Fighting Time: Temporality, Time Reform and the Irish Revolutionary Present*

[25 Feb 2020 – include IRA general order on time. IRA to use Post Office time to avoid confusion re summer time, CD 105/2/19

By Eve Morrison

> This was a rich land with a good standard of comfort; there were many creameries. Some of the houses sent a boy to Maynooth to the priesthood and a girl to the university to get a teacher's degree. The area was cut up by roads which gave easy communication to the activities of closely linked posts and barracks. There was the difficulty of three different times for councils and classes. Summer time was kept by cities, some towns and the railway; new time was an increase of twenty-five minutes on old Irish time to synchronise with English time; as yet punctual time had not come.[1]

This evocative description of Ireland in 1920, in the midst of a political and temporal transition and crisscrossed with physical markers of modernisation, appears in *On Another Man's Wound*, Ernie O'Malley's memoir of life as an Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) organiser and officer during the War of Independence. An insurgency against British rule began in 1919, continued until July 1921, and was followed by a civil war (1922-1923). Partition created two new jurisdictions, the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. In theory, Ireland had also acquired new time. With the passing of the Uniform Time (Ireland) Act in 1916 'old Irish time' (regulated by Dunsink Observatory in Dublin) was legislatively abolished in favour of Greenwich Mean Time or 'Greenwich time', Britain's legal time standard. 'Summer time' (Daylight Saving) was introduced the same year. In practice, these official initiatives were widely ignored, in some places until mid-century.[2]

The global ‘zenith’ of temporal reform, from 1908 to 1913, coincided in Britain and Ireland with the political crisis over Irish self-governance. Home rule was the single most important issue in Irish politics, and one that was contentious enough, particularly in the years preceding the outbreak of the Great War (1914-1918), to pose a viable threat to the survival of the British state.[3] A successful campaign by elite reformers to introduce ‘uniform’ time across the two islands fuelled public debates about temporal reform in an already highly charged political landscape. It was an era in which time was understood by many to be a horological manifestation of identity, and the time question became bound up with ‘Irish Question’. Discussed in the wake of the third home rule bill (1912) and enacted in the aftermath of the Easter Rising (1916), time reform became a venue for asserting or denying Ireland’s right to self-determination. British and Irish MPs, northern and southern unionists, constitutional nationalists in the Irish Parliamentary Party (I.P.P.) and separatist nationalists (Sinn Féin and the I.R.A.) made rival claims to define, administer and control access to Irish time. Who had the right to decide what time it was and whose time mattered? Should ‘true’ Irish time reflect the constitutional link with Britain or was it a temporal manifestation of Ireland’s historic claim to nationhood? There was no consensus on the question among either unionists or constitutional nationalists, but in December 1918 Sinn Féin won seventy-three seats in Westminster, routing the I.P.P. The newly elected MPs refused to take their seats or except the new time. They returned to Ireland to establish a counter government, the First Dáil, and recorded government minutes in ‘old’ Irish time.[4]

Temporality embodies a ‘multiplicity’ of coexisting experiences and ideas about time, public and private, individual and collective.[5] This chapter explores the multiplicities of Irish time in a period of political upheaval and war. The lived temporal experience of the Irish present in this period was informed by the gradually evolving construct of ‘Irish time’ over

the nineteenth century, public debates and time reform initiatives of British and Irish elites, the time-keeping habits observed by Irish citizens (and across the two islands), the radical nationalist political and military campaign to establish an Irish republic and the temporal coercion employed by government forces to stop them.

Time in Transition

The modernisation of temporal systems to facilitate technological advances in travel and communications was a near global phenomenon in the *fin de siècle* and early twentieth century. Much of the world adopted standard or (as it was then generally known) 'uniform' time, derived from the Prime Meridian (a line of longitude defined as 0° from which to calculate standard time) at Greenwich Observatory outside London. It was the most important advance in time keeping since the introduction of the mechanised clock, but a slow, uneven process.[6] Before the advent of standardisation, time was regional, municipal and local. Time was kept by cockerels, time balls, church bells, the tides, the sun, the turning of the seasons and the calendar.[7] A rail passenger travelling across the United States in 1870 had to adjust their watch over 200 times.[8] Germany was home to five time zones until 1891.[9] In 1911, France had the most chaotic time system in Europe.[10]

In Britain and Ireland, no time system was recognised legally until 1880, when the Statutes (Definition of Time) Act designated Greenwich Time in Britain and 'Dublin Time' in Ireland (twenty five minutes, twenty one seconds slow of Greenwich) as the official times to be employed in 'acts of Parliament, deeds and other legal instruments'. Civil time remained unregulated, and inaccuracy remained a perennial problem. Public clocks in cities and towns from Jarrow to London were often unsynchronised and unreliable.[11] In southwest Ireland, before the railways, men transporting butter by horse and cart along the 'butter roads' of Cork and Kerry set their pocket watches by the Shandon clocktower in Cork city, and

brought the correct time back home with them.[12] As the century wore on, accurate time became a commodity, sold in Britain by the post office or by private businesses like the Magenta Company or the Standard Time Company.[13]

While the divergence between sun and clock time goes almost unnoticed today, at the turn of the last century this was not the case. Clocks and watches ran according to local 'mean solar time' or 'mean time', derived by using the 'equation of time' in conjunction with local meridians to calculate the difference between 'apparent solar time' (time according to the position of the sun) and the mean (average) length of a 24 hour day (one full rotation of the earth).[14] The Norfolk and Suffolk coasts, by sun time, were five minutes ahead of Greenwich Observatory. The Outer Hebrides, the tip of Cornwall and Ireland's northern and eastern coasts were twenty to twenty-five minutes slow. It took another fifteen to twenty minutes for the sun to pass over Ireland's southern and western counties, reaching the coastlines of counties Galway, Mayo and Kerry last of all. Only these local meridians produced 'real', 'natural' or 'God's' time. Employing legislation to tamper with time caused amusement or disquiet.

