

Crime and Punishment in Belfast, 1798 to
1914 [OLE3039]

7 October 2026

Purpose



Objectives

- Give a brief overview of late Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian attitudes towards crime.
- Outline the institutions and organisations involved in the detection, prosecution and punishment of offenders.
- Explore the social experience of crime, its impacts and prevalence.

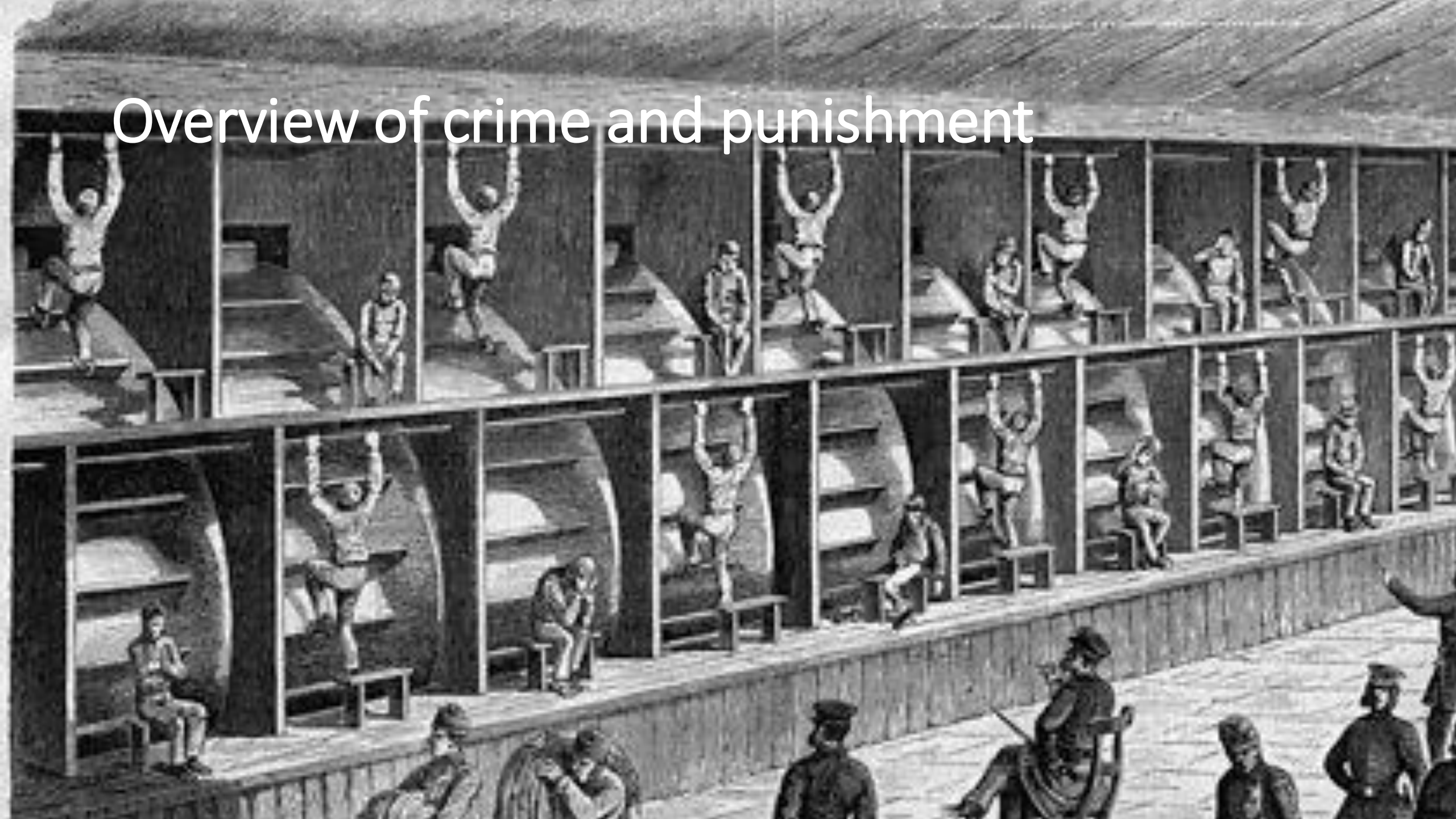


Contents

- Overview of period
- Policing
- Prosecution
- Punishment
- Social experience of crime and law enforcement



Overview of crime and punishment



Early 19th Century (1800-1836)

- Crime rates relatively low in rural areas.
- Punishments for crimes often severe, including the death penalty.
- Prevention based on deterrence.
- Criminality had no age limits
- Emergence of voluntary policing and constables in some towns.
- Prisons characterized by harsh conditions and little focus on rehabilitation.



Mid-19th Century (1837-1860s)

- Urbanization and industrialization lead to rising crime rates in cities.
- Establishment of modern police forces like the Metropolitan Police in 1829.
- Prison reformers like John Howard and Elizabeth Fry advocate for improved conditions.
- Introduction of the separate system in prisons to prevent corruption.



Late 19th Century (1860s-1880s)

- Growing concern for inhumane prison conditions and treatment.
- Construction of new, more humane prisons with improved facilities.
- Recognition of the need for separate treatment of juvenile offenders.
- Emergence of the concept of the "child criminal."
- Shift towards rehabilitation and education in prisons.
- The "Bloody Code" begins to be gradually reformed, reducing the number of capital offenses.



Turn of the Century (1890s-1901)

- The late Victorian era witnesses a continued shift towards rehabilitation.
- Emphasis on addressing the root causes of crime, including poverty and lack of education.
- Shift towards community policing and crime prevention.
- Modernization of the criminal justice system and legal reforms.



Early 20th Century (1901-1914)

- Edwardian era follows Queen Victoria's reign, continuing some late Victorian trends.
- The prison system continues to focus on rehabilitation and education.
- Efforts to address social and economic factors contributing to crime persist.
- Development of forensic science and investigative techniques.



A black and white photograph of a large group of police officers, likely from the early 20th century, posing in front of a building. The officers are arranged in several rows, with some standing and some kneeling or sitting in the front. They are wearing dark uniforms with peaked caps. Many of the officers in the front rows are holding rifles. The building behind them has large windows and a central entrance with a decorative archway. There are some signs or notices posted on the building's facade. The word "Policing" is overlaid in white text on the left side of the image.

Policing

Police forces in Belfast

- Belfast Harbour Police
- Belfast Borough Police (BBP) – “Bulkies”
- Royal Irish Constabulary
- The British Army



(1) Belfast Harbour Police

Established in 1824 as a one man force. The first constable was John Bowstead, replaced a year later by Charles Gourley.

The constables immediate supervisor was the Harbour Master.

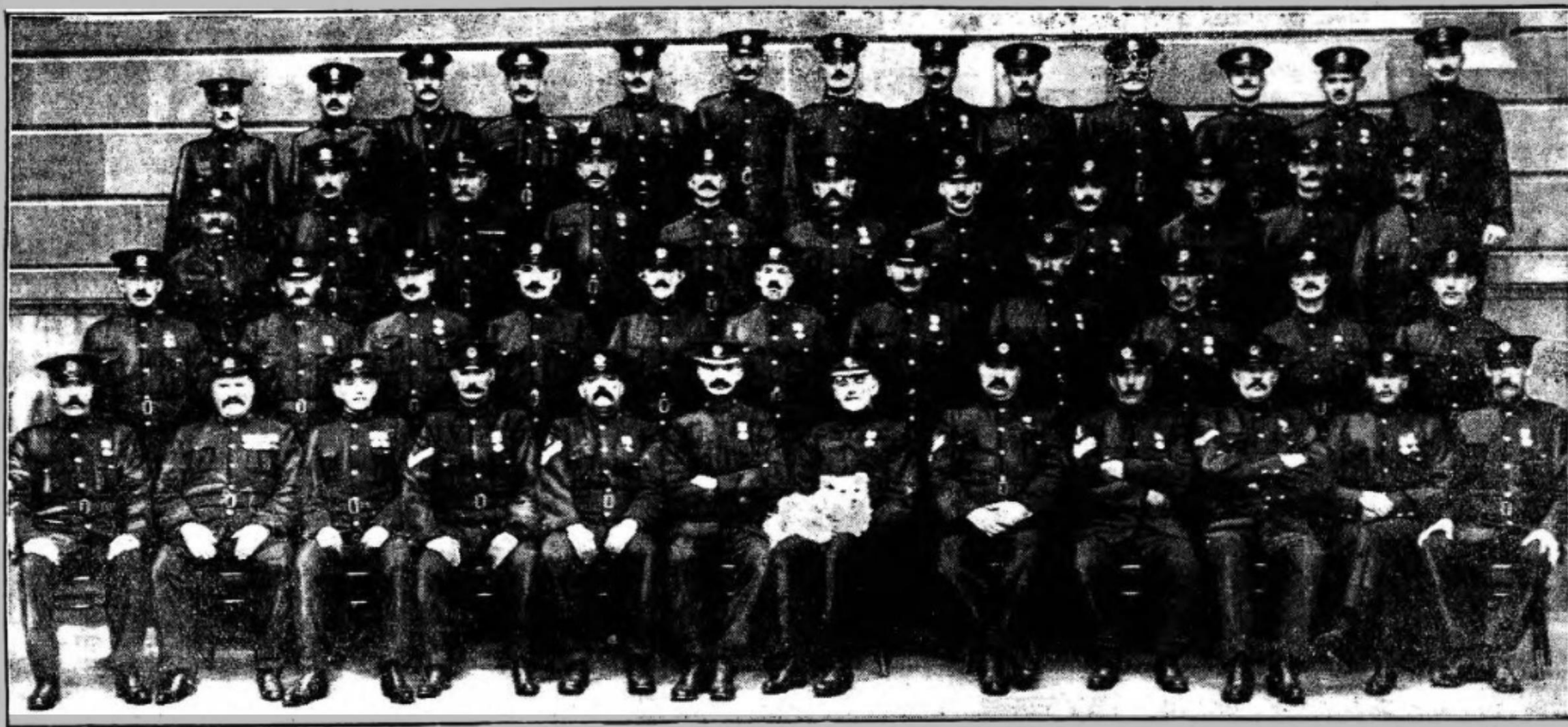
By 1840 there were 6 constables and one Chief Constable - Samuel Dunlop. In 1847 the force was incorporated under the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act of 1847.

By 1861 there were 32 officers, and a helmet with 'white ornaments' was being worn.

At the time of the Edward VII's Visit to Ireland in 1903 the force numbered 65 men. The King approved the award of the 1903 Visit to Ireland medal to the BHP.



BELFAST HARBOUR POLICE FORCE, 1909.



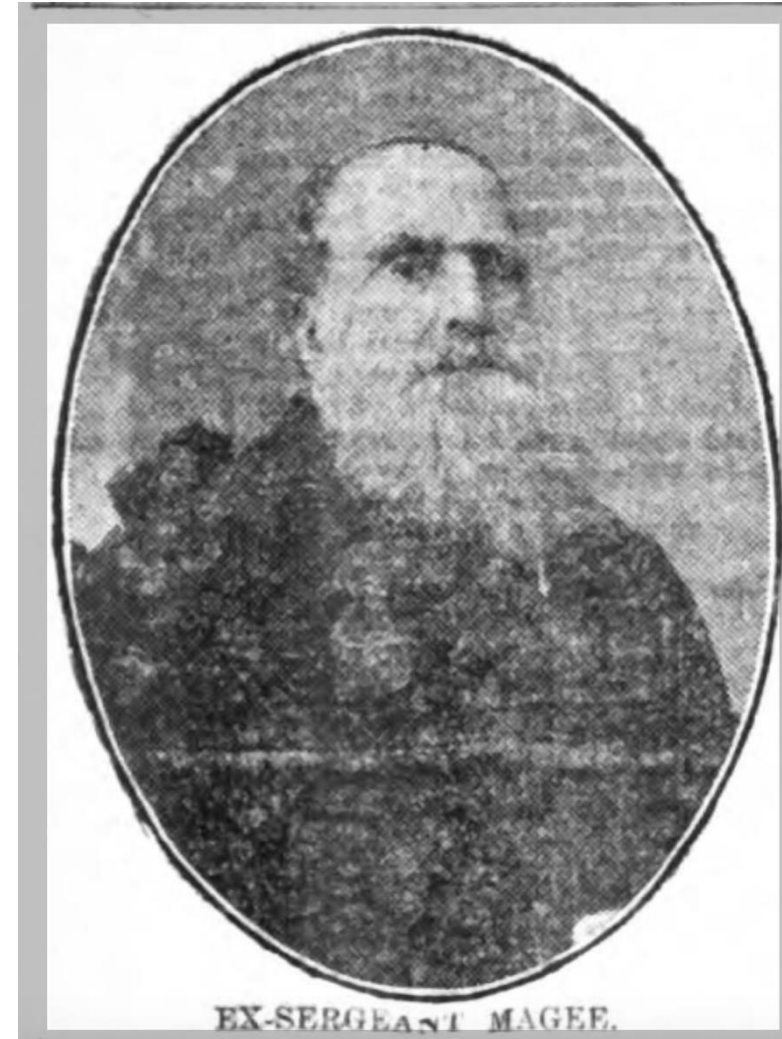
Belfast Harbour Police today

- Powers on any land owned by the Belfast Harbour Authority and at any place within one mile of any owned land.
- Still exist today, are oldest continuously-operating law enforcement agency on the island of Ireland.



Joseph Magee

- BHP police officer, 1848 to 1884.
- Arrested and prosecuted some 464 persons, 275 for robbery and 45 for picking pockets on the quays.
- Magee's most prized possession was a walking stick, "crooked in a fearful and wonderful manner", which had once belonged to the United Irishman leader Henry Joy McCracken.



A photograph of Joseph Joy Dean Magee, aged 94 in 1907 (*Larne Times*, 6 April 1907).

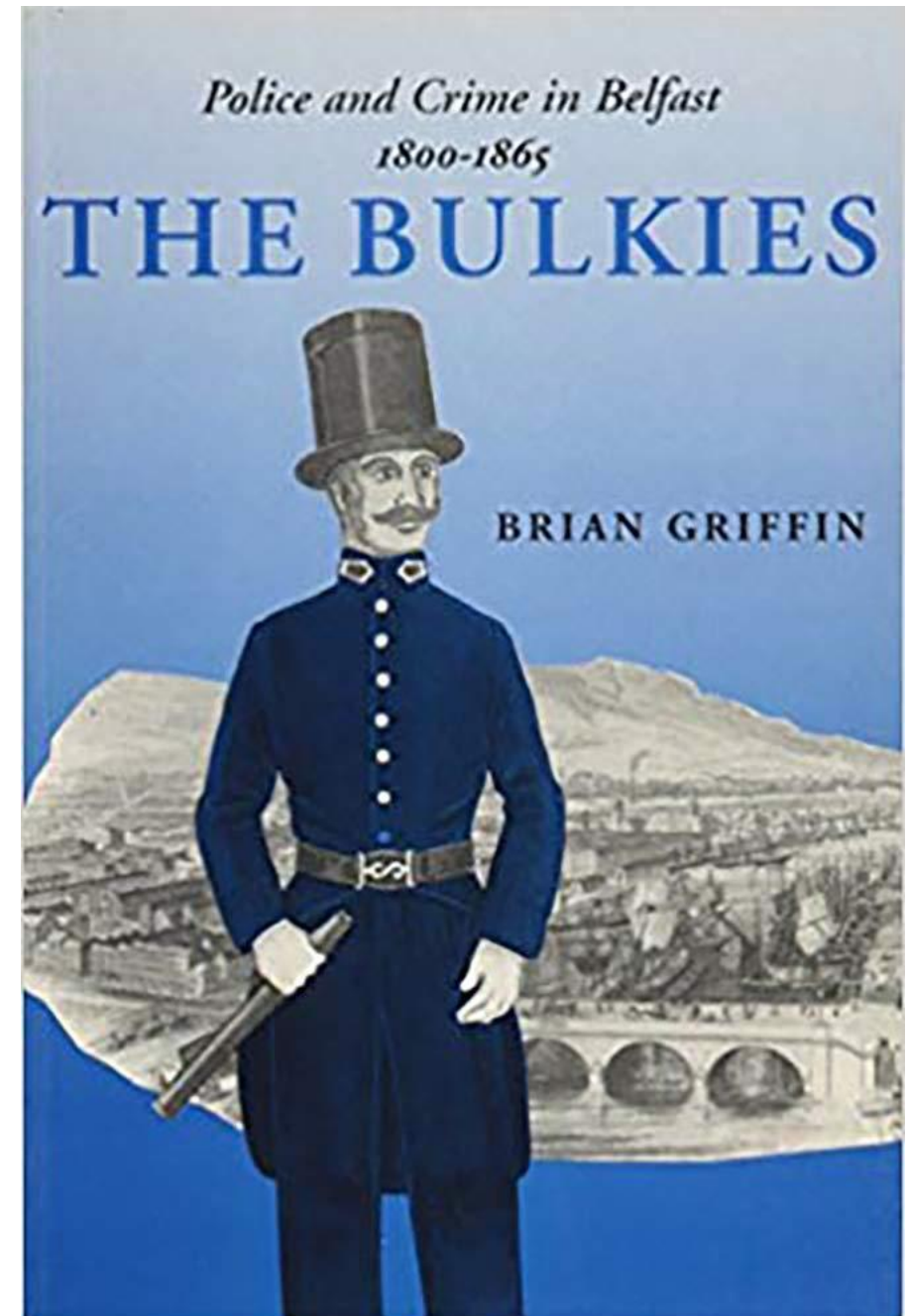
What did they do?

- Police the quays. In September 1862, The Rev. Patrick McCartin was fined in £3 for being 'drunk and disorderly' on Donegall Quay and also for having assaulted and kicked Harbour-Constable Perry.
- Rescuing people from the Lagan. In March 1862, a 'countryman' from County Down, fell into the water Donegall Quay. The tide was low at the time, and Chief Constable Magee of the Harbour Police soon got a boat and rescued the man successfully.
- Fishing dead bodies out of the Lagan. In April 1861, Rose Ann Gilmore of Smithfield Court was found drowned by a harbour constable. The woman had of late been 'quite addicted to the drink' and had earlier told her daughters that she 'would no longer be a disgrace to them'. The jury at the inquest returned a verdict of 'accidental death'.



2. Belfast Borough Police

- Established under Belfast Police Act 1800, one of the last acts from the Irish Parliament.
- Replace system of parish watchmen
- Act:
 - Established a municipal 'town watch'
 - Set police commissioners as 13 members of the municipal corporation plus 12 town commissioners for lighting and paving.



Who were they?

- Force had 30 (1816) and 160 men (1865).
- Majority were working class men of rural working class occupational backgrounds.
- 1864 of 160 men:
 - 116 Labourers
 - 17 weavers
 - 6 farmers
 - 6 soldiers
- Concentrated from specific geographical areas: 1865, 60/160 came from Glenavy, Maghreagall, Derriaghy, Drumbo.



Why replace the Borough police?

- Royal Commission of inquiry into 1864 riots recommended abolition.
- Police regarded as partisan.
- Many senior members of the force were Orange Order members.
- Force controlled by the Corporation which was largely made up of Protestant Conservative councilors.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY—BELFAST RIOTS, 1864.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FIRST DAY.

BELFAST, SATURDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER, 1864.

THE Commissioners, CHARLES ROBERT BARRY, esq., q.c., and RICHARD DOWSE, esq., q.c., took their seats on the Bench at twelve o'clock, and proceeded to open the Commission.

Michael Joseph Barry, Esq., Secretary to the Commission, read the following warrant:—

WARRANT appointing CHARLES R. BARRY and RICHARD DOWSE, Esqrs., Q.C.s, to hold an Inquiry into the Riots at Belfast.

By the Lords Justices General and General Governors of Ireland:

*"MAZIERE BRADY, C.
"G. BROWN, General.*

"Whereas certain riots and disturbances have recently taken place in the borough of Belfast, in the County of Antrim, which continued for a considerable period, and were productive of disastrous consequences, and for the suppression of which it became necessary to employ a large additional force of military and constabulary; and we deem it expedient that inquiry should be made in respect of the several matters hereinafter set forth, in order that such measures should be adopted as may be found necessary for securing the future tranquillity of the borough; we do hereby authorize and direct you, Charles Robert Barry and Richard Dowse, Esqrs., one of her Majesty's Counsel-at-Law, to hold a Court of Inquiry at Belfast aforesaid, on Saturday, the 12th day of November instant, and on the following days, and to inquire into the existing local arrangements for the preservation of the peace of that borough, the Magisterial jurisdiction exercised within it, and the amount, and constitution, and efficiency of the police force usually available there, the proceedings taken by the Magistrates and other local authorities towards the prevention or suppression of the said riots and disturbances, and whether these authorities and the existing police force are adequate to the future maintenance of order and tranquillity within the borough, and whether any and what changes ought to be made in the local magisterial and police jurisdiction, arrangements, and establishment, with a view to the better preservation of the

each other with savage ferocity, but inflicted injuries of the most outrageous character upon the persons and property of inoffensive citizens whose opinions were, or were supposed to be, obnoxious to their assailants. The city at length is said to have presented the appearance, in some degree at all events, of a town captured in civil war. Business was suspended—the inhabitants afraid to appear in the streets—private and public buildings—nay, houses of worship—devastated and wrecked—the hospitals filled with the dying and wounded, while the wail of the orphan and the widow made mournful record of the fatal results of this most fratricidal conflict. It is to be hoped, and I trust it will turn out to be the case, that, when these matters are made the subject of due investigation, there will be found to be much exaggeration in the details that have been made public; but after making every reasonable allowance for the magnifying or distorting effects of alarm, or prejudice, or mistake, enough must remain to satisfy us that these outrages were of a character calling forth the indignation and the horror of the right-minded, and which must affix an indelible disgrace upon the people among whom they could occur. They almost confer the garb of sober truth upon the absurd and grotesque exaggeration with which a very ignorant French scribbler has invested his description of the events.

