

## Central Lancashire Online Knowledge (CLoK)

Title	'No longer clad in corduroy'? The Glasgow University Irish National Club, 1907-1917
Type	Article
URL	<a href="https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/id/eprint/31412/">https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/id/eprint/31412/</a>
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2020.0464">https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2020.0464</a>
Date	2020
Citation	O-Cathain, Mairtin Sean (2020) 'No longer clad in corduroy'? The Glasgow University Irish National Club, 1907-1917. The Scottish Historical Review, 99 (2). pp. 271-294. ISSN 0036-9241
Creators	O-Cathain, Mairtin Sean

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work.  
<https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2020.0464>

For information about Research at UCLan please go to <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/>

All outputs in CLoK are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including Copyright law. Copyright, IPR and Moral Rights for the works on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the <http://clock.uclan.ac.uk/policies/>

*MÁIRTIN Ó CATHÁIN*

## ‘No longer clad in corduroy’? The Glasgow University Irish National Club, 1907–1917

### *ABSTRACT*

Unique among university clubs in Britain, the Glasgow University Irish National Club emerged before the First World War among mainly second generation, Scots-born Irish students to assist in the campaign for Irish home rule. It was a useful adjunct to the home rule movement and helped the Irish and mainly Catholic students at the university carve out a niche for themselves firstly within the institution and thereafter in wider society. This reflected a growing Irish Catholic middle-class desirous of playing a greater role in Scottish public life during a time of great transition for the Irish in Scotland.

Between the years 1907 and 1917, there existed at Glasgow university a unique student society focused on building support for Irish home rule. Although like the wider campaign for home rule, it was badly interrupted by the first world war, with several of its members being killed in the conflict, the Glasgow university Irish national club managed to limp into 1917, the only club of its kind in Britain or Ireland. The space it inhabited in university life was largely thereafter taken by a newer catholic students’ society whose emergence, growth and confidence owed much to the struggle of the Irish national club to gain recognition and respect. This, however, involved a transition through which religion replaced politics as the guiding force for a small but influential Irish catholic elite who would help mould as well as reflect a wider shift in Scotland’s catholic community after the war.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Dr James McConnel, Northumbria University, for commenting on an earlier draft of this paper. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers who made helpful and constructive comments.

This article argues that the consideration of this Edwardian university club highlights various important issues to be considered around migrant elite formation in Scotland, the opportunities for social mobility the club afforded, and ultimately its contribution to and impact on the temporal ‘moment’ of communal identity shift from nationalism to catholicism normally identified in most accounts with the post-war years, 1918 Education Act and / or the conclusion of the ‘Irish revolutionary period’.<sup>2</sup>

The ‘University of Glasgow Story’, launched online in 2007, contains a wealth of information for researchers on alumni of the university over its more than five hundred-year history.<sup>3</sup> It provided a valuable base from which some of the initial biographical data on former students was gathered for this article. This was augmented by civil registration and census material to build up a socio-economic profile of the Irish national club members who could be traced. The minutes of the Glasgow university union’s committee of management, held by the university’s archive service, show the daily workings of the organisation and contain occasional references to the clubs and societies but have scant mention of the Irish club, for which there are no specific records. Much more useful was the Glasgow university magazine, titled the *Fleeting Hour*, which has more detail on the politics, social life and opinions of those at the helm of the Union between the years 1906 and 1923. Much of the response of the Irish community in Scotland to the activities of the Irish national club at the university is contained in the pages of their newspaper, the *Glasgow Observer*, which often provides additional detail of the debates covered in the *Fleeting Hour*. This communal perspective was given some unique insights by Patrick G. Torley of Clydebank, the late son of a former club president, John L. Torley (1891–1945).<sup>4</sup> Taken together, these primary sources enable the reconstruction of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow: The uneasy peace* (Manchester, 1987), 97–107; T. M. Devine ‘Introduction’, in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society* (Edinburgh, 1991); Bernard Aspinwall, ‘A long journey: the Irish in Scotland’, in P. O’Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide: History, heritage and identity*, Volume 5, *Religion and Identity* (Leicester, 1996), 146–82.

<sup>3</sup> [www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk](http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk)

<sup>4</sup> For Torley, see n. 79.

pre-War Glasgow university union and the fledging appearance of and reception afforded the Irish national club, both within and outwith the student estate.

A starting point, however, is to address some of the debates in the literature concerned in particular with the emergence of a specifically Irish catholic elite and where this sits in relation to Irish and Scottish civic and intellectual life. The common perception is that the Irish in Scotland in general, but particularly perhaps the catholic element, were an entirely impoverished and marginalised group. Few studies have examined or even addressed the existence of the small but vibrant and influential middle class. The Celtic football club myth, for example, concentrates overwhelmingly on the charitable origins of the club but ignores the fact that the famous sporting brand was an expression of middle-class Irish catholic aspiration and ambition.

Much of the most stimulating Irish historiography over the last decade and more has emerged out of research into the development and consolidation of an Irish catholic elite.<sup>5</sup> This also includes valuable recent studies by McConnel and NicDháibhéid, which consider the complexities around inter-generational and familial social mobility.<sup>6</sup> Key to this trend has been Ciarán O'Neill's incisive work on the Irish, British and transnational contours of Irish catholic elite education in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, in contrast to the idea of a block or limitation to Irish catholic advancement in public life, O'Neill's research through a prosopographical analysis has illuminated the ways in which many or most wealthy Catholics pursued private sector careers in the professions, military and local government. It is, in fact, he argues, their relative disinterest in higher political office which stands in contradistinction to the ideas advanced by some scholars, i.e. Senia Pašeta, notably, that marks out the affluent

---

<sup>5</sup> Fergus Campbell, *The Irish Establishment, 1879–1914* (Oxford, 2009); Ciarán O'Neill (ed.), *Irish Elites in the Nineteenth Century* (Dublin, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> James McConnel, "Out in the Cold?": The children of the Irish parliamentary party and the Irish free state', in *Irish Historical Studies* 42 (2018) 87–114; Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'Fighting their Fathers' Fight: The post-revolutionary generation in independent Ireland', in Senia Pašeta (ed.), *Uncertain Futures: Essays about the Irish past for Roy Foster* (Oxford, 2016), 148–60.

Catholic middle class.<sup>7</sup> This is a well-supported and carefully constructed thesis, alive to wider debates on the nature of elites, and engaged with theorists such as Bourdieu and Foucault to a certain extent, but it perhaps too uncritically distinguishes between the public and private spheres, and allows little room for the widely accepted idea that success in the private sphere had an impact on public life. Bourdieu's ideas about the ability of elites to manage change by the control of 'forms of capital which are mutable, that is can be exchanged or turned into other forms of capital such as cultural and symbolic capital' are important.<sup>8</sup> It is this expansive mutability of various forms of capital in the formation of elites that is somewhat missing from O'Neill's study, concerned as it is with arguments that the political impact of the Irish Catholic elite was relatively limited.

O'Neill's research, however, is focused on the examination of intermediate or second-level education at private institutions in Ireland, England and France, and he pays little attention to universities. The experiences generally of university students is not something that has generated much interest in Irish historical research besides where it features in debates on the university question, institutional histories or biographical work.<sup>9</sup> Students, perhaps surprisingly, feature even less in Irish diaspora studies, with only the recent work of Laura Kelly on Irish medical students really standing out. Kelly's research therefore is pioneering on a number of levels, concerned as it is with university educational experiences, particularly in her earlier work on young Irish women, but also for its concern with student culture and positioning of the migrant student experience in the wider body of writing on the diaspora.

---

<sup>7</sup> Ciarán O'Neill, *Catholics of Consequence: Transnational education, social mobility and the Irish catholic elite, 1850–1900* (Oxford, 2014), 206; Senia Pašeta, *Before the Revolution: Nationalism, social change and Ireland's catholic elite, 1879–1922* (Cork, 1999), 3–4.

