A Level History
Unit 17:
Unionism and Nationalism 1800-1900 –
Opposing the Second Home Rule Bill
Playing the Scottish Card: Ulster Unionists and the Second Home Rule Bill

Overview and Rationale

This Unit is offered to support the teaching of the GCE History Assessment Unit 3 (A2:1) – Change over time: Unionism and Nationalism (1800-1900). It covers the campaign mounted by Unionists in Ulster to oppose Gladstone’s Second Home Rule Bill during 1892-3. For sources, the Unit draws on discussions by leading historians and political analysts, and on contemporary documents, including the reports and proceedings of the Ulster Convention of 1892, and works by creative writers and journalists.

The Unit demonstrates how some of the northern Unionist’s central arguments against Home Rule, specifically concerning prosperity and their fears for Protestant liberties, continued to be articulated in this period. It is also designed to develop student understanding of the significance for many within the pro-Union lobby of their Scottish cultural heritage, and of the historic link between Ulster and Scotland, both of which were frequently invoked in Unionist canvassing within Ulster and within Scotland itself, and in campaign rhetoric and pageantry.

Specification Requirements and Assessment Objectives

The Unit has been designed to address directly the specification content for this module, which includes Unionism in the north; the motives of Unionists in upholding the Union and the methods they employed. In addition, through its use of sources both contemporary and historiographical, and in offering opportunities for students to engage critically with sources the Unit supports students in addressing the following aspects of the Assessment Objectives for GCE History:

AO1
• Demonstrate understanding of the past through explanation, analysis and arriving at substantiated judgements of:
  – key concepts such as causation, consequence, continuity, change and significance within an historical context;

AO2
• As part of an historical enquiry, analyse and evaluate a range of appropriate source material with discrimination.
• Analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, how aspects of the past have been interpreted and represented in different ways, for example in historians’ debates.¹

¹ CCEA, Current GCE History Specification, p.28.
The Context

Following the general election of 1885, Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91) and his supporters in the Irish Parliamentary Party held the balance of power at Westminster. Parnell made it clear that he would only support W.E. Gladstone (1809-98) in forming a Liberal government if he committed himself to introducing legislation for Irish Home Rule.

The first Home Rule Bill was introduced, and defeated, in 1886 which led to another general election being called in which the Home Rule issue was hotly debated. Parnell’s downfall and death did not prevent a further Home Rule bill, which included the following terms, being introduced in 1893:

1. An Irish parliament in Dublin would control internal Irish affairs such as policing, justice, and education.
2. Ireland would remain subject to the Westminster parliament in taxation, customs, coinage, defence and other imperial affairs.
3. Ireland would continue to be represented at Westminster by eighty elected Irish MPs.

The prospect of a Dublin parliament becoming a reality prompted Unionists into action and they mounted an energetic campaign to oppose it.

According to Patrick Buckland ‘Not until the mid-1880s did the opponents of home rule in Ulster begin to organise effectively. Until then politically conscious Protestants were divided into conservatives, liberals and Orangemen’. They did not present a united front against home rulers and included members of all Protestant denominations, also landowners, artisans, businessmen and tenant farmers. They were determined to resist Home Rule by force if necessary, though only as a last resort. The Home Rule ‘emergencies’ in the 1880s and 1890s were significant in the development of the Ulster Unionist movement.2

Buckland also identifies a significant contrast between Unionists in the north, and in the south, arguing that it was largely the Ulster Unionists who stressed objections to Home Rule on religious grounds because they felt it was unjust to make Irish Protestants subject to an Irish Catholic parliament. If they could play on the sympathies of British Protestants, it would put pressure on the advocate of Home Rule, Gladstone himself. Scotland in particular appeared to offer an attractive focus for a pro-Union campaign, since Gladstone’s seat was in a Scottish constituency: the Ulster Unionists claimed that ‘if we can stir up the religious feeling in Scotland we have won the battle…Scotland…is the stronghold of Mr Gladstone; and if we excite this feeling among the Scotch, that they ought not to leave us to be destroyed, it will be one of the most important points in our favour.’3

Irish Identities

Also bound up with the idea of a pro-Union campaign which targeted Scotland, was the issue of cultural identity. Many Ulster people felt a strong affinity with Scotland and the Scots, because they were themselves the descendants of ‘Planters’ who had migrated from Scotland to settle in Ulster in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. According to Graham Walker, the promotion of a sense of Ulster-Scots identity developed in this period because ‘Ulster unionists sought to disrupt…the Irish nationalist view of Ireland as a nation, one and

