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CROWNED IN SHAMROCKS ERIN'T BROAD ACRES: THE EMERGENCE OF THE
IRISH CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN YORKSHIRE, AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE
WEST RIDING'S FORGOTTEN IRISH RUGBY CLUBS, 1860-c 1920.

DAVID HOLMES

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Abstract

This thesis examines the emergence of the Irish Catholic diaspora in the industrial diocese of the West Riding of Yorkshire, and the evolution of the West Riding's forgotten Irish rugby clubs, 1860-c 1920. In addition to considering the contributions of Irish immigrants in the history of rugby football this thesis explores their religious, nationalist, social and cultural experiences, set within the wider history of Irish immigration in England. The history and establishment of parochial and non-parochial Irish Catholic rugby clubs in the West Riding can be traced back to the 1870s. Diasporic Irish Catholics settled in the county have always been part of rugby football since its inception, albeit, at a much slower and punctuated rate than that observed among English Protestant communities. The foremost aim of this thesis is to scrutinise the rugby antecedents of Irish Catholics domiciled in the manufacturing centres of the West Riding during the Victorian and early Edwardian periods. In the late nineteenth century, towns and cities across the West Riding had become the great citadels of rugby football. Rugby attracted much participation, giving rise to the Catholic Church establishing its own internalised parochial rugby clubs, which were intended to improve the spiritual and physical well-being of its poor Irish adherents. This thesis, moreover, examines the establishment of non-parochial Irish rugby clubs which acted as sporting auxiliaries to Irish nationalist clubs. Finally, this thesis investigates those opportunities which allowed some working-class Irish Catholics to participate in games of rugby league outside of their own ethno-religious clubs for some of the county's senior professional rugby clubs. Since the main objective of Irish nationalist organisations was to offer financial support and political muscle to the Irish Parliamentary Party, this thesis will argue that the establishment of non-parochial nationalist Irish rugby clubs initially centred on the sport's by products', 'gate-money'.

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Abbreviations

FA: Football Association.

GAA: Gaelic Athletic Association.

ILL: Irish Land League.

ILP: Independent Labour Party.

INL: Irish National League.

NILL: National Irish Land League.

NU: Northern Union.

RFU: Rugby Football Union.

UIL: United Irish League.

YMCS: Young Men's Catholic Society.

YRFU: Yorkshire Rugby Football Union.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the emergence of the Irish Catholic diaspora in the industrial diocese of the West Riding of Yorkshire, and the evolution of the West Riding's forgotten Irish rugby clubs, 1860-c 1920. The term 'rugby football' is used here to represent both rugby union football and rugby league football, except where it is inappropriate. The aim of this research is to determine the historical relationship between Irish Catholic diasporic identities and rugby football in the late Victorian and early Edwardian eras, although occasional reference will be made of that other important nineteenth-century immigrant group, the Eastern European Jews. In addition to considering the contributions of Irish immigrants in the history of rugby football, this thesis shall also examine their religious, nationalist, social and cultural experiences, set within the wider history of Irish immigration in England. In particularly, it shall examine the role of the Roman Catholic Church, which played a predominant part in the process whereby Irish people assimilated into their new surroundings. In their new urban communities the Irish sought to maintain their Irish culture with the Catholic Church being central to many community activities. It established a means of contact between its Irish adherents and helped to strengthen many of their religious convictions, to enlighten them in the midst of the difficulties presented by the question of the day.

This will lead naturally enough into the core area of the research, which will argue that diasporic Irish Catholics settled in the county have always been part of rugby football since its inception, albeit, at a much slower and punctuated rate than that observed among English Protestant communities. First, it will argue that rugby attracted much participation among the working-class Irish Catholics, giving rise to the Catholic Church establishing its own, internalised, parochial rugby clubs, which were intended to improve the spiritual and physical well-being of its poor Irish adherents. Secondly, it will argue that the establishment of non-parochial Irish nationalist rugby clubs initially centred on the sport's by products',

'gate-money'. Thirdly, following the great rugby split of 1895, this thesis shall examine those sporting opportunities which allowed some working-class Irish Catholics to participate in games of rugby league outside of their ethno-religious clubs for some of the county's senior professional rugby clubs.

Finally, this thesis attempts, through careful and selective consideration of primary sources, to evaluate what effect rugby football had on the culture of Irish Catholic immigrants and what effect, if any, Irish immigrants had on rugby football. It attempts to explore some of the key social, economic and political trends that have developed before, during and after the emergence of rugby league in 1895, especially, how the state and receiving societies of the West Riding responded to Irish immigrant groups. This study also reflects a legitimate attempt to cross inter-disciplinary boundaries to bring out some of the wider strands of current thinking – and it does so with a sense of eclecticism, rather than sticking to the given 'party line' – simply dredging up dry listings of fixtures, results, personalities, catalogues of games, a litany of victories, a string of statistics or a scatter of similes and waiting for them to cohere into an orderly account of the past.

Historically speaking, it is a determined attempt to recover the minds, thoughts and actions of men and women not long dead, whose customs, values and attitudes were almost certainly different from our own. It is important to have an historical perspective, particularly on the relationship between social and political changes in order to understand the well-developed sense of identity and self-image of the Yorkshire people. In particular, it looks at the dynamics of the hostilities directed towards the Irish Catholic diaspora through the lens of public anxiety. This strategy makes it possible not only to gauge the hostilities that Irish immigrant communities faced but also to illuminate the mental universe of popular writers, journalists and government officials, whose fears and fantasies were directed towards them.

To date there has been no academic research papers regarding the consequence and purpose of rugby football in the lives of Irish Catholic immigrant populations in England. Most ground-breaking research regarding Irish immigrants and sport is concentrated on Scotland and association football. They have also tackled a number of other topics concerning the lived experiences of Irish immigrant communities, ranging from Gaelic games and the Gaelic Athletics Association and to association football and Irishness.[1] The neglect of sport from the research programme of those fascinated in Irish immigration and sport in England is somewhat uncharacteristic, and sadly lacking, especially when we take into account the social, political, economic and cultural significance of sport among the Irish in England during the period under investigation. Indeed, to date, there is no comprehensive work that documents connections between Irish immigrants and sport in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, except that is, for the studies of David and Peter Kennedy and their research pertaining to soccer clubs emerging from Irish Catholic communities in Liverpool.[2]

Furthermore, histories that seek to challenge and confirm immigrant identities in rugby league football are often mainly concerned with New Commonwealth immigrant groups. Thus, considerable literary effort has been expended to link, at one end, historical idiosyncratic accounts of individual black players with the origins of rugby league and, at the other end, to join in sequence patterns of New Commonwealth immigration to create a continuous chronological black history, running from the First World War period to the

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[1] J.M. Bradley, *Ethnic and Religious Identity in Scotland: Politics, Culture and Football* (Aldershot, 1995); G.P.T. Finn, 'Racism, religion and social prejudice: Irish Catholic clubs, soccer and Scottish society – the historical roots of prejudice' *International Journal of Sport*, 8 (1991), pp. 370-97; G.P.T. Finn, 'Faith, hope and bigotry: case studies and Anti-Catholic prejudice in Scottish soccer and society', in G. Jarvie and G. Walker (eds.), *Scottish Sport and the Making of the Nation* (Leicester, 1994), pp. 91-112; R. Giulianotti, 'Supporters, followers, fans and flaneurs: a taxonomy of spectator identities in football', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 26 (2002), pp. 25-46; T. Campbell and P. Woods, *The Glory and The Dream, The History of Celtic FC, 1887-1986* (Edinburgh, 1986); S. Feeney, *Conradh na Gaelige (Gaelic League) in Scotland, 1895-1995: A centenary celebration* (Edinburgh, 1995); S. King, *The Clash of the Ash in Foreign Fields Abroad* (London, 1998);
[2] D. Kennedy and P. Kennedy, 'Ambiguity, Complexity and Convergence: The Evolution of Liverpool's Irish Football Clubs', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 7 (2007), pp. 894-920.

present day. There is, however, no endeavour, brief or otherwise, to identify or recover older stages of immigration and how these particular immigrant groups functioned within the social, cultural and historical context of rugby football. Given this curious absence, they fail to accurately consider widespread connections that feature earlier processes of immigration and settlement of erstwhile historical subjects and their association with rugby league football, such as, Irish Catholics and Eastern European Jews. Such works, however, are particularly informative and provide a much broader understanding and definition of minority group participation within rugby league and organised British sports. These are valuable studies, which have broken new ground by reconstructing the years of post-colonial immigration and black minority group participation, situated within the wider study of rugby league football. Based on their findings, it is argued by some historians, most notably Tony Collins, that rugby league is among the most ethnically composite of all the professional team sports in Britain, 'with a rich sporting pedigree of black minority group participation, which pre-dates the First World War'.[3] But these works are only pale reflections of the sporting experiences of other immigrant communities that preceded post-colonial immigrations.

Given the central location of these works, which identify a high level of inter-connectedness between rugby league and predominantly working-class immigrant communities, it seems somehow strange then that two culturally distinct immigrant groups, omnipresent with the emergence and widespread popularisation of both rugby union and rugby league, and unquestionably the object of the sports historians' attention, remain largely invisible to the historical audience – the Irish and Eastern European Jews. Despite forming England's largest national and religious diasporic group until well after 1945, 'Irish Catholics are seen as constituting the least resident aliens of all the immigrant groups',[4] and remain

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[3] T. Collins, 'Racial Minorities in a Marginalised Sport: Race, Discrimination and Integration in British Rugby League Football', in (eds.), M. Cronnin and D. Mayall, *Sport and Ethnicity: Sporting Nationalism* (London, 1998).

[4] S. Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* (Buckingham, 1993), p. 5.

absent from the tracts of rugby football history – so much so that one could even question their existence.[5] This is in the face of vibrant Irish communities, 'whom often formed their own independent social structures, and participated in various activities that were at variance with the host society'.[6]

Recent years have also seen the publication of a small corpus of finely-crafted works in which autobiographic and biographic modes, or hybridised forms of them, have been mobilised in order to determine the degree of ethnic minority participation in rugby league football in Britain. Thematically, these works differ ideologically and formally, varying from the unconventional memoirs of the sporting elite to scholarly theses.[7] Yet, there are many reasons to be sceptical of some of these works because their oral transmissions, stories and the memoirs they preserve tend to be quite minimalist, providing only limited interpretations that consolidate interrelationships between minority groups and rugby league; advancing narrow and all-inclusive idioms that never intersect with minority groups beyond the achievements of black professional rugby league players.

Whatever the genuine memories they preserve, they provide historians with few data to reconstruct or advance a much broader understanding and definition of the historical, cultural and sociological developments of rugby league from which, eventually, a number of minority groups arose. Such works do not explore the historical and cultural milieu of these identifiable minority groups, thereby, obscuring the stoical struggles and subsequent sporting prominence of these minority groups set against a backdrop of a long and inglorious line of

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[5] J. MacLaughlin, *Ireland: The Immigrant Nursery and the World Economy* (Cork, 1994); C. Holmes, *John Bull's Island. Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971* (London, 1988); M.A.G. O'Tuathhaigh, 'The Irish in nineteenth century Britain: Problems of Integration', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian city* (Beckenham, 1985).

[6] F. Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice: A Study of Irish Immigrants in York, 1840-1875* (Cork, 1982), pp.100-122; C. Holmes, *The Impact of Immigration in England, 1870-1914* (London, 1960), pp. 62-8.

[7] T. Collins and P. Melling, *Crossing the Colour Line in Rugby League* (Skipton, 2004); Collins, 'Racial Minorities in a Marginalised Sport: Race, Discrimination and Integration in British Rugby League Football'; K. Spraklen, 'Black Diamond Black Pearl: Exploring Racial Identities in Rugby League', in (eds.), M. Cronnin and D. Mayall, *Sport and Ethnicity: Sporting Nationalism* (London, 1998); J. Long and B. Carrington, *What's The Difference? A Study of the Nature and Extent of Racism in Rugby League* (Leeds Metropolitan University, 1995).

racist reaction to them. Indeed, some of the most significant elements found in these works are spliced together to create catalogues of memoirs that are predisposed to encapsulate and preserve the notable characteristics and sporting triumphs of legendary black players and giants of the game.

Of course, there maybe a legitimate set of circumstances for these giants of rugby league football to write their memoirs, and even for the rest of us to buy and, conceivably, read them. They provide a slab of stone for the supporter to attack with their chisels, and a doorstop for all but the intrepid reader. In academic parlance, their function is sociological rather than historical. Usually historical facts quickly become garbled. At present we understand significantly more about the chronologies of black professional rugby league players and their connections with rugby league than we do about the complicated but equally fascinating histories of other immigrant communities and their relationship with rugby league. The authors of these various publications appear to have rooted black professional rugby league players into the smoothly flowing whole, stamping their own beliefs on what they consider to be the definitive interpretation of the relationship between immigrant communities and rugby league.

It is quite apparent, then, that a good deal of analysis for understanding and contextualising immigrant identities, in the context of league football, has been constructed on the foundations of what is termed, 'a black-white dichotomy, where colour is foregrounded as the predominant marker of difference and cultural distinctiveness'.[8] Indeed, in several instances contemporary academic contributions in notable journals and publications, in accord with research recounting the integration and assimilation processes of minority groups in the history of sport and rugby league, writers have become almost

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[8] D. Mason, *Race and Ethnicity in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1995), p. 9; M. J. Hickman and B. Walter, *Religion, Class and Identity: The State, the Catholic Church and the Education of the Irish in Britain* (Avebury, 1995), pp. 12-18.

exclusively restricted to a dialectic black African-Caribbean discourse *per se*.[9] Naturally, out of these generally well written works emerge important insights into the rich sporting heritage of black professional rugby league players.[10] However, they do little in the way of advancing a didactic explication which time-lines some of Britain's oldest immigrant groups – the diasporic Irish and Eastern European Jews – at the earlier end of the sports chronological range.

Secondly, these studies fail absolutely to correlate our most basic understanding of the historical and cultural sequences and synchronisms of these nineteenth and early twentieth century immigrant groups, set within the dominant culture of the host society. Thirdly, they leave the Irish and Jewish immigrants completely divorced from the historiography of rugby league. In the end, however, for the Irish – especially in light of their undocumented contributions in these less serviceable histories, which fail to anchor their legitimacy into the broader historical currents of rugby league football – they remain little more than an invisible minority. As a consequence, it is no wonder, then, that a number of variously sized holes in our understanding of rugby league history remain to be filled, something this research aims to remedy.

The relationship between Irish diasporic identities and rugby football is profoundly entrenched and intertwined in the history of Irish Catholic diasporic immigration to the West Riding of Yorkshire – conventionally spanning the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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[9] J. MacClancy, *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity* (London, 1991); B. Mosely, *Sporting Immigrants* (London, 1997); J. Bains and S. Johal, *Corner Flags and Corner Shops: The Asian Football Experience* (London, Pheonix, 1998); M. Bose, *The Sporting Alien: English Sport's Lost Camelot* (Edinburgh,1996); B. Carrington, 'Sport, masculinity and black cultural resistance', *Journal of Sports and Social Issues*, 22, No. 3 (1998); G. Jarvie and I. Reid, 'Race relations, sociology of sport and the new politics of race and racism', *Leisure Studies*, 16, No. 4, (1997); J. A. Maguire, 'Sport, racism and British society: a sociological study of England's elite male Afro-Caribbean soccer and rugby union players', in G. Jarvie, (ed.), *Sport, Racism and Ethnicity* (London, 1991); Collins and Melling, *Crossing the Colour Line in Rugby League*; Collins, 'Racial Minorities in a Marginalised Sport: Race, Discrimination and Integration in British Rugby League Football'; Spraklen, 'Black Diamond Black Pearl: Exploring Racial Identities in Rugby League'; Long and Carrington, *What's The Difference? A Study of the Nature and Extent of Racism in Rugby League*.

[10] Collins, 'Racial Minorities in a Marginalised Sport: Race, Discrimination and Integration in British Rugby League Football'.

Before considering the nomenclature that reflect the contributions of Irish diasporic immigrants in the history of rugby football, the opening chapters of this thesis will first examine the social, cultural, religious and political experiences of the Irish Catholic diasporic immigrants domiciled in the West Riding; set within the wider history of Irish immigration in England from the early nineteenth century through to the opening decades of the twentieth century. Essentially, these chapters characterise the sources and timing of the arrival of the Irish immigrants as they reacted to an assortment of internal and external stimuli. These chapters are also arranged chronologically and topically to give a broad outline of the times, and how Yorkshire society responded to Irish Catholic immigrants in the diaspora, which waxed and waned throughout much of the period under examination.[11]

It will also examine whether or not there was a distinctive Irish sub-culture in the textile-producing districts of the West Riding, and if so, did it vary throughout the localities they inhabited. At the same time, this research will attempt to establish exactly what these working-class Irish Catholic diasporic communities were doing that was not shared by the native/host majority, and rationalise how significant these things were. This will lead, naturally enough, into the core area of this research, namely, the connections and equivalences between the experiences of these Irish Catholic communities and their relationship with rugby football, and to what extent the Irish diaspora was culturally influenced by both codes of rugby football in a period dominated by Irish nationalism. Indeed, with the growth in Irish immigration came a corresponding increase in Irish social and cultural vitality in many parts of the county – political and nationalistic consciousness, too, was fermenting.[12]

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[11] M. J. Hickman and B. Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain* (London, 1997), p. 182; M. Hecter, *Internal Colonisation: the Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (London, 1975), pp. 290-6; Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p. 12.
[12] J. A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London, 1963), p. 12.

This thesis incorporates eight chronologically ordered chapters. The first is concerned with the characteristics of the Irish Catholic immigrant communities domiciled in the West Riding, integrating the rationale for their arrival in the West Riding, and the manner in which they were received by contemporary public opinion. Attention is concentrated on the Irish demographic and cultural landscape of Irishmen and their families as they transplanted their rural way of life and values to the unfamiliar economic and Protestant social setting of industrial Yorkshire, precipitated by economic and social transformations taking place in both Ireland and Britain.[13] Cumulatively, these mechanisms will offer compelling glimpses into the tensions that existed between these immigrant communities and the host society regarding public health and morals, standards of living, employment conditions and rates of pay, and law and order.

There follows three chapters which examine the lived religious experiences of the diasporic Irish Catholics, but each approaching these religious experiences from a different angle. They provide a general introduction to some of the key issues and problems concerning the English Catholic Church in its relation to the Irish Catholic diaspora – the social, political and nationalistic issues that arose within a religious framework and displayed themselves in a religious setting.[14] They also examine, how and why, the Catholic Church had become such a dominant religious channel in the internal development of Irish diasporic life. Indeed, Catholicism and the English Catholic Church became a religious key which unlocked most doors to Irish Catholic diasporic life – a totalising religion that controlled the whole order of their lives.[15]

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[13] T. Dillion, 'The Irish in Leeds, 1851-61', *The Thoresby Miscellany*, 16 (1979); C. Richardson, 'Irish Settlement in Mid-Nineteenth Century Bradford', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research*, 20 (1968).
[14] G. Beck, *The English Catholics* (London, 1950), p.8; M. J. Hickman, *Religion, Class and Identity: The State, the Catholic Church and the Education of the Irish in Britain*, (Avebury, 1995), p.87; B. Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community* (London, 1997), p.5.
[15] J. Bossy, *The English Catholic community, 1550-1850* (London, 1975), pp. 203-09.

The first of these three chapters deals with the religious revival of the English Catholic Church and its preoccupations to provide for the spiritual needs of the displaced Irish immigrants. The second chapter shall consider these developments in relation to the growth of politically active Irish nationalist and secret oath-bound organisations that existed across the industrial diocese of the West Riding. The presence of illegal oath-bound societies and the repercussions of the problems they occasioned became a persistent challenge for the Catholic Church and for its clergy in those towns and districts with large Irish communities well into the twentieth century.[16] Therefore, the chapter will examine ecclesiastical sanctions introduced by the Catholic Church to control their diffusion. The third of these three chapters shall examine some of the influences at work in relation to the expansion of Catholic confraternities, guilds and societies, including sports and rugby clubs, which the Catholic Church saw as a means of habituating its Irish diasporic communities to the function and dominance of its doctrines, sharply differentiating them from the mainstay of English Protestant society.

The foremost lines of enquiry in the final four chapters of this thesis integrate the history of rugby union football and rugby league football into their larger cultural contexts with patterns of Irish immigration, social stratification, nationalism, and Catholicism. They consider to what extent cultural assimilation into English society required, specifically in the case of Irish encounters with rugby football during the closing decades of the nineteenth and opening decades of the twentieth century. In a small way, these chapters will also challenge assumptions that Irish adoptions of British sporting culture meant a renunciation of Catholicism, or their own national culture, and that they had receded into the background as fully integrated group by the turn of the twentieth century.

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[16] H.V. Brasted, 'Irish nationalism and the British empire in the late nineteenth century', in O, MacDonagh, W.E. Mandle and P. Travers (eds.), *Irish culture and nationalism, 1750-1950* (London, 1983), p. 183.

The first of these chapters examines the social experience and importance of rugby football in the West Riding. The history of rugby football is a vital part of evaluating how Irish Catholic communities domiciled in the West Riding evolved as rugby itself evolved. It is, therefore, essential to examine the historical importance of rugby in the county. The chapter is arranged topically to provide a broad outline of the times, and how Yorkshire society responded to rugby football as a regional winter pastime. The second chapter examines how many Irish Catholics gravitated towards rugby football, given the regional importance of rugby as a dominant winter pastime.[17] It also examines the establishment and importance of the Catholic Church's rugby teams and sports societies, which helped to create and develop a unique Catholic consciousness among the mass of its working-class Irish adherents.

The third chapter shall examine the establishment non-parochial Irish nationalist rugby teams, which acted as sporting auxiliaries and cash cows to the various Home Rule clubs scattered across the county. Since the main objective of the Home Rule organisation was to offer financial support and political muscle to the Irish Parliamentary Party,[18] this chapter will argue that the establishment of Irish nationalist rugby football teams initially centred on the sport's by products', namely commerce and gate-money, cashing in on the craze that was rugby football. The final chapter attempts to draw some initial conclusions about the number of first and second generation Irish Catholic players participating at the senior level of rugby league competition in the West Riding throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The aim of this chapter is to make two basic points about the patterns of Irish Catholic immigrant development associated with the emergence and spread of rugby league football in the West Riding. Moreover, it shall examine sporting opportunities which allowed some working-class Irish Catholics to participate in games of

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[17] T. Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History* (London, 2006).
[18] A. O'Day, *The English face of Irish nationalism* (Dublin, 1977).

rugby league football outside of their ethno-religious clubs as playing members for some of the county's leading senior teams.

This research is the first ever attempt to examine and establish Irish immigrant identities in rugby football within the context of a detailed study of one region. What it seeks to establish is the cultural assimilation of the Irish immigrants into rugby football, and in doing so, attempts to make a significant contribution towards the growing body of knowledge that seeks both to challenge and confirm immigrant identities in rugby football, broadening the focus of earlier scholars on the subject. Taken as a whole, this research will attempt to document the rich, unique features of Irish immigration into the West Riding and locate them in specific social, religious and nationalist contexts; and traces their emergence and transformation over time, as rugby football emerged and transformed itself over time, detailing how Irish immigrants have contributed to the history of rugby football.

Particular, attention is focussed on the cultural and sporting activities of the Catholic Church and Irish Home Rule clubs, and will argue that they had become, to a considerable extent, two of the most powerful forces in drawing together religion with Irish culture and Irish nationalism with Irish culture throughout the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods, defining what had become a multi-generational diaspora. This research will argue that, the history of rugby football was full of incident and interest, touching on all sides of life, on the outlook and interests of many working-class Irish Catholics domiciled in the West Riding. It will draw attention to those aspects of Irish immigration in England which are often neglected, leisure and sport, and the impact diasporic Irish Catholic communities had on both codes of rugby football. Therefore, if this thesis directs attention to these neglected aspects of rugby football history, it will have achieved its aims. For the sake of brevity, then, the historical enterprise for this thesis is viewed through the sporting antecedents of nineteenth and early twentieth century Irish Catholic communities domiciled in the manufacturing

districts of the West Riding. It is an approach that is developed by evaluating the relationship between Irish Catholic immigration to the West Riding of Yorkshire, and the evolution of the history of rugby football.

CHAPTER 1

IRISH LIFEWAYS

Immigration, Life, Labour and the Diasporic Irish Catholic Community in the West Riding of Yorkshire 1800-*c*, 1922

The geographical focus of this history is stage set on the eastern slopes of the Pennines – the Broad Acres of Yorkshire – encompassing the old manufacturing towns and districts of the West Riding, which once upon a time presented bright new prospects that lured many working-class people to them from far and away. It is worthwhile remembering that the West Riding of Yorkshire has a very long history of immigration and settlement. Most of those people who came to the West Riding throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century came to work in the textile and manufacturing industries, usually at a time of labour shortage, or when there was a need to prop up failing industries with cheap labour. Before, during and after the Great Potato Famine of the mid-nineteenth century, thousands of predominantly impoverished, itinerant and working-class Irish Catholics settled in the main industrial centres of the West Riding, which saw the creation and subsequent growth of numerous émigré communities organised along ethnic and religious lines – safe havens where some semblance of their former lives might be maintained.[1] By the late nineteenth century Irish Catholic immigrants had begun to assert themselves as an increasingly significant social, religious and political group. Correspondingly, with this growth came hostile reaction against them from the evangelical Protestant majority that lived around them. The cultural activities, religious belief systems and doctrines of Irish Catholics set them apart from the rest of the host society. From the host society's perspective the Irish Catholics were unconventional groups, outside any long-standing tradition. As such, they were potentially dangerous and subject to a variety of criticisms, many unwarranted.

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[1] E. Royale, *Modern Britain: A Social history, 1750-1997* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 69-74.

This chapter begins with the rapid expansion of Irish immigration into the chief manufacturing centres of the West Riding of Yorkshire during the nineteenth century. As a preliminary to the forthcoming chapters, which articulate the key issues and problems concerning the English Catholic Church in its relation to the Irish Catholic diaspora – the social, political and nationalistic issues that arose within a religious framework – and the contributions of Irish immigrants in the history of rugby football, this chapter shall, first, examine the far-reaching circumstances and rationale for their coming to the West Riding. Attention is concentrated on Irish immigrant demographics and the cultural landscape of Irishmen and their families as they shifted their mainly rural ways of life and values to the unfamiliar economic social setting of industrialised Yorkshire, precipitated by economic and social transformations taking place in both Ireland and Britain.[2] Cumulatively, these mechanisms will offer compelling glimpses into the tensions that existed between these immigrant communities and the host society regarding public health and morals, standards of living, employment conditions and rates of pay, and law and order.

There is general agreement that in England the main areas of Irish settlement during the nineteenth century were in London and Lancashire, with smaller concentrations in the West Midlands and the West Riding of Yorkshire.[3] The history of Irish Catholic immigration and settlement to the West Riding had begun a generation or two before the arrival of the Great Famine victims of 1845/47, an event that would swell the industrial polity of Britain, including the foremost manufacturing districts of northern England, as the Irish rural population found itself squeezed out of the Irish countryside.[4] At the beginning of the nineteenth century increased numbers of Irishmen and their families transplanted their rural ways of life and values to the unfamiliar economic and social setting of industrialised

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[2] T. Dillion, 'The Irish in Leeds, 1851-61', *The Thoresby Miscellany*, 16 (1979); C. Richardson, 'Irish Settlement in Mid-Nineteenth Century Bradford', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research*, 20 (1968).
[3] Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*, p.17.
[4] *Leeds Mercury*, 12 November 1863.

Yorkshire, precipitated by economic and social transformations taking place in both Ireland and Britain.[5]

The development of capitalism and the expansion of urban Britain was a fundamental characteristic of the nineteenth century. As the rural population declined in the face of extensive changes in agricultural production, the factory age demanded huge rises in locally concentrated workforces.[6] In the first half of the nineteenth century, under the impetus of industrialisation, most towns in the West Riding experienced a population explosion. Indeed, the number and wealth of its inhabitants, and its natural and artificial production, stood the West Riding at the forefront of English counties.[7] The chief cause of this rapid increase in population is to be found in the rapid development of the means of profitable employment for the labouring classes who formed the great mass of people domiciled in the county. Profitable employment was derived from the combined advantages of a skilful agriculture, rich coalfields and lead mines, ingenious manufacturers, and a commerce extending to the whole world.[8] As such, the prosperity of the county and its industries attracted considerable numbers of people from other English counties and immigrants from further afield – the Irish are one such immigrant group that stands out.[9]

In the opening decades of the nineteenth century municipal authorities and contemporary press, generally tolerant of social diversity, for the most part ignored the presence of the Irish and the proliferation of Irish Catholic communities within the county. In its earliest stages, few people in the West Riding would have even been aware of the accidental causes and unusual circumstances under which Irish immigration was beginning to

[5] M. Hecter, *Internal Colonisation: the Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (London, 1975).
[6] A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1971), p. 140.
[7] E. Baines, *History, Directory, and Gazetteer of the County of York* (London, 1822), p. 88.
[8] R. G. Wilson, 'The Supremacy of the Yorkshire Cloth Industry' in N. B. Harte and K. G. Ponting (ed.), *Textile History and Economic History* (Manchester, 1975), p. 153.
[9] 'Report by Statistical Committee of Town Council, 1839', in J. F. C. Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain, 1831-1851* (London, 1988).

increase.[10] On the surface, the Irish numbered among the great majority of people migrating into the West Riding from all other parts of the kingdom – England, Scotland and Wales – and swelling the industrial polity.[11] Indeed, the majority of towns in the West Riding grew not only through natural increase but by substantial in-migration of people born outside the county.[12] Certainly, most officials would not have been able to distinguish between the incoming Irish and the aggregation of people migrating from all other places. Officials had little interest in making such distinctions, caring only about collecting taxes and maintaining order.[13] At a deeper level, however, no thinking person could have ignored entirely the presence of the Irish – distinct in varying degrees form the industrial proletariat, not only in terms of religious and cultural practices, but also in dialect, pronunciation, social habits, and character.

The overall silence of the sources for this early period makes it impossible to determine with certainty the make-up of the Irish diaspora and probably bears witness to an effective *modus vivendi* between the receiving communities of the West Riding and the Irish diaspora – an attitude of live and let live – which allowed the Irish to compete for labour on an equal footing.[14] By the 1820s all this changed dramatically. This stands out when we consider the descriptions of the Irish carried down through the county's press – from the *Yorkshire Gazette* to the *Leeds Patriot* – which stimulated the ferocious passions of the English industrial classes, who episodically, unleashed severe anti-Irish sentiments, finding in

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[10] *Lloyds Weekly*, 23 February 1831.

[11] Report published by the Bradford Catholic Club, 1851: 'Over the past thirty years the overwhelming majority of people settled in the manufacturing towns of this county are people who have come hither from other places. I should say fully two thirds of the inhabitants are composed of those – or the families of those – who have settled in this county from all parts of England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and the Continent'.

[12] T. Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban Industrial Society: Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 252-92.

[13] *Ibid.,* p. 57: 'I assert that officials everywhere in Yorkshire have thus held aloof from their poorer brethren. What have they been doing in their own sphere to help them? The answer, I fear, is nothing. For many years they have ignored the growing presence of the English, Scottish and Irish labouring classes – deprived of social importance. With the strongest possible motive, they care only about getting in the rates as best they can and maintaining law and order for the furtherance of their own prosperity'.

[14] *Leeds Mercury*, 18 March 1833.

the Irish a convenient scapegoat for the nation's and the county's social and economic ills. According to the *Yorkshire Gazette* of 1825, 'Irish immigration has been very large during the past few years, and in all the chief towns in Yorkshire there are Irish colonies to be found, which live sundered from the rest of the people by mutual dislike. These Celtic invaders lessen the rate of wages, and this is their principle fault; but there is also in their habits and bearing towards their neighbours something that constantly irritates the English multitudes'.[15] Certainly, Irish competitiveness in the labour market explains why most contemporary newspapers adopted similar viewpoints about the Irish. The *Leeds Patriot*, informed its readers about the moral and cultural causes and consequences Irish immigration might have on Yorkshire society, 'It is painful to contemplate what might be the ultimate effect of this Irish immigration on the moral and habits of the people and on the future of the county'.

This was a marked change from the neutral tone promulgated only a few years earlier, which on the whole was more favourable towards the Irish, 'An Irishman toils manfully for his reward, and turns out work to which he has wholly been unaccustomed, quite as good as the Englishman's. The local and alien character of the Irishman may be essentially different; however, he works like all other men in proportion to the amount of his reward. English witnesses state that he asks for no holidays and toils conscientiously and infatigably'.[16] Indeed, by the mid 1820s the theme of every insulting tongue and of every malicious mind had matured into a systematic attack on the Irish diaspora, which set in motion dynamics that ultimately lowered their status. Thus, Irishmen had become the 'Arab-Hindoo-Celt, in whom idleness is an instinct, fatal to his progression, and who would rather beg a penny than earn a crown'.[17] Within a quarter of a century, increased levels of Irish immigration had aroused sustained controversy and provided a concrete focus for press attacks. They now stood apart from other communities in the locales they inhabited, exposed to the opprobrium of all

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[15] *Yorkshire Gazette*, 12 July 1825; *Leeds Patriot*, 5 April 1826.
[16] *Yorkshire Gazette*, 4 September 1819,
[17] *Bradford Observer*, 15 March 1835.

classes and the furious violence of the lower. Simmering hatred of the Irish, as manifested through intrusions into the English labour market, increased numbers of Irish pauper immigrants, religious ferment, divisions between industrial capitalism and the industrial proletariat, and massive unemployment in the textile manufacturing industries, reached boiling point in the late 1820s.[18]

With varying degrees of reliability town-based statistics and unofficial sources, mostly inconsistent, ambiguous, or vague, give the impression that the levels of Irish coming into the West Riding during this period was steadily on the rise and had characteristically changed from temporary to permanent settlement.[19] According to a variety of sources, this early immigration was largely propelled by poor harvests and the urge to escape the lesser famines of 1817-1818 and 1822, which reduced substantial portions of Ireland's rural population to poverty. Others migrated because of a stagnant Irish economy following the decline in rural textile industries.[20] In 1824, Parliament passed an Act which abolished the tariff levied on the import of English textiles to Ireland. In essence, this Act devastated the Irish textile industry when Ireland was swamped with cheaper mass produced textiles from the industrial mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire.[21]

The sources clearly reveal that Irish immigration to the West Riding was increasing due to the intolerable difficulties which sprang from Ireland itself. Unfortunately, the nature of the evidence makes it impossible to determine with any degree of certainty the demographic experience of the Irish diaspora in the West Riding at any point prior to the

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[18] Poor Law Enquiry (Ireland): Appendix G; Report on the State of the Irish poor in Great Britain, 1835; D. E Strong, 'Progression, Extent and Value of the Weaving Industry in Yorkshire and Lancashire', *Economic Science and Statistics* (1844), pp.5-12.