<sup>8</sup> Glen Morgan, Paul Hirsch and Sigrid Quack, 'Elites on Trial: Introduction', in Glen Morgan, Paul Hirsch and Sigrid Quack (eds), *Elites on Trial* (Bingley, 2015), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Senia Pašeta, 'The Catholic Hierarchy and the Irish University Question, 1880–1908', in *History* 85 (2000), 268–84; R. B. McDowell and D. A. Webb, *Trinity College Dublin 1592–1952: An academic history* (Cambridge, 1982); Gillian McClelland with Diana Hadden, *Pioneering Women: Riddell Hall and Queen's University Belfast* (Belfast, 2005); Colin Barr, *Paul Cullen, John Henry Newman, and the Catholic University of Ireland, 1845–1865* (Notre Dame, IN, 2003); Ged Martin, 'Parnell at Cambridge: The education of an Irish nationalist', *Irish Historical Studies* 19 (1974) 72–82.

While it is admitted that this section of the Irish migrant experience is a marginal, privileged and not wholly representative one, it was nonetheless an influential one. Students were not merely representational of the social mobility of the migrant community but would, in time, as O'Neill and Kelly make clear, become key leadership figures. As MacRaild, Miskell and latterly Moulton have all emphasised, these crucial middle-class representatives have been sidelined in the literature, but their role, particularly in articulating and transmitting the changing identity and values of the Irish community in Britain, and their attempts to negotiate the corresponding relationships within, across and beyond that community also deserve further attention.<sup>10</sup>

Scottish studies of the student estate have also informed this article, in particular the ground-breaking work of Catriona Macdonald, with its focus on the temporal and spatial challenges posed by students in Scotland and their relationship to civic life.<sup>11</sup> Of course, in a time of shifting identities and accommodation with Scottish society in which the Irish student body increasingly identified itself with catholicism over nationalism (problematic as that in itself proved to be), the question of which civic life this meant often arises. This thorny issue has been discussed at length, if indirectly, in a succession of works on both the Irish and separately the catholic experience in Scotland (as well, it must be said, the Protestant Irish experience). The work of Tom Gallagher and the late Bernard Aspinwall, as well as T. M. Devine approaches this from various perspectives.<sup>12</sup> More recently we have been provided with

---

<sup>10</sup> Laura Kelly, *Irish Women in Medicine, c. 1880s–1920s: Origins, education and careers* (Manchester, 2012); Laura Kelly, 'Migration and Medical Education: Irish medical students at the University of Glasgow, 1859–1900', in *Irish Economic and Social History* 39 (2012) 39–55; D. M. MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750–1939* (Basingstoke, 1999), 61–2; Louise Miskell, 'Operating in the Ethnic Sphere': Irish migrant networks and the question of respectability in nineteenth-century South Wales', in Enda Delaney and D. M. MacRaild (eds), *Irish Migration, Networks and Ethnic Identities since 1750* (Abingdon, 2007); Mo Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England* (Cambridge, 2014), 5–7.

<sup>11</sup> C. M. M. Macdonald, 'Rhetoric, Place and Performance: Students and the heritage of the Scottish universities, 1880–1945', in I. J. M. Robertson (ed.), *Heritage, Culture and Identity: Heritage from below* (Farnham, Surrey, 2012), 59–74; C. M. M. Macdonald, "'To Form Citizens": Scottish students, governance and politics, 1884–1948', in *History of Education* 38 (2009) 383–402.

<sup>12</sup> Tom Gallagher, 'The Catholic Irish in Scotland: In search of identity', in Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants*, 19–43; Bernard Aspinwall, 'Catholic Realities and Pastoral Strategies: Another look at the historiography of

a longer focused monograph study by Cliff Williamson on catholic intellectual life in Scotland, which complements as much as it challenges some of the earlier, perhaps more ethnically-focused work. Williamson, like Aspinwall before him, is keen to contextualise the Scottish catholic experience in a British, European and international framework, but provides a more sustained consideration of the religious and secular world of the catholic community's middle-class leadership.<sup>13</sup> Williamson and Aspinwall also share an antipathy of sorts to what they see in the historiography as the cultural drag of Irish ethnic politics well into the twentieth century and the sectarian reference points, rising like Churchill's 'dreary steeples' whenever Scottish catholicism is discussed. Quite rightly, they refer to the complexity of the catholic community, the decline in the Irish-born proportion of the population and the traction lost by Irish nationalism in Scotland in the years after the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921. However, they fail to address the ethnic communalism of the second and even third generation, the possibility that a sentimental attachment to Irish nationalist aspirations remained for many and that this perspective may even have accompanied a whole host of other indicators of assimilation. Much or most of this attitude is manifested in the make-up, politics and impact of the Glasgow university Irish national club.

The club was formed on 28 October 1907 in the humanity classroom at Glasgow university, the students thanking both the principal and Professor Phillimore for allowing use of the space. Created 'to foster Irish Nationalist ideas at the University', the new club was founded by an eclectic group of mainly second-generation (i.e. non-Irish-born) students.<sup>14</sup> There are no membership figures available for the club but there was clearly a core of around

---

Scottish catholicism, 1878–1920', *Innes Review* 59 (2008) 77–112; Bernard Aspinwall, 'The Formation of a British Identity within Scottish Catholicism, 1830–1914', in Robert Pope (ed.), *Religion and National Identity: Wales and Scotland, c. 1700–2000* (Cardiff, 2001), 268–306; T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700–2000* (London, 1999), 495–97.

<sup>13</sup> Clifford Williamson, *The History of Catholic Intellectual Life in Scotland, 1918–1965* (Basingstoke, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 2 Nov. 1907.

thirty to forty students and social gatherings (though probably not all composed of members), could clearly contain up to hundred individuals. At its height, membership probably sat at around sixty students, including the women at Queen Margaret college, making it larger than the Fabians but smaller clearly than the Liberal or Conservative clubs.<sup>15</sup> Its president, who had earlier made a public call for the creation of such a club at the university, was a young dynamic medical student with the unlikely name of Hyacinth Bernard Wenceslaus Morgan, born in 1885 to Irish parents in the equally unlikely location of Grenada in the West Indies. Morgan worked briefly in St George's, the island's capital, as a civil servant, and intended to embark on a legal career before heading to Glasgow in 1904 where he began his training as a medical doctor.<sup>16</sup> Like other young Irish catholic students, he soon came under the influence of Professor John Phillimore (1873–1926), a renowned classics scholar who had come to Glasgow from Oxford in 1899.<sup>17</sup> Phillimore was an urbane and sophisticated individual, a gifted linguist, but also a talented mountain climber who had been an intimate of Hillaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton with whom he had founded a republican club at Oxford university. He was on the radical wing of Liberalism and remained an ardent supporter of Irish claims to self-determination. Widely popular across the student body, he became associated particularly with catholic students after his conversion to that faith in 1906.<sup>18</sup> The club appeared at an auspicious time for Irish nationalists whose campaign for home rule had been given new hope with the advent of a Liberal government headed by Henry Campbell-Bannerman, a former Glasgow alumnus, and the introduction of the Irish council bill in May 1907. Chastened by the legacy of Gladstone's

---

<sup>15</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 3 Dec. 1910. The year 1913 was noted as a high point for GUINC membership, though numbers remain elusive in reports, see *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 30 Aug. 1913. The *Derry Journal's* Scottish correspondent suggested there were just over one hundred Catholic undergraduates at the university and forty women students at Queen Margaret college in 1912: *Derry Journal*, 15 Mar. 1912.

<sup>16</sup> E. L. Cox, 'A West Indian Lobbyist in England: The campaign of Dr Hyacinth B. Morgan on behalf of the British West Indies, 1919–1955', *Journal of Caribbean History*, 47 (2013) 49–51.

