

Department of Humanities, Northumbria University

Honours Dissertation

‘In no part of Great Britain were the relations ... so friendly and intimate as on Tyneside’: An examination of Anglo-Irish relations in Newcastle upon Tyne 1850-1890

Adam Woolley

BA Hons History

2015

This dissertation has been made available on condition that anyone who consults it recognises that its copyright rests with its author and that quotation from the thesis and/or the use of information derived from it must be acknowledged. © Adam Woolley.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA (Hons) History.

Contents Page

Introduction

3

Chapter 1: No-Popery

8

Chapter 2: In the Pits and the Shipyards

19

Chapter 3: 'A Home Rule Hotbed'

27

Conclusion

38

Appendices

41

Bibliography

44

Introduction

The traditional historiographical image of the Irish in Victorian Britain is of outcasts greeted with hostility by their hosts.¹ Such a picture was reflected in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley's *The Irish in the Victorian City* (1985).² In this work, Swift has admitted, he and Gilley 'sought to reflect the consensus on the subject by describing both the degree of demoralization and disadvantage experienced by Irish migrants in Victorian Britain.'³ However, since 1985, largely due to the continued work of Swift and Gilley, great strides and revisions have been made in the study of the Irish in Britain. Edited volumes such as Swift and Gilley's *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939*, their *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension*, and Donald MacRaild's *The Great Famine and Beyond* have brought together many local studies into Irish communities, small and large, across Britain. In doing so, they have shown that the experience of the Irish in Britain was far from uniformly characterised by demoralization, disadvantage and hostility.⁴ These conclusions have also been reflected in the two recent single-volume studies on Britain's Irish - Graham Davis' *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1914* and the seminal work in this field, Donald MacRaild's *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939*. These works again complicate the traditional picture of the Irish 'outcast' in Victorian Britain.⁵

Despite these great strides and despite the large number of local studies however, a very significant Irish community has been somewhat neglected. The North-East did see some pre-Famine Irish immigration. However, this influx was limited because pre-Famine migrants tended to settle in their ports of entry - largely in Lancashire and western Scotland. It was in the post-Famine period -

¹ Roger Swift, 'The Outcast Irish in the British Victorian City: Problems and Perspectives', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 99 (1987), pp. 264-276.

² Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

³ Roger Swift, 'Historians and the Irish: Recent Writings on the Irish in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in Donald MacRaild (ed.), *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000), p.14.

⁴ Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in Britain 1815-1939* (Savage, Maryland: Barnes & Noble Books, 1989); Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999); Donald MacRaild (ed.), *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000).

⁵ Graham Davis, *The Irish in Britain 1815-1914* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991); Donald MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

1850 onwards - that the North-East saw a rapid expansion in its Irish population. As MacRaild comments, 'If cotton was "king" in the generations before 1850, coal, iron and ships most definitely shared the crown for a century thereafter.'⁶ The rapid expansion of these industries in the North-East served to attract a large Irish contingent and by 1851, the North-East had the fourth largest Irish-born concentration in England and Wales (See Appendix 1). What is more, the region's Irish population remained high throughout this period and in fact continued to expand between 1851 and 1871 (See Appendix 2). It seems rather surprising given the numerical significance of this Irish population that, as MacRaild points out, it remains 'one of the least known of all Britain's Irish communities.'⁷

Despite such a limited historiography however, debate has opened up over one of the central facets of the study of the Irish in Britain - the relations between the Irish and their hosts. The groundbreaking work on Anglo-Irish relations in the North-East was done by Roger Cooter in his M.A. thesis, 'The Irish in County Durham and Newcastle 1840-1880', published in 2005 as *When Paddy Met Geordie: The Irish in County Durham and Newcastle 1840-1880* – a work from which this study took its inspiration.⁸ Cooter's thesis, originally produced in 1972, was ahead of its time. As MacRaild comments in his foreword for *When Paddy Met Geordie*, Cooter took an 'integrationist approach' when historians were still writing of the Irish in Britain as a singularly despised and victimised substratum of society.⁹ In his work, Cooter argues that in the North-East Anglo-Irish relations were relatively harmonious, so much so that 'the Irish in the region were almost invisible.'¹⁰ This is an assertion that Frank Neal has taken issue with in his article, 'English-Irish conflict in the North-East of England'.¹¹ Neal contests that there were numerous violent Anglo-Irish confrontations in the North-

⁶ MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora*, p.55.

⁷ MacRaild, *The Great Famine and Beyond*, p.6.

⁸ R.J. Cooter, 'The Irish in County Durham and Newcastle 1840-1880', unpublished M.A. thesis, Durham, (1972). See also R.J. Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie: The Irish in County Durham and Newcastle 1840-1880* (Sunderland, Sunderland University Press, 2005).

⁹ Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.ix.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹¹ Frank Neal, 'English-Irish conflict in the North-East of England' in Patrick Buckland and John Belchem (eds), *The Irish in the British Labour Market* (Liverpool: The Institute of Irish Studies, 1992).

East and therefore 'the evidence does not enable us to conclude that inter-communal relationships...were free from friction at the level of the workplace, public house and street.'¹²

Space limitations mean that it is not possible here to examine Anglo-Irish relations across the whole North-East and therefore this study will focus on its chief urban centre - Newcastle upon Tyne. Throughout this period, of all of the North-East's urban centres, Newcastle had the largest Irish contingent and, excepting Gateshead, it had the largest proportion of Irish-born persons (See Appendix 3). In examining the relations between the North-East's largest Irish population and their hosts, this study hopes to further address the historiographical neglect of the North-East's Irish communities. While Neal is correct to assert that the Irish were not an 'invisible minority' in the North-East and while tensions were certainly present in Newcastle, this study will find that tensions in the city were, relatively, remarkably limited. Indeed, it would seem that in Newcastle the Irish experienced a greater degree of tolerance than generally experienced in the North-East. Nonetheless, this is not to detract from Cooter's thesis as many of the forces, with some exceptions, that served to limit animosity towards the Irish in Newcastle were broadly at work in the region. However, this study would suggest that many were exaggerated in the city, leading to a greater degree of tranquillity.

The first chapter in this study will examine anti-Catholicism. At the mid-century, for numerous reasons - which certainly included the influx of Irish migrants during and after the famine disaster - No-Popery sentiment erupted across Britain. In many areas with large Irish contingents, anti-Catholicism translated into antipathy and often violence against the Catholic newcomers. In examining Newcastle at the mid-century, it is clear that anti-Catholicism was very much present. However this study will argue that it was distinctly limited relative to other areas and almost never translated into anti-Irish rhetoric or inter-communal violence. The first factor explaining this was the weakness of Orangeism in Newcastle. Although Orange Lodges were present in the city, there were

¹² Ibid., p.61.

very few in comparison to areas in the North-West and Scotland. However, more significant was the religious composition of the city. Not only was the position of the Catholic Church relatively strong, the city had a very large Nonconformist contingent. This was true of the surrounding region but was exaggerated in Newcastle. Dissenters in Newcastle were not necessarily fond of the Catholic Church but it would seem they had a greater mistrust of the Anglican Church and were therefore unwilling to follow its anti-Catholic lead. Furthermore, Nonconformist strength was largely behind Newcastle's radical Liberal political landscape. Liberal dominance in the city prevented the Tories from bolstering No-Popery sentiment for their electoral advantage.

Chapter two will examine Anglo-Irish labour relations. There was a pervasive belief in Victorian Britain that the Irish were accustomed to a lower standard of living than the British working-class, and therefore were willing to work for lower wages. It was therefore widely believed that the Irish were lowering wages and living-standards. In areas with large Irish contingents, this was one of the chief sources of Anglo-Irish friction and regularly translated into inter-communal working-class violence. It was primarily the presence of working-class violence in the North-East which led Neal to contest Cooter's thesis. This study will find that inter-communal working-class tensions resulting from labour jealousies were limited in Newcastle relative to both the nation and region. Indeed, no large-scale violent confrontations between the city's Irish and host working-class can be identified. The first reason for this is true broadly of the North-East. Although the Irish were not 'invisible', the region did have relatively tranquil Anglo-Irish labour relations because its industrial expansion in this period served to keep wages relatively high and therefore undercut the potential for the Irish being cast as an economic scapegoat. However, the evidence undoubtedly shows that tensions in Newcastle itself were more limited than in the surrounding region. One reason for this may be that, as the region's industrial centre, Newcastle's greater degree of prosperity had an exaggerated tranquilising effect. However, a more significant factor was Newcastle's distinct industrial make-up. In this period, Newcastle saw the rapid expansion of newer industries such as iron shipbuilding and the iron industry. Such industries had not had time to

develop the same closely guarded employment patterns as the Durham pit villages from which most of Neal's evidence of working-class confrontation derives.

The final chapter will examine the political experience of the Irish in Newcastle and the host reaction to it. It will first examine how the local population reacted when national hysteria erupted in the aftermath of the Fenian outrages. It will find that, although Newcastle was not immune to this hysteria, the outburst in the city was limited and brief. It was limited and brief because again radical Liberal strength in the city prevented the Tories from fuelling and exploiting anti-Irish feeling and because the strong radical and pro-Irish element of Newcastle's Press actively dampened it. The chapter will then go on to examine the development of the Home Rule Movement in Newcastle, the host reaction to it, and the degree to which Irish political needs were looked after. It will find that the hostile reaction to Home Rule that occurred in other areas was simply absent. What is more, the political needs of the Irish were strikingly well looked after in a city that had an unusual level of sympathy for the Irish nationalist cause. The reason for this again was the city's political landscape. Radical Liberal strength across the region meant that the Irish communities' nationalist needs were relatively well represented. However, no Irish community in the North-East or Britain was better represented than Newcastle's Irish were by the city's ultra-radical MP Joseph Cowen. The city became 'a Home Rule Hotbed' because it was a bastion of radicalism.

Chapter 1: No-Popery

Dissent and Catholicism have increased, not only as fast and as much as the Church, but they have progressed fully one-half more.¹³

Joseph Cowen Jr.