[19] *Leeds Mercury*, 17 May 1835, Social Educational and Religious State of the Manufacturing Districts of Yorkshire;

[20] *Second Report of the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom*, 1826 –27; Report by Statistical Committee of Town Council, 1839, in J. F. C. Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain*, 1831 – 51 (1988), p.8; and *Report by the Statistical Committee of Town Council,* 1839, in J. F. C. Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain,* 1832–51 (London, 1988), p. 23.

[21] F. L. Wilson, 'The Irish in Britain during the first half of the Nineteenth Century' (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Manchester, 1946), p. 46.

Census of 1841. Indeed, there is a paucity of hard data on the values implicit with the 'numbers game'. Given that no official figures existed prior to 1841, it is difficult to produce any reasonable estimates for an Irish presence in any given area of the county. Therefore, any attempt to sketch a broadly based statistical/demographic picture of Irish immigration presents a number of awkward problems, which may be better left out the present discussion.[22] When the first census recording birth places of the population was taken in 1841, there were more than 18,230 persons living in the West Riding who had been born in Ireland (10,150 males and 8,125 females). The main areas of Irish settlement included; Leeds, Otley, Bradford, Keighley, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Halifax, Wakefield, Sheffield and Barnsley.[23]

By the mid-nineteenth century Irish immigration and settlement in Britain became the subject of much public discussion as never before. There was not a large town in any part of England or Scotland in which there was not an Irish colony; and in several of them, such as London, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Bradford and Glasgow, the Irish formed a considerable proportion of the whole population. Scores of Irish migrated to the industrial counties of northern England swelling the labour reserve of the textile towns where the growth of industrialisation provided plenty of employment opportunities. This migration led to the establishment of distinct Irish communities throughout the foremost industrial and commercial centres of the West Riding. The forces which scattered the Irish labouring classes throughout the industrialised centres of Britain have been categorised into those causes which 'pushed' and those which 'pulled'. The 'push' or dynamic of ejection included such factors as religious controversy or outright persecution, poverty and hunger – particularly during and

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[22] Estimates of those entering ports do not distinguish between permanent and seasonal arrivals, or between those destined to stay in Britain and those intending to move on elsewhere because early statistics make no distinction between these factors, in F. L. Wilson, 'The Irish in Britain during the first half of the Nineteenth Century' (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Manchester, 1946), p.20.

[23] *Census of Population England and Wales 1841* – Enumeration abstract. The National Census of 1841: 289,404 Irish people were living in England and Wales and 126,321 in Scotland, in J. A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London, 1963), p. 46.

in the immediate aftermath of the Great Famine of 1845/47. The 'pull' or attraction lay in economic opportunities overseas, fashioned by an exigency for all forms of labour.[24]

In Ireland, when rural families were unable to be self-sufficient, Irish agricultural labourers would rely increasingly on incomes from seasonal farm work in England.[25] It was common for Irish gangs working in the rural districts of England to do fencing, walling, drain laying, shearing, crop harvesting, flax cutting and processing, and scrub cutting.[26] In many areas of the West Riding such work was available from farmers or local bodies. According to contemporary sources, large numbers of Irishmen first came to the West Riding for seasonal farm work, leaving their families to maintain themselves in their absence, returning home when the harvest was completed.[27] They generally paid their own passage to England and carried back to Ireland the greater part of their earnings.[28] Increasingly, however, as industrialisation began to shape the British economy, Irish agricultural workers began to turn their backs on seasonal farm work, devoting themselves to the various labour intensive trades available to them in the industrial centres of the West Riding – mingling with the English industrial classes for the first time.[29] This displacement and migration represented the first 'foreign' experience for the vast numbers of uprooted Irishmen, who found a means of subsistence for themselves and their families by entering a state of dependence in various forms. Soon after their arrival the first generation of Irish immigrants settled in the main manufacturing centres of the county, taking maximum advantage of their most valuable recourse and only commodity – their cheap labour.

This was especially welcomed by the regions industrialists who stood to accrue collateral benefits from the expanding pool of cheap Irish labour they now had at their

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[24] S. J. Connolly, *Priest and People in Pre-Famine Ireland 1780-1845* (Dublin, 1895).

[25] A. Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925* (London, 1992), pp. 22-8.

[26] *Leeds Mercury*, 3 March 1823.

[27] *Ibid*., 5 June 1927.

[28] *The Times*, 12 August 1822.

[29] F. L. Wilson, *The Irish in Britain during the first half of the Nineteenth Century* (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Manchester, 1946), pp. 8-9.

disposal. In relatively large numbers they functioned in a wide variety of capacities in the unskilled labour markets, which were neither static nor uniform and varied from district to district and over time. They toiled on major industrial construction projects and public works programmes to serve the capitalist needs of the localities they inhabited. They came as factory operatives, navvies and construction gangs, the iron and steelworkers, the miners and coal-heavers, textile workers and the miscellaneous poor.[30] Others exchanged their services for maintenance with individual masters as hand-loom weavers in the woollen and worsted branches of the textile industry manufacturing woollens, stuff and course woollen cloth.[31]

In the woollen emporiums of the West Riding, woollen manufacturing was carried out in two ways – the domestic and factory system. The former business was conducted by a small number of masters who – generally possessed of very limited capital – had in their houses two or four looms, employing, besides themselves and their families, anything between three and seven Irishmen.[32] It also became common practice among Irish contractors to hire looms from individual masters and factory manufacturers. However, the rate per week at which a hand-loom and all the other tools of a weaver could be hired, when deducted from their wages, was considered expensive. This proved to be a lucrative business for the masters

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[30] J. E. Tennent, *Proceedings of the National Association for the promotion of Social Sciences* (1860),p. 142; *Leeds Mercury*, 5 March 1816; *Sheffield Mercury*, 16 February 1827; *Leeds Mercury*, 8 September 1839; *Leeds Mercury*, 12 June 1840; *Leeds Mercury*, 7 September 1844; the various newspaper reports relate to Public Works Programmes Irish labourers were employed in. *Second Report of the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom*, 1826 –27; Report by Statistical Committee of Town Council, 1839, in J. F. C. Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain*, 1831 – 51, (1988); Laity's Directory 1829 p.26, earliest mention of the Irish in Huddersfield as a sizable community concerns the decision in 1832 to construct a chapel to encourage the Irish labour force to stay on; and S. Jubb, *The history of the Shoddy Trade* (Houlston and Wright, 1860); *Leeds Mercury*, 15 June 1839: Irish navvies employed on the Swinton and Knottingly railway lines, Sheffield to Rotherham lines, the Oakenshaw contract near Wakefield, Rotherham to Darfield lines, Leeds to Bradford lines, the Aire valley lines and the Leeds to York lines. *Leeds Mercury*, 7 September 1839: Disturbance between English and Irish labourers at the Holmfirth Reservoirs; *Leeds Mercury*, 7 September 1839: Disturbance between English and Irish labourers at the Holmfirth Reservoirs; *Leeds Mercury*, 9 November 1844: Over one hundred Irish labourers replace striking miners in Wakefield; *Sheffield Independent*, 23 June 1842: A provincial history of Sheffield and Hallamshire and the Steel Industry.
[31] *Leeds Mercury*, 18 June 1831.
[32] *Northern Star*, 2 July 1832.

and manufacturers, and one that would generate problems for the Irish in times of economic stagnation.[33]

Although the mainstream of Irish immigrants arriving in the West Riding during the pre-famine period possessed no marketable skills that had much bearing on industrial life, we ought not to underestimate the talents, skills and energy among some sections of the Irish diaspora.[34] A proportion of Irish immigrants that reached the West Riding were more or less trained in industrious habits, amid the wreck of the textile manufacturing industries in Ireland.[35] Most of them had learned their trade at home and had followed the track across the Irish Sea when those industries left their own shores. It is important to recognise that not all Irish people simply foisted themselves on Yorkshire society, but reluctantly entered the county in response to economic demands generated by what turned out to be a relatively short-lived period of rapid economic growth.[36] In the opening decades of the nineteenth century a proportion of Irishmen and their families were skilled hand-loom weavers attracted to the county by the expanding woollen and cotton industries. From the analysis of an inquiry into the condition of working class families in the West Riding – conducted in the spring of 1828 – it was calculated that no fewer than 2,000 Irish hand-loom weavers were living and working in the textile industries of the West Riding.[37]

In 1838, the Geological and Polytechnic Society of the West Riding of Yorkshire paid high testimony to the conduct and industrial qualities of Irish workmen in the county. Moreover, the English Railway Commissioner quoted the following comments made by the head of a highly respectable engineering firm in Leeds, 'We employ in our factory nearly 300 skilled Irish engineers and workmen. I have had a great number of them in my employment

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[33] *Leeds Mercury*, 29 October 1829.
[34] Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*, p. 82.
[35] L. M. Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland* (London Batsford, 1972), p. 105.
[36] *Leeds Mercury*, 23 October 1839: A report describes the rise in the number factories and newly formed industries in the West Riding of Yorkshire between 1801 and 1839 – across the industrial landscape of the West Riding the number of occupations to which manufacturing alone gave rise has been estimated at 120.
[37] Trades Report for the West Riding of Yorkshire, published in the *Northern Star*, 7 August 1828.

from three to twenty years, some twenty-four and twenty-five years, and we like them as workmen full as well as the English'.[38]

The gradual development of the engineering trades in the West Riding attracted the labour of Irish immigrants with essential engineering skills. Between the years 1795 and 1847, Irish engineers are reported to have been employed by a number of West Riding firms that were concerned in the manufacture of textile machinery, pumping engines, locomotive engines, tools for locomotive building, marine engine tools, ordinance tools, tools for ship building, and small-arm tools.[39] In 1836, the Iron and Steel Institute gave an account that an undisclosed number Irishmen had been gainfully employed by several iron and engineering firms in Leeds; including, the Victoria Foundry in Water Lane, the Leeds Iron Works in Pottery Field, and Sir Peter Fairburn's Engineering Works in Wellington Street. In Bradford a number of Irishmen were employed in the foundries at Low Moor and Bowling.[40]

The first half of the nineteenth century gave free reign to those currents which corresponded to the spirit of the age in terms of hostilities towards the Irish weavers and others. Although much of the evidence for the persecution of the Irish weavers place the difficulties outside the West Riding, in places like Manchester – where it was estimated that of the 6,978 weavers employed in that town, no fewer than 4,157 were Irish[41] – contemporary sources do record a number of locally fuelled incidents. For instance, in the 1820s and 1830s, Irish hand-loom weavers working in Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, Halifax and Barnsley were being forcibly driven from the competition in the labour markets as a consequence of the fury and violence of English weavers, whom they rivalled in their own peculiar labour.

For example, having rejected the depressed rates of pay offered by their masters, the greater body of stuff weavers in Leeds walked out on strike. Nevertheless, a few hand-looms

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[38] *Leeds Mercury*, 18 August 1838: Annual General Meeting of the Geological and Polytechnic Society.
[39] Trades Report for the West Riding, summarised in the *Leeds Mercury*, 20 May 1837.
[40] Iron and Steel Institute Annual Report, 1836.
[41] *Lloyds Weekly London Newspaper*, 21 June 1845.

did continue to operate without any intimidation from the striking majority; and no molestation was offered to any who accepted the terms offered by their masters, that is to say all except for the Irish weavers. The masters, impatient at such insolence and anxious to complete their contracts, engaged the services of Irish weavers, who took out the work at the lowest prices, and thus, contributed to various outbreaks of violence against them. Mobs of English hand-loom weavers – men and women – are reported to have forced entry into the dwellings of Irishmen who had taken out such work and compelled them to return it to their employer, accompanying them through the streets for that very purpose.[42]

The same intimidation and violence was tried on the Irish linen weavers in Barnsley, though with unequal success. In this case, the Irish stood together and defeated the English mob. Contemporary sources indicate that English tensions began to rise in Barnsley on account of the influx of Irish weavers, combined with the prevalent opinion that this situation had occasioned the reduction in the rate of wages. When fighting erupted into the streets between the two populations the local Magistrate was compelled to read out the Riot Act, but the violence became so intense that Magistrate retreated to the local barracks and ordered out the soldiers to break up the fighting and restore the peace. The fighting between the English and the Irish was especially intense outside the Cheapside Tavern, where a large number of Irishmen, armed with sticks and bludgeons, began an almost indiscriminate attack all those who crossed their path. It is reported that in the skirmishes scores of men, on both sides, were severely wounded. One unfortunate Englishman died shortly after the incident from serious head injuries sustained during the fighting.[43] Another murderous fight also took place inside a beer-house known as the White Swan, at the corner of Duke Street and Manchester Road, Bradford, between a number of English and Irish weavers. In the violent exchanges an

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[42] *Leeds Mercury*, 14 April 1827.
[43] *The Times*, 5 July 1828.

English weaver was struck over the head with a metal poker and as a consequence died from his injuries.[44]

The timing and spread of such hostilities in the county corresponded with periods of depression and recession that continued intermittently throughout much of the nineteenth century.[45] It is clear from this outline that conditions in the West Riding were by no means idyllic for the Irish immigrants, particularly those working in the textile trades. According to contemporary sources, the greatest blame for this situation must be laid on the rising tide of Irish immigration, which struck the English labouring classes with full force.[46] The direct and provoked competition by English and Irish labourers, for the means of subsistence, was not, however, confined to the textile manufacturing trades. In various other occupations the same generous spirit manifested itself. Irish labourers engaged on the collieries and railways, who found in the miners and navvies most willing confederates, armed themselves with bludgeons, and proceeded to drive out every Irishman – with his wife and family – from many of the regions' public works programs.[47]

Entirely distinct from the widespread effects of machinery, the serious contest for labour between the English and Irish, like most other contests between the employed and the employer hinged largely on the rate and amount of wages. On the one hand, the employees demanded more, and on the other, the industrialists were resolved to give less, and to enable the industrialists to succeed they introduced Irish labour.[48] So with the help of the Irish the industrialists could rely confidently on being able to suppress the wages of the English labouring classes. As it were, the Irish became, in every branch of industry, the auxiliaries who enabled the employers to dictate their terms to the employed.

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[44] *Bradford Observer*, 25 October 1832.
[45] G. M. Young, *Victorian England* (London, 1936), p. 25.
[46] *Ibid.,* p. 48.
[47] J. H. Clapham, *The Railway Age 1820-1850* (London, 1926), p.400.
[48] W. E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870* (Cambridge, 1957), p.351.

During the 1830s and 1840s, the outcry which had long been raised inside and outside parliament – started by the intrusion of Irish workmen into the English labour market, and violently re-echoed by the hate and jealousy of the English labouring classes – split the English and Irish proletariat into two camps. Accordingly, English workmen, who had long been the *beau ideal* of labourers, were held forth as the paragon and model of their class, while the baneful Irish were blamed for the excessive competition in relation to the field of employment of labourers – accustomed to low conditions of existence, and contented to toil, in order that they may live on in that state – willing to work and ready to raise up other generations of labourers on far worse terms than English labourers.[49]

The consequent tensions between the Irish and the more fortunate English labourers were whipped up on various grounds. Indeed, the attitude of the English towards the Irish changed with the times, especially in those years marked by recession and depression. In fact, throughout the nineteenth century, the country was intermittently gripped by periods of economic disruption, creating tensions as a result.[50] In such depressed times, any short-lived social integration either fell apart or slipped into the background as hostile rivalries between the English and the Irish took centre stage. Once again, what happened to the Irish in the West Riding cannot be separated from what was happening in the history of England as a whole, socially, politically and economically. Such was the portrait of the age.

Between 1824 and 1846, popularly elected Boards of Guardians to the parishes of the West Riding played a significant role at both shaping and reflecting the evolving regional census concerning increased numbers of Irish poor entering the county. Most Guardians were a privileged handful, supported by and supportive of a social, economic, and political structures that were oppressive to the vast majority of Irish people, who, overwhelmingly, were dreadfully impoverished. Yet, at the same time, the Board of Guardians presented

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[49] *Freemans Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 4 July 1842.
[50] G. M. Young, *Victorian England* (London, 1936), p. 138.

themselves as the protectors of the poor. Every kind of distress fell within the purview of the Poor Law, and it was the responsibility of the Guardians to relieve it to the best of their ability. However, the wretched conditions of so large a proportion of Irish poor, assuredly well deserving of assistance, were seen by many Boards of Guardians, parochial councils, civic patrons and contemporaries of the West Riding to be undeserving of any publicly subsidised welfare services or even voluntary charitable aid.[51]

Determined to free themselves from the burden of maintaining Irish poor, and to make the Poor Law administration as inexpensive and its consequences as nastily a deterrent as possible, Boards of Guardians to the West Riding took the most active and decisive measures for removing to their own country all Irish applying for parochial relief; driving many Irish poor to the wall without consideration for their personal concerns, economic circumstances, familial responsibilities, character or condition. In times of economic difficulty, when trade was flat, most Irish obliged by misfortune to apply for poor relief were prohibited from doing so and returned under pass to Ireland. There were, nonetheless, a few burdensome exceptions that passed through the portals of the Poor Law Unions. When relief was provided, however, it was the lowest possible of all the divergent scales of relief and could be described as, to quote the words of a correspondent writing for the *Bradford Observer* of 22 July 1844, 'starvation out-relief'.[52]

The most common clauses in the couple of hundred byelaws put into practice by the various Boards of Guardians made the awarding of 'Outdoor Relief' dependent on the character and conduct of the Irish applicant. On the proviso that it was an Irishman's first application for relief and they were of good character, free from immoral habits, sober and

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[51] M. E. Rose, *The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914* (London, 1972), pp. 88-94; Pauper Statistics, Bradford Poor Law Union 1838; *Leeds Mercury*, 5 November 1938; Extracts from the Ledger of the Leeds Union; *Bradford Observer*, 22 July 1844: Transcript of a speech by Reverend Baptist Noel of London on the Starvation Laws; C. Jones, *Immigration and Social Policy* (London, 1977), p. 57.

[52] *Bradford Observer*, 22 July 1844: Transcript of a speech by Reverend Baptist Noel of London on the Starvation Laws.

industrious, 'starvation out-relief' was provided for a period of no more than two weeks without removing him. If, however, an applicant continued to require relief for a period that exceeded two weeks, then an order for his removal was taken out, or a pass ordered to be signed.[53] Many Boards of Guardians across the county professed the enlightened rule of a sanitary home, refusing outdoor relief to Irishmen, whatever his character or conduct. For example, too respectable a home was as grave a disqualification in some Unions as too an appalling home is in others.[54] As for their poor physical appearance and lack of clothing, the Board of Guardians to Leeds had this to say, 'It has nothing to do with any increase of distress just now; covering has always been a rarity amongst the lower Irish classes, and to use a justified *Irishism* on the occasion, nakedness is quite a *habit* with them'.[55]

Far more usual, Boards of Guardians excluded any Irishmen, whatever his present conduct, who had, 'wasted his substance in drinking and gambling, or had led an idle or disorderly life', or those who could not satisfy the Relief Committee that their destitution had not been caused by, 'their own vicious habits', or other improvidence or intemperance in the past. Many Boards of Guardians insisted on Irish applicants demonstrating some signs of thrift, yet, any tiny investment of any sort, be it the keeping of pigs or the possession of poultry was reasonable grounds for disqualification.[56] Or, as the Poor Law administration of Bradford put it, 'That they were huddled together with their pigs, is no proof of distress, for various reasons; one is, that the lower class of Irish in this town have always been on the best possible terms with their pigs, as every man knows'.[57] The Board of Guardians to Halifax, citing similar incidences as a failure of proof of Irish distress, offered this rationalisation,

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[53] Pauper Statistics, Bradford Poor Law Union 1838; *Leeds Mercury*, 5 November 1938; Extracts from the Ledger of the Leeds Union.
[54] Rose, *The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914*, pp. 88-94.
[55] *Leeds Mercury*, 26 August 1838.
[56] Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, 1834-1838, Cd. 4499, *Minority Report*, pp. 739-44.
[57] *Bradford Observer*, 15 December 1844: Extracts from the Bradford Law Union.

'That having pigs to cuddle, the inhabitants needed not, if they had not liked it, to have gone out to get food'.[58]

After 1846, and following the Settlement Act, parishes were obliged to relieve any destitute individual resident within their boundaries. This measure was not intended to meet the requirements of the Irish immigrants as such. Its impact, nevertheless, appeared to be predisposed in this direction. No sooner had the Act been passed, the manufacturing towns in the county were swamped by the 'Great Famine' influx of Irish manpower of 1847-48; in addition to a national trade depression. It was no accident, perhaps, that the Leeds Board of Guardians, by 1854, should have felt itself peculiarly hard hit. 'It is difficult to state how much of an increase in relief paid out is to be attributed to the alteration of the law, and how much to the influx of the Irish…yet a considerable proportion arises from Irish cases'.[59]

It is difficult to quantify exactly how many Irish were shipped under passes from the West Riding during this period. However, between 1824 and 1831, 38,968 Irish paupers were shipped under passes from Liverpool and the counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The absolute cost for passing these 38,968 paupers back to Ireland totalled £14,253.[60] In 1826, in a single session, Dr Corbett, Magistrate for the Barnsley district, granted passes to more than seventy unemployed Irish cloth weavers and their families.[61] The total cost for conveying destitute Irish from the West Riding in that same year was estimated to be £960.[62] Not later than 1829 the sum total for returning Irish paupers from the West Riding back to their places of origin had significantly increased to a staggering £2,471.[63] This amount appears to have

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[58] *Halifax Guardian*, 5 January 1845.
[59] M. E. Rose, *The English Poor Law 1780-1930* (Newton Abbott, 1971), p. 202.
[60] *Leeds Mercury*, 20 April 1831: A Parliamentary paper published in 1833 containing an account of the number of Irish poor shipped under passes from Liverpool between 1824 and 1831. In 1824, 2,491; 1825, 3,028; 1826, 6,428; 1827, 6,055; 1828, 4,948; 1829, 5.086; 1830, 5,679; 1831, 5,863; making a total in those eight years of 38,968 person shipped under pass from Liverpool and other places in the counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and 8,723 from Middlesex. The total cost for passing these 38,968 paupers to Ireland was £14,253.
[61] *Sheffield Mercury*, 5 September 1829.
[62] *Leeds Mercury*, 23 April 1827.
[63] *Ibid.,* 14 May 1830: Quarterly Financial Report for the West Riding of Yorkshire.

remained constant until around 1833, when it decreased to an estimated £907, and then again in 1834, to approximately £416.[64]

Throughout much of the nineteenth century Irish Catholic immigrants were the subject or object of observation and analysis by interested writers. Sometimes these observations were first hand, whilst on other occasions, they were based on a less than clear understanding. Were nineteenth-century writers favourably disposed or antagonistic towards Irish immigrants and Catholicism as they understood them? The answer depends in part on chronology. By and large, observations dating from the early nineteenth century are more favourable towards Irish immigrants residing in the county than those composed later. This about-face in attitude towards Irish immigration and settlement changed dramatically during the 1820s with the arrival and expansion of what was termed 'Irish Pauper' immigration. The majority of these people were peasants and agricultural labourers, along with mendicants, petty criminals and underemployed itinerant workers who lived by their wits or off charity. Most Irish communities in the West Riding experienced instances of overt discrimination in employment and accommodation that arose from Irish and English having to interact widely for the first time. There was an oft repeated charge that all the misfortunes of Ireland were due to the defects of the Celtic character. This was derived from the unwillingness of English commentators, journalists and writers to confess that the conditions of Ireland were due to the misdeeds of Englishmen. As such, no story was too sensational for belief and no disclosure too appalling.

Irish immigration to Britain accelerated during nineteenth century for four main reasons. The first was the severe economic hardship brought about by the potato blight (the fungus *Phytophthora infectans*), which began in 1845 and illustrated an important aspect of

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[64] *Ibid.,* 18 April 1835: Report by the Finance Committee for the West Riding of Yorkshire.

colonial exploitation of the Irish economy.[65] During the famine (or 'the starvation' as some have argued it might more accurately be called) the Irish economy continued to export food while Irish people went hungry.[66] The shipping columns of contemporary newspapers throughout the famine period show that more barley, wheat and meal flour had been imported into Britain from Ireland in 1845 than in any of the previous three years, and between 10 October 1845 and 5 January 1846 over 30,000 head of cattle had been shipped from Ireland to English ports.[67] The second reason was the demise of a whole host of Irish industries, particularly those in the rural districts.[68] Industry based in the countryside tended to cater for household and local needs, presenting limited possibilities for capital growth and a transition to more progressive forms of organisation and production.[69] This was further compounded by the arrival of the railway and cheaper transport, which meant local production, was replaced by goods made in Dublin or, to a greater extent, Britain.[70] Thirdly, there was the demand for labour from the rapidly industrialising British economy, which lured Irish workers to British factories. The final reason concerns the crass maladministration of the Irish authorities – the horrors of which more prompt and competent action on the part of the authorities might have considerably averted.

Uprooted by the potato blight of 1845 and the resulting starvation, the displacement and migration of the Irish was already well established by 1847. Between 1845 and 1851, largely as a consequence of the famine, at least three million persons left the thirty-two counties of Ireland, which had a population of just over eight million. In Britain the 1841 Census indicates that there were more than 289,404 Irish people living in England and Wales, with a further 126, 321 living in Scotland. By the 1851 census the Irish population living in

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[65] E. W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London, 1993), p. 266.
[66] G. Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the Famine*, 1798 –1848, Dublin, 1972), p. 147.
[67] R. Kee, *The Most Distressful Country* (London, 1976), p. 247.
[68] L. Kennedy, Why one million starved: an open verdict, *Irish Economic History*, 11 (1984), pp. 91-7.
[69] Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 105.
[70] G. O'Brien, *The Economic History of Ireland from the Union to the Famine* (London, 1918), p. 368; R. D. C. Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817–1870* (Cambridge, 1960), p. 210.

Britain had increased to 519,959 in England and Wales and to 207,367 in Scotland.[71] The peak was evident in the 1861 Census, which put the Irish-born population living in England and Wales at 601, 634, although in Scotland it had declined somewhat to 204,083.[72] According to MacLaughlin, 'during the second half of the nineteenth century Ireland had gained the dubious distinction of being the only country in Western Europe to experience substantial and consistent population loss'.[73]

During the 1860s, the West Riding of Yorkshire became the host of upwards of 50,701 Irish immigrants. By the 1880s, the most dramatic phase of Irish immigration had ended. The proportion of Irish-born had peaked in 1871 and 1881, when they constituted about 2.5 per cent of the population of the West Riding, but thereafter numbers steadily declined. Irish immigration into the West Riding had slowed and by the end of the century had virtually ceased, thus, ending the first wave of Irish immigration into West Yorkshire. According to the 1901 Census there were 22,640 Irish people in West Yorkshire.[74] By 1911 the numbers had fallen to 22,436 (Table 1 refers). However, census figures from the 1860s onwards underestimate the Irish diasporic population of the West Riding because the key census question focused on birthplace. For this reason neither census identified children born in Britain to Irish immigrants who continued to view themselves as Irish.[75] 'Therefore, if one extends the definition of Irishmen living in West Riding to include second and third-generation residents, the size of the Irish community must at least be doubled'.[76] A more accurate enumeration can be found in the general statistics compiled by the Catholic Diocese of Leeds, as shown in chapter two.

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[71] *Census of Great Britain 1841-51*: Population Tables.
[72] *Ibid*., 1861.
[73] J. MacLaughlin, *Ireland*: *The immigrant Nursery and the World Economy* (Cork, 1994), p.17.
[74] *Census enumeration for England and Wales*, 1901.
[75] *Census enumeration for England and Wales,* 1911.
[76] MacLaughlin, *Ireland*: *The immigrant Nursery and the World Economy*, p.21.

Table 1.1 Irish-born in West Riding of Yorkshire in relation to total population, 1841-1911.

Date	Population of West Riding	Number of Irish-born males	Number of Irish-born females	Total number of Irish-born	Per cent of West Riding population
1841	1,593,079	10,105	8,125	18,230	1.1
1851	1,783,190	22,617	21,024	43,974	2.5
1861	2,016,462	25,050	25,415	50,701	2.5
1871	2,423,045	28, 908	27,584	56,746	2.3
1881	2,983,342	30,086	26,271	56,447	1.9
1891	3,141,154	23,279	20,228	43,815	1.4
1901	3,584,762	22,389	16,974	39,561	1.1
1911	4, 108,088	9,867	12,569	22,436	0.5

Source: Census of England and Wales, 1841-1911.

This settlement process saw the creation of small émigré communities scattered throughout the heavily industrialised towns and cities of the West Riding, with a sprinkling in some of the smaller satellite towns and villages situated in agricultural districts. The Irish immigrant demographics and cultural landscape would, 'change in ways that the receiving communities of the West Riding could never have envisaged'.[77] The 1881 Census highlighted the fact that there was a disproportionate number of Irish relying on poor relief or on the county's workhouses for survival.[78] They were for the most part, residing in the worst districts, and to add to their miseries there is evidence to suggest that they had to contend with social and religious prejudices.

All the myths about interaction between the Irish and English working classes were about to be tested for the first time. A steady and increasing rate of Irish immigration to the West Riding would mean that the Irish and English proletariat would come into widespread contact with each other for the very first time and with that contact would come challenges, prejudice and conflict – and, eventually, an opportunity for Irish immigrants to participate for the first time in mainstream English social, political and cultural life. These new conditions would require a major recasting of the 'social contract' between the diasporic Irish and

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[77] *Ibid.,* p.12.
[78] *Census enumeration for England and Wales*, 1881.

English proletariat. This in turn would require Irish and English to shed one set of myths and develop others to replace them.

Since the majority of Irish immigrants worked at the lowest paid jobs they tended to live in the very poorest parts of the county's towns and cities, 'where the living conventions were defined by the receiving communities'.[79] Thousands of Irish immigrants were infamously housed, living in fever-smitten back lanes and streets of the industrialised towns of the West Riding in small, dirty, dark and badly ventilated rooms with little or no sanitation. Many lived in cellars into which a ray of sunshine or a breath of fresh air never entered, and often they huddled together in such a manner that no regard was paid to either age or sex.[80] By the late 1860s, information regarding the misery and wretchedness suffered by Irish domiciled in towns like Bradford, Leeds, Otley, Halifax, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Batley, Wakefield, Barnsley and Sheffield becomes particularly copious and varied. In 1866, according to a reporter writing for the *Leeds Mercury*, hundreds of Irish poor living in Leeds were out of work , some with large families, 'and I have too much reason to fear some have already perished for the want of food'.[81] The correspondent also claims to have encountered, 'a young Irish mother, heartbroken and weeping over her dead child, a poor widow and her daughter who had been two days without food; a sick Irishman naked and penniless; and other cases almost innumerable and equally distressed'. Those whose humanity and religious duty rendered them well acquainted with the situation of the Irish were frequently overcome by scenes of poverty and sickness that constantly greeted their eyes as they made their daily visits to the houses of the Irish poor. A journalist reporting on the atmosphere of the living conditions of Irish living in Halifax stated that, 'it was almost impossible to observe the common decencies of life. In health, in sickness, in childhood, in the full strength of youth,

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[79] MacLaughlin, *Ireland*: *The immigrant Nursery and the World Economy*, p.19.
[80] *Northern Star*, 8 June 1869, 'The state of the Irish poor in Leeds and Bradford'.
[81] *Leeds Mercury*, 18 January 1866.

and in the feebleness of decrepit years, all ages, all sexes, all conditions of humanity, are crammed together'.[82]

Wishing to direct public attention to the miserable state in which so many Irish people passed their days, and to excite sympathy and charity in their favour, journalists and members of charitable institutions published many depressing and heart rendering descriptions. These daily experiences show that it was not, by any means, too higher-coloured picture to paint of the distress and deprivation endured by the vast majority of Irish people living in these industrial towns and cities. In 1861, an appeal was made for more effective relief to ease the suffering of the Irish poor in Bradford. It was reported that a great proportion of the Irish inhabitants in that town were, 'homeless and vagrant, and the remainder were living in great distress'.[83] In 1859, it was reported that the Irish Catholics of Huddersfield were forced into the slum areas of Turnbridge and Hell Square and that, 'The Irish Catholics of this town and neighbourhood where about 600 in number and living in deep distress'.[84] A writer in the *Northern Star* of 6 November 1861, speaking of the conditions and the distress of the Irish poor in the West Riding states that, 'what is true of the Irish poor in Leeds and Bradford is also true of the other parts of the West Riding, Halifax, Huddersfield, Wakefield, Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield, crowded away in dens where salvation of any kind is the hardest of problems'.[85]

Between 1846 and 1848, Typhus, or 'Irish Fever' as it was more commonly known, gripped the industrial towns of West Riding.[86] Typhus spread quickly and easily through the Irish quarters and inner-city townships. 'Severe economic depression, a severe typhus epidemic and the incursion of Irish vagrants forced the question of Workhouse

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[82]*Halifax Courier*, 22 January 1867.
[83] *Northern Star*, 28 April 1861.
[84] *Ibid*., 12 October 1859.
[85]*Ibid.,* 6 November 1861: Irish Absenteeism and the Irish poor of the West Riding.
[86] *Committee for Enquiring into Health of Large Towns and Populous Districts*, Vol 1, 1844 p. xxiv; E. Chadwick, 'Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population', 1842, in D. Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, (London, 1997), pp.86-96.

accommodation to the fore. In 1847 the rising tide of Irish vagrants and the rapid spread of

fever highlighted the gross inadequacy of vagrant and fever accommodation'.[87] Following the

cessation of the typhus epidemic the situation worsened with sporadic outbreaks of cholera in

Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, Halifax, Sheffield, Barnsley, Skipton, Wakefield, Shipley,

Bingley and Keighley. Frequently, these outbreaks of disease began shortly after the arrival

of new Irish immigrants. Of course, these epidemics provoked hostility from the receiving

communities as the Irish were seen as the disseminators of these killer diseases.[88]

In a number of the county's larger towns sanitary facilities were almost non-

existent.[89] 'People had to purchase their water from carts at a price of one penny for three

gallons. Hygiene was certainly expensive and beyond the means of the poorest'.[90] Irish

households, as contemporaries maintained, were more densely crowded than those of the rest

of the English working-class population. As the Irish communities living in these centres

multiplied, the existing sanitation systems became so inadequate as to be a growing menace

to health. Street sewers were, 'immense brick caverns, flat bottomed and flat sided, washed

only by a feeble trickle of water. In some cases town sewage was allowed to flow into the

rivers from which the water companies were taking their water supply'.[91] Attempts to define

these factors and their magnitude, and to devise new regulations and policies to deal with the

unsanitary conditions, were not made until well into the late nineteenth century.[92] Indeed, it

took a series of cholera epidemics and some alarming sanitary inquiries to persuade central

and local authorities to take positive action to clean filth from the streets, which did not begin

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[87] Report by the Statistical Committee of Town Council, in J. F. C. Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain, 1831-51* (London, 1988), p. 53.

