



# EXPLORING THE 1798 REBELLION

- *The Impact of the Physical Force Tradition on Irish Politics*

## CHRONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

1775 AD

1775-83  
The American Revolution

1780 AD



1785 AD

1789  
The French Revolution

1790 AD

1791  
Society of the United Irishmen founded in Belfast

1793 AD

1793  
France declared war on Britain

1796 AD

Tone went to France  
British Government brought in repression, arms searches  
French invasion fleet in Bantry; Tone on board; failed to land due to bad weather

1798 AD

1798  
Arrest of United Irishmen leaders  
Risings in Wexford and Ulster  
French army landed in Killala Bay, Co. Mayo  
French fleet captured off Donegal; Tone arrested  
Tone tried and sentenced to hang; attempted suicide; later died

1800 AD

Act of Union

162

L.O. 2.3

The Nature of History: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11

CBA1

CBA2



## You will learn to ...

- ⌚ Explore the impact of the physical force tradition on Irish politics
- ⌚ Explore the impact of the 1798 Rebellion
- ⌚ Explore the Nature of History

## KEY WORDS

- |                           |              |                  |
|---------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| • Cause                   | • Course     | • Consequence    |
| • Empathy                 | • Source     | • Evidence       |
| • Bias                    | • Chronology | • Physical force |
| • Parliamentary tradition | • Impact     |                  |

## Political Traditions in Modern Ireland

There were two main political traditions in Ireland – nationalism and unionism.

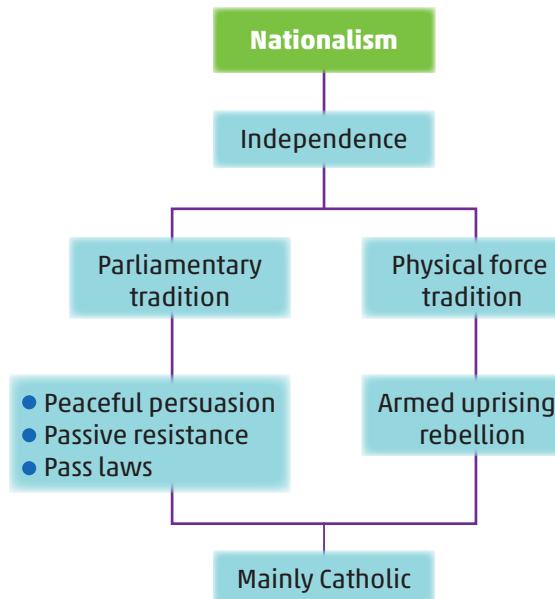
- Nationalism sought to gain independence from Britain while unionism wanted to maintain British rule in Ireland.

Nationalists disagreed about how they would achieve independence.

- Some believed in **parliamentary means** – that is, using the British Parliament to pass laws to give independence to Ireland. This tradition used **peaceful means** to achieve its aim of an independent Ireland. **Leaders** associated with this tradition in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries included Henry Grattan, Daniel O'Connell, Isaac Butt, Charles Stewart Parnell and John Redmond.
- Others supported **physical force** as a means of achieving independence. This would mean organising **armed rebellion** or **uprising** to defeat the British army in Ireland. **Leaders** associated with this tradition in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries included Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, William O'Brien, James Stephens and Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa.

These political traditions were **dominant at different times** during those centuries. The traditions also continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and we will look at this later.

