

A2

LEVEL

IRELAND UNDER THE UNION 1800–1900

FOR CCEA A2 LEVEL



Dr Russell Rees

**COLOURPOINT
EDUCATIONAL**

*In memory of my mother,
Meta Rees (1931–2017)*

© Dr Russell Rees and Colourpoint Creative
Limited 2018

Print ISBN: 978-1-78073-123-0
eBook ISBN: 978-1-78073-162-9

Layout and design: April Sky Design

Printed by: GPS Colour Graphics Ltd, Belfast

All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval
system or transmitted in any form or by any
means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying,
scanning, recording or otherwise, without
the prior written permission of the copyright
owners and publisher of this book.



Colourpoint Educational

An imprint of Colourpoint Creative Ltd

Colourpoint House
Jubilee Business Park
21 Jubilee Road
Newtownards
County Down
Northern Ireland
BT23 4YH

Tel: 028 9182 6339

Fax: 028 9182 1900

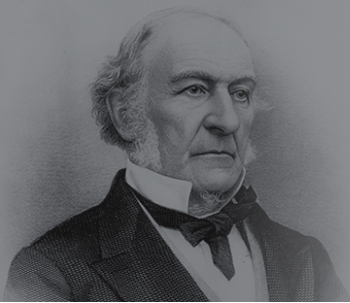
E-mail: sales@colourpoint.co.uk

Web site: www.colourpoint.co.uk



Russell Rees completed a doctoral
thesis in Irish History at the
University of Ulster in 1986. He
spent the next 30 years teaching
History at Omagh Academy. Among
the books he has written are *Ireland
1900-25* (2008), *Conflict in 19th
Century Ireland* (2010), both of which
were published by Colourpoint,
and *Labour and the Northern
Ireland Problem 1945–51: The Missed
Opportunity* (2009).

This book has been written to
help students preparing for the A2
History specification from CCEA.
While Colourpoint Educational
and the authors have taken every
care in its production, we are not
able to guarantee that the book is
completely error-free. Additionally,
while the book has been written
to closely match the CCEA
specification, it is the responsibility
of each candidate to satisfy
themselves that they have fully
met the requirements of the CCEA
specification prior to sitting an exam
set by that body. For this reason,
and because specifications change
with time, we strongly advise every
candidate to avail of a qualified
teacher and to check the contents
of the most recent specification
for themselves prior to the exam.
Colourpoint Creative Ltd therefore
cannot be held responsible for any
errors or omissions in this book or
any consequences thereof.



Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| Introduction | 5 |
| Map of Ireland | 10 |
| 1 Opposition to the Union | 11 |
| 1.1 Constitutional Nationalism 1800–1845 | 12 |
| 1.2 Revolutionary Nationalism 1800–1900 | 39 |
| 1.3 Constitutional Nationalism 1845–1900 | 52 |
| 1.4 Cultural Nationalism 1800–1900 | 85 |
| 1.5 Opposition to the Union – Conclusion | 96 |
| 2 The Significance of Social and Economic Issues | 99 |
| 3 The British Government Response to Irish Nationalism | 131 |
| 4 Supporters of the Union | 166 |
| Conclusion | 211 |
| General index | 223 |
| <i>Illustrations</i> | |



Acknowledgements

I have incurred a number of debts in producing this work. The staff at Colourpoint Books have been very patient and professional in bringing this project to a successful conclusion. In particular, I would like to offer my personal thanks to the Managing Director, Dr Wesley Johnson, for his encouragement and support and to Sheila Turner Johnston who read an early draft of the manuscript. Over the years I have benefited from my contacts with Professor Paul Bew, Professor Eugenio Biagini, Professor Sean Connolly, Professor Alvin Jackson, Dr Eamon Phoenix, and the late Professor Tony Hepburn. Each of these scholars has caused me to think more carefully about nineteenth century Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations in general.

My work has also been stimulated by my conversations with a number of close friends and colleagues. These include Lindsey Gregg, Ryan Mitchell, Stephen Maclaine and Keith Hamilton.

A special word of thanks must go to Dr Gordon Rees who read the entire manuscript and suggested a number of changes. Any remaining errors or, indeed, flawed or incomplete judgements, are, of course, my responsibility.

My greatest debt is to my wife, Jean Rees, who typed the manuscript with surprisingly little protest and was a constant source of support and encouragement.

