

3.0 Those who Set the Stage

3.4 Those primarily concerned with Irish culture

3.4.2 Douglas Hyde, Eoin MacNeill, and the Gaelic League

Douglas Hyde (1860-1949) was born at Castlerea, Co Roscommon, the son of a Church of Ireland clergyman. He was educated by his father and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he studied law. Later, he learned Irish at Ratra, Co. Roscommon, where the language was still spoken but was seemingly in irreversible decline. His life was largely devoted to the study and publication of traditional Irish literature and folklore, his publications including Amhráin Grádh Chúige Connacht ('Love Songs of Connacht', 1893) A Literary History of Ireland (1899), and his autobiography Mise agus an Connradh ('Myself and the Gaelic League', 1931). He also wrote a number of plays, the most notable being Casadh an tSugáin (The Turning of the Straw Rope), the first play in the Irish language to be professionally produced (1901). He adopted the pen-name An Craoibhín Aoibhinn ('the delightful little branch'). In 1909 he became the first professor of modern Irish at University College, Dublin.

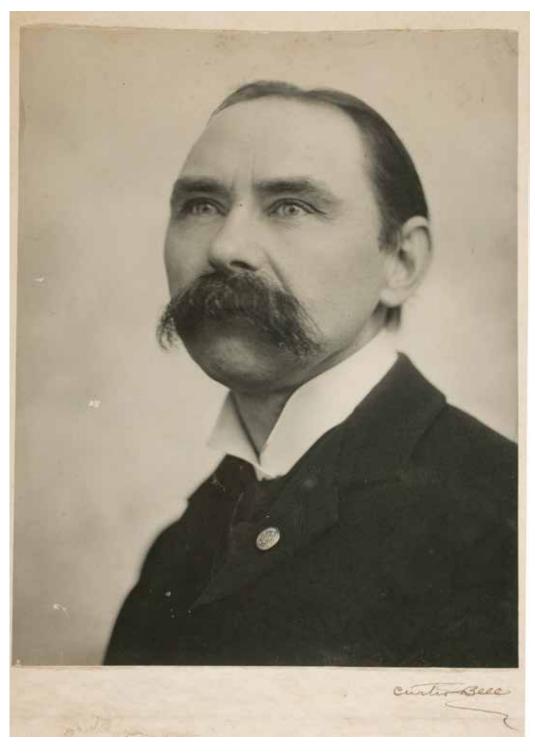
While Hyde's literary contribution was considerable, his monumental achievement was as a cultural activist. In 1893 he chaired the foundation meeting of the Gaelic League which had been convened by Eoin MacNeill; Hyde became the first president, a position he held until 1915. The organisation was non-political and nonsectarian and aimed at involving people of different religious and political loyalties in a common cultural effort. Its objective was the revival of the Irish language and the preservation of Irish literature, music and traditional culture.

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Under the direction of Hyde as president and Eoin MacNeill as secretary, the Gaelic League formulated and implemented an ambitious programme; by 1905 it had 550 branches throughout the country. The branches organised Irish classes conducted by timirí (travelling teachers) and also lectures, concerts and Irish dances. From 1899 onwards the Gaelic League published An Claidheamh Soluis, an Irish-language weekly newspaper. It staged an annual cultural festival, the Oireachtas, and had Saint Patrick's Day designated a national holiday. It also succeeded in having Irish included in the curriculum for primary and secondary schools and in having it made compulsory for matriculation at the National University of Ireland.

While the Gaelic League was strictly non-political and the membership included some unionists, the majority of members were nationalists - in the decades leading up to 1916 most would have been moderates who regarded Home Rule as the only viable objective. The membership also included extreme nationalists, including a number of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic, who were particularly influential within the organisation. While these eventually gained control in 1915, the main contribution of the Gaelic League to the 1916 Rising had already been made: over a generation the Gaelic League had accomplished significant cultural change in the nationalist population. The young men of the 1916 generation were proud to be Irish and heirs to one of the oldest civilisations in Europe; many of them spoke the Irish language; they cherished their cultural traditions; and, moreover, they were aware of their national history-a history in which Ireland had been unjustly dominated for centuries. While the majority would settle for Home Rule, some believed Ireland was entitled to full independence, an objective for which they were prepared to fight.