## Political traditions in modern Ireland



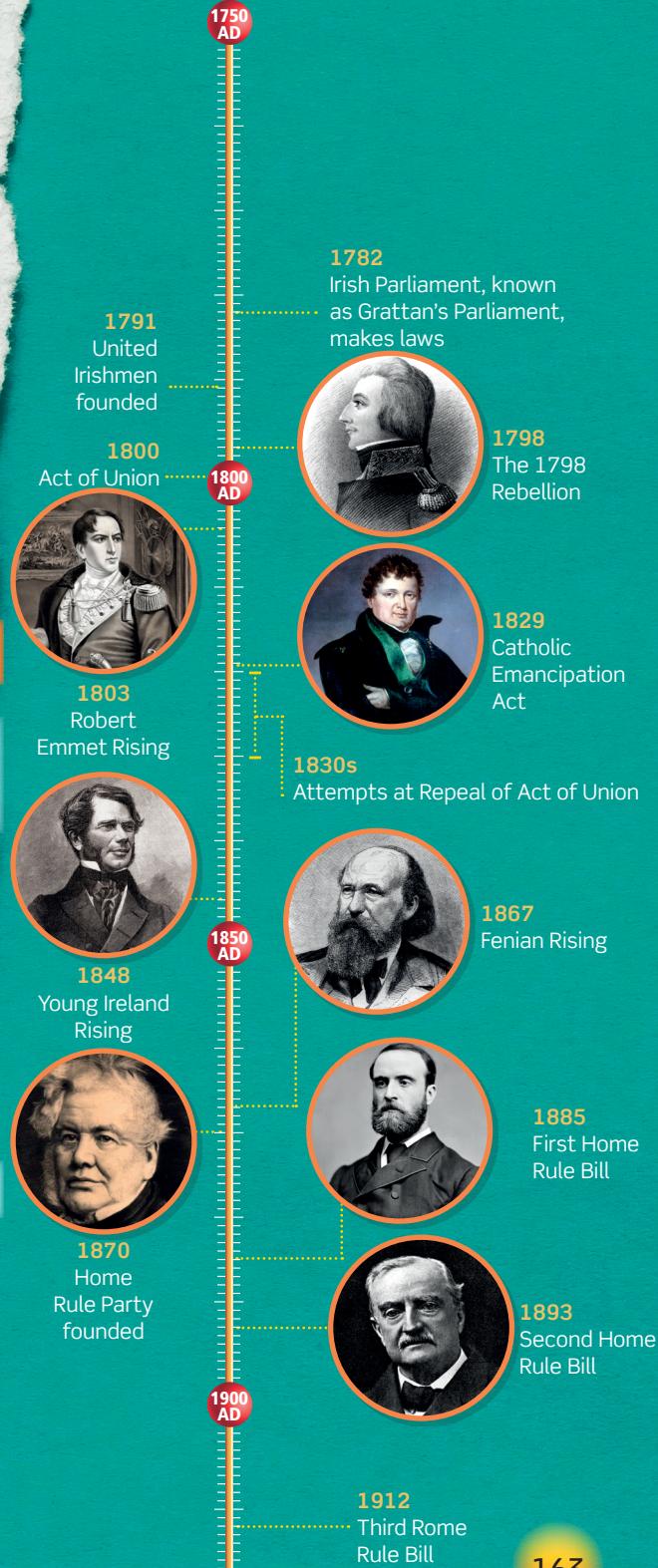
## HISTORICAL CONCEPTS

Outline political traditions in modern Ireland



### Timeline of Nationalist political traditions in Modern Ireland

#### CHRONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

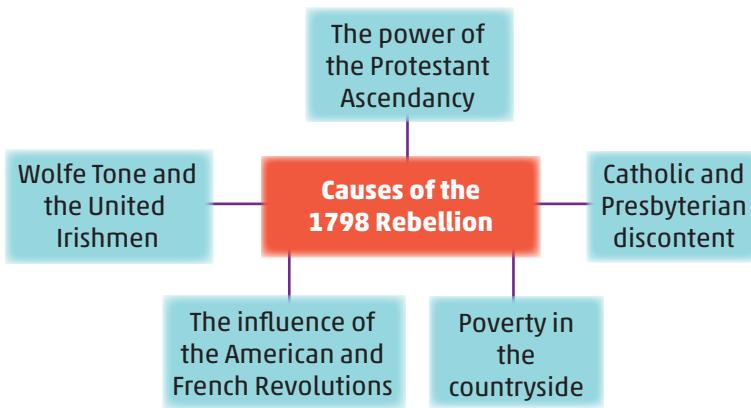


What events are listed in the timeline as part of the physical force tradition? What events are listed as part of the parliamentary tradition?