[88] F. Engels, *Conditions of the Working Class of England*: Personal observation in which he speaks of the impoverished conditions of the Irish in the North of England.

[89] Dr Bell the Bradford Poor Law Doctor, reported in 1865 that 230 houses accommodated 1450 people, had only 435 beds and 36 privies. This gave more than six persons per house, three persons per bed and over forty persons to every privy, in C. Richardson, 'Irish Settlement in Mid-Nineteenth Century Bradford', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research,* Vol. 20 (1968), p. 42.

[90] *Committee for Enquiring into Health of Large Towns and Populous Districts*, Vol. 1 (1844), p. xxiv.

[91] Richardson, 'Irish Settlement in Mid-Nineteenth Century Bradford', p.53.

[92] Report by the Statistical Committee of Town Council, in J. F. C. Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain, 1831-51* (London, 1988), pp. 52-78.

generally until the 1870's and 1880's. Edwin Chadwick, the crusader for public health, reported in the late 1840's that, 'the Irish people living in the cellars of Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Bradford lived in conditions worse than in the prisons'.[93]

The antecedent circumstances in these localities, the classes and conditions of the Irish diasporic communities living in them, allegedly, gave rise to the progress of diseases such as typhus and a number of other diseases with the same essential characteristics as typhus. The general increase in concentrations of Irish during this period undoubtedly fostered poor sanitation and living conditions, thus, promoting infection and disease. Epidemics of typhus, cholera, influenza, measles, and whooping cough were reported frequently as the rate of Irish immigration to the West Riding augmented.[94] In 1856, the Irish inhabitants of Leeds and Bradford were being brutally criticised for contributing to the decline in community health, brought about by population overcrowding and reduced hygiene – their living conditions and lifestyle (e.g., refuse disposal, household and settlement size, dietary practices and food preparation techniques) were being blamed for the transmission of some of the most infectious diseases. [95]

In the opening decades of the nineteenth century the receiving communities of the West Riding appeared to initially accept the diasporic Irish, although they did not actively seek them nor welcome any of them. In the 1830s that acceptance had been revoked for failure to follow the 'social norms'; those economic and industrial practices the English working classes had helped fashion. Indeed, one symptom of the intensity of English ill-feeling was the continuing lack of interest the diasporic Irish showed in ratifying working-class norms in its social and economic environment, 'and looked after their own ahead of

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[93] R. A. Lewis, *Edwin Chadwick and the Public Health Movement, 1832 – 1854* (London, 1952), p. 48.
[94] *Northern Star*, 8 February 1852: A lecture by Dr Greenhow concerning the living conditions in back-to-back houses in Leeds, Bradford and Halifax and the spread of infectious diseases.
[95] *Leeds Mercury*, 28 January 1856: Editorial urging upon Irish immigrants in Leeds the importance of cleanliness.

broader social responsibilities'.[96] Such factors altered the relationship between Irish and English, which did not significantly diminish until decades after World War II, creating a new situation the English proletariat did not like. Irish and English working classes interacted on a small scale in the industrial towns of nineteenth and early twentieth century West Riding. English representations of Irish tended to be as uninformed, and in some cases as pejorative, as those of other non-English peoples, such as the Jews. In other cases it was simply patronising. Between these extremes, individual Irish immigrants made their way through daily rounds of trade and work, heated discourse, friendly transactions, habit, and religion with most English people forming their opinions about them on the basis of personal contact, hearsay, and preconceptions.[97]

In the Irish labouring classes of the West Riding we come across a diaspora that had likenesses with, but also more important distinctions from the English labouring classes. But these differences are striking. The 'first' generation Irish immigrants brought many aspects of their old way of life, religion and culture into their new surroundings, thus, differentiating themselves from their English neighbours; Catholicism was one such distinctive marker. There existed in the West Riding articulated Irish communities that distinguished themselves from their hosts by their style of life and system of belief, which developed what we might call a 'sectarian consciousness' without effecting complete physical separation from their English neighbours.[98] Put it in another way, even when the Irish dwelled among the general populace of the West Riding, they lived a life apart. The Irish in the West Riding tended to form a new 'Them' while confronting a shared 'Us', who in the West Riding were the English proletariat. Of course, the modes of interaction between the Irish and English fluctuated in different parts of the county.

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[96] *Leeds Mercury*, 18 May 1862.
[97] F. Neal, 'English-Irish Conflict in the North East of England', in J. Belchem and P. Buckland (eds), *The Irish in British Labour History* (Liverpool, 1993), pp. 59-85.
[98] C. Holmes, *John Bull's Island. Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971* (London, 1988), pp. 3-15.

The social and cultural consequences of nineteenth century Irish migration were considerable. It brought both compensations and trauma: wider employment opportunities for some, and cultural and emotional dislocation for others. Some families, removed from their social and cultural structures that had given their lives meaning and direction for generations, and lacking any alternative structures to substitute or compensate for these changes, collapsed into dysfunction, alcohol, violence and crime. This was also a period when many Irish families living in towns and cities ceased to have active links with their rural traditions, and lost all live connection with the Gaelic language and Irish culture.[99] Urbanisation accentuated aspects of Irish insecurity in relation to the English proletariat. Those who grew up from their earliest years in a cultural vacuum, in which they felt ill-equipped to be Irish, yet knew by the way people treated them that they were not English, were also those who were most vulnerable to non-achievement and crime if they were associated with other risk factors. From the earliest days of Irish immigration, it was this period, and these experiences, that held most risk for the survival of Irish culture.[100]

Not surprisingly, Irish misfortunes generated a great deal of publicity from an unsympathetic press. Pernicious attacks by the press concerning Irish immorality, drunkenness and a whole range of activities that were held to characterise a distressingly wide section of the Irish diaspora were brought very prominently before the English public. Throughout the period under investigation, a number of writers and journalists commented on the Irish diaspora – some favourably, some unfavourably, and still others in a mixed vein, all influenced by a variety of cultural and social factors, and by their sources of information. Unfortunately, these hostile words and characterisations were more often preserved, and they influenced later generations to think and act antagonistically toward the descendants of the first generation, and the later influxes of Irish immigration, especially in the post-famine era.

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[99] M.A.G. O'Tuathhaigh, 'The Irish in nineteenth century Britain: Problems of Integration', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian city* (Beckenham, 1985), p. 28.
[100] Fitzpatrick, 'A curious middle place: The Irish in Britain, 1871-1939', p. 16.

As such, this served only to further demarcate the Irish proletariat from the English proletariat.

Indeed, at this time, dichotomies of race and nationality were frequently conflated in popular journals and newspaper editorials. Curtis, in his study of the impact of racial stereotyping on colonial policy, illustrates this with a quotation from Frazer's magazine, a middle-class journal, in 1847. 'The English people are naturally industrious – they prefer a life of honest labour to one of idleness. They are persevering as well as an energetic race, who, for the most part comprehend their own interests perfectly and sedulously pursue them. Now of all the Celtic tribes, famous everywhere for their indolence and fickleness as the Celts everywhere are, the Irish are admitted to be the most idle and most fickle. They will not work if they can exist without it'.[101] Reports such as this are extremely interesting because they reveal the fear deeply held by mid-Victorians that their towns and cities were being morally contaminated by the Irish. For most people, being Irish meant being poor and dirty, and being English meant being industrious and clean. These essential polarities held true for the remainder of the Victorian and Edwardian periods.

In Irish communities across the industrial centres of the West Riding primitive violence and drunkenness were rarely far from the surface. The tradition of fighting and disorderly conduct made working-class Irish Catholics less acceptable to the mainstay of Yorkshire society, 'in an era where drink received the most sustained criticism'.[102] As Dillon has noted, 'In such conditions there is little wonder that the feelings of the Irish were blunted, that there health was affected, and that they sought relief in surroundings given to drinking and brawling...the instances of disorder and disturbances which occurred in the Irish quarters were the inevitable outcome of their situation'.[103] Without a doubt, in such living conditions

[101] L. B. Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport, 1968), p. 4.
[102] *Bradford Observer*, 12 March 1846.
[103] Dillon, *The Irish in Leeds, 1851-1861*, p.18.

there is little wonder that the feelings of Irish Catholic immigrants were blunted, that there health was affected, and that they sought relief in surroundings given to drinking, brawling and midnight turbulence.[104]

Indeed, during the second half of the nineteenth century, 'without exception there were almost weekly references in local newspapers to assaults on the police, offences against the person, common assault, brawling, breaches of the peace, including drunkenness and disorderly conduct'.[105] For example, in 1866, seventy Irish navvies employed on the new railway lines near Bradford, started a large fight outside the Worlds End public-house, Bolton Road. During the affray four local police officers were assaulted. Two Irishmen, Michael and James Nolan, were subsequently arrested, charged and sentenced by local magistrates to two-months imprisonment for their part in the assault.[106] At Leeds in 1861, on the day following St. Patrick's Day, 37 people were committed for drunkenness; in 1862, 18; in 1863; 15; in 1864, 21; and in 1865, 27.[107] According to Richardson, 'over the six year period 1862 – 67, the average number of persons per year apprehended in Bradford and taken into custody was 1,419, 318 of whom were Irish Catholics (22%). During this same period a total of 12,697 people were apprehended of which 6.6% were for drunkenness, 2.1% for assaults on police, and 26.6% for common assault'.[108] At Sheffield, 1870, the number of male prisoners committed to the borough goal for felonies were in the following proportions: Irish Catholics, 12.3%; Protestants, 19%. For assaults: Irish Catholics, 25.9%; Protestants, 21%. For drunkenness: Irish Catholics, 30.1%; Protestants, 20.6%. The Sheffield authorities inveighed that drunkenness among young adolescent Irish Catholics of that town was the chief cause of crime.[109]

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[104] *Bradford Observer*, 26 June 1876.
[105] Richardson, 'Irish Settlement in Mid-Nineteenth Century Bradford', p.55.
[106] *Bradford Observer*, 31 May1866.
[107] *Leeds Mercury*, 18 January 1865.
[108] Richardson, 'Irish Settlement in Mid-Nineteenth Century Bradford', p.55.
[109] *Sheffield Mercury*, 4 May 1870.

In 1871 the Police Division of Dewsbury – which was comprised of the townships of Batley, Heckmondwike, Ossett, Morley, Mirfield, Thornhill, Gomersall, Liversedge, and Birstall – reported that during a six month period, 232 Irish Catholic males and 28 Irish Catholic females had been summarily convicted of drink related offences. This figure represented 42% of all summary convictions for the whole division throughout the same period.[110] In 1873, at Leeds, the total number of adult persons brought before local magistrates for crimes other than indictable offences was 2, 842. Of this number 1,578 were drink related offences. Classified according to the countries of their birth, 1,065 were English; 471 Irish Catholics; 25 Scottish; and 17 foreigners.[111] In the Police Division of Wakefield in 1876, the number of adult people brought before the local magistrates for non-indictable offences was 1,594 of whom 1,029 were convicted and 565 discharged. Among those convicted of drunkenness and common assault, according to their countries of birth, 562 were English; 254 Irish Catholics; 12 Scottish; and 10 other nationalities. Of those Irish people convicted by the local magistrates, 14 were young Irish females, all charged and convicted with an array of offences relating to prostitution and open and lewd conduct in public places.[112]

The glut of statistics and recorded facts concerning Irish disorderly behaviour were seized upon by the mercenary English press. Essentially, the newspapers became the vehicle for the expression of English anxieties, feeding the English imagination with negative images of Irish society and culture, and had little to do with humanitarian concerns. This contemporary obsession with the Irish was undoubtedly a major factor in generating hostilities towards Irish immigrants as a serious economic and social liability. The local newspapers of West Riding dealt with disorderly Irish in their own inimitable way – and with

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[110] *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 14 October 1871.
[111] Criminal Statistics of Leeds from 29 September 1872 to 29 September 1873: Social Science Association, Leeds.
[112] *Wakefield Express*, 12 December 1876.

all the sensitivity of a hand-grenade. The way in which the news-matter concerning the Irish was handled would today be thought of as incredibly negative and extremely harmful to race relations; they mounted to small treatises, espoused by exciting xenophobia. The flourishing provincial daily and weekly press of nineteenth century West Riding was overwhelmingly political. In them can be found the widest available coverage of the life of the community, including accounts and discussions of key events, verbatim reports of speeches or sermons and of the activities of many organisations including those of local government, as well as letters, gossip and editorials; while for the 'human interest' they relied largely on racial issues and sensational law cases to spike the readers' imagination. As such, Irish disorder, violence, delinquency, crime and anti-Irish feeling were frequently thrust into the limelight more than ever before, or since.

Crime and disorder aside, life in Irish communities tended to be orientated towards family, community and the Catholic Church. However, on occasion, this orientation would extend to wider Irish Catholic communities in the diaspora, especially when Irish Home Rule was being discussed or disputed.[113] The latter was especially likely when wider groupings such as the Irish National League (INL), the United Irish League (UIL), and the Irish Self-Determination League (ISDL) were involved, activating more extensive nationalistic networks and obligations. Major decision-making on community matters during the nineteenth century was centred on consensus-forming discussions among families and the local parish priest.[114] The focal point of Irish Catholic communal life was the Church and its confraternities, or the local branch of the Home Rule confederation, which served as a Trojan horse to introduce both an Irish Catholic presence and Irish considerations outside of the Catholic Church.

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[113] C. Pooley, 'Segregation and integration? The residential experience of the Irish in Mid-Victorian Britain', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian city* (Beckenham, 1985), p. 44.
[114] *Catholic Herald*, 7 September 1896.

In the nineteenth century the Irish settled mainly in urban areas and distinct Irish communities were established. In the towns and cities across the West Riding Irish suffered many of the social problems that afflicted the poorest members of the English working-class during industrialisation. Such problems were worsened for many Irish who left comparative rural tranquillity for accommodation in an overcrowded urban area. Composed as they were of so largely of uprooted people, the central townships became a breeding ground for vice and crime. Irish immigrants were judged by many to share no common ethnic or national affiliation with their English counterparts – they spoke no common language, and they normally led a marginal and sometimes lawless existence on the fringes of English industrial society. Indeed, the Irish immigrants constituted, in effect, a loosely defined, inferior social class composed of a shifting and shifty population without secure ties to settled communities. Yet at the same time, in the face of negative statistics and gloomy prognostications, Irish immigration began to acquire all the characteristics of a 'chain migration' as other Irish people sought to link up with family and friends who had already moved to the West Riding. This can be chartered, at least intermittently, throughout much of the nineteenth century and fairly regularly during the early decades of the twentieth century. What is more, contemporary sources become continuous in the opening decades of the twentieth century in an era contemporary with Home Rule for Ireland, which came to play an important part in the political drama of the period. As such, contemporary sources highlight the complex relationships which united the Irish diaspora of the West Riding to Ireland, with nationalistic, cultural, social and political influences flowing in both directions. These issues will be discussed in chapter three

Indeed, by the 1880s, with the growth in Irish immigration came a corresponding increase in Irish social and cultural vitality in many parts of the county – political and

nationalistic consciousness, too, was fermenting.[115] In addition, the available nineteenth century sources provide much important information about the nature of any exchange or 'acculturation' of behavioural patterns between the English and Irish populations. In their new communities the Irish sought to maintain and preserve their distinct culture; the Catholic Church being central to many community activities – the first step towards social betterment. The following chapter, therefore, deals with the religious revival of the English Catholic Church and its preoccupations to provide for the spiritual needs of the displaced Irish immigrants. Through the official encouragement of the Catholic Church we see a triumph for the diasporic Irish. In the nineteenth century the Catholic Church provided Irish immigrants with the foundations for social and spiritual improvement, self-discipline, fellowship and the pursuit of a clearly planned objective. By the early twentieth century the Irish diasporic communities had mastered the problems first expounded by earlier generations of Irish that were the heart of social problems. As Bishop Gordon wrote, 'They struggled from darkness into light'.[116]

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[115] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p. 5.
[116] *Tablet*, 25 June 1904.

CHAPTER 2

TRANSITION AND TRAJECTORIES

The Catholic Church and its People in Victorian and Edwardian West Riding of Yorkshire.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the religious revival of the English Catholic Church and the religious experience of Irish Catholics settled in the West Riding of Yorkshire during the nineteenth and opening decades of the twentieth century. It shall provide a general introduction to some of the issues and problems concerning the Church in its relation to the Irish Catholic diaspora – the social and political issues that arose within a religious framework and displayed themselves in a religious setting. In the nineteenth century Catholicism and the English Catholic Church developed in a way which at first sight may seem paradoxical, but it will be seen, on reflection, to be natural and reasonable. Catholicism began at the top of the social ladder with the upper classes: it spread down to the middle; and ended among the ranks of the lower classes. By the mid nineteenth-century the Catholic Church had become co-extensive with a wider circle of adherents, which included among its number the mass of destitute Irish Catholic immigrants escaping the upheavals of the Great Famine of 1845/7. By the late nineteenth-century the Church had become a dominant religious channel in the internal development of Irish diasporic life. Indeed, Catholicism was a religious key which unlocked most doors to Irish Catholic diasporic life – a totalising religion that controlled the whole order of their lives.

Following the English Reformation of the sixteenth century, Catholicism had virtually disappeared in England and Wales, although a small number of followers clung to their faith. According to a religious census in the year 1767, it appears that the number of Roman Catholics in England and Wales was 67,916, consisting almost exclusively of a class

of very high and of a class of very low social standing, neither class being very numerous.[1] It was only in 1828 that the old Acts, which had debarred Catholics from municipal office and from office in the State, were both repealed; and in the following year an Act was passed for the emancipation of Roman Catholics.[2] By these Acts, and by their subsequent extension, full civic rights were at last conceded to all men alike, irrespective of their religion. As a result Catholicism soon began to revive and expand.

According to the Roman Catholic Directory 1850, as a result of the aforementioned Act, there was an overall increase in the number of Catholic Peerages and Baronetages. There were 22 Catholic Peers, 9 Peers of England, and 4 Peers of the United Kingdom; 13 Catholic Peers sat in the House of Lords. There were 43 Catholics, 22 being English, 3 Scottish, and 17 Irish. Of the members of Parliament, 31 were Catholic. In 1850, out of the total population of approximately 17 million people in England and Wales, there were roughly 250,000 Roman Catholics. By the turn of the twentieth century the figures were 36 million and 1.7 million respectively.[3] The two most powerful causes that affected the Roman Catholic revival in England were Irish immigration and conversions to their faith, which began with the Oxford movement in 1833. This was a paradoxical movement – half Catholic, in its attitude to doctrine and ritual; half Nonconformist, in its attitude to the government of the Church.[4] The process of conversion added but only a few names to the roll of great Roman Catholic houses; but besides this, it had created something which had not existed before, a Roman Catholic middle class.[5] But the Catholics still had grievances, and it wasn't until 1871 that they were fully admitted, on a footing of equality, to the old Universities of Oxford and Cambridge; and throughout the remainder of the nineteenth and early twentieth century they

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[1] *Catholic Record Society*, 1767.
[2] J. Bossy, *The English Catholic community, 1550-1850* (London, 1975), pp. 203-09.
[3] *Catholic Directories*, 1850 and 1900.
[4] John Keble (1792-1866) Anglican priest and Professor of Poetry at Oxford: Gave a sermon on the decline of the faith in Britain in 1833, which was taken as the beginning of the Oxford Movement.
[5] *Catholic Directory*, 1839.

continued to wage a struggle against the Anglican Church and the British Government in the field of education, challenging its right to any position in that field.[6]

The Roman Catholic Directories reveal that in 1850, there were 587 Roman Catholic churches, 788 priests, 99 schools and 11,000 Catholic children of school age. By 1910 there were 1,700 churches, 3,687 priests, 1,064 schools and 330,000 Catholic children of school age.[7] As the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth the Catholic Church in England had assumed a tangible shape, making significant social, ecclesiastical and political progress with its adherents. No one could deny that Catholics were not now a substantial and important element of society, nor could anyone denigrate the charitable and social experience of the Church. Even diasporic Irish Catholics, though many were still poor, had improved their economic well-being and social standing.[8] In the West Riding the few noble Catholic families of ancient lineage, who held fast to their faith through long ages of persecution, were the exception and not the rule. These were aristocratic families of wealth, but it was mainly landed wealth, accompanied by social prestige and attended by civic disability. The Catholic community in the West Riding, as they were in the rest of England, were a largely disfranchised minority struggling during the long period of its dual with the State, which lasted from 1662 to 1832.[9] But while the Catholic community of the West Riding was broadened, derived from the benefits of the Catholic Emancipation Bill of 1829, it was also, in another sense, narrowed by its social makeup.

Socially, and in respect of the classes which it embraced, Catholicism was the religion of tradition confined to a bevy of landed noblemen in the countryside and middle-class professionals in the industrialised towns.[10] Surprisingly, even after the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 had removed almost completely the civil intolerances, which they had suffered

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[6] Bossy, *The English Catholic community, 1550-1850*, p. 289.
[7] *Catholic Directories*, 1850 and 1910.
[8] L(eeds) D(iocesian) A(rchives),Bishop Joseph Roberts correspondence, 1916.
[9] G. Beck, *The English Catholics* (London, 1950), p. 42.
[10] J. Supple, 'The Catholic clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A profile', *Northern History*, 21 (1985), pp. 212-14

for centuries, Catholics in Yorkshire were reluctant as a body to evangelise their own countrymen, rich or poor. As members of a minority Church, which was ill-equipped and nervous of embarking too strenuously on anything which might look like proselytizing, Roman Catholics in the West Riding were in a weak position.[11]

Then, with startling rapidity, the situation altered with the influx of thousands of Irish immigrants, most of them very poor indeed, but carrying with them the love of their religion and the determination to uphold that religion and to make sacrifices for it.[12] Irish immigrants, it should be borne in mind, were essentially a Catholic people, and therefore, it is no wonder that as soon as the trammels were shaken off they should show their accustomed devotion to their faith and their clergy. Their presence resulted in Irish issues being debated and the arrest and expulsion of some who supported the Fenian cause of Irish independence.[13] It also resulted in a demand for Irish priests and bishops to serve the county's Catholic population and in an eventual change in the character of the Church in England from an all English institution to a largely Irish one.[14] According to historian David Fitzpatrick, 'the Catholic Church in England was profoundly altered by the Irish influx and between 1800 and 1870 it was transformed from being a small, proud, rich, and unpopular body to become a large prudent, poorer and unpopular body, with a vast majority of Irish adherents'.[15]

The bold Catholicism of the famine refugees was to put the finishing touches to the process of re-establishing the Roman Catholic Church in England.[16] Worship with their fellow countrymen, under the spiritual guidance of an Irish priest perhaps, was one of the few comforting distractions available to them; to divert their minds from the dull routine of

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[11] *Ibid*., p. 213.

[12] F. M Allen, *Through Green Glasses* (Bradford, 1878), p. 18.

[13] M. C. Bishop, 'The social methods of Roman Catholicism in England', *Contemporary Review*, 39 (1877), pp. 610-12.

[14] Supple, 'The Catholic clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A profile', pp. 212-14.

[15] D. Fitzpatrick, *Irish Economic and Social History* (Dublin, 2003), p. 116.

[16] M. J. Hickman, *Religion, Class and Identity: The State, the Catholic Church and the Education of the Irish in Britain*, (Avebury, 1995), p.87; B. Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community* (London, 1997), p.5.

ceaseless drudgery, their turbulent social circumstances and appalling living conditions. 'Their most striking characteristic', wrote a correspondent in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1880, 'is their unexampled religious fidelity, a fidelity forged generations ago when the oppressed Irish found solace in the Catholic Church'.[17] There was a growing optimism among some Catholics in England that the coming of Irish Catholic immigrants was a necessary prelude to the enlightenment and diffusion of Catholicism. In the highly valued Catholic periodical, the *Dublin Review*, one correspondent in 1856 wrote, 'everybody interested in extending Catholicism in England should devote himself to 'bringing into shape, and order, and discipline, that vast body of Catholics which is comprised within the Irish Poor, because through them the Church might become more genuinely popular in England than she had been for more than three centuries. It is very well to have rich people…' he said; 'but after all, it is the poor who constitute the real bulwark of the Church'.[18]

The Catholic Directory of 1839 reveals that there existed across the whole of Yorkshire, fifty-two Catholic chapels and one Catholic College at Ampleforth. Of these fifty-two chapels, twenty-seven of them existed discretely under the protection of local Catholic gentry in quiet corners of the Yorkshire countryside, 'attended by priests they regarded as friends, or servants'.[19] In 1850, when the Roman Catholic clerical hierarchy was restored by Pope Pius IX and the Vicars-Apostolic became Bishops-in-Ordinary, commonly known as the 'second spring', there was in the new Diocese of Beverley, which was co-extensive with the whole of the county of Yorkshire: forty-seven secular clergy and sixteen members of religious orders who served a total of sixty-one churches and chapels.[20] The number of adherents in the Yorkshire Diocese stood at approximately 125,703 souls.[21]

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[17] J. O'Connor, 'The Irish in England', *Fortnightly Review*, 14 (1880), p. 411.
[18] *Dublin Review*, 12 December 1856.
[19] Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850*, pp. 250-62.
[20] *Catholic Directory*, 1850.
[21] LDA, Table of Comparison: 1860.

In September of that same year, the Right Rev. John Briggs was appointed Bishop to the new Diocese of Beverley. Following his death in 1861, the Right Rev. Robert Cornthwaite succeeded him as Bishop of Beverley. The Right Rev. William Gordon succeeded Bishop Cornthwaite upon his death in 1890. Bishop Gordon had almost completed the twenty-first year of his episcopate, when he passed away on 7 June 1911. In the same month, the Right Rev. Joseph Robert Cowgill succeeded Bishop Gordon as head of the Leeds Diocese. And, in all aspects, they were active propagators in extending to the Irish diasporic communities the fundamental means to spiritual and cultural development.[22]

In 1878, Bishop Cornthwaite was appointed the See of Leeds, when the Beverley Diocese was divided into the dioceses of Leeds and Middlesbrough. The Diocese of Leeds encompassed the whole of the industrial West Riding, and the Diocese of Middlesbrough the North and East Ridings. According to statistics published by the *Catholic Directory*, the partition of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Beverley into those of Leeds and Middlesbrough left the respective clerical strength in each diocese as follows: Leeds – eighty secular priests and eighteen regulars; and Middlesbrough – forty secular priests and thirteen regulars. In the Diocese of Leeds the places of Catholic worship were: Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Halifax, Huddersfield, Wakefield, Barnsley, Dewsbury, Doncaster, Batley, Bingley, Ripon, Pontefract, Knaresborough, Otley, Selby, Brighouse, Goole, Harrogate, Skipton, Wetherby, Shipley, Settle, Ossett, Masborough, Keighley, Ilkley, Hazlewood, Rudding Park, Scarthingwell, Heckmonwike, Horsforth, Stourton, Wath-upon Dearne, Elsecar, Ackworth Grange, Castleford, Deepcar, Rawdon, Boston Spa, Clifford, Handworth, Aberford, Whitwood, Sicklinghall, Revell Grange, Owlerton, Bishop Thornton, Broughton Hall,

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[22] *Catholic Directories*. 1861-1911.

Burghwallis, Carlton, Kirk Edge, Mickley, York (south of the river Ouse), Bentham, Lawkland, Whitewell, Myddleton Lodge, and Nun Monkton.[23]

The Catholic community of Yorkshire, as it stood at the end of the nineteenth century, was certainly very different from that of the first half of the nineteenth century. To begin with, it was numerically different. Not later than 1910, there was one hundred and ninety-one Catholic clergy working in the dioceses of Leeds and Middlesbrough, serving 154 churches and chapels. Table 2.1 demonstrates that by the opening decade of the twentieth century the number of adherents in the industrial Diocese of Leeds formed almost 4 per cent of the total population of Yorkshire, which stood at 3,584,762, a position they had held steadily for three decades and would continue to hold for the next four. In 1910, out of the total population of 1.7 million Roman Catholics in England, Scotland and Wales roughly 8 per cent lived in the West Riding.

Having crossed the threshold of the nineteenth century as an inconsequential and minor religion, by the close of the century the Catholic Church had transformed itself into the concrete embodiment of a prosperous and intimidating religion; with new aims and perspectives directly related to the immediate spiritual needs of the Irish working-class. The increased numerical strength of the industrial Diocese of Leeds emanated from the punctuated years of nineteenth century Irish immigration; and was fundamental to the Church's social and racial transformation from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. More than ninety-five per cent of all Catholic adherents living in the West Riding were Irish immigrants or the direct descendents of Irish immigrants. The actual number of English Catholics and English conversions, of which there were comparatively few, was composed almost entirely among the gentry, the scholastic and middle classes. [24]

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[23] *Catholic Directory*, 1878.
[24] P. Sidney, *Modern Rome in modern England* (London, 1906), pp.311-16.

Table 2.1 Number of Catholic in the Diocese of Leeds and General Statistics 1875-1911.

Year	Catholic Adult Population	Baptisms	Number of Catholic Children	Total Number of Catholics	Population of West Riding as per Census Returns	Percentage of West Riding Population
1875	80.645	4,269	16,138	96,783	1,593,079	6.1
1876	93,561	4,600	18,016	111,577		
1878	96,000	4,629	19,092	115,092		
1879	98,308	4,601	21,083	119,391		
1880	101,998	4,760	20,908	122,906		
1881	97,643	4,661	19,697	117,340	2,983,342	3.9
1884	94,901	4,273	19,272	114,173		
1886	93,285	4,347	20,860	114,145		
1887	92,208	4,293	21,060	113,268		
1888	92,725	4,336	21,384	114,109		
1889	90,358	4,129	21,443	111,801		
1890	93,127	4,307	21,711	114,838		
1891	92,616	4,223	22,279	114,895	3,141,154	3.7
1892	95,492	4,361	23,084	118,576		
1893	95,278	4,439	23,634	118,912		
1894	95,617	4,347	24,031	119,648		
1895	99,047	4,608	24,667	123,714		
1896	100,141	4,724	24,692	124,833		
1897	102,502	4,673	24,669	127,171		
1898	101,155	4,725	25,097	126,252		
1901	106,213	4,994	25,503	131,716	3,584,762	3.7
1904	116,682	5,063	28,754	145,436		
1908	105,224	5,124	25,682	130,906		
1909	102,667	4,783	26,496	129,163		
1911	108,589	4,954	25,658	134,247	4,108,088	3.3

Source: General Summary of Statistics of the Diocese of Leeds, Leeds Diocesan Archive.

Clearly, intense theological ferment brewed among the Irish immigrants in the West Riding, seeking as they did, to find meaning in the inexplicable series of tragedies they had suffered in Ireland; and at the same time trying to address the future of their relationship with the English Catholic Church in a predominantly Protestant country. In the teeth of continuous persecution and acute distress, the whole burden of the spiritual and moral training of this large body of Irish poor fell to the bishop and the priesthood; as they had the most influence over the Irish people. With the arrival on the scene of impoverished Irish in the mid-

nineteenth century the boundaries between the Irish Catholic diaspora and English Catholic communities began to be defined more narrowly – setting in motion a chain of events that would radically alter the Catholic Church in Yorkshire.

Indeed, having entered the nineteenth century as an oppressed minority faith, by the close of the century Catholicism became one of the main religions in England. One of the watershed events for this transformation was the influx of Irish Catholic immigrants. The triumph of Catholicism was facilitated by the Church's ability to adapt, transform, and internalise facets of the religious tradition with which it had competed during its formative centuries, and its evolving understanding of its key personage. Indeed, during the mid-nineteenth century the Church had to respond to the challenges posed by the divergent views of a number of groups and systems of belief, prominent among which were the Irish immigrants.