FIRST DAY.

November 12

3. Royal Irish Constabulary

- Took over the BBP in 1865
- RIC established under Irish Constabulary Act in 1822
- Accountable to UK civil administration for Ireland controlled from Dublin Castle.
- RIC in Ireland in 1841 over 8,600 men.
- 450 RIC men in Belfast in 1865
- Many Irish cities had their own force e.g. Dublin Metropolitan Police



Structure and Size of the Force

- By 1914, Belfast's RIC comprised over **1,200 men** (about one-ninth of the entire force in Ireland).
- The city was divided into six districts (Musgrave Street, Springfield, Brown Square, Glenravel, Mountpottinger, and Donegall Pass), each with differing manpower.
- Belfast was one of the most intensively policed cities in the UK.



Routine and Duties

- Policemen worked in rotating divisions: day, evening and night shifts (“Night Watch”), averaging **six hours of beat duty per day**.
- Duties included traffic control, guarding flashpoints between Catholic and Protestant districts, and patrolling beats singly or in pairs.
- Discipline was rigid, with roll calls, inspections and parades, but supervision varied depending on local officers.



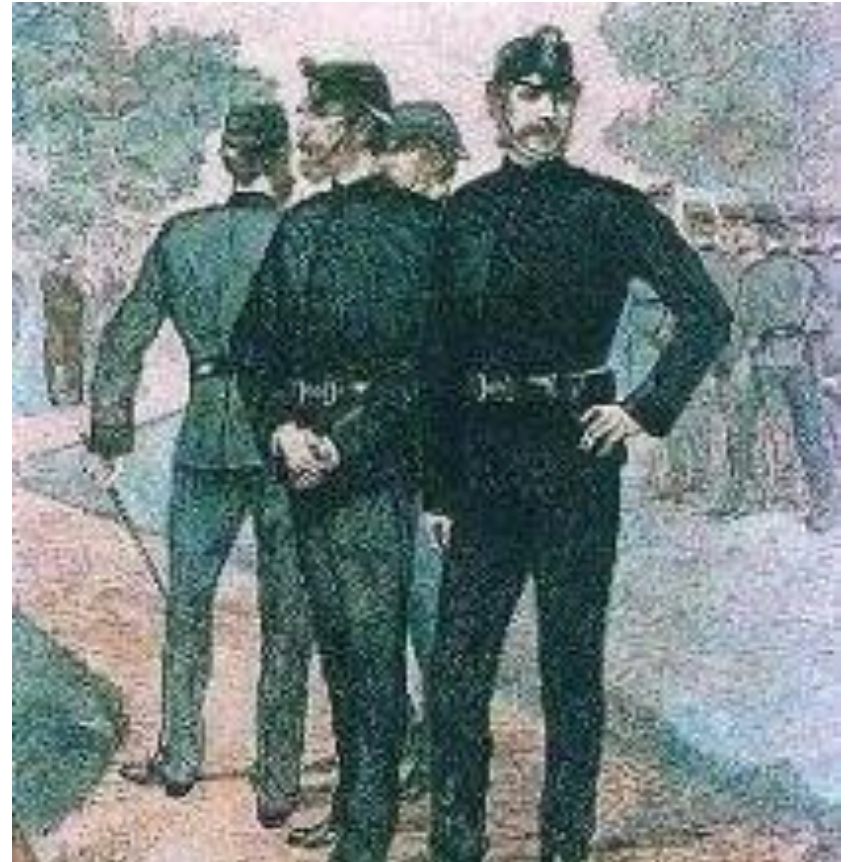
Transfers, Tenure and Promotion

- Policemen could not serve in their native counties, and initially Belfast was staffed with experienced volunteers.
- Service in Belfast was attractive due to fewer transfers, better allowances and city amenities, but promotion prospects were **slow and frustrating**.
- A competitive “P” examination (introduced in 1889) provided quicker promotion for younger men, but this fuelled resentment among long-serving constables.



Discipline and Morale

- Alcohol was the single biggest disciplinary problem: drunkenness on and off duty was widespread and often led to dismissal.
- Other common offences: absence from duty, fraternising with prostitutes, theft from mess supplies.
- By the early 20th century, overall punishments declined, reflecting both improved discipline and a more lenient approach to enforcement.
- The 1906 Commission revealed discontent over slow promotion and accusations of sectarian bias, though no conclusive evidence was found.



Living Conditions and Married Life

- Barracks were often cramped, unsanitary and poorly maintained, though improvements came after the 1886 riots.
- Married men faced strict regulations: living within a quarter-mile of barracks, inspections of family quarters, and restrictions on attending church with their families.
- Despite hardships, Belfast was still attractive for married policemen due to better housing, schooling, and reduced transfers.



Sectarianism and Politics

- Regulations forbade policemen from expressing sectarian or political opinions, but in Belfast's divided climate, tensions inevitably seeped into the force.
- Allegations of religious bias in promotions were aired but not officially substantiated.
- The **Irish News** accused the police of partiality, while Unionists often mistrusted them as too lenient on Catholics.



Table 2.1 Returns of Men Dismissed, Discharged, Disrated, Fined and Admonished

Year		Total number of men	Total number punished	Percentage of men punished
1895	Belfast force	816	47	5.7
	Ireland	10,914	602	5.5
1900	Belfast force	927	61	6.5
	Ireland	9,993	522	5.2
1905	Belfast force	1,038	31	2.9
	Ireland	8,670	321	3.7

Source: *Belfast Police Commission, 1906. Appendix to Report of the Commissioners. Minutes of Evidence, Appendices and Index* (Dublin, 1907), Document Number 7.

Table 6.2 Royal Irish Constabulary Rates of Pay, 1872–1913

Rank from 1 Dec 1872	Rank from 18 June 1883	Rank from 21 Dec 1908
Head Constable Major: £104	Head Constable Major: £104	Head Constable Major: £104
1st Class Head Constable: £91	Head Constable Over 6 yrs: £104	Head Constable Over 5 yrs: £104
2nd Class Head Constable: £83 4s	Do. Over 3 yrs: £97 10s	Do. Under 5 yrs: £97 10s
Constable: £72 16s	Do. Under 3 yrs: £91	Sergeant Over 4 yrs: £83 4s
Acting Constable: £67 12s	Sergeant Over 4 yrs: £80 12s	Do. Under 4 yrs: £78
Sub-Constable Over 20 yrs: £62 8s	Do. Under 4 yrs: £75 8s	Acting Sergeant: £75 8s
Do. Over 14 yrs: £59 16s	Acting Sergeant: £72 16s	Constable Over 25 yrs: £72 16s
Do. Over 8 yrs: £57 4s	Constable Over 20 yrs: £70 4s	Do. Over 15 yrs: £70 4s
Do. Over 4 yrs: £54 12s	Do. Over 15 yrs: £67 12s	Do. Over 13 yrs: £67 12s
Do. Over 6 months: £52	Do. Over 12 yrs: £65	Do. Over 11 yrs: £65
Do. Under 6 months: £39	Do. Over 9 yrs: £62 8s	Do. Over 7 yrs: £62 8s
	Do. Over 7 yrs: £59 16s	Do. Over 4 yrs: £57 12s
	Do. Over 4 yrs: £57 4s	Do. Over 6 months: £54 12s
	Do. Over 6 months: £54 12s	Do. Under 6 months: £39
	Do. Under 6 months: £39	

Source: *Royal Irish Constabulary and Dublin Metropolitan Police. Report of the Committee of Inquiry, 1914*, [C7421], HC 1914, xliv, 247, p. 4.

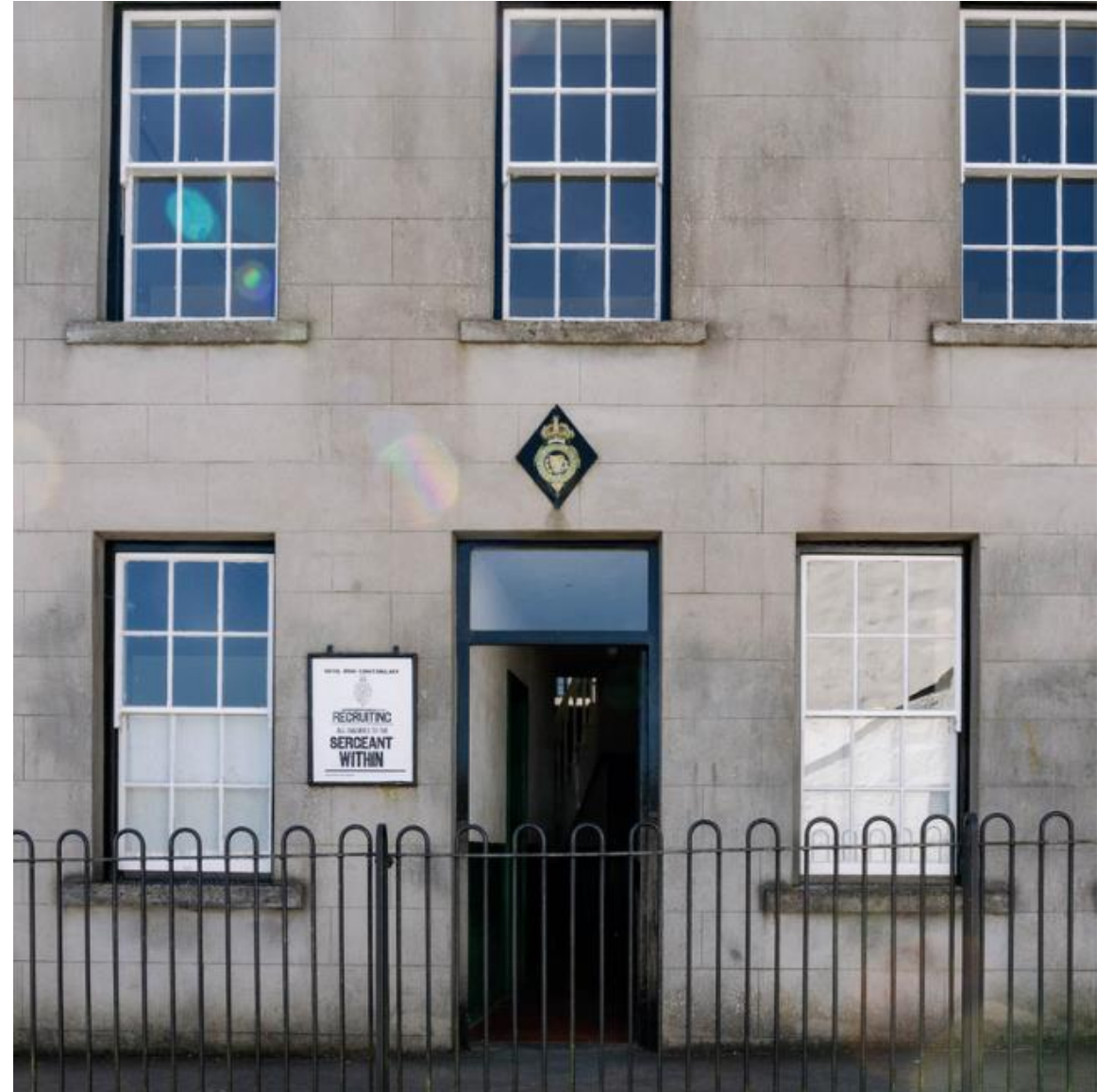
Officers vs. Rank-and-File

- Officers were usually from middle or upper-middle-class backgrounds, entering through a cadet system that excluded the sons of ordinary constables.
- Many were criticised as inexperienced, aloof or arrogant – compared unfavourably to army rejects.
- Rank-and-file often saw them as ornamental and out of touch, though Belfast was a career “proving ground” for ambitious officers.



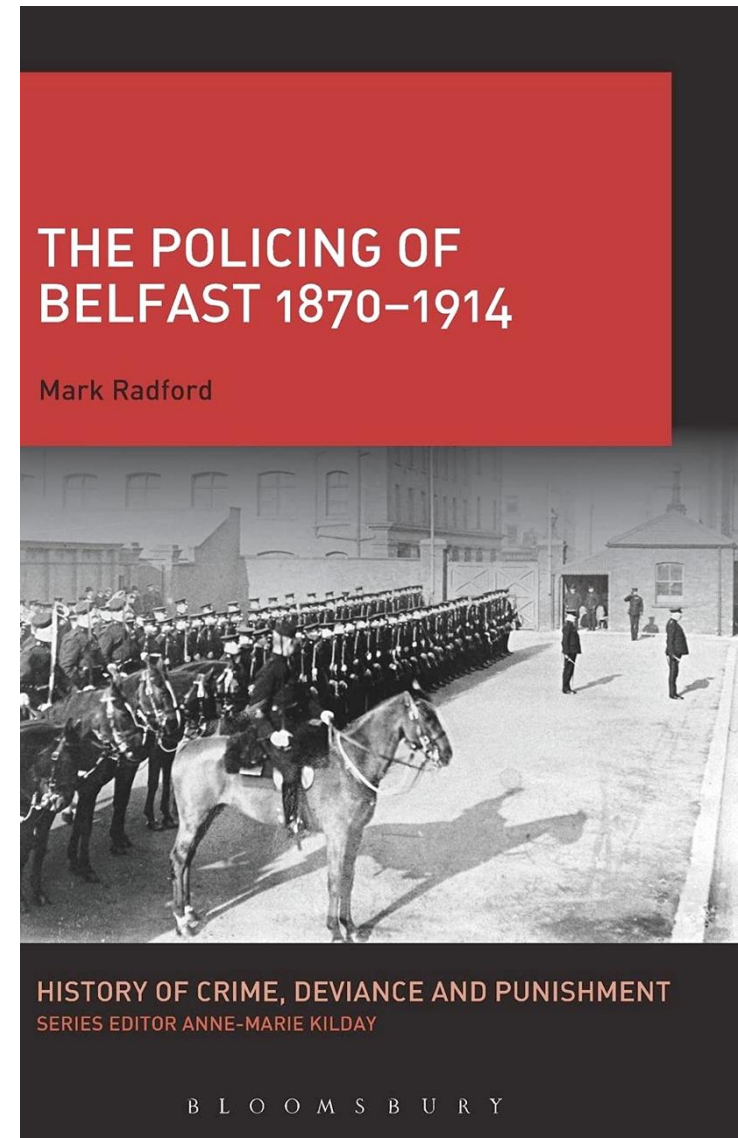
Leisure and Police Culture

- Despite hardships, Belfast police life had social outlets: sports clubs (football, tug-of-war, handball), music (piano and waltz clubs), and fishing.
- These activities, along with allowances and a relatively stable tenure, made Belfast one of the more desirable postings in the RIC.



How effective were they?

- The performance of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) was marked by its adaptation to changing circumstances and the challenges of policing a diverse and politically charged environment in Belfast.
- RIC officers faced low morale, frequent resignations, and calls for better conditions, which affected their overall efficiency.
- While the RIC managed to maintain order in Belfast despite the city's social volatility, it faced significant criticism during events like the 1886 riots.
- Despite its efforts, the RIC struggled to be perceived as both popular and impartial due to the deep-seated sectarian divisions in Belfast.



Detection and clear up rates

- **Summary prosecutions per constable:**
 - 34 (1870) → 39 (1880) → 16 (1914)
 - Decline due partly to more officers & changing tactics
- **Indictable crime:**
 - Generally low, good clear-up rates compared with English cities
 - Spike 1890s due to counting changes and growing population
 - Criticism focused on failure to protect unoccupied houses



Problems with policing

- **Over-policing** of petty offences alienated public
- **Sectarian mistrust**: both communities disliked the force
- **Police brutality scandals** undermined credibility
 - “Black Affair” (1872): brutal false arrest → public outrage
 - “Neeson Case” (1900): savage police beating, fabricated evidence → acquittal, long-term hostility
- **Detective failures** highlighted weakness in urban crime control
- **Press hostility** amplified perceptions of police ineffectiveness



Policing and the community



Views of the Catholic community

- BPP defended Catholic churches and properties against Protestant mobs.
- BPP seen as a Protestant police force with little Catholic representation: 1864 5/160 were Catholic (Belfast at the time was around 30% Catholic)
- In June 1865, Anne Hughes was ordered to find bail to keep the peace for twelve months or be imprisoned for three months for being disorderly and using 'party expressions' in Mill Street. She had been singing about Dan O'Connell, the Liberator of Ireland and said she would not go to the Police Office for it was an Orange Lodge. She went to jail.



Where the BPP sectarian & anti-Catholic?

- Police sought to be non-partisan. In 1831 any policemen who quarrelled over 'party' matters would be dismissed.
- The City's police committee noted that it was 'well aware of the excitable character of our operative and labouring classes, and the difference in both political and religious views. If the slightest provocation be given on either side, a riot is sure to ensure'.
- John Rea, Presbyterian Young Irelander and Liberal made many accusations against the BPP.
- Brian Griffin argues that:
 - Easy to understand why BPP may be seen as sectarian but the evidence suggests the partisanship was exaggerated.
 - Tory town council much more sectarian than the frontline police officer.



Police and the Protestant community

- Relations not always good. In July 1850, a desperate affray broke out between police and Orangemen at the Malone Turnpike when the Orangemen were attempting to parade. A young boy with a drum was arrested and afterwards a riot erupted.
- Many protestants were suspicious of RIC when they took over from BPP.
- March 1866, Archibald Marks, after being arrested for being drunk and disorderly, blamed the police as 'Dublin papists'.
- BNL said the RIC arriving in Belfast was the 'green badge of disgrace'.



Working classes – 1860s

- In August 1861, it was reported that large mobs of people collected in High Street, Bridge Street and Castle Place, apparently for the purpose of setting off fireworks in honour of the Lord Lieutenant's visit to Belfast. However, about twenty constables appeared at one point, which soon caused the gathering to turn into a riot, causing considerable injury to many.
- On 27 Dec 1856, a person wrote to the BNL that it was 'a particular taste of the lower orders of Belfast is to beat the constables'.
- On 17 Dec 1854, the BNL reported Resident Magistrate J.C. O'Donnell as saying that municipal policemen were 'the common target of all the ill-conducted people in the town'.



Working classes – later 19th century

- John H Otway, QC, in Feb 1880 commenting on Belfast Sectarian camps, at the Records office, 'there was nothing that united them more than this common hatred of the police'.
- Sam McAughtry, recalling his youth in 1920s Tiger Bay, states that people were 'distanced from the police'.



Assaults against the police, 1850s

Table 2. Assaults on Belfast Policemen, 1855–1864

<i>Year</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Committed by drunk/ disorderly prisoners</i>	<i>Committed after intervention in family disputes</i>
1855	89	50 (56.2%)	6 (6.7%)
1856	123	76 (61.8%)	15 (12.2%)
1857	115	71 (61.7%)	6 (5.2%)
1858	211	124 (58.8%)	16 (7.6%)
1859	164	101 (61.6%)	10 (6.1%)
1860	190	131 (68.9%)	12 (6.3%)
1861	145	110 (75.9%)	6 (4.1%)
1862	143	98 (68.5%)	7 (4.9%)
1863	148	100 (67.6%)	7 (4.7%)
1864	234	181 (77.4%)	13 (5.6%)
Total	1,562	1,042 (66.7%)	98 (6.3%)

Source: Belfast Newsletter, 1855–1858, 1860–1864; Belfast Daily Mercury, 1859. (The assaults upon the police during the communal riots of July and September 1857 and August 1864 are not included).

Brian Griffin, *The Bulkies, Police and Crime in Belfast, 1800-1865* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997), p.111

Why did they dislike the police?

- Reported in the *Belfast Daily Magazine*, 30.8.1854 that : 'truly the constables of our town often make a bad use of their power, not as regards persons of influence, to whom they are always the most sneaking and fawning of creatures, but to the lower classes they generally act in the most malevolent manner'.
- Working class suspicion of authority
- Ideas like socialism, Chartism and unions
- Interference with working class pursuits: In June 1844, a large crowd of five hundred people gathered in Pound Street to witness a cockfight. Three men were arrested. Charles Morrison was fined 2l, Henry Graham was discharged and James Boyle was fined 3l.



4. The military

- Military forces available to aid the civil powers to keep law and order.
- June 1898. The culmination of the 1798 celebrations were marked by serious rioting in the Shankhill Road area of the city. Eight hundred soldiers were deployed to keep the peace throughout the city, mainly at disturbances in York Street, Academy Street, Garfield Street and Smithfield.



Victoria Barracks

- The barracks were completed just before the UI Rebellion 1798.
- In 1873 a system of recruiting areas based on counties was instituted under the Cardwell Reforms and the barracks became the depot for the 83rd (County of Dublin) Regiment of Foot and the 86th (Royal County Down) Regiment of Foot.
- Following the Childers Reforms, the 83rd and 86th regiments amalgamated to form the Royal Irish Rifles with its depot in the barracks in 1881.
- A major extension was built between 1880 and 1881 to accommodate the extra troops.