When No-Popery sentiment erupted in mid-nineteenth century Britain, it was not a new phenomenon. As historian D.G. Paz has pointed out, 'Anti-Catholicism...has been an English characteristic since the Reformation.'¹⁴ However, the 1850s saw a striking upsurge of anti-Catholic sentiment which had serious implications for the post-famine wave of Irish migrants. It is not the purpose of this chapter to account for why this took place, however, an outline of the causes is necessary. Firstly, through the 1830s and '40s anti-Catholicism was bolstered by resistance to the Tractarian Movement which had been attempting to revive the 'High Church' element of Anglicanism, associated with Catholicism.¹⁵ On top of this, in 1845, Sir Robert Peel's Conservative government granted a permanent endowment to the Maynooth Seminary - at the time the chief trainer of Irish priests. The endowment proved hugely controversial and provoked significant anti-Catholic sentiment.¹⁶ Furthermore, the late-1840s saw a mass influx of Irish migrants, the vast majority of whom were Catholic. The impact of the famine influx in bolstering anti-Catholicism makes it difficult to gauge to what extent No-Popery sentiment was motivated by antipathy towards the Catholic Church and to what extent it was fuelled by more general anti-migrant sentiment. Both certainly played their part in creating a powder keg and, in 1850, the Papal Aggression put a match to it. On the 29 September 1850 Pope Pius IX created a territorial hierarchy of the Catholic Church in England, appointing bishops to rule over 12 bishoprics including the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Nicholas Wiseman.¹⁷ The move was met with indignation by the Prime Minister, the Established Church, the Press, and largely by the public.¹⁸ No-Popery sentiment quickly gathered

¹³ Joseph Cowen, 1878 quoted in Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.99.

¹⁴ D.G. Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p.2.

¹⁵ MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora*, p.174.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.6.

¹⁷ Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism*, p.12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.9-12.

momentum and much of the antipathy provoked was directed at Britain's Catholic newcomers. Many areas with large Irish contingents saw violent reprisals against the Irish and serious Anglo-Irish confrontations.¹⁹ This chapter will examine No-Popery sentiment in Newcastle, and find that it did not gather the same momentum as elsewhere. Due to the weakness of Orangeism in Newcastle and, more significantly, its religious composition, the anti-Catholicism that did rear its head at the mid-century was of a low intensity, faced articulate opposition, and rarely translated into anti-Irish sentiment or inter-communal violence.

Newcastle was not immune to the anti-Catholic sentiment that exploded at the mid-century. Anti-Catholic lectures were a fixture of public life in mid-Victorian Britain and were certainly seen in Newcastle.²⁰ Indeed, in 1847, before No-Popery sentiment broke out in earnest, the Protestant Association met in Newcastle to hear James Lord give a lecture on the superiority of Protestantism.²¹ After 1850, such lectures increased considerably and were largely organised by the Newcastle and North of England Protestant Alliance which was formed in 1850.²² In early-February 1852 the Alliance met for a lecture by the Anglican Reverend Hugh Stowell who urged his audience that:

...if they valued their liberties – their Queen – their constitution, and their Bibles, they had to prepare for the coming struggle; for the controversy was between light and darkness – slavery and freedom – Christ or the Pope – salvation or ruin. They had not to ask whether this one was of the established church or the other of that denomination of dissenters – all minor points must give way in order to fight a great battle for liberty and right against the common enemy of all.²³

Stowell's virulently anti-Catholic message was reportedly met with 'loud applause'.²⁴ A meeting two years later saw Reverend J.A. Wylie lecture the Association on the particular evils of the Jesuits.²⁵ He fancifully claimed that, 'they were sworn to wage war against Protestant states; and they

¹⁹ MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora*, p.175.

²⁰ Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism*, p.25.

²¹ 'Protestant Association', *Newcastle Courant*, 12 March 1847, p.3.

²² 'North of England Protestant Alliance', *Newcastle Courant*, 29 October 1852, p.2.

²³ 'North of England Protestant Alliance', *Newcastle Courant*, 6 February 1852, p.7.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ 'North of England Protestant Alliance', *Newcastle Courant*, 10 February 1854, p.7. See also 'North of England Protestant Alliance', *Newcastle Courant*, 29 October 1852, p.2.

amalgamated with all churches, penetrated even into state cabinets and private families, and made themselves familiar with every movement going on, for the purpose of transmitting their reports to Rome.²⁶ He then concluded with:

...a powerful and eloquent appeal for Protestants to unite against the aggressions of a church that, in every age where it obtained supremacy, had despoiled mankind of their social rights and freedoms, enslaved the mind, checked the progress of science and art, and robbed man of his dearest right, freedom of thought and speech.²⁷

His words were also met enthusiastically.²⁸ Plainly, when No-Popery sentiment was at its height, there were people in Newcastle who held deeply anti-Catholic opinions.

Yet, although evidently present, No-Popery sentiment in Newcastle was limited. Evidence of this can be found in a report by the *Newcastle Courant* on a public meeting in late-November 1850. The meeting, organised by the Mayor after he had received a requisition carrying 300 signatures, was to address the Papal Aggression and propose a memorial to the Queen.²⁹ In Victorian England petitions to the government and memorials to the Queen, although ineffective, were constantly produced in an attempt to influence politics and at the mid-century huge numbers were sent to attempt to convince the Sovereign or government to do something to counter the Papal Aggression.³⁰ This particular memorial was proposed by a Mr. Ralph Walters who read that:

...the inhabitants...of Newcastle upon Tyne...are deeply sensible of the great blessing, civil as well as religious, which this constitutionally protestant nation has enjoyed since its emancipation from the thralldom of the Roman Sea.

...the assumption of power and pretension to undivided sway over the realm of England, put forth in all the documents that have come from Rome, satisfy your memorialists that the ultimate object...is the supremacy of the Roman Catholic religion and the consequent overthrow of their civil and religious liberties.

...your memorialists, while deprecating the revival of the penal enactments against Roman Catholics, humbly pray that your Majesty will be graciously pleased to refuse to recognise any ecclesiastical dignitaries invested with territorial jurisdiction in this country

²⁶ 'North of England Protestant Alliance', *Newcastle Courant*, 10 February 1854, p.7.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ 'Public meeting on the Papal Aggression'. *Newcastle Courant*, 29 November 1850, p.3.

³⁰ Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism*, pp.30-33.

by the Pope of Rome, and withhold all countenance from an encroachment on the part of the Roman Catholic Church.³¹

Firstly, this memorial, although being further evidence that the Papal Aggression was a significant issue in Newcastle, illustrates the limited nature of anti-Catholicism in the city. For, as a Catholic speaker at the meeting - a Mr Larkin - reportedly scorned:

He certainly did not expect great things from the memorial, but he was really astonished at little things, for it seemed to him that the whole country was heaving like a mountain which laboured, and from which they expected something to be brought forth, and behold it was nothing more than a ridiculous mouse, requesting the Queen not to recognise Cardinal Wiseman.³²

At a time when anti-Catholic sentiment was raging through the nation the wording and requests of this memorial are certainly rather moderate.

Furthermore, the memorial did not just face Catholic opposition. First, a Mr Charles Rayne called for calm and questioned whether there was any reason for panic among the people of the town or country. He argued that there was 'no necessity for any legislative enactment to put down the Pope's Bull, because it was simply a measure affecting the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church in this country.'³³ The Unitarian Reverend G. Harris went further. He stated that 'the civil and religious liberties of England had not been gained by one party, nor had they been built up by any one class, nor by professors of any one faith; but they had been gained by men of all classes and of all faiths.'³⁴ He therefore argued that 'Surely Catholics in England were at liberty to adhere to their faith...episcopacy was their form of church government, and to carry out that form, an organisation was necessary'. He felt that 'to get up a memorial to the Sovereign about such trifles was sheer folly' and instead, the memorialists should 'claim for their fellow countrymen of all religious persuasions,

³¹ 'Public meeting on the Papal Aggression'. *Newcastle Courant*, 29 November 1850, p.3.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

the free and full enjoyment of religious privileges.³⁵ Harris did not simply see the issue as irrelevant; he saw the request to resist the new Catholic hierarchy as encroaching on the religious freedoms of Catholics. Not only was the anti-Catholicism inspired in Newcastle of a relatively low intensity, there were also non-Catholic individuals willing to oppose it and defend Catholic liberties.

More significant still for this study is that this anti-Catholicism rarely translated into anti-Irish feeling as it did in other areas with large Irish contingents. Undoubtedly, the attacks of those such as the Protestant Alliance upon the Catholic Church would have been hard for the city's expanding Irish Catholic population to stomach. Indeed an anti-Catholic lecture in March 1847 was made all but impossible by Catholics present who reportedly let out 'loud howls' of protest throughout.³⁶ Although the report does not specify whether the Catholics were Irish, it seems incredibly likely, given the proportion of Newcastle's Catholic population that were Irish, that some were. However, neither this lecture nor any other in Newcastle in this period made any attack on, or indeed even any reference to, the Irish themselves. This would certainly suggest that No-Popery sentiment in Newcastle did not translate into anti-Irish sentiment.

What lends further weight to this assessment is the lack of inter-communal violence in Newcastle at the mid-century. In other areas of Britain with large Irish contingents – particularly the North-West - significant rioting and Anglo-Irish violence was provoked when No-Popery sentiment was at fever pitch.³⁷ In 1851 Cheltenham had seen a protest against Papal Aggression turn violent.³⁸ A year later, Stockport witnessed probably the most violent and destructive No-Popery riot seen across the nation.³⁹ In the following decades No-Popery sentiment continued to rear its head and as late as 1867, the infamous anti-Catholic preacher William Murphy was provoking massive unrest in

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ 'Protestant Association', *Newcastle Courant*, 12 March 1847, p.3.

³⁷ Pauline Millward, 'The Stockport Riots of 1852: A study of Anti-Catholic and Anti-Irish Sentiment' in Swift and Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City*, pp.207-224. See also Tom Gallagher, 'A tale of two cities: communal strife in Glasgow and Liverpool before 1914' in Ibid., p.112.

³⁸ Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism*, p.254.

³⁹ Millward, 'The Stockport Riots of 1852', p.217.

Birmingham.⁴⁰ In Newcastle however, only two sizable Anglo-Irish incidents provoked by or involving anti-Catholicism can be identified. The first incident took place in May 1851 in Sandgate – an area of Newcastle with a very large Irish contingent. It was reported in the *Tablet* – a Catholic periodical – that the incident took place when the Irish of Sandgate were provoked by the rabidly anti-Catholic preaching of ‘Ranter Dick’. The Irish, ‘unable to restrain their feeling, commenced an attack on the preacher, who had speedily to fly to save himself from a severe chastisement; some of the people present took part with the preacher; the Irish rallied on their side, and a general row commenced...’⁴¹ The *Courant* also reported on the incident but made no mention of the anti-Catholic ‘ranter’. Instead it reported that the row was ‘pretty generally attributed to one of the Irish party tripping up the heels of a female.’⁴² This seems a rather unlikely course of events. However the *Courant* does report what ensued. Allegedly, soon after the row commenced, as many as 200 Irishmen descended on the area and one among them was apparently witnessed to have ‘placed himself at the head of the mob, howling and vociferating loudly – “Och, by Jasus, we’ll take Sandgate tonight and be revenged on every English in it [*sic*].”’⁴³ The mob proceeded to smash windows and doors along the street and injured two policemen responding to the commotion. The row ended two hours after it began when police reinforcements arrived, arresting over forty Irishmen.⁴⁴ Clearly this was a sizable inter-communal disturbance provoked by anti-Catholicism.

