

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
IRELAND

This final volume in *The Cambridge History of Ireland* covers the period from the 1880s to the present. Based on the most recent and innovative scholarship and research, the many contributions from experts in their field offer detailed and fresh perspectives on key areas of Irish social, economic, religious, political, demographic, institutional and cultural history. And they do so by situating the Irish story, or stories – for much of these decades two Irelands are in play – in a variety of contexts, Irish and Anglo-Irish, of course, but also European, Atlantic and, latterly, global. The result is an insightful ‘take’ on the emergence and development of Ireland during these often turbulent decades. Copiously illustrated, with special features on images of the ‘Troubles’ and on Irish art and sculpture in the twentieth century, this volume will undoubtedly be hailed as a landmark publication by the most recent generation of historians of Ireland.

THOMAS BARTLETT was born in Belfast, and is a graduate of Queen’s University Belfast. He has held positions at the National University of Ireland Galway, then as Professor of Modern Irish history at University College Dublin, and most recently as Professor of Irish history at the University of Aberdeen, until his retirement in 2014. He is a member of the Royal Irish Academy and his previous publications include *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
IRELAND

GENERAL EDITOR

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University of Aberdeen

This authoritative, accessible and engaging four-volume history vividly presents the Irish story – or stories – from c.600 to the present, within its broader Atlantic, European, imperial and global contexts. While the volumes benefit from a strong political narrative framework, they are distinctive also in including essays that address the full range of social, economic, religious, linguistic, military, cultural, artistic and gender history, and in challenging traditional chronological boundaries in a manner that offers new perspectives and insights. Each volume examines Ireland's development within a distinct period, and offers a complete and rounded picture of Irish life, while remaining sensitive to the unique Irish experience. Bringing together an international team of experts, this landmark history both reflects recent developments in the field and sets the agenda for future study.

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1880 to the Present

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-11354-1 — The Cambridge History of Ireland
Edited by Thomas Bartlett
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107113541

DOI: 10.1017/9781316286470

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First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International, Padstow, Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN – 4-Volume Set 978-1-107-16729-2 Hardback

ISBN – Volume I 978-1-107-11067-0 Hardback

ISBN – Volume II 978-1-107-11763-1 Hardback

ISBN – Volume III 978-1-107-11520-0 Hardback

ISBN – Volume IV 978-1-107-11354-1 Hardback

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General Acknowledgements

As General Editor of the Cambridge History of Ireland, I wish to express my gratitude to all those who assisted in bringing these four volumes to publication. My fellow editors, Brendan Smith, Jane Ohlmeyer and James Kelly have been unstinting with their time and unwavering in their determination to bring their respective volumes to completion as expeditiously as possible. John Cunningham offered vital editorial support at key points in this process. The team at Cambridge University Press, headed by Liz Friend-Smith, supported initially by Amanda George and latterly by Claire Sissen and Bethany Thomas, has been at all times enthusiastic about the project. It has been a great pleasure working with them. My thanks to the often unsung archivists whose documentary collections were freely drawn upon by the contributors in all volumes, to those who helped source images, and to those who drew the informative maps. Lastly, my warmest thanks to all the contributors who gave freely of their expertise in writing their chapters, and for their patience in awaiting publication of their efforts.

Thomas Bartlett, MRIA
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Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-11354-1 — The Cambridge History of Ireland
Edited by Thomas Bartlett
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Acknowledgements

In editing this volume, I have incurred many debts. My thanks to my fellow editors, Brendan Smith, Jane Ohlmeyer and James Kelly for their collegiality, solidarity and support in what was in every respect a collaborative venture. My thanks to John Cunningham for his editorial assistance. In editing volume 4, I sought advice from Nicholas Canny, Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, James Smyth, Patrick Griffin, Kevin Whelan and Eamon Duffy, none of whom, be it said, are responsible for the final outcome. The team at Cambridge University Press, headed by Liz Friend-Smith, has been a pleasure to work with. As always, my thanks to the archivists who freely made available the documents on which these chapters draw. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Mary Broderick at the National Library of Ireland, and to Christian Dupont at the Burns Library in Boston College, for their assistance in sourcing images for this volume. Lastly, my thanks to the contributors for their patience during the completion of this volume and for their good humour in responding to my editorial interventions.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-11354-1 — The Cambridge History of Ireland
Edited by Thomas Bartlett
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Abbreviations and conventions

AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
BH	Bobbie Hanvey Photographic Archive, J. J. Burns Library, Boston College
BL	British Library
BMH	Bureau of Military History
CIÉ	Córas Iompair Éireann (Irish Transport Authority)
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DDA	Dublin Diocesan Archives
DÉ	Dáil Éireann
DIFP	Documents on Irish Foreign Policy (Royal Irish Academy)
DMP	Dublin Metropolitan Police
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GHQ	General Head Quarters
GPO	General Post Office, Dublin
IAA	Irish Architectural Archive
IAOS	Irish Agricultural Organisation Society
ICA	Irish Country Women's Association
ICD	Irish Catholic Directory
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
<i>IF</i>	<i>Irish Freedom</i>
IHA	Irish Housewives' Association
<i>IHS</i>	<i>Irish Historical Studies</i>
IMA	Irish Medical Association
IMMA	Irish Museum of Modern Art

Abbreviations and conventions

INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
IPP	Irish Parliamentary Party
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NARA	National Archives Records Administration
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NGI	National Gallery of Ireland
NICRA	Northern Irish Civil Rights Association
NILP	Northern Ireland Labour Party
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NUI	National University of Ireland
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SAS	Special Air Service
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SMA	Society for African Missions
SPIL	Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language
SSISI	Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TD	Teachta Dála (Dáil Deputy)
TNA	The National Archives, London
UCD	University College Dublin
UCDDA	UCD Department of Archives
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UDL	Union Defence League
UDR	Ulster Defence Regiment
UIL	United Irish League
USC	Ulster Special Constabulary
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force

General Introduction

The aims of this four-volume History of Ireland are quite straightforward. First, we seek to offer students, and the general reader, a detailed survey, based on the latest research, of the history of the island from early medieval times to the present. As with other Cambridge histories, a chronological approach, in the main, has been adopted, and there is a strong narrative spine to the four volumes. However, the periods covered in each volume are not the traditional ones and we hope that this may have the effect of forcing a re-evaluation of the familiar periodisation of Irish history and of the understanding it has tended to inspire. A single twist of the historical kaleidoscope can suggest – even reveal – new patterns, beginnings and endings. As well, among the one hundred or so chapters spread over the four volumes, there are many that adopt a reflective tone as well as strike a discursive note. There are also a number that tackle topics that have hitherto not found their way into the existing survey literature. Second, we have sought at all times to locate the history of Ireland in its broader context, whether European, Atlantic or, latterly, global. Ireland may be an island, but the people of the island for centuries have been dispersed throughout the world, with significant concentrations in certain countries, with the result that the history of Ireland and the history of the Irish people have never been coterminous. Lastly, the editors of the individual volumes – Brendan Smith, Jane Ohlmeyer, James Kelly and myself – have enlisted contributors who have, as well as a capacity for innovative historical research, demonstrated a talent for writing lucid prose. For history to have a social purpose – or indeed any point – it must be accessible, and in these volumes we have endeavoured to ensure that this is the case: readers will judge with what success.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-11354-1 — The Cambridge History of Ireland
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Preface

THOMAS BARTLETT

The period 1880–2016 in Irish history defies easy categorisation or simple generalisation. The historian surveying these years cannot but be left with an abiding sense of incompleteness. Issues such as sovereignty, land, language, religion, migration, culture and identity – that were troubling, even vexatious, at the end of the nineteenth century – remain unresolved though partly reformulated and stand surrounded by uncertainties in the second decade of the twenty-first century. The self-government – independence or ‘Home Rule’, the desire to ‘take control’ – that was the preferred objective of a large majority of Irish voters in the 1880s was conceded north and south by 1922, but it was done in a fragmented way and led to a fractured island. The ‘sovereignty’ acquired by the two Irelands that emerged from ‘the decade of revolution’, 1913–1923, was not at all what the ‘South’ (or Irish Free State) sought nor was it indeed what the ‘North’ (or Northern Ireland) desired. The partition of the island was viewed – at least *officially* in the Irish Free State – as an outrage that had, hopefully temporarily, halted the onward march of the Irish nation; by contrast, partition was seen almost immediately in Northern Ireland – at least by its Protestant majority, Northern Catholics were not at all enthusiastic – as the best possible outcome in that it guaranteed Unionist hegemony into the foreseeable future. In the event, the Irish Free State, set up following the Anglo-Irish War of 1919–1921, successfully extended its sovereignty during the inter-war years, a process marked by the ratification of a new Irish constitution of 1937, *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, and culminating in the restoration of the ‘Treaty ports’ which had remained under British control, in 1938. However, the ‘recovery’ of the six counties of Northern Ireland proved impossible. The declaration of a republic in 1949 completed the process

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but the national sovereignty of the twenty-six counties was soon reduced by Ireland's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, and diminished further by the country's embrace of the concept of 'shared sovereignty' as the EEC morphed into the nascent European [political] Union (EU). For the most part, this evolution was broadly welcomed by the Irish public, but in the neighbouring island – Britain – which had joined 'Europe' at the same time as Ireland, it met with growing unease climaxing in the 'Brexit' vote of June 2016 to leave the EU altogether and 'take back control'. Northern Ireland (and Scotland, but not Wales) voted to remain in the EU, thus raising once again the threat of the break-up of the United Kingdom. Issues of sovereignty are destined to remain as uncertain into the future as they were in the 1880s.