- ① List the causes of the 1798 Rebellion
- ② Examine the causes of the 1798 Rebellion

### HISTORICAL CONCEPTS



# Ireland in 1790

## The Protestant Ascendancy

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Ireland was ruled by a parliament in Dublin that was under the control of Great Britain. The Irish Parliament was controlled by the **Protestant Ascendancy**, that is, by members of the Church of Ireland (or Anglican Church). Even though they made up only 15 per cent of the population, they owned most of the land of Ireland, which they got during the plantations.

### Catholic and Presbyterian discontent

The Protestant Ascendancy used the **penal laws** to maintain its power in Ireland. These were laws that **discriminated** against Catholics and Presbyterians. Catholics, who formed 75 per cent of the population, lived all over Ireland, but Presbyterians, who formed 10 per cent, lived mainly in Ulster.

Although some of the penal laws had been abolished (repealed), Catholics and

Presbyterians still protested about the remaining laws. They also had to pay **tithes** (one-tenth of their crops) to support the Anglican clergy.

### Poverty in the countryside

The majority of people in Ireland lived in the **countryside**. Most of the people were tenant farmers and landless labourers. The population of Ireland doubled in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, so many farms were **subdivided**. As a result, many people were **very badly off**.

### The influence of the American Revolution

The Americans had won their **independence** from Britain in 1783. This was an example for some in Ireland, led by Henry Grattan, who wanted the Irish Parliament to have more power. In the circumstances, the Irish Volunteers won the right for the Irish Parliament to make its **own laws** (legislative independence) in 1782.

### The influence of the French Revolution

The principles of the French Revolution – **liberty, equality and fraternity** (brotherhood, nationality) – were popular in Ireland, especially among **Presbyterians** in Belfast. Some political leaders wanted the French revolutionary principles put into practice in Ireland.

### The United Irishmen

The **Society of the United Irishmen** was founded in Belfast on 18 October 1791. They wanted to reduce English power in Ireland.

- To do that they sought the '*complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament.*'
- They wanted to include '*Irishmen of every religious persuasion*', including Catholics, in that reform.

Q

What caused discontent in Ireland in 1790?

### Part of a swearing in ceremony for United Irishmen

'What is that in your hand?'  
 'It is a branch'.  
 'Of what?  
 Of the tree of Liberty.'  
 'Where did it first grow?'  
 'In America.'  
 'Where does it bloom?'  
 'In France.'  
 'Where did the seed fall?'  
 'In Ireland.'

### Oath taken by United Irishmen

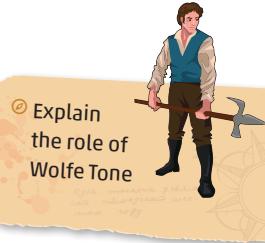
'I ---- do voluntarily declare that I will persevere (carry on) and endeavour (try) to form a Brotherhood of affection amongst Irishmen of every religious persuasion. I do further declare that I will persevere and endeavour for a Parliamentary Reform, and for an equal representation of all the people in Ireland. So help me God.'

1. How did the words in the ceremony connect Ireland with a **wider revolutionary movement**?
2. What, do you think, is the wider revolutionary movement?
3. What are the **aims** of the United Irishmen according to the Oath?
4. How does the oath show that the United Irishmen began as a **peaceful organisation**?

## Wolfe Tone

Theobald Wolfe Tone, a Dublin lawyer, was present at the founding meeting of the United Irishmen. He came to prominence when he wrote a pamphlet, *An Argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* (1791).

Tone supported the British government getting rid of some more of the penal laws but he was **disappointed** that the government did not get rid of them all.



Q

What were the aims of the United Irishmen? Why did their aims change? What part did Tone play?

### The influence of war

War broke out between Britain and France in 1793 and this **changed everything**. Now the British feared a French invasion so they stopped any further reforms and brought in a policy of **repression**.

The United Irishmen were banned so they became a **secret, oath-bound society**. Instead of seeking parliamentary reform, they started planning an **anti-English rebellion** and a republic.

