



01. John Redmond as a young man

JOHN EDWARD REDMOND — THE NATIONAL LEADER

John Edward Redmond (1856–1918), Wexford man and leader of The Irish Parliamentary Party from 1900–1918, was one of the most influential Irish politicians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was a leading exponent of Irish parliamentary nationalism and was expected to become the first prime minister of an Irish Parliament.

Redmond was a member of a Catholic landed family with a background in business and politics. John served as M.P. for New Ross (1881–1885), North Wexford (1885–1891), and Waterford (1891–1918). His aim and that of his party was to secure Home Rule or a domestic parliament for Ireland. Redmond skilfully secured the passage of a third Home Rule Bill through Westminster in September 1914. The outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, combined with political division in Ireland, delayed the introduction of Home Rule. In the following years, support for Redmond declined rapidly under pressure of events at home and abroad. He died on 6 March, 1918 and is buried in the family mausoleum in St John's graveyard, Wexford. This exhibition reflects on his life and achievements.



02. John Redmond



03. John Redmond, with King George V and Queen Mary, at Warley Barracks, Essex



04. John Redmond addressing the monster Home Rule rally in Dublin on 31 March 1912

THE REDMOND FAMILY

The Redmonds were of Norman descent. In the eighteenth century many of the family went into military service on the continent providing generals for the French and Austrian armies. Those who remained in Ireland became part of a new class of Catholic merchants, bankers and ship-owners who in the early nineteenth century acquired considerable wealth.

The earliest member of the Redmonds to appear in modern records was Edward Redmond who moved into Wexford town in the early eighteenth century. His son Walter Redmond owned 5,000 acres of land in the county, and a private bank which was established in 1770. In 1799 he purchased Ballytrent House in south County Wexford where John Edward Redmond was to spend his formative years. John was educated at Clongowes Wood College. Later in life he qualified as a barrister. The monument in Redmond Square in Wexford town is to John Edward Redmond's grand uncle of the same name. Redmond senior was a Liberal M.P. for the town from 1859 to 1865. It was due to his influence that the railway was brought to Wexford and he was also responsible for the reclamation of five thousand acres of Wexford harbour now called the slob lands.

His nephew, William Archer Redmond sat for Wexford as a member of Isaac Butt's Home Rule Party from 1872 to 1880. William Archer's son, John Redmond attended Trinity College Dublin to study classics but did not finish his degree due to his father's ill health. In 1876 he moved to Westminster and worked as a clerk in The House of Commons.



05. Redmond Monument, Redmond Square, Wexford



06. William Archer Redmond, father of John Redmond



07. Ballytrent House



08. John Redmond as a young man





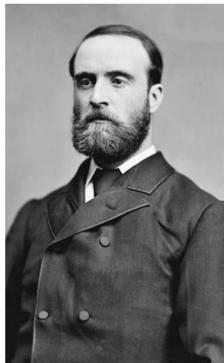
09. John Redmond outside the House of Commons



10. John and Johanna Redmond's children, Esther, William Archer and Johanna



11. Johanna Redmond, wife of John Redmond, as a young woman



12. Charles Stewart Parnell

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

On the death of his father William Archer in 1880 John Redmond entered parliament in 1881 and was to serve as an M.P. for 37 years. His brother Major Willie Redmond was also an M.P. from 1883–1917. Willie was his closest political advisor in their long careers in politics.

In 1886, as Prime Minister William Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill seemed likely to be defeated in the House of Commons, John wrote to Father Patrick Furlong, P.P. of New Ross: *I fear the Bill is doomed ... [but] ... Time is on our side and I don't think we need fear a short delay – as success in the near future is assured. Success would have to wait 28 years.*