From the mid nineteenth century, reformers petitioned governments and public officials for uniform time to be introduced across the Britain and Ireland as well as in India and other colonies. Scientists at the 1883 Geodec Congress of in Rome and delegates at the International Conference for Fixing a Prime in Washington D.C. the following year recommended time uniformity only for commerce and communications, not 'civil life.'[15] They had little option but to take a pragmatic approach. Government statutes and formal regulations often took a long time to penetrate the temporal peculiarities, traditions and habits followed by institutions, social groups, communities and individuals around the globe. The process of standardisation itself generated an even greater proliferation of times as old

temporal systems co-existed with the new.[16] When railways, post offices and other official bodies began the process of temporal standardisation in the mid nineteenth century a plethora of timekeeping habits still governed the daily lives of most citizens.

Various innovations had evolved to deal with multiple temporalities. Irish 'resistance to synchronicity'[17] was far from unique. French, German, British and Irish railway stations, Irish post offices, and at least one of Oxford's dreaming spires, the 'Tom Tower' clock at the main entrance to Christ Church College, fitted their clocks with an extra minute hand to show both standard and local mean time. Sometimes two or more clocks were used, each displaying a different time.[18] In 1892, Robert Hugh Mill, Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society of London and avid time reformer, noted, with some exasperation, both the 'anomaly' of Dublin time and the fact that the map of Britain and Ireland in the frustratingly complex but indispensable *Bradshaw's Monthly Railway Guide* was traversed with horizontal lines marking nine local mean times across the two islands.[19] This cartographical innovation, of little practical use other than as an aid for calculating departures and arrivals in local time, first appeared at the end of 1883, three decades after the railways officially adopted Greenwich time.[20]

The Irish Railway Clearing House, established in 1848, advised railway companies to forgo Ireland's patchwork of local times (Galway, Cork, Belfast, Queenstown, Waterford etc) in favour of 'Dublin time' (also referred to as 'Dunsink', 'railway' or 'Irish' time).[21] By 1855, public bodies in most principal towns had adopted it for official business. The Port and Docks Board and the Ballast Office (both in Dublin), mail cars, railways and the 1pm drop of O'Connell (then Carlisle) Bridge time ball by which most Dubliners set their watches also ran to Dublin time.[22] Around 1914, the ball was converted to Greenwich time, but Dubliners were not.[23] According to watchmaker and staunch northern unionist Francis Montgomery

Moore, ‘Belfast’ time (twenty-three minutes forty-three seconds slow of Greenwich) could never be ‘Irish’ time.[24] The Albert Memorial Clock - on which Belfast residents relied – as well as the Belfast ports ran to Belfast time. In some parts of Ireland at least three time systems remained in use. In 1903, *Guy’s Cork City & County Almanac and Directory* for Munster (Ireland’s southernmost province) supplied moon risings in Greenwich time, tides in ‘railway’ time, and for sunrise and sunset, railway time plus ‘Dial Time at Cork’.[25] Temporal plurality hampered telegraphic communications, however, and by 1898, telegraph and post offices across Ireland were, like the railways, using Greenwich time, even in Belfast.

The Politics of Time

Temporal reform was closely followed by the contemporary press. British and Irish news reports, editorials and published letters on the topic of time appeared alongside coverage of the great issues and events of the day: women’s suffrage, Irish home rule, the Great War (1914-1918), the dangers of socialism and workers’ rights.[26] The time question was comparatively light-hearted, replete with riffs, puns and jokes at time’s expense, but temporal reform was never politically or socially neutral.[27] It was a manifestation of a ‘growing regulatory and regularizing culture’ that was shaped and informed by the values and virtues of the Victorian and Edwardian modernising elites who were largely responsible for proposing, initiating and implementing it.[28] For scientists, professionals, academics, top tier government officialdom, business and commercial elites, a willingness to adopt uniform time was a marker of the ‘civilised’ world and ‘modern progress’.[29]

In Ireland, the world view and attitudes associated with time reformers made the question of uniform time potentially politically divisive from the outset. Not only did the cosmopolitan, integrated British and Irish elites who had most to gain from the

synchronisation of ‘Irish’ and ‘English’ time, by and large, regard home rule as a ‘dark cloud’ and a ‘menace’, but attitudes were also often underpinned by *de rigueur* negative generalisations about Ireland and the Irish.[30] In June 1908, Sir William H.M. Christie, the Astronomer Royal, raised the issue of assimilating British and Irish time when testifying before a House of Commons Select Committee established to ascertain the feasibility of a Daylight Saving bill recently introduced by Robert Pearce MP (Liberal, Leek, Staffordshire). He attributed the failure of earlier attempts by Sir Robert Ball and Mr. Arthur A. Rambout to affect the change during their tenures as Royal Astronomer of Ireland to the fact that Irish people disliked ‘earlier rising.’[31] It was not uncommon on either island to portray accurate time-keeping as an English virtue. From 1900 to 1914, for instance, the *Western People* ran an advertisement for T.W. Armstrong, a catholic watchmaker and jeweller from Ballina, Co. Mayo, featuring an illustrated hand holding a pocket watch accompanied by the caption: ‘England Goes by Greenwich time, and England won’t go wrong in a hurry.’[32]