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Douglas Hyde as a young man.

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Hazelbrook, malahide. 12 June 1893 sear lir, It is proposed to arrange, by agreement among persons interested in the preservation of Gaelic as a spoken language, for a preliminary conceltative gathering of anot very formal kind to discuss practical steps towards the formation, on the lines The formation of an Society, on the lines indicated in a recent article in the Gaelic Journal, indicated in a recent article in the Gaelic Journal or otherwise as may be determined, of an organization to maintain and promote the use of Gaelic as a spoken language in Ireland :

Draft of letter by Eoin MacNeill proposing the foundation of a society for the preservation of the Irish language.(Ms. 19,315).

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also to discuss the means by which the aim of such an organization may best be attained. your cooperation is very carnestly desired, as also that of any friends of the movement with whom you may be in communication have influence. Kindly communicate early with Rev. E. OGrowney, M. R. J. a. Maynooth College orgwith M. J. A. Leoya, and the arcon hith Itra & Road y, Sublin, or with me at above address or at the office of the accountant General, Four fourts, Dublin. yours very truly

Draft of letter by Eoin MacNeill proposing the foundation of a society for the preservation of the Irish language.(Ms. 19,315).

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5 Preliminary meeting At a meeting held on monday, 13 July 1893, at 9 Lower Ofonnell street, sublin. Douglas Hyde L.S. in the chair, the following also present. Jas micht bogan Satrick OBrien Chas Percy Bushe Thos w Ellerker J. meile Russell. fitzgerals? Rev. Wm Hayden S.J. Vatrick & Hogan M.a. martin Kelly It was moved by fritkeill seconded by fle logan and resolved That a Society be formed under the name of the Gaelic heague for the purpose of keeping the Irish Language spoten in Sceland. moved by I oneill Russell, seconded by M Kelly and resolved ananimously. That we have present constitute ourselves the a Society under the name and for the purpose a foresaid

Minutes of the preliminary meeting of the Gaelic League. (Ms. 10,895).

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THE GAELIC LEAGUE.

(FOUNDED, July, 1893.)

OBJECTS.

1. The preservation of Irish as the national language of Ireland, and the extension of its use as a spoken tongue.

2. The study and publication of existing Gaelic literature, and the cultivation of a modern literature in Irish.

MEANS.

The means by which it is sought to achieve these objects are :-

1. The establishment of branches of the League in suitable centres, especially in the Irish-speaking districts.

2. The encouragement of the formation of classes for the study of Irish.

3. The holding of public meetings and lectures for the purpose of stimulating and informing public opinion on bchalf of the Irish language.

4. To encourage the people who know Irish to speak it habitually where it is understood, and to impart the language to the young.

5. To endeavour to secure that, as in Wales, the national language shall be the medium of instruction in the National Schools in those districts where it is the home language of the people, and that greater facilities than at present be afforded for its teaching in the National and Intermediate Schools in all parts of the country.

6. The publication and distribution of books and pamphlets in Irish, or relating thereto.

7. The publication of the Gaclic Journal, a magazine devoted exclusively to the objects of the League and issued mainly in the Irish language.

8. The encouragement of Irish music and songs in Irish.

9. To inform the public on questions relating to the movement by contributions to magazines and journals.

10. The collection of the oral Gaelic literature, consisting of folk tales, poems, songs, proverbs, riddles, &c., still extant among the people.

11. The free grant of Irish books to branches of the League that cannot easily obtain them otherwise.

A Gaelic League leaflet.