Unquestionably, the cultural-sociological framework provided by the Catholic Church in England, to which most Catholics subscribed, at least nominally, was the most influential in Catholic working-class culture. The Roman Catholic Church, to which most Irish immigrants paid varying degrees of observance, played a predominant role in the process, whereby, Irish people assimilated into their new surroundings. In their new communities the Irish sought to maintain their own culture with the Catholic Church being central to many community activities. It established a means of contact between its adherents and helped to strengthen many of their religious convictions; to enlighten them in the midst of the difficulties presented by the political and social questions of the day. [25]

It was especially, on behalf of the disinherited classes, the large mass of Irish immigrants, the watchful guardian and the preserve of their social, spiritual and moral consciousness. Catholicism, like other totalising religions, aimed not only to shape society

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[25] E. R. Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1984), p.180.

but also to control all aspects of an individual's life. In addition to structuring industrial working-class Catholic society, it structured the lifetime of all its adherents and their daily routine. While it was treated as one of the major religions in late Victorian England, for Catholics it had become much more than that: it was a way of life, a large and rich culture, an environment that enveloped a Catholic from birth to death.[26]

Undoubtedly, the expansion of Catholicism in England was the unequivocal consequence of nineteenth-century developments manifested by the assimilation of racially and linguistically different peoples from continental Europe, who were destined to prove far more important in their influence on English Catholic life, and the course of Catholic history, than their English co-religionists. While there was *de facto* a great variety among the various Catholic communities, attempts were made by the Church to create a synthesised consciousness, which in its spirit and action, endeavoured to promote an historic religious system of belonging to drive home a common English ethos. Hitherto, in the main centres of factory production of the West Riding, as elsewhere across industrialised northern England, the Church served a deeply class-divided society in which English adherents – drawn not only from the aristocracy and gentry but also, increasingly, those of the scholastic and new industrialists – were in the minority.[27]

By the early twentieth-century the West Riding not only played host to thousands of Irish Catholics affirming their religious heritage, but also to many other foreign adherents from Italy, 1,588; Poland, 3,358; Lithuania, 788; and the Ukraine,1,690:[28] all of whom had their own special requirements, distinctive belief systems, national identities and cultures. In 1912, according to the Catholic Church, there was also an increase in the number of Eastern European Jews that had converted to Catholicism, especially in the township of Leeds, where

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[26] H. McLeod, *Religion and the working class in nineteenth century Britain* (London. 1984), pp. 32-4.
[27] M. A. G. O Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Problems of Integration', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 31 (1981), p.168.
[28] *Census and Enumeration for England and Wales, 1901*

there existed a large Jewish community.[29] In 1914, following the outbreak of the Great War, the county played host to large numbers of Belgium refugees – mainly Catholic. On 31 October 1914, the *Catholic Herald* reported that an estimated 8,000 Belgium Catholics were sojourning in the West Riding; 2,000 in Leeds and the remainder scattered across the towns and districts of Bradford, York, Huddersfield, Wakefield and Sheffield.[30] Looking at the Church in its relation to foreign adherents we may notice, in the double sense that it included, or rather sought to include all adherents into its body, but rejected the identification of Church with the great accession of those members drawn from Ireland and other nations; or rather, to speak more exactly, it did so without making any concessions in its overall mission to promote an all English appearance to the mainstay of Yorkshire society.[31]

Without doubt, the Victorian Catholic hierarchy, almost exclusively composed of upper and middle-class Englishmen, placed their essential emphasis on the Church's English credentials: its preferred anthem, 'Faith of Our Fathers', which fostered fond memories of a bygone age that pre-dated the Reformation, which inculcated the *beau ideal* of the English Catholic gentleman. In essence – in their torturous and tortured attempt to maintain their supremacy and to reinstate their authority within the Church – the aristocracy and bourgeoisie developed a defensive reaction to Irish immigrants by stressing the need to build up the Church's English authority and clarify its ecclesiastical doctrines and politics, drawing sharply on the historical origins of England's glorious Catholic past.[32] Indeed, adherence to English Catholic values promoted among the aristocracy, in the sphere of religious thought and social life, remained very strong at this time despite the growing number of pauperised Irish immigrants. By now, the Church, unseen by itself, had aroused an impulse and brought a new breath of vigour and enthusiasm into an atmosphere heavy with the dust of national

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[29] *Catholic Herald*, 5 October 1912.
[30] *Ibid.*, 31 October 1814.
[31] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, pp.27-30.
[32] D. Fitzpatrick, 'A Curious Middle Place: The Irish in Britain 1871-1921', in R. Swift and S. Gilley, *The Irish in Britain 1815-1939* (London, 1989), p.13.

identity and theological disputes. In the intervening years much dust had indeed been raised, not only theological questions but also on matters with a crucial bearing on the national character of the Church. For many Irish immigrants the Church had now come to represent a real source of national strength, which they used to accentuate their Irishness, thus, creating a dualism that would challenge the Catholic Church and its laity for the remainder of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In their temper and tradition, English proponents of Catholicism warned that the well-being and the survival of the Catholic Church in England was wholly dependent on the proper maintenance of not only pre-Reformation theologies, but political theory, philosophy, and above all, English history, to distort the presence of thousands of Irish immigrants.[33] Objecting to the whole idea of any midway position they rejected the identification of the Irish, and claimed that the Church should be, and properly ought to be, a gathered body which consisted of those members of the English nation, and only those members of the English nation.[34] Indeed, their aim was to attack the Irish Catholics to break down and ultimately disguise their national identity. Such certitude in the matter of identity was a debilitating and destructive handicap from one point of view and a source of strength from another. Certainly, the Catholic Church and its English adherents represented one end of the theological spectrum, while the Irish immigrants represented the other, adamant that the Irish diaspora in its entirety remained valid. At a time when the emerging Church and its ecclesiastical hierarchy engaged in a rigorous process of self-definition, Irish Catholic groups blurred the boundaries both sought to erect.

This can best be observed through the pomp and ceremony that accompanied the laying of many foundation stones to mark the commencement of a church in a town, or the opening of a newly constructed church, school, or convent, when Catholic procession bands

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[33] J. McCarthy, *Ecclesiastical History of Britain* (London, 1912), pp. 12-18.
[34] McLeod, *Religion and the working class in nineteenth century Britain* (London. 1984), p. 29.

played all the popular Irish airs such as, 'Patrick's Day', 'Wearing of the Green', 'Haste to the Wedding' and 'Paddy Land', much to the abhorrence of the English ecclesiastic hierarchy.[35] As the Right Rev. Provost Render of York described in 1867, regarding the laying of the foundation stone at St. Paulinus, Dewsbury, 'Three local bands discoursed appropriate music throughout the journey of the procession from Westtown to Heckmondwike; and much to the thrill of the men, women and children that marched that day; on the route back to Westtown, the bands assisted this great procession of some 600 souls by playing all the popular Irish airs'.[36] This was a typical advertisement of the cherished relationship between nationality and religion, which was the unifying theme in the story of the Irish in defiance of English Catholic feelings.

Many English converts in the West Riding, however, were not under any historical influence; they had little interest in anything except the general politics of the Roman Catholic world, and their strongest sentiments, which amounted indeed to a passion, was devotion to the Pope.[37] The opinions of, and rivalries among English and Irish adherents and prominent clerical figures, all played a role at both shaping and reflecting the evolving regional consensus concerning the expansion of Catholicism in the county.[38] Through its social activities, as well as its doctrines, the Catholic Church extended its single undeviating influence to wider fields, which promoted the eternal welfare of its adherents. The Church directed its efforts to preventing the division of its adherents into two hostile camps and preparing them for the fit discharge of their social and religious lives to achieve the essential elements of an autonomous Catholic community, 'insulated against the working-class culture of the native majority'.[39] The result of these processes was a religion that exhibited the most

[35] P. Grogan, *Memoirs of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Bradford* (Bradford, 1982), p.2.
[36] LDA, Correspondence of the Right Rev. Provost Render of York, regarding the laying of the foundation stone at St. Paulinus, Dewsbury.
[37] *Tablet*, 3 May 1850.
[38] P. Hughes, *The Coming Century* (London, 1850), p.42.
[39] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholic in England, 1880-1939*, p. 38.

diverse and contradictory features of Catholic life. Catholicism in the nineteenth century was often called a 'family' rather than one religion, and even within this 'family' the differences were often more pronounced than the similarities.[40]

From a sociological perspective the intrusions of the Irish Catholic diaspora, many in Catholic name only, posed a unique set of challenges for Bishop Briggs and his priesthood when they arrived in industrial Yorkshire during the mid-nineteenth century.[41] In large part, the religious authority of the Diocese, the priesthood and the community it served, scarcely numbering a few thousand souls was dominated by social and economic elites, forming a homogenous body of social life and general opinion. It was subjugated by the families of gentle and noble ancestry in the countryside and English middle-classes in the towns.[42] They were, and continued to be, small loose groups that placed their emphasis on a separate and autonomous congregation gathered in its separate and local chapels. Unless the Bishop saw a specific reason to intervene he allowed those English Catholics, who represented the very best of their inherited traditions, a considerable amount of religious self-rule under the leadership of a priest and the bureaucracies the latter maintained.[43] At the other end of the social spectrum were the majority of county's Irish adherents, consisted primarily of impoverished and underemployed itinerant workers with little or no access to religious accommodation.[44]

It was no coincidence that in 1850 the majority of Catholic missions in the Yorkshire region were geographically located in bucolic districts, in quite corners and lanes, by old stone churches which had been built in the Middle Ages. Moreover, most were either chapel's attached to Catholic houses, or churches bought and endowed by aristocratic families. More often than not these had been chantry chapels before the Reformation, and

[40] *Catholic Herald*, 22 March 1889.
[41] *Leeds Mercury*, 28 August 1847.
[42] *Catholic Directories*, 1851-1901.
[43] Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850*, pp. 250-62.
[44] *Catholic Herald*, 8 March 1889.

afterwards were converted into chapels to contain monuments to a particular family with vaults beneath for inhumations; Broughton Hall and Ackworth Grange are to mention but a few. Above all, these were privately controlled chapels providing for the gentry and the aristocracy. According to Jennifer Supple, of the sixty-one chapels scattered across mid-nineteenth century Yorkshire landscape, 'seventeen dated back to the medieval period, others dating from the Reformation, but the majority were established at some stage during the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries'.[45] In addition to exclusive aristocratic or gentry chaplaincies, a further twenty-five missions were spread through the villages and towns of the countryside, or in coastal parishes.[46]

In 1850, no fewer than seventeen established missions could be found in Yorkshire's industrial towns or industrialised districts, representing only one-third of the total number of missions across the entire length and breadth of the county. It was, of course, precisely in the industrial districts – those areas where the majority of Irish immigrants were putting down their roots – that the position was worse. An assessment of the *Catholic Directories* reveal that, during this early period of Irish immigration Leeds had only two missions and Bradford, Sheffield, Wakefield, Halifax, Keighley and Hull all had one each.[47] But in some of the smaller mill towns, such as, Batley, Brighouse, Dewsbury, Otley and Skipton, where hundreds of Irish Catholic families were beginning to settle, there was not a single mission for miles around. In the absence of religious accommodation most adherents in these towns were compelled to find alternative ways to hear Mass. Often, they visited other towns and districts for this purpose.[48] In some parts of nineteenth-century Yorkshire it was difficult to provide an effective ministry and proper services, and church attendance was not effectively

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[45] Supple, 'The Catholic clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A Profile', *Northern History*, 21, p.219.
[46] *Ibid*., p.220.
[47] *Catholic Directory*, 1850.
[48] *Ibid.,*1850.

enforced.[49] There were also frequent complaints of bad behaviour in church, of the congregation talking, eating, spitting and sleeping during services, and some English seem to have been no less irreverent than the Irish. Indeed, during the 1850s and 1860s priests and visiting bishops frequently complained of the lack of social graces in some parishes.[50]

On Sunday's, Irish communities settled in the districts of Dewsbury, Batley, Birstall and Brighouse had to walk to either Huddersfield, Halifax, Wakefield or Leeds to hear Holy Mass, and were often harangued and, 'physically and verbally abused on their journey by hooligan elements from those districts'.[51] By 1850, the Catholic community of Yorkshire had grown to such an extent that in some of the county's larger towns, such as Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield, priests were compelled to open 'chapels-of-ease', most of which blossomed into fully fledged parishes in their own right in the last quarter of the nineteenth and the opening decades of the twentieth centuries.[52]

St. Patrick's, Huddersfield, established in 1832, became the first centre of worship in the formative period specifically constructed to accommodate the religious sensibilities of Irish immigrants coming to work in the town's textile industries.[53] By the same token, St. Vincent's of Sheffield, which opened its doors in 1853, was also constructed to meet the spiritual needs of the diasporic Irish; and analogous with Huddersfield, 'it was served almost exclusively by Irish priests'.[54] In the mid nineteenth-century these wholly Irish missions were an exception to the rule because, 'most missions were composed of mixed congregations. Even those missions, which for the most part were Irish in composition, often accommodated

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[49] *Catholic Herald*, 18 June 1897.
[50] BL, a series of letter to the editor of the *Bradford Observer*, 1867, titled Irish Disaffection in Bradford; LDA, Letter G. Lambert to Bishop of Leeds, 3 August 1880; Visitation 1896, St. Austin's, Wakefield; S. Gilley, *Catholic Faith in the Irish Slum* (London, 1973), pp. 23-38; Visitation 1885, St Mary's, Bradford.
[51] D. Walsh, *St. Mary's of the Angels: 100 Years 1870 – 1970* (Webb, 1970), p. 21.
[52] *Tablet*, 11 October 1881.
[53] *Laity's Directory* 1829, p. 26.
[54] *Catholic Herald*, 15 July 1891.

small numbers of English Catholics in their congregations, who often bestowed much of the financial assistance'.[55]

How many wealthy English Catholics who expressed their piety by financially supporting the construction of a new church, or the refurbishment of a church, were actually doing so because the responsibility fell to them as patrons is impossible to estimate, but devout English Catholics were considerable benefactors.[56] For example, in 1865 John Simpson donated £800 towards the construction of St. Mary's Church, Bradford, and paid for the paving of the church. He also provided alter rails, a Communion plate, and a Turkish carpet.[57] But the principle goal of donating elaborate gifts and large sums of money should not be viewed, in most cases, as simple acts of religious philanthropy or displays of higher religious propriety for the benefit of all the Church's adherents.

Certainly, for many upper and middle-class English Catholics it was not a simple matter of trying to raise standards of ceremony in the Catholic Church's poorly furnished missions, which of course it did, but it was done to watch over their English national identity, and that of 'their' Church and, in particular, to protect it from the Irish.[58] Generally speaking, this process of donating large sums of money, fixtures and fittings, was aimed at denying the Irish an identity within the English Catholic community. It was a rooted and methodical attempt to highlight those aspects of the Church that characterised a dominant English culture, and a key tool for preserving the physical separation of the Irish from the mainstay of the English upper and middle-class Catholics. By the close nineteenth century it had became less fashionable to express piety or English nationality by financially supporting and refurbishing churches. For the extremely wealthy English Catholics, devotions might be

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[55] Supple, 'The Catholic clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A profile', *Northern History*, 21, p. 219.
[56] Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850*, p. 280.
[57] P. Grogan, *Memoirs of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Bradford* (Bradford, 1982), p.2.
[58] *Catholic Herald*, 8 November 1905.

advertised by various kinds of charitable endowments: hospitals and schools.[59] By the early twentieth century, bucolic missions and chapels catering for the gentry and even the aristocracy were very much in the minority. Of the 154 churches and chapels scattered across the industrial Diocese of Leeds, almost 100 were to be found in industrial towns and villages. Leeds and its neighbourhood now boasted nine churches; eight in the Bradford district; five in Sheffield; while other sizeable towns, such as Halifax, had several churches, and missions had also been founded in many of the smaller industrial towns and villages.[60]

The punctuated expansion of churches and chapels between 1829 and the 1930s was a drama with a prologue and four Acts: 1829-38, a period of preparation following the Catholic Emancipation Bill (Prologue); 1838 and 1878 the building of Catholic churches and the establishment of Catholic parishes in the central districts of the county's industrial towns to accommodate the mass of Irish immigrants (Act 1); 1878 and 1880, a period consolidated by the formation of the Catholic Diocese of Leeds (Act 2); 1880-1914, construction of Catholic churches and the establishment of parishes in the out-townships where industry grew rapidly with corresponding labour requirements (Act 3); 1914 through to the 1930s, churches and parishes were formed in developing working class housing areas – Council and private housing estates – 'where working-class Irish, or the descendents of working-class Irish immigrants were re-housed from the old inner-city slum clearance districts'.[61]

Following the influx of Catholics arriving in Yorkshire from Ireland, the Church recognised the importance of securing suitable church accommodation if the children from the Isle of Saints were to remain true to the religion of their forbears; and, too, the means whereby the coming generation might be prepared for a new kind of life and to complete the establishment of a Church fit to form the lives of many. The incentive to construct larger

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[59] *Ibid.*, 18 March 1894.
[60] *Catholic Directory*, 1900.
[61] P. G. E. Bell, 'The Evolution of a Multi-Cultural Society', report in The British Council of Churches, Sixteenth Assembly, 1982.

religious facilities was much greater in those districts with larger concentrations of Irish Catholics – such as Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield. The enduring grandeur of the Catholic Church in the West Riding, in both non-secular and sacred spheres, was reflected not only by its lust for power and glory, but also its ambitious building schemes. Unfortunately, for the most part of the nineteenth century, the socio-economic location of the mainstay of the Catholic population in the West Riding, and their extreme poverty and squalor, meant that church building had to be related to need, and therefore lagged behind actual demand.

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century religious accommodation in the West Riding was regarded as sub-standard and lamentably deficient. Unfortunately many churches gave a very limited service, while some were unbelievably bad. Of course, such deficiencies did very little to encourage or inspire regular worship among the newly arrived Irish diasporic communities. Indeed, this was one factor which may have significantly affected church attendance at this time. Throughout the county, in those parishes where churches had already been founded in a previous century, the ill-equipped internal character and poor quality of these premises did not make them conducive for the full extension of maintaining or promoting regular church attendances. The lack of capital meant that existing churches were often small and ill equipped. Such, at least, was the view of the Bishop Briggs. According to Briggs, during the 1850s 'the Catholic congregation in Doncaster worshipped in a small, cramped and ill-conditioned chapel',[62] where, during the summer months the temperatures became so insufferable and the air so stifled, 'that parishioners frequently passed-out'.[63] Briggs also wrote in 1851, that for most Irish immigrants living in the county's urban and commercial districts, Holy Mass was celebrated in rented halls and rooms above badly ventilated industrial or commercial premises, such was the lack of religious buildings.[64] The comments referred primarily to religious accommodation for the lower ranks of the Irish

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[62] LDA, Dr Brigg's correspondence 1864, R. Gibson to Briggs, 31 May 1853.
[63] Supple, 'The Catholic clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A profile', *Northern History*, 21, p. 219.
[64] *Tablet*, 24 June 1851.

working-class. By the time they were written, ambitious attempts had already been made to establish churches or alternative accommodation on a more stable basis, but not always the type desired.

During the 1860s the Irish Catholics of Heckmondwike celebrated Mass beneath a joiner's shop in Little George Street. According to one of the congregation, 'The sawdust use to filter through the cracks in the floor and find its way down our backs, causing a sensation something like being rubbed with a piece of sand-paper'.[65] Meanwhile, in Batley, 'Catholics celebrated Mass in rented rooms above a ginger-beer manufactory. Although the room was crammed to near suffocation, it was so bitterly cold during the winter months that Mass had to be said hurriedly for fear that the wine in the chalice would freeze'.[66] In the 1850s, the Irish Catholics of Dewsbury celebrated Mass in a rented room in one of the towns Cloth Halls.[67] Such was the lack of suitable religious accommodation that in some towns Sunday Mass was even celebrated in rented rooms above local public-houses. Indeed, between 1850 and 1852, Irish Catholics domiciled in Bradford celebrated Holy Mass in rented rooms above the Roebuck Inn, much to the opposition of the local clientele. This was in sharp contrast to both the Anglicans and Nonconformists who witnessed an unprecedented profusion of chapel and church building projects, which spread rapidly throughout the county during the same period.[68]

In spite of anti-Catholic persecution the movement by the Church to found religious accommodation developed very rapidly from the 1850s onwards. In large towns like Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, Huddersfield, Halifax, York, Dewsbury and Keighley every effort was made by the working-class poor to raise the capital required to construct new churches,

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[65] *Catholic Herald*, 5 November, 1891.
[66] LDA, 1866 Visitation, Batley, 17 November 1863.
[67] LDA, 1853 Visitation, Dewsbury, 8 July 1853.
[68] G. G. Cragg, *A Study in Evangelicalism: Two local studies which examine Evangelicalism in the West Riding and the growth of Methodism* (London, 1947); A. E. Teal, 'Methodism in Halifax and District 1780 – 1850: A Study of the Development of Methodism and the Impact upon a Rapidly Changing Society in the Early Nineteenth Century' (Unpublished MSc Thesis, University of Bradford, 1976).

often under conditions of great difficulty. 'Bear in mind' said Briggs in 1852, exhorting the working-class faithful to lend financial support, 'that these churches will have to be erected by the zeal, the confidence, and the pence of working men alone'.[69] Throughout the West Riding workers did express their zeal and confidence, 'and collectors willingly offered themselves to make the weekly rounds to collect the pence from the Catholic poor'.[70] For the largely poor working-class Irish Catholics this was a very considerable sum and gives some idea of the sacrifices involved in building these churches.

The Church was also among the first to introduce tea-parties at low rates of admission, oratories, festivals, rural excursions and amusements with instruction to raise funds, which the Central Board allocated according to priority. From this was born a long series of outdoor collections, fetes, Catholic festivals and other non-secular activities to pay for the construction of its churches, or at least, to cover the interest payments on the Church's many loans – the money once more being raised by the working-class poor.[71] Here, in subsequent years, the popularity of concerts, fetes and parties were organised not only as a means to raise ambitious building funds but to improve the habits of its adherents, and is one great cause of their success in the propagation of their system. By the close of the 1870s, the Roman Catholic Church had increased the number of its churches and its worshippers. The central districts of manufacturing towns were increasingly becoming Catholic. In sharp contrast, both the Nonconformists and Anglicans found their central town churches and chapels increasingly being faced by the predicament of dwindling congregations and an ensuing deficit in financial support.[72]

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[69] *Tablet*, 8 February 1852.
[70] P. E. Freeman, *Catholicism in Leeds: A Community of Faith, 1794-1994* (Leeds, 1995), p. 22; Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*, p. 46.
[71] *Catholic Herald*, 18 January 1899.
[72] A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740 – 1914* (London, 1976), p. 145.

With the depopulation of the cities as residential areas – as the middle classes relocated to the newly fashioned suburbs and dormitory towns – town centre chapels remained ever more enclosed by industrial and commercial property and a working-class population which was predominantly Roman Catholic, who were only too glad to make use of these facilities. The dilemma faced by the Nonconformists and Anglicans was not faced by the Catholics. Its adherents were essentially Irish or the descendants of Irish working-class immigrants. At home they were crowded into one dense mass, in houses separated by narrow, unpaved, and almost pestilential streets in an atmosphere loaded with smoke and exhalations of county's large manufacturing towns. At work they were daily subject to the dull routine of daily drudgery, in which the same mechanical process was incessantly repeated. However, their religious cohesion was strengthened by their ethnic antecedents and their deprived social standing.[73]

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the Church had shown small improvements on its position, although much less than might have been expected from the increased number of churches.[74] By the early 1900s, however, large numbers of new missions had been opened across the whole county, many new schools and churches had been built, and the old schools of the Diocese, almost without exception had been enlarged or improved, all catering for the spiritual and pastoral needs of a Catholic population which had grown so dramatically. Table 2.2 demonstrates the growth of missions across the Diocese of Leeds and the numerical strength of each mission during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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[73] *Ibid*., p.90-8.
[74] *Ibid*., p.205.

Table 2.2 Missions in the Diocese of Leeds and their numerical strength 1881-1911.

Name of Mission	1881	1885	1889	1893	1897	1902	1908	1911
Aberford-cum-Garforth	204	119	274	329	280	310	138	218
Ackworth Grange	230	235	220	665	61	58	75	74
Allerton Park	..	..	..	131	162	144	163	224
Barnsley-cum-Worsboro' Bridge	2,957	2,688	2,698	2,881	2,890	2,991	3,034	3,553
Batley-cum-Birstall	4,580	3,188	3,582	3,294	3,212	3,666	2,582	2,673
Batley Carr	1,330	1,576	1,092	1,096	849	676	706	840
Bentham	..	..	240	234	183	90	60	60
Beeston	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	750
Bingley	406	358	419	406	803	604	597	650
Birstall	..	..	..	..	..	..	928	914
Bishop Thornton	211	228	248	316	322	262	275	312
Bradford: St. Maria's	8,804	7,905	8,330	8,785	9,625	8,371	8,542	7,111
St. Joseph's	4,719	4,235	4,086	4,198	3,692	4,020	4,015	4,020
St. Anne's	3,002	2,524	3,324	3,101	3,041	2,941	3,003	2,572
St. Patrick's	8,086	6,689	6,052	5,477	5,683	5,574	5,562	4,867
St. Cuthbert's	..	1,456	1,247	1,245	1,435	1,387	1,159	1,211
St. William's	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,018
Brighouse	774	744	767	740	716	662	460	352
Broughton	260	408	227	238	377	438	450	68
Carlton	267	210	236	175	205	256	186	185
Castleford	836	723	999	969	1,084	1,104	1,414	1,569
Clifford	804	531	305	703	423	441	694	396
Deepcar	..	..	110	117	154	198	170	161
Denaby Main	..	..	..	..	350	700	660	600
Dewsbury	2,917	2,751	2,361	2,405	2,855	2,336	2,200	2,918
Doncaster	825	784	788	800	800	918	1,001	1,229
Goldthorpe	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	650
Goole	748	758	759	1,050	1,101	1,146	1,308	1,190
Grimesthorpe	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	308
Halifax: St. Maria's	6,859	7,207	6,764	3,143	2,880	3,214	2,937	3,082
Sacred Heart & St. Bernard's	..	..	..	2,842	3,286	4,336	2,990	2,900
West Vale	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	454
Handsworth	316	257	196	257	315	504	452	334
Harrogate	265	300	436	529	502	778	844	1,000
Hebden Bridge and Luddenden Foot	..	..	..	400	430	600	600	600
Heckmondwike	739	900	894	755	713	646	777	659
Hemsworth	..	..	..	..	519	1,286	1,591	762
Horsforth	..	..	..	..	297	254	230	213
Hoyland Nether-cum-Low Valley	..	..	..	..	782	716	1,584	1,486
Huddersfield	3,665	4,052	3,604	3,807	3,597	4,330	4,766	5,222
Ilkley	416	445	450	432	584	405	451	570
Keighley	4,437	4,402	4,205	4,117	4,337	4,843	3,642	4,681
Knaresborough	573	585	566	668	683	682	729	607
Leeds: The Cathedral	..	..	..	..	5,861	5,715	4,621	3,844
St. Anne's	8,385	8,595	7,546	6,173	..	..	..	..
St. Maria's	5,747	6,525	6,156	6,385	6,983	7,712	7,757	6,319
St. Patrick's	9,371	8,508	9,284	8,514	9,026	9,972	9,312	9,746
St. Joseph's	2,380	2,341	2,520	2,930	3,318	4,022	3,973	3,924
Holy Family	..	601	913	1,268	1,303	1,411	1,965	2,033
St. Francis'	..	..	..	..	3,187	3,290	3,628	2,786
Sacred Heart	..	..	..	1,319	1,590	1,791	2,130	2,099
St. Augustine's	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,247	1,334
St. Richard's	..	..	1,884	2,576	..	..	..	..
Masborough	1,957	1,893	1,950	1,970	2,072	2,501	2,679	2,904
Moorthorpe	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	374
Morley	..	..	..	..	610	700	900	800
Mortomley	..	..	..	..	278	347	300	345
Normanton	1,017	1,074	1,259	1,446	1,408	1,726	1,838	2,151

Name of Mission		1881	1885	1889	1893	1897	1902	1908	1911
Ossett		..	373	358	263	402	390	388	780
Otley		815	778	831	867	836	827	869	814
Pontefract		1,108	1,279	1,223	1,194	1,331	1,547	1,922	2,052
Pudsey		..	..	..	265	..	398	322	426
Ripon		600	549	578	451	511	501	502	475
Rudding Park		158	129	164	180	219	199	195	147
Scarthingwell		333	290	379	384	337	271	175	185
Selby		1,491	1,101	992	1,018	1,034	1,163	1,224	1,327
Settle		..	..	100	97	90	76	155	112
Sheffield:	St. Maria's	7,770	5,527	4,664	4,912	3,882	3,721	4,030	3,359
	St. Vincent's	7,065	4,499	5,987	7,125	8,903	8,842	9,414	8,250
	St. Charles'	1,598	1,508	1,647	1,670	1,748	2,102	2,387	2,676
	St. Catherine's	1,607	1,508	1,559	1,655	1,741	1,998	1,995	1,666
	St. Wilfred's	375	610	122	960	975	1,173	1,405	1,019
Shipley		858	841	890	669	715	676	690	741
Sicklinghall-cum-Wetherby		914	183	174	149	170	120	131	158
Skipton		914	957	1,051	1,021	1,140	1,213	1,240	1,238
Tadcaster-cum-Hazelwood		586	408	344	537	426	483	486	487
Wakefield		3,423	3,290	3,269	3,685	3,439	3,588	3,576	3,293
Wath-on-Dearne		632	786	675	726	604	485	824	356
Whitewell		172	172	99	98	77	66	69	73
York		607	795	910	954	1,103	1,073	941	1,026

Source: Catholic Directories 1881-1911, Leeds Diocesan Archives.

A further achievement in the chief centres of industry in the West Riding was the educational establishments in which young Catholics could receive a more advanced course of educational instruction. The secondary schools for boys, St. Michael's College, Leeds; St. Bede's Grammar School, Bradford; and for girls, Notre Dame College, Leeds; Notre Dame School Sheffield; and St. Joseph's, Bradford, were all impressive institutions, 'and compared favourably with any schools of their like in the country'.[75] For less fortunate children of the Church there was the Shibden Industrial School for boys; St. Joseph's Home for girls at Sheffield; St. Mary's Orphanage for girls in Leeds; and St. Vincent's Home for boys and girls, also in Leeds. Children that were physically compromised at birth were sent to specialist schools to receive their education. In a circular to his clergy, in 1902, Bishop William Gordon wrote, 'If there be any blind or deaf and dumb children in your parish, we

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[75] LDA, Bishop Gordon, For the Protection and Education of Catholic Boys and Girls.

urge you to secure that they be sent to one of the specialist institutions specially provided for them. That for the blind is at Liverpool, that for the deaf and dumb at Boston Spa'.[76]

Notwithstanding the expansion of churches, the establishment of parishes, Catholic day schools, Convents of various orders, old people hostels, hospital chaplaincies; and having in its ranks a body of adherents who had educated themselves in Catholic principles, and fortified themselves by religious fervour, there were very few Catholic societies or recreational organisations exerted by the Catholic social spirit.[77] Of those Catholic guilds and societies in existence during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, which gave the Church a controlling influence over a considerable area of social interaction, these were poorly attended and poorly supported.[78] Indeed, throughout much of the third quarter of the nineteenth century popular culture among the Catholic communities of the West Riding was often associated with secular activities, but as we have seen already Catholicism provided and controlled much of the culture shared by its adherents – rites of passage – weddings, christenings and funerals, as well as an amalgam of religious processions and ceremonies. However, there was an area of culture which took place outside the Church, the location of leisure, sports, entertainment and recreation.[79]

This fact, though much to be regretted by the Catholic Church, is easily explained. For the Catholic Church in Yorkshire had been fully occupied since the time of emancipation in rebuilding its ruins. The hard dreary task of reconstruction had absorbed all its energies and finances. Churches and schools had to be rebuilt, spiritual provision had to be made, and little time and little money, to say nothing of the clergy, had been available for any other work. Thus, wrote the *Catholic Herald*, 'our men have had, more or less, to trust in their

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[76] LDA, Circular to the Clergy of the Diocese of Leeds, 1902, Bishop William.
[77] LDA, Minute Book of Leeds Catholic Club.
[78] J. H. Trebble, 'The Place of Irish Catholics in the Social Life of the North of England' (unpublished Ph.D, Leeds University), p.215.
[79] *Catholic Herald*, 5 April 1890.

Catholic instinct to find the right way in their free association with communal popular pastimes'.[80]

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, very satisfactory progress had been made in many ways. During this time, approximately twenty-six different societies, federations or associations, reflecting a whole range of Catholic religious, leisure, social and political interests were successfully established in most parishes within the Diocese. Although the comprehensiveness of Catholic societies will be examined in greater detail in chapter four, for now, they included: the Catholic Temperance Society, the Catholic Prisoners' Aid Society, the Catholic Boy's Brigade, the Catholic Young Men's Association, the Catholic Record Society, and the Catholic Reading Guild.[81] For the sake of brevity, the societies, federations and associations established in the West Riding, hoped to achieve the unity of Catholics outside the church door through debates, meetings and social activities. The ecclesiastical hierarchy of the West Riding considered the establishment and activities of these societies, association, federations to be critical, 'as in Belgium, France and Germany, a Catholic social life has to be established here in Yorkshire'.[82] However, Bishop Cornthwaite was very quick to point out that federations and societies needed to act with, 'the knowledge and consent of the local priest'.[83]

In spite of the consequences of many attacks on Catholicism throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from inside and outside the faith; in spite of rumours of decay and disarray, Catholicism outlived all announcements of its, 'impending demise'.[84] It may have appeared amorphous and archaic but it put its stamp on all religions that attempted to displace it. The nineteenth century witnessed the Church's adaptation to Rome and to the adherents it served, as well as, increasing institutionalisation and associated efforts

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[80] *Tablet*, 15 June 1878.
[81] *Catholic Directories*, 1878-1880.
[82] LDA, Minute Books of various committees.
[83] LDA, Correspondence Bishop Cornthwaite to Diocesan Organisations, 1879.
[84] *Catholic Herald*, 6 September 1892.

at doctrinal clarification.[85] The Latin language, the Catholic religion, the Late Antique culture, and the historical culture of the English elites all gained common currency and were diffused by the Church to fulfil its social and spiritual obligations to a diverse and divisive membership, which resulted in a kind of Anglo-Romanisation with a distinct Celtic flavour.

