

British Association for Irish Studies

Newsletter

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Orangeism
The Making of a Tradition
KEVIN HADDICK-FLYNN



FOCUS INTERVIEW

WITH

KEVIN HADDICK FLYNN

ON

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BRITAIN'S IRISH TRAVELLERS: NEW PROJECT

BATTLE IN THE BOOKS: IRISH CULTURAL THEORY?

IRISH STUDIES IN BRITISH SCHOOLS

NOTICEBOARD

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EDITORIAL

As usual a few generous and well-informed contributors have made the current issue of the Newsletter possible. I want to thank, in particular: Kevin Haddick Flynn for an extended Focus Interview about his thought-provoking history of Orangeism; Colm Power for his outline of a major project on Irish Travellers in Britain on which he is the Principal Researcher and which is being supported by the Centre for Irish Studies, Strawberry Hill after a successful bid for National Lottery funding; Lance Pettitt for the 2nd contribution to the new series 'Battle in the Books', which addresses the topic of Irish Studies and Cultural Theory; and Christy Evans, a new member of The BAIS National Council who is interested in developing a structure for networking among British Secondary Schools who are teaching, or about to teach, Irish Studies.

The call for Papers for the early November Conference on 'The Irish Diaspora', to be held at

the Irish Studies Centre, University of North London, at which Luke Gibbons (Dublin City University) has agreed to deliver the BAIS Millennium lecture on Friday 10 November 2000, is a great opportunity for our members who are researching into this rapidly expanding field of learning to propose a paper. Please consult Noticeboard on page 12 for the details.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of BAIS is the sheer breadth of membership: undergraduates, postgraduate researchers, university and school teachers, and generally interested and enthusiastic writers and readers. May I remind members that the Newsletter is here as the broadest of platforms for all to participate in the lively debates which seem to be ongoing in the current Irish Studies scene.

Copy and/or discs (Word 6/95) with articles, reports, notices, letters etc. to be included in No. 23 should be sent to Jerry Nolan, 8 Antrobus Road, Chiswick, London W4 5HY by July 10th 2000.

12 FOCUS INTERVIEW: KEVIN HADDICK FLYNN

Kevin Haddick Flynn is a director of a number of companies in the international oil industry. His personal interest in history has inspired him to become a busy historical researcher. Kevin has published numerous articles on historical and political subjects in Ireland, Britain and the United States. He is chiefly interested in 17th century Irish history, and is currently working on a biography of Patrick Sarsfield which, he tells me, will be the first study of the Jacobite leader by an Irishman since John Todhunter's book in 1895. An article on Sarsfield; 'What Really Happened at Ballyneety?' will be published in the Summer edition of *History Ireland*. His recently published book is *Orangeism – the Making of a Tradition* (Wolfhound, 1999) which, again he tells me, is the most comprehensive study of its subject since Sibbert's two-volume work in 1914. He has very kindly agreed to discuss in the columns of the BAIS Newsletter some of the major issues arising out of this detailed historical study.

JN: Can you recount a little about the mixture of Orange and Green traditions in your own family background?

KHF: The Haddicks – the maternal side of my family – are of old planter stock and descended from an adventurer and soldier, Sir Victor Haddick, who came to Ireland in the late 17th century and was granted lands sequestered from the Maguires in County Fermanagh. A later Sir Victor Haddick was a senior member of the Grand Lodge of Ireland in 1912 and one of the earliest signatories of the Ulster Covenant. My grandfather, Edward Haddick, married Josephine O'Brien from a staunch republican family in County Tipperary where she was a classmate of Dan Breen at Donohill National School. There are numerous things in both the Orange and Green traditions which I salute and admire.

JN: Who has most influenced your approach to historical research?

KHF: Inspiration came, initially, from my grandfather, who was a fine old fashioned essayist. While I was studying at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire – an Ivy League College founded by George III, supposedly to educate the Indians – I met Robert Roswell Palmer. Palmer was of Ulster descent and had written a two-volume classic on 18th century Europe entitled *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*. He believed that history writing should not just provide employment or parlour games for academics but enthuse the millions – a view which I readily absorbed. Palmer spent much of his life analysing the problems of metahistory and synthesis. From his example I formed some idea of how narrative history ought to be written, and began to question a number of reigning conventions. I accepted his view that history is not a strict science, and saw the wisdom of Burke's remark that it is 'the great Serbonian bog where armies whole have sunk'. Later in London I knew Sir Charles Petrie, the greatest of modern Jacobite historians. When I knew him he was President of the Irish Military History Society, and working on his book *The Great Tyrconnel* (1973). It was Sir Charles who urged me to study Orangeism. Years earlier he had written a biography of Walter Long, who had been the leader of the Unionist party prior to Edward Carson. Due to business commitments, I postponed writing a book about Orangeism for

many years, and then found that it took much longer to research and write than I had anticipated.