<sup>17</sup> Glasgow, University of Glasgow Archive Services [UGAS], Papers of John Swinnerton Phillimore, 1896–1926, GB 0248 DC 016.

<sup>18</sup> S. N. Miller, 'Phillimore, John Swinnerton (1873–1926)', rev. Mark Pottle, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35509>; accessed 2 March 2011]. Phillimore went on to become president of the Glasgow university catholic sodality during the first world war.

alliance with the Irish and secured by a landslide election victory, the Liberals were focused on domestic policy, cautious about a renewal of the home rule controversy and pursued a more tentative strategy. That ‘step by step’ incremental approach to devolution ultimately failed, but a mood of optimism nonetheless suffused the nationalist movement and reinvigorated its supporters at a time that coincided with something of a critical mass of young and energetic Irish students at the university.<sup>19</sup>

Irish clubs had existed at the university before, but, like those at Edinburgh university, these had been primarily social organisations with little or no mention of politics.<sup>20</sup> Kelly mentions such a club at Glasgow in 1898 which held meetings and organised its own St Patrick’s day festivities. Between 1859 and 1900, she notes, 182 Irish-born medical students attended Glasgow with 14 alone matriculating in 1885–6. Of course, a longer history of Irish-born students at Glasgow university and other Scottish universities has been documented by several historians, not least Elaine McFarland, whose work on eighteenth-century students, mainly presbyterians, was a crucial element in her discussion of Scottish and Irish radicalism in that period.<sup>21</sup> There were also Irish students at the university involved in and with the students’ union and its various societies who held aloof from the nationalist club which appeared in their midst.<sup>22</sup> The change appears to have come with the slow rise in the numbers of students from Irish catholic backgrounds beginning to appear at Glasgow university from around the turn of the century onwards, a development largely concomitant with the growth of a mainly lower middle-class Irish catholic community in Scotland. Some of these were Irish-born but most members of the new nationalist club were the second-generation children of Irish

---

<sup>19</sup> Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish history, 1800–2000* (London, 2003), 99, 111.

<sup>20</sup> Gerald Warner, *Conquering by Degrees. Glasgow University Union: A cenetenary history, 1885–1985* (Glasgow, 1985), 50; *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 12 Feb. 1890; *Edinburgh Evening News*, 13 Dec. 1902.

<sup>21</sup> Kelly, *Irish Medical Students*, 49, 40; E. W. McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution: Planting the green bough* (Edinburgh, 1994).

<sup>22</sup> UGAS, Glasgow University Union [henceforth GUU] minutes, 7 and 14 Mar. 1905, GB0248 DC 094/2/3. Fred Farrell and E. J. Fitzgerald were prominent members of the union’s management committee at this time but neither got involved with the nationalists.

migrants, most of whom had achieved a good degree of social mobility in their own lifetimes. For example, the club's vice-president, James Alphonsus Conway, was born in Dennistoun, Glasgow in 1888, son of a prosperous Irish pawnbroker. Conway had a brother, Frank, who also attended the university and was involved with the club, later establishing his own law firm after service in the first world war.<sup>23</sup> The secretary, Michael John Murray, was born in Greenock, also in 1888 to an Irish customs and excise officer, Patrick Murray.<sup>24</sup> Among most of the other initial committee members, backgrounds were not greatly dissimilar to these. Daniel Augustine Cush, son of a Belfast spirit merchant, lodged with his school teacher sister on Byres Road, close by the university and enjoyed the services of an Irish servant while he was a student. Charles Bennett also lived with his family, close to Kelvingrove park and the university. He was the son of Professor Peter Bennett, an Irish-born teacher of physics at Anderson's college, whose eldest son was a pharmacist and who also had two daughters who were school teachers.<sup>25</sup> The son of another wine and spirit merchant made good, Patrick O'Hare from County Monaghan, and one of Glasgow's leading Irish politicians, Thomas O'Hare was alone amongst the founding committee in being a law student as every other member was studying medicine.<sup>26</sup> The only member of the club committee not from an Irish background was the treasurer, Felix Savy (or Joseph Henri Napoleon Felix Savy, to use his full name). Like Morgan, Savy was born in a slightly more exotic location: Port Victoria, Mahe in the Seychelles. He was the son of a French attorney, Charles Savy. He was sent to the French-

---

<sup>23</sup> 'James Alphonsus Joseph Conway', The University of Glasgow Story (henceforth UGS) [<https://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH19068&type=P>; accessed 24 Aug. 2017] and 'Private Frank Joseph Aloysius Conway', UGS [<http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/ww1-biography/?id=2351>; accessed 24 Aug. 2017].

<sup>24</sup> 'Michael John Murray', UGS, [<http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH23887&type=P>; accessed 24 Aug. 2017].

<sup>25</sup> 'Daniel Augustine Cush', UGS [<http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH24748&type=P&o=&start=0&max=20&l>; accessed 24 Aug. 2017] and 'Charles Bennett', UGS [<http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH18594&type=P>; accessed 24 Aug. 2017].

<sup>26</sup> 'Thomas Alphonsus O'Hare', UGS [<http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH23923&type=P>; accessed 25 Aug. 2017].

founded Marist Brothers' boarding school, St Joseph's college in Dumfries, and he entered Glasgow university to study medicine in 1905.<sup>27</sup> It would take some considerable time before Catholic students such as these moved into the governance of the student estate at Glasgow. When they did, in the years after the first world war, it was as representatives of a confession more than of a political identity, but it was politics rather than faith that built the base to gain that foothold.<sup>28</sup> The liberal-nationalist alliance increasingly stressed the importance of accommodation between Britain and Ireland through the mechanism of self-governance as a means towards establishing a 'brotherhood of affection' between the two countries. This, it was held, would make loyal citizens of the Irish, and devoted servants of the wider British empire wherever the Irish were found, from Aberdeen to Auckland. More immediately, the club's executive helped foster a new, younger professional elite, ostensibly collected together in an Irish interest, but increasingly and through their experiences at the university, committed to a future in Scottish public life, if not across Britain and the empire.

The ordinary members of the club mostly mirrored the executive over the years 1907 to 1917 and, as can be seen from Table 1 (containing information on those students who could be identified and traced), these were mainly Irish catholic, second- and sometimes third-generation and from families where there had been some social mobility, often as a result of opportunities afforded the Irish in the licensed trade. A number were related, such as the Hayes siblings, two of only four individuals on this list born in Ireland. At least three members can be identified as having roots in colonial or imperial service. Edmund Burke's father, for example, was born in 1860 in Barbados to an Irish soldier serving there, and Hyacinth Morgan and John Gibb both had Irish fathers in far-flung corners of the empire. This indicates that imperial connections helped facilitate the education of more than a few members of the club and

---

<sup>27</sup> 'Joseph Henri Napoleon Felix Savy', UGS

[<http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH21826&type=P>; accessed 25 Aug. 2017].

<sup>28</sup> UGAS, GUU minutes, 9 Mar. 1911, GB0248 DC 094/2/4. E. J. Burke made an early breakthrough for the Irish club, being elected onto the union's library committee in 1911.

highlights how empire facilitated as well as benefited from university education as shown in the work of Fitzpatrick, Ridden and O’Neill.<sup>29</sup> It is a little harder to account for the involvement of a Chinese arts student in expatriate Irish circles, but Yuan Chen may well have been brought in as a result of a personal friendship if not as a result of a post-Boxer rebellion sense of anti-imperialism. The students’ union minutes from 1910 show the existence also of a vibrant Indian union which affiliated, demonstrating that the Irish were not the only ones claiming anti-imperialist credentials but with whom no common cause appears to have emerged.<sup>30</sup>

Table 1 – Glasgow University Irish National Club members (1907–17)

Name	Place of birth	Father’s occupation	Year graduated
Charles Bennett	Glasgow	Professor of Chemistry	1908
Thomas H. Boyle	Port Glasgow	Spirit Dealer’s Assistant	1913
Edmund Burke (P)	Elgin	Wool Agent / Station Master	1914
Yuan Chen	Wuxi, Jiangsu, China	Editor	1915
Francis J. Conway	Glasgow	Pawnbroker	1920
James A. Conway (P)	Glasgow	Pawnbroker	1914

<sup>29</sup> David Fitzpatrick, ‘Ireland and the Empire’, in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 3: *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), 494–521; Jennifer Ridden, ‘Elite Power and British Political Identity: The Irish elite in the “British World”’, in Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips (eds), *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain* (Basingstoke, 2004), 197–212; O’Neill, *Catholics of Consequence*, 58, 70.

