

THE MEN BEHIND THE GLASS

• NE OBLIVISCARIS •



CAMPBELL
COLLEGE

ESTD 1894



CAMPBELL
COLLEGE

EST 1894

LESSON 2

IRELAND IN 1914

In 1911, the UK held a census of the population, which included Ireland. The total population of the United Kingdom was 45,221,000, with 36,070,000 recorded in England and Wales, 4,761,000 in Scotland and 4,390,000 in Ireland. The figures in Ireland were made up of 2,192,048 men and 2,198,171 women.

The population of Ireland broke down to these numbers by province:

Province	Population
Leinster	1,162,044
Munster	1,035,495
Connacht	610,984
Ulster	1,581,696

According to the 1911 census, religious breakdown in Ireland was:

Religion	Number	Percentage
Roman Catholic	3,238,656	73.8%
Church of Ireland	575,489	13.1%
Presbyterian	439,876	10.0%
Methodist	61,806	1.4%
Other Christian denominations	57,718	1.3%
Jewish	5,101	0.1%

In Ulster the religious profile was:

Religious profession	Number	Percentage
Roman Catholic	690,816	43.67%
Church of Ireland	366,773	23.19%
Presbyterian	421,410	26.64%
Methodist	48,816	3.09%
Other Christian denominations and Jewish	53,881	3.41%

Ulster was different than the other three Irish provinces as its majority population, 55%, were of the Protestant faith.



CAMPBELL
COLLEGE

ESTD 1894

WHAT WAS HOME RULE?

The Home Rule movement was a series of political attempts by Irish nationalist Members of Parliament and other politicians to gain devolved government for Ireland in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. This movement aimed to establish an Irish Parliament within the United Kingdom that would look after domestic issues such as planning, education, health, housing and utilities for the people on the island of Ireland. Before the First World War, the key leader of this movement was John Redmond MP and his Irish Parliamentary Party.

After the first two Bills were rejected by the Houses of Parliament, a third Bill was presented to Parliament in 1912. The Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, introduced the Bill on 11 April 1912. The bill provided for:

- An Irish Parliament to be set up in Dublin with powers to deal with most national affairs.
- A number of Irish MPs would continue to sit in the Parliament of the United Kingdom (42 MPs, rather than 103).
- The abolition of Dublin Castle administration, the government organisation through which Britain had governed Ireland and its powers and responsibilities transferred to the new Parliament.

The Third Home Rule Bill took two years to pass through the Houses of Parliament and only became law on the outbreak of war. However, the implementation of the legislation was suspended because of war.

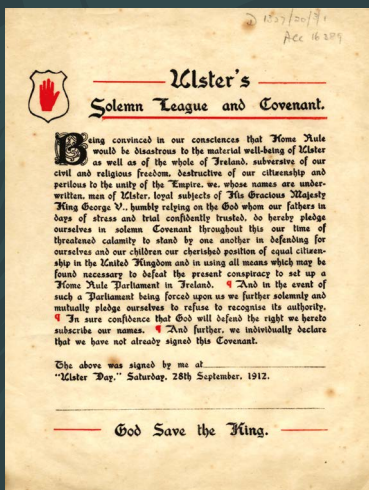
REACTION TO THE BILL

The introduction of a third Home Rule Bill in 1912 put Ireland on the brink of civil war. Fearing that a devolved administration in Dublin would threaten their identity, religion and economic interests, unionists in Ulster mobilised in their opposition to Home Rule.

In September 1912, nearly 500,000 people signed The Ulster Solemn League and Covenant and Women's Declaration (the 'Covenant' was signed by men and the 'Declaration' was signed by women) in a show of resistance. Most of these signatures were gathered on 'Ulster Day' on 28th September, across Belfast and Ulster. By signing the Covenant and Declaration, unionist men and women pledged to defy the implementation of Home Rule by 'all possible means'.

In January 1913, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was formed. It was a unionist militia made up of 100,000 men between the ages of 17 and 65 who had signed the Covenant and was formed to resist any form of authority from Dublin via physical force if necessary.

To arm this group, several radical unionists smuggled around 25,000 rifles and millions of rounds of ammunition into Ulster through the port of Larne in April 1914.



A copy of the Ulster Covenant signed by men in 1912. Courtesy of PRONI.



A postcard commemorating the Larne gun running in 1913. Courtesy of PRONI.