JN: Why has the Battle of the Boyne become so central to Ulster Orangeism? Just how unhistorical are Orange memories of King Billy's often celebrated victory?

KHF: The Boyne is given primacy in Orange tradition primarily because of the presence of William. It was he who made the crucial planning decisions, and led the left-wing of the cavalry. William crossed the river at Drybridge and actually participated in the fighting. He was conspicuously brave throughout and exposed himself to great danger. Indeed he was lucky to escape unharmed following serious incident both before and after the battle. Orange attitudes to the Boyne are somewhat exaggerated. In truth, it was not much of a battle. It decided practically nothing. The Jacobites withdrew in relatively good shape having lost about a thousand men (or 4%) and lived to fight another day. Strategically, the Battle of Aughrim in the following year was far more important and decided the outcome of the war.

JN: What part do Orange memories of another battle, at the Somme in 1916, play in the tradition of Orangeism?

KHF: The Somme has attained significance because it began on 1st July, the old calendar date of the Battle of the Boyne, and because the scale of the sacrifice has come to be seen as symbolic of Protestant Ulster's loyalty to the Crown. Four posthumous Victoria Crosses were won by the men of the 36th Ulster Division. Although formed largely from Carson's Army, the Division was not 100% Protestant, nor was it drawn exclusively from Ulster. It should be remembered that the 16th (Irish) Division – whose members were drawn mostly from the pro-Home Rule National Volunteers – were also involved in the long Somme campaign. This detachment suffered almost as much as the Ulster Division, with 4,000 men killed or wounded between 3rd – 9th September 1916. Orangemen at their religious services commemorate the fallen of both Divisions.

JN: How do you view in your account of the

traditions of Orangeism the movement of republican Presbyterians into forms of Orangeism after the failure of the 1798 Rebellion?

KHF: I could write a thesis in answer to that question! Only a minority of Presbyterians embraced republicanism and their adherence to republican doctrine has been ridiculously overplayed. Presbyterians had earlier been strong Williamites – they defended the Walls of Derry, and participated in the 1689-91 War. They believed that William, the only Calvinist to sit on the English throne, was one of their own. In 1798, the Presbyterian ‘Turn Out’ was relatively small and confined to two counties. The marvel is that the small farmers and labourers who gathered at Roughfort, Donegore Hill, and Ballinahinch did not see the hopelessness of their enterprise. In Ulster the whole United Irish Movement ended in miserable fiasco. Disillusionment became rife on receipt of news from the South. The massacre at Scullabogue was seen as an attempt to wipe out Protestants, and a re-run of the 1641 Rising and of the 1680s when Tyrconnel tried to overrun Derry and Enniskillen. Furthermore, the news of ‘Popish’ clergy leading pikemen in Wexford and Wicklow left them feeling that they had backed the wrong cause. The Presbyterian return to Orangeism is clearly illustrated in the history of the Drennans. William Drennan was a fervent United Irishman. His son, John Swanwick Drennan, a poet like his father, wrote verses to celebrate Orange resistance to Home Rule. His sister, Sarah, married John Andrews of Comber. Her daughter was the mother of John Miller Andrews, Northern Ireland’s second Prime Minister and Head of the Orange Order between 1948-55.

JN: During the 19th century why did Daniel O’Connell and Michael Davitt try to win Orange support and why did they fail to do so?

KHF: O’Connell had something in common with Orangemen: he was a loyalist and shared their veneration for ‘the darlin’ little Queen’. His overtures towards them were laughable. Gimmicks like drinking a tumbler of water from the Boyne cut no ice with the hard-headed brethren. O’Connell made great efforts to encourage Protestants to join the Repeal Movement, and some of his closest lieutenants, like Tom Steele, were valuable precisely because they were Protestants. In fact, Protestants had

little time for O’Connell because he had nothing practical to offer them. The case of Davitt was different. A small populist wing of the Order emerged in Cavan and Fermanagh and was, for a time, interested in the Land League. Orange tenants could see merit in an organisation which agitated for reduced rents and security of tenure. But the Grand Lodge was not prepared to tolerate even the most tenuous connections with the League and quickly put the screws on. The warrants of two lodges were withdrawn and others were threatened with expulsion. The attitude of the ‘populists’ was unrepresentative. The mass of Orangemen would have no truck with an organisation which they perceived to be run by Fenians, and led by a convicted gun-runner.

JN: Why did marching become so important a practice in the expression of Orangeism?