3 Ibid., p. 13.
indivisible with an historic destiny to be self-governing. Remember that within this period, Irish nationalists had a powerful political machine in the shape of the Irish Parliamentary Party: the Home Rule Party, to promote their agenda at Westminster and in their constituencies throughout Ireland. In addition, their view of Ireland’s distinctiveness as a nation with its own language, history and culture was disseminated and endorsed by organisations such as the Gaelic Athletic Association, founded 1884, which encouraged Irish sports, and The Gaelic League, founded 1893, which had as one of its key aims, the restoration of the Irish language. The argument of many unionists, according to Walker, was that they ‘formed a distinctive people with their own rights in opposition to Irish Catholics’ and he adds, ‘I think it should be noted how particularly Scottish and Presbyterian this cultivation of an “Ulster” ethnic identity proved to be.’ However, it should also be remembered that there were many Protestants in this period and later who were sympathetic towards and supportive of the agenda of organisations such as the Gaelic League. These included Douglas Hyde (1860-1949), son of a Church of Ireland rector from Roscommon, and also, for example, Bulmer Hobson (1883-1969), a Belfast playwright and nationalist activist.

There was also a further Unionist argument – an economic one – against Home Rule. Many believed that Ulster was prosperous because its industries supplied markets in the British Empire, and supported Imperial expansion. Those who held this view felt strongly that the best course for Ireland as a whole, if all her people were eventually to prosper, was not to break with Great Britain. This argument had been articulated as early as 1841 by the Rev. Henry Cooke, in his riposte to Daniel O’Connell, following the latter’s visit to Belfast in January 1841. Jonathan Bardon summarises Cooke’s argument thus: ‘Protestant liberties would be imperilled by a Catholic ascendancy in a Dublin parliament; Ulster’s prosperity and industrial growth were due to Protestant enterprise; and Ulster’s future lay in serving the markets of Britain’s expanding empire.’

**Campaigning Against Home Rule**

The Ulster Liberal Unionist Association was formed to campaign against the first three Home Rule Bills, especially in General Elections in the period 1886-1912. Anti-Home Rule opposition was traditionally associated with Conservative politics, and with organisations such as the Orange Order, but many Liberal Unionists had a track record of support for reform in Ireland – T.W. Russell, for example, born in Fife but elected M.P. for South Tyrone in the election of 1886, had been on the side of tenant right during the Land War.

**Campaigning in Scotland**

Much activity and energy was invested in pro-Union campaigns in Britain. The campaign mounted in Scotland attempted to capitalise on a sense of common identity between Protestants in Ulster and in the Scottish Lowlands. This area included the Central Belt between Glasgow and Edinburgh, and also south-west Scotland, especially Ayrshire, and Dumfries and Galloway, all of which are within easy travelling distance of east Ulster as the sea journey is so short.

5 Ibid., p. 94.
Speeches made in Scotland characteristically appealed for Scottish support on the basis of shared identity. Look at this extract from a speech made by T.W. Russell in Grangemouth, Stirlingshire in 1886:

What, I ask, have they (the Ulster Unionists) done that they are to be deprived of their Imperial inheritance, that in the words of the Apostle they are to be made ‘bastards and not sons’ Three hundred years ago Ulster was peopled by Scotch settlers … The men there are bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh … they read the same Bible, they sing the same psalms, they have the same church polity. Nor have they proved altogether unworthy of their ancestry…The descendants of these men have made Ulster what it is…

1. How does the speaker emphasise the ‘ethnic’ connection between Ulster Protestants and the Scots?
2. Which words emphasise shared religious identity and/or use Biblical references? How does such an approach make his words seem even more effective?

