

The United Irishmen and the '98

The Society of United Irishmen sprung from the ashes of the Volunteers. The Society arose in 1791 when a 28-year-old Belfast barrister, Theobald Wolfe Tone, organized its first chapter. The United Irishmen's stated goal was the establishment of national government through equal representation of all the people in a radically reformed Irish Parliament.⁹⁸ From its outset, the United Irishmen sought full equality of rights among all the Irish. Tone wrote that he wanted "to unite the whole people of Ireland ... and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter."⁹⁹ By year's end, a second chapter formed in Dublin under the leadership of Simon Butler and James Napper Tandy.¹⁰⁰ The movement was bi-polar with one pole in Belfast, Protestant and predominantly Presbyterian, and the other pole in Dublin, about equally Protestant and Catholic. While Society members held diverse political views, the need for legislative independence with electoral reform was the common, unifying belief.

By early 1794, Dublin Castle perceived the United Irishmen as a serious threat to the government and planned action to suppress the movement. On May 4, 1794 Dublin police raided a meeting of the local United Irishmen chapter and seized its papers. Subsequently, there were raids elsewhere and Dublin Castle began to infiltrate informers into the Society.¹⁰¹ In response, the movement went underground; however, in Ulster it maintained an open presence. By May 1795, the United Irishmen had reconstituted itself as a revolutionary, republican leaning organization whose members had to swear oaths of allegiance and secrecy.¹⁰² Because of the oath of allegiance, the United Irishmen became an outlawed organization under the Insurrection Act of March 24, 1796. The act made it a capital offense to administer an oath of any society formed for seditious purposes. Those who took such oaths were liable to transportation for life.¹⁰³

In the mid-1790s, the United Irishmen senior leadership included Wolfe Tone, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, MP for County Kildare, Arthur O'Connor, MP for Phillipstown Borough, Thomas Adis Emmet, a Dublin barrister, William MacNevin, a Dublin physician, and Oliver Bond, a Dublin woolens merchant; all were Protestant.¹⁰⁴ At the beginning of 1798, Fitzgerald claimed the Society had 280,000 sworn members, with Ulster accounting for 40% of the membership. A memorandum prepared by Fitzgerald and delivered to Dublin Castle by Thomas Reynolds, a police informant, showed the Society's armed men as follows:

⁹⁸ Madden, *The United Irishmen*, 222-23.

⁹⁹ O'Faolain, *The Autobiography of Wolfe Tone*, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Madden, *The United Irishmen*, 223-24.

¹⁰¹ Information provided by informants led to the arrest of several Belfast leaders on September 16, 1796.

¹⁰² Madden, *The United Irishmen*, 263-69; Curtin, "The transformation of the Society of United Irishmen."

¹⁰³ 36 Geo. 3 (Ireland), c.20.

¹⁰⁴ Madden, *The United Irishmen*, 264-65; Maxwell, *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798*, 12-21.

History of Part-Time Irish Soldiery

Ulster 110,990, Munster 100,634, and the counties of Dublin 5,177, Kildare 10,863, Wicklow 12,895, Queens 11,689, Kings 3,600, Carlow 9,414, Kilkenny 624, and Meath 1,400.¹⁰⁵

The United Irishmen, having first obtained French assurance of armed support (initial landings of 3,000 troops with an additional 8,000 troops in a floating reserve), set in motion a plan to forcibly take control of the Irish state. On the night of May 23, 1798, the Dublin chapter would seize the offices of government, while in the city's environs rebels would overwhelm the isolated detachments of the British Army. The next day, in support of these coup-like actions, the United Irishmen would mobilize in the adjoining counties and prepare defensive positions to protect Dublin from an expected British relief force. Armed uprisings planned for Ulster and Leinster would place the newly established revolutionary government in control of a *de facto* state. Finally, French troops would land, link up with the insurgents, and the combined force would defeat the British Army. The Society's plan was doomed at inception. The United Irishmen was riddled with Dublin Castle informants and the government had detailed knowledge of the planned revolt. On May 19th, Fitzgerald, the United Irishmen's military leader and architect of the planned revolt, was arrested. Other arrests followed, and the Dublin seizure never came off. Additionally, the revolt in the Dublin environs was put down quickly by British troops and yeomanry. The capital remained firmly in government control.

With exceptions in Ulster and the Midlands, the revolt of the United Irishmen failed at the outset. In Ulster, they seized most of the countryside but Belfast and other towns, such as Downpatrick, remained in government hands. British forces attacked rebel-held areas and quickly re-established government control of Ulster except for County Down. There a 5,000 strong force held out until June 13th when it was defeated at Ballynahinch. In the Midlands, the United Irishmen army of 3,000 troops captured towns in County Kildare and County Meath. On June 19th, at Clonard, County Meath, the United Irishmen suffered a major military defeat and by the end of the month, the Midlands force had dispersed. By Summer 1798, the organized insurgency directed by the United Irishmen leadership, was effectively over. Though many Catholics participated in the revolt, the Society's leadership was predominantly Protestant. For example, of the twenty senior leaders imprisoned after the revolt in Kilmainham Gaol, ten professed to the Church of Ireland, six Presbyterian, and only four Catholic.¹⁰⁶