KHF: A march, or parade, may be defined as a procession in military order. As an action it should be conducted with pride. If one excludes the ‘pride’ factor, it becomes meaningless. Orangemen say that they march ‘with pride’, which is not the same as marching triumphally, in celebration of their culture and heritage. They also say that their marches have a ceremonial significance and are symbolic of events in Orange history. Marching on ‘The Twelfth’ is, for instance, a re-enactment of William’s five day march from Lockbrickland in County Down (where his army assembled) to the banks of the Boyne. Marches, Orangemen argue, help to establish the presence of the Order in Loyalist areas and to allow the community to draw strength from this. It lets people know that the Order hasn’t gone away! It also enables brethren from different walks of life to show solidarity, publicly, for Orange principles. Some of the marching traditions are quaint. In Belfast there is an old ritual called ‘Floating the Banner’. The event entails a local Orange lodge engaging a band and parading around its catchment area, usually from the home of their immediate past master to the home of their incoming one. The parade is followed by a meal in the Orange Hall, known as a ‘festive board’. Then there is the ‘Good Drumming Ritual’. If an Orangeman falls foul of his lodge, his brethren may march to his house and annoy him with a ‘good drumming’ which entails loudly playing their lambegs under his window for several hours!

which entails loudly playing their lambegs under his window for several hours!

JN: Your research led you into some of the more arcane regions of Orange 'sister' organisations. What about throwing some light on: 'The Royal Black Perceptory' and 'The Royal Arch Purple'?

KHF: The Royal Black Perceptory is a Brotherhood similar to the Orange Order but less politically involved and more scripture based. It originated in Scotland, and transferred to Ireland in 1797, but was not fully constituted until 1820. Around one third of Orangemen are 'Blackmen' and complete an elaborate sequence of degrees until they reach the 11th degree which is called 'The Red Cross'. It is organised as an honorary knighthood and initiates are called 'Sir Knight'. Like the Orange Order and the Royal Black Perceptory, the Royal Arch Purple Order is a Brotherhood. It is the most Masonic-like of the Loyalist Orders. It derives its name from 'arch' meaning chief (as in archangel) and its colour from scriptural sources – the curtains of the tabernacle which surround the Ark of the Covenant were purple. Most members of the Orange Order are 'Purplemen'. The order's single degree is regarded as the culmination of a natural progression through the Orange Order. 'Purplemen' as such rarely appear in public and many outsiders are unaware of their existence.

JN: How did Orangeism manage to unite the disparate parts of Ulster Protestantism in opposition to Irish Home Rule?

KHF: This was much easier than might be imagined. The Order, in fact, was pushing on an open door. During the Irish Home Rule period (1867-1921) Ulster Protestants were explicitly Unionist and implicitly Orange. As the Home Rule crises occurred and recurred, the Order had the infrastructure through its network of lodges to organise resistance. It also had agitators throughout the province of Ulster who were ready to stir up anti-Home Rule fervour.

JN: How do you interpret the emergence of the Independent Orange Order in 1903 which regarded unionism as being incapable of holding the new wine of twentieth century democracy?

KHF: It is doubtful whether the rank and file of the Independent Orange Order ever held such a view. It was the opinion of Robert Lindsay Crawford, the Lisburn-born businessman and journalist, who was the sole intellectual among the leadership. Crawford advocated a romantic vision of Orange and Green uniting. Under his leadership, the Independents developed a friendship with the Ancient Order of Hibernians and they both supported Big Jim Larkin's strike on the Belfast Docks in 1907. But Crawford himself was finally drummed out of the Order, and ended his working life as trade representative of the Irish Free State in New York. The Independents were mavericks; many of their pronouncements were eccentric and inconsistent. The Order still survives mainly in North Antrim. They merit only the briefest of footnotes in Orange history.

JN: Have Orangemen ever tried to justify the virtual one-party state in Ireland since 1922?

KHF: Orangemen have never felt it necessary to justify the political arrangements of the Old Stormont days. They tend to take the view that all the Province's political institutions were based on the British model and were mainly liberal and democratic in form. The Executive was accountable to parliament; there was a free press and free elections; all political parties – including Sinn Féin – were permitted to seek support. It is true, they say, that Protestants have monopolised power, but they have done so as a political majority elected as a demographic majority, in a majoritarian political system. That is their story and they have stuck to it!

JN: What has been the Order's role since the current political crisis began in 1969?

