

Towards a ‘world-wide empire of the Gael’: nationalism, identity, and the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society, 1912–22

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ABSTRACT. *In the early twentieth century, Irish ethnic, benevolent and mutual benefit associations around the world became part of the transnational fight for Irish freedom, utilising large, widespread memberships to raise funds and lobby for Irish independence. In Australia and New Zealand the largest such group was the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society (H.A.C.B.S.), which boasted some 41,000 members spread across almost 600 branches in 1920. The society’s engagement with the home rule movement and the subsequent Irish Revolution provides a fascinating example of how the expansive spatial and intergenerational networks of Irish-Catholic benevolent associations were mobilised in full support of Irish self-determination, particularly after 1919. Members of the H.A.C.B.S. in Australia had to negotiate complex and sometimes competing identities and loyalties: to Ireland, Australia and the British Empire, and the evolution of these tensions reflects the variety and complexity of global Irish nationalism. Reflecting patterns observed elsewhere, within a context of increasing sectarian tensions, labour militancy and broad Catholic disillusionment with their political and economic place in Australasian society, the H.A.C.B.S. moved from devout imperial loyalty in 1916 to total support for a fully independent Irish republic by 1922.*

On 3 May 1916, dozens of delegates representing branches from throughout New South Wales gathered in Sydney for the annual district meeting (A.D.M.) of the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society (H.A.C.B.S.). The meeting took place as news of the Easter Rising, which had begun in Dublin on 24 April, was spreading across the English-speaking world, bringing the political situation in Ireland to the forefront of popular consciousness. Hibernian conferences generally included the passage of a resolution on Ireland — usually a statement of support for John Redmond, the Irish Parliamentary Party (I.P.P.) and home rule. On this occasion, the delegates passed a far stronger statement:

We, the members of the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society of New South Wales, in Annual Conference assembled, deplore the actions of a small and irresponsible section of the people of Ireland, and regret their recent uprising. We especially regret the horror and misery involved in this

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unhappy rebellion, and we affirm our loyalty and allegiance to the Crown, and pray that a speedy and conclusive victory will come to his Majesty’s Arms and to those of our gallant allies, in the ranks of and side by side with whom are, we believe, no more trusty and loyal soldiers than the Irish and Irish Australians.¹

The text of this resolution was, overall, unremarkable. Its rhetoric was nearly identical to condemnations of the ‘Sinn Fein Revolt’ by Australia’s Irish Catholic clergy, as well as by other Irish-Catholic ethnic and benevolent associations, that appeared in the press around the same time.² In the weeks that followed, Victoria’s Hibernian A.D.M., as well as the triennial meeting of national delegates in Melbourne, passed similar resolutions.³ Within the context of the Great War, in which over 700 of its members were already fighting, in addition to genuine anxieties over accusations of disloyalty from established Anglo-Protestant Australians, the Hibernians were keen to strongly disavow the Rising and to profess loyalty to king and empire.

These resolutions by the H.A.C.B.S. carried considerable weight. By 1916 the society represented over 41,000 men and women, making it by far the largest Irish ethnic association on the continent. Its networks spanned Australia and New Zealand, and its engagement with the politics of Ireland emerged in a profoundly diasporic context.⁴ The organisation was highly localised, with parish-based branches providing key spaces for individuals of Irish birth and descent to engage with their ancestral homeland. At the same time it was also regional, national and transnational, as the H.A.C.B.S. attempted to forge closer cooperation with its northern hemisphere contemporary, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (A.O.H.), and even sent a representative to Ireland in 1921 to foster a more direct participation in the nationalist movement.

This article will assess the H.A.C.B.S.’s responses to Irish nationalism from 1912 to 1922. The society’s engagement with the Home Rule movement and the subsequent Irish Revolution provides a fascinating example of how the expansive spatial networks of Irish ethnic and benevolent associations, for whom the political destiny of the ‘Old Land’ was generally a secondary concern, were mobilised in full support of Irish self-determination, particularly after 1919. The example of the

¹ [Sydney] *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 May 1916.

² Strong condemnations of the rising by Australia’s Catholic bishops and archbishops, in addition to comparable resolutions by the Australian Holy Catholic Guild, the Irish National Foresters and United Irish League of Victoria, all appeared together in Sydney’s foremost Catholic newspaper, the *Freeman’s Journal*. See *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 May 1916. All references below to the *Freeman’s Journal* relate to the Sydney title and not the Dublin newspaper of the same name.

³ H.A.C.B.S., *Victoria district: official report of the annual district meeting, 1916* (Melbourne, 1916), p. 43; H.A.C.B.S., *Report of the proceedings of the second triennial meeting, 1916* (Brisbane, 1916), p. 30. See also Patrick O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia: 1788 to the present* (Sydney, 2000), p. 264.

⁴ In his introduction to the concept of ‘diaspora’, Kevin Kenny notes that the term is most accurately used ‘when it involves communication not only between a given overseas community and a homeland but also among various overseas communities of common origin, conceived as nodes in a network or web’. The H.A.C.B.S. constituted an important institutional node connecting those of Irish birth and descent overseas to one another and to their ancestral homeland: see Kevin Kenny, *Diaspora: a very short history* (Oxford, 2013), p. 13.

H.A.C.B.S. also demonstrates the challenges faced by supporters of Irish nationalism within the British Empire. For those in Australia at least, the members of the H.A.C.B.S. had to negotiate complex and sometimes competing identities and loyalties: to Ireland, Australia and the empire. Within a context of increasing sectarian tensions, labour militancy and broad Catholic disillusionment with their political and economic place in Australasian society, the society moved from devout imperial loyalty in 1916 to total support for a fully independent Irish republic by 1922.⁵ Finally, the attempts at transnational engagement by the H.A.C.B.S. provide us with an opportunity to examine the Irish Revolution as a ‘global’ event, with diasporic nationalism serving as a key rhetorical device for the society’s members, though tangible contributions towards an independent Ireland were limited and encountered considerable logistical challenges.

I

Although it shared many common features with its northern hemisphere contemporary, the A.O.H., the H.A.C.B.S. was founded and developed independently in Australia and New Zealand. It was a mutual benefit society which functioned, above all, to provide its members with financial relief during periods of illness. ‘Friendly societies’ of this sort were common in England in the eighteenth century and spread throughout the British Empire during the early nineteenth, expanding rapidly in the Australian colonies in the 1830s and 1840s.⁶ The mid nineteenth century was also a period of expanding Catholic associational life in Australasia. St Patrick’s Societies were set up in many cities and towns, and some of these formed benefit arms to assist their members during difficult times. Other exclusively Catholic mutual benefit societies also emerged and were popular among Irish settlers in Australia, with the most successful of these expanding and spreading beyond their original jurisdictions. In addition to essential sickness and death benefits, they provided key social and fraternal opportunities as well as spaces where individuals of Irish birth and descent came together as an emerging ethnic community.⁷

The H.A.C.B.S. was formed through an amalgamation of three groups: the Ballarat Hibernian Society (B.H.S.), the Irish Australian Catholic Benefit Society (I.A.C.B.S.) and the Albury Catholic Benefit Society (A.C.B.S.).⁸ The Ballarat Hibernians were established in 1868 and quickly spread beyond the gold-mining town of Ballarat to other towns in Victoria, eventually extending as far as Greymouth on New Zealand’s South Island, where the society was popular

⁵ See O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, p. 252; Rory Sweetman, ‘Who fears to speak of Easter week? Antipodean Irish Catholic responses to the 1916 Rising’ in Ruan O’Donnell (ed.), *The impact of the 1916 Rising among the nations* (Dublin, 2008), pp 71–90.

⁶ Patrick H. O’Connor, *The Hibernian Society of New South Wales, 1880–1980* (Sydney, 1980), pp 10, 17; Mary Denise Sweeney, ‘The Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society — Brisbane branches, 1879–1906: a heritage study’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Queensland, 2005), pp 2, 7, 38.

⁷ On the expansion of Irish associational culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its impact on the evolution of identity at home and in the diaspora, see Jennifer Kelly and R. V. Comerford, ‘Introduction’ in Jennifer Kelly and R. V. Comerford (eds), *Associational culture in Ireland and the wider world* (Dublin, 2010), p. 3.