<sup>30</sup> UGAS, GUU minutes, 12, 20 Dec. 1910, GB0248 DC 094/2/4.

Daniel Cush	Glasgow	Spirit Merchant	1913
James N. Doherty	Gorbals, Glasgow	Mason	1917
Philip Duffy	Glasgow	Spirit Merchant	killed 1917*
George Forrester	Tarbolton	Policeman	1909
John Forrester	Tarbolton	Policeman	1911
John J. Gibb	Punjab, India	Soldier	1912
James A. Hamilton	Cushendun, Co. Antrim	Farmer / Lighthouse keeper	1919
Bridget J. Hayes (P)	Ennis, Co. Clare	Farmer	1914
Daniel C. Hayes	Ennis, Co. Clare	Farmer	1911
Stephen J. Henry	Glasgow	Auctioneer	1908
Charles J. Kirk	Dumbarton	Spirit Merchant	1913
William J. B. Lavery	Dumbarton	Spirit Merchant	1916
Hugh L. McCormick	Glasgow	Spirit Merchant	1915
Joseph Patrick McGreehin	Ballieston, Glasgow	Grocer	1915
Hyacinth Morgan (P)	Grenada, West Indies	Solicitor	1909
John Hughes Murray (P)	Greenock	Spirit Merchant	1915
Michael J. Murray (P)	Greenock	Spirit Merchant	1912
Mary O'Neill (P)	Partick, Glasgow	Shipyard Labourer	1914
Thomas O'Hare (P)	Glasgow	Spirit Merchant / MP	1912
Edward Quigley	Lambhill, Glasgow	Pawnbroker	1908
James F. Quigley	Possilpark, Glasgow	Pawnbroker	1912, killed 1917
James F. Quigley	Bridgeton, Glasgow	Draper	1910

Edward A. Riordan	Leeds, England	Supervisor, Customs and Excise	1910
Thomas Rogers	Shawlands, Glasgow	Tramways timekeeper	1915
Charles Savy	Seychelles	Attorney	1910
William A. Stuart	Dennistoun, Glasgow	School Inspector	1914, killed 1917
John Torley (P)	Clydebank, Glasgow	Clerk	1916
Tom White	Glasgow	Metal broker	1909
Hugh G. Wilson	Ballyclare, Co. Antrim	Gentleman	1912
Henry Windsor	Cookstown, Co. Tyrone	Veterinary Surgeon	1909

---

(P) signifies presidents of the Glasgow University or Queen Margaret College Irish National Club  
 \*Duffy took classes in History, French, Geography and Latin between 1913 and 1915 but never graduated because he enlisted and was killed in 1917.  
 Sources: The Glasgow University Story [<https://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/>; accessed 6 September 2017]; *Glasgow Observer* (1906–21); National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotlandspeople, [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) [accessed 6, 7 & 8 Sept. 2017], Census of Scotland, 1891, 1901 and 1911; General Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland).

Medical students made up the overwhelming majority of the young men on this list, accounting for twenty-three or 64%, and all of the club's presidents with the exception of the women, who were arts students. Of the rest, seven were MA students, four studied law and two achieved bachelors of science qualifications. As already noted, Irish medical students generally formed a significant element of the undergraduate community, and the degree to which a shared course of medical studies may have helped bind a core of club members together should not be

underestimated. These young men and women had been brought together by a shared sense of the importance of the Irish national project, but also, as the founding meeting of the Queen Margaret college Irish national club declared, ‘to enlighten those who misunderstand and misrepresent Irish claims and aspirations, and to engender and keep verdant the history of the western isle’.<sup>31</sup> They thus saw themselves as ambassadors for Ireland and the epitome of the kind of citizens deemed worthy of self-government. Again, this involved and was tied to a process of civic engagement through education that reflected social mobility and elite formation in the Irish catholic community, which aimed at providing leadership roles in catholic, Scottish, British and wider imperial spheres.

The sense of community (or communal) pride in the university’s Irish catholic cohort began to be represented in the pages of the Glasgow Irish newspaper, the *Glasgow Observer*, around this period as well. A regular column on ‘varsity matters’ appeared, perhaps for a time authored by H. B. W. Morgan himself, celebrating collective and individual endeavour by the student body and their place at the heart of a narrative of Irish catholic achievement, progression and acceptance.<sup>32</sup> Lists of catholic and Irish graduates were regularly given as evidence of this trend, and appeared alongside news of the other celebrated institutions such as the Jesuit-run St Aloysius college and Notre Dame catholic teacher-training college in Glasgow.<sup>33</sup> John Henry Newman’s ideas on the purpose of the university and its place in catholic life were a feature of most discussions about tertiary education in the *Observer* and university students at this time became the load-bearers for the expectations and aspirations of their families and communities.<sup>34</sup> This placed them in an influential position almost a decade before the 1918 education act and Irish civil war, both seen as so pivotal in the catholic community’s ultimate shift away from Irish politics and towards Scottish domestic concerns.

---

<sup>31</sup> *Weekly Freeman’s Journal*, 24 Jan. 1914.

<sup>32</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 23 Feb., 16 Mar., 13 Apr. and 4 May 1907.

<sup>33</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 14 Apr. 1906 and 20 Apr. 1907.

<sup>34</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 2 Feb. 1907.

Perhaps also because they provided a younger, in part Labour rather than Liberal-inclined leadership, they were not associated with the generational gap afflicting many pre-war parliamentary nationalists in Ireland as the younger militant separatists came to the fore.<sup>35</sup>

The Glasgow university Irish national club's origins and founders were keen to make their own impact on Irish political life, but the character of their politics and place in the corporate life of the university and its student union are no less interesting. Glasgow university union (GUU), pre-dated the students' representative council, being founded in 1885. Originally conceived as a means of acquiring a recreational centre for the students, the union came about largely as a result of the efforts of the two university societies, the dialectical and medico-chirurgical.<sup>36</sup> Warner has written of the development of the union as a milestone in student life, growing from the humble scheme for recreational space 'to the more ambitious notion of institutionalising, in representative form, the entire student corporate life'.<sup>37</sup> Glasgow university's two main political societies however, existed long before the Union. The Conservative association, which is the oldest university Conservative club in Britain, was founded as the Peel club in 1836. The Liberal association followed just a few years afterwards and the two unsurprisingly came to dominate university politics until the Glasgow university Fabian club, which appeared in 1895, added a further element, though its influence was often marginal.<sup>38</sup> Clubs and societies keen to avail themselves of the union facilities had to seek affiliation by submitting their constitution to the management committee, but it was not an automatic process, and the union minutes show that the Conservative club had their application rejected in 1906, though the reasons for this are not noted.<sup>39</sup> Strangely, there is no record in the

---

<sup>35</sup> R. F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890–1923* (London, 2014), 1–30.

<sup>36</sup> UGAS, GUU minutes, 7 Mar. 1905, GB0248 DC 094/2/3. Besides the dialectical and medico-chirurgical societies (which would also have had a draw for the Irish students), at the time of the Irish club's appearance the union also featured a Christian union, Alexandrian society, Ossianic society, philosophical society and a church of Scotland undergraduate society, later joined by a united free church students' society.