Of course, for the jingoistic British press the widespread acceptance of Greenwich time *was* a reflection of ‘English’ superiority. ‘England alone’, wrote one newspaper columnist in 1903, ‘having been first in the field and being a great sea power, has been able to enforce the use of its meridian upon the rest of mankind and to persist in the conservatism which is to our hearts so dear.’[33] Time standardisation coincided with imperial expansion and a general upsurge in nationalism across Europe. Imperial rivalries and colonial resistance, however, often complicated its successful implementation. France, the country most discussed in Irish time reform debates, refused to accept *l’heure anglaise de Greenwich* until March 1911, when they finally capitulated. They dubbed the new time as ‘Paris time minus nine minutes’, their dignity preserved by nomenclature.[34] Britain encountered more tenacious opposition in some of its colonies. The resistance of Bombay’s Indian residents to the 1906

imposition of Indian Standard Time outlasted the Raj. It was 1950 before the Municipal Corporation, by then the lone public institution still observing local time, finally ended the 'battle of clocks'.[35]

The Campaign for Uniform Time, 1908 to 1916

The issue of Daylight Saving, discussed in the House of Commons on several occasions in the years between the publication of William Willett's *The Waste of Daylight* (1907) and its implementation in 1916. Daylight Saving had wide support among both unionist and nationalist Irish parliamentarians[36], but these debates became a forum for raising the more controversial issue of uniform time across Britain and Ireland. Pearce's ultimately unsuccessful 1908 bid to introduce Daylight Saving provided the impetus for what became a five-and-a-half-year campaign to extend Greenwich time to Ireland. In early 1909, the Dublin Chamber of Commerce [D.C.C.] began circulating a 'memorial' calling for the introduction of Greenwich time across the British isles. By the Summer of 1911 it had garnered the support of Irish and British Chambers of Commerce, the Annual Conference of the Associated Chambers of Commerce, the Board of Trade, the Dublin Mercantile Association, Dublin County Council, the Dalkey and Rathmines Urban Councils, and the Port and Docks Board.[37]

From the beginning, their efforts prompted a steady stream of public commentary, both for and against. Within the I.P.P., still the dominant force within constitutional nationalism despite interparty wrangling and damaging splits, there was a lack of consensus.[38] William Field, a businessman and MP (I.P.P., Dublin), proved a dedicated opponent.[39] Over 1909 and 1910, the *Freeman's Journal* (the newspaper most closely associated with the I.P.P.) published letters from Field berating the D.C.C. for attempting to usurp the 'function of timekeeper for the Irish nation'. All to no avail, he argued, because the Irish population

were ‘satisfied’ and had ‘no complaint against the immutable laws of nature…which the Creator has placed this island.’[40]

Other Nationalists MPs disagreed. Of the two Irish MPs to raise the issue (separately) in June 1911, one was a Unionist (Godfrey Fetherstonhaugh, Fermanagh North) and the other a Nationalist (Vincent Kennedy, I.P.P., Cavan West). Afterwards, Kennedy was specifically commended for his intervention by the Belfast Chamber of Commerce who worked closely with the D.C.C. on the issue.[41] Field was also taken to task in the *Irish Independent* by F.J. O’Driscoll, who insisted that uniform time would not ‘affect Irish Home Rule or independence to the extent of a tick of a town clock’. O’Driscoll quoted another of Field’s critics who had pointed out that Dublin or ‘Irish’ time had been legislatively imposed on Ireland in 1880 by the ‘adjacent island’ and could hardly be considered ‘an indigenous and national property.’[42] In May 1911, August Birrell, the Irish Chief Secretary, confirmed that the government would consider the measure ‘if there was a demand’.[43] Uniform time lobbyists hoped that it would be implemented on 31 December but a lack of consensus amongst Irish MPs seems to have dissuaded the government from taking further action.[44]

When the D.C.C. memorial was reproduced in full in *The Horological Journal* in September 1911, the campaign against home rule by Irish unionists and Tory extremists was gathering momentum.[45] The previous month, the Parliament Act removing the House of Lords’ veto (and with it the means to prevent a home rule bill becoming law) had received royal assent. On 23 September, the first of thousands of anti-home rule monster meetings and rallies, mass petitions and canvassing across Britain and Ireland took place. [46] Spearheading the opposition that would destabilise British political life and bring Ireland to the brink of civil war in 1914 were Edward Carson, leader of the Irish Unionists in parliament and leading member of the Irish Unionist Alliance (I.U.A.), and James Craig, a Unionist MP for East

Down and a member of the Ulster Unionist Council (U.C.C.) who took a leading role in organising and arming the Ulster Volunteer Force, the paramilitary wing of home rule resistance. [47]

In October 1911, Captain Charles Craig (Unionist, South Antrim), James Craig's brother and a founding member of the U.U.C., asked the Chief Secretary when Greenwich time would be extended to Ireland, describing it as 'non-contentious' issue. [48] Michael Joyce (I.P.P. Limerick) immediately shouted across the chamber: 'Wait till we get home rule', but then Vincent Kennedy, noting that France, Spain and Portugal had adopted uniform time, pointedly asked Birrell how many memorials he had received on the question. The Chief Secretary had received twenty-five memorials in favour, and none against.[49] Unionists persisted, and in June 1912 a Uniform Time (Ireland) Bill was formally introduced in the House of Lords by the Earl of Shaftesbury, a British peer closely associated with Ulster. With home rule seemingly imminent Shaftesbury admitted that attempting to pass uniform time legislation for Ireland was 'rather Utopian'.[50] As it turned out, there was a diversity of attitudes among unionists as well. Two Irish peers spoke against it. Lord Oranmore declared himself a 'Home Ruler' on the matter, denouncing the bill as a 'last instance of Saxon tyranny'.[51] The Earl of Mayo also objected, but his plea for 'Irish miles, Irish stew, and other Irish things' to remain unaltered was ridiculed by other peers as well as the unionist press: 'If Irish miles and Irish stew were as great a nuisance as Irish time is to anyone who has to do business with people across the Channel' wrote one editorialist, 'they would have to go, too.'[52]

In the end, the bill passed in the Lords and was sent to the Commons, only to stall again. Despite the efforts of Charles Craig to introduce it as a private members bill in March 1913 (supported by his brother and several other Unionist MPs), the second reading was

deferred eleven times between March 1912 and May 1913 in favour of more pressing concerns.[53] The unionist press blamed Nationalist opposition, and this probably was a factor.[54] Uniform time was considered important enough to raise and implement only with consensus. It did not come before parliament again until the summer of 1916, when radically altered circumstances turned Greenwich time into a weapon in the unionist arsenal.

