report, Leitrim, Apr. 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105).

¹⁰⁸ CI Report, Leitrim, Jan. 1918 (TNA, CO 904/104); CI Report, Leitrim, May 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105).

¹⁰⁹ Borgonovo, *Dynamics of War*, p.186.

Once more, the state's response to a concerted challenge followed a familiar pattern, with the arrest of seventy-three Sinn Féin leaders on the night of 17-18 May 1918. The reason offered for the arrests were alleged collusion between Sinn Féin and the German government. Prominent Sinn Féin leaders throughout Ireland, including Leitrim's James Dolan, were arrested and deported to jails in England. While the police believed that Dolan's arrest, and that of the other Sinn Féin leaders, would have a pacifying effect, Carrick Board of Guardians condemned the arrests and called for the immediate release of prisoners.¹¹⁰ Recalling the North Leitrim 1908 election campaign, board member Thomas Flynn declared that, 'when Charlie Dolan, as a boy, a few years ago came and told them it was no use, the people laughed at him. They have come to the realization of it now'.¹¹¹ Although many people were angry at the arrests, it was noticeable in Leitrim that meetings organised to protest against the arrests attracted much smaller numbers than the earlier anti-conscription gatherings. Police reported that most meetings lasted between ten and fifteen minutes, and noted that 'they won't have much effect'.¹¹² Nonetheless, condemnations of the arrests were widespread, and the Breffni O'Rourke Sinn Féin club viewed the action 'as this latest piece of trickery of the Freemason Government of England'.¹¹³ While the party realised that the German Plot arrests deprived them of some of their most experienced campaigners, Murphy argued that 'the internments further bolstered the party's already burgeoning popularity with the nationalist public; an effect magnified by the government's failure to convince many that their justification for the arrests was credible.'¹¹⁴

Although Sinn Féin garnered support from its leadership role in land agitation, it was the conscription crisis of 1918 that consolidated its ever increasing political strength amongst the majority of the nationalist population. While all shades of nationalist political opinion opposed conscription, Sinn Féin were the major political beneficiaries of the anti-conscription campaign. The presence of members of the highly influential clergy alongside advanced nationalists at public meetings provided Sinn Féin with political respectability, and increasing levels of support in the county. As it had done in the immediate aftermath of the Rising, the actions of government further eroded the credibility of constitutional nationalism, and sealed its political fate in the eyes of the Irish people.

¹¹⁰ CI Report, Leitrim, May 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105).

¹¹¹ LO, 1 June 1918.

¹¹² CI Report, Leitrim, June 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105).

¹¹³ SC, 15 June 1918.

¹¹⁴ William Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921* (Oxford, 2014), p.129.

3.5 1918

By the spring of 1918, Fitzpatrick observed that much of Ireland ‘had become virtually ungovernable’.¹¹⁵ Raids for arms by Volunteers were increasing in many areas, and hostility towards the police was common. With a general election expected at the end of the war, Sinn Féin continued to consolidate its support base and prepared to displace the Irish Party as the representatives of Irish nationalism. How did these developments manifest themselves in Leitrim, and how did Leitrim’s political factions prepare for and perform in the 1918 general election?

An important element of Sinn Féin’s political strategy was to wrest control across Ireland of Irish Party dominated local councils. In June 1918, Mohill’s Edward Daly Sinn Féin Club requested all councillors to vote for Sinn Féin candidates, which resulted in Sinn Féin’s James Teague being unanimously elected Chairman of Mohill District Council. Despite a similar request from the Carrick Sinn Féin Club, UIL veteran Patrick Flynn defeated Sinn Féin’s Michael McGrath at the District Council and Board of Guardian elections. At his accession speech in Carrick, Flynn called for unity among nationalists, and claimed that there were many aspects of Sinn Féin policy that he supported. McGrath immediately questioned Flynn’s overtures claiming that ‘no man could carry two flags’.¹¹⁶ At County Council level, Sinn Féin emerged victorious on 15 June 1918 when Michael Murphy defeated his former UIL colleague, Thomas Fallon, by one vote to secure chairmanship of Leitrim County Council. During the meeting, reference was made to Fallon’s previous support for the war effort, and his recent vote at the Irish Convention against Ireland controlling customs and excise in a Home Rule Parliament. At Aughawillan, the Thomas Ashe Sinn Féin Club, congratulated Michael Murphy, and his fellow Leitrim councillors for removing Fallon, ‘whose action in the recent Convention misrepresented and degraded the people of Leitrim’.¹¹⁷

While political change was taking place at council level across Leitrim, police reports consistently referred to a relatively peaceful county. White gloves, the symbol of an absence of indictable offences, were presented to Judge Brown at both Manorhamilton and Carrick courts in June 1918. Brown observed:

¹¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.126.

¹¹⁶ *LO*, 15 June 1918.

¹¹⁷ *LO*, 22 June 1918.

from the Longford border beyond Dromod to the short Atlantic sea coast, the whole county of Leitrim must be congratulated. It is something to cause gratification and pleasure in the minds of all thinking men that in these times of sorrow and stress and tension of wars and rumour of wars of transition and unsettlement, there is at least one county in Connaught where indictable and organised crime do not exist at these Trinity Quarter Sessions.¹¹⁸

The only serious cases, according to Justice Pim in his report to the Leitrim Summer Assizes, referred to a small number of arms raids and the cutting of telegraph wires. In his address, Pim declared that, ‘raids for arms and the cutting of telegraph wires are not attacks, so much on the individual, as on the district and body politic’.¹¹⁹ The quietude of the county was acknowledged by the authorities, with Leitrim being one of only six counties in Ireland where the Crimes Act of 1887 was not operational that summer.¹²⁰

Despite this relatively peaceful environment, a number of political trials involving local republican activists took place in the summer of 1918. At a Crimes Court held in Manorhamilton on 3 July 1918, Charles Timoney was sentenced to six months hard labour, and John O’Connell received a one month sentence for unlawful assembly and illegal drilling. After the court was cleared following scuffles, Timoney refused to recognise the court and declared that ‘it is all a farce, and as a soldier of the Irish Republic I refuse to recognise this court and deny the right of the Resident Magistrate to try me’.¹²¹ At Carrick on 12 July 1918, despite pleas for leniency from local parish priest Father McCabe, seven Drumshanbo Volunteers were sentenced to one month in jail for unlawful assembly in their local town on the night of Arthur Griffith’s by-election victory in East Cavan.¹²² On their release from jail on 10 August, the *Leitrim Observer* reported that the prisoners ‘received a tremendous ovation and were escorted by a large number of friends to their respective houses’.¹²³ Similar scenes took place at the trial of Michael Mulligan at Carrick on 23 July 1918 for unlawful drilling at Ballinamore. The *Leitrim Observer* reported that Mulligan questioned the right of the court to try him, and ‘took the whole proceedings in an indifferent way, wearing a smile during the evidence’.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ SC, 15 June 1918.

¹¹⁹ LO, 6 July 1918.

¹²⁰ SC, 22 June 1918.

¹²¹ SC, 10 July 1918.

¹²² LO, 17 Aug. 1918.

¹²³ LO, 17 Aug. 1918.

¹²⁴ LO, 27 July 1918.

Continuing a policy of repression, Dublin Castle introduced regulations that required organizers of public meetings and assemblies to acquire a permit from the authorities. As an act of defiance, Gaelic games were organised nationwide without any application for a permit on 4 August 1918, when over 54,000 members of the GAA played football and hurling across the country. One game was played in Leitrim at Gortlettragh between the local team and Johnston's Bridge.¹²⁵ Acts of defiance by republicans continued on 15 August 1918, with the reading of a Sinn Féin manifesto by party activists at public meetings across the county. Such acts of civil disobedience have been identified by James Scott as part of a range of tactics against ruling authority.¹²⁶ At Ballinamore, Carrick and Aughnasheelin, large forces of police did not interfere with proceedings.¹²⁷ The only arrest took place at Mohill, where Tim Ward, secretary of Mohill Sinn Féin club, was detained.¹²⁸ Police reported that, apart from Ward, no other arrests took place across Leitrim because 'the evidence in these cases was not considered strong enough to warrant any proceedings being taken'.¹²⁹

During these months, Sinn Féin prepared assiduously for the expected general election. The nature of Sinn Féin's mobilisation process revolved around passive resistance, political education and preparedness. *Nationality* advised Sinn Féin members that 'the chief work of every club is to educate public opinion into the conviction of the hopelessness of the Westminster policy. Public meetings, debates, social re-unions, with short addresses, will do much to spread the light'.¹³⁰ Kay Lawson and Peter Merkl argued that successful political movements develop linkages to the citizen and encourage grass-roots participation through education, and the presentation of clearly designed policies and values.¹³¹ In 1918, such activity developed Sinn Féin into a unified and focused political movement that won the support of a large section of the Irish people. Alongside the establishment of an effective political organisation at local level, the party ensured that every eligible voter was registered by undertaking a plebiscite in each parish. Police reported that 'the Referendum or Plebiscite is being used as an opportunity to make a house to house collection for funds, and it will also serve as a register for election purposes'.¹³² The importance of effective preparation was

¹²⁵ *RH*, 10 Aug. 1918.

¹²⁶ Scott, *Domination*, pp 129-130.

¹²⁷ *LO*, 24 Aug. 1918.

¹²⁸ *LO*, 24 Aug. 1918.

¹²⁹ CI Report, Leitrim, August 1918 (TNA, CO 904/106).

¹³⁰ *Nationality*, 25 Aug. 1918.

¹³¹ Kay Lawson and Peter H. Merkl (eds), *When Parties Fail: Emerging Alternative Organizations* (Princeton, 1988), p.16.

¹³² Inspector General's Report, Jan. 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105)

emphasised by the Sinn Féin South Leitrim Executive at their meeting in Cloone on 3 February 1918: ‘Leitrim Sinn Féiners must need to wake up in time and have all preparations made for the General Election so that when it comes, Leitrim will strike a blow-this time the final blow in the cause it advocated ten years ago’.¹³³

At Kiltubrid, the Seán MacDiarmada Sinn Féin Club reported that by the end of February 1918 the majority of people in the parish had signed the plebiscite, ‘with the exception of a very limited number of blue bloods’.¹³⁴ The Sinn Féin Executive urged every branch that ‘the services of the women members should be availed of as much as possible, especially as a very large number of the new voters will be women’.¹³⁵ While the previous by- election campaigns across the country were heavily supported by outside supporters who campaigned alongside local election workers, the party realised that this would not be possible at a general election campaign. Sinn Féin headquarters advised local constituency organisations to ensure that proper local structures were in place, and warned local party organisations to leave ‘nothing to chance, and by seeing that the election work in every constituency is organised down to the smallest detail’.¹³⁶

While the 1918 general election was eagerly awaited by advanced nationalists, an important feature of the contest was the effects of the Representation of People Act, which became law in April 1918. The Act extended the vote to all men of twenty-one years of age, and to women over thirty who were householders or married to householders. Nationally, the electorate increased from 698,000 to 1,931,000, and in Leitrim eligible voters increased from 12,209 to 30,079.¹³⁷ Consequently, the electorate had a more diverse social and gender composition, with increased numbers of younger voters, women and working class males. Another consequence of the new legislation for Leitrim was the merging of the county’s two constituencies into a single unit. Local representatives on Carrick District Council were unhappy, passing a motion condemning ‘the proposed redistribution scheme, under which the large and important county of Leitrim will be deprived of one of its two representatives’.¹³⁸

The official announcement of James Dolan’s candidature for the 1918 general election was made in September 1918. Like many prospective election candidates, Dolan was a

¹³³ LO, 9 Feb. 1918.

¹³⁴ LO, 23 Feb.1918.

¹³⁵ LO, 4 May 1918.

¹³⁶ LO, 21 Sept. 1918.

¹³⁷ B.M.Walker (ed.), *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin, 1978), p. 359, p.392.

¹³⁸ LO, 24 Nov. 1918.

prisoner in Gloucester Jail. The *Leitrim Observer* noted that, 'it is fitting then that another brother of the Dolan family should once more carry the flag of Irish independence and in placing it in the hand of the brother of Charles Dolan, Leitrim has acted wisely and honourably'.¹³⁹

According to Laffan, 'many MPs decided that the Irish Party's cause was hopeless and that they should desert their sinking ship'.¹⁴⁰ In Leitrim, 'a form of musical chairs was played, in which, apparently, the loser was the player who actually ended with the seat rather than without it'.¹⁴¹ Having previously informed Dillon in September 1918 of his intention not to stand in the election, Smyth pledged his support to Meehan.¹⁴² At a hastily convened selection convention at Drumkeerin, the Irish Party gathered to choose its candidate. The *Roscommon Herald* reported, 'Mr Meehan after thanking the Convention, declined to go forward'.¹⁴³ Following a protracted meeting, Thomas Fallon was selected. He subsequently withdrew, but not before the *Leitrim Observer* reported that,

from what we know of Mr Fallon, we are surprised that a Nationalist of long standing who stood the stress of Forster's Coercion Acts, and always took a manly part in Ireland's cause, should allow himself to be made a shield of, with the apparent object of saving the credit of those who are afraid to face the music.¹⁴⁴

Following Fallon's withdrawal, Dillon was forced to request that Gerald Farrell, a barrister from Longford, contest the Leitrim seat.¹⁴⁵ While Farrell, the son of Longford Irish Party stalwart J.P. Farrell, had family connections with Leitrim, his main residence and business interests were in Longford.¹⁴⁶ A Dolan victory was predicted, and the *Leitrim Advertiser* believed that,

Mr Farrell has not the ghost of a chance, and most of the Party supporters in Leitrim are sorry to see him now forcing a contest with all its bitterness, when any of the former members or other county men could not see their way to go forward in the Irish Party interest.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁹ *LO*, 12 Oct. 1918.

¹⁴⁰ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.156

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *LO*, 16 Nov. 1918.

¹⁴³ *RH*, 30 Nov. 1918.

¹⁴⁴ *LO*, 30 Nov. 1918.

¹⁴⁵ *Irish Independent*, 2 Dec. 1918.

¹⁴⁶ CI Report, Leitrim, Nov. 1918 (TNA, CO 904/107).

¹⁴⁷ *LA*, 5 Dec. 1918.

At a meeting of Leitrim County Council to discuss numbers of presiding officers at local polling booths, Councillor Thomas McGivney claimed that the discussion was a waste of time, 'because the Sinn Féiners will have a walk over; there will be no necessity to fix the booths at all'.¹⁴⁸

Dolan's campaign opened with a large rally in Ballinamore on Sunday 24 November 1918. Ben Maguire, Dolan's Director of Elections, claimed that a victory would ensure 'the death-knell of parliamentarianism in Leitrim, and the end of corruption'.¹⁴⁹ A series of after-Mass meetings took place on 1 December including one at Rantogue addressed by Rice O'Beirne from Ballinamore, who as the *Leitrim Observer* reported, was 'in the past identified with the AOH, but who has for a considerable time thrown in his able lot with the cause of Sinn Féin'.¹⁵⁰ A large Sinn Féin rally in Drumshanbo heard a letter from Fr. McGaver from Drumcong calling for support for Dolan, and welcoming 'any movement that may help to dislodge from parliament the present parliamentary MPs and their idiotic leader, and I wish it every success'.¹⁵¹

Throughout the campaign, Sinn Féin's well-organised political machine campaigned in every part of the county. Roscommon cleric, Father Michael O'Flanagan, addressed a meeting in Drumkeerin on 9 December and told the crowd that, 'he expressed himself delighted with the state of political feeling in Leitrim and emphatically declared that the constituency was thoroughly sound for the principle of self-determination'.¹⁵² At an election rally in Mohill on 12 December, the Irish Party was condemned for forcing a contest in Leitrim, and putting unnecessary expense on taxpayers. Referring to Farrell's candidature, F.J. Mc Cabe advised the electorate to 'give him such a thrashing that he will be afraid and ashamed to be seen in Leitrim again'.¹⁵³

Sinn Féin framed the election debate as a referendum for self-government, and a place at the post-war Paris Peace Conference.¹⁵⁴ There was no evidence of any radical social or economic policies being espoused by speakers, nor were there any female speakers on election platforms. However, members of Cumann na mBan were active in personation activity on

¹⁴⁸ *LO*, 23 Nov. 1918.

¹⁴⁹ *LO*, 30 Nov. 1918.

¹⁵⁰ *LO*, 7 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵¹ *SC*, 7 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵² *LO*, 14 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵³ *RH*, 14 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵⁴ Borgonovo, *Dynamics of War*, p.225.

polling day.¹⁵⁵ The political health of the Irish Party machine in the county was demonstrated by the absence of any concerted election campaign in support of Farrell. At election nomination day, on 4 December, the *Roscommon Herald* reported that, ‘Mr Farrell was left practically alone in Carrick on Wednesday having no one with him except Mr Meehan and his brother Matt Farrell, Solicitor, Ballaghadereen’.¹⁵⁶ Reportedly, Farrell and Meehan received a very hostile reception from Sinn Féin supporters in the town, and sought refuge in the nearby Bush Hotel. The only report of any meeting in support of Farrell was one held in Killenumery. The *Leitrim Observer* noted that, ‘it was announced in the daily papers of the other day that Mr Farrell held meetings at Carrick-on-Shannon and Drumshanbo, but no person in any of these districts can tell the place of meeting’.¹⁵⁷

On election day, 14 December 1918, the *Leitrim Observer* reported that ‘no doubts are entertained of Mr Dolan’s return by a substantial majority as reports from all parts of the county go to show that the majority of the people favour the principle for which he stands – Ireland’s independence’.¹⁵⁸ Apart from a small number of minor incidents between AOH and Sinn Féin supporters in Drumshanbo and Aughawillan, the election was conducted in an orderly manner across the county.¹⁵⁹ No Irish Party personation agents were present at most of the polling booths in the county.¹⁶⁰ While the presence of personation agents would not have changed the result, their need was quite evident. According to Volunteer P.J. Hargaden, ‘personation was indulged in on a large scale and our men voted for absentee or dead voters. There was no trouble and the election went off quietly enough’.¹⁶¹

In preparation for the election count on 28 December, extra contingents of soldiers and police were drafted into Carrick. On the previous evening, soldiers removed Sinn Féin flags around the town, but these were soon replaced by local Volunteers. The result of the election nationally was a resounding victory for Sinn Féin, with the party winning 73 of the 105 seats in Ireland, and the Irish Party successful in only six. Leitrim followed the national trend with Dolan getting 17,711 votes to Farrell’s 3,096, with seventy per cent of the county’s electorate turning out to vote. Dolan’s share of the vote was eighty-five per cent, the largest recorded in

¹⁵⁵ Statement of Bridget Doherty, Bureau of Military History Witness Statement (hereafter BMH WS) 1193, pp 1-2); Margaret Brady (BMH WS 1267, p.2).

¹⁵⁶ *RH*, 7 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵⁷ *LO*, 14 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵⁸ *LO*, 14 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵⁹ *LO*, 21 Dec.1918.

¹⁶⁰ *LO* 21 Dec. 1918.

¹⁶¹ Patrick J. Hargaden (NAI, BMH, WS 1268, p.3)

the country. In contrast, of the 117 postal votes from soldiers, 7 were spoiled, 70 voted for Farrell with 40 voting for Dolan.¹⁶² Following the election count, a large rally took place in Carrick with Canon Thomas O'Reilly presiding. Calling for unity among all nationalists, O'Reilly declared that different views should always be tolerated and that, 'they should stand shoulder to shoulder, and they had an example of what unity did in killing the cursed Act of Conscription'.¹⁶³ Across Leitrim, Dolan's victory was celebrated with torchlight processions, marching bands and bonfires.¹⁶⁴

Dolan's victory, like that of fellow Sinn Féin candidates, can be attributed to a range of factors, most notably the comprehensive transfer of political loyalty from the Irish Party to Sinn Féin during the preceding two years. The inability of the Irish Party to find a candidate from Leitrim to run in the election was a true reflection of the weakness of local Irish Party structures by late 1918. In contrast, the Sinn Féin party machine was efficient and organized, and the conscription crisis of 1918 merely consolidated an ever-increasing level of support for advanced nationalism. Although McConnel, Farrell, and Laffan argued that the extension of the franchise was a factor in the increasing level of electoral support for Sinn Féin, de Bromhead, Fernihough, and Hargaden concluded that Sinn Féin's electoral success was driven by events between 1916 and 1918 leading to a change of political allegiance in the wider electorate, rather than a change in its composition.¹⁶⁵ With an eighty-five per cent share of the vote for Dolan, it is clear that the expanded electorate certainly aided Sinn Féin in Leitrim, but the transfer of political loyalty from the older generation is also apparent. Such a comprehensive political mandate from nationalist Ireland provided the platform for a new and radical political initiative for advanced nationalism.

¹⁶² *RH*, 4 Jan. 1919.

¹⁶³ *LO*, 4 Jan. 1919.

¹⁶⁴ *LO*, 4 Jan. 1919.

¹⁶⁵ Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin, 1981), p.214; James McConnel, 'The Franchise Factor in the Defeat of the Irish Parliamentary Party, 1885-1918' in *The Historical Journal*, 47:2 (2004), pp 355-37; Brian Farrell, *The Founding of Dáil Éireann: Parliament and Nation Building* (Dublin, 1971), pp 45-50; Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.152; Alan de Bromhead, Alan Fernihough and Enda Hargaden, 'Representation of the people: Franchise Extension and the 'Sinn Féin' election in Ireland, 1918, Queen's University Centre for Economic History, Working Paper 2018-08.

Chapter 4: Leitrim under two states

4.1 Introduction

When the First World War ended on 11 November 1918, a wide range of nationalist groups across Europe quickly emerged to place their demands for national independence at the conference of Allied nations that was scheduled to meet at Versailles, Paris in January 1919. Unlike Finland, the Baltic states, Czechoslovakia and Poland, regions that were ruled by some of the defeated belligerents, Ireland's claim for self-government was from one of the victorious Allied powers, the United Kingdom. However, Ireland's claim was bolstered by Sinn Féin's overwhelming victory at the 1918 general election, and the establishment of an alternative parliament, Dáil Éireann, in Dublin. The Dáil immediately set about the establishment of an alternative government and civil administration to that of Britain, and over the next three years successfully implemented separate systems of local government, and judicial administration in Ireland. This chapter will outline the political environment of Co. Leitrim in the years from 1919 to 1922, and will trace the construction and workings of the alternative Irish administration in the county. As political violence emerged in many areas of Ireland, Section One assesses the political environment in Leitrim throughout 1919 and government reaction to increasing levels of support for Sinn Féin. Section Two examines the transfer of power that emerged in the county from 1919, including the 1920 local election campaign. Having received a mandate at both national and local elections, Section Three examines the emergence of increasing levels of civil disobedience with the establishment of a republican counter-state within the county, and the particular issues faced by the new local power brokers. Section Four examines the post-Truce environment, the county's reaction to the Treaty, and the administration of local government in the county in a changing political climate.

4.2 A peaceful county?

When the first Dáil assembled at the Mansion House in January 1919, only twenty-seven of the elected members were present. Thirty-four of its members were in jail. The *Sligo Champion* reported that Ireland's newly elected public representatives would now appeal to the Peace Conference, and complimented the Dáil proceedings as 'conducted in a manner befitting the dignity of Irishmen'.¹ Calling for the immediate release of prisoners, the *Champion* condemned the government declaring that, 'its vacillation and indecision in regard to the Irish

¹ SC, 25 Jan. 1919.

political prisoners may be justly characterised as contemptible from every point of view'.² What issues dominated the political landscape of Co. Leitrim in early 1919, and did the county follow a similar pattern to its neighbours?

At first, the demand for the release of the German Plot prisoners, including Leitrim's newly elected MP James Dolan dominated the political agenda of local councils. Supporters argued that, as the jailings had been justified on the grounds of an alleged conspiracy with Germany, there was no reason for continued imprisonment after the cessation of wartime hostilities. This argument, widespread protest in Ireland, and the influenza epidemic that swept through many prisons in England in early 1919 all influenced a decision to release the Irish prisoners in the spring of 1919. Dolan, along with other prisoners, was released from Gloucester Jail, and he arrived in Dublin on 7 March 1919. In Leitrim, welcome home celebrations for Dolan were cancelled due to the death of his sister Mary at the Meath Hospital, Dublin on 8 March 1919 from pneumonia.³

Having secured their political dominance on the national stage, Sinn Féin activity now turned to wresting control of the Irish Party dominated local councils. Cloone Robert Emmet Sinn Féin club declared that, 'the present members of both county and district councils should be removed at the coming election, and their places taken by new earnest active workers for Irish freedom'.⁴ Clooneagh Sinn Féin called on its supporters to ensure victory at the local elections, urging that 'there can be no faltering now. We are on the last lap of the race for Liberty's goal, the goal for which untold generations of Irishmen have suffered and died'.⁵

Aside from the arrest of Hugh Turbett at Ballinamore in January 1919 for posting seditious literature, Leitrim, showed no signs of political crime in the early months of 1919. Police reports consistently noted a peaceful county with only a small number of indictable offences. Addressing the Grand Jury of Leitrim on 6 March 1919, Justice Gordon complimented the people of Leitrim and noted that cases of drunkenness had decreased substantially from 357 in 1917, to 175 in 1918. ⁶ At the Quarter Sessions at Carrick on 18 March 1919, white gloves were presented to Justice Brown who observed that, 'it speaks well for the peacefulness and orderliness of this county that up to the time of making up this Sessions

² SC, 15 Feb. 1919.

³ LO, 15 Mar. 1919.

⁴ LO, 15 Mar. 1919.

⁵ LO,, 5 Apr. 1919.

⁶ LO,, 8 Mar. 1919.

calendar, now for two consecutive Quarter Sessions, I have now been presented by you with white gloves on four occasions, and it is a most creditable record'.⁷

While Leitrim was free from indictable crime and political violence, a growing support for Sinn Féin was evident in the county. This support for Sinn Féin was not necessarily an endorsement of militant republicanism, but very often a resentment of British policy in Ireland and disillusionment with the Irish Party. Police reports in May 1919 observed that,

the whole community is restless and apprehensive, but people of stake in the country still with few exceptions, hold aloof from Sinn Féin, and there are no doubt many Sinn Féiners who joined the movement through dread of conscription and dissatisfaction with the existing form of government and the policy of the Irish Parliamentary Party, but without any inclination to take up arms for a republic.⁸

The political climate was best encapsulated by Fr. Michael O'Flanagan's post-election remark that, 'the people have voted Sinn Féin. What we have to do now is explain to the people what Sinn Féin is'.⁹ While the establishment of Dáil Éireann was an attempt to demonstrate to the world that Ireland could govern itself, the attempts to outline its case at the post-war Paris peace conference was a priority for republicans. The issue was prominent at Leitrim's first welcome home rally for Dolan on 27 April 1919 at Ballinamore. Dolan told the large crowd assembled that 'the Great War has called into being the Peace Conference to establish the rights of the world, and Ireland has her representatives there knocking strongly, determinedly and persistently at the door; and Ireland means to see that Ireland's voice shall be heard there before there is any peace in the world'.¹⁰ A recurring theme of Dolan's public statements were calls for unity among nationalists in the county. At Ballinamore, he appealed,

to every man and every woman in Leitrim to drop all political differences and look upon every one not in the garrison, of course we will look upon the garrison as those keeping us in subjection, as being prepared to take the stand in the national ranks and work harmoniously until our country is free.¹¹

⁷ RH, 22 Mar. 1919.

⁸ Inspector General's Report, May 1919 (TNA, CO 904/109).

⁹ Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation and Not a Rabble, The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (London, 2015), p.184.

¹⁰ LO, 3 May 1919.

¹¹ LO, 3 May 1919.

At an Aeríocht in Drumshanbo, Dolan told supporters that ‘they should welcome every man into their ranks so long as there was no malice against him’.¹² The series of welcome home celebrations for Dolan continued throughout the late spring and early summer of 1919. At a meeting in Drumkeerin on 25 May 1919, described as, ‘the largest and most enthusiastic meeting ever held in the district’, Dolan thanked the people for their support for Sinn Féin. Dolan’s conciliatory tone toward all shades of nationalism was proving a success as the *Leitrim Observer’s* reported:

Sunday’s platform contained all the opposing elements of former days and it is a pleasing sign of the times to note the friendly intercourses all day between politicians of different political views, all united in the one grand object of removing the shackles of slavery from our motherland.¹³

Reunification of differing shades of nationalism was made easier by the political strategy of the Irish Party under the leadership of the more radical Dillon, who began to engage in abstentionist tactics at Westminster in 1918. Conor Mulvagh noted that Sinn Féin was seeking ‘virtually the same goals that their predecessors had sought, the line of demarcation between constitutional and advanced nationalism thus rested on the question of tactics’.¹⁴ David Fitzpatrick also argued that the broad similarities in membership and ideology between the old local party structures of the UIL and the emerging Sinn Féin party resembled the decanting of ‘old wine into new bottles’.¹⁵

As Sinn Féin’s fortunes continued to grow within the county, the sudden death in May 1919 of Patrick Flynn, one of the main leaders of the local Irish Party machine, was a major blow to constitutional nationalism. Flynn, a party stalwart and one time nominee for parliamentary representation, was a member of numerous local bodies including county and district councils. Friend and foe alike praised Flynn’s contribution to politics. At a meeting of Leitrim County Council, County Surveyor Eugene O’Neill Clarke told councillors that Flynn ‘was an ornament to every Board with which he was associated’.¹⁶

Reflecting the growing support for Sinn Féin among elements of the clergy, a significant clerical presence was evident at Sinn Féin meetings in the county. Brian Heffernan

¹² *LO*, 26 July 1919.

¹³ *LO*, 31 May 1919.

¹⁴ Mulvagh, *Irish Parliamentary Party*, pp 269-270.

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.107.

¹⁶ *LO*, 24 May 1919.

noted that the conscription crisis of 1918 facilitated the rapprochement between Sinn Féin and the clergy.¹⁷ In her study of Longford, Coleman attributed clerical support for Sinn Féin to the perceived fate of Ulster Catholics in the event of partition.¹⁸ At Sunday mass in Drumshanbo in July 1919, Fr. McCabe, the local parish priest made his political views clear in advising his congregation to ‘stand by Sinn Féin as it was now the only policy for them’.¹⁹ One Leitrim priest, Fr Edward Ryans, a curate at Aughavas, was a well known Sinn Féin activist, and served as President of the South Leitrim Sinn Féin Comhairle Ceanntair. Addressing a meeting at Drumshanbo in July 1919, Ryans told the crowd that, ‘the young men were not content to have Sinn Féin a spark, but they fanned it into a flame that spread throughout the land’.²⁰

The refusal by the major powers to accede to an official Irish presence at the Versailles Peace Conference received widespread condemnation from republicans. While police reports indicated that the decision at Versailles ‘was taken very quietly in the county’, at an Aeríocht at Fahy in August, Dolan reacted angrily. He declared that, ‘the majority of the men who sat at the Peace Conference had a mandate from their peoples to see that justice was done to every white race. The principle was adopted that there would be no peace in the world as long as there was a white race in slavery’.²¹ The rejection of Ireland’s claims for self-government ensured that republicans became more resolute in their demands. At a meeting at Carraigallen, Dolan and Count Plunkett rejected all solutions to the national question other than complete independence. With discussion about forms of Dominion Home Rule emanating from government, Dolan accused the British of attempting to conscript the souls of the Irish people, having failed to conscript their bodies. Dolan emphatically rejected any compromise and stated:

the easiest way to settle the Irish question was for foreigners to clear out altogether and let the Irish people govern themselves. They would not be satisfied with any other solution of the Irish question and he stood up to the demands made by the people in December 1918, and they would have that and nothing else.²²

In an increasingly unstable and defiant political environment, the authorities initiated a countrywide suppression of Sinn Féin, Cumann na mBan, the Irish Volunteers and the Gaelic

¹⁷ Brian Heffernan, *Freedom and the Fifth Commandment: Catholic priests and political violence in Ireland, 1919–21* (Manchester, 2014), p.98.

¹⁸ Coleman, *Longford*, p.77.

¹⁹ *LO*, 26 July 1919.

²⁰ *LO*, 26 July 1919.

²¹ *LO*, 16 Aug. 1919.

²² *LO*, 6 Sept. 1919.

League on 26 November 1919. Following the government crackdown, the inactivity of Sinn Féin locally and nationally was reflected in the lack of press reports from branches. Even before the ban, apathy and inactivity were evident in the ranks of Cumann na mBan. The Gortagh branch condemned absences from meetings stating that ‘it is hoped that the members of each branch will organise their own districts and work in a good spirit, and not in the uninterested way in which they have worked in the past months’.²³ Aside from official suppression, Laffan attributed the decline of Sinn Féin activity to the increasing influence of the Dáil, and argued that Sinn Féin’s activity was now relegated to elections and party organisation. According to Laffan,

most of its past achievements had centred on the task of winning parliamentary seats, but at least for the foreseeable future this phase in its career was over. In some respects, it was almost as if Sinn Féin had been a mirror image of the Parliamentary Party, and when its enemy disappeared, it vanished too.²⁴

The authorities finally reacted to Dolan’s acts of public defiance, and arrested the MP at his home in November 1919 for promoting the Dáil Loan Scheme. Launched in the autumn of 1919, the initiation of the loan scheme was one of the most significant undertakings by Dáil Éireann in its attempts to run a *de facto* government and administration. The main aim of the scheme was to obtain financial support for the fledgling administration both at home and abroad. A novel scheme by local Volunteers in south Leitrim of levying each farm holding a fee of two shillings per cow ensured a steady flow of funds to support the loan.²⁵

At his trial at Drumshanbo, on 21 November 1919, large crowds gathered in support of their local MP, resulting in the court being cleared. Before his sentence of two months’ imprisonment was passed, Dolan refused to recognise the court, declaring that ‘men, swords and bayonets will never still the heart of the Irish people’.²⁶ At its meeting of 27 November 1919, Carrick Board of Guardians passed a unanimous resolution condemning Dolan’s imprisonment ‘as an insult to the crimeless county of Leitrim, whereby our popular representative is incarcerated for his third Xmas in succession’.²⁷ Despite political turmoil enveloping the nation, Leitrim remained in a relatively peaceful and crime free state in late

²³ RH, 15 Nov. 1919.

²⁴ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.309.

²⁵ Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, p.4).

²⁶ LO, 22 Nov. 1919.

²⁷ LO, 29 Nov. 1919.

1919. At the opening of Manorhamilton Quarter Sessions on 24 September 1919, Judge Brown, on accepting white gloves, congratulated the people of Leitrim declaring that,

it was all the more a matter of pride when they saw what had occurred in other parts where even contrary to the laws of humanity and the teachings of common Christianity men had not scrupled to send suddenly into the next world by the assassin's bullet brother Irishmen who were nurtured on Irish homesteads and were instructed, like themselves, in Christian doctrine. Leitrim was happily free from such an unenviable reputation. Long might it remain law abiding with each man helping his neighbour and all pulling together for the general good.²⁸

Following the imprisonment of Dolan, and the nationwide suppression of Sinn Féin, the police inspector reported in November 1919 that, 'Sinn Féin is inactive, and now that it has been suppressed, no meeting has attempted to be held'.²⁹ While the veracity of police reports is open to question, Sinn Féin was obviously inactive due to suppression, and the lack of a campaigning focus for its members and supporters. Nonetheless, its opponents, with the exception of small areas of North Leitrim, were non-existent, and by December 1919, the RIC reported that Sinn Féin had 44 branches in Leitrim with nearly four thousand members.³⁰ Unlike other counties in Ireland, where acts of political violence had begun to erupt in 1919, Leitrim remained peaceful. Throughout the year, advanced nationalism continued its growth, with the different shades of nationalism in the county merging under the Sinn Féin banner. The growing support for republicanism was aided by growing support among the county's clergy, and the absence of any political opposition to challenge the hegemony of Sinn Féin.

4.3 Local government and elections

An important element of the establishment of a successful counter-state was control of local government structures throughout the country. While the forthcoming local elections for rural areas in June 1920 was an opportunity for Sinn Féin to consolidate its power base, Mitchell has argued that, 'Dáil Éireann would be challenged to live up to its claim to be the government of Ireland'.³¹ Did this transfer of power materialise in Leitrim, and what was the outcome of the county's first local elections since 1914?

²⁸ LO, 4 Oct. 1919.

²⁹ CI Report, Leitrim, Nov. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/110).

³⁰ CI Report, Leitrim, Dec. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/110).

³¹ Arthur Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government in Ireland, Dáil Éireann 1919-22* (Dublin, 1995), p. 120.

Unlike in the pre-war years of Irish Party domination of local elected bodies, competition emerged as early as 1919 among various local factions for the positions of Chairman and Vice- Chairman on many local bodies. At Carrick Board of Guardians, Thomas Flynn was elected on the toss of a coin, and recalled his work with Seán Mac Diarmada during the 1908 North Leitrim by-election. Recalling the 1908 North Leitrim election, Flynn doubted the sincerity of many of his fellow-councillors' adherence to the ideals of Sinn Féin, and declared that, 'he would not wonder if Seán Mc Dermott turned in his clay when he saw the men who were today shouting about Sinn Féin—men who tried to kick him through the streets'.³² At Leitrim County Council's meeting of 18 June 1919, the outgoing Chairman Michael Murphy was elected on his own casting vote, after being questioned about his Sinn Féin credentials, and the fact that he was a Justice of the Peace.³³

With the suppression of many branches of advanced nationalism, renewed attempts at Home Rule were on the government's political agenda in early 1920. Townshend believed that British policy contained a fatal contradiction claiming that,

It was committed to self-government, but it required that the Irish people follow British rules of constitutional behaviour. It rested on the assumption that the great majority of Irish people remained law-abiding moderates, who would accept a Home Rule settlement that fell far short of independence.³⁴

Reflecting the mood of many nationalists, the moderate *Sligo Champion* was adamant that 'any lowering of the flag at the present time, or any compromise or trucking with the half measures of British statesmen would be rightly regarded as a betrayal of the living and an outrage on the dead'.³⁵ According to Laffan, as a result of the ongoing suppression of Sinn Féin, political activity was at a standstill nationwide and, 'as two rival armies fought each other on Dublin streets and country lanes there often seemed to be little for politicians and other politicians to do except keep their heads down and wait for the shooting to stop'.³⁶

Nevertheless, locally elected bodies continued to operate, and it was Scottish born Chief Secretary Iain Macpherson's Education Bill that caused major consternation among Ireland's hierarchy, clergy and public representatives in early 1920. Despite the Bill's proposals for the

³² *RH*, 14 June 1919.