Opposing the Second Home Rule Bill

The Ulster Unionist Convention of 1892

This massive event, staged with great pageantry and publicity, was held in a pavilion constructed for the occasion, sited close to the Botanic Gardens and the University area in Belfast. It was documented in two souvenir books produced for the occasion. The first, *The Proceedings of the Ulster Unionist Convention*, advertised it in advance with details of resolution to be debated:

… in summoning this Convention, we declare its objects to be:

a) To express the devoted loyalty of Ulster Unionists to the Crown and Constitution of the United Kingdom.
b) To avow our fixed resolve to retain unchanged our present position as an integral portion of the United Kingdom
c) To record our determination to have nothing to do with a Parliament certain to be controlled by men responsible for the crime and outrage of the Land League … many of whom have shown themselves the ready instruments of clerical domination
d) To declare to the people of Great Britain our conviction that the attempt to set up such a Parliament in Ireland will inevitably result in disorder, violence and bloodshed …
e) To protest against this great Question, which involves out lives, property and civil rights, being treated as a mere side issue in the impending electoral struggle
f) To appeal to those of our fellow countrymen who have hitherto been in favour of a separate Parliament to abandon a demand which hopelessly divides Irishmen, and to unite with us under the Imperial legislature in developing the resources and furthering the best interests of our common country.

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7 Form of church government. Russell is referring to the structures of the Presbyterian church, which was established in Ulster by Scots settlers.
At the Convention itself a further resolution was passed, expressing ‘sympathy with fellow Unionists in Leinster, Munster and Connaught, pledging Ulster to support them, and appointing an Ulster deputation to attend the Unionist Convention organised by the Unionists of the South and West’.

Consider the resolutions and try to answer the following questions:

1. What issues and traditions appear to command the loyalty of the writers of these resolutions?
2. What reasons do they have for rejecting Home Rule – both positive and negative reasons?
3. What effort do they make to persuade people who are in favour of Home Rule that it is not the best way forward for Ireland as a whole?
4. Is there any evidence that they feel abandoned, isolated or that their concerns have been trivialised?
5. Historian Gordon Lucy argues that the resolutions ‘are of interest in establishing to what extent Ulster Unionists were thinking of themselves primarily and to what extent they believed themselves bound to the fortunes of their fellow Unionists in the South and West.’ Having read the resolutions, where do you feel the emphasis seems to lie concerning this issue.

The book includes a great deal of advertising material supplied by local businesses, demonstrating that the commercial and industrial communities backed the Convention and its aims. There are many sketches of impressive buildings, such as the Belfast Public Library, factories and manufacturing centres as well as of iconic beauty spots including the Mournes and the Giant’s Causeway. What messages do you think those who produced the book were trying to convey by the inclusion of such material?

Text can be viewed here: http://www.arts.ulster.ac.uk/ulsterscots/usep/digitised-texts/

A poem titled, ‘Ulster, for the Convention, 17 June, 1892’ is also included and makes very interesting reading. The following is an abridged version:

Our fathers came from Britain
In the days of olden years,
Staunch Protestants and Puritans,
And hardy Pioneers

They found this land a desert
They made it bloom and smile,
Wrung bounty from the chilly skies
And from the rugged soil.

They built the homely farmhouse
Where their little ones were born;
They raised the humble House of Prayer
Where they met on Sabbath morn.

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11 Ibid., p. 25.
The linen shone upon the Green  
And in many a cottage room  
Was heard the hum of the spinning wheel,  
Or clack of the busy loom.

Till one great City rose, and reared  
Her temples and her spires,  
Piled high her palaces of trade,  
Kindled her factory fires,  
And launched the mighty ships that bridge  
The ocean’s vast abyss,  
And link in bonds of peaceful arts  
Far countries unto this.

What marvel, now, we are resolved  
Our birthright to maintain;  
And in the Imperial unity  
Our Ulster shall remain.

We’ll work for Ireland’s welfare,  
For better social laws;  
We’ll join all honest Irishmen  
In every righteous cause,  
No bigot hate inspires our hearts,  
Our hands from blood are free,  
But to Irish Priest or Parliament  
We owe no fealty.

So we’ll keep the glorious heritage  
That we and ours have known –  
One great United Empire,  
One Parliament, one Throne ……

1. How does the writer present Protestant Unionists as models of courage and godliness?  
2. How does he present their achievements? What gives them their ‘birthright’ in Ireland?  
3. How does he attempt to challenge or answer critics of his viewpoint?  
4. How effective do you think poetry and songs (a feature of all traditions in Ireland) are in consolidating support for a political cause?

After the Convention, a further book was published:  

Once again, symbolism and pageantry were central to getting the Unionist message across. The report included the information that 12,000 delegates had attended, from all the counties of Ulster. It was consciously produced as ‘a souvenir of an event unique in the history of the

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12 *Proceedings,* pp. 47-51.
British Empire’, and it described a special medal struck for the Convention, which included ‘the arms of England, Scotland and Ireland, side by side, and joined at the top … surmounted by a crown. Above this design is the text … *Quis Separabit?*\(^{13}\) Beneath are the Rose, Thistle and Shamrock, with the Red Hand of Ulster, and the date, 1892’.

