



**HAL**  
open science

# James Doherty, Irish Liberty, British Democracy: The Third Irish Home Rule Crisis, 1909-1914

Pauline Collombier-Lakeman

► **To cite this version:**

Pauline Collombier-Lakeman. James Doherty, Irish Liberty, British Democracy: The Third Irish Home Rule Crisis, 1909-1914. 2020, pp.202-204. 10.4000/etudesirlandaises.10393 . hal-04601402

**HAL Id: hal-04601402**

**<https://hal.science/hal-04601402v1>**

Submitted on 4 Jun 2024

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

---

James Doherty, *Irish Liberty, British Democracy: The Third Irish Home Rule Crisis, 1909-1914*

Pauline Lakeman

---



**Édition électronique**

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/10393>  
DOI : 10.4000/etudesirlandaises.10393  
ISSN : 2259-8863

**Éditeur**

Presses universitaires de Caen

**Édition imprimée**

Date de publication : 31 décembre 2020  
Pagination : 202-204  
ISBN : 978-2-84133-996-9  
ISSN : 0183-973X

**Référence électronique**

Pauline Lakeman, « James Doherty, *Irish Liberty, British Democracy: The Third Irish Home Rule Crisis, 1909-1914* », *Études irlandaises* [En ligne], 45-2 | 2020, mis en ligne le 31 décembre 2020, consulté le 14 février 2021. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/10393> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesirlandaises.10393>

---



*Études irlandaises* est mise à disposition selon les termes de la Licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Partage dans les Mêmes Conditions 4.0 International.

mention but a few examples. It is thus revealed that, despite its increasingly distant relations with what was then the most powerful union, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU), from which it had emerged, the ICA was to retain its syndicalist flavour as illustrated by its use as an "armed picket" in a number of industrial disputes in 1914-1915. Not widely known is also the fact that the labour militia was not created *ex nihilo* in the middle of the Dublin Lockout of 1913, but that a corps of bodyguards had already been set up beforehand by the strike committee. Leddin furthermore revisits the myth of Connolly's kidnapping by the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in January 1916, pointing out that it was of his own free will that the ICA leader met with representatives of the republican secret society to seal an alliance in preparation for a rebellion. Another aspect of interest is that, unlike Matthews, the author provides some insight into why the ICA hardly developed outside Dublin. The main reason being that the Irish Volunteers already had a strong presence in the rest of the country, leaving little room for another militia.

More disputable, however, appears the assertion whereby the egalitarian nature of the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic would have been influenced by Connolly's socialist thinking, not least because of certain similarities with passages in the ICA Constitution. To this it can be replied that the principles of the Proclamation were expressed in sufficiently general terms to elicit the endorsement of non-socialist IRB activists, some of whose leaders nevertheless had a social conscience. One may also regret that some passages seem to depart somewhat from the history of the ICA strictly speaking, such as those dedicated to the Limerick soviet and the rail embargo of British soldiers and military supplies, in which the labour militia did not take any part. Or, in the same vein, at the end of the conclusion, when the author tends to confuse Connolly's legacy with that of the ICA.

The aforesaid reservations notwithstanding, Leddin's book is overall of great analytical richness, supplemented by abundant appendices (p. 234-249). Through its exploration of the working-class and socialist arm of Irish republicanism, the full complexity of the revolutionary process is brought to the forefront. It therefore provides a valuable source for any exhaustive study of the Irish Revolution.

Olivier COQUELIN

**James Doherty, *Irish Liberty, British Democracy: The Third Irish Home Rule Crisis, 1909-1914*, Cork, Cork University Press, 2019, xi + 308 p.**

The decade of centenaries celebrated in Ireland since 2012 has led to the publication of many new scholarly works re-examining the Home Rule crisis of 1912-1914, the Irish Parliamentary Party and the figure of John Redmond. James Doherty's *Irish Liberty, British Democracy* is part of this still ongoing effort to shed new light