Location



8th Royal Irish Fusiliers on the
return of the battalion from South
Victoria Barracks, Belfast. Oct 1914

Early 19th century

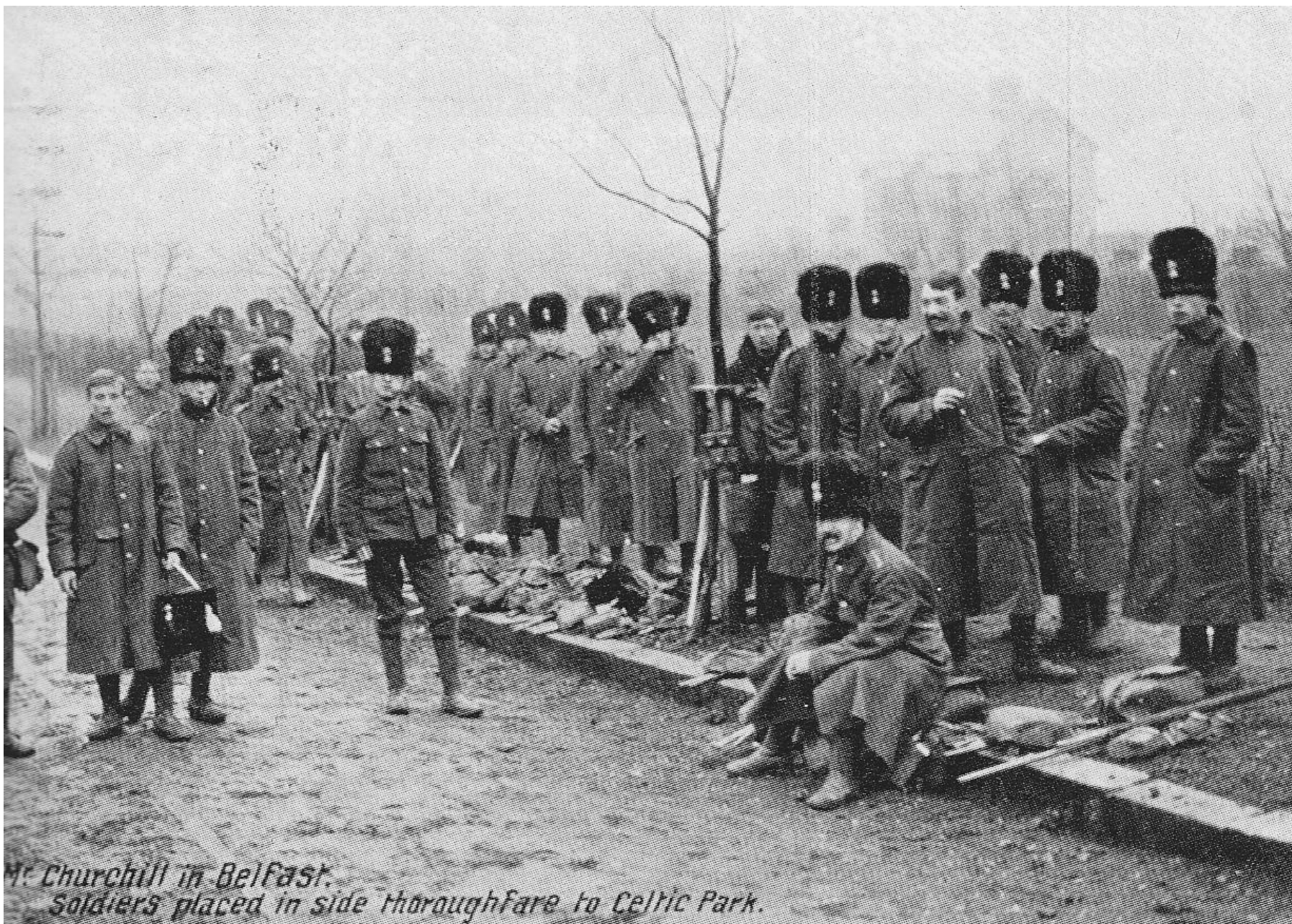
- In August 1838, the army helped move ringleaders of a gang that sought to steal potatoes from the quay to the House of Correction, using a 'a strong military force'.
- In July 1841, a 'Tory mob' proceeded towards the Ormeau (right) to attack the house of the Marquis of Donegall, but was turned back by Mr. Coulson and a troop of Dragoons.



Later 19th century

- 1864 and 1886 riots, soldiers deployed to quell rioting.
- In 1893, military policed dockyard and kept Protestant and Catholic mobs apart.
- During 1907 Dock Strike, two Catholics shot dead on lower Falls Road by soldiers.



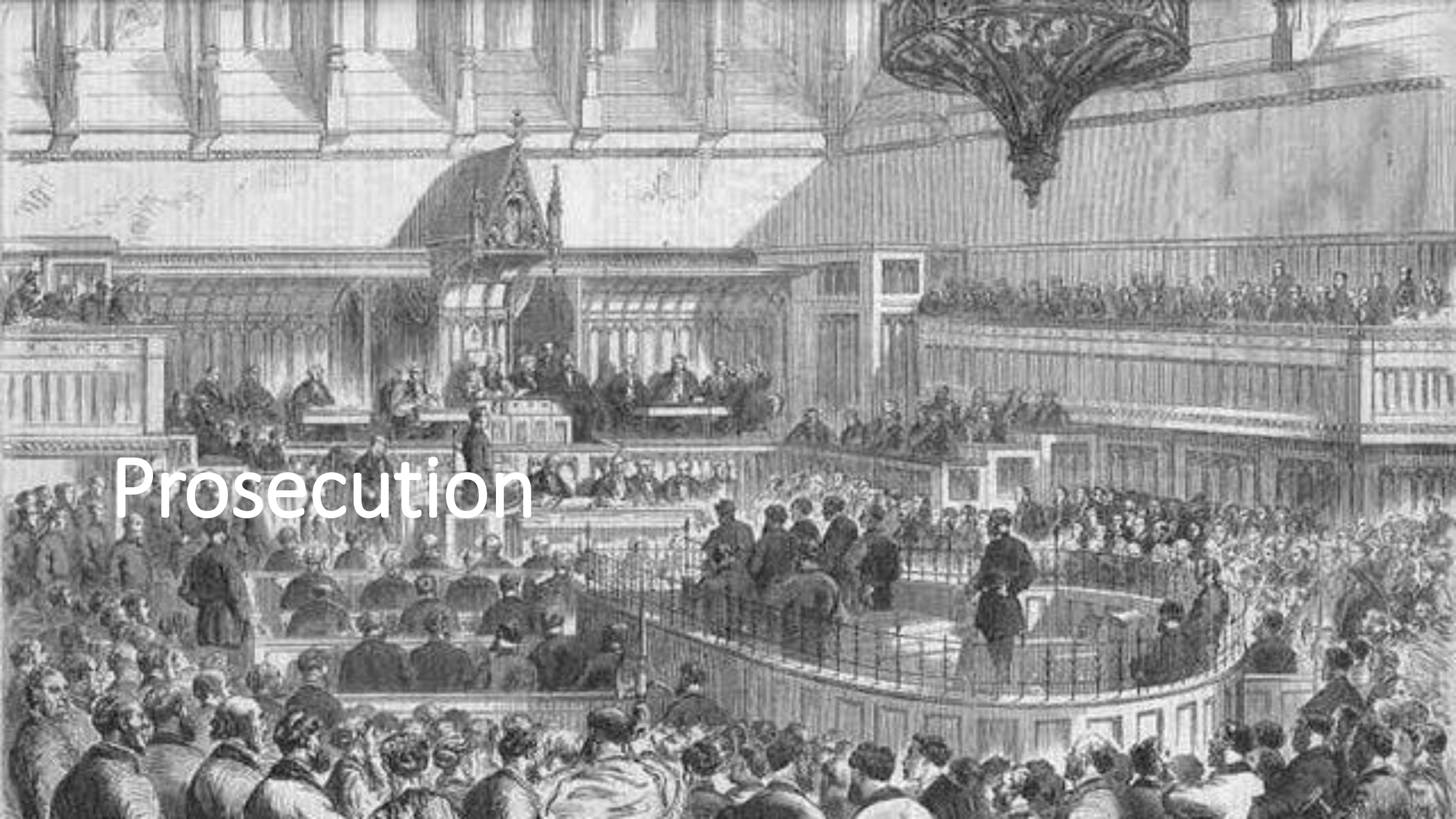


9th Battalion,
Enniskillen Fusiliers,
Donegall Road, 1912

*Mr. Churchill in Belfast.
Soldiers placed in side thoroughfare to Celtic Park.*



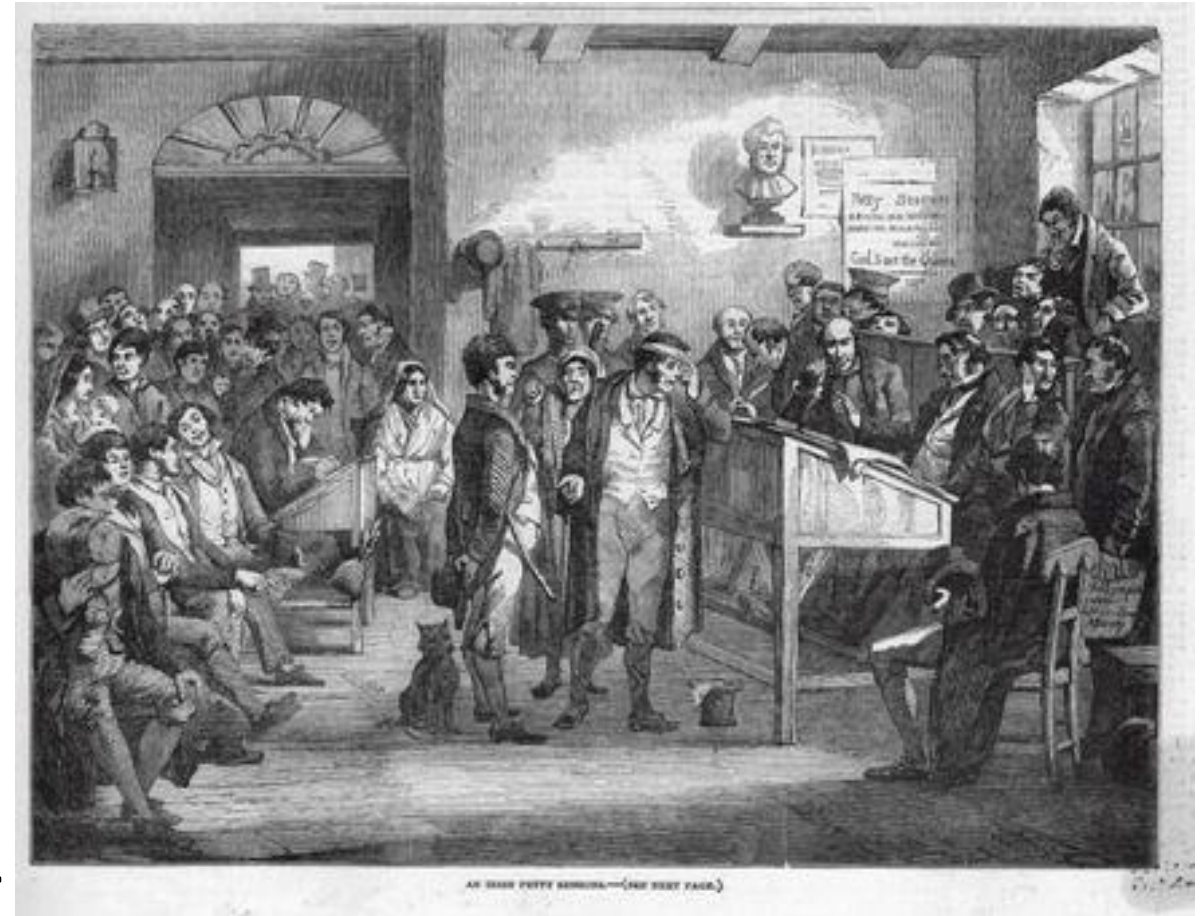
Maxim Gun
section,
Middlesex
Regiment,
Ormeau Park,
1912



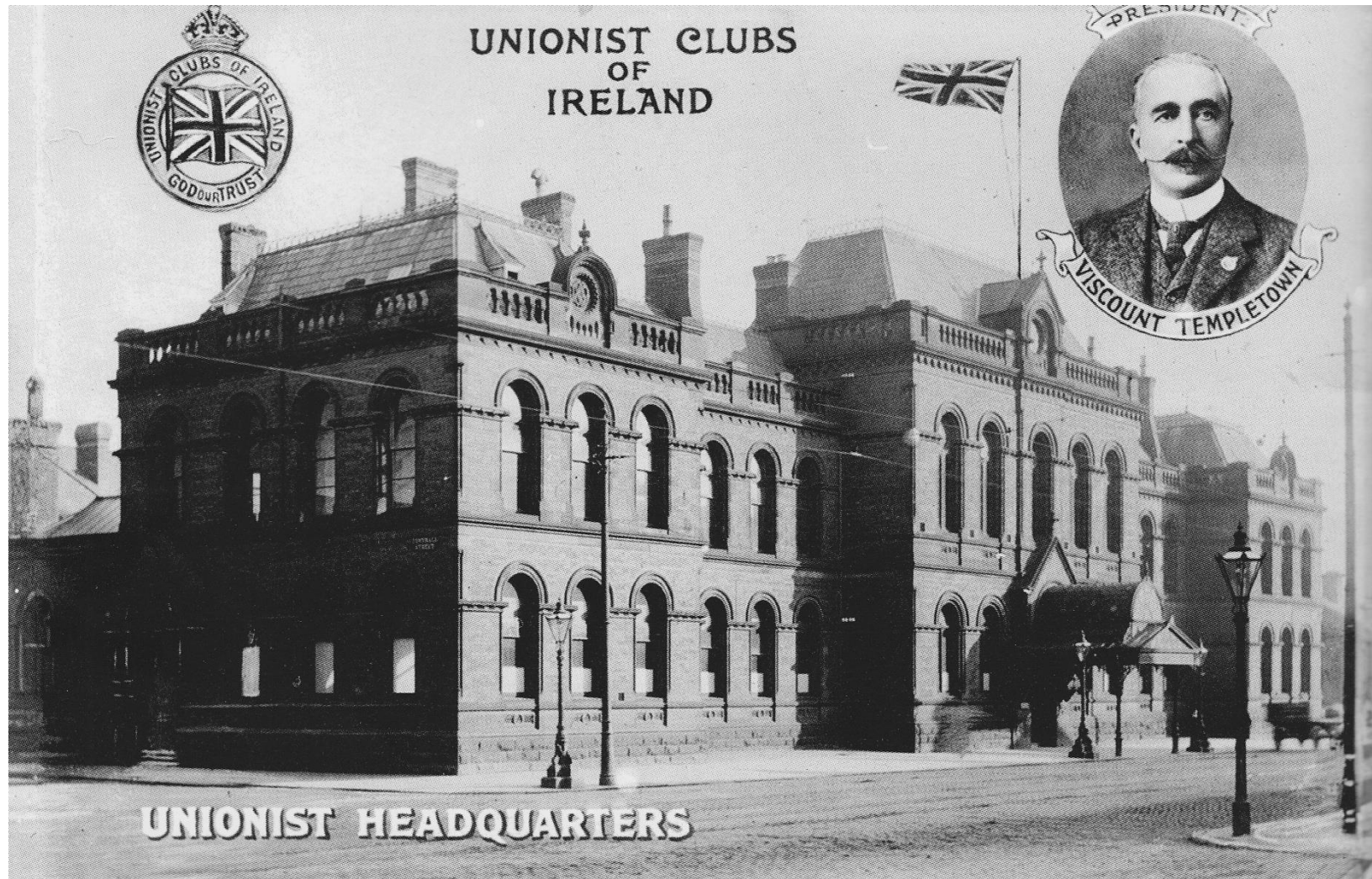
Prosecution

Courts system

- **Police Court** - a lower court which holds trials for summary offences and preliminary hearings for more serious ones.
- **Belfast Quarter Sessions** – hearing more serious, non-capital cases.
- **Antrim Assizes** – hearing the most serious cases, rape, murder and manslaughter.



Police courts



Court scene



Crumlin Road Court House, 1850 (taken in 1905)



Crumlin Road today



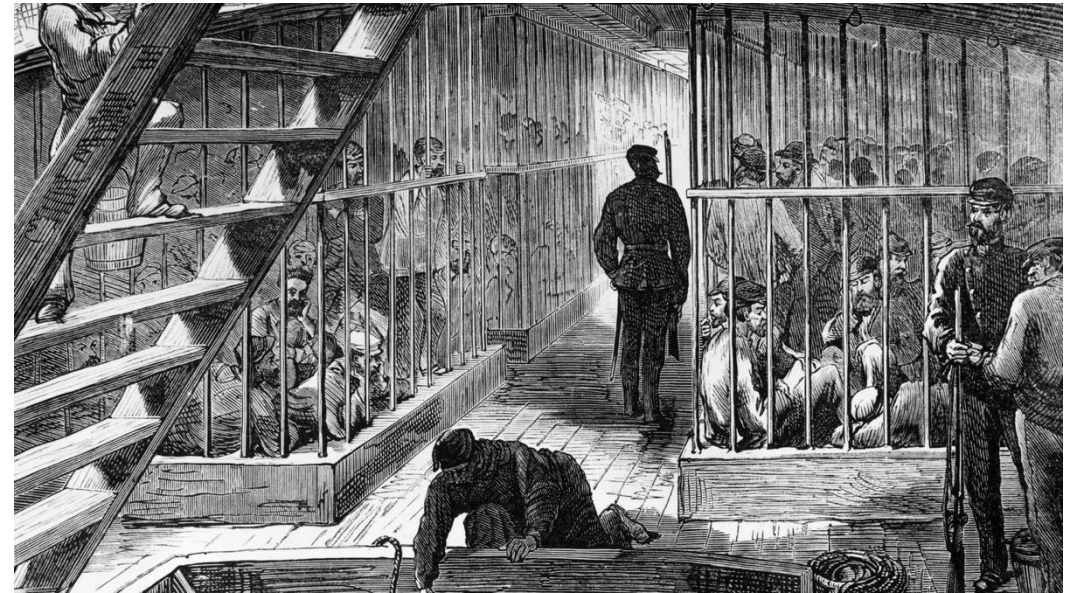
Volume of cases

- Quarter Sessions for October 1840 reported the following is a list of the prisoners to be prosecuted: Larceny, 162; assault, 30; obtaining goods under false pretences, 6; dilapidating houses, 1; exposing the person, 1; having unwholesome meat, with intent to vend the same, 1; total 201.
- Spring Assizes, March 1913. There was a 'heavy workload'. Over 70 cases were to be heard which would include 3 cases of rioting, 3 of manslaughter, 28 of housebreaking, 7 cases of larceny, 9 of embezzlement, 6 of assault, 2 of bigamy, 2 of shooting with intent, 4 of assault, 6 cases of sexual assault upon women and children. The judge addressing the grand jury noted the increase in drunkenness in Belfast with almost 800 cases before the courts already in 1913 (to March)



Sentences at the Belfast Quarter Sessions, July 1837

- Miles Conway, stealing ham, 12 months in the House of Correction.
- Bridget Loughrey, stealing two gowns, transported 7 years.
- John Cassidy and Charles Stewart, stealing a chemise, 12 months in jail and whipped three times.
- Thomas Ryan, stealing stockings, transported 7 years.



Sentences at the Antrim Assizes, July 1837

- John McAlister and John Ward, burglary, death
- John McClean, highway robbery, death
- James Granny, larceny, transported 7 years
- John Moore, cow stealing, transported for life
- Edward Murphy, sheep stealing, transported for life



People vs property: a different value?

- March 1845: Robert Wilson, a schoolmaster, was charged with attempting to violate the persons of Margaret Mann and Eliza Mary Wilson, two little girls at his school, in October 1843. The details of the crime are too revolting and unfit for publication. He was sentenced to 10 months in gaol.
- July 1880: John Stewart was indicted for the rape of Ellen Tumelty, aged 7. He was sentenced to 5 years penal servitude.
- March 1868: George Meek and John Ross, both found guilty of burglary at the late Assizes and sentenced to penal servitude for life, and also Bernard Burns, found guilty of robbery and sentenced to seven years penal servitude, left Belfast escorted by police by the mid-day train for Dublin. They were to be transferred from Dublin to the convict settlement on Spike Island.
- June 1857: John Trainor was sentenced to one month imprisonment for having been found in a house with intent to commit a burglary.

The importance of 'good character'

- June 1865: Alexander Fox and Samuel Fox, two little boys, were charged with stealing a goat, the property of Mrs. Lynas from a field near the Paper Mill Bridge. Alexander Fox was sentenced to a month's imprisonment and five years confinement in the Malone Protestant Reformatory while Samuel was discharged, as it was believed he bore a good character. The boys' mum had described Alexander as a bad character,
- January 1885: William Dunlop and Thomas Watt were charged with stabbing two young men named Bower and Vance in Bryson Street, Ballymacarrett. As the prisoners were said to be of good character, they were discharged.
- June 1886: Mary Carrol was fined 40 shillings plus costs for soliciting for prostitution. Her mother, who lives at Brown Square, provided a letter claiming the defendant was of good character and had been employed by the Ulster Spinning Company for four years. She was accordingly discharged.



The value of wealth and connections?

- October 1841: New regulations respecting persons found drunk in the street have been revealed. If the person is disorderly they should be spoken to mildly and persuaded to return home. If the person needs assistance, they should be helped home. If the person is riotous, he is to be conveyed to the Police Office. **The same conduct applies to those ill or well dressed.**
- March 1914: Richard Fairfax came before the courts charged with larceny of five diamond rings from Weir & Sons. He was found guilty and sentenced to twelve months hard labour. Fairfax who had studied medicine came from a wealthy and influential family from South Africa and had turned to crime to pay off his gambling debts. The court did not agree to any leniency in this case.