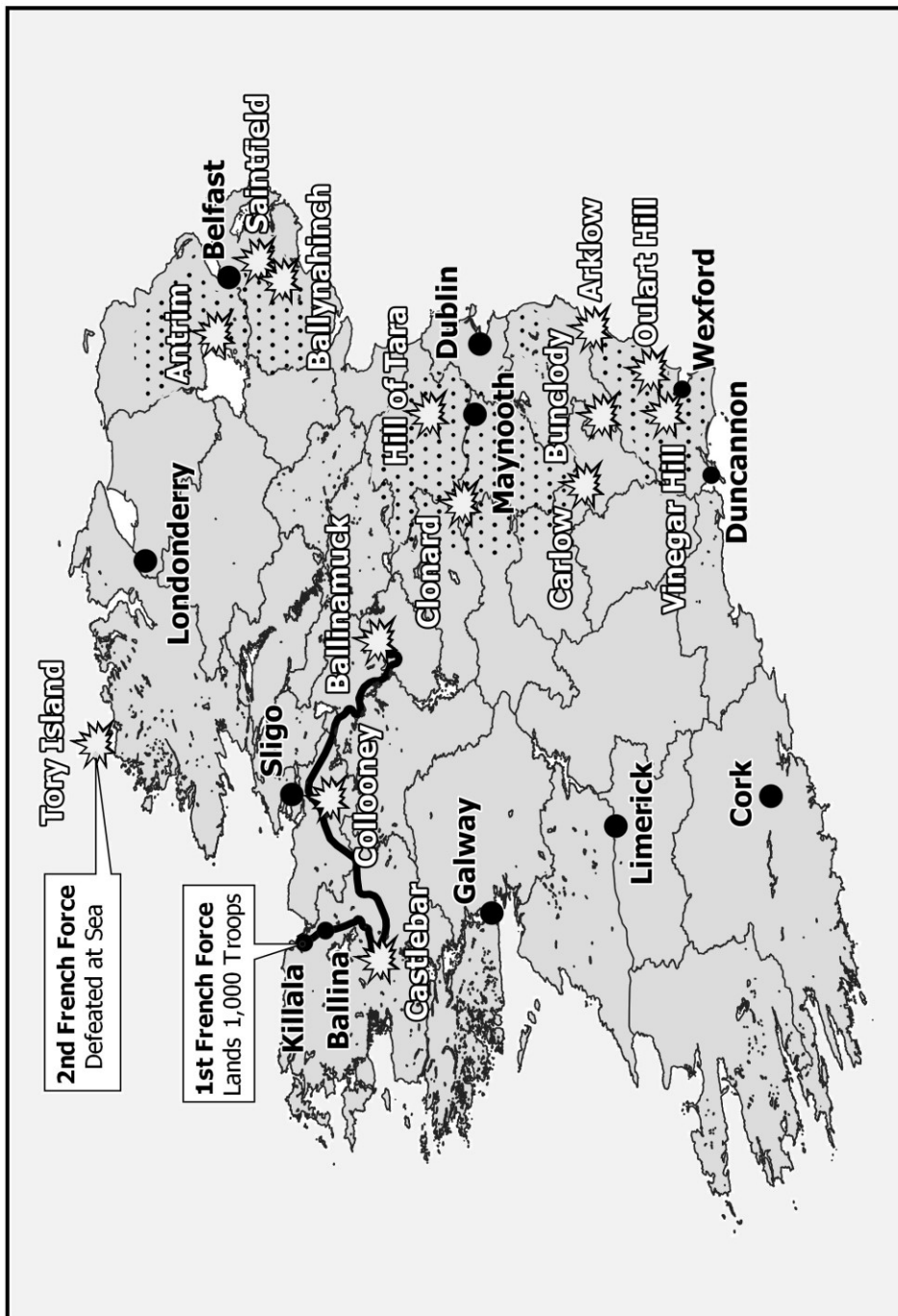
For early twentieth century Catholic, Irish nationalists, the year 1798 is memorable for the Wexford Rising.

“Wexford rose, not in obedience to any call from the United Irish organization, but purely and solely from the instinct of self-preservation. ... It was the wild rush to arms of a tortured peasantry, unprepared, unorganized, unarmed.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Madden, *The United Irishmen*, 283-84.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, appx. x, 585.

¹⁰⁷ P. W. Joyce, A. M. Sullivan, and P. D. Nunan, eds., *Atlas and Cyclopedia of Ireland* (New York: Murphy & McCarthy, 1900), Part II, 219.



Insurrection of 1798

In May 1798, the North Cork Militia was the only British force in County Wexford.¹⁰⁸ Most of the regiment was scattered about the county in isolated companies and sections. At the rising's inception, the insurgents successfully attacked the component units of the North Cork. The British command, fearful of losing the Town of Wexford along with the countryside, dispatched elements of the Donegal Militia from its barracks at Duncannon Fort to the town. The remnants of the North Cork withdrew from the countryside and joined the Donegal troops in the Town of Wexford. The Wexford garrison commander, LTC Maxwell of the Donegal Militia, soon determined his position to be untenable and accordingly, the remnants of the North Cork, together with the Donegal troops, made a fighting retreat to Duncannon Fort. With the only local British forces bottled up in Duncannon, the insurgents took control of County Wexford. Once its base was secured, the Wexford "peasant army" moved north towards Dublin along two axes. The advancing western wing met with defeat at Bunclody (County Carlow) and the eastern wing was stopped at Arklow (County Wicklow). With their advance on Dublin blocked, the insurgents withdrew into County Wexford and prepared to meet the expected British onslaught. The culminating battle of the British campaign to retake Wexford took place on June 21st at Vinegar Hill near Enniscorthy. After the British victory there, the peasant army dwindled to isolated bands kept intact by the hope of a French landing.

By mid-July, the insurgency was reduced to small, largely inactive, and isolated, groups of rebels awaiting French assistance. That assistance came when a French force of about 1,000 troops landed on the northwest coast of Ireland at Killala, County Mayo, from where it marched southward. The government assembled troops from throughout the island and met the French force, now augmented with about 3,000 insurgents, at Castlebar. The Franco-Irish army, commanded by the French general Jean Joseph Humbert, defeated the British, then moved northeast into Ulster and defeated a British force at Collooney. On September 5th Humbert's army turned southeast towards the highland headwaters of the River Shannon. Dogged by British counterattacks, short of supplies, outnumbered and without hope of reinforcement, locally or from France, Humbert surrendered on September 8th at Ballinamuk, County Longford. "His Irish auxiliaries got no quarter, nor did those left behind in Ballina, Killala, and elsewhere."¹⁰⁹

On September 16, 1798 the French government, unaware of Humbert's surrender, dispatched another amphibious force to Ireland. This army of 3,000 troops, in ships commanded by Commodore Jean-Baptiste-Francois Bompard, was to link up with Humbert's troops in Ulster. Accompanying Bompard was Wolfe Tone, who had fled previously to France. After several minor engagements with the Royal Navy, Bompard's squadron arrived off Lough Swilly on October 10th. Bompard was unable to locate a suitable landing site for the expeditionary force and withdrew from the coast. The next day his squadron was soundly defeated by the Royal Navy near Tory Island, off the northern coast of County Donegal. Of

¹⁰⁸ After the general embodiment, Dublin Castle decided that no militia regiment would be stationed in its home county or any county adjacent thereto.