Behind the issue of sovereignty lay questions of state formation and state survival. Both Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State were born out of war – civil, guerrilla or sectarian, on occasion a combination of all three – and, for many decades, both bore the scars of the conflicts attendant on their birth. Such circumstances were hardly propitious for survival, let alone thriving – as many states in Europe, post-1918, demonstrate. And yet, the two states survived, despite numerous challenges – sometimes economic, sometimes violent – the relationship between them currently can best be described as one of guarded engagement, much different to, and generally welcomed after, the frozen hostility that prevailed for much of the twentieth century. However, it would be foolish to claim, given a certain rapprochement between North and South and a joint commitment to the 'peace process' to end the 'Troubles' in the North, that Irish history has liberated itself from the centuries of ideological antagonism that long gave it definition. Low, perhaps very low, intensity conflict will continue for decades – the paramilitaries haven't gone away, you know – and the conditions for conflict remain. The unpredictable impact of the economic cycle may be compounded if the Brexit vote has the negative impact on Northern Ireland's economy that some predict; and, indeed, given the gloomy forecasts for the entire global economy, it may be that Ireland, North and South, is in for some stormy economic times.

If the quest for sovereignty has remained unfinished business, and relationships between North and South are far from cordial, those other vectors of the Irish story – land, language, religion – equally have proved disconcertingly elusive of resolution. True, the Land Question was *almost* solved under British rule but politicians in the new entities of Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State were constantly faced with rural discontent and they found plenty of agrarian issues demanding their attention. In addition, just as the

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Land Question was indissolubly linked to Irish emigration, the failure to end, or even control for most of the twentieth century, the annual exodus of mostly rural dwellers – a flight not just from the land, but from Ireland itself – bore witness to the incompleteness of the supposed resolution of the Land Question. Similarly, the Language Question, the matter of the restoration of the Irish language as the vernacular of the people – a key objective for many of the revolutionary generation – has proved a disappointment. Notwithstanding many inducements, financial resources and patriotic exhortations, the decline of Irish has continued. Curiously, in the early decades of the twenty-first century, government-sponsored efforts are being made in Northern Ireland to revive ‘Ulster-Scots’, closely linked to the Scottish dialect of Lallans: initial signs are that the outcome here will not be all that different to that of the Irish language. So far as religion – a bedrock of Irish identity – is concerned, the decades from 1880 to 2016 could easily be styled ‘The ascendancy and descendancy of the Catholic Church in Ireland’, or some comparable formulation. The Catholic Church and its clergy and bishops until the 1960s, and perhaps beyond, exercised and enjoyed an influence that was without parallel in Europe (Spain under Franco and Portugal under Salazar are the only possible exceptions) and was likely only approached in some countries in South America. The church’s views on a very broad range of issues – not just faith and morals – were eagerly sought, listened to attentively and frequently heeded by public representatives. Visually, the evidence for this dominance – to take just two vignettes – can be seen at the Eucharistic Congress of 1932, and at the funeral in 1940 of Archbishop Byrne, on both of which occasions large areas of Dublin, notably O’Connell Street and the surrounding area, were closed down in order to facilitate religious worship and public displays of Catholic allegiance. Such scenes are unimaginable in 2016. The Catholic Church’s authority and influence, in decline since the 1960s, had fallen to an all time low by the second decade of the twenty-first century – a consequence of systemic weaknesses, secularisation and modernisation exacerbated by numerous cover-ups of the sexual and physical abuse of minors. When in August 2016 the Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, referred to the ‘poisonous atmosphere’ at St Patrick’s College, Maynooth, the premier seminary for the formation of Irish priests since the 1790s, and drew attention to what he saw as a sexualised sub-culture at that institution, his strictures generated less surprise than expected: strikingly, anxiety, concern or outrage were rarely expressed by an Irish public that had long given up on, and had ceased to be shocked by, anything emanating from the once all-dominant Catholic Church in Ireland.

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What of the Irish people during these decades? It is tempting to insist that, of course, they are better off now, that real progress has been made in diminishing poverty, that the standard of living is much improved, that the state and the state's institutions, and Irish society, North and South, are more caring, more tolerant or at least more humane than a hundred years ago; but it has proved to be a long road to arrive at this point, one paved with misguided intentions, flawed perspectives and heartless legalism. The promise of independence, of 'Sinn Féin' (=ourselves) the war-cry of the revolutionary generation, aspiring to take control, to do things right, proved illusory: women generally, children from poorer backgrounds, the socially marginal, the demographically surplus, the sexually deviant, the natural outsider, the writer, the artist, the maverick – unless monied – found Ireland, North and South, a cold house for much of the twentieth century; in many instances they still do.