CAMPBELL
COLLEGE

ESTD 1894

'...the people of Ulster will resist, and I think they will be right...'

Andrew Bonar Law MP,
Leader of the Conservative and Unionist party, a leading advocate against Irish home rule

'...there were no people in the whole of Ireland who were more ready to fight and, if need be, to die in defence of the liberty of their country than the Nationalists of Belfast'

Joe Devlin,
Nationalist MP
for West Belfast

COUNTER REACTION

Following the signing of the Covenant and creation of the UVF, Irish Nationalists created the Irish Volunteers. Their aims were 'to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to the whole people of Ireland' and ensure the Home Rule Bill was implemented. By mid-1914, it had 200,000 members. Nationalists imported their own weapons with a delivery of 1500 Mauser rifles to the Irish Volunteers at Howth Harbour on 26th July 1914.

Local perspective: Campbell College and the UVF

The simmering tension affected the boys of Campbell College. Headmaster Robert MacFarland reflected in July 1914 that the previous year had been "full of care and anxiety". John MacDermott, a pupil at Campbell, recalled that "the Ulster question had become increasingly grave during my last two years at Campbell [1912-14], and had faced the senior boys...with the realisation that the political issues of the local scene were mounting to a climax, and could soon affect our lives to a degree which justified immediate attention and concern." This 'attention and concern' prompted many Old Campbellians (OCs) to sign the Declaration and support and train with the UVF.

Local perspective: West Belfast and the Irish Volunteers

As many members of the unionist community joined the UVF, many in the nationalist community joined the Irish Volunteers. Patrick Donnelly of Inkerman Street, just off the Falls Road was an ardent supporter of the Irish Parliamentary Party and its local MP Joe Devlin. Patrick attended rallies and events organised by the IPP and joined the Irish Volunteers.

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

When war broke out in August 1914, Britain relied on voluntary enlistment to staff the armed forces. By December 1915, over 2.4 million men had volunteered for military service, but the number of men volunteering was declining. As a result, conscription was introduced to press men into military service. However, for political reasons, those born in Ireland were exempt from conscription, meaning all who joined did so of their own free will. The reasons for enlistment were often shaped by tradition and history. However, many men from both traditions in Ireland joined for economic reasons, adventure, or because their friends had enlisted.



CAMPBELL
COLLEGE

ESTD 1894

From its creation in 1894 until the end of the war in November 1918, Campbell College had educated around 1,200 pupils who had reached military age (18), with 594 of those serving in the armed forces of Britain and its allies.



Catholic/Nationalist Enlistment

- To protect small nations from German invasion
The invasion of Catholic Belgium had been widely reported in the Irish media and used in Allied propaganda to boost Catholic/nationalist enlistment numbers.
- Strengthen the case for Home Rule
John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, hoped that Irish nationalist participation would ensure the implementation of Home Rule. Redmond also hoped that the experience of fighting side-by-side would bring both political traditions in Ireland closer together, leading to a wider approval of the implementation of Home Rule.



Protestant/Unionist Enlistment

- Political and cultural identification
Many men from Protestant unionist backgrounds identified themselves as British, so believed it was their duty to fight for King and country.
- Strengthen the case against Home Rule
Many unionists believed that by demonstrating their loyalty, that they would be rewarded with Ulster, or at least parts of it, being excluded from the terms of the Third Home Rule Bill, set to be enacted after the war.

Throughout the course of the war, huge numbers of Irishmen enlisted to fight in the British armed forces:

- Around 200,000 Irishmen served with British forces during the war with around 130,000 civilians also volunteering during the conflict.
- The enlistment rate varied from province to province. In Ulster, the enlistment rate matched that of Britain; the rate in Leinster and Munster was about two thirds of that in Britain; and in Connaught the enlistment rate was the lowest of the four provinces.
- In the north of Ireland, the enlistment rate amongst Catholics and Protestants was similar.



CAMPBELL
COLLEGE

Est 1894

The Irish News in September 1914 estimated that over 3,000 Catholics from West Belfast had enlisted in the British Army.



John Sinclair (OC 182)



Robert McConnell (OC 938)

CAMPBELL'S CONTRIBUTION

For Campbellians past and present, the reasons for enlistment were as varied as their fellow countrymen. Many Old Campbellians (OCs) gave up their civilian careers to enlist for what they saw as their duty for King and country. The Campbellian – the Campbell College magazine – declared the war as a 'noble cause', a sentiment that was echoed by the headmasters and school staff.