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 CHARLASS PRIOTY RUSHK, A. H. LLOYD, M. JAMES MIOILARL, OOLAN, RUERRF CONNELL, RUE GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE IRISH LANOUADE Six Rassions way we supper sum the final Lassing Strains 1. It is an Nickeral Language.
2. It is the only heritage now extent that has been left to one vari-& These, with The Patrick J. Hogan, were THE GARLIC LEAGUE. FURNIED TO KEEP THE LANDLAGE BOOKEN IN HELASON JOHN HORAN, 3 E.A PLACE, DURLS, J. H. LEOYD, 8 WARRION ALTERS, NORTH STELAR, DURLS, HOVOLARY SECRETARIES GORDON. | JOHN MUNBILL, 4 OMINUM GAMES, DUMIN. VACE PRESIDENT | Rev. EUSEBY D. CLEAVER, M.A. the original founders of the hear -X. DOUGLAS HYDE, LLD. [FROLING TRANSLATION.] TREASURERS 1 COMMUTTRE R. M3. GORDON. and scontry frick the postmemetrye na statolicky pinu ag ony more (a more many and a memory and a memory of a more and and a proper interact of which ag only memory (a myoremanne, ag interpretention) and an analysis of the second stately (a memory (a myoremany)). Second stately and a state of second stately (a memory) and a state of second stately (a memory) and a state of second stately (a memory). The second stately and a state of second stately (a memory) and a state of second stately (a memory) and a state of second stately (a memory). The second stately (a memory) and a state of second state of the second state of th bothyme. Stolesch, nid fraudstaug Sphri mood, a pande an pran Stragher in a schlar pri may collerp gad Vall, voor Chaompaio a deno object in arrgen. It denbagding politige in aven schigte kap prempia an ohning pareo den at schaol Sp Sphrainad. Dohimpican also ga man den pao Gangger a Ni hameary into litignes active pues as pushedade, act + mouth If i an Curpoin current Compan in Sacolice point an Sharbark to buangio ager to learngat may printeeringat Somilger (Tyskub) na tites i agri an tua tearpoider verne la hagun tearna na vernera panktoon i n dar i na brait gaeteolog wat Labara. Begenning somplet offendlad op pagent to found to e na waemb ani i Sommer Somilger oo labara. til Datmostre Conrepsió na Sardolge la humpuaguit ná la huiĝeost spublide ap bat, agar ničurpi ann piccept ap durne ou dunh a dyenu h ufte confisiere standige hi normon, alpun Fhanfolge da ngalisi. Gri Thurtantante ager pricinate Threnige da langa ager oa sattere atoire spacha no pann turnann tre chonnpat na Sannige to be taked a argument for we applied cash arming on Shareda tions charmes as to beer as high character a muste at a char tests an art a the 45rT 1 nUorge Cholum Chille Diomo Santrola Dully-ata-cliat, beakame, 1831, ann ran speakttham. Dioma callett. 1 Scoports.

Pages from Gaelic League brochure, Oct. 1896. (Ms. 10,895).

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Impressed with the remarkable and unescreeted success which has attended the efforts of the backie League, during its first session to popularise the use of the Irish Longuage and to maintain it a living and potent force in Ireland, the Centual Conneil has determined to push on the work organization vigorously during the coming Session. Acture working branches of the League are already istence in bark Galway Derry and New Ross: in escistures in Costs, Galway, Deary, and New Ross: and now the establishment of branches in Several other centres in the South and West of Ireland is under Consideration I am therefore directed to communicate with you in order to enlist your Co-operation in this truly National undestaking and to obtain from you, for the guidance of the Council information on the following points -1. Would "the establishment of a branch of the league he attended with any measure of success in your district, and would it contribute to its success if delegates were sent to the mangural meeting for the Central Branch 2. To what estant is Irish spoken in your district and is it spoken by the rising generation 3. Do the National Scathers in the breakity fenow Irish and is it taught in the schools 4. She names and addresses of a five energetic men who are in sympathy with the objects of the Gaulio league and who would be likely to assist you in establishing and supporting a branch. I may have point out that impossibilities are not expected at the beginning. The Council would be satisfied with a dozen active members to start with fuling compident that if the movement were once set in motion in your neighbourhood that the membership would inexease repiely in a short time to it is of the utmost importance that the conneil should have before them, at once, the information they desire I trust you will be pleased to farrier me with an early repty John Maevill Hon. See.

Statement by Eoin MacNeill on the success of the Gaelic League, 1893-4. (Ms. 10,895).

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Extract from page of An Claidheamh Soluis, 13 June 1903.

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Poster advertising the annual Seachtmhain na Gaedhilge (Irish week), c.1915-16. (Proclamations).