³³ *LO*, 21 June 1919.

³⁴ Townshend, *Republic*, p.140.

³⁵ *SC*, 7 Feb. 1920.

³⁶ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.284.

establishment of locally elected school committees with revenue raising powers from local rates, and security of employment and pension rights for teachers, it received widespread condemnation from the clergy because the Bill would dilute church power over education. Archbishop Hoare, in his 1920 Lenten pastoral message, condemned the Bill declaring that,

what would the value of any instruction, if it were given as in France in a school from which God is banished? You can bend the tree while it is a sapling, but not when it has grown to maturity. And if the teacher, or the system has sown Godless, heretical secular seed in the youthful mind, it is hard to expect good fruit.³⁷

Sinn Féin, like the Irish Party in the past, followed the direction of its spiritual leaders. At its quarterly meeting on 18 February 1920, Leitrim County Council supported the position of the Catholic Church and described the Bill as ‘a menace to the religion of our children, and an effort by a Scotch importation to anglicise our children’.³⁸ Nationwide opposition to the Bill contributed to the resignation of the Chief Secretary in April 1920, and the dropping of the bill eight months later.³⁹

While many individual members of local councils transferred their loyalty freely from constitutional to advanced nationalism, the extent of adherence to militant republicanism is open to question. Mitchell argued that while there was support for violence in the pursuit of self-government, there was also widespread opposition from many quarters. By late 1919, increasing levels of political violence were condemned by the Catholic hierarchy and in the press. A number of local authorities, including Westmeath, Meath, and Dublin and Cork city councils, passed resolutions against the campaign of violence. Leitrim County Council passed a similar resolution condemning political violence at their November 1919 meeting.⁴⁰ At the request of the South Leitrim Sinn Féin Executive, the November 1919 resolution was raised by Councillor Michael McGrath, who proposed in February 1920, that the Council rescind the resolution. Despite protracted debate, the original motion of condemnation stood on a 10-5 vote.⁴¹

The opportunity to test the extent of Sinn Féin electoral support in the county, was provided at the 1920 local elections. No local elections had taken place since 1914, and the

³⁷ *LO*, 21 Feb. 1920.

³⁸ *LO*, 21 Feb. 1920.

³⁹ Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government*, pp 95-97.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government*, p.72.

⁴¹ *LO*, 21 Feb. 1920.

composition of the electorate had changed radically with the passing into law of the Representation of the People Act of 1918. A feature of the 1920 elections was the introduction of proportional representation, with the primary aim of ensuring a fairer representation for minority parties in the poll. Nationally, the elections were held in two stages, the urban area elections in January 1920, and the rural areas in June 1920, and both further consolidated Sinn Féin's hold on political power. The 15 January elections saw Sinn Féin, Labour and other nationalists winning control of 172 of the 206 borough and urban district councils. The rural elections in June showed a much greater level of support for Sinn Féin who took control of 338 of the 393 county and rural councils, with many areas uncontested.⁴² All of Leitrim's district and county council electoral areas, except Manorhamilton, remained uncontested. Here, Irish Party stalwarts Bernard Connolly and Thomas McGovern were comprehensively defeated, and Patrick McDermott, brother of executed 1916 leader, Seán MacDiarmada, was elected to the county council.

At Mohill District Council, which had witnessed the early transfer of loyalty to Sinn Féin in 1917, 'all the candidates returned in the whole of the Mohill district were representative of the Sinn Féin principles.'⁴³ In both district councils in the Carrick area, the elections were uncontested with 23 Sinn Féin and two Labour candidates returned unopposed. Prior to the Carrick district council nominations being received, tension was evident between the Labour and Sinn Féin factions. At a meeting of the Carrick branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union prior to the election, William O'Reilly, district organiser of the union, was insistent that Labour would contest the seat and called for support for the Labour nominee Joe McCormack, declaring that, 'no trade unionist could support anyone standing in the name of Labour but Mr McCormack, and in the past they had too many hypocrites pleading to labour at election times and forgetting them when their ambitions were attained'.⁴⁴ With the withdrawal of independent candidate Edward Doyle, an election contest was avoided, with six nominations received for the six seats on the council. Unlike in many of the urban municipal elections held in January 1920, when Labour won 324 seats to Sinn Féin's 422, Labour only received 11% of the vote in contested county and rural council elections in June demonstrating the difference of appeal for the party in many rural areas.⁴⁵ Laffan observed that even at a time

⁴² Philpin, Charles H.E., *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland* (Cambridge, 2002), p.145; Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.327.?

⁴³ *LO*, 15 May 1920.

⁴⁴ *LO*, 1 May 1920.

⁴⁵ Francis Costello, *The Irish Revolution and its Aftermath 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2003), p.159.

when the Irish Transport Worker's Union had reached its peak in terms of membership, union solidarity did not translate into votes at the ballot box.⁴⁶

The *Leitrim Observer's* post-election analysis claimed that despite the suppression of Sinn Féin,

the determination to be free has in the intervening period increased rather than diminished, and it is obvious that the various parties which tried to carry the country in favour of a Home Rule settlement have almost completely lost their followers who are now to be numbered among the supporters of the Republican movement.⁴⁷

The newspaper's advice to the newly-elected councils was that, 'it was the primary duty of Republicans to see that the old and evil system is completely swept away and instead is established a system clean in its every detail.'⁴⁸

The political message to government was that the people supported Sinn Féin in large numbers, and the transfer of political power that was demonstrated nationally in December 1918, was replicated at local council level. Politically, the doctrine of constitutional nationalism was a spent force in Leitrim as elsewhere, and while the voice of organised labour was present in the county, it had to take a back seat to advanced nationalism. Republicans had now received a comprehensive mandate from the Irish people, and the Dáil government, with the assistance of local government, could advance the establishment of the counter-state.

4.4 Civil disobedience and the counter state

Mitchell argued that the alternative government of Dáil Éireann "blossomed" in the summer of 1920. Its implementation of a separate system of civil administration in areas such as local government and justice firmly established it as the *de facto* government of Ireland. The Dáil and its leaders, both nationally and locally, became fully preoccupied with asserting their authority across nationalist Ireland. Fitzpatrick believed that despite widespread violence, by mid-1920, the local elections had consolidated Sinn Féin support in local government.⁴⁹ In this changing environment, how did local government and civil society operate under Leitrim's new power brokers? In examining how the wider population responded, the emergence of

⁴⁶ Michael Laffan, "'Labour must wait': Ireland's conservative revolution' in Patrick J. Corish (ed.), *Radicals, Rebels and Establishments* (Belfast, 1985), p.215.

⁴⁷ *LO*, 12 June 1920.

⁴⁸ *LO*, 5 June 1920.

⁴⁹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.143.

farming and labour organisations will be explored. Finally, the reaction of the authorities to developments in Leitrim will be assessed.

In a spirit of conciliation, the first act of the newly elected Chairman of Manorhamilton District Council, Sinn Féin leader Ben Maguire, was to pay tribute to the work of the outgoing Council who “might not be perfect in every detail, but at the same time they appreciated all the good work that they had done”.⁵⁰ At the town’s local Board of Guardians, one of the first acts of the new body was a resolution expunging from the record of the Board a previous resolution condemning the 1916 Easter Rising.⁵¹ Leitrim County Council’s first post-election meeting on 16 June 1920 elected Gaelic League activist Peadar Keaney as its Chairman, and former prisoner Tim Ward as Vice -Chairman. In his acceptance speech, Keaney stated:

Where they had contests in the county they made the issue one of the Irish Republic versus the British Empire, and they were elected on the Irish Republic issue and came here to act in accordance with their pledge at the election. The responsibility was great, but he hoped to have the co-operation of the young and old men on the Council. The farming and business interests were represented on the Council, and when he spoke of the farmers he might say they were labourers, not big ranchers, and they had therefore the farming and business and labour interests represented.⁵²

Assertions of their republican credentials were widespread among the newly elected councils. Leitrim County Council pledged allegiance to Dáil Éireann, and declared that, ‘the First Republican Council of Leitrim ostentatiously congratulated the forces of the IRA on their many successes during the past year, and the many fortresses and seats of oppression destroyed, and we earnestly hope that they may continue their successes until victory crowns their arms’.⁵³ Actions ranging from the replacement of the RIC by Volunteers in the escort of mentally ill patients, to the flying of the tricolour over buildings, were early manifestations of the regime change on local bodies in the county. Both Leitrim County Council, and Mohill District Council, refused to repair roads claiming that in doing so they were only aiding Ireland’s enemies.

Relations with the Local Government Board (LGB) provided the new councils with a serious dilemma. The Dáil, fearing the loss of British revenue which accounted for nearly

⁵⁰ *LO*, 26 June 1920.

⁵¹ Minutes of meeting of Manorhamilton Board of Guardians, 24 June 1920, Leitrim County Library.

⁵² *LO*, 19 June 1920.

⁵³ Paul Mulvey (NAI, BMH, WS 1265, p.3)

twenty per cent of local authority funding, was happy for councils to pledge allegiance to Dáil Éireann while continuing to receive revenue from the LGB.⁵⁴ Despite the Dáil initially requesting local councils to correspond with the LGB, both Carrick and Mohill councils refused to co-operate with either the LGB or the Surveyor of Taxes. Both councils ordered the burning of all correspondence received from both bodies.⁵⁵ As a result of the widespread non-submission of accounts for audit, the British government issued an ultimatum on 29 July 1920 that any council refusing to co-operate with audits would no longer receive funds from the Board. The Dáil responded to this ultimatum by ordering councils to replace banks with trustees in order to conduct their financial affairs.⁵⁶ According to Volunteer Paul Mulvey, a Leitrim County Council clerk, a paymaster arrangement whereby men of standing in the community would conduct council business through their own personal accounts, was used in the collection of local rates. Unlike other areas of the country, Mulvey recalled that ‘the rate collectors were exceptionally loyal to the new council and handed up the rates collected’.⁵⁷

In its attempts to hamper the rival civil administration, both police and military often raided council meetings, and confiscated minute books.⁵⁸ One of the most serious incidents took place in Carrick on 21 July 1920 where a joint meeting of Roscommon and Leitrim County Councils was hosting a delegation from the Dáil Commission of Inquiry into the Resources and Industries of Ireland led by Darrell Figgis and Maurice Moore. During the course of the meeting, an army raiding party led by a Lieutenant Crowther entered the council room and arrested Peadar Keaney and Darrell Figgis, and ordered that a rope be procured to hang them.⁵⁹ Figgis recalled that following the discovery of Sinn Féin documentation in his possession, he was ‘sentenced to be hanged, the sentence to be executed at once without delay’.⁶⁰ The intervention of the local Crown Clerk, Robert Lonsdale, who was alerted to the incident, ensured that Figgis was taken from the military and conveyed to the local RIC station where he was released. Crowther was subsequently detained in military custody and relieved of his duties on grounds of mental instability.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Farry, *Sligo*, p.75.

⁵⁵ *LO*, 10 July 1920.

⁵⁶ Farry, *Sligo*, p.75.

⁵⁷ Paul Mulvey (NAI, BMH, WS 1265, p.4).

⁵⁸ *RH*, 11 Sept.1920.

⁵⁹ Paul Mulvey (NAI, BMH, WS 1265, p.40).

⁶⁰ Darrell Figgis, *Recollections of the Irish War* (London, 1927), p.305.

⁶¹ *RH*, 24 July 1920; *LO*, 24 July 1920.

According to Laffan, one of the most remarkable achievements of the Dáil was the establishment of republican arbitration courts, which were organised by the party's branches and local executives in a three-tiered structure including parish, district and circuit courts.⁶² This new system of the administration of justice totally undermined the crown courts throughout most of Ireland. Despite the presentation of white gloves at Manorhamilton Quarter Sessions in late May 1920, this symbolic gesture was even questioned by members of the judiciary. At the Leitrim Summer Assizes at Carrick in July 1920, Justice Pim described the presentation of white gloves as a "mockery". According to Pim, the reason why there was so little court business was because of intimidation by third parties of jurors not to attend, and pressure being exerted on the public not to bring cases.⁶³ As a result, crown court activity during this period was minimal and confined to malicious damage claims, and public house licence transfers. Throughout the summer of 1920, a steady stream of Dáil court activity operated across the county dealing with a range of cases including minor land disputes, assault, and theft. Kotsonouris refers to the transfer of court administration to 'shabby halls or outhouses, or rooms above shops to be decided by men, and sometimes women, unremarkable as themselves'.⁶⁴

As part of the administration of justice, local Volunteers took an active part in the enforcement of court decisions. Volunteers across the county were also involved in a range of activities including area patrols, recovery of stolen property, public house licencing enforcement and traffic duties.⁶⁵ At Kiltoghert Parish Court, the court chairman advised that a range of public order offences, including abusive language and drunkenness, would be dealt with severely by the courts 'as the present time demanded a spirit of sobriety and friendship amongst the people, who are engaged in the resurrection of their national ideals and the regeneration of their country'.⁶⁶ The wide range of policing activity was demonstrated, when, following a request from a local priest, the local Volunteers 'rounded up a number of people who were standing outside the church during the sermon, and ordered them to go inside and listen'.⁶⁷

⁶² Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.310.

⁶³ *LO*, 10 July 1920.

⁶⁴ Mary Kotsonouris, *Retreat from Revolution: The Dáil Courts 1920-24* (Dublin, 1994), p.12.

⁶⁵ *SC*, 3 July 1920.

⁶⁶ *LO*, 14 Aug. 1920.

⁶⁷ *RH*, 14 Aug. 1920.

By the summer of 1920, republican courts were well established and operating unhindered with the support of the general public and the legal profession.⁶⁸ While court personnel changed, the majority of cases before the republican courts still revolved around land and property disputes. Among a sample of Leitrim cases in the Court Registrar returns in 1921 were possession of a house, rights of way and possession of a byre.⁶⁹ While there was initial toleration of these courts, government policy changed in late August 1920. Attempts to hinder the development of republican local administration were enhanced through the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act which altered government policy from tolerance to repression resulting in court sittings being raided on an ongoing basis across the county.⁷⁰ While republican courts gained the support of much of the public, Fitzpatrick argued that their success was circumscribed by the weakness of central direction, undue local influences, and disruption by both the police and military.⁷¹

The operation of the courts was significant, as it demonstrated that civil disobedience was an alternate mode of resistance.. According to Costello, the successful operation of these courts in relatively peaceful counties such as Leitrim, Galway and Laois demonstrated that British rule in Ireland was still threatened by one of the more potent aspects of non-violent republicanism.⁷² The actions of Sinn Féin activists in establishing an alternative apparatus of public administration was pioneering and far-reaching in resisting British rule. Not only did republicans defy the government, but they ensured through a combination of persuasion and intimidation, that the institutions of government were boycotted.⁷³

With a continuing policy of repression across Ireland, the passing of the Government of Ireland Act on 23 December 1920 was the British Cabinet's attempt to finally introduce Home Rule. The *Sligo Champion* observed that, 'the English government gives a Christmas box to Ireland, a Partition Bill (sic) jocosely called "Home Rule for Ireland". No one wants it, and no one is bothering about its provisions'.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Costello, *The Irish Revolution and its Aftermath*, p.197.

⁶⁹ South Leitrim Court Registrar Returns for Quarter End 31 December 1921, Dáil Éireann Courts Commission, NAI, DE 10/36.

⁷⁰ *LO*, 2 Oct.1920; *LO*, 16 Oct. 1920.

⁷¹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.152.

⁷² Costello, *The Irish Revolution and its Aftermath*, p.197.

⁷³ Scott, *Domination*, p.129.

⁷⁴ *SC*, 1 Jan. 1921.

At local level, councils were preoccupied with the minutiae of gully filling and sheep dipping in the face of mounting disruption and raids from the authorities. At Manorhamilton in April 1921, the local Board of Guardians meeting was raided, and following an inspection of the minute book, the chairman Ben Maguire was arrested and subsequently imprisoned.⁷⁵ Murphy identified the upsurge in violence in the winter and spring of 1920-21 as the reason for the introduction of mass internment, and observed that ‘Sinn Féin representatives who had gained control of local government in much of Ireland during 1920, were convenient targets for internment although many were not active Volunteers.’⁷⁶ The arrest of many councillors, and travel disruption across the county also hampered the administration of local government. By July 1921, the Dáil had refused a request from Mohill District Council to operate a quorum of three people for council meetings. The background to the Mohill request was the fact that the council had to disqualify seven members for non-attendance. Five of the bad attenders were either in jail or on the run.⁷⁷

Another operational issue for local councils was lack of finance due to a cessation of grant aid, and non-payment of rates. In January 1921 Leitrim County Council announced that owing to their financial position they were unable to clean or repair public roads.⁷⁸ The decision to sell the dispensaries and Board of Guardian houses in Dromahair and Manorhamilton due to financial constraints encountered much local opposition from both within and outside the council chamber. James McGorin, president of the local guardians, observed that, ‘If we are to sell those houses, and next year we are again in financial difficulties and sell something else, we will soon have nothing to sell, and when things are settled down we will have to build and get into some property again’.⁷⁹

While agrarian unrest swept across Galway, Mayo and Roscommon in early 1920, Leitrim, with the exception of the Gowel and Carrick areas, did not witness any large scale agitation in the period. The main reasons were the comparative absence of large-scale grazier farms in the county, and the fact that the rate of land purchase by tenant farmers was higher than in neighbouring counties. At Gowel, the arrival home from America of Jim Galton in June 1921 witnessed increased social unrest in the area. Galton, a Volunteer and former member of the American Communist Party, advocated widespread land distribution. Galton’s

⁷⁵ SC, 23 Apr. 1921.

⁷⁶ Murphy, *Imprisonment*, p.197.

⁷⁷ RH, 6 Aug. 1921.

⁷⁸ *Roscommon Journal*, 1 Jan. 1921.

⁷⁹ SC, 15 Jan. 1921.

activities caused suspicion among many locals and Sinn Féin leaders who feared the land issue would distract attention from the national question. According to Dooley, the formation of the National Land Bank by the Dáil in December 1919, provided loans to the landless and to owners of uneconomic holdings to acquire additional land.⁸⁰ As a result, co-operative societies were formed in many areas to facilitate the purchase of untenanted land. By 1921, the bank had lent a total of £316,590 to thirty-five societies with a membership of eight hundred, for the purchase of nearly 16,000 acres.⁸¹ In Leitrim one society was formed in the Carrick district which facilitated the purchase of the Jamestown estate for £6,730. The campaign to redistribute the Jamestown land was led by local curate Fr. O'Farrell, who was adamant that the campaign to redistribute the land would be peaceful, and conducted on the basis of social justice and the common agreed principle of 'Ireland for the Irish, and the land for the people'.⁸² At nearby Carrick, local parish priest Canon O' Reilly led a campaign which resulted in the purchase of a seventy-five acre farm in Carrick for distribution amongst the landless and uneconomic landowners of the area. While the operations of the Land Bank were relatively modest, it prevented widespread violent land agitation, and was an expression of the Dáil's commitment to tackling the question of land ownership.⁸³

Political agitation was not the sole preserve of Sinn Féin, and Leitrim's farmers were actively involved in late 1919 in the formation of the Irish Farmer's Union (IFU). This period coincided with the suppression of Sinn Féin, and many Sinn Féin members in Leitrim were active in the Union. A branch and executive network was established throughout the county in late 1919 and early 1920. At a meeting in Fenagh in November 1919, with Michael Murphy Sinn Féin Chairman of Leitrim County Council presiding, the large crowd was told that,

the farmers need no longer remain the only disorganised and inarticulate portion of the community. They had now their Union and their newspaper to ventilate their grievances and to keep them informed of those happenings that most concern them. They in Leitrim should now march on with the farmers all over the country in this Union of brotherhood and progress.⁸⁴

Tensions were evident between the Irish Farmer's Union and labour unions across Ireland, with a strike embargo by organised labour preventing the export of pork and butter products.

⁸⁰ Terence Dooley, *"The Land for the People", The Land Question in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 2004), p.82.

⁸¹ Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government*, p.89.

⁸² *LO*, 27 Mar. 1920.

⁸³ Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government*, p.89.

⁸⁴ *LO*, 15 Nov. 1919.

According to Larry Hayden, IFU county secretary, the embargo was a very serious issue for farmers who claimed that,

if labour called for arbitration before wielding the strike weapon he would venture to say that the farmers through the medium of their organisation would go half way to meet their demands, and in all probability both parties would come to a satisfactory settlement for both consumer and producer.⁸⁵

While police reports highlighted the national growth of the Irish Transport Workers' Union (ITWU), this growth was marginal in Leitrim during the period.⁸⁶ By early 1920, the ITWU had six branches and nearly 400 members in the county, primarily composed of shop assistants, and labourers in local councils. Unlike other counties, where farm labourers formed large segments of the union, the lack of large farms in Leitrim ensured an absence of this cohort from the county's union branches. Despite a relatively narrow base of union membership, as early as 1919, May Day was observed as a general holiday for shop workers in both Carrick and Ballinamore. With an absence of industrial unrest, trade union activity revolved around issues of increased wages for council labourers, and the implementation of the Shop Hours Act, giving shop workers a weekly half-day holiday.⁸⁷ In pay negotiations on behalf of shop assistants, the Ballinamore branch of the ITWU reported that local employers were friendly and acceded to their demands 'without any trouble'.⁸⁸

Other union activity involved the local Trades and Labour Council in Carrick campaigning for the reduction of food prices, and condemning alleged profiteering by local shopkeepers.⁸⁹ In May 1920, agreement was reached between the union and employers on wage increases for outdoor labourers from 32s to 40s, and their indoor counterparts from 16s to £1. The only serious industrial unrest that occurred was the seizure of a coal pit by miners on the Leitrim side of the county bounds with Roscommon in June 1921. In what has often been described as 'the Arigna Soviet', nine miners took control of one of the local mines and sold coal directly to the public following the breakdown of wage talks with the Transport Workers' Union. After court action was instituted by the mine owners, the *Freeman's Journal* compared the Arigna incident to the workers takeover of Knocklong Creamery in Limerick.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ LO, 1 May 1920.

⁸⁶ CI Report, Leitrim, Dec. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/110).

⁸⁷ LO, 16 Aug. 1919.

⁸⁸ LO, 11 Oct. 1919.

⁸⁹ RH, 13 Aug. 1921.

⁹⁰ RH, 4 June 1921.

The agitation in Arigna, and at Knocklong and Bruree in Co. Limerick, was only of a short term nature, and order was restored after negotiation.⁹¹ Following the widespread dismissal of Catholic workers in Belfast, the union also supported a boycott of Belfast goods initiated by Dáil Éireann. At an ITWU meeting in Carrick, William O'Reilly declared that no union member would handle Belfast goods in opposition to attempts by 'the capitalist class of Orangemen to break up the trade union movement in that city which has done much to elevate the position of the workers of all creeds and classes and further the cause of Irish nationality'.⁹²

While support for Labour was marginal in a small-farm dominated rural economy, support for striking railway workers was demonstrated in Carrick in June 1920. At an after-Mass collection in Carrick to raise funds for the railwaymen who were dismissed from employment because they refused to facilitate the movement of munitions for the British army, over £60 was collected.⁹³ Labour gatherings were also subject to suppression by the military, and following a military raid on a union meeting at Dromahair in April 1920, the local branch asserted the long established right of labour to hold meetings for the benefits of members, declaring that 'we do not think it is necessary to ask any permit from military or other forces'.⁹⁴

Following the 1920 local elections, the Dáil and its local Sinn Féin party machine implemented their authority across Ireland. Not only did they acquire a mandate from the people, but republican administrators successfully implemented their authority in a wide range of areas including local government and courts administration. Their success was based on achieving both the support of and respect from the general public for efficient and fair governance. Despite a wide range of attempts by government to stymie the operation of the counter state, republican administrators, not unlike their military comrades, ensured that Ireland was lost to Britain.

4.5 Truce and Treaty

With the announcement of the Truce in July 1921, local newspapers welcomed the cessation of hostilities. The *Sligo Champion* noted that, 'the feelings of joy and happiness which pervaded the atmosphere were evidenced no less in the Crown forces in the country than in the demeanour of the Irish people themselves'.⁹⁵ Although welcoming the announcement of the

⁹¹ Laffan, 'Labour must wait', p.210.

⁹² *RH*, 11 Sept.1920.

⁹³ *LO*, 3 July 1920.

⁹⁴ *SC*, 16 Apr. 1921.

⁹⁵ *SC*, 16 July 1921.

Truce, the *Roscommon Herald* warned that if any future settlement was not just, ‘the rivers of blood and tears, the terror and agony brought to hundreds of thousands of homes, all would rise up in judgement if there were a paltry surrender’.⁹⁶ The terms of the Truce ensured that the Dáil government operated alongside its British counterpart, and republicans prepared for the formal establishment of new agencies of state. What effect did the Truce have on local government administration in the county, and how was the subsequent Anglo-Irish Treaty, and transfer of power received in Leitrim?

Mitchell believed that the collection of rates was one of the most serious challenges facing the *de facto* political authority of Ireland.⁹⁷ A politically unstable environment ensured that many ratepayers took advantage of the situation to avoid or delay paying rates. Rate collection proved to be the most pressing issue facing Leitrim County Council. By September 1921, only £1,000 of £50,000 due had been collected.⁹⁸ According to some councillors, the reasons for non-payment included poor economic conditions for ratepayers, and a fear that people would have to pay twice to both Dáil and Crown structures.⁹⁹ Large amounts dating back to 1920 remained uncollected, and Hughes observed that by October 1921, ‘the situation in Leitrim was desperate’.¹⁰⁰

Reports of intimidation of rate collectors, the withholding of rates collected, and council disputes with rate collectors added to the chaos. In late 1921, a Dáil Inspector, attending an anti-rates meeting in Leitrim to explain the need for payment, had to fire shots over the heads of the unreceptive crowd to escape. The rates issue in the county was so serious that it merited discussion at Cabinet, where William T. Cosgrave was persuaded not to resort to more drastic methods of rate collection for fear of alienating the public.¹⁰¹ By November 1921, the Council threatened to sack some rate collectors for non-collection, and requested the public ‘to support them in the administration of the affairs of the county’.¹⁰² At a meeting in Drumsna, James Dolan admitted that the 7s-3d in the pound was a high rate, and claimed that, ‘it was only a war rate and was but a small sacrifice the people of County Leitrim were asked to make’.¹⁰³ Despite

⁹⁶ *RH*, 2 July 1921.

⁹⁷ Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government*, p.160.

⁹⁸ Daly, *Buffer State*, p.89.

⁹⁹ *RH*, 5 Nov. 1921.

¹⁰⁰ Brian Hughes, *Defying the IRA? Intimidation, Coercion, and Communities during the Irish Revolution* (Liverpool, 2016), p.71.

¹⁰¹ Daly, *Buffer State*, p.89.

¹⁰² *RH*, 5 Nov. 1921.

¹⁰³ *RH*, 19 Nov. 1921.

such pleadings, Hughes has argued that a combination of poor economic conditions, political opportunism and self-interest ensured widespread non-payment of rates throughout Leitrim.¹⁰⁴

By December 1921, the situation was so desperate in Leitrim, that an IRA public proclamation had to be issued by General Seán MacEoin (now Commandant of the IRA's Western Division) ordering all rate payers to pay within twenty-one days, or be 'treated with the utmost vigour'.¹⁰⁵ Despite all the pleas and threats, the issue of non-payment persisted into the following year, even though the rate of 3s-2d in the pound was the lowest on record.¹⁰⁶ At a meeting of the County Council on 15 April 1922, a deputation from Kinlough Farmer's Union pleaded inability to pay claiming that 1921 'was the worst year for farmers since the famine'.¹⁰⁷ The County Secretary claimed that the collection record across the county of all rate collectors was bad, with only £36,782 collected and £49,544 still outstanding in April 1922.¹⁰⁸ The impracticality of the County Council requesting the IRA to protect the local rate collectors, was demonstrated by the IRA's refusal to enforce court decrees as they themselves were active in the anti-rates campaign.¹⁰⁹ The implications of decreased revenue was little or no road repairs, and wage reductions to road labourers from £1-16s to £1-7s a week. Despite criticism of the county council for reducing wages, and attempts by the Irish Transport Workers' Union to have the wage reduction policy reversed, the Council's position remained unchanged.

With increasing financial pressure on local government finances, the Dáil administration initiated a policy of the amalgamation of Poor Law Unions, as multiple Unions carrying out similar functions made little sense. The proposals in the case of Leitrim were to abolish Kinlough and Ballinamore Unions, and retain Unions at Carrick, Mohill and Manorhamilton. Predictably, widespread opposition ensued from local factions in the affected areas. Myles Prior, Relieving Officer at Ballinamore Union, protested against closure, and questioned, 'how will a poor father or mother see their sick child if the child is in a hospital twenty or thirty miles away'.¹¹⁰ Despite all the arguments relating to patient welfare, Coleman believed that the chief reasons for opposition to such amalgamations was the loss of local employment.¹¹¹ Following Union rationalisation in the county, political tensions emerged

¹⁰⁴ Hughes, *Defying*, pp 71-73.

¹⁰⁵ *RH*, 3 Dec. 1921.

¹⁰⁶ *SC*, 4 Mar. 1922.

¹⁰⁷ *RH*, 15 Apr. 1922.

¹⁰⁸ *RH*, 15 Apr. 1922.

¹⁰⁹ *RH*, 17 June 1922.

¹¹⁰ *RH*, 3 Sept. 1921.

¹¹¹ Coleman, *Longford*, p.98.

between the three remaining Unions. Daly observed that, ‘opposition was positively vociferous in Co. Leitrim where Carrick-on-Shannon, Mohill and Manorhamilton each asserted its claim to secure the county hospital or county home’.¹¹² On 2 November 1921, a Conference of Union delegates voted to adopt a report of the Local Government Medical Inspector recommending a county home and hospital in Manorhamilton, and a district hospital and county infirmary at Carrick. The decision angered the Chairman of Leitrim County Council, Tim Ward from Mohill, who alleged that ‘wire pulling had been carried on, and he wished the public to know that’.¹¹³

While the issue of rates and Union amalgamations were some of the more important issues facing local councils, the more mundane issues of supply contracts to local workhouses, education, road repairs, and wage rates also preoccupied the local bodies. Despite widespread criticism from local councillors, strict adherence to Dáil procedures prevented the appointment of an Assistant Surveyor for the county in September 1921.¹¹⁴ A similar directive ensured that two tillage experts were not retained by the County Committee of Agriculture because of the budgetary situation.¹¹⁵ While both republican and crown courts continued to operate, the business of the latter was composed of a vast array of compensation claims linked to political violence.

Like their counterparts in Sligo and Longford, local Sinn Féin clubs and IRA units attempted to exert influence on council appointments.¹¹⁶ In January 1922, Leitrim County Council decided that roads foremen would be chosen by local Sinn Féin clubs, in consultation with the County Surveyor, Eugene O’Neill Clarke.¹¹⁷ Despite the Department of Local Government instructing Clarke not to cooperate with the local Sinn Féin clubs, the local government inspector in the county advised that the County Surveyor was powerless, concluding that, ‘every Sinn Féin Club in County Leitrim is a County Council’.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, Dáil inspectors continued to attempt to prevent clientilism by the county’s new power brokers. The process of appointment to three vacant posts as temporary rate collectors in August 1920 involved the Leitrim Sinn Féin Executive forwarding twelve names to the

¹¹² Daly, *Buffer State* p.75.

¹¹³ RH, 5 Nov. 1921.

¹¹⁴ RH, 24 Sept. 1921.

¹¹⁵ RH, 22 Oct. 1921.

¹¹⁶ Farry, *Sligo*, p.82; Coleman, *Longford*, p.100.

¹¹⁷ RH, 4 Feb. 1922.

¹¹⁸ Daly, *Buffer State*, p.85.

council, and the appointments were made in consultation with the Dáil local government inspector at a private council meeting.¹¹⁹ Dáil inspectors were also present at a meeting of the Council's Finance Committee when the issue of unvouched expenses for Volunteers taking patients to Sligo Asylum was raised. Admonishing the council for its policy, the inspector stated that, 'the county council has no authority to make payment for a lunatic without vouchers'.¹²⁰

While advanced nationalists had continuously criticised the old Irish Party of patronage and clientism, the new power brokers in Leitrim continued this practice in the appointment of road foremen and labourers. While acknowledging the establishment of the Civil Service Commission, and the Local Appointments Commission, as an attempt by the government in the 1920s to introduce meritocracy to senior public appointments, Elaine Byrne recognised that local councillors could still make appointments to lesser grades, which continued the ancient practice of dispensing patronage.¹²¹ Tensions between the County Council and the County Surveyor, Eugene O'Neill Clarke resulted in the Council removing the authority of appointment from the County Surveyor. Patronage also extended to appointments at the new County Home and Infirmary. A meeting of the Leitrim County Home Committee in April 1922 heard that there were a number of suitably qualified candidates from Leitrim, Antrim, Sligo and Sunderland, England applying for two nursing posts. Committee member Ben Maguire concluded that, 'we need consider none but those from Leitrim', and advised that the posts be allocated between North and South Leitrim applicants, resulting in the appointments of Miss Ward from Arigna, and Miss O'Rourke from Kiltyclogher to the posts.¹²²

Following nearly five months of negotiations between British and Irish representatives, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed on 6 December 1921. British recognition of Irish autonomy, and the complete control of internal affairs within the twenty-six southern counties were among some of the benefits of the agreement. Retaining the King as head of state, partition and a continuation of a constitutional link with the Empire ensured opposition to the Treaty from Eamon De Valera and his supporters. Both public opinion and a large number of Dáil deputies

¹¹⁹ *RH*, 27 Aug. 1921.

¹²⁰ *RH*, 5 Nov. 1921.

¹²¹ Elaine Byrne, *Political Corruption in Ireland 1922-2010: A Crooked Harp?* (Manchester, 2012), p.31.

¹²² *SC*, 8 Apr. 1922.

supported the agreement on the basis of renewed peace, and the view that the Treaty was a “stepping stone” to eventual reunification and separation from the Crown.¹²³

The *Roscommon Herald* reported that news of the signing of the Treaty witnessed ‘much public rejoicing throughout County Leitrim’.¹²⁴ One of the immediate consequences of the Treaty was the release of prisoners, who were welcomed home at a series of rallies throughout the county. The question of prisoner releases remained a major issue for republicans through the autumn and winter of 1921. While a small number of prominent republican leaders were released following the truce, the majority remained incarcerated in overcrowded camps and jails. The *Sligo Champion* challenged the English government that if they were sincere in seeking lasting peace that they should ‘release the prisoners without further delay’.¹²⁵ At a meeting of the Manorhamilton Board of Guardians in October 1921, members passed a resolution advising the Sinn Féin negotiators in London to suspend peace negotiations until ‘all the internees and political prisoners are released’.¹²⁶ Though most were freed in December, William Murphy has argued that those remaining in prison were ‘an unspoken and subsidiary consideration during the Treaty debates’.¹²⁷ At a welcome home rally for released prisoners at Carrick, Andrew Lavin advised those present, that on this issue they should ‘keep cool and keep their powder dry until Dáil Éireann had given its decision on the Peace Treaty’.¹²⁸

At Manorhamilton, Dolan praised Collins, Griffith and the Treaty negotiators proclaiming that ‘they had achieved a magnificent victory and signed a treaty which would be the foundation stone of peace and friendship between the two countries’.¹²⁹ Explaining his reasons for supporting the Treaty, Dolan intimated that the threat by Lloyd George of a resumption of war was realistic, but told the crowd that, ‘we shall be a free people. Some say our freedom is limited, but if we look around and examine the small nations of the world, we will realise that we will have to bow in this wicked world to the forces of might’.¹³⁰

While the public mood in the county was in favour of the Treaty, the *Roscommon Herald* reported that ‘there are many in favour of Mr De Valera’s attitude’. However, the

¹²³ Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government*, p.327.

¹²⁴ *RH*, 10 Dec. 1921.

¹²⁵ *SC*, 8 Oct. 1921.

¹²⁶ *SC*, 22 Oct. 1921.

¹²⁷ Murphy, *Imprisonment*, p.245.

¹²⁸ *RH*, 17 Dec. 1921.

¹²⁹ *RH*, 17 Dec. 1921.

¹³⁰ *SC*, 17 Dec. 1921.

Herald warned that ‘the men who vote for rejection would find it as difficult as the members of Redmond’s old Parliamentary Party to get re-elected in the next appeal for the verdict of the voters’.¹³¹ On 30 December 1921, the South Leitrim Comhairle Dáil Ceantair met and instructed its councillors to vote for acceptance of the Treaty. At a specially convened meeting following the Comhairle Dáil Ceantair meeting, Leitrim County Council ratified the Treaty, and instructed the four members of the newly constituted Leitrim-Roscommon North electoral area, James Dolan, Thomas Carter, Andrew Lavin and Count Plunkett to vote in favour of acceptance. While Plunkett and Dolan were experienced politicians, Carter, a shopkeeper from Drumreilly, and Lavin, a farmer from Boyle, were political novices.