By the close of the nineteenth century the roles and importance of churches increased both Catholic communal and religious life. These roles were neither static nor uniform, varying parochially and over time. The expansion of church missions appear to have assimilated what, at least in some places, were originally separate institutions to become multipurpose institutions, whose activities included the reading of the Bible, organised prayer, study, and a variety of communal endeavours, such as, education and charitable work. Church missions of the late nineteenth century are also indicative of the vitality of the Irish diasporic community throughout much of the period under investigation.[86] The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was overall, a period of growth and prosperity for all Catholic communities in the West Riding.

If the history of Catholicism in the West Riding in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is a record with a difficult beginning and a good ending with a long and ambiguous middle, attitudes towards it during the same period, however, presents a contrasting picture. Although Catholicism was gaining strength in the industrial heartlands of the West Riding this did not mean that popular, emotional anti-papism was on the decline. In fact the opposite applied. An example of anti-Catholic feeling in the West Riding is illustrated by the purchase of a piece of land on which to build St. Patrick's Church, Bradford. According to J. Earnshaw, in the subsequent negotiations for its purchase, 'it was necessary in those days, owing to the bitter prejudices ranged against everything Irish and Catholic, to keep under

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[85] D. Mathew, *Catholicism in England* (London, 1939), p. 261.
[86] *Tablet*, 6 January 1872.

wraps the actual reason for which the land was required'.[87] Earnshaw also describes the clandestine measures surrounding the purchase of the land, 'The land was first conveyed to a Mr R. V. Williams in 1850, then in 1851 to a Mr H. Westwood, who represented the Catholic purchasers and great was the wrath of the vendors, Misses Mary and Elizabeth Rawson, when they found that the land was to be used for the erection of a Catholic Church'.[88]

Indeed, the human floods from Ireland excited a deeper consciousness of opposition and agitation towards Catholics. By the 1860s, both anti-Catholic and anti-Irish sentiments had loosened a nations tongue and retrogressively raised the curtain on the increased number of acts of vandalism directed against Catholic places of worship; carried out by Protestant mobs, often at the instigation of a local firebrand, or roused by a Protestant lay preacher.[89] In vastly different times, anti-Catholic sentiments and outright violence, loosed from their historical moorings, and contributed to the demonization of Catholics in nineteenth century Yorkshire, which at times produced some unfortunate results.

As the Irish Catholic presence increased, resistance to Catholicism was reinforced by a popular clamour of anti-Catholic rioting and attacks, which struck blindly at churches and other religious premises. In 1862, the West Riding was beset by the national frenzy of anti-Catholic 'Garibaldi Riots', which had already led to violent clashes in London and in Lancashire. In August of 1862 'Baron de Camin', an uncompromising anti-papal slanderer, toured the industrial towns of the West Riding. The agitation and bitterness he helped kindle succeeded in blazing up agitations between the English and Irish proletariat. Indeed, agitation was followed by acts of violence, which dogged every footstep of his tour. In Bradford, 'when the Baron attempted to lecture the English proletariat against the curse of the 'Scarlet Lady' at the Oddfellows Hall, a group of determined Irishmen broke up the meeting in an

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[87] J. Earnshaw, Souvenir Brochure, *The Records and Reminiscences of St. Patrick's Parish* (1903), p.11
[88] *Ibid.*, p.12
[89] *Leeds Mercury*, 11 February 1868.

orgy of violence. Thereafter, a series of major riots followed, including the stoning of the Catholic chapel'.[90]

On 23 August 1862, at Wakefield, several hundred Irishmen, led by Reverend John Baron, marched on the Theatre Royal, Westgate, where Baron de Camin was due to make a public appearance. However, there was no chance of him appearing because the agent refused to open the theatre doors. Unfortunately, for Baron de Camin, he was spotted by a number of Irish protesters in Silver Street, and had it not been for the protection afforded him by the Mayor and the Police he would probably have been seriously injured. As it was, he sustained only minor injuries, after reportedly being thrown to the ground and kicked once in the head. With this exception the evening passed off quietly.[91] On the following evening, however, what amounted to a religious riot occurred outside the Royal Hotel, where Baron de Camin addressed a large English audience from the hotel's balcony. In his address, the Baron called on his Protestant audience to, 'Remove all Catholics'. As a consequence, he was immediately removed from the balcony by the attendant police officers for inciting violence. Taking his words literally, many Protestants made their way into the New Street area of the town, an Irish district, and began smashing windows and assaulting any Irish residents that dared venture into the streets. Because the Baron had also raised the cry of, 'Down with Nunneries', as he was escorted from the balcony, the Protestant mob made their way to St. Austin's School, the home of the Sisters of Charity, and smashed the school's windows. The mob then moved a short distance to St. Austin's chapel and smashed the windows there. They also assaulted the local priest, Father Wattriel.[92] These actions, and actions like them, further widened the breach between Catholic and Protestants in the West Riding at that time.

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[90] C. Richardson, 'Irish Settlement in Mid-Nineteenth Century Bradford', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic Research*, 20 (1975), p. 42.
[91] *Leeds Mercury*, 24 August 1862.
[92] *Ibid.*, 25 August 1862.

This was also a period of the Political Protestants, whose struggle for political and social change was fed by the radical press. As such, newspapers like the *Bradford Review* were openly active in promoting the most searing anti-Catholic ideas and actions; and in 1862 the paper 'sponsored a working man's anti-Catholic rally in the Temperance Hall'.[93] For both the English working-class and the press the Irish Catholics had become anathema and a permanent state of siege. Although negative representations of Catholicism were more potent around the time of the famine influx than in much later periods, anti-Catholicism remained strong throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This late nineteenth century editorial, carried by the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus* in 1884, illuminates the mental universe and the deep-seated prejudice directed towards the Catholic community:

> For my part I could never understand what there was about the Roman Catholics to attract the admiration of a strong minded man. But what a history the Roman Catholic Church has. It pretends to be founded on the teachings of Christ, but is it. Does Catholicism imagine that other readers of history know nothing of the sin and profligacy of its religious houses and teachers that have disgraced its history? Do we know nothing of the diabolic practices which the 'Holy Church' indulged in when it burnt at the stake men, women and even children in the name of their precious religion? Can we forget the doings of the Spanish Inquisition? By all means lets stir up again this abominate sink of iniquity that we may not forget its lessons, for we are reminded that this is the same old church in creed, in doctrine, and in practice and therefore would 'do it again if it had the chance. Why are Roman Catholic countries in a continual state of unrest and insurrection? I would appeal to the working man through a working-man's paper to think of these things, and say whether or not they would wish again for a repetition of the past.[94]

The tradition of anti-Catholicism in nineteenth-century West Riding of Yorkshire became more heightened as a result of popular Protestantism; the large-scale immigration of Catholic Irish into the county; and the rapidity in which, 'Irish concerns were propelled to the

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[93] *Bradford Review*, 27 September 1862; 16 October 1862; 30 October 1862; 24 March 1862; 9 April 1862; S. Gilley, 'The Garibaldi Riots of 1862', *The Historical Journal*, xvi, 4, (1973); J. Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England 1700 – 1870* (London, 1979), pp. 279-81.
[94] *Telegraph and Argus,* 12 March 1884.

forefront of local and national political discourse'.[95] In the minds of Protestants, the word Catholic had also become synonymous with poverty and squalor, with crowded courts, fever stricken houses, reckless intemperance, and midnight turbulence.[96] By the early twentieth century, the Protestant lobby was still all-consuming and lingered on, excited by the inflammatory harangues of anti-Catholicism.

In 1908, Prime Minister Asquith had, 'felt it necessary to prohibit a public procession of the Blessed Sacraments at the Eucharistic Congress'.[97] And in the very same edition of *The Times* newspaper which reported on the events at the inaugural National Catholic Congress – held in Leeds from 29 July to 2 August 1910 – was followed it up with two trenchant items relating to anti-Catholic feeling. One was a report of a 'Sectarian Disturbance' in Liverpool where a Protestant woman had been physically molested by a mob, 'because it was alleged she had a portrait of the Pope hanging on the wall in her house'.[98] The other was a statement made by a Wesleyan minister that the, 'religious and political indoctrination of the Roman Catholic Church was used to bar the way to any social change, thus, obstructing the path in the progress towards Christian unity, because it would not relinquish its proud claims to pomp and power'.[99] According to D. Paz, 'Anti-Irish sentiment, bourgeois social control, British chauvinism, evangelical enthusiasm, economic conflict or religious prurience, produced different varieties of anti-Catholicism that served several functions in different locations'.[100] Without doubt, in different areas of the county, anti-Catholicism could serve political, electoral and theological interests, while in others it acted as a rare phenomenon in

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[95] W. L. Arnstein, *Protestant versus Catholic in Mid-Victorian England* (London, 1982), p. 108.
[96] LDA, Minute Book of the Leeds Catholic Society.
[97] E. Oldmeadow, *Francis Cardinal Bourne* (London, 1944), pp. 46-53; E. Halevy, *The Rule of Democracy 1905-1914* (London, 1932), p. 78.
[98] *The Times*, 29 July 1910.
[99] *Ibid*., 2 August 1910.
[100] D. G. Paz, *Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (Stanford, 1992), pp. 35-8.

the immoral world of raucous entertainment in its association with public houses, brutal coarseness and obscenity. [101]

Although anti-Catholicism was both more than, and less than anti-Irish rancour, there is no doubting that the pace and scale of Irish immigration, and its close links with its widest spheres of religious, political, racial and economic distinctiveness contrived to provoke animosity; bringing fresh stimulus to an old prejudice. 'With English evangelicals working feverishly for the conversion of Catholic Ireland and with the Protestant Irish occupied in a kind of no popery grand tour of England, anti-Catholicism both reinforced English nationalism and Irish Catholic solidarity – no matter how far from home they happened to be'.[102] They knew all about the recent past, the famine years, when Irish men, women and children died trying to keep body and soul together. Having experienced prejudice in both Ireland and now Yorkshire, they survived by turning internally to their traditions, their theological beliefs, their community and their church, which served as a rallying point and a symbol of both Irish nationalism and independence. These same factors contributed to their perseverance after 1900.[103]

The emerging Catholic Church of nineteenth-century Yorkshire, with its dual identity, both as the continuation of the old English aristocracy and now also as the patron and promulgator of working-class Irish, would wrestle with the challenges posed by the existence of its polarised Catholic citizens. As we have seen already, by 1850, English aristocratic and middle-class Catholic families had become the minority, outnumbered by the thousands of working-class Irish. From a religious standpoint and whatever its original form, the Roman Catholic Church in the West Riding had to be revised and reworked to articulate the mass of Irish immigrants. In response to these demands began the transition and transformation of the

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[101] K. T. Hoppen, *Ireland Since 1800: Conflict and Conformity* (London, 1989), pp. 56-6.

[102] S. Gilley, 'The Roman Catholic Church and the nineteenth-century Irish diaspora', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 35 (1984), pp. 180-5.

[103] H. McLeod, 'Building the "Catholic ghetto": Catholic organisations 1870-1914' in S. Sheils and D. Wood, *Voluntary religion* (London, 1993), p. 77.

Catholic Church, that dividing watershed in modern English history when everything began to change and 'reform' became the general watchword.[104]

With the arrival of Irish immigrants Bishop Briggs quickly solidified the Church's position in a committed, even impassioned way, much to the consternation of its English adherents. He immediately recognised the need for the Catholic Church to adapt itself quickly to the meet the needs of the classes from which it recruited, mainly the working-class Irish, and to produce far reaching ideologies that would effectively bring together Catholics from diverse social backgrounds.[105] Whether by design, or not, he was a unifying force as perceived by those he encountered.[106] In his address to the lower clergy at the Synod, in 1852, Briggs showed good instinct with regards to the problems facing the Church. He dwelt on the social inequalities and racial characteristics of all sections of the Catholic people in Yorkshire, and the social threat posed by patriotic and nationalistic fervour; Protestant hostilities and the unresponsiveness of nominal English Catholics.[107] With regards to the latter he wrote, 'Thus we are told that people are repelled because the Church is too confined to the working-class Irish, and its rough and ready ways are not such as commend themselves to men and women of culture'.[108]

There existed in the West Riding, as elsewhere in northern England, many privileged English Catholics implacably opposed not only to Irish Catholics but all Catholics outside their own socio-economic group. They were predominantly wealthy and aristocratic; their social interests were, not surprisingly, in preserving the doctrines of a political economy to stifle the demands of the workers. Such a conservative agenda extended to their religious references – reserved for those who were not obliged to labour, since they lived on the labour of others. They did not accept theological innovations and believed strongly in free-will and

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[104] D. Mathew, *Catholicism in England* (London, 1936), p. 241.
[105] *Tablet*, 2 May 1851.
[106] J. Douglas, 'Catholic Churches in Leeds 1783-1900' *The Victorian Society*, 4 (1983), p.38.
[107] LDA, Bishop Briggs's correspondence 1886B.
[108] *Ibid*., 1886A.

old English Catholic traditions. The Church rarely named names, preferring instead to use code terms like 'accommodationists' to characterise wealthy English Catholics, who would do almost anything to maintain their privileged position within the Church, very much to the exclusion of others.[109] Their criticisms of the Church were not aimed at the authentic Church of the past, but only at the present structure and its unclean adherents, the Irish working-class. Many wealthy and middle-class English Catholics were unwilling or unable to make their peace with the diasporic Irish or the Church, therefore, some effected a complete physical separation from it.[110]

An even greater distaste for diversity was probably developed among English Catholics when Bishop Briggs introduced new forms of spirituality and blended them with traditional English Catholic devotions, exemplified by, 'comprehensive devotional and social edifice, which involved a significant ideological content'.[111] From as early as the late 1840s, the English Catholic Church had already begun to introduce a number of new devotions, predominantly from continental Europe, and categorised as being ultramontane. These incorporated new styles of ceremony and ritual, calculated to allow uneducated and illiterate members to participate in processions and devotions to specific saints, or to Christ and his mother under an assortment of titles.[112] The aim was not to make them fanatics, but to train up the lower classes (the Irish) in the habits of piety. To achieve this many Yorkshire priests implemented many of these new-fangled devotions with the endorsement and full backing of their bishop.

According to J. Supple, even before the restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy had commenced, Briggs was already in the process of transforming the function of the Church with the introduction of, 'Forty Hour devotions and the inculcation of outdoor processions,

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[109] *Tablet*, 28 October 1855.
[110] *Catholic Herald*, 1 June 1887.
[111] *Tablet*, 4 August 1854.
[112] *Ibid*., 22 June 1840.

which played homage to the Blessed Sacrament'.[113] By the 1850s he had managed to promote the diffusion of devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. 'Friday's almost immediately developed into the day particularly blessed to the Sacred Heart; Saturday's were observed as Our Lady's day, and at numerous churches across Yorkshire there was Rosary or Litany of the Blessed Virgin; Thursday's grew to be the most fashionable day for additional services, with Benediction, English prayers and popular hymns'.[114] Brigg's religious advances enjoyed great popularity among some sections of the Catholic community throughout this period. Seeking to promote a Church, which habituated the labouring Irish poor to its prevailing social order, Briggs advocated these new devotional measures in order to teach them the difference between their apparent and their true religious interests. His influence was far-reaching; in so far as his new devotions were designed to give individual parishes and their priests the fairest chance of training up the rising generation of working-class adherents in habits of sobriety, industry, independence and prudence, and in a proper discharge of their religious duties.[115] By the late 1870s, the propagation of Catholic ceremonial processions had also become a popular means of habituating adherents to the existing religious order. These stylised processions were more often than not staged within the confines of church, 'but on occasion in the street in authentic Continental style'.[116] Not only did they appeal to the Irish working-class but also some professional English Catholics who, in an increasingly commercialised world, welcomed the new indoctrinations and devotions to the community.[117]

Nevertheless, these bold adaptations were not accepted by all English Catholics; some undoubtedly judged it an arrogant power play by Bishop Briggs to weaken the position of the upper and middle classes.[118] In response to these new practices of devotion, according to one

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[113] Supple, 'The Catholic Clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A Profile', p.230.
[114] *Tablet*, 26 June 1874.
[115] *Ibid.*, 8 November 1867.
[116] Supple, 'The Catholic Clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A Profile', p.231.
[117] *Catholic Herald*, 10 May 1882.
[118] *Bradford Observer*, 23 March 1852.

nineteenth century source, 'Some English middle-class Catholics married and had dealings with their fellow Catholics thereafter, but did not attend church or follow the Catholic doctrine; while others did not marry and cut themselves completely off from mainstream Catholicism'.[119] For many English Catholics, this marked the beginning of this line of development, when questions arose not only about the substance of Catholic ideology, but also the authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to formulate and impose their new ultramontane interpretations on others, who did not want them. Though the Church faced some internal opposition, we cannot be sure just how serious it was. All in all, this period saw unprecedented ruptures that pitted many English Catholics against Irish Catholics and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.[120]

Notwithstanding the implementation of these new ultramontane religious observances and outmoded spiritual customs, which represented the pretensions of the English upper-class, had not completely disappeared from the religious landscape of the West Riding. As a way of harmonising the interests of the propertied and upper-classes, who were engaged in the defence of their own class interests, some of Yorkshire's priests were compelled to preserved some old English traditions, offering a fusion of old and new devotions. Such was the case at Goole, where evening Mass, 'included a recital from the Jesus Psalter – a prayer book emanating from the fifteenth century and popular among those English Catholics who held on to their faith both during the aftermath of the Reformation, and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when English Catholics were persecuted – simultaneously with the singing of the ultramontane Faber's admired hymn Faith of Our Fathers'.[121]

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[119] (B)ritish (L)ibrary, a series of letter to the editor of the *Bradford Observer*, 1867, Irish Disaffection in Bradford.
[120] *Ibid.*, 22 July1868.
[121] *Tablet*, 3 April 1869.

This programme received considerable support in other parts of the county. According to Jennifer Supple, St. Maria's of Sheffield was praised by one of the most uncompromising opponents of 'Italianism' in the English Church, George Mivart. At St. Maria's, Canon Walshaw not only impressed but reconciled many English contemporaries with a variety of religious dedications that were decidedly old English. As an example of traditional English devotion, 'the good Father implemented the wearing of Gothic vestments, the singing of Gregorian chants by a surpliced chancel choir, and pre-Reformation religious observances; for instance Relic Sunday, despite the fact that Holy Week services had been practically abandoned in many missions, were conducted according to the ancient and most devotional liturgy of the Catholic Church'.[122] Mivart wrote that St. Maria's 'for the beauty and appropriateness of its appointments and of its services might set an example to all of England'.[123]

The spiritual makeover of the Catholic Church was treated with mixed reaction. Some urban areas took to the changes with greater zest than rural areas, and younger people adopted the new ways with more enthusiasm than their elders. Of those English Catholics who welcomed the transformation of the Catholic Church positively tended to see the arrival and inclusion of the Irish Catholics immigrants, at least initially, as a coming together of forces that could produce a reinvigorated and strengthened faith. The rationale behind this was that one day Catholicism would revert back to its prominent position as the country's established religion.[124] At the same time there was a continuous stream of objections from many English Catholics, believing their position to be incompatible with the continued membership of Irish Catholics, who professed an illiberal exclusiveness that was at variance with the spirit of the growing and changing face of the Catholic Church. This position became more acute in the late 1860s with the adoption of Cardinal Manning's social gospel,

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[122] J. Supple, 'The Catholic Clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A Profile' *Northern History*, 21 (1985), p.231.
[123] *Dublin Review*, 1884, in J. Supple, 'The Catholic Clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A Profile', p.230.
[124] *Catholic Herald*, 16 May 1889.

which positioned the Catholic Church unequivocally in support of the urban poor, a situation which ultimately received Papal approbation in Leo X111's *Rerum Vovarum*. He said, 'It is for Catholics to take the initiative in all true social progress, and show themselves the steadfast defenders and enlightened counsellors of the weak'.[125]

According to the comments in an editorial carried by the *Catholic Herald*, one correspondent wrote, 'Their ideas of religion', the Irish, 'were of the vaguest sort; some of them had about as much notion of Christianity as the Ancient Romans'.[126] To some English upper and middle-class adherents, certain observances of the Church appeared unnecessary, disagreeable and superstitious, 'useful perhaps to the ignorant Irish who could not read or think but were quite superfluous for men of intelligence like the English'.[127] Some English elements even sought to emphasise ideas that stressed their historical and biological unity to the exclusion of the Irish and, 'looking at Irish Catholics from a Protestant point of view'.[128] The fight which many English Catholics so gamely waged with pen and voice against the working-class Irish was used at every opportunity to stress the Church's patriotic English qualities, making every effort to disengage themselves from the mass of Irish Catholics. 'In the dark days of persecution the light of our faith was kept alive in England by the bright influence of the gentry, not the wild Irish'.[129] The adjective 'wild' was commonly used as a synonym for 'barbarian'. Thus, the civil Irish Catholics were those conforming to English Catholic ways, while the wild were those who did not. Sometimes resistance to the presence of Irish Catholics amounted to no more than failing to attend the local parish church, or objecting to certain ceremonies, something which was taken very seriously as evidence of a challenge to the authority of the Church.[130]

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[125] D. J. Holmes, *More Roman than Rome: English Catholic in the nineteenth century* (London, 1978), p. 38.
[126] *Catholic Herald*, 2 August 1888.
[127] *Ibid.*, 29 February 1889.
[128] Sidney, *Modern Rome in modern England*, pp. 10-18.
[129] *Leeds Mercury*, 7 October 1859.
[130] P. H. Bagenal, *The Priest in Politics* (London, 1893), p. 27.

In a letter to the editor of the *Bradford Review*, an anonymous, 'English Roman Catholic', resident of that town protested that, 'the fluid mass of Irish poor, are the contemptuous damnation and opponents to the true Catholic faith in this country'.[131] Such language probably reflects the pain and anger of many English Catholics of social standing, a tiny group within a small minority community, as it became separated, divorced in a sense, from the larger Catholic community, as it sought to develop its own identity outside this 'other' Catholicism. Yet the distinction between Irish Catholics and the English elites should not be overstated, for one of the strengths of the Catholic Church was its capacity to organise, regularise, and thus, domesticate the practices and customs of its adherents. Indeed, Briggs hit back immediately with a sermon that was clearly designed to question the religious and spiritual fidelity of those members of upper and middle-class English Catholic society, which would not accept or respect the poorer members of the Church. To the modern ear, much of what he wrote might sound shallow and trite. But it was effective in its day:

> No one knows more than I that we all strike trouble along life's road. No one appreciates more than I that it is easy to give advice, but really we meet so many along the road who need encouragement…and practical sympathy, that I never tire of entreating travellers of the Friendly Road to keep their eyes open for those less fortunate travellers who need just a little act of kindness, that kind word of cheer, which puts new heart into those who find the road heavy going…Look up! It is when the lights of earth are dimmest that we can as Catholics can see the most stars.[132]

Briggs and his clergy worked relentlessly to introduce traditional virtues of family-life, where drudgery and the dissipation of want were patched together as the preserve and manifestation of piety and devotion.[133] By and large, these changes addressed the elementary questions of how a desolate Catholic population devoid of material and social wealth should quietly and industriously live their lives – or how to preserve themselves in respectability –

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[131] *Bradford Review*, 16 July 1863.
[132] *Tablet*, 12 March 1861.
[133] *Ibid.*, 27 March 1852.

especially when the living and working conditions of the mass of Catholics was driving them desperate; rendered reckless as they were by the agencies of vice offered by society at large.[134] In the case of English Catholics, the antidote was to put aside their concerns for materialistic wealth and, 'renounce illiberal exclusiveness at variance with the spirit of our Catholic faith',[135] to safeguard the continued communal existence of the Church. The Irish working-class, likewise, were expected to do what the Church deemed to be correct, observing the sacraments, attending Mass regularly, and maintaining other ritual requirements, even though the only rewards for their deeds was anguish and animosity. Thus, the conventional face of Catholic ideology at this time was not that of self-help, but rather, 'fortitude in the face of adversity'.[136]

Briggs called on all to take pride in their cross-cultural uniformity and to regard the historical, cultural, and theological heritage that its citizens shared as being more important than the class antagonisms that were threatening the social order of the Church. Before his death, Briggs wrote 'In any case, these class or racial characteristics are something merely extrinsic and accidental. As the old schoolmen said, everything received is shaped according to the nature of that which receives it'.[137] These remarks also underscore his theological beliefs; treating both nationalities as a single school. In 1865, in the hope of dissipating the prejudices of English Catholics, Bishop Robert Cornthwaite, described by his predecessor Briggs in his Admonitions as, 'devout, obedient, sober and zealous',[138] responded with a circular, written in Latin, asking for a reconciliation between the English and Irish on the basis of complete unity, '*Haec oportet facere et ille non omittere*'. In other words, we will endeavour to extend the efforts of the Catholic Church, not merely by multiplying the number of chapels of the same kind, but also by a large measure of elasticity and adaptability, 'so that

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[134] *Ibid*., 8 April 1856.
[135] LDA, Bishop Briggs's circular issued before Palm Sunday 1856.
[136] *Tablet*, 23 March 1853.
[137] LDA, Bishop Briggs's correspondence 1886B.
[138] *Ibid*., 1886B.

each separate chapel may have its own distinctive characteristics that may be congenial to the patriotic sentiments and social tastes of all sections of the Catholic people'.[139]

It remained, however, that a significant number of English Catholics were in a state of great spiritual uncertainty. Father M. O'Donnell, a Roman Catholic missionary priest, who spent a great deal of time in the West Riding during the mid-nineteenth century, wrote in 1872, 'I steadied many tottering English souls in their allegiance, and heard numerous general confessions.[140] It is certainly true, for the most part, that English Catholics did go to church and that some had strong religious faith, as evidenced by their acts and their words. But it is also true that there was much indifference to Catholicism from which the middle and upper-reaches of English society were no more immune than the Irish. The English also participated in many church services on much the same terms as the Irish: in Communion, in marriage, and in baptism as sponsor or godparent.

With the influx of Irish immigrants Catholicism had taken a giant step in marking its ascendancy in the industrial heartlands of the county. Although the new forms of spirituality and devotional aids did not significantly alter the rights and privileges of the county's Irish adherents, they did, however, reflect the desire by the Church to limit the power of its English upper and middle-class adherents. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, nonetheless, the Church remained socially and ethnically separated and the upper-class English remained, almost unreservedly, the connoisseurship and conserve of the Catholics Church in Yorkshire. By 1900, however, the Irish were, 'the leading members of many missions and the influence of the gentry had declined'.[141] Throughout most of the remainder of the twentieth century an uneasy but largely uneventful peace prevailed between English and Irish Catholics. The

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[139] LDA, Bishop Cornthwaite's correspondence 1865.
[140] LDA, Father M. O'Donnell: Happy Thoughts, Records and Reminiscences.
[141] Supple, 'The Catholic Clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A Profile', p.212.

opportunities for all but the very rich to contribute to activities connected with the Church were reduced, and the level of participation in worship remained much the same.[142]

It has been argued by some nineteenth-century commentators that Irish immigrants did not care at all for the Catholic Church in England; that it was the question between landlord and tenant in Ireland which was the chief cause of dissatisfaction when they arrived in England and the single most important issue they concerned themselves with.[143] No doubt about that; the unsettled state of law in Ireland, which was left in the hands of the landlord the entitlement to eject a tenant at his pleasure without any indemnity for improvements made had a great deal to do with the hatred the Irish immigrants had against the English; but the primary cause of it was the treatment they received regarding their creed. Nothing offended the Irish immigrants more painfully when the freedom of their conscience was attacked. Everything else could be forgiven, even the famine, which left in its path a terrible death-toll and a continuous string of immigrants, but intolerance with regards to religious matters was rarely forgiven.[144]

The English profoundly misunderstood the Irish character, and the Irish, with long memories, profoundly distrusted the English. Described as a, 'highly imaginative people, acting always more by the impulse of the heart than by those of reason',[145] most Irish immigrants took to Roman Catholicism in England with heart and soul and became more Roman Catholic than England and the English had ever been.[146] True, those among the Irish Catholic diaspora of a higher rank, closely connected, and often in contact with the English bourgeoisie showed no great difficulty in succumbing to the so called 'supremacy' of Protestant England, even in spiritual matters; but the bulk of Irish immigrants stuck firmly to

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[142] E. R. Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1984), p. 301.
[143] J. Denvir, *The Irish in Britain: From earliest times to the fall and death of Parnell* (London, 1892), p. 125.
[144] H. McLeod, *Urbanisation and Religion in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Berlin, 1990), p. 38.
[145] S. Leslie, *Cardinal Manning, His Life and Labours* (London, 1921), p. 104.
[146] H. W. Benjamin, 'The London Irish: A study in political activism, 1870-1910' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Princeton, 1976), p. 94.

the Catholic creed, and, after all, this was only natural.[147] In 1865, in his 'Health and Benedictions', Cardinal Manning wrote, 'We need not, therefore, wonder if there be occasionally found among our flock English and Irish middle classes, some whose loyalty to the Church is tainted by false principles, insensibly imbibed by too close contact with the Protestant world'.[148]

Tolerance, real Christian forbearing, confidence, trust in their ultimate good sense, would have made, no doubt, many proselytes among Irish Catholic immigrants, but instead of that they were continually treated like a conquered race, like inferior beings; forced to look on quietly when their most holy rights were trampled upon.[149] We must, therefore, not be too astonished to find that the vast majority of Irish immigrants stuck to their old creed because it was the only thing left to them which made them feel independent. As such, a creative and mutually beneficial synthesis between Irish immigrants and the Catholic Church in England was not only desirable, but possible; not only possible, but attainable; not only attainable, but attained. An extract from a letter written by Mr Maurice to the *Sheffield Mercury*, 1868, admirably illustrates this point, 'The dream of a Church such as Christ established does float about the minds of Irishmen. We have taught them to confound it with the Popedom. They will cling to that, and they will cling to it, whilst there is nothing left – the Catholic Church of this country is the Church of a dominant race, the Irish'.[150]

As one might expect, there was a wide spread of individual commitment and active practice among Irish Catholics. There were those who devoted their entire lives to practicing and propagating a particular devotion or philosophy, and there were others for whom Catholicism was an embarrassment, a remnant from a bygone age, a formality that one

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[147] *Tablet*, 8 March 1864.
[148] LDA, Manning's Papers 1865.
[149] D. Gwynn, *Manning and Ireland* (Burns and Oates, 1951), p. 53.
[150] *Sheffield Mercury*, 12 October 1868.

submitted to for the sake of the family.[151] There were others who belittled, despised and utterly rejected the authority of the Church. That aside, one of the most protracted, irksome and challenging issues facing the ecclesiastical hierarchy in industrial Yorkshire was the apparent lack of religious conformity, low levels of formal devotions and sacred duties, especially among those Irish immigrants living on the fringes of society in the county's urban slum districts.

On the other hand, this was to be expected, considering that before 1850 the Catholic Church in Ireland had become peripheral to the great mass of Irish adherents.[152] They were still referred to as Catholic, but the term served more a surname than as a title. Back on their native soil, the majority of Irish Catholics were Catholic in name only and were wholly ignorant of the Catholic doctrine.[153] They adhered to and performed certain rituals for the benefit of individuals that were required to make a Catholic a full member of his or her community, preserved and transmitted from generation to generation. As Steven Fielding points out, 'Membership of the Church was a seemingly normal consequence of family and national origin' and was, he said, 'an unquestioned, unremarkable constitutive element of a person's identity'.[154]

For instance, they would have their progeny baptised as Catholics, would prefer Catholic rites accompanying death and burial, and may perhaps get married in the Catholic Church, 'but regular attendance at Mass and the sacraments was not part of their nominal Catholicism'.[155] James Duffy of Bradford, who cheerfully described himself as an, 'Irish heathen', reinforces this view in an abstract of his memoirs carried by the *Catholic Herald* of 14 September 1891: 'Back in the old country we would still go to church to get married. We would get buried. We would have our children christened. We would swear by God and the

[151] Holmes, *More Roman than Rome: English Catholics in the nineteenth century* , p. 28.
[152] E. Larkin, 'The devotional revolution in Ireland, 1850-75', *American Historical Review*, 77 (1972), p. 164.
[153] Norman, *The Catholic Church in Ireland in the Age of Rebellion, 1859-73*, p. 109.
[154] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* , pp.48-9.
[155] Norman, *The Catholic Church in Ireland in the Age of Rebellion, 1859-73*, pp.108-09

Bible. We turn back to the Catholic Church in sorrow and in trouble, but we tended not to go to prayers on a Sunday'.[156] According to contemporary sources, 'only one-third of all Irish Catholics living in rural Ireland attended Holy Mass or observed the sacraments'.[157]

How did, then, the English Catholic Church in nineteenth century Yorkshire improve levels of religious conformity among the diasporic Irish or of binding their conscience, substituting their principle of private judgement for the principle of obedience to Catholic authority in civic, political and religious matters? The answer must rest on careful consideration of the religious, political, and social realities of nineteenth century England, along with the standard means of communication and expression between the Church, its clergy and the diasporic Irish. For the most part, the Church more than held its own, responding as it did with a number of ecclesiastical campaigns and programmes that were accredited with improving levels of religious conformity across the whole of the county.[158] In the hope of startling a religiously minded community among the Irish, the Diocese of Leeds produced examples of working-class ignorance. Thomas McNamara, aged 11, 'has heard of hell in the factory when the men swear; he has never heard of Jesus Christ; has never heard of God, but he has heard the men in the factory say, God damn thee'. Denis Flynn aged 13 declared, 'I don't know who Jesus Christ was: I never saw him, but I've seen Connor, who prays about him'.[159]

Another area of achievement for the Catholic Church was the manner in which it permeated moderate Irish nationalism with the ethos of Catholic devotion that best matched its organisational aspirations. For many in the Church Irish nationality could not be overlooked. Thus, Irishness was appealed to and began to play a prominent role in the Church's attempts to impress upon the diasporic Irish the importance of their faith. Under the

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[156] *Catholic Herald*, 14 September 1891.
[157] E. Larkin, 'The devotional revolution in Ireland, 1850-75', *American Historical Review*, 77 (1972), p. 164.
[158] *Tablet*, 19 October, 1878.
[159] LBA, Circular to the Clergy, Secular and Regular, and to all the Faithfull of the Leeds Diocese, Bishop Cornthwaite, 1879.

impetus of moderate Irish nationalism, the Catholic Church in Yorkshire sought to emphasise qualities that stressed both the historical prestige and religiosity of the Catholic Church in Ireland, 'against that of the supposed denigrated working-class society of Protestant England'.[160] This increased valuing of Irish Catholic heritage was deliberately designed to engender a feeling of Irish superiority over their English working-class counterparts, and to encourage them to live up to that righteous heritage.