Is this too bleak an assessment? Gaiety and laughter, fun and romance were not absent during these decades; gloom, doom and despond were not universal. Competitions organised by the Gaelic Athletic Association, at the national as well as the parish level, generated fervent enthusiasm, while music in the home after dark, dancing at the crossroads, horse-racing on the sands, conviviality in the pubs, the pleasures of radio listening and the cinema, and the consolations of religious worship were features of what have been dubbed, in deference to the French, *'les années noires'*, the dark decades of Irish history. Together these activities brought much pleasure to the Irish people. No history that fails to recognise this reality or realities can truly be assessed as offering a rounded picture. And yet, conveying the realities of twentieth-century Irish life – the poverty and squalor, alongside the pride and contentment, the misery and separation jostling warmth and conviviality, the galling failure and triumphant success, the generosity with the hypocrisy is a taxing task.

Perhaps it was only in a petri dish occupied by these opposites that Irish literary talent could be incubated? Is it altogether accidental that Ireland during these decades produced four Nobel Prize winners in literature (William Butler Yeats 1865–1939), Samuel Beckett (1906–1989), George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), and Seamus Heaney (1939–2013); five, if James Joyce (1882–1941) is accorded honorary status? By contrast, Scotland, with a similar population, though not with a similar violent recent history, had none. (Poland, Russia, Sweden, Spain, the United States and the United Kingdom all had similar numbers of Nobel laureates for literature, but all had multiples of the Irish population.) The story of twentieth-century Ireland is one of opposites: murder, mayhem and atrocity compete with high ideals, high mindedness and

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sacrifice, small differences – what foot does he dig with? – with ethnic exclusiveness: in short, great hatred with little room. These contrasts proved fertile soil for Irish writers. Beckett in *Waiting for Godot* has Vladimir asking: ‘Well? What do we do?’; ‘Do nothing’ answers Estragon, ‘it’s safer that way’: his reply captured the suffocating atmosphere of Ireland in the mid-twentieth century. ‘You coasted along’ wrote John Hewitt (not, alas, a Nobel winner), similarly evoking successive Unionist governments’ failure to adapt, evolve, or accommodate the nationalists in Northern Ireland in the years before the Troubles literally blew up.

The organisation of this volume requires explanation. The opening chapter by Ó Tuathaigh offers a road map through the entire period, and succeeding chapters dwell in depth on the highways and byways signposted therein. Thus the revolutionary tradition, constitutional politics, Unionist mobilisation and cultural revival in the years before 1914 are addressed by, respectively, Kelly, Mulvagh, Jackson, Foster and Ó Conchubhair. Social conditions and the Land Question are looked at afresh by Clear and Dooley, while Fitzpatrick explores the tangled story of Ireland and the Great War. McGarry offers a contemporary account of the revolutionary decade, while the history of the two Irelands during the inter-war period is discussed by Dolan and Riordan, concluding with Ollerenshaw drawing on recent research to describe the impact of World War II on both Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State. Post-war Irish politics and the fortunes of the Irish economies, North and South, are addressed by Girvin and O’Hagan: and war and peace in Northern Ireland during the tumultuous last decades of the twentieth century is the subject of a chapter by John and Paul Bew. There then follow a series of chapters that seek to take a long view of key issues and developments over the entire period, 1880–2016: family, and philanthropic and state institutions (Earner-Byrne, Cox), Irish foreign policy (Kennedy), media (Savage), the Catholic Church (Ó Corráin), memory and remembrance (Beiner), sport and leisure (Rouse), emigration (Daly) and art and architecture (Murphy). Lastly, O’Halpin offers some reflections on the tortuous course of Irish history since the 1880s, as Ireland evolved – some might prefer ‘lurched’ or ‘staggered’ – from an embedded, if discontented, member of the British Empire in 1880, to an embedded, if potentially unsettled, member of the European Union in 2016.

It will be seen at once that this is not a conventional, nor be it said, exhaustive, history of twentieth-century Ireland. Cumulatively, the historians in this volume have sought to convey the texture of Irish life in all its

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complexity over these decades and to highlight what they see as the key determinants of change and continuity. The picture that emerges cannot be a complete one, but rather it offers a fuller, more nuanced interpretative narrative of Ireland from the 1880s to the present than is currently available.



MAP 1. Map of Ireland.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-11354-1 — The Cambridge History of Ireland
Edited by Thomas Bartlett
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