### Wolfe Tone sought help

Tone went to America first, and then to France. He asked the French revolutionary government for help. They provided a fleet of 43 ships and 15,000 soldiers, with one of their most able commanders, General Hoche. They failed to land in Bantry Bay in 1796 due to bad weather. Tone, on board one of the ships, was very disappointed.

*'We have now been six days in Bantry Bay within 500 yards of the shore without being able to land. .... all our hopes are now reduced to getting back safely to Brest (France), and I believe we will set sail for that port the instant the weather will permit.'*



A drawing by James Gillray, an English artist, on *End of the Irish Invasion; or - the Destruction of the French Armada* (1797)

Q

Can you **identify** the ships? Does this drawing support or oppose the French attempted invasion in Bantry Bay in 1796? Is this **mocking** the invasion? Is this **propaganda**? Explain your answers by referring to evidence in the drawing.



# Analysing Sources

## How did Tone's ideas change?

### HISTORICAL EMPATHY

#### Q Source 1

I do not mean to take away from the application of his Majesty's rights: I owe him allegiance (loyalty), and if occasion should require it, I would be ready, cheerfully, to spill my blood in his service.

*(An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland [1791])*

#### Q Source 3

July 14<sup>th</sup> [1791]. I sent down to Belfast, resolutions suited to this day, and reduced Ireland was the great grievance (complaint) of the country. 2nd. That the most efficient way to oppose it was by a reform in Parliament. 3rd. That no reform could be just which did not include the Catholics.

*(Tone's Diary)*

#### Q Source 2

My argument is simply this: That Ireland requires a strength in the people to counteract (cancel out) the influence of [the British] Government: that this strength may be safely and peaceably achieved through the reform of Parliament: and finally that no reform is honourable, or just, which does not include, the extension of elective franchise (vote) to the Roman Catholics.

*(An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland [1791])*

#### Q Source 4

To subvert (undermine) the tyranny (oppression) of our very bad Government, to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country – these were my **objects** (aims). To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions (disagreements), and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations (religions) of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter (Presbyterian) – these were my **means** (methods).

*(The Autobiography of Theobald Wolfe Tone [1937])*



1. Why are these sources called **primary** sources?
2. For whom is Tone prepared to **spill his blood** in Source 1?
3. According to Tone in Source 2, how will **parliamentary reform** help Ireland? What must be included as part of that reform?
4. Do Tone's views in Source 3 match those in Source 2?
5. According to Tone in Source 4, what is the source of Ireland's 'political evils'? What connection does Tone want to break? How does he intend to achieve his objects (aims)?
6. What changes do you notice in Tone's views?
7. **Summarise** the changes in Tone's views. Explain your answers in each case by using evidence from the sources.



## Closer to the Rebellion

The British government took action to stop the rebellion. The British commander, General Lake, used his troops to burn houses, flog and torture suspects and confiscate arms in Ulster and Leinster.

There was also conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Ulster. Peep-o'-Day Boys (Protestant group) clashed with the Defenders (Catholic group). After one such clash in 1795, the Orange Order was founded to maintain Protestant control.

By now though, the United Irishmen had grown to 300,000 members, and the leaders drew up plans for a rising (rebellion). However, the government used information from spies to arrest the leaders, including Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1798). He was wounded during his arrest and died a couple of weeks later.



How did the British government try to stop the rebellion? How was the Orange Order founded? How large an organisation was the United Irishmen?