To drive the point home some priests organised and delivered discrete doctrinaire lectures on the subject. Popular tracts such as, 'The Irishman a Missionary' was preferred among the county's clergy and clearly pointed to the conclusion that those Irish, 'who carried in their hearts their holy religion had a moral duty to transplant that religion in all places where they settled or sojourned'.[161] Other priests delivered pulpit rhetoric to drum sound doctrine into the Irish; first and foremost the doctrine of the unity of interest between the English Catholic Church and the Irish adherents, the latter having the duty to follow where the former led. Here the Catholic perspective of moulding Irish minds is less discretely expressed. Undoubtedly the Church believed that each and every Irishman should be faithful to his calling by leading a life in harmony with his religious faith, and more importantly, in accordance with the doctrines of the English Catholic Church.[162] Before his death in 1885, Father Kenny of St. Paulinus, Dewsbury, who needed no introduction to Irishmen living in the West Riding, said in his lecture at the Temperance Hall, Bradford:

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[160] P. H. Bagenal, *The priest in politics* (London, 1893), p. 18; E. Benson, *To struggle is to live* (Leeds, 1979), p. 58.

[161] *Tablet*, 12 February 1865.

[162] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, pp.40-3; Bagenal, *The priest in politics*, p.18; *Catholic Herald*, 24 July 1887.

The Irish Catholic who takes religion seriously finds its influence in every relation in life. Four hundred years ago England did everything in its power to make the Irish true Roman Catholics. They succeeded admirably. The Irish Catholic, more than any other man, falls under the influence of his religion. No other religion enters so intimately into the warp and woof of human affairs, colouring every event, the trivial as well as the great. It is true that its influence is not manifested in the same degree by all. If an Irishman is a real live Catholic, steadfastly endeavouring to square his life with his beliefs, he feels it more than the indifferent, careless, half-baked independent minds of some English subjects.[163]

These speeches clearly express the abstract desire by the Church to butter-up Irish adherents, to give them a feeling of moral and religious dominance over the English proletariat and to encourage them to concentrate all their efforts and training into improving their location within the English Catholic Church. That this increased valuing of their culture/heritage should lead the English Catholic Church to become advocates for their culture must have come as something of a surprise to most Irish. Indeed, it seemed for a time that Catholicism was being submerged in a feeling that resembled Irish nationalism. That feeling did not persist, however. This impulse came from the Church's growing conviction that Irish Catholics would, by the same process, eventually focus attention away from the ancestral home and fully on the contemporary homeland of England, and of course, the English Catholic Church. Through a combination of political cunning, good luck, the occasional promotion of nationalist aspirations, and the waging of psychological warfare, the Church managed to retain the support of many Irish immigrants; presenting an Irish assimilated image, while emphasising a more English perspective to the rest of society. [164]

By the early 1880s the greater majority of missions in the West Riding reported significant increases in attendance figures at Sunday Mass, thronging confessionals, and larger crowds at the communion rails.[165] Indeed, across the whole of England, 'approximately

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[163] *Tablet*, 19 January 1885.
[164] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, pp.40-2.
[165] *Ibid*., 3 March, 1880.

60 per cent of Catholics attended mass and observed the sacraments'.[166] Acknowledging these improvements Bishop Cornthwaite wrote, 'There are upwards of 17,000 more Catholics attending Mass in the Diocese now than when we took up the reigns of its government. Whilst we regret the loss of so many of our subjects, we cannot but rejoice and thank God for the increase He has given us'.[167]

To complicate the picture further was the problem of mixed marriages – Catholics marrying out of the faith. An approach to assessing the Church's actions against mixed marriages is to consider the marriages as other than a purely religious crime that caused the community 'great guilt'.[168] In York in 1841, '71.4 per cent of Irish spouses were married to English partners'.[169] The Catholic Church showed no difficulty in expressing its condemnation of mixed marriages. In 1889, Bishop Gordon wrote, 'There is an evil growing in the Diocese, an evil which needs reproof, which a Bishop must stay, if he can, and evil which is silently and surely working untold mischief and ruin amongst its members of our Catholic people. The evil we speak of is that of mixed marriage'.[170] Of all the social tribulations that were the curse of so many Irish working-class Catholics, and the miseries that arose from them, in the opinion of the Church, these were inconsequential when compared with the, 'widespread havoc and appalling spiritual destruction which mixed marriages wrought amongst the little ones of our flock'.[171]

Although mixed marriages were more common in the middle of the nineteenth century, in 1891, the Diocese of Leeds reported an increase in the number of Irish Catholics who had abandoned their religion through mixed marriages. On the other hand, the Church

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[166] P. Hughes, 'The English Catholics in 1850' in G. Beck (ed.), *The English Catholics* (London, 1950), p. 80; G. P. Connolly, 'Irish and Catholic: Myth or reality? Another sort of Irish and the renewal of the clerical profession amongst Catholics in England, 1791-1918' in S. Swift and S. Gilley, *Victorian city* (London, 1973), p. 231, 336-7; S. Gilley, 'Catholic faith of Irish slums. London 1840-70' in H. Y. Dyos and M. Wolff (eds), *The Victorian city: Images and realities* (London, 1973), pp, 202-31.
[167] LDA, Bishop Cornthwaites, circular to his clergy, 8 November, 1880.
[168] LDA, Letter from Bishop Cornthwaite to Regular and Secular Clergy, 23 February 1886.
[169] F. Finnegan, 'The Irish in York', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds), *Victorian city* (London, 1989), p. 38.
[170] LDA, Letter from Bishop House, Leeds, 15 January 1889: The Returns of Mixed Marriages.
[171] LDA, Letter from Bishop Gordon to the Diocese, 4 February 1891.

was careful not to identify missions in the Diocese where mixed marriages presented an acute problem. By examining mission statistics, however, we are able to identify that the mission at Castleford, which had no more than 750 souls, all told, there were fifty-six cases of mixed marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics.[172] In thirty cases out of the fifty-six marriages the children born of them were utterly lost to the Catholic faith. There was another mission in the Diocese, far removed from the one already mentioned: at Wakefield 132 members were reported to have married out of the faith.[173] Clearly, the so called evil of mixed marriage had plainly come to be looked upon with a certain degree of indifference and nonchalance among some working-class Catholics.

Astonishingly, the Church held itself responsible for this predicament. In 1892, Bishop Gordon wrote in a circular addressed to his clergy, 'We are bound from our office, as Bishop, to speak against them, and in no measured terms condemn them, lest the terrible result which follow from them should be placed at our account'.[174] Bishop Gordon responded to mixed marriages with Decree 11 of the Synod.[175] In accordance with the decree, all mission priests were instructed to lecture their congregations on the ills of mixed marriage, an ecclesiastical ticking off from the pulpit and the platform. For good measure, and just to make certain that the message was clearly getting across to its adherents, the Church printed thousands of written copies of the instructions which were disseminated among the Catholic community each Sunday.[176]

Without doubt, there were many Irish immigrants who practiced affiliations with Catholicism, but for one reason or another did not attend Mass regularly, if at all.[177] There

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[172] *Ibid,.* 1891.

[173] LDA, Returns and Statistics of Mixed Marriages, Bishop of Leeds, 15 January 1891.

[174] LDA. Circular to Regular and Secular Clergy, Bishop Gordon, 17 January 1892.

[175] LDA, William, By the Grace of God and Favour of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Leeds: Decree 11 of the Synod, Mixed Marriages, 1892.

[176] LDA, Copies of the instructions were circulated among the Diocese by Rev. J. R. Cowgill at 6*d*. per dozen. Further copies could be obtained from the Industrial School Press, Shibden, Halifax.

[177] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

were two kinds of Irish immigrant; those active in the Catholic Church, and those whose lifestyle precluded them from active participation. In 1865, Bishop Cornthwaite wrote, 'Being wanting in filial docility and reverence they, the Irish Catholics living in slum areas freely dispose of doctrine, practice, and discipline upon their own responsibility and without the least reference to the mind of the Church or to her ministers'.[178]

It is difficult to assess the effect of the Church upon this section of society of the immigrant community, with whom priests had only peripheral contact. One Irish Catholic from Sheffield wrote, 'When our people have been beaten, knocked about, and covered in filth all week, they want to be in bed all day to rest on Sunday, and not to go confess to the Almighty'.[179] Lees suggests that, 'women and children made up the bulk of Mass attendance and that even as late as 1903 adult males accounted for only one-third of the congregations. Yet many more families would have had some kind of contact with the norms and rituals of the Catholic Church than indicated by the attendance at Mass'.[180] As a consequence of intolerable pressures that inflicted so many Irish the overriding concern of the Church was the continuance of a spiritual ministry for them. In an age where its adherents, whose numbers constantly pressed on the limits and means of subsistence, religious and moral training, crime, diseases and whole host of social inequalities, the tending of souls took precedence over and above the necessity for social amelioration. In this sphere the Church was firmly committed to the prevention of further 'leakage'. The achievements and failures of its policies are judged by the fact that, during the late 1860s and early 1870s Cardinal Manning initiated the Roman Catholic Church's social gospel. In the West Riding, the Catholic Church had a, 'strong and spirited parochial structure from which to unleash its attack on social deprivation and ignorance'.[181]

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[178] LDA. Bishop Cornthwaite, 1865, Health and Benediction, Circular to the Regular and Secular Clergy.
[179] *Sheffield Mercury*, 25 September 1878.
[180] L.H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin, Irish migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester, 1979), p.72.
[181] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p.42.

Although the Church would continue to struggle in maintaining levels of religious conformity, as a diasporic community, the Irish Catholics were arguably the most intense religious people in Victorian and Edwardian Yorkshire. [182] Thus, for many Irish immigrants, the Catholic Church had fashioned a religious philosophy, 'where raggedness and filth did not exclude them as outsiders, and where their Celtic Catholicism was a representation of charm rather than of superstition and ignorance'. [183] Yet, there is a darker side to the picture, and a long roll of losses to count against the gains. The proportion of Irish adherents was also diminished because of financially oppressive missions, eventually succumbing, as they did, to a storm of financial charges inflicted upon them by the Church in its attempts to collect funds. Faced with a permanent deficit in revenue and mounting debts, as a result of its church restoration works and its extensive church and school building programmes, the Church and mission priests introduced a package of obnoxious charges to underwrite mission expenses and increase mission incomes, which were clearly oppressive to vast majority of people, who overwhelmingly, were dreadfully impoverished. [184]

At the same time the Church and mission priest presented themselves as the protectors of the poor. The contradictory actions of the Church reveal the contradictory ways that charges were viewed by the Catholic population of Yorkshire. For the wealthy and the middle-classes, it was, respectively, tolerable and socially acceptable; for the poor, it was, well, taxing. By the late 1860s all priests practicing in the West Riding were levying rates for the sacraments with scarcely a shadow of control from the central Catholic Church of England. By the 1890s, according to Jennifer Supple, 'there was a fixed rate for sacramental offerings, generally 2*s*. 6*d*. for baptisms and 5*s*. for marriages and funerals'. [185] In most

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[182] *Catholic Herald*, 14 February 1888.
[183] *Tablet*, 15 June 1878.
[184] LDA,Visitation Returns, St. Mary's, Bradford, 1866, 1868, 1880, and 1890.
[185] Supple, 'Catholicism in Yorkshire, 1850-1900', p.222.

missions admission charges, bench charges and pew rents secured positions for the more affluent in the galleries but deterred many of the county's poorest Catholics, the Irish.[186]

The administrative decision to introduce bench charges, pew rents and entrance fees was secured by the Second Provincial Synod in 1855, 'as a matter of parochial economy, because there was no other adequate means of accruing mission funds'.[187] In most cases, pew rents, bench charges and admission charges were a major source of a mission's income and, as such, were emphatically upheld by the Church's hierarchy until the closing decades of the nineteenth century. At St. Austin's, Wakefield, 1885, charges were levied for 395 out of 505 places, with admission charges at the door amounting to £113, whilst pew rents raised £27.[188] Some priests were as fiscally callous as they dared be and appeared to take little heed of the spiritual needs of the Irish poor, who were by now being priced out of the mission doors.[189] As one religious commentator from Halifax remarked, 'That Church can scarcely be called Christian which stands on the other side of the gulf busy with the salvation of its own soul and economic services, while it leaves to the supply and demand the miserable thousands who, on the other side of the gulf, are crowded away in dens where salvation of any kind is the hardest of problems'.[190] For some priests, especially those in struggling urban missions, the question of charges and cost was a matter of high anxiety. Social detachment coalesced with physical detachment from the Church to limit regular worship was seen to be as awkward a situation for the Catholic community as could be had.[191]

Conscious of the fact that it was unrealistic proposition to expect their poor congregations to contribute all the money needed to pay for their spiritual well-being a number of mission priests in Leeds, Bradford, York, and Sheffield abolished bench charges

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[186] LDA,Visitation Returns, St. Peter's Bradford, 1880.
[187] Supple, 'The Catholic Clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A Profile', p.214.
[188] LDA,Visitation Returns, St. Austin's, Wakefield, 1885.
[189] Souvenir Brochure, St. Patrick's, Bradford, Extracts from Canon Earnshaw's Reminiscences.
[190] *Halifax Guardian*, 3 March 1862.
[191] LDA, Bishop Cornthwaite, circular to Regular and Secular Clergy, 1872.

and pew rents, but reserved the right to continue taking entrance fees.[192] In June 1896, Father Mulcahy was appointed by Bishop Gordon to take charge of St. Maria's, Halifax: he complained that when he succeeded Father Kenny the interest and redemption of capital debt cost him almost a pound a day, 'before I could claim the price of a breakfast: and this to be collected from the very poor people'. Within ten years, however, owing to his indefatigable energy and the willing co-operation of his parishners, he had managed to reduce the debt on the mission from £5,000 to £3,000.[193]

At other urban missions across the Diocese, entrance fees were abolished, but bench charges and rent pews remained. A few mission priests abolished both, forcing them to consider other means of increasing mission revenues, some being more enterprising and inventive than others.[194] Many priests left their parishes and embarked on what has been termed 'begging tours'. In 1859 Father O'Leary of Dewsbury toured Ireland,[195] and between 1879 and 1881 Father Kenny of St. Paulinus, Dewsbury toured Australia, where he is reported to have collected a 'goodly sum'.[196] In 1883, Father Foley of St. Patrick's, Bradford toured America, and again in 1885 he toured Belgium and Ireland.[197] In 1898, the well-known and enterprising rector and curate of St. Mary's, Bradford, Father Puissant and Father O'Sullivan, hired out rooms to local businessman, Mr James McKay, who opened the town's first vegetarian restaurant. Mr McKay, an Irish Catholic, understood thoroughly the art of catering for public needs. His Bradford establishment was patronised by vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike. The *Catholic Herald* reported that, 'on fast days the vegetarian restaurant

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[192] LDA, Visitation Returns, St. Walburga, Shipley, 1863, 1881 and 1891; Visitation Returns, St. Patrick's Leeds, 1874, 1878, and 1889; Visitation Returns, St. Maria's, Sheffield, 1872, 1881, and 1888; Visitation returns, St. George's, York, 1878 and 1884.
[193] *Catholic Herald*, 10 November 1906.
[194] LDA, Visitation Returns, St. Vincent's Sheffield, 1878 and 1882; Visitation Return, St. Cuthbert's, Bradford, 1891; Visitation Returns, St. Maria's Leeds, 1891; Visitation Returns, St, Maria's Leeds, 1881; Visitation returns, St. Paulinus, Dewsbury, 1888 and 1890.
[195] Supple, 'Catholicism in Yorkshire, 1850-1900', p.223.
[196] *Tablet*, 12 October 1885.
[197] *Catholic Herald*, 4 May 1901.

offered a welcome change to the usual fare on such occasions'.[198] By the opening of the twentieth century McKay went on to open restaurants in Leeds and Halifax, conducted on similar lines to the institution which had been met with such wonderful success in Bradford.[199] Most parish priests organised musical concerts, fetes, garden parties, lectures and athletics tournaments to increase the necessary finances required to cover mission expenditures and mission debts.[200]

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Catholic Church was noteworthy for the prominent role of its mission priests. They were the most visible public face of the Church and served as the mediators between Irish Catholic communities in the diaspora and the Catholic Church's Hierarchy, at times intervening with the latter on behalf of the former, or vice versa. According to Steven Fielding, 'the priest was the human liaison between the Church and the public, and was therefore essential to the daily functioning of the Catholic Church and its adherents, an office that would facilitate greater Church unity. What's more, so far as the majority of Catholics were concerned, 'the key figure in the Church was not a bishop, cardinal or even Pope, but their own parish priest'.[201] In the mid-nineteenth century many priests in Yorkshire emerged from the English upper and middle-class urban elites. They were Ushaw educated, had close ties with the very wealthy and were endowed with great privileges. Throughout the nineteenth century the Catholic Church was making a gradually stronger commitment to Irish-English relations, as such, the national and social composition of Catholic priests serving in Yorkshire was changed. In 1850, the disposition of Catholic priests practicing in Yorkshire was: forty-seven English and six Irish; in 1875, seventy-seven English and twenty-five Irish; in 1900, seventy-nine English, seventy-five Irish

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[198] *Ibid.*, 22 December 1899.
[199] *Ibid.*, 13 April 1900.
[200] Supple, 'Catholicism in Yorkshire, 1850-1900', pp.221-2.
[201] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p.40.

and thirty-seven from the Continent. During the late nineteenth century almost half of all clerics working in the industrial Diocese of Leeds originated from Ireland.[202]

Moreover, English Catholic priests were no longer recruited from the upper classes. The moves were partly a belated recognition of ethnic diversity within the Diocese of Leeds. The population contained thousands of Irish, plus a growing number of European immigrants, including Ukrainians, Poles, Italians and Lithuanians. But the changes were brought about largely by Irish immigrant activists, who were determined that Irish ought to be able to behave as Irish in wider English Catholic life rather than submerge their identity in favour English Catholic mores and values.[203] Having an Irish priest allowed them to do this. In contrast to the upper and middle-class English priests, Irish priests represented, at least in theory if not always in fact, simple men of the lower classes who understood and, indeed, embodied the fundamental truths and teachings of Catholicism, and for whom the culture of the upper and middle classes was inferior and superfluous. Irish priests were separate from the larger society and distinct from the Church's ruling classes. Yet, simultaneously, by virtue of this separateness and distinctiveness they would play a significant role in influencing the outcome of events in both the clerical and the civic realms – and in making peace between local Irish Catholic communities, the church, and local authorities.[204] They often came under suspicion which encouraged, 'Protestants to abuse them and to speak irreverently of the Church and its ceremonies. Anti-Catholic clericalism might be provoked by the character of particular members of the clergy'.[205]

Among their many duties nineteenth century priests went out into Irish working-class communities to preach their message of survival through social and religious reform. Most priests were extraordinary men driven by an extraordinary mission. Much of their success can

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[202] Supple, 'Catholicism in Yorkshire, 1850-1900', pp. 213-16.
[203] *Catholic Herald*, 12 April 1893.
[204] Sidney, *Modern Rome in modern England*, p. 279.
[205] Supple, 'Catholicism in Yorkshire, 1850-1900', p. 235.

be understood in the light of the social climate in which they preached, especially the fact that diasporic Irish Catholics were at the time reeling from the physical and psychological effects of the famine, demoralised and handicapped by malnutrition, alcohol and disease. They worried that most Irish adherents were not adequately prepared to resist the temptations of town life – alcohol, unsupervised access to members of the opposite sex, potential contact with an English Protestant under-class.[206] Many of them devoted a great deal of time in the impoverished districts of the West Riding, where they led prayers and lectured Irish immigrants on how to improve their spiritual welfare and material circumstance. As well as protecting the spiritual welfare of their flocks, priests advocated health and hygiene measures, and were expected to supervise sanitation and suppress rural customs which the English Catholic Church and the health authorities regarded dangerous. It was hoped, too, that they provide accurate information on Catholic births, deaths, marriages and population movement. Many priests when visiting the poor in their homes gave them valuable advice on thrift and the necessity of keeping their houses in more sanitary condition. Some priests also made the point of addressing homely advice on these matters from the altar and the platform.[207]

It was also the earnest endeavour of most priests to root out vice and drunkenness from the labouring and poorer classes as a sure means of raising their moral and social conditions. However, as immigrants adapted to urban life, they found that they shared cultural patterns with the indigenous working-class. 'The spirited pub-culture with its attendant turbulence at turning-out time, and the raucous ebullience of the street community were familiar aspects in the experience of the urban poor, and did provide some immigrants ease of admission into indigenous society'.[208] Some priests played an active part at reclaiming these men from drunkenness and drunken habits and to persuade them to overcome the glittering inducements of the public-house. According to J. Supple, some

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[206] M. MacDonagh, *Irish life and character* (1899, London), p.35.
[207] Supple, 'Catholicism in Yorkshire, 1850-1900', pp.225-29.
[208] *Ibid*., p.229

priests, 'at the request of a drunkards wife, would make the rounds of public-houses and heave out their husbands'.[209] They also assisted local authorities and the police: in Otley the priest was referred to as, 'the policemen of the Irish', and the *Bradford Observer* carried a report that on the occasion of an Irish affray involving five hundred people, 'the police ran for the priest, who no sooner made his appearance than the riot was instantaneously hushed into quietude'.[210] Their task was to reconstruct Irish immigrants to make them clean, industrious, sober and virtuous.

Despite the many social evils percolating through the Irish districts of the West Riding the Church and its priests had been largely content to see, at least, Irish Catholics living in urban communities separately from the English Protestant working-class. They believed that this situation provided the best opportunity for Catholic culture, identity and confidence to recover after the trauma of the famine, and to allow priests the opportunity to connect and work more widely with his people in their capacity as social and religious reformers, without the intrusions or interferences of Protestant outsiders.[211]'These little Ireland's provided a unified system of inter-personal interactions between the priest and his adherents, as well as a framework of ethnic homogeneity, where a distinctive Irish Catholic sub-culture existed'.[212]

Indeed, priests were pivotal in the Church's attempts to enhance Catholic identity and cohesion, to make function what had previously been dysfunctional. Thus, priests were instrumental in the process of assimilating Irish Catholics into Yorkshire urban life, and at the same time separating them from the perceived caustic influences of contact with the English labouring classes. A priest's most important task, however, was to preserve some kind of influence over adherents who might require the occasional prompting into 'devotional

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[209] *Ibid.*, p.228.
[210] *Bradford Observer*, 23 July 1857.
[211] *Catholic Herald*, 6 June 1894.
[212] Supple, 'Catholicism in Yorkshire, 1850-1900', pp.225-29.

compliance, and would go house-to-house to make sure that they did comply'.[213] The

conjecture was that, as Cardinal Vaughan put it, 'A house-going priest makes a church-going

people',[214] a maxim that was taken very seriously. What's more, priests also encouraged Irish

Catholics to play a more active part in Catholic clubs more willingly than trades unions, in

religious confraternities rather than Irish secret societies, and temperance groups rather than

the public-house. Indeed, they worked tirelessly to lure the faithful into a much closer liaison

with the customs and doctrines of Catholicism, whether through attendance at Mass or

involvement in Catholic confraternities. They arranged social meetings, homilies, musical

evenings, suppers, fundraising dinners and pleasure trips which supplemented the

configuration of parochial devotional activities. Fundamental in the Catholic Church's

approach, through its priests, was an extensive component of social control, 'at times

transparently intolerant, yet not discordant with the philosophy of the age'.[215]

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, major and irreversible

adjustments had been made to the relationships between the Irish and the industrial Diocese

of Leeds. The Church had become a far more visible component in every aspect of the urban

Irish working classes than it had been a generation or two earlier. For the first time things

were bending slowly but decisively in the direction of Irish Catholic needs and aspirations.

The momentum of these changes would be maintained by the Church, but not without

controversy. The Church had come to incorporate a world-view and way of life that appeared

to avoid the excesses and unacceptable features of outsiders, religions and cultures; at the

same time it offered elevated concepts that it hoped would join Irish Catholics to the rest of

English Catholic culture.[216] To achieve this goal the Church would have to wrestle with the

omnipresence of Irish secret societies, Fenianism, Irish Home Rulers and Irish cultural

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[213] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p.44.
[214] *Ibid*., p.45
[215] *Catholic Herald*, 18 November 1892.
[216] *Ibid*., 15 March 1853.

practices; all of which had an impact, in one form or other, on the diasporic Irish Catholics living in the West Riding, and is where the next chapter picks up.

CHAPTER 3

GUNS AND ROSARIES

The English Catholic Church, Irish Secret Societies, Fenianism and Irish Home Rule in Victorian and Edwardian West Riding of Yorkshire.

Of all the long-term difficulties facing the Catholic Church in nineteenth and early twentieth century Yorkshire, as elsewhere in England, none was more intractable and ferocious than the Irish political problem and the fight for Home Rule. For centuries Ireland was the incubus of British politics, hostile and accusing, combining an appeal to arms with an appeal to conscience. This chapter shall consider these developments in light of the relations and antagonisms between three main groups of nineteenth and early twentieth century West Riding; politically active Irish nationalist organisations, the Irish Catholic diaspora, and the Catholic Church – all propagating their views, in opposition to the other. The main struggle lay between the Church and Irish nationalist organisations, with each side attempting – with varying degrees of success – to win over the diasporic Irish Catholics as allies.

The proselytising efforts of the Catholic Church to attract and dominate the lives of its Irish affiliates, through the presence of the guilds and confraternities it had established and supported, was predominantly occasioned by a simmering dislike of rival religious groups and active political bodies, which reached boiling point during the 1850s and 1860s; heated by growing Irish nationalism and the presence of Irish oath-bound secret societies. The extent to which various members of the Irish diaspora came in direct contact with the latter or its representatives is unclear. Indeed, Irish secret societies are difficult to research because they often avoided creating any documentation which might incriminate them. How individual Irish immigrants in the West Riding reacted to oath-bound societies depended on such issues

as personal concerns, economic circumstances, familial responsibilities, and their view of the British Empire in Ireland.[1]

Adding even more heat were the Fenians and extremist organisations that were engaged in considerable opposition against the British government. Among the various groups engaged in active resistance against the British the best known are the Brotherhood of St. Patrick and the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). Again, to what extent the Fenians represented the sentiments of the Irish diaspora in the West Riding is not known, but their presence and activities were strongly felt. These more extreme political groups should not, however, be confused with the steadier elements of either the Irish Land League (ILL), the Irish National League (INL) or the United Irish League (UIL), which were legitimate political organisations with open political agitations that had, generally speaking, always been fluid and co-operative. The local branches and central organising committees of these organisations attempted to end the confluence between violence and justice which had held firm during the 1860s and 1870s.[2]

The Catholic Church was clearly unhappy with the turn of events. The varied responses are epitomised by two of the county's bishops. In 1858, Bishop Briggs is reported as having said, that when Ireland is granted her own political autonomy, and Irish members are withdrawn from this country, then there will be but one policy for Catholics, viz., 'to unite themselves behind one political party for the occasion that supports the principles of the Holy Church'.[3] Later, in 1878, Bishop Cornthwaite, played down the importance of Irish nationalist organisations by announcing in a circular to his regular and secular clergy, 'our organisations need not run counter to Irish societies in this Diocese, for Irish faith and Irish political opinion will always be subject and secondary to what is Catholic, besides, most of

[1] P.B. Ellis, *A History of the Irish working class* (London, 1985), pp. 142-50.
[2] L.P. Curtis, *Coercion and Conciliation in Ireland, 1880- 1892* (Princeton, 1963), pp. 128-9.
[3] LDA, Bishop Briggs, The Catholic Church and True Progress, 1858.

our co-religionists in this Diocese are in harmony with the aspirations of our societies'.[4] These comments appear to suggest that the former imbalance was being corrected by the creation of another imbalance because there is no disputing the fact that Irish nationalism and Feniansim was a constant thorn in Church's side well into the twentieth century.[5]

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century the assumptions of most Irish Catholic immigrants was that their own culture was strong enough and pervasive enough to persist through, despite any vicissitudes or challenges it might encounter.[6] And perhaps it was the case. They imagined that the special measures undertaken by secret oath-bound societies or Irish nationalist organisations to protect and strengthen Irish language, politics and culture were necessary because of their vulnerability, and that such measures would not in any way threaten the viability of the Catholic Church and their position within it – they were wrong. As mentioned in the previous chapter, for large numbers of diasporic Irish, although connected to the Church through the sacraments of birth, marriage and death, they had long lived without its immediate presence and interferences in Ireland. Therefore, secret oath-bound societies provided additional comfort when they arrived in the West Riding.[7]

Most Irish immigrants continued to draw their strength and identity not just from being Catholic, but also from being a known and knowing member of a particular Irish oath-bound society; and from being embraced by the people the history and the tradition of that society. The origins of Irish Catholic self-help organisations (or secret societies) were formed principally as a direct reaction to Orangemen and Protestant oppression in Ireland.[8] It ought not to be a matter of astonishment, then, that many Irish immigrants should be attracted to secret societies, they were, after all, a minority group living in a Protestant country.

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[4] *Tablet*, 2 September 1878
[5] E.P.M Wollaston, *The Irish Nationalist movement in Great Britain, 1886-1908* (unpublished MA thesis, University of London, 1958), p.12.
[6] J. Bossy, *The English Catholic community, 1550-1850* (London, 1983), p. 249.
[7] J. Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain* (London, 1994), pp. 7-14.
[8] T. Gay, *The Orange Order* (London, 1972), p. 8.