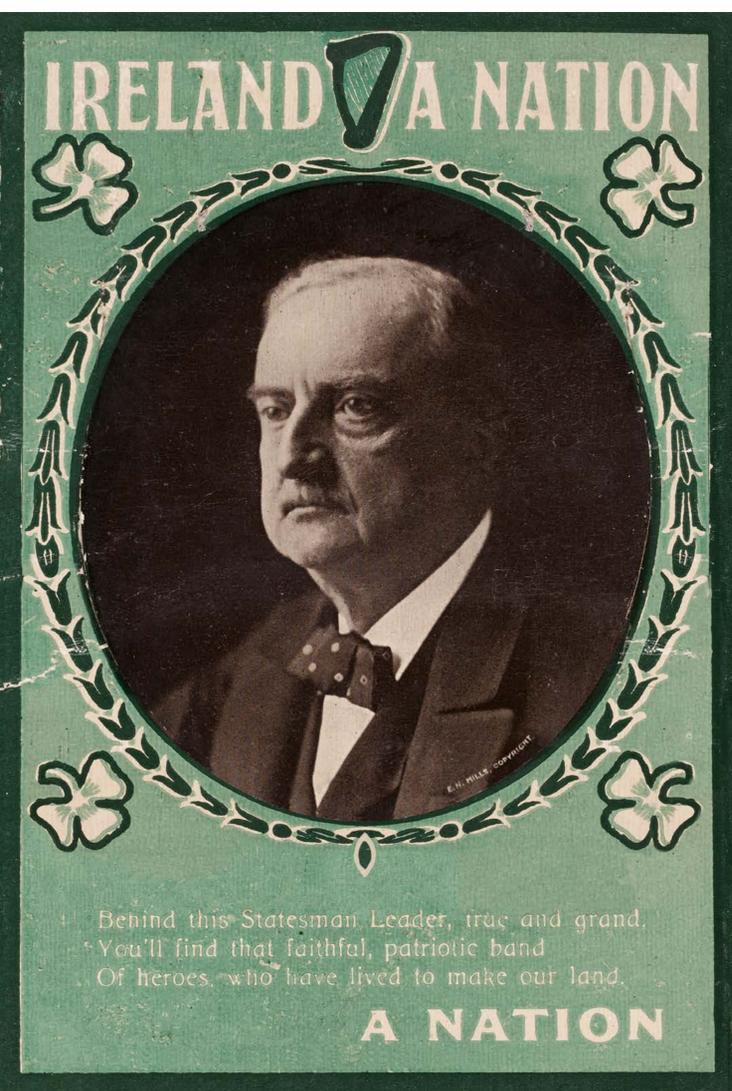
Redmond was active in the Plan of Campaign – a civil disobedience campaign against Irish landlords. He was impressed by the charismatic Charles Stewart Parnell, leader of the Nationalist Party (later The Irish Parliamentary Party). In 1883–4, at the request of Parnell, John and his younger brother Willie went on a fundraising trip to Australia, New Zealand and the United States. They collected £30,000 for the Irish National League. It was on these tours that John Redmond realised the considerable political power of the Irish Diaspora in helping to obtain Home Rule for Ireland.

In Sydney John met and married Johanna Dalton who belonged to a prominent Irish-Australian family. They were married in Sydney on 4 September 1883. They had three children – a son William Archer and two daughters Esther and Johanna. Tragedy was to strike in 1889 when his wife died in childbirth leaving him with three small children. She is buried in Glasnevin cemetery. A decade later he married an English woman, Ada Beesley. They had no children and she died in England in 1954. His daughter Esther died in the United States in 1917, and his brother Major Willie Redmond died on the battlefield in 1917.

In 1890 the Irish Parliamentary Party was thrown into turmoil when its leader, Parnell, was named as co-respondent in a divorce case. He had been having an affair with Katherine O'Shea, the wife of a fellow M.P. Redmond was in the minority who remained faithful to the disgraced Parnell. He declared: *I am bound to him by the ties of private friendship and political allegiance.* Redmond subsequently led his fellow pro-Parnellites throughout the 1890s when the party split into two factions. In 1900, he was elected chairman of the re-united Irish Parliamentary Party.



13. John and Willie Redmond on their return from Australia 1884



14. Home Rule postcard



15. Souvenir admission card for Mansion House meeting, Dublin on Friday, 25 September, 1914



16. John Redmond presents colours to the Irish National Volunteers at Maryborough (Portlaoise), 16 August, 1914

THE HOME RULE BILL

John Redmond was elected chairman (leader) of the reunited Irish Parliamentary Party, a position he held until his death in 1918 – a longer period than any previous nationalist leader, except Daniel O’Connell. He was a compromise candidate due to the personal rivalries among the anti-Parnellites. Although he had a successful 1900 general election, he would never have as much authority as his predecessor, Parnell.

The first and second Home Rule bills in 1886 and 1893 were defeated in the Commons and Lords respectively. 1910 was a year of political upheaval. There were two general elections, the second changed everything to Redmond’s advantage as his party held the balance of power in Westminster. This was a high point in his political career. He made clear his political stance: I stand where Parnell stood.

A third Home Rule Bill was introduced on 11 April 1912. It was passed by the House of Commons but rejected by the House of Lords. This happened again in 1913. In May 1914 the Commons overrode the Lords’ veto and the Home Rule Bill became law on 18 September 1914 but was suspended for the duration of the war.

If I may say so reverently, Redmond told the House of Commons, I personally thank God that I have lived to see this day.

Redmond had not foreseen the fierce opposition to Home Rule from the Unionist community led by Edward Carson. On 28 September 1912, over half a million people signed the Ulster Covenant, pledging to use physical force if necessary to defeat Home Rule. Prime Minister Asquith tried to mollify the Ulster Unionists with a number of policies. Redmond stoutly fought the idea of dividing Ireland north and south.

Irish nationalists can never be the assenting parties to the mutilation of the Irish Nation. The two-nation theory is to us an abomination and a blasphemy.