(Far Left)
John Gault (OC 682)
and (left)
Charles Robinson
(OC 1153)

- John Gault and Charles Robinson gave up lives and jobs in Canada to return to the UK to enlist.
- John Sinclair was so desperate to 'get out to the Front' that he resigned his commission, as he was deemed medically unfit for active service. He enlisted as a private in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.
- Robert McConnell (below left) and his brother Samuel McConnell both 'ardently desired to do their bit'. Sam was 'intensely disappointed' to be declared medically unfit.

Churches also urged their parishioners to contribute to the war effort. The Reverend John Davis, then a minister of Buittle parish church in Scotland, gave patriotic sermons encouraging all men of military age to enlist and contribute. In December 1914, it was reported in the local paper: 'Davis decided to join up in 1916 because he wanted to lead by example as he held an important position in his community'.

Robert McConnell's decision to enlist was influenced by parental expectation and his own perception of manliness. Writing to his father, he said he joined up because it was "the only thing you would have me do. You would not like if your son was having an easy time while all the chaps in our church are on the battlefield. And when I come back I will not be a boy, but a man."

Not all Campbellians shared the enthusiasm and support for the war. Eric Robertson Dobbs commented: "I gazed sadly and uncomprehendingly. I was, for the time being at least immune to the infection. The notion of going out to kill or be killed by one of those young Germans in whose company [in July 1914 when he was with William Semple in Germany on holiday] I had so recently got cheerfully drunk was a prospect that filled me with repugnance...My practical conclusion was that this was not my war."



CAMPBELL
COLLEGE

EST 1894

WEST BELFAST'S CONTRIBUTION: ENLISING IN THE 6TH CONNAUGHT RANGERS

The unit which many West Belfast Catholics enlisted in was the 6th Connaught Rangers. Their motivation for doing so was varied:

- Michael and Robert Brennan joined up together on 12th November 1914. Robert joined because he was 'fighting for the freedom of Catholic Belgium and other small nations'.
- James Conlon and his father Owen joined up because they had lost their jobs at Combe Barbour's Engineering works between the Shankhill and Falls Roads due to sectarian riots. There were few jobs around and no welfare state so many men joined the army to support themselves and their families.
- Tommy Devlin, of Lady Street, West Belfast, joined the Army because he was urged to by the Irish Parliamentary Party and local MP Joe Devlin. They said that joining up would help secure Home Rule.

However, not all men in West Belfast enlisted. John McKillen, whose family came from Oranmore Street, did not enlist because he had an infant child and his wife was expecting another baby. He remained behind to provide for his family and was the only member of his cycling club, Clonard, not to enlist.



Image courtesy of PRONI.



CAMPBELL
COLLEGE

EST 1894



QUESTIONS

- ① In the 1911 Census, what was the percentage of Protestants in Ireland as a whole compared to the province of Ulster?
- ② What were the signs that elements of the Protestant and Catholic communities were edging towards civil war in the run up to the outbreak of the Great War?
- ③ What reasons did Protestants and Catholics give for enlisting in the British Army on the outbreak of war?
- ④ What reasons were given by men for not enlisting?
- ⑤ What are the similarities and differences given for the motivation of men from West Belfast joining the Connaught Rangers and former pupils at Campbell College for enlisting in the army?

Extension

What did you find to be the most interesting piece of information regarding enlistment from the lesson?

Why did you find this interesting?

Group Discussion Task

Identify and discuss the reasons why men chose to enlist in the First World War. Put yourself in the shoes of those young boys at the time in 1914. Which of the reasons do you identify with the most? Do you think these same reasons would influence young people today? Feedback your thoughts to the rest of the class.

Digital Task

This can be completed as a group/paired activity or an individual activity.

Using desktop publishing software, create a one-page recruitment poster for *The Campbellian* in which you will try to convince all pupils of military age to enlist for the First World War.

Analyse and study recruitment posters from the time. Plan and design your poster to include graphics and a slogan (any graphics downloaded from the internet are to be relevant and used appropriately). On completion of your poster, evaluate its design and effectiveness. Is there anything that you would do differently the next time? Look at posters created by classmates and offer constructive praise and feedback.





CAMPBELL COLLEGE

EST 1894