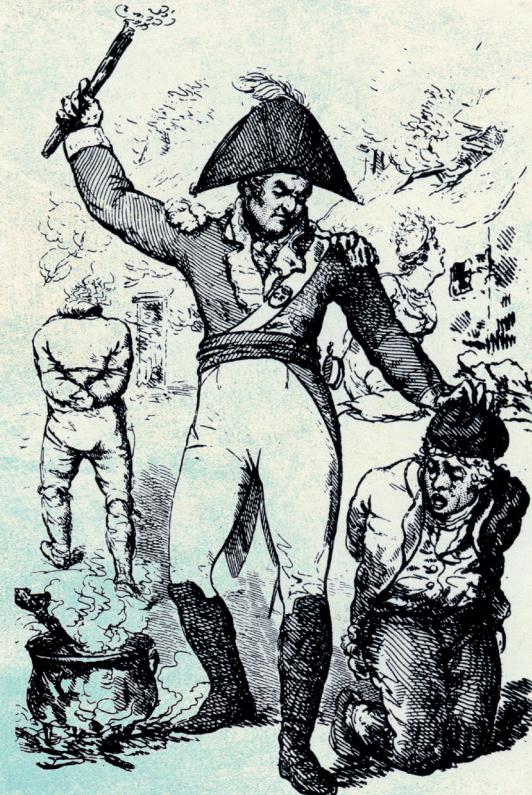
### HISTORICAL JUDGEMENTS

#### Croppies Lie Down!

This was an anti-rebel song from 1798. It refers to those with close cropped hair, in imitation of the French revolutionaries.

*We soldiers of Erin, so proud of the name,  
We'll raise on the rebels and Frenchmen our fame;  
We'll fight to the last in the honest old cause,  
And guard our religion, our freedom and laws;  
We'll fight for our country, our King and his crown,  
And make all the traitors and croppies lie down.  
Down, down, croppies lie down.*

*The rebels so bold, when they've none to oppose,  
To houses and haystacks are terrible foes;  
They murder poor parsons and likewise their wives,  
At the sight of a soldier they run for their lives;  
Whenever we march over country and town  
In ditches and cellars the croppies lie down.  
Down, down, croppies lie down.*



Pitch-capping with lighting tar used by soldiers against rebels before and during the 1798 Rebellion (from Walter Cox's Irish Magazine, February 1810)

1. In the song, why do the soldiers say they are fighting?
2. What do they say about the rebels?
3. What is the purpose of this song, do you think?
4. What is the purpose of pitch-capping as shown in the drawing?
5. Are these sources **primary** or **secondary** sources? How **useful** are these sources for historians? Explain your answers in each case using evidence from the sources.



Describe the events of the 1798 Rebellion

## The 1798 Rebellion

Even though the leaders were arrested, the rebellion broke out in four main areas.

- In the counties of Dublin, Kildare and Meath, a rising was signalled by attacks on the mail coaches. But the rising was easily put down.
- The most serious rising took place in County Wexford. The actions of the yeomanry (a part-time force) and the militia (a full-time force) provoked a rising led by Father John Murphy and Bagenal Harvey, a Protestant landowner. They had victories at Oulart Hill, Enniscorthy and Wexford town. The rebel forces burned over 100 Protestants in a barn in Scullabogue and killed nearly 100 in Wexford town. They were defeated at New Ross and Arklow, and later at a major battle at Vinegar Hill, near Enniscorthy. After that, the leaders were executed.
- A further rising took place in Ulster, in Counties Antrim and Down. The leaders, Henry Joy McCracken in Co. Antrim and Henry Munro in Co. Down were each defeated and executed.
- French troops, led by General Humbert, landed in Killala, Co. Mayo. He defeated the British at the Races of Castlebar but was later defeated in Ballinamuck, Co. Longford.

Q

Where did the main events of the 1798 Rebellion or Rising occur?

### COMMEMORATION



Statue of a Wexford Pikeman, commemorating the 1798 Rebellion. Erected in Wexford for 1798 bicentenary

### The 1798 Rebellion



## Tone arrived in Ireland

Tone got further help from the French government. However, he was captured on board the French fleet off the coast of Donegal. He was taken to Dublin, tried for treason and found guilty. He was sentenced to death. His request to be shot like a soldier was refused, so he committed suicide.

## Massacre at Scullabogue

On 5 June 1798, 126 people – men, women and children – were killed at Scullabogue, Co. Wexford. They were mostly Protestants. They had been rounded up from the locality and held prisoners some days previously. First, 37 of them were taken and shot, and some piked, in groups of four. Then the remainder, who were held in a barn, were attacked and the barn set on fire. Anyone trying to escape was piked and blocked. The Massacre at Scullabogue has caused controversy ever since.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The 1798 Rebellion is commemorated by many ballads, including 'Boulavogue', 'The Boys of Wexford' and 'The Rising of the Moon'.