The second incident was more confused. In 1862, British anti-Catholicism spiked again over events in Italy. Garibaldi was marching on Rome and his brand of secular nationalism was widely endorsed by the British working-classes. However, the Irish in Britain leapt to the defence of the Pope and opposed Garibaldi. The issue sparked Anglo-Irish confrontation and riots in Wakefield, Bradford, Leeds and, most destructively, in London and Birkenhead. Rioting was so intense in

⁴⁰ Sheridan Gilley, ‘The Garibaldi Riots of 1862’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (1973), pp.697-732, p.700.

⁴¹ *Tablet*, 24 May 1851, p.324.

⁴² ‘Disturbance in Sandgate’, *Newcastle Courant*, 16 May 1851, p. 3.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Birkenhead that soldiers were required to restore peace.⁴⁵ A far more limited episode in Newcastle in 1866 perhaps reflects similar Anglo-Irish tensions. In a rather strange incident, a group of so called 'Fenians' - Irishmen committing offences were roundly referred to as Fenians at this time and there is no evidence that these men belonged to Irish Republican Brotherhood - marched on to the Town Moor where the Newcastle Races were being held and 'armed with shillelaghs and railings...struck at all and sundry whom they met.'⁴⁶ While carrying out this attack, the Irishmen were witnessed to be shouting 'To hell with Garibaldi' and 'Long live the Pope'.⁴⁷ A P.C. Anderson was dealt a particularly brutal assault and on witnessing this, onlookers attacked and severely assaulted the Irish mob. In all, forty were injured, fifteen of whom were hospitalised. Eight Irishmen were later convicted for causing riot.⁴⁸ This again was a large-scale Anglo-Irish confrontation which was provoked in some measure by religious grievances. However, although these were ugly episodes, their significance is in their anomalous nature. Large violent Anglo-Irish clashes were almost unheard of in Newcastle at a time when No-Popery violence was raging elsewhere.

Why was anti-Catholicism limited in Newcastle and why did it so rarely lead to anti-Irish sentiment and inter-communal conflict? The first factor to take into consideration was the weakness of Orangeism in the city. The 1795 'Battle of the Diamond' - a battle at which the Protestant 'Peep o' Day' Boys won a decisive victory over the Catholic Defenders and vowed to put up stronger resistance against the Defenders - is usually seen as birth of Orangeism.⁴⁹ In the first half of the nineteenth century the Order grew rapidly and out-migration from Ireland meant that, in MacRaild's words, by the 1860's, 'it spanned the British Empire...from Tyneside to Toronto.'⁵⁰ Indeed, it would certainly be wrong to say that Orangeism was non-existent in Newcastle. As MacRaild has found, the

⁴⁵ MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora*, pp.178-179. See also Gilley 'The Garibaldi Riots of 1862'.

⁴⁶ 'Newcastle Upon Tyne Races', *Newcastle Chronicle*, 29, June 1866, p.5. See also 'The Irish Riot at Newcastle Races. Forty Men Wounded', *Newcastle Chronicle*, 29, June 1866, p.5.

⁴⁷ 'The late Irish riot on the Town Moor', *Newcastle Courant*, 6 July 1866, p.5.

⁴⁸ 'The Irish Riot at Newcastle Races. Forty Men Wounded', *Newcastle Chronicle*, 29 June 1886, p.5.

⁴⁹ Donald MacRaild, *Faith, Fraternity and Fighting: The Orange Order and Irish Migrants in Northern England, 1850-1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), p.1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.36.

city had two Orange Lodges and indeed one of the earliest Orange songbooks, printed around 1817, has been attributed to the area.⁵¹ Nevertheless, in comparison to cities such as Glasgow and Liverpool, and even in comparison to other areas in the North-East such as Consett and Hartlepool – both of which had large numbers of Ulstermen - Orange activity in Newcastle was very limited.⁵² The limited nature of Orangeism in the city certainly contributed to the lack of sectarian tensions.

However, more significant in limiting anti-Catholicism, anti-Irish sentiment and resultant Anglo-Irish violence was the city's religious composition. In Newcastle, the Anglican Church was exceptionally weak because, not only was Catholicism relatively strong, the city was also a stronghold for Nonconformity. In 1851, in England and Wales as a whole, the Church of England accounted for 51.9% of all available church seating. By contrast in Newcastle it accounted for only 33.9%. Although Anglicanism was weak throughout the North-East, this figure was significantly lower than even the regional average (See Appendix 4). In Newcastle, not only did Catholic places of worship account for a relatively high 5.9% of seating available in the city; Nonconformist places of worship accounted for 58.4% (See Appendix 5). What is more, this data is very likely to give a conservative figure for dissenting strength in Newcastle due to the scarcity of Nonconformist places of worship.⁵³

The strength of Dissent and weakness of Anglicanism primarily prevented the Church of England from promoting No-Popery as it did elsewhere. This was not because Nonconformists were fond of the Catholic Church. It was a product of their greater suspicions of the Church of England. Such suspicions made them unwilling to follow the anti-Catholic lead of the Established Church. As already explored, Nonconformist ministers such as Rev. G Harris were willing to speak out against popular anti-Catholicism and he was certainly not alone. Evidence of this is seen in a meeting of the

⁵¹ Ibid., p.44.

⁵² Joan Hugman, 'Joseph Cowen of Newcastle and radical liberalism', unpublished PHD thesis, Northumbria (1993), pp.156-157.

⁵³ Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.98.

Anti-State-Church Association held in Newcastle 20 December 1850.⁵⁴ The national Association founded by Edward Miall – which became the Liberation Society in 1853 - wanted, as one may deduce, the disestablishment of the Church of England.⁵⁵ At this meeting, a Mr J. Kingsley - a lecturer of the Association - spoke against being enticed into an anti-Catholic alliance with the Anglican Church. He reportedly stated:

...the Clergy, who usually denounced dissenters as “Schismatics”, and described their places of worship as “Conventicles”, were now saying, “Dear brethren, let us merge all our differences.” If the Queen’s civil authority were really, and without any sophistry, shown to be attacked, let such an attack be resisted; but he warned the people against being led into recognition of the authority of the state in religion...⁵⁶

What Kingsley had to say was clearly popular among his audience as the *Courant* reported that it was met with ‘protracted applause’.⁵⁷ Plainly, he and many in the audience held a deep suspicion of the Church of England and their motives in attempting to draw Dissenters into an alliance against the Catholic Church.

However, those who attended the meeting are likely to have attended because they agreed with such views and historian D.G. Paz has found that at a national level the Anti-State-Church Association was unpopular among more conservative Nonconformists.⁵⁸ Yet, there is evidence that in Newcastle, opinions such as those espoused by the Association were prevalent enough to be deemed a serious threat by local Anglicans. In March 1862, the Newcastle Church Institution - made up of many of the local Anglican clergy - heard a lecture by the Rev. James Bardsley on ‘what Nonconformists say of themselves, and their system; and what they say of the Church.’⁵⁹ He stated that, ‘They [Anglicans] had been assailed; and therefore, as it was proposed to substitute some other system in place of the Church of England, it seemed to him only fair that they should examine that

⁵⁴ ‘Anti-State-Church meeting’, *Newcastle Courant*, 20 December 1850, p.3.

⁵⁵ Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism*, p.16.

⁵⁶ ‘Anti-State-Church meeting’, *Newcastle Courant*, 20 December 1850, p.3.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism*, p.16.

⁵⁹ ‘Newcastle Church Institution’, *Newcastle Courant*, 14 March 1862, p.2.

system.⁶⁰ He went on at length to attack Nonconformity and defend the Established Church arguing that:

The great advantage of the Church of England was that it had in its article and in its Prayer Book a standard from which no person could depart... Dissenters on the other hand had no such standard by which to be guided; and the consequence was that 330 churches which were built by 2000 Nonconforming clergymen and their hearers in the fifty years after the secession in 1662, were now pouring forth the deadly waters of Socinianism.⁶¹

Such defensive and anti-Nonconformist utterances are in stark contrast to the Anglican calls of the early-1850s for Protestants of all denominations 'not to ask whether this one was of the established church or the other of that denomination of dissenters', and to unite against the dangers of Popery.⁶² They show that in Newcastle, Dissenting hostility towards the Established Church was such that it was deemed a serious threat by the Clergy. Evidently Dissenters had largely not been convinced to follow the Anglican anti-Catholic lead.

What is more, Dissenting strength also impacted the political landscape of Newcastle. Historian Eugenio F. Biagini rightly identifies the rapid growth of Nonconformity in the first half of the nineteenth century as vital to the development of popular Liberalism.⁶³ He argues that '[Nonconformists'] commitment to popular education, temperance, social reform and humanitarian causes overseas was consistent with the traditions of English radicalism.'⁶⁴ Nonconformist strength in Newcastle went hand in hand with Liberal and Radical strength. Newcastle's Liberal and Radical tradition will be dealt with in much greater depth in chapter three in exploring the political toleration of the Irish in Newcastle in the 1870s and '80s, but it also requires some attention in explaining the limitations of No-Popery sentiment. Historian Pauline Millward has found that in Stockport in 1852, the politics of the town were in a 'state of flux'.⁶⁵ It had recently seen a Tory

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² 'North of England Protestant Alliance', *Newcastle Courant*, 6 February 1852, p.7.

⁶³ Eugenio F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.5-6.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.6.

⁶⁵ Millward, 'The Stockport Riots of 1852' in Swift and Gilley, *The Irish in the Victorian City*, p.209.

revival but by 1852, this revival was on the wane and Millward argues that the Tories promoted anti-Catholicism in order to turn the tide against the Liberals.⁶⁶ Indeed, in many areas, the Tories exploited anti-Catholic sentiment – fuelling and prolonging it - for their electoral advantage. However, in Newcastle this was impossible. It was impossible because the Liberals proved absolutely dominant throughout this period. Indeed one of Newcastle’s two seats would be filled by the Liberal Thomas Headlam from his predecessor’s retirement in 1847 until he was defeated in February 1874.⁶⁷ The second seat also remained firmly in the hands of various Liberals, including Joseph Cowen Sr., whose son’s career will be explored in depth in chapter three. Evidently the Conservatives were incredibly weak in the city and had no foothold from which to promote anti-Catholicism. The strength of Dissent and resultant Liberal strength in Newcastle prevented the Anglican Church and Tories from promoting anti-Catholic and anti-Irish sentiment as they did elsewhere.