¹⁰⁹ O'Connell, *The Irish Wars*, 138.

Bombart's squadron of ten ships, six were captured and one sunk. Among the French sailors and soldiers taken prisoner by the British was Wolfe Tone.¹¹⁰

Throughout 1798, Catholic militiamen, with very few exceptions, remained loyal to the Crown.¹¹¹ They fought the United Irishmen rebels throughout Ireland, the Catholic insurgents in County Wexford, and the French invasion force in the northwest. The heavily Catholic Kerry, Kilkenny, and Longford militia regiments were a major component of the British force that opposed Humbert's Franco-Irish army.

The Irish Militia's greatest defeat in 1798 took place on May 27th at Oulart Hill, about 25 kilometers north of Wexford town. There, a force of 110 to 120 North Cork Militia, about a quarter of the regiment's strength, attacked an insurgent force which numbered anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000. The North Cork force was led by the regimental commander, a Lieutenant-Colonel Foote, who was accompanied by several staff officers. Foote foolhardily ordered his troops to attack uphill against a force that outnumbered his by 25 to 1 or more. The North Cork were quickly enveloped and massacred. Foote was one of the handful of militia survivors.

The yeomanry fought with the militia and army against the insurgents of 1798. Among Catholics, the yeomanry gained a reputation for depredations and commission of atrocities.¹¹² Two years after Union between Ireland and Great Britain, Parliament affirmed the status of the yeomanry in Ireland and the Volunteers in England and Scotland.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Maxwell, *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798*, 304-15.

¹¹¹ Approximately 60 militiamen were court-martialed for treason. They were primarily Protestant United Irishmen in Ulster regiments, and Catholics in the Longford and Westmeath regiments. Karsten, "Irish Soldiers in the British Army," 31-64. Nelson claims 67 militiamen joined the insurgency, 5 from Kilkenny, 16 from Meath, and 50 from Longford. Nelson, *The Irish Militia, 1793-1802*, 222, 232.

¹¹² Francis Plowden, a Catholic, English lawyer, characterized the yeomanry as Orange-dominated and quick to commit atrocities against Catholics. His history of Ireland recites numerous incidents in support of his contention. Plowden, *The History of Ireland from its Union with Great Britain*, 70-75, 92-100, 112-13. Shortly after the book's publication, the Crown convicted Plowden, then living in Dublin, of criminal libel. He was fined the then enormous sum of £5,000 and in response fled to Paris. He remained there until his death in 1829. *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, s.v. "Plowden, Francis."

Thirty-two years later, Richard Robert Madden, in his sympathetic account of the revolutionaries, echoed Plowden's sentiments. Madden, *The United Irishmen*, 303, 306, 310-11, 318, 322-24, 346, 351. For example, he writes of "... the savagery of the Carlow slaughter and conflagrations, chiefly by the Yeomanry, after the defeat and flight or concealment of the rebels...", *Ibid.*, 343. Madden, born in Dublin and baptized an Anglican, was a physician who during his travels abroad became a noted abolitionist. Politically, he held republican views and strongly opposed the Protestant Ascendancy. *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, s.v. "Madden, Richard Robert."

For modern-day accounts of yeomanry misconduct see Blackstock, "A Forgotten Army" and Patterson, "White Terror: Counter-Revolutionary Violence in South Leinster, 1798-1801."

¹¹³ Yeomanry (Ireland) Act, 1802, 42 Geo. 3, c. 68; Volunteer Act, 1802, 42 Geo. 3, c. 66.

The Militia, 1800-1898

Under the Act of Union, 1800 the "Irish Militia" effectively became the "Militia in Ireland." At first, the Militia in Ireland operated in accordance with the old statutes of the Kingdom of Ireland; however, in practice those statutes had little bearing on the militia. The entire Militia in Ireland was embodied and effectively part of the British Army until 1816 (a year after the Napoleonic Wars concluded).

The first statutory militia change after Union was the Militia (Ireland) Act, 1802 which officially ended compulsory service by ballot.¹¹⁴ Further changes were made by four bills all enacted in 1809, during the Napoleonic Wars.¹¹⁵ The first act of 1809 authorized militiamen in Irish units to enlist in the regular British Army, provided that no more than 40% of the strength of any one regiment or battalion so enlisted. The second increased by 20% the authorized strength of each unit of the Militia in Ireland. The third granted family allowances to all embodied militiamen, not just those compelled to serve by ballot. Payments were 1s. per week for each legitimate child under age 10, 2s. per week for the wife of a balloted militiaman, and 1s. per week for the wife of a volunteer militiaman. The maximum family allowance was 4s. per week (£10.4 per year). The fourth act of 1809 consolidated and restated the law for the Militia in Ireland and redesignated lieutenant-colonel commandants as colonels.

After demobilization in 1816, the government placed the Militia in Ireland into suspended animation. While county governors still commissioned new regimental colonels (who in turn commissioned new subordinate officers), and small depots were maintained, rank and file recruitment and training ceased.¹¹⁶ As enlistments expired the muster rolls shrank, but the officer corps remained near authorized strength. Many of the officers by 1854; however, were practically elderly having been commissioned prior to 1815. For example, in the Donegal Militia, all but one of its lieutenants and all its ensigns had been commissioned before 1815. The numbers for the Dublin City Militia were similar to those for Donegal; four of eight lieutenants and three of six ensigns had been commissioned prior to 1815.¹¹⁷ The permanent staffs, which maintained and guarded militia stores (uniforms, accoutrements, and weapons) dwindled through ever-decreasing Parliamentary appropriations. The stores were maintained at state expense in case the government decided to revive the militia.