on Irish political history and Anglo-Irish relations. The book goes back on the period which opened with the constitutional crisis triggered by the House of Lords' rejection of the 1909 budget, which was to play a seminal role in both British and Irish politics. Not only was the Lords' power of veto curtailed and the Liberal party returned to power after ten years of Conservative rule; the hung Parliament resulting from the two general elections of January and December 1910 also compelled the British Liberals to ally once more with the Irish parliamentary nationalists and with Labour. These combined events opened the way for the introduction in April 1912 of a third Home Rule Bill, which was likely to be passed by Parliament, reviving the concerns of Irish and British unionists and leading to what has been known as the Ulster crisis of 1912-1914. While poring over these well-known episodes, James Doherty investigates an array of fresh avenues. Rather than narrowing the debate on Ireland, Doherty shows that self-government was a greater British issue and fitted within the quest for wider democracy in the United Kingdom: in his view, the debate for Irish Home Rule became a struggle to apply the terms of the 1911 Parliament Act, reassert what liberalism meant and uphold the principles popular liberalism was still deeply attached to – compliance with the law, the supremacy of the Commons, and the need to reduce the powers of the elites. This thesis provides a new reading frame for the episode of 1912-1914, which is seen as a second constitutional crisis after that of 1909-1911. It also leads Doherty to highlight the weakened state of the Liberal party even before 1914: Home Rule revealed (rather than fostered) a widening gap between the party's rank and file and its leadership, whose lack of foresight and cynicism is regularly emphasised. By contrast, Doherty attempts to offer a nuanced portrayal of John Redmond. While he admits that Redmond may have been too complacent regarding Ulster and ultimately made a number of choices and calculations that backfired against him, he also interestingly challenges the idea Redmond may have been a weak or failed leader. The Irish party chairman no doubt had to grapple with divisions within the Irish Parliamentary Party and face the growing threat of physical force nationalism in 1913-1914. But what transpires from Doherty's account is rather the amount of support and leverage he had amongst the radical wing of the Liberal party, who saw him as a champion of democratic and liberal principles. Redmond is also seen as a political figure whose acceptance of an amending bill temporarily excluding Ulster and call upon Irishmen to join the British war effort in 1914 might not have failed if World War One had not lasted four years. Going against the idea that civil war in Ireland was inevitable, Doherty speculates that Redmond and Carson were ready for compromise and peace.

These lines of enquiry contribute to the revision of previous historiographies of the British Liberal party, the Irish Parliamentary Party, John Redmond, unionism and partition. As a result, *Irish Liberty*, *British Democracy* will be of interest to anyone interested in these topics. Another strength of the book lies in its use of fresh material: the usual cabinet papers, public speeches by the leading political figures of the day are obviously relied upon; but there are several interesting passages in which Doherty resorts to original sources such as the archives of Irish nationalists Tom

Kettle and T. P. Gill; the press is also employed extensively to bring to the fore the views of the liberal rank-and-file and compare them with those of the leadership.

This is not the first time that Home Rule has been examined in relation to the subject of democracy. Eugenio Biagini's 2007 *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876-1906* already suggested that the matter of Irish self-governance had a significant impact on British liberalism, leading not to its decline but to its reshaping as the liberal rank and-file became more concerned with freedom, human rights, imperialism and required that "politics should be guided by non-negotiable moral imperatives" (p. 376). James Doherty demonstrates that Home Rule remained popular with the lesser members of the Liberal party and liberal grassroots, who regarded its enactment as a moral imperative, a confirmation of the Liberal party's commitment to progressive politics, and the ultimate proof of the greater democratisation of Britain and its institutions. In doing so, he provides an insightful extension of Biagini's work.

Pauline LAKEMAN

**Cormac Moore, *Birth of the Border: The Impact of Partition in Ireland*, Newbridge, Merrion Press, 2019, viii + 306 p.**

En cette année 2020 qui marque le centenaire du Government of Ireland Act, année faisant elle-même partie de la grande décennie des commémorations (commémorations de 1914, 1916, 1918, 1920, 1921, 1922...), il était tout à fait naturel que des ouvrages sur la partition de l'Irlande soient proposés par les maisons d'édition irlandaises. Si l'on ajoute à cela le contexte très particulier qu'est celui du Brexit et de l'imbroglio constitutionnel et socio-économique qu'il crée autour de la frontière irlandaise, il était inévitable que la question de la frontière entre Irlande et Irlande du Nord soit à nouveau une préoccupation commune aux historiens et au public.

C'est dans ce contexte que Cormac Moore, historien au Dublin City Council, où il est en charge précisément des commémorations, a publié il y a quelques mois un ouvrage intitulé *Birth of the Border: The Impact of Partition in Ireland* chez Merrion Press.

Le but de cet ouvrage n'est pas vraiment d'apporter une réponse scientifique nouvelle aux questions que les historiens, sociologues et politologues se posent depuis longtemps sur les origines et les causes de cette partition, ni sur les stratégies possibles qui existent pour résoudre cette question frontalière séculaire. Il s'agit pour Cormac Moore de décrire les principaux impacts qu'a eu la création de deux nouvelles entités étatiques autonomes sur l'île. En quatorze chapitres, très courts, essentiellement thématiques, l'auteur détaille la façon dont différents secteurs de la société, comme le mouvement ouvrier, les églises, les forces de sécurité, les entreprises, le monde éducatif, le milieu sportif, le monde judiciaire etc., se sont adaptés à cette nouvelle donne.