

ON THE BRINK

The Politics of Conflict 1914-1916 Project

PRO / ANTI HOME RULE

EASTER RISING & BATTLE OF THE SOMME

COMMEMORATION

JACK WHITE

Jack White was the son of Sir George White, a hero of the Siege of Ladysmith during the Boer War. His family lived at Whitehall, approximately a mile from Broughshane.

Jack received a military education at Sandhurst and was commissioned into the 1st Gordon Highlanders. He was awarded a D.S.O for his ownbravery during the Boer War. But in 1908 he resigned his commission, choosing to become a lumberjack in Canada, and living in a Tolstoyan commune in England.

White returned home after his father died in 1912 and his interest in Irish politics was ignited. He was one of the principal organisers of an anti-Carson protest meeting in Ballymoney Town Hall in 1913. He also identified himself with workers' rights, helping to establish the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) with Jim Larkin.

Connolly and White parted ways in 1914 after Connolly burnt a Union Jack at a public meeting. Despite his opposition to British imperialism, he said that as a son of White of Ladysmith he could not allow the flag to be insulted. He joined the Irish Volunteers and operated in Derry and in Donegal. However, he disliked what he perceived as a spirit of sectarianism within the Irish Volunteers.

On the outbreak of the First World War, White wanted the Irish Volunteers to become a Home Defence Force, in order to gain military training and equipment. His position was not popular with either the pro- or anti-Redmonites and he was 'elbowed out' of the Volunteer movement. White decided to make his Ford car into an ambulance at his own expense, and went in it to serve Belgian soldiers at the front in France. But he was suspected of being a spy due to his connections to Roger Casement and other leading nationalists.



White is believed to have returned from France to become involved in the planning and carrying out of the Easter Rising. Shortly afterwards, White was arrested in South Wales attempting to persuade miners to come out on strike in support of the imprisoned James Connolly. He was given a short prison sentence for sedition, being transferred from Swansea to Pentonville Prison in London the day before Roger Casement was executed there for treason.

In 1945, White offered himself as a republican socialist candidate for North Antrim in the general election. However, within six months he had died of cancer in Belfast. He is buried in the White family plot in the First Broughshane Presbyterian Church. His tombstone records that he was Sir George White's son, but no further details are provided.

Jack White on military parade with the ICA.
Mid-Antrim Museum