Dr Russell Rees

Introduction

The Act of Union was imposed against the backdrop of revolutionary upheaval in Ireland and a major war on the continent. Over the course of the nineteenth century it became clear that the union did not reflect the views of a majority of Irishmen. Yet the Act of Union was not solely to blame for the emergence of sectarian politics, which saw Catholic nationalism confront Protestant unionism for much of the century. Indeed, most Irish Catholics who took an interest in the union debate recognised that the British state no longer trusted the Protestant Ascendancy with the government of Ireland. Furthermore, they assumed that a new constitutional arrangement would facilitate the extension of full political rights to Irish Catholics. This was the essence of the 'Catholic Question' which dominated political life in the first decades of the nineteenth century. In such circumstances the decision to abandon the Catholic cause, taken reluctantly by the Prime Minister, William Pitt, meant that the union was severely handicapped from the outset. Pitt's Irish allies, such as Lord Castlereagh, had become convinced that the Catholic Question could only be resolved in the context of the union, but the determined opposition of the king prevented the authorities at Westminster from tackling this most pressing of all Irish problems.

Ultimately, therefore, the union was not a success, and it eventually fell victim to the forces of revolutionary nationalism. Yet the fact that it lasted 120 years suggests that it was not doomed to fail. A legislative union had worked for Scotland and Wales, and both of these countries had a legacy of conflict with England. Cultural nationalism was particularly strong in Wales, but it did not develop into a demand for Welsh separatism. When cultural nationalism emerged in Ireland, however, it could not, despite the efforts of its early leaders, remain detached from political nationalism. Scotland had, of course, experienced English aggression in the eighteenth century, as the unsuccessful attempt by 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' to seize the British crown brought swift retribution: in 1746, the remnants of the Jacobite army were slaughtered on Culloden Moor, and this was followed by the highland clearances. The Scottish clan system was ruthlessly dismantled, but this did not provoke a nationalist challenge to the 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland. Instead, the Westminster government raised highland regiments for the British army and, more importantly, presided over a raft of economic improvements that considerably raised the

standard of living in Scotland. True, the Scots retained their strong sense of national identity, but they were also successfully integrated into the United Kingdom. This did not happen in Ireland, where the union failed to provide an alternative to Irish nationalism.

The Act of Union took effect from 1 January 1801, joining Britain and Ireland together in the United Kingdom and establishing a new constitutional arrangement between the two neighbours. The act abolished the Irish parliament in Dublin's College Green. Thereafter, 100 Irish MPs sat in the House of Commons at Westminster, while 28 Irish peers and 4 Church of Ireland bishops took their seats in the House of Lords. The legislation also included interim arrangements to adjust trade tariffs between the two countries, and these were gradually phased out to establish free trade between Britain and Ireland from 1824. The impact of these financial changes was negligible, as they merely accelerated the advance of an economic union that was already taking shape in the second half of the eighteenth century. Even politically, there was considerable continuity with the pre-union era. While the removal of the Irish parliament provided an obvious break, the whole complex machinery of the Dublin Castle administration not only remained in place but was substantially developed over the course of the nineteenth century. Clearly, Ireland would not follow the Scottish example and become fully integrated into the United Kingdom's system of government.

While Pitt had argued that the union would allow Irish problems to be tackled in a more efficient and sympathetic manner, the more immediate concern for Westminster was to prevent a new invasion attempt by the French in support of an Irish insurrection. In August 1798 a French force had landed in County Mayo, but following an initial success they were defeated in an engagement in County Longford. The desire to protect its Irish flank, therefore, exerted a powerful influence on British thinking. Britain had been at war with France since 1793, and Pitt was fully aware that the French would seize any opportunity to exploit further unrest in Ireland. A fresh French invasion could either divert British attention away from the war on the continent, or provide a bridgehead for a subsequent invasion of Great Britain. Against this background a political union offered the best means of bringing stability to Ireland and minimising the prospect of invasion. These circumstances also coloured the thinking of many Protestant Ascendancy families, who had been stunned by the insurrection and now looked to the British state to guarantee their security. What was now required, they argued, was a period of firm government, and this secured their support for

a legislative union.