In arguing for ratification of the Treaty, recently released prisoner Ben Maguire stated that he did not consider the agreement as a full measure of freedom that Seán MacDiarmada and Terence MacSwiney died for, but he added that ‘this treaty does not give us all we stood for, but it gives us certain things we never had before’.¹³² At the Dáil Treaty debates, Dolan again praised the plenipotentiaries, and declared that, ‘he did not look upon the Treaty as final and everlasting. All countries were developing, and this was only a step forward in the development of their country’.¹³³ The ratification of the Treaty by Dáil Éireann by a margin of seven votes on 7 January 1922, saw Dolan, Carter and Lavin taking the pro-Treaty side, with Count Plunkett supporting De Valera. The news of ratification was received in Carrick ‘by a marked quietness and calm that can be better imagined than explained’.¹³⁴ No public celebrations or political gatherings took place, and this atmosphere continued during the following months. The editorial of the *Roscommon Herald* reflected the prevailing mood of many people that the Treaty ‘gives a good means to an end and affords the Irish people the opportunity of being mistress in their own house, with a control, despite all the fights made in the centuries past, that could never be obtained before’.¹³⁵

With the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis in February 1922 avoiding a vote on the Treaty, and the postponement of the election for several months, the attempt to maintain unity was the main agenda item for national leaders. The *Sligo Champion* observed that, ‘the tables are turned,

¹³¹ *RH*, 31 Dec. 1921.

¹³² *RH*, 7 Jan. 1922.

¹³³ *ibid.*

¹³⁴ *RH*, 14 Jan. 1922

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

Ireland, not England is on trial before the world now, and unless reason prevails, disaster will ensue'.¹³⁶

At Carrick, local curate Father Dalton advised that in the interests of peace, no public political meetings should be held, and that people should be free to make up their own minds on how to vote in the upcoming election.¹³⁷ In Leitrim, major conflict between both sides was avoided, and preparations for the impending general election were carried out in a very low key fashion, with only one public meeting hosted by the pro-Treaty side taking place on 17 March 1922 at Carrick. Prior to the Carrick meeting, Andrew Lavin was kidnapped and held for a brief period by gunmen before being released. At the sparsely attended public meeting, Dolan was interrupted by a group of Volunteers who confronted him declaring that, 'you were in your feather bed when the boys on the run had a thorn quick for a pillow'. Both Carter and Dolan's respective addresses argued that the Treaty ensured that Ireland would finally take control of its own affairs, and closely resembled Michael Collins' speech at College Green, Dublin on 5 March 1922.¹³⁸ Collins told the crowd that the establishment of a Free State would eventually lead to Irish unity, but warned that if the Free State is destroyed, 'you destroy our hopes of national freedom, all realisation in our generation of the democratic right of the people of Ireland to rule themselves without interference from any outside power'.¹³⁹

While candidate selection meetings were held by both sides, the only visit by a prominent national leader took place at Aughnasheelin on Easter Sunday night when General Seán MacEoin attended a concert in the local parish hall. MacEoin declared that his visit to Aughnasheelin was only a social event and, that irrespective of political differences, people should be allowed to vote without any interference or intimidation.¹⁴⁰ With an agreement reached nationally on Sinn Féin panel candidates, no Labour candidate emerged in the Leitrim-North Roscommon constituency, and the four sitting TDs were selected. The only perceived opposition for the panel candidates was the selection of Roscommon-based Charles McCarthy by the Irish Farmer's Union. The withdrawal of McCarthy, following a meeting with the panel, prior to the submission of nominations on 6 June 1922, ensured that no contest would occur in Leitrim-North Roscommon. In response to the withdrawal, the panel candidates issued a statement stating that because 'the national battle is not yet won', they deemed the withdrawal

¹³⁶ SC, 18 Mar. 1922.

¹³⁷ *Roscommon Messenger*, 14 Jan. 1922.

¹³⁸ RH, 25 Mar. 1922.

¹³⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 6 Mar. 1922.

¹⁴⁰ RH, 29 Apr. 1922.

of McCarthy ‘as an act of patriotic duty which deserves the highest commendation’.¹⁴¹ Farmers’ representatives were following the path of Labour, and acceding to the demands of separatists who insisted upon the postponement of other issues until the national question was solved.

Early in 1922, Leitrim witnessed the withdrawal of crown forces across the county. The *Roscommon Herald* reported that ‘the IRA are vigilantly engaged in the protection of the people, and to their credit it may be said that everything is well conducted and law and order maintained’.¹⁴² Attempted cattle drives and land seizures at Drumlioni and Gowel resulted in the arrest and subsequent release of Jim Gralton.¹⁴³ While Sinn Féin had feared that forced land redistribution would alienate cross class support, the rulers of the new state also wished to enforce the law and prevent land seizures. In Leitrim, in addition to issuing a proclamation prohibiting land seizures, National Army officer, Commandant Harry McKeon, also confiscated the cattle of trespassers.¹⁴⁴

While the 1903 and 1909 Land Acts transformed land ownership across Ireland, by 1917 of the 570,000 land holdings in Ireland, 227,000 were of less than ten acres.¹⁴⁵ This situation often created resentment, and many land hungry smallholders did not hesitate to seize land if the opportunity presented itself. Bew argued that Sinn Féin policy shifted against the land-hungry, and from 1919 to 1921 the age-old tradition of ‘Irish rural collective action, such as it was, had degenerated into a morass of competing factional disputations’.¹⁴⁶

In Leitrim, the transfer of power was conducted in an orderly fashion, with the majority of people and their public representatives accepting the terms of the Treaty. The absence of candidates from organised labour and farmer’s representatives ensured that no contest took place in the 1922 election which contributed to a relatively peaceful local political environment. Apart from the rates issue, and minor land agitation, Leitrim did not witness the widespread political unrest that was associated with other regions. Continuity rather than change dominated local politics, with the new rulers consumed with the same broad range of issues as their predecessors. A culture of cautious conservatism, an emphasis on the fostering

¹⁴¹ *Roscommon Messenger*, 10 June 1922.

¹⁴² *RH*, 18 Feb. 1922.

¹⁴³ *RH*, 22 Apr. 1922.

¹⁴⁴ *RH*, 13 May 1922.

¹⁴⁵ Ferriter, *Rabble*, p.230.

¹⁴⁶ Bew, *Agrarian Radicalism*, p.234.

of nationalism, and the absence of a social or economic vision for an independent Ireland bore a striking resemblance to the old regime. Old wine was indeed being decanted into new bottles.

Chapter 5: War of Independence 1919-1921

5.1 Introduction

Less than a month after Sinn Féin's resounding victory at the 1918 general election, the first shots of Ireland's War of Independence were fired on 21 January 1919, when Volunteers of the South Tipperary brigade of the IRA killed two policemen, and stole a consignment of explosives destined for a local stone quarry. For the next two and a half years, as republican politicians and administrators built a parallel government to the crown's across Ireland, their military counterparts fought a bitter and often brutal war against crown forces. Unlike the republican counter state, which made consistent if modest inroads across nationalist Ireland, political violence varied from negligible levels in many areas, including Leitrim, to intense and highly concentrated levels in other counties. Hart's analysis of revolutionary violence in 1917-23 demonstrated that violence in Leitrim was the lowest in Connaught, and among the lowest nationwide. No IRA violence was recorded in the county in the 1917-19 period.¹ Nevertheless, despite low levels of IRA violence, in many counties the administration of crown rule was rendered impossible by campaigns of boycott, intimidation and civil disobedience.

The war itself developed in a number of distinct phases, and Michael Hopkinson argued that the limited nature of the conflict in its initial phase, 'scarcely merits the term war'.² From a period of minimal guerrilla activity in 1919, violence escalated throughout 1920, followed by a counter insurgency by crown forces from mid-1920 to 1921. This chapter will provide an analysis of events in Leitrim from January 1919 to July 1921, focussing on both IRA and crown forces activity in the period, and examining the effects of political violence on a rural community in north-west Ireland. Section One outlines the drift towards militancy in the county throughout 1919 and early 1920 that incorporated raids for arms, and campaigns of boycott and intimidation. A new phase of the conflict is examined in Section Two, which incorporated increasing levels of state violence and repression against local communities. Section Three examines a more intense phase of violence that commenced in early 1921, and witnessed the killing of republicans, crown forces and civilians. In summary, the chapter asks if the county followed a similar pattern to neighbouring counties in a drift to violence in the period, and what was the nature of resistance to British rule in Leitrim? How did the authorities react to republican resistance and what were the effects of crown force actions within the county? In

¹ Hart, *The IRA at War*, pp 34-41.

² Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p.79.

answering these research questions, current historiography of the 1919-1921 period will be explored, and its applicability to events in the county will be established.

5.2 Volunteer Formation and Motivation

Since 1917, republican strategy across Ireland revolved around building Irish Volunteer structures in every area to co-exist alongside the Sinn Féin party. How did Volunteer structures develop in the county during the period, and how active were Leitrim Volunteers in the early years of the conflict? As Sinn Féin's membership base and party structures grew extensively in Leitrim in the 1917-1919 period, military developments in the county did not match their political counterparts. Both Hart and Augusteijn cited family ties, friendships and a search for excitement as some of the motivating factors for joining Volunteer units.³ The first post-Rising Volunteer companies were formed at Ballinamore and Aughnasheelin in the spring of 1917. Hugh Brady recalled that 'our drill parades were held in public for the first six months or so, and we were a source of amusement and jibes for a lot of the locals who I suppose thought we were mad or fanatics'.⁴ Patrick Hargaden remembered similar experiences in the Gorvagh and Mohill areas in the summer of 1917, with the formation of small numbers of men into units with no arms or ammunition:

it was realised that when a few men in Dublin city and other centres could stand up to the might of the British Empire and give their lives for their country, then surely if the whole country was united in one effort there was a bigger chance of succeeding. In this way, when the young men met in groups, they would discuss such matters.⁵

Patrick Doherty recalled joining the Volunteers at Cloone in 1917, where Frank Maguire, a close relative of Doherty's was Company captain. Not only family connections, but family traditions of political activism was also recognised as a motivating factor for joining the Volunteers.⁶ Hugh Brady stated that his father was a former Fenian 'and was always a separatist, and it was from him that I developed my rebel tendencies'.⁷ Cumann na mBan member Lily Freyne from Rooskey on the Leitrim-Roscommon border also remembered a

³ Hart, *IRA and Its Enemies*, pp 207-208, Augusteijn, *Public Defiance*, pp 78-79.

⁴ Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, pp 1-2).

⁵ Patrick J. Hargaden (NAI, BMH, WS 1268, p.1).

⁶ Coleman, *Longford*, p.160.

⁷ Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, p. 1).

history of political activism in her family: ‘I was brought up in Fenianism, my uncle was a Fenian poet, all belonging to me were Fenian. It was all I heard at home’.⁸

By 1918, events at home and abroad attracted a steady influx of young men and women to the ranks of advanced nationalism. Bernard Sweeney recalled a mobilisation of Volunteers held at Aghoo Bridge during the East Cavan by-election in May 1918 to organise an electoral campaign team to support Arthur Griffith. Sweeney recounted his trip to Cavan stating,

we were carrying hurling sticks. At Bailieboro a party of military attacked us and smashed up our cycles and they took the hurling sticks we were carrying. Despite this interference, however, we succeeded in getting to our destination. There were about two hundred Leitrim men on this job.⁹

The threat of conscription in early 1918, and the arrival of Volunteer organiser and 1916 veteran Peter Paul Galligan, brought large numbers of recruits to local Volunteer companies. Brady emphasised the influence of Galligan. After his address to a meeting at Aughnasheelin in 1918, large numbers joined the the local Volunteer company bringing the unit’s strength to over two hundred men.¹⁰ However, as was reflected in many other regions across Ireland, once the conscription crisis abated, Volunteer numbers decreased dramatically, and Brady acknowledged that ‘the remainder of our big Company became inactive and therefore ceased to be members’.¹¹

The role of Cumann na mBan in the post-1916 environment mirrored that of the Irish Volunteers, with most activity devoted to assisting Sinn Féin in electioneering and political campaigns. Brigid Mullane from Sligo, a Cumann na mBan organiser, was responsible for much of the development of the movement in south Leitrim in 1918.¹² With the efforts of Mullane, and Kate Healy from Cloone, sixteen branches were established in the county by early 1918. During the 1918 general election campaign, Cumann na mBan were involved in a range of activities including providing hospitality to Sinn Féin election workers, and voting for ‘dead and absentee voters’.¹³

⁸ Lily Moffitt (Freyne) interview, November 1982, Iris.

⁹ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, pp 1-2).

¹⁰ Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, p.2).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Townshend, *The Republic*, p.51.

¹³ Margaret Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1267, p.2).

Marnie Hay identified a number of branches of na Fianna Eireann, the republican boy scout movement, in the south of the county at Carrick, Gorvagh, Cloone, Dromod, Drumsna and Mohill in 1921.¹⁴ According to Charles Pinkman, the South Leitrim Brigade's Intelligence Officer, na Fianna members carried dispatches and scouted for local Volunteer units.¹⁵

Throughout 1918 and 1919, Volunteers were primarily involved in assisting Sinn Féin in a range of activities including electoral campaigning, and the collection of the Dáil Loan. The first visible sign of outward Volunteer activity occurred at Ballinamore in July 1918 when the RIC observed between sixty and seventy young men, under the direction of Michael Mulligan, drilling in a field near the town. Mulligan was subsequently arrested, and he refused to recognise the court, which sentenced him to twelve months imprisonment for unlawful assembly. While police reports give no indication of an active Volunteer organisation, the first meeting of countywide Volunteer units was held at Gorvagh in August 1918. At this meeting, the South Leitrim brigade was formed with three battalions covering Cloone/Carraigallen (First Battalion), Ballinamore/Drumshanbo (Second Battalion), and Mohill/Carrick (Third Battalion).¹⁶ Because of the geography of the county, the adoption of a north-south divide in the formation of Volunteer structures was both necessary and practical, with North Leitrim Volunteer companies joining the brigade areas of South Donegal and North Sligo. Volunteer companies that were formed in 1919 at Dromahair, Newtownmanor, Killavoggy and Killargue were part of the Eighth Battalion of the Sligo Brigade, while Volunteer companies in the villages of Tullaghan and Kinlough close to the Donegal border joined the South Donegal Brigade. Harold Mc Brien, an officer commanding the Eighth Battalion, confirmed that the Volunteer companies in his battalion area had 'no arms whatsoever'.¹⁷ Leitrim's Volunteer companies were similar to their Clare counterparts in 1919, as described by Fitzpatrick:

singularly ill-prepared for revolution. Warlike talk kept their spirits up, arms raids provided diversion, drilling sessions kept them in close contact with each other; yet these activities served merely to preserve the organisation of the Volunteers, not to transform them into an army.¹⁸

In Leitrim, the only strike against the forces of the crown in the first year of the War of Independence was an attempted assault by Charles Timoney on Sergeant Hugh Devanny at

¹⁴ Marnie Hay, 'Fianna Éireann' in John Crowley, Donal O'Driscóil, Mike Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2017), pp 173-176.

¹⁵ Charles Pinkman (NAI, BMH, WS 1263, p.14).

¹⁶ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, p.5).

¹⁷ Harold McBrien (NAI, BMH, WS 895, p.1).

¹⁸ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.178.

Fivemilebourne in June 1919. Timoney, Company Commander of the Drumalease Volunteers, and president of the local Sinn Féin club, had received a six month prison sentence in 1918 for illegal drilling and unlawful assembly. At his trial in 1919, Devanny described the altercation with Timoney who allegedly told the policeman that, 'I will shoot you like the officer in Tipperary'.¹⁹ The defendant was bound to the peace for twelve months for the assault on the RIC sergeant. Aside from the Timoney incident, police reports described a peaceful county with an active Sinn Féin party, and little or no Volunteer activity. Hart recognised the relative inactivity of many regions, and argued that Sinn Féin party organisers, as opposed to their Volunteer comrades, were more active and successful in the midlands and North Connaught.²⁰

5.3 Boycott, intimidation and arms raids

By early 1920 the political environment in Leitrim was showing signs of change. Although police reports indicated that in January 1920 recruitment to the RIC was in a healthy state, a change was evident a month later. In February, the County Inspector reported that the 'general condition of the county was peaceable, but not as peaceable as it was. Several attempts have been made to intimidate prospective recruits for the RIC, and also some raids for arms and threatening letters'.²¹ One such attempt at intimidation at Ballinamore resulted in the shooting of railway porter Patrick McCabe on 24 March 1920. McCabe was stopped by a group of men near his home, and after indicating his intention of joining the RIC, he was shot, resulting in the subsequent amputation of his leg. W.J. Lowe described boycott and intimidation as actions not only directed at policemen and their families, but in many instances directed at members of the local community who appeared to be friendly with the RIC.²² No neighbour would transport McCabe to his compensation hearing at the Carrick Quarter Sessions, resulting in him having to walk the ten mile journey to Carrick on crutches.²³

With a virtual absence of arms in the hands of the Volunteers, a noticeable increase in raids for arms began in the spring and summer of 1920. Hugh Brady described a process whereby 'every house where it was known, or suspected, that there were arms of any sort, was visited by our men. In most cases, it was only a matter of calling for the arms'.²⁴ Similarly, Bernard Sweeney recalled little or no resistance being offered to Volunteers calling to

¹⁹ Prosecution of Civilians, Charles Timoney (TNA, WO 35/105/24).

²⁰ Hart, *The IRA at War*, p.53.

²¹ CI Report, Leitrim, Feb. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/111).

²² Lowe, *RIC*, p.85.

²³ Charles Pinkman (NAI, BMH, WS 1263, p.12).

²⁴ Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, p.5).

households looking for arms. However, in a small number of instances, Volunteers encountered resistance at a number of Protestant households. At Kiltubrid in April 1920, Richard Taylor initially resisted the raiders by firing a number of shots at them. After an exchange of gun fire and a threat to burn the house, Taylor surrendered his gun and ammunition.²⁵ At Ardrum on 21 May 1920, four raiders John O'Rourke, Michael Mc Goldrick and brothers Frank and Michael Sweeney arrived at the home of William Johnston demanding the surrender of arms and ammunition. Having been requested to return a short time later by the householder, the four men were arrested by a waiting RIC patrol. The following day, train driver John Gaffney refused to take the men and a police escort to Sligo. Attempts to move the prisoners by road were thwarted by local Volunteers who felled trees and blocked roads around the town. An intervention by the local clergy calmed the large crowd, and the prisoners were returned to the local barracks.²⁶ After police cleared the roadblocks, the prisoners were eventually transported by road to Sligo. At their subsequent trial in Carrick, all four men were acquitted, claiming that they went undisguised and unarmed with the sole intention of borrowing a gun. Gallogly believed, 'that the reason they got off so lightly was due to the influence of the local postmaster, who wanted the boycott imposed on Johnson (sic), his brother-in-law lifted'.²⁷ A similar attempt to transport suspected Volunteers in custody took place in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford in January 1920, resulting in the outbreak of a riot in the town.²⁸ Like Leitrim, Wexford was relatively free of violence, yet incidents such as those at Enniscorthy and Ballinamore demonstrated an air of defiance and civil disobedience prevalent among large sections of the population.

As in the south of the county, when arms raids began, the only resistance that north Leitrim Volunteers met were at the homes of Protestant families. At the homes of both William Vanston and William McNasser, near Manorhamilton, shots were fired by the householders before they surrendered their arms.²⁹ A number of novel schemes were adopted in the quest for arms. Eugene Kilkenny recalled dressing up in British Army uniform and collecting arms in the Cloone and Aughavas areas.³⁰ A rather unusual addition to the local arsenal occurred in

²⁵ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, pp 5-6).

²⁶ *RH* 29 May 1920; *Freeman's Journal* 30 May 1920.

²⁷ Dan Gallogly, *Slieve an Iariann Slopes: history of the town and parish of Ballinmore, Co. Leitrim* (Ballinamore, 1991), p.218.

²⁸ William Murphy, 'Enniscorthy's Revolution' in Colm Toibin (ed.), *Enniscorthy-A History* (Wexford, 2010), pp 399-423.

²⁹ Register of Crime, Province of Connaught, Leitrim, 11 Aug. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/45).

³⁰ Eugene Kilkenny (NAI, BMH, WS 1146 , p.16).

September 1920 when Drumshanbo Volunteers rowed to the Inisfallen Island on Lough Allen, the home of British army veteran Major O’Conor, and demanded two small cannon. Both were handed over, and the *Anglo-Celt* reported that, ‘the raiders left a receipt for the cannon, apologised for intruding, and assured Mrs O’Conor they would afford the island protection if needed’.³¹ The home of Anne Godley at Killegar was raided when Mrs Godley and her steward were at church service. The police reported that the raiders ‘helped themselves to brandy, cigarettes and cake on failing to find arms. Although some of the raiders have been identified no one will attend to give evidence’.³² At Ballinamore, the owner of Newell’s hardware shop was held up at gunpoint, and a consignment of gelignite was taken from the shop’s storeroom.³³

As a result of the increasing number of arms raids across the county, the RIC visited homes and collected arms in order to prevent them falling into the hands of republicans. When Volunteers called to the home of retired RIC County Inspector Ross Rainsford at Carrick, they were told that he had already handed his arms to the RIC. In a report on the raid at Rainsford’s home, the *Leitrim Observer* claimed that on being told that there were no weapons present, ‘the raiders took his word and left without searching the house’.³⁴ At the Spring Assizes in Carrick on 4 March 1920, Judge Moore commented that, although the county was not ‘as bad as other counties’, he was unhappy that arms raids and intimidation were increasing.³⁵ Raiding for arms was condemned by some local clergy, including Mohill curate Fr. Pinkman, who ‘warned young men against the danger and sin of taking part in raids for arms’.³⁶ As early as March 1919, Bishop Joseph Hoare of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise was suspicious of the motives of republicanism, and warned that revolutionary action would lead to ‘what has taken place in France, Portugal, Mexico and Russia. Secret societies and revolution did not bring the rebirth of nations, but their devastation and destruction’.³⁷

Hart has attributed a relationship between raiding for arms in the early phases of the conflict and later violence. He argued that units that took the initiative to raid for arms and were active in drilling were later among the more active, commenting that ‘the units that took the lead in gunplay and arms seizures were also generally the most energetic in other

³¹ AC, 11 Sept. 1920.

³² Register of Crime, Province of Connaught, Leitrim, 5 Sept. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/45).

³³ Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, p.6).

³⁴ LO, 11 Sept. 1920.

³⁵ LO, 6 Mar. 1920.

³⁶ LO, 13 Mar. 1920.

³⁷ Heffernan, *Fifth Commandment*, p.19.

respects'.³⁸ Augusteijn also identified a strong correlation between early Volunteer activity and 'the propensity of violent confrontation in the 1920-21 period'.³⁹ In nearby Longford, raiding for arms was evident throughout 1919, and a confrontation between Volunteers and the RIC in April 1919 resulted in the wounding of two local Volunteers at Aughnacliffe. Increasing levels of Volunteer activity, and police raids on homes of republicans in Longford were a feature of life in the county during 1919.⁴⁰ As the Inspector General's Report of December 1919 was reporting an increasingly hostile environment in many areas countrywide, the RIC County Inspector in Leitrim reported a 'peaceable county'.⁴¹ When raids for arms finally took place in 1920 across Leitrim, these were on a small scale and directed exclusively at private homes.

In the spring of 1920, in its attempt to hamper British civil administration, republicans initiated a campaign of intimidation of state officials, including local rate collectors. The killing of sixty-four-year-old rate collector Francis Curran at Aughavas on 12 April 1920 was linked to the rate collection issue. Curran, a local farmer and a father of eight children, worked for county councillor Michael Curran, an unpopular rate collector, and an ardent critic of Sinn Féin. Francis Curran was killed by two masked men, armed with shotguns, after returning from work at Michael Curran's. Although there was a general pattern of intimidating state officials in the spring of 1920, the reasons for Curran's killing were unclear. Cormac Ó'Súilleabháin believed that there were 'other local issues at play rather than any great motivation to strike a blow in the struggle for independence'.⁴² Denouncing Curran's killing, Bishop Hoare of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise proclaimed that,

they were told they were at war against the enemy. That was not so. War was declared by the head of the State. And all sides given an opportunity to prepare. This man was shot from behind a wall. It was all nonsense to talk of being at war with the enemy. If they did not make up for this, the scourge of God would fall on them.⁴³

Heffernan has argued that the pastoral letters, particularly at the beginning of the ecclesiastical seasons of Advent and Lent, provided opportunities for the hierarchy to condemn violence in their dioceses.⁴⁴ While many of Leitrim's clergy did not support militant

³⁸ Hart, *The IRA at War*, p.44.

³⁹ Augusteijn, *Public Defiance*, p.343.

⁴⁰ Coleman, *Longford*, p.116.

⁴¹ Inspector General's Report, Dec. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/107); CI Report, Leitrim, Dec. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/107).

⁴² Ó Súilleabháin, *Leitrim's Republican Story*, p.55.

⁴³ *LO*, 24 Apr. 1920.

⁴⁴ Heffernan, *Fifth Commandment*, p.48.

republicanism, some of the county's Roman Catholic priests were active supporters. Like their parishioners, clergy transferred their political allegiance from Home Rule to Sinn Féin's republican philosophy with relative ease. Heffernan believed that for many older and conservative clerics, 'the wild ideas which Sinn Féin leaders were proclaiming had dangerous effects on irresponsible young men with too much time on their hands'.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, involvement in the broader republican movement by some of their younger colleagues ensured that priests could exercise an element of control over republicans. Condemnation of republican violence was a natural response for many priests, but as a state campaign of coercion ensued, clerical condemnation of IRA violence became more muted for fear of losing the respect of their congregations.⁴⁶

As a result of the RIC's decision in late 1919 and early 1920 to abandon many rural police barracks and move to more fortified central locations, IRA GHQ initiated a centrally coordinated campaign to burn many vacant barracks to prevent re-occupation. The withdrawal of the police from many parts of rural Ireland further alienated the force from the local population, and surrendered large areas of the countryside to republican courts and police (see Appendix 1). In Leitrim, despite the relative quietude of the county, the RIC vacated twenty-five rural barracks and moved officers to the main towns of Carrick, Mohill, Ballinamore, Drumshanbo, and Manorhamilton.

On Easter Saturday night 3 April 1920, Leitrim Volunteers engaged in the widespread burning of vacated barracks at Rantogue, Drumsna, Garadice, Farnaught, and Fenagh. At Rantogue, the raiders informed the wife of the local RIC sergeant of their intention to burn the building, and assisted her in moving her possessions to nearby alternative accommodation. At Fenagh, Volunteers also moved family possessions, including turf, to the local hall before burning the building.⁴⁷ Reporting on the burning of Farnaught barracks, the *Leitrim Observer* noted that the raiding party 'removed Mrs Gilroy and her family to a neighbour's house for shelter and safety, the men then removed the furniture and other belongings and piled them safely outside some distance away'.⁴⁸ This pattern of behaviour contrasted sharply to that of many other Volunteer units throughout the country, who ensured that policemen's families were turned out of their dwellings without any recourse to aid from neighbours.⁴⁹ The AOH in

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.21

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.36.

⁴⁷ Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, p.6).

⁴⁸ *LO*, 10 Apr. 1920.

⁴⁹ Lowe, *RIC*, p.100.

North Kiltubrid condemned the destruction of property, and warned that the actions of the raiders was ‘no advancement to the interests of the country, but will bring a taxation on the already over taxed rate payers of the country’.⁵⁰ Burnings and raids on government offices continued throughout the spring and summer of 1920 at Keshcarrigan, Glenade, Gortvagh, Kiltyclogher and Cloone. The only daylight burning of a police barracks took place at Cloone in July 1920 when Volunteers blocked off the village before burning the local barracks.⁵¹

The release of republican prisoners from Mountjoy Jail served as the background for the burning of the Masonic Hall in Ballinamore in the early hours of 17 April 1920. Following a hunger strike in the pursuit of political status, and to protest against detention without trial, the prisoners had been finally released. Prior to the release, a nationwide general strike was called on 13 April 1920 by the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress (ILPTUC) in support of the prisoners.⁵² In Leitrim, the strike was supported in all the main towns of the county. At Ballinamore, three hundred workers of the Cavan and Leitrim Railway Company stopped work in support of the strike.⁵³ When news of the government’s concession to the prisoner’s demands reached Leitrim, celebrations began across the county. At Ballinamore, sections of the crowd broke a number of shop windows of boycotted Protestant businesses that had refused to close on the day of the general strike. This boycott was eventually lifted following the intervention of a Sinn Féin arbitration court, and the issuing of a public apology by the business owners in the local newspaper.⁵⁴ Later that evening, the RIC barracks was attacked by stone throwers, and a group of men entered the Masonic Hall and burned the building. Unlike their colleagues in Clare, who shot and killed three people celebrating the prisoner releases in Miltown Malbay, the RIC remained in their barracks.⁵⁵

The increase in violent activity in the Ballinamore district was raised in the House of Commons on 27 April 1920 by Colonel Wilfred Ashley, Conservative MP for Flyde, who listed a range of outrages including arson, murder, boycott and intimidation. Ashley’s demand for the immediate protection of the inhabitants was acceded to with the arrival of twenty-five soldiers to Ballinamore in early May 1920.⁵⁶ Despite the arrival of extra troops in the county,

⁵⁰ *LO*, 10 Apr. 1920.

⁵¹ Patrick Doherty (NAI, BMH, WS 1195, p.11).

⁵² Conor Kostick, *Popular Militancy 1917-1923* (Cork, 2009), pp 129-140.

⁵³ *LO*, 17 Apr. 1920.

⁵⁴ *RH*, 22 May 1920.

⁵⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.219.

⁵⁶ House of Commons (HC) Debate April 1920, Vol. 128 cc 1024-6; HC Debate May 1920 Vol.128 cc 2216-7.

Volunteer activity continued throughout May and June of 1920. This included the derailment of a train outside Mohill and raids at Carrick's Revenue and Customs office. The Carrick raiders left a note claiming that, 'only documents harmful to the Irish Republic were taken'.⁵⁷ As a result of the intense period of barrack burnings, public bodies were well aware of the impending malicious damages claims on the rate payers of the county. Noting that the Manorhamilton sub-district in North Leitrim was relatively free of violence and barrack burnings, and that most claims originated in the south of the county, Councillor Irwin at Manorhamilton District Council expressed the belief that, 'each end should bury their own dead'.⁵⁸

By June 1920, the RIC County Inspector was demanding more reinforcements, reporting that existing troops were confined to guarding barracks and courthouses. Claiming that intimidation and boycott was widespread, contributing to low morale among the RIC, he advised that, 'patrols should be sent out at night to assert the law and show the Sinn Féin party that they have not things all their own way as they practically have at present'.⁵⁹ In response, military reinforcements from the East Yorkshire regiment were drafted into Mohill and Carrick to assist the police. The *Sligo Independent* and *Irish Bulletin* reported the planned enlargement of the military in Carrick, and noted that, 'a gun has been placed on the roof, and sand bags and wire entanglements have been set up'.⁶⁰

D.M. Leeson described the introduction of British army veterans in early 1920 to bolster the ranks of the RIC as a response to increased levels of political violence and intimidation. The new recruits' mixed mode of dress, necessitated by a shortage of RIC bottle green uniforms, gave the group their infamous nickname, the 'Black and Tans'. Although officially classed as RIC constables, they established themselves as a unique group with different wage levels, code of discipline, and group culture than the regular policemen of the force.⁶¹ Throughout the summer of 1920, reinforcements of this new force, and regular troops, were drafted into Mohill, Ballinamore and Carrick. While Hargaden recalled that the first Black and Tans arrived in the area in the autumn of 1920, the *Leitrim Observer* reported in March 1920 that, 'ex-soldiers partially attired in the uniform of the RIC and in khaki are doing duty at

⁵⁷ *LO*, 15 May 1920.

⁵⁸ *SC*, 8 May 1920.

⁵⁹ CI Report, Leitrim, June 1920 (TNA, CO 904/112).

⁶⁰ *Sligo Independent*, 12 June 1920; *Irish Bulletin* 11 June 1920.

⁶¹ D.M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans, British Police and Auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence* (Oxford, 2011), pp 9-10, pp 28-30.

Carrick-on-Shannon, and the different towns throughout the whole county at the present time'.⁶² In addition to the Black and Tans, the Auxiliary Division of the RIC (ADRIC) was formed in July 1920 and consisted of former military officers who were recruited with the rank of police sergeant. During the early autumn of 1920, two detachments of Auxiliaries were posted to the Longford, Leitrim, and Roscommon area. While both groups were separate and distinct with different command structures, Lowe argued that the 'Auxiliaries and Black and Tans were inseparable in the public mind'.⁶³

Despite the relative quietude of the north of the county, the only attack on an occupied barracks took place at Fivemilebourne in the early hours of 2 June 1920. While the barracks was in Co. Leitrim, it was the Sligo brigade led by Seamus Devins that led the attack. Leitrim Volunteer companies, part of the Eighth Battalion of the Sligo brigade, blocked roads in the immediate area. Despite succeeding in making a hole in the roof of the barracks and engaging in a protracted engagement with the six man RIC contingent, the raiders were thwarted and eventually withdrew. In the days following the attack, the barracks was evacuated by the RIC, and local Volunteers burned the building on 16 June 1920. The vacated barracks at neighbouring Killargue was burned a week later.⁶⁴

The first direct confrontation between police and Volunteers had taken place at Mohill on 30 May 1920, with an attempted raid at the local railway station where a recently arrived consignment of steel shutters destined for the local RIC barracks were stored. A police patrol noticed the attempted break-in, and a gun battle ensued, with the raiders escaping. Unable to procure any local transport as a result of the police boycott, the *Sligo Independent* reported that, 'the police then dragged cartloads of the window shutters to the barracks and barricaded the building'.⁶⁵ One of the more daring challenges by local Volunteers to crown forces took place early on Sunday morning 4 July when four soldiers of the East Yorkshire regiment were overpowered while guarding a broken down military lorry at Drumreilly. The soldiers had been transporting furniture from an evacuated barracks at Carraigallen to Ballinamore when the truck got stuck on soft ground, and a detachment was left to guard the truck overnight. Word of the military presence quickly spread, and the following morning ten Volunteers mingled with returning Mass-goers from Drumlea Church. While passing the military lorry, they

⁶² *LO*, 13 Mar. 1920.

⁶³ Lowe, *RIC*, p.110.

⁶⁴ Harold McBrien (NAI, BMH, WS 895, p.4).

⁶⁵ *Sligo Independent* 5 June 1920; *LO*, 5 June 1920.

quickly overpowered the troops, confiscated their arms and ammunition and burned the lorry before escaping. Mohill District Council immediately passed a resolution congratulating 'the soldiers of the Irish Republican Army on the victory they achieved at Drumreilly.'⁶⁶

Acknowledging the practical difficulties for a badly armed guerrilla force not engaging with a well-resourced enemy, Hart argued that every IRA brigade engaged in less risky activities including barrack burnings and robbing post offices and local postmen.⁶⁷ From May 1920, raids on postmen in Leitrim by the local IRA was a regular occurrence.⁶⁸ Part of the reason for minimal military engagement by Volunteers was an increased military presence in the county.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the first ambush in the county took place outside Ballinamore on 2 September 1920, when a four man bicycle police patrol was attacked at Crimlin. The ambush proved a failure, because the eight-man IRA unit opened fire with shotguns when the police were out of effective range. After a brief exchange of fire, the police retreated, and neither side suffered casualties.⁷⁰ Later that night, an IRA unit led by Bernard Sweeney burned Ballinamore court house. According to Sweeney, 'the military and police carried out extensive raiding after this, but did not arrest any of our men'.⁷¹

While little direct physical confrontation took place in 1920, the more covert activity of boycott and intimidation was used extensively by republicans. Part of this strategy was the deliberate isolation of policemen and their families from the communities that they considered themselves to be part of. The rationale for boycott made sense as RIC intelligence sources were used frequently in the war against republicans. Recalling a disturbed county with low morale among the RIC, the County Inspector described the situation at Mohill in June 1920, 'where police officer's (sic) families are severally boycotted and where persons who befriend the police are threatened with serious trouble on that account'.⁷² James C. Scott argued that resistance to oppression by subordinate groups can manifest itself in many covert ways, including the exercise of coercion to ensure non-cooperation with the rulers of society.⁷³ Stathis Kalyvas has also contended that acts of terror in the form of coercion and intimidation can be

⁶⁶ RH, 10 July 1920.

⁶⁷ Hart, *The IRA at War*, p.44.

⁶⁸ Post Office Reports, Attacks on Mails, 1 May 1920-31 December 1920 (TNA, CO 905/158/1).

⁶⁹ RH, 31 July 1920.

⁷⁰ Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, p.15); Register of Crime, Province of Connaught, Leitrim, 3 Sept. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/45).

⁷¹ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, p.8).

⁷² CI Report, Leitrim, June 1920 (TNA, CO 904/112).

⁷³ Scott, *Domination*, p.27.

as effective as mass violence.⁷⁴ In June, the County Inspector had to vacate his accommodation at the Bush Hotel because of intimidation of the proprietor. By August 1920, the *Roscommon Herald* reported that ‘throughout county Leitrim the boycotting of police is carried on and there is no outside intercourse with or assistance in any way rendered to members of that body’.⁷⁵ According to Hargaden, the RIC were ‘treated as outcasts and everyone, or almost everyone shunned them’.⁷⁶ In order to acquire goods from traders, the police undertook a policy of entering premises, forcibly taking goods and leaving money. The *Irish Bulletin* reported that ‘British police armed with revolvers raided several shops in Mohill, Co Leitrim, and commandeered supplies. Payment was left for what was taken’.⁷⁷ Police reported that the traders appeared willing enough to do business on these terms, and ‘only pretended a reluctance to supply the police through fear’.⁷⁸ When informed that crown forces were taking such action in Leitrim, Michael Collins advised that no action should be taken because ‘when we have driven them to this position, our boycott is a success’.⁷⁹

Police reports in the summer of 1920 indicated low numbers of RIC recruits ‘due to the consequence on their families’.⁸⁰ According to Lowe, threats against policemen and their immediate families, in addition to members of the wider community who were thought to be friendly or sympathetic to the RIC, were deeply rooted traditions in Ireland.⁸¹ The historic weapons of boycott and intimidation drove the RIC and their families into an isolated and dangerous existence. According to Brian Hughes, among its more common features were ‘sending anonymous threatening letters, posting proclamations, administering oaths by force, raiding homes and damaging property’.⁸² At Carrick on 10 June 1920, a notice was placed at the post office and the office of inland revenue warning that ‘notice is hereby given that all intercourses of any kind whatsoever between citizens of the Irish Republic and that portion of the Army of Occupation known as the RIC, is forbidden and that a general boycott of the said force is ordered: and that all persons infringing this order will be included in this boycott’.⁸³ At Drumshanbo and Kinlough, warnings were issued that anyone trading with or talking to the

⁷⁴ Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war* (Cambridge, 2006), pp 44-48.