Time reform in the wake of the Easter Rising

When Sir Henry Norman, a Liberal MP from Blackburn, rose to speak in favour of a new Daylight Saving bill on 8 May 1916, Britain was two years into the Great War. Charles Craig was with 36th (Ulster) Division on the Western Front, an officer in the 11th Royal Irish Rifles.[55] After a lengthy discussion, the 'Summer Time' bill passed by 170 votes to two and came into force as a wartime measure two weeks later.[56] A few months earlier Herbert Asquith, the Prime Minister, had dismissed Daylight Saving but since then Germany, Austria and Holland had introduced the measure, and France would soon do the same.[57] Circumstances had also invested the question of uniform time with a new sense of urgency. Dublin was under martial law. The Easter Rising (24-29 April), an unsuccessful six-day revolt by separatist nationalists against British rule, coincided with a German gas attack at Hulluch, Belgium in with the 16th (Irish) Division suffered over 2,000 casualties.[58] Once again, the Daylight Saving debate provided a pretext for raising the uniform time.

The ground had clearly been prepared. After James Dundas White (Independent Liberal, Tradeston, Glasgow) cited a letter in *The Times* that morning from Lord Inverclyde on the subject of Greenwich time for Ireland, Herbert Samuel, the Home Secretary (who had been successfully represented by Carson in a libel suit a few years earlier) suggested that Irish clocks could simply be moved back 35 minutes instead of an hour in October when Daylight Saving came to an end.[59] Both were reluctant to introduce the legislation without

clear indications that it would be supported in Ireland, however, and that, in the present circumstances, was difficult to ascertain.[60]

For Unionists, now more than ever, uniform time was emblematic of their connection with Britain, a symbolic defence against nationalist encroachment. Among the increasingly disunified and weakened I.P.P. it was yet another cause of division which Carson and Craig easily turned to their advantage. James Craig expressed his 'keen disappointment' that uniform time was not to be implemented immediately, calling for uniform time to be least be introduced in the north where the population was 'anxious' to 'have English time in the future'. Ulster, he said, was 'most anxious that this particular psychological moment should be taken to make a standard time throughout the whole of the country' because it was 'more nearly allied to the rest of the United Kingdom than any other part of the country'.[61] John Boland (I.P.P., Kerry South) was the only the only Nationalist MP to respond. None of the I.P.P. leadership were present among the thirty-eight Nationalist MPs in the chamber. William Field and Michael Joyce, known opponents of uniform time, remained silent. Though careful to disassociate himself from Craig, Boland expressed his support for the Home Secretary's proposal on the condition that efforts be made to ascertain Irish opinion on the matter.[62]

The I.P.P.'s muted response to Craig's weaponization of uniform time reflected both their lack of consensus on this issue and the party's state of confusion and disorganisation after the Rising. Against the express advice of John Redmond (the I.P.P. chairman) and John Dillon (I.P.P., East Mayo) several leaders of the Rising had been executed, four of them that morning. In July, I.P.P. morale would suffer a further devastating blow when, despite their party's efforts in the ongoing home rule negotiations, the government confirmed that six Ulster counties were to be excluded permanently from the home rule settlement.[63] They had

been unable to prevent partition. The Ulster Unionists (with whom the government had engaged in separate negotiations) had prevailed. Herbert Samuel announced the Uniform Time (Ireland) bill on 1 August, assuring the House that there was consensus among Irish MPs. In addition to Kennedy and Boland, Redmond had privately expressed his support, although he was not in the House.[64] John Dillon, however, promptly seized on the uniform time question as a means of reclaiming his party's nationalist credibility. Declaring that neither the I.P.P. nor the Irish people had been consulted, Dillon refused to support the bill: 'We have managed to get along for 600 or 700 years … without assimilating our time to that of Great Britain. We have got along very well. It reminds us that we are coming into a strange country.'[65]

Dillon, the only I.P.P. leader to have experienced the Rising first-hand, had spent Easter week confined to his house in Dublin listening to gun fire and wild rumours. Without access to newspapers, public clocks or telegrams he lost his time sense, misdating a (now famous) extended letter to his mother-in-law: 'What an extraordinary experience it is - to be isolated from the whole world'.[66] Dillon returned to Westminster in May with a more acute sense of the Irish present than his fellow parliamentarians. In a speech that shocked much of his party and the House, he declared himself to be 'proud' of the rebels who, however misguided, had fought a 'clean fight, a brave fight'.[67] The Commons still voted to proceed with the time bill by a large margin, but Dillon was supported by all but two of the thirty-eight Nationalist MPs present.[68] In the days that followed several MPs submitted blocking motions, and the bill's second reading was deferred three times.[69] The *Irish Independent* suggested that, thanks to Dillon's 'heavy guns', Redmond had lost control of his party: 'The incident of the Uniform Time Bill, though trifling in its way, shows how the wind blows'.[70]

The British and unionist press dismissed National MPs' objections as 'unreasonable, illogical and sentimental'[71], but Irish opinion towards the new time (Daylight Savings) was clearly divided, and public anger at the executions was palpable. On 31 May 1916, Chrissie Fullerton wrote from Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire), co. Dublin to Mary Laithwaite, mother of Sir John Gilbert Laithwaite, a Dublin born civil servant in the India Office:

> 'Carson should have been shot as he is the cause of this outbreak. It was pure revenge shooting Major McBride. I am sorry for Mr Pearse and his brother…How do you like the new time? I believe down in Co Limerick the farmers who supply Cleeve's Creameries with milk have refused to observe the new arrangement as they say the cows won't conform to it & give them milk an hour earlier!'[72]