When anti-Catholicism erupted across the nation in the middle of the nineteenth century, a measure also took hold in Newcastle. However, in comparison to other areas with large Irish populations, the anti-Catholicism produced was strikingly limited. First, the outcry over the Papal Aggression of 1850 was very limited and from its outset faced opposition from native non-Catholics. What is more, this anti-Catholicism translated into anti-Irish sentiment and inter-communal violence incredibly rarely. Evidently, in Newcastle sectarian tensions resulting from No-Popery sentiment never took the same hold that they did in other areas with significant Irish contingents and the Irish experienced less hostility as a result. What partly explains this was that the weakness of Orangeism in the area significantly reduced the potential for sectarian tension. However, more significantly, the strength of Dissent and resultant Liberal strength in Newcastle removed a great deal of potential for Establishment sponsored anti-Catholic and anti-Irish sentiment.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp.209-211.

⁶⁷ *The Morning Post* (London), 10 July 1847, p.3. See also *Daily News* (London), 7 December 1875, p.4.

Chapter 2: In the Pits and the Shipyards

‘It is not the friction but the relative ease with which the Irish were absorbed into the working-class communities which is remarkable.’⁶⁸

E.P. Thompson

In 1926, historian Arthur Redford argued that in Victorian Britain ‘the main social significance of the Irish influx lay with its tendency to lower the wages and standard of living of the English wage-earning classes.’⁶⁹ In the late-1980s, Jeffrey Williamson effectively refuted this argument through a quantitative assessment of the Irish impact upon the labour market which found that the Irish influx was too small to have a significant impact at a time of massive industrial expansion.⁷⁰ However, the falsity of Redford’s conclusions is not of interest to this study - what is of interest is the evidence upon which they were based. His conclusions, as Williamson observes, were not based on quantitative evidence but relied on ‘the opinions of contemporary observers who had strong views on real wages and the Irish absorption problem’.⁷¹ A weight of contemporary literature suggests there was a pervasive belief that the Irish were accustomed to a lower standard of living and therefore worked for lower wages and undercut the wages of the native working-classes.⁷² As Cooter argues, in many areas with significant Irish populations, these contemporary attitudes served as a ‘motor for ethnic antipathy’.⁷³ This antipathy manifested itself in violence.⁷⁴ Anti-Irish working-class violence was witnessed across the nation, from the urban centres of Liverpool and London to sparsely populated areas of Wales and Cumbria.⁷⁵ This chapter will examine to what extent Anglo-Irish working-class labour jealousies and conflict existed in Newcastle. Although it would be false to

⁶⁸ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p.480.

⁶⁹ Arthur Redford, *Labour Migration in England 1800-1850* (2nd edition. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), p.159.

⁷⁰ Jeffrey G. Williamson, ‘The impact of the Irish on British labor markets during the industrial revolution’ in Swift and Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in Britain 1815-1939*, pp.159-160.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.135.

⁷² Davis, *The Irish in Britain*, pp.88-89.

⁷³ Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.122.

⁷⁴ Gilley, ‘The Garibaldi Riots of 1862’, p.697.

⁷⁵ A particularly striking incident took place at the Cumbrian town of Barrow in 1864. The Irish were driven from the town because of rumours they were undercutting local wages. Donald MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict and Migration: The Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), pp.173-176.

suggest that such tension did not exist, this chapter will argue that the dearth of violent incidents resulting from local labour jealousies - a dearth which significantly limits the source base of this chapter - illustrates tensions in Newcastle were limited relative both to the nation and region. Cooter has argued that tensions in the North-East were limited in part by the enforced position of the Irish as unskilled labourers, prevented from competing with their hosts for semi-skilled and skilled occupations. However, there is strong evidence to indicate that Newcastle's Irish in fact experienced a relatively high degree of economic mobility. This chapter will instead argue that Anglo-Irish working-class tensions in Newcastle were limited firstly, because of the economic boom the city experienced in this period - a boom experienced in the region more broadly - and secondly, by Newcastle's distinct and diverse industrial make-up.

Central to Neal's challenge to Cooter's assertion that the North-East's Irish were 'almost invisible' is that significant tensions and confrontations between the region's Irish and non-Irish working-class can be identified.⁷⁶ The presence of these tensions is undeniable and is well illustrated in the trial of the Irish Catholic George Matthews for the murder of Daniel Hives in February 1847. Both men were working on the Newcastle-Berwick railway line and at the trial, a witness named William Oliver - a wagon driver on the line - guessed at the motive for the killing, stating:

At that time a good many Irish were working there. Since then there have not been so many. There was jealousy on both sides, and often disturbances in consequence. They [the Irish] are used to work for less wages than English labourers. There are always plenty of English ready to work. [Sic]⁷⁷

Clearly contemporary British fears that the Irish were undercutting the working Englishman's wages were held at least by some in the North-East.

⁷⁶ Neal, 'English-Irish conflict', pp.59-85. See also Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.2.

⁷⁷ 'Newcastle and Northumberland Assizes', *Newcastle Courant*, 5 March 1847, p.2.

Furthermore, such tensions did not just lead to isolated attacks - Neal provides examples of larger-scale clashes.⁷⁸ The most notable of these clashes took place at the Durham pit village of Black Hill in April 1858. On Saturday 10 April a local was attacked by a gang of Irishmen and on the following Saturday the locals responded in kind. Over the following days tensions rapidly escalated as Irish reinforcement came from the surrounding villages. Although none died in this incident and only a few were wounded, the situation reached such a level that local justices were incapable of bringing it under control and peace was only restored when the Nottinghamshire militia arrived.⁷⁹ That significant tensions remained is evidenced by the fact that it was felt necessary for the Royal Sherwood Foresters to remain in the area and stand guard outside the trial of three Irishmen involved.⁸⁰ In the incident's aftermath, the *Durham County Advertiser* described it as just 'one of those bitter outbursts of feeling between English and Irish labourers so common in this county'.⁸¹ Although this was a rare large-scale incident, it seems clear that the North-East was far from immune to Anglo-Irish working-class conflict.

However, what of the region's main urban centre? Neal argues that events at Black Hill had an impact across the region and that this 'backwash' can be traced to Newcastle in the murder of John Kane - an Irish Catholic - a month later. When walking through Walker, Kane was stabbed to death.⁸² The *Courant* reported that Kane was attacked by 'a group of men standing near the "Ellison's Arms" commonly called "The Hole"'. Kane was a Roman Catholic, and at this house, it is stated, an orange club is held.⁸³ The implication is clear - Kane was targeted by Orangemen because he was an Irish Catholic. Neal argues it is 'plausible' that heightened Anglo-Irish tensions in the aftermath of the Black Hill episode played a part in this attack.⁸⁴ Perhaps this is plausible but there is no evidence to link the two incidents and no evidence showing that the attack was motivated by

⁷⁸ Neal, 'English Irish conflict', pp.66-71.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.67-68.

⁸⁰ 'The Riot at Black Hill', *Newcastle Courant*, 30 April 1858, p.3.

⁸¹ *Durham county Advertiser*, 23 April 1858 quoted in Neal, 'English-Irish conflict', p.67.

⁸² 'Outrageous and fatal attack at Walker', *Newcastle Courant*, 4 June 1858, p.2.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Neal, 'English-Irish conflict', p.69

antipathy towards the Irish motivated by a belief that they threatening local wages and jobs. Indeed the one major clash that can be identified between sections of Newcastle's working-class and was motivated by labour jealousies shows quite the opposite. In Walker in early-1871, a dispute over wages saw a number of labourers walk out on J.W. Richardson and Co.'s shipbuilding yard.⁸⁵ A number of these men, James McGradey included, were Irish. The shipyard brought in men from Glasgow and London to fill the gap and the *Courant* reported that 'considerable enmity has been manifested by a number of...Irishmen towards those new men since their arrival.'⁸⁶ This feud led to a number of the Irishmen attacking a group of the labourers from London in January, and to the murder of one of the Glasgow labourers - John McDougal - in early-February - allegedly at the hands of McGradey.⁸⁷ Although this was a major working-class clash, the event runs counter to the notion that the willingness of the Irish to work for lower wages provoked antipathy among natives. In this case the Irish aggressively resisted other outsiders undercutting their wages. In this period no large-scale clash between the Irish and local working-classes took place. Clearly tensions between Irish and Geordie labourers were limited relative both to the nation and region.

So what accounts for this rather peaceable relationship? One argument advanced by Cooter is that in Newcastle, and indeed across the North-East, the Irish experienced employment discrimination which restricted them to the lowest paid and most undesirable forms of employment.⁸⁸ He argues that this lack of economic mobility undermined the potential for animosity towards the Irish because 'it prevented the Irish from undermining the occupations and wages of the non-Irish.'⁸⁹ It is undoubtedly true that the majority of Irishmen in Newcastle, as they generally did in Britain, worked as unskilled labourers. Indeed, as late as the 1880s a shipyard manager named John Price drew a distinction between the Scottish workers he employed, whom he described as the 'brains' behind the work in his yards, and the Irish, who simply 'performed the principle part of our

⁸⁵ 'Alleged murder at Walker', *Newcastle Courant*, 17 February 1871, p.5.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.125.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

labour.⁹⁰ However, in 1872 the Irishman Hugh Heinrich conducted a detailed survey into Britain's Irish communities which was published as a series in the Irish nationalist newspaper, the *Nation*. Its main objective was to gauge the level of electoral influence that Irish communities might have, but it also provides a rare insight into the employment of the Irish in Victorian Britain. Heinrich, while observing that the 'rank and file' of Newcastle's Irish were labourers, commented that, they:

Fairly contrast with their kindred in most other towns... There are among them 400 business men of various grades and conditions, and over 4000 skilled artisans, that is about 5,000 – or nearly one in six – who have worked upwards from the severest drudgery to a condition of comparative prosperity.⁹¹

He felt therefore that there 'was no town in England where...the Irish labourer has more completely gained his recognised place in the ranks of his fellow work-men.'⁹² Within these essays Heinrich does tend to emphasise and celebrate the work ethic of Irishmen and would certainly have had an interest in emphasising the fruits of this work ethic. However, he would have had no motivation to exaggerate the economic mobility of the Irish in Newcastle relative to the rest of Britain. Furthermore, his observations are corroborated by a similar survey conducted by another Irishman, John Denvir. Denvir conducted his survey in 1892 when writing his history of the Irish in Britain. On examining the Irish in Newcastle he found that, 'several of them who came here as packmen are now among the foremost citizens of this place. Although as elsewhere the Irish are chiefly labourers, a fair proportion are artisans – chiefly in connection with shipbuilding, for which the Tyne is famous.'⁹³ It would appear from Heinrich and Denvir's observations that Newcastle's Irish in fact experienced a relatively high degree of economic mobility. Therefore, it was not the lack of Irish

⁹⁰ Royal Commission on 'Depression of Trade and Industry', 1886, quoted in David Dougan, *The History of North East Shipbuilding* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968), p.36.