⁸ O’Connor, *The Hibernian Society of New South Wales*, p. 14.

amongst transplanted Victorian miners.⁹ The I.A.C.B.S., originally known as the St Francis Benefit Society, was established in 1865 as a benefit arm of the Catholic Young Men’s Society of St Francis’s parish in Melbourne. Like the B.H.S., the organisation spread quickly and by the 1860s there were fourteen St Francis groups in Victoria.¹⁰ Although situated in New South Wales, Catholic networks in the border town of Albury meant that the A.C.B.S. was closely connected to similar groups in Victoria. Led primarily by hotel proprietor Mark Young of the Ballarat Hibernians, representatives from these associations and from the St Patrick’s Society in Geelong met in Geelong on 13 March 1869 to discuss an amalgamated society ‘based on Catholic principles and Irish sympathies’.¹¹ Meetings between these groups continued over the next two years, during which time the Geelong representatives withdrew. The Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society — a hybridised title that was suggested by the delegates from Albury — was formally established in 1871, with Young serving as the first chief president.¹²

The expansion of the H.A.C.B.S. was rapid. In less than a year, there were sixty-six branches, including eight in New Zealand. By the late 1880s, Hibernianism had spread to all of the Australian colonies and throughout New Zealand as well.¹³ The early H.A.C.B.S., though, was thoroughly dominated by Victoria. The Melbourne-based executive directory struggled to manage branches in other colonies, leading to the establishment of separate district boards, beginning with New South Wales in 1880 followed by New Zealand in 1886.¹⁴ Other districts were established as the organisation expanded. After 1891, annual meetings of Hibernian delegates began to be rotated to points outside of Melbourne, but tension between Victoria and the other districts over the colony’s perceived dominance was a recurring feature of proceedings through much of the later nineteenth century. This declined considerably following the Federation of Australia in 1901.¹⁵

For most members, the fundamental basis for participation in Hibernian activity was through the structures of their local branch. Branches tended to be associated with particular Catholic parishes, meaning that large urban areas such as Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane were home to numerous branches of varying size.¹⁶ In addition to their primary function — the collection of dues, as well as the management and disbursement of sickness and death benefits — branches formed the basic social unit of the Hibernian experience. Members came together for branch dinners, banquets, sporting events, annual Communion breakfasts and various annual activities connected to the celebration of St Patrick’s Day — all events that contributed to the formation of cohesive, intergenerational Irish ethnic communities. In smaller country towns, H.A.C.B.S. events such as picnics were of tremendous significance to local Catholic communities. Hibernianism, then, was

⁹ Sweetman, *Faith and fraternalism: a history of the Hibernian Society in New Zealand* (Dunedin, 2002), p. 1; O’Connor, *The Hibernian Society of New South Wales*, p. 18.

¹⁰ Sweeney, ‘The Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society’, p. 61.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹² O’Connor, *The Hibernian Society of New South Wales*, p. 19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp 19–20.

¹⁴ Sweetman, *Faith and fraternalism*, p. 179; Sweeney, ‘The Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society’, p. 102; O’Connor, *The Hibernian Society of New South Wales*, p. 9.

¹⁵ O’Connor, *The Hibernian Society of New South Wales*, pp 22–3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

deeply local, though a great deal of branch activity was defined and prescribed by district boards as well as the national executive directory.

By the early twentieth century, there were nine H.A.C.B.S. district boards: Victoria, New Zealand, New South Wales, South Queensland (Brisbane), Rockhampton, Tasmania, South Australia, North Queensland and Western Australia. Friendly societies were governed by different regulations in each state, so the district boards were responsible for setting membership dues, the rules governing benefits and overseeing the establishment of new branches, as well as the process of clearances, whereby a member moved and transferred benefits from one district to another. Several elected representatives from each branch met at annual district meetings that were usually held in the spring. These meetings brought together members from across each state, assessed the overall health of the organisation, discussed and debated potential rule changes, and directed engagement with the politics of Ireland. Matters of significance to the national organisation, such as changes to the H.A.C.B.S. constitution, were discussed at triennial meetings of interstate delegates, the locations of which were rotated around Australia and New Zealand. Owing to the disruptive circumstances of the Great War followed by the Spanish flu, 'triennial' meetings were in fact held every four years during this period: 1912, 1916 and 1920. The H.A.C.B.S., then, while inherently a highly localised benefit society, was a cohesive regional, national and transnational organisation that provided social and fraternal opportunities for the Irish Catholics of Australasia.

Although it was not Australasia's only friendly society for Catholics — the Irish National Foresters (I.N.F.) and the Australian Holy Catholic Guild (A.H.C.) offered similar benefits — the H.A.C.B.S. had emerged as the largest fraternal organisation for Irish Catholics in Australia by the early twentieth century. Unlike the A.O.H. in North America, whose membership declined from 1908 onwards, the Australian Hibernians continued to expand. In 1912, the organisation boasted some 37,500 members across Australia and New Zealand. The 1916 triennial meeting reported further growth to just over 41,000, though through the remainder of the Great War, and influenced no doubt by the influenza epidemic of 1918–19, membership had dropped to just under 41,000 by the beginning of 1920 (see Table 1).¹⁷

Unlike many other Irish Catholic benefit societies across the diaspora, membership in the H.A.C.B.S. was not solely reserved for men — the presence of both women and youths within the organisation's structures ensured that the construction of Irish ethnic identity via the Hibernian networks involved entire communities. Women made up approximately 20 per cent of the society throughout this period, and many Catholic parishes possessed both men's and women's Hibernian branches. Ladies' branches offered similar, though generally less lucrative, sickness and death benefits to their male counterparts. Women were able to join male branches in communities where no separate women's branch existed, but the agency of the ladies' organisation was extremely limited. Male officers oversaw their meetings and their district conventions were run by men's executives. Some communities also had juvenile branches, intended to provide limited benefits for young men and eventually ease transition into full Hibernian membership,

¹⁷ Membership figures were published in reports appended to the minutes of each triennial meeting: see H.A.C.B.S., *Proceedings of the first triennial meeting of interstate representatives, 1912* (Perth, 1912); *Report of the proceedings of the second triennial meeting, 1916*; *Report of the proceedings of the third triennial meeting, 1920* (Sydney, 1920).

Table 1: H.A.C.B.S. Membership by district, 1912–16.¹⁸

Year	District	Male Members	Female Members	Juvenile Members	Total
1912	Victoria	8,184	2,276	104	10,564
	New Zealand	3,360	116	0	3,476
	New South Wales	9,545	1,861	182	11,588
	South Queensland	3,940	249	0	4,189
	Rockhampton	955	91	0	1,046
	Tasmania	588	78	0	666
	South Australia	2,018	1,016	690	3,724
	North Queensland	884	68	0	952
	Western Australia	1,004	246	79	1,329
	Total	30,478	6,001	1,055	37,534
1916	Victoria	9,015	2,643	35	11,693
	New Zealand	3,388	118	0	3,506
	New South Wales	10,616	1,760	64	12,440
	South Queensland	5,177	314	0	5,491
	Rockhampton	1,051	183	0	1,234
	Tasmania	603	159	0	762
	South Australia	2,119	1,059	593	3,771
	North Queensland	860	36	0	896
	Western Australia	1,229	124	257	1,610
	Total	34,058	6,396	949	41,403
1920	Victoria	8,354	2,492	35	10,881
	New Zealand	3,212	202	0	3,414
	New South Wales	10,545	1,757	30	12,332
	South Queensland	5,717	353	0	6,070
	Rockhampton	1,059	114	0	1,173
	Tasmania	594	166	0	760
	South Australia	2,155	1,229	672	4,056
	North Queensland	950	55	0	1,005
	Western Australia	829	155	103	1,087
	Total	33,415	6,523	840	40,778

though with the exception of South and Western Australia, their ranks were in rapid decline after 1900. Owing to the incomplete and scattered nature of H.A.C.B.S. branch-level records, compounded by the overwhelming tendency only to refer to members by their first initials, analysis of the overall membership from the perspective of birthplace or class is impossible. It was undoubtedly a predominantly working-class and, by the twentieth century, Australian-born organisation. The occupational profile of individual branches would have varied considerably depending on location, and the Hibernians drew members from across the social

¹⁸ Membership figures are calculated from the published reports of triennial meetings. See *Proceedings of the first triennial meeting of interstate representatives, 1912*; *Report of the proceedings of the second triennial meeting, 1916*; *Report of the proceedings of the third triennial meeting, 1920*.

Table 2: H.A.C.B.S. branches, 1912–20.¹⁹

Year	District	No. Men's Branches	No. Women's Branches	No. Juvenile Branches	Total
1912	Victoria	90	29	7	126
	New Zealand	46	2	0	48
	New South Wales	150	45	6	201
	South Queensland	33	6	0	39
	Rockhampton	10	3	0	13
	Tasmania	9	2	0	11
	South Australia	27	18	15	60
	North Queensland	20	3	0	23
	Western Australia	27	19	4	50
	Total	412	127	32	571
1916	Victoria	101	36	1	138
	New Zealand	68	2	0	70
	New South Wales	165	52	4	221
	South Queensland	38	6	0	44
	Rockhampton	12	3	0	15
	Tasmania	9	3	0	12
	South Australia	30	21	12	63
	North Queensland	15	1	0	16
	Western Australia	22	2	12	36
	Total	460	126	29	615
1920	Victoria	101	38	1	140
	New Zealand	61	3	0	64
	New South Wales	156	47	2	205
	South Queensland	44	7	0	51
	Rockhampton	11	3	0	14
	Tasmania	10	1	0	11
	South Australia	30	25	18	73
	North Queensland	13	1	0	14
	Western Australia	18	2	5	25
	Total	444	127	26	597

spectrum. Many Hibernian leaders were well-educated men from privileged professions such as physicians, attorneys or merchants, but the society's rank and file were made up of the working-class members who benefitted most from the H.A.C.B.S.'s sickness and death benefits, as indicated by Mary Sweeney's occupational profile of Queensland Hibernians, based on surviving branch data from Brisbane.²⁰

The size of individual branches varied widely. Most ranged from fifty to 100 members, though those based in large cities and towns could be much bigger. The largest branches during this period were both in the Hibernian heartland of

¹⁹ All branches are listed, along with the membership of each, in the minutes of each triennial meeting. *Proceedings of the first triennial meeting of interstate representatives, 1912*; *Report of the proceedings of the second triennial meeting, 1916*; *Report of the proceedings of the third triennial meeting, 1920*.