When the Daylight Saving and the uniform time bills were being debated, the Dublin, Belfast and Cork Chambers of Commerce, the Port and Docks Board (Dublin) and the Cork, Drogheda, Newry, Sligo and Limerick Harbour Boards, had all passed yet another round of resolutions in favour of uniform time while Limerick Corporation, Cork County Council and Carrick-on-Suir Urban Council all resolved against it.[73] Public opposition from separatist nationalists was also mounting. On 7 August, Dublin Corporation voted in favour of uniform time by seventeen votes to eight but Ben Briscoe, representing Sinn Féin, denounced 'West British Time.' [74]

In the circumstances, the government decided to withdraw the bill, prompting Edward Carson to go on the offensive, threatening to block the Dublin Reconstruction (Emergency Provisions) Bill in retaliation.[75] More consensus within the I.P.P. might have allowed the party to hold their nerve and turn the situation to their advantage, but instead of preventing, or at least delaying the legislation, MPs withdrew their blocking motions to get the

reconstruction bill through. An already faltering party looked weaker still.[76] The time bill was debated again on 17 August, passed by committee the following day, was approved by the House of Lords, and received Royal Assent on 23 August 1916.[77] The 'Irish half hour' was legislated out of existence. Uniform time was formally introduced in Ireland as 'Western European time' on 1 October 1916. The Irish revolt against new time, however, was far from over.

Fighting Time in Ireland

A parliamentary 'Summer Time' Committee convened in 1917 to investigate the feasibility of re-introducing Daylight Savings across both islands reported that Irish attitudes were 'somewhat conflicting'[78] With both Daylight Saving and uniform time now in force, the new official Irish time was one hour and twenty-five minutes ahead of what was now being referred to as 'old' Irish time, and differed by almost two hours from sun time in parts of the south and west. As early as 1908, British time specialists cautioned the government against 'adopting times which do not agree with the local meridians' where there was a significant discrepancy between sun time and clock time.[79] Nonetheless, the government reintroduced summer time across both islands in the Spring of 1917 and in subsequent years.[80] Most Irish farmers continued to observe sun time, as did many farmers in Britain and elsewhere.[81] The Council of Agriculture, rural public bodies and farmer's bodies across Ireland tabled objections to one or both reforms, and the Clonmel Board of Guardians flatly refused to observe uniform time.[82]

Not all Irish citizens objected to the reforms, however, and there was a marked urban/rural divide. The longer summer evenings were generally popular with urban dwellers from all backgrounds. Horace Curzon Plunkett was thrilled at the idea of being able to play golf at 10pm in June.[83] Most Irish trade unions and workers' organisations consulted in 1917

were in favour of Daylight Saving.[84] One enterprising cycle agent in Cork City advised customers to make best use of the extra daylight by purchasing their bicycles.[85] In some areas, protestant but not catholic churches observed the new time,[86] but the Dublin Diocese accepted the change. Rev. P.D. McCaul, a teacher in St. Eunan's College in Letterkenny, Donegal, made a plea for summer time to be given a fair trial.'[87]

Public clamour relating to both reforms gathered apace in the weeks before and the months after uniform time's implementation. Newspapers published letters describing 'English' time as a 'badge of slavery', a violation of the natural 'rights of small nations', a herald of the destruction of Ireland's 'distinct position on God's earth' and a 'de-nationalising measure' unsuited to Irish conditions.[88] Heated arguments broke out during urban and rural council meetings. Public bodies and organisations, often split down the middle, passed resolutions for or against by a single vote.[89] In February 1917, one indignant member of the County Cork Committee of Agriculture and Technical Instruction protested that their 'natural meridian' had been 'filched from them without their being consulted.'[90] John Dillon warned the House of Commons that the 'whole rural world' was in revolt against uniform time but was ignored.[91] Catholic bishops, who weighed in on the public debate from March 1917, had already commenced efforts to calm the situation with plans to accommodate both sides.

Rev. Dr. Patrick Foley, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, a strong supporter of the British war effort[92] and personally in favour of adopting 'new time', was well aware that the legislation would have little impact outside of the towns. In September 1916, before uniform time came into effect, he had advised that, at least in rural areas, when the clocks moved forward masses times and school openings and closings should be put back half an hour in order to accommodate those who continued to follow old time.[93] Foley made similar arrangements in 1917 and he, as well as the bishops of Kerry and Killaloe, directed school

managers to simply postpone marking the school rolls until 11am 'new' time.[94] He also advised that nuns could both adopt new time and follow the same horarium as before by being 'a half hour behind it [new time] in rising, retiring, religious exercises etc, as well as in school work.'[95] In May, Foley stated publicly that most rural districts favoured Greenwich time but most towns preferred 'new' time (Greenwich time plus Daylight Saving). Local priests were advised to observe Greenwich time in less densely rural populated areas but, in parishes with towns having a population of 1,000 or more, the heads of families in each parish should determine which time to observe by public vote.[96]

Other members of the clergy were less accommodating. In an article published in the *Catholic Bulletin* (the only Catholic journal to publicly defend the Easter Rising) that year, Rev. Cornelius Mangan, a Limerick curate, denounced the 'insufferable arrogance of the ruling caste in England and its complacent garrison in Ireland' for imposing Greenwich time on Ireland.[97] Asserting that the legislation contravened the 1884 meridian conference's recognition of 'Dublin time', Mangan noted that four different times were now being observed in Ireland: Greenwich time, Greenwich time with summer time, old Dublin time, and old Dublin time with summertime. Countess Markievicz's 1918 prediction that abolishing Irish time would "put the whole country into the SF (Sinn Féin) camp" overstated its political impact, but the furore over time reform was an indication of the public mood.[98] In April 1918, another piece of ill-judged British legislation, this time to extend military conscription to Ireland, prompted mass opposition to British rule and united, as probably no other issue could have, the catholic clergy and constitutional nationalists with the separatists leading the anti-conscription campaign.[99] In the lead up to the December 1918 General Election, Sinn Fein speakers derided the I.P.P. for what had been, as far as they were

concerned, a craven capitulation to both time reforms.[100] Within weeks of the election, a military and political insurgency against British rule began.

