Rural agitation in Ireland 1710-2010: a bibliography
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Abstract
This bibliography brings together recent secondary literature on agitation in rural Ireland over a period of three centuries.

Keywords:
Ireland, rural agitation, land war, peasant resistance, Whiteboys, rural protest, tithe war, Ribbonism

Introduction
Studies of various aspects of rural agitation in Ireland have flourished over the last four decades. Prior to the publication of T Desmond Williams' edited collection on secret societies in 1973—generally seen as the beginning of this flourishing—rural unrest had not been a major subject of unrest: aside from O'Donoghue's work on tithes and a variety of work published in local archaeological and historical journals, the land war had been almost the sole such subject of interest to mainstream Irish historiography. This changed with the arrival of social history and 'history from below' under the influence of English historians such as E.P. Thompson.

As Fitzpatrick noted in a 1985 review essay 'In addition to the three volumes under review, at least twenty-two major studies of various aspects of rural unrest have been published since 1978’ (Fitzpatrick 1985: 98). By the time Cronin published her review in 2012 her bibliography had swelled to twelve pages, though some of the listed works were contextual rather than focused on specific cases of agitation. My recent review in Interface featured a bibliography of eighteen pages, though again a fair number of the listed works were contextual.

It is of course difficult to sort out the bounds within which rural protest may be contained. The general understanding is that it concerns contentious activity by the lower orders and the dispossessed, in a phrase poor people’s social movements. However we also need to include, for example, the activities of the landlords’ social movements, social movements from above. These would include the massive evictions after the famine as well as landlord organisations—such as the Property Defence Association—formed during the long land war. We also need to include the north-eastern exception, the Orange Order being definitely associated with, if not responsible for, a variety of rural unrest.

Cronin divides her treatment into four periods: the age of mass protest (1750-
1825), changing protest (1845-79), the transformation of protest (1879-1903) and reforms, solutions and disillusionment (1903-60). Cronin is an excellent guide to the different positions historians have taken up in attempting to explain rural unrest. It does however have blind spots, the largest of which, the peculiar disappearance of the period 1826 to 1844, means that treatments of the tithe war are missing. Her closing date of 1960 seems appropriate as traditional agrarian agitation may be seen as ending in the 1950s. This bibliography continues past that date in recognition of the fact that rural protest did not cease then, but simply changed in response to a new set of circumstances, including the late industrialisation of Ireland which led to the setting up of extractive and productive industries in rural areas. The majority of rural protest since then has involved objections to locally unwanted land uses, which were also a source of urban protest.

The bibliography is divided in two: the first section lists publications in episodes of unrest chronologically; the second consists of thematic and contextual approaches. The contextual section is necessarily brief and selective, as the vast majority of publications on Irish history could arguably be described as providing context for the understanding of rural unrest. For landlords and estates, those articles dealing with relations with tenants are chosen: those wishing to examine further aspects of this phenomenon are referred to Dooley’s fine guide to sources. Similarly references to the agricultural, economic and geographical literature are selective. While the core of the literature has been produced by historians – both academic and amateur- contributions to the literature have also come from, anthropology, criminology, cultural studies, economics, geography, legal studies, social movements studies and sociology.

I hope this bibliography will be of use to all those who wish to engage with the history of protest and agitation in Ireland. As well as showing the achievements of the literature, the bibliography also shows where gaps in the literature exist. Jim Smyth, the historian who both noted the tendency of historians of the 1790s to concentrate on the United Irishmen and ignore the Defenders and was the historian who attempted to remedy this bias, noted in 1992 that ‘the basic narrative history of the Defenders has still to be written’ (Smyth 1992:100): twenty-five years later, it still awaits writing. One of the fundamental methodologies of historians has yet to be used i.e. publication/editing of original texts. Gibbons is the only publication of actual agrarian communications. Compare this dearth of publication to the massive editing and publication by historians and history journals of the texts of the enemies of the people: church, state, landlords, etc. The voice of the people –in Irish, the cosmhuintir (pedestrians, i.e. those without horses)- is beginning to be heard but is still only faint.

Thanks are due to the many local studies librarians in county libraries who provided a variety of access to their collections: this bibliography would be much poorer without their assistance. Thanks are particularly to the librarians at Ballinamore Library, County Leitrim.
Eighteenth century

Eighteenth century disaffection
Anon (n.d.) Rural unrest in northern Tipperary 1750 to 1850. 


Eighteenth century disaffection - regional, county and area studies

Houghers

Whiteboys

Whiteboys - regional, county and area studies


O’Riordan, Edmund (ed.) (2014) The case of Fr Nicholas Sheehy priest –patriot –martyr Hanged at Clonmel –March 1766. Co. Tipperary: Galty Cottage Books. (Reprints chapter from Burke, William P. (1907) History of Clonmel (pp.13-87) and Madden, Richard (1843) The United Irishmen –their lives and times (second series, volume 1) (pp.88-171) along with the editor’s chapter on Fr. Sheehy commemorations at Clogheen and Shanrahan 1869 – 1898 -1966 from Lonely little god’s acre (2011) (pp.172-244)).