²⁰ Sweeney, *The Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society*, pp 138–42.

Table 3: Irish-born and Roman Catholic population of Australia.²²

Region	1911			1921		
	Irish-born Population (%)	Roman Catholic Population (%)	Total Population	Irish-born Population (%)	Roman Catholic Population (%)	Total Population
New South Wales	46,656 (2.8%)	375,391 (22.8%)	1,646,734	37,161 (1.8%)	482,575 (23.0%)	2,099,763
Victoria	41,477 (3.2%)	271,754 (20.7%)	1,315,551	27,242 (1.8%)	315,718 (20.6)	1,531,529
Queensland	31,599 (5.2%)	137,086 (22.6%)	605,813	25,725 (3.4%)	172,662 (22.8%)	757,634
South Australia	7,997 (2.0%)	50,964 (12.5%)	408,558	5,648 (1.1%)	64,054 (12.9%)	495,336
Western Australia	9,451 (3.4%)	56,616 (20.1%)	282,114	7,788 (2.3%)	64,488 (19.4%)	332,213
Tasmania	2,155 (1.1%)	28,581 (14.9%)	191,211	1,321 (0.6%)	33,106 (15.5%)	213,877
Territories	99 (2.0%)	1,033 (20.6%)	5,024	148 (2.3%)	699 (10.9%)	6,442
Total (Australia)	139,434 (3.1%)	921,425 (20.7%)	4,455,005	105,033 (1.9%)	1,133,302 (20.8%)	5,436,794

Victoria: St Killian's (no. 4) in Bendigo and St Ignatius's (no. 34) in the Melbourne suburb of Richmond both exceeded 700 members.²¹

Though it was strongest in the most populous states of Victoria and New South Wales, as well as major metropolitan areas like Brisbane, the spatial network of the H.A.C.B.S. was vast (see Table 2), reflecting a widely dispersed intergenerational Irish Catholic community (see Table 3). With the exception of the isolated and sparsely populated Northern Territory, virtually every city and sizeable town across both dominions was home to a Hibernian branch. Naturally, the organisation was

²¹ *Report of the proceedings of the second triennial meeting, 1916.*

²² Australian censuses did not separately record those of Irish descent. By the beginning of the twentieth century, migration from Ireland to Australia had slowed considerably and, as the immigrant generation passed away, the Irish-born population was in steady decline. Australia's Roman Catholic population was predominantly, though not overwhelmingly, of Irish descent. These figures, which do not record the vast majority of Aboriginal Australians, are reconstructed from: Ministry of State for Home Affairs [Australia], *Census of the commonwealth of Australia, taken for the night between the 2nd and 3rd April, 1911* (Melbourne, 1911), part xiv — summary — tables 1 (population of states and territories); 22 (total population of states and territories — birthplaces); 61 (population of states and territories — religion); Ministry of State for Home and Territories [Australia], *Census of the commonwealth of Australia, taken for the night between the 3rd and 4th April, 1921* (Melbourne, 1921), vol. 1, part II — table 3 (population according to birthplace); vol. 1., part vi — table 3 (population according to religion); 'Bulletin no. 1' (population of states and territories).

strongest in regions with the highest Irish or Catholic populations (see Table 1). Hibernianism could thrive in both city and countryside, and some small, relatively isolated towns were home to flourishing branches. The St Mary's (no. 283) branch in the interior Western Australian mining town of Kalgoorlie, for example, had well over 100 members in the early twentieth century, where its growth was likely owing to the society's popularity amongst Catholic gold miners.²³

In order to be eligible for membership in the H.A.C.B.S. an individual had to be a practising Roman Catholic. Irish ancestry was not necessarily required, though that members 'cherish the memory of Ireland' was enshrined in the Hibernian constitution, and in practice the membership 'almost wholly consisted of persons of Irish birth or descent'.²⁴ Though perhaps not to the same extent as their counterparts in North America, Hibernians in Australia and New Zealand served as 'custodians of Irish culture', promoting Irish-Catholic respectability, a reverence and passion for Irish Gaelic language, history and music, as well as support for Irish nationalism.²⁵ Various events in the H.A.C.B.S. annual calendar were designed to promote and impart a keen appreciation for Irish identity not only amongst the society's membership, but the broader Irish-Catholic community as well. The best example from the period under investigation here is the New South Wales district's annual Thomas Moore concert.²⁶ The commemoration of the iconic early-nineteenth-century Irish poet and composer, which consisted of recitations and musical performances, first took place in 1912 at the Sydney Town Hall. Conceived to 'reverse the centuried efforts to destroy the literature of the old land, and [to recall] the golden links of Ireland's story in music', as well as to inspire 'ardent affection for the Land of the Shamrock', early Moore concerts, were tremendously successful.²⁷ Though their popularity waned during and after the Great War, they remained a key feature of Hibernian activity in Sydney until 1927.²⁸

In addition to their influential networks within Australia and New Zealand, the H.A.C.B.S. also attempted to forge a broader, interconnected Irish diaspora. From the late nineteenth century through to the early twentieth, discussions about 'steps to unite the sea-divided Gael' frequently took place, focusing on affiliation or possible amalgamation with the A.O.H. in both North America and Ireland.²⁹ An early history of the H.A.C.B.S. notes correspondence on transnational Hibernian

²³ *Proceedings of the first triennial meeting of interstate representatives, 1912.*

²⁴ O'Connor, *The Hibernian Society of New South Wales*, p. 32; O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, p. 174.

²⁵ See Mark McGowan, *The waning of the green: Catholics, the Irish, and identity in Toronto, 1887–1922* (Montreal and Kingston, 1999), p. 154; Keron Ó Luain, "'The majority of our people belong to the working classes": The Ancient Order of Hibernians in the United States, c.1850–1884' in *Social History*, xl, no. 1 (2020), pp 52–80.

²⁶ On Moore's significance as a cultural figure, see Frank Molloy, "'The sigh of thy harp shall be sent o'er the deep": the influence of Thomas Moore in Australia' in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish worldwide, vol. 3: the creative migrant* (London, 1994), pp 115–32.

²⁷ H.A.C.B.S., *New South Wales district: 32nd annual report, 1912* (Sydney, 1912), pp 15, 17.

²⁸ O'Connor, *The Hibernian Society of New South Wales*, p. 52; *Freeman's Journal*, 4 May 1916.

²⁹ H.A.C.B.S., *National directory of Australasia: steps to unite the sea-divided Gael* (Brisbane, 1934).

affiliation between the executive directory and ‘some friends in New York’ as early as 1889.³⁰ In 1892, ‘every effort was made’ to forge a formal working relationship, but apparently owing to the vast distances between the continents, letters from the H.A.C.B.S. never reached their intended destination. Three years later, in 1895, in the midst of his Australian tour, Michael Davitt was asked to deliver a communication to Hibernians in the United States. He obliged, but it still took several years before any concrete steps towards a transnational Hibernianism were taken. The new president of the A.O.H. in America, John T. Keating, wrote to the executive directory of the H.A.C.B.S. in 1898 expressing his desire to form ‘an international bond of friendship and unity between Irishmen’.³¹ The two organisations exchanged formal greetings at their respective national meetings in 1900 and 1901, and by 1902 an agreement was in place that required branches of the H.A.C.B.S. to admit any member of the A.O.H., providing they were in good health.³² A more formal amalgamation of the societies was discussed at several points over the following decades, but never took place. Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, the relationship with Hibernians in the northern hemisphere remained an important feature of the society’s engagement with Irish nationalism throughout this period.

II

Despite its size and considerable geographic scope, the H.A.C.B.S. has only featured tangentially in the historiography of Irish nationalism in Australia and New Zealand. In Patrick O’Farrell’s foundational study, for example, the H.A.C.B.S. is primarily examined as a key point of contact between the Irish Catholic laity and clergy. Rarely is Hibernian engagement with Irish Australian nationalism acknowledged. In fact, O’Farrell notes that the ‘Irishness of this benefit society movement was, in a sense, accidental’ and that the Hibernians ‘rarely took any initiative in nationalism matters’.³³ Generally, both older and emerging historical literature have tended to focus on smaller, explicitly nationalist groups in Australasia, such as Albert Dryer’s Irish National Association (I.N.A.), as well as the fascinating connections between labour radicals, socialists, women’s groups and the Irish republican movement.³⁴ But Irish-oriented benefit societies, such as the

³⁰ H.A.C.B.S., *A history of the Australasian Catholic Benefit Society* (Newcastle, NSW, 1903), p. 124.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² H.A.C.B.S., *A history of the Australasian Catholic Benefit Society*, pp 130, 136. See also H.A.C.B.S., *Second biennial meeting of deputies from states of Australia and New Zealand, 1903* (Sydney, 1903), pp 4–5. The agreement did not allow for a transfer of insurance benefits from one organisation to the other.

³³ O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, pp 174, 176.

³⁴ Beyond O’Farrell’s foundational study, some representative studies of Irish-Australian nationalism include: Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland’s new world: immigrants, politics, and society in the United States and Australia, 1815–1922* (Madison, WI, 2008); Mark Finnane, ‘Deporting the Irish envoys: domestic and national security in 1920s Australia’ in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xl, no. 3 (2013), pp 403–25; Dianne Hall, ‘Irish republican women in Australia: Kathleen Barry and Linda Kearns’s tour in 1924–25’ in *I.H.S.*, xlix, no. 163 (2019), pp 73–93; Stephanie James, ‘The evolution of Adelaide’s Irish National Association, 1918–1950: from security threat to cultural force?’