Protestant Unionist fears are made explicit within the text:

> The present Nationalist majority is controlled by the Roman Catholic priesthood. This majority, through an Irish Parliament would govern Ulster. Let anyone imagine Ulster in fact governed by the Irish priesthood. One need not paint in detail the effect on trade, education and the most important questions of modern life.\(^{14}\)

To justify such anxieties, Protestants would have pointed to the active role played by Catholic priests in the local branch organisation of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and to the small number of non-Catholics, apart from Parnell himself, within the party. Events outside Ireland, such as the issue of the papal dogma on Infallibility in 1871, would have seemed to many Ulster Protestants to confirm that the Church was intent on dominance. The slogan ‘Home Rule is Rome’s Rule’, first coined by the English Quaker M.P. John Bright (1811-89), was frequently employed in anti-Home Rule agitation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to Jonathan Bardon, ‘Protestants visualised a Dublin government putting education entirely in the hands of the Church and forcing their children to attend Catholic schools and reserving public employment exclusively for Catholics.’\(^{15}\)

### The Convention Meetings

The number of people who attended was estimated at around 20,000. Messages of support were read out from many parts of the world, including many from locations in Scotland: Auchtermuchty, Selkirk, Kilmarnock, Partick, Midlothian, Edinburgh, Arbroath, Stirling, Stranraer and Ayr. The message from the Arbroath Liberal Unionist Association was typical of many:

> The Arbroath Liberal Unionist Association accord their hearty sympathy and support to the excellent objects of the Ulster Convention, and trust that the Convention will convince all loyal subjects of the necessity of maintaining the integrity of the United Kingdom, and the civil and religious liberty of their fellow citizens.\(^{16}\)

In an introductory speech by the Duke of Abercorn Ulster’s historic connection with Scotland was emphasised, as was Ulster’s prosperity:

> Before Ulster was planted by Scotch and English settlers it was the poorest and most turbulent part of Ireland … Your energy has given richness and fertility to a sterile soil. Your towns are alive with many industries. Your ports send vessels laden … to every land. Your ship-builders are adding yearly to the commercial

\(^{13}\) ‘Who will separate (us)?


\(^{15}\) Bardon, p. 407.

navies of the world … You may place some trust, I think, in our Scottish
neighbours, who can trace in us some of their own characteristics …

Several speakers also stressed that they had no wish to see the return of a Protestant
Ascendancy: ‘…Ulster makes no demand for Protestant Ascendancy … I speak as the
representative of thousands of delegates to the Convention, who, like myself, are Liberals
born and bred …’

Assessment of the Great Convention

The historian Gordon Lucy has made a detailed study of the convention of 1892 in The Great
Convention: the Ulster Unionist Convention of 1892 (Armagh: Ulster Soc Publications,
1995). He notes the following criticism often directed at the type of delegates it attracted:

‘The other charge commonly levelled at the Convention’s composition … was
that it was simply an Orange meeting. Although two prominent Orangemen …
were among the speakers there were no Orange symbols … and no Orange
processions in evidence … the Convention was not even an exclusively Protestant
gathering, let alone an Orange assembly …’. In support of his view he cites the
remarks of several speakers, including the Rev Dr Kane, who welcomed the
presence of Roman Catholics in the Convention: ‘with sincere pleasure, not
because we wish to make use of them for the purpose of fastening a yoke of
slavery upon them and their co-religionists, but because we acknowledge to the
full their right to all the privileges of British citizenship …’.

He adds, ‘The proceedings were carefully orchestrated to demonstrate the essential unity of
hitherto rival, competing or even antagonistic interests in common defence of the Union….Liberals and Conservatives, rural and urban dwellers, citizens of Belfast and Londonderry,
landlords and tenants, the representatives of agriculture and of commerce and industry, and
Anglicans, Presbyterians and every other denomination.’

Many of the speeches delivered also emphasise the unity of very diverse interests in opposing
Home Rule. Thomas Sinclair, later author of Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant said:

‘A conviction of common duty in the presence of a common danger has healed divisions that
formerly embittered many of our social relationships, and has united in common defence of their
common birthright as British citizens men who through all their previous lives had never
stood on the same platform. We are here as Radicals and Tories, Presbyterians and
Episcopalians, Orangemen and Roman Catholics, land owners and land occupiers, masters
and men, but with threatened disaster at our gates we speak and act as one man.’