⁹¹ Alan O'Day has found and edited a series of weekly newspaper articles written by Heinrich in 1872 for the *Nation* entitled 'The Irish in England'. It is published as *A Survey of the Irish in England in 1872* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1989), p.119.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.122.

⁹³ John Denvir, *The Irish in Britain, from the earliest times to the fall and death of Parnell* (London: 1892), p.442.

competition for semi-skilled and skilled occupations that removed the potential for tension between the Irish and native working-classes.

In reality numerous factors served to limit these tensions. Undoubtedly, factors identified in chapter one as instrumental in limiting anti-Catholicism played a part and, furthermore, Newcastle's Radical tradition which will be explored in the following chapter was surely also significant. However, most significant was the city's economic and industrial make-up. In 1872, Heinrich observed that:

In Newcastle, from a combination of causes, there are classes and varieties of labour to be obtained which are met with in few other places. It is the chief centre of the coal and iron trade of the North – a commercial port ranking among the highest in the scale of tonnage, and one of, if not the chief centre of the English shipbuilding trade.⁹⁴

Two decades later, Denvir's findings were similar. He found that, 'all along the riverside you find...shipbuilding, iron-works, chemical works, and other industries.'⁹⁵ What these two observations indicate is important for two reasons. Firstly, they reflect the massive industrial expansion that had taken place in Newcastle. To a large degree, this expansion had taken place across the North-East. Long before this period, the North-East had been one of the chief suppliers of coal in the country.⁹⁶ In this period, the coal industry continued to expand and indeed in 1863, its annual output was still greater than the combined output of the metal and shipbuilding industries.⁹⁷ Furthermore, in the same year, in terms of gross tonnage, the North-East ports – on the Tyne, Wear and Tees – owned less only than the ports of the Mersey and the Thames, and the region's thriving chemical industry met half of the nation's demand.⁹⁸ In addition, although the North-East already had a history in shipbuilding, this period saw the birth of iron shipbuilding and its rapid expansion in the North-East, particularly in Newcastle. This in turn, alongside the expansion of the region's railways, significantly

⁹⁴ O'Day, *A Survey of the Irish in England*, p.118.

⁹⁵ Denvir, *The Irish in Britain*, p.442.

⁹⁶ Dougan, *The History of North East Shipbuilding*, p.22.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.35.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.35-36.

increased the demand for iron and therefore significantly expanded the region's iron industry.⁹⁹ The upshot of this rapid industrial expansion was that the region in this period experienced an economic boom. Demand for labour was generally high and therefore wages were relatively high. This impacted positively on relations between the Irish and native working-classes. Although Neal is right to assert that Anglo-Irish working-class tensions were present, relative to other areas of the country they were limited and Cooter's assessment that 'the economic boom in Durham and Newcastle ameliorated the forces conducive to ethno-religious discord' is instructive.¹⁰⁰ The fact that Newcastle was the industrial centre of the region must surely have meant that it experienced the greatest economic expansion and this may partially serve to explain why its Anglo-Irish working-class tensions were also limited relative to the North-East.

However, what was also important was Newcastle's distinct range of industry. Heinrich observed that Newcastle's 'varieties of labour' were 'met with in few other places'. Importantly, the variety was not met with in the North-East more broadly. A large proportion of the evidence that Neal uses to show that Anglo-Irish working-class tensions existed in the North-East is derived from incidents taking place in Durham pit villages. This is significant. As Cooter points out, it was very difficult for the Irish to enter into the North-East's coal industry not just because they lacked experience and skills, but because they 'were thwarted by the pride and jealousy of the indigenous labour force whose skills were their only property and gift to their sons.'¹⁰¹ The coal trade was a long-existing industry in the North-East and was therefore closely guarded. The upshot was that in settlements where it was the main source of employment, Irish attempts to penetrate its ranks served to provoke confrontation between the Irish and their hosts. In contrast, although coal mining was present in Newcastle, by 1850, it was certainly not its primary industry. Of 360 collieries in the

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.35.

¹⁰⁰ Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.124.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.112.

North-East in 1880, only eight (2.2%) were located in Newcastle.¹⁰² As both Heinrich and Denvir observed, the city had a very broad range of industries and some of its major industries, such as the iron industry and the iron shipbuilding industry, had developed much more recently than coal mining and were going through their initial expansion in this period.¹⁰³ Therefore, within these industries the same closely guarded hereditary patterns of employment that existed in the pits had not had time to develop. Consequently the Irish did not face the same resistance upon entering them. It seems very likely that this explains the exaggerated tranquillity of Newcastle's Anglo-Irish working-class relations within the North-East.

In many areas of Britain with large Irish contingents, the contemporary belief that the Irish undercut British wages and living standards was pervasive. It provoked antipathy towards the Irish which often translated into violent confrontation. Although the North-East's Anglo-Irish working-class tensions were relatively limited, Neal is correct in arguing that Anglo-Irish working-class tensions and sometimes serious confrontations existed. However, the situation in Newcastle in this period does not fit with the national or regional picture. Although, it would be false to argue that no tensions existed between the Irish and Geordie labourers, the complete lack of large-scale confrontation between the two groups resulting from labour jealousies strongly suggests that tensions were very limited. This was not a result of discrimination against the Irish preventing economic mobility. Newcastle's Irish in fact experienced a relatively high degree of economic mobility. What served primarily to undermine the potential for confrontation was Newcastle's economic expansion in this period and its distinct and diverse industrial make-up.

¹⁰² A national list of collieries compiled by ancestry.com and broken down by region (<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cmhracs/list80.htm>), last accessed 02/03/2015.

¹⁰³ Dougan, *The History of North East Shipbuilding*, pp.37-44.

Chapter Three: 'A Home Rule Hotbed'¹⁰⁴

I feel deeply the debt of gratitude every Irishman owes the constituency that speaks through the noble and great hearted Joseph Cowen... May your generous action, as sympathetic and justice-loving Englishmen at this crisis, never be forgotten by the Irish people.¹⁰⁵

A.M. Sullivan

After the Irish exodus of the late-1840s, the desperate economic situation of the bulk of the Irish in Britain meant survival took priority over politics. However, over the last four decades of the nineteenth century, as the economic position of Britain's Irish community gradually improved, it steadily became more politicised.¹⁰⁶ If this improving situation made political participation possible, it was the Fenian outrages of the late-1860s that served as the catalyst for the Irish community's political awakening. However, the Irish political movements of this period provoked backlashes from the host population, bolstering sectarian tensions in many areas with large Irish contingents. This chapter will explore the development of Irish nationalism among the Irish diaspora in Newcastle and seek to identify the level to which it was tolerated. It will first examine the host reaction to the Fenian outrages. It will then go on to explore the involvement of Newcastle's Irish in the early stages of the Home Rule movement, the extent to which their political needs were looked after, and the host reaction to their nationalist politics. It will argue that Newcastle's Irish experienced a level of political toleration and sympathy greater than that experienced by their countrymen elsewhere in Britain due to the great strength of radical liberalism in the city.

Fenianism grew out of the failed 1848 rising led by the Young Irelanders. Its aim was to militarily overthrow British power in Ireland.¹⁰⁷ Throughout the 1860s Fenianism was increasingly discussed in Britain and when their activities hit British soil in late-1867, national hysteria set in. On the 11th September, thirty armed Fenians affected the escape of two Fenian leaders imprisoned in

¹⁰⁴ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, p.59.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from A.M. Sullivan to an anti-Coercion meeting held in Newcastle quoted in *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 29 January 1881.

¹⁰⁶ Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, pp.143-144.

¹⁰⁷ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp.92-100.

Manchester and in the process shot a policeman - Sergeant Brett - dead.¹⁰⁸ On 13 December a second major outrage took place in London. A botched attempt to free the Fenian Richard Bourke from Clerkenwell gaol using explosives ended with 20 civilian deaths.¹⁰⁹ These outrages provoked hysteria and a great wave of anti-Irish sentiment. Newspapers across the nation condemned the Fenians and produced vast numbers of largely bogus reports of Fenian activity.¹¹⁰

So what was the picture on Tyneside? The panic characterising the nation was certainly seen to an extent in Newcastle. Indeed, in the aftermath of Clerkenwell, the *Times* reported that 'the diabolical Fenian outrage in London...has caused very great excitement in Newcastle...and all classes of the community have been loud in their expressions of abhorrence of the crime.'¹¹¹ Furthermore, numerous stories - likely largely false - of Fenian activity in the region were reported. In the aftermath of the forcible liberation of the Fenian prisoners in Manchester, it was reported in the *Courant* that there had been a sighting of Colonel Kelly - one of the escapees - in Durham, and shortly after it was reported in the *Newcastle Journal* that two Irishmen had been arrested in Newcastle on suspicion of being Kelly.¹¹² Furthermore, in October the *Courant* reported an uncovered Fenian plot to seize the armoury at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Allegedly, a letter bearing Berwick's postmark, intended for a 'certain individual in Manchester' fell into the hands of the London police. This letter laid out the plan of attack and claimed that 'we will easily manage it in one night.' On hearing of the conspiracy, the authorities took measures to alleviate the threat.¹¹³ Clearly it was felt in the city's press that there was a genuine Fenian threat. That many among the local populace shared these fears was demonstrated in an explosion in Newcastle just five days after Clerkenwell. The authorities received intelligence that a large stock of nitro glycerine was being held at a city central location. Although its owner could not be found, on consultation with John Mawson

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.103.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.104.

¹¹⁰ MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain*, p.125.

¹¹¹ 'The Fenian Outrage', *The Times*, 17 December 1867, p.10.

¹¹² 'The Fenian Movement', *Newcastle Courant*, 27 September 1867, p.5. See also Neal 'English-Irish Conflict', p.73.

¹¹³ 'Fenian alarm at Berwick', *Newcastle Courant*, 11 October 1867, p.2.

- the city's sheriff - it was decided that it should be disposed of through an explosion on the Town Moor. However, the explosion went tragically wrong, killing seven including Mawson.¹¹⁴ Although the *Times* reported that the incident 'cannot fairly be traced to Fenianism', it observed that in its direct aftermath, the city had been sent into 'the wildest excitement' and 'the public mind cannot be dissuaded of the belief that the explosion has something to do with Fenianism.'¹¹⁵ Evidently, when national hysteria over the Fenian threat was at fever pitch, Newcastle's press and people were not immune.