H.A.C.B.S., Irish National Foresters, Australian Holy Catholic Guild and others had a central role in determining how Catholics of Irish descent responded to the movement.

O'Farrell does note the society's role in passing nationalist resolutions, welcoming visiting nationalist politicians, and providing 'moderate council and influence'.³⁵ Hibernian support for the cause of Ireland went beyond such ancillary action. Throughout the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the society's engagement with Ireland was consistent, enthusiastic, nuanced, transnational, and represented one of the more direct expressions of Irish identity on the part of the membership. In the mid 1880s, the H.A.C.B.S. actively supported Charles Stewart Parnell's movement for Irish home rule, and played a central role in welcoming future I.P.P. leader John Redmond and his brother William in 1883. Four years later, in 1889, Home Rule envoys John Dillon, Sir Thomas Esmonde and John Deasy were special guests at the H.A.C.B.S.'s annual Boxing Day picnic in Sydney, where they raised £250.³⁶ Organisational support for an Irish parliament continued after the turn of the century, particularly as Home Rule re-emerged as the preeminent political question in the British Empire from 1910. In 1912, another group of I.P.P. delegates, William Redmond, Richard Hazelton, and John T. Donovan, toured Australasia. In New Zealand, they raised over £10,000 over three intense weeks of public meetings and lectures.³⁷ In Australia, H.A.C.B.S. infrastructure was essential to the tour's success — rallies often took place at Hibernian halls, while the society also offered essential promotion by hosting and advertising public meetings. Towards the end of their visit, the envoys were special guests at the 1912 New South Wales A.D.M. in Sydney. At the banquet, Hazelton, who was a member of the A.O.H. in Ireland, thanked the H.A.C.B.S. for the 'great assistance given to him and his colleagues throughout the length and breadth of Australia and New Zealand in making their mission the grand success it has been'.³⁸

The successful passage of the Home Rule Act in 1912, coupled with the elimination of the House of Lords' veto, made Home Rule seem like a virtual certainty. In Australia, as elsewhere across the diaspora, Irish ethnic and benevolent associations began to make plans to celebrate the triumphal establishment of a Dublin

in *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, xlv (2017), pp 31–49; Colm Kiernan, 'Home Rule for Ireland and the formation of the Australian Labor Party, 1883–1901' in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, xxxviii (1992), pp 1–11; Elizabeth Malcolm and Dianne Hall, *A new history of the Irish in Australia* (Sydney, 2018); Patrick O'Farrell, 'The Irish Republican Brotherhood in Australia: the 1918 internments' in Oliver MacDonagh, W. F. Mandle and Paucic Travers (eds), *Irish culture and nationalism, 1750–1950* (London, 1983), pp 182–93; Peter Overlack, "'Easter 1916" in Dublin and the Australian press: background and response' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, liv/lv (1997), pp 188–93; Jimmy Yan, 'The Irish Revolution, early Australian communists and Anglophone radical peripheries: Dublin, Glasgow, Sydney, 1920–1923' in *Twentieth Century Communism*, xviii, no. 18 (2020), pp 93–125.

³⁵ O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, p. 176.

³⁶ O'Connor, *The Hibernian Society of New South Wales*, p. 36; Malcolm Campbell, 'John Redmond and the Irish National League in Australia and New Zealand, 1883' in *History*, lxxxvi, no. 283 (2001), pp 348–62.

³⁷ Rory Sweetman, 'The importance of being Irish: Hibernianism in New Zealand, 1869–1969' in Lyndon Fraser (ed.), *A distant shore: Irish migration and New Zealand settlement* (Dunedin, 2000), p. 145; Richard P. Davis, *Irish issues in New Zealand politics, 1868–1922* (Dunedin, 1974), p. 127.

³⁸ H.A.C.B.S., *New South Wales district: 32nd annual report, 1912*, p. 38.

parliament. For the H.A.C.B.S., this led to discussions of a more direct, tangible engagement with 'the Old Land'. Hibernians in both Victoria and New South Wales planned to send delegates to Dublin to represent their district boards at the parliament's opening. At Victoria's A.D.M., held in Fitzroy in April 1913, delegates debated the propriety of funding a delegation to Dublin. Brother Lynch of Geelong addressed the assembled members, stating that the passage of a resolution of support — the standard mechanism for associational engagement with Irish nationalism — was insufficient in this case. A fund, he argued, ought to be established to finance a delegate to represent the society in Dublin. Several other attendees spoke in favour of this measure, and the resolution passed unanimously.³⁹

The following year, the expectation remained that Home Rule would be finalised before the end of 1914. At Victoria's A.D.M., this time held in Bendigo, the delegates again discussed sending a delegate to Dublin. J. C. Brady, from the Melbourne suburb of Richmond, presented a cheque for £20 from his St Ignatius (no. 24) branch to be put towards the fund and gave an impassioned speech on the importance of financing a Hibernian delegate, as it would represent the culmination of decades of Home Rule fundraising endeavours by the society. The H.A.C.B.S. had, he said, directly contributed to the

onward march to ultimate Home Rule, and now, when Erin is about to leave her dismal shadow ... will we adequately recognise her splendour by not sending to her pageantry a Hibernian delegate in keeping with the magnificence of such a historic ceremony? ... Let us prove to this state that our joy is something more than transitory.⁴⁰

To physically take part in the opening of a Dublin parliament was a profoundly emotional opportunity for Brady and his fellow Hibernians — a triumphal conclusion to a diasporic movement in which they felt fully involved. Several other delegates spoke in favour of funding a delegate, with some, such as Geelong's J. E. Ferguson, likewise pledging money collected by their branches. The possibility of a levy on each member of the society, however, prompted some protest. J. Glynn of South Melbourne rose and stated that 'he had been sent to oppose a delegate'. Dr Nicholas Michael O'Donnell, a Melbourne physician who was president of the nationalist United Irish League of Victoria, had already been chosen to represent the state in Dublin, and Glynn believed a single Victorian delegate, one that would not draw directly on H.A.C.B.S. funds, ought

³⁹ H.A.C.B.S., *Victoria district: official report of the annual district meeting, 1913* (Melbourne, 1913), p. 89.

⁴⁰ H.A.C.B.S., *Victoria district: official report of the annual district meeting, 1914* (Melbourne, 1914), p. 25. In the northern hemisphere, Hibernianism was divided between the main organisation in the United States and Canada, and the 'Board of Erin', who were strongest in Ireland and Great Britain. After 1900, the Board of Erin A.O.H. was dominated by the Belfast-born member of parliament Joseph Devlin, who used the rapidly expanding order as a vehicle to promote constitutional Irish nationalism. This created tension between the two bodies, as the American A.O.H. tended to be dominated by republican nationalists. Several attempts at transatlantic rapprochement in the early twentieth century failed, and the organisations remained separate. See A. C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and nationalist Ireland in the age of Jose Devlin, 1871–1934* (Oxford, 2008), pp 92–6, 98.

to be sufficient.⁴¹ Brady and his supporters persisted, however, and secured the passage of a resolution establishing a levy of one shilling for each adult member to raise the £300 necessary to send a representative.

The district board's long-serving secretary, J. W. Ryan, was selected as the society's representative. Ryan was born in the United States to Irish parents, and in addition to his prominent role in the H.A.C.B.S., he was heavily involved in other Irish associations in Melbourne, serving, for example, as president of the city's nationalist Irish-Ireland League. In a short address, delivered to 'cheers and deafening applause', Ryan acknowledged his pride in his intergenerational identity, regretting that his parents were not still alive to

witness the honour bestowed upon me ... Australia — particularly Victoria — is the home of Hibernianism. From the inception of the society, from 1865 to the present time, it has always aided and assisted and encouraged Home Rule, and I thank God that I have lived to see the opening of the great Irish parliament.⁴²

The district board of New South Wales also committed to sending 'a large contingent of Hibernians' to Dublin in 1914, but stopped short of actively setting up a fund to accomplish this. That Hibernians in Australia were willing to send representatives across the vast distance affirms the profound sentiment that underlay a direct participation in the Home Rule celebration.

In an effort to forge an even more overtly transnational Hibernianism, Ryan planned to meet with representatives from both the Irish (Board of Erin) A.O.H. and its North American counterpart in Dublin in order to promote 'a close bond of federation between the A.O.H. of Ireland and America and our Society'. The Australian executive had communicated with John Dillon Nugent, national secretary of the A.O.H. in Ireland, and requested that he make arrangements for a transnational Hibernian conference, while they also wrote to the American national secretary, Philip J. Sullivan, to solicit his cooperation. H.A.C.B.S. national secretary James S. Dowling wrote to Ryan to express his hope that the meeting would help bring about a 'world-wide Empire of the Gael'.⁴³ The conference, of course, never took place. Home Rule was put on hold with the beginning of war in August, and the membership of the H.A.C.B.S. were faced with an entirely different set of challenges.