Go onto YouTube and look up 'Reasons for the failure of the 1798 Rebellion'

### CHRONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

#### Timeline for 1798 Rebellion

May	Rebels victory at Battle of Oularc Hill
June	Rebels control Enniscorthy and Wexford
June	Rebels defeated at the Battle of New Ross Massacre at Scullabogue
	Henry Joy McCracken rebelled in Co. Antrim
	Rebels defeated at Battle of Vinegar Hill
August	General Humbert landed in Killala, Co. Mayo
September	General Humbert defeated at Ballinamuck, Co. Longford
October	Tone captured in French ship off Donegal
November	Tone committed suicide

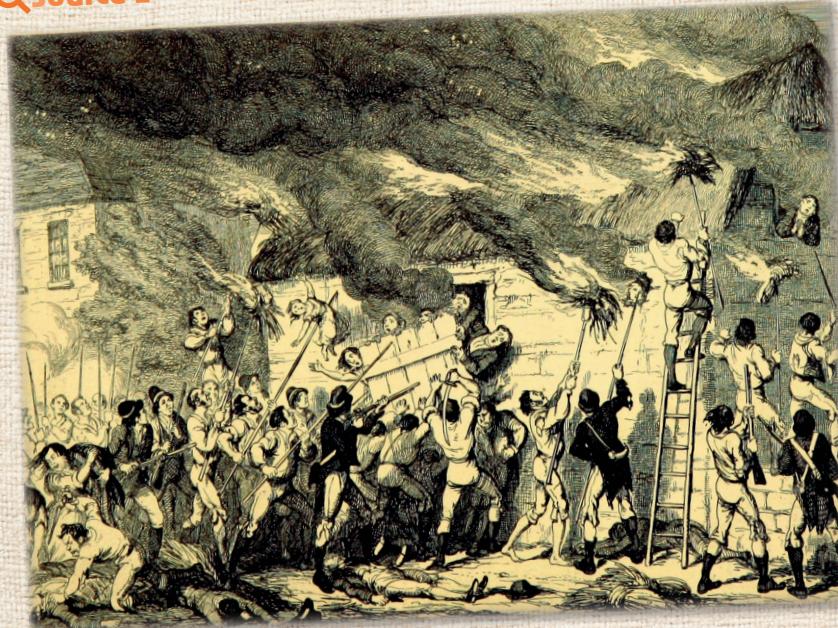


# Analysing Sources

## Massacre at Scullabogue

### CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

#### Source 1



Massacre at Scullabogue, a drawing by George Cruikshank (1792–1878), from William Maxwell, *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798; with memoirs of the Union, and Emmett's insurrection in 1803* (1845)

pp. 93–94



- Is this drawing a **primary** or a **secondary** source?
- What is happening at the barn?
- What is happening to the people that are trying to get out of the barn?
- What **weapons** are being used by the attackers?
- How would you describe the **mood** of the crowd?
- Is this source **reliable**?
- Is it **propaganda**?
- What **impression**, do you think, the drawing would make on people who saw it in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Explain your answers in each case by referring to evidence in the drawing.



1. What does the writer in Source 2 say happened to 'suspected government loyalists' in Wexford?
2. What sometimes happened to prisoners, according to this source?
3. What part did **sectarianism** play in the massacre, according to Source 2?
4. Why is this a **secondary** source? Explain your answers in each case, using evidence from the sources.

### Q Source 2

What conclusions can we draw from this summary of the evidence? We must first acknowledge that the rounding up of suspected government loyalists (supporters) was common practice everywhere in Wexford during the rebellion, and the killing of prisoners was not unknown either; in this sense what happened at Scullabogue was part of a larger pattern, although on a larger scale and carried out in an especially brutal manner. Beyond this though, the evidence strongly suggests that the killings took place as an immediate reaction to atrocities in the battle of New Ross, raging six miles away. ... Finally, while it cannot be denied that sectarian hatred (hatred between religions, groups) had some part to play in the affair, I suspect that as we learn more about the crime and the people who carried it out, ... the sectarian dimension (aspect) will then come to appear far more incidental (less important) to the affair than it has seemed up to this.