In addition to the issue of security, Pitt hoped that the union would consolidate British control over Ireland, while simultaneously improving Anglo-Irish relations by removing the risk of conflict between the parliaments in London and Dublin. Distrust between these two assemblies was scarcely concealed, and the likelihood of a serious constitutional clash had grown significantly in the latter part of the eighteenth century. During this period two particular issues shaped Irish politics. Firstly, the Protestant Ascendancy was challenged by the growth of Catholic power as a small, but growing, educated Catholic middle class emerged to demand the removal of barriers to Catholic participation in public life. This led to a series of Catholic Relief Acts in 1778, 1782 and 1793, the last of which extended the franchise to all Catholics who met the property qualification. Secondly, suspicion and hostility came to dominate relations between the two parliaments in London and Dublin. This led to the emergence of a distinctive 'patriot' faction in the Irish parliament, which fostered a growing spirit of independence among patriot supporters in the last quarter of the century. This marks the beginning of political nationalism in Ireland. After the Act of Union, this elitist Protestant nationalism gave way to a popular Catholic version, but the core demand for Irish self-government remained constant.

By the late 1770s Henry Grattan had emerged as the leader of this patriot faction. Grattan insisted that Ireland was an independent nation under a joint Crown, though this nation, of course, was very narrowly defined. While it had a strong cultural and historical dimension, membership of this political nation was confined to that exclusive Protestant (Anglican) caste born in Ireland. Grattan and his patriot followers in the Irish parliament were quick to seize the opportunity provided by Britain's war with her separatist American colonies. Ireland had close links with the colonies, forged by large-scale emigration, and Grattan stressed the parallels between the Irish constitutional predicament and the American challenge to British authority. The patriot demand for legislative independence received a further unexpected boost when France entered the American war in 1778 on the side of the colonists. This forced the Westminster government to dispatch its regular troops stationed in Ireland across the Atlantic to bolster the British military effort. With the Irish coastline now inadequately defended, the Protestant gentry quickly established volunteer corps throughout the island to meet the threat of a possible French invasion. Soon, there were 40,000 serving in this part-time military force, with the rank and file

drawn principally from well-to-do Protestants serving under officers who were generally of landowning stock. In addition to their military capacity, however, the Volunteers quickly acquired a political significance, as the patriot faction recognised the potential of an alliance with the new body in pressing their demands. Immediately, the Volunteers provided a national organisation to promote the political aims of the patriots, while Grattan took advantage of this extra-parliamentary muscle in his campaign for political concessions.

When the American crisis occasioned a change of government in March 1782, Grattan wasted no time in moving a formal declaration of independence for the Irish parliament. With the Whigs, who had previously encouraged the Irish patriots, now in power, concessions followed, though 'legislative independence' in the strictest sense was not implemented. The Irish parliament was accorded increased powers, but this did not mean self-government as the Irish executive remained under Westminster control. Indeed, the conservative nature of the patriots ensured that the new constitutional arrangements made little actual impact on Irish society. Yet 'Grattan's Parliament', as the period from 1782 to 1800 became known, acquired major symbolic importance. The concessions won from the British were remembered with great pride, and the changes coincided with a major upswing in Ireland's economic fortunes. From the beginning of the nineteenth century the parliament building in College Green became a symbol of national freedom. Moreover, the factors that had brought success to the patriots were not lost on later generations of nationalists. The mobilisation of popular support in Ireland, the fear of a French invasion, Britain's preoccupation with a major conflict and the collapse of a hostile government at Westminster had each combined to advance the patriot cause. More significantly, perhaps, the decisive element in Grattan's triumph had been the role played by the extra-parliamentary pressure applied by the Volunteers.

Of course, Grattan's Parliament proved incapable of resolving the most pressing political issue in Ireland. While Grattan himself favoured granting full political rights to Catholics, he was unable to persuade a majority of Irish MPs to make this necessary leap of faith. Accordingly, the 1793 Catholic Relief Act was effectively imposed by Westminster against the determined opposition of the Irish parliament. Yet the return of Grattan's Parliament became the motivation for every subsequent nationalist movement. Grattan and his patriot supporters fought against Pitt's union plans, though most of this Ascendancy opposition to the Act of Union faded quickly once they

recognised that they were heavily outnumbered by the Catholic majority. It would have been difficult to foresee this development in 1800, but then both the rise of popular Catholic nationalism and the sharp decline of Presbyterian radicalism would have been equally hard to predict. Initial reaction to the Act of Union would have confirmed this. Both the Catholic hierarchy and most of the Catholic middle classes were in favour of the union, while the recently formed Orange Order was fiercely opposed to the measure. In time, there would be a realignment of these political forces as attitudes to the union altered, but it was only really in the last quarter of the century, with the emergence of the Home Rule movement, that the failure of the union became widely acknowledged.