⁴¹ On O'Donnell, see Val Noone (ed.), *Nicholas O'Donnell's autobiography* (Ballarat, 2017); Chris McConville, 'Nicholas Michael O'Donnell' in Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (eds), *Dictionary of Australian Biography* (18 vols, Carleton, Victoria, 1988), xi; Laurence Geary, 'Nicholas Michael O'Donnell (1862–1920): a Melbourne medical life' in *Australasian Journal of Irish Studies*, xvi (2016), pp 13–29; Jonathan O'Neill, 'Language, heritage and authenticity: Nicholas Michael O'Donnell and the construction of Irishness in Australia' in *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, v, no. 2 (2012), pp 39–59.

⁴² H.A.C.B.S., *Victoria district: official report of the annual district meeting, 1914*, pp 27, 39–40.

⁴³ These plans were outlined in a letter from the H.A.C.B.S. national secretary, James S. Dowling to J. W. Ryan, 18 June 1914. The full text of this letter was printed in H.A.C.B.S., *Victoria district: official report of the annual district meeting, 1915* (Melbourne, 1915), pp 37–8.

III

With the outbreak of war, Catholics in Australia were keen to demonstrate their loyalty to king and country. For the Hibernians, such expressions of imperial loyalty were nothing new. Whether at the branch or district level, dinners, banquets, Communion breakfasts, and other social events organised by the H.A.C.B.S. invariably began with a toast to 'The Pope and the King'.⁴⁴ Expressions of loyalty were also to the fore at Hibernian annual district meetings. For example, in 1909, the new governor general of Australia, the earl of Dudley — a former lord lieutenant of Ireland — was a special guest at Victoria's annual assembly. His speech praised the organisation's loyalty to the empire, and at its conclusion, the gathering rose and gave cheers for the king.⁴⁵ Even support for Home Rule was expressed in loyal, pro-imperial terms, as resolutions were usually couched in rhetoric of imperial unity, maintaining that the granting of self-government to Ireland would greatly enhance unity and 'give new strength to the British Empire'.⁴⁶ The war placed an even greater onus on the society to pledge their loyalty to the empire. Members of the H.A.C.B.S. signed up for service in the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.) in large numbers — a source of great pride for the organisation. In New South Wales alone, over 1,000 had volunteered by the beginning of 1917.⁴⁷ Resolutions of support for the Allied cause, as well as resolutions of sympathy for fallen members, were common at Hibernian events, generally emphasising both the Irish and Irish-Australian contribution to the effort.⁴⁸

The initial responses to the Easter Rising, in which the society roundly condemned the rebels, reflected this overriding paradigm of loyalty to king and empire. New South Wales' resolution has already been noted, while in Victoria, the H.A.C.B.S. deplored 'the disturbing effects of a misguided, insignificant portion of the people of Dublin ... Ireland was solidly united to combat the common foe of us all'.⁴⁹ In New Zealand, too, the Hibernians forcefully proclaimed their loyalty in the rising's immediate aftermath.⁵⁰ Following the draconian executions of the rising's leaders, however, the tone of Hibernian resolutions began to shift, albeit without abandoning its staunch support for the war effort. The 1916 triennial meeting, which brought together Hibernian delegates from across Australia and New Zealand, was held in Melbourne in mid May. Although the society's official resolution was firm in condemning 'the lamentable folly of the extremists in the Old

⁴⁴ This was the case, for example, at the grand banquet following the 1912 A.D.M. of the New South Wales district: see H.A.C.B.S., *New South Wales district: 32nd annual report, 1912*, p. 38.

⁴⁵ H.A.C.B.S., *Victoria district annual report, 1909* (Melbourne, 1909), p. 66.

⁴⁶ H.A.C.B.S., *New South Wales district: 32nd annual report, 1912*, p. 8.

⁴⁷ H.A.C.B.S., *New South Wales district: report of the proceedings of the thirty-seventh annual meeting, 1917* (Sydney, 1917), p. 17.

⁴⁸ See for example, *Victoria district: official report of the annual district meeting, 1916*, p. 63. The resolution stated, in part: 'Irishmen, as with Ireland's sons in Australia, were in their proportion, if not in excess of their proportion, upholding the honour of the British Flag.'

⁴⁹ H.A.C.B.S., *Victoria district: official report of the annual district meeting, 1916*, p. 43.

⁵⁰ Sweetman, 'The importance of being Irish', p. 149. See also the recent articles in Peter Kuch and Lisa Marr (eds), *New Zealand's responses to the 1916 Rising* (Cork, 2020).

Land', it also 'deeply deplore[d] the ruthless retaliatory measures of the Home Government' and appealed for a general amnesty.⁵¹

The Australian conscription crisis further shifted Irish Australians' perceptions of the political situation in Ireland. In August 1916, upon his return from meetings in London, Australian Prime Minister William Morris Hughes called a plebiscite on the question of conscription. Following an increasingly jingoistic and sectarianised campaign, conscription was narrowly defeated in the October vote. A broad alliance of working-class and women's groups cooperated to bolster the anti-conscription movement, but in the aftermath of the rising, further fuelled by the outspoken anti-conscription stance of the coadjutor archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, many imperially-minded Australians blamed Catholics of Irish descent for its defeat.⁵² A second plebiscite, held in December 1917, likewise failed to bring about the result that Hughes and his allies desired, as conscription was defeated by an even wider margin.

Catholic opposition to conscription cannot be divorced from its overriding class context. In the early twentieth century, a majority of Irish-Australian Catholics were working-class, and it was those from poorer backgrounds whose livelihoods were particularly imperilled by the threat of conscription. Even Mannix's own stance was likely influenced by his experiences living in the working-class suburb of West Melbourne, amid 'families whose sons and husbands were dying at a fast rate in a distant war'.⁵³ His vociferous opposition to conscription made Mannix a hero to working-class Irish Australians. In a political atmosphere where they felt increasingly alienated from the dominion's corridors of power and prestige, Mannix's rhetoric of 'Australia First' highlighted the idea that opposing conscription was not necessarily an act of disloyalty.⁵⁴ Despite consistent attempts to connect anti-conscription sentiment to Australian patriotism, however, the widespread notion that the Irish were opposed to the measure prompted 'some of the most vitriolic attacks ever made on the Australian Catholic community', led by organisations like the Imperial Protestant Federation and the transnational Orange Order, and this significantly affected how groups like the Hibernians expressed their identity during the final years of the war and after.⁵⁵

⁵¹ H.A.C.B.S., *Report of the proceedings of the second triennial meeting, 1916*, p. 30.

⁵² Mannix became archbishop of Melbourne in May 1917. Val Noone, 'Class factors in the radicalisation of Archbishop Daniel Mannix, 1913–1917' in *Labour History*, cvii (2014), p. 189. See also Stephanie James, 'Loyalty becoming disloyalty? The war and Irish-Australians before and after 1916' in Michael J. K. Walsh and Andrekos Varnava (eds), *Australia and the Great War: identity, meaning and mythology* (Melbourne, 2016), pp 110–27; Daniel Marc Segesser, "'To be avoided at all hazards — rebel Irish and syndicalists coming into office': the Easter Rising, climatic conditions and the 1916 Australian referendum on conscription' in Enrico Dal Lago, Róisín Healy and Gearóid Barry (eds), *1916 in global context: an anti-imperial moment* (Oxford and New York, 2018), pp 146–56.

⁵³ Noone, 'Class factors in the radicalisation of Archbishop Daniel Mannix', p. 193; Malcolm Campbell, 'Emigrant responses to war and revolution, 1914–1921: Irish opinion in the United States and Australia' in *I.H.S.*, xxxii, no. 125 (2000), p. 87.

⁵⁴ Michael McKernan, 'Catholics, conscription, and Archbishop Mannix', in *Australian Historical Studies*, xvii, no. 68 (1977), p. 306. See also Malcolm & Hall, *A new history of the Irish in Australia*, pp 229–33.

⁵⁵ Jeff Kildea, 'Australian Catholics and conscription in the Great War' in *Journal of Religious History*, xxvi, no. 3 (2002), pp 301–02; O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, p. 272. See also Jeff Kildea, "'A veritable hurricane of sectarianism": the year 1920 and ethno-religious conflict in Australia' in Colin Barr and Hilary M. Carey (eds), *Religion*

The H.A.C.B.S. constitution forbade the society from actively engaging with domestic political questions, but the consistent public attacks on Catholics meant that it could not remain isolated from political currents in Australia. Although the Hibernians did not formally take a stance for or against conscription, members were present in large numbers at many of the venues where anti-conscription arguments were disseminated. For example, on the day after Hughes called the first referendum, Hibernians formed a guard of honour at the St John's parish annual bazaar in the Melbourne suburb of Clifton Hill, where Mannix gave his first, widely-publicised speech against conscription.⁵⁶ Both Victoria's and New South Wales's annual district meetings passed resolutions of support for Mannix, and decried the circulation of 'stupid anti-Catholic literature ... intended to disturb the peace of the community and create bitterness and discord'.⁵⁷ A message of 'filial respect and devotion' for Mannix was repeated at the 1918 New South Wales A.D.M., an example of the archbishop's growing influence on Catholic associational life, even beyond his episcopal see in Victoria.⁵⁸ Mannix's leadership of the anti-conscription movement laid the foundation for his central role in directing and promoting Catholic-Australian support for Irish nationalism over the subsequent years, which generally superseded that of his more circumspect, though still stridently nationalist, colleague in New South Wales, the Waterford-born Archbishop Michael Kelly.⁵⁹ Indeed, through the networks of Hibernianism at least, there was little regional variation in how members responded to Irish affairs. Resolutions and commentary from Victoria were no more or less nationalistic than that which emerged from, for example, New South Wales or Queensland.