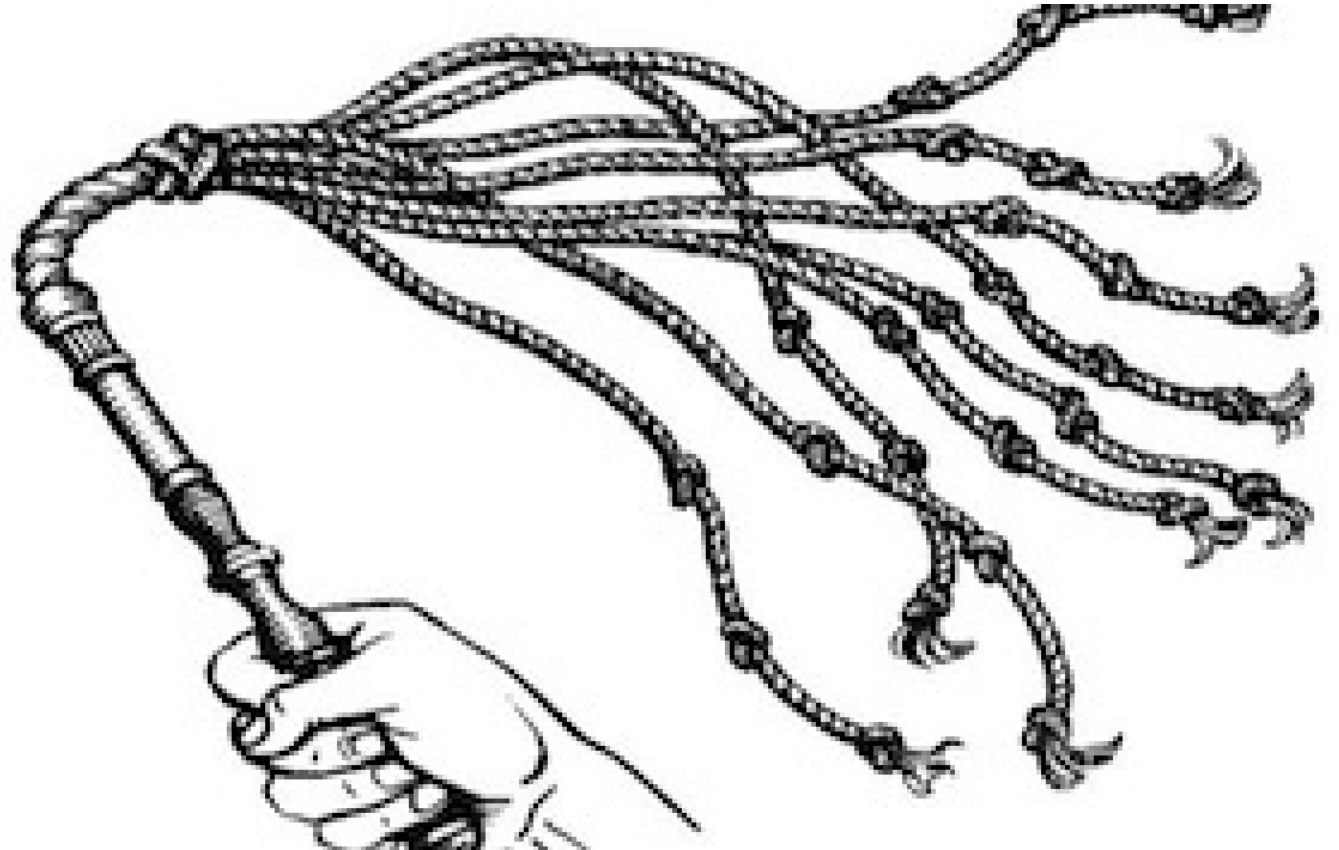




Punishment

Punishments

- Penalties for juveniles
- Pledging sobriety
- Fines
- Imprisonment
- Hard labour
- Transportation
- Death



Punishments for juveniles – birch rod

- December 1882: William Miller, a young lad, was charged with stealing a threepenny bit from Mr. Ranagan, a hairdresser of Castle Lane. He was sentenced to 24 hours gaol and twelve strokes of the birch rod.
- November 1885: Samuel Gaskin was charged with stealing a fish from his next-door neighbour, Mr. Tyrell, of Shankhill Road. He was given 12 stripes with the birch rod.



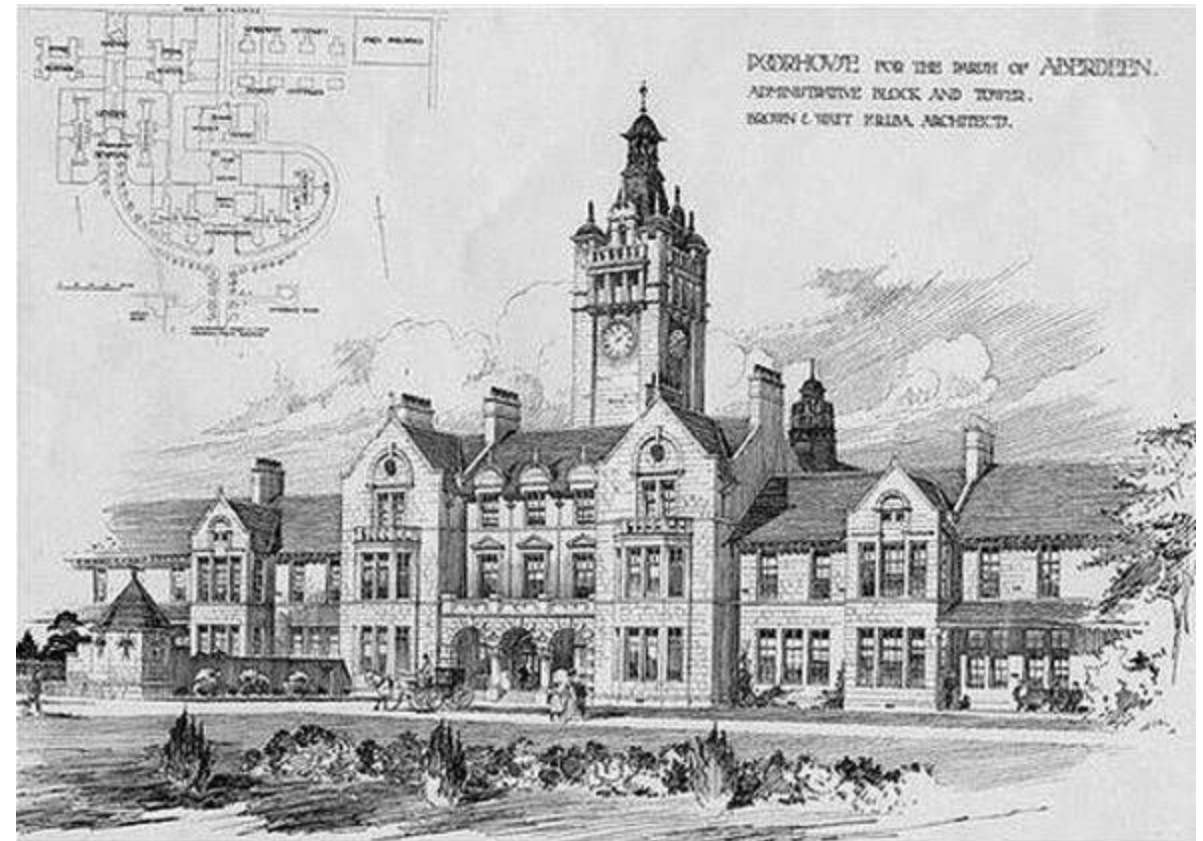
"SPARE THE ROD," ETC.

GOVERNESS. Looking for your horse, Mr. Wuzzle?

MR. WUZZLE. No, miss; I'm a lookin' for that there boy o' mine, miss !!

Punishments for juveniles – training establishments

- March 1869: A little girl named Jane Rice was sentenced to fourteen days imprisonment and to five years in the **Monaghan Roman Catholic Reformatory** for having stolen and illegally pawned a handkerchief, the property of a man named Tait.
- April 1880, John Gaynor, aged about 12, was charged with being disorderly in Arthur Street. He had seven previous convictions and was sent to the **Roman Catholic Industrial School**.
- June 1881: James Magill, aged 10, who appeared semi-naked in the dock, was charged with stealing a watch, property of Elizabeth Yates, of Corporation Street. He was gaoled for 14 days and sent to the **Malone Protestant Reformatory** for 5 years.



Oldmill Reformatory School for boys, Aberdeen

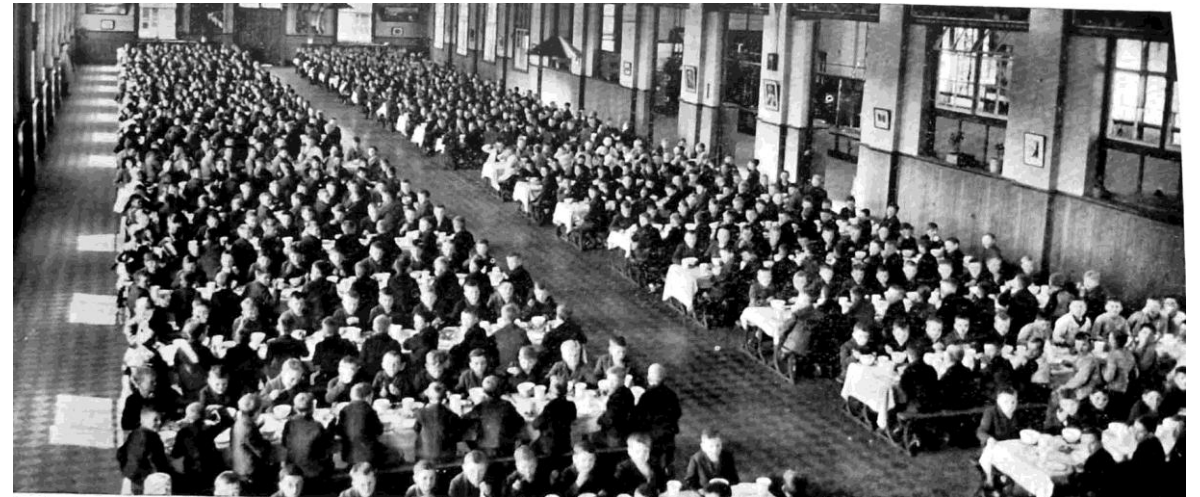
Industrial schools and reformatories

- To prevent proselytism or changes in the religion of a child committed, Catholic and Protestant children were sent to separate schools.
- Children sent to Industrial schools were destitute and those sent to Reformatories were juvenile offenders.
- Reformatories had an element of punishment, security and detention in their regime.



Industrial schools – inception and purpose

- Under the Industrial Schools Act 1868 to care for "neglected, orphaned and abandoned" children could be sent to a residential school.
- Industrial schools had two main objects, to instill in the children the habit of working and to develop the latent potential of the destitute child.
- They were intended to help those children who were destitute but who had not as yet committed any serious crime.
- The timetable was quite a strict one, the children rose at 6.00am and went to bed at 7.00pm.
- During the day there were set times for schooling, learning trades, housework, religion in the form of family worship, meal times and there was also a short time for play three times a day.
- The boys learned trades such as gardening, tailoring and shoemaking; the girls learned knitting, sewing, housework and washing.



Balmoral Industrial School, Home, West End (on the site of Musgrave Park/Hospital)

- BIS set up in 1897, took over from Belfast's Fox Lodge.
- Certified for 350 boys
- Boys leaving the school would attend the Balmoral Working Boy's Home, established in 1899, as a half way house between institutional and independent life.



Reformatories – purpose and inception

- Set up under the 1854 Youthful Offenders Act (the Reformatory Schools Act).
- Provide care for those who had been involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour.
- Aimed to teach manual trades to inmates such as agriculture, building or weaving.



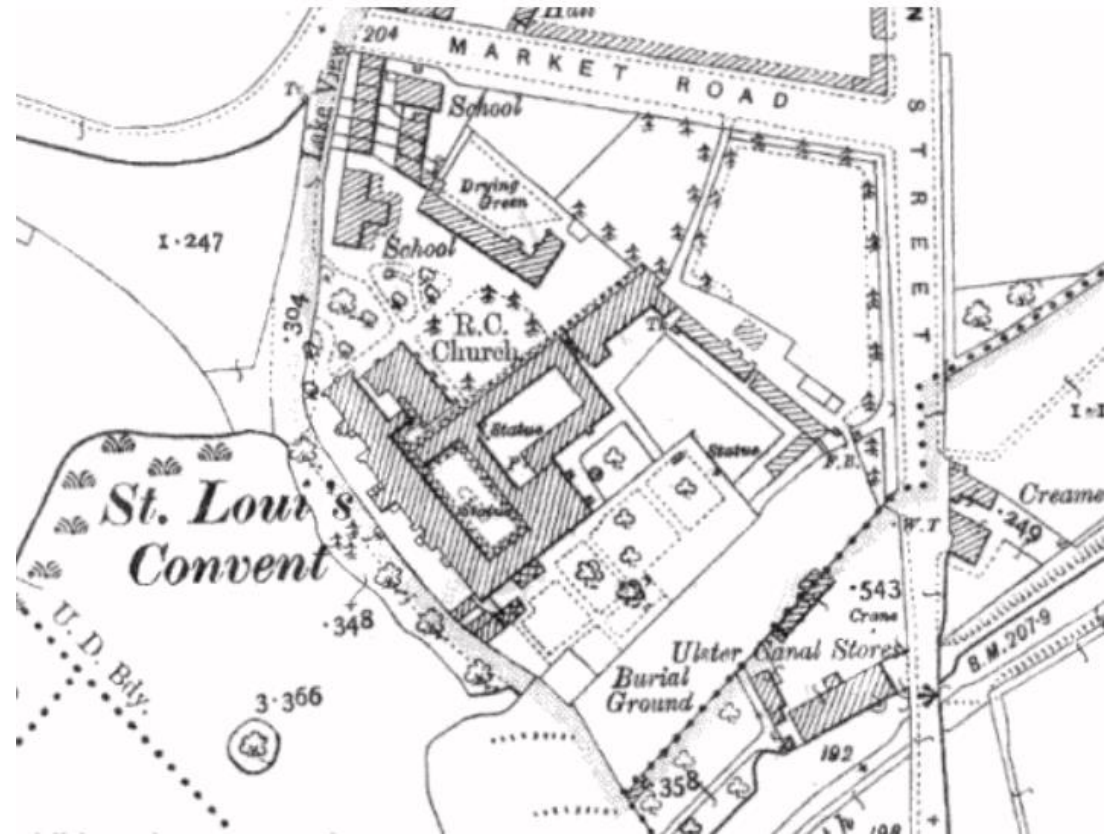
Malone Protestant Reformatory

- Opened March 1860, Lisburn Road with accommodation for 60 inmates.
- 1866: nearly 40 acres of land attached. Boys instructed in agriculture, shoemaking, tailoring and sack-making.
- Boys could receive a visit once every 2 months. Only 'first class boys' were allowed to go out with a pass as messengers.
- 1911 inspection: 117 cases, 13 staff.



Spark's Lake Reformatory, Monaghan

- Opened June 1859; room for 60 inmates.
- An inspection report 1870 said that it had all the most corrupt refractory girls from other institutions. Mrs Beale was said to have succeeded in thoroughly reforming girls who had been considered incorrigible but were now well conducted and held responsible positions in life.
- Girls taught needlework, shirt making, dress making. They made lace and understood embroidery.
- Girls worked in the bakehouse, cooked for the Sisters and nearby convent school.
- 1880, average number of inmates was 65.
- It was closed in 1903.



Pledging sobriety



Man signing sobriety pledge in
police station, 1910

Fines – examples from the 1890s

- May 1891: Eliza O'Hare was summoned for keeping intoxicating liquor at her home, 13 Servia Street, without a license. She was fined 40 shillings plus costs.
- One man, John McAllister, was arrested and charged with being a member of a stone-throwing mob in connection with disturbances outside the Ulster Hall during Mr. Parnell's visit. He was later fined 40 shillings.
- August 1891: Hugh Diamond was charged with furiously driving a brake in Clifton Street and fined 20 shillings plus costs
- August 1894: Samuel Edgar was fined 40 shillings plus costs for being drunk and disorderly, it was his 135th conviction.
- July 1896: John McCormick and John Crofts were charged with stealing a goose from the ship 'Fairhead' at Dufferin Dock. They planned to sell the goose to get drink. They were each fined 10 shillings plus 5 shillings costs.



Currency converter

- 12 pennies (d) = 1 shilling
- 20 shillings (s or /) = £1
- 240 pennies = £1
- Terms:
 - Farthing = $\frac{1}{4}$ d
 - Half penny = $\frac{1}{2}$ d
 - Penny = 1d
 - Tupence = 2d
 - Threepence = 3d
 - Sixpence = 6d
 - Shilling = 1/-
 - Florin = 2/-
 - Half Crown = 2/6
 - Crown = 5/-
 - Guinea = 21s



Fines vs weekly wages 1890s

Average weekly wages of worker:

- 1870: An Ulster Agricultural labourer working six days a week for 8s 3pence = £21 pounds per year (420s).
- 1894: Shipwright, Belfast, 1894: 33s 6 pence = £106 (2,120s)
- 1894: Bricklayer, masons, plasterer, Belfast: 18s = £46 (936s)
- 1886: linen worker, male, average wage = 23s = £60 (1,196s)
- 1886: linen worker, female weaver, average wage: 9s, 5pence = 490s = £25



Imprisonment – before 1800

- No recorded prison in Belfast until the start of the 19th century.
- Belfast may have had a 'bridewell'. By the law of James I (right) passed in 1609, it became obligatory for all English counties to provide bridewells, or 'houses of correction' as they became widely known.
- County Gaol for Antrim in Carrickfergus (then administrative capital)



Imprisonment – 1820s

By 1820's five prisons are reported in Belfast:

- Lock up provided in Ferguson's entry in 1812.
- There was a Jailhouse in Joy's Entry where Henry Joy McCracken was held prior to his execution. This is now the location of the Henry's.
- House of Correction, Howard Street, built in 1817. The ominous inscription above the door warned "Within amend, without beware." It had three long blocks running parallel to Howard St (picture to right best idea of what this looked like).
- House of Correction, Henrietta Street, mentioned in 1822 (but no other record).
- Marshalsea Prison of the Manor Court, Smithfield North, for debtors.



County Gaol of Down

House of Correction

HOUSE OF CORRECTION.

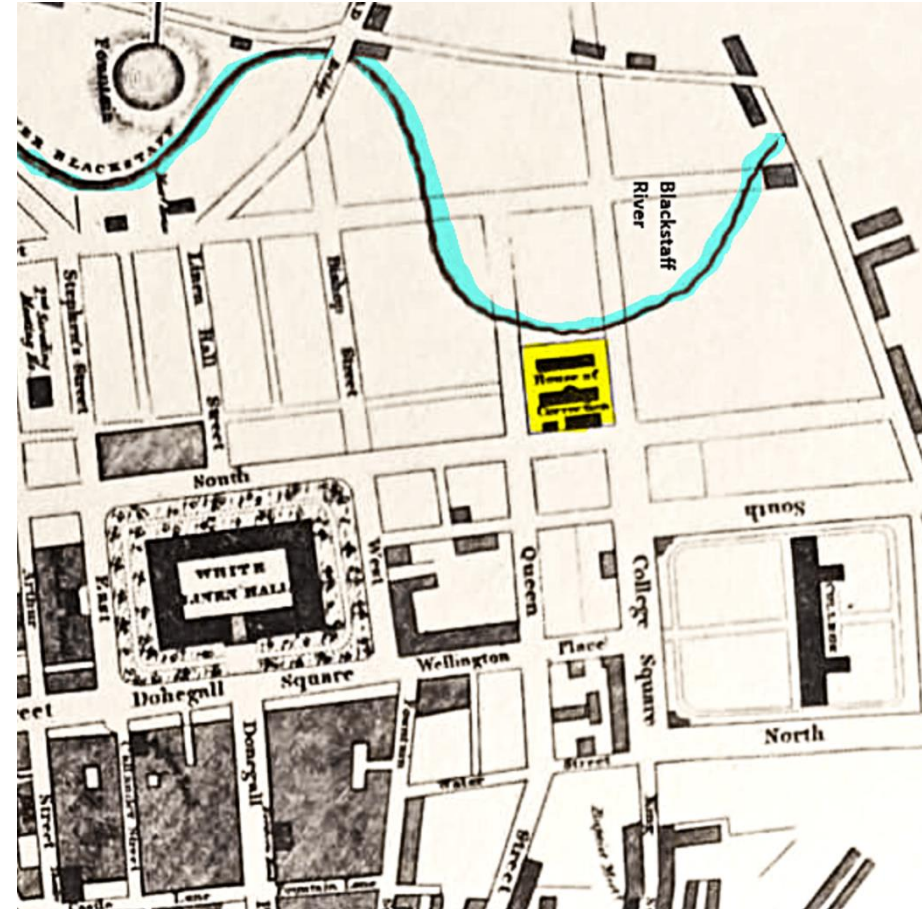
TO ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS.