The Irish Revolutionary Present

Like many European nationalist movements, separatists understood Irish sovereignty as a reclamation of a past 'golden age'.[101] Laying exclusive claim to a redemptive and messianic restoration of Ireland's glorious Gaelic past, what Sean O'Faolain, another I.R.A. man turned writer, would later describe as a 'rich flowering of the old', was an important aspect of separatist nationalist legitimisation.[102] In their memoirs and propaganda, male revolutionaries often characterised their war as a collapse of historical time, an 'a-temporal' communion with Ireland's dead generations of patriots.[103] Nonetheless, the Irish Revolution was a very modern experience. Those fighting for an Irish republic took full advantage of the fruits of modernisation and socio-economic transformation predating political independence.[104] Members already employed in post offices and railways utilised these pre-existing lines of communication and supply to send secret communications and gather information. Dáil Ministers rushed to acquire telephones after the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed and 'used them to death', according Kathy Barry, a Cumann na mBan[105] member who carried out a range of administrative tasks for the movement: 'I had forgotten what it was like to have to write ten letters to say what you could say in ten minutes' she wrote, 'now I know again.'[106]

The more widespread availability of the new 'safety bicycle', equipped with pneumatic tyres, in 1890s had a similarly transformative effect. Bicycles were almost as important as guns to the success of the Irish independence struggle, allowing even the most wanted members of the Irish revolutionary government to move freely.[107] Cycling was

particularly liberating for female activists (and Irish women generally).[108] Separatist propaganda often contrasted women's lack of political rights under British rule with their equal status in ancient Gaelic society, and the Easter Proclamation guaranteed women's equality in the future.[109] Nonetheless, although more progressive in terms of political equality for women than the I.P.P., radical nationalism remained highly 'gendered'. Women provided logistical support for military organisations that they were not allowed to join.[110] Later accounts, both by the women themselves as well as others, often do not retain the impatience expressed by some female activists at the time or their spirited defiance of the gendered norms, which included cutting their hair short. Madge Clifford, Ernie O'Malley's secretary, commiserated with Barry when, in late 1922, after acting as a special courier for Liam Lynch (O/C of Anti-Treaty forces) from a base with the Tipperary I.R.A. she was sent back to the dullness of administering a dependents fund in Dublin:

> 'Rotten you had to come up. I'm sure you'll be looking after dependents in heaven… A.G.G. told me you had a bobbed NUT and I was quite pleased to hear him say that, as they tell me it is not becoming to girls and they say I am too much like a Tom-BOY with it.[111]

Barry had already acquired a reputation for rebelliousness. At the beginning of the Civil War, in July 1922, she and two other Cumann na mBan members defied an I.R.A. Commander's order for the women to leave the Hammam Hotel, then occupied by the Dublin I.R.A. They stayed until the men were evacuated on 5 July 1922, actions she later defended in a letter to her disapproving fiancé (also in the I.R.A.):

> And to go back to the other episode you mentioned – your disapproval of me – all the horrid things you said that night. Among other things you told me I wasn't a woman at all so I decided if I ever got a chance when the war was over I'd vamp

> you and let you see whether I was not…Oh Jim I've written pages about it ... I'm sorry. I didn't notice myself. I love those three days at the end because I felt I was nearly as useful as a man and you don't know how helpless a feeling it is to be a woman when you feel you ought to be a man.[112]

Female activists like Kathy Barry forged their own place in nationalist time, gaining a taste of what a fairer world might feel like by asserting themselves in the present.

The official implementation of time reform measures in 1916 was followed by More extreme forms of temporal control during the War of Independence. The curfews imposed by Crown Forces after the Easter Rising (in Dublin) and across various cities and towns during the War of Independence seriously disrupted daily life and alienated large section of the Irish population.[113] Post- curfew raids and arrests by Crown Forces became particularly notorious. The experience of military conflict and imprisonment was often traumatic, disorientating, frightening and sometimes unsurvivable. Letters and diaries written in the course of, or shortly after, the events described in them took place retain more of the time sense and temporal flux of the Irish 'revolutionary present' than retrospective accounts, in visceral flashes of temporal dislocation, exhilaration, agony and confusion.

Sean Fitzpatrick, a Dublin I.R.A. member, penned a short account of a terrifying night spent in Dublin Castle in November 1920 in the custody of the Auxiliary Police, a force of former British Army officers with Great War service drafted in to shore up the faltering Royal Irish Constabulary. Written in January 1922 while serving a year's sentence in Exeter County Prison, Fitzpatrick's account is virtually without punctuation, moving from the past to the present tense and back, hovering on the cusp of what Edmund Husserl referred to as 'retention' (recent past) and recollection (memory). Thirty-two people were killed or fatally wounded on 21 November 1920 in Dublin, 'Bloody Sunday'.[114] All but three of the fifteen

men shot by the I.R.A. short in the early morning were British Army or Auxiliary police. In the afternoon the police retaliated by opening fire on a crowd of civilians at a Gaelic football match. Fourteen died, another sixty were wounded. A further three I.R.A. men in police custody, Dick McKee, Conor Clune and Peadar Clancy, were killed that night. Sean Fitzpatrick, who had been arrested the day before with McKee and Clancy, survived after hours of threats and intimidation:

> he said are you cold Fitzpatrick & I said yes he said you are not half as cold as you will be in a few minutes. I am after putting three fucking bulletts [sic] through your two fucking Sinn Fein pals hearts and I am coming back to do the same with you in a few minutes[115]

Later, when an Auxiliary pointed a loaded gun at him, he described the time sense of not knowing whether he would live or die:

> …he stands in front of me and points revolver at me for about four seconds to me they seemed four hours sentry shoved up revolver & said to not be tricking with that thing

The families of some of the civilians executed by the I.R.A. as alleged spies endured a an even more agonising wait. In the months after the War of Independence was ended by the Anglo-Irish Truce in July 1921, Catherine and Agnes Ray, the wife and sister of Patrick Ray, an ex-soldier who disappeared in Passage West Co. Cork on 21 January 1921, wrote several letters to the new government pleading for news.