⁷⁵ CI Report, Leitrim, June 1920 (TNA, CO 904/112); *RH* 7 Aug. 1920.

⁷⁶ Patrick J. Hargaden (NAI, BMH, WS 1268, p.7).

⁷⁷ *Irish Bulletin*, 18 June 1920.

⁷⁸ CI Report, Leitrim, July 1920 (TNA, CO 904/112).

⁷⁹ Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government*, p.149.

⁸⁰ CI Report, Leitrim, July 1920 (TNA, CO 904/112).

⁸¹ Lowe, *RIC*, p.99.

⁸² Hughes, ‘Persecuting the Peelers’, p.207.

⁸³ *Sligo Independent*, 19 June 1920.

police would be deemed to be assisting the enemy and would ‘be severally dealt with’.⁸⁴ While these everyday acts of harm and threat did not operate in isolation to political violence, they combined to dictate an environment of fear in the local community.⁸⁵

Hughes believed that policemen were often targeted through intimidation being exerted on their families. An effective campaign of intimidation against police families in Leitrim resulted in eleven officers resigning from the force, the second highest number in Ireland outside of Cork.⁸⁶ At Glenfarne creamery, manager Denis Sheelan refused to take milk from a local farmer until his son resigned from the RIC.⁸⁷ The *Roscommon Herald* reported that, ‘resignations from the RIC are being announced daily throughout Co. Leitrim, and a big proportion of those resigning are men of long service’.⁸⁸ P.J. Hargaden believed that, while a number of good young men resigned from the force in Leitrim, many who remained became more bitter towards republicans.⁸⁹ Because of limited employment opportunities, Hughes believed that many men remained in the force, but their attitude hardened as a result of ongoing intimidation.⁹⁰

An analysis of Volunteer activity from 1917 to 1920 in Leitrim shows little or no activity before early 1920 apart from drilling and assisting Sinn Féin. However, in early 1920 the environment within the county changed dramatically in a similar manner to other areas across Ireland. Lynch has described the war in its early stages as ‘a continuation of low-level small-scale acts of violence mainly occurring during raids for arms on isolated farms or homes in rural Ireland’.⁹¹ Augusteijn also recognised that, ‘violence remained extremely limited during 1919’, with only sixteen members of crown forces losing their lives in the course of the year.⁹² Until mid-1920, Volunteer activity revolved predominantly around burning unoccupied buildings, and raids on mails. Police reported that although

no companies of Irish Volunteers are known to the police as existing officially in the county, every young Sinn Féiner is practically a ‘Volunteer’, and a member of some Sinn Féin club. It

⁸⁴ Register of Crime, Province of Connaught, Leitrim, 21 July 1920 (TNA, CO 904/45).

⁸⁵ Hughes, *Defying*, p.149.

⁸⁶ Hughes, *Defying*, pp 27-30.

⁸⁷ Lieutenant E.Thorpe to O/C, A Branch,GHQ, 11 April 1921 (TNA,WO 35/129/39).

⁸⁸ *RH*, 14 Aug. 1920.

⁸⁹ Patrick J. Hargaden (NAI, BMH,WS 1268, pp 7-8).

⁹⁰ Hughes, *Defying*, p.36.

⁹¹ Robert Lynch, *Revolutionary Ireland, 1916-1923* (London, 2015), p.67.

⁹² Augusteijn , *Public Defiance*, p.93.

is not believed that many arms are in the hands of these young fellows, nor much ammunition, but they must have a good many shotguns and old revolvers seized in raids.⁹³

Nevertheless, while the arsenal in the hands of Leitrim's Volunteers was limited, a range of limited action hampered British administration in the county. Non-violent forms of resistance such as boycott and intimidation were common, and very often these methods were as effective in disrupting British rule as direct military engagements.

5.4 Repression and violence

As a response to increasing levels of IRA violence, a more brutal phase in the conflict was initiated by authorities in the late summer of 1920. Hopkinson argued that the change in character of the conflict from erratic and limited action to more widespread and ruthless conflict was facilitated by the passing of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act in August 1920.⁹⁴ Despite low levels of violence in many areas countrywide, Michael Farry identified the new legislation, and the arrival of Auxiliaries in the autumn of 1920, as the beginning of a new phase in the conflict.⁹⁵ The threat to law and order ensured that the authorities resorted to a range of coercive measures including internment, the use of courts-martial, military tribunals, and the imposition of curfews. How did this new policy manifest itself in Leitrim, and what effect did it have on the region? How did crown forces operate in this new legislative environment in the county, and how did the IRA respond?

The first IRA fatality in a confrontation with crown forces took place in the village of Drumsna on the night of 11 September 1920 when Pat Gill, a local Volunteer, was shot dead while travelling to the wake of his cousin, Bernard O'Beirne, who was also a member of the IRA. The *Roscommon Herald* reported that, 'what can only be described as a reign of terror existed in the peaceful Leitrim village, Drumsna for about an hour on Saturday night last'.⁹⁶ After passing a parked military lorry containing a party of soldiers, a shot was fired at Gill. At the subsequent inquest into Gill's death, Lieutenant Wallace of the East Yorkshire regiment stated that Gill was requested to stop three times before being shot. Condemning the killing, and returning a verdict of murder, the jury foreman stated that, 'we draw the attention of the civilised world to the necessity of ridding our country from the tyrannical rule at the hands of

⁹³ CI Report, Leitrim, June 1920 (TNA, CO 904/1120).

⁹⁴ Hopkinson, *War Of Independence*, p.79.

⁹⁵ Michael Farry, *The Aftermath of Revolution, Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000), p.12.

⁹⁶ *RH*, 18 Sept. 1920.

a foreign government'.⁹⁷ The funerals of both O'Beirne and Gill attracted large crowds, and their coffins were accompanied by IRA guards of honour.⁹⁸

Controversy also surrounded the killing of seventy-year-old James Connolly (Senior) during a military and police raid at his home at Kinlough on 14 September. The Connolly family were known republicans. James (Junior) was a member of Leitrim County Council, and served as an officer in the Kinlough Volunteers who were attached to the IRA's South Donegal Brigade. Ó Duibhir believed that the raid was part of a reprisal for the burning of Dunkineely RIC barracks in south Donegal.⁹⁹ The police claimed that Connolly was shot when he rushed towards a nearby room having refused to put his hands up when ordered to do so.¹⁰⁰ During the raid, Connolly (Junior) was discovered in the house, and he was immediately arrested. The military authorities did not co-operate with Connolly's inquest, and no military witnesses attended. The jury found that the military were 'guilty of wilfull murder of a revolting and brutal character'.¹⁰¹ In response to a range of jury verdicts condemning the actions of crown forces, inquests linked to deaths as a result of political violence, were replaced by military tribunals in the autumn of 1920.

The killings of both Gill and Connolly marked the commencement of a period of increased coercion by crown forces in late 1920. This escalation of state violence throughout Leitrim was part of a deliberate change of military policy by the authorities.¹⁰² Following the passing of the Restoration of Ireland Act in August 1920, Hopkinson believed that the character of the war changed from limited and erratic action, to a more widespread brutal and ruthless conflict, including frequent raids on homes.¹⁰³ On the night of 21 September 1920, while crown forces were involved in the infamous sacking of the town of Balbriggan in Dublin, their comrades in Leitrim rampaged through Carrick. The attack on Carrick was a reprisal for the presence of armed IRA men patrolling the local fair on the previous day. In the raid on Carrick, men with blackened faces fired shots and threw grenades into a number of buildings. The *Roscommom Herald* reported that,

⁹⁷ *LO*, 18 Sept. 1920.

⁹⁸ *LO*, 18 Sept. 1920.

⁹⁹ Liam Ó Duibhir, *The Donegal Awakening, Donegal and the War of Independence* (Dublin, 2009), p. 177; *Sligo Independent*, 2 Oct. 1920.

¹⁰⁰ Register of Crime, Province of Connaught, Leitrim, 16 Sept. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/45).

¹⁰¹ *Sligo Independent* 2 Oct. 1920.

¹⁰² Lynch, *Revolutionary Ireland*, p.74.

¹⁰³ Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p.79; *LO*, 25 Sept. 1920.

a number of houses were entered by the raiders and young men taken out of their sleeping attire and marched some distance from their houses, had shots fired around them and were then forced to go down on their knees under threats of being instantly shot and forced to swear the police boycott in the town would be removed.¹⁰⁴

Two shop assistants at Barrett's Hardware, John Quinn and J.J. Higgins, who were local IRA members, escaped from the building, but two of their colleagues were marched through the streets, placed against a wall and threatened that they would be shot.¹⁰⁵ Joe Mc Cormack, the Sinn Féin Chairman of Carrick District Council, suffered a similar fate, when marched down the main street of the town. Shots were fired around him, and he was forced to swear an oath that the boycott against crown forces in the town would be lifted. The *Anglo Celt* reported that, 'large numbers of families left the town for the country, fearing a repetition'.¹⁰⁶ On the following day, the local District Inspector, having being refused service at Barrett's, returned with reinforcements and commandeered supplies.¹⁰⁷ Reporting on the Carrick raids, the *Sligo Independent* noted that, 'the whole affair has caused much excitement in the town, and hundreds of people from the country viewed the wreckage done in the short time by the disguised men, who are alleged to have been much excited'.¹⁰⁸

A meeting was immediately called by local businesses and town residents to discuss the raids. This meeting was also raided by the military, though the intervention of Canon O'Reilly and local Church of Ireland rector Rev. Beresford resulted in the raiding party's withdrawal. In Carrick, both clergymen were part of a delegation that met the RIC County and District Inspector to discuss the recent actions of the crown forces in the town. The *Anglo Celt* reported that, following the meeting, all parties 'advocated peace and the forgetting of the past, denounced all crimes, and appealed to all present to use influence to see that nothing occurs to life or property'.¹⁰⁹ Despite the assurances of the police, a heavy military and police presence continued in Carrick with ongoing searches of the general public. The printing works of the *Leitrim Observer*, and the adjoining home of editor Patrick Dunne, were raided by police and

¹⁰⁴ *RH*, 25 Sept. 1920; *LO*, 25 Sept. 1920.

¹⁰⁵ *LO*, 25 Sept. 1920.

¹⁰⁶ *AC*, 25 Sept. 1920.

¹⁰⁷ *AC*, 2 Oct. 1920.

¹⁰⁸ *Sligo Independent*, 25 Sept. 1920.

¹⁰⁹ *AC*, 2 Oct. 1920.

military, and the *Anglo Celt* reported that, ‘a picture of the Sacred Heart was taken from a bedroom and nailed to one of the doors’.¹¹⁰

Raids continued on 22 September at Drumshanbo when shots were fired and grenades thrown into the home of District Councillor John McPartlin. During the attack on the town, the home and business premises of Pat Conefrey, a local republican, was burned.¹¹¹ According to the Register of Crime, the Conefrey attack was the work of the IRA.¹¹² Leeson has argued that the information contained in the Register of Crime detailing crown force reprisals was deliberately inaccurate, with incidents often incorrectly blamed on republicans.¹¹³

Attacks and provocation by crown forces continued across south Leitrim throughout September 1920 with a large police and military presence in the area. On 24 September, according to the *Roscommon Herald*, Ballinamore was subjected to scenes of terrorism, ‘now common across many towns in Ireland’. It reported that, ‘several groups of police invaded the town and at every point possible used every endeavour to goad the public into anger’.¹¹⁴ The *Leitrim Observer* reported that crown forces fired shots into the Town Hall, and a young local man ‘received a serious bayonet thrust and is now lying in a rather serious condition as a result’.¹¹⁵ Raids and searches were becoming a common feature of daily life in the county. In October, on the eve of Carrick’s annual agricultural show, the police imposed a curfew from 10.30 p.m. and raided the town’s three hotels. At McLoughlin’s Hotel, shop assistant Michael McTierney was arrested, and his lodgings nearby were searched where a Sinn Féin membership card was found in a suitcase. McTierney subsequently received twelve months imprisonment for the offence at a court martial in Athlone.¹¹⁶ A large police and military presence was in place on show day with widespread searches of people and vehicles.¹¹⁷

This pattern of activity continued throughout October with ongoing raids and searches across the county. Bernard Magee, and his employer Patrick Briody, were arrested at Carraigallen on 19 October for the possession of republican newspaper, *An tÓglach*. Magee received twelve months imprisonment for possession of seditious literature, but Briody was

¹¹⁰ AC, Oct. 1920.

¹¹¹ LO, 25 Sept. 1920.

¹¹² Register of Crime, Province of Connaught, Leitrim, 24 Sept. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/45).

¹¹³ Leeson, *Black and Tans*, pp 158-159.

¹¹⁴ RH, 2 Oct. 1920.

¹¹⁵ RH, 2 Oct. 1920.

¹¹⁶ Prosecution of Civilians, Michael McTierney (TNA, WO 35/116/31).

¹¹⁷ LO, 9 Oct. 1920.

acquitted as Magee claimed that the newspaper belonged to him. Leeson believed that many innocent people endured the wrath of crown forces by being merely associated with republicans.¹¹⁸ James Gavin was sentenced to eighteen months hard labour for possession of one round of ammunition that was found in his hat when searched in Carrick. At his court martial, Gavin claimed that he found the cartridge on the street outside the court house. Brigadier General C.S. Lambert recommended that an example would have to be made of Gavin claiming that he ‘may have to suffer in person for the greater sins of others’.¹¹⁹

The intensive military and police presence in the region ensured that Volunteer activity was virtually non-existent in the autumn of 1920. The only serious political crime that occurred was the attempted murder of rate collector Michael Curran at Aughavas on 6 October. Curran received minor injuries in an exchange of gunfire with a group of men who attacked his home. According to the *Roscommon Herald*, Curran was an unpopular man and a strong opponent of Sinn Féin and ‘many stories were told of his jibes at the expense of those who were in any way identified with the movement’.¹²⁰

Throughout October and November 1920, troops interfered on an ongoing basis with life in towns and villages across the county.¹²¹ At Leitrim fair on 13 October 1920, plain clothes police carried out extensive searches of young men who were in the village.¹²² At Mohill, the officer board of the town’s GAA club abandoned a dance because of the fear of violence from a large military presence in the town.¹²³ Indiscriminate shooting by police and soldiers also took place at Drumsna, Dromod, Mohill and Johnstonbridge.¹²⁴ According to Hugh Brady, the policy of ongoing coercion was counterproductive as the practice, ‘in many cases turned people who, if not openly hostile to, had no sympathy with Sinn Féin, or who were lukewarm, into enthusiastic Sinn Féiners’.¹²⁵

Community facilities such as local halls and creameries were regular targets for crown force reprisals.¹²⁶ Aughavas Hall was the first to be burned in the county on 22 October 1920,

¹¹⁸ Leeson, *Black and Tans*, p.62, p.189.

¹¹⁹ Prosecution of Civilians, James Gavin (TNA, WO 35/117/35).

¹²⁰ *RH*, 16 Oct. 1920.

¹²¹ *LO*, 9 Oct. 1920.

¹²² *LO*, 16 Oct. 1920.

¹²³ *LO*, 23 Oct. 1920.

¹²⁴ *Irish Bulletin*, 12 Nov. 1920.

¹²⁵ Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, p.8); *LO*, 16 Oct. 1920.

¹²⁶ Joost Augusteijn, ‘Military Conflict in the War of Independence’ in John Crowley, Donal O’Drisceoil, Mike Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2017), pp 348-357.

and in the following weeks halls were burned at Annaduff, Fenagh, Gortvagh, Gowel and Ballinamore. At the subsequent compensation hearing at Carrick Quarter Sessions on 13 January 1921, the caretaker of Fenagh Hall, James Cox, described men arriving in lorries with police caps as the arsonists.¹²⁷ At Ballinamore, the local Catholic Hall was full of young people attending Irish classes. In his subsequent testimony at the Carrick Quarter Sessions, hall caretaker Hugh McKiernan described shots being fired, the young people being abused, and the destruction of property, including a billiard table. The hall was then burned by the attackers. Local solicitor, J.A. Kiernan, described the attack as a ‘piece of malicious and wanton destruction’. In awarding £704 to the plaintiffs, Judge Brown declared that the attack and burning of the hall was

an act of brigandage pure and simple. It was impossible to conceive that uniformed men should descend upon a hall and proceed to destroy it when people were playing innocent games and attending an Irish class, and he could not imagine how people in a Christian land could be guilty of such savagery.¹²⁸

Following the death of Lord Mayor of Cork Terence MacSwiney in Brixton Prison after a seventy-four day hunger strike on 25 October 1920, businesses across Leitrim closed as a mark of respect during MacSwiney’s funeral. The County Inspector reported that ‘the death of the Lord Mayor of Cork occasioned no little excitement and little comment, and business was resumed as usual after mass’.¹²⁹ Police reported that, while the majority of people still supported Sinn Féin, he noted that ‘the feeling towards the police appeared, however to be changing for the better and the boycott of police has been removed from the entire county. Police patrols were able to move about more freely and this produced a good effect’.¹³⁰

The first Leitrim based police casualty did not take place in the county, but near the village of Glasson in County Westmeath. Constable Sydney Larkin, a twenty-two-year-old Londoner based in Carrick, was killed on 2 November 1920 in an ambush *en route* to Athlone. Larkin was the driver of an RIC party from Carrick who were due to give evidence at the court martial of Carrick shop assistant Michael McTierney. Larkin was killed in the exchange of gunfire, along with Volunteer James Finn from Streamstown, Co. Westmeath.¹³¹ In Leitrim,

¹²⁷ RH 15 Jan. 1921.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ CI Report, Leitrim, Nov. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/113).

¹³⁰ CI Report, Leitrim, Oct. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/113).

¹³¹ *Westmeath Examiner*, 6 Nov. 1920.

Carrick's businesses were ordered to close by crown forces, and to accord the same respect to Larkin as they had done to MacSwiney.¹³² In the days following Larkin's killing, following the imposition of a curfew at Carrick, sixty armed men raided the offices of the *Leitrim Observer* local newspaper, and destroyed the printing presses. Before leaving, the raiders set fire to the building, but through the efforts of the Dunne family and their neighbours the building was saved from total destruction.¹³³ The raiding party proceeded across the town and attacked the jeweller shop of John Dunne, brother of the *Leitrim Observer's* editor. Outside the shop, the raiders drew a skull and crossbones inscriptions, and wrote 'Three lives for one of ours. Take heed. Up the Black and Tans'.¹³⁴ Noting attacks on a number of local newspapers, the *Irish Bulletin* observed that 'the natural consequence has been that the provincial press now avoids the publication of any but the baldest details of the military and constabulary excesses'.¹³⁵

Coercion by the police and military continued in Carrick, when soldiers ordered the removal of the tricolour from the Carrick Workhouse building. The soldiers subsequently removed the flagpoles from the building and threw them into the river Shannon.¹³⁶ Despite, or because of such behaviour, Leitrim County Council acceded to a request from the local military garrison that Carrick residents would observe a two minute silence on Armistice Day on 11 November. The Council claimed that they acceded to the request, because of 'the courteous tone of the suggestion'. A request that all shops close from 10.45 to 11.15 on 11 November was also accepted by local businesses after visits by police.¹³⁷

Confusion between the actions of Auxiliaries, Black and Tans, and regular soldiers was not uncommon in the period.¹³⁸ The *Freeman's Journal* clarified an earlier report on the Carrick attack, stating that they had earlier described the raiders as dressed in khaki, and added, 'but in fairness to the local military, it should be stated that these men dressed in khaki, were members of the auxiliary force who visited the town on the evening in question'.¹³⁹ While often all three groups were involved in joint operations, they existed in separate units in the region. Throughout the 1919-1921 period, the area was under the command of the British Fifth Division. Formed in 1906, the Fifth Division suffered considerable casualties during the First

¹³² *RH*, 6 Nov. 1920.

¹³³ *Freeman's Journal*, 11 Nov. 1920.

¹³⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 11 Nov. 1920.

¹³⁵ *Irish Bulletin*, 29 Nov. 1920.

¹³⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 13 Nov. 1920.

¹³⁷ *RH*, 13 Nov. 1920.

¹³⁸ Lowe, *RIC*, p.110.

¹³⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 13 Nov. 1920.

World War. During the Irish War of Independence it had responsibility for most of central and western Ireland, under the command of Brigadier-General C.S. Lambert, who was based in Athlone. The county of Leitrim was under the control of the 13th Infantry brigade, and both the East Yorkshire and Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire regiments served in the area. While Boyle in Co. Roscommon was the area headquarters, military detachments were posted in Carrick, Mohill, Drumshanbo, Ballinamore, and Manorhamilton throughout the period.¹⁴⁰ The RIC was commanded by a local County Inspector based in Carrick, and supplemented by Black and Tans in the major towns of the county. While the Auxiliaries were under the administrative structure of the RIC, for operational reasons they were under the command structures of the military. The old Workhouse in Boyle was the base for “E” Company under the command of Lt. Colonel S.F. Sharp, and “M” Company were based at the County Infirmary in Longford. Both auxiliary groups were formed as counterinsurgency forces that operated independently of other RIC units, and were primarily responsible for reprisal attacks and burnings in Leitrim.¹⁴¹

The Cloone and Aughavas districts were attacked on 17 November 1920. After destroying the home of John Harte, a Sinn Féin member of Leitrim County Council, the raiders took Harte from his home and fired shots over his head, before he escaped by jumping into a local river. At Annaghacoolan, brothers Bernard and Frank Ryan were placed on a hastily erected scaffold in their kitchen, and threatened with hanging unless they gave information on Volunteer activities in the area. The *Roscommon Herald* reported that, ‘they were subjected to a half hanging process until their faces were nearly black and their tongues lulled forth. They were then forced to stand for an hour and a half in their bare feet and half naked in icy cold water while they were at the same time beaten with whips all over their bodies’.¹⁴² According to the *Freeman’s Journal*, the raids ‘created a feeling of horror among all classes of the community’.¹⁴³ The curate at Aughavas, Fr. Edward Ryans attracted the attention of a raiding party in early December 1920. Ryans, President of the South Leitrim Sinn Féin Executive, was a familiar figure at republican gatherings. On 5 December, Ryans was visited by two armed and masked men at his home, and was ordered to surrender his shotgun to the RIC.

¹⁴⁰ William Sheehan, *Hearts and Mines, The British 5th Division in Ireland, 1920-1922* (Cork, 2009), p.184. ¹⁴¹ Ernest McCall, *The Auxiliaries, Tudor’s Toughs, A Study of the Auxiliary Division Royal Irish Constabulary 1920-1922* (Newtownards, 2013), p.203.

¹⁴² *RH*, 20 Nov; *SC*, 20 Nov. 1920.

¹⁴³ *Freeman’s Journal*, 22 Nov. 1920.

Furthermore, the clergyman was threatened that if he did not refund £110 taken in a fine at a Sinn Féin court at which he had presided, that there would be serious consequences.¹⁴⁴

In his analysis of crown force reprisals, Leeson believed that many of the outrages committed were in fact government reprisals, claiming that, 'our anonymous registrar made few admissions of this kind'. While crown forces rarely admitted participating in reprisal attacks, 'in many cases the police chose their victims with care'.¹⁴⁵ Rumpf and Hepburn observed that only in Leitrim, Longford, and Sligo did it appear that reprisals were significantly out of proportion to the extent of IRA activity.¹⁴⁶ Compared to both Sligo and Longford, republican military activity in Leitrim had been at an extremely low level, nevertheless an unrelenting policy of coercion was carried out across the county. An analysis of attacks on property by crown forces demonstrated that outside of Munster, the highest rates occurred in Galway, Dublin, Leitrim, Sligo and Longford.¹⁴⁷ In many instances, this pattern of state violence can be explained as a response to the very effective system of covert action of boycott and intimidation carried out by republicans against crown forces, state officials and their families.

According to police reports, the intense nature of crown forces activity in the autumn and winter of 1920 had positive effects. The reports noted that the boycott of the force was lifted and that, 'the terrorist element was defeated due to the firm and determined action of the police in holding up and searching Irish Volunteers'.¹⁴⁸ Police reported that, 'moderate people who previously would not interact with the police were now doing so'.¹⁴⁹ Hughes also identified that,

county inspectors across the country were reporting that while there was still much violence and unrest, relations between the police and the public were improving and there was a greater willingness to come forward with information in certain areas. The RIC also believed that the majority of civilians had become sick of the present state of the country and desired peace.¹⁵⁰

Nevertheless, increased violence convinced the authorities in November 1920, to sanction widespread internment, and camps were opened at Ballykinlar, Co. Down, the Curragh in Co.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Leeson, *Black and Tans*, p.158, p.173.

¹⁴⁶ Rumpf and Hepburn, *Nationalism and Socialism*, p.38.

¹⁴⁷ Augusteijn, 'Military Conflict', p.354.

¹⁴⁸ CI Report, Leitrim, Nov. 1920, (TNA, CO 904/113).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Hughes, 'Persecuting the Peelers', p.215.

Kildare, Collinstown in Co. Dublin, and Spike and Bere Islands in Co. Cork.¹⁵¹ In late January 1921, after a series of large scale arrests in the Cloone and Aughavas districts, the *Roscommon Herald* reported that, 'it was to the amazement of the people of these districts that so many arrests were made, especially of men who have taken no prominent part in politics at any time'.¹⁵² With the exception of Frank Sweeney, Quartermaster of the South Leitrim Brigade, who was interned in December 1920, the main IRA leaders in the county escaped arrest. During this period, Volunteers countrywide had adhered to the November 1920 directive from GHQ to stay away from their homes for fear of arrest.¹⁵³

In Leitrim, the new phase of the conflict from late summer of 1920 saw widespread coercion, brutality and reprisals carried out by crown forces across the county. Unlike the cyclical pattern of retaliatory action described in other regions, state violence in Leitrim was completely disproportionate to IRA activity. The authorities were not, it seems, distinguishing between the political and military wings of republicanism. By the end of 1920, three people had died in the county as a result of political violence, and two of these were killed by the British military in controversial circumstances. A suspended police boycott and no IRA action against crown forces might suggest that the policy of reprisal and coercion was successful. However, with the introduction of mass internment, a small number of Volunteers went on the run and this would eventually initiate a more concerted level of violence by the IRA in the county.

5.5 January-July 1921

Apart from two relatively minor skirmishes with crown forces in 1920 at Crimlin and Drumreilly, the IRA in the county was militarily inactive until the early months of 1921. However, over a four month period from January to April 1921, Leitrim witnessed an escalation of IRA activity. What factors were responsible for the changing patterns of violence within the county in these months, and how did the authorities respond to IRA actions? A feature of the 1919-1921 period were variations in levels of political violence across Ireland, and how are these variations explained in the context of Leitrim?

While IRA GHQ was constantly frustrated by some of the quieter counties, it was the escalation of police and military activity in late 1920 that forced many Volunteers to go on the

¹⁵¹ Murphy, *Imprisonment*, p.194.

¹⁵² *RH*, 5 Feb. 1921.

¹⁵³ Ó Duibhir, *Ballykinlar*, p.28.

run, and become members of flying columns. By December 1920, police were reporting for the first time that ‘information as to the formation of the South Leitrim Battalion IRA has come to hand, and it is believed that some five or six companies have been formed’.¹⁵⁴ According to the County Inspector, with the ability of police to move freely around the county without fear of ambush ‘they were now receiving information from sources hitherto dried up’.¹⁵⁵ The concept of IRA flying columns was initially devised in mid-1920 when the column was to consist of twenty-six men divided into four squads.¹⁵⁶ Each column was to be a mobile force that worked independently, and also as an aid to local units in initiating action in their respective brigade areas. Hopkinson recognised the plight of many part-time untrained Volunteers with meagre resources attempting to take on a highly trained well-resourced army and police force. The threat of reprisals in communities was also a factor that inhibited armed action by local Volunteer units.¹⁵⁷ The columns offered safety and companionship for many men on the run, and, ‘even if only a small minority of Columns ever managed a successful ambush, the transition to active service was a game changing move for the Army of the Republic’.¹⁵⁸ Bernard Sweeney recalled the transition stating that,

in December 1920, the active service unit, or flying column could be said to have come into existence. A number of the lads who were on the “run” had come together for companionship and also for safety reasons and were staying in the one district. I suppose that it was the herd instinct or that we felt safer in numbers that drove us together.¹⁵⁹

Unlike other more active counties, where the flying column was seen as an elite fighting force, in Leitrim the columns were organised on the basis of companionship by men on the run.

Despite their formation, IRA GHQ needed to ensure that the columns would become militarily active in the quieter counties. According to Townshend, the relationship between GHQ and inactive areas remained tenuous, with GHQ having ‘two primary means of influencing the action of local forces: it could send them organizers, and it could send (or deny) them arms’.¹⁶⁰ According to Hopkinson, ‘by late 1920, GHQ regarded the neighbouring counties of Roscommon and Leitrim as problem cases’.¹⁶¹ This assessment influenced the

¹⁵⁴ CI Report, Leitrim, Dec. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/113).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Augusteijn, *Public Defiance*, p.126.

¹⁵⁷ Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p.74.

¹⁵⁸ Townshend, *The Republic*, p.182.

¹⁵⁹ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, p.10).

¹⁶⁰ Townshend, *The Republic*, p.182.

¹⁶¹ Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p.143.

decision to send GHQ staff officer, and former leader of the North Longford brigade, Sean Connolly, to Leitrim and north Roscommon to organise their flying columns. Prior to Connolly's arrival, Frank Davis, a member of the North Longford Brigade, was sent to Leitrim, and reported that 'he found South Leitrim terrible'.¹⁶² The close proximity between both areas ensured close contact with the South Leitrim and North Longford brigades. Ongoing meetings took place to share ideas and information on enemy movements. Both Séamus Wryne and John Joe O'Reilly from Leitrim travelled to Longford for explosives training, and while there they took part in the attack on Arvagh RIC Barracks in February 1921.¹⁶³ Prior to the Arvagh raid, a co-ordinated assault involving both brigades in simultaneous attacks on Arvagh, Ballinamore, Roosky and Mohill barracks had to be abandoned because of an increased military presence in the region.¹⁶⁴ Before Connolly's arrival in Leitrim then, IRA activity had increased and, according to police, local Volunteers were being urged by GHQ 'to commit outrages and they are doing their best to comply with their instructions'.¹⁶⁵ Increasing IRA activity led police and military to force civilians to travel with them on patrols. According to the *Anglo-Celt*, the presence of Murtagh Dowd, a Sinn Féin court republican judge travelling with a police patrol at Carrick, while holding a union jack flag, 'caused a sensation'.¹⁶⁶

Townshend believed that the lack of central co-ordination from GHQ meant that the impetus for a military campaign was often dependent on the initiative of local activists. He recognised that the performance of units in the later stages on the conflict was often linked to the initiative shown by Volunteers in the 1918-1919 period, observing that, 'thereafter no amount of prodding from above could spur on slow starters to make up lost ground'.¹⁶⁷ Local initiative was also a factor identified by Coleman, who argued that the standard excuse of a lack of arms proffered by inactive areas, may 'have been an indication of lethargy on the part of IRA units that also affected their performance during the war'.¹⁶⁸ Hart has contended that effective local leadership and organisation rather than guns often dictated whether a region was active against crown forces.¹⁶⁹ The absence of both effective leadership and arms was a factor that hindered IRA activity in Leitrim. Ernie O'Malley, a GHQ organizer in Roscommon and

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Francis Davis, (University College Dublin Archives (hereafter UCDA), Ernie O'Malley Papers, P17/b/131).

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ CI Report, Leitrim, Jan. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/114).

¹⁶⁶ AC, 19 Feb. 1921.

¹⁶⁷ Townshend, Charles, 'The Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerrilla Warfare, 1916-21' in *English Historical Review*, 94 (1979), p.321-22.

¹⁶⁸ Coleman, *Irish Revolution*, p. 79.

¹⁶⁹ Hart, 'The Geography of the Irish Revolution', pp 142-176.

Leitrim, described the South Leitrim Brigade's commander Sean Mitchell as 'neither active in mind or in intention, nor would he normally go out of his way to look for a fight'.¹⁷⁰ Hugh Brady, Bernard Sweeney and P.J. Hargaden claimed that only a few service rifles and shotguns were in the possession of the South Leitrim Brigade.¹⁷¹ When questioned by Sean MacEoin on the levels of ammunition in the South Leitrim brigade area, local IRA man Tom O'Reilly replied that they possessed 'as much as would frighten sparrows out of a haggard'.¹⁷²

The first attempt at a large scale operation against crown forces was planned for 16 January 1921. As part of a co-ordinated attack, Volunteers fired shots at Ballinamore RIC barracks in the expectation that crown forces would travel from Mohill to aid their comrades. At Edentenny, an ambush party had cut down trees and trenched the Ballinamore-Mohill road to await the British reinforcements. The immediate reaction to the Ballinamore and Edentenny incidents was one of outrage by some residents of the area. The *Roscommon Herald* reported that 'the people of Ballinamore it is understood signed a paper disassociating themselves from the recent attack on the police, or from having any connection with the alleged conspiracy on the lives of the police'.¹⁷³ In late January 1921, Thomas Early, a member of the Royal Air Force, who was home on leave, was shot and seriously injured near Leitrim village. Condemning the attack on Early, Canon O'Reilly warned that, 'people who were guilty of murder had their blood spilt, and he knew of instances where they died in asylums or other places which brought disgrace on themselves and their families'.¹⁷⁴

After a brief period of time in north Roscommon, Connolly arrived in Leitrim in February 1921. His first action was to divide the flying column into two units, one headed by Sean Mitchell from Mohill, and the other led by Connolly himself. Describing Connolly's arrival, Bernard Sweeney stated that, 'we also got some more rifles but never had more than ten or twelve at any time, and ammunition for the rifles was very low at all times, about ten or twelve rounds per rifle'.¹⁷⁵ Connolly was immediately involved in a number of failed ambush attempts at Annaduff, Fenagh and Ballinamore.¹⁷⁶ According to Sweeney, 'on several occasions, Connolly and I and some other members of the column came into Ballinamore to

¹⁷⁰ O'Malley, *Rising Out*, p.166.

¹⁷¹ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, p.16); Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, p.11); Patrick Hargaden (NAI, BMH, WS 1268, p.14).

¹⁷² Francis Davis, (UCDA, Ernie O'Malley Papers, P17/b/131).

¹⁷³ *RH*, 29 Jan. 1921.

¹⁷⁴ *Irish Catholic*, 5 Feb. 1921.

¹⁷⁵ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, p.11).

¹⁷⁶ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, pp 11-12).

try and ambush a street patrol of the Tans and RIC. We put a mine, smaller portable type in the street but we never had any luck as the enemy never obliged us by turning up'.¹⁷⁷ At Drumshanbo on 2 March 1921, members of Connolly's column were lying in wait for a passing RIC patrol, but abandoned the operation when detonators failed to operate. The column also planned to kill former RIC County Inspector Ross Rainsford while he played golf at Carrick, but he failed to appear.¹⁷⁸

Despite these setbacks, the Leitrim Volunteers' first successful engagement with crown forces took place at Ballinawig, Sheemore, between Gowel and Carrick, on the morning of the 4 March 1921. False information that local Volunteers would be attending Mass was passed to police, who along with a detachment of soldiers from the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment, raided the church at Gowel.¹⁷⁹ The regiment had recently arrived in Leitrim from Donegal, and observed that 'the district is considerably more disturbed than that which we have vacated in Donegal, and though our hopes are high we have not yet been able to get the gunmen of the district under hand'.¹⁸⁰ On their return to Carrick, the raiding party was ambushed at Sheemore by Mitchell's unit. Recalling the ambush, Charles McGoohan stated that, 'I think several people said "fire" at the same time and as soon as fire was opened the figures started to jump and tumble out of the lorries. It was difficult to say how effective this first volley was, but afterwards it was some time before any fire was returned'.¹⁸¹ In an attempt to out-flank the ambushers, the party's commanding officer Lieutenant C.E. Wilson was shot and fatally wounded.¹⁸² During the short engagement, two RIC men, Sergeant Healy and Constable Costello were wounded. With a low supply of ammunition and fearing the arrival of reinforcements, Mitchell withdrew his column to safety after less than a thirty minute engagement.¹⁸³ With the departure of the ambushers, the police and military re-grouped and forced a young local boy to guide them by back roads into Carrick.¹⁸⁴ Reflecting on the ambush McGoohan stated that, 'I think that Sheemore proved that Leitrim could produce good fighting men'.¹⁸⁵ Sergeant A.M. Austin of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment recalled:

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Francis Davis, (UCDA, Ernie O'Malley Papers, P17/b/131).

¹⁷⁹ Ernie O'Malley, *Rising Out, Sean Connolly of Longford* (Dublin, 2007), p.149.

¹⁸⁰ *History of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment* (File 6, Leitrim County Library), p.13.

¹⁸¹ Manuscript Memoir, Leitrim County Library, McGoohan Papers.

¹⁸² *History of Regiment*, p.14.

¹⁸³ Patrick Doherty (NAI, BMH, WS 1195, p.20).

¹⁸⁴ O'Malley, *Rising Out*, p.151.