THE COMMISSIONERS for Building a HOUSE of CORRECTION in the Town of Belfast hereby give Notice, that they will receive Proposals for executing the same, until **TUESDAY** the Twentieth inst. agreeable to Plans approved of by Government which, together with a Specification thereof, may be seen at the **CASTLE OFFICE**, in which Proposals it will be required, that the Specific Works should be particularly estimated and marked down. Security for double the amount of the Estimate will be required, for the proper execution of the work; and the Names of the Securities must be attached to the Proposals in their own hand-writing, and delivered to **Mr. ROBERT AUCHINLECK**, No. 185, North-street, sealed, on or before **TUESDAY** the 20th inst. at **TWELVE o'Clock**, at which time the Commissioners will meet at the Castle Office.

136;

Belfast June 12. 1815.

Procuring the House of Correction – Newsletter 13th June 1815





‘Within Amend, Without Beware’

- In 1819 there were 74 inmates.
- Prisoners were given a rudimentary education in reading and writing and religious studies.
- There was also a chapel, so designed that the men and women could not see each other.

WANTED,
At the House of Correction, Belfast,
A QUANTITY of Good ROPE for OAKUM.
The above Institution is, at present, supplied with
a quantity of prime OAKUM, which will be disposed of on
Moderate Terms, either by the Can, Cwt., or Stone.
Persons wishing to purchase, will please apply to
A. L. MILES, Governor.
HOUSE OF CORRECTION, Sept. 22. 1835. 696

Rope Wanted for Oakum – Northern Whig
24th September 1835

Running of the House of Correction

"The discipline of this prison is so strict and correct that its influence has been most salutary on the conduct of the disorderly in this town and neighbourhood"

George Benn, A History of the Town of Belfast, 1823

HOUSE OF CORRECTION, BELFAST, FEB. 7, 1826

The annual return of this prison for the last 12 months past, we are gratified to find, amounts to about £200 by the industry of its inmates, exclusive of bedding, shirting, sheeting, and twenty-four prison dresses for females, which have been manufactured and made up. It is also a fact, that every article received in this prison since last assizes, such as blankets, quilts, shoes, prison dresses, smith work, carpenter work, even ink and paper, has been purchased at a low rate, and paid for out of the prisoners' work, to the amount of £127. Of the prisoners, one man, sentenced at the assizes, has, for the last eleven months, earned by stone-breaking and weaving upwards of £9, three of which he will get, and after deducting £5 as the cost of his maintenance, leaves £1 clear to the county, after all expenses. To this may be added, that this man was ignorant of the alphabet when committed, and can now read the Bible and Testament, and write.

House of Correction Annual Return –
Newsletter 10th February 1826

Crumlin Road Gaol 1845

- Designed by Sir Charles Lanyon, the prison was built between 1843 and 1845 and cost £60,000.
- Designed for 500-550 prisoners in cells that measured 12 x 7 feet.
- Housed male and female prisoners.
- Designed on the separate system



1846: first prisoners arrive

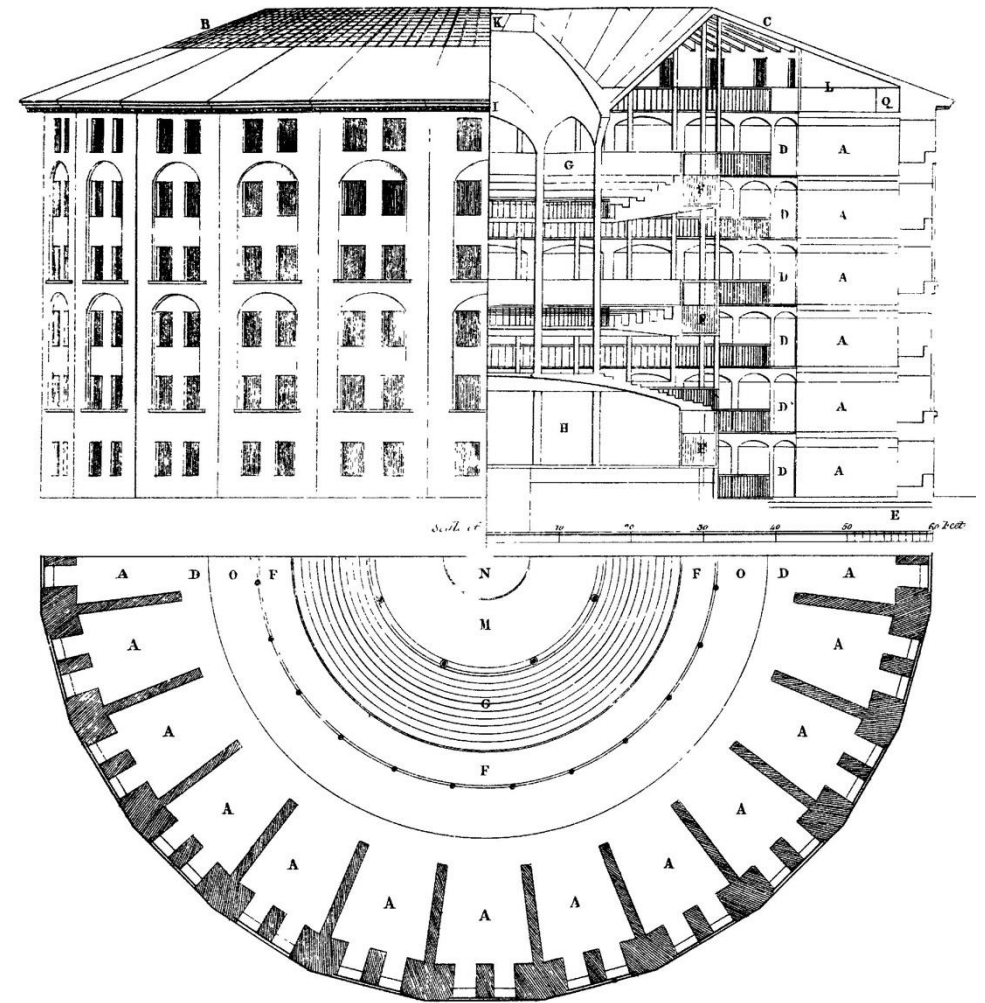
The first prisoners arrived, marched in chains from the county Gaol in Carrickfergus.

The total number of prisoners was 106, consisting of six awaiting deportation, 17 serving sentences (6 of whom were described as lunatics) and the remainder awaiting trial.



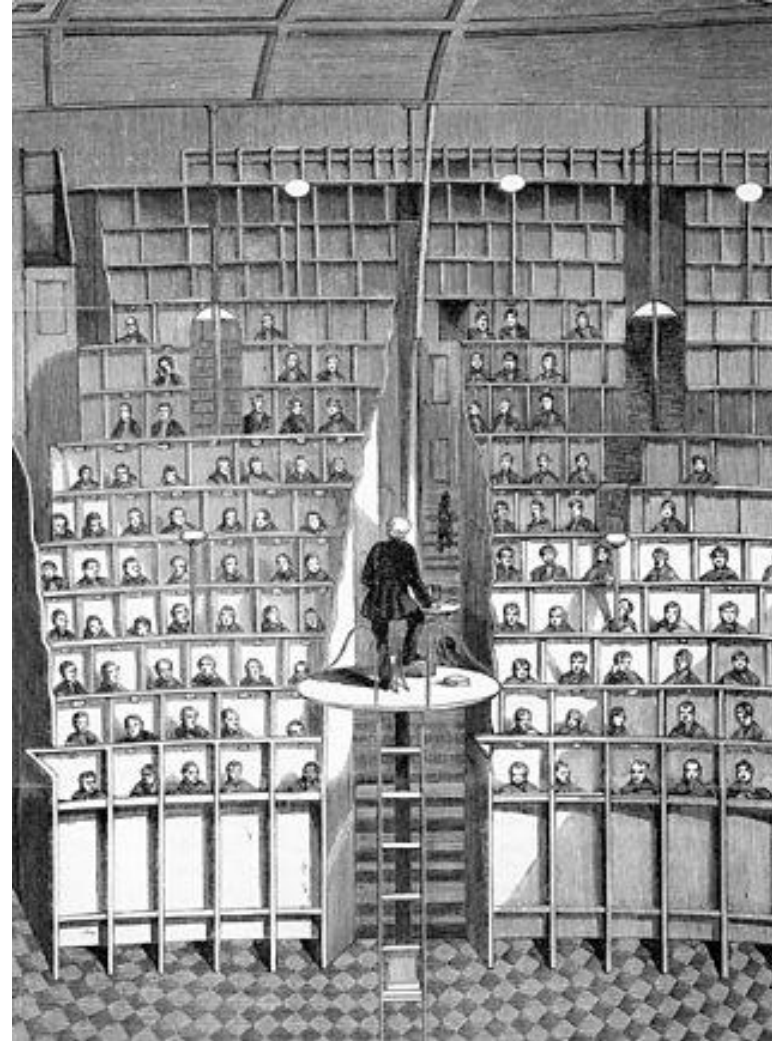
Imprisonment - Why build a new prison?

- Rehabilitative ideals. Enlightenment ideas on scientific and reformatory ideas for deterring and preventing crime and reforming individuals (Panopticon – right).
- Prisons became full and conditions bad and alternative measures did not work (e.g. hulks) this led to reform movements – John Howard/Elisabeth Fry.
- Need to accommodate debtors. The Inspector General of prisons reported in 1796 that 716 felons and 575 debtors were confined in Irish gaols. That was one prisoner per 4260 people (1801 pop of Ireland 5.5m). – 23 per 100,000).
- Rise in population, rise in crime, need for new places to hold them. Could not transport them all.



Imprisonment – The Separate System

- A form of prison management based on the principle of keeping prisoners in solitary confinement.
- The objective of such a prison or "penitentiary" was that of penance by the prisoners through silent reflection upon their crimes and behavior

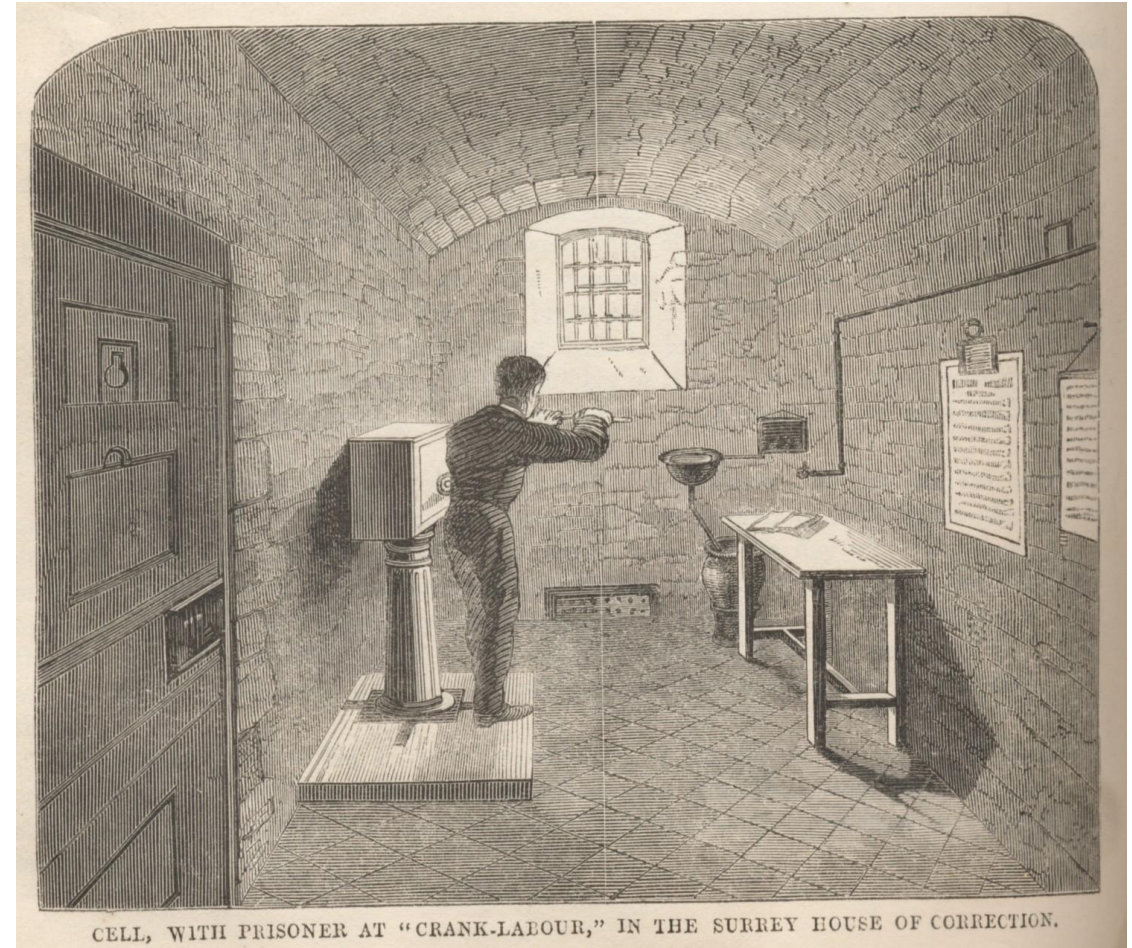


Hard Labour - Prisons Act of 1865

October 1838 : it was noted that stone broken up at the House of Correction were used for the repair of local roads.

Under 1865 Act, prisons were to be a deterrent providing 'hard labour, hard fare and hard board'.

It was decreed that 'the treadwheel, crank, capstan, shot-drill and stone-breaking were listed as acceptable types of first class hard labour, and such others as the justices wished to provide had to be approved by the Secretary of State'.



CELL, WITH PRISONER AT "CRANK-LABOUR," IN THE SURREY HOUSE OF CORRECTION.



PRISONERS WORKING AT THE TREAD-WHEEL, AND OTHERS EXERCISING, IN THE 3RD YARD OF THE VAGRANTS' PRISON, COLD BATH FIELDS.

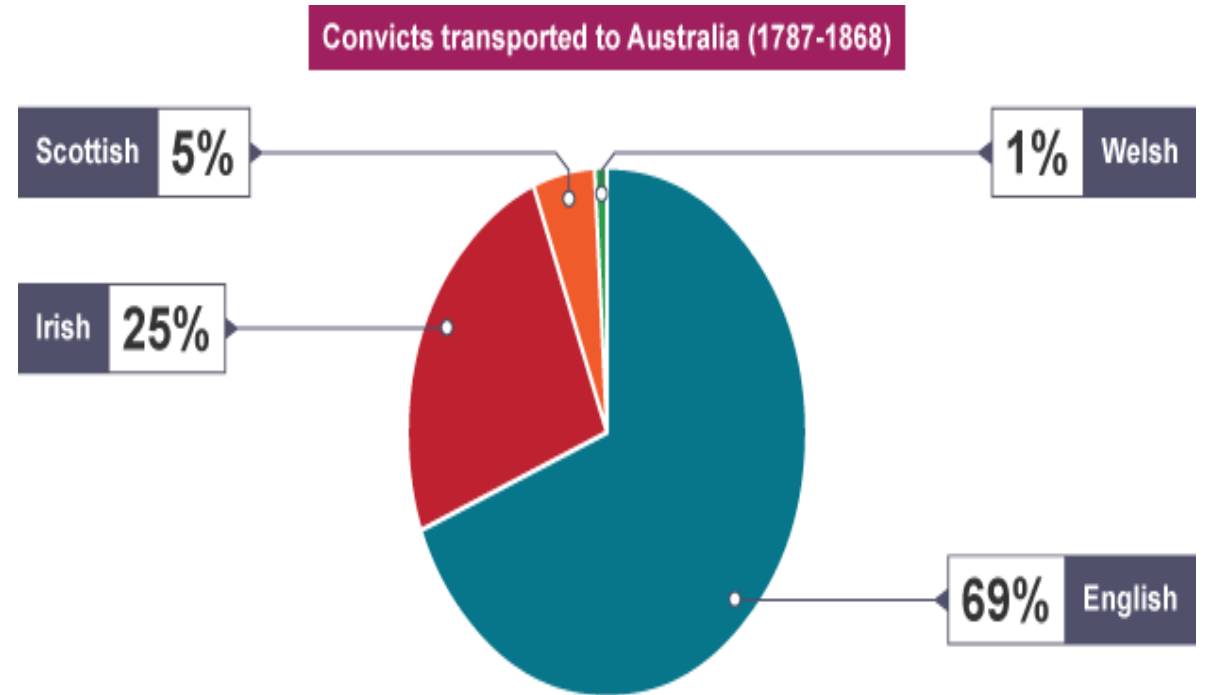
Transportation

- Transportation starts in early 17th century, sending convicts to American colonies.
- Australia the main destination after American War of Independence, 1776-83
- Between 1788 and 1868, about 162,000 convicts were transported from Britain and Ireland to various penal colonies in Australia.
- Why?
 - Humane alternative to execution and useful deterrent
 - Prisons were overcrowded, cheaper alternative to prison.
 - Need for labour in new world



Transportation from Belfast

- Seen as a tough penalty. August 1838, a burglar was caught trying to break into the offices of Hill Hamilton in Hill Street. A person named Thomas Lindsay, who was sleeping in the premises, caught a boy named Holland trying to cut the door. He was sentenced to two months imprisonment at the Police Office and much outrage has been caused as to why he was not brought before the Belfast Quarter Sessions to be transported.
- Last report from Belfast: September 1856, Robert Moffat, aged 72 was sentenced to 15 years transportation for manslaughter and his son was committed to four years penal servitude.



Why did transportation end?

- New ideas of prison reform
- Opposition from the colonies
- In 1837, the Molesworth Committee was convened and evidence about the lawlessness in the colony and the unpredictable nature of the system of assignment was well received by committee members, who were already well disposed to the idea of abolition.
- The committee's recommendations were that transportation should cease as soon as was practicable; that a punishment of hard labour be substituted for transportation.

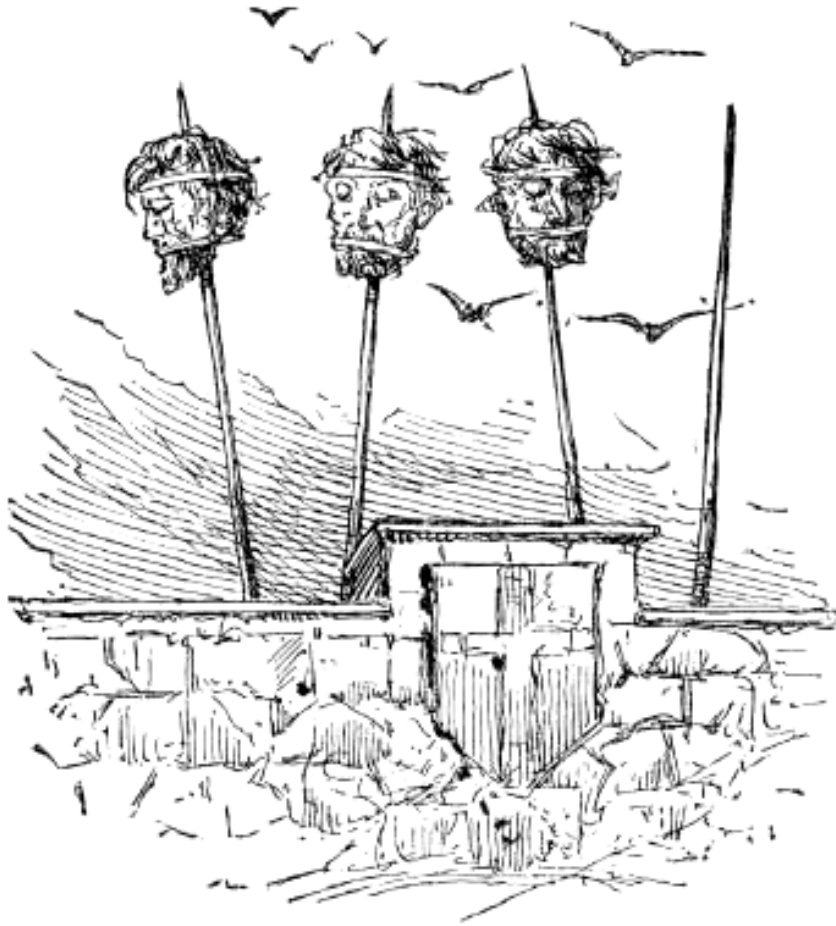


Did convicts return to Belfast?

- August 1862: Charles McKenna, returned convict, and James McColgan, thief, were ordered to find bail or be imprisoned for a month for having been found climbing over the back gate at Wilmont Terrace.
- July 1885: A returned convict named Ireland was charged with stealing a number of fowl, property of Mr. David Morrow, Mayo Street. His license was revoked and he had to serve the remaining year of his sentence.