<sup>37</sup> Warner, *Conquering by Degrees*, 1–3.

<sup>38</sup> UGAS, GUU minutes, 1 Mar. 1911 and 12 Mar. 1914, GB0248 DC 094/2/4 show Fabians, Philip Figdor and Robert Page Arnot active in raising the issue of wages for the union maids and servants.

<sup>39</sup> UGAS, GUU minutes, 14 Feb. 1906, GB0248 DC 094/2/3.

committee's minutes of an application by the Irish nationalists though, like the Fabians, they did request an extra speaker at the union's political debate. Outside of the rectorial elections, the regular parliamentary debate was the core activity of the political clubs and afforded the opportunity to engage with the big political issues of the day to many students. It was, moreover, something students engaged with for a variety of reasons—the practice of a rhetorical and discursive flourish, their validation and advancement within the club and across the student body, a form of political apprenticeship and / or simply for fun.<sup>40</sup> Catriona Macdonald has shown how a complex and often divisive and contested corpus of ideas about the role and meaning of student politics more broadly increasingly characterised university life from the 1890s onwards.<sup>41</sup> The novelist John Buchan, a student at Glasgow in the middle of that decade remembered:

As a student I was wholly obscure. I made few friends, I attended infrequently one or other of the numerous societies, but I never spoke in a debate; and I acquired the corporate spirit only at a rectorial election when, though a professed Tory, I chose to support the Liberal candidate, Mr Asquith, and almost came by my end at the hands of a red-haired savage, one Robert Horne, who has since been Chancellor of the Exchequer.<sup>42</sup>

For a later president of the Oxford union and enthusiast for its own clubs and societies, this general air of apathy for student politics is probably less significant than its professed ideological flexibility. This was a feature of the Irish nationalist club and was noted by other contemporaries, such as the playwright O. H. Mavor who recorded that, although ‘an

---

<sup>40</sup> UGAS, GUU minutes, 15 Nov. 1905 and 27 Feb. 1908, GB0248 DC 094/2/3 and 094/2/4.

<sup>41</sup> Macdonald, “‘To Form Citizens’”, 389.

<sup>42</sup> John Buchan, *Memory Hold-the-Door: The autobiography of John Buchan* (London, 1940), 33.

intransigent liberal', he took part with other students in the torchlit procession and welcome for George Wyndham when the Tory chief secretary for Ireland became rector in 1902.<sup>43</sup>

The rectorial elections were often the dramatic centrepiece of the university's public life, but the union debates were the principal political events that marked out the academic year. Some of these were printed by the union and are preserved in the university's archives. These were designed to mirror debates in the Commons with the clubs given speaking rights, and students referred to by their 'constituency', normally assigned as a result of ancestral linkages. At the conclusion of the focused debate a motion with or without amendments was then put to the 'chamber' and voted upon.<sup>44</sup> The Irish nationalist club declared its intention to participate in the union debate at its founding meeting in 1907, but its appeals to do so were rejected by the committee (though strangely neither the application nor the rejection were minuted). However, an article in the university magazine, the *Fleeting Hour*, gives a flavour of how some viewed the new club and its ambitions. The president, Hyacinth Morgan, was singled out for some typically stereotypical humour employing Mr Dooley, the famous creation of Chicago journalist, Finley Peter Dunne:

There was a generally expressed wish among the Glasgow University Nationalists that the new society should be represented in Friday's debate. Tyranny, cowardice, or both, prevented that wish from being granted by the authorities. Accordingly, none of the three wigs gravitated towards the green. Dooley sums up Mr Morgan's position—"I'd lay down me life an' th' lives iv ivry wan iv th' eighteen brave men iv me devoted army", he says, "I'll fight whiniver 'tis cool", he says, "an' they ain't wan iv these twelve men here that wudden't follow me to hell, if they was

---

<sup>43</sup> J. Bridie [O. H. Mavor], *One Way of Living* (London, 1939), 115.

<sup>44</sup> UGAS, GUU printed debates, GB0248 DC 094/4/1.

awake at th' time", he says. Mr H. B. W. Morgan has, however, been photographed for the *Glasgow Observer*. Lack of space compels us to dismiss the subject for the present. Au revoir, my little Hyacinth!<sup>45</sup>

The tone in the *Glasgow Observer* was unsurprisingly a little more brittle. In the paper's 'University Notes' it mentioned that although the club did not take part as an official body in the debate, about ten 'enthusiastic' members attended and voted for the Liberals. The *Observer* noted that there was a marked absence of any discussion on Ireland and added that one of what it claimed were only three Catholics at the university not in sympathy with the Irish nationalist club, spoke for the Conservatives.<sup>46</sup> This appears to have been Matthew Cassidy, a medical student who graduated in 1909 and became a district medical officer in Jamaica and served in the war later settling in the Gold Coast until he retired to Maidenhead in Berkshire.<sup>47</sup> The *Observer* continued:

Varsity politicians will very soon realise that no false and misleading fabrication against Catholicity or bigoted indulgence in Carrion Crowism against the Emerald Isle will be allowed to pass unchallenged. The next debate will see the Irish Nationalist to the forefront.<sup>48</sup>

Ahead of that debate however, the club members entertained the nationalist M.P., J. G. Swift MacNeill at the end of November 1907. MacNeill was an erudite and distinguished figure, professor of constitutional and criminal law at the King's Inns, Dublin and a respected, if at

---

<sup>45</sup> UGAS, Glasgow University Magazine (hereafter GUM), 7 Nov. 1907, xix (GB 248 DC/198/1/19), 6.

<sup>46</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 9 Nov. 1907.

<sup>47</sup> UGAS, GUM, 7 Nov. 1907, xix (GB 248 DC/198/1/19), 23; Matthew Ignatius Thornton Cassidy (1883-1947) [<http://www.genegenealogy.com/getperson.php?personID=P234&tree=Tree1>]; accessed 25 Aug. 2017]; *Donegal News*, 24 Apr. 1909.

<sup>48</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 9 Nov. 1907.

times eccentric, parliamentary. As M.P. for South Donegal he was a popular choice of speaker among the Irish in the west of Scotland, many of whom had roots in that county, and spoke in three different places as well as his stop-off at the university.<sup>49</sup> He was an important totem for nationalists in being a protestant, especially in a time when sectarian arguments over home rule were again gaining currency, and this formed the core of his address, at least in the version presented in the *Observer*. He told the students that in spite of the concerns raised by unionists about the treatment of protestants in a home rule Ireland, that catholics were not intolerant and that their fears were unfounded.<sup>50</sup> The *Glasgow Herald*, alternatively, did not report this section of the speech, but concentrated instead on the long historical preamble about the perceived wrongs Ireland had suffered. MacNeill's qualified faith in the Liberal government and prime minister, and the presence of the presidents of the Liberal and dialectic clubs testified to his broader appeal among the students.<sup>51</sup> The subsequent Glasgow university union debate, which was not covered in the *Fleeting Hour*, recorded a victory for the Irish Liberal alliance by 209 votes to 204 with some added post-debate fisticuffs. The *Observer* reported:

the Liberals were in power but Conservatives were sanguine of success. Their hopes though were doomed for disappointment because the Nationalists had appeared on the scene ... a most regrettable incident happened after the proceedings had finished. A Conservative, smarting under defeat was rash

---

<sup>49</sup> *Irish News*, 22 Nov. 1907. Just previous to this, the Irish national club had held one of their first debates in the union on the subject of emigration, perhaps unsurprisingly, and voted by a large majority that the disadvantages outweighed the advantages.

<sup>50</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 30 Nov. 1907.