By September 1914, however, he had conceded that *no coercion should be applied to any single county in Ireland to force them against their will to come into the Irish Government.* But he hoped, as nationalist and unionist Irishmen were going to fight side by side, *that their union in the field may lead to a union in their home, and that their blood may be the seal that will bring all Ireland together in one nation...*



17. "The Ulster Crisis, 1913" by Reginald Cleaver, a cartoon depicting Lloyd George, Asquith and Redmond



18. Redmond addressing a public meeting on the Home Rule Bill, 1912

THE GREAT WAR

As 1914 progressed, Ireland seemed to be moving closer and closer to a civil war between the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish National Volunteers. The Third Home Rule bill was on the Statute Book but with the outbreak of war, its operation was suspended until after the war. In August 1914, thousands of Ulster Volunteers flocked to join the British army to demonstrate their complete loyalty to Britain. To ensure that Home Rule would be granted, John Redmond believed that members of the Irish Volunteers should also join the British army, and in a speech in Co. Wicklow in September 1914, he pledged his support for the Allied cause and urged the Irish Volunteers to...

account yourselves as men not only in Ireland but wherever the firing line extends in defence of right, of freedom and religion in this war.

In response to Redmond's recruiting call, the Irish National Volunteers split in two. The majority of Volunteers, renamed the National Volunteers and numbering 158,000, supported Redmond's policy and by October 1915 there were over 100,000 Irishmen fighting on the side of Britain in the Great War. It is estimated that a total of 210,000 Irishmen fought in the war, of whom about equal numbers were Catholic and Protestant. Of these, around 60,000 lost their lives. His brother, Willie Redmond was one of those killed in action in 1917. His son, William Archer also fought in the war.

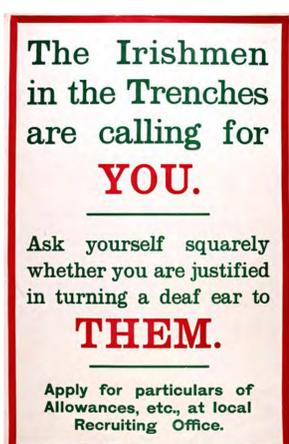
The minority Volunteer group, called the Irish Volunteers and numbering 12,000, was led by Eoin MacNeill in opposition to Redmond's policy. Members of this group, along with the Citizen Army, formed the manpower of the Easter 1916 Rising.

The Easter Rising came as a great shock to Redmond who saw it as undermining his political advances. He condemned it but pleaded with Asquith to end the executions.

In the two years after the Easter Rebellion, nationalists began to support Sinn Féin which supported complete independence from Britain instead of the Home Rule Party of John Redmond. In the General Election of 1918 the Irish Parliamentary Party was heavily defeated by Sinn Féin.



19. Captain William Archer Redmond



20. World War 1 recruitment poster



21. Willie Redmond MP, John Redmond MP, and William Archer Redmond MP, at Clongowes Wood College, 1914

Éire
€1John Redmond
1856–1918

22. Stamp featuring John Redmond, from a portrait by Sir John Lavery

Sources:

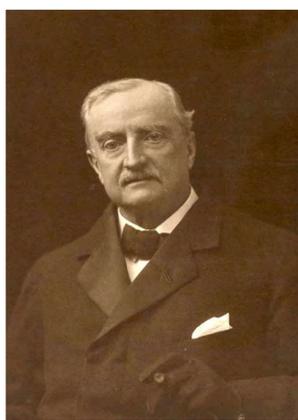
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Ryan, Arthur (ed.), *Major William Redmond: In memoriam* (1917): 7
The Sphere: 25
Topfoto: 4

23. John Redmond's grandchildren, Max and Johanna Redmond, with their mother, Johanna.



24. John Redmond in 1918

REDMOND'S
LEGACY

John Redmond's life in politics was characterised by great achievements and great disappointments. He did not live to see the landslide victory of Sinn Féin in the 1918 general election. The Irish Parliamentary Party was left with only six seats compared to Sinn Féin. He had obtained Home Rule by peaceful means, sought for a century in Ireland by his predecessors Daniel O'Connell, Isaac Butt and Charles Stewart Parnell. Like his predecessors he believed in peaceful negotiations as the only solution to the Irish Question.

He was overtaken by events outside his control. He died of heart failure on 6 March 1918. After a funeral service in Westminster, his remains were brought to Dublin by sea and from there to Wexford by train. He was not interred in Glasnevin Cemetery with other Irish statesmen but in a mausoleum in St John's graveyard where his ancestors had been buried for well over a hundred years. His funeral drew huge crowds. It marked the end of a lifetime in politics and of an era in Irish history.

The political tradition of the Redmond family continued when John's only son Captain William Archer Redmond was elected M.P. for Waterford in 1918. He had fought in the war and succeeded to his father's seat. He had the unique distinction of serving first as an M.P. and, after 1923, as a TD. He held the seat until his early death at the age of 46 in 1932. He is buried beside his father in the mausoleum in St John's graveyard. He was succeeded in Dáil Éireann by his wife Brigid who won every subsequent election until her death in 1951.

John Redmond's younger daughter, Johanna died a year after her husband Max Sullivan Green had been killed while chasing a bank robber in Dublin. Their two orphaned sons were fostered in Cork and later moved to England to be educated. Their children and the extended family have retained strong links with Ireland.



25. Account of John Redmond's funeral from The Sphere, March, 1918



An Roinn
Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta
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