Oakboys (Hearts of Oak)


Hearts of Steel


Magennis, Eoin (n.d.) The hearts of steel, the baronet and the minister: http://www.academia.edu/5796037/The_Hearts_of_Steel_the_baronet_and_the_minister_A_killing_in_Gilford_in_1772 , accessed July 28, 2018


Rightboys

Steelboys, Peep O’ Day Boys

1790s Defenders, Anti-militia, Agrarian agitation
Bohan, Janine Elaine (2015) Conflict, politics and patronage in late eighteenth century County
Armagh: a study of the correspondence of Edward Hudson, Church of Ireland minister, Forkhill, 1789-1795. Seanchas Ard Mhaca 130-150. (Defenders).


1790s Defenders etc. - regional, county and area studies


reparation' after 'proper acquittal' in Armagh assizes. Dúiche Néill 22:122-140.


Orangeism


**Pre-famine Ireland**

**Pre-famine Ireland**


Pre-famine Ireland - regional, county and area studies


**Threshers**


**Caravats & Shanavests**


**Carders**


**Ralahine**


Interface: a journal for and about social movements

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Ribbonmen


O Muireadhaigh, Sailbheastar (1964/1965) Na Fir Ribín. Galvia x118-32

Ribbonmen - regional, county and area studies


Rockites


**Rockites - regional, county and area studies**


**Terry Alts**


**Whitefeet**

Dunne, Terry (n.d.) ‘Be very civil with the people’: subaltern collective agency and uneven proletarianisation in a nineteenth century colliery.


Tithe war

Tithe war - regional, county and area studies

**Tommy Downshire’s Boys**

**Molly Maguires**

**Molly Maguires - regional, county and area studies**
Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Ribbonism - regional, county and area studies**


**Famine – food riots and other protest**

The long land war

Long land war 1850-1923


**Long land war 1850-1923 - regional, county and area studies**


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**Bibliography**


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**Gweedore sheep war/Derryveagh evictions**


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history and society. Dublin: Geography Publications, pp.547-582.


McClintock, May (ed.) (2007) The silent land: the story of the dispossessed in Derryveagh. N.p.: n.pub. 184pp, pbk, illus, map. (Badly organised (with neither index nor table of contents) book, relating to details of those evicted and their descendants; also includes details of three trials of Francis Bradley charged with murder of Adair stewart Adam Grierson (pp. 63-76)).


Tenants’ rights movement


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#### Land War


Land war - Boycotting

Marlow, Joyce (1973) *Captain Boycott and the Irish*. Andre Deutsch.


Land War - regional, county and area studies
Bader, Diane Lovegrove (2016) *Setting Donegal on fire*. N.p.: pub by author. (Account –by his great-granddaughter- of the life of Daniel Sweeney (1830-1893), detailing his involvement (as a returned emigrant) in Land League activities in Donegal and his arrest and imprisonment under the Coercion Act (pp.23-54). Includes a long extract (pp.31-36) from a report of a speech by him in January 1881.


Finnegan, Pat (2012) *The case of the Craughwell prisoners during the land war in Co. Galway*,
1879-85: the law must take its course. Dublin: Four Courts Press.
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O’Halloran, James J.G. () The impact of the land war in Clare, Wexford and Donegal. Clare Association 52-57.


Irish National League/ Plan of Campaign


Irish National League/ Plan of Campaign - regional, county and area studies


Doyle, Peggy (n.d.) The Coolgreaney evictions 1887. N.p: N.p. [Printed by The Echo’ Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford].


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**United Irish League - regional, county and area studies**


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Murphy, Clare C. (1996) Conflicts in the west, the ranch wars continue, 1911-1912. Part II. Cathair na Mart 16:112-139.

Ranch war - regional, county and area studies

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Changing protest after independence

After independence

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1960s


Locally unwanted land uses — factories, mining, waste dumps, telephone masts


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Rossport
Siggins, Lorna (2010) Once upon a time in the west: the Corrib gas controversy. Dublin:
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Context and thematic approaches

Guides to sources, bibliographies


Marnane, Denis G. and Darmody, Mary Guinan (n.d.) Finding Tipperary: a guide to the resources of the Tipperary Studies Department, Tipperary County Library, Co. Tipperary. N.p.: County Tipperary Joint Libraries Committee. (pp.88-93 Land; pp.96-98 Law and order).

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**Context - regional, county and area studies**


Crawford, W.H. (1975) Landlord-tenant relations in Ulster, 1609-1820. *Irish Economic and
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Context – agricultural and economic history


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Waterways


Michael Davitt


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About the author
Tomás Mac Sheoin is an independent scholar who writes on the chemical industry and social movements. He has recently edited with Frank Pearce a special issue of Social Justice (41 (1/2)) to mark the 30th anniversary of the Bhopal chemical catastrophe. He can be contacted at tmacsheoin AT gmail.com.