

# Revealing Identity

The search for identity was influenced by inspiration from the past and reaction to events in the present. By the early twentieth century, identities had emerged that were associated with particular groups in society. Each impacted on the other and at times there were surprising juxtapositions of beliefs.

## Revealing politics

Home Rule agitation led to growing unionist opposition. The increasingly organised unionist supporters rallied in opposition to the 1886 and later Home Rule bills at the Ulster Convention held on June 17, 1892.



Publication in Protestant Ulsterian Convention in Belfast, 1892.



Badge from the 1892 Ulster Convention opposing Home Rule.



Ulster Convention, Belfast, 1892.

By the time of the 1912 Home Rule bill, the Unionist leader, Edward Carson, had mobilised northern unionists. The success of the 1914 Larne gunnunning demonstrated the strength of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).



Brass badge given to UVF members.



Copy of Ulster's Stephen Lempster and Co. memo, signed by the proprietor and a relation from a Protestant family, against the Third Home Rule Bill, 1912.



William Hall Protestant school, Binn Ballymoney (left) and Larnigan (right) under Home Rule.



Edward Court not belonging to the Ulster Volunteer Force, Binn Ballymoney.



First page of diary from Rose M. Young, diary.



**James Robert "Jack" White**  
(1879 - 1946)

Jack White (centre), son of Sir George White VC, White Hall, Broughshane, was an advocate of Home Rule and shared a platform with Roger Casement and Alice Stopford Green in Ballymoney at a Pro-Home Rule meeting in 1913. In the same year he founded the Irish Citizen Army in Dublin which later took part in the 1916 Easter Rising.

Protest collection.

**Arthur O'Neill**  
(1876-1914)

Born into the powerful O'Neill family of Shane's Castle, Randalstown, Arthur O'Neill (centre, left) was the eldest surviving son of Edward, 2nd Baron O'Neill. He was Unionist Member of Parliament for Antrim Mid from 1910 until he was killed in action during the First World War. Captain Arthur O'Neill died in November 1914 while serving as a Captain in the 2nd Life Guards at Ypres in Belgium.

Milwaukee Museum collection.



**George Young**  
(1876-1939)

Born in Galgorm House, Ballymena, George Young (centre, right) was educated in England. He continued his family's tradition of supporting 'Unionist' (Pro-British) and was a Member of Parliament at Stormont from 1929 until his death in 1939. He was one of the directors of the British Isles Spring Company in Ballymena. George Young had a particular interest in the Loyal Orange Institution and was popularly known as 'Orange George'.

Milwaukee Museum collection.



**Roger Casement**  
(1864-1916)

Born in Dublin, Roger Casement was orphaned by the age of twelve and spent much of his early life with relatives at Magherintemple, Ballycastle. Educated in Ballymena, he retained links with north Antrim throughout his life and was active in the 1904 Glens Fés. He opposed cruelties in the Congo and Brazil when working in the Consular Service until 1912. His involvement with the nationalist movement and the Easter Rising led to his execution in 1916.

McArdle Museum collection.



**James B. Armour**  
(1841-1928)

Born in Lisboy, Ballymoney, J.B. Armour was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1869 and spent fifty-six years at Trinity Church, Ballymoney. He played an active role in education and publicly supported Home Rule and the Tenant Right movement. In October 1913 he was prominent in the pro-Home Rule meeting of Ballymoney Protestants and he later opposed the partition of Ireland.

Portrait of J. B. Armour by W. Carter. Image courtesy: Irish Presbyterian Church, Ballymoney.

Despite huge County Antrim support for unionism, some people from unionist families favoured Home Rule, such as Captain Jack White of Broughshane. Son of an Anglo-Boer War hero, White organised a Protestant pro-Home Rule meeting in Ballymoney in October 1913. A local Presbyterian minister, Rev. J.B. Armour, supported him and speakers included Roger Casement and Alice Stopford Green.

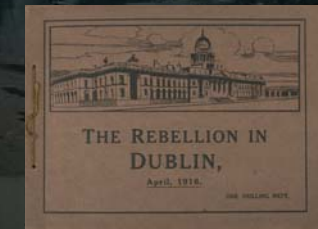
The nationalist Irish Volunteers organised the Howth gunnunning of August 1914, echoing the earlier Larne event. Roger Casement's failed efforts to obtain German support for a rising led to his execution in August 1916.

Political unrest in early twentieth-century Ireland led to tensions within families. Rose Young of Galgorm Castle came from a unionist background, but was active in the Gaelic League. Her brother 'Orange' George Young served as Unionist Member of Parliament and was prominent in the Orange Order. Similarly, Rose Young's friend Margaret Dobbs shared her interest in Gaelic culture and was a friend of Roger Casement, yet her brother James took part in the UVF Larne gunnunning.

## Revealing conflict

In September 1914 the Home Rule Bill became law, but the First World War had begun and both unionists and nationalists joined the war effort. The July 1916 Battle of the Somme saw terrible Irish losses, a sacrifice that was not forgotten. At Easter 1916, Irish republicans staged a rebellion in Dublin to try to secure independence by force. Subsequent conflict led to the 1921 partition of Ireland.

Long before the outbreak of war, nationalists opposed army recruitment. In 1905 Stephen Clarke was arrested in Ballycastle for distributing anti-recruitment pamphlets. F.J. Bigger's skill in organising his defence ensured that Clarke was acquitted.



Poster commemorating the 1916 Rebellion in Dublin, with photographs showing the destruction caused by the rebels.