> …I am nearly distracted and thinking from day to day I would hear something…my suffering since I can't describe … as he came out of the train he met his little boy and told him to go home. And he never turned in Home … I am heart broken and only ask you in return to let me know is he a prisoner or if he is dead or alive I have 4 young children and am destitute.[116]

His execution was confirmed by the I.R.A. in January 1922, but his body was never found.[117]

In November 1922, during the Civil War, Ernie O'Malley was arrested by Irish Pro-Treaty forces. His eye for complexity and contradiction is as evident in his prison writings as his later memoirs, but the former record the time awareness of someone preparing for oblivion: 'It is a run against time now…I have received my papers and should be shot in three days for this.'[118] Letters O'Malley wrote in October and November 1923 during his forty one day hunger strike document his gradual mental deterioration and collapse of his sense of space and time. Over the final ten days he seemed not to realise that his nightly visits to the room of his friend Mrs. Molly Childers, which he described as 'creeping in', were hallucinations.[119] On the 30 March 1923, Frank Aiken, the I.R.A.'s Chief of Staff, ordered republican (Anti-Treaty) forces to dump arms. The Civil War was over and they had lost. Anti-Treatyite propagandists had employed their own variation on messianic Irish time, recasting 1922 as the 'seventh year of the Republic'[120] established by the 1916. It would be several years before the majority of them gave up their allegiance to this 'unspoiled space-time' and recognised the legitimacy of the new state.[121]

Time in Independent Ireland

During the revolutionary period itself there was a consensus against Greenwich time among separatist nationalists imbued with the essentialist values of the cultural revival and intent on de-anglicisation.[122] After independence however, a new pragmatism set in. In March and April 1923, the last months of the Civil War, after two debates that covered essentially the same ground as previous exchanges in Westminster and the British and Irish press (the health benefits of sunlight, the opposition of agriculturists, milking cows, 'God's time' etc),

the Third Dáil[123] passed new Daylight Saving legislation. When Kevin O'Higgins, the Minister for Home Affairs introduced the bill he remarked:

> …we all raised our plaintive voices against "this rotten British time and this rotten British legislation". Now, with the responsibilities of our own housekeeping upon us, we have to realise that there is a good deal of sound sense to recommend it.

A proposed amendment to restore old Irish time and another to let local government bodies decide whether or not to observe summer time in a particular area were both defeated.[124] Objectors were assured by the Minister of Agriculture that no one would be forced to observe the new time against their will:

> It is one of those laws that ought to be very popular in this country, because it does not matter two pence whether you obey it or not…Nobody need go by it except he is going to a train – and need not obey it then… nobody will punish him.[125]

Republicans came to power in the 1930s, and successive Fianna Fáil[126] governments, made no attempt either to implement messianic republican time or to restore the old Irish time preferred by Sinn Fein administrators. During a debate in December 1937 concerning the wording and interpretation of the new Constitution, when Patrick McGovern (Fine Gael, Cavan) proposed that 'we ought to try to get back to Dublin time' President Eamon de Valera responded that it was 'more convenient' accept Greenwich time.[127] Some individuals, from all walks of life, continued to make the case for the restoration of Irish time. In 1927, an Irish Great War veteran invoked an Irish scientist's contribution to Einstein's theory of relativity (the Lorentz-Fitzgerald contraction) to argue for a return to a time standard that reflected 'our separate, Irish identity.'[128] In 1939, a Jesuit priest's objections to time uniformity fused anti-treatyite republicanism, anti-urbanism, and conservative catholic social teaching in

dismissing urban dwellers as ‘economic parasites’ who should consider the good of the community instead of allowing ‘themselves to be swept away by the undue consideration of their own personal pleasure.’[129]

As ever, the decisions of officialdom did not necessarily impact on the timekeeping habits of the wider population. Irish railway companions, travel guides, city and county directories, for all that they created an ‘expectation of temporal precision’,[130] suggest local times survived for a surprisingly long time. Negotiating multiple times was probably most problematic along the new border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State where farmers observing old time had to contend customs men and increased fees after 5pm (new time) when conveying their goods from one jurisdiction to the other.[131] Elsewhere, it was easy to ignore the new time (apart from when there was a train to catch or a telegram to send), and seems to have continued for years in rural Ireland. Both *Guy’s* and *Thom’s* made the switch to the Greenwich time in 1921, but the fact that *Thom’s* continued to publish coordinates for calculating Dublin, Belfast, Galway, Londonderry, Queenstown [Cobh] and Waterford mean times until 1941 raises the distinct possibility that a significant section of provincial Ireland never even adopted Dublin time, much less Greenwich or Daylight Saving.[132]