Ireland

CHAPTER 1

Opposition to the Union

Following the 1798 rebellion, revolutionary nationalism resurfaced in 1803, 1848 and 1867. On each occasion, the leaders of these insurrections looked back for inspiration to earlier attempts to end British rule in Ireland. This tradition of violent nationalism never came close to success in the nineteenth century, but each rebellion appeared to at least achieve the goal of keeping alive the revolutionary flame. This was particularly true of the Fenian leadership in the 1860s. Constitutional nationalism, by contrast, mobilised significant, and at various junctures, overwhelming popular support. While its cadre of leaders was often drawn from the middle classes, much of its appeal was based on its cross class nature. Here, the Catholic faith helped to bind the various classes together, and over the course of the century a powerful bond developed between religion and national consciousness. This gave rise to the phenomenon of Catholic nationalism, and for much of the century, particularly in the early decades, both the organisation of the Catholic Church and its personnel were used in the construction of major political movements.

These constitutional nationalist movements varied their objectives depending on political circumstances. At certain times they sought to break the union, while at others they pressed for political and economic reforms under the auspices of the union. Unlike nationalist movements across contemporary Europe, Irish nationalism was not rooted in either a shared culture or a common language. In fact, the dominant nationalist leader in the first half of the nineteenth century, Irish-speaker Daniel O'Connell, eschewed the use of the Irish language in favour of English, which he associated with progress and modernisation. Therefore, the language was never a feature of O'Connell's repeal campaign, nor indeed part of any Fenian programme. It was only in the final years of the century that the language emerged as a significant component of national consciousness, when it became central to a new movement aimed at cultural revivalism. During the nineteenth century, however, cultural nationalism never had the same impact as either constitutional or revolutionary nationalism. These political nationalists sought, by different means, to alter the constitutional relationship between Britain and Ireland that had been established by the Act of Union at the beginning of the century.

1.1 Constitutional Nationalism 1800–1845

The development of Irish nationalism and the role of the Catholic Church

In Ireland, the most powerful advocate of a union had been Lord Clare, who acted as Lord Chancellor of Ireland during the passage of the Act of Union. While his father had been a convert from Catholicism, Clare had been a fierce opponent of Catholic relief and saw the union as a means of protecting the interests of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland. Clare was determined that such a new constitutional arrangement would not be blighted by accompanying legislation granting Catholic emancipation. In the previous decade he had warned that the 1793 legislation, which had given the vote to Catholics, would prove to be a fatal mistake, and he resolved to block any further attempts to extend full political rights to Ireland's Catholics. Moreover, his assessment of the 1798 rebellion had added to his concern about the potential danger of Catholic democracy. Not surprisingly, therefore, Clare used his considerable influence to impress upon Pitt the need to alter his initial plan, which was to introduce Catholic emancipation in tandem with the Act of Union. The Prime Minister and Lord Castlereagh, his Irish Chief Secretary, acceded to Clare's wishes, but proceeded on the assumption that emancipation could not be delayed for long. Yet Clare's intervention had ensured that the union was designed in a manner that would defend the Protestant interest in Ireland.

Clare had contended that the concession of emancipation would increase the likelihood of a fresh rebellion. Of course, Pitt's acceptance of the case for implementing the union without emancipation was encouraged by the fact that England was at war with France, making security a primary consideration for his government. Yet the establishment of this new constitutional arrangement without a resolution of the Catholic Question ensured that Irish Catholics came to see the union as part of a wider British plan to shore up the Protestant interest in Ireland. This realisation came as a shock to most Irish Catholics. Contacts with the government had indicated that a new constitutional arrangement would pave the way for the final resolution of the Catholic Question. The leaders of Catholic opinion in Ireland were convinced by the argument that emancipation could be more easily delivered within the broader United Kingdom framework. In Ireland Catholics comprised 80 percent of the population, but they faded into a less significant number