Many English clerics felt that secret oath-bound societies were competing with the Catholic Church for the affections and support of the diasporic Irish working class. In most places the Catholic clergy in England had little sympathy or understanding for Irish political and social issues. The claim to secret oath-bound societies outraged some priests, so most attempted to maintain a balance between modesty and offending those who wanted to pay homage to them – simply because most clery were English. The Church, however, had no such inclination of moderation. It embraced a more absolute sense of authority in its attitude towards illegal oath-bound organisations and raged against anyone who became a member. And raged it did. Thus, Irish Catholics who challenged the Church's authority on this issue, or were identified as members of an illegal secret organisation were punished with excommunication.[9]

Given the destructive tendencies and erroneous doctrines to be found among some omnipresent Irish oath-bound societies, which succeeded in permeating all classes of Irish immigrants, but predominantly the Irish labouring classes, it is no wonder they represented a real danger to the religious practice and cultural integrity of the English Catholic Church. After the famine had visited Ireland the ceaseless procession of Irish Catholic immigrants entering the county were filled with a blind desire to throw off the burden of their disabilities. But the Irish immigrants had no real political knowledge, no unity, no organisation, no leader; and they stumbled on in the dark, 'the hatred in their hearts expressing itself in secret oaths and secret societies'.[10]

Without a clear leadership from among their own people and without any semblance of local political and economic infrastructure, nationalist organisations moved into the gap created by the lack of a central community within the Catholic Church at that time, which did not want to be sidetracked from its undertaking of church building and offering the most

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[9] T. Frost, *Secret Societies of the European Revolution, 1776-1876* (London, 1876), pp. 280-91.
[10] *Bradford Observer*, 23 January 1864.

rudimentary spiritual resources for the burgeoning Catholic population. Therefore, the reason for secret oath-bound societies' greater prominence was due, in large part, to the breakdown of conventional mechanisms of community control and social organisation within the English Catholic Church, in political as well as in religious spheres. As such, the presence of illegal oath-bound societies and the repercussions of the problems they occasioned became a more persistent challenge for the Catholic Church and its clergy in those towns and districts with large Irish communities.[11]

It has been suggested that revolutionary feelings in the minds of Irish immigrants on the matter of Ireland were whipped up by aspiring Irish nationalist agitators of disreputable character, 'united by hatred, revolutionary thoughts, insubordination, resistance to things established, claims of independence, and disloyalty'.[12] The presence of these protagonists in the Diocese brought an immediate reaction from the Catholic Church, denouncing the ideological content of their lectures as being, 'of the most seditious and inflammatory nature, marked with a peculiar character of irreligion and blasphemy'.[13] Many of these protagonists evinced fear of arrest and accordingly moderated their speeches just far enough to render them, in their judgement, immune from prosecution.[14]

In spite of English opposition to his presence, perhaps the most influential and determined Irish nationalist activists to pay regular visits to the West Riding during the nineteenth century was, 'the Irish Archbishop of Tuam, John McHale, who, for over sixty years was the most indefatigable agitator of British Rule in Ireland'.[15] McHale was the first in a long procession of Irish agitators to visit the West Riding in the formative period to generate political and financial support in the struggle for Irish independence. Such was his

[11] H.V. Brasted, 'Irish nationalism and the British empire in the late nineteenth century', in O, MacDonagh, W.E. Mandle and P. Travers (eds), *Irish culture and nationalism, 1750-1950* (London, 1983), p. 183.
[12] *Bradford Observer*, 5 April 1864.
[13] *Tablet*, 12 June 1862.
[14] *The Times*, 22 May 1864.
[15] E. Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Creation of the Irish State, 1878-1886* (London), pp. 9-15.

appeal among the Irish diasporic communities of the West Riding that wherever he visited his lectures attracted extremely large audiences – as well as the attention of local authorities and the watchful eye of the Catholic Church. In furthering his popularity, and that of the Irish nationalist cause, he sermonised to his congregation in both English and Gaelic languages, which went some way in galvanising Irish diasporic support and loyalty. He was described by contemporary commentators as being, 'an unremitting exponent of Irish nationalism, viewed by many Irish Catholics, both at home and abroad, as a patriot bishop'.[16] His activities evoked a variety of responses, even from those who knew him. Some saw him as a stoical political figure capable of liberating Ireland; while others saw him as a seditious and dangerous priest with an attendant disregard for ecclesiastical regulations, conveying theological expressions in abject deference to the authority of the Church, thus, rendering him insolent to his superiors, the Church, and Rome.[17]

McHale, like other alluring Irish nationalist figures visiting the county, decisively rejected the established authority of Great Britain who so signally failed to solve Ireland's economic problems. McHale, it has been suggested, was the most active propagators of Irish nationalism to visit the county during the second half of the nineteenth century; developing a consciousness of a deeper opposition in the minds of the diasporic Irish and variously promising revolt against the British Empire. In the words of the *Leeds Mercury* 'he speaks one language of disaffection and defiance in the most searing terms'.[18] Such was McHale's popularity that at a meeting in Sheffield, 20 June 1851, he was presented with a case of cutlery by local Irishmen working in the South Yorkshire coalfields. The *Sheffield Mercury* reported that, 'Irish priests were very much in attendance to hear the bishop connect with all phases of Irish nationalism and the fight for independence'.[19] McHale always maintained that

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[16] *The Times*, 21 February 1852.
[17] *Tablet*, 4 July 1854.
[18] *Leeds Mercury*, 28 June 1851.
[19] *Sheffield Mercury*, 22 June 1851.

the object of his visits to the West Riding were organised to expose English misrepresentations and calumny in reference to Ireland, 'and to advocate solidarity with the Irish labouring classes in an open-table fellowship'.[20] McHale was not the only Irish Catholic clergyman to have nationalistic ideologies that were at variance with the ethos of the English Catholic Church. In a report carried by the *Tablet* of 9 January 1864, apparently there were a number of isolated cases involving Irish Catholic priests serving in the Yorkshire Diocese allying themselves with the Irish Land League and other nationalist parties of discontent, 'and upon occasion the violence of their language had led to disorder and crime in the region, the latter of which is the inevitable concomitant of an Irish political disturbance'. The report also states that the Catholic Church's Hierarchy had acted wisely in dealing with the Irish priesthood in the Diocese, 'as represented by Father J. Ryan, who ought to receive a wholesome crack'.[21]

The Catholic Church's attitude towards Irish secret societies was unambiguous. It loudly condemned them as the enduring personification of revolutionary principles which constituted a kind of inverted society, whose objectives were to exercise a hidden suzerainty over recognised society, 'and the very reason for their being was nothing more than to urge war against God and the Church'.[22] In short, they formed a kind of invisible state in a legitimate state. Although most Irish secret societies put forward a humanitarian programme, the Catholic Church openly denounced them for having sectarian designs that pretended to have no political aim, but in fact exercised a profound influence over legislative and administrative life; and whereas in words they professed respect for authority and even for religion, their ultimate purpose was to limit the sovereign powers of the State and the priesthood, which they professed were the enemies of liberty. In 1858, Bishop Briggs, of the

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[20] *Bradford Observer*, 22 June 1851.
[21] *Tablet*, 9 January 1864.
[22] LDA, Motives for Confidence.

then Diocese of Beverley, wrote, 'Having chosen the priesthood as the object to be aimed at, these sects seek to diminish in the eyes of the people its prestige and its authority'.[23]

Outraged and alarmed by the temper of such a large number of Irish immigrants who transferred their attentions and energies to Irish secret societies, so soon after the Catholic Emancipation Act, the Catholic Hierarchy in the north of England made a concerted plan of campaign which translated itself into action on a stage that grew wider and wider to both identify sects and shut them out; and also to identify those individuals allying themselves with these societies. In reply to Bishop Briggs' enquiry in connection with secret societies functioning in the West Riding, the Reverend Henry Gillow of Manchester advised him that 'the Knights of St. Patrick…are Ribbonmen…they are amongst the Catholics what the Orangemen are amongst the Protestants…they are political and exclude other religions'.[24]

The Ribbonmen movement was founded in Ireland in the late eighteenth century as a fraternal and religious – later political – society for Catholic men. The term 'Ribbonmen' was applied to a number of Irish political secret societies, including the Defenders and the White Boys. Its tangled lineage also embraced the Brotherhood of Saint Patrick, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Fenians, and the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The 'ribbons' in question were two in number: green for Ireland, red for the blood of her enemies. There were grips (handshakes) and words of recognition, and the usual paraphernalia, but the oath makes clear that this was not – by the standards of most political secret societies – particularly militant.[25]

By 1871, Ribbonism was declared illegal by the Westmeath Act, but there still existed in the West Riding, as in other parts of England, Ribbon lodges. Some Ribbon lodges joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood wholesale, others piecemeal, while yet others moved in the direction of religious and charitable works. By the late nineteenth century, at any rate, the

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[23] LDA, Circular addressed immediately before Palm Sunday to all Clergy of the Northern District: 1858. Bishop Briggs' Letter Book.
[24] Letter from Rev. Henry Gillow, Manchester, 10 March 1836 to Bishop Briggs, Vicar Apostolic of Northern District: Bishop Briggs Letter Book.
[25] R.B. Madden, *United Irishmen* (London, 1843), pp. 42-50.

term Ribbonism was dead and mostly forgotten, except by the few who once wore the Orange or the Green. For the former, it was a catch-all pejorative; for the latter, a fond folk memory.[26]

Bishop Briggs was absolute in his directive concerning the membership of illegal Irish secret societies. 'Exclude from the Sacraments the Knights of St. Patrick (who call themselves also The Members of the Brotherly Society and pass their Society as a Sick Club). Also members of any other such society, that there may now, or hereafter be, the object of which is of a political nature and members whereof are associated to defend the persons of each other by physical force'.[27] The evidence seems to suggest that sanctions imposed by the Catholic Church both in Ireland and in England did have a significant effect on the rank and file membership of the secret oath-bound societies in question. Indeed, even non-political societies such as the Hibernians, 'were eager to avoid clerical disapprobation and willingly submitted their rules for Episcopal scrutiny'.[28]

Hibernia is the classical name for Ireland, from Greek. The origin of the society known as the Hibernians is hazy, even the date is unclear, varying from 1565 to the 1690s The Ancient Order of Hibernians was founded in the West Riding in 1836. Prior to 1836, the Ribbonmen (a late eighteenth century anti-Protestant Irish society) and their successors, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, may, or may not have protected outlawed Catholic priests; acted as a terrorist-cum-vigilante group against English landlords; rallied to Wolfe Tones Irish uprising of 1798; and generally fought for Ireland. Whatever happened before 1836, the Ancient Order of Hibernians adopted the form of a fraternal secret society after it had arrived in Britain, borrowing its structures and its ritual from other groups such as the Odd Fellows.[29]

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[26] D.M. Brownstone, *The Irish-American Heritage* (New York, 1989), p. 121.
[27] Bishop Briggs Circular issued before Palm Sunday 1836 to all clergy in the Northern District: Bishop Briggs Letter Book.
[28] F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and anarchy in Ireland* (London, 1886), p. 347.
[29] T. Frost, *Secret Societies of the European Revolution, 1776-1876* (London, 1876), pp. 82-95.

The Yorkshire branches of the Ancient Order of Hibernians were founded in 1836 in Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield, as a religious, political fraternal society, which later offered insurance to its members. It was open to all Catholic men of Irish descent aged 16-45, and by 1863 had 1,800 members.[30] The Daughters of Erin were the female auxiliaries, founded with similar aims, with branches in both Leeds and Bradford. The Hibernians and their female auxiliaries were deemed odious in the eyes of the Catholic Church, 'and must be hallowed by the influence of the Church'.[31] By the 1830s, as increased numbers of Irish immigrant were beginning to settle in the county, the Church launched a massive clerical campaign to bring the Hibernians under religious influence or to shut the door against them. With this definite step a new stage in the Church's long struggle with secret oath-bound societies had commenced. The Hibernians were at last on the defensive. They initially objected to any religious interference and rejected outright renewed attempts by the Church to reform their general rules on the grounds that they were quite capable of reforming themselves. Indeed, they were doing so quite adequately and, 'any attempt at interference by an extraneous power such as the Church', would be, 'altogether destructive of their just ancient rights'.[32] This was not an argument that pleased the Church, announcing that, 'reform can only be achieved through the direct intervention of the Church'.[33]

By 1836, the grasp of ecclesiastical control was hanging on the throat of the Hibernians, and, with this, Church influence and control which left it without independence, without political ambitions – a mere tool of the Catholic Church. In May 1836, 'the National Board of the Hibernian Society of England meeting at Wigan waited upon the Bishop of the Northern District of England…as to such alterations in our General Rules as we might

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[30] *Catholic Herald*, 14 June 1884.
[31] Obligations from the Hibernian Society: Bishop Briggs' Letter Book 1836.
[32] Frost, *Secret Societies of the European Revolution, 1776-1876*, p. 104.
[33] *Ibid*., p. 105.

suggest'.[34] After lengthy deliberations the Hibernian Society passed a motion proclaiming the necessity to reform and that it would amend its general rules in compliance with the Bishop's clerical requirements. In essence this was a confession of defeat, a renunciation of any political intentions or any connections with any political societies in Ireland. Accordingly, 'Bishop Briggs issued a declaration, within acceptable limits to the Catholic Church, to be signed by all members of the Hibernian Society'.[35] Other secret societies had already taken this step, more were to follow. Indeed, a comparable avowal was drawn up for members of the Fraternal Society of the Sons of the Shamrock.[36]

While the Catholic Church and its bishops were united in their desire to stamp out secret oath-bound societies, they were not united around specific theological practices to exclude adherents from the Church and the sacraments. Some lower-ranking clergy, mostly Irish, appear to have counselled peace or some caution in an attempt to reverse the revolutionary thoughts and actions of some Irish Catholics to, 'consolidate and repatriate those members, who, through internal betrayal, were banished from the mission doors'.[37] Although the immediate menace of secret societies had receded into the background, and despite facing religious condemnation, there were some members of secret societies who were determined to continue with the ancient traditions enshrined within the general rules of their secret oath-bound societies; and attempted to break down the semi-ecclesiastical character and hold the Church had over them.[38] By the late 1860s the campaign against secret societies was taken up afresh by the Church, culminating in the introduction of a programme of positive discrimination in an attempt to try and neutralise the Irish urban poor from becoming concerned in the illegal activities of Irish secret societies.[39]

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[34] Letter from the Hibernians Society of England to Bishop Briggs 15 May 1836
[35] Obligations from the Hibernian Society: Bishop Briggs' Letter Book 1836.
[36] Obligations from the Fraternal Society: Bishop Briggs' Letter Book 1836.
[37] *Tablet*, 17 May 1864.
[38] *Ibid*., 24 May 1864.
[39] *Ibid*., 18 February 1865.

To win the hearts and minds of the Irish diaspora, and prevent further leakage, the Church made a series of minor advances to carve out an identity for them, promoting an amalgamation of Catholicism with moderate Irish nationalism, thereby, putting an end to nationalistic quarrels which brought the religion itself into disrepute. The Church, increasingly concerned by the tenets of Irish nationalism, felt the danger of alienating Irish people, and estranging their minds from every principle of Catholicism, 'and if we allow this unseemly exhibition to go on the more radically minded they will become'.[40] The diasporic Irish were, as a consequence, dangled an ecclesiastic carrot that encouraged them to preserve those expressions of their Irish culture which did not invite the immediate condemnation of the indigenous community, or more importantly, the Church.[41] Here was an undertaking which held out the promise of satisfying those Irish who might retain animosities to the doctrines and politics of the Church in favour of illegal secret societies. In some districts, missions and confraternities were dedicated to Irish saints. Frequently, 'Irish symbols were used to embellish those missions that supported large numbers of Irish Catholics. Celebrations were usually organised for St. Patrick's Day and on occasions Irish priests delivered a pulpit rhetoric which combined the Catholic Faith with nostalgic thoughts of the homeland'.[42]

Irish nationalism seemed to disappear from the scene for a while, but it had not died out. It remained latent, only to be revived in the late 1850s when it fell into the hands of extremists. By the 1860s there was a renaissance of revolutionary activities when the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), a secret society closely affiliated with Fenianism, was established in Britain. Founded by John O'Mahoney and James Stephens, who left exile in Paris in 1853 to relight the flames of Irish rebellion – O'Mahoney to New York and Stephens to Dublin. In March 1858, supported with American money, Stephens swore in his first

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[40] *Ibid,*. 4 November 1864.
[41] S. Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* (Buckingham, 1993), p.42.
[42] E.R. Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the nineteenth century*, (Oxford, 1984), p. 250.

recruit in Ireland. Thereafter, the IRB spread rapidly throughout Ireland and the north of England.[43]

Like most prelates in Britain, Bishop Cornthwaite was extremely worried by the extension of the IRB in his diocese.[44] Moreover, he became increasingly concerned by rumours that the IRB had infiltrated local branches of the more moderate Brotherhood of St. Patrick. Cornthwaite was made even more anxious by growing reports that the IRB was actively recruiting from the Brotherhoods' large membership, which had now become sympathetic to the IRB's subversive objectives. Cornthwaite was right to be worried. In his memoires, John Denvir, who enrolled as a Fenian in Liverpool in 1866, states that the main recruiting ground for Fenians and the IRB was in fact through an open association with the Brotherhood of St. Patrick. Cornthwaite was also troubled that the Brotherhood had become lay-controlled and that the clergy would have little input.[45]

In 1861, alarmed by the rapid diffusion of the IRB and the upheavals accompanying it, Bishop Cornthwaite wrote to the head of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Archbishop Paul Cullen, expressing his adjurations and invited him to shed some light on the political underpinnings of the organisation; as well as, urging him to bring to judgement the legitimacy of the Brotherhood of St. Patrick, 'and was in great fear that they are rapidly increasing…amongst us'.[46] 'The Irish Republican Brotherhood was embraced by thousands of Irishmen, wrote a contemporary reporter for *The Times*, and it was immediately successful because, 'a great many Irishmen of the working-class, especially in the industrial towns of northern England were already lost to the Catholic faith and looking for an alternative'.[47] Much to Cornthwaite's disdain and deepest irritation, Cullen came to the conclusion that the

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[43] L. O'Broin, *Fenian Fever* (London, 1971), p. 18-28.
[44] Cullen Papers, Foreign Bishops, 1862.
[45] P. F. Moran, *The Pastoral Letters and other Writings of Cardinal Cullen*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1882), p. 736; P. MacSuibhene, *Paul Cullen and His Contemporaries*, vol. 4 (Naas, 1974), p. 183.
[46] LDA, Cornthwaite to Cullen, 20
[47] *The Times*, 5 July 1862.

Brotherhood of St. Patrick was not an illegal society, despite having its own newspaper which disseminated revolutionary ideas. Written in unmeasured language, it openly solicited itself as, 'an organisation of Irishmen, resolved and held together by the resolve to win for Ireland her freedom, and restore a certain equitable title in the soil to the Irish people'.[48] The Brotherhood insisted that it was not a secret organisation or the dangerous presage of civil and national strife, and denounced the fact that it administered a secret oath; but Cornthwaite was not at ease with these reassurances, which he deemed to be so ambiguous, doubtful and contradictory.[49]

Perhaps even more alarmingly, nor was the Fenian movement was initially judged to be a secret revolutionary political organisation, which, from its inception, held out a fallacious perspective of co-operation with the Church, not only on theological questions but also on matters with a crucial bearing on the true political character of the organisation. The Fenian leadership worked hard for inclusion and acceptance within the Catholic Church by offering a package of erroneous reassurances to conceal the genuine ideological status of its organisation. In order to demonstrate that its organisation conformed to the Church's instructions and authority on the matter of secret oath-bound societies, the Fenians modified the oath taken by the rank and file of its membership; and as a result, 'members were not disqualified from the sacraments or from referring to anything in the confessional'.[50] It is impossible to suppose that Cullen could, for much longer, be kept in ignorance of the deception and the true principles on which the Fenian organisation and the Brotherhood of St. Patrick were both formed and governed. Indeed, this decision was met with solid resistance from within the English Catholic Church. By December 1862, however, the temper of this reaction forced Cullen to bring his ecclesiastical powers to bear, condemning the Brotherhood of St. Patrick as an unregulated, subversive secret organisation with

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[48] *Irishman*, 15 March 1862; *United Irishman and Galway American*, 18 September 1863.
[49] *Irish Liberator*, 9 June 1864.
[50] E.D. Steele, 'The Irish presence in the north of England, 1850-1914', *Northern History*, 22 (1976), p. 230.

revolutionary designs beyond the religious influence of the Church. Membership was immediately declared a sin and members would be excommunicated.[51] For the Catholic Church, no doubt, the taming of revolutionary organisations could only be brought about by condemning them and alienating their membership from every religious communion. According to Steele, 'Cullen exerted himself to stamp out Feniansim and the Brotherhood of St. Patrick by ecclesiastical sanctions' in order to maintain ecclesiastical domination over the Irish.[52] Certainly, by 1865, Cullen's efforts had been fully rewarded, following Rome's Holy condemnation of Fenianism: 'Not only was Fenianism a secret society and condemned as such by the Church, a condemnation which Pius IX renewed in September 1865, but it was openly committed to the establishment of an independent Republic of Ireland by means of physical force'. [53]

Paul Cullen, the Archbishop of Dublin, and Henry Edward Manning, the Archbishop of Westminster, who pursued broadly similar aims on vital political questions regarding Ireland and Irish nationalism, were both resolute adversaries of Fenianism; two sides of the same coin, attacking the most wildest and most anarchical doctrines underpinning the Fenian movement as being a 'wicked device…for the utter destruction of all religious belief among the Irish people generally'.[54] As the political struggle for Irish independence sharpened, so did the bitter disputes and fierce animosities that permeated both the Catholic Church and the Fenians. Both archbishops were resented and bitterly assailed by the maddest ravings of furious Fenians, 'a resentment growing out of the conviction that both Cullen and Manning had systematically deluded and denied them their just entitlement to speak of political morality'.[55] Manning had entered into an accord with his opposite number in Dublin to eradicate Fenianism, both imbued with the idea of applying their every power of thought and

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[51] *Irishman*, 7 December 1862.
[52] Steele,'The Irish presence in the north of England, 1850-1914', p. 230.
[53] L. Shane, *Cardinal Manning: His Life an Labours* (London,1921), p. 22.
[54] *Ibid,.* p.23
[55] *Ibid,.* pp.24-5.

force of action to achieve this end. However, 'Manning's way of thinking was more restrained as he was conscious that the foundations of nationalism was dear to the hearts of the Irish in England as well as in Ireland, and he new it would be challenging to persuade them that adoration of the motherland was an eccentricity that could seriously impair the righteous cause of Ireland and that of Catholicism in England'.[56]

By the early 1860s Fenianism and the IRB had managed to radiate out across most towns and districts in both Ireland and Britain, standing as silhouettes against British themes and preoccupations concerning Ireland. The north of England division of the IRB extended from Stafford in the south to Berwick in the north and embraced the counties of Northumberland, Westmorland, Durham, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Staffordshire and the northern counties of Wales.[57] Thereafter, the IRB concerned itself with founding branches and opening a subscription list, not only in Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow, but also in Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, York, Huddersfield and Halifax, 'which bore every mark of success', wrote a correspondent reporting for the *Northern Star*.[58]

At its height the IRB had succeeded in infiltrating twenty-five branches of the Brotherhood of St. Patrick in Lancashire, and twelve branches in the West Riding.[59] From this point, control of the Brotherhood of St. Patrick, gradually but inevitable, passed out of the hands of moderate Irish nationalists and slipped into the hands of more radical members, in spite of strong attempts by the Catholic Church to prevent it.[60] Behind the organisation there now loomed a number of Irishmen, open to disaffection, only too prone to be misled. The story of the Brotherhood of St. Patrick provides an instructive example of the way in

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[56] D. Newsome, *The Converted Cardinals: John Henry Newman and Henry Edward Manning* (London, 1993), pp. 41-45.
[57] R.V. Comerford, 'Conspiring Brotherhoods and Contending Elites, 1857-63, in *A new History of Ireland, vol. V, Ireland under the Union 1800-1870*, (ed.). W.E. Vaughan (Oxford, 1989), p.424.
[58] *Northern Star*, 28 November 1862.
[59] Denvir, *The Irish in Britain*, p. 178.
[60] *Ibid*., pp.181-4.

which both Irish revolutionaries and members of the IRB combined to turn what originated chiefly as a moderate and respectable Irish nationalist society to their own purposes; and as such became a prop of revolution instead of moderate Irish nationalism.

In 1863, eager to underline the tenure of his power and popularise the strength of the organisation, Stephens made an elevated guess as to the consolidated strength of the IRB's membership to be approximately 80,000, with and an additional 15,000 members serving in the ranks of the British Army.[61] Conversely, following his countrywide perambulations to survey the disposition of the organisation in the autumn of 1864, Philip Coyne, a leading IRB member from Kilkenny, calculated the numerical strength of its membership, as he saw it, to be no more than 54,000.[62] Accordingly, this latter enumeration suggests that the organisation was in a much weaker position than the multiplications propagated by Stephens, and in all probability, is a far more accurate assessment than that propagated by Stephens.

Whatever its overall strength the IRB grew quickly through the medium of pyramid selling: The Chief Organiser of the IRB (Stephens) had four Vice Organisers or *V*s. Each *V* would appoint a number of Colonels or *A*s; each *A* would recruit nine *B*s or Captains; the *B*s, in turn, were each to recruit nine *C*s or Sergeants; and invariably, each *C* was expected to recruit nine *D*s, or Privates.[63] The whole unit, from *A* to *D*, was known as a 'centre', and centres were rapidly formed in Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield, where the greater majority of diasporic Irish were domiciled. At this embryonic stage, some of the smaller 'centres' to spring up – Halifax, Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Rotherham, Barnsley and York – were essentially dependant on the energies and subscription of the larger 'centres', Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield, for their survival and continued progress.[64] The stage was now set for a more decisive advance, which could only be done by a wide propagation of revolutionary ideas to

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[61] L. O'Broin, *Fenian Fever* (London, 1971), p. 170.
[62] C. Townsend, *Political Violence in Ireland* (Oxford, 1983), p. 90.
[63] O'Broin, *Fenian Fever*, pp. 18-21.
[64] Denvir, *The Irish in Britain*, p. 178.

win the support of the mass of Irish immigrants domiciled in the county and the development of intensive political agitation and action.[65] Apart from the day-to-day work of the organisation – meetings, producing and distributing pamphlets, making daily collections and organising lectures – branches of the IRB channelled their efforts into providing St. Patrick's Day celebrations and activities. In these activities the object was to exercise a more immediate and direct influence over the Irish diasporic communities.

In the West Riding, as elsewhere across industrialised northern England, the considerable energy and commitment displayed by groups and individuals in support of the Fenian cause, through the affiliated branches of the Brotherhood of St. Patrick, is best illustrated by the amount of planning which accompanied St. Patrick's Day celebrations; and the vaguely threatening number of individuals spurred on by these and other organised activities.[66] It was in this situation that a new sphere of Irish nationalism and agitation opened out across the county. After 1861, in this new atmosphere, the movement to co-ordinate and generate greater support through the activities of their St Patrick's Day celebrations developed with extraordinary impetus. For example, in 1862, over 500 Irishmen from Bradford celebrated St. Patrick's Day at an event arranged by the local branch of the Brotherhood of St. Patrick's. In the same year the *Leeds Mercury* reported that, 'a spectacle of an incalculable audience comprising of rough Irishmen', congregated at the Mechanics Institute, Leeds, to listen attentively to lectures published under an assortment of titles which embodied Ireland and her history; the significance of which went on to take every opportunity to popularise and glorify all aspects of Irish military history.[67] That such lectures aroused anguish and fury among the Irish immigrants goes without saying, and is illustrated by a letter to the *Bradford Observer* in 1863, 'Their dominant tone was caustic, forming part

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[65] *Ibid*., p.169.
[66] O'Broin, *Fenian Fever*, p.22.
[67] *Leeds Mercury*, 19 March 1862.

of a propaganda war which was devoted to exalting the valour of one side and to emphasising cowardice on the other to rouse military expressions of Irish nationalism'.[68]

The sight of large numbers of Irishmen gathered together to listen to the voice of an Irish historian/orator on St. Patrick's Day was something new in the West Riding. These lectures may have looked harmless enough as abstract stories, 'but they ended in maddening passions, the drunken frenzy, the unappeasable tumult, and the perfect zeal of fanaticism', reported the *Bradford Observer*.[69] It was symptomatic of the resulting transformation that, when a lecture was given, supported by a bevy of Irish nationalists, it inevitably ended in disruption and violence. Here the orator's perspective of moulding minds was less discreetly expressed. Undoubtedly the main aim of the orator was first and foremost to mould the minds of his audience by drumming in revolutionary doctrines. This was an overtly political aim and generally assessed as such. Indeed, through their lectures such men won first their interest and then the enthusiastic support of future nationalists.

As well as lectures, some branches offered alternative forms of celebration, incorporating nationalist stage props which included iconic images and portraits of Irish freedom fighters, 'and were excited by the inflammatory harangues of demagogues' as the concrete embodiment of Irish nationalism. For example, on St. Patrick's Day 1863, the Sheffield branch of the Brotherhood of St. Patrick offered its members discussions which vulgarised the British Government. In addition to images of St. Patrick that festooned the walls, 'hung portraits of famous Irish nationalists' who had suffered from British political offences, such as, 'John Mitchel, Wolf Tone and Thomas Francis Meagher, were on display'.[70] It is worth noting that events organised by the Brotherhood of St. Patrick and its affiliated Fenian organisation on St. Patrick's Day should be seen as part of task of staging

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[68] *Bradford Observer*, 21 March 1862.
[69] *Ibid.*, 18 March 1864.
[70] *Irish Liberator*, 2 April 1862.

Irish cultural legitimacy, which declined to be covered or protected by the blanket of conformity by either the Catholic Church or the British State.

St. Patrick's Day celebrations also provided a rallying point for Irish nationalists to harass or highjack celebrations organised by the Catholic Church. Branches of the Brotherhood of St. Patrick in Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield and Halifax were often accused by the Church and local authorities of being responsible for inciting the, 'ruinous consequences of many acts of drunken violence that accompanied St. Patrick's Day celebrations in these towns'.[71] For instance, following St. Patrick's Day celebrations, 1863, at the Railway Coffee Tavern, Halifax, a large group of Irishmen, led by local members of the IRB, were involved in violent clashes with the police.[72] In 1864, a Sheffield correspondent reported that Fenian extremists in his parish were working hard to 'secure the amalgamation with the Catholic Societies on St. Patrick's Day on whose money they naturally had designs on'.[73] With this message the correspondent considered it a key undertaking that ordinary Irish Catholics and the Church should have their eyes opened to their internecine activities and should not be misled by their secret intrigues. In the same year, a member of the Bradford Catholic Club reported that the struggle in his parish, between moderate Irish Catholics and extremists leading up to St. Patrick's Day, had become seriously competitive, 'the latter have the upper hand at the moment, but will probably be finally outnumbered come the day of the Saint'.[74]

The ardour with which Fenians sought support carried them to extraordinary lengths, which laid them open to arrest and imprisonment for sedition. With increased boldness and self-confidence – in proportion to the impunity which they now believed they had secured – Fenian activists assembled day after day on street corners in the most numerous and impoverished Irish districts to deliver lectures, discourse and debate, 'which have in many

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[71] *Tablet*, 2 April 1866.
[72] *Halifax Guardian*, 20 March 1863.
[73] *Sheffield Mercury*, 7 March 1864.
[74] *Bradford Observer*, 17 March 1864.

instances been of a seditious and immoral nature',[75] with the single undeviating purpose of promoting their cause and multiplying their membership. In 1864, a correspondent for the *Halifax Guardian* wrote, 'various extremists of Fenian sympathies have been in full swing all over this area during the past week, and are promising bigger gatherings in the weeks to come'.[76] The members, organised in these organisations, soon realised the necessity of extending Irish nationalist doctrines among the hitherto unthinking mass of Irish immigrants by producing and circulating cheap propaganda materials. In 1866, the Brotherhood of St. Patrick publishing numerous penny pamphlets and newspapers, and other radical works, to distribute among Irish Catholics domiciled in Dewsbury, Batley and Huddersfield, calculated to diffuse mass agitation and raise capital, 'and being in serious financial difficulties, so I am reliably informed, they are compelled to sell their malign interpretations door-to-door, street-to-street and from town-to-town'.[77] One outcome of this was that Irish immigrants began to study and learn more about the politics of Ireland. They learned through direct participation in nationalist struggles, by reading Fenian literary material which now emerged for the first time, and by attending the popular agitational lectures and discourse by Irish propagandists on street corners and in lecture halls.

A frequent complaint among Catholic clergy, especially those working in some of the poorer missions, was the corrupting influence nationalistic newspapers were having at stirring up agitations among the dispossessed and under-privileged, 'offering illusionary assurances of respect and precarious promises of Irish liberty'.[78] The Church, which sought to reinforce its already strong ideological influence as the chief means whereby its adherents were held back from revolutionary action denounced all radical propaganda as wrong, dangerous and anachronistic. The Church was especially concerned by the diffusion of publications which

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[75] *Leeds Mercury*, 17 August 1862.
[76] *Halifax Guardian*, 8 July 1864.
[77] *Halifax and Huddersfield Express*, 3 November 1866.
[78] *Tablet*, 17 May 1867.

often repeated the charge, that to root out all obstacles on the path to independence, they must begin with the priesthood, as they had the most influence over the people. Indeed, many Fenians believed, that so long as the priest had the power of awing them by the fears of being damned to all eternity, Irish independence could never be achieved. Priests were also stunned by the large numbers of illiterate working-class Irish that continued to purchase and consecrate the walls of their houses with copies of the *Irish Liberator*, the *Irishman*, *The Nation* and the *Galway American*, 'and being lacking in the essential elements of literacy they are ignorantly unaware of their basest subversive content'.[79]

In 1863, Bishop Cornthwaite wrote, 'The avidity with which large sections of the Irish Catholic working-classes now buy extreme literature is evidenced by the progress of the Fenians' newspaper, the *Irish Liberator*'.[80] The newspapers contents were of the kind familiar to those who may have been in the habit of reading it. Its first article carried the heading, 'Priests and Politics', and the strain of it was manifest from a single sentence, 'Liberty must be won by force, or not at all, therefore we must either give up our country in despair, or teach the people to disregard politico-ecclesiastical dictation'.[81] In 1865, reporting on the various street corner meetings he witnessed in the Bank district of Leeds, a correspondent for the *Leeds Mercury* described the promoters of 'Fenianism Causes' as being satisfied with the political and fiscal support they had receiving from the Irish community in the town, as well as, additions to their membership lists and the increased sales of their literature.[82]

Through the medium and accessibility of Irish nationalist newspapers the Irish diasporic communities of the West Riding become more responsive to what was happening in Ireland. There was no other comparable body of literature to mirror Irish views of English

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[79] *Leeds Mercury*, 29 May 1867.
[80] *Tablet*, 17 February 1863.
[81] *Irish Liberator*, 24 March 1863.
[82] *Leeds Mercury*, 18 April 1865.

during the Victorian and Edwardian periods other than those already outlined in the above. Carrying informed political comment advancing Irish nationalistic views, these newspapers were a seductive trap used with great effect to stir up nationalist feeling and to influence the opinion of the Irish Catholic diaspora.[83] Books and journals recounting Irish history were also in wide circulation. During the 1860s and 1870s most literary works in circulation depicted fictional Irish figures – noble heroes, beautiful and tragic heroines, unrequited love – through a haze of poetic imagery.[84] The figures they created bore little relation to life and conditions in Irish Catholic communities, either in Ireland or the diaspora, and for the most part made no distinction between Irish from different regions – distinctions that would have been crucial in Irish diasporic eyes.[85]

By the early 1880s more able writers would devise more credible Irish characters and situations that were closer to the realities of Irish life. In some historical literature everything English was viewed through the bloody spectacles of Vinegar Hill, the scene of slaughter in the turmoil of 1798, steeped in a particular retrospective temperament in the bitterness of the past.[86] Indeed, the retrogressive steps of Irish nationalist newspapers, such as the *Nation* and the *Irishman*, tended to 'freeze' out certain chapters of Irish history, abandoning old histories of prolonged contact with the English in favour of contemporary histories with specific reference to Irish revolutionaries who had dominated much of the nineteenth-century Irish nationalist scene – Wolf Tone, Daniel O'Connell John Mitchel, Thomas and Francis Meagher are to mention but a few – as survivors from a pristine age, as men who exemplified the most noble and dignified features of Irish nationalism. These men were depicted to give way to a

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[83] R. Swift and S. Gilley, *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Four Courts Press, 1999), pp. 35-38.
[84] S. Deane, *Strange Country, Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing Since 1790* (Oxford, 1997), pp.48- 63.
[85] *Ibid*., p. 42.
[86] L. Ryan, *Irish Fenianism and the Vote: An Anthology of the Irish Citizen Newspaper 1912-1920* (Folens, 1996), p. 18.

new current of national hope.[87] We are aware that nineteenth-century English press articles, journals and periodicals portrayed Irish immigrants in prose and cartoons as simpletons who were comic in their ability to cope with modern English society – the 'Stageman Paddy'.[88] But what had been published by way of Irish nationalist newspapers suggests that there was also an Irish stereotype of the English as someone who was self-centred, acquisitive, unfeeling and callous in their treatment of the Irish.[89] By highlighting and caricaturing English qualities, that were distasteful in Irish eyes, Irish commentators also communicated indirectly the qualities they most valued according to their own mores.[90]

By the 1880s, in a campaign to repress the improper reading habits of its Irish adherents, the Catholic Church introduced instructions on the principles of what it judged to be appropriate or inappropriate reading material. It was primarily the production and sale of popular nationalist journals and seditious political newspapers that the Church of the day was concerned to silence. Consequently, adherents who failed to abide by the Church's guidelines on the matter were either rebuked or lived in fear of disclosure and sacramental retribution.[91] This development was to have a new impetus with the establishment of mission libraries, 'but, libraries of the first order, and of the highest and most moral tone'.[92] Indeed, fundamental to the Church's campaign was the introduction of its libraries, 'to provide intellectual fare of a kind to solace those whose lives have been given to the wild schemes of revolutionary agitators'.[93] The necessity for the careful selection of books, journals and

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[87] G. Smyth, *Decolonisation and Criticism: The Construction of Irish Literature* (Pluto, 1998), pp. 19-31; R. Swift, 'The Historiography of the Irish in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *The Irish World Wide. Vol.2, The Irish in the New Communities*, (ed.), P. O'Sullivan (Leicester University Press, 1992), pp. 52-60.
[88] P. Hartman and P. Husband, *Racism and the Mass Media* (London, 1974), p. 24; L.P. Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (New York, 1968; L.P. Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Newton Abbot, 1971); R.N. Lebow, *White Britain and Black Ireland: The Influence of Stereotypes in Colonial Policy* (Philadelphia, 1976).
[89] L. Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork, 1996), pp. 18-27.
[90] C.G. Pooley, 'Segregation and Integration? The Residential Experience of the Irish in Mid-Victorian Britain', in *The Irish in Britain 1815-1939*, (ed.), R. Swift and S. Gilley (London, 1989), p. 62.
[91] *Tablet*, 12 February 1888.
[92] LDA, Diocese report on the Class of Books to be Admitted to the Library, with a Suggestive Catalogue, 1889.
[93] *Ibid.*, 1889.

periodicals admitted into mission libraries was considered extremely important to the Church, 'that I shrank from committing myself to the task',[94] wrote Father Mulcahy of St. Maria's, Halifax, 1897. The compilation of a library catalogue proved to be a genuine problem for those entrusted with the administration and day-to-day running of a mission or society library. Accordingly, all reading materials were heavily censored for the slightest sentiments that might menace or offend the moral or theological codes of the Catholic Church. In 1898, Bishop Gordon wrote, 'No matter whether we take up a book, a newspaper, or a magazine, there is sure to be something or other that is liable to contaminate the Catholic reader'.[95] Catholic poets found a prominent position in the library catalogue but novels proved to be a rather more difficult matter to deal with. Indeed, the works of Dickens, Scott and several other popular authors were not recommended to the catalogue until 1910.[96]

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century high-class periodicals, in which intellects of the day aired their learning and sentiments, were also prohibited from the catalogue because the content of the arguments advanced in them were deemed grossly irreligious and slanderous towards the saints and the holy faith of the Church – a conviction that would be reiterated time and again in the following decades. 'As a reviewer for the public press, it has been my painful duty to read and examine most of the so-called high-class periodicals of the present day, and I can assure you, my friends, as a Catholic loyal to the practice of traditions of God's Church, I have been more shocked than I can express at the manner in which some of the great intellects of modern thought have, month after month, issued their fulminations against all that the Catholic holds dear'.[97] In other word, currents of modern thought, as represented in its literature, or any other literature that tended to lean

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[94] LDA, Father Mulcahy, Recollections of St. Maria's, Halifax.
[95] *Catholic Herald*, 2 September 1898.
[96] *Ibid*., 15 June 1910.
[97] LDA, Circular and Annual Report from the Secretary of the Central Council for Catholic Libraries, 1909: Advise for societies wanting to form libraries.

towards the slightest disintegration of the Church or Christianity, were deemed unpalatable and subsequently prohibited from the library catalogue.