In this period of dormancy, 1817 through 1853, the 38 Irish militia regiments had only cadre staffs of full-time adjutants, NCOs, and drummers.¹¹⁸ By 1853, adjutants, with the rank

¹¹⁴ 43 Geo. 3, c. 2.

¹¹⁵ 49 Geo. 3, cc. 5, 56, 86, 120.

¹¹⁶ Bowman and Butler, "Ireland" in *Citizen Soldiers and the British Empire*.

¹¹⁷ *Thom's Irish Almanac and Official Directory, 1852*.

¹¹⁸ *Returns of the Militia Staff in Great Britain; of the Militia Staff in Ireland, of the Establishments of Officers and Men of each Militia Corps in Great Britain; and of the Sum paid by the Public for each Corps of Militia in the United Kingdom, 1828*, H.C. Accounts & Papers, No. 183.

of captain, were paid 8s. per day, sergeant-majors 1s. 10d., sergeants 1s. 6d., and drummers 1s.¹¹⁹ Beginning in 1823, Westminster progressively reduced the number of permanent militia positions.¹²⁰ An 1834 army inspection of the permanent staff in Ireland (783 of all ranks), revealed that nearly all the NCOs were over 40 years of age (many in their 50s) and possessed little or no military skills. A preponderance of English-named staffers in the report indicates that Protestants were most of the cadre force. Though the staff was paid at a daily rate, there were few military duties, so many staffers also held civilian employment.¹²¹ By 1853, the total permanent staff of the Militia in Ireland was down to 26 adjutants, 24 sergeant-majors, and 120 sergeants, which equates to 4 or 5 men per regiment.¹²²

The Militia in Ireland was reconstituted during the Crimean War and reorganized under the Militia (Ireland) Act, 1854.¹²³ The law's provisions included five-year enlistment terms, authorization of enlistment bonuses to be set by the War Office, an increase of authorized strength to 30,000 privates, and specific authority for embodiment during time of war, not just threatened invasion. The act also gave the Lord Lieutenant greater control over the militia than under previous statutes. For example, Dublin Castle became the sole source of both officer commissions and NCO appointments. Annual training was set at 21 days, but the Lord Lieutenant received authority to reduce it to not fewer than 3 days, or to increase it to not more than 56 days. As was the case since 1802, there was no provision for compulsory service.

Recruits into the new militia understood, as in 1794, that they were not enlisting into a part-time force. With Britain at war with Russia, the militia would be embodied for the duration of the conflict and be a major component of the home army.

During the Crimean War, the government embodied nearly the entire militia to free regular army units at home for active service abroad.¹²⁴ From May 1854, through September 1856, embodied militia units were stationed throughout the United Kingdom.¹²⁵ Of the 37

¹¹⁹ *Militia Estimates for the Year Ending 31 March 1854*, 1852/53, H.C. Accounts and Papers, No. 777.

¹²⁰ *Abstract of the Sums Voted and the Amount Actually Expended for the Militia of the United Kingdom*, 1834, H.C. Accounts & Papers, No. 231; *An Abstract of the Sums Voted and the Amount Actually Expended for the Militia of the United Kingdom, in each Year [from 1834 through 1842]*, 1843, H.C. Accounts & Papers, No. 600.

¹²¹ In 1834, 293 of the permanent staff of 735 sergeants and drummers apparently had full-time civilian employment. None of the 38 officers, the regimental adjutants, had outside employment. *Reports of the Officers appointed on the Recommendation of the Committee on the Militia Estimates of the last Session of Parliament, on the State of the Staff of the Disembodied Militia of the United Kingdom*, 1835, H.C. Accounts & Papers, No. 201.

¹²² *Militia Estimates for the Year Ending 31 March 1854*, 1852/53, H.C. Accounts & Papers, No. 777.

¹²³ 17 & 18 Vict., c. 107.

¹²⁴ Of the 164 militia regiments in the United Kingdom, 146 were embodied by July 1855. *Return of Regiments of Militia Embodied in each Month to Present Time*, 1854/5, H.L. Other Papers, No. 266.

¹²⁵ *Hart's New Annual Army List*, 1856.

embodied Irish regiments, 13 were stationed in England.¹²⁶ As the war progressed, and the demand for troops in the theatre of war continued, Parliament authorized militiamen to volunteer for service in the colonies with their units. These militia regiments would free regular army garrison units for active service in Crimea.¹²⁷ Irish regiments accounted for 13 of the 49 militia regiments that volunteered for colonial postings.¹²⁸ Only 10 of the 49 volunteering units were deployed abroad.¹²⁹ After the conclusion of the Crimean War, the militia was demobilized between May and September 1856.¹³⁰

In 1857, the Indian “Mutiny” prompted the government to again embody the militia to free regular army units at home for active service abroad. This mobilization was not as extensive as the one for the Crimean War.¹³¹ Of the 15 embodied Irish regiments, 11 were stationed in England and 1 in Scotland.¹³² Again, the government asked militiamen to volunteer for foreign service with their units. In response, nine of the embodied Irish militia regiments agreed to serve abroad. Of those nine, four had also volunteered for overseas service during the Crimean War (North Cork, Antrim, Armagh, and Roscommon). By the end of 1861, all the embodied Irish regiments had been demobilized.¹³³

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Dublin Castle had serious doubts as to the loyalty of Catholic militiamen. Accordingly, the government suspended recruitment and all training from 1866 through 1870 (threat of Fenian infiltration of units), and again from 1881 through 1882 (fears that the militia would undertake “rural agitation” - the “Land Wars”).¹³⁴

In 1871, county authorities lost their power to appoint militia officers. County “Governors” now styled “Lieutenants,” could only nominate officer candidates to the War

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ 18 & 19 Vict., c. 1.