KHF: Its role has not been directly related to the crisis. It is not a political party and does not give its members political instructions nor does it run political tests. The nearest it gets to being 'political' is the obligation which it imposes to uphold the authority of the Crown and to assist the Magistrates in the execution of their duty. It should be remembered that, technically, Orangemen are not obliged to be unionist, but are, of course, obliged to be Protestants. In Scotland most Orangemen do not support the Tory party (the traditional unionist party there)

but vote either Labour or Nationalist. Orangemen have not always stayed within the letter of the law, notably at Drumcree in recent years. In their individual capacities, some Orangemen have been members of dubious organisations and have taken part in violent and non-violent protests. I am referring to a minority. The great majority of the brethren have always stayed within the law, and have been among the most respectable of citizens. The Order has paid a heavy price for the Troubles. Dozens of Orange Halls have been fire-bombed; their marches have been disrupted and they have been prime targets for terrorists; up to 600 have lost their lives violently and a large number have suffered injury.

JN: How can Orangeism reinvent itself as a celebration of Ulster Protestantism?

KHF: The short answer is that it cannot do so, and I do not think it desirable that it should. If the Order were to change any of its imperatives, it would destroy its essence. It is basically a religious institution, an auxiliary church, if you like. It exists to protect the tenets of the Reformed Faith and to maintain the connection with the Crown. These objects are defensible and legitimate. Problems arise when a minority fail to show tolerance for the beliefs of their Catholic neighbours or allow their marches to become triumphal enactments of past military victories. Irish nationalists have rarely sought to understand Orangeism. They see the Orangeman as a kind of degenerate United Irishman who for some inexplicable reason 'has gone wrong'. The truth is that Orangeism is not some quaint folk culture that can be fenced off into a reservation. Nor is it an unlettered condition that one can be educated out of. It is a cultural reality which has all the hallmarks of permanence. I feel that it is almost genetically encoded in its adherents. Today Orangeism represents a dual challenge to Orangemen themselves and to Irish nationalists. The former should ensure that their practices

remain in line with their precepts; and the latter should have respect for the rights of the Orange community who wish to continue upholding their own traditions.

JN: What is the future for Orangeism in an Ulster Unionist Party which is becoming more secular under the influence of David Trimble as leader?

KHF: Orange influence on Ulster Unionist policy, not only through its block vote on the Ulster Unionist Council, but through its general vote (outside the 'block') will continue to be significant, under whatever leader. The Ulster Unionist Council has a membership of 858, with each member having a single vote. Although the Orange block is only 120 strong, the Order's influence among the 18 constituency parties (who have 680 votes between them and usually swing matters) is far reaching. It is an open secret that most constituency parties are run by Orangemen who will not deviate too far away from the wishes of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland. As already mentioned, the Orange Grand Lodge does not give political directives, but often a nod is as good as a wink. Trimble's leadership, after his 56% to 43% win on March 25th, must be in doubt. His courageous statement in Washington – where he indicated a willingness to go back into government with Sinn Féin before actual I.R.A. decommissioning, provided clear guarantees are given – has only added to his difficulties. A number of my Orange contacts in the Portadown/Lurgan area have recently suggested that his re-nomination for the Upper Bann Constituency could even be in doubt. The suggestion in recent years that the Ulster Unionist Party should cut its links with the Orange Order seems to be a non-starter. How can any Ulster Unionist leader risk jettisoning Orange support?



KEVIN HADDICK FLYNN

AUTHOR OF

ORANGEISM – THE MAKING

OF A TRADITION

(WOLFHOUND PRESS 1999)

Room to Roam: Britain's Irish Travellers

Brief background to the research project

Mr. Colm Power, acting for the Centre for Irish Studies based in the Department of Historical, Social and Cultural Studies at St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, has bid successfully for a major National Lotteries Charity Fund research grant to finance a major social research project on Irish Traveller communities in Britain. Titled, 'Room to Roam: Britain's Irish Travellers', the project has received Lottery funding in excess of £200,000 and began in February 2000. It will take three years to complete. The project was researched, written and submitted for St. Mary's College by Colm Power, who is also Principal Researcher on the three year project. Colm particularly acknowledges the valuable advice and support of Dr. Jane Longmore (former head of St. Mary's H.S.C.S. Dept.), BIAS Irish Travellers Project and the Action Group for Irish

Youth, among others, in formulating and submitting the successful Travellers' research bid. Colm Power is already engaged at St. Mary's in completing the full-text web-based 'Irish Community Archive' – an invaluable collection of reports and other welfare publications by voluntary and public sector groups relating to the welfare of the Irish in Britain. Also, Colm has just completed a social history report for the 25th anniversary of Irish Centre Housing. Two half-time field researchers (one female, one male) will join Colm Power after the initial six month preparatory period to help carry out the two year intensive qualitative phase of the research project, followed by the final writing-up and dissemination of the findings by the Principal Researcher.