Even in Britain, the demise of local mean times was a much slower and more contested process than was often assumed by contemporaries then and some historians since. Recent scholarship indicates that E.P. Thompson and others overstated both the impact of temporal reform on people’s timekeeping habits and industrial capitalism’s need for ‘abstract time’.[133] Far from being the Irish peculiarity of conservative imaginings, resistance to time standardisation was as British as Finchley. It was not out of the ordinary for clocks adorning British churches and village squares to display local times until well into the twentieth century.[134] *Bradshaw’s* did not update their map marking local time until 1929. Ruth Belville,

the ‘Greenwich time Lady’, provided Londoners with better time than many of London’s public clocks into the 1930s.[135] In reality, it was probably the radio in interwar period and later, not the factories and railways in the nineteenth century, that made the systematic standardisation of British and Irish civil time a reality.[136] Even then, traces of the old remained. Precisely when Tom Tower’s extra hand was removed is not known, but Christ Church College still runs to Oxford mean time. The tradition that ‘one is not late till five minutes past the appointed time’ is observed to this day.[137]

Conclusion

While there is some justification in interpreting the imposition of ‘English time’ on Ireland in October 1916 as a kind of reprisal for the Easter Rising, the survival of multiple temporalities and opposition to time reform was not, as has been argued, a distinctive characteristic of Irish ‘colonial modernity’.[138] It was as much a feature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century global experience as the quest for uniformity.[139] In the end it seems, for most of the revolutionary generation, the loss of twenty-five minutes and twenty-one seconds was less important than finally having the right to decide for themselves. Apart from a period during the Emergency (Second World War) official Irish time never deviated from the ‘adjacent’ island. Time, regardless, continued to pass, and the young radical nationalists who fought for Irish independence grew old, marked by it always: ‘The truth of it is that they were both wonderful times and nightmare times’ remembered Sean O’Faolain:‘Even still, after forty years have blunted my worst memories of them, I…still frequently awake sweating from a nightmare that has whirled me back among them again.’[140]

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[5] Julian Wright, *Socialism and the Experience of Time: Idealism and the Present in Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.7.

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[13] *The Times*, 10 Jan. and 22 Jan. 1908; Rooney and Nye, 'Greenwich Observatory Time', 6.

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[111] 'Madge' to Barry, 22 Dec. 1922 (UCDA, Kathy Barry Moloney Papers[KBMP], P94/28).

[112] Barry to Moloney, 31 Jan. 1923 (UCDA, KBMP, P94/113). For a fuller account see Eve Morrison 'Tea, Sandbags and Cathal Brugha: Kathy Barry's Civil Wars' in Oona Frawley (ed.) *Women in the Decade of Commemorations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming 2020).

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[115] Statement of John F. Fitzpatrick, 25 Jan. 1922 (private hands).

[116] 11 Dec. 1921, Catherine Ray to [Adjutant General, IRA GHQ] (MAI, Collins Papers, A/0649/IV).

[117] Minister for Defence to Agnes Ray, 25 Jan 1922 (MAI, Collins Papers, A/0649/IV).

[118] 14 Jan. [1923] Ernie O'Malley Diary, Mountjoy prison (MAI, Childers papers, BMH CD 6/36/21).

[119] O'Malley to Mrs. Childers, 11. 12. 17, 19 Nov. 1923 in Richard English and Cormac O'Malley (eds.), *Prisoners: the Civil War Letters of Ernie O'Malley* (Swords, co. Dublin:

Poolbeg Press, 1991), pp.43-54. See also his posthumous Civil War memoir, Ernie O'Malley, *The Singing Flame* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2012, 1st ed. 1978); Ian Miller, *A History of Force Feeding: Hunger Strikes, Prisons and Medical Ethics, 1909-1974* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 3016) p.3, p. 92, p.106.

[120] Quoted in Beatty, *Masculinity and power*, p.43.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Timothy G. McMahon, *Grand opportunity: the Gaelic revival and Irish society, 1893-1910* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), p.5, p.217.

[123] The main parties represented were Pro-Treaty Sinn Fein (later known as Cumann na nGaedheal and then Fine Gael), the Labour Party, Farmer's Party and various independents.

[124] [Dáil in Committee] Summer Time Bill, 1923—Third Stage, Dáil Éireann debate, 12 Apr. 1923 [https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1923-04-12/28/]; Summer Time Act, 1923 [http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1923/act/13/enacted/en/print.html].

[125] Bille Um Am Samhraidh, 1923 (Summer Time Bill, 1923). - Second Stage, Dáil Éireann debate, 27 Mar. 1923. [https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1923-03-27/19/?highlight%5B0%5D=summer&highlight%5B1%5D=time]

[126] Fianna Fáil, a political party representing those who fought on the republican side during the Civil War, was founded by Eamon de Valera in March 1926.

[127] Interpretation Bill, 1937 – Committee, Dáil Éireann debate, 7 Dec. 1937. [https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1937-12-07/26/].

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[129] Rev. R.S. Devane, S.J., *Summer Time: an Imposition and an Anomaly* (Brown and Nolan Ltd: Dublin, 1939), p.17; Martin Walsh, 'Richard Devane: Social Campaigner in the Free

State, 1920–51', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 103, No. 412 (Winter 2014/15), 562-73.

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[131] Peter Leary, *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border, 1922-1972* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2016), p. 53.

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[134] Ian P. Lyman, 'A Neglected Branch Line of Horology', Pt.1, *Clocks*, Vol.15, No.6 (Nov. 1992), 9-13, 11; ibid. Pt, 2 Vol.15, No.7 (December 1992), 38-41, 41; Gay, 'Clock Synchrony', 121.

[135] Rooney and Nye, 'Greenwich Observatory Time', 29.

[136] Gay, 'Clock Synchrony', 129.

[137] Judith Curthoys, *The Cardinal's College: Christ Church, Chapter and Verse* (London: Profile Books, 2012); Email, Judith Curthoys (Archivist, Christ Church College, Oxford) to Eve Morrison, 7 Mar. 2019.

[138] Gibbons, *Joyce's Ghosts*, p.165, p.180, p.185.

[139] Ogle, *Global Transformation*, p.10, p.72, p.99.

[140] Sean O'Faolain, *Viva Moi*, 142.