¹⁸⁵ Manuscript Memoir, Leitrim County Library, McGoohan Papers.

a subsequent examination of the position revealed six rifle pits dug in behind a low wall at the edge of the wood, and on the crest of the hill. The ambushers were echeloned in the wood to account for the flanking parties. No doubt exists that the information as to the wanted men being in the chapel was false, and a trap for troops and police.¹⁸⁶

Kautt observed that the army raised the issue of vehicle spacing to prevent increased casualties in an ambush situation in rural areas.¹⁸⁷ At Sheemore, guidelines were not followed by the army and police, as the distance from front to rear of the column was no more than one hundred yards, resulting in all vehicles coming under fire simultaneously.¹⁸⁸

The significance of the ambush at Sheemore was the fact that the engagement was the first encounter with crown forces in the county which inflicted casualties on the British. The ambush was well planned, but the short nature of the engagement resulted in low casualty figures. For her bravery at Sheemore, Alice Gray was awarded the Order of the British Empire medal. Gray, a fifty-five-year-old Dubliner and qualified nurse, was employed by the police as a woman searcher. When Wilson was shot, she immediately went to his assistance and administered first-aid. Reports of the ambush noted her ‘magnificent courage under fire. During the action she re-distributed the rifles of the wounded men among those who were only carrying revolvers’.¹⁸⁹ In his correspondence with the War Office in relation to Gray’s action, Commander of British Forces in Ireland Neville Macready advised his colleagues to ‘make a story of this but do not use name or description. Call this heroine “a loyal Irish lady of 55”’. Macready also recommended that Gray be awarded the Order of the British Empire, which was presented to her on 30 January 1922 in a private ceremony by the Lord Lieutenant at the Vice Regal Lodge. At Gray’s request, the ceremony was private, as she was ‘hoping to proceed to Canada as quickly and quietly as possible’.¹⁹⁰

While the ambush was deemed a success by the IRA, Volunteer Eugene Kilkenny described a heavy police and military presence in the south Leitrim area in the aftermath hindering further IRA activity.¹⁹¹ A planned attack in Mohill on a RIC and Black and Tan patrol was abandoned because of the heavy military presence in the town.¹⁹² In the immediate

¹⁸⁶ *History of Regiment*, p.14.

¹⁸⁷ William H. Kautt, *Ambushes and Armour, The Irish Rebellion, 1919-21* (Dublin, 2010), p.135.

¹⁸⁸ Sheehan, *Hearts and Mines*, p.95.

¹⁸⁹ Irish Office and Irish Branch, Heroism of Nurse Alice Gray at ambush, Sheemore Hill, Co. Leitrim (TNA, HO 351/87).

¹⁹⁰ C.F.N Macready to Under Secretary, War Office, 4 Apr. 1921 (TNA, HO 351/87).

¹⁹¹ Eugene Kilkenny (NAI, BMH, WS 1146, pp 12-13).

¹⁹² Patrick J.Hargaden (NAI, BMH, WS 1268, p.11).

aftermath of the ambush, raids and reprisals were carried out in the local area, and Gowel Temperance Hall was destroyed by fire. At nearby Kiltoghert, crown forces destroyed machinery at the local creamery before burning the building.¹⁹³ Ernie O'Malley described the scene:

the concentration of troops, Auxiliaries and RIC, surprised at this activity in a quiet spot, were aggressive and overbearing in their raids, interrogations and destruction. Houses were burned close to Carrick, and a creamery near the chapel of Gowel, while the people left empty houses behind as if a famine had again struck this quiet countryside.¹⁹⁴

While attempting to establish a site for an ambush near Gorravagh, Connolly's unit arrived at the home of local national school teacher James Flynn at Selton, Gorravagh, in the early hours of 11 March 1921. Flynn was a republican sympathiser, and a relative was a member of Connolly's flying column. On their arrival, the column also immediately occupied a nearby house owned by a local Protestant family, the McCullough's.¹⁹⁵ As the column settled down to rest at Flynn's, their presence in the area became known, and was spoken about openly in the local shop. Delia Mannion, the shop assistant, and a member of Cumann na mBan, alerted the column, and advised that they leave the area immediately, but they remained at Flynn's.¹⁹⁶

In the late afternoon of 11 March 1921, the alarm was raised that a military convoy was on the Mohill-Ballinamore road nearby. Observing the military stopping at the top of the laneway to the Flynn and McCullough homes, James Flynn immediately alerted the column. The raiding party placed two Lewis machine guns on gate piers overlooking both homes before beginning to search the area, and then proceeded to approach towards both homes. The military claimed that they were immediately fired upon by hidden gunmen.¹⁹⁷ Bernard Sweeney described what transpired at Selton:

I looked through the shrubs where I had taken up position and could see the enemy with machine guns set in position. Each of our sections concentrated on the direction of where the machine fire was coming and opened fire in that direction. The enemy were well informed of

¹⁹³ SC, 20 Mar. 1921.

¹⁹⁴ O'Malley, *Rising Out*, p. 152.

¹⁹⁵ Michael Whelan, 'Selton Hill' in *Leitrim Guardian* (1970), pp 30-40; O'Malley, *Rising Out*, p.155.

¹⁹⁶ Whelan, 'Selton Hill', p.31.

¹⁹⁷ Courts of Inquiry in lieu of Inquest: Deaths of Michael Baxter, Joseph Beirne, John Connolly, John J.O'Reilly, J.J. Wrynne, and an unknown man (Joseph Nangle?) (TNA, WO 35/160/3).

the position of the place and they had a force of military on the south side of us also, and they opened up with rifle fire and we had not a chance from the start.¹⁹⁸

When the shooting had ceased, five of the column John J. O'Reilly (Miskawn), Seamus Wrynn, Michael Baxter, Joe Beirne and John J.O'Reilly (Derrinkeher) were dead. Both Sean Connolly and Jack Hunt were wounded and captured. Connolly died later that night in Carrick Jail from his wounds. Bernard Sweeney was also wounded, but evaded capture by hiding in a drain, from where he was rescued later that night by locals. Only three of the Flying Column, Michael Guckian, Andy McPartland and Pee McDermott escaped unhurt.

Recalling the shock of losing Lieutenant Wilson at Sheemore, regimental sources reported that, 'vengeance was swift and very destructive, for a week later to the very day, the "brave boys" of the IRA lost six of their ablest and most experienced leaders in the South Leitrim brigade'.¹⁹⁹ On the basis that officers involved in the Selton shootings should not be identified, members of the press were not admitted to the inquests of the dead Volunteers at Carrick.²⁰⁰ The military enquiry found that no blame could be attributed to crown forces for the deaths of any of the six men, and concluded that 'these persons were killed by the crown forces in the execution of their duty and that blame for their deaths attaches to those who have encouraged them and others to take up arms against the crown'.²⁰¹

D.I. Hickman, the RIC District Inspector, received the praise of his superiors who stated that he received 'information and arranged all the details of the encounter most ably, and is deserving of the greatest praise'.²⁰² Newspapers reported that an ambush party engaged with crown forces, resulting in the shooting and capture of the ambushers, with no casualties inflicted on the police or military.²⁰³ The County Inspector reported that, 'it was thought that this was an ambush, but from a study of the ground I believe the gang had assembled to carry out an ambush near Mohill. The ground where they were caught was most unsuitable for an ambush'.²⁰⁴ At the subsequent Field Court Martial of Jack Hunt in Boyle, defending solicitor Petit questioned the military witnesses on the nature of the ambush. Petit enquired how could an ambush party be in a house seventy-five yards from the main road, and suggested that, 'it

¹⁹⁸ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, p.14).

¹⁹⁹ *History of Regiment*, p.18.

²⁰⁰ Kautt, *Ambushes*, pp 152-185.

²⁰¹ Courts of Inquiry in lieu of Inquest: Deaths of Michael Baxter, Joseph Beirne, John Connolly, John J.O'Reilly, J.J. Wrynn, and an unknown man (Joseph Nangle?) (TNA, WO 35/160/3).

²⁰² CI Report, Leitrim, Mar. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/114).

²⁰³ *Roscommon Journal*, 19 Mar. 1921, *Strokestown Democrat*, 12 Mar. 1921.

²⁰⁴ CI Report, Leitrim, March 1921 (TNA, CO 904/114).

was curious out of all this firing done there was no one killed on the military side, and six were killed on the other side'.²⁰⁵ Despite character references from the local priest, doctor and a Protestant merchant, Hunt was sentenced to ten years penal servitude for possession of a revolver and ammunition.²⁰⁶

Following the tribunal, the bodies were removed from military custody to St Mary's Church in Carrick before proceeding to their home areas. The *Anglo Celt* reported that

there was a great manifestation of grief in the town when the remains were removed from the military barracks. All houses were shuttered, and blinds drawn as the cortege went through the town, and at the military headquarters, soldiers stood at the salute and guards presented arms as the dead were borne out on the soldiers of relatives.²⁰⁷

At Longford, all businesses were closed during the funeral mass of Connolly. The *Longford Leader* reported that, 'as the funeral procession passed from the cathedral, an armoured car and two lorries containing police and Auxiliaries passed by and proceeded in the direction in which the funeral was going. Each man saluted the remains as they passed'.²⁰⁸ Despite a large Volunteer presence at the funerals, crown forces did not intervene. Sympathising with the relatives, Bishop Finnegan explained that had the men been killed in an ambush he would have prevented a Christian burial, but the circumstances of their deaths were that 'they were shot escaping, not ambushing'.²⁰⁹ Finnegan was an ardent critic of violence of both state and IRA violence. In his Lenten pastoral of February 1921, Finnegan proclaimed that 'I condemn, abhor and detest violence from whatever side or source it comes, and I earnestly appeal to all, especially our young men, to be very mindful of the teaching of our Catholic faith and to conform their conduct in all matters to the requirement of God's law'.²¹⁰

An IRA investigation was immediately conducted to discover how the authorities received the information of the flying column's presence in the area. The guilty party was identified as local Protestant farmer William Latimer, who had learned of the column's presence through his young son who had visited Mc Cullough's early on the morning of 11 March. Latimer's mother had died earlier, and his son was sent to McCullough's for some

²⁰⁵ AC, 21 May 1920.

²⁰⁶ AC, 21 May 1920.

²⁰⁷ AC, 19 Mar. 1920.

²⁰⁸ *Longford Leader*, 19 Mar. 1920.

²⁰⁹ Gallogly, *Kilmore*, p.286.

²¹⁰ Gallogly, *Kilmore*, pp 286-287.

items to prepare for her wake. His son returned with news of the presence of armed men. Later, Latimer prepared to go to Mohill to make funeral arrangements, and on the way he met local doctor Charles Pentland. It was speculated that Latimer relayed the column's location to Pentland, who subsequently returned to Mohill, and informed R.I.C. District Inspector Hickman. Charles Pinkman, the IRA Brigade Intelligence Officer concluded that,

whatever Latimer told Pentland, the doctor only stayed for a brief period at the dispensary and then returned to Mohill, and contacted District Inspector of the R.I.C. DI Gore Hickman personally. Immediately a mobilisation of police and Tans took place in Mohill, and as soon as Latimer arrived in the town he was contacted by both police and military officers, who then proceeded to Gorvagh.²¹¹

Latimer was shot dead by the IRA at his home on 30 March 1921, by two members of the Number Two Flying Column, Michael Geoghegan, and Matthew Boylan. Local Volunteers were initially tasked with the responsibility for killing Latimer, but refused to do so.²¹²

According to Pinkman, after the Selton shootings, typewritten circulars were posted to all republicans in Gorvagh warning them that if anything happened in the area that lives would be lost and property burned. Notices were then posted by republicans to all Protestant families in Mohill and Gorvagh that if crown force reprisals occurred in the wake of the Latimer killing that, 'so many lives would be forfeited and that every Protestant house in the area would be burned'.²¹³ No reprisals occurred, and the County Inspector reported that, 'information was coming in fairly freely, but the murder of Latimer will, I fear, have such a terrifying influence on the people that for the present at least very little can be expected'.²¹⁴ Fearing for his life, Pentland immediately went to England, while Latimer's widow Isabella, was subsequently awarded £4,680 as compensation for the death of her husband.²¹⁵

The circumstances of the Selton killings can be explained through a combination of betrayal and carelessness. While the authorities were fully informed of the flying column's presence at Gorvagh, the location of the Flynn home in close proximity to loyalist homes in a lowland area near a busy road was not safe. Despite warnings from local Volunteers, no look-outs were in place in an area of intense military activity following the Sheemore ambush. While

²¹¹ Charles Pinkman (NAI, BMH, WS 1263, pp 7-8).

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Charles Pinkman (NAI, BMH, WS 1263, p. 9).

²¹⁴ CI Report, Leitrim, Mar. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/114).

²¹⁵ Irish Distress Committee and Irish Grants Committee, Isabella Latimer (TNA, CO 762/4/4).

Connolly's organisational ability and drive certainly spurred the local IRA into action, by the end of March 1921, any impetus given to the local IRA by Connolly's arrival had disappeared.

In his analysis of IRA ambushes, Kautt described most ambushes in the 1919-1921 period as falling between amateurish and professional.²¹⁶ While Sheemore in its planning and execution fell between both discriminators, the shootings at Selton were a clear example of amateur soldiery. Although the IRA did not ambush crown forces at Selton, police and military came fully prepared for an engagement. The IRA suffered a similar fate at Clonmult in Co. Cork when twelve members of the Fourth Battalion of the First Cork brigade were killed in controversial circumstances by crown forces who surrounded a safe house. As at Selton, no scouts were posted in the general area and the IRA unit were caught by surprise by a British raiding party. Hart claimed that the IRA at Clonmult were also careless in developing a predictable routine which led the raiding party to the location. After Clonmult, six alleged spies were killed by the local IRA, including a shell shocked ex-soldier David Walsh.²¹⁷ According to O'Halpin, the death of Walsh was a result of the IRA's search for a scapegoat claiming that, 'it led to the gratuitous killing of a damaged and probably innocent man'.²¹⁸ The IRA rationale for killing alleged informers was that they provided information to the authorities, and such killings discouraged others from doing likewise. Dolan argued that many innocent people died for real or imagined reasons. The intention of such killings was to bring terror to a district, and Dolan believed that, "it reinforced divisions, it isolated communities, it bred the fear of being taken from your bed by masked men in the night to be found dead in a ditch with the mark of a spy".²¹⁹ The killing of Latimer almost certainly had such an intimidatory effect.

According to Townshend, in the immediate aftermath of the Selton killings, 'Leitrim went from bad to worse'.²²⁰ In order to reorganize the brigade area, Collins sent Captain Paddy Morrissey, a GHQ staff officer, to the county. At his first Battalion Council meeting, Morrissey stated that, 'the South Leitrim brigade was the worst brigade in Ireland and that the Third Battalion was the worst battalion in the brigade'. His comments were not well received, and

²¹⁶ Kautt, *Ambushes*, p.122.

²¹⁷ Hart, *IRA and Its Enemies*, pp 97-98.

²¹⁸ Eunan O'Halpin, 'Problematic Killing During the War of Independence and It's Aftermath' in James Kelly and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe-Historical Perspectives* (Sallins, 2013), pp 317-348.

²¹⁹ Anne Dolan, '*Spies and Informers Beware*' in Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (eds), *Years of Turbulence, The Irish Revolution and Its Aftermath* (Dublin, 2015), p.171.

²²⁰ Townshend, *The Republic*, p.293.

resulted in the resignation of the entire battalion staff.²²¹ Morrissey claimed that ‘Collins was very sore over Connolly. He blamed the Leitrim people and Mitchell the brigadier. Be careful he said to me, you are going into the most treacherous county in Ireland, but after a month I wrote back to him to say that the people were marvellous’.²²² Not only had Selton resulted in the capture of a limited arms supply, but the deaths of six active column members was detrimental to any hope of increased military activity in the area. Connolly’s death had a serious effect on IRA activity in both south Leitrim and north Longford. According to Davis, following the jailing of Séan MacEoin and the death of Connolly, IRA action was minimal, and, ‘harassing tactics were the only things we were capable of’.²²³ By May 1921, the north Longford column had become so ineffective that the possibility of joining with their south Leitrim comrades was being considered.²²⁴

Bernard Sweeney believed that ongoing raids by crown forces and disorganisation in the ranks of the brigade made it ‘harder every day to stay alive’.²²⁵ Ernie O’Malley believed that the IRA had lost some of its best men at Selton, and the explosives training that Connolly had undertaken with the Leitrim IRA was not put to any use. According to O’Malley, ‘the mines which were buried in the roadsides waited for men to explode them against lorries, but no one disturbed their quiet graves’.²²⁶

The lack of an effective intelligence network to support the military campaign was also evident in Leitrim.²²⁷ Sweeney admitted that the intelligence service was ‘never highly organised in the area’, highlighted by several abandoned ambushes due to the non-appearance of crown forces.²²⁸ Townshend also questioned the Brigade Intelligence Officer, Charles Pinkman’s competence and conduct of the post-Selton investigation, when Latimer was identified as the culprit on ‘rather circumstantial evidence’.²²⁹ In one of the few intelligence reports forwarded to GHQ in August 1921, Pinkman stated that he could not furnish a complete set of information as he still had to enquire about the rank of the local British army commanding

²²¹ P.J. Hargaden (NAI, BMH, WS 1268, p.12).

²²² Francis Davis, (UCDA, Ernie O’Malley Papers, P17/b/131).

²²³ Francis Davis (NAI, BMH, WS 496, pp 31-32).

²²⁴ Coleman, *Longford*, p.130; Francis Davis (NAI, BMH, WS 496, p.38).

²²⁵ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, p.16).

²²⁶ O’Malley, *Rising Out*, p.166.

²²⁷ O’Malley, *Rising Out*, p.139, p.142.

²²⁸ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, p.18); Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, p.12).

²²⁹ Townshend, *The Republic*, p.293.

officer, and the name of the army regiment stationed at Mohill. Neither could he supply the name of the crown prosecutor in the county.²³⁰

Volunteer ranks were further depleted by the death of local Volunteer James McGlynn in Drumshanbo on 12 April 1921, while enforcing the Belfast boycott. The boycott was instituted by Dáil Éireann as a protest against partition and sectarian attacks on the Roman Catholic population across Ulster. While posting notices against non-compliant businesses, the shotgun which he was carrying, accidentally discharged, killing McGlynn. The military tribunal heard that McGlynn's body was found with a shotgun by his side, and boycott notices were also found in his possession. The tribunal found that his death was accidental, 'when taking part with other person's (sic) unknown in an act of violence against certain residents of Drumshanbo'.²³¹

While direct military engagement was not a consistent feature of the 1919-1921 period in the county, the enforcement by Leitrim Volunteers and members of Cumann na mBan of the Belfast boycott was carried out relentlessly. While killing was the ultimate sanction for defying the IRA, Hughes argued that defiance of the boycott was often punished by non-lethal, yet effective forms of violence.²³² Manorhamilton shopkeeper Thomas McGovern was kidnapped by Volunteers, and was released only when he took an oath that he would no longer trade with the Ulster Bank.²³³ In nearby Dromahair, draper James Kelly was fined £40 by the local boycott co-ordinator for trading in Belfast goods. Hargaden recalled:

lists of Belfast firms who were on the blacklist were supplied to us and we raided the trains and vans for the goods of those firms. When we found such goods, which was nearly always we destroyed them or commandeered them. Bread vans were turned upside down and their contents spilled on the roadside and, in a short while, we had driven Belfast goods from the area.²³⁴

With the escalation of conflict, women played a major logistical role for Volunteers by providing food, shelter and clothing for men who were on the run. Margaret Brady recalled that 'we provided clean shirts for the men, and knitted socks for them. We also organised billets for the Column and cooked meals for them'.²³⁵ The transportation of arms, administration of

²³⁰ Intelligence Officer to GHQ, 13 Aug. 1921 (UCDA, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P 7A/18).

²³¹ Court of Inquiry in Lieu of Inquest: Death of James McGlynn (TNA, WO 35/154/52).

²³² Hughes, *Defying*, p.7,p.87.

²³³ *RH*, 11 Sept. 1920; Register of Crime, Province of Connaught, Leitrim, 4 Sept. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/45).

²³⁴ Patrick J.Hargaden (NAI, BMH WS 1268, p.9).

²³⁵ Margaret Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1267, p.4).

first-aid and intelligence gathering was carried out by women.²³⁶ Despite the vital role played by women in the campaign, a Leitrim IRA commander told a Cumann na mBan organiser that he should not be expected to ‘trust these girls with the secrets of the IRA’.²³⁷

Cumann na mBan members were also prominent in the enforcement of the Belfast boycott campaign in the county. Brady recalled that, ‘as well as going to the various shops and warning the owners not to stock Belfast goods supplied by the black-listed firms, the girls of Cumann na mBan did a big amount of intelligence work in this respect and were able to keep watch on all goods coming into the area’.²³⁸

Townshend described a core group of fifteen women who worked closely with active Volunteers in Leitrim.²³⁹ While many of their roles were classed as auxiliary, the organisation later judged that, ‘five-sixths of its functions were concerned with military matters’.²⁴⁰ Throughout the early phase of the military campaign, gender stereotypes enhanced the role of women, as in most instances police and military would not search them. However, with the introduction of female searchers by British authorities, the role of Cumann na mBan became more restricted. Doherty recalled a raid on her home in early 1921: ‘I was put into a room in my house where I was undressed almost naked by two female searchers. I am positive that one of the searchers was a man dressed up as a woman’.²⁴¹

In April 1921, two members of the crown forces died at Ballinamore. Wilfred Jones, a Black and Tan, was shot on the outskirts of town near the railway station while in the company of local girl Margaret Sadler. Jones’s killer was Charles McGoohan, a member of the Number Two flying column, and one of the Sheemore ambush party. McGoohan had received information that Black and Tans socialised freely in the town, and that Jones was meeting a girl near the railway station. Describing the shooting, McGoohan recalled that,

I found him standing on the roadside. I don’t know if he had already drawn his gun at my approach, but a considerable gun battle ensued in which I got off seven shots and he got off three and the last from the prone position. His companion I believe was injured also. I think I

²³⁶ Fanny Barry Application File (MA, Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF60172); Catherine Flynn Application File (MA, Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF60079; Rose Ann Geoghegan Application File (MA, Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF60007; Bridget Doherty (BMH WS 1193, p.5); Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (eds), *Irish Women and Nationalism: soldiers, new women and wicked hags* (Kildare, 2004); Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London, 1989), p.104.

²³⁷ Cal Mc Carthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2014), p.120.

²³⁸ Margaret Brady (NAI, BMH WS 1267, p.3).

²³⁹ Townshend, *The Republic*, p.250.

²⁴⁰ Townshend, *The Republic*, p.251.

²⁴¹ Bridget Doherty (NAI, BMH, WS 1193, p.4)

showed a fair turn of speed away from the scene for a couple of hundred yards when I slowed down and reloaded my guns. I had two; a Smith and Wesson 45 and a Colt automatic 45, so the enemy was out-gunned as well as surprised. Anyhow he lost.²⁴²

Jones was transported back to the local barracks on a cart, where he died a short time later.²⁴³

Later that night, Mayo born RIC man Thomas Mугan was killed at Ballinamore barracks. Official reports claimed that Mугan was killed when loading his rifle in the barracks.²⁴⁴ Hugh Brady claimed that Mугan was shot by Black and Tans, while preventing them from leaving the barracks to carry out reprisals in revenge for the Jones killing.²⁴⁵ According to O'Malley, Mугan's death 'saved a few houses and maybe some lives that night'.²⁴⁶ Houses were raided in the Ballinamore area in the following days, and Sweeney claimed that, 'the Tans were practically mad in the town of Ballinamore. They beat up every man they could lay their hands on'.²⁴⁷

The second killing of an alleged informer in the county took place at Gardaice, near Ballinamore, on 22 April 1921 when fifty-four-year-old John Harrison was beaten and shot dead near his home. Harrison, a Protestant, and father of twelve children lived five miles from Ballinamore on his forty-acre farm. According to Brady, suspicions that Harrison was a spy were confirmed in material taken in a mail raid at Garadice Station.²⁴⁸ In the early hours of 22 April, a group of men arrived at the Harrison home and ordered Harrison to come out. After Harrison refused, shots were fired, and a threat was made to burn the house before Harrison came out.²⁴⁹ According to Head Constable Black from Ballinamore, he found Harrison, 'dead and horribly mutilated'.²⁵⁰ A piece of cardboard tied with Harrison's bootlace was placed around his neck with the warning, 'Informers and traitors beware'.²⁵¹ Jane Harrison was subsequently awarded £4,640 for the death of her husband.²⁵²

²⁴² Manuscript Memoir, Leitrim County Library, McGoohan Papers.

²⁴³ Court of Inquiry in lieu of Inquest, Death of Constable Wilfred Jones (TNA, WO 35/151B/24).

²⁴⁴ *RH*, 23 Apr. 1921; *AC* 23 Apr. 1921.

²⁴⁵ Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, pp 8-9).

²⁴⁶ O'Malley, *Rising Out*, p.167.

²⁴⁷ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, p.160).

²⁴⁸ Hugh Brady (NAI, BMH, WS 1266, p.17).

²⁴⁹ Court of Inquiry in lieu of Inquest, Death of John Harrison (TNA, WO 35/151A/35).

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

²⁵¹ Anne Dolan, '*Spies and Informers Beware*', p.162.

²⁵² Ó Súilleabháin, *Leitrim's Republican Story*, p.83; *AC*, 15 Oct. 1921.

Two further killings of Black and Tans took place in Ballinamore and Carrick on 16 May 1921. At Carrick barracks, Constable Leonard Hart from London was shot dead by colleague Constable Johnson when a firearm was accidentally discharged.²⁵³ At Ballinamore, Constable Thomas Tasker was killed in a similar incident by his colleague Constable Colin Hay. Hay was subsequently sentenced to two months imprisonment for recklessly handling a firearm.²⁵⁴ While travelling to Boyle to collect a military ambulance to convey Tasker to Dublin, District Inspector Gore Hickman was ambushed at Drumsna, but escaped uninjured.²⁵⁵ According to O'Halpin, fourteen per cent of police casualties during the War of Independence were classed as accidental, having being inflicted by the victim or his comrades.²⁵⁶

With a limited arms supply, and ongoing raids by crown forces, road trenching was a regular activity undertaken by Volunteers. William Sheehan identified counties Longford and Leitrim as particularly active in using trenching as a mechanism to impede the movement of crown forces.²⁵⁷ Although trenching was considered to be a low risk activity, a group of between ten and fifteen young men at Gortvagh were taken by surprise with the sudden arrival of soldiers and police on the evening of 26 May 1921. Five of the group James Moran, James Doonan, Tom McGarty, Michael Moran and Michael Earley were captured after a brief chase across fields. In a subsequent petition for the early release of Michael Earley by District Inspector Gore Hickman, the police officer claimed that Earley was 'a delicate boy', and was forced at gunpoint to take part in the trenching.²⁵⁸ Suspicion for alerting the RIC pointed at the local Church of Ireland rector Rev. Dayley, who had earlier passed through Gortvagh.²⁵⁹ The clergyman subsequently left the area under police escort to England.²⁶⁰

Intensive crown force activity continued unabated throughout May and June 1921 in the hunt for IRA activists. The authorities were conscious of the use of the railway network for carrying dispatches between the countryside and the city.²⁶¹ Train searches were frequent and intensive, including the searching of a train's coal supply for dispatches and arms.²⁶² Police

²⁵³ *Freeman's Journal*, 18 May 1921.

²⁵⁴ *RH*, 20 Aug. 1921.

²⁵⁵ *SC*, 21 May 1921.

²⁵⁶ Eunan O'Halpin, 'Counting Terror: Bloody Sunday and the Dead of the Irish Revolution' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012), p.153.

²⁵⁷ Sheehan, *Hearts and Mines*, p.75.

²⁵⁸ Prosecution of James Moran, Michael Moran, Michael Early, Thomas McGarty, James Doonan (TNA, WO 35/128/14).

²⁵⁹ Patrick Doherty (NAI, BMH, WS 1195, p.28).

²⁶⁰ Irish Distress Committee and Irish Grants Committee, Rev. George Ingham (TNA, CO 762/53/12).

²⁶¹ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, p.18).

²⁶² Report of raids on channels of communication employed by IRA (TNA, WO 35/35/86b).

reports identified the Slieve an Anerin mountains between Ballinamore and Drumshanbo as a hiding place for Volunteers.²⁶³ In early June, an extensive search involving over four thousand men, aided by aeroplane support searched the area.²⁶⁴ Although six IRA men were captured, most of the men on the run evaded capture by crossing the mountain to county Cavan which was outside the search area.²⁶⁵

Widespread searches by crown forces in May and June 1921 were part of a nationwide strategy by the authorities to roundup wanted men and search for arms.²⁶⁶ An incident at Ballinaglera church on 5 June 1921 caused controversy when it was alleged that crown forces entered the church during mass and dragged members of the congregation outside. Parish priest, Fr. Michael Kelly, formally wrote to the Lord Lieutenant complaining about the actions of crown forces. According to Kelly, he witnessed an officer dragging people off their knees, and having intervened, the priest was 'driven back by the church gate by the officer's subordinates with revolvers, after which they entered the sacristy and church, where their conduct was most objectionable'.²⁶⁷ Replying to a parliamentary question by T.P. O'Connor on the incident, Sir Hamar Greenwood denied the priest's allegations claiming that that two men were detained when they were observed transferring documents to a woman in the congregation, and that Mass was not interrupted in any way.²⁶⁸

Little or no IRA activity in the county resulted in the authorities extending curfew deadline times from 10.00 to 11.00 p.m. in June 1921. The last action of the War of Independence in Leitrim was the burning of RIC motor stores at Mohill railway station in early July 1921.²⁶⁹ News of the signing of the Truce was welcomed across the county, and the *Roscommon Herald* reported that it 'was hailed in these districts with much delight by all shades of opinion, and a hope is expressed that should the representatives meet, a happy and peaceful settlement of the present struggle will be brought about'.²⁷⁰

Not unlike those identified by Augusteijn, Fitzpatrick, and Hart in other rural areas, the men and women of the IRA and Cumann na mBan in Leitrim were predominantly young,

²⁶³ CI Reports, Leitrim, Feb. 1921, Mar. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/114).

²⁶⁴ *RH*, 11 June 1920.

²⁶⁵ Bernard Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1194, p.16); Sheehan, *Hearts and Mines*, p.232.

²⁶⁶ Kautt, *Ground Truths*, p.159.

²⁶⁷ *Freeman's Journal* 14 June 1921.

²⁶⁸ *Freeman's Journal* 28 June 1921.

²⁶⁹ *RH*, 2 July 1921.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

unmarried, Roman Catholic and from lower-middle class farming backgrounds.²⁷¹ While Joe Beirne at thirty-two years of age, was the oldest man in both of Leitrim's flying columns, the average age of column members was twenty-five years old.. All were Roman Catholic and unmarried. Many like Bernard Sweeney, from Ballinamore, a twenty-four-year-old gardener at the local Convent of Mercy, were active in Sinn Féin since 1917. Michael Geoghegan from Drumshanbo was a twenty-four-year-old carpenter, who was jailed in 1918 along with six Volunteers for unlawful assembly (see Chapter Three). Geoghegan along with Matthew Boylan were the killers of alleged informer William Latimer. Boylan, originally from Manorhamilton, but working as a driver in Drumshanbo, was twenty-two-years-old, and would later become chauffeur to future Garda Commissioner Eoin O'Duffy.²⁷² Sam Holt, Carrick Union's Secretary, was one of the few republican activists that did not fit Hart's profile of IRA members. Protestant-born, and the son of an ex-RIC man, Holt converted to Catholicism at the time of his marriage. His politicisation began following his brief detention in the wake of the Easter Rising, and he was active in the formation of Sinn Féin clubs in the county throughout 1917.

The social profile of Cumann na mBan members closely resembled their male comrades. Aileen Sheehan described female activists as young, unmarried, well educated and from rural backgrounds.²⁷³ Women like Margaret Sweeney, a legal secretary from Cloone and Rose Ann Crowley, a teacher from Leitrim village were active throughout the War of Independence.²⁷⁴ Sweeney's sister Brigid Doherty was the founder member of Cloone Cumann na mBan in 1918, and later served as President of South Leitrim Cumann na mBan. After independence, all three women married Volunteers.

An analysis of successful War of Independence medal applications from Leitrim, reveals that 339 out of 468 applicants who stated their occupation were farmers, forty-one were labourers, seventeen were farm labourers and sixteen were tradesmen. While recognising that medal applications were submitted at a later period, one must assume that in the case of farmers, tradesmen or labourers, that the applicants were in similar or related occupations as younger

²⁷¹ Hart, *The IRA at War*, pp 110-138; Augusteijn, *Public Defiance*, pp 353-367; Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp 184-185.

²⁷² Ó Súilleabháin, *Leitrim's Republican Story*, p.93.

²⁷³ Aileen Sheehan, 'Cumann na mBan' in David Fitzpatrick, (ed.), *Revolution? Ireland 1917-1923* (Dublin, 1990), pp 89-90.

²⁷⁴ Bridget Doherty (BMH WS 1193), Margaret Brady (BMH WS 1267) , p. 2), Rose Ann Geoghegan Application File (MA, Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF60007.

men. Only 49 out of 977 applicants from the Volunteers and Cumann na mBan from the county were born before 1890.²⁷⁵

Coleman explained the War of Independence as ‘a series of small localised campaigns, rather than a nationwide struggle, with little co-ordination between brigades or overall control by IRA GHQ, in spite of its efforts to impose some form of uniformity’.²⁷⁶ Such a campaign ensured considerable variations in patterns of violence not only between, but also within counties. In Leitrim, what limited action took place was primarily concentrated in the south of the county. While James Dolan and Ben Maguire returned to the county after internment, they devoted their efforts to political activity, and were never involved in militant republicanism. Dolan’s pacifism was noted by police who reported that ‘the quietude of north Leitrim is due to the restraining influence of Dolan, who, although an ardent Sinn Féiner, in practice he is strongly opposed to murder and methods of warfare adopted by the extremists’.²⁷⁷ Throughout the two and a half year campaign from 1919-1921, only two members of crown forces were killed by the IRA, with three policeman killed by their own colleagues in controversial circumstances. Six members of the IRA and two civilians were killed by crown forces, and three civilians were killed by the IRA.

While Connolly died less than three weeks after his arrival in Leitrim, in that short period of time, the South Leitrim Brigade were provided with effective leadership and organisation. Ernie O’Malley believed that after the killings at Selton Hill, ‘the men were despondent and leaderless. The Leitrim brigade had lost some of its best officers and its new and real driving force, Sean Connolly’.²⁷⁸ The lack of a centrally controlled and directed republican military campaign for most of the War of Independence ensured that local initiative was crucial. Low levels of arms, an ineffective intelligence network and poor leadership ensured that resistance in Leitrim was confined to a limited number of activities including road trenching, raids on mails and a widespread boycott campaign against the sale of Belfast goods.

However, an overemphasis on military engagements as an indicator of republican resistance, has ignored a wide range of acts of non-violent forms of resistance. Actions such as civil disobedience, boycott, intimidation and defiance were conducted successfully by Leitrim

²⁷⁵ MA, Military Pensions Collection, Pension Series and Medal Series.

²⁷⁶ Coleman, *Irish Revolution*, p.78.

²⁷⁷ Army of Ireland, Administrative and Easter Rising Records, Sinn Féin Activists, James N. Dolan (TNA, WO 35/206/62).

²⁷⁸ O’Malley, *Rising Out*, p.166.

republicans. In many instances, this terror was directed, not only at crown forces, but against members of the local population who were seen as not complying with republican directives. Where Leitrim differed from other regions was the extreme levels of state violence. These retaliatory acts were totally disproportionate to the levels of IRA military activity in the county, and can best be explained by the widespread success of a campaign of boycott and intimidation against crown forces, state officials and certain members of the local community. While violence was cyclical in many regions, with both sides motivated by a desire to hit back at the enemy for the last attack, retaliatory violence in Leitrim was directed at the local population, who were seen as complicit by the authorities in boycott and intimidation campaigns.²⁷⁹ Unlike Fitzpatrick's analysis of the drift to violence in Clare, which he explained as an 'overreaction by the Volunteers to overreaction by the government', this did not take place in Leitrim.²⁸⁰ As the history of the conflict was one of experiment, improvisation and self-discovery, Leitrim republicans soon discovered that covert forms of resistance were often the most effective weapons in their armoury.

²⁷⁹ Hart, *IRA and Its Enemies*, p.106.

²⁸⁰ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.179.

Chapter 6: Civil War in Leitrim

6.1 Introduction

With the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty on 6 December 1921, all parties to the Treaty had different perceptions of what the agreement meant. Under its terms, a twenty-six county entity, the Irish Free State was established which would have dominion status within the British Empire, and, consequently, recognise the British monarch as the formal head of state. To the Irish delegation, the terms of the Treaty ensured British recognition of Irish statehood, a native Irish administration, and control of a wide range of governmental functions. While it offered less than the coveted Irish Republic, the Irish negotiators believed that hopes for full independence would, in time, be fulfilled. Under the threat of a resumption of war from Britain's Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, the Irish delegation in London believed that the terms of the settlement were the best that could be achieved, and that there was no viable alternative. To the British, the Treaty ensured that the age-old Irish problem would be resolved, while retaining both the imperial link within the Empire and naval bases in Ireland.

An important element of the agreement was the recognition of partition whereby the six north-eastern counties on the island would constitute Northern Ireland, with its own Prime Minister and parliament. The Government of Ireland Act of 1920 had formally created partition but under the terms of the Treaty the Northern Ireland parliament was allowed to secede from the jurisdiction of the Irish Free State, and remain within the United Kingdom. Although partition was not welcome, Collins and Griffith believed that Article 12 of the Treaty, establishing a Boundary Commission, would make the long-term viability of the northern state untenable. As the Irish negotiators returned home, opposition to the Treaty soon emerged from Eamon de Valera, the President of the Irish Republic, and other elements within Sinn Féin, who argued that under dominion status Britain would continue to exercise undue influence on Irish affairs. Furthermore, they objected to provisions such as the oath of fidelity that members of Dáil Éireann would have to swear to the British monarch. After an acrimonious series of debates, the Dáil approved the Treaty by 64 votes to 57 on 7 January 1922. This resulted in the resignation of de Valera, and two other cabinet ministers, Austin Stack and Cathal Brugha.