<sup>51</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 29 Nov. 1907; UGAS, GUU minutes, 20 Dec. 1911, GB0248 DC 094/2/4. Attendance was normally good when M.P.s made a visit to the university, as in 1911 when Augustine Birrell, who was chief secretary for Ireland as well as a leading Liberal politician, dined with the students.

enough to use language against a Nationalist that no Catholic would tolerate. The result was not altogether pleasant for the Conservative.<sup>52</sup>

This was not, of course, unusual for union debates which, like the rectorial elections, were an opportunity for a panoply of high jinks and inter-personal violence as well as serious political discussion, but the *Observer* portrayed things as part of what was at times a physical contest and a struggle for the Irish Catholic students to carve out their place at the university, just as Irish migrants had more widely attempted to do over the preceding century. That this depiction was hyperbole in large part, given the growing numbers of Irish Catholic students at the university, their social class profile and the support they received from many of the staff and students does not invalidate the antagonism which they sometimes faced. Reporting on the February 1908 union debate, the *Glasgow Observer* claimed that Morgan refuted unionist arguments that home rule meant Rome rule, whilst his deputy, Tom O'Hare, dealt with the evils caused by the union with Britain and financial relations between England and Ireland, noting that the vote resulted in 157 votes for the Tories and 133 for the Liberals.<sup>53</sup> However, in a typically ironic and waspish piece in the *Fleeting Hour*, Tory partisan Robert Hellier Napier ridiculed the *Observer's* use of the term 'carrion crowism' beginning:

It was *our* debate—our, and ours alone. Tories and Liberals thought that they were in charge, but we proved them wrong. Alone we did it—alone, save for our emerald neck-ties, and once more our wild harp rings out Erin's glories through the Hills of Tara [ra-boom-dee-ay].<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 7 Dec. 1907.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 Feb. 1908.

<sup>54</sup> UGAS, GUM, 12 Feb. 1908, xx (GB 248 DC/198/1/20), 359.

What followed was a predictable litany of references to Irish rustic life, a selection of farm animals, Donnybrooks and begorrahs, which cannot have endeared Napier or those on the magazine to their Irish catholic peers. Perhaps correspondingly, the following *Fleeting Hour* report of the union debate written by another member of the editorial team took a much more restrained approach. Although described as having ‘murder in his eye’, Tom O’Hare for the nationalists was depicted as ‘an interesting speaker with the gift of phrase-making who appeals rather to sentiment than reflection’, while his colleague, Tom White, ‘poured forth a stream of racy invective’, but his main points were reported.<sup>55</sup> *Détente* had also broken out in the union management committee which had received a request from the nationalist club before the debate for two speakers. Replying that the Liberals had already given up one speaker to the nationalists, the minutes show that it nonetheless agreed to ask the Conservatives to do likewise and if refused, would permit them a second speaker.<sup>56</sup>

The Liberal-nationalist alliance was an obvious one given the growing dependence on the Irish parliamentary party at Westminster by Asquith’s administration after the failure of the People’s Budget in 1909 and although individuals in the nationalist club, notably Morgan but also, it seems, Tom White, were also members of the Fabians at the university, the alliance held firm. From time to time there was contact with the cultural nationalists of Sinn Féin in Glasgow, but that party had very little appeal, was consistently criticised by home rulers as irrelevant and eccentric and represented a very small organisation in Scotland. The nationalist club stuck to its parliamentary path and goal of home rule, challenging the separatists as impractical and naïve.<sup>57</sup> John Redmond was chosen and accepted the position of honorary

---

<sup>55</sup> UGAS, GUM, 4 Mar. 1908, xx (GB 248 DC/198/1/20), 448–9.

<sup>56</sup> UGAS, GUU minutes, GB0248 DC 094/2/4, 27 Feb. 1908. Hyacinth Morgan and Michael Murray made a bid for the presidency and secretaryship of the union in 1910, though they were unsuccessful: see *Weekly Freeman’s Journal*, 26 Feb. 1910.

<sup>57</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 21 Mar. 1908 and 5 Mar. 1910. White also appears to have been sympathetic to the catholic socialist society of John Wheatley: *Glasgow Observer*, 4 Dec. 1909. For more on Sinn Féin in Scotland, see Máirtín Ó Catháin, ‘“A winnowing spirit”: Sinn Féin in Scotland, 1905–38’, in Martin Mitchell (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008), 114–26.

president of the club, whilst the three vice presidents, Swift-MacNeill, Joe Devlin and Dr Patrick O'Hare reflect the students' gratitude to visiting speakers and a local Glasgow Irish nationalist notable. It seems also that several of the students were in addition members of their 'local' or 'home' branches of the United Irish League of Great Britain (UILGB). This provided an important organisational link between the club and network of UILGB branches as well as providing a ready cadre of future leaders.<sup>58</sup> However, that leadership did not necessarily have to be political. It could equally fulfil a social, economic, cultural or community role, with one member of Irish national club addressing a branch of the UIL in Glasgow's Townhead in 1917 on the Irish community in New Zealand, whilst a fellow club member spoke afterwards on the topic of catholic education.<sup>59</sup> The important thing appears to have been that there was a place for the young students after their graduation and a role to occupy in the service of their communities. This civic opportunity (or expectation) adhered to those inculcated at university in some respects, and service to civic life in Scotland more broadly, through and after student life, increasingly seemed to coalesce with a communal civic elite rather than to contradict it.

As previously indicated, the election of the rector of Glasgow university every three years was the high point of political activity for the students, and Macdonald has noted its importance as a locus for negotiating the often problematic and not easily reconciled ideas about citizenship and studentship. It was, also, of course, a performative space that displayed all the classic elements, Macdonald argues, of carnivalesque.<sup>60</sup> We have no direct evidence of the Irish nationalist club's involvement in these dramatic and playful events, but we know they supported their Liberal friends in the battles (real and figurative) associated with the rectorial election campaigns and were successful in persuading the university Liberals to back home rule to secure that support in 1908.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 6 Feb. 1915.

<sup>59</sup> *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 17 Nov. 1917.

<sup>60</sup> Macdonald, "To Form Citizens", 395, 389.

<sup>61</sup> *Irish News*, 23 Oct. 1908.

During the years of the nationalist club's existence, the rectorship alternated between Tory and Liberal candidates, Asquith being replaced in 1908 with Curzon before the position passed, interestingly, to the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Augustine Birrell, in 1911. Birrell was the last Liberal to serve as rector until the second world war, and there is at least a possibility that the Irish students had some part in his selection by the Liberal club.<sup>62</sup> Mavor gives a good account of the club's attempts to choose a rectorial candidate in 1908, passing in quick succession and by a number of odd factors to consider Henry Campbell-Bannerman, John Morley and finally (and reluctantly), Lloyd George.<sup>63</sup> Elsewhere, Mavor makes a strong case for how seriously the political parties themselves took the rectorial contests and the time, money and labour devoted to these.<sup>64</sup> There is some evidence that the Fabians felt the same way, and Anderson and Macdonald's research tends to support such a view.<sup>65</sup>

Another important feature of the Glasgow university Irish national club was the social aspect of club life and, while much of that went on within the University, it brought Irish catholic town and gown together. This was, of course, a very prominent aspect of student life more generally at Glasgow, and the union minutes show clearly how much time and money was invested in dinners, dances and concerts, as well as games.<sup>66</sup> There does not appear to have been any engagement with the growing Gaelic games culture in Glasgow but one of the club members, Hugh Gilmer Wilson, gained fame as an Ireland rugby international.<sup>67</sup> As the young nationalists had sallied out to participate in the debates, meetings and marches of their local

---

<sup>62</sup> *Donegal News*, 28 Oct. 1911. The nationalist M.P., Richard McGhee, was hosted by the joint co-operation of the Liberal and Irish national clubs at Glasgow university union during and in support of the Birrell hustings.