Within a context of increasing public suspicion of Irish-Catholics, the Hibernians continued to promote their society's loyalty, at least up to the end of the war. In New South Wales, the transnational networks of the church were mobilised to achieve this aim. The outgoing apostolic delegate to Australasia, Bonaventura Cerretti, addressed the April 1917 A.D.M. in Sydney, praising Hibernian loyalty in both Australia and North America, where the A.O.H. had temporarily abandoned their traditionally Anglophobic stance and passed strong pro-Allied resolutions following the United States' entry into the war.⁶⁰ On the Australian side, Cerretti highlighted the 1,040 Hibernians who had volunteered for service overseas as the perfect answer to accusations of disloyalty.⁶¹ Nevertheless, discussions of the Irish situation at H.A.C.B.S. conventions displayed a considerable change in tone from the previous year, though support for Home Rule was still framed as being essential to imperial unity and the war effort:

and greater Ireland: Christianity and Irish global networks, 1750–1950 (Montreal and Kingston, 2015), pp 363–82.

⁵⁶ Noone, 'Class factors in the radicalisation of Archbishop Daniel Mannix', pp 195–6.

⁵⁷ *New South Wales district: report of the thirty-seventh annual meeting, 1917*, p. 3; H.A.C.B.S., *Victoria district: official report of the annual meeting, 1917* (Melbourne, 1917), p. 34.

⁵⁸ H.A.C.B.S., *New South Wales district: 38th annual report, 1918* (Sydney, 1918), p. 10.

⁵⁹ On Michael Kelly, see Patrick O'Farrell, 'Archbishop Kelly and the Irish Question' in *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, xiv, no. 3 (1974), pp 1–19.

⁶⁰ David Brundage, *Irish nationalists in America: the politics of exile, 1798–1998* (Oxford, 2016), p. 152.

⁶¹ *New South Wales district: report of the thirty-seventh annual meeting, 1917*, pp 4–5.

Had the Home Rule Bill been put into immediate operation — as we maintain should have been done — it would have had the effect of bringing about a closer unity of the Empire, which is most essential during the currency of the present War. On the contrary, however, owing to the lamentable weakness of the British Government, Ireland's hopes and aspirations have, once again, been shattered, and Home Rule has been deferred indefinitely. This treacherous betrayal by British Statesman was the main cause of a brave, though futile, attempt in Ireland, to compel the recognition of Ireland's claims to the same freedom and justice as is being enjoyed in other parts of the Empire, and whilst deeply regretting the unfortunate rising and deploring the loss of the brave and cultured Irishmen who sacrificed their lives for Ireland's cause, we deprecate the harshness and brutality of the English General — Maxwell — whose bloodthirsty methods in dealing with the outbreak contrast so unfavorably with those employed by more kindly-hearted and diplomatic general Botha, under somewhat similar circumstances in South Africa, indeed we feel justly proud of our brave and patriotic kinsmen and trust that we may see the realisation of those hopes for which they died. May the souls of the Patriots who thus laid down their lives for the freedom of their native land rest in peace.⁶²

The shared experience of anti-Catholic prejudice and accusations of disloyalty created a sense of unity amongst many Catholics of Irish descent in Australia. As the Great War ended, this set the stage for a more coherent engagement with the rapidly evolving political situation in the Old Land.⁶³

IV

Hibernian engagement with the Irish question from the beginning of the Anglo-Irish War in early 1919 to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 was far more direct and consistent than any of the society's nationalist activity up to that point. In Ireland, Sinn Féin's overwhelming success in the 1918 general election, in which they won seventy-three out of 105 seats, signified mainstream Irish nationalism's transition from a Home Rule-centred movement to a republican one.⁶⁴ From the beginning of 1919, using the rhetoric of 'self-determination' for small nations coined by Woodrow Wilson, Irish ethnic and benevolent associations around the world began to lobby for independence. The historiography of the Irish Revolution has become increasingly preoccupied with such 'global' aspects. Emerging scholarship has focused on the reciprocal relationships between republican nationalists in Ireland and radical revolutionaries in Europe and elsewhere, as well as the attempts to mobilise the diaspora.⁶⁵ The H.A.C.B.S. was involved

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶³ O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, p. 280.

⁶⁴ Alvin Jackson, *Home rule: an Irish history, 1800–2000* (London, 2003), pp 176–80.

⁶⁵ On the transnational turn in the historiography of the Irish Revolution, see Enda Delaney and Fearghal McGarry, 'Introduction: a global history of Irish Revolution' in *I.H.S.*, xlv, no. 165 (2020), pp 1–10. See also Niall Whelehan (ed.), *Transnational perspectives on modern Irish history* (New York, 2014) and Patrick Mannion and Fearghal McGarry (eds), *The Irish Revolution: a global history* (New York, 2022).

in the latter process, though contributions to a global nationalist movement were more significant to the Hibernians as a rhetorical device, fostering a powerful, idealised identification with a transnational Irish ‘race’, rather than in terms of tangible support for Irish independence.

In Australia and New Zealand, the immediate post-War period saw a widespread reorientation of how Catholic associations expressed support for Irish nationalism, as a mass-movement for Irish independence began with a monster meeting in Melbourne, arranged by Archbishop Mannix, on 19 December 1918.⁶⁶ Nationalist groups that were exclusively committed to Home Rule within the structures of the British Empire, such as the United Irish League of Australia (U.I.L.A.), declined quickly.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, formerly marginal groups like the republican I.N.A. rapidly gained influence. However, the I.N.A. continued to be regarded with suspicion by some more conservative nationalists like Archbishop Michael Kelly, and it was seldom mentioned in H.A.C.B.S. correspondence about Ireland, reflecting the more moderate form of Irish republicanism favoured by an association deeply concerned with respectability.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the H.A.C.B.S. response to the Irish Revolution was part of a broader associational movement in Australia and New Zealand that saw a wide variety of organisations work together to lobby and fundraise for Irish independence. The Hibernians supported the cause through their own associational networks, as well as through formal and informal cooperation with explicitly nationalist umbrella groups such as the Irish National Executive (I.N.E.).

Although a republican consensus was emerging, public professions of imperial loyalty continued through early 1919. In January and February, members of the H.A.C.B.S. across the two dominions assembled for both district and branch-level annual Communion breakfasts. Toasts to ‘The Pope and the King’ continued at the beginning of most events, usually followed by a speech from a leading member extolling Hibernian loyalty to the empire.⁶⁹ In Sydney, the district board held a special banquet in mid January to honour members who had lost their lives in the war, while some Hibernian St Patrick’s Day parades that year, such as the procession in Perth, were led by the Union Jack.⁷⁰

Despite this continuing loyal orientation, statements on Ireland by the various levels of the H.A.C.B.S. increasingly expressed sympathy with Sinn Féin, though, at this stage, generally stopped short of endorsing a fully independent republic, calling instead for the broader, Wilsonian concept of ‘self-determination’. One of the society’s first official statements on Irish affairs took place at the annual meeting of Victoria’s women’s branches, though, as was typical, this assembly was led by the

⁶⁶ See *Freeman’s Journal*, 2 Jan. 1919.

⁶⁷ Although the U.I.L.A. publicly pledged to continue fighting for Home Rule, President M. P. Jageurs privately conceded to the Archbishop of Sydney, Michael Kelly, that ‘some members favour immediate dissolution’. See M. P. Jageurs to Michael Kelly, 18 Jan. 1919 (Sydney Archdiocesan Archives (S.A.A.), Michael Kelly papers, fol. A0556). See also [Melbourne] *The Advocate*, 1 Feb. 1919.

⁶⁸ O’Farrell, ‘Archbishop Kelly and the Irish question’, pp 4–5. On the I.N.A., see Richard Reid, Jeff Kildea and Perry McIntyre, *To foster an Irish spirit: the Irish National Association of Australasia, 1915–2015* (Sydney, 2020).

⁶⁹ For examples, see *The Advocate*, 11 Jan. 1919; *Freeman’s Journal*, 16 Jan. 1919.

⁷⁰ *Freeman’s Journal*, 20 Mar. 1919.

executive of the men's district board. The Hibernians acknowledged America's leading role in promoting Irish self-determination and, in keeping with expressions of diasporic nationalism elsewhere in early 1919, prayed that President Wilson and the delegates at the Paris Peace Conference would justify Allied war aims by granting Ireland independence.⁷¹

Victoria's A.D.M., held in South Yarra on 23 and 24 April, commented directly on the movement away from Home Rule, towards Sinn Féin and republicanism. In his opening address, Grand President P. H. Killeen admitted that:

The position in Ireland to-day is somewhat different from what it has ever been before. Ireland is not now inclined to favor the Home Rule policy of a few years ago. The recent elections prove that she is determined on self-government. "Autonomy for Ireland" is the watchword, and it behoves us as Irishmen and descendants of Irishmen to co-operate with Irish sympathisers in Victoria, men and women, old and young, rich and poor, and unite in one strong body and go hand in hand with the people of Ireland, and assist them in every possible way to attain the coveted goal.