From early 1922, Michael Collins and his pro-Treaty colleagues established a Provisional Government that oversaw the transfer of power from Britain to an Irish administration. Despite attempts to re-unify both factions at a political and military level, the

country plunged into chaos as many influential IRA leaders led their men in opposition to the Treaty. While the pro-Treaty side were winning the political debate, the majority of prominent IRA leaders were opposed to the Treaty, with only Seán MacEoin in Longford, Eoin O'Duffy in Monaghan, and Michael Brennan in Clare, aligning with their IRA GHQ colleagues, Collins, Mulcahy and J.J. O'Connell, in support of the settlement. While a peaceful transfer of military bases and police barracks to local IRA units began in February 1922, conflict soon broke out in many areas between the two factions of the IRA over control of these barracks. As political leaders debated the merits of the Treaty, the confused political environment in Dublin was reflected in many local areas, with pro-Treaty forces attempting to prevent strategic locations being taken over by republicans.

Within a few short months of the signing of the Treaty, widespread political violence, agrarianism and lawlessness erupted in many parts of Ireland. The purpose of this chapter is to chart the nature of civil conflict in Leitrim from January 1922 to May 1923. Reflecting the situation across many parts of Ireland, the war in Leitrim was a relatively limited affair, with large-scale military activity confined to the summer and early autumn of 1922. However, the conflict within the county was complex, incorporating political violence, elements of sectarianism, minor land agitation, and widespread criminality. While large areas of Leitrim were relatively unaffected by the war, active republican groups operated in the border regions with neighbouring Roscommon and Sligo. The chapter is divided into three sections, with Section One examining the transition from British to Irish rule in the county, renewed agrarian agitation, and increased criminality in a changing political environment. As a border county, the Provisional Government's relationship with the new northern state is also outlined in this section. Section Two discusses the outbreak of Civil War in June 1922 and the early months of the campaign in the region, as both sides attempted to assert their authority. A new and more bitter phase of the conflict following the death of Michael Collins, is outlined in Section Three. Among the issues examined are state and republican violence, criminality and accusations of sectarianism, and the county's experience of the transition of power from British to Irish rule. Did the activities of the main protagonists within the region reflect national patterns, or were elements of the conflict unique to Leitrim?

6.2 The new state: law and disorder

By early 1922, the rulers of the new state prepared for the formal transfer of power to their native administration. Apart from the over-arching threat of civil war, a variety of issues

ranging from the land question to lawlessness, faced the Irish Free State government in the early months of its existence. How did events unfold in Leitrim in the early months of 1922, and how did the county and its people react to the new state?

The *Freeman's Journal* reported the withdrawal of crown forces from the county in late January 1922, stating that, 'all the Black and Tan members of the RIC in Leitrim have been notified that their services will no longer be required after February 1'.¹ Since the Truce, these forces had observed an increasingly active republican movement reactivate parish courts and establish IRA training camps across the county. Police reported regular breaches of the terms of the Truce by Leitrim republicans throughout the autumn of 1921. In October, police reported that three men took bedding from Manorhamilton Workhouse for a local IRA training camp on the production of a written order from three local district councillors. Training camps were also reported near Ballinamore.²

In early February 1922, detachments of the Royal Sussex Regiment based across Leitrim withdrew from their barracks, which were immediately occupied by the county's pro-Treaty IRA units. Before departing on 14 March, the RIC dumped surplus ammunition and explosives in the river Shannon in order to prevent munitions falling into the hands of the local IRA units. Local newspapers welcomed the departure of the RIC, and reflected that, 'it's a big change in twelve months when the paid bullies would not allow the people to walk the streets without insulting and abusing them.'³

Nollaig Ó Gadhra noted that across Connacht, the position of local IRA commanders on the Treaty, and local loyalties and animosities often determined the choices made in relation to the settlement.⁴ The position of the IRA's South Leitrim Brigade was primarily influenced by the Commanding Officer of the Midland Division of the National Army, General Sean MacEoin. MacEoin and his north Longford flying column (as shown in Chapter Five) had a major influence in the south Leitrim area. In the north of the county, IRA units were part of the Third Western Division under the leadership of Sligo anti-Treaty leaders, Brian MacNeill, Seamus Devins and Billy Pilkington. Like many other families in the period, the MacNeills were divided on the question of the Treaty. MacNeill's father Eoin was a Free State Minister, and his brother was a serving officer in the new National Army. The strength of anti-Treaty

¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 28 Jan. 1922.

² Summaries of Reports of Criminal Offences and Breaches of the Truce in Leitrim, 1921 (TNA, CO 904/153).

³ *RH*, 18 Mar. 1922.

⁴ Nollaig Ó Gadhra, *Civil War in Connacht 1922-1923* (Cork, 1999), p.13.

sentiment among the Sligo IRA ensured that the border regions of Sligo and Leitrim would form part of the opposition to the new state.⁵

As a result of increasing lawlessness, one of the first actions of the Provisional Government was formation of a civic guard on 21 February 1922. While deployment of the force was temporarily delayed until August 1922, due to internal divisions and an abortive mutiny, attempts were made to establish a police structure nationwide. In many areas of Leitrim, local IRA units who were occupying barracks and police stations acted as the enforcers of law and order in local areas.⁶ In a politically unstable environment, it was often difficult to differentiate between political incidents involving anti-Treaty IRA units, and ordinary criminals taking advantage of societal instability.⁷ Robberies were a daily occurrence, with 319 post office raids reported across Ireland between 23 March and 19 April 1922.⁸ At Gortvagh on 31 January 1922, twenty-six-year-old Hugh Canning was killed in an altercation with neighbours.⁹ At nearby Mohill, a local merchant Patrick McKenna was shot and seriously wounded in an incident linked to a property transaction. Three men were subsequently arrested by the local IRA and charged with the attempted murder of McKenna.¹⁰ On 6 May 1922, raiders stole £200 from the Northern Bank at Drumshanbo, and within three days the bank was again raided.¹¹ In the same week, Carrick railway station was raided by armed and masked men, and a large amount of money was stolen.¹²

The political division of Ireland into two separate states not only divided nationalist Ireland, but it also resulted in renewed outbreaks of large-scale sectarian violence across Northern Ireland. In the six month period between the signing of the Treaty on 6 December 1921 and 31 May 1922, eighty-one Protestants and one hundred and sixty-nine Catholics were killed in violence in the newly formed northern state.¹³ Outbreaks of ethnic violence were common in post-war Europe, and Ulster's violence was perhaps less ruthless and widespread than that experienced in many regions because of the clearcut societal divisions between Irish

⁵ Michael Farry, *The Irish Revolution, 1912-23 Sligo* (Dublin, 2012), pp 89-90.

⁶ *RH*, 11 Mar. 1922.

⁷ Farry, *Aftermath of Revolution*, p.165.

⁸ Hopkinson, *Civil War*, p. 90.

⁹ *LA*, 9 Feb. 1922.

¹⁰ *LA*, 27 Apr.1922.

¹¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 11 May 1922.

¹² *Freeman's Journal* 11 May 1922.

¹³ Michael Hopkinson, 'The Craig-Collins pacts of 1922: two attempted reforms of the Northern Ireland government' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 27:106 (1990), p.156.

nationalism and unionism.¹⁴ Despite two Craig-Collins agreements in January and June 1922, part of whose terms ended the Belfast boycott in return for the re-instatement of sacked Catholic shipyard workers, Collins approved a clandestine operation of IRA violence against the new northern state. Coleman has argued that the rationale for the northern offensive was two-fold, using the IRA to destabilise the northern state, and also helping the IRA to unite around a cause thus preventing a split in the ranks.¹⁵ Regan also attributed complex motivations to Collins's northern policy, including keeping the northern IRA pro-Treaty, and his 'willingness to reunite with the anti-Treatyites against a common enemy apparently without concern for British sensibilities'.¹⁶ Robert Lynch argued that Collins played a careful balancing act in the role of an outraged constitutional politician, while 'covertly he and his tiny IRB clique made their own plans for spreading destruction and instability in the North'.¹⁷

The establishment of an Ulster Council/Northern Command under the leadership of Frank Aiken, with Sean MacEoin as his deputy, resulted in the initiation of a violent border campaign from January to June 1922 against crown forces from both pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty IRA units. While a number of major confrontations between the IRA and crown forces took place on the border, including those at Clones, Co. Monaghan in February 1922, and Pettigo in Co. Donegal in May 1922, few incidents erupted on the Leitrim border with Co. Fermanagh.¹⁸ Among the more serious was a co-ordinated kidnap raid of prominent unionists organised by the Northern Command in response to the threatened execution of republican prisoners at Derry Jail. These raids on the night of 7-8 February were organised from a base at Blacklion on the Cavan/Leitrim/Fermanagh border, and involved the deployment of IRA units from Longford, Leitrim, Longford, Armagh and Mayo into Fermanagh and Tyrone. While the raids proved successful in the Tyrone area, where the IRA kidnapped twenty-one local unionists, the IRA raiders in Fermanagh met strong resistance from their kidnap targets. A speedy deployment of A Specials resulted in the capture of the IRA kidnappers outside Enniskillen.¹⁹ Five Leitrim republicans, Bernard Sweeney, John Kiernan, Joe Reynolds, John Griffin, and Charlie Reynolds were part of the fourteen-man raiding party..²⁰ At their trial in

¹⁴ Timothy Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence, Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (New York, 2010).

¹⁵ Coleman, *The Irish Revolution*, p.110.

¹⁶ John M. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution, 1921-1936* (Cambridge, 1999), p.61.

¹⁷ Lynch, *Northern IRA*, pp 104-105.

¹⁸ *Ulster Herald*, 18 Feb. 1922, *Donegal Democrat*, 3 June 1922, Lynch, *Northern IRA*, pp 154-56.

¹⁹ *FH*, 11 Feb. 1922, Lynch, *Northern IRA*, pp 100-106.

²⁰ Interview with Bernard Sweeney, *Leitrim News*, 22 Apr. 1971.

March 1922, the defendants refused to recognise the court, and asserted that their actions were politically motivated. Rejecting these claims, Justice Wilson told the court that ‘the group were taking peaceable subjects out of their beds in the dead of night and doing with them as they wished’.²¹ Before sentencing the defendants to ten year prison terms, the judge added that ‘a crime was a crime whether it was committed by a politician, a saint or a butter merchant’.²²

Only two further significant incidents took place in the Leitrim-Fermanagh border area in the campaign against the new northern state. On 28 March 1922, Charlie McGoohan led an attack on the RUC barracks at Belcoo, Co. Fermanagh, overpowered its occupants and seized a large quantity of arms and ammunition.²³ The only fatality of the campaign in the region took place a week later on 5 April 1922 when a six man RUC patrol was ambushed on the Fermanagh-Leitrim border at Garrison. The machine gun attack occurred at 9.30 p.m. in the evening, and resulted in the death of Constable Edwin Plumb and the wounding of two of his colleagues. Three of the patrol retreated to the local barracks, and on their return with reinforcements, could only recover two policemen. The following day, Plumb’s body was discovered on the Leitrim side of the border in a badly mutilated state, and taken back to Garrison RUC barracks by local clergymen.²⁴

Hopkinson believed that the lack of government authority in early 1922 contributed to the revival of land seizures and cattle drives across the country.²⁵ Gemma Clarke has argued that by the early 1920s the main enemy of the landless man ‘was not the rack renting landlord of old, or the estate worker who protected him, but the Catholic nationalist grazier who had bought his way into the Protestant Unionist club of ownership’.²⁶ In Leitrim, agrarian agitation was primarily confined to the south of the county near Carrick, and led by labour activist Jim Gralton. Gralton had returned to Leitrim from America in 1921, where he was actively involved in the American labour movement. On his return, Gralton built the Pearse-Connolly Hall on his own land with the aid of local voluntary labour, and used the venue for social functions and community education.²⁷ In late April 1922, he and his followers seized land at Mong from Wilton Vaugh, Sub-Sherriff of Leitrim. The *Anglo-Celt* reported that Vaugh’s land was ‘now

²¹ *RH*, 18 Mar. 1922; *AC* 18 Mar. 1922; *Freeman’s Journal* 14 Mar. 1922.

²² *FH*, 18 Mar. 1922.

²³ Manuscript Memoir, Leitrim County Library, McGoohan Papers.

²⁴ *FH*, 15 Apr. 1922.

²⁵ Hopkinson, *Civil War*, p. 90.

²⁶ Gemma Clarke, *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2014), p.87.

²⁷ Des Guckian, *Deported: An Undesirable Alien* (Dromod, 1986).

taken over by the Gowel Committee who state that they will use it, particularly for the grazing of cows of poor people resident in the district'.²⁸ In a similar incident, cattle were driven off the land of John O'Donel near Carrick, and driven over thirty miles to his home at Manorhamilton.²⁹ Further agitation took place at Dromod where a group of local men were charged with a land seizure and warned to desist from such activity. The court heard that the defendants 'took the law into their own lands and no civilised Government could tolerate such an act, which was sheer Bolshevism'.³⁰

Campbell recognised the restraining forces of conservatism within the republican movement that prevented a radical distribution of grazing land for smallholders and the landless.³¹ In her work on land congestion in Co. Galway, Una Newell argued that the series of Land Acts from 1881 to 1909 brought little fundamental change in the pattern of land structure in Ireland. According to Newell, the landscape of 1920s Co. Galway still contained large landlord properties, and large tracts of untenanted grazing lands alongside a mass of smallholders.³² However unlike Galway and neighbouring Roscommon, Leitrim did not contain large numbers of estates and grazier farms. Large holdings were uncommon in Leitrim with only 21 farms in the county over 200 acres compared to 254 in Galway, and 108 in Roscommon.³³

The composition of land holdings in Leitrim (over 90% were under 50 acres), and an above average rate of land purchase by tenant farmers contributed to a low level of agitation in the county.³⁴ Wheatley argued that land purchase was more advanced in Leitrim compared to many other counties of Connaught, and the absence of large grazier farms contributed to the relative quietude.³⁵ Nevertheless, many land hungry smallholders did not hesitate to seize land if the opportunity presented itself. When Patrick and Bernard Gilhooley attempted to seize the land of a neighbour in May 1922, their defence at a republican court in Drumsna was that their father who sold the land to Fox in 1897 was 'fond of a drop and he was not as cute as Mr Fox

²⁸ AC, 6 May 1922.

²⁹ RH, 6 May 1922.

³⁰ FH, 22 Apr. 1922.

³¹ Campbell, *Land and Revolution*, p.303.

³² Una Newell, *The West must wait: County Galway and the Irish Free State 1922-32* (Manchester, 2015), pp 45-46.

³³ <https://www.cso.ie/en/census/censusvolumes1926to1991/historicalreports/census1926reports/census1926volume2-occupations/>

³⁴ Terence Dooley, *The Land for the People: The Land Question in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 2004), p.235.

³⁵ Wheatley, *Irish Party*, pp 24-27.

was'. On the threat of imprisonment by the court, both men gave an undertaking to vacate the land.³⁶

While Sinn Féin had feared that forced land redistribution would alienate cross class support for the party, the rulers of the new state also wished to prevent land seizures and enforce law and order.³⁷ Terence Dooley argued that while Minister of Agriculture Patrick Hogan recognised that the solution to the land question lay in the completion of land purchase through new legislation, he also believed that the State should quell disorder by force if necessary.³⁸ Hogan, himself a substantial farmer, described land agitators as being from 'the worst elements in the country districts with a pretty liberal sprinkling of wasters from the towns. They are practically all landless. The great majority have no genuine claim to land and would not make a success of farming'.³⁹

From the spring of 1922, the reaction of the authorities in Leitrim to attempted land seizures and cattle drives was swift. Commandant Harry McKeon, National Army commanding officer in south Leitrim, issued a public proclamation in April 1922 prohibiting land seizures in his district. Part of McKeon's policy was the seizure of trespassing cattle, and transporting them to Dublin's cattle market for sale.⁴⁰ McKeon publicly announced that Dáil Éireann would acquire large tracts of land for division, 'and that persons requiring land will have loans advanced to them for purchase'.⁴¹ Nevertheless, agitation by Jim Gralton and his supporters continued. In their attempts to thwart Gralton, government troops occupied the Pearse-Connolly Hall at Gowel. During a standoff between locals and troops, threats were made by the troops to burn the hall. While in occupation of the hall, National Army officer James McLoughlin was killed in an accidental shooting on 30 May 1922, when he failed to respond to a sentry's challenge while approaching the hall.⁴²

As part of a concerted land agitation campaign across Ireland, many 'big houses' were destroyed by a land hungry population intent on forcing land redistribution. While thirty-nine such houses were destroyed in Connaught during the Civil War period, only one incident

³⁶ RH, 13 May 1922.

³⁷ RH, 6 May 1922.

³⁸ Dooley, *Land*, pp 50-51.

³⁹ Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies since 1922* (Oxford, 1999), p.31.

⁴⁰ *Freemans Journal*, May 10 1922.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² LA, 1 June 1922.

occurred in Leitrim at Glenfarne.⁴³ Because of the volatile political climate, the owners of Glenfarne Hall, a Belfast timber harvesting company, abandoned the property which was subsequently looted by locals. The property was later occupied by National Army forces in September 1922.⁴⁴

By early 1923, the government had established the Special Infantry Corps (SIC) to prevent land seizures and quell land agitation and industrial unrest. Hogan and his cabinet colleague, Kevin O'Higgins, saw the role of the new force as the protectors of the social and moral fabric of Irish society.⁴⁵ In Leitrim, the activities of the Special Infantry Corps were minimal. When a detachment of the Second Infantry Battalion based at Carrick arrested a five man gang at Kilmore on 21 May 1923, only Michael Duignan was associated with 'land trouble'. The remainder, described as 'active Irregulars', were handed over to Commandant Sean Mitchell and interned at Boyle.⁴⁶

The most pressing issue for Leitrim farmers in 1922 was rates. As outlined in Chapter Four, while many farmers opportunistically refused to pay rates, many others faced genuine economic hardship. By 1922, economic conditions were so bad in parts of the west of Ireland that the Irish White Cross had set aside £25,000 for the relief of distress.⁴⁷ In some of the Congested District Board areas of north Leitrim, the *Fermanagh Herald* reported that the intervention by the Provisional Government was demanded by Leitrim County Council for smallholders in economic distress.⁴⁸ Rate collection was also hampered by local IRA units who threatened local rate collectors.⁴⁹

Despite attempts to preserve unity within the ranks of the IRA, clashes between both sides increased. The occupation of the Four Courts in Dublin on 13 April 1922, by republicans led by Rory O'Connor heightened tensions between both sides. In March 1922, rival units in Limerick city contested the right to occupy vacant barracks.⁵⁰ Farry described clashes in Sligo between government troops and anti-Treaty factions during March 1922, and the dominance

⁴³ Clarke, *Violence*, p.7.

⁴⁴ Francis White, *Glenfarne-A History* (Glenfarne, 2014), p.25.

⁴⁵ O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p.33.

⁴⁶ Reports of Prisoners Arrested by 'A' Coy., Second Battalion, Special Infantry Corps, 17 May 1923 (Military Archives (hereafter MA), Athlone Command Papers, CW/P/02/02/02).

⁴⁷ Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland: A Study of Irish Landed Families, 1860-1960* (Dublin, 1999), p.42.

⁴⁸ *FH*, 24 June 1922.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Farry, *Aftermath of Revolution*, p.93.

of the anti-Treaty IRA who occupied the main barracks in the county.⁵¹ In contrast, all barracks in Leitrim were occupied by pro-Treaty forces. However, the fragility of the situation in the region was demonstrated at Boyle where the local barracks was taken over by Martin Fallon, leader of the North Roscommon Brigade, who initially declared that he was anti-Treaty. Following a meeting with Sean MacEoin and Eoin O'Duffy at the Bush Hotel in Carrick in late March 1922, Fallon changed to the pro-Treaty side. On hearing of Fallon's defection, Brian MacNeill, Divisional Adjutant of the Third Western Division of the IRA, immediately took over Boyle barracks, and Fallon's pro-Treaty faction withdrew and occupied the local Workhouse. As Carrick was under pro-Treaty control, the strategic importance of the town of Boyle as a gateway to Sligo and north Leitrim resulted in reinforcements from the IRA's anti-Treaty Third Western Division arriving in the town to protect the barracks.

Unlike other regions, the early months of 1922 in Leitrim were characterised by an environment of relative peace, partly influenced by the uncontested nature of the 1922 election in the county. Nevertheless, a number of incidents took place in the Carrick area including the burning of the Parke Masonic Hall, and the firing of shots at soldiers near the town's barracks.⁵² The South Leitrim Brigade's support for the Treaty contributed to the quietude, and yet while the county was relatively peaceful, Leitrim IRA units were still active in Collins's clandestine border campaign. Although agrarianism had not disappeared, land seizures in the county were fewer, and confined to a small area around Carrick. The actions of the pro-Treaty authorities in policing the county ensured that crime was controlled, and widespread land seizures prevented. Very often, the lines between political activity, agrarian revolt, and ordinary crime were unclear.⁵³ As tensions in Dublin intensified, the increasing rate of violent incidents in the provinces, in the quest for control of strategic locations, was an indicator of a changing environment.

6.3 Civil War: the early months

As outlined in Chapter 4, the absence of an election and consequent election campaign contributed significantly to the absence of political turmoil in the county. Nevertheless, after six months of division, dissension, and failed attempts at compromise at a national level, the Civil War began on 28 June 1922 with the bombardment of the Four Courts by government

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.54.

⁵² *RH*, 29 Apr. 1922; *RH*, 2 May 1922.

⁵³ Ó Súilleabháin, *Leitrim's Republican Story*, p.133.

forces. The background to the bombardment was the pro-Treaty election victory, and pressure from the British following the killing of Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson by the IRA in London. In a letter to Collins, Lloyd George was adamant that, ‘the ambiguous position of the IRA’ could no longer be ignored, and the Prime Minister made it clear to Collins that, ‘His Majesty’s Government cannot consent to a continuance of this state of affairs, and they feel entitled to ask you to formally bring it to an end forthwith’.⁵⁴ How did Leitrim react to the outbreak of violence, and what was the pattern of violence in the county during the early months of the conflict?

Reporting on the outbreak of formal hostilities, the *Leitrim Advertiser* reported that, ‘a feeling of despair and sadness has come over the population at seeing the country now enmeshed in the throes of civil war, with Irishmen fighting against other brave Irishmen’.⁵⁵ An equally despondent *Roscommon Herald* declared that,

all the blood, misery, suffering and ruin endured in Ireland for the last six years goes for nothing, when just as much or even better might have been had for the ask under Redmond’s old worthless Parliamentary Party. It is this reflection that makes the Civil War now raging in Dublin, so maddening and heart-depressing.⁵⁶

Unlike the War of Independence, there was no formal republican unit within Leitrim during the Civil War, which forced anti-Treaty IRA men to join units in north Roscommon and Sligo. Ó Súilleabháin noted the cross county structure of republican resistance in the region, against the backdrop of strong support for the Treaty within the county.⁵⁷ While all three Western Divisions of the IRA were anti-Treaty, the South Leitrim Brigade supported the December 1921 settlement. IRA veteran Jim Gallagher recalled that the few Leitrim anti-Treaty members of the IRA in south Leitrim went to Boyle barracks to join their north Roscommon comrades, because in Leitrim the ‘whole Brigade became pro-Treaty’.⁵⁸

While many historians believed that the causes of the conflict were complex, and not necessarily related to the Treaty settlement, unlike many civil wars worldwide, political divisions across class lines were not evident.⁵⁹ As previously outlined, support for the Treaty

⁵⁴ Lloyd George to Michael Collins, 22 June 1922, (NLI, Eoin O’Duffy Papers, MS 46, 281/5).

⁵⁵ *LA*, 6 July 1922.

⁵⁶ *RH*, 1 July 1922.

⁵⁷ Ó Súilleabháin, *Leitrim’s Republican Story*, p.138.

⁵⁸ Jim Gallagher (Leitrim County Library, Local Studies Oral History Collection, Audio 263).

⁵⁹ Tom Garvin, *1922: The birth of Irish democracy* (Dublin, 1996), p.39; Joe Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989), p.67; Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic, A Documented Chronicle* (London,

in Leitrim was strong and heavily influenced by the positions taken on the settlement by local leaders. Bew has contended that there was no correlation between class origin and support for the Treaty, and believed that political calculations, ideological factors, and personality disputes were more relevant.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, support for the anti-Treaty side was more prevalent in poorer areas of the west and south, with militant republicanism sometimes portrayed as ‘a lower-class rural phenomenon’, aided by anti-Treatyites fuelling agrarianism among uneconomic landowners and the landless.⁶¹ Furthermore, while elements of all social classes supported the Treaty, the strongest support for the Provisional Government came from the upper echelons of Irish society, and in areas of relative prosperity where there were more established links to the British economy.⁶² While Bill Kissane has argued that theories of cleavage across social class lines between both sides remain unconfirmed, the conflict was not entirely without a class basis.⁶³ Gavin Foster explained this phenomenon through the unique structure of Irish society, which revolved around a status conscious population with multiple social divisions, not necessarily linked to traditional class structures.⁶⁴ This emphasis on societal status led to a wide variety of descriptions of opponents being made including those of collaborators, riff-raff, corner boys, and social climbers.⁶⁵

Support for the Treaty among all classes in Leitrim was reflected in high enlistment into the National Army in the early months of 1922. An IRA review took place at Drumsna on 14 February, and the *Roscommon Herald* reported that ‘all the shop assistants and workers are enrolled in the ranks of the Army’.⁶⁶ In early March 1922, eleven hundred men presented themselves at Carrick barracks to join the army and the newly formed civic guard.⁶⁷ The experience of Leitrim, a county where over 85% of farmers possessed holdings of less than thirty acres, supported Hart’s argument that neither poverty nor prosperity influenced the conflict among the general population.⁶⁸ A similar pattern emerged in neighbouring Sligo

1968); P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924); John M.Regan, *Myth and the Irish State: Historical Problems and Other Essay* (Dublin, 2013).

⁶⁰ Paul Bew, *Ireland, The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006* (Oxford, 2007), pp 438-439.

⁶¹ Foster, *Civil War*, p.7; Bew, ‘Agrarian Radicalism’ in Boyce, *The Revolution in Ireland*, pp.229-234; Dooley, *Land*, p.50.

⁶² Bew, *Ireland, Politics of Enmity*, p. 439.

⁶³ Foster, *Civil War*, pp 7-12.

⁶⁴ Bill Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War* (Oxford, 2005), p.8.

⁶⁵ Foster, *Civil War*, pp 22-82.

⁶⁶ *RH*, 18 Feb. 1922.

⁶⁷ *RH*, 18 Mar. 1922.

⁶⁸ Hart, ‘*Geography*’, pp 142-176.

where Farry has observed that the socio-economic background of republican internees and National Army soldiers in the county were broadly similar.⁶⁹

With strong republican resistance across large areas of the west of Ireland, the National Army were intent on taking control of the region by recapturing republican occupied towns.

Within twenty-four hours of the Four Courts' bombardment, government forces recaptured Finner Camp in Donegal adjacent to the Leitrim border. Two republicans were killed, including James Connolly, a Sinn Féin member of Leitrim County Council, and a Captain in the Third Western Division. Connolly's father was killed in controversial circumstances by crown forces in 1920. Eighteen-year-old John Connolly was the second Leitrim republican to die in the opening weeks of the civil war. His family received a note informing them that his body was in a coffin in Tullaghan church, and that his death was the result of an accidental shooting. Connolly's father told his inquest that his son was an apprentice shoemaker in Bundoran, but he had left his employment to fight with republican forces. The verdict of the inquest jury found 'that the deceased died near Tullaghan on 11 July 1922, and the cause of death was shock and haemorrhage as a result of a gunshot injury, but how inflicted there was no evidence to show'.⁷⁰

By early July 1922, the *Freeman's Journal* reported that government forces controlled Carrick, 'with no Irregulars in the whole of the south Leitrim area'.⁷¹ In an attempt to stop the National Army advancing westwards towards Boyle, republicans unsuccessfully attempted to destroy the railway bridge crossings of the river Shannon at Drumsna.⁷² Since April 1922, Boyle was jointly controlled by both pro and anti-Treaty forces, and in the battle for control of the town in June 1922, National Army commander and former leader of the North Roscommon Brigade, Michael Dockery, was killed. On 3 July 1922 pro-Treaty reinforcements arrived from Athlone which decisively turned the battle in favour of government forces. After a protracted four day battle, the National Army captured the town, and republicans retreated to the nearby Arigna mountains on the Roscommon-Leitrim border. In their retreat from Boyle, a group of republicans ambushed a National Army patrol at Ardcarne outside Carrick, killing one soldier, before the attacking party was captured by government forces. National Army victories continued, and with the re-capture of Sligo town in late July 1922, government forces were in control of all the main towns in counties Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon. Despite losing control

⁶⁹ Farry, *Aftermath of Revolution*, p.296.

⁷⁰ *Donegal News*, 22 July 1922.

⁷¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 8 July 1922.

⁷² *LA*, 6 July 1922.

of the towns, republicans successfully transferred large supplies of arms and ammunition to remote hideaways in the surrounding countryside and mountains. Such resources ensured that the conflict would be protracted, and Farry has observed that ‘in spite of initial successes, large areas of Connacht, especially in Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo and the Connemara area of Galway still caused major problems for the government and hopes of a quick end to the war were soon seen to be premature’.⁷³

With government forces in control of the major towns, republican strategy in the region revolved around a campaign of guerrilla warfare based in the mountains of Arigna and north Sligo. Republican resistance was concentrated around two groups, the Arigna column under the control of Edward (Ned) Bofin, and a larger group under the command of Liam Pilkington and Brian MacNeill based at Rahelly House on the Gore-Booth estate on the Sligo-Leitrim border. National Army intelligence reports identified Bofin as a leader ‘known for his soldierly qualities’, who compelled his men to go to bed at 8.00 p.m. each evening and rise at 2.00 a.m., in order to conduct operations under cover of darkness.⁷⁴ While good communications existed between both groups, no unified command structure, nor any co-ordinated military strategy existed between them.⁷⁵

Pilkington’s group attacked the town of Manorhamilton on 9 July 1922, and were involved in a number of incidents in north Leitrim. During the course of the attack, the local curate, Fr. Brady, intervened and stood in front of the National Army garrison. He informed the attackers that ‘he would remain there, and if they attacked the barrack he would be the first to fall’.⁷⁶ The republicans acceded to the priest’s request and withdrew. Two weeks later, on 16 July 1922, Manorhamilton barracks was again attacked by republicans with rifle and machine gun fire.⁷⁷ In addition to attacks on National Army garrisons, republicans were also involved in road trenching and attacks on mails and trains. In July 1922, bridges were destroyed, and roads blocked with fallen trees in order to hinder the movement of the National Army.⁷⁸ Increasing levels of attacks on infrastructure forced William Cosgrave to request clergy and other public figures to direct and assist local populations to clear road and bridge obstructions. At Killargue in July 1922, the local curate Father Mc Manus organised local

⁷³ Farry, *Aftermath of Revolution*, p.79.

⁷⁴ Daily Intelligence Report, 4 Aug. 1922 (MA, Western Command Papers, CW/Ops/02/01/01).

⁷⁵ Farry, *Aftermath of Revolution*, p.80.

⁷⁶ *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 July 1922; *Donegal News*, 13 July 1922.

⁷⁷ *Freeman’s Journal*, 19 July 1922.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

people to clear road obstructions put in place by republican forces on the Drumkeerin-Manorhamilton road.⁷⁹ Pro-Treaty TD James Dolan had a narrow escape from republicans when he climbed over a wall and escaped during an attack by Pilkington's unit on Glenfarne railway station in July 1922. On 5 July 1922, Pilkington's column captured a National Army outpost at Kinlough, and the fifteen-man garrison were disarmed.⁸⁰

Farry described the months of August and September 1922 in the region as a period of military stalemate with both sides pre-occupied with maintaining control of their respective areas.⁸¹ During this period, a proposed peace initiative by Father James Roddy from Geevagh failed, despite a three day ceasefire bringing both sides to peace talks. On the mistaken assumption that a permanent truce had been negotiated, several members of the Arigna column arrived at Boyle barracks where they were arrested. The men were subsequently released having been informed that the cessation in hostilities was only temporary.⁸²

One of the few significant actions undertaken in Leitrim was the capture of the Drumsna garrison on 24 August 1922, where a large quantity of arms and ammunition was captured by republicans. In the subsequent military inquiry, Private Philip Brady who was on sentry duty at the time of the attack claimed that he was taken by surprise, and overpowered by the raiders, who were in stocking feet while approaching the building. The raiders detonated a mine near the barracks door before overpowering the seven-man unit.⁸³

During the first weeks of Civil War, the conflict in the north-west followed the general pattern nationwide. The capture of large strategic military locations like Boyle and Sligo, was mirrored across Munster, where government forces, possessing superior manpower and equipment asserted state authority, while republicans retreated to the surrounding countryside. Republican strategy reverted to a guerrilla campaign, capturing isolated army posts, disarming the occupants, and retreating to mountain strongholds with captured arms and ammunition. As such, the vast majority of Leitrim's countryside was peaceful, and fighting was confined to the county's border areas with Sligo and Roscommon. Despite protracted fighting to control the region's major towns in the summer months of 1922, only three fatalities occurred.

⁷⁹ Freemans Journal 20 July 1922.

⁸⁰ *Fermanagh Herald* 15 July 1922; *Donegal News*, 15 July 1922.

⁸¹ Farry, *Aftermath of Revolution*, p.80.

⁸² Hegarty Thorne, *Roscommon*, p.142.

⁸³ Command Intelligence Officer to Director of Intelligence GHQ, 8 Sept. 1922 (MA, Western Command Papers, CW/Ops/02/01/01).

6.4 State violence, guerrilla war and criminality

Following the death of Michael Collins in August 1922, the conflict entered a new and more brutal phase that was characterized by a low intensity, yet violent guerrilla campaign.⁸⁴ This new phase also witnessed the introduction of a range of repressive public safety legislation, the widespread use of internment, and executions of republican prisoners. Across the region, violence increased dramatically with controversial killings carried out by both government and anti-Treaty forces. What was the pattern of violence throughout this period? Did this reflect events nationwide, or were aspects of the conflict in the north-west unique?

In the aftermath of Collins's death, the Free State-Northern Ireland relationship changed. The new leadership in the south no longer felt the need to appease anti-Treaty opponents as Collins had attempted.⁸⁵ The Provisional Government's priority was to fight and assert its authority, and so 'both north and south finally retreated into their own safe dogmatic cocoons, the Northern IRA became an immediate anomaly and an embarrassing symbol to the South, of its failure to either adapt, or to confront the realities of partition'.⁸⁶ Sniping along Leitrim's border with Fermanagh was now confined to occasional attacks by republicans, with the National Army concentrating their efforts in the fight against their former comrades.

Throughout September 1922, confrontations increased between republican and government forces across Leitrim. At Dromod, government forces under the command of Commandants Harry McKeon and Tom Carter intercepted republicans on the estate of Ormsby Gore. The group had earlier crossed the river Shannon from Co. Roscommon. During the gun battle, republicans on the Roscommon side of the river kept up concentrated machine gun fire on McKeon's men in an attempt to aid their comrades. After an hour long engagement, three republicans were captured and taken to Carrick.⁸⁷ An attack on 14 September 1922 on Drumshanbo barracks by the Arigna unit led by Bofin resulted in the overpowering of the garrison and the capture of rifles, ammunition and explosives. In the course of the attack, Private James Dolan was killed, and before departing, the raiders set fire to the building. Despite protracted searches throughout the summer of 1922, government troops were unable

⁸⁴ Foster, *Civil War*, p.5.

⁸⁵ Lynch, *Northern IRA*, p.194 and p.208.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.211.

⁸⁷ *Freeman's Journal* 6 Sept. 1922; *LA*, 7 Sept. 1922; *AC*, 9 Sept. 1922.

to dislodge the Arigna republicans. During one search on 14 August 1922, a fourteen bed republican field hospital, staffed by four nurses, was discovered in the mountains.⁸⁸

Sean MacEoin, Commander of National Army forces in the midland and north-west, faced a number of logistical and organisational issues. With the size of his Western Command area stretching from Athlone to Donegal, many of his units were located in dispersed and isolated posts in the region. The presence of two well-armed republican columns in rough mountainous terrain on the Sligo, Roscommon and Leitrim borders ensured a prolonged conflict for MacEoin.⁸⁹ Morale among young National Army soldiers was also low, with many placed in isolated outposts across the region. At Dromahair in September 1922 government soldiers surrendered their barracks, a Lewis machine gun, and twenty rifles and ammunition to republicans as a protest about lack of pay and supplies.⁹⁰

In an attempt to take control of the region, MacEoin deployed experienced and war-hardened troops to the North Sligo-Leitrim border.⁹¹ In a co-ordinated military operation, troops from Manorhamilton, Boyle, and Sligo under the command of MacEoin, and troops from Finner camp under the command of Commandant Joe Sweeney, undertook extensive searches resulting in the capture of large numbers of republicans. During Sweeney's advance south, the republican controlled north Leitrim villages of Kinlough and Tullaghan were captured, and thirty republicans surrendered at Kiltyclogher.⁹² On the outskirts of Manorhamilton, fourteen republicans were arrested in possession of arms and explosives.⁹³ In their attempts to thwart National Army advances, republicans derailed trains across the region. At Dromahair, republicans apologised to the train crew informing them that they were compelled to take such action, because 'their comrades had been surrounded by numbers of Free State troops and it was their duty as republicans to take every possible step to checkmate the movements of the Free State soldiers'.⁹⁴

Because of the rapid advance of government forces, Pilkington's headquarters at Rahelly House was evacuated, and republicans sought shelter in the nearby mountains. *En*

⁸⁸ AC, 26 Aug. 1922.

⁸⁹ J. Fearin and D. Laitin, 'Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War' in *American Political Science Review*, 97:1 (2003), p.81 quoted in William Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War* (Oxford, 2006), p.9.

⁹⁰ Hopkinson, *Civil War*, p.215; Farry, *Aftermath of Revolution*, p.83.

⁹¹ Calton Younger, *Ireland's Civil War* (London, 1968), p.467.

⁹² LA, 21 Sept. 1922.