The Death Penalty



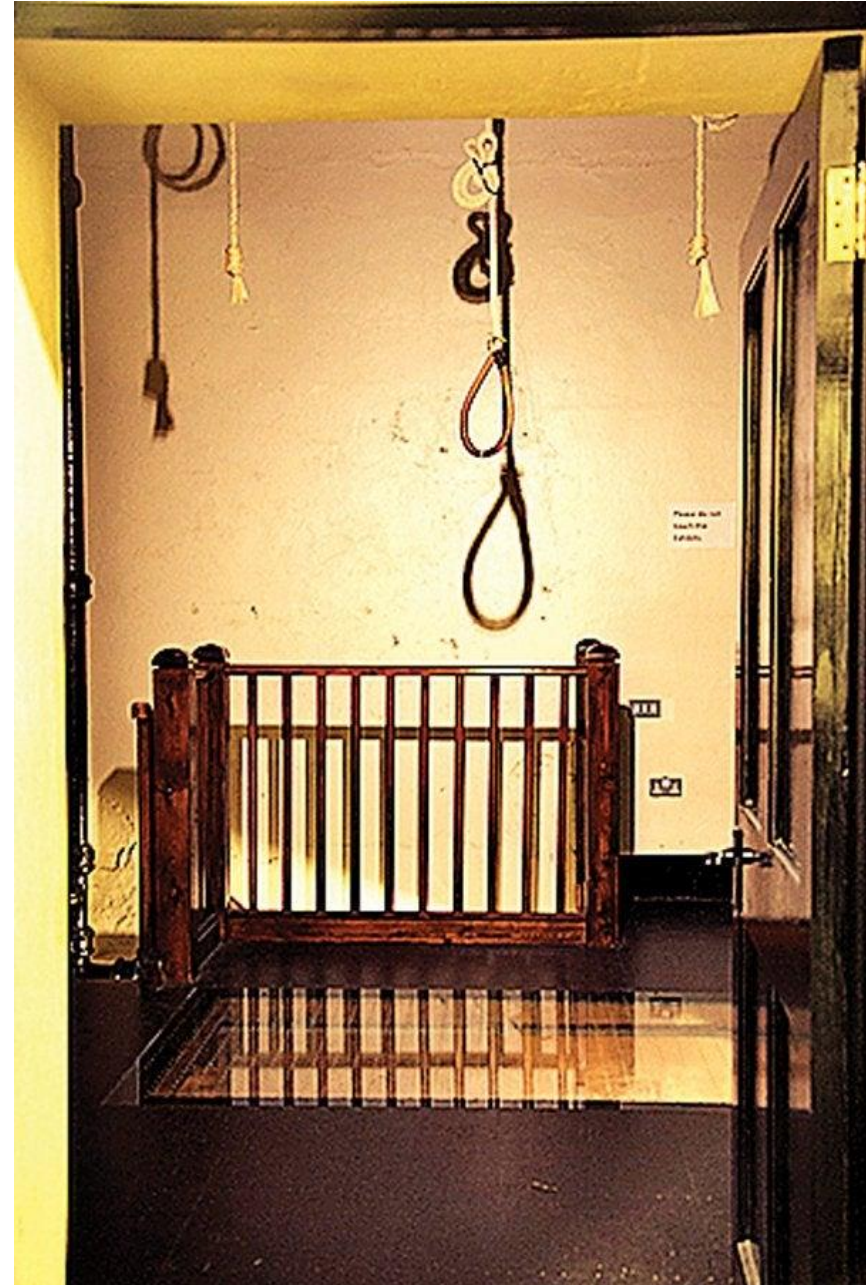
Belfast's most famous execution

- Executed in July 1798, court martialled for treason.
- Hung in front of the Market House (Dunnes)
- Body turned over to his family.
- McCracken's confederates' heads were on spikes.
- Probably Joy's social class that spared him from this fate.



Death Penalty

- 1800, 222 crimes were punishable by death
- 1816, Francis Johnson last person executed in public in Belfast.
- 1868 public executions in Britain were abolished.
- 1908 hanging was abolished for people under the age of 16.



Reform of the system

- At the start of the period there was no standard gallows, no standard noose and no concept of a drop that would typically cause instant unconsciousness.
- Neither was there any uniformity of equipment.
- From 1878 the execution rope of a standard pattern with a metal eyelet was available from the Prison Commissioners.



People executed at Crumlin Road Gaol

21st June 1854	Robert Henry O'Neill
8th April 1863	Daniel Ward
26th April 1876	John Daly
14th January 1889	Arthur McKeown
17th August 1894	John Gilmour
11th January 1901	William Woods
19th August 1909	Richard Justin

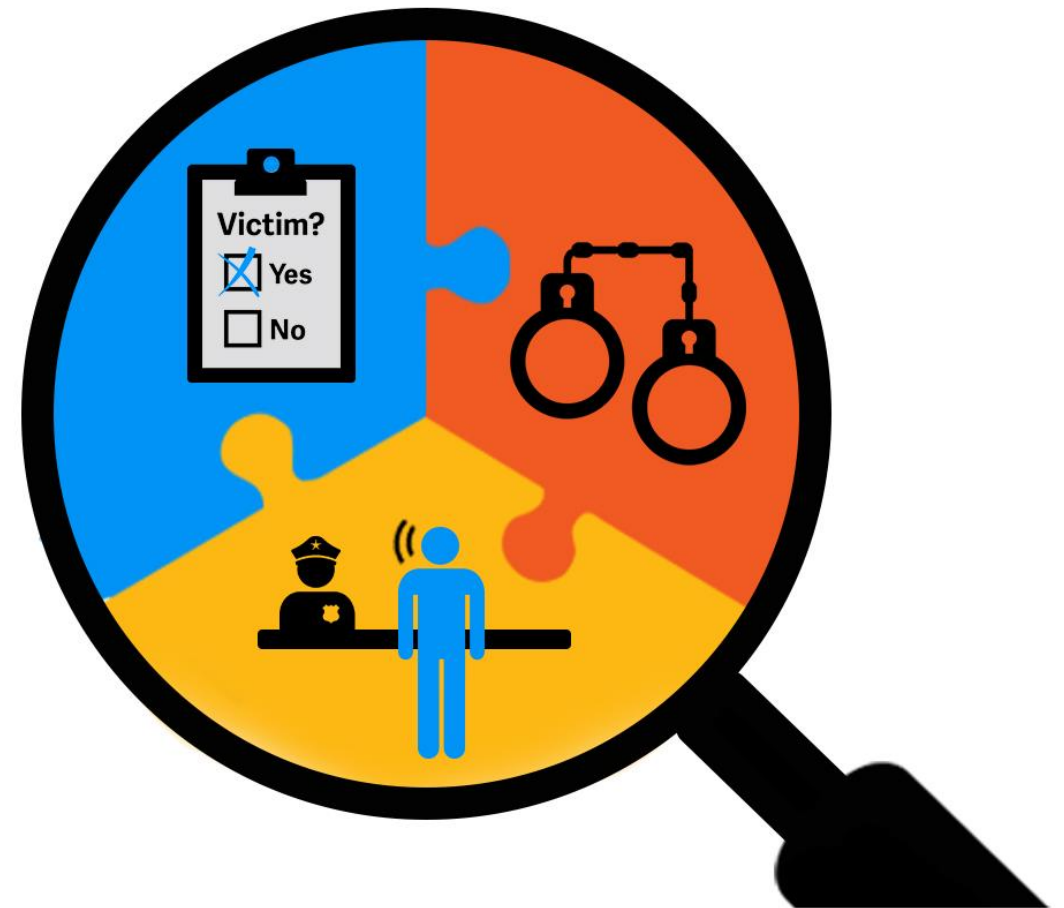


The social experience of crime and law enforcement



Challenges to understanding crime(s)

- Little statistical data – hard to get an overview of extent, nature and impact of crime
- Few written sources available.
- Notions of ‘crime’ written from the perspective enforcers and ‘victims’.
- Lack of comparative data – how crime varied over time and compared to other places.



Reported crime

- *Hue-and-Cry*, was the colloquial name for the *Police Gazette*. The internal bulletin of the Royal Irish Constabulary that was not meant for publication.
- The files, covering the period 1861-1893, show that assault was the most common crime in the period, with some 28,353 cases reported, closely followed by reports of the breaking of license conditions (28,092 cases) and of theft (23,345 incidences).

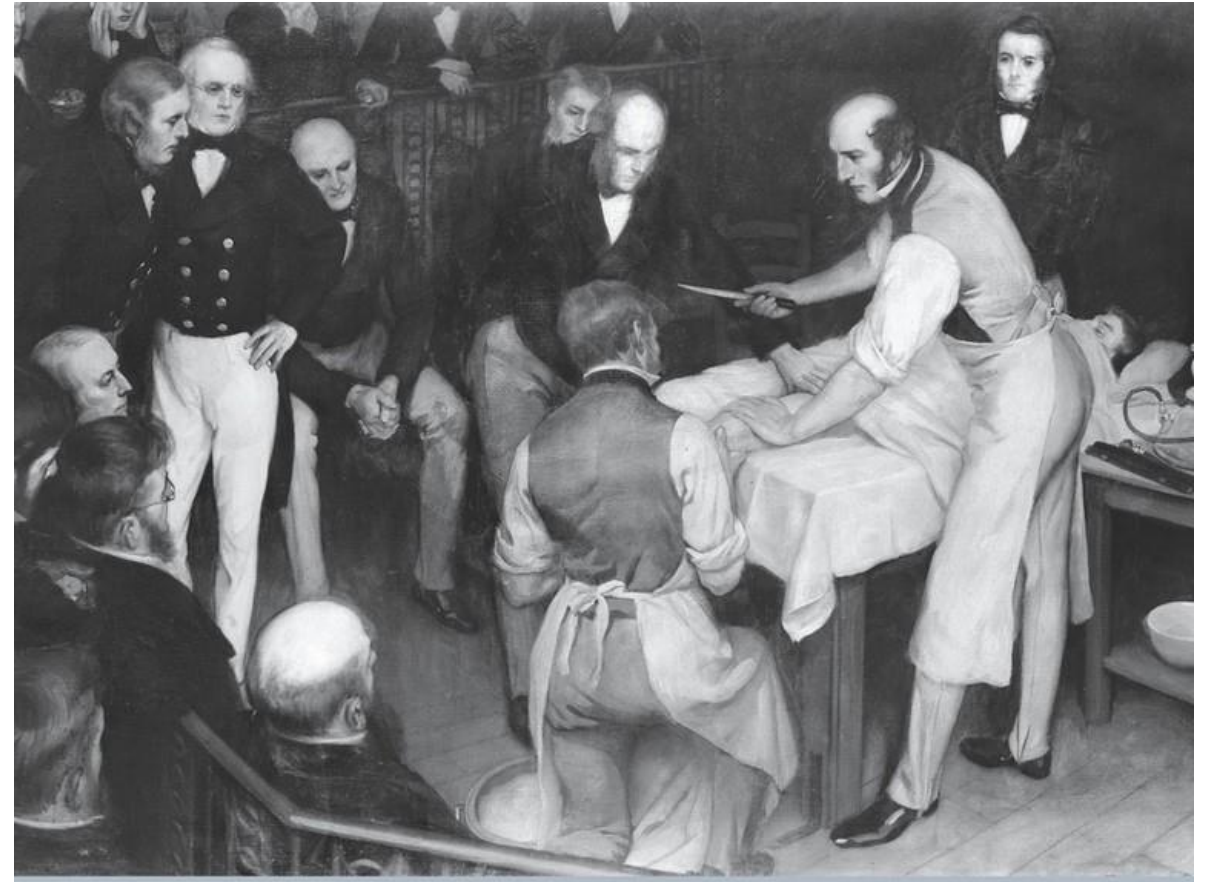


Judicial Statistics Table, Population of Belfast and the Strength of the Belfast RIC

Year	Indictable offences	Summary offences	Housebreaking burglary	Assault on RIC in Belfast	Assault on DMP	Drunk & disorderly
1870	54	15,117	4	616	840	8,776
1875	118	13,366	4	438	837	7,776
1880	173	20,535	1	606	747	7,359
1885	172	13,933	30	626	540	6,170
1890	168	16,266	9	493	464	7,522
1895	910	12,849	27	317	244	5,729
1900	2,134	14,226	47	393	291	5,444
1905	2,036	13,860	46	370	210	4,783
1910	1,888	18,834	64	257	209	3,986
1914	1,769	20,282	51	294	185	5,098

Grave robbing

- Rise of medical education created a demand for bodies for dissection.
- Parliament passed the Judgment of Death Act of 1823, which saw the number of crimes punishable by death drop dramatically
- Result, demand for bodies but reduced supply.



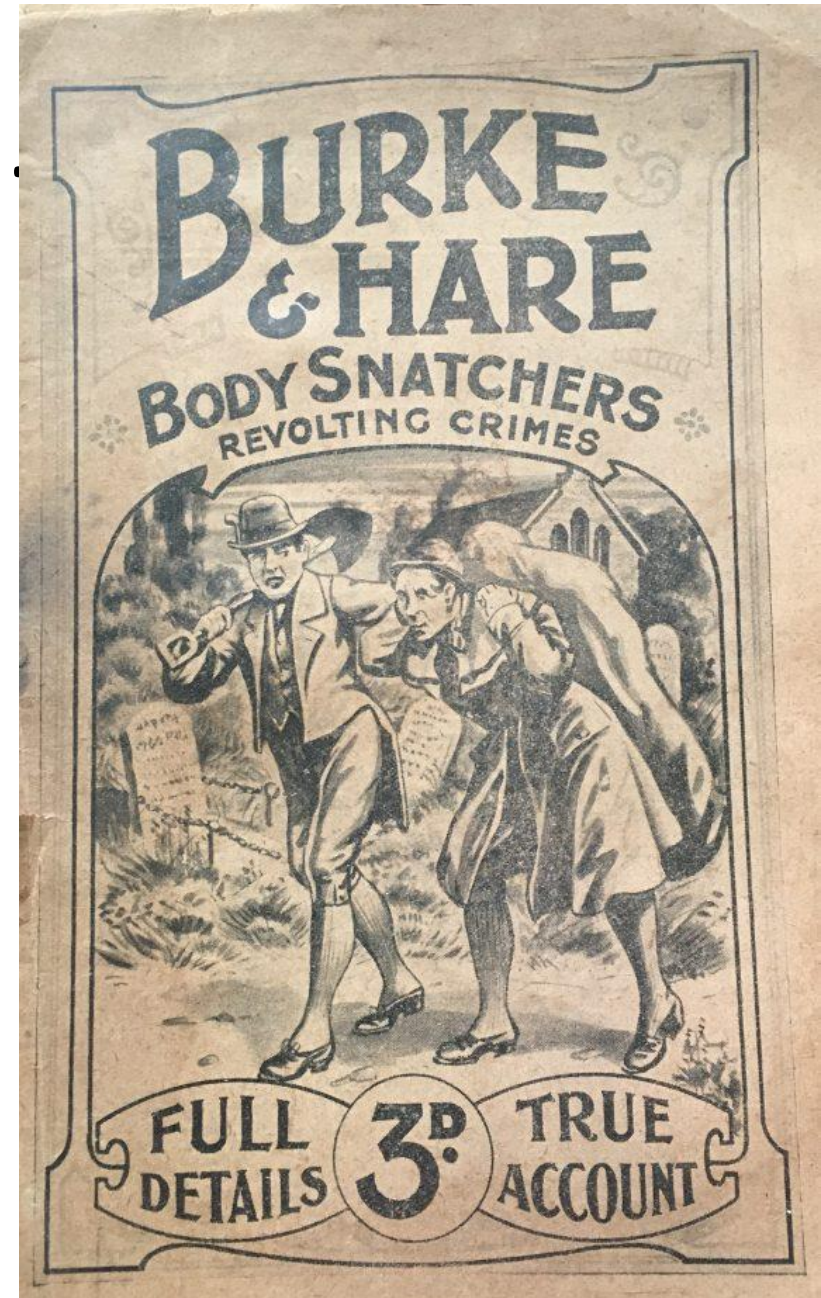
Northern Whig, 2nd January 1832

- “On Saturday; a skeleton of a human being, evidently not long from the knife of an anatomist, was discovered in one of the fields South of the White Linen Hall (today's City Hall) – lying quite exposed on the green sward! An action like this is most disgraceful to any member of the medical profession... No doubt some brutal young student, belonging to Belfast, was guilty of this shameful conduct. We believe the skeleton still lies in the same exposed situation”



Rise of the body snatchers...

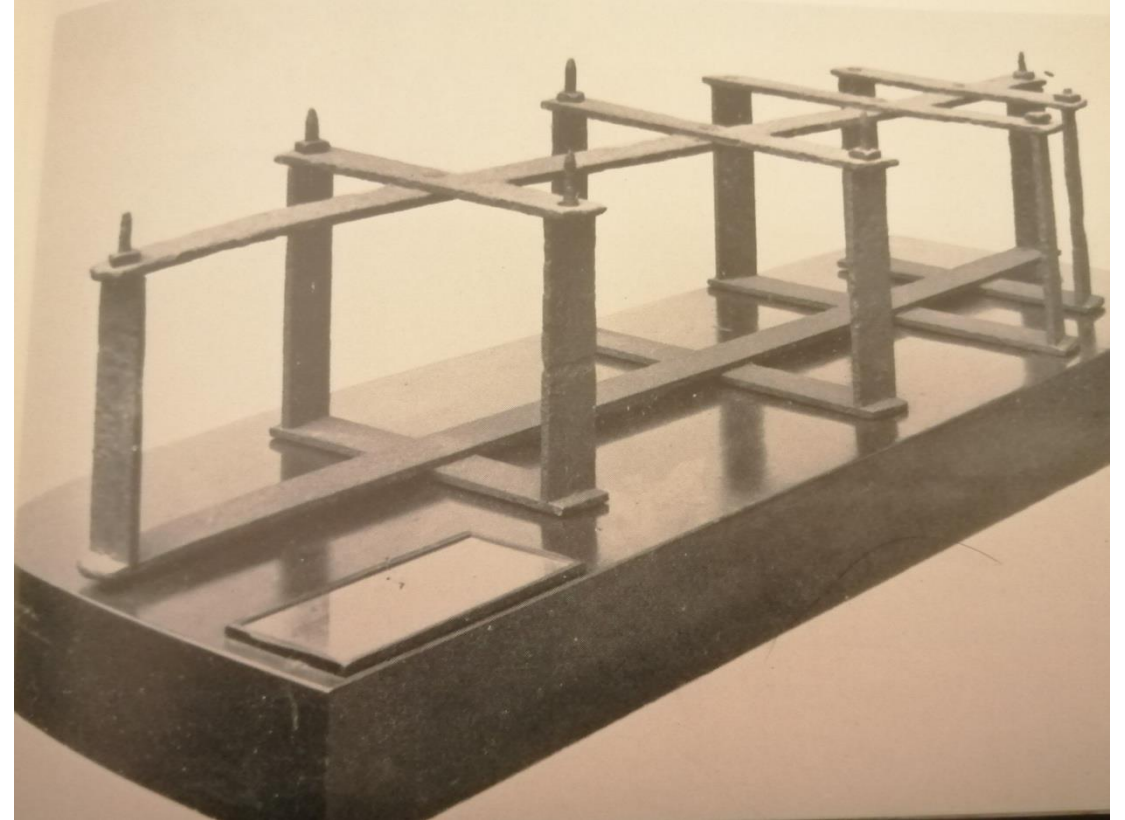
- There is a printed circular issued by a medical institution in December 1808, offering the sum of £5 for good, fresh corpses, and upwards of £10 for specimens known to have died of obscure complaints. These prices were for bodies delivered to John Forrest in Hudson's Entry which is today's Gresham Street.
- One Saturday in July 1823, a barrel on board a ship at Belfast docks bound for Scotland, aroused some suspicion. On cracking it open, the crew discovered the body of a woman aged around 30 and a child around the age of 3. The corpses had been packed in sawdust.



Counter measures



Dunegore Mort-House



Mort-safe coffin cage used at Clifton St Cemetery

Children and 'pitch and toss'

- A game in which players toss coins at a mark, the person whose coin hits closest to the mark wins the coins.
- The coins are 'tossed' in the air he/she wins all those that come down heads up.
- Disliked as:
 - Gambling
 - Immoral
 - Public nuisance



Boys from McQuiston National School, Oak St
1902, playing (probably not pitch and toss)

Juvenile Crime

- Brian Griffin argued that child felonies were a 'large share of crime' in Belfast. These included crimes such as pickpocketing, theft and vagrancy.
- Noted in 1853 that 'small thieves and small thefts' occupied most of the criminal proceedings in the Belfast courts.
- Why?
 - Poverty, death of parents and the need to survive
 - Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders pointed out in Feb 1857 that many Belfast's juvenile delinquents were the 'children of depraved and profligate parents, who, unwilling to bear the burden of their support, send them from their homes, to gain subsistence as best they may'.



Juvenile crimes – 1840s

April 1841: James Magean, a little boy, was accused of stealing a handkerchief, valued at 4d. He was sentenced to be transported for seven years.

April 1842: John O'Neill, aged 12, was charged with stealing three bottles, property of James Coleman. He was sentenced to seven years gaol.

October 1842: William Dougherty, aged 12, 'an expert pickpocket', stole a handkerchief, property of James Hart, and was sentenced to three months in gaol and to be whipped three times during his incarceration.

January 1844: Alexander Doorish, aged 10, was charged with stealing a piece of India rubber, property of W. S. Pim. He was sentenced to four months in gaol, during which time he would be whipped.



Offences by children

- June 1856: James Barr, Arthur Donnelly, William Rennor and James Rennor were each fined one shilling for playing “pitch and toss” on a Sunday morning in Ballymacarret.
- September 1856: Henry Dunlop and John McNeice were charge with being engaged in a game of pitch and toss. McNeice is described as being a very little boy. They were both granted bail.
- January 1864: Hugh Moore was fined in 20s and costs for playing pitch and toss at twelve o’clock on a Sunday in the public street, thereby interfering with people going to their places of worship.



Juvenile crimes – examples from the 1880s

- December, 1882: John Green, aged 14, was charged with stealing an ounce of tea and 2 pounds of sugar from Messrs. Pratt & Montgomery, Great Edward Street. He was sentenced to 14 days gaol and on release he would attend the Malone Protestant Reformatory for five years.
- April 1884: William Gibbon was brought before the Police Court. Described as a 'miserably dressed newsboy', was fined 40 shillings or one month in gaol for playing pitch and toss on the public street.