He confirmed that H.A.C.B.S. representatives would take part in meetings with members of other Irish associations in the state over the following weeks to discuss how best to support the nationalist cause. Archbishop Mannix, naturally, would be the 'heart and soul behind the movement'.⁷² J. C. Brady, who had championed sending a delegate to the opening of the Irish Parliament in 1914, called for the society to support the Irish cause more directly, and suggested a resolution be cabled to Charles Gavan Duffy, the Irish republican envoy to the Paris Peace Conference, declaring Ireland's right to self-determination. Brady said that Ireland:

is Sinn Fein to the core and to-day she no longer supplicates the rights of her race, but challenges the right of any other race to deny her inalienable rights. Many of us had proclaimed our individual sentiments in relation to Ireland's aspirations, but to-day we come forward in the strength of our numbers; to-day we add the prestige of our Society to the preponderating list of re-christened Irish, and demand from the arbiters now assembled in Paris the full recognition of the principles of peace amongst nations and the right of at least one small nation to shape her own destiny.

Evidently, the leadership of the H.A.C.B.S. now considered it vital that they use their numbers and perceived influence to forward the cause of Irish independence.

The final resolution and the minutes of the deliberations were forwarded to Gavan Duffy in Paris. A reply was included in the annual report, received on 1 May, thanking the Hibernians for their support and promising to send further documents on the 'character of the present military occupation' — a tantalising example of how Irish nationalist literature could circulate transnationally via the structures of a particular organisation.⁷³

⁷¹ *The Advocate*, 1 Feb. 1919.

⁷² H.A.C.B.S., *Victoria district: official report of the annual district meeting, 1919* (Melbourne, 1919), p. 7.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp 42–3.

Overt, formal cooperation with other Irish associations was a primary feature of Hibernian engagement with Irish affairs during this period. In Victoria, the cooperative association discussed at the 1919 A.D.M. had emerged as the 'Irish-Ireland League of Victoria' by early July. H.A.C.B.S. District Secretary J. W. Ryan maintained his prominent role in Melbourne's nationalist circles by serving as the league's first president.⁷⁴ In New South Wales, the I.N.E. constituted a similar organisation. Lawrence Cotter, who would be named grand president of the Hibernians' national directory the following year, was the Hibernian representative to this group. The I.N.E. worked closely with Archbishop Mannix in organising the first Melbourne Irish Race Convention of November 1919. Though Mannix was indeed the 'heart and soul' behind this massive gathering, the archbishop admitted to his Sydney counterpart, Michael Kelly, that 'the real work' would rest with Australia's Catholic societies.⁷⁵ During the planning phase for the convention, it was in fact Cotter who wrote to Kelly to solicit his cooperation and that of Sydney's Catholic clergy.⁷⁶

Hundreds of Hibernian delegates attended the Convention on 3 November, which attracted over 1,000 participants.⁷⁷ The respective district boards each sent representatives, but, reflecting the geographic scope of Hibernianism, most delegates represented individual branches from across Australia and New Zealand.⁷⁸ As Darragh Gannon has demonstrated, the convention brought Irish matters to the forefront of Catholic popular consciousness in Australasia, and also launched the successful Self-Determination for Ireland Fund, to which Hibernians contributed generously. The top-down spatial networks of the H.A.C.B.S. were essential to their contribution to this fundraising endeavour. Directives were sent from the district boards to the individual branches calling for local subscriptions, which were then managed by the branches themselves.⁷⁹ The process was slow. Almost a year later, in September 1920, New South Wales District President Patrick O'Loughlin wrote to Archbishop Kelly, remitting 100 guineas (£105) from branches across the state, in addition to £20 from his own local branch at Kogarah.⁸⁰

In the aftermath of Melbourne's Irish Race Convention, the Hibernians and other Irish ethnic and benevolent associations became far more actively engaged with the situation in Ireland. As news of the British government's increasingly repressive measures in Ireland, which were consistently reported in the Catholic press, expressions of imperial loyalty by the society gradually declined. In their place, the

⁷⁴ *The Advocate*, 8 July, 11 Oct. 1919.

⁷⁵ Daniel Mannix to Kelly, 3 Sept. 1919 (S.A.A., Archbishop Kelly papers, fol. A0548).

⁷⁶ Lawrence Cotter to Kelly, 7 Aug. 1919 (S.A.A., Archbishop Kelly papers, fol. A0556).

⁷⁷ On the Irish Race Convention, see Darragh Gannon, 'Inventing global Ireland: the idea, and influence, of the Irish Race Convention' in Mannion and McGarry (eds), *The Irish Revolution: a global history*.

⁷⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, 6 Nov. 1919; Sweetman, 'The importance of being Irish', p. 156.

⁷⁹ For example, the district board of Victoria wrote to Yarraville's St Augustine's (no. 640) branch to solicit a contribution to the fund in mid December 1919. The branch submitted £1 1s. 0d. See St Augustine's Branch, Yarraville (no. 640) minute book (Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission (M.D.H.C.), St Augustine's Branch, Yarraville papers, Records, 2/O/HAC, box 1).

⁸⁰ Patrick O'Loughlin to Kelly, 17 Sept. 1920 (S.A.A., Archbishop Kelly papers, fol. A0556). See also *Freeman's Journal*, 14 Oct. 1920.

mantra of ‘Australia First’ resonated more frequently at Hibernian events, as a means of balancing support for Irish independence with loyalty to Australia. Examples may be found at both branch and district level. At the annual Communion breakfast at the Bankstown, New South Wales branch, for example, a Brother Quinn from nearby Marrickville gave a speech to the assembled members in which he reflected on evolving ‘Hibernian’ identity, stating that ‘We are Hibernian to cherish the land of our forefathers, but not enough attention was paid to the fact that the Society was also an Australian one ... The society did not go far enough in the promotion of an Australian sentiment and follow the advice of the grand prelate, Archbishop Mannix: Australia First’.⁸¹

At the 1920 New South Wales A.D.M. in Sydney, the Cavan-born cleric Monsignor John P. Moynagh gave a similar address, instructing the assembled Hibernian delegates that they should ‘first of all be true to our own country. Every Australian-born should be true to Australia. Australia should be first.’⁸² Moynagh’s speech then moved on to a strong appeal for Irish self-determination. This address, and many similar examples at other Hibernian events, large and small, over the following months, was not intended as a call to place Australian loyalty above the ancestral connection to Ireland. Rather, these were statements directed at those who were publicly critiquing Irish-Australian nationalism and accusing its supporters of disloyalty. ‘Australia First’ maintained that Irish nationalism and Australian loyalty or patriotism were capable of existing simultaneously; even reinforcing one another.

As Irish and Australian nationalisms came to dominate the construction of Hibernian identity, some members were keen to actively and directly break with the society’s imperial orientation of previous years. Perhaps the most striking example of this took place at the 1920 New South Wales A.D.M., when J. E. Fox of St Francis (no. 357) Branch in the Sydney suburb of Paddington brought up the society’s 1916 condemnation of the Easter Rising, describing it as ‘ill-advised and unpatriotic, as well as being a reproach to the name, tradition, and radical spirit of the H.A.C.B.S.’, and called for it to be stricken from the minutes. The district president, R. F. Bourke, replied that, ‘while the Hibernian society throughout Australasia was wholeheartedly behind the Sinn Feiners’, there was no need to take the unusual step of striking the 1916 resolution from the minutes. Instead, a strong statement of support, lamenting the British Government’s attempts to ‘force upon the people of that great country something they will never consent to’, was included in the report.⁸³ Later that month, the 1920 triennial meeting took place in Brisbane, bringing together delegates from across the continent. A subsection of the executive report brought out a similarly nationalist interpretation of the ‘great, historic and ever-memorable Easter Week of 1916’, which had ‘succeeded in finding the soul of Ireland’. The minutes of this meeting also contained another strong statement of support for the ‘young, bold, valiant, and trusted’ Éamon de Valera, which invoked global Irish nationalism in assuring the Sinn Féin leader that

⁸¹ *Freeman’s Journal*, 9 Oct. 1919.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 6 May 1920. For comparable ‘Australia First’ speeches and statements, see *ibid.*, 28 Oct., 25 Nov. 1920, 18 Aug., 1 Dec. 1921.

⁸³ H.A.C.B.S., *New South Wales district: 40th annual report, 1920* (Sydney, 1921), pp 11, 34–5.