Sinclair also addressed and attempted to refute the charge that the Convention had been
organised to promote, or prop up, a Protestant Ascendancy: ‘I speak as the representative of
thousands of delegates to this Convention who, like myself, are Liberals born and bred, who
have in their veins the blood of Scottish Covenanters and English Puritans, and the best part

17 Ibid., p. 23.
19 Lucy, The Great Convention, pp. 18-19.
20 Ibid., p. 23.
21 Ibid., quoted, p. 27.
of whose political lives have been spent in resisting and pulling down ascendancy in every form.22

It should be remembered, however, that the Ulster Covenant of 1912, which Sinclair later framed, was at least in part inspired by the Scottish National Covenant of 1638, drawn up by Scottish Presbyterians in opposition to religious changes that Charles I was attempting to impose, and which the Scottish Covenant authors considered too close to Catholic doctrine and practice. Thus, invoking the memory of the Covenanter could be interpreted as implying opposition to an imposed Catholicism. Several speakers certainly expressed openly their fear of domination by the Catholic clergy in an Ireland ruled from Dublin.

Many speakers voiced the fear that Ulster’s prosperity would be lost if Home Rule legislation was passed:

The Duke of Abercorn urged ‘Your towns are alive with many industries. Your ports send vessels laden with manufactures to every land. Your ship builders are adding yearly to the commercial navies of the world. These are things that can only be achieved by a strong and self-reliant people, and … must not be jeopardised by the rash experiments of party politicians’.23

1. The view expressed here is very similar to the argument of Rev. Henry Cooke against Repeal, following Daniel O’Connell’s visit to Belfast in 1841. See USEP Unit 2 ‘The Repealer Repulsed’.

What was the impact of the Convention?

The Convention, while it may have raised Unionist spirits significantly, did not bring about any change of policy. Twenty-three Unionists were elected to Westminster in the 1892 General Election, but parliament still had a majority of M.P.s in favour of Home Rule.

Gordon Lucy assesses its significance as follows: ‘At the most fundamental level the Convention of 17 June 1892 was an impressive demonstration of the resolve of Ulster Unionists, irrespective of political pedigree, religious affiliation or social class, to remain citizens of the United Kingdom. The Convention demonstrated a spontaneous solidarity in defence of the Union. Above all, it demonstrated that Ulster Unionism was a popular, broadly-based and democratic movement.’24

A Question to Consider

How convincing do you find the view that Ulster Unionism in 1892 was ‘popular, broadly-based and democratic’? Consider the evidence of the literature and speeches from the Convention, and any other information or sources you have studied.

Unionist Clubs and Scots Residents in Ulster

Following the 1892 General Election Ulster Unionists attempted to gain support from neighbouring Scotland as they continued to oppose Gladstone’s policy of Home Rule. Many Scotsmen resident in Ulster became actively involved in the Unionist campaign.

22 Ibid., quoted, p. 28.
23 Ibid., quoted, p. 31.
24 Ibid., p. 63.
Lord Templeton at Templepatrick, Co Antrim called for and assisted in establishing a movement of Unionist Clubs, intended to be a nationwide network, and aimed at strengthening resistance. He made his appeal in March 1893 and by May the Belfast Newsletter was reporting that there were over two hundred Clubs in existence throughout Ireland, many of which became affiliated to the Unionist Clubs Council, based in Belfast. By August it was claimed that the numbers of clubs had risen to almost 300, with over 100,000 members, the vast majority of whom were from the merchant, farming and labouring classes. According to the historian Kyle Hughes, if those figures are accurate, ‘the clubs represented a spontaneous political movement enjoying widespread popular support and constituted an important pan-class organisation’. 25

A particularly welcome development from the Unionist point of view was the establishment of a Unionist Club by Scotsmen who lived and worked in Belfast – the Belfast Scottish Unionist Club (BSUC). Unionists recognised that such a group could play a vital part in spreading the anti-Home Rule message in Britain, as its support meant that their views could be less easily characterised as Orange, sectarian and Conservative. Club members took a leading part in the ‘Balfour Demonstration’ of April 1893. On this occasion 100,000 Unionists of all classes marched past the Conservative leader A. J. Balfour outside the Belfast Linen Hall, at a special demonstration staged to coincide with his visit to Belfast. Hughes describes this as ‘one of many examples of political pageantry employed so effectively during the Home Rule era’. 26 The Scots also supplied a band of pipers and special tartan badges designed for the event, so Unionism was again openly associated with Scottishness and represented by recognisable Scottish symbols.