<sup>63</sup> Bridie, *One Way of Living*, 148–9.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Anderson, *British Universities: Past and Present* (London, 2006), 84, 90–93; Macdonald, “‘To Form Citizens’”, 399.

<sup>66</sup> UGAS, GUU minutes, 28 Nov. 1904, 7 Mar. 1905, 12 Mar. 1906 and 16 Sept. 1908, GB0248 DC 094/2/3 and 094/2/4. There was a student union games committee at Glasgow, on which the Irish played a part.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Hugh Gilmer Wilson’, UGS [<https://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH23759&type=P>; accessed 24 Aug. 2017]; *Glasgow Observer*, 20 Feb. 1909. Wilson was from a Presbyterian background and also played for Malone rugby club as well as Glasgow university. He won 18 caps for Ireland and died in Larne in 1941.

UILGB branches, the social gatherings in the university union allowed them to reciprocate in some ways and bring in to the club those from outside. This particularly included their fellow students, the young women of Queen Margaret college, in addition to friends and associates from home. This helped to create as well as cement relationships and although it was not without its problems, it became an important adjunct to the political activities.<sup>68</sup>

The social events began soon after the club was formed. One of the earliest, in December 1907, was a ‘smoker’, which, possibly because the club had yet to truly establish itself and was still fighting for its space, took place outside the university in a city centre hotel. Club members were joined by a number of artistes and invited guests, including the former M.P. and honorary vice-president, Patrick O’Hare, for an evening of convivial political conversation and music.<sup>69</sup> This appears to have been a men-only affair, however, and needs to be set in the context of attempts around this time to establish a Glasgow Irish gentleman’s club in the city. In some ways pre-figured by the university club and indicative of a wider trend, discussed above, of middle-class gentrification and social mobility, the Irish National Club, Glasgow Limited sought to model itself on the Irish Club in London, which claimed the membership of over fifty Irish M.P.s as well as the cream of London Irish society.<sup>70</sup> Founded in 1909 after several years of discussion and planning, the Glasgow Irish Club aimed to provide a permanent social and political meeting place for the community’s aspiring middle class, developed on the lines of the more well-established Liberal and Tory clubs.<sup>71</sup> As Fergus Campbell has noted, club membership was an important signifier of the catholic Irish colonisation or ‘greening’ of elite social space in certain respects, and the classic Victorian gentleman’s club was a valuable and significant appropriation for the Glasgow Irish.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> *Donegal News*, 21 Jun. 1913; *Weekly Freeman’s Journal*, 28 Mar. 1914; *Derry Journal*, 19 Jan. 1912.

<sup>69</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 21 Dec. 1907. The ‘smoker concert’ apparently became a regular feature of the Club’s social life: *Derry Journal*, 2 Dec. 1910.

<sup>70</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 27 Mar. 1909.

<sup>71</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 24 Apr. 1909.

<sup>72</sup> Fergus Campbell, *Irish Establishment*, 150, 298–300.

Declaring boldly at the outset that ‘the Irish community is no longer clad in corduroy’, the Irish Club stressed that it offered to the professional and business classes ‘a suitable, convenient and dignified place of resort ... the rendezvous for business interviews or business fixtures with business friends’, as well as a place for ‘the consolidation of Irish political interest in the city’.<sup>73</sup> Its founding committee included, besides the great and the good of Irish catholic middle-class life, a former member of the student club, the solicitor and Celtic FC board member, Tom White. This again had the potential to bring the students into the heart of this new socio-political enterprise in the city, allowing a seamless transition from the oak-panelled rooms of the university union to those of the Irish Club.

Keeping women out, however, proved to be a trickier proposition at the university in a time of rising feminist and suffrage activism, not to mention the crisis over the third home rule bill. More than one union meeting was disrupted by the young suffrage campaigners from Queen Margaret union and there was a willingness on behalf of the Irish students at least to allow women not only to attend the union political debate but to participate in nationalist club social events.<sup>74</sup> Their desire though for greater political involvement culminated in the founding in 1914 of the Queen Margaret College Irish nationalist club, presided over by Bridget Josephine Hayes, an English literature student. The women’s club began with a gathering of twenty arts students, mostly English and Scottish-born with an Irish connection, and they extended membership to all past and present students of the university.<sup>75</sup> The club appeared just over a month before Asquith introduced his bill, which was passed in the Commons as the Government of Ireland Act in May 1914, failed in the Lords and saw the Liberals use the

---

<sup>73</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 15 May 1909.

<sup>74</sup> UGAS, GUM, 7 Nov. 1907, xix (GB 248 DC/198/1/19), 24; UGAS, GUU minutes, 15 Nov. 1911, GB0248 DC, 094/2/4.

<sup>75</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 14 Mar. 1914. Hayes’s brother, Daniel, who qualified as a doctor in 1911, was a member of the men’s club at Glasgow; another, Francis, gained his medical degree from Edinburgh University in 1915; and her eldest brother, Thomas, was the parish priest in Troon. The family hailed from Clondegad, near Ennis in County Clare.

Parliament Act to gain royal assent before the act was suspended at the outbreak of the first world war. Like her male counterparts, Hayes featured as a guest speaker at UILGB branches in the city but her address focused on modern Irish poetry rather than the home rule bill, Irish politics or the question of women's suffrage, which may indicate a resistance to women stepping into the political arena.<sup>76</sup> Both sections of the nationalist club came together soon after the Hayes' address for a dance in aid of the families of the Dublin Lockout workers, an unusual gesture given the Irish parliamentary party's reputation on the strike, but one in many ways in keeping with the socialist leanings of some club members.<sup>77</sup> The club had already appealed previously for its members to hold more of such social events, leading the *Fleeting Hour* to note that 'the 'merry bhoys' will be merrier than ever'.<sup>78</sup>

Occasionally the social events could prove raucous affairs. The president of the men's club, John L. Torley, son of Scotland's Irish Republican Brotherhood leader for much of the late nineteenth century, found himself before a disciplinary hearing of the union in 1914. Charged with others of slashing a new tablecloth with a knife, refusing to pay for the damage and abusing union staff, Torley took sole responsibility and was fined five shillings.<sup>79</sup> Torley, a medical student, had been elected nationalist club president the previous year and was an active member of his 'home' branch of the UILGB in Clydebank. His son remembers that he had a close personal and political friendship with the then leading Liberal club member and later tory secretary of state for Scotland, Walter Elliot.<sup>80</sup> It may have been at least partly through Elliot's influence and support that the nationalist club achieved some purchase in the Glasgow university union, and his close friendship with Torley and others appears to have survived his later conversion to unionism. This may have been because Torley, unlike his father, was a

---

<sup>76</sup> *Derry Journal*, 6 Nov. 1914.

<sup>77</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 14 Mar. 1914.

<sup>78</sup> UGAS, GUM, 16 Mar. 1913, xxv (GB 248 DC/198/1/25), 457.

<sup>79</sup> UGAS, GUU minutes, 6 Nov. 1914, GB0248 DC, 094/2/4.