Child gangs

Julius Rodenberg,
*A Pilgrimage
Through Ireland on
the Island of the
Saints* (London,
1860), p.315.

a name in this branch of industry. Her den is subjected to continued examinations, and is constantly under surveillance, and yet it has been impossible hitherto to catch this criminal in the act, although it is known that the majority of the youthful population quartered on her are stolen children of twelve or thirteen years of age. This woman keeps several young women, by whom the boys are utterly corrupted in an unnatural way; they are instructed how to pilfer in the streets and the port, and seduce other boys by representations and promises to Anderson-row. In this way this criminal den is constantly filled afresh; and respectable parents who have lost their son sent on an errand, and whose traces they have tried in vain to find by advertisements, discover him again, years after, in the criminal, whom the magistrate sentences to lengthened imprisonment. The reader will be surprised that nothing is done to end this fearful trade, but those who carry it on are so cunning that it has hitherto been found impossible to convict them.

Road crime

- January 1845: A cart man named Mulligan was fined one shilling plus costs for obstructing a passage at Winecellar Entry.
- September 1888: James Douglas was charged with carelessly driving his horse and cart in Cross Street, Ballymacarrett, thereby knocking down and injuring a child, Richard McGrath, aged 2 years and 8 months.
- May 1913: Robert Clements of Antigua Street was summoned at the Belfast Summons Court for having worked a horse while it was unfit for work. He was fined 1s and 20s costs.



Drink and drunkenness

- **Largest class of offences in Belfast**
- 45%+ of all crimes in Ireland were drunkenness or disorderly conduct
- Declined from **8,776 (1870)** → **5,098 (1914)** against a massive rise in population
- Created resentment: criminalised otherwise “law-abiding” people



Drunkenness and Violence

- Assaults on police often linked to drunkenness
- Typical scenario: arrest for drunkenness → disorderly → assault on officer → crowd joins in
- Example: **Lizzie Porter** resisted so fiercely it took 5 people to subdue her (36 convictions)
- Declining trend overall: **616 assaults in 1870 → 294 in 1914**
- Still higher than Dublin despite Belfast's smaller population



Recidivistic offenders - 1881-1882

- July 1880: Cornelia O'Grady was fined 40 shillings for having been drunk in Victoria Street. She had 114 previous convictions. Jane Kelly who has 74 previous convictions, was gaoled for 6 months for being drunk in Adelaide Street and assaulting two policemen.
- August 1880: Margaret Ann Rocks was charged with being drunk and disorderly in Pakenham Street. She had 95 previous convictions.
- November 1880: Ann Jane Mill, was charged with being drunk and disorderly in Talbot Street. There were 87 previous convictions against her. She was fined 40 shillings plus costs or one month in gaol.
- September 1881: Mary Johnston and Jane Kelly were charged with being drunk and disorderly on the Dublin Road. It was Johnston's 151st conviction and Kelly's 78th.



Owen Christie – the record holder

- June 1846: Owen Christie was charged by Isabella Williams with having broken four panes of glass in the windows of her house in Back Lane, when he had entered the house drunk. He was discharged when he agreed to pay compensation.
- November 1861: The 'notorious' Owen Christie was fined for being drunk and disorderly in High Street. This was his 157th appearance in the dock, perhaps the greatest number of charges against any law-breaker in the kingdom. For drunkenness and assaults, Christie has suffered about seven years imprisonment, and has paid £100 in fines.
- March 1863: fined for the 180th time for being drunk and disorderly in Ballymacarrett.
- October 1863: imprisoned for three months for being drunk and disorderly in Round Entry and with an assault on Miss Euphemis Mercer, a Scotch lady missionary. This was the 211th time that Mr. Christie has been convicted.
- August 1865: brought up for the 221st time, charged with being drunk and disorderly and using party expressions, and assaulting the constables in the Police Office. He was fined in 40s and costs.



Publicans and drinkers

- August 1870: Samuel Rice was fined in 40s and costs for disorderly conduct at Peter's Hill by shouting 'I will not curse the Pope but to hell with the pump'. The people passing at the time thought that he was cursing the Pope,
- October 1882: Hugh Casey, a publican of Carrick Hill, had his application for the renewal of his license refused, as he was not of good character and had four convictions against him since last year.
- February 1878: James Cavanagh was fined 40s for drunkenness and disorderly conduct in North Queen Street.



Party Processions Act 1850

- Prohibited open marching, organised parades and sectarian meetings in Ireland.
- Aimed to prevent 'Assemblies of Persons in Ireland who shall meet and parade together or join in procession, and who shall bear, wear or have amongst them or any of them any fire-arms or other offensive Weapons, or any Banner, Emblem, Flag or Symbol, the Display whereof may be calculated or tend to provoke Animosity between different Classes of Her Majesty's Subjects, or who shall be accompanied by any Person or Persons playing Music which may be calculated or tend to provoke Animosity between different Classes of Her Majesty's Subjects, shall be unlawful Assemblies'

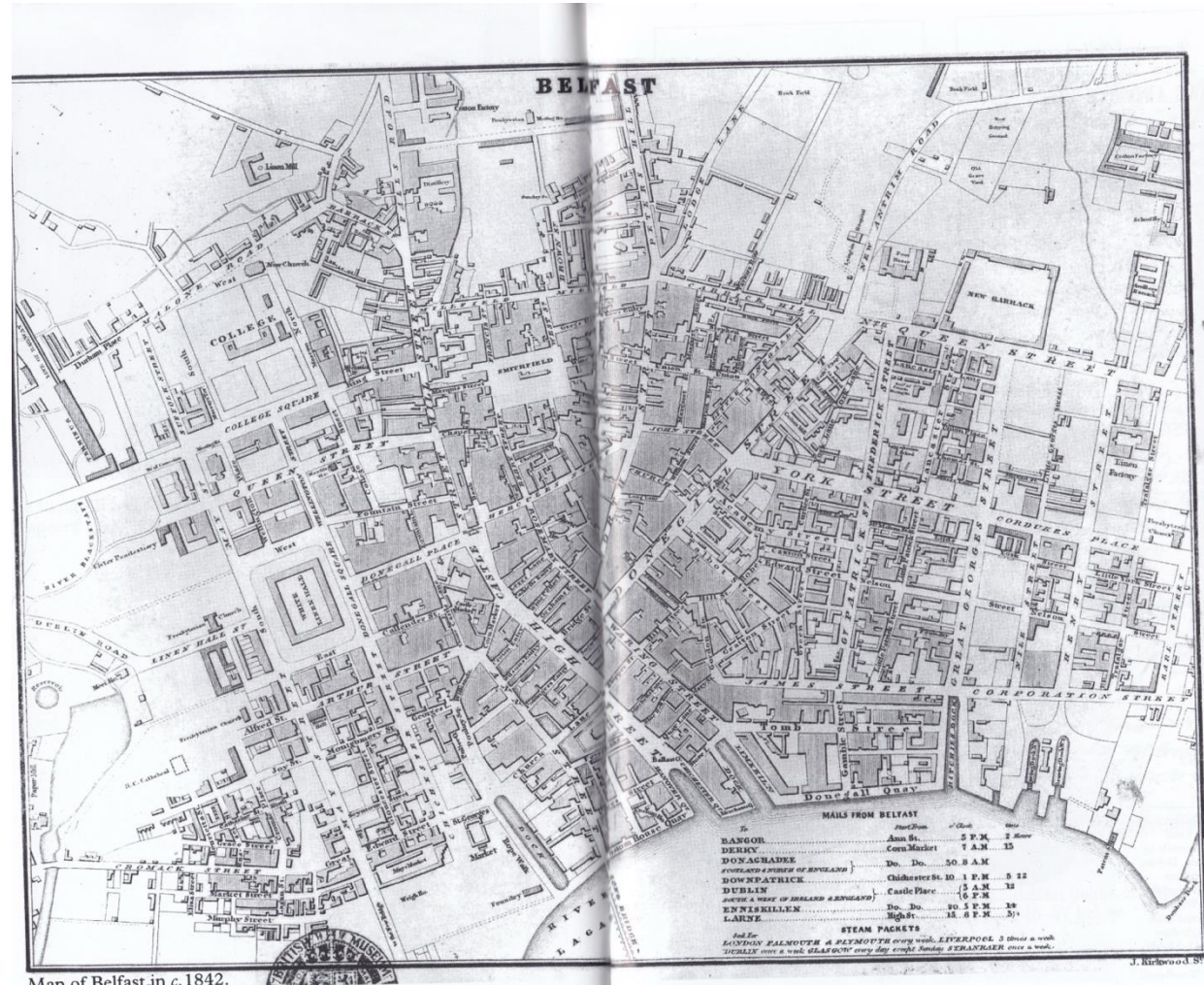


Prosecuted for 'Party Expressions'

- June 1865: Anne Hughes was ordered to find bail to keep the peace for twelve months or be imprisoned for three months for being disorderly and using party expressions in Mill Street. She had been singing about Dan O'Connell, the Liberator of Ireland and said she would not go to the Police Office for it was an Orange Lodge. She went to jail
- October 1878: John Murphy was sent to jail for one month for shouting "God save Ireland, and to h—I with Victoria" in Clifton Street. Mr Murphy had seven previous convictions.



Crime ridden parts of Belfast



Map of Belfast in c.1842.

Undesirable areas

- Caddel's Entry had a poor reputation as a den of iniquity. Edinbrugh body snatchers Feeny and Stewart used this street. Brothels and shebeens.
- Smithfield was also a 'dubious area'.
- Long bridge a place of thieves and muggers etc



Round Entry, 1850s

them in any form. This entry harbours the most loathsome corruptions; and in these bawdy-houses, under the cover of darkness, deeds of villainy are perpetrated which never come to light in our Police-courts. Unwary youth are entrapped and drawn into these places as flies into a spider's web—inebriated, robbed, and then turned out guilty, ruined, stricken, with a sting

William Murphy O'Hanlon, *Walks Among the Poor of Belfast* (London, 1853), p.21

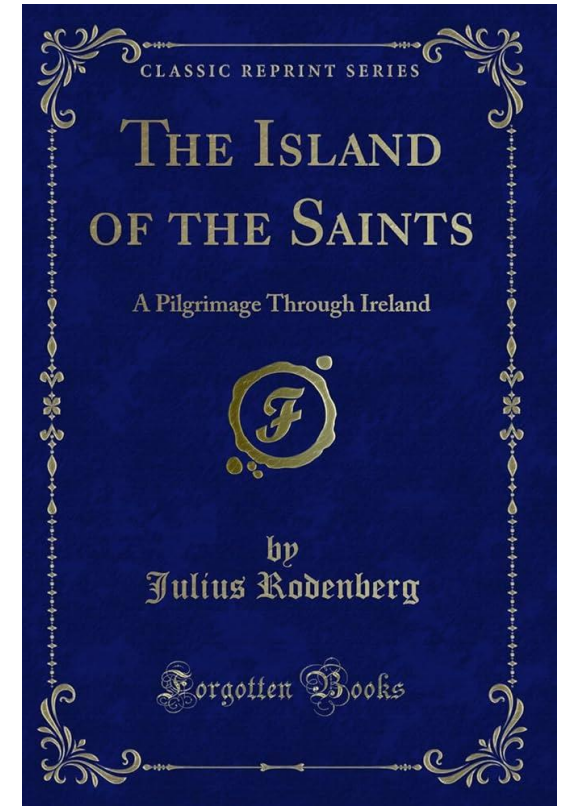
Barrack Lane, 1850s

their tenants, I will not take upon me to affirm. But here every kind of profligacy and crime is carried on, despite the police, who seem to be little terror to evil-doers in this quarter. Passers of base coin, thieves, and prostitutes, all herd together in this place as in a common hell, and sounds of blasphemy, shouts of mad debauch, and cries of quarrel and blood, are frequently heard here through the livelong night, to the annoyance and terror of the neighbourhood. Nor can redress, it appears, be obtained, nor this cage of unclean things cleansed. It is the practice, as we were informed, of these miscreants to frequent the docks, and, having caught sailors, like unwary birds, in their toils, to allure them into these pitfalls, where they are soon peeled and plundered. How is it that such things are tolerated in a civilized community?

William Murphy O'Hanlon, *Walks Among the Poor of Belfast* (London, 1853), p.16

Anderson's Row, 1860s

Anderson-row is a narrow, short *cul-de-sac*, which sends to meet the intruder the miasma of rotten straw, filthy rags, and rubbish of every description, with which the ground is covered instead of pavement. There are some twelve or fourteen houses—if these dens can be so called—in Anderson-row, and in them dwell about two hundred beggars, thieves, and prostitutes. Often these dens are chokingly full of denizens—often some are empty, because their former inhabitants have migrated to prison. Anderson-row is mainly a nursery for young criminals, and these dozen houses, on an average, supply three-fourths of the contingent to the prisons and reformatories. Women, trembling with frost and hunger,



Julius
Rodenberg, A
*Pilgrimage
Through Ireland
on the Island of
the Saints*
(London, 1860),
p.313.

Suicide: common in Victorian times

January 1914: A Mr Thomas Wardrop, a well-known architect and surveyor, died when he threw himself from the fourth floor of the Scottish Provident Buildings in Belfast. Mr Wardrop had entered the buildings and immediately went to the fourth floor, removing his overcoat and folding it neatly. He then jumped to his death. Notes to his wife and to the coroner were found on his body in which he blamed his lack of money and work prospects as his reason for taking his life. Mr Wardrop was originally from England and had served in Hong Kong working for the War Office as a draughtsman. In his suicide letter to the coroner Wardrop stated that it was because he had lost his job with the government that had caused his distress and he asked that someone should help his poor wife and four children. At the inquest a fund was set up to help the family and the hard work and reticence of Wardrop was spoken of in the coroners court.



Suicide: people arrested

- December 1880: John Craig was charged with attempting to commit suicide by throwing himself into the pond at the Waterworks.
- March 1881: William Greer was indicted for having attempted suicide in Antrim Gaol [Crumlin Road]. The governor of the gaol brought the case as there had been a spate of attempted suicides at the gaol.



Suicide: Why was it illegal?

- Many Victorians were Christians believed it was a sin to take one's life, that was God's will.
- Suicide is objectively a sin which violates the commandment "Thou shalt not kill". Suicide is self-murder.
- Act of people who were mentally unwell. For example, in July 1888, S. McCormick, a labourer, was charged with attempting to commit suicide by hanging and sent to the 'idiot ward' of the Union Workhouse.



Suicide: punishment

- February 1844: Ann Castles was rescued from Donegall Quay after she attempted to commit suicide by throwing herself in to the water. She claimed to be tired of life and was sentenced to one month in the House of Correction
- June 1913: William Stevenson of Heather Street was sentenced to two months in prison after he appeared in court charged with attempting to commit suicide by gas and also with attacking a Constable Furlong who attempted to stop him from killing himself. Stevenson then picked up a hatchet and tried to assault the constable. The constable was commended in court for his bravery



Suicide: scale and stigma

August 1849: The 19th Annual Report of the Belfast District Lunatic Asylum revealed that there are currently 257 males and females in the asylum, 23 of which are disposed to suicide.

July 1847: Mary Hughes, aged 20, committed suicide in her home at Ballynafeigh. She hung herself from a hook by a ribbon. Her family took her to Friars Bush burying ground, but were denied entry, as suicides are denied a Christian burial. The funeral then proceeded to the New Burying Ground, Clifton Street, where the unfortunate woman was buried at last.



Master criminals

April 1845: At the Quarter Sessions, the above named men were charged, Anderson was also charged with being a member of the 'Convivial Club', a society whose members bought his stolen goods, enabling him to live in extravagant style.

October 1913: Maggie Douglas or Cahoon was called "the cleverest pickpocket in town" by the judge when she appeared in court charged with theft of 2s 6d. Douglas had been before the court over 24 times previously and this time she had been caught stealing from a young man in a bar as he was standing at the bar buying her a drink.



What prevented crime?

- Servants: An attempted robbery took place at four houses at Kennedy's Place, Shankill Road in January 1842. The robbers were disturbed by a servant girl and escaped empty handed.
- November 1848: An attempted burglary took place at number 2 Cumberland Place, Donegall Pass. The gates to the premises were opened with false keys. The robbers disturbed a servant girl, who raised the alarm, but the burglars escaped.
- Nightwatchmen: In November 1841, Hugh Bogue, watchman at Carrick Hill, caught a man removing a washtub and two pieces of harness from the house of Mr. Patterson, a publican. The thief dropped his plunder and escaped.



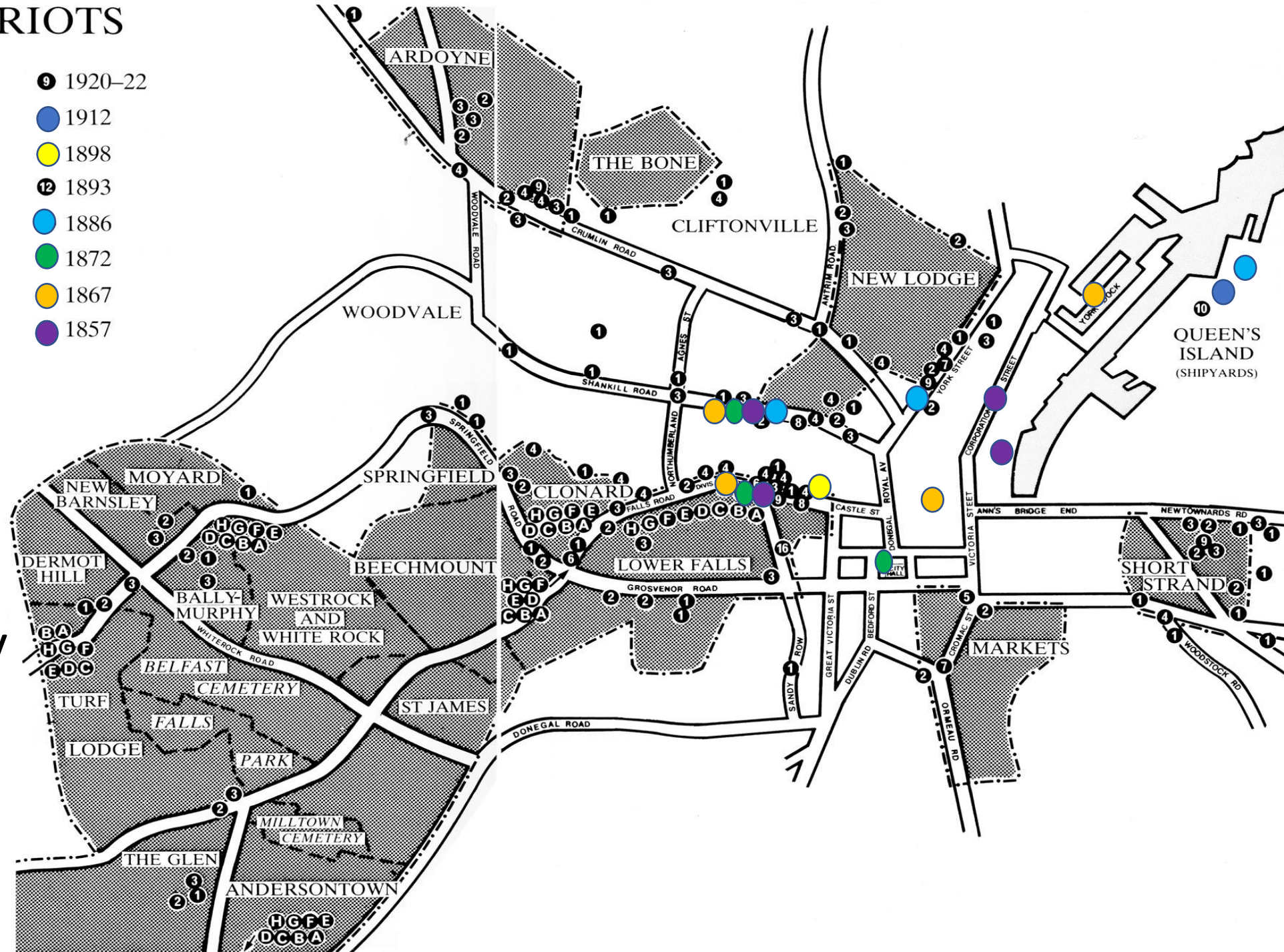
Public disorder



BELFAST RIOTS

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| A 1980 | 1 1972 | 9 1920–22 |
| B 1979 | 2 1971 | 10 1912 |
| C 1978 | 3 1970 | 11 1898 |
| D 1977 | 4 1969 | 12 1893 |
| E 1976 | 5 1966 | 13 1886 |
| F 1975 | 6 1964 | 14 1872 |
| G 1974 | 7 1935 | 15 1867 |
| H 1973 | 8 1932 | 16 1857 |