What echoes can be observed here of Daniel O’Connell’s monster meetings with their pageantry and merchandising?

Also in an attempt to convince Scots to support opposition to Home Rule, the BSUC welcomed delegations of Scots to Belfast, and organised tours for them of Belfast’s most successful factories and industrial works, such as the Belfast Ropeworks, textile companies and the shipyards. The purpose was to gain Scottish backing for the view that commerce and industry could only thrive if Ireland’s position within the Union remained unchanged.

**Campaigning in Scotland**

Unionists believed it was crucial to take the message into Scotland itself, and to Scottish workers in industrial centres in the north of England, so speakers were dispatched to these areas to disseminate the pro-Union message and to rally support. They were not always welcomed, particularly in areas where the Scots people addressed were descended from Irish migrants who came from Catholic nationalist backgrounds.

Campaigners produced a ‘Manifesto to the People of Scotland in the name of the Scots Resident in Ireland’. 27 It warned that

- Home Rule would be destructive to the success of industry in Ireland
- That the unemployed from Ulster would converge on industrial centres in Scotland and England, threatening the job security of local workers

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26 Ibid., p. 136.
27 Quoted, ibid., pp. 138-9.
That the members of an Irish parliament would govern according to ‘the will of the priesthood’ and would act in a discriminatory way towards Protestants.

It made a direct and emotive appeal to Scots readers:

‘Will you perpetrate the foul wrong of deserting your brethren whose only fault has been their allegiance to those principles of truth and justice which have made the British Empire the home of freemen and the protector of the oppressed? We cannot believe it of our brother Scots.’

Consider these questions on the appeal

1. To what values does the writer of this appeal express loyalty?
2. What tactics of persuasive writing does the appeal employ to gain Scottish support? Quote examples.

In a further audacious move a plan was developed to dislodge Gladstone himself and the Home Secretary Asquith from their Scottish constituencies of Midlothian and East Fife. Unionists sent delegates to address political meetings in those areas and to distribute anti-Home Rule material in the autumn of 1893. However, the Lords threw out the second Home Rule Bill in September, Gladstone resigned in March 1894 and in July 1895 the Conservatives won the British general election, which banished the possibility of Home Rule for a time.

Creative Writers and Scottish Identity in the Home Rule Era

It should not be assumed that all people of an Ulster-Scots background opposed Home Rule. The poet Florence Wilson (1870-1946), for example, from Bangor in County Down keenly supported it. However, Many Ulster writers in this period reflected the growing consciousness of the distinctiveness of the Ulster-Scots community, and of the Presbyterianism of many of its members. One of these is Archibald McIlroy (1859-1915) who wrote a series of books set in the Co. Antrim town of Ballyclare, called ‘Craiglinnie’ in the stories. The opening description of the little community brings out its rural Presbyterian character and some of its eccentricity, employing some characteristically Ulster-Scots expressions. It was the Scots who had brought Presbyterianism to Ulster in the era of the Ulster Plantations:

The river which wimples through, right under the village street, comes in useful as a means of localization and designation as well. Anyone living within half a mile of its banks, between the village and the county town, was termed a ‘doon’ the-water man’; those dwelling on the north side were known as ‘up-through folk’. The terms had more significance than may, at first sight, be suspected; for ‘doon-the- water people’, basking, as it were, in a fertile valley, occupied a very different position from the ‘up-through folks’, whose chief characteristics were peats, moss fir, half- starved ‘shilties’, and dwarfy, black-faced sheep. Their ‘fertile valley’ was a profusion of whins, boulders, and single-stone dykes. Doon-the- water people wore broadcloth and linen shirts on Sabbaths and fair days; the upper folks homespuns, slouch hats, and magenta-coloured mufflers.

28 Down.
29 Small horse.
30 Walls.
McIlroy published this book in 1898 but set his story a generation earlier. This style of sentimental, nostalgic writing, usually set in a rural environment, is called ‘kailyard’ (meaning cabbage patch), and was also extremely popular in Scotland in the same period. One of the leading Scottish kailyard writers was J. M. Barrie, author of *Peter Pan* (though this was not one of his kailyard texts).