⁹³ *Freeman's Journal*, 20 Sept. 1922; Younger, *Civil War*, p.467.

⁹⁴ *Fermanagh Herald*, 23 Sept. 1922.

route to a meeting with Pilkington at Glencar, Brian MacNeill, Seamus Devins, Paddy Carroll, and James Banks were shot dead by government forces on the slopes of Benbulbin. The nature of the killings proved controversial, with claims that the four were taken away from the main body of National Army troops, and executed by machine gun. While official sources claimed that the men were retreating from an ambush site, Captain Charlie McGoochan was accused of directing the killings after the men had surrendered.⁹⁵ On the same day, two republicans Harry Benson and Tom Langan were also intercepted by the National Army. The bodies of both men were found eleven days later at the bottom of a ravine. Benson's body contained bullet wounds to the head and shins, while Langan's body had seven bullet wounds and a bayonet wound. As MacNeill's body was taken to Dublin for a private family funeral, the remaining funerals at Sligo attracted large crowds. Votes of sympathy were passed by local organisations to the family of Devins, a local TD and county councillor, and his comrades who had died 'in a fight which they thought was right'.⁹⁶

By the end of September 1922 MacEoin's operation in the area was deemed a success, yet isolated bands of republicans continued to operate in the area.⁹⁷ The RUC barracks at Belcoo on the Fermanagh/Leitrim border was attacked by gunfire on 15 October 1922, and the *Freeman's Journal* reported that the attackers were 'roving bands of Irregulars who have recently been seen in Glenfarne and Kiltyclogher districts of Co. Leitrim'.⁹⁸ A similar pattern emerged in many previously held republican strongholds including Munster. In Cork, Tom Crofts, the O/C of the Cork IRA, claimed that in the county, 'there was no worthwhile fighting'.⁹⁹ One of the few republican successes in the autumn of 1922 was the destruction of the river Shannon railway bridge at Drumsna which disrupted railway operations temporarily between Dublin and Sligo.¹⁰⁰

The wounding of Drumshanbo curate John Casey on 25 October 1922 in a shooting incident outside the town brought renewed attention on the region. Casey was returning from a funeral in Ballyshannon on his motorcycle when he was shot at Galley bridge, on the outskirts of Drumshanbo. The *Roscommon Herald* described the priest's Sinn Féin sympathies during the War of Independence, reporting that, 'his service not alone to Leitrim but for the entire

⁹⁵ Unsigned statement, n.d., (MA, Western Command Papers, CD 333/36).

⁹⁶ *SC*, 30 Sept. 1922.

⁹⁷ *Fermanagh Times* 30 Sept. 1922.

⁹⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, 17 Oct. 1922.

⁹⁹ Hopkinson, *Civil War*, p.201.

¹⁰⁰ Operations Report, Western Command, 5 Oct. 1922 (MA, Western Command Papers, CW/Ops/02/01/04).

cause have been unequalled, and there was scarcely a man, clerical or lay, to whom such attention was paid by the British government during the reign of terror'.¹⁰¹ It was believed that the curate failed to stop while instructed to do so by republicans, and as a result shots were fired. Despite receiving a bullet wound, Casey continued to the parochial house in Drumshanbo, where he was treated by a local doctor, and afterwards transported to Dublin where he successfully recovered.¹⁰² The Casey shooting took place two weeks after the issuing by the Irish Bishops of a Pastoral Letter supporting the legitimacy of the Provisional Government, and proclaiming 'the guerrilla warfare now being carried out by the Irregulars is without moral sanction; and therefore the killing of National Soldiers in the course of it is murder before God'.¹⁰³

Within two days of the Casey shooting, large forces of troops and armoured cars searched the Arigna mountains for republicans with little success.¹⁰⁴ Despite the presence of a National Army garrison in Drumshanbo, the Arigna column continued to carry out raids on the town.¹⁰⁵ One of the few chivalrous acts of the conflict took place at Drumsna when a car containing National Army officer Captain McNabola was ambushed by republicans. Travelling with his sister and a friend to Carrick, McNabola was on medical leave from the army having been injured at Boyle in July 1922. Having succeeded in stopping the car, the ambushers discovered that McNabola was still recuperating from his wounds. Informing the travelling party that they would not shoot an injured man, the republicans procured a horse and trap from a local farm, and McNabola and his companions were transported to Carrick.¹⁰⁶

At Manorhamilton on 17 November 1922, a republican unit arrived in the town with the intention of commandeering goods from shops, and raiding the local post office. Unknown to the republicans, soldiers were already patrolling the town, and an exchange of fire took place which resulted in the shooting of republican leader Philip Gilgunn. While the raiding party succeeded in commandeering clothes and foodstuffs and tobacco, the badly injured Gilgunn was transported to St. Vincent's Hospital in Dublin where he died the next day.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ *RH*, 4 Nov. 1922.

¹⁰² *Freeman's Journal*, 27 Oct. 1922.

¹⁰³ Patrick Murray, *Oracles of God: The Roman Catholic Church and Irish Politics, 1922-37* (Dublin, 2000), pp 72-74.

¹⁰⁴ *Irish Independent*, 6 Nov. 1922.

¹⁰⁵ *FH*, 11 Nov. 1922.

¹⁰⁶ *RH*, 11 Nov. 1922.

¹⁰⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 21 Nov. 1922; *AC*, 25 Nov. 1922.

The establishment of the reconstituted civic guard in September 1922 resulted in Sligo-Leitrim becoming a specific police division, with two sub-divisions headquartered in Carrick and Sligo. By early 1923, four barracks were established in the county at Carrick, Manorhamilton, Ballinamore and Carraigallen.¹⁰⁸ The Provisional Government was very aware that a successful depiction of the new entity as a non-political police force was vital to it being accepted by local communities. At its inception, Commissioner of the new force, Eoin O'Duffy, announced that it was 'a police force for all the people, and not for any section of the people'.¹⁰⁹ Despite O'Duffy's hopes, the newly constituted force was seen by republicans as a symbol of the new state. As a result, civic guards were only stationed in districts that were perceived to be in government control. In spite of these limitations, the establishment of a police presence in Leitrim was essential because of increasing levels of lawlessness. Whiskey, tobacco, boots and sides of bacon were stolen from Carrick railway stores in September 1922 by people 'not connected with any side in the present struggle, and who are only to be found when brigandage is the predominating factor'.¹¹⁰ While the arrival of civic guards in the county resulted in a dramatic decrease in crime in towns with a police presence, crime continued in areas where police were not stationed.¹¹¹ A police presence did not prevent a group of armed men cycling into Ballinamore and robbing the town's four banks.¹¹² Armed raiders also robbed post offices at Drumsna, Drumkeerin, Leitrim and Glenfarne.¹¹³

At Ballaghameehan on 17 October 1922, two men assaulted the barman at McGowan's public house and removed the till from the premises. Placing the till on a donkey cart outside, they emptied the till, and made their escape by bicycle towards the border. Locals immediately petitioned the Provisional Government to have an army or civic guard presence in the area.¹¹⁴ On 11 October, the premises of Robert Gorby at Newtowngore was raided by armed and masked men. A ton of flour, bacon, sugar, boots and whiskey were taken to a waiting horse drawn wagon. The raiders then robbed cash and clothes from Johnston's drapery store nearby.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ Farry, *Aftermath of Revolution*, p.172.

¹⁰⁹ Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: A Self-Made Hero* (Oxford, 2005); Brady, *Guardians*, p.103.

¹¹⁰ *RH*, 30 Sept. 1922.

¹¹¹ *RH*, 28 Oct. 1922.

¹¹² *RH*, 7 Oct. 1922.

¹¹³ *AC*, 7 Oct. 1922.

¹¹⁴ *FH*, 28 Oct. 1922.

¹¹⁵ *AC*, 14 Oct. 1922.

While IRA Chief of Staff, Liam Lynch, specifically ordered that members of the police force were not to be physically harmed in any way, intimidation was permitted and carried out throughout the country.¹¹⁶ On 17 November, the first attack on civic guards in the county took place at Ballinamore. Members of the Arigna column arrived by train from Drumshanbo, and placed roadblocks on the outskirts of the town. The intervention of the local curate prevented the burning of the civic guard barracks, but the raiders took police uniforms and equipment before proceeding to take goods from local shops. After transporting the proceeds of the raid back to the railway station, the gang departed by train towards Arigna.¹¹⁷ On 29 December, a twenty strong raiding party forced their way into the civic barracks at Carraigallen. While the policemen were treated ‘very courteously’ by the raiders, the barracks’ consignment of uniforms, raincoats, blankets and leggings were confiscated.¹¹⁸ Two months later, on 23 February 1923, raiders returned to Carraigallen in a less courteous mood. A warning to leave the town was made to the guards, and their bedding and equipment was burned.¹¹⁹ Patrick Campbell, one of the six guards who was stationed at Carraigallen, recalled that, ‘before leaving the leader of the gunmen warned us that if we didn’t clear out immediately we would not be warned again’.¹²⁰ Between September 1922 and the summer of 1923, over 200 stations were attacked, 2,400 guards were assaulted, and one was murdered across Ireland.¹²¹

Ongoing raids on banks and post offices resulted in National Army soldiers providing armed guards across the county on fair days when large sums of money were in circulation.¹²² With increasing security at banks, mail cars and postmen again became an easy and regular target for thieves. Prior to Christmas 1922, three mail cars were held up at Leitrim village, and the raiders ordered the drivers to accompany them to the Arigna mountains. The *Irish Independent* reported:

there was a very valuable consignment, including Christmas parcels and registered letters. It was stated that letters and parcels to private individuals would be returned. The drivers were treated most hospitably, and got bumpers of whiskey on their arrival at the mountains, and also were given a substantial meal.¹²³

¹¹⁶ Vicky Conway, *Policing Twentieth Century Ireland, A History of an Garda Síochána* (Oxford, 2014), p.37.

¹¹⁷ *AC*, 25 Nov. 1922.

¹¹⁸ *RH*, 6 Jan. 1923.

¹¹⁹ *Fermanagh Herald*, 10 Mar.1923.

¹²⁰ Brian McCarthy, *The Civic Guard Mutiny* (Cork, 2012), p.197.

¹²¹ McGarry, *O’Duffy*, p.123.

¹²² *RH*, 14 Oct. 1922; *RH*, 11 Nov. 1922; *RH*, 16 Dec. 1922.

¹²³ *Irish Independent*, 23 Dec. 1922.

Increasing numbers of raids on post offices and mail cars in the Drumsna, Drumshanbo and Leitrim districts, resulted in all pension payments transferred to the head office at Carrick.¹²⁴

During December 1922, Leitrim witnessed three deaths in an increasingly lawless environment. An agrarian dispute was the cause of the death of Francis McCarron, a fifty-seven-year-old farmer, at Drumshanbo on 2 December.¹²⁵ Ten days later, three raiders shot Thomas and Carson Dennison during a raid on the family shop and bar at Drumkeerin. The Dennisons, a local Church of Ireland family who had traded in the town for decades, were sympathetic to republicans during the War of Independence.¹²⁶ Twenty-nine-year-old Thomas died almost immediately, while his seventy-four-year-old widowed father Carson died three days later in hospital. There were no witnesses to the killing, and nobody was ever arrested or charged. According to Ó Súilleabháin, republicans from Arigna were suspected of the killings of both men.¹²⁷

The relationship between republicanism and the Protestant minority population in the years of the revolution is contested. Narrow definitions of Irishness often excluded non-Catholics, and some including Hart argued that, ‘the Protestant experiences of the revolution in southern Ireland ranged from massacre and flight to occasional inconvenience and indifference, from outraged opposition to enthusiastic engagement’.¹²⁸ Describing an incident in April 1922, when fourteen Protestant men were killed at Dunmanway in West Cork, Hart suggested that the killings were sectarian, and claimed that ethnic intolerance was central to the republican revolution.¹²⁹ Both Borgonovo and Regan have refuted Hart’s claims, and argued that the reason behind the killings were linked to the fact that all the victims were suspected informers, and members of anti-republican groups in the area.¹³⁰ Hart has also argued that similar campaigns of widespread intimidation against Protestants were waged in parts of King’s and Queen’s counties, South Tipperary, Leitrim, Mayo, Limerick, Westmeath, Louth and Cork.¹³¹ With the exception of one incident in the north of the county where a number of

¹²⁴ *Freeman’s Journal* 22 Jan. 1923; Brady, *Guardians*, p.137.

¹²⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 5 Dec. 1922; *AC*, 9 Dec. 1922; *RH*, 9 Dec. 1922.

¹²⁶ Ó Súilleabháin, *Leitrim’s Republican Story*, p.149.

¹²⁷ Ó Súilleabháin, *Leitrim’s Republican Story*, p.149; *Freeman’s Journal*, 14 Dec. 1922.

¹²⁸ Peter Hart, ‘The Protestant Experience of Revolution in Southern Ireland’ in Richard English, and Graham Walker (eds), *Unionism in modern Ireland : new perspectives on politics and culture* (New York, 1996), pp 81-99.

¹²⁹ Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies*, pp 280-284.

¹³⁰ John M. Regan, ‘The “Bandon Valley massacre” as a historical problem’ in *History: the Journal of the Historical Society*, 97:325 (2012), pp 70-98; John Borgonova, *Spies, Informers and the Anti-Sinn Féin Society, the Intelligence War in Cork City, 1920-1921* (Dublin, 2007).

¹³¹ Hart, ‘The Protestant Experience’, pp 81-99.

Protestant families near Manorhamilton were subject to threats to leave their homes in May 1922, there was no evidence of widespread intimidation against Protestants in Leitrim. The background to the Manorhamilton incident involved a raid by armed men on seven Protestant homes, claiming that the properties were required for Catholic refugees from Belfast. When the families reported the incidents to troops in Manorhamilton, and to James Dolan TD, a telegram reply was received stating that, ‘Minister of Defence Dáil Eireann assured protection, Four Courts forces also assured protection. Orders to this effect sent to Dromahair and Manorhamilton. Advise people return home’.¹³²

While Protestant businesses in Leitrim suffered as a result of the strict enforcement of the Belfast boycott, the boycott itself affected all businesses. Gemma Clarke has argued that attacks on Protestant businesses cannot be seen in isolation to the wider conflict over the Treaty, as all sections of society were exposed to violent acts.¹³³ Between 1911 and 1926, the southern Irish Protestant population fell by one-third from 327,176 to 220,723. In that same fifteen year period, the Protestant population of Leitrim fell by 1,736, a drop of 32.21 per cent, greatly exceeding the decline of the Catholic population of the county who experienced a 5.37 per cent decline.¹³⁴ Andy Bielenberg argued that a multiplicity of factors including British military withdrawal, agrarianism, land reform, economic migration and marriage patterns explain the decline in the minority population. He argued that revolutionary violence ‘accounted for a relatively small share of total Protestant departures’.¹³⁵ Similar arguments were made by Fitzpatrick who believed that low fertility, mixed marriage and conversion accounted for the decline, concluding that ‘the inexorable decline of southern Protestantism was mainly self-inflicted’.¹³⁶

In her study of Leitrim Protestants from 1911 to 1928, Moffitt admitted that levels of ‘low grade or invisible intimidation’ was carried out against some Protestants, but concluded that victims were often targeted for their hostility towards republicanism or resentment over land ownership.¹³⁷ Moffitt’s analysis also identified the voluntary departure of Protestants in

¹³² FH, 27 May 1922.

¹³³ Clarke, *Violence*, p.152.

¹³⁴ Miriam Moffitt, ‘The Protestant experience of revolution in County Leitrim 1911-1928’ in *Breifne, Journal of Cumann Seanchais Bhreifne*, 12:46 (2011), pp 303-323.

¹³⁵ Andy Bielenberg, ‘Exodus: The Emigration of Southern Irish Protestants During the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War’ in *Past & Present*, 218:1 (2013), pp 199–233.

¹³⁶ David Fitzpatrick, ‘Protestant Depopulation and the Irish Revolution’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, 38:152, (2013), pp 643-661.

¹³⁷ Moffitt, *Leitrim Protestants*, pp 315, 323.

advance of the turbulent years between 1919 and 1923. Citing the largest decline of the Methodist population in the county from 524 in 1912 to 405 in 1916, she concluded that ‘it appears that Methodists in north Connaught and south Ulster left in anticipation of national government and not in response to the creation of the Irish Free State’.¹³⁸ Declining numbers of births and baptisms were also identified in Rural Deans’ reports in the wider Protestant community. Across ten Leitrim parishes, baptisms declined from 518 children in the years between 1910 and 1919 to 356 in the following decade.¹³⁹ Clergymen also identified economic reasons for migration and emigration in the years before 1919, but in later reports, they cited the changing political environment as reasons for population change.¹⁴⁰ In 1921, Revd. Austin Sweetman at Fenagh attributed the increasing numbers of Protestant departures from his parish to ‘anarchy’. Both Revd. Matthew Porteus at Manorhamilton, and Revd. S.J. Haylett at Drumreilly reported ‘unsettlement in country’ as reasons for the departure of some of their congregations.¹⁴¹

One of the preferred destinations for many Leitrim Protestants was nearby Co. Fermanagh. Census returns in 1925 indicated that, of 2,117 Protestant Fermanagh residents who had left the Free State in the preceding five years, 292 were from Leitrim, 51 were from Sligo, 55 from Galway, 34 from Mayo, and 6 from Roscommon.¹⁴² In submissions to the Boundary Commission in 1925, both Revd. Thomas Walmsley and Fermanagh councillor Thomas Scott stated that large numbers of Protestants had left the Manorhamilton area to settle in Fermanagh. Scott claimed that that seventy percent of families in the Garrison-Manorhamilton district ‘have transferred into Northern Ireland’ over the last five years’.¹⁴³ The proximity of Co. Fermanagh may explain the extent of the exodus, but such large numbers leaving Leitrim may demonstrate that while there may not have been a concerted campaign of sectarianism, many Protestant families may have experienced intimidation. While Moffitt argued that few firm conclusions can be drawn of the departure, forced or otherwise, of such a large cohort of the population, she concluded that ‘evidence suggests that Protestants were not randomly or routinely attacked, those who suffered - and some suffered greatly - were greatly

¹³⁸ Ibid, p.310.

¹³⁹ Ibid, pp 315-16.

¹⁴⁰ Rural Deans’ reports, Representative Body of Church of Ireland Library, D3/1/19-24.

¹⁴¹ Reports of Revd. Austin Sweetman, Revd. Matthew Porteus and Revd. S.J. Haylett, Representative Body of Church of Ireland Library, D3/1/22.

¹⁴² Farry, *Aftermath of Revolution*, p.200.

¹⁴³ Evidence of Thomas Scott and Revd. Thomas Walmsley, 29 Apr. 1925, Boundary Commission Papers, (NLI, MS 6515).

targeted on account of their public hostility to republican ideals or because of long-standing resentments over land ownership'.¹⁴⁴ Such experiences were not uncommon, and McDowell has argued that some people seized the opportunity for 'inflicting injuries on obnoxious persons, for paying off old scores and for widespread looting'.¹⁴⁵

By January 1923, National Army reports referred to anti-Treaty forces as an enemy with depleted numbers, lack of organisation and unified control, and almost complete ineffectiveness from a military standpoint.¹⁴⁶ Farry has argued that by early 1923, the conflict nationally had become localised and scarcely merited the term 'war'.¹⁴⁷ While open conflict with government forces was non-existent in the region, isolated shooting incidents and raids on shops and post offices continued. Arigna republicans were involved in raids at Ballyconnell on 6 January 1923, where Michael Cull was shot dead by Captain J.F. Kellegher, a National Army officer, while raiding Owens and Richardson's hardware shop. The fearsome reputation of the Arigna column was demonstrated in a request for anonymity at Cull's inquest by the soldiers involved in the shooting. Writing to General Séan MacEoin, Colonel Pádraig Woods outlined that Kellegher's home was located on the Cavan-Leitrim border, and 'stands in grave danger from Bofin and his followers'.¹⁴⁸ At Dowra, on the same day as the Ballyconnell shooting, Michael McManus, a National Army soldier, was killed in an attack by members of the Arigna column.¹⁴⁹ At Mohill in January 1923, the local barracks was fired on from attackers in nearby hills, and gunmen fired shots at a passenger train near the town.¹⁵⁰

Leitrim's first fatal casualty of 1923 was Patrick O'Boyle, from Drumshanbo, who was shot dead near Arigna on 31 January 1923. The circumstances surrounding the death of O'Boyle, a First World War veteran and Secretary of the Leitrim War Pensions Committee, were clouded in mystery. Because of O'Boyle's background, suspicion was immediately pointed at republicans from Arigna. While Jane Leonard argued that ex-servicemen and their families were victimised by the IRA, Paul Taylor believed that ex-servicemen were 'not

¹⁴⁴ Moffitt, *Leitrim Protestants*, p.323.

¹⁴⁵ R.B. Mc Dowell, *Crisis and Decline: The Fate of Southern Unionists Dublin* (1995) p.120, quoted in Farry, *Aftermath of Revolution*, p.201.

¹⁴⁶ Adjutant General to Major General MacEoin, 7 Jan. 1923 (MA, *Western Command Papers*, CW/OPS 02/03/01).

¹⁴⁷ Farry, *Aftermath of Revolution*, p.90.

¹⁴⁸ Colonel Pádraig Woods to Major-General MacEoin, 7 Jan. 1923 (MA, *Western Command Papers*, CW/OPS/02/03/01).

¹⁴⁹ *Irish Independent*, 8 Jan. 1922; Hegarthy Thorne, *Roscommon*, p. 153.

¹⁵⁰ *FH*, 3 Feb. 1923.

disproportionately targeted as a group'.¹⁵¹ Another secretary of a War Pensions Committee in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, James Morrissey, was killed by the IRA in 1921 on allegations of being a 'traitor and spy'.¹⁵² O'Boyle's death was attributed to him not hearing a challenge to halt by republicans owing to heavy rain.¹⁵³ When O'Boyle's body was recovered in the aftermath of the shooting, the *Leitrim Observer* reported that 'there were indications that he received spiritual ministrations, as in one of his hands there was a crucifix, and the other bore traces of his having held a blessed candle'.¹⁵⁴ Both government and republican sources condemned the killing.¹⁵⁵

In one of the more audacious attacks of the conflict, a one hundred strong raiding party from Arigna, entered Ballinamore in the early hours of 1 February, and attacked the thirty-five man garrison. After a six hour gun battle, the garrison surrendered when the roof collapsed following the detonation of a mine. The National Army troops were taken to Drumshanbo on a seized train where they were later released. Before leaving the town, the post office and a local bank was raided. The *Freeman's Journal* reported that as a result of the incident, 'a large force of National troops has been poured into Leitrim, and developments are expected to follow'.¹⁵⁶

On 6 February 1922, fifty heavily armed men from the Arigna column attacked the town of Ballyconnell. During widespread looting and burning of the town's business premises, two men, Sean Mc Grath, an Irish teacher from Galway, and William Ryan, a shop assistant at Owens and Richardson's hardware shop, were shot dead by the raiders. The shop's owner, William Owens was seriously wounded in the attack.¹⁵⁷ During the thirty-five minute raid, the raiders informed local people that the attack was revenge for the death of Michael Cull. The *Roscommon Herald* reported that the attackers 'came from the direction of the mountains in County Leitrim, and swooped down on the village when most of the inhabitants were at breakfast. The pillagers wrecked and looted at will, and generally behaved like an army of men run amok'.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵¹ Paul Taylor, *Heroes or Traitors: Experiences of Southern Irish soldiers returning from the Great War, 1919-1939* (Liverpool, 2015), p.79.

¹⁵² Murphy, 'Enniscorthy's Revolution', p.419.

¹⁵³ *Freeman's Journal*, 10 Feb. 1923.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *LO*, 10 Feb. 1923.

¹⁵⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 2 Feb. 1923.

¹⁵⁷ *LO*, 10 Feb. 1923.

¹⁵⁸ *RH*, 10 Feb. 1923.

The viciousness of the Ballyconnell raid prompted an immediate response from the authorities. Richard Mulcahy, as Minister of Defence and Chief of Staff, admitted the problems that the government had with the Arigna column. In a speech to Dáil Éireann, he stated that,

some of our men in that area, not undertaking to believe that those men were as black as their present deeds have painted them, have contrary to orders, and, contrary to the spirit of discipline in the Army, been carrying on a sort of negotiations with them. Anyone who knows the hinterland of mountains lying behind Ballinamore and Ballyconnell knows that for the work that we have to do in that area we have not sufficient troops to effectively control those mountains and to get that band of Irregulars that we know have been hiding there for some time.¹⁵⁹

Describing the activities of the Arigna column, Mulcahy declared that,

there is this particular type of madness amongst a section of the people in the country who are armed, who are supported in their madness by feeling that they are following an ideal, and by gathering to themselves all the phrases and all the words that have supported our national struggle in the past.¹⁶⁰

Despite differences in cabinet between Mulcahy and O'Higgins on aspects of the military campaign, the government presented a united and uncompromising policy of dealing with republicans.¹⁶¹ Commenting on the attack on Ballyconnell, O'Higgins told the Dail that,

I want to combat the view that it was a natural thing to expect that a body of Irishmen would descend upon this little town and proceed to murder their fellow citizens. It was not a natural thing. It is perhaps the most unnatural thing that has happened since this unnatural strife began.¹⁶²

Throughout the early spring of 1923, National Army strategy revolved around heavy concentrations of troops in searches for republicans.¹⁶³ In the north-west, reinforcements were transferred to the area from Cavan, Longford and Dublin in an attempt to capture the Arigna column. Despite over six hundred troops and armoured vehicles searching the Arigna mountains, harsh weather conditions and prior warning of the impending raids resulted in the

¹⁵⁹ *Dáil Debates*, 8 Feb. 1923.

¹⁶⁰ *Dáil Debates*, 8 Feb. 1923.

¹⁶¹ O'Halpin, *Defending*, pp 29-30.

¹⁶² *Dáil Debates*, 7 Feb. 1923.

¹⁶³ Hopkinson, *Civil War*, pp 239-245.

capture of only three men.¹⁶⁴ In spite of the heavy military presence in the area, soldiers in four National Army outposts on the Boyle-Carrick road were overpowered, and rifles and ammunition were taken. One soldier, Private Andrew Callaghan, died subsequently from wounds sustained in the attack. In a further attack on an isolated garrison at Drumsna on 19 February 1923, one republican was captured when the attackers were taken by surprise by the arrival of reinforcements from Carrick and Drumshanbo.¹⁶⁵

In their attempts to evade military patrols, Seamus Cull and Paddy Tymon, two prominent members of the Arigna column, were killed on 27 February 1923 in an explosion on the Arigna mountains. Both men had rowed across Lough Allen from a safe house at Cormongan, near Drumshanbo, and sought refuge in a cave. At the inquest of both men at Drumshanbo, Captain Baxter, a National Army officer, claimed that the military patrol that he was leading discovered a rifle, a revolver and some bedding at the mouth of the cave. In his testimony, Baxter stated that on further examination of the area, they discovered a small room in the dugout, and a hole leading further in to the cave. Having received no reply for over a two hour period, and believing that the cave was empty, Baxter detonated an explosive in order that the cave could not be used again by republicans. An excavation commenced after the explosion, and the bodies of Cull and Tymon were discovered.¹⁶⁶ Counter claims would suggest that the troops knew the men were in the cave, and deliberately detonated the mine with the intention of killing them.¹⁶⁷ Baxter's testimony is contradicted by National Army operations reports which stated that, 'troops believed dug out was occupied, called on them to surrender which they refused to do'.¹⁶⁸ The inquest jury found that, 'death was due in each case to shock caused by an explosion through military operations in Arigna Valley, and they considered no blame attested to anyone'.¹⁶⁹ A large National Army force was present at the funerals of both men, and all male mourners in attendance were searched.¹⁷⁰

Within one month of the deaths of Cull and Tymon, similar state atrocities against republicans in Kerry, involving the use of mines, took place. An unwillingness to curb the

¹⁶⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 15 Feb.; *RH*, 17 Feb. 1923.

¹⁶⁵ O/C Carrick Garrison to O/C Boyle Garrison, 20 Feb. 1923 (MA, Athlone Command Papers, CW/Ops/02/03/01).

¹⁶⁶ *LO*, 3 Mar. 1923.

¹⁶⁷ Ó Súilleabháin, *Leitrim's Republican Story*, p.151.

¹⁶⁸ Weekly Appreciation Report, Athlone Command, 5 Mar. 1923 (MA, Athlone Command Papers, CW/Ops/02/03/02).

¹⁶⁹ *LO*, 3 Mar. 1923.

¹⁷⁰ *Irish Independent*, 5 Mar. 1923.

excesses of its soldiers, including the murder of prisoners characterised the government.¹⁷¹ Lynch argued that the National Army became ‘institutionally terroristic’, with the closing months of the Civil War punctuated by a series of organised massacres of republicans.¹⁷² Clarke recognised the bitter nature of the conflict where ‘perpetrators on both sides undoubtedly strayed from the military codes of conduct’.¹⁷³ Within Cabinet, O’Higgins and Hogan were adamant that government would restore law and order, and the adoption of executions as part of public policy from November 1922, demonstrated their intent.¹⁷⁴

The content of Lenten Pastorals in February 1923 referred to the need for law and order, and gave continued support to the Provisional Government. In his pastoral letter, Primate of All Ireland, Cardinal Logue, was unequivocal in his condemnation of ‘an orgy of crime and outrage’ enveloping the country.¹⁷⁵ Condemning republicans and their use of force, Bishop Hoare of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise proclaimed that, ‘there must be a government, and that government must protect itself by making laws and executing them’.¹⁷⁶ Although noting that his diocese of Kilmore was comparatively free ‘of these grave and terrible violations of the law of God’, Bishop Patrick Finnegan claimed that, ‘some crimes--deplorable crimes-- have been committed within its boundary’.¹⁷⁷ Finnegan exhorted, ‘young men and others in the diocese who may have become mixed up either from motives of mistaken patriotism, or of private loot in these terrible acts, to repent at once and approach the tribunal of penance’.¹⁷⁸ In addition to condemnation from the hierarchy, certain clergy criminalised the actions of the anti-Treaty side using terms such as ‘murderer’, ‘bolshies’, ‘riff-raff’, in denunciations from the pulpit.¹⁷⁹

By the spring of 1923, attacks by republicans on government forces became infrequent. While units of the Arigna column continued to operate, no large scale operations were undertaken following the Ballyconnell attack. Trains continued to be a target for republicans in isolated attacks across the north of the county. At Glenfarne on 7 March 1923, passengers were ordered from the Sligo-Enniskillen train by a group of armed men, who burned carriages before sending it driverless towards Manorhamilton where it stopped outside of the town.¹⁸⁰ At

¹⁷¹ O’Halpin, *Defending*, p.30.

¹⁷² Lynch, *Revolutionary Ireland*, p.126.

¹⁷³ Clarke, *Violence*, p.176.

¹⁷⁴ O’Halpin, *Defending*, p.31.

¹⁷⁵ *FH*, 17 Feb. 1923.

¹⁷⁶ *RH*, 17 Feb. 1923.

¹⁷⁷ *LO*, 17 Feb. 1923.

¹⁷⁸ *LO*, 17 Feb. 1923.

¹⁷⁹ Gallogly, *Kilmore*, p.290.

¹⁸⁰ *FH*, 10 Mar. 1923; *Irish Independent* 8 Mar. 1923

Carrick on 13 March 1923, shots were fired over a two hour period at both the military barracks, and the National Army outpost at the local railway station.¹⁸¹

A heavy National Army presence, and ongoing searches resulted in the capture of a number of republicans during March 1923. On 12 March, two republicans Frank Slevin and James O'Donnell were arrested dressed in women's clothing on the outskirts of Manorhamilton. Reports had suggested that both men had earlier entered the town, 'presumably to raid the banks, but finding an armed guard on the premises, they left'.¹⁸² After a two hour gun battle with soldiers on 13 March 1923, eight men, including local republican leader Philip Rooney, were captured at Kiltyclogher.¹⁸³ Paul Bofin, brother of the Arigna column's leader, was also captured in early March.¹⁸⁴

Widespread searches in the last remaining republican strongholds of Munster and North Connaught continued throughout March and April of 1923. In Waterford, an attempted meeting of the IRA Executive in the Nire Valley was moved to four different locations because of the threat of National Army raids.¹⁸⁵ Despite IRA Chief-of-Staff Liam Lynch's calls for the fight to be continued, republican resistance decreased in the wake of ongoing imprisonments and executions by government forces. Although Lynch recognised a declining level of morale in the south, he believed (incorrectly) that republican forces were strong in other areas.¹⁸⁶ On 25 March 1923, Ned Bofin and three other men were arrested at Riverstown, Co. Sligo. Seen as the identified leader, with Liam Pilkington, of republicans in the region, his arrest was a serious blow to the anti-Treaty side. Labelled by English newspapers as the 'De Wett of the West', the *Roscommon Herald* reported that the 'capture of the man with many exploits to his name was important and sensational'.¹⁸⁷ To many local people who supported and sheltered the Arigna column, their exploits were a form of social banditry, where the group were seen, not as criminals, but rather as champions of just causes.¹⁸⁸ Following Bofin's capture, organized republican resistance in the region almost immediately disappeared. By early April 1923,

¹⁸¹ *RH*, 17 Mar. 1923; *LO*, 17 Mar. 1923.

¹⁸² *Freeman's Journal*, 15 Mar. 1922.

¹⁸³ *Irish Independent*, 14 Mar. 1923.

¹⁸⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 13 Mar. 1923.

¹⁸⁵ Seán Murphy and Sile Murphy, *The Comeragh's, Gunfire and Civil War, The Story of the Déise Brigade IRA 1914-1924* (Kilmacthomas, 2003), pp 161-165; Hopkinson, *Civil War*, p.236.

¹⁸⁶ Hopkinson, *Civil War*, p.236.

¹⁸⁷ *RH*, 31 Mar. 1923.

¹⁸⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London, 2005), p.25.

military intelligence reported the surrender of Owen Cull, one of the Arigna leaders, and an inactive local column.¹⁸⁹

The final months of the conflict were characterized by isolated gun and arson attacks on the homes of government officials. The homes of both Commandant Sean Mitchell, and Eugene Kilkenny near Mohill, and Charles McGoohan at Ballinamore were burned in March and April of 1922.¹⁹⁰ Intimidating warning notices, a familiar weapon of Leitrim republicans, were posted outside churches in south Leitrim in March 1923, threatening members of the local population including priests, doctors and farmers with sons in the National Army.¹⁹¹ Condemning the notices, the *Freeman's Journal* reported:

the world has learned to expect nothing less from the Bolsheviks but merciless persecution of the teachers and professors of every Christian creed. But the last thing it expected was to find Irishmen borrowing a leaf from Soviet practice. Yet the proclamation posted on Catholic churches in south Leitrim, threatening expulsion or death to all doctors, priests, and ministers, might have been drafted at Moscow except for the fact that even Lenin and Trotsky would hesitate to show their hand so openly.¹⁹²

Although the killing of Dr. Paddy Muldoon in Mohill on 18 March 1923 had no direct political motive, an indirect political connection was suspected. Muldoon was shot dead at 11.00 p.m. having parted company with Edward Geelan, clerk of the local District Council. Geelan claimed that Muldoon was confronted by three men, and was shot with a rifle from close range. Although Muldoon was identified as a Sinn Féin supporter who had provided first aid classes to Cumann na mBan during the War of Independence, the *Roscommon Herald* claimed that 'since the split he took no sides in the Irish struggle, and an uncharitable word towards anybody was never heard from his mouth'.¹⁹³ Suspicion was immediately directed toward republican priest Fr. Edward Ryans from Aughavas, whom the authorities believed had Muldoon killed by a local IRA gang. Ryans, together with a local girl Mary Kate Gallogly, had appeared in court in Dublin in February 1923 on charges of attempted abandonment of a baby girl at a church in the city. At his trial, Ryans denied that he was abandoning the child, but was merely supporting the young unmarried mother who had worked as a housekeeper for him

¹⁸⁹ General Weekly Return, Athlone Command, 5 Apr. 1923 (MA, Athlone Command Papers, CW/OPS 02/03/07).

¹⁹⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 9 Apr. 1923.

¹⁹¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 27 Mar. 1923.

¹⁹² *Freeman's Journal*, 28 Mar. 1923.

¹⁹³ *RH*, 24 Mar. 1923.

temporarily. While the State entered a *nolle prosequi* for Gallogly in May 1923, Ryans was remanded in custody.¹⁹⁴ Ó Súilleabháin believed that the motive for the killing was linked to suspicions that Muldoon was aware that the priest was the father of Gallogly's child, and that he would report this to his close friend, Canon Masterson.¹⁹⁵ While Ryans had an alibi on the night of the killing, reports indicated that he may have collected the gang following the shooting.¹⁹⁶ The Criminal Investigation Division report concluded that, 'it appears to be very difficult to obtain any definite information locally regarding the affair'.¹⁹⁷ Although inconsistencies appear in statements made by witnesses for Ryans, nobody was ever charged with the killing of Muldoon, and the case was closed. Following his subsequent release, Ryans was exiled to America by Bishop Hoare.¹⁹⁸

By April 1923 the only reported activity by republicans in the north of the county was the derailing of a train at Glenfarne and the burning of Dromahair Courthouse.¹⁹⁹ Fairs, church gatherings and any event that attracted large crowds, also attracted interest from government forces. At Leitrim village on 1 April 1923, the local chapel was surrounded, and all men in the congregation were searched.²⁰⁰ In spite of the increased level of National Army activity, isolated attacks against relatively easy targets characterized the closing weeks of the conflict. On 30 April, an IRA gang shot seventy-two-year-old farmer Michael Reynolds at Johnston's Bridge. Reynolds's son was a former member of the RIC who had resigned from the force. The *Roscommon Herald* reported that the home of another ex-RIC man nearby was also raided on the same night.²⁰¹ At Reynolds's inquest, the coroner Dr Arthur Mc Gauran stated that 'as a Leitrim man born, bred and reared in the county, I regret exceedingly that such conduct can go on amongst the people'.²⁰²

A similar incident on 15 May 1923 at Cloone resulted in the wounding of Patrick and Philip McGuire. A group of men called at the McGuire home and requested Philip McGuire to accompany them outside. In an attempt to wrest a revolver from one of the gunmen, both McGuire brothers were injured, before the gunmen made their escape. The *Freeman's Journal*

¹⁹⁴ *Irish Times*, 13 Feb. 1923, 10 May 1923.

¹⁹⁵ Ó Súilleabháin, *Leitrim's Republican Story*, pp 152-153.

¹⁹⁶ Leitrim County Library, Local Studies Collection, Muldoon File (502).

¹⁹⁷ Leitrim County Library, Local Studies Collection, Muldoon File (502).

¹⁹⁸ Leitrim County Library, Local Studies Collection, Muldoon File (502); Clergy Diocesan Records, Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, Edward Ryans.

¹⁹⁹ *Irish Independent*, 4 Apr. 1923; *Freeman's Journal*, 5 Apr. 1923.

²⁰⁰ Hegarty Thorne, *Roscommon*, p.196.

²⁰¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 2 May 1923; *RH*, 5 May 1923.

²⁰² *RH*, 5 May 1923; *Irish Independent*, 3 May 1923.

reported that ‘no reason is assigned for the attack, but it is generally assumed that it is attributable to the fact that one of the boys had been in the National Army up to lately’.²⁰³ On the night of 25 May 1923, former National Army officer Patrick Keville was killed near his home. A group of men had earlier visited Keville’s home, examined his army discharge papers and proceeded to a neighbour’s house where Keville was visiting. The inquest jury found that Keville ‘was foully murdered by a person or persons unknown’.²⁰⁴ A subsequent pension application on behalf of Keville’s family confirmed that he was gathering intelligence for government forces in the south Leitrim area at the time of his death.²⁰⁵

The killing of Liam Lynch, Chief-of-Staff of the IRA, in Co. Tipperary on 10 April 1923, marked the beginning of the end of the civil war. Six weeks later, on 24 May 1923, Lynch’s successor Frank Aiken ordered republican forces nationwide to dump arms, heralding an end to nearly twelve months of bitter conflict. Despite De Valera’s defiant statement that republicans would not leave their country like the Jacobite ‘Wild Geese’, the U.S. Consulate in Dublin witnessed a surge in visa applications by early 1924.²⁰⁶ A combination of bleak economic prospects, and ongoing state repression ensured a steady flow of defeated republicans to America where many, including Jim Gralton, became involved in the American labour movement.²⁰⁷

Since the death of Collins, the conflict entered a more protracted and vicious phase. Draconian legislation and increasing levels of state violence, was responded to by similar levels of viciousness by republicans. Brady described the nature of certain actions as ensuring that ‘the thin lines distinguishing political agitation from ordinary crime had become long blurred’.²⁰⁸ While lawlessness still prevailed in Leitrim following the cessation of hostilities, the surrender and capture of the main protagonists based at Arigna ensured the end of anti-Treaty resistance in the county. Although political violence in the region resembled the national pattern, the activities of the Arigna republicans was unique, and clearly resembled the actions of elements of crown forces during the War of Independence. Although formal hostilities ended

²⁰³ *Freeman’s Journal*, 16 May 1923.

²⁰⁴ *LO*, 2 June 1923.

²⁰⁵ Patrick Keville Application File (MA, Military Service Pensions Collection, DP 24313).

²⁰⁶ Gavin Wilk, *Transatlantic Defiance: The militant Irish republican movement in America 1923-1945* (New York, 2014), pp 30-33.

²⁰⁷ Gavin Foster, ‘No “Wild Geese” this time”? IRA Emigration after the Irish Civil War’, *Éire-Ireland* 47:1 (2012), pp 94-122.

²⁰⁸ Brady, *Guardians*, p.137.

in May 1923, republican arms were never surrendered, and the conflict continued to leave an indelible mark on the Irish political landscape for many years to come.

Conclusion

This study has charted the impact of revolutionary movements on politics and civil society in Co. Leitrim between 1912 and 1923. As the first comprehensive research work on Leitrim during the transformative years of the Irish revolution, this is a detailed case-study and contributes to the broader body of scholarship on the period. In order to achieve this, this thesis is founded on an engagement with the available sources, revealing in detail the events as they affected Leitrim, while always maintaining a conversation with the secondary literature so as to place it in context. The thesis has concluded that while in certain respects, the county closely followed national trends in its political behaviour, it sometimes differed from both its near and distant neighbours.

Despite being one of the first regions, where (on the occasion of the 1908 North Leitrim by-election) Sinn Féin challenged the hegemony of John Redmond's Irish Party, the county's nationalists remained committed to Redmondite constitutionalism. By 1912, any support accrued by Sinn Féin in 1908 had long since dissipated. The Irish Party's widespread support base derived from a number of factors including the expectation of Home Rule and the continuing transfer of land from its hereditary owners to their tenants, which seemed assured. Nonetheless, the analysis set out in the preceding chapters supports Michael Wheatley's argument that the success of land reform had begun to erode political activism by farmers which was previously mobilised through the United Irish League.¹ While minor acts of agrarianism took place, the absence of large grazier farms in the county ensured a relatively peaceful countryside. It was unionist opposition to Home Rule and the formation of the UVF that consolidated the support of Leitrim's nationalists under the flag of the Irish Volunteers, but it is important to note that this only gathered significant momentum when the Irish Party moved to support the movement in the early summer of 1914. Although the intervention of the First World War in August 1914 may have averted a civil war in Ireland, it initiated the division of the Irish Volunteer movement, with the vast majority of Leitrim's members firmly supporting Redmond.

¹Wheatley, *Irish Party*, pp 24-27.

This study has confirmed the argument that while the Irish Party's local support base was neither in a state of decay nor unrepresentative of local political opinion in 1914, Redmond's support for the British war effort contributed to the ultimate decline of the Irish Party.² Although local UIL membership remained high, an absence of branch activity and no political opposition, ensured high levels of lethargy in party organisation. The research supports both Fitzpatrick and Coleman's argument that the First World War helped to shape the Irish Revolution.³ Over time, the Irish Party's support for the war effort caused many nationalists to desert constitutional nationalism. As recruiting and conscription became critical issues during a protracted war, the identification of the Party with recruiting would prove a crucial factor in its loss of support. What was distinctive about the Irish Party in Leitrim was the unwavering support of the county's two MPs in promoting recruitment. Unlike many of their parliamentary colleagues, both Leitrim MPs, as committed federal imperialists, firmly supported recruitment on platforms across the county, thus further weakening the cause of constitutional nationalism. Indeed, at the 1918 general election, Sinn Féin specifically targeted Leitrim's MPs for their position on recruitment.⁴

The war in Europe and the Easter Rising sealed the fate of John Redmond and the Irish Party. The effect of the Rising and the government's subsequent policy of executions, arrests and imprisonment changed the political landscape of the county in the months following. British government ineptitude in allowing the military to punish and pacify Ireland turned an indifferent population into a broadly hostile one. The *Sligo Nationalist* reported that 'the strong military measures taken to put down the 'Rising' in Sligo and Leitrim are beginning to be regarded with amused contempt by the people of these counties'.⁵ Such contempt manifested itself in changing public opinion, most notably among key influential figures. Charles Tilly's analysis of government responses to collective action and mobilization, ranging from repression to facilitation, accurately reflects the reaction of authorities in the post-Rising period.⁶ While the time-honoured resolutions of support for Redmond were passed by the Irish Party controlled organs of local government, the establishment of the Irish National Aid and Volunteer Dependent's Fund played an important role in channelling opposition to British

² Wheatley, *Irish Party*.

³ Fitzpatrick, *Ireland and the First World War*, p. vii; Coleman, *Longford*, p.4.

⁴ Trinity College Dublin Library, Samuels Papers, Box 3.

⁵ *Sligo Nationalist*, 20 May 1916.

⁶ Tilly, 'From Mobilization to Revolution' in Ernesto Castaneda and Cathy Lisa Scheiner (eds), *Collective Violence, Contentious Politics, and Social Change* (New York, 2017), pp 71-91.

policy towards a common cause. The experience of post-Rising Leitrim clearly supports Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid's argument that the Fund also provided a platform for many nationalists who were disillusioned with Redmond.⁷ From the early summer of 1916, active and efficient republican groupings emerged across the county to create an alternative voice for Leitrim's nationalists.

While Horne's and Jeffery's seminal publications provided comprehensive accounts of the war in a national context, both authors have identified gaps in literature, most notably the absence of local studies.⁸ Across Leitrim, the response to the war was one of enthusiasm and patriotic fervour among early enlistees and civic leaders, closely followed by a phase of indifference and opposition. A prolonged war and mounting casualties curbed much of the early enthusiasm and hindered recruitment, with the only beneficiaries being the county's farmers, profiting from an increased demand for agricultural produce. While both Fitzpatrick and Staunton argued that economic factors were not a major influence on enlistment rates, the disproportionate number of recruits from the county's towns and lack of response from rural districts, supports Dungan's argument that economic factors played a major part in the decision to enlist or remain at home.⁹ Codd, in her study of recruiting in Wexford, described the pattern of recruitment there as 'traditional and sporadic', with the largest numbers the result of class and family ties.¹⁰ The same pattern applied in Leitrim. Despite having one of the lowest levels of military recruitment the county witnessed the mobilisation of an active female non-combatant population in a range of charitable activity to assist the war effort. Like those promoting recruitment, these initiatives were organised and directed by members of the middle and upper classes. With the suspension of recruitment tours in the wake of the Rising, and negligible recruitment, the war became a peripheral event for most people in Leitrim. It was the passing of the Military Service Act in 1918, providing for conscription in Ireland, that brought the war back to the centre stage of local politics. While a broad coalition of groups including the Catholic Church, the Irish Party and Sinn Féin campaigned successfully against conscription, it was the latter that gained the most politically from the anti-conscription campaign.

⁷ Nic Dháibhéid, 'Irish National Aid', p.707.

⁸ Jeffery, *Great War*, p.17; Horne, *Our War*, p.3.

⁹ Fitzpatrick, 'Collective Sacrifice', p.1030; Staunton, 'Kilrush', pp 268-272; Dungan, *Distant Drums*, p.54.

¹⁰ Codd, 'Wexford', p.20.

Michael Laffan's study of Sinn Féin shows how a range of different nationalist groupings coalesced under the flag of the re-organized party during 1917. A series of by-elections in neighbouring North Roscommon and South Longford in 1917 demonstrated the attractiveness of republicanism, and exposed the weakness of a declining Irish Party. It was these same elections that further politicised the people of Leitrim, and contributed to the growth of Sinn Féin within the county. Leitrim had one of the largest Sinn Féin membership bases in Ireland, and as in many areas including Cloone and Drumsna, a relatively seamless transfer of political loyalty by supporters of constitutional nationalism to Sinn Féin.¹¹ Rather than witnessing a radical political transformation, the experience of Leitrim supports Fitzpatrick's thesis that continuity rather than change marked the rise of Sinn Féin. While Sinn Féin represented a perceived new phenomenon, its members and supporters were broadly the same people who had supported and held membership of the Irish Party's local support organisations. The presence of such support ensured, that while Sinn Féin embraced agrarianism when it suited its electoral needs, republicans would never disrupt the emerging economic and social *status quo* to the detriment of nationalist landholders.

Both Mitchell and Daly outlined the successful challenge to the state by republicans in the wake of the 1918 general election victory.¹² Although Leitrim was not a major theatre of violent resistance, the establishment of a republican counter-state challenged the existing structures of state political power within the county. Not only did this unprecedented and pioneering initiative defy the state, it also, as Marie Coleman has argued, provided a form of self-government before the formal establishment of the Irish Free State.¹³ While Leitrim's republican administrators established efficient and alternative systems of local government and justice, they faced a number of challenges from both the existing state and the local population. In addition to the financial challenges posed by the suspension of Local Government Board funding, a protracted anti-rates campaign by Leitrim's farmers threatened the effective administration of local government. Nevertheless, these challenges did not hinder the implementation of public policy decisions, many of which were, as in the past, influenced by local interests and political factions. A culture of cautious conservatism, and the upholding of the *status quo*, provides clear evidence that a pattern of continuity, rather than change, began to emerge.

¹¹ Laffan, *Resurrection*, pp 186-188.

¹² Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government; Daly, Buffer State*.

¹³ Coleman, *Longford*.

While Ireland witnessed unprecedented levels of conflict between 1919 and 1921, historians have recognised that this violence was concentrated in a small number of regions, mostly in Munster and Dublin city. Despite Hopkinson's and Townshend's comprehensive accounts of the conflict, a concentration on overt political violence as an indicator of resistance is a clear feature of their work, and that of the wider historiography of the period.¹⁴ Little analysis of the effectiveness of non-violent forms of resistance, as elucidated by Kalyvas, has been undertaken in the study of the Irish revolution.¹⁵ Both Lowe and Hughes outlined large scale instances of boycott and intimidation against crown forces and the local population, with the latter highlighting its widespread use in Leitrim.¹⁶ The success of these methods attracted the ire of the state, and Leitrim suffered disproportionate levels of violence directed by the state against the local population. Such widespread levels of state violence, in the absence of sustained IRA violence, challenges Hart's analysis of a cyclical pattern of conflict between the state and the IRA.¹⁷ The presence of both British Army and Auxiliary units at Boyle, Carrick, Mohill, and Longford, ensured that south Leitrim received more attention from crown forces than the north of the county. The main reason for the desire of crown forces to act against the local community, as opposed to the IRA, was the widespread success of non-violent forms of civil resistance against crown forces, state officials and those who interacted with the crown administration. The description of this region as 'quiet' distorts somewhat the reality of the local environment, where non-violent resistance prevented the full and effective operation of civil society, and the state's forces responded with levels of violence that were intimidatory and destructive.

A range of historians including Rumpf, Fitzpatrick, Hart, and Augusteijn examined patterns of republican violence during the 1919-1921 period, and Fitzpatrick's seminal work, 'The Geography of Irish Nationalism' in particular provides a thorough analysis of republican violence.¹⁸ A number of factors including the absence of an effective leadership and a lack of arms hindered the development of a campaign in Leitrim. Given the high levels of emigration, and a relatively small population, the potential pool of 'revolutionaries' remained small. Arms raids and barrack burnings in 1920, and through into early 1921, marked the extent of direct military action against the state. Unlike in adjacent Longford, where the differing levels of violence between the north and south of the county have been convincingly explained by

¹⁴ Townshend, *The Republic*; Hopkinson, *War of Independence*.

¹⁵ Kalyvas, *The logic of violence*, pp 44-48.

¹⁶ Lowe, *The War against the RIC*, p.85; Hughes, *Persecuting the Peelers*, p.207

¹⁷ Hart, *IRA at War*, p.58

¹⁸ Fitzpatrick, 'The Geography of Irish Nationalism', pp 113-44.

economics and geography, such explanations are not applicable in Leitrim. It was the influence of Longford, and pressure from IRA GHQ that initiated limited military action in south Leitrim in the early months of 1921. While the topography of north Leitrim was as suited to guerrilla warfare, perhaps even more so, than that of the south of the county, the influence of Sinn Féin's James Dolan, a noted pacifist, contributed to the lack of direct military engagement with crown forces there. Nevertheless, boycott and intimidation were as widespread in the north of the county, as in the south, which raises questions about the apparent 'quietude' of the region.

In a similar pattern to the War of Independence, Hopkinson's study of the Civil War demonstrated that political violence was confined to a small number of specific areas of the country.¹⁹ While most of Leitrim did not witness widespread violence, the conflict in the north-west traversed county boundaries with roving republican units battling against government forces across Leitrim, Roscommon, and north Sligo. Despite the county sharing some of its border with the new northern state, little cross-border violence in the region occurred from the spring of 1922. The broad support of Leitrim's IRA units for the Treaty was influenced by the stance of General Sean MacEoin, whose North Longford Brigade had co-operated closely with their south Leitrim counterparts in the 1919-21 period. Following the capture of the region's main towns in the summer of 1922, the war developed into a guerrilla war until the formal end of hostilities in May 1923. A feature of the conflict in the region was a series of extra-judicial killings and state violence. The activities of elements of republican groups contributed to increased levels of lawlessness and criminality against both the National Army, the Civic Guard, and the local population. Such an environment provides the context for the eighteen criminal, agrarian and political killings in the region. As Foster and Kissane have observed, the absence of social class divisions among the belligerents was apparent, with men from similar social backgrounds equally likely to be on either side of the conflict.²⁰ Although the Civil War in the north-west broadly followed national patterns, the republican unit based at Arigna was involved in a widespread campaign of terror against both state forces and the civilian population. The group's involvement in the killing of innocent civilians at Drumkeerin and Ballyconnell supported Brady's argument, that it was often difficult to differentiate between political and criminal acts.²¹

¹⁹ Hopkinson, *Civil War*.

²⁰ Kissane, *Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p.8; Gavin Foster, 'Class Dismissed? The Debate over a Social Basis to the Irish Civil War' in *Saothar: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society*, 33 (2008), pp 73–86.

²¹ Brady, *Guardians*, p.137.

Some of the more controversial claims of Hart pertaining to sectarianism during the Irish revolution are refuted by this study. Although four Protestants were killed in the 1921-1922 period, two as alleged informers and two in the course of a robbery, there was no evidence of widespread sectarianism in the county. While agrarian violence was directed against Protestant landholders, and Protestant businesses were intimidated during the Belfast boycott, there is no evidence that a co-ordinated campaign against Protestants was carried out in Leitrim. Catholic businesses were also targeted as part of the boycott campaign. Nevertheless, high levels of migration of Protestants to nearby Fermanagh supports Clarke's argument, in her study of Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford, that few Protestants remained unaffected by the pervasive sectarian atmosphere in some districts.²² Leitrim was no exception to the countrywide mood, where Protestants were assumed to be loyalists, and therefore potential enemies of the emerging state. This could, and did, increase the vulnerability of individual Protestants in the aftermath of events such as those at Selton Hill. Nevertheless, the interdependence and mutual amity in a small rural environment where opinions were formed, not by ideologues or a distant city-based revolutionary class, explained the lack of sectarian and ethnic violence that was prevalent in the urban and industrialized north-east.

If the definition of revolution is significant and fundamental political change achieved through violence, then one can argue that the 1912-1923 period was revolutionary. However, a more detailed analysis reveals little alteration in the structure of society taking place during the period. Politics and society in the county of Leitrim did not witness any mass transformation due to the challenge to law and order by republicans from 1916 to 1923. A mostly contented small farmer class had already benefitted from the fruits of land reform, ensuring the presence of a conservative peasant culture across the county. While a combination of government ineptitude and underlying anglophobia saw the Irish Party replaced with Sinn Féin, no radical transformation occurred in the political culture of Leitrim. The evidence of the Irish revolution in the county clearly supports Fitzpatrick's thesis that no gulf existed between constitutional and advanced nationalism. A more efficient and determined organisation emerged in the wake of the Easter Rising, where 'the political culture of nationalist Ireland re-emerged, draped in a tricolour that barely obscured the outline of a golden harp'.²³ The common denominator for both advanced and constitutional nationalism was independence, with neither doctrine having a coherent or radical social and economic vision for an independent Ireland. Throughout the

²² Clarke, *Everyday Violence*, p.199.

²³ Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands*, p.69.

period, the public were often willing to defy both the crown and republican administrations in a manner that was not based around politics, loyalty, or allegiance but self-interest. In so doing, the revolution in the county did not evolve in isolation from the forces of rural conservatism, it merely accommodated the many different strands of nationalism that were already present in Leitrim society. A continuation of parliamentary institutions, local government, common law and judicial structures leads to the conclusion that evolution, rather than revolution, took place across rural Leitrim and, more generally, in Ireland between 1912 and 1923.

This study seeks to add to the body of knowledge surrounding one of the most turbulent periods of Irish history. It has re-constructed what happened in Leitrim through an engagement with the sources left behind by participants, civic society and government. In providing some insight into the political and social fabric of society in County Leitrim in the 1912-1923 period, it has confirmed some established characteristics of the revolutionary period, but has also challenged common historical assumptions relating to violence and modes of resistance. The study has attempted to set out some of the distinctive characteristics of events in a small, thinly populated, rural county in north-west Ireland, but has also identified broad similarities with many of her near neighbours. While Leitrim witnessed land reform and the democratisation of local and national government, the new state replaced many of the old patriarchal and deferential structures with their own forms of authority. Thus the term 'revolution' has only limited application in Leitrim during this period. Because the goals of nationalism were very narrowly focussed under the Irish Party, its overthrow by Sinn Féin did little to broaden that focus. It may even have narrowed it.

Appendix 1:

R.I.C. Barracks in Co. Leitrim.

The first named station in bold is the Head Quarters station of the District, and the consecutively numbered towns are sub-stations within that District.

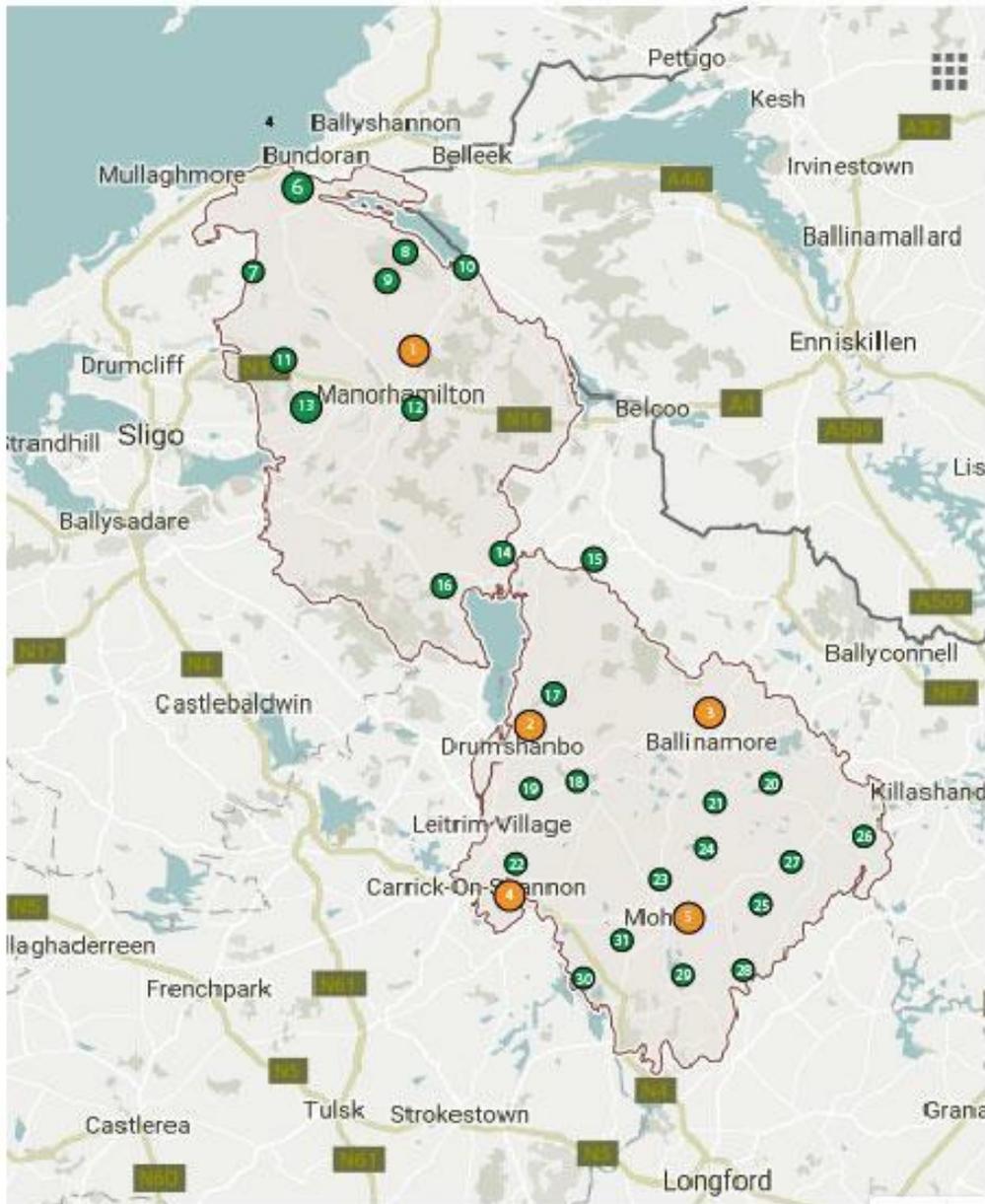
1/ **Carrick-on-Shannon (Carrick)** 2/ Dowra 3/Drumshanbo, 4/Drumsna, 5/Keshcarrigan
6/Leitrim

1/**Ballinamore** 2/ Carrigallen 3/Drumdarton, 4/Fenagh 5/Garadice 6/ Mullagarve

1/**Manorhamilton** 2/ Annagh, 3/Dromahair 4/ Drumkeerin, 5/Fivemilebourne 6/Glenade
7/Glencar 8/Gubalaun 9/Killargue 10/Kiltyclogher 11/Kinlough

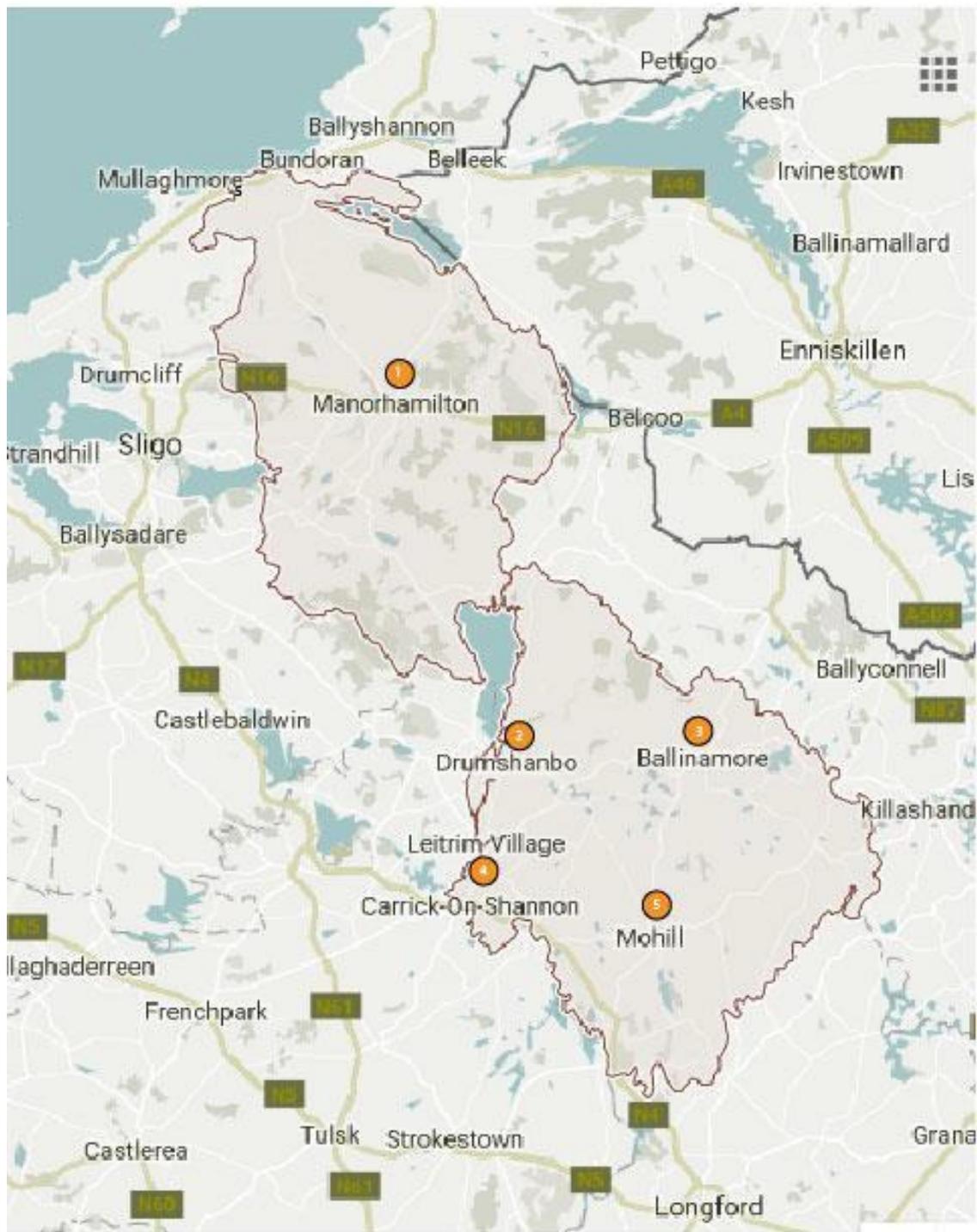
1/**Mohill** 2/Cloone 3/Corraneary 4/Corraterrif 5/Dromod 6/Farnaught 7/Gorvagh

PRE - 1920 RIC BARRACK LOCATIONS



- 1 Manorhamilton 2 Drumshanbo 3 Ballinamore 4 Carrick-On-Shannon 5 Mohil
- 6 Kinlough 7 Glencar 8 Gubalaun 9 Glenade 10 Kiltydogher 11 Fivemilebourne
- 12 Kilargue 13 Dromahair 14 Annagh 15 Dowra 16 Drumkeerin 17 Rantogue
- 18 Drumdarton 19 Mullagarve 20 Garadice 21 Keshcarrigan 22 Leitrim 23 Gorvagh
- 24 Fenagh 25 Cloone 26 Carrigallen 27 Corraneary 28 Farnaught 29 Dromod
- 30 Drumsna 31 Corraterrif

RIC BARRACK LOCATIONS - JULY 1920



- 1 Manorhamilton
- 2 Drumshanbo
- 3 Ballinamore
- 4 Carrick-on-Shannon
- 5 Mohill

Appendix 2 Killings:

January 1919-July 1921

Name	Date	Status	Category
1. Francis Curran, Augavas, Co. Leitrim	12/4/20	Civilian	Political/Personal
2. Patrick Gill, Drumsna, Co. Leitrim	11/9/20	IRA	Political
3. James Connolly, Kinlough, Co. Leitrim	14/9/20	Civilian	Political
4. Lieut. C.E. Wilson, Sheemore, Co. Leitrim	4/3/21	Crown Forces	Political
5. Sean Connolly, Gorvagh, Co. Leitrim	11/3/21	IRA	Political
6. John J. O'Reilly (Miskawn), Gorvagh, Co. Leitrim	11/3/21	IRA	Political
7. Seamus Wrynn, Gorvagh, Co. Leitrim	11/3/21	IRA	Political
8. John J. O'Reilly (Derrinkeher), Gorvagh, Co. Leitrim	11/3/21	IRA	Political
9. Michael Baxter, Gorvagh, Co. Leitrim	11/3/21	IRA	Political
10. Joe Beirne, Gorvagh, Co. Leitrim	11/3/21	IRA	Political
11. William Latimer, Gorvagh, Co. Leitrim	30/3/21	Civilian	Political
12. James McGlynn, Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim	12/4/21	IRA	Political
13. Constable Wilfred Jones, Ballinamore Co. Leitrim	15/4/21	Crown Forces	Political

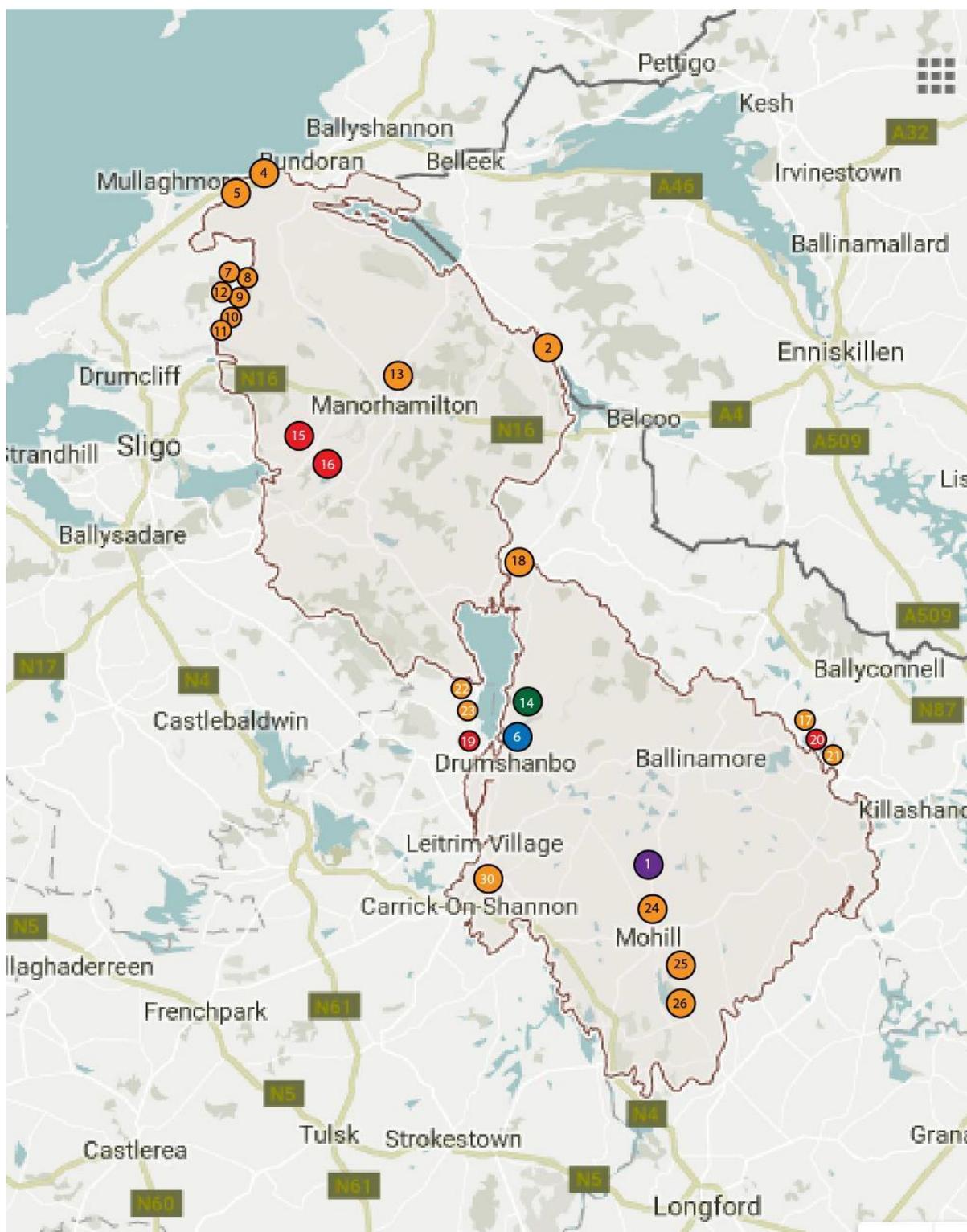
14. Constable Thomas Mugan, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim	15/4/21	Crown Forces	Accidental Shooting
15. John Harrision, Garadice, Co. Leitrim	22/4/21	Civilian	Political
16. Constable Leonard Hart, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim	16/5/21	Crown Forces	Accidental Shooting
17. Contable Thomas Tasker, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim	16/5/21	Crown Forces	Accidental Shooting

Appendix 3:

Killings: January 1922-May 1923

Name	Date	Status	Category
1. Hugh Canning, Gortvagh, Co. Leitrim	31/1/22	Civilian	Personal
2. Edwin Plumb, Garrison, Co. Fermanagh	5/4/22	A Special	Political
3. James Mc Loughlin, Gowel, Co. Leitrim	30/5/22	Free State	Accidental Shooting
4. James Connolly, Finner, Co. Donegal	29/6/22	Anti-treaty	Political
5. John Connolly, Tullaghan, Co. Leitrim	11/7/22	Anti-treaty	Political
6. James Dolan, Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim	14/9/22	Free State	Political
7. Seamus Devins, Ballinrillick, Co. Sligo	20/9/22	Anti-Treaty	Political
8. Patrick Carroll, Ballinrillick, Co. Sligo	20/9/22	Anti-treaty	Political
9. James Banks, Ballinrillick, Co. Sligo	20/9/22	Anti-treaty	Political
10. Brian MacNeill, Ballinrillick, Co. Sligo.	20/9/22	Anti-treaty	Political
11. Harry Benson, Ballinrillick, Co. Sligo.	20/9/22	Anti-treaty	Political
12. Tom Langan, Ballinrillick, Co. Sligo	20/9/22	Anti-treaty	Political
13. Philip Gilgunn, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim	17/11/22	Anti-treaty	Political

14. Francis McCarron, Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim	2/12/22	Civilian	Agrarian
15. Thomas Dennison, Drumkeerin, Co. Leitrim	12/12/22	Civilian	Criminal
16. Carson Dennison, Drumkeerin, Co. Leitrim,	12/12/22	Civilian	Criminal
17. Michael Cull, Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan	6/1/23	Anti-treaty	Political
18. Michael McManus, Dowra, Co. Cavan	6/1/23	Free State	Political
19. Patrick O'Boyle, Arigna, Co. Roscommon	31/1/23	Civilian	Unknown.
20. Sean McGrath, Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan	6/2/23	Civilian	Criminal
21. William Ryan, Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan	6/2/23	Civilian	Criminal
22. Patrick Tymon, Arigna, Co. Roscommon	27/2/23	Anti-treaty	Anti-treaty
23. Seamus Cull, Arigna, Co. Roscommon.	27/2/23	Anti-treaty	Anti-treaty
24. Paddy Muldoon, Mohill, Co. Leitrim	18/3/23	Civilian	Personal
25. Michael Reynolds, Johnstonsbridge, Co. Leitrim	30/4/23	Civilian	Political
26. Patrick Keville, Johnstonsbridge, Co. Leitrim	25/5/23	Civilian	Political



- Political
- Political/Criminal
- Personal
- Political/accidental
- Agrarian

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