**(Daniel Gahan, *The Scullabogue Massacre 1798*, in *History Ireland*, 1996)**



Memorial for victims of Scullabogue Massacre, unveiled in May 1998

### Q Source 3

The killings were not a matter of mob-frenzy ... but a military-style operation carried out by a small number of men, perhaps as few as seventeen [watched by a much larger group] ... So far as we know all of [the Catholics] were imprisoned and killed because of their connections with local Protestants. ... Apart from [the wife and son of a yeoman], none [of the total killed] had any known connection with the military; they were only 'loyalists' in the general sense that this was used as a synonym (same or nearly same meaning) for 'Protestant' ... Most died mainly because they belonged to recently established and deeply resented local Protestant settlements.

**(Tom Dunne, *The Killings at Scullabogue, in Rebellions: Memoir, Memory and 1798* [2010])**



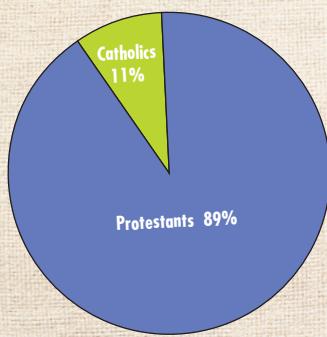
1. How were the killings carried out, according to Source 3?
2. Why were Catholics killed?
3. What did the word 'loyalists' mean, according to Source 3?
4. Why did most of the people die?
5. Do Sources 2 and 3 come to the same conclusions about the Scullabogue Massacre? Explain your answers in each case by referring to evidence in the sources.

### Q Source 5

The reporting of these (Wexford) events in Belfast from 7 July (1798) to 11 June the following year (1799) laid great stress on the brutal, annihilating (destroying) anti-Protestantism of the Catholic masses: 'if the gates of hell were opened there would not come a worse enemy than our neighbours were.'

**(Paul Bew, *The Politics of Enmity 1789–2006* [2007])**

### Q Source 4



#### Known occupations

Farmers	5
Weavers	4
Shoemakers	2
Servants	2
Masons	2
Others – Butcher, Labourer, Butler, Piper, Excise official, Steward, Tailor, Cattle buyer, Slater, and Schoolmaster	



1. What conclusions about the people who were killed can you draw from the information in Source 4?
2. Does this information help you understand what happened in Scullabogue?
3. According to Source 5, what was the impact of the events in Wexford on Belfast?

# The Impact of the Rebellion

## Death and destruction

There is uncertainty about the number killed in the 1798 Rebellion. Numbers range from about 10,000 to 30,000. There was widespread **destruction** in towns, such as New Ross, where fighting took place.

Explore the impact of the 1798 Rebellion at the time and on later Irish history

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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## The Act of Union

The **Act of Union** (1801) was passed which ended the parliament in Dublin. Instead, all Irish members of parliament (M.P's) and Irish Lords sat in the parliament in Westminster. Ireland was now ruled directly from London.

## Memory

For decades, families who had supported the Rebellion sought safety in suppressing their memories; Anna Kinsella (a historian) points out that the earliest known 1798 memorial in Co. Wexford was erected as late as 1875 in Bunclody. (*The Irish Times*, 10 January 1998)

## Catholics and Protestants in conflict

*'The bloodshed and murder confirmed two awful lessons. For Catholics, that the state (government) and its allies, (especially perhaps its Orange allies) would, if provoked, impose a bloody terror on the countryside. For Protestants, on the other hand, it became easy to claim that Catholics could not be trusted: given a chance they would use their power, as at Scullabogue, to destroy the other community. Both sides now believed the worst of each other.'* (Paul Bew, *The Politics of Enmity 1789–2006*, [2007])

## Republic and physical force

The United Irishmen movement influenced **later generations**. The United Irishmen put forward the concept (idea) of a **republic** as the right form of Irish independence. They also had fought and died for the republic. For some people in later years, **armed rising** (physical force) was the only way a republic would be gained.

### Boolavogue

*At Boolavogue as the sun was setting  
O'er the bright May meadows of Shelmalier  
A rebel hand set the heather blazing  
And brought the neighbours from far and near  
Then Father Murphy from old Kilcormack  
Spurred up the rock with a warning cry  
'Arm, arm' he cried, 'for I've come to lead you  
For Ireland's freedom we fight or die'*

*Boolavogue* was composed in 1898, on the centenary of the 1798 Rebellion

- What is the message of this verse of 'Boolavogue'?
- Is the song propaganda?
- What do you think about the song, after listening to it?



Listen to the song being sung on YouTube.

## The physical force tradition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

### Q The Rising of 1803

This rising was organised by Robert Emmet who was hanged for his part in it. Even though the rising was a failure, Emmet's speech from the dock at his trial became famous. 'Not only did Emmet fail to take Dublin; he came nowhere near any success at all ... A ... mob was soon rampaging through the streets of Dublin with pikes and blunderbusses. It eventually found itself surrounding the coach of Lord Kilwarden, the Lord Chief Justice, and a remarkably humane man, who with his son-in-law was now savagely piked to death.'

(R. Kee, *The Green Flag* [1972])



### Q The Young Irelanders Rising of 1848

'What is often described as the rising of 1848 in Ireland was not in any practical sense a rising at all.' The leaders, including William Smith O'Brien, were sent into exile in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania).

(R. Kee, *The Green Flag* [1972])

### Q

'I have but one request to ask at my departure from this world – it is the charity of its silence. Let no man write my epitaph; for as no man who knows my motives and character dares now to vindicate (justify) them, let not prejudice or ignorance asperse (criticise) them. Let them rest in obscurity and peace until other times and other men can do justice to them. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then and not till then, let my epitaph be written.'

(Robert Emmet at his trial)



William Smith O'Brien, one of the main organisers of the 1848 Rising



The main event of the Rising of 1848 was an attack on a group of Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) besieged in the Widow McCormack's house in Ballingarry, Co. Tipperary

One result of the 1848 Rising was the tricolour flag of green, white and orange, which later became the national flag of Ireland. 'The white in the centre signifies a lasting truce between the "orange" and the "green".' (Thomas Francis Meagher)

### The Fenian Rising of 1867

The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) organised the Fenian Rising of 1867. The efforts at a rising in Ireland failed, but the IRB continued to exist. Members of the IRB organised the 1916 Rising.

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Physical force tradition in 19th century

**INVESTIGATE A REPOSITORY OF HISTORICAL EVIDENCE****Investigate the National 1798 Rebellion Centre, Enniscorthy**[www.1798centre.ie](http://www.1798centre.ie)**➤ Preparing for CBA1**

**A project related to an aspect of the history of your locality or place  
(or personal/family history)**

**LOCAL PROJECTS FROM THE 1798 REBELLION AND LATER  
RISINGS**


Your  
locality can  
include your  
county

- Any United Irishmen leaders from your locality
- Any battles or incidents in your locality
- Any leaders from 19th century rebellions from your locality
- Any battles or incidents from 19th century rebellions in your locality
- Any family ancestor involved in 19th century rebellions

**➤ Preparing for CBA2**

**A project on the life and experiences of a person of historical interest**



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Web Resources  
and Reading

**PERSONS OF INTEREST FROM THE 1798 REBELLION AND THE  
PHYSICAL FORCE TRADITION IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES**

- |                       |                            |                          |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| ● Theobald Wolfe Tone | ● Lord Edward Fitzgerald   | ● General Hoche          |
| ● Father John Murphy  | ● Bagenal Harvey           | ● General Humbert        |
| ● Henry Joy McCracken | ● Henry Munro              | ● Michael Dwyer          |
| ● Robert Emmet        | ● William Smith O'Brien    | ● John Mitchel           |
| ● James Stephens      | ● Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa | ● Thomas Francis Meagher |

**Focus Task****Historical Debate**

- ‘The 1798 Rebellion showed physical force was a failure.’ Use your textbook, the internet and your school library to present the case, for and against, the motion.