<sup>80</sup> Author interview with Patrick G. Torley, son of John L. Torley, Clydebank, 13 April 2011. John Torley senior was Scottish leader of the IRB from about 1869 until his death in 1897.

strong opponent of separatism and remained a firm advocate of dominion home rule; his son certainly suspected strongly that he voted Tory.<sup>81</sup> It is equally likely, if not more so, however, that Torley's and Elliot's enduring friendship was of the type forged in student life and carried through their participation in the first world war as Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) doctors. However, it was the war that, as with their cause of home rule, effectively ended the existence of the university nationalist club. Eager in their own way to answer Redmond's call, as well as responding to the prevailing mood in Scotland, most members of the club joined up or enrolled in the university's officer training corps after the war broke out. Most appear to have served with the RAMC including club presidents Morgan, O'Hare, Hughes, Burke and Torley, an experience which seems to have consolidated their dual identity as both Irish nationalists and British citizens.<sup>82</sup> There were also, perhaps unsurprisingly, a number of casualties of that conflict from the Club, including James Francis Quigley from Possilpark, killed on the Western Front in 1917. Like his brother Edward, who graduated in 1908 and was a member of the Club himself, James was a medical student who graduated in 1912, joined the London Scottish and was killed at the third battle of Ypres.<sup>83</sup> The entire experience of the war appears to have strengthened a British-Irish identity amongst many of the Irish in Britain who were involved in it at a time when that same identity was increasingly beginning to collapse at home in the years after the 1916 Easter Rising. Club members had been at the apex of fostering that identity within the university as well as out across the Irish community in political, business and social circles. A combination of declining support for dominion home rule in Ireland, the demise of Liberalism and growth of Labour, and demands for state-aided catholic

---

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *British Medical Journal*, 19 May 1956, p. 1171 and 5 Jul. 1941, p. 33; *Derry Journal*, 15 and 22 Oct. 1915; Elaine McFarland, "'How the Irish Paid Their Debt': Irish Catholics in Scotland and Voluntary Enlistment, August 1914–July 1915", *SHR* 82 (2003) 261–84; Darrien Tierney, 'Catholics and Great War Memorialisation in Scotland', in *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 37 (2017) 19–51.

<sup>83</sup> 'James Francis Quigley', UGS

[<https://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH23775&type=P&o=&start=0&max=20&l;> accessed 19 Oct. 2018].

education, added to the growth which catholicism enjoyed after the first world war, was reflected in the changing character of student life at Glasgow University.

In the years after the war the vacuum left by the departure of the nationalist club was filled by a succession of groupings identifying as catholic student societies. The groundwork for these began before the war in the heavily catholic identity of the nationalist club, reinforced by press coverage and the self-perception of the students themselves as mainly second generation, Scots-born Irishmen and women. A catholic student sodality, founded by the Jesuit priest, Fr. Geoffrey Bliss was active in the university a decade before the chaplaincy itself emerged in 1925, and chose none other than the former national club patron, Professor Phillimore, as its president.<sup>84</sup> The demise of the Irish parliamentary party and the conclusion of the Irish civil war had left little or no taste for Irish politics among the student body. Some became involved with the Liberal club and others, such as P.J. Molloy and Colm Brogan, embraced the Labour club; but for many, matters of faith trumped politics in the increasingly fractious sectarian atmosphere of inter-war Scotland.<sup>85</sup> The Catholic students sodality also enjoyed the endorsement of several old members of the nationalist club, including John L. Torley, and it hosted a series of social events and spiritual retreats—to Ireland, among other places.<sup>86</sup> The university had around 200 catholic students by 1920, and their intellectual guru, Professor Phillimore, remained an important influence. His 1921 speech entreating catholic students to embark on nothing less than a re-catholicisation of Scotland was hugely controversial, but the lecture was also a call for the development of a lay catholic intellectual leadership to contribute to Scottish as well as catholic civic life.<sup>87</sup> Such a message was entirely

---

<sup>84</sup> *Derry Journal*, 17 Sept. 1915. The sodality appears to have been founded in late 1914 with fifty members: *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 12 Dec. 1914.

<sup>85</sup> UGAS, GUM, 14 Mar. 1923, xxxiv (GB 248 DC/198/1/32), 357. Brogan, brother of Denis Brogan, the renowned American historian, seems to have left Labour after university and enthusiastically embraced a right-wing conservative vision.

<sup>86</sup> *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 12 Jun. 1915 and 13 Dec. 1919.

<sup>87</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 19 Nov. 1921; J. S. Phillimore, 'The Prospects of the Catholic Church in Scotland', *Dublin Review* 171 (1922) 183–98.

in keeping with the ideas promulgated in the Irish nationalist club in the years before the war, and catholic students took the lead and became active in their local communities, where they were not already so. From this stemmed not only a catholic intellectual elite, small though it was, and an inter-connected network of local businesses and professionals, but, as Williamson has shown, a range of outlets for that group from catholic union work to social guild, distributism and catholic action which frustrates simple left / right categorisation.<sup>88</sup> These catholics, it seemed, rapidly moved away from the singularity of Irishness and engaged fully with their membership of a wider British and European catholic identity, though they still retained a sentimental if largely ossified belief in Irish self-determination, partly because the cause of dominion home rule had itself become the relic of an earlier pre-war generation.

Geraldine Vaughan has written of how ‘affinities’ and ‘professional solidarity’ among local elites bridged many of the gaps between Scottishness and Irishness in late nineteenth- and especially early twentieth-century Scotland. She notes, moreover, how ‘loyalty to Ireland and local patriotism were not contradictory’, something clearly reinforced in the experience and engagement of the Glasgow university Irish national club, not only locally but on a broader front as well.<sup>89</sup> The original motivating force behind the club, Hyacinth Morgan, went on to have a national and international platform and impact as a renowned Labour M.P. Active on many fronts during his life, as chair of the medical aid for Spain committee, as a member of the national executive of the confederation of health service employees (COHSE), and medical advisor to the trades union congress. He was also M.P. for North Camberwell, Rochdale and Warrington. His connection with Ireland was maintained as a member of the backbench Labour friends of Ireland group and he remained a staunch opponent of partition, though much of his energy was taken up with his West Indian advocacy and anti-colonial work.<sup>90</sup> Morgan’s one-

---

<sup>88</sup> Williamson, *Catholic Intellectual Life in Scotland*, 4-5.

<sup>89</sup> Geraldine Vaughan, *The ‘Local’ Irish in the West of Scotland, 1851–1921* (Basingstoke, 2013), p. 133.

<sup>90</sup> Cox, ‘A West Indian Lobbyist’, 49–72.

time national club treasurer, alternatively, became a leading member of the unionist party. Although never standing nationally, Felix Savy was an active unionist and chair of the Badenoch division of the unionist association. He was a renowned tuberculosis specialist and bought the Grampian sanatorium as a treatment centre, later selling it on to a catholic religious order in 1934.<sup>91</sup> Others, like Henry Windsor, also had an impact in other hemispheres. He emigrated to Australia in 1914, where he became a renowned surgeon and president of the Queensland medical board, as well as a fellow of the royal college of surgeons and the royal Australasian college, accruing to himself a papal knighthood and a CBE too, before his death in 1976.<sup>92</sup> Most former members, however, of the Glasgow university Irish national club contributed to Scottish and British public life and to their local communities, in a much more modest but no less significant manner. Whether as local GPs in Ibrox or Clydebank, as house doctors in Manchester and London hospitals or as solicitors, local councillors and assorted worthies, these veterans of Edwardian student politics carved out mature and influential niches for themselves. The elite formation that had taken place on Gilmorehill in the years before and during the early years of the great war reverberated far beyond Glasgow university and played an important if not a singular role in the assimilation of the Irish and Catholic community. Moreover, it demonstrated that a shift in ideas and priorities away from Ireland and Irish politics, and towards Scotland and a Catholic identity, had taken place. Like many ideological shifts, this had been forged by a relatively small middle-class elite assuming and being accorded leadership roles in their community at a time when Irish nationalism was coming in from the cold to take its place among the British family of nations. The stalling and ultimate disintegration of that project had an impact on the survival of home rule politics at Glasgow university, but many of its leaders had already graduated to new leadership roles across and

---

<sup>91</sup> *British Medical Journal*, 13 Feb. 1965, 457–8.

<sup>92</sup> Royal College of Surgeons of England, ‘Windsor, Henry Joseph (1885-1976)’, Plarr’s Lives of the Fellows [<http://livesonline.rcseng.ac.uk/biogs/E007055b.htm>]; accessed 6 September 2017].

beyond Britain, transformed by their experience of war, by a rising confident and ambitious form of catholicism, and a determination to re-define the identity of their community.