¹²⁸ *Return of the Militia Regiments of the United Kingdom which Volunteered for Foreign Service during the Crimean War and during the Indian Mutiny*, 1868/69, H.C. Accounts & Papers, No. 318.

¹²⁹ *Hart's New Annual Army List 1856*, shows two militia units stationed in Gibraltar, two in Malta, and six in the Ionian Islands (Corfu, Zante, Cephalonia). All Irish militia units were in the United Kingdom.

¹³⁰ *Return of Total Expense Incurred on Account of the Embodied Militia Showing Period During Which Embodied*, 1860/61, H.L. Other Papers, No. 157.

¹³¹ In 1857, the War Office embodied 47 infantry regiments while during the subsequent two years it embodied a further 10 regiments, all artillery. *Return of the Total Expenses incurred on account of the Embodied Militia in each Year since 1854 showing the Strength of the Force during the part of the Year it has been Embodied*, 1860, H.C. Accounts & Papers, No. 380. As of February 1859, 33 militia regiments remained embodied (18 English, 3 Scottish, 12 Irish). *Returns of the Number of Volunteers given by each Regiment of Embodied Militia to the Regular Army during the Year 1858*, 1859 Sess. 1, H.C. Accounts & Papers, No. 158.

¹³² *Hart's New Annual Army List, 1858*.

¹³³ *Hart's New Annual Army List, 1862*.

¹³⁴ Bowman and Butler, “Ireland” in *Citizen Soldiers and the British Empire*.

Office. The War Office had final say as to who would receive a Queen's militia commission.¹³⁵

In 1882, Parliament put into a single, comprehensive statute the governing authority for the militias of England & Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.¹³⁶ At about the same time, by War Office directive, militia infantry regiments were restyled "battalions" and linked with regular battalions into territorial regiments that shared a common basic training depot establishment.

The Yeomanry, 1800-1834

From 1800 through the early 1830s, Irish county authorities used the yeomanry as a part-time, paramilitary police force. Irish nationalists, especially Catholics, came to view this force as an instrument of British oppression. In June 1831, an incident in Newtownbarry, County Wexford, brought the Irish Yeomanry to the attention of the British public. The incident, termed by many "the Newtownbarry Massacre" became notorious and triggered a Parliamentary investigation. In Newtownbarry, irate townsmen tried to release one or more heifers taken by county officials as a statutory tithe for the Church of Ireland. The magistrates called for the yeomanry. In the ensuing tumult the yeomen opened fire on the crowd and caused multiple civilian casualties. The conservative *Dublin Evening Mail* reported the incident as a mob attack on the authorities that necessitated a firm response. It reported one yeoman and 18 "insurgents" killed, and a great number of yeomen gravely wounded. The radical *London Globe*, however, reported that "One of the most sanguinary and brutal outrages that ever gave pain to the eye, or sadness to the heart, took place yesterday at Newtownbarry." The account claimed 13 dead, including 1 yeoman (most likely killed accidentally by his own party), and 23 gravely wounded. The *Globe* portrayed the incident as an attack by "barbarous assailants" who fired indiscriminately in response to stones thrown at them by some boys.¹³⁷

After the Newtownbarry incident, British government support for the part-time force, by then half-hearted, waned further. In 1834, Westminster disbanded the Irish Yeomanry. "The force was widely seen to be sectarian in nature and was certainly largely Protestant in composition. In any case, its function as a part-time constabulary force had been rendered redundant both by the concentration of the yeomanry in Ulster, far removed from some of the worst 'disturbed districts' and the formation of the Irish Constabulary in 1822."¹³⁸

The Militia and the War in South Africa, 1899-1902

Unlike 45 years earlier when the Crimean War began, the United Kingdom at the start of the war in South Africa (the 2nd Boer War), had a pool of recently discharged soldiers who

¹³⁵ Regulation of the Forces Act, 1871, 34 & 35 Vict. c. 86.

¹³⁶ The Militia Act, 1882, 45 & 46 Vict., c. 49.

¹³⁷ *The Spectator*, June 25, 1831, 16.

¹³⁸ Bowman and Butler, "Ireland" in *Citizen Soldiers and the British Empire*, 41.

were obligated to reinforce the army when so ordered by the War Office. This manpower pool was the Army Reserve. With the Army Enlistment Act of 1870, Parliament authorized “short-service” enlistment.¹³⁹ Recruits served three to nine years with the Regular Army then spent the balance of their twelve-year engagement in the Army Reserve. Reservists received “reserve pay” simply for their reserve status, plus additional pay for the occasional training muster. Pay was 1s. per day during the first year in the Reserve, then 4d. per day thereafter.¹⁴⁰ At the start of the Boer War, the Army Reserve totaled 79,000 men: 61,000 were sent to South Africa, 5,000 remained at home, and 13,000 the army found unfit for service (16.5%).¹⁴¹

There was also another source of reinforcements and replacements for the army: the Militia Reserve. This reserve pool consisted of militiamen who after two annual trainings volunteered as reservists for the Regular Army. Such reservists remained on the rolls of their militia units and were subject to both militia embodiment and reserve mobilization. At the start of the Boer War, the Militia Reserve totaled approximately 30,000 men, 27.5% of the entire militia.¹⁴²

The Army and Militia Reserves, called to the colours in October, did not provide enough men to meet war requirements and the government had to look elsewhere for the needed troops.¹⁴³ Among the measures taken to obtain more soldiers was mobilization of the militia. The War Office issued the first embodiment orders on November 4, 1899, which called up 38 infantry battalions (of which 7 were Irish). Further embodiments were soon ordered and by the end of January 1900, 40,000 of the available 110,000 militiamen were embodied.¹⁴⁴ As with the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, the main purpose of the embodiment was to free regular army units at home for active service at the front. Also, as during earlier wars, militiamen could volunteer to serve abroad with their units; however, for the Boer War militia units were not barred from the theatre of war. On April 1, 1900, 19,000 of the by then 44,000 embodied militiamen were in South Africa.¹⁴⁵ By year’s end, every militia unit was embodied

¹³⁹ 33 & 34 Vict., c. 67.