Ireland's 'sons and daughters throughout the world, and especially in the great States of America and Australasia are standing behind the dear old Mother Country and will continue to do so until the morning of her freedom which, we trust and pray, is very close at hand'.⁸⁴

In later 1920 and 1921, the H.A.C.B.S. continued to express support for Sinn Féin and Irish self-determination. Hibernian spaces, whether at branch or district level, remained critical venues for public discussions about and engagement with the situation in Ireland. Resolutions supporting de Valera and Sinn Féin, and others denouncing British state violence in Ireland, were passed at virtually every Hibernian event, while members who remained opposed to the turn towards republican Irish nationalism seldom, if ever, publicly voiced their dissent.⁸⁵ Formal cooperation with more overtly nationalist groups also continued. At a special district meeting in Melbourne in January 1921, a representative from the Irish-Ireland League addressed the assembled Hibernians on the current conditions in Ireland and strongly encouraging members to join the league.⁸⁶ At the New South Wales A.D.M. in April 1921, Hibernians were similarly urged to join the Self-Determination for Ireland League of Australia (S.D.I.L.A.), recently established by the touring Irish-Canadian nationalist, Katherine Hughes. In smaller towns, Hibernian networks were essential to the establishment of nationalist groups like the S.D.I.L.A.⁸⁷ In New Zealand, meanwhile, the league's 'leading figures were, almost without exception, members of the Hibernian Society'.⁸⁸

In a final explicitly transnational engagement with Ireland, the H.A.C.B.S. in Victoria decided to revive the 1914 plan to send District Secretary J. W. Ryan to Ireland to gather information and express support to Ireland's nationalist leaders in person.⁸⁹ The prospect of Ryan's journey to Ireland elicited some opposition from within Hibernian ranks. A 20 May 1920 letter to *The Advocate* argued that the society's funds should 'only be spent on the sick and needy'. Several letters for and against Ryan's trip appeared in subsequent issues of the paper, former District President P. H. Killeen defending the decision by pointing out that it was intended to fund the trip using the money raised between 1912 and 1914 to send Ryan to Dublin for the opening of an Irish parliament, not money deducted from the society's sickness and benevolent accounts. A final letter in the exchange complained that use of this fund to send Ryan to Dublin in 1921 might prevent the Hibernians from sending a delegate to Dublin for the ultimate opening of a self-governing assembly.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ *Report of the proceedings of the third triennial meeting, 1920*, pp 11, 14.

⁸⁵ See *Freeman's Journal*, 9 Sept. 1920; *The Advocate*, 27 Jan. 1921.

⁸⁶ H.A.C.B.S., *Victoria district: official report of the annual district meeting, 1921* (Melbourne, 1921), p. 23.

⁸⁷ In the western Victorian town of Colac, members of the local Hibernian branch joined the S.D.I.L.A. en masse, and the two organisations worked seamlessly together to promote Irish nationalism locally: see *The Advocate*, 16 June 1921. Similarly, in Yarraville, S.D.I.L.A. meetings were noted in the minutes of the local H.A.C.B.S. branch, and the Hibernians sent official representatives to them: see St Augustine's Branch, Yarraville (no. 640) minute book.

⁸⁸ Sweetman, *Faith and fraternalism*, p. 22.

⁸⁹ *The Advocate*, 21 Feb. 1921.

⁹⁰ *The Advocate*, 20 May, 27 May 1920. See also *ibid.*, 3 June 1920.

Despite some members' misgivings, plans to send Ryan to Dublin continued. A farewell banquet took place on 5 March 1921 in Melbourne, with tickets distributed to branches all over the state.⁹¹ He departed on 2 April on board the *S.S. Mantua*, and sent greetings to the 1921 Victoria A.D.M. from Colombo.⁹² In Rome, likely thanks to the influence of Monsignor Cerretti, the former apostolic delegate to Australia, Ryan met with Pope Benedict XV and had a Mass said for the H.A.C.B.S. — a major accomplishment for a relatively small antipodean organisation.⁹³ Unfortunately, details of his activities in Ireland are scarce. He had been provided with credentials to the A.O.H. prior to his departure, and it is likely that he liaised with northern hemisphere Hibernians upon arrival but this is uncertain. The minutes of Victoria's 1922 A.D.M., as well as the triennial meeting of 1923, mention his successful journey, but provide no additional details, and the report he was commissioned to write on Irish conditions does not appear to have survived. More tangible cooperation between the two organisations did not materialise, and these attempts at direct transnational engagement produced few tangible results.⁹⁴

Hibernian engagement with the politics of Ireland declined following the signing of a truce between British and republican forces in July 1921, followed by the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December. Republican propaganda was circulated via the society's branches to the end of 1921, while statements about Ireland were an important component of the H.A.C.B.S.'s jubilee celebrations in November 1921. Resolutions of support continued to be forwarded to Éamon de Valera even after the establishment of the Irish Free State, but overall the surge in republican Irish nationalism gradually ebbed away.⁹⁵ The 1922 New South Wales A.D.M. included a lengthy summary of events in Ireland over the previous year. While the members of the H.A.C.B.S. were generally content with an independent state that kept Ireland within the imperial fold, faced with reports of the escalating circumstances of the civil war, their joy was 'tinged with sorrow'.⁹⁶ The ancestral connection was not forgotten, and attempts to forge closer relations with the A.O.H. continued into the 1930s, but in the years that followed 'the political development of Ireland ceased to be of importance to the Hibernian Society', and its incorporation into an integrated, global diaspora waned.⁹⁷

⁹¹ A note that tickets to the event had been received was included in the St Augustine's Branch, Yarraville (no. 640) minute book.

⁹² *Victoria district: official report of the annual district meeting, 1921*, p. 57.

⁹³ *The Advocate*, 28 July 1921.

⁹⁴ H.A.C.B.S., *Business paper, report, balance sheets, etc. 1920–1923* (Sydney, 1923), p. 11.

⁹⁵ A pamphlet on 'The truth about Ireland', produced in South Australia, was circulated by the St Augustine's Branch, Yarraville (no. 640) 'to dispel the sectarian rancour at present extant': see St Augustine's Branch, Yarraville, correspondence, 30 Nov. 1921 (M.D.H.C., Records, 2/O/HAC, Box 1). On the H.A.C.B.S. jubilee celebrations, see *The Advocate*, 20 Oct., 27 Oct. 1921; *Freeman's Journal*, 20, 27 Oct., 3 Nov. 1921. A special resolution was sent by the H.A.C.B.S. to de Valera in Jan. 1922: see *The Advocate*, 17 Jan. 1922.

⁹⁶ H.A.C.B.S., *New South Wales district: annual report, 1922* (Sydney, 1922), p. 18.

⁹⁷ O'Connor, *The Hibernian Society of New South Wales*, p. 57. On continued efforts to affiliate with the A.O.H. in the northern hemisphere, see H.A.C.B.S., *Steps to unite the sea-divided Gael*.

The society remained a formidable one in Australia and New Zealand through the mid twentieth century, but the establishment of universal healthcare in the 1970s undermined its primary function as a friendly society and membership declined rapidly thereafter.⁹⁸

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The Irish nationalist activity of the H.A.C.B.S. reflected many of the broader, well-known patterns of Irish-Australian nationalism in the early twentieth century. A predominantly intergenerational, working-class Irish Catholic community supported Home Rule for Ireland prior to 1916. The constitutional nature of John Redmond's Home Rule campaign allowed Irish and imperial identities to overlap comfortably, and ethnic and benevolent associations like the Hibernians embraced loyalty to the empire as a basis for enhancing respectability. The Easter Rising, followed by the highly sectarianised and divisive campaign for conscription in 1917, moved many Catholics of Irish descent towards more radical, republican Irish nationalism. Bolstered by rising working-class militancy and disillusionment at the established order, a cohesive movement in favour of Sinn Féin and a fully independent Irish republic emerged after 1918. Reflecting the rhetoric of the influential archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, the overt imperial loyalty of the pre-rising period was shed as Hibernians embraced the twin pillars of republican Irish nationalism and 'Australia First' after 1919. In fostering a shared conception of Irish-Australian ethnicity, a strong attachment to the ancestral homeland was seamlessly entwined with an esteem for the adopted one.

In both Australia and New Zealand, the H.A.C.B.S. played an important role in promoting nationalist activity. In addition to their numerous resolutions and fundraising, Hibernian events and spaces emerged as essential venues for meetings, lectures, and rallies in favour of Ireland's self-determination. In smaller towns, the support of local Hibernian branches was key to the establishment and growth of explicitly nationalist organisations such as the Irish-Ireland League or S.D.I.L.A., while in larger centres leading members of the society played vital roles in collaborative republican associations like the I.N.E. The H.A.C.B.S., then, helped bring Catholics of Irish descent on the spatial periphery of the global diaspora into the movement for Irish freedom.

Together, the strongly republican rhetoric expressed in the H.A.C.B.S.'s minutes and resolutions, its role in fostering and expanding Irish-Australian nationalism and its attempts at genuine transnational engagement with the political destiny of Ireland make the society in Australia and New Zealand a small but fascinating component of the global Irish Revolution. The H.A.C.B.S. constituted a node connecting Catholics of Irish descent to one another, but its engagement with Irish nationalism also reveals the practical limitations of diasporic associational contributions to Ireland's global revolution. Through their membership and participation, a working-class Irish Catholic from Yarraville, Colac or Kalgoorlie could learn about the rapidly evolving situation in Ireland, pledge money for the nationalist movement and support resolutions intended to lobby both domestic and external politicians to grant some form

⁹⁸ Sweeney, 'The Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society', pp 265–6.

of Irish independence. Most of the society's attempts at transnational engagement were primarily rhetorical, however. The overtures to the A.O.H. in Ireland and North America as well as J. W. Ryan's 1921 mission ultimately accomplished little in terms of tangible support for an Irish republic. What was far more significant for the members of the H.A.C.B.S. was the resonant and powerful idea that they were contributing to a far greater, international movement: justifying their membership in the 'Irish race' and enhancing a shared feeling of intergenerational Irish community and identity — a sense of belonging within a 'worldwide empire of the Gael'.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ This article is an output of the collaborative project 'A global history of Irish Revolution, 1916–1923', funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and jointly held by Queen's University, Belfast, and the University of Edinburgh. My thanks to Professor Enda Delaney for his support in carrying out this research and his comments on an earlier draft.