Yet, although the *Times* commented on the 'great excitement' among Newcastle's people in the aftermath of Clerkenwell, in the same article it observed that the city had remained 'remarkably peaceful' and that 'no demonstrations of any kind have taken place.'¹¹⁶ Indeed, Newcastle saw no violent clashes between the Irish and their hosts following the Fenian activities while William Murphy was using the backlash provoked by the outrages to whip up sectarian tensions and violence across the Midlands and North-West.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, as well as being limited, the reaction provoked by the outrages in Newcastle was brief. Locals quickly began to question stories of Fenian activity and even point the finger at the authorities for giving them credence. Just a month after the death of Sergeant Brett, a Newcastle local was quoted in the *Chronicle* complaining that '...in the north-eastern districts we hear of no 'movements' of an alarming character except among the police.'¹¹⁸ In Newcastle, the hysteria provoked by the outrages was relatively limited and dissipated quickly.

One likely reason for this rather rational response has already been explored in chapter two - the region's booming economy and distinct industrial make-up served to undermine sectarian tensions. A second and more important reason touched on in chapter one was the strength of radical liberalism. This was primarily important because Liberal strength obviously meant Tory

¹¹⁴ 'The Explosion at Newcastle-On-Tyne.', *The Times*, 21 December 1867, p.9.

¹¹⁵ 'The Terrible Explosion at Newcastle, *The Times*, 19 December 1867, p.9.

See also 'Terrific Explosion at Newcastle', *The Times*, 18 December 1867, p.9.

¹¹⁶ 'The Fenian Outrage', *The Times*, 17 December 1867, p.10.

¹¹⁷ MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora*, pp.179-181.

¹¹⁸ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 14 October 1867, p.2.

weakness. In Liverpool the Tories had been ascendant since before the post-famine Irish influx and became all but invincible after it.¹¹⁹ Historian Tom Gallagher argues that ‘The Lancashire Liberals...could only watch helplessly the Tories play with consummate skill on working-class sensibilities...’¹²⁰ The Conservatives consistently exploited anti-Irish and anti-Catholic sentiment - fuelling and prolonging it - for their electoral advantage and did so in the aftermath of the outrages. By contrast, the predominance of radical Liberal politics in Newcastle meant Conservatives had no foothold from which to bolster Fenian hysteria and anti-Irish feeling.

However it was not just Tory absence that limited the reaction, Newcastle’s radical political landscape served to actively limit the response. The Radical Joseph Cowen – whose tenure as Newcastle’s MP 1874-1886 will be explored shortly – owned the widely read radical *Newcastle Chronicle*. In the aftermath of the outrages, the *Chronicle* reported Fenian activity very sympathetically. Although it condemned the actions of the Fenians in Manchester, the condemnation was qualified by an examination of the Irish grievances behind them. In early-October it was argued in the *Chronicle* that, ‘about two grievances no man in this age can be ignorant – the church and the land... Fenianism is no more than the sign and the fruit of existing wrongs... The condition of Ireland, say what we like of it, is a disgrace to English statesmanship.’¹²¹ Clearly radical promotion of civil liberty, agrarian reform and religious freedoms translated into some sympathy for the Fenian cause.¹²² Such reports surely also engendered some sympathy in its wide working-class readership. What is more, the *Chronicle* condemned reprisals against Newcastle’s Irish. Just eleven days after Clerkenwell, the *Chronicle* scathingly replied to a letter which advocated the dismissal of the Irish workforce in England stating, ‘There could not possibly be a more preposterous proposition... Ours is a district where Irishmen have hitherto conducted themselves with eminent

¹¹⁹ Gallagher, ‘The Tale of Two Cities’, p.115.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.116.

¹²¹ ‘Fenianism: Its cause and its cure, *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 2 October 1867.

¹²² Hugman, ‘Joseph Cowen of Newcastle and radical liberalism’, p.177.

propriety, and what they have done we believe they will continue to do.¹²³ The influence of the radical *Chronicle* surely served to limit the local reaction to Fenianism and mitigate against hostility towards the Irish.

Although the outrages did not draw the same response from the host population in Newcastle as elsewhere, they had the same impact on the Irish community; serving as a political awakening.¹²⁴ From 1873, with the foundation of the Home Rule Confederacy of Great Britain, Home Rulers attempted to draw support for the cause from Britain's Irish communities.¹²⁵ The fundamental role that Britain's Irish were envisaged to play is illustrated in the words of Isaac Butt in 1873, recorded in the *Nation*:

There were towns in England in which...the Irish vote was the majority. That was a great power... The first element of success was a just and righteous cause, and the next was that they would be able to command an overwhelming majority of Irish members and a powerful influence in English representation, and if these elements were properly worked, they were sufficient to carry the cause.¹²⁶

Butt's expectation was that a coalition of Liberal MPs - forced to court the vote of their Irish constituents - and Irish nationalist MPs would be sufficient to secure Home Rule.¹²⁷ However, in 1890, Charles Stewart Parnell stated that 'it is undoubtedly true that a very large portion of our strength in this country [Britain] is wasted and lost, owing to the neglect, and in some cases inability of those Irishmen who are entitled to vote to look after their vote and secure it.'¹²⁸ Indeed, historian Alan O'Day has effectively argued that at a national level the Irish vote never lived up to the expectations articulated by Butt.¹²⁹

¹²³ 'Irishmen in England', *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 24 December 1867, p.2.

¹²⁴ Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, pp.143-144.

¹²⁵ Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (London: Phoenix, 2003), pp.35-36.

¹²⁶ Alan O'Day, 'The political organization of the Irish in Britain, 1867-90', in Swift and Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in Britain 1815-1939*, p.185.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.184-185.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.184.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.185-186.

However, in Newcastle's case, this assessment does not hold true. This is partly because the city had strong Irish nationalist leadership. For instance, Bernard McAnulty - described on his death as 'the life and soul of all the Irish political movements in the city' and still seen today by the city's Irish as 'the father of the Irish in Newcastle' – was crucial to mobilising Newcastle's Irish.¹³⁰ Furthermore, Tim Healy, who would go on to become one of the lead Home Rulers, played an instrumental role.¹³¹ The success that these individuals and others had is shown by the fact that in this period politicians were forced to court Irish support.¹³² Indeed, although the Irish in Newcastle generally voted Liberal, in 1874 the Tory Charles Hammond was elected. His unlikely success was largely due to his promises to the Irish community. Indeed, he would prove good to his word, being one of only ten English MPs to support Butt's 1874 Home Rule motion.¹³³

However, their high level of political organisation was not the only factor behind the political interests of Newcastle's Irish being relatively well looked after. A more significant factor again was the city's long-standing allegiance to radical Liberal politics. Although the largely Liberal North-East was broadly responsive to the Irish cause, Biagini has rightly singled out Newcastle itself as 'a Home Rule hotbed.'¹³⁴ The fact that it was a hotbed for Home Rule certainly had a great deal to do with the fact that it was a hotbed for radicalism.¹³⁵ It was in Newcastle's incredibly popular radical Liberal MP Joseph Cowen that the region's Irish, indeed the nation's Irish, had their most articulate and dogged advocate. Cowen was an ultra-Radical and historian Keith Harris is right to argue that in Home Affairs he was to establish his own 'Newcastle school of Radicalism.'¹³⁶ What is more, his influence extended beyond Britain. Indeed, on his death in 1900, the *Justice* - the newspaper of the Marxist Social-Democratic Federation - reported that, 'revolutionists of all countries will join with us in

¹³⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 15 September 1894, p.4. See also Mike Kelly, 'No sign of Irish influx slowing down', *The Journal*, 24 December 2014, pp.16-17.

¹³¹ Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.162.

¹³² MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora*, p.131.

¹³³ Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.163.

¹³⁴ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, p.59.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.54.

¹³⁶ Keith Harris quoted in Nigel Todd, *The Militant Democracy: Joseph Cowen and Victorian Democracy* (Whitley Bay: Berwick Press, 1991), p.2.

mourning the death of Joseph Cowen...the sturdy champion of oppressed people everywhere.'¹³⁷ Foremost amongst such oppressed peoples for Cowen were the Irish. In 1885, he was one of just four Liberals in England whom Parnell exempted from his anti-Liberal, anti-Radical manifesto.¹³⁸ The reason for Cowen's exemption was that, as Joseph Keatling has commented, 'His sympathy for Irish Tynesiders was extraordinary' and he consistently championed their cause.¹³⁹ Cowen strongly advocated the release of Fenian prisoners and in August 1876, made an impassioned speech in the House of Commons to that end.¹⁴⁰ He supported the Land League and endorsed the National Land League of Great Britain whose first conference was held in Newcastle.¹⁴¹ Most significantly, throughout the 1870s and until retiring from public life in 1886, despite it bringing him into collision with the Liberal caucus, he consistently vehemently opposed coercion and championed Home Rule.¹⁴²

Since the Act of Union (1800), coercion, alongside limited concessions, had been the chief means used by Westminster to suppress Ireland's nationalist aspirations.¹⁴³ This would not change as Gladstone's government attempted to deal with increasing unrest as Parnell used the Land League to harness agrarian radicalism behind Home Rule.¹⁴⁴ Cowen strongly opposed such measures. Speaking in the House of Commons in 1881 against the then proposed Coercion Bill, Cowen highlighted the hypocrisy of the Liberals' use of coercion, asking the Liberals 'if the Conservatives had been in office and the Liberal Party had been on the opposing benches. Would

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.3.

¹³⁸ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism* p.52. See also Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.165.

¹³⁹ Joseph Keatling quoted in Cooter, *When Paddy met Geordie.*, p.165.

¹⁴⁰ A speech made by Joseph Cowen in the House of Commons on the release of the Fenian prisoners, 2 August 1876, in Tyne and Wear Archives, ref no. DF.COW/B/176.

¹⁴¹ Todd, *The Militant Democracy*, p.142.

¹⁴² Ibid., p.144.

¹⁴³ Patricia Jalland, *The Liberals and Ireland: The Ulster Question in Britain to 1914* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980), pp.19-20.