¹⁴⁰ *Royal Warrant for the Pay, Appointment, Promotion, and Non-Effective Pay of the Army, 1899*, Arts. 1289-1306A.

¹⁴¹ *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa*, 1903, [Cd.1789], at 40. Hereafter cited as *South African War Report*.

¹⁴² Henry Jenkyns, “Constitution of the Military Forces of the Crown;” Testimony of LTG T. Kelly-Kenny, *Minutes of Evidence Vol. 1, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1790], qq. 4624-4625, 4629.

¹⁴³ The reserve pool would be exhausted by the end of September 1900. *South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1789], at 40.

¹⁴⁴ *Appendix to the Minutes of Evidence, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1792], nos. 10, 14; *General Annual Report on the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September, 1904*, 1905, [Cd. 2268].

¹⁴⁵ Total Strength on April 1, 1900, *Appendix to the Minutes of Evidence, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1792], no. 10.

and 30 militia infantry battalions were in, or in transit to, South Africa.¹⁴⁶ Though the United Kingdom was under no threat of invasion, all of the Militia Royal Garrison Artillery was embodied and dispatched to coastal forts. Three Irish RGA units manned the fortifications of the Royal Navy dispersal anchorages of Lough Swilly, Berehaven, and Cork Harbor. The nine other RGA units manned coastal fortifications in England. Note that of the first 16 Irish infantry battalions embodied 12 were stationed in England.¹⁴⁷

During the Boer War, a total of 68 militia infantry battalions served abroad, all but 8 in South Africa. Among the units that saw overseas service were seven Irish battalions, one in Malta and six in South Africa.¹⁴⁸ The War Office asked 72 militia infantry battalions to volunteer for overseas service. The army deemed a battalion to have volunteered if enough men agreed to serve abroad with the unit.¹⁴⁹ Only those individuals who so volunteered would depart with the headquarters staff and receive the £5 foreign service bonus. Those who did not volunteer were stationed at the battalion's training depot. All 54 English battalions that were asked to serve abroad had enough volunteers to qualify. Of 8 Scottish units asked, 1 failed to qualify (3/Cameron Highlanders, at its depot, Inverness), and of 10 Irish units asked, 3 failed to qualify. The three Irish units that did not produce enough volunteers for foreign service were as follows:

4th Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, at Aldershot, England.

4th Battalion, Connaught Rangers, at its Galway City depot.

6th Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, Dundalk, Co. Louth, at Sheffield, England.

According to the then Inspector-General of Recruiting, two days after the Royal Irish Regiment battalion failed to qualify for foreign service, its commander notified him that he now had the needed number of volunteers. The battalion; however, never went abroad as the War Office, in those two days, had filled the quota with another unit.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ *Harts Annual Army List 1904*; Return of Militia Battalions Abroad, *Appendix to the Minutes of Evidence, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1792], no. 16.

¹⁴⁷ Army Order 112, *Appendix to the Minutes of Evidence, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1792], no. 14.

¹⁴⁸ Return of Militia Battalions Abroad, *Appendix to the Minutes of Evidence, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1792], no. 16. The Irish contingent in South Africa included two of the three militia battalions of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Brian Tweedy's regiment that is mentioned several times in *Ulysses*.

¹⁴⁹ Army Orders, 1899, No. 93 issued under 61 & 62 Vict. c. 9. Typically, a unit would not be sent overseas unless it could deploy 400 men. Testimony of MG G. Barton, *Minutes of Evidence Vol. 2, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1791], q. 16343.

¹⁵⁰ Testimony of MG H.C. Borrett, *Minutes of Evidence Vol. 1, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1790], qq. 5306-08, 5323-32.

Prior to the amalgamations of 1881, 6/Royal Irish Rifles was styled the “Louth Militia” and its failure to volunteer for service abroad became notorious as “The Louth Mutiny.”¹⁵¹ On December 1, 1899 the 716 militiamen and 25 officers of the battalion were embodied at the unit’s depot in Dondalk, County Louth. Of the militiamen on the roll, 17 were unfit for service and another 22 were absent without leave. Five days later the War Office moved the battalion to Sheffield, England.

During the next two months, the unit’s 237 militiamen who were also Militia Reservists were sent to Regular Army units. In that same time period, 25 recruits finished their training and joined the battalion. On February 9, 1900, the War Office asked the now 465 enlisted men of the Louth Militia to volunteer for foreign service. Only 290 did so, a number insufficient to qualify the unit to serve abroad. Later, 95 of the 175 men who refused foreign service recanted, but that changed nothing as the War Office had stricken the battalion from the list for overseas service.¹⁵² The battalion’s failure to qualify for overseas service became a subject of newspaper articles and debate in Parliament. That was because some Louth Militiamen claimed the battalion’s officers obtained consents to foreign service through deceit or coercion.

Among Catholic nationalists, there was widespread belief that militia officers in Ireland, of which about 85% were Protestant and either Anglo-Irish or English, coerced or deceived uneducated, subservient, rural Catholic militiamen into acceptance of foreign service.¹⁵³ Throughout February 1900, several times Irish MPs voiced concerns in Commons regarding Irish militia volunteers for foreign service.¹⁵⁴ For example, on February 15, 1900, in Commons during Questions, the following exchanges occurred among the Under-Secretary of State for War and several Irish MPs:¹⁵⁵

Patrick O’Brien, Kilkenny:

I beg to ask the Under Secretary of State-for War whether, when Irish Militia regiments are brought to England and the men are asked to volunteer for service at the front, he will provide Members of this House who may wish to visit Militiamen belonging to their constituencies who are in such regiments, with the opportunity of ascertaining in what way they were asked to volunteer for the front, and whether they were free agents or not, and with the necessary authority to interview them on these points.

¹⁵¹ Hall, “The Louth Militia Mutiny.”

¹⁵² Even if the War Office had reconsidered the battalion’s decision to volunteer, it is unlikely the Louth Militia would have been sent abroad with only 385 militiamen.

¹⁵³ Butler, *The Irish Amateur Military Tradition*, 62.