McIlroy would have been aware of the growing intensity of feeling in the pro and anti-Home Rule camps, which included an emphasis on Ulster’s resistance to Home Rule because of the fear that it would establish a ‘Catholic ascendancy’. But he is careful to promote tolerance and mutual respect in his novels, for example in the following extract which describes an encounter between the village Orange Lodge, returning from the 12th of July procession, and the local priest, following the death by natural causes of a member of the Catholic community whose funeral many of the Orange men have attended:

> On the return journey in the evening the priest himself was at the gate, beckoning with his hand. Flags and banners were lowered, out of respect, and the whole lodge stood to attention as Father Lynch uncovered his head…” Three cheers for Father Lynch! someone shouted, perhaps on the impulse of the moment, and without due consideration; but the cheers were taken up, and rang out heartily. "God bless you, friends, one and all," responded the priest, visibly affected, as he turned into the manse, and the procession slowly moved on to the village.

Literature played an important part in expressing distinctive national identity on both sides of the Home Rule debate. Can you name some Irish writers from this period who intended that the literature they created should promote and celebrate a strong sense of Irish national identity?

**Journalism**

John Harrison (1847-1922), a Scottish (Edinburgh-based) journalist who visited Ulster shortly after Gladstone committed himself to achieving Home Rule for Ireland, wrote a series of articles for the *Scotsman* newspaper which sketched the history of Scots settlement in Ulster. These articles were collected and published in book form in 1888 as *The Scot in Ulster*. Harrison was an opponent of Home Rule. He thought of it as a cover, a ‘nickname’ coined by the Irish for a movement which really aimed at ‘separation from Great Britain’.

The extract from the text and the questions which follow are offered for a classroom evaluation exercise in groups.

**The ‘Scotch’ Character of Ulster and the Implications for Home Rule**

It is strange for any man who is accustomed to walk through the southern districts of Scotland, and to meet the country people going about their daily work in their everyday clothes and everyday manner, to cross into Ireland and wander through the country roads of Down or Antrim. He is in a country which is supposed to be passionately anxious to set up a separate nationality, and yet he cannot feel as if he were away from his own kith and kin. The men who are driving the carts are like the men at home; the women at the cottage doors are in build and carriage

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like the mothers of our southern Highlands; the signs of the little shops in the villages bear well-known names – Paterson, perhaps, or Johnston, or Sloan; the boy sitting on the ‘dyke’ … is whistling ‘A man’s a man for a’ that’32 … Certainly it seems little short of madness in any statesman to attempt to force a race so ‘dour’ and determined as are these Ulster men – descended as they are from blood as ‘dour’ as any which the world has known … – to attempt to compel men of such a stock to submit to a form of government against which they protest, and which they dislike and distrust with all the force of their nature.

1. What features of the Scottishness of Ulster people does the writer mention?
2. What parts of Ulster in particular is he speaking of?
3. Quote any references you can find to the Home Rule movement.
4. How do you interpret the last sentence – does it have any threatening undertones?
5. What significance do you find in the fact that the writer was himself a Scot, and that his article first appeared in the Scotsman, a Scottish newspaper?
6. How likely do you think it was that such an article would convince a) nationalists and b) the Westminster government that Home Rule for Ireland was the wrong course to take?
7. Can you think of any ways in which the approach here, which emphasises ‘racial’ characteristics and difference might prove counter-productive to the anti-Home Rule cause?

Conclusion

How successful was the appeal to Scottish heritage in Scotland? In Ulster?

It is difficult to quantify the effect of ‘playing the Scottish card’, but the evidence considered here demonstrates that the project was certainly pursued with great energy in Ulster and in Scotland by elements within the anti-Home Rule, pro-Union lobby, and that it also added a significant dimension to the pageantry associated with their campaign.

Although the Home Rule crisis evaporated in the 1890s when the House of Lords rejected the second Home Rule Bill, the pro-Union arguments, and the conviction of those who made them, contributed to a ground swell of feeling, and in turn to the development of a network of organisations opposed to Home Rule. Thus, the stage was partially set for the Ulster Covenant campaign of 1912 and for the very real threat of armed resistance to Home Rule that dissipated only in the face of the greater threat of the First World War.

32 A well known song by the Scots poet Robert Burns.