¹⁴⁴ Davis, *The Irish in Britain*, pp.204-206.

not such a proposal as is now before them have been denounced with indignant eloquence as the natural outcome of tyrannical Tory rule?’¹⁴⁵ He further went on:

Let them [MPs] suppose that England had been conquered by France, as Ireland had been by England, and that for seven hundred years the history of this country under French rule had been a black record of crime, violence and opposition... Let them suppose there had been great and prolonged distress, deepening in some districts into famine; and the people in their desperation had been driven to regrettable excesses. Let them suppose further, that there was a parliament in Paris which contained some 550 Frenchmen and 100 Englishmen and that the parliament of Frenchmen not only suspended the constitutional liberties of the English people but the parliamentary liberties of the English representatives. What would they have said, and how would they have acted? I would not insult them by supposing that under such circumstances their opposition to such legislation would not have been as dogged and determined as the opposition of the Irishmen was to like legislation for their native lands.¹⁴⁶

In this speech Cowen articulated his moral opposition to a Bill that would attack the liberties of an Irish people fighting for greater freedoms. Furthermore, unlike other Radicals such as his fellow North-Easterner Thomas Burt who opposed coercion but did not condone the obstructionist tactics of Irish MPs, Cowen strongly supported the Parnellites’ efforts – involving a 41 hour filibuster - to disrupt the Bill’s discussion and opposed their expulsion from the house to prevent the disruption.¹⁴⁷ Cowen would speak, albeit in vain, a further five times against the Bill and, in 1882, would be one of just two English MPs to oppose another Coercion Bill introduced in the aftermath of the Phoenix Park murders.¹⁴⁸

Cowen’s feelings on coercion were mirrored in his constituency. Just three days after Cowen’s initial speech opposing the 1881 Bill the *Newcastle Chronicle* recorded that a meeting was held at the Circus, Percy Street, Newcastle whose purpose was ‘to place on record a protest against Coercion...’¹⁴⁹ The meeting was allegedly so popular that ‘the immense auditorium of the Circus was crowded to repletion long before the hour set for the commencement of the proceedings, and that

¹⁴⁵ A speech given by Joseph Cowen in the House of Commons on the Irish Coercion Bill, 26 January 1881, in Tyne and Wear Archives, Ref no. DF.COW/B/211.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Todd, *The Militant Democracy*, p.138.

¹⁴⁸ Speeches made by Joseph Cowen in the House of Commons on the Irish Coercion Bill, in Tyne and Wear Archives Ref no. DF.COW/B. See also Todd, *The Militant Democracy*, p.143.

¹⁴⁹ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 29 January 1881.

hundreds desirous of obtaining admission were disappointed.¹⁵⁰ The article claims that of the estimated four or five thousand people present, only around twenty spoke out in favour of coercion.¹⁵¹ This does not seem wholly surprising given the meeting's purpose but nonetheless the figures are striking. Clearly Cowen's moral opposition to coercion was felt in his constituency.

As whole heartedly as Cowen opposed coercion, he supported Home Rule. Cowen was one of the earliest Liberal and Radical MPs to support Home Rule and championed it until his retirement. In a speech made at a pro-Home Rule rally in Birmingham 17 June 1886, after Gladstone's Home Rule Bill had been defeated with the help of five of Birmingham's eight MPs, Cowen articulated the moral case for Home Rule, stating:

Behind emancipation, tithe reform, disestablishment, and the Land Acts, and deeper than them all, there is the intensified yearning of the Irish Celt for a national existence – for the free growth for his peculiarities of character, for a right to determine the methods and apply the power of his own life.¹⁵²

Ultimately, Cowen believed that behind all the reforms Westminster had been forced to concede due to popular discontent in Ireland, was a feeling of nationality distinct from Britain and, therefore, a desire for self-determination. He further argued that such a desire and the agitation it caused would never be destroyed by either coercion or concession and he therefore believed that 'if Ireland is ever to be won over to settled order and contentment...her honourable ambitions to administer her own affairs [must be] gratified.'¹⁵³ Cowen believed that the only thing that would satisfy nationalist sentiment and preserve the Union, as well as being morally imperative, was granting Home Rule.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² A speech given by Joseph Cowen in Birmingham on Ireland, 17 June 1886, in Tyne and Wear Archives, Ref no. DF.COW/379.

¹⁵³ 'Mr Joseph. Cowen, M.P. on foreign affairs and home politics', *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 20 February 1885, p.2.

¹⁵⁴ A copy of a speech by Joseph Cowen in the House of Commons on Ireland, 7 June 1886, Ref no. DF.COW/B/377.

Again, such views were reflected more broadly in Newcastle. Quite surprisingly, in 1872 even the conservative *Courant* bemoaned the condemnation of Home Rulers in the national press and displayed them as men motivated by 'candour, patriotism and sense.'¹⁵⁵ By January 1882, Newcastle Debating Society had set up a mock parliament to discuss Home Rule. The member playing 'Secretary of State for the Colonies' argued that there 'are important matters of municipal management which are brought from Ireland to Westminster at great cost, and which, along with other matters of self-government, might, we think, be left to the Irish people.'¹⁵⁶ In the following weeks, many other MPs came to support this view.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, in the aftermath of Gladstone's announcement of his Home Rule Bill - a Bill which permanently split the Liberals - it was recorded in a letter from A.K. Durham - secretary of the Newcastle Liberal Association - to Cowen that a meeting of the Association had voted overwhelmingly (516 to 4) in favour of a Bill they considered a 'noble measure worthy of acceptance by the people of the United Kingdom.'¹⁵⁸ The strength of Newcastle's radical Liberal tradition plainly led to broad support for Home Rule.

This is not to say that there is evidence to suggest that Irish Nationalism was actively supported by Newcastle's working-class.¹⁵⁹ However, a lack of active support is very different from the active resistance that was seen elsewhere. O'Day argues that the violent backlash against Home Rule that was seen in places such as Glasgow and Liverpool was one of the chief obstacles to effectively mobilising the Irish vote.¹⁶⁰ Newcastle did not see such a backlash largely because of popular allegiance to Cowenite radicalism which, as Joan Hugman has argued, placed Home Rule as its central plank and intertwined Irish and radical interests to the point that they were 'scarcely distinguishable'.¹⁶¹ Joseph Cowen scarcely needed the support of the Irish in elections because of his

¹⁵⁵ 'The Home Rule Movement', *Newcastle Courant*, 12 January 1872, p.5.

¹⁵⁶ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, p.59.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Letter from A.K. Durham to Joseph Cowen on resolution on Ireland, 13 April 1886, in Tyne and Wear Archives, ref no. DF.COW/B/372.

¹⁵⁹ Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, pp.168-169.

¹⁶⁰ Alan O'Day, 'The political organization of the Irish in Britain', p.186. See also MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora*, p.182.

¹⁶¹ Joan Hugman, 'Joseph Cowen of Newcastle and radical liberalism', pp.175-176.

popularity among the host population and actively opposing Home Rule would have been impossible to reconcile with otherwise supporting Cowen's principled radical politics.¹⁶²

In Victorian Newcastle, the Irish experienced a relatively large degree of political toleration. Although Newcastle was not immune to the anti-Irish hysteria provoked by the Fenian outrages, the local response was relatively small and dissipated quickly because Tory weakness in the city prevented them from fuelling anti-Irish feeling and because Newcastle's Cowenite radical press actively dampened anti-Fenian and anti-Irish hysteria. When Irish nationalism turned again to a largely constitutional approach, nationalist leaders hoped that Britain's Irish community would be successfully organised to help carry Home Rule through parliament. Although this hope was not realised nationally in this period, in Newcastle the vote was very well organised by strong nationalist leaders in the city. However, strong Irish leadership was not the only reason that Irish political interests were relatively well looked after in Newcastle. What was again most significant was Newcastle's long-standing allegiance to radical Liberal politics. Such politics were more broadly associated with the North-East but were exaggerated in Newcastle. In Newcastle's Joseph Cowen MP, the Irish found their greatest advocate. In his tenure as MP for Newcastle between 1874 and 1886 he tied the Irish cause to his brand of ultra-radicalism; unwaveringly opposing coercion, defending the actions of nationalists and championing Home Rule. Although there is little evidence of working-class support for Home Rule, Cowen's huge popularity prevented the active and hostile resistance to Home Rule that was seen elsewhere.

¹⁶² Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.166. See also Todd, *The Militant Democracy*, p.158.

Conclusion

In 1992, social psychologist Liam Greenslade pointed out that, as the study of the Irish in Britain has expanded, 'admirably...some effort has been expended upon debunking stereotypical myths about Irish people which were promulgated by contemporary investigators.'¹⁶³ However, he argues that, 'unfortunately...in their keenness to dispense with the observations of writers like Engels, Duncan, and others, some contemporary historians of the nineteenth century Irish communities have begun to play down certain aspects of the Irish historical experience, in particular with regards to the catastrophic dimension.'¹⁶⁴ He accuses such historians of seeking 'to demonstrate that it really was not that bad at all and that a concentration on the poor and underprivileged simply plays into the hands of those who would preserve ancient bitterness.'¹⁶⁵ This study certainly did not set out with the intention of minimising Irish suffering in Newcastle but it certainly adds to the increasing weight of work on the Irish in Victorian Britain which refutes the orthodox picture of the Victorian Britain's Irish population as a universally despised sub-stratum of society.

This study has sought in some small measure to address the historiographical neglect of the North-East's Irish communities, but a huge amount of research remains to be done. Although a study of Newcastle does not serve to support Cooter's assertion that the Irish in the North-East were an 'almost invisible minority', it is clear that Anglo-Irish relations in Newcastle in the period 1850-1890 were strikingly limited relative to other areas with large Irish contingents. Therefore, a study of the North-East's main urban centre to a large degree serves to support Cooter's overriding conclusion about the relatively tranquil nature of Anglo-Irish relations in the North-East. Indeed, the main forces at work in limiting Newcastle's Anglo-Irish tensions were broadly at work in the region. However, it would seem that several of these forces – most significantly Dissenting strength and Anglican weakness, industrial expansion, and a Liberal and Radical political tradition - were

¹⁶³ Liam Greenslade, 'An Tonn Gheal: Historical reflections on Irish Migrants in Britain in the 1980s', in Buckland and Belchem (eds), *The Irish in the British Labour Market*, p.30.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.31.

exaggerated in Newcastle and this study would suggest that this served, along with Newcastle's distinct industrial make-up, to further ameliorate Anglo-Irish relations.