Despite compelling its Irish adherents, according to its rules, to foster a healthier taste for reading that didn't excite hatred or contempt, 'and away from the odious and violent expressions of Irish nationalist literature',[98] the Church would still continue to wrestle with omnipresent of Fenian organisations. Although the IRB in Britain was intent on causing an Irish revolution, hitherto they had not actually done very much about it. The activities of British Fenians throughout the course of the 1860s were almost entirely directed towards organising and expanding its cells or 'centres', smuggling small arms and ammunitions (or what they termed 'war material'), and infiltrating the military.[99] In the West Riding for instance, in 1861, forty brand new revolvers and a quantity of ammunition was discovered at the house of a 40 year old Irishman named John Tobin (a.k.a. 'Bradford Jack') of 46, Silk Street, Bradford, who was subsequently arrested. Also found in his possession was a rule book relating to the IRB, entitled 'Regulations for the Government of the IRB in the North of England Division'.[100]

It was later reported by Superintendent Laycock, Senior Investigating Officer, that the seizure formed only part of a larger consignment of some 200 firearms that had been introduced into the town. Tobin was also a member of the local branch of the Irish Land League (ILL) which had been infiltrated by the IRB.[101] When questioned later, members of the branch denied any knowledge of the Brotherhood or any association with it. However, contemporary intelligence reports suggest that many of the most active Land Leaguers seceded from the branch on account of the violent language used by some speakers at public

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[98] *Catholic Herald*, 29 September 1889.
[99] J. Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel* (Dublin, 1983), p.50.
[100] *The Times*, 4 November 1861.
[101] *Bradford Observer*, 16 November 1861.

meetings. Since then the ILL had been managed by an extreme section of the IRB, but membership had decreased and contributions had greatly diminished.[102]

On 18 September 1865, two detectives from Dublin arrived in Sheffield armed with a warrant for the arrest of a man named James Quigley, a silversmith employed by Messers H. Wilkinson and Co., in Norfolk Street, on the charge of high treason. Seemingly, he had been an active agent for the Fenian leadership in Ireland, travelling from place to place to keep together the links of the IRB. At the time of his arrest he was found in the possession of a book containing copies of letters he had written to activists both in England and the Continent. From the entries in the book it would appear that Quigley had been frequently called upon to travel to distant towns across the country for the purpose of forming local IRB organisations, or aiding those already in existence.[103]

In October 1865, two men named William Ward and Francis Higgins, both tailors from Bradford, were arrested in Tuam, Ireland, on the charge of being concerned with the Fenian movement. Ward resided at an address in Dyer's Yard, Brick Row, Thornton Road; and Higgins at an address in Goit Side. Detectives from the Irish Constabulary arrived in Bradford to search their homes. During the search at Ward's house, officers discovered twelve rounds of Ball cartridge, several copies of Irish nationalist newspapers, and correspondence from friends in Ireland urging him to have nothing to do with the Fenians. Ward was a former member of the Bradford Rifle Corps, and allegedly a secretary of the Fenian organisation in the Bradford district. The search at Higgins' address revealed nothing.[104] Moreover, in the same month, a complete unit of the IRB was arrested in County Cork, Ireland. Of the 187 arrests made, eight of these arrests were made in England, one in Sheffield, two in Manchester, one in Liverpool, two in Leeds, and two in Bradford.[105]

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[102]Report No.3: Observations on Fenianism 1861, Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom.
[103] *Irish Times*, 19 September 1865.
[104] *Bradford Observer*, 12 October 1865.
[105] *The Times*, 4 October, 1865

In February 1867, a number of Irish conspirators had assembled in London in a failed attempt to blow-up a number of metropolitan railway stations. Most of the conspirators involved in the incident managed to escape undetected. During the subsequent investigation, Bradford became the focus of the Metropolitan Police's enquiries. One of the conspirators, an Irish American with numerous aliases, had been lodging at an address in Bradford. During his stay in the town a report not unlike an explosion of gunpowder was heard to come from the room where a confederate was with him. The lodger told the landlady that the sound was a pistol shot, and that the bullet was lodged in the wall. The Police could not find any trace of the bullet. The man is reported to have left Bradford with two heavy bags on 20 February, about the same date when the conspirators assembled in London. Through information supplied by the wider Irish community and police informants the authorities were able to establish that the Irish American, together with a Yorkshire Irishman, had constructed the explosive devices used in London at the lodging house in Bradford – both their identities remained unknown and the crime went undetected.[106]

It is no surprise that most of the IRB's war materials were sourced from the northern counties of England. In the mid 1860s, extreme elements of the IRB were mainly occupied in getting together as much war material as possible. There appears to have been a greater demand than ever for arms, ammunition and detonators.[107] Arms agents were especially busy in the mining districts and robberies from Colliery Magazines in the Yorkshire and Lancashire coalfields could be laid to their charge. Detonators formed the bulk of goods stolen. According to contemporary sources, the robberies are believed to have been carried out by the IRB, assisted by men familiar with the mines.[108] In some of the magazines entered (Wakefield and Selby) the colliery managers had taken the precaution of storing their

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[106] *Bradford Observer*, 18 March 1867.
[107] Government Report on Irish Revolutionary Activities, 15 June 1865, No. 159.
[108] Report of Commissions on Coal Mines1865, following the theft of explosives and detonators from mines: between 1865 and 1867, representatives of the county's mines reported significant increases in the number of Irishmen, 'mostly young men who had not long been in the county', working in the Yorkshire coalfields.

detonators in a secret place, and the raiders went away empty handed. From 1865 onwards other collieries followed their example.[109]

The IRB also threw considerable weight into infiltrating Irish troops garrisoned in this country that could be mobilised against them to quash any Irish rebellion. According to Steele, 'on approaching a soldier, a Fenian agent would take the natural precaution of inquiring whether he was an Irishman and a Catholic'.[110] Fenian propaganda around this time had declared that an Irishman who joined the British military was a 'traitor to his country and a felon to his soul',[111] though this had not stopped nearly, 'thirty per cent of the regular army and Royal Marines in 1864 from being Irish. More than half this number was enlisted into the services in England, Scotland and Wales'.[112] By the 1860s the issue of Irish nationalism had not simply begun to divide Ireland, but more broadly had infected recruitment of Irishmen into the military services.[113]

The Royal Commission on recruiting in 1860 argued that, 'in Ireland every conceivable obstacle was thrown in the way of obtaining men for the service'.[114] Of those Irishmen who enlisted into the military in Britain a high proportion were Irish immigrants.[115] In the 1860s, three Irish regiments or battalions of Irish regiments were stationed in the West Riding: Sheffield, 7/Irish Dragoon Guards; Bradford, Dublin Fusiliers; and York, 6/Royal Irish.[116] Neither regiment was ever wholly Irish, but there was a solid and unmistakable streak of Irishness running through their ranks. According to contemporary sources the Dublin Fusiliers, 'recruited many Irishmen from the township of Bradford'.[117] There are two

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[109] *The Times*, 5 October 1865.
[110] Steele, 'The Irish presence in the north of England, 1850-1914', p.203.
[111] *Irishman*, 12 March 1864.
[112] Steele, 'The Irish presence in the north of England, 1850-1914', p.203.
[113] J. Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain* (London, 1994), p. 40.
[114] P.P. 1864, xxxv, pp. 585-7, Nos. and Religious Denominations in H.M. Land and Marine Forces, in .D. Steele, 'The Irish presence in the north of England, 1850-1914', *Northern History*, 22 (1976), p. 231.
[115] Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain*, pp. 40-41.
[116] *Leeds Mercury*, 3 November 1864; *Sheffield Mercury*, 16 February 1865; *Bradford Observer*, 25 September 1886; O'Broin, *Fenian Fever*, pp. 18-28; Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain*, p. 41.
[117] *Catholic Herald*, 22 June 1889.

reported cases of Fenian activists approaching Irish soldiers serving with regiments garrisoned in the West Riding: York in November 1864 and Bradford in May 1866. Both incidents occurred in un-named public-houses, 'where Fenian agents attempted to plant the seeds of doubt in the minds of two Irish recruits about their service with British army and to join a united independent army for Ireland'.[118]

Between 1858 and 1867, the IRB, in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales had only managed to raise £25,000 – a great deal of money for the time – but hardly enough to fund a revolution. Unfortunately for the Fenians, this was not the only setback. The American Civil War soaked up many of the troops who were supposed to be training to fight in Ireland, and the same conflict stopped much money being sent back to the Emerald Isle. To make matters worse, the Catholic Church was now opposed to Fenians, as it was to all secret oath-bound societies, so Fenians mostly had divided loyalties. The story thereafter is almost familiar. The Americans, wondering where their money was going, wanted the Irish to rise immediately. The Irish did not have the money, and were in any case under surveillance by the English. In 1865, Stephens and others were arrested in Ireland, though Stephens escaped through the help of a warder who was sworn into the brotherhood. In 1866, *habeus corpus* was suspended in Ireland, and many more Fenians were arrested. In 1867, the weakened brotherhood made a desperate attempt at rebellion and, predictably, failed.

On 11 February 1867, the most audacious venture ever attempted by British Fenians, which was called off at the last moment, was to seize the arms and ammunitions stored at Chester Castle and to transport them to their comrades across the Irish Sea.[119] Over 1,000 Fenians from across the north of England assembled in Chester for the assault on the castle, but they were betrayed and the town was swarming with troops, so the whole operation was

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[118] *Bradford Observer*, 25 May 1866.
[119] Denvir, *The Irish in Britain*, pp. 82.

abandoned and the Fenians dispersed without incident.[120] On the morning of the aborted raid large numbers of Irish are reported to have left Leeds, Bradford, Halifax and Huddersfield bound for Chester, most of them heavily armed.[121] Seventy suspected Fenians are reported to have left Leeds Railway Station,[122] sixty from Halifax,[123] forty from Huddersfield,[124] and upwards of one-hundred suspected Fenians, 'most of whom were well armed',[125] left Bradford. On the same morning a shoemaker by the name of Thomas Fenton of White Hart Yard, Leeds, was arrested outside Leeds Railway Station, having in his possession a parcel containing 140 rounds of ball cartridge which was destined for Chester.[126] In addition to those Fenians that went to Chester a further one hundred suspected Fenians left Bradford for Belfast via Holyhead and Morecambe.[127]

When these reports reached the authorities in the West Riding, taken in conjunction with the Chester outbreak, prompt and vigorous measures were resolved upon to prevent any other attempted uprisings in either Leeds or Bradford. On 12 February, a detachment from the 19th Infantry arrived at Bradford Barracks from Sheffield;[128] and a large detachment of specially trained officers from the Bradford Police, drilled in sword exercises and taught how to use revolvers – forwarded by the Government as a pre-cautionary measure for any emergency that may arise – patrolled the Irish districts of that town.[129] A Squadron of Enniskillen Dragoon Guards, numbering 101 officers and men, arrived in Leeds from York

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[120] Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain*, p. 54.
[121] *Leeds Mercury*, 13 February 1867.
[122] *Ibid.*, 14 February 1867.
[123] *Halifax Guardian*, 13 February 1867.
[124] *Huddersfield Examiner*, 13 February 1867.
[125] *Bradford Observer*, 13 February 1867.
[126] *Leeds Mercury*, 14 February 1867; *The Times*, 13 February 1867.
[127] *Bradford Observer*, 13 February 1867.
[128] *The Times*, 14 February 1867.
[129] *Bradford Observer*, 15 February 1867.

and took up quarters at the barracks in Chapeltown Road;[130] and a battery of artillery was also despatched from Aldershot and subsequently mobilised in both Leeds and Bradford.[131]

Following the Fenians' botched attempt to raise tumult in England in February 1867, in both England and Ireland, the IRB had been quarrelling among itself and was beginning to fracture. In January 1866, it divided into two branches, following the deposition of Stephens, and thereafter divided into several more, all of which were thoroughly infiltrated by British spies, informants and agent provocateurs. In July 1867, a secret convention attended by some 300 members of the IRB, from Ireland and across Britain, was convened in Manchester to unite the organisation, at which it recognised Colonel Kelly as chief executive. The drama that was acted-out following the convention redounded to the continuing benefit of the Irish cause. On 11 September 1867, Kelly, together with an American army officer named Timothy Deasy, was arrested by the Manchester Police. A week later, on 17 September, in a defiant rescue bid the prison van carrying Kelly and Deasy through the city streets of Manchester was ambushed by thirty Fenians. Both men were set free and spirited away into hiding by the brotherhood, thus, evading recapture.[132]

During the rescue a number of people were wounded and a police sergeant was killed. Of the twenty-eight men placed on trial for their involvement in the rescue, twelve were found guilty, seven for riot and assault and five for murder. The five convicted of murder were all condemned to death. Within days of their sentence one of the defendants was pardoned and the other had his sentence commuted. On 23 November 1867, the remaining three: William Allen, Michael Larkin and Michael O'Brien were hanged in front of a crowd of 10,000 people. They became known as the 'Manchester Martyrs'.[133]

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[130] *Leeds Mercury*, 14 February 1867.
[131] *The Times*, 13 February 1867.
[132] P. Rose, *The Manchester Martyrs: the Story of a Fenian Tragedy* (London, 1970), pp. 22-88.
[133] Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain*, pp. 60-64.

The public execution of the 'Manchester Martyrs' caused an immense groundswell of public sympathy for the Fenians, which swept across Ireland and England. At a public address in Bradford, on 10 December 1867, a public speaker going under the pseudonym of 'Philanthropos' said, 'It is now three weeks since Allen, Larkin and O'Brien were executed. On the day of their execution I said: The time is not far off when the English people will repent their death when repentance is too late. Has not that time already come?'[134] Those who had been indignantly adverse to the activities of Fenians, when they were a considerable revolutionary threat, without hesitation expressed adoration for the courageous young men who had died or were facing lengthy terms of imprisonment.[135] Cardinal Cullen, realising the consequences, attempted to use his influence in high political circles to make clear his reservations regarding the executions. In a letter to M.P. Lord John Howard he wrote, 'Had the unfortunate Fenians gone to penal servitude, they would have soon been forgotten but now their example and their pretended heroism will be praised, and much mischief will be done for a long time'.[136] According to Fredrick Engels, the Manchester executions had, 'accomplished the final act of separation between England and Ireland. The only thing that the Fenians still lacked was martyrs. They have been provided'.[137]

In response to the execution of the 'Manchester Martyrs', a series of improvised Fenian funeral processions were organised by the Irish communities in Leeds and Bradford. This presented a formidable challenge for the local authorities and the Catholic Church. On Sunday 15 December 1867, Irishmen of all ages gathered at the appointed places to march through the principle streets of these towns. While half the male population were at church or sitting quietly at home the other half were under the direction of the local magistrates to secure peace in both towns; the police force armed with cutlasses and revolvers were posted

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[134] *Bradford Observer*, 11 December 1867.
[135] Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846-82*, p. 183.
[136] D.D.A., Cullen to Lord Edward Howard, M.P., 1 December 1867.
[137] Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain*, p. 64.

in the Irish districts and the yeomanry and the military were quartered in public buildings in the heart of the two towns, ready to act if the necessity arose. The display of military, police and other forces were rendered necessary to reinforce the decision taken by the authorities, who feared an uprising, to forbid these Fenian funeral processions from taking place. From the moment their minds were made up on the question the magistrates acted with vigour and unanimity.[138]

They omitted nothing in their preparations and were encouraged in their efforts by the co-operation of the Catholic Church. Bishop Cornthwaite, in condemning of the processions had the following pastoral letter read out at services across the Diocese:

> DEAR CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST - You are invited, we hear it with anxiety and sadness, to join in processions, which we, as you Bishop, feel bound in the sight of God to condemn, and which the authorities have deemed necessary to prohibit, and, if need be, to prevent. You will absent yourselves from the projected processions, and you will take no part or share in it. You will retire to your homes quickly and quietly after the morning services, and neither by participation nor as spectators, give encouragement to an act which may occasion much harm, and can produce no possible good. As you shall obey our commands we bless you, and commend you and yours to God, that He may have you and yours always in His Holy keeping.[139]

The reading of this forcible letter was followed in most cases by a direct appeal on the part of the Church and the parish priest to their flocks to abstain from taking any part in the processions; and it may be added as another instance of the care which was exercised to remove all causes for potential unrest. Contemporary newspaper reports indicate that very few people assembled and the processions did not go ahead.[140] Whether out of the magisterial proclamations or through conformity with the Catholic Church it would be difficult to say. Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century the deaths of the 'Manchester Martyrs' were commemorated behind closed doors at the local branches of the Irish National

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[138] *The Times*, 12 December 1867.
[139] LDA, Robert Bishop of Beverley, Circular to Regular and Secular Clergy, 11 December 1867.
[140] *The Times*, 12 December 1867; *Leeds Mercury*, 12 December 1867; *Bradford Observer*, 12 December 1867.

League.[141] It wasn't until 1909 that the Diocese of Leeds sanctioned Irish communities in the diaspora to organise official church services and parades in honour of the 'Manchester Martyrs'.[142] In Bradford it is reported that between 700 to 800 men paraded annually to commemorate the event. On 21 December 1914, at the Central Committee of the United Irish League for Yorkshire, it was decided, owing to so many Irishmen having joined the British Army following the outbreak of the Great War that annual church parades in honour of the 'Manchester Martyrs' be abandoned; and following the amnesty in 1918 they seem to have disappeared completely from the Irish nationalist calendar.[143]

Throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras Feniansim would continued to be a problem, not only for the British government, but also the Catholic Church in England. On 27 January 1866, Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster, wrote a friend, 'I wish I had time to write on Fenianism. I believe it to be far graver than we think. The majority of Irish sympathisers in the cause of nationalism are Fenians, less its folly and violence'.[144] In the Diocese of Beverley, Cornthwaite affirmed that it was his duty to warn and to guide his flock. He wrote in a letter addressed to his regular and secular clergy that contrary to what the Fenians alleged, it was the responsibility of pastors to instruct and guide the faithful in the philosophy of political morality, 'as it is the office of the Church to teach morals: politics are part of morals because they are morals of society'. Faced with the present dangers, he implored the Irish diaspora in the diocese, 'not to be carried through natural but misguided emotions into a sinful path'. For over a quarter of a century, and throughout much of Cornthwaite's episcopacy, Fenianism and Irish nationalism, did, and continued to be, an obstruction for the Catholic Church in the West Riding.

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[141] *Catholic Herald,* 14 September 1892.
[142] *Ibid.*, 2 January 1909.
[143] *Ibid.*, 22 December 1914.
[144] E.S. Purcell, *Life of Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster* (London, 1896), p. 85.

To counteract the presence of Fenians Cornthwaite arranged for a series of anti-Fenian lectures to be given in those missions with large Irish communities.[145] Since the Manchester Fenian outrage much uneasiness was felt by the authorities across the region. As per the instructions of Cornthwaite, public meetings were convened in school buildings and church halls adjoining churches. In the larger towns of Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield these meetings attracted audiences of up to a 1,000 Irishmen.[146] At St. George's Hall, Bradford, over 3,000 Irishmen are reported to have sat through lectures given by leading Irish figures from within their own communities.[147] Reports suggest that the meetings were orderly and enthusiastic. Other meetings were promoted throughout the industrial towns by a requisition signed by principal Irishmen and clergy, the object being to show publicly that the Irish of the West Riding had no sympathy with the Fenians.[148]

By the late 1870s and early 1880s Fenianism in the county appears to have made no real progress. Attempts to stir up action into activity were met with little success; reports indicate general apathy. There is no doubt that many Irish moderates who had been stampeded into supporting organisations, such as the Brotherhood of St Patrick, were now concerned in more legitimate nationalist organisations.[149] Local clerical attacks carried much weight and caused movements like the brotherhood much disruption and damage. Further evidence of this was supplied by a Catholic curate of St. Patrick's, Bradford, who addressed from the pulpit a large assembly of young people from his parish. He warned them against countenancing secret societies. He told them that he was aware that two rooms were to be opened in his parish that evening and that the promoters denounced the clergy and pledged themselves to do violence to their persons. He described that the house in which the rooms

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[145] *Tablet*, 4 May 1868.
[146] *Sheffield Mercury*, 18 June 1868; *Leeds Mercury*, 14 November 1868; *Bradford Observer*, 16 December 1868.
[147] *Bradford Observer*, 15 January 1869.
[148] *Halifax Guardian*, 21 January 1870.
[149] *Tablet*, 7 March 1879.

were, and removed from his pocket a slip of paper, which he said contained the names of the members already enrolled and the rules that bound them. He told his auditory that he had people at all their meetings, whether general or committee, and that he was informed of their most secret acts. His duty, he said, was performed when he had warned them of their impropriety, sin and danger, 'and if they did not speedily withdraw from their evil courses the next appeal to them would be from the police'.[150]

In December 1863, it was decided to amalgamate the No. 1 and No. 3 branches of the Leeds Brotherhood of St. Patrick, 'because of declining membership after local clerical denunciations'.[151] It led to a division within nationalist ranks and many Irishmen left the brotherhood. Now that the extremists were unable to conjure up the bogey of conscription, the movement became, in a national sense, moribund. The local branches were outraged by these denunciations. 'In Sheffield the branches were outraged because they had contributed to the establishment of Catholic schools and chapels in the town'.[152] There is some evidence that throughout the nineteenth century the British government, local constabularies and clerics worked collaboratively to infiltrate and identify Fenian activists in the West Riding. In November 1889, a circular addressed to the Leeds Diocese requested without delay a list of persons who in the past five years had taken a prominent part either as Fenians or Nationalists.[153] The circular asked the Church to compile a list that included all Fenians and members of the IRB; prominent secret society men of considerable local influence who had taken or were likely to take a leading part in the commission of outrages; active influential Fenians who travel about the county organising and promoting the interests of secret organisations; Roman Catholic clergymen and other persons of note who took an active part in the nationalist movement, and from their position and status had an influence over the

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[150] *Tablet*, 22 May 1867.
[151] *United Irishman and Galway American*, 5 December 1863.
[152] *Ibid*., 5 March 1864. In Sheffield a local curate, Fr. Burke, had denounced the Brotherhood as Garibaldian and Mazzinian, and the Catholics of the city were told to have nothing to do with it.
[153] Directorate of Intelligence, Report 19, 1889.

people; persons of prominence who moved between England and Ireland, or persons who had arrived from Ireland and America.

The Church was also asked to furnish a list of each persons name, their antecedents, character and opinions (whether moderate or extreme) – in fact everything known about a person in connection with the Fenian and Nationalist movements should be given. The circular concludes by describing the manner of tabulating replies. If indeed the Church furnished the above information sought by the authorities then it is not challenging to appreciate how and why the Fenians found themselves so thoroughly infiltrated and completely compromised in their activities. Of course the Church was supremely placed to collate and disseminate such sensitive information, which could also prove to be self-serving. Perhaps confession was not as confidential as the Irish Catholics thought.

In the West Riding, the IRB remained in existence, but passively so. There were occasional, sporadic flare ups. For example, an Irishman by the name of William Stephens, a labourer residing at 25, Ellis Street, Sheffield, was shot in the head by an assassin. Stephens is believed to have been a Fenian and active member of the IRB. The police were able to ascertain that Stephens was responsible for the split in one of the local secret societies and was also suspected by its membership of being an informer. In an attempt to silence Stephens for good an American assassin living in Lancashire was brought into the town for that purpose.[154] In 1879, Fenian members of the volunteer corps in Leeds resigned and left the town. Drilling among the brotherhood was reported as, 'going on nightly in beer houses in Leeds'.[155] In 1883, violence broke out in Halifax between Fenian agitators and the local police following a meeting at the Mechanics Institute.[156] Nothing much happened until 1899,

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[154] *Sheffield Mercury*, 18 August 1880.
[155] *Leeds Mercury*, 26 February 1879.
[156] *Catholic Herald*, 3 April 1883.

when a Welshman – Arthur Griffiths, editor of the United Irishman in Dublin – proposed a campaign of passive resistance, which eventually grew into the Sinn Fein.[157]

However, many Irish Catholics living in the industrialised Diocese of Leeds had by now become active members of several open Irish political organisations, which would provide the Catholic Church with another bicultural headache. These include the Irish Land League (ILL), the Irish National League (INL), formed by Charles Stewart Parnell in 1882, which was replaced by the United Irish League (UIL) in 1900. Home Rule and Irish political organisations in the West Riding shall be discussed in greater detail in chapter seven, but for now, the object of these societies was to assist and obtain for Ireland by all legitimate means, the right of managing her own internal affairs, leaving England managing all imperial matters. All Irish people could wear the shamrock and sing 'God Save Ireland' when celebrating St. Patrick's Day; Irish folk music and dancing, too, proved popular. The passion roused by the agitation inevitably erupted into violence and outrage, but it was because the INL and the UIL was technically lawful organisations that the government and the host society had so much difficulty in coming to grips with it.[158]

The numerous branches of Irish political organisations that sprang up in the West Riding during the nineteenth century were also energetically engaged in generating finances for the Irish Parliamentary Fund, who depended, to a certain extent, upon them for financial support. They organised social events and collections to further the cause of the Home Rule movement and to support evicted tenants in Ireland, all under the watchful eye of the Catholic Church. The Irish of the West Riding, as in other parts of the country, organised themselves into societies dedicated to getting the British out of Ireland once and for all, which undoubtedly contributed to outbreaks of anti-Irish feeling.[159] The Fight for Home Rule was

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[157] C. Townsend, *Political Violence in Ireland* (Oxford, 1983), p. 90.
[158] M. A. G. O. Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in Nineteenth Century Britain: Problems of Integration', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5 (1981), p. 168.
[159] Minutes of the National Irish League, Huddersfield Branch, Yorkshire Archive, Huddersfield Library.

viewed by the ecclesiastic hierarchy of the Catholic Church in both England and Ireland as being the 'conscientious conviction that expressed the legitimate aspirations of the Irish people'.[160] Indeed, the *Catholic Herald* of 12 June 1899 reported that, 'The Irish National League of the West Riding has over thirty branches and in almost every case is headed by a Roman Catholic priest'.[161]

By the late nineteenth century the cultural and sub-cultural aspects of Irish nationalist life and the Irish nationalist project of identity were an important component of the activities of the Home Rule clubs in the West Riding. Although the vitality of these activities varied from time to time, it is quite clear that cultural activities remained an important hub of Irish cultural life up to, and beyond, the First World War. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century Home Rule clubs proved to be one of the most vibrant forces for Irish political independence and Irish culture in the West Riding, defining the identity of what had become a multi-generational diaspora. The nationalist grand narrative both sustained and equipped members of the various Home Rule clubs with a legitimacy and authority that united many working-class Irish Catholics in the diaspora together. Their importance can never be overstated and the *Catholic Herald* was accurate in its estimation that club life had 'awakened and developed the self-governing powers of the members'.[162] Club activities were regarded as, 'a way of life'. Most clubs ran lectures and classes in singing, dancing and political history. Indeed, in the West Riding, Home Rule clubs proved to be the focal points of local Irish nationalist's social, recreational and political efforts. Although their political faith was sometimes in decline their commitment to the Home Rule way of life was frequently galvanised by infusions of encouragement from the nationalist politicians touring those districts with Irish communities. Throughout the remainder of the early 1900s the Home Rule

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[160] R. Kees, *The Laural and the Ivy: The Story of Charles Stewart Parnell and Irish Nationalism* (London, 1993), p. 8.
[161] *Catholic Herald*, 12 June 1899.
[162] *Catholic Herald*, 2 January 1890.

confederation continued to attract both organised and unorganised Irishmen into a common forum.

Home Rule aside, throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods, legislation designed to limit the spread of Fenianism continued to be promulgated by the Catholic Church. The ecclesiastic laws echoed the sentiments and concerns expressed at the roughly contemporary church councils, whose canons included prohibitions against freemasonry and mixed marriages. The Church assumed that Irish Catholics were interacting, and that Fenianism remained a powerful attraction to Irish adherents. Its ecclesiastical canons were a response to the presence of thriving and vibrant Irish communities and the perceived threat from secret oath-bound societies and Fenianism which both posed as an alternative to Catholicism. We should recall that during the mid-nineteenth century most Irish Catholics were new to the type of Catholicism practiced in England when compared with that they had practiced in Ireland, for whom the evolving boundaries between Ribbonism, Fenianism and Catholicism were likely to have been blurred.

The Church remained concerned about Fenianism and revolutionary tendencies among its adherents, as it continued to erect boundaries and to define itself, in large part, in contrast to the mainstream of English society. During this period there were church councils whose decisions on the nature of secret societies and revolutionary organisations were regarded as binding for all Irish Catholic communities in the diaspora; both in the context of the vibrancy and the attractiveness of illegal secret organisations to which many Irish immigrants were drawn and in the context of its ongoing struggles against Fenianism as well as those Irish who saw in the continuation of Irish cultural practice a challenge to the claims of the Catholic Church in Yorkshire. Throughout the period under investigation the Irish diaspora would come to understand the Catholic Church as being the sole and universal vehicle for their salvation.

The same period was also formative in the evolution of Catholic societies and confraternities which functioned independent of each other, but were controlled by the central councils of the Church. These institutions or societies were an effective means of developing a Catholic identity and forms of self-legitimisation that would come to increase Irish Catholic communal and religious life. They were indispensible to the cultural expansion of the Church and the spirit of Catholic association in late Victorian and early Edwardian West Riding of Yorkshire. As such, the next chapter shall endeavour to single out the contributions of Catholic social and cultural life. The immediate purpose of these societies was moral and spiritual, but they achieved much more than this. They owe their existence to the same powerful reaction of the Church against the moral and material deterioration of English Protestant society; these societies worked side by side with the Catholic Church; they mutually supplemented each other; and they became the twin children of the same spirit.

CHAPTER 4

THE SPIRIT OF ASSOCIATION

Catholic Popular Culture, Confraternities, Guilds and a Restored Community

If we wish to test the strength of the Catholic spirit in any given community in the industrial diocese of the West Riding during the nineteenth and early twentieth century we should examine what forms of organisation flourished among them. Wherever the spirit of the Catholicism was active in the hearts of the laity it should manifest itself in the Church's confraternities, guilds and societies. Indeed, nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the energetic propagations of the Church to establish its confraternities and guilds, which it saw as a means of habituating its people to the function and dominance of its doctrines. As a preliminary to discussing the contributions of Irish Catholic immigrants in the history of rugby football; this chapter shall examine some of the influences at work in relation to the expansion of Catholic confraternities, guilds and societies which sharply differentiated Catholics from the mainstay of English Protestant society in the West Riding of Yorkshire during the period under investigation.

By the late nineteenth century Catholic confraternities had become as various as they were numerous: some were religious, some were educational, some were economic, and some were even political. It was not, however, for the aristocracy and gentry that these confraternities and guilds were intended. They were brought into being to meet the immediate practical needs of the Irish labouring poor, and, to control and direct their thoughts and actions – inculcating habits of industