

A True Piece of Ireland: Phoenix Park, Dublin, 1882-1916

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J. JASON FRIEDMAN

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my dear friend, Heather Fisher. She was both an amazing friend and a tremendous inspiration. She is already greatly missed.

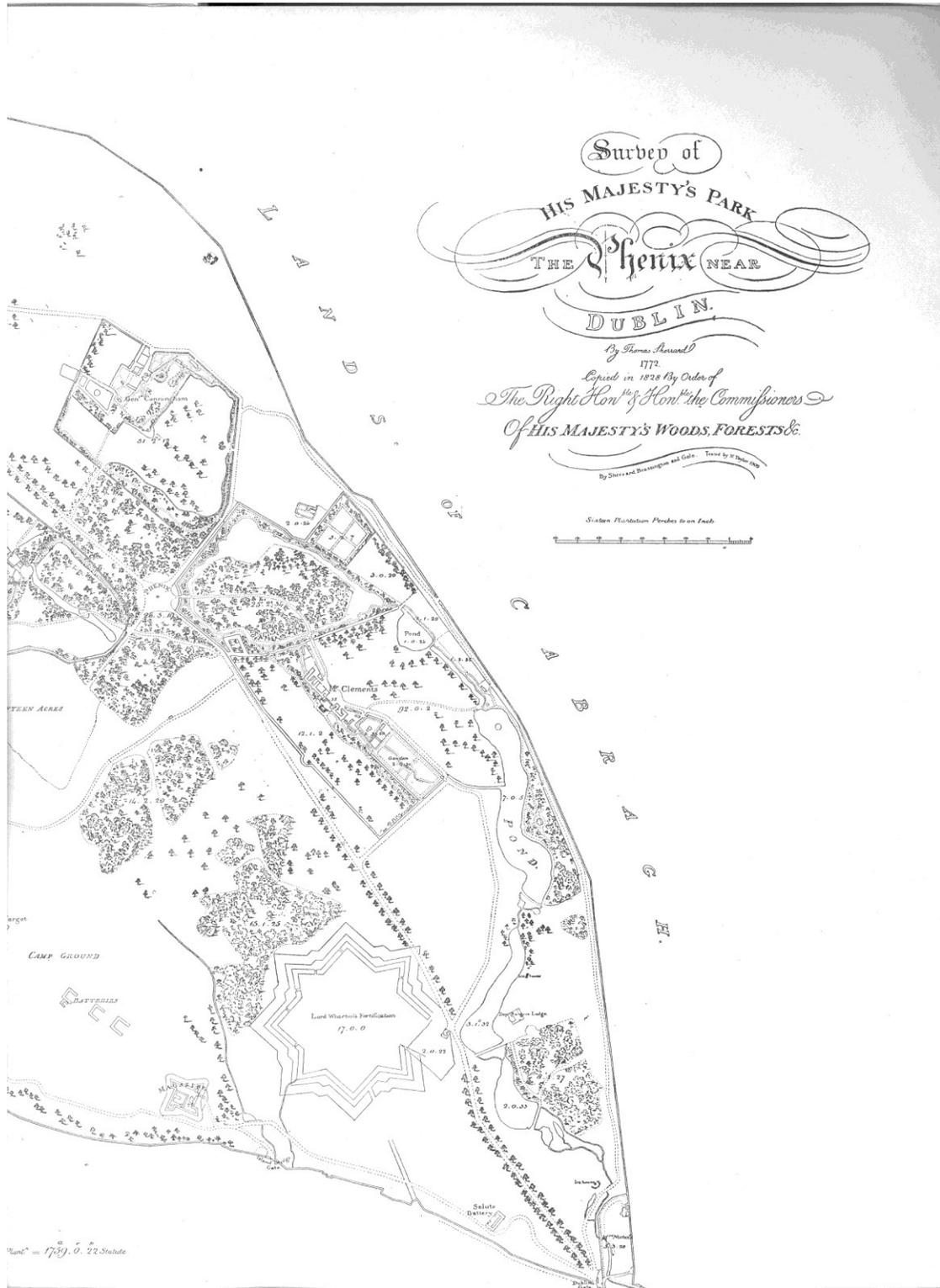
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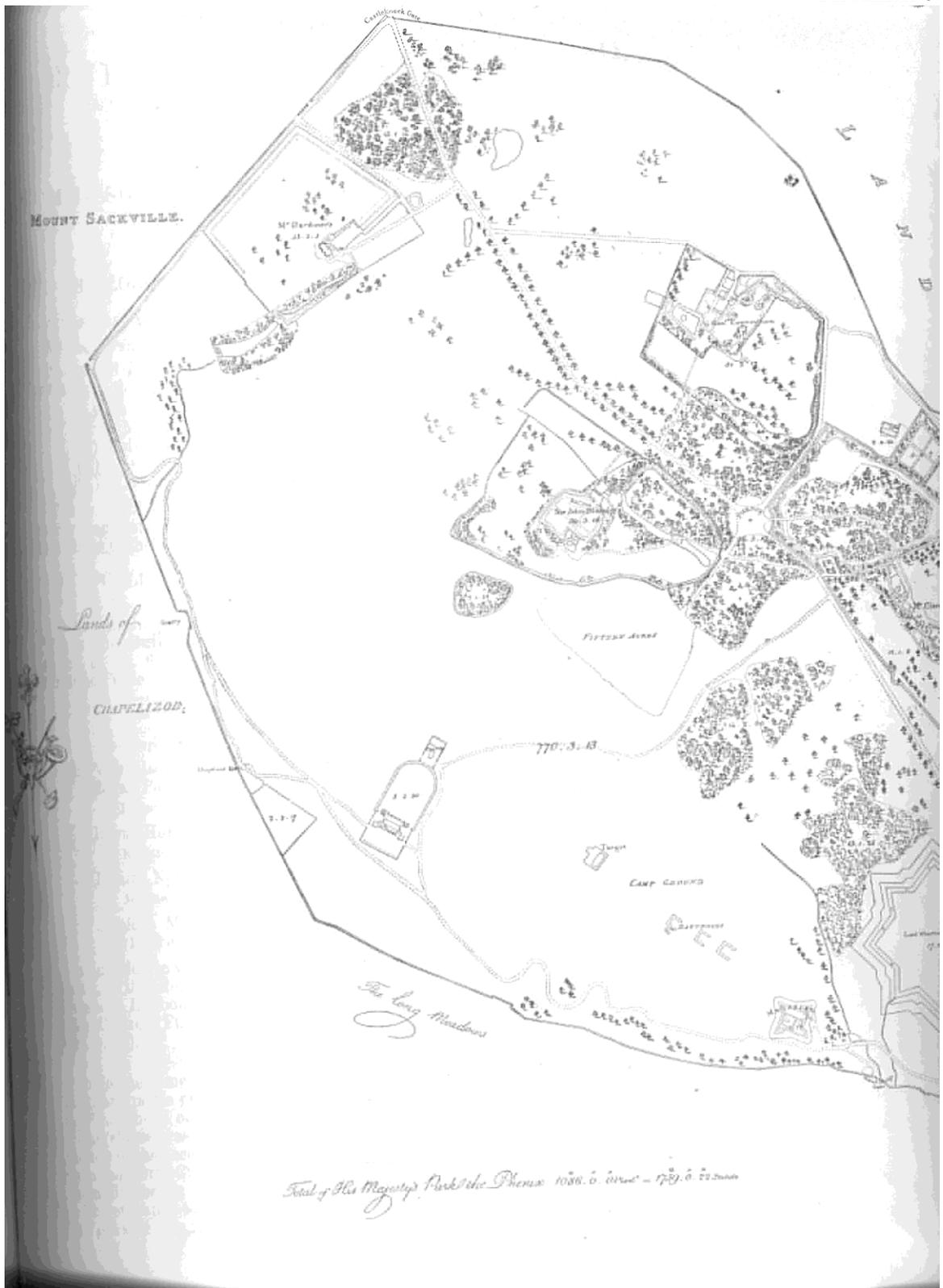
There are several people I would like to thank for their assistance with this project. Foremost, I would like to thank my professors Elizabeth Elbourne, Brian Lewis, and Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert. Professor Elbourne's constant support and encouragement throughout this program has been of great comfort and help. All three of these people have made me a better historian. I would also like to thank my fellow graduate students for their tremendous support and critical eyes. In particular, I want to mention Jodi Burkett, Daniel Johnson, Emily Morry, and Anna Shea, who all looked over a draft of this paper at one of its many stages. I am also grateful to my friend Louisa Tobin who hosted me during my unfortunately brief research in Dublin. Finally, I would like to thank the Department of History of McGill University for providing me with the opportunity to do what I love.

Abstract

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland contained a variety of nationalist, unionist, and working-class forces. A variety of groups interacted to create the Irish Free State that eventually emerged. This paper examines the role of Phoenix Park as a microcosm for understanding these elements. One can see the larger issues occupying Ireland playing out within this park. Symbols of imperial authority, a variety of forms of nationalist expression, and labor rallies all existed within this one space. Phoenix Park embodied this period of Irish history.

Map of Phoenix Park, reprinted in 1909 Commissioners' Report (originally 1772)





Introduction

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland served as a center of activity and energy. Physical-force nationalists, such as the Fenians, Irish Republican Brotherhood, and Sinn Féin pressed for a violent break from Britain. Meanwhile, the Irish Parliamentary Party and more moderate Home Rule nationalists sought a peaceful and constitutional weakening of bonds. They favored dominion status rather than outright independence. At the same time, loyalists sought to keep Ireland firmly within the structure of the United Kingdom. Cultural nationalists decried “foreign sports” and emphasized the importance of establishing an “Irish Ireland.” Trade unions increasingly asserted labor interests. All of these groups occupied important roles within Ireland as a whole, sometimes in conflict, sometimes in cooperation. Phoenix Park served as a representative locale within which to view these varied interactions.

Recently, authors such as Felix Driver, David Gilbert, Tina Loo, and Jonathan Schneer have examined cities and parks as locations for seeing larger histories. In both their book *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display, and Identity* as well as their article “Heart of empire? Landscape, Space and Performance in Imperial London,” Felix Driver and David Gilbert examine the notion of the imperial city.¹ For example, Driver and Gilbert see the development of the Empire reflected in the architecture of London through different styles, such as neoclassical.² They also argue that different buildings served as important demonstration points for imperial issues.³ They point out that the Stock

¹ Felix Driver and David Gilbert, *Imperial Cities: Display, Landscape and Identity*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999) and “Heart of Empire? Landscape, Space and Performance in Imperial London,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (February 1998): 11-28.

² Driver and Gilbert, “Heart of Empire?,” 18-19.

³ Ibid.

Exchange served both as a center of protest for Gladstone's Home Rule Bill and as a center of celebration for the relief of Mafeking.⁴ They see examining structures as focal points for events as critical to understanding the British Empire. Driver and Gilbert view people's use of space and structures as indicative of larger imperial themes. This use of sites for different purposes also occurs in Phoenix Park, a dimension this paper will explore.

In her analysis of Dublin monuments, Yvonne Whelan provides an excellent framework for examining the monuments of Phoenix Park. In her essay, "The Construction and Destruction of a Colonial Landscape: Monuments to British Monarchs in Dublin Before and After Independence," Whelan analyzes the symbolism of the erection and removal of four royal monuments to: Kings William I, George I, George II, and Queen Victoria.⁵ Whelan points out the controversial nature of some of the monuments such as the Victoria monument.⁶ Moreover, after independence, Whelan provides valuable insight into the removal of the three statues. Both the statues of King William III and King George II were destroyed by bombs.⁷ The University of Birmingham bought the statue of King George I in 1937.⁸ The government of Ireland gave the Victoria monument to Sydney, Australia in 1986 after the statue had remained in storage for 38 years.⁹ Whelan argues that the debates over these statues, in terms of both their construction and removal, speak to the larger issues of colonialism and

⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁵ Y. Whelan, "The Construction and Destruction of a Colonial Landscape: Monuments to British Monarchs in Dublin Before and After Independence," *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 28, No. 4, (October 2002): 508-533.

⁶ Ibid., 520-521.

⁷ Ibid., 522-523.

⁸ Ibid., 523.

⁹ Ibid.

independence. She clearly sees these monuments as sites of contestation, and her discussion provides a framework for evaluating the monuments in Phoenix Park, particularly the destruction of the Gough statue.

In *London 1900: An Imperial Metropolis*, Jonathan Schneer sees the Empire reflected within the city of London.¹⁰ In a similar way, this paper sees Phoenix Park as reflective of Dublin and Ireland at large. Connections also exist within Schneer's discussion of what he terms, "London's Radical and Celtic Fringe."¹¹ For example, he identifies Irish nationalists, particularly cultural nationalists as very strong among the Irish in England.¹² Similarly, the Irish often demonstrated their vehement opposition to the South African War and support for the Boers.¹³ Thus both in his methodology and his content, Schneer presents important considerations for this essay. Like London, Phoenix Park reflected a broader system, and elements of Irish nationalism bore striking similarities in both locations.

In her essay, "Postcards from the Edge: The Politics of Nature in British Columbia," Tina Loo examines Stanley Park in Vancouver as "a means of colonization."¹⁴ In building her case for Stanley Park as colonization she examines events within the Park such as Lord Stanley's dedication speech occurring on the site of an aboriginal grave.¹⁵ She discusses the replacement of houses with a cricket oval.¹⁶ Moreover, she notes the irony of Vancouver's Art, Historical, and Scientific Society

¹⁰ Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: An Imperial Metropolis*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 162-183.

¹² *Ibid.*, 172.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 178-179.

¹⁴ Tina Loo, "Postcards from the Edge: The Politics of Nature in British Columbia," (Montreal: McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, 1996), available online: <<http://www.misc-icem.mcgill.ca/publications/loo.pdf>>, retrieved 14 July 2004, 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

erecting totem poles on appropriated aboriginal land, even though the original people did not build poles.¹⁷ Tina Loo sees both the structures and events of Stanley Park as representative of broader themes of native-settler conflict within the imperial context. Phoenix Park contains some of the same symbolism, as English administrators often imposed their vision of space through symbols such as monuments and structures.

These authors all contribute to a framework that this essay will apply to Phoenix Park. Namely, that spaces can be seen as representative of larger processes and that these can be understood through both events and physical structures. In this sense, Phoenix Park serves as a microcosm for the larger issues of Ireland. The various larger conflicts among nationalists, loyalists, labor, and capital can all be seen transpiring in Phoenix Park. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland was a time full of anxiety and action. Through an analysis of Phoenix Park, one can see these larger issues represented on a smaller stage.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Background

Today, Phoenix Park is purported to be one of the largest metropolitan parks in the world.¹⁸ In fact, at 1,752 acres, Phoenix Park is over double the size of New York's Central Park.¹⁹ Originally founded as a deer park, by 1900 it had become an important location for both leisure and political activity for Dubliners. Unlike many late nineteenth and early twentieth century urban public parks, Phoenix Park grew into a public park rather than coming about through intentional design. While arising as a popular public space, the Park also contained symbols and institutions of imperial authority. The people of Dublin, including nationalists, trade unionists, and loyalists, interacted in this space and with its symbols. Around the turn of the century, Phoenix Park had taken on elements of imperialism, nationalist resistance, trade unionism, and cooperation. In this way, it embodied the multidimensional nature of Ireland itself.

As mentioned above, rather than being a purpose-built urban public park, Phoenix Park originally began as a deer park. A brief discussion of the Park's origins will help to provide some background to its development. The original land and manor appear to have belonged to Richard Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke.²⁰ Strongbow gave the manor and land to the Knights Templars in 1174.²¹ However, King Edward II suppressed them in 1307 and subsequently in 1310 their "lands and possessions were granted to the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem," also known as the Knights Hospitallers.²²

¹⁸Dublin Tourism, "Phoenix Park," Available online:

<<http://www.visitdublin.com/gardens/detail.asp?ID=1379>>, retrieved 20 November 2003.

¹⁹City of New York / Parks & Recreation, "Central Park," Available online:

<http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_your_park/vt_central_park/vt_central_park.html>, retrieved 30 March 2004.

²⁰*Sixty-Second Report of the Commissioners of Public Works*, 1894. Ireland, 7.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Ibid.*, 8.

As part of the broader campaign to eliminate Catholic religious orders during the English Reformation, in 1535 Henry VIII dissolved the Knights Hospitallers and assumed control over their land including Phoenix Park.²³ Queen Elizabeth confirmed the crown's claim to ownership in the second year of her reign, after Queen Mary had ceded control to the Catholic Church.²⁴ In 1662, the Duke of Ormond, acting on authority of the crown, began purchasing adjacent land.²⁵ The Treasury eventually allocated twenty-thousand pounds for land purchases, and extended the Park to the south side of the Liffey River.²⁶ In 1682, the north side of the Park was enclosed by a stone wall, in order to prevent the deer from causing harm to neighbors' property.²⁷ Eventually, "the Park was completed by the Earl of Chesterfield during his Lord Lieutenancy, and the Phoenix Column was erected by him in 1745 to commemorate the laying out and embellishment of the grounds by walks and plantations."²⁸ In more recent times, Phoenix Park fell under the administration of the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Woods, Forests and Land Revenues until 1851, when it was transferred to the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Works and Public Buildings.²⁹ From there, administration of the Park transferred to the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland on January 1 of 1860, and remained with this Board of Commissioners until Irish independence.

During the time period of this paper, the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland managed the Park. In 1886, the Park included a total of 1,752 acres, 1,330 of

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

which were open to the public.³⁰ The Park was administered by the Board of Public Works. The average cost of the Park amounted to 6,500 pounds per year for park officials, fencing, roads, forestry, deer, and gardening.³¹ Two hundred official passes were issued for the free passage of tradesmen's vehicles as the Board only allowed noncommercial traffic without a pass.³² This immense amount of vehicular traffic led the Board to conclude that "wear and tear on roads is incessant."³³ In fact, while commercial passes had been "freely granted" early on, in 1894 commercial traffic was restricted to between the Dublin and Castleknock gates.³⁴

With regards to pedestrian traffic, the Park contained twelve miles of footpaths made from 1,500 yards of shingles and stones each broken into sand and gravel respectively.³⁵ The 1886 Government Report on Phoenix Park also commented that regarding the average 650 head of deer present, "the herd is exposed to much injury and disturbance from the Public and dogs and therefore requires the same attention as a herd of sheep."³⁶ Of the 650 deer, approximately sixty were "killed annually for distribution by warrant of Her Majesty and for sale."³⁷ In the management of the deer, we can effectively see the encroachment of the public on the traditional function of Phoenix Park.

In terms of the size of the various parts of the Park, in 1894 the Commissioners of Public Works, Ireland reported:

³⁰"Government Report 1886," in *Newscuttings, copies of documents, pictures, plans relating to Phoenix Park, Dublin and to buildings, activities, memorials, events personalities, etc., therein, 17-19th C.*, compiled by A.J. Nowlan. Vol. 1. , National Library of Ireland, Department of Manuscripts, (Ms. 14892), 191.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴*Sixty-Second Annual Report*, 9.

³⁵"Government Report 1886."

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., 192.

<i>Enclosure</i>	<i>Area (in acres)</i>
Viceregal Lodge	180
Chief Secretary's Lodge	75
Under Secretary's Lodge	51
Royal Hibernian Military School	31
Royal Irish Constabulary Depot	10
Magazine Fort	2
Royal Zoological Gardens	19
<i>Total Enclosures</i>	<i>421³⁸</i>

³⁸*Sixty-Second Annual Report*, 8-9. The total reflects additional enclosures not included within the table.

Monuments

By 1882, Phoenix Park had become an important place within the imperial framework of the city. During this time period the monuments and structures of the Park provided symbolic connections to imperialism. Earlier, voluntary subscriptions, mostly from the upper class, led to the construction of the Wellington Testimonial, a tall obelisk intended to reach a final height of 205 feet.³⁹



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³⁹Fergus D'Arcy, "An Age of Distress and Reform: 1800-1860," in *Dublin Through the Ages*, ed. Art Cosgrove, (Dublin: College Press, 1988), 104 and Finerty.

⁴⁰ Photograph taken by author, March 2004.



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The committee in charge of erecting the Wellington monument originally wanted the testimonial to replace the statue of King George II in St. Stephen's Green, but the committee decided it would be wrong to move the monarch for a subject.⁴² While these subscriptions provided sufficient funds to begin the obelisk, a lack of funds later caused a long delay in the monument's completion.⁴³ Interestingly, as a Protestant Irish-born British army commander, Wellington's monument demonstrates a combination of imperial and Irish commemoration.

⁴¹ John F. Finerty, *Ireland in Pictures*, (Chicago: The International Photographic Publishing Co., Inc., 1898), available online: <<http://www.quinnipiac.edu/x6779.xml>>, Quinnipiac University, Great Hunger Room Digitized Books, retrieved 10 July 2004.

⁴² Whelan, "Construction and Deconstruction," 518-519.

⁴³Ibid.



⁴⁴The inscription on the monument reads:

ASIA AND EUROPE, SAVED BY THEE, PROCLAIM
INVINCIBLE IN WAR THY BREATHLESS NAME
NOW ROUND THY BROW THE CIVIC OAK WE TWINE
THAT EVERY EARTHLY GLORY MAY BE THINE

This plate contained the verses in both English and Latin, an obvious classical imperial allusion. In addition, the monument features three graphical metal plates. One depicts Wellington's victory at Waterloo.



⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Photograph taken by author, March 2004.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Another depicts Wellington in India.



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The third shows Wellington as the champion of Catholic Emancipation.



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Wellington, prime minister at the time, actually opposed Catholic Emancipation, but supported it in order to avoid revolt in Ireland.⁴⁸ This portrayal of Wellington as the deliverer of Emancipation sharply contrasts with the later Daniel O'Connell monument on O'Connell Street (then Sackville Street) in the center of Dublin, completed in August 1882.⁴⁹ Also, its substantial height served as an important geographical marker in turn of the century Dublin, which caused at least one later urban planner to attempt to use it in his designs for a more modern city.⁵⁰ Notably, unlike Nelson's Pillar on O'Connell Street, the Wellington Testimonial survived The Troubles and continues to stand today.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ William Wilcox and Walter Arnstein, *The Age of Aristocracy 1688 to 1830*, Seventh Ed., (Lexington, Massachusetts and Toronto: D. C. Heath and Company, 1996), 321-322.

⁴⁹ Yvonne Whelan, "Monuments, Power and Contested Space: The Iconography of Sackville Street", *Irish Geography*, 2001, Vol. 34, No. 1, 25.

⁵⁰ Joseph Brady, "Dublin at the Turn of the Century," in *Dublin Through Space and Time (c.900-1900)*, ed. Joseph Brady and Anngret Simms, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 260.

A different monument to a military leader did not fare nearly as well. On February 2, 1880, a statue to Field-Marshal Hugh Viscount Gough was unveiled in the Park.⁵¹



The statue had an inscription which read:

In honour of Field-Marshal Hugh Viscount Gough, K.P. G.C.B., G.C.S.I. An illustrious Irishman, whose achievements in the Peninsula War, in China, and in India, have added lustre to the military glory of this country, which he faithfully served for seventy-five years. This statue (cast from cannon taken by the troops under his command and granted by Parliament for this purpose) is erected by his friends and comrades.⁵³

Clearly, the erection of this statue in 1880 reflected an important imperial awareness.

The statue represented a symbol of Ireland's military role in building the British Empire.

It seems likely that this imperial significance led to later attacks on the monument. On

December 24, 1944 someone removed Gough's head with a hacksaw and took the

⁵¹Nowlan, Vol. 4, 27.

⁵²Finerty.

⁵³“Early Morning Explosion: Gough Monument Shattered,” *The Irish Times*, 23 July 1957, in Nowlan, Vol. 4.

sword.⁵⁴ Several months later, on April 9, 1945, a member of the public discovered the missing head on the banks of the Liffey River.⁵⁵ While the sword was never found, officials restored Gough's head on June 16, 1945.⁵⁶ However, the statue continued to bear the brunt of nationalist animosity, and on November 6, 1956 the *Evening Mail* reported “an attempt to blowup [the] Gough statue.”⁵⁷ While this attempt failed, less than a year later the statue was severely damaged in an explosion.⁵⁸ Nationalists had finally succeeded in destroying this imperial symbol.

A symbolic imperial meaning also works within the context of the Park through the Phoenix Column. Erected in 1745 by the Earl of Chesterfield, the Column depicts the mythical bird phoenix at the top of a large pillar.⁵⁹



⁵⁴Nowlan, Vol. 4, 28.

⁵⁵Ibid., 29.

⁵⁶Ibid., 30.

⁵⁷*Evening Mail*, 6 November 1956, in Nowlan, Vol. 4.

⁵⁸“Early Morning Explosion: Gough Monument Shattered,” *The Irish Times*, 23 July 1957, in Nowlan, Vol. 4.

⁵⁹D. A. Chart, *The Story of Dublin*, (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1932), 314.

⁶⁰Interestingly, this depiction of the mythological phoenix may have had no connection with the name of the Park. Instead, the word Phoenix as used in Phoenix Park may come from two Irish words *finniske* and *finnioge*, translated as 'fair water', named after a nearby spring, a fact known at the turn of the century.⁶¹ Later observers credited the name to the Phoenix House, a stately mansion created by Sir Edward Fisher, which likely derived its name from the mythical phoenix.⁶² Thus, Chesterfield may have sought to appropriate the Park's name from the Irish into a mythological symbol, or may have simply wished to reinforce the mythical interpretation of the phoenix. In either case, this conflict over the origins of the Park's name strikes to the heart of the contestation of the space. One can see these rival interpretations of the origins of the name as a symbol of national and imperial conflict that characterized the Park and Ireland as a whole at this time.

⁶⁰ Photograph taken by author, March 2004.

⁶¹ Frances Gerard, *Picturesque Dublin Old and New*, (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1898), 258.

⁶² Chart, 310-311.

Buildings

Continuing through the Park, the Viceregal Lodge also served as a symbol of colonialism as well as fulfilling a practical function. The government originally purchased the Lodge in 1784 from Lord Leitrim.⁶³ Subsequently, the Lodge became the official residence of the viceroy also referred to as the Lord Lieutenant.⁶⁴ In 1900, the viceroy continued to reside in the Lodge, and it served as a center of his authority.



⁶⁵In addition, the Viceregal Lodge served in an important function as a social center for the elite within Dublin. The Lodge hosted a number of garden parties, dances, and balls on the viceroy's behalf.⁶⁶ During this period, the pages of *The Irish Times* contained numerous descriptions of social events among the elite within the colonial administrative sphere of Dublin.⁶⁷ In this manner, the social and political elites of the Dublin administration could enjoy the social sphere that the Lodge presented. The Lodge also played an important role by hosting royal visits. For example, in 1897, during their royal

⁶³Ibid, 260.

⁶⁴Ibid, 260.

⁶⁵ Photograph taken by author, March 2004.

⁶⁶Ibid., 264.

⁶⁷The “Social Movements” section of *The Irish Times* includes daily accounts of social events at the Viceregal Lodge during this time period.

visit to Dublin, the Duke and Duchess of York stayed at the Viceregal Lodge.⁶⁸ In 1900, at the Lodge, “considerable temporary additions had to be made for the accommodation of the large number of indoor and outdoor servants accompanying the Queen.”⁶⁹ The Lodge’s function as a social venue for the elite and temporary royal lodging represented the authority of the crown within Ireland.

This symbol of royal authority became a target for nationalist extremists on May 6, 1882. “The Phoenix Park Murders” served as an important assault on the authority of the British administration of Ireland. The headline of *The Irish Times* on May 7, 1882 read: “Appalling Murders In the Phoenix Park, Assassination of the Chief Secretary and Undersecretary.”⁷⁰ The paper exclaimed “public feeling received a shock such as has never been experienced in the country before. The history of Ireland – at least of the period in which we live – may be searched in vain for a record of crime more terrible, or one carried out with more deliberation or determination.”⁷¹ At approximately 7:30pm, four men had jumped out of a carriage, stabbed Lord Frederick Cavendish and Thomas Burke, the Chief Secretary and Undersecretary for Ireland respectively, and quickly driven off. Lord Cavendish and Mr. Burke had “received so many wounds that if each had had several lives he could not have survived.”⁷²

One of the most shocking elements of the assassination was its close proximity to the Viceregal Lodge, the residence of the Lord Lieutenant. Earl Spencer, the Lord Lieutenant at the time, “had just entered his garden in front of the lodge when, in the distance his Excellency observed a scuffle going on on the road. It looked merely as if it

⁶⁸ “Royal Visit to Ireland,” *The New York Times*, 18 August 1897, 5.

⁶⁹ *Sixty-Eighth Annual Report of the Commissioners of Public Works, Ireland*, 1900, 6.

⁷⁰ *The Irish Times*, 7 May 1882, 1.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

was a brawl, but he gave directions that a policeman should be sent to see what it was.

Little did he think that his two intimate friends were being then butchered to death before his face.”⁷³ The assassins killed two of the most important officials in Dublin within sight of the very symbol of the crown’s presence in Ireland.

The reaction in Dublin was one of shock:

The news of the terrible tragedy, of which, within twenty-four hours, the whole civilized world will be informed, was received with the utmost incredulity in Dublin – people found it impossible to realize that such a deed could be perpetrated in the Phoenix Park in the broad light of an evening in May – yet before ten o’clock the different newspaper offices were besieged by persons anxiously inquiring whether there was any foundation for the report which had obtained circulation. People heard with horror its confirmation.⁷⁴

Indeed, one of the most shocking parts of the assassination was that it occurred in such a popular, frequented area of the Park.⁷⁵ The reaction in Parliament was also understandably somber. Both the House of Lords and the House of Commons immediately adjourned on Monday May 8.⁷⁶ William Gladstone, Prime Minister, referred to the assassination as “unparalleled in our history—and unparalleled for the blackness of the crime which has been committed—unparalleled, as I fully believe, for the horror it has excited in the entire people of the United Kingdom.”⁷⁷ Charles Stewart Parnell, leader of the nationalist Irish Parliamentary Party, also expressed his outrage:

I wish to state my conviction that this crime has been committed by men who absolutely detest the cause with which I have been associated and who have devised that crime and carried it out as the deadliest blow which they had in their power to deal against our hopes in connection with the new course on which the Government had just entered.⁷⁸

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates*, 8 May 1882, 315-326.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 320.

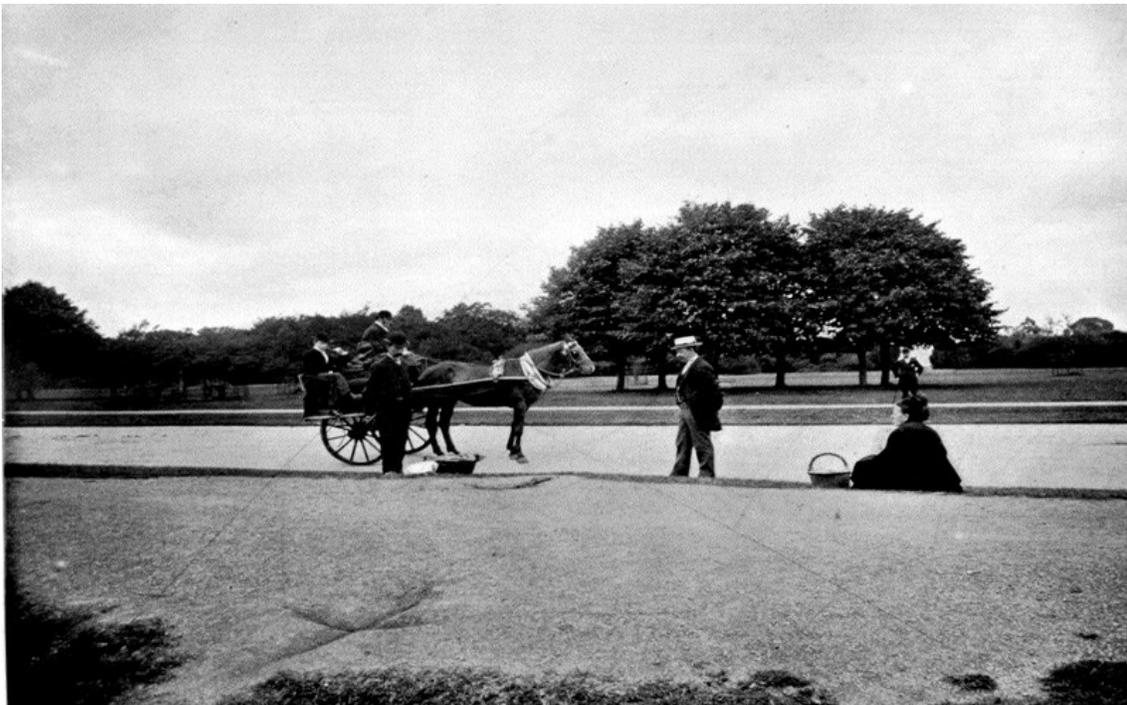
⁷⁸ Ibid., 323.

The shock at the assassinations reverberated throughout Britain and Ireland.

As a result of the infamy of these murders, the Park itself is most often tied to them in British and Irish history. For example, in his memoirs, Winston Churchill ties his childhood memories of the Park to the murders:

In the Phoenix Park there was a great round clump of trees with a house inside it. In this house there lived a personage styled the Chief Secretary or the Under Secretary, I am not clear which. But at any rate from this house there came a man called Mr. Burke. He gave me a drum. I cannot remember what he looked like, but I remember the drum. Two years afterwards when we were back in England, they told me he had been murdered by the Fenians in the same Phoenix Park we used to walk about in every day. Everyone round me seemed much upset about it, and I thought how lucky it was the Fenians had not got me when I fell off the donkey.⁷⁹

Sixteen years later, people continued to remove crosses placed at the site of the killing in what can be seen as a form of nationalist protest within the imperial space of the Lodge.⁸⁰



⁷⁹ Winston Churchill, *My Early Life*, (London: Thornton Butterworth Limited, 1930), 16-17.

⁸⁰Gerard, 268.

Thus the control over the site of the violence became an important symbolic dimension of nationalist and imperial conflict. “The Phoenix Park Murders” occupied significant importance for both the forces of imperial control and the nationalists at this time.

Along with the political and social elements of imperial power, the Park also contained elements of imperial military power. Among the military related structures within the Park are: a former barracks converted into the headquarters of the Royal Ordnance Society, the Royal Hibernian Military School, a Magazine Fort, and the barracks and depot for the Royal Irish Constabulary.⁸² The Royal Hibernian Military School provided “free education and maintenance to the sons of deserving soldiers.”⁸³ The purpose of this school was clearly to mould a future imperial army. In fact, one observer commented in 1913 that “by an excellent rule no book work is done after 1 p.m., the instruction in the afternoon being technical.”⁸⁴ The school also played an important role during King Edward VII’s royal visit in July 1903. He decided to present the school with a new set of colors.⁸⁵ In his address, King Edward attached important military significance both to the school and to the colors, remarking that “when you grow up and leave this school and go into the army you should always remember that high feeling of all that is right which has been inculcated during the period that you have been at this school.”⁸⁶ Within the context of this imperial military display, the colors were consecrated by Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, and Presbyterian chaplains, indicating

⁸¹ Finerty.

⁸² Dillon Cosgrove, *North Dublin*, 1909. Available online:

<<http://indigo.ie/~kfinlay/North%20Dublin/cosgrave2.html>>, retrieved 18 November 2003.

⁸³ “The Royal Hibernian Military School,” *Irish Life*, 10 October 1913.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ “Royal Hibernian Military School. Presentation of Colours,” *The Irish Times*, 24 July 1903.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

religious inclusiveness within the larger imperial framework.⁸⁷ On the whole, the Royal Hibernian Military School served as one example of the important imperial military institutions within the confines of the Park.

The larger issue of imperial military authority throughout Ireland also came across in official ceremonies held in the Park. For example, during Queen Victoria's visit in 1900, she held an official United Services Review in the Park. According to *The Irish Times*, approximately 8,000 men in service attended the event, along with over 150,000 spectators from the general public.⁸⁸ While the *Times* may have overestimated the spectators, one cannot deny a significant degree of enthusiasm among some segments of the populace. Three years later, King Edward VII had a similar royal review during his visit. Similarly to the previous military review, *The Irish Times* lauded the event as a “vast popular demonstration” and a “very extraordinary and absolutely spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm.”⁸⁹ Through these royal military institutions and functions, parts of the Park occupied an explicitly imperial structure. Within Phoenix Park, contemporaries could clearly see the symbols of imperial military power on display.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸“United Services Review in the Park,” *The Irish Times*, 23 April 1900.

⁸⁹ Editorial, *The Irish Times*, 24 July 1903.

Leisure

Phoenix Park also served as an important leisure area for Dubliners. The Park's ample space of over 1,700 acres allowed for a great number of people to spend their time within its vast domain.⁹⁰ The Dublin Zoological Gardens, also located in the Park, provided an additional attraction to Dubliners and visitors alike. Frances Gerard, a visiting well-to-do Briton, described Phoenix Park as a place where one can “spend a happy but unfashionable afternoon... lying on the grass, in lazy, luxurious idleness, enjoying the exquisite sweetness of the delicious summer air” and observe a “shifting crowd of men, women, and children.”⁹¹ Indeed, in 1900, *The Irish Times* observed that thousands of people enjoyed the Park on a pleasant Saturday afternoon in April and could get there by way of the tram.⁹² Similarly, an 1886 government report described the Park as “a great resort for picnic parties and Sunday and day school holiday parties in fact space is so abundant and the scenery so varied that amusements are difficult to be enumerated.”⁹³ Thus, the Park played an important role as a leisure escape from modern urban life.

The People's Gardens served as an especially popular place of leisure and relaxation in this time period.

⁹⁰O'Brien, 62.

⁹¹Gerard, 257-258.

⁹²“Passing Events,” *The Irish Times*, 14 April 1900.

⁹³“Government Report 1886”.



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⁹⁴ Finerty.

The People's Gardens consisted of sixteen acres of a variety of ornamental gardening.⁹⁶ One contemporary observer described it as “great tracts of ground... set ablaze with the scarlet of geranium or fuchsia, dotted with the bright yellow of the daffodil, or tinged with the refreshing blue of the forget-me-not.”⁹⁷ An 1886 government report estimated that 1,700 people frequented the gardens on Sundays.⁹⁸ For its part, *The Irish Times* put the amount at thousands daily during a particularly nice period in early May.⁹⁹ In 1910, *The Gardener* declared “number and variety of flowering trees and shrubs to be found in the park constitute probably the most representative collection to be found in any public park in the British Isles.”¹⁰⁰ A writer for the *Gardener's Chronicle* described the Gardens as the “most frequented spot... the scene, in its gorgeous loveliness, made a deeper impression on me than anything in the way of summer bedding recently seen.”¹⁰¹ The most frequent criminal act within the confines of the Gardens appears to have been the theft of flowers. For example, in their *Sixty-Ninth Annual Report* in 1901, the Commissioners reported that they occasionally engaged in “prosecutions for theft or destruction of flowers or shrubs in the Park Gardens.”¹⁰² Similarly, on June 1, 1903, the *Evening Telegraph* reported a man charged with willfully destroying flowers.¹⁰³ The People's Gardens may have been run by the imperial Dublin administration, but it nevertheless served as a forum for popular leisure and relaxation that crossed nationalist

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Gerard, 312.

⁹⁸“Government Report 1886”.

⁹⁹“People's Gardens, Phoenix Park,” *The Irish Times*, 7 May 1902

¹⁰⁰“A Noted Irish Public Park: Phoenix Park, Dublin.” *The Gardener*. 3 September 1910, in Nowlan, Vol. 4, 68A.

¹⁰¹“Phoenix Park, Dublin,” *Gardener's Chronicle*, 8 October 1910,, in Nowlan, Vol. 4, 69.

¹⁰²*Sixty-Ninth Annual Report*, 1901, 11.

¹⁰³*Evening Telegraph*, 1 June 1903, in Nowlan, Vol. 4, 67A.

and imperial divides.

However, leisure activities also served as sources of conflict of important imperial and nationalist significance. A small area of the park, known as “the hollow”, frequently



¹⁰⁴served as the site of concerts. In fact, a small bandstand had been constructed in this area.

¹⁰⁴ Photograph taken by author, March 2004.



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The bandstand also served as a common venue for military bands. To the chagrin of military officials, however, these military band concerts became sites of Irish nationalist political expression. In a letter to *The Irish Times* written on June 26, 1902, G. de C. Morton, Major General Commanding Dublin District complained of the “unseemly conduct” of the spectators when they booed during the playing of “God Save the King.”¹⁰⁶ He argued that the concerts were not designed to have a political nature, and asked that the crowd not bring politics into the concert.¹⁰⁷ He threatened to cancel the concerts if the behavior of the crowd in this regard did not change.¹⁰⁸ John G. Nutting responded to this charge in a witty manner. He argued that, “I decline to admit that any of our fellow-countrymen—not even Mr. William O’Brien himself—can possibly think that

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Morton, G de C., “Military Bands in the Phoenix Park,” *The Irish Times*, 27 June 1902.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

by hissing when the National Anthem is played they are giving expression to political opinion, because the King is entirely above politics.”¹⁰⁹ He further stated that nationalists such as Daniel O’Connell and Charles Parnell had made a similar distinction and:

that all educated, self-respecting people in this country, whatever their politics put the head of the State above their party differences. The hisses come from people who are either grossly ignorant of constitutional politics, or cannot resist any opportunity to advertise their natural vulgarity. Both classes are equally undeserving of notice.¹¹⁰

However, these “grossly ignorant” people “undeserving of notice” remained undeterred by either letter. On June 29, 1902, one day after Nutting’s letter, a military band encountered “a very large crowd comprising some hundreds of men and youth... [who] began to hiss and hoot...”¹¹¹ When the band struck up “God Save the King”, the spectators hissed loudly.¹¹² Shortly afterwards the band left and the crowd sang “God Save Ireland”, “Who Fears to Speak of '98” and other nationalist songs.¹¹³ “God Save Ireland,” written by Timothy D. Sullivan, had become the de facto anthem of Irish nationalists during this time period, sung by both Home Rulers and more radical nationalists.¹¹⁴ The crowd then chanted “We don't want the Saxons!” and applauded a nationalist speaker who appropriated the bandstand. For its part, *The Irish Times* titled the incident “Disgraceful Scenes in the Phoenix Park,” and referred to it as “a disgraceful attempt, which proved only too successful... made by an organized mob.”¹¹⁵ It similarly remarked that “the temper of the crowd was not improved by a stump oration from one of

¹⁰⁹ Nutting, John G., “Military Bands in the Phoenix Park,” *The Irish Times*, 28 June 1902.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ “Military Bands: Scene in Phoenix Park: Hostile Demonstration,” *Irish Independent*, 30 June 1902.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Peter Alter, “Symbols of Irish Nationalism,” in *Reactions to Irish Nationalism, 1865-1914*, (London and Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press, 1987), 6-8.

¹¹⁵ “Disgraceful Scenes in the Phoenix Park,” *The Irish Times*, 30 June 1902.

their number, who abused the military in general, and urged the crowd to get rid of them and secure ‘Ireland for the Irish.’”¹¹⁶ Similarly, on June 25, 1902, the hollow served as the site for an open air Gaelic League performance including violin solos, step dancing, and Gaelic songs that drew 2,000 spectators.¹¹⁷ Events at the bandstand illustrated part of the broader actions of nationalist resistance.

Athletics was another leisure pursuit which took on larger significance. Phoenix Park served as a site of conflict over athletics between cultural nationalists and the Dublin administration. Since its opening to the public, the Park had been used for a variety of popular activities. Specifically, by the turn of the century, the Park had become an important site for sporting matches. For example, in 1886, Phoenix Park had five cricket clubs, at least four bicycle clubs, three football clubs, a golf club, and a polo club.¹¹⁸ In 1893, as a result of popular demand, the Commissioners of the Board of Public Works, Ireland decided to begin construction of a public cricket ground.¹¹⁹ Although cricket clubs had already secured private grounds of their own, the Commissioners felt that with the sport's increasing popularity and limited resources of the Park, a public space would serve best. In the same year, the Commissioners referred to polo by stating that “the matches and games played on this ground form one of the most popular amusements in Dublin, and are watched by crowds of spectators of all classes.”¹²⁰

In addition, the Board had trouble regulating its fields. For example, in 1901 it noted the “danger to mounted troops and to the public using the Park for horse exercise from the existence of holes left after the removal of goal posts erected for the purpose of

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Nowlan, Vol. 4, p. 83.

¹¹⁸ “Government Report 1886,” in Nowlan, Vol. 1, 192-193.

¹¹⁹ *Sixty-Second Annual Report*, 9.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

playing football.”¹²¹ In 1885, the Commissioners installed some temporary boundaries to preserve the polo ground. This action prompted a quick response in Parliament from T.

Healy, Member of Parliament for Monaghan. He demanded to know:

by what right the officers of the Dublin Garrison have caused warnings to be erected requesting riders to keep off what they call ‘the Polo Ground’ in the Phoenix Park, who made this plot a Polo Ground, how many acres does it contain, who allowed it to be railed off as such, is it not one of the finest levels in the entire Park, how much is now railed off in inclosures for the use of cricketers and polo players in the Phoenix Park, and are there any such privileges accorded to cricket and polo clubs in Hyde Park and Regent’s Park?¹²²

Henry Campbell-Bannerman responded by emphasizing the temporary nature of the barriers as well as the notice being a request rather than a warning.¹²³ Healy, a nationalist MP, clearly saw the importance of the Park as a symbol of national, public space, informing the House that he would “call attention to the continual encroachments on public property by the snobs and swells of Dublin Garrison.”¹²⁴

The Commissioners took an interest in facilitating other sports as well. They created a public football field near the Magazine Fort with permanent goal posts. They allocated the fields “by order of receipt of the application.”¹²⁵ The Commissioners created a public hurling area of three acres as a result of a request by the City of Dublin Hurling League and the acknowledged growing popularity of the sport.¹²⁶ In this manner, the Commissioners responded to increasing public demand for sports, no longer catering solely to the private clubs that had formerly held exclusive control over fields within the

¹²¹*Sixty-Ninth Annual Report of the Commissioners of Public Works, Ireland, 1901, 11.*

¹²²“Ireland – The Phoenix Park – The Polo Ground,” *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates*, 17 April 1885, 17-18.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵*Sixty-Ninth Annual Report of the Commissioners of Public Works, Ireland, 1901, 11.*

¹²⁶*Ibid.*

Park.

In 1910, the Park had thirty-two football grounds covering 50 acres, six cricket grounds, and one polo ground.¹²⁷ Sports such as cricket and polo embodied the use of the Park in a cultural imperialist sense, especially to the recently formed Gaelic Athletic Association. As part of the cultural nationalism movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Gaelic Athletic Association had been founded in 1884 in order to encourage traditional Irish sports and discourage 'foreign' sports.¹²⁸ In fact, at least one person has attributed the idea for the G.A.A. to a stroll through the Park.¹²⁹ The G.A.A. also had close connections with the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a militant nationalist organization.¹³⁰ This conflict between the G.A.A. and the Dublin administration came to a head in the context of Phoenix Park over the allocation of athletic fields. Much to the anger of the cultural nationalists, only three of the thirty-two playing fields in the main sporting section of the Park had been designated for Gaelic games.¹³¹ These complaints went all the way to the House of Commons, where the Chief Secretary for Ireland asserted royal authority in Phoenix Park and maintained that soccer players vastly outnumbered the participants in Gaelic sports.¹³² Indeed, these assertions are supported by the figures of the Commissioners of the Board of Public Works. The following table lists the applications received for each sport in the given year:

¹²⁷“A Noted Irish Public Park: Phoenix Park, Dublin,” *The Gardener*, 3 September 1910, 363 in Nowlan, Vol. 4, 68A.

¹²⁸J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 417.

¹²⁹“Gaelic Athletic Association,” *The United Irishman*, No. 1, 4 March 1899, 3.

¹³⁰W.F. Mandle, “The I.R.B. and the Beginnings of the Gaelic Athletic Association,” in *Reactions to Irish Nationalism, 1865-1914*, (London and Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press, 1987), 95-116.

¹³¹Joseph V. O'Brien, *“Dear Dirty Dublin”: A City in Distress 1899-1916*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 62.

¹³²Nowlan, Vol. 4, 69.

	<i>1902</i>	<i>1903</i>	<i>1904</i>	<i>1905</i>	<i>1906</i>	<i>1907</i>	<i>1908</i>	<i>1909</i>	<i>1910</i>	<i>1911</i>	<i>1912</i>	<i>1913</i>	<i>1914</i>
	- <i>1903</i>	- <i>1904</i>	- <i>1905</i>	- <i>1906</i>	- <i>1907</i>	- <i>1908</i>	- <i>1909</i>	- <i>1910</i>	- <i>1911</i>	- <i>1912</i>	- <i>1913</i>	- <i>1914</i>	- <i>1915</i>
Assoc. Football	1156	1976	3202	2664	2910	3304	2507	2542	2381	2372	2272	2217	1452
Hurling	25	122	137	115	115	143	39	104	88	49	38	27	20
Gaelic Football	N/A	13	85	51	142	83	103	76	71	47	52	23	28 ¹³³

Despite this extreme numerical difference, G.A.A. leaders such as Runaire Onora, Secretary of the County Dublin Gaelic Football League called for fairness and protested perceived discrimination.¹³⁴ In Parliament in 1906, Irish Members of Parliament asked three times why there were so few fields allocated to Gaelic sports, and each time the response pointed to the numbers of applications.¹³⁵ Similar complaints were made regarding the insufficient size of the dressing room for Gaelic Football and hurling.¹³⁶ Conflict over sport also came about through the Commissioners' attempts to prevent damage to fields. For example, in 1903, they prohibited football and hurling from the “Nine Acres,” the official area for polo. After this prohibition, the Board still reported that:

There was at first opposition to the Board's action by some players who had from time to time used this portion of the Park for football and hurley. The Board were reluctantly obliged to prosecute in several cases, after which the opposition practically ceased.¹³⁷

¹³³Compiled from Annual Reports of the Commissioners of the Board of Public Works, Ireland, 1903-1915, Nos. 71-83. No records exist for 1916, likely as a result of the First World War.

¹³⁴Runaire Onora, “Letter to the Editor,” *Evening Telegraph*, 24 November 1906, in Nowlan, Vol. 9.

¹³⁵“Football in Phoenix Park, Dublin,” *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 28 February 1906, 1146, “Football and Hurling Grounds in Phoenix Park,” 29 October 1906, 683, and “Phoenix Park Playing Grounds,” 22 November 1906, 985-986.

¹³⁶Nowlan, Vol. 4, 69.

¹³⁷*Seventy-First Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Board of Public Works, Ireland, 1903, 10.*

This damage to the polo grounds and subsequent resistance to the Commissioners represents another act of defiance within Phoenix Park. Thus, within the realm of sports, Phoenix Park was characteristic of Ireland. In this time period, the supporters of cultural nationalism clashed with the royal administration in matters as seemingly benign as the allocation of athletic fields.

Imperial and National Events

Nationalist and imperial conflict also came across through large-scale events. For example, the Park itself at times became the center of imperial enthusiasm through such events as royal visits. Within this time period, the most significant royal visit occurred in April of 1900 when Queen Victoria resided at the Viceregal Lodge during her stay in Dublin. The time of her stay coincided with the South African War, and the press recognized the symbolic importance of the Queen's visit in bolstering imperial unity during this trying war.¹³⁸ Indeed, nationalists were quick to deride the Queen's visit as part of "a well concocted plan to entrap young Irishmen to enlist and go out to Africa to help in doing the dirty sanguinary work that receives at this moment the condemnation of the whole Continent of Europe as well as of America... helping England to rob and kill the honest Boers."¹³⁹ As part of a show of imperial support as well as popular enthusiasm for the Queen, Phoenix Park played the central role in a large-scale welcoming of the Queen to Dublin. Upon her arrival in Dublin, a massive crowd of people including over 10,000 children greeted the Queen in the Park.¹⁴⁰ Interestingly, within this popular display of imperial enthusiasm, the imperial military also made a display with the Royal Irish Constabulary maintaining security rather than the Dublin Metropolitan Police.¹⁴¹ In addition, along with the common children who *The Irish Times* described as "neatly if poorly clad," were members of the Boys' Brigade, Church Lads' Brigade, and Hibernian Military Boys' School, bringing an imperial military dimension to the children to

¹³⁸"The Queen's Visit," *The Irish Times*, 5 April 1900.

¹³⁹ O'Hare, James, letter to the editor, *The United Irishman*, No. 57, Vol. 3, 31 March 1900, 7.

¹⁴⁰"Phoenix Park. The Children's Review," *The Irish Times*, 5 April 1900.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

complement the adults.¹⁴² Thus, shortly after the Queen's arrival, the Park became a site of imperial enthusiasm on both a military and civilian scale through both children and adults.

A similarly imperial event occurred only a few days later when the Queen hosted a Children's Treat in the Park on April 9. Many children came from all over Ireland to attend this event.¹⁴³ As with the initial event, both the Boys' Brigade and the Church Lads' Brigade attended the Treat. However, unlike the previous event, small symbols of Irish identity occurred within the framework of imperial symbolism. For example, the children sang both English and Irish songs, and presented the Queen with shamrocks.¹⁴⁴ Likewise, the Dublin Metropolitan Police provided security at this event.¹⁴⁵ Despite these Irish symbols, “the vast majority, indeed almost all, of the Catholic children, at the male and female national schools, and at the industrial schools” chose not to attend the event as a result of Catholic and nationalist pressure.¹⁴⁶ An editorial in *The United Irishman* went as far as to claim that the Treat was “intended to be used for religious proselytism.”¹⁴⁷ It went on to state that “there is nothing more hideous and revolting than the attempt to debase the children. The sinners against children are the vilest of all sinners.”¹⁴⁸ A later editorial attacked moderate nationalists and Home Rulers as “so-called nationalists... [who are] satisfied with all that has taken place.”¹⁴⁹ Rather than have their children attend Queen Victoria's treat, radical nationalists arranged a later nationalist children's

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³“The Queen. Remarkable Scene in the Park,” *The Irish Times*, 9 April 1900.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Michael J. F. McCarthy, *Five Years in Ireland: 1895-1900*, (London and Dublin: Simpkin, Marchall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., and Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1902), 506-507.

¹⁴⁷ Editorial, *The United Irishman*, No. 57, Vol. 3, 31 March 1900, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Editorial, *The United Irishman*, No. 59, Vol. 3, 14 April 1900, 3.

treat as a substitute.¹⁵⁰ Janette Condon has explored this nationalist-sponsored treat in detail in her work entitled, “The Patriotic Children's Treat: Irish Nationalism and Children's Culture at the Twilight of Empire.” This nationalist sponsored “Patriotic Children's Treat” occurred in Clonturk Park on Sunday, July 1, 1900. Although the organizers had originally intended to hold their treat at Wolfe Tone’s grave in Bodenstown cemetery on his birthday, June 20, they chose Clonturk Park due to the logistical difficulties presented by transporting a large number of children.¹⁵¹ The owner of the Park had volunteered it for the treat instead.¹⁵² The nationalist press estimated an attendance of 30,000 children affirming loyalty to the Irish Queen Cathleen Ni Houlihan.¹⁵³ Queen Victoria's visit symbolized imperial enthusiasm and provoked a nationalist response.

In addition, like Queen Victoria, King Edward VII and the Duke of York used the Park for royal events around the turn of the century. Like Queen Victoria, King Edward sponsored a children’s treat in Phoenix Park. Unlike the 1900 Treat, the 1903 “Children’s Fete” was largely devoid of Irish symbols.¹⁵⁴ There were no shamrocks or Irish songs.¹⁵⁵ In addition, the Royal Irish Constabulary provided security rather than the Dublin Metropolitan Police.¹⁵⁶ Also, “miniature Union Jacks had been liberally supplied” and “Their Majesties were greeted with cheers and the waving of thousands of

¹⁵⁰Maud Gonne MacBride, *A Servant of the Queen: Reminiscences*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1974), 294-295.

¹⁵¹ “Patriotic Children’s Treat,” *The United Irishman*, 12 May 1900.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³Janette Condon, “The Patriotic Children's Treat: Irish Nationalism and Children's Culture at the Twilight of Empire.” *Irish Studies Review*, vol. 8, no. 2, August 2000, 173-174.

¹⁵⁴ “Children’s Fete. Interesting Scene In The Park,” *The Irish Times*, 27 July 1903.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

handkerchiefs and miniature Union Jacks.”¹⁵⁷ Instead of presenting shamrocks to Queen Victoria, a Roman Catholic boy and Protestant girl presented a bouquet “To our Queen, from many loyal little ones.”¹⁵⁸ In contrast to the Irish identity within the Children’s Treat of Queen Victoria, King Edward’s “Children’s Fete” had a much more strict imperial symbolism.

Moreover, like the 1900 treat, King Edward’s 1903 “Fete” prompted a nationalist treat in response. Once again, *The United Irishman* led the charge in attacking the royal children’s treat. It commented that “on Saturday next the political sopers of Dublin will parade as many children as they can bribe before the King of England.”¹⁵⁹ It denounced the “child-exploiting toadies, posing as philanthropists, who are organizing the degrading affair for their own ends” and warned nationalist parents that:

we understand that some of these persons, in order to procure a good muster of children, are going about the streets at the present time asking children to go to the Park on Saturday, and offering them green tickets which they say will entitle them to sweets and cakes. We advise Nationalist parents to keep a sharp look out for these people, most of whose faces are familiar at other times of the year as the faces of tract-droppers.¹⁶⁰

The nationalist press once again expressed their outrage over a royal event for children.

Maud Gonne MacBride spearheaded the organization for a nationalist children’s treat. In an appeal to fellow nationalists, she not only expressed sympathy for “the unfortunate children who are dragged to the Phoenix Park... without choice of their own,” but also her fear that “the reptile Press of Dublin Castle [will misrepresent them] as

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ “All-Ireland,” *The United Irishman*, No. 230, Vol. 10, 25 July 1903, 1.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

being the children of workingmen attending of their own free will.”¹⁶¹ Thus, the nationalist treat was organized as much to influence press accounts as to provide a nationalist alternative to the royal treat.¹⁶² Nationalists claimed that over 15,000 children attended their treat compared with only 9,000 for the royal treat.¹⁶³ They described their own treat as “a most remarkable and significant demonstration.”¹⁶⁴ Once again, imperial authority had tried to use Phoenix Park as a focal point for Irish loyalty to the crown, and once again nationalists had organized their own treat as a symbol of resistance. The dueling treats worked within the larger pattern of imperial and nationalist conflict throughout Ireland.

Additionally, Phoenix Park served as a forum for political and social action during this time period. For example, the Park served as the inaugural site for Irish Language Week in 1908.¹⁶⁵ The Week kicked off with a procession to Phoenix Park.¹⁶⁶ Beyond cultural nationalism, the procession had a clear nationalist political component as well. It included a tableau of Robert Emmett and representatives of Sinn Féin.¹⁶⁷ When they reached Phoenix Park, the Lord Mayor made a speech in which he blamed the government “that had prohibited the teaching of the language in the schools.”¹⁶⁸ Although nationalist elements were present at the event, Douglas Hyde, president of the Gaelic League, emphasized that:

their programme appealed as much to the Unionist as to the Nationalist, to

¹⁶¹ Maud Gonne MacBride, Mrs. James Egan, Miss Macken, Miss Maggie Quinn, *The United Irishman*, No. 230, Vol. 10, 25 July 1903, 4.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *The United Irishman*, No. 231, Vol. 10, 1 August 1903, 5.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ A. J. Nowlan, ‘Phoenix Park – Public Meetings’ in Nowlan, Vol. 6, 19.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Irish Language Procession, Speech of Dr. Douglas Hyde,’ *The Irish Times*, 21 September 1908.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

the Protestant as to the Catholic, to the Parliamentarian as to the Sinn Feiner, because all Irishmen desired to see Ireland getting the best out of itself.¹⁶⁹

Phoenix Park served as the forum for Hyde to espouse a cultural program that reconciled both nationalist and political elements. The Irish Language inaugural event marked an important moment of cultural nationalism that at least officially attempted to work within a larger, nonpolitical framework.

Phoenix Park served a more explicitly nationalist function for the centenary of the 1798 rebellion. 1798 commemorations were planned all over the country, and Dublin and Phoenix Park were no exception.¹⁷⁰ Thousands of people attended the commemoration in Phoenix Park.¹⁷¹ The meeting included banners of 1798 leaders Wolfe Tone, Father Murphy, and other leaders of the rebellion.¹⁷² At their meeting at the Park, the assembly passed two resolutions. The first ended with the statement that “we pledge ourselves to never cease in our efforts to honour their memories and perpetuate their broad, tolerant, and highly patriotic principles.”¹⁷³ The second included a more international anti-imperial sentiment. Mr. McCann of Johannesburg, South Africa introduced a resolution:

In order that the memory of Tone and the United Irishmen may be worthily perpetuated this meeting approves of the action of the '98 Centenary Committee in erecting a monument to those sons of liberty on the site granted by the [Dublin] Corporation, and we appeal to the scattered sons of the Gael throughout the world for financial support to the project.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Sophie Olliver, “Presence and Absence of Wolfe Tone During the Centenary Commemoration,” in *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland*, ed. Laurence M. Geary, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 177.

¹⁷¹ “The '98 Centennial,” *The Irish Times*, 18 July 1898.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

It was seconded by Mr. Ward of Glasgow, Scotland and passed by the meeting.¹⁷⁵ Thus, not only did the centennial commemoration of 1798 have important nationalist connections for Ireland, but it also made Phoenix Park symbol of resistance to British authority across the Empire.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Working-class Expression

Beyond nationalist and loyalist conflict and demonstration, Phoenix Park served as an area of working-class expression. Trade unionism was a powerful rallying cry for the working-class throughout Ireland, but it was often tied to nationalism, provoking animosity among loyalists. A plethora of labor organizations cooperated and competed among themselves and with nationalists during this time period. Although they generally did not gather as much support as explicit nationalists, they played an important role in Ireland among the working-class.¹⁷⁶ Trade union parades often expressly supported nationalist causes such as the Manchester Martyrs, the Land League, Parnell, and the 1798 and 1803 centenaries.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, labor leaders sometimes tried to build bridges of working-class identity across sectarian boundaries.¹⁷⁸ Overall, trade unionism and nationalism had strong links, but conflict existed over what if any nationalist priorities would be reflected in the labor movement. Phoenix Park often served as a showcase for trade unionism and some of the conflicts within the movement. On March 13, 1887 thousands of people marched to the Wellington Testimonial.¹⁷⁹ On April 3 of the same year, a National Labour League rally attracted 5,000 people.¹⁸⁰ On March 13, 1890, the Dublin United Builder's Labourers' Trade Union held a strike march to Phoenix Park.¹⁸¹ Similarly, striking employees of the Great Southern Railway had a mass meeting in Phoenix Park in May 1890.¹⁸² At their meeting, Michael Davitt, a prominent

¹⁷⁶ Lane, 116-117.

¹⁷⁷ Neil Jarman and Dominic Bryan, *From Riots to Rights: Nationalist Parades in the North of Ireland*, (University of Ulster at Coleraine: Centre for the Study of Conflict, 1997), 26.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Lane, 149.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 150.

¹⁸¹ Lane, 166.

¹⁸² "Strike on the Great Southern Railway," *The Nation*, 3 May 1890.

nationalist, “censured the signalmen for leaving their boxes without due notice; at the same time he condemned the actions of the directors in prosecuting them.”¹⁸³ The Park also hosted meetings for the Amnesty Association, Temperance, Irish Socialist Republican Party, and unions.¹⁸⁴ In 1907 a hand-bill announced:

Belfast Lock-Out! A Monster Meeting Under the Auspices of the Dublin Trades Council will be held in Phoenix Park on Sunday, 4th August At 4:30p.m. To express the sympathy of Dublin Workers with the gallant struggle for Trade Union Principles now being carried on in the Northern Capital. The Chair will be taken by Mr John Lumsden, President of the Dublin Trades Council... Assemble in your thousands in support of the right of combination. Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains and a world to gain.¹⁸⁵

Phoenix Park served as a major focal point for May Day events. The 1891 May Day procession to Phoenix Park attracted 17,000 people.¹⁸⁶ Two prominent members of the labor movement, Adolphus Shields and John Whelan gave speeches in support of Parnell, who had become more closely aligned with labor during the O’Shea scandal.¹⁸⁷ In 1894, 10,000 people attended the May Day rally. On May 2, 1909, a large “Dublin Labour Day Demonstration” procession took place. The procession marched from Grafton Street to Phoenix Park. *The Dublin Trade and Labour Journal* for that month outlined the order of procession:

I.-- Carriage, No. 1 Platform.

1. Irish Transport Workers (Coal Labourers).
2. Irish Drawers’ Assistants.
3. Brass Founders.
4. Amalgamated Engineers.
5. Carpet Planners.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ A. J. Nowlan, ‘Phoenix Park – Public Meetings’ in Nowlan, Vol. 6, 19.

¹⁸⁵ Dublin Trades Council, “Belfast lock-out! A monster meeting under the auspices of the Dublin Trades Council, will be held in the Phoenix Park, on Sunday, 4th August,” National Library of Ireland, Department of Manuscripts.

¹⁸⁶ Lane, 177.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

- II.—Carriage, No. 2 Platform
6. Corporation Labourers.
 7. Electricians.
 8. Independent Labour Party.
 9. Amalgamated Tailors.
 10. Hair Dressers.
 11. Book Binders.
 12. Amalgamated Carpenters.
 13. Irish Stationary Engine Drivers.
 14. Amalgamated Painters.
- III. – Carriage, No. 3
15. Irish Socialists Society.
 16. Sheet Metal Workers.
 17. Paper Cutters.
 18. Coach Makers.
 19. Stone Cutters.
 20. Slaters.
 21. Bakers.
 22. United Labourers.¹⁸⁸

The variety of different trades at these rallies emphasizes the popular importance of the trade union movement. Also, interestingly, the procession began with two explicitly Irish groups. Meetings and rallies such as this one took place frequently, and almost exclusively on Sundays. In fact, groups such as the Irish Socialist Republican Party often had regular weekly meetings on Sundays in the Park.¹⁸⁹ These events demonstrated significant working-class popularity. Moreover, while some events such as the 1798 centenary had specific nationalist significance, others such as the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers of Great Britain and Ireland on May 18, 1891 appealed more on class identity lines.¹⁹⁰ A litany of events characterized this time period including

¹⁸⁸ “Dublin Labour Day Demonstration,” *The Dublin Trade and Labour Journal: The Official Organ of the Workers of the City and County of Dublin*, May 1909, Vol. 1, No. 1.

¹⁸⁹ Lane, 219.

¹⁹⁰ Nowlan, Vol. 6, 110.

Women's Suffrage, United Irish League protests, and Socialist Party meetings.¹⁹¹ Most importantly, the Park served as a popular site of expression for a variety of political, social, and economic issues throughout Ireland.

At a labor demonstration on March 30, 1890 in Phoenix Park, a rift between the Irish Nationalist and working-class movements emerged. The night before the rally, Michael Davitt, a prominent Irish nationalist, wrote a letter critical of the working-class leaders and their program. In his letter, Davitt asked four critical questions:

- (1) Who are the responsible heads of this organization of “General Labourers of Great Britain and Ireland.”
- (2) How long this body has been organized.
- (3) What its relations are with the recognized labour bodies of England or of London; and
- (4) What this “General Labourers of Great Britain and Ireland” organization proposes to do for the labour interests of Ireland which Irish labour organizations are unable to accomplish.¹⁹²

Davitt argued for the importance of Irish labor independence as well as for “the principle of ‘Home Rule’ fully and thoroughly recognized in all relations between British and Irish labour bodies.”¹⁹³ One of the leaders of the labor demonstration, Mr. A. Shields, addressed the role of Davitt. He stated that “he still believed that Mr. Davitt to be a friend of the working classes (hear, hear)”¹⁹⁴ and that “he, of course was glad to see the interest Mr. Davitt took in the labourers of other countries.”¹⁹⁵ After these positive comments, Shields criticized Davitt’s for not attending the demonstration as well as his letter in the *Times*.¹⁹⁶ The next speaker, Dr. Aveling, responded in a similar manner. He referred to “their friend Mr. Davitt” and then offered a pointed response to each of

¹⁹¹Ibid., 90-122

¹⁹² Davitt, Michael, in “Labour Demonstration in the Phoenix Park,” *The Irish Times*, 31 March 1890.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ “Labour Demonstration in the Phoenix Park,” *The Irish Times*, 31 March 1890.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

Davitt's questions:

He asked first who were the heads of the organization of the General Labourers' Union. Well, they were the general labourers themselves... Then Mr. Davitt asked how long has this union been organized. Well, next Sunday would be its first birthday. (Applause)... Then he inquired, what were the relations of this General Labourers Union to the other unions of England and Great Britain? Well, it was almost the only union of unskilled labourers... Mr. Davitt asked also what can this general Labourers' Union do for Irish labour which Irish labour cannot do for itself? Now, in asking that question their friend Mr. Davitt had shown that he did not quite understand what labour fights were... They recognized that they could not get Home Rule under present conditions unless they got on their side the working classes of England... Mr. Davitt asked, in conclusion, how they who in Ireland formed branches of the union carry on their affairs? Would they be at the beck and call of England? Not at all.¹⁹⁷

Interestingly, the editors of *The Irish Times* agreed with Davitt's criticisms and particularly attacked the fact that Dr. Aveling was an Englishman.¹⁹⁸ Conflict in Ireland over an international or Irish approach to trade unionism played out within Phoenix Park.

Within this event, we see a multitude of levels operating. First, a tension existed between the Irish nationalism promoted by Davitt and the international nature of the labor movement. Davitt believed in keeping a focus on Home Rule, and the crowd seemed enthusiastic towards him. Nevertheless, they also responded positively to the workers' rights portion of the address. In a sense, Aveling, Davitt, Shields, and the audience all sought to resolve Home Rule within a broader context of the working-classes. Aveling and Shields made working-class advancement the priority, while Davitt argued for Home Rule as the most important item. The people, through their attendance and enthusiasm in the Park, demonstrated support for both. Even nineteen years later, the tension remained, as a May Day speaker made the point that "the Labour movement was not antagonistic to

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Editorial, *The Irish Times*, 31 March 1890.

any movement in the country which was making for national independence.¹⁹⁹

Also, of importance in the rhetoric of both the editors of *The Irish Times* and Michael Davitt, is suspicion of British, and specifically English, hegemony. Davitt seemed particularly concerned in his questions regarding the leadership of the movement and the role of Irish unions. Likewise, the editors attacked Aveling's Englishness. While it would be going too far to say that both the editors and Davitt were arguing for a nationalist perspective, they both saw the importance of Irishness. Thus, they criticized the labor rally for its English components. Both socialism and nationalism were prevalent movements within Ireland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both their conflicts and attempts at conciliation were represented in Phoenix Park.

¹⁹⁹ "Demonstration in Dublin," *The Irish Times*, 3 May 1909.

Conclusion

Overall, Phoenix Park presents a multitude of layers and nuances as a microcosm of Ireland. Within the Park, institutions and symbols such as the Viceregal Lodge and Royal Hibernian Military School imposed an aura of imperial control. Yet, at the same time, Dubliners tried to establish nationalist spheres such as at the site of “The Phoenix Park Murders”, “the hollow”, and Gaelic athletic fields. In addition, symbols such as the Wellington Testimonial served in dual imperialist and nationalist spheres. The park also served as an important staging area for labor and political rallies. In this manner, Phoenix Park at the turn of the century can be observed as a true representation of Ireland. It contained the structures of imperial domination, national resistance, trade unionism, and cooperation all within one space within one time.

Today, many of the structures of the Park remain. Some, such as the Wellington Testimonial and bandstand, continue seemingly unaltered, other than by the passage of time. However, following independence, many of the structures, became new national symbols of authority. The Viceregal Lodge now serves as the residence for the President of Ireland. Similarly, the former Royal Irish Constabulary barracks became the barracks of the Irish police force. The Royal Hibernian Military School became a Free State Army Barracks in 1922, but shortly thereafter was converted into St. Mary's Hospital. Most strikingly, the Park has ceased to serve as the popular and symbolic space it once did. Much of the Park is now in a state of disrepair. When we look back to the Phoenix Park of one hundred years ago, we see a Park full of life and importance that played a representative role in the Irish imperial experience.

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