In this study Anglo-Irish relations have been examined through three issues which, in many areas, were flashpoints for Anglo-Irish confrontation. The first was the Catholicism of the majority of the Irish. For numerous reasons, including the post-famine Irish influx, the mid-nineteenth century witnessed an explosion of anti-Catholicism which, in many areas with large Irish populations, translated into anti-Irish sentiment and inter-communal confrontation. Newcastle was not immune to this No-Popery sentiment and the huge increase in popular anti-Catholic sentiment after 1850 must have been difficult for the city's Irish newcomers to stomach. Nevertheless, anti-Catholicism was certainly limited relative to other areas and faced significant local opposition. Furthermore, and more significantly, anti-Catholicism was directed against the Catholic Church itself and not against the city's Irish Catholics and it very rarely translated into Anglo-Irish confrontations. What partially serves to explain this was the weakness of Orangeism in Newcastle. However, more significant was Newcastle's religious composition. The weakness of Anglicanism, the strength of Dissent and resultant Liberal strength in the city, meant that the Church and the Conservatives were largely unable to promote anti-Catholicism as they did elsewhere.

The second focal point for confrontation examined was the workplace. The pervasive belief that the Irish were undermining wages and living-standards led to friction and confrontation between the Irish and their hosts in many areas. Indeed, the North-East itself saw a sizable number of Anglo-Irish working-class confrontations. However, Newcastle did not. This was not because Newcastle's Irish were prevented from competing for semi-skilled and skilled occupations. The city's Irish in fact experienced a relatively large degree of economic mobility. What firstly explains Newcastle's tranquil Anglo-Irish working-class relations was Newcastle's rapid economic expansion in this period which undermined the potential for sectarian tensions. Indeed this was true of the North-East more broadly. However, Anglo-Irish labour jealousies were limited in Newcastle relative

to the region. This was likely partly because Newcastle experienced greater economic expansion than the surrounding region, but also highly significant was Newcastle's distinct industrial make-up. In this period, Newcastle saw the expansion of relatively new industries. These industries had not had time to develop the same closely guarded hereditary patterns of employment as the pits in County Durham and therefore, the Irish were able to enter into them with a great deal less friction.

The final flashpoint was politics. When Fenian activities hit Britain in the late-1860s, national hysteria and a fresh wave of anti-Irish feeling ensued leading to Anglo-Irish confrontations in many areas of the country. Although Newcastle was not immune to the hysteria, the city's reaction was relatively limited and brief. The Home Rule Movement, beginning in the 1870s, also provoked anti-Irish antipathy in many areas of the nation. However, in Newcastle this reaction was absent. What is more, the nationalist needs of Newcastle's Irish population were strikingly well looked after. The reason for Newcastle's political toleration and sympathy for the Irish nationalist cause was its radical Liberal political tradition. Although such a tradition characterised the North-East more broadly it was exaggerated in Newcastle where Joseph Cowen's hugely popular brand of ultra-Radicalism placed the needs of the Irish at the heart of the city's politics.

The Irish were not 'almost invisible' in Victorian Newcastle. There is certainly evidence of antipathy towards the Irish in the city and even of violent clashes between the Irish and their hosts. However, such clashes were incredibly rare and it is clear that the Irish were not received with the same level of hostility that their fellow countrymen met elsewhere. From an examination of Anglo-Irish relations in Newcastle it would certainly seem that, in the words of T.P. O'Connor, 'in no part of Great Britain were the relations...so friendly and intimate as on Tyneside.'¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ T.P. O'Connor quoted in Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.172.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Irish born Population of Counties in England and Wales:

Counties	Total Population	Irish Born	% Irish Born
North Western	2490827	214318	8.6
London	2362236	108548	4.6
Yorkshire	1789047	57266	3.2
Northumberland and Durham	715247	31167	4.4
Monmouthshire and Wales	1188914	20738	1.7

Source: 1851 Census: Birth Places of People: Summary Tables, No.39 in Neal, English-Irish Conflict, p.59

Appendix 2: The Irish Born Population of County Durham and Northumberland 1851-1871:

	1851	1861	1871
Total Population	715242	851691	1071735
Irish Born	31167	42753	52021
% Irish Born	4.4	5	4.9

Source: 1861 Census: Appendix to Report, Table 123 and 1871 Census: Birth Place of the People, Table 18 in Neal, English-Irish Conflict, p.60

Appendix 3: The Irish born population of the North-East's main urban centres, 1851-1871:

Place	Total Population			Irish Born			Irish as percent of total		
	1851	1861	1871	1851	1861	1871	1851	1861	1871
Newcastle Upon Tyne	87784	109108	135347	7124	6956	6904	8.1	6.8	5.1
Gateshead	25568	33587	51903	2195	2299	3276	8.6	6.8	6.3
Durham City	13188	14088	15129	786	898	723	6	6.4	4.8
South Shields	28974	35239	46949	922	1083	1613	3.2	3.1	3.4
Sunderland	63897	78211	102711	3601	4169	4469	5.6	5.3	4.4
Tynemouth	29107	34021	40187	1108	1312	1336	6.3	5.4	4.7

Source: Census Reports: 1851, 1861 and 1871 Birth place of the People in Neal, English-Irish Conflict, p.61.

Appendix 4: The Relative position of the Church of England, National and in the North East, 1851:

	Percentage of Available Seating	
	Church of England	Other
England and Wales	51.9	48.1
County Durham	37.8	62.2
Northumberland	37.1	62.9
Newcastle	33.9	66.1
Gateshead	42.9	57.1
Sunderland	28	72

Source: *Census of Great Britain: Religious Worship (1851)*, p.cclxxiv, p.ccxcii in Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.98.

Appendix 5: Religious Seating Accommodation in Newcastle, 1851:

	Seating Accommodation	Percentage of Seating Accommodation
Church Of England	10,488	35.7
Wesleyan Methodist	3,652	12.4
Other Methodists	3,838	13
Presbyterian	2,770	9.4
Independents	1,036	3.5
Roman Catholic	1,744	5.9
Baptists	2,148	7.3
Other	3,738	12.8
Total	29,414	100

Source: *Census of Great Britain: Religious Worship (1852-53)*, pp.418-21 in Cooter, *When Paddy Met Geordie*, p.94.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Printed primary sources

Denvir, John, *The Irish in Britain, from the earliest times to the fall and death of Parnell* (London: 1892)

Heinrich, Hugh, O'Day, Alan (ed.), *A Survey of the Irish in England in 1872* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1989)

Tyne and Wear Archives

A copy of a speech by Joseph Cowen in the House of Commons on Ireland, 7 June 1886, Ref no. DF.COW/B/377.

A speech given by Joseph Cowen in Birmingham on Ireland, 17 June 1886, in Tyne and Wear Archives, Ref no. DF.COW/379.

A speech given by Joseph Cowen in the House of Commons on the Irish Coercion Bill, 26 January 1881, in Tyne and Wear Archives, Ref no. DF.COW/B/211.

Letter from A.K. Durham to Joseph Cowen on resolution on Ireland, 13 April 1886, in Tyne and Wear Archives, ref no. DF.COW/B/372.

Newspapers

Daily News (London)

Durham county Advertiser

Newcastle Chronicle

Newcastle Courant

Newcastle Daily Chronicle

Newcastle Weekly Courant

Tablet

The Journal

The Morning Post (London)

The Times

Online resources:

A national list of collieries compiled by ancestry.com and broken down by region

(<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cmhracs/list80.htm>), last accessed 02/03/2015.

Secondary sources

Published works

Biagini, Eugenio F., *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Cooter, R.J., *When Paddy Met Geordie: The Irish in County Durham and Newcastle 1840-1880* (Sunderland: University of Sunderland Press, 2005)

Davis, Graham, *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1914* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991)

Dougan, David, *The History of North East Shipbuilding* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968)

Gallagher, Tom, 'A tale of two cities: communal strife in Glasgow and Liverpool before 1914', in Swift, Roger and Gilley, Sheridan (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1985)

Greenslade, Liam, 'An Tonn Gheal: Historical reflections on Irish Migrants in Britain in the 1980s' in Buckland, Patrick and Belchem, John (eds.), *The Irish in the British Labour Market* (Liverpool: The Institute of Irish Studies, 1992)

Jackson, Alvin, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (London: Phoenix, 2003)

Jackson, Alvin, *Ireland 1798-1998* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999)

Jalland, Patricia, *The Liberals and Ireland: The Ulster Question in Britain to 1914* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980)

MacRaild, Donald (ed.), *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000)

MacRaild, Donald, *Culture, Conflict and Migration: The Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998)

MacRaild, Donald, *Faith, Fraternity and Fighting: The Orange Order and Irish Migrants in Northern England, 1850-1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005)

MacRaild, Donald, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

Millward, Pauline, 'The Stockpot Riots of 1852: A study of Anti-Catholic and Anti-Irish Sentiment' in Swift, Roger and Gilley, Sheridan (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1985)

Neal, Frank, 'English-Irish conflict in the North-East of England' in Buckland, Patrick and Belchem, John (eds.), *The Irish in the British Labour Market* (Liverpool: The Institute of Irish Studies, 1992)

O'Day, Alan, 'Irish influence on Parliamentary Elections in London, 1885-1914', in Swift, Roger and Gilley, Sheridan, (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1985)

O'Day, Alan, 'The political organization of the Irish in Britain, 1867-90', in Roger Swift and in Swift, Roger and Gilley, Sheridan (eds.), *The Irish in Britain 1815-1939* (Savage, Maryland: Barnes & Noble Nooks, 1989)

Paz, D.G., *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992)

Redford, Arthur, *Labour Migration in England 1800-1850* (2nd edition. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964)

Swift, Roger and Gilley, Sheridan (eds.), *The Irish in Britain 1815-1939* (Savage, Maryland: Barnes & Noble Nooks, 1989)

Swift, Roger and Gilley, Sheridan, (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1985)

Swift, Roger and Gilley, Sheridan, (eds.), *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999)

Swift, Roger, 'Historians and the Irish: Recent Writings on the Irish in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in Donald MacRaild (ed.), *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000)

Thompson, E.P., *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968)

Todd, Nigel, *The Militant Democracy: Joseph Cowen and Victorian Democracy* (Whitley Bay: Berwick Press, 1991)

Williamson, Jeffrey G., 'The impact of the Irish on British labor markets during the industrial revolution' in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in Britain 1815-1939* (Maryland: Barnes and Noble books, 1989)

Wolffe, John, *The Protestant crusade in Great Britain, 1829-1860* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991)

Journal articles

Gilley, Sheridan, 'The Garibaldi Riots of 1862', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (1973), pp.697-732.

Swift, Roger, 'The Outcast Irish in the British Victorian City: Problems and Perspectives', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 99 (1987), pp. 264-276.

Unpublished MA and PHD theses

Hugman, Joan, 'Joseph Cowen of Newcastle and radical liberalism', unpublished PHD thesis, Northumbria (1993)

Cooter, R.J., 'The Irish in County Durham and Newcastle 1840-1880', unpublished M.A. thesis, Durham, (1972)