¹⁵⁴ 78 *Parl. Deb.* (4th ser.) (1900) February 2, 8; 79 *Parl. Deb.* (4th ser.) (1900) February 15, 19, 20, 22, 27.

¹⁵⁵ 79 *Parl. Deb.* (4th ser.) (1900) 62-66.

COL Edward James Saunderson, Armagh, North:

Arising out of that question, may I ask my hon. friend whether he is aware that the hon. Member for Kilkenny on a recent occasion is reported to have advised Irish soldiers to shoot their English comrades and join the Boers?

J.G. Swift MacNeill, Donegal, South:

Don't stand that.

Speaker:

Order, order! That does not arise out of the question.

George Wyndham, Under-Secretary of State for War:

In reply to the hon. Member who asked the original question, I have to say that this would be quite contrary to military discipline.

Eugene Crean, Queen's Co.:

Is the hon. gentleman aware that several of the soldiers have written to their friends saying that they have been coerced into volunteering?

Wyndham:

No, Sir; I have no information to that effect, and I believe the case has been misrepresented.

• • •

O'Brien:

I beg to ask the Under Secretary of State for War whether nearly 50 per cent, of the 6th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles (Louth Militia), stationed at Sheffield Barracks, have signified their objection to go to the front in South Africa; and if so, whether the men are within their rights in refusing for foreign service; and whether he will see that no undue pressure is put upon them to compel or induce them to go.

Wyndham:

I have no information to the effect stated in the question. But, as I have before informed the hon. Member, commanding officers have received the most explicit orders not to place any pressure upon their men to accept service in South Africa, and the Secretary of State has no reason to believe that such pressure is being exercised.

O'Brien:

May I ask the hon. Gentleman whether, considering he asked me to postpone the question, he instituted the inquiries which he promised to make?

Wyndham:

I cannot accept the statement that I promised to make any inquiry. I have on more than one occasion given the answer I have given this afternoon.

O'Brien:

I am in the recollection of the House—

Speaker:
Order, order!

Swift MacNeill:
Move the adjournment.

Speaker:
The question has been fully answered.

O'Brien:
I will take the earliest opportunity to raise the question of the kidnapping of Irish Militiamen to send them abroad. I beg to ask the Under Secretary of State for War whether he can explain the method adopted by the colonel of the 3rd Royal Munster Fusiliers (Militia), now stationed at Dover, en route to South Africa on the 21st inst., to ascertain whether any of the men were willing to volunteer for the front; whether he will inquire if the men were asked en masse while on parade; whether he is aware that very few of them understood the colonel's words; also that some men who were not on parade at the time afterwards explained to their officers that they were not willing to volunteer or be bound by what happened on parade on the occasion, and were then told that the majority had volunteered, and that they were bound to go with them; whether he will order, before this regiment is sent to the front on the 21st inst., that each man is asked separately if he wishes to volunteer, and allowed reasonable time to give his reply, and that he is protected against any attempt to influence him in his decision; and whether he will give the necessary authority to Irish Members of this House to interview any of their constituents who are amongst the 3rd Royal Munster Fusiliers.

Wyndham:
There is no information on the subject in the War Office; but strict orders are given that no pressure is to be put upon the men; and the Secretary of State is not disposed to interfere with the commanding officer, who, he does not doubt, did his duty.

• • •

Richard M'Ghee, Louth, South:
I wish to ask the Under Secretary of State for War a question of which I have given him private notice — namely, whether his attention has been directed to a letter dated 12th February, in the Irish press, from Dr. Logue, the Cardinal Primate of Ireland, with reference to the case of a Militiaman named Duffy, under orders, as he believe, for military service in South Africa, without having been given any option of accepting or declining active service; and whether, having regard to the statement of the Cardinal on the subject of the grievances of this man, that "he knows as little of what he is about as a bullock being led to the shambles" —

Speaker:
Order, order!

At the outbreak of hostilities, the militia had 109,551 men, including Militia Reservists.¹⁵⁶ During the course of the war a further 85,834 men joined. Of the total 195,385 militiamen that served during the Boer War, 22.5% went to South Africa.¹⁵⁷ Excluding Militia Reservists, 28,474 ordinary militiamen from throughout the United Kingdom were in the war zone.¹⁵⁸ This indicates that about 3,300 Irish militiamen volunteered after the outbreak of hostilities to fight the Boers.¹⁵⁹

By September 1900, the British Army had defeated the Boer field forces and captured the principal towns of the Boer republics including Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, and Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal Republic. In October 1900, the Boer's initiated guerilla warfare that continued until their capitulation in May 1902.

The British government began to stand down the militia in late 1900. Of the twelve Irish garrison artillery regiments, the War Office disembodied five in October 1900, and the remaining seven the following month. Of the 28 Irish infantry battalions, 17 were disembodied in the last quarter of 1900 leaving 7 in England and 4 in South Africa.¹⁶⁰ The War Office disembodied a further seven Irish battalions in 1901 and four in 1902. The last Irish battalion to return to part-time status was 5/Royal Irish Rifles (South Down Light Infantry), which was disembodied in July 1902.¹⁶¹

The Imperial Yeomanry

Shortly after the start of hostilities, the War Office concluded that the army lacked sufficient mounted infantry to meet military needs in South Africa. On December 24, 1899, the War Office called for volunteers for active service in the soon to be formed Imperial Yeomanry units. The Imperial Yeomanry was open to troopers of the existing "home" yeomanry (the part-time cavalry force in Great Britain), members of the volunteer force, and any civilian provided "... that he is a good rider and a marksman according to yeomanry standard."¹⁶² As mounted infantry, not cavalry, the new force's basic element was denominated "company" and not "squadron." The first 10,242 Imperial Yeomen were

¹⁵⁶ *General Annual Report on the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September, 1904*, 1905, [Cd. 2268], Part XI.

¹⁵⁷ From October 1, 1899, through December 31, 1901, 85,384 men joined the Militia. 43,875 Militiamen, including Militia Reservists, went to South Africa. Grant, *History of the War in South Africa*, Vol. 4, 677-78.

¹⁵⁸ Deployments to South Africa, *Appendix to the Minutes of Evidence, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1792], no. 5.

¹⁵⁹ Based on 7 of the 60 volunteered militia battalions in South Africa were Irish (11.7% of total).

¹⁶⁰ *Hart's Annual Army List, 1901*.

¹⁶¹ *Hart's Annual Army List, 1904*

¹⁶² Formation of Imperial Yeomanry, *Appendix to the Minutes of Evidence, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1792], no. 14. The yeomanry, like the volunteer force and militia, by statute, could not be compelled to serve abroad. There were no home yeomanry or volunteer units in Ireland.

dispatched to South Africa in 1900 after two to three months training with their units. About 30% of the men were of the home yeomanry or Volunteers. Many in the first draft could not ride well and few were proficient with rifles. A further 16,597 Imperial Yeomen were sent to South Africa in 1901. This second draft consisted almost entirely of civilians of whom only a quarter had ever ridden a horse and nearly none could demonstrate any marksmanship ability. The men of the second draft were trained hastily in South Africa then assigned to secondary combat roles: guard duty and protection of lines of communication.¹⁶³

The initial contingent of Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa included five Irish companies, each of 121 men. The ranks were filled primarily from the Anglo-Irish elite. The 45th Company, commanded by Thomas Pakenham (Earl of Longford) recruited Dublin professionals and members of hunt clubs located throughout Ireland. It was dubbed by the press “The Irish Hunt.” The 47th Company, raised in London by the Earl of Donoughmore, consisted of rich, Anglo-Irish men-about-town, who each paid £130 for the cost of his horse, equipment, and passage to South Africa.¹⁶⁴ The 46th and 54th Companies were raised in Belfast, the 60th Company in other parts of Ulster. All but the 60th were regimented into the 13th Imperial Yeomanry Battalion, commanded by a regular army officer, LTC Basil Spraaage. On May 27, 1900 that 500-man battalion was nearly surrounded at Lindley in the Boer Republic of the Orange Free State. At the time, the battalion could have made good an escape, but Spraaage ordered his men to dig in and await relief. On May 30th, after heavy fighting, Spraaage surrendered the battalion to the Boers after it took 80 casualties. Two days later the relieving British troops arrived to find only the left behind bodies of Spraaage’s men killed-in-action.¹⁶⁵ As the war progressed six additional Irish companies formed. One of these, the 74th Company, incurred casualties of 25% of its initial strength.¹⁶⁶

The Irish Imperial Yeomanry units returned home in 1901. In June of that year, the conservative Anglo-Irish journal *Irish Society*, to honor the returning Irish soldiers, published the following poem by “J.R.S.”

‘Ode of Welcome’

The Gallant Irish yeoman
Home from the war has come
Each victory gained o’er foeman
Why should our bards be dumb.

How shall we sing their praises
Our glory in their deeds
Renowned their worth amazes
Empire their prowess needs.

¹⁶³ *South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1792], at 71-72; War Recruiting, *Appendix to the Minutes of Evidence, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1792], no. 13.

¹⁶⁴ Doherty, *North Irish Horse*, 4-8; Formation of Imperial Yeomanry, *Appendix to the Minutes of Evidence, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1792], no. 14.

¹⁶⁵ Maurice, *History of the War in South Africa* Vol. 3, 115-25.

¹⁶⁶ *Minutes of Evidence Vol.1, South African War Report*, 1903, [Cd. 1790], appx. D.

So to Old Ireland's hearts and homes
We welcome now our own brave boys
In cot and Hall; neath lordly domes
Love's heroes share once more our joys.

Love is the Lord of all just now
Be he the husband, lover, son,
Each dauntless soul recalls the vow
By which not fame, but love was won.

United now in fond embrace
Salute with joy each well-loved face
Yeoman: in women's hearts you hold the place.

The poem is an acrostic where the first letter of each line spells out THE WHORES WILL BE BUSY. The purported author was Oliver St. John Gogarty, Joyce's former friend who appears in *Ulysses* as Malachi Roland St. John (Buck) Mulligan.¹⁶⁷

After the war, the government reorganized the old "home" yeomanry and christened it "Imperial Yeomanry."¹⁶⁸ The new force had two Irish regiments: The North of Ireland and the South of Ireland Imperial Yeomanry.¹⁶⁹ The "North Irish Horse" was headquartered in Belfast, the "South Irish Horse" in Limerick. Detached squadrons were in Londonderry, Enniskillen, Dundalk, Cork, and Dublin.¹⁷⁰ The regiments were manned with many veterans of the eleven Irish Imperial Yeomanry companies that fought in South Africa. These units retained the elite social status of the first five wartime Irish companies of Imperial Yeomanry. On Bloomsday, the North Irish Horse was com-manded by the Earl of Shaftesbury, the South Irish Horse by the Marquess of Waterford. Of the 33 Irish Imperial Yeomanry officers in 1904, 10 were titled and among them were 4 peers.¹⁷¹

The Imperial Yeomanry in Ireland, like elsewhere in the United Kingdom, proved immensely popular. Unlike the militia, the Imperial Yeomanry on Bloomsday was only a few men short of its authorized enlisted strength, which for Ireland was 888.

¹⁶⁷ Ulick O'Connor, *Oliver St John Gogarty* (London: Cape, 1964), 22-23. During the war, Gogarty contributed articles to *Sinn Fein* that opposed British Army recruitment of Irishmen. Gogarty became a prominent otolaryngologist, a noted man of letters, and served in the Irish senate until its dissolution in 1936.

¹⁶⁸ Militia and Yeomanry Act, 1901, 1 Edw. 7, c. 14.

¹⁶⁹ *The London Gazette*, January 7, 1902.

¹⁷⁰ *Monthly Army List, December 1904*; Vaugh, The South Irish Horse; Baillie-Stewart, The North Irish Horse.

¹⁷¹ *Monthly Army List, December 1904*.