 CATHOLIC REGION



Inter-
Community
tension

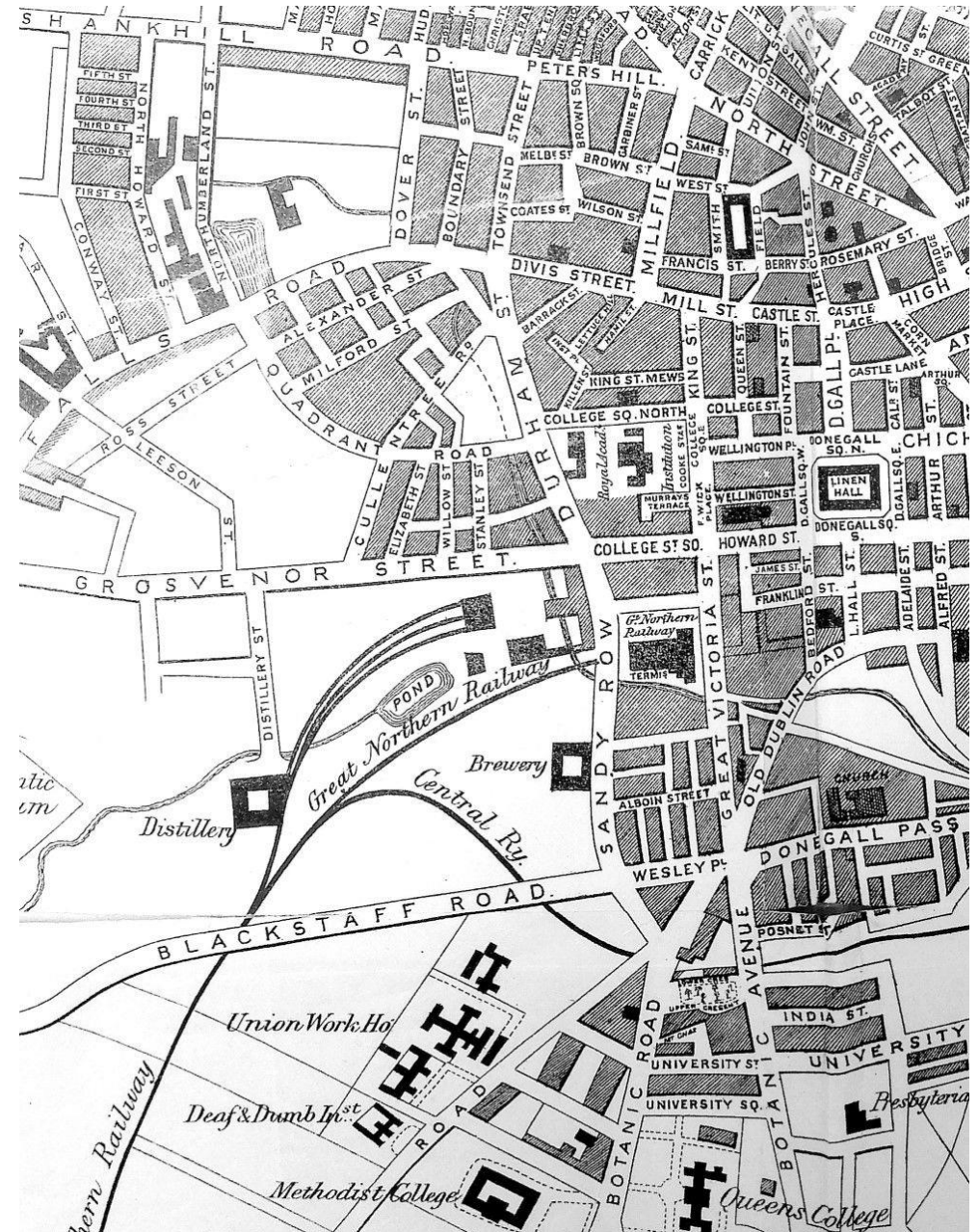
1864 Riots

- Riots started with Protestant angry that Orange Order parades had been banned, attacked Catholic returning from a nationalist rally in Dublin.



Location of riots

The Commission of Inquiry into the 1864 riots noted that 'chief theatre of the disturbances...as on former occasions' was the interface between the Catholic 'Pound' district, today the beginning the Falls Road and Divis Street, and the Protestant Sandy Row neighbourhood.



1864 riots consequences

- Report of Commission of Inquiry into 1864 Belfast Riots found:
 - Between 9 to 19 August, 316 injuries and 11 deaths, including 98 cases of gunshot injuries, of which 34 were 'severe'.
 - 212 cases of injuries by blunt force, stabbing or slashing.
 - £50,000 property damage



SCENE AT A BELFAST RIOT.

1886 Riots

- 1886, introduction of a Home Rule Bill.
- Clashes reported in shipyards between Protestant and Catholic labourers
- Riots intensified on 8 June, the day that the Home Rule Bill was defeated in Westminster
- RIC reinforcements sent from Ireland; rioters attacked police and soldiers. Running battles between security forces and rioters lasted until 14 June.
- Further riots occurred during 12th July celebrations; 2k RIC officers and soldiers deployed.



1886 Riots

- June and July saw:
- 50 dead
 - 1 RIC superintendent
 - 13 Protestants shot by RIC
- 390 RIC men injured.

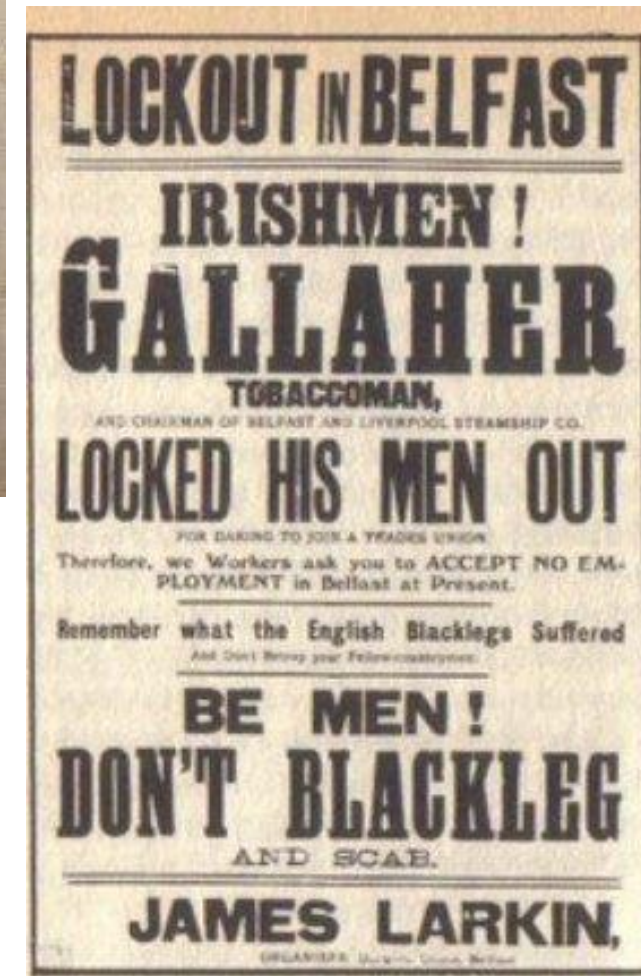


Shankill Road RIC station, 1886



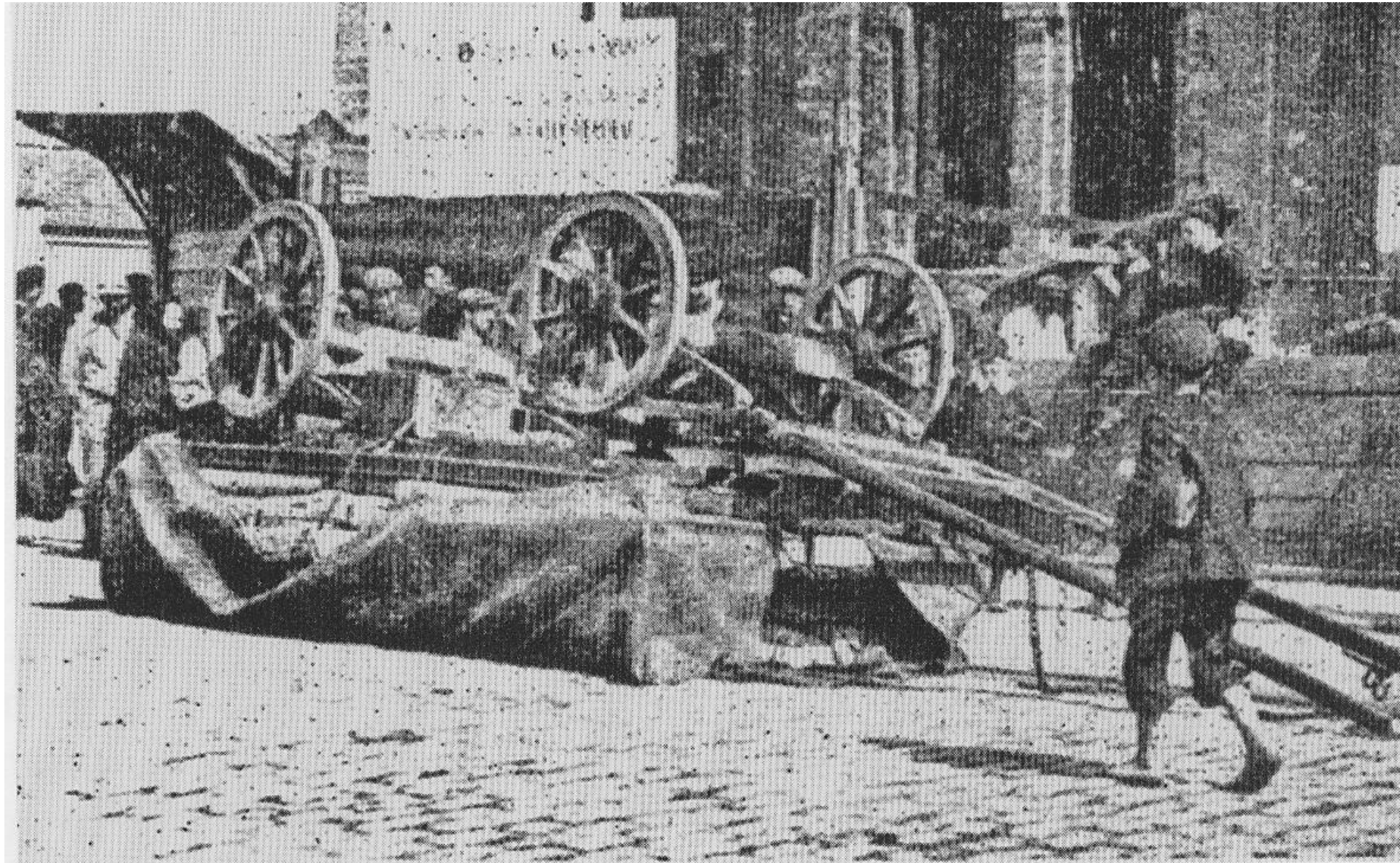
1907 Dock Yard Strike

- The Belfast Dock strike or Belfast lockout took place from 26 April to 28 August 1907.
- The strike was called by TU leader James Larkin who had successfully organised the dock workers to join the National Union of Dock Labourers
- The dockers, both Protestant and Catholic, had gone on strike after their demand for union recognition was refused. They were soon joined by carters, shipyard workers, sailors, firemen, boilermakers, coal heavers, transport workers, and women from the city's largest tobacco factory.
- Most of the dock labourers were employed by powerful tobacco magnate Thomas Gallaher, chairman of the Belfast Steamship Company and owner of Gallaher's Tobacco Factory.
- The RIC later mutinied when ordered to escort the blackleg drivers of traction engines used to replace the striking carters.
- Order was eventually restored when British Army troops were deployed.
- In mid-August during the course of a riot in the lower Falls Road, two Catholics were killed by soldiers





Carters erect
barricades during
the strike.



Lorry overturned
during the riots on
Great George Street



Police protecting 'blackleg' workers, 1907



Funeral of Charles
McMullan



Funeral of a victim of
the 1907 Riots

Other incidents of public disorder

- July 1837: A riot occurred on Donegall Quay when the steamer Rapid was about to sail to Glasgow with a load of potatoes. People of the poorer classes attacked the ship and dispersed on the arrival of the police.
- July 1843: Another riot has occurred in Belfast after a funeral at Friar's Bush when a man named Byers was attacked by a crowd near Victoria Place. Stones and brickbats were thrown and several shots were fired.
- August 1841: The Brannagh and the Brady families of Hercules Street were engaged in a viscous street brawl. Margaret Brannagh deposed that she was attacked by Mrs. Brady. A cross charge was made against James Cooney, Margaret Brierley, Jane Dugan and Margaret Brannagh. All the accused were bound over to keep the peace.
- July 1842: A riotous demonstration of unemployed and destitute operatives assembled at the Police Buildings and marched on Donegall Street Bakery to demand bread or work.



Continued...

- December 1846: A food riot took place in Belfast when a number of labourers attacked bakeries in the town.
- July 1847: The Twelfth of July celebrations passed off peacefully without any serious disturbance in Belfast, apart from a few minor brawls. Stonethrowing occurred in Durham Street and there was a fracas in York Street, where an immense assemblage of girls had gathered to see the 'Belfast Band'.
- July 1849: Several cart men, passing through Ballymacarret, having fastened orange lilies to their horses heads, were attacked by a group of navvies, who tore the flowers from the horses and beat the cart men.
- February 1863: A number of millworkers in Mr. Glenfield's mill, York Road, disputed with other millworkers, in the employment of Mr. Beck, Jennymount (right), and a serious riot ensued – stone-throwing – the usual mode of fight in Belfast at the time - being used.



CONVEYANCE OF MR. BLOANE TO GILTSFUR-STREET COURTESY.

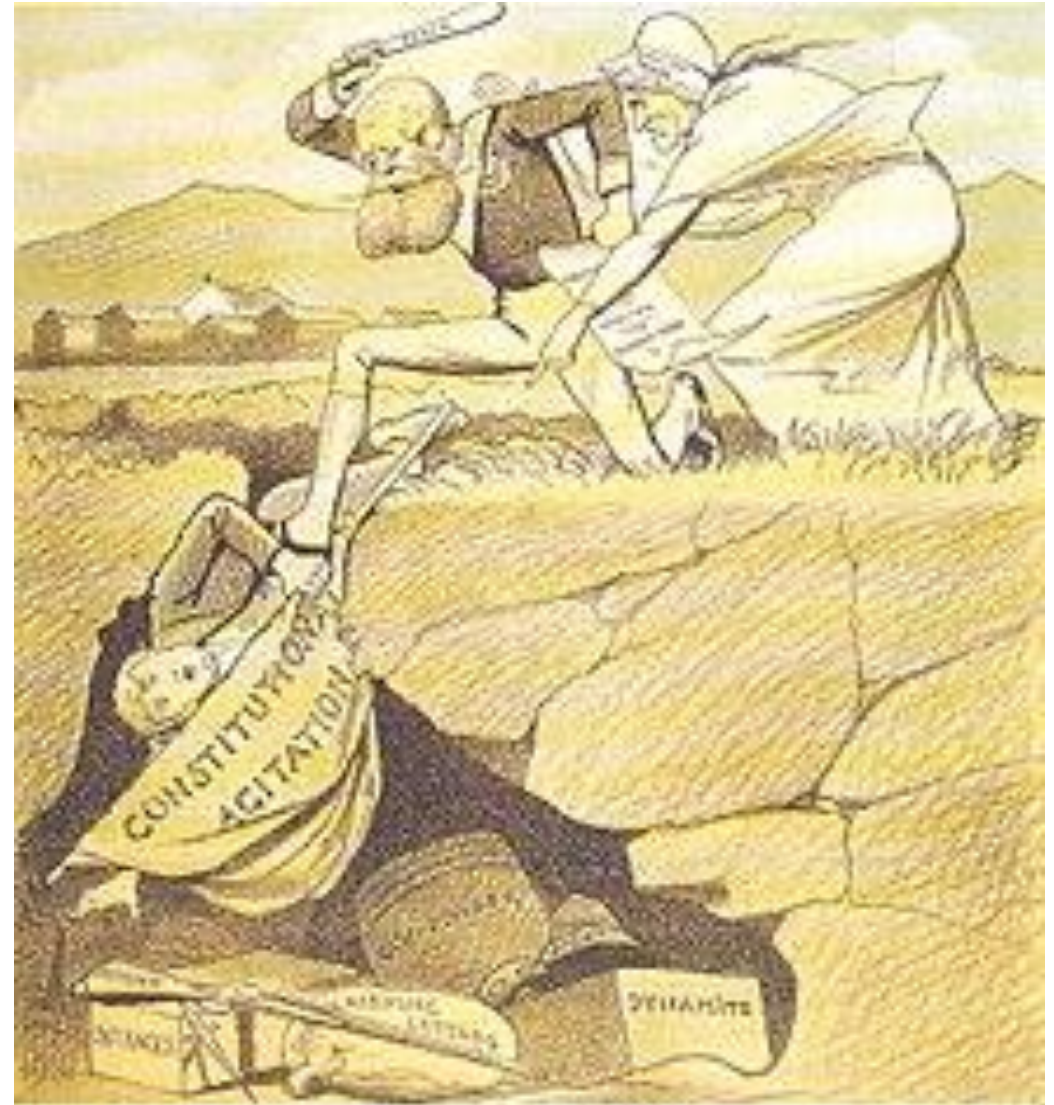
'Political' crime

- Ribbonism: rural movement active against landlords and their agents and opposed "Orangeism".
- October 1839: A large force of police and military made their way to the public house of a man named Houston situated on the Falls Road opposite the Belfast Distillery. They had received information that a Ribbon Lodge was based here. A number of documents were seized and Houston removed to the House of Correction.
- September 1845: Evidence of Ribbonism in Belfast has been confirmed with rumours that a Ribbon Ball was to be held in a certain tavern in this town.



Fenianism

- The word Fenian served as an umbrella term for the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and their affiliate in the United States, the Fenian Brotherhood in the late 19th and early 20th century dedicated to the establishment of an independent Irish Republic.
- October 1865: A 45 year old man who gave his name as Francis Thomson was arrested under suspicious circumstances in Ballymacarrett. It was believed that he was a member of the Fenian Brotherhood.



1860s

- April 1866: A man named Patrick Cunningham, a shoemaker in Lettuce Hill, was arrested by Constable Clingan and Acting-Constable Thomson on a charge of being connected with the Fenian conspiracy.
- March 1867: A number of people were arrested on suspicion of Fenianism after a large quantity of arms and ammunition were discovered in a house at 69 Pound Street. Many rumours circulated around Belfast as to a possible Fenian outbreak in some part of the North.



The House of Detention in Clerkenwell after the bombing; seen from within the prison yard

Suffragettes

- March 1914: The palatial residence known as Abbeylands, the home of Sir Hugh McCalmont was burned to the ground and due to finding a quantity of the 'Votes for Women' literature it was thought that the Suffragists were responsible for the fire.
- Orlands, the county Antrim home of Bishop Henry was reduced to ashes after the Suffragists set fire to the mansion.



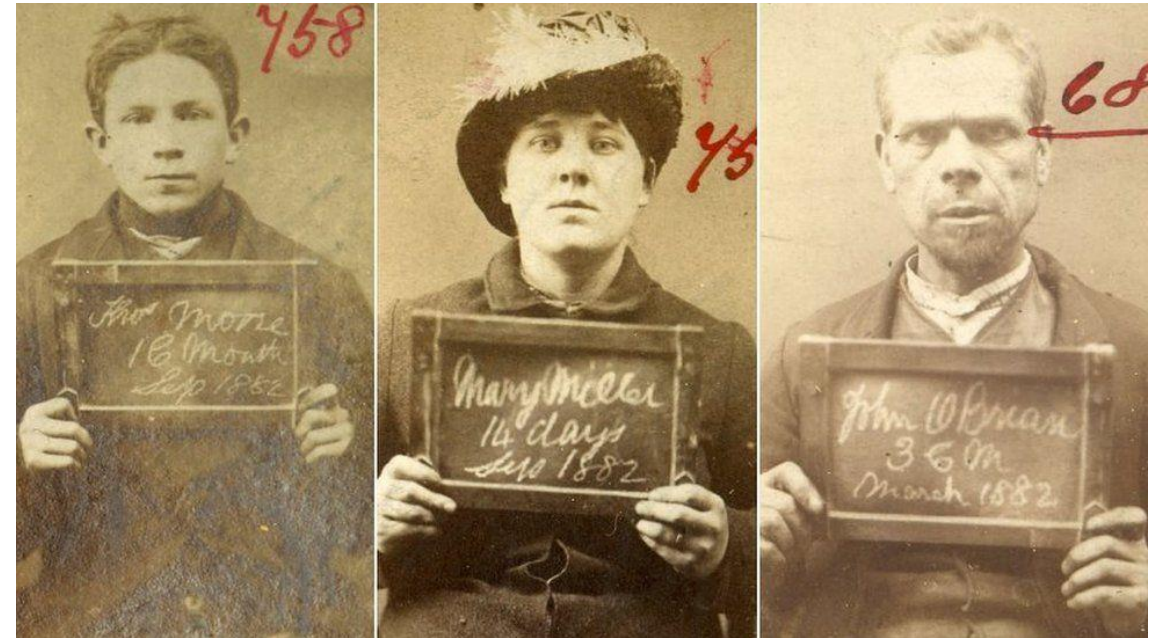
Before the Great War...

- The handsome and costly Tea House at Bellevue Gardens was destroyed by a fire, which was thought to have been started by the Suffragists. Propaganda material produced by the women was found at the scene.
- May 1914: The Cavehill Bowling and Tennis Club was damaged by a fire thought to be caused by the Suffragists.
- August 1914: An attempt was made to blow up Lisburn Cathedral and suspicion immediately fell on the Suffragists.



Final thoughts – crime worse than today?

- One study suggested that the murder rate in Victorian Ireland was seven times higher than today.
- Other stats suggest that the 1860s the annual rate of homicides known to the police was 1.7 per 100,000 of the population, in the 1890s it was 1 per 100,000.
- Rate in 2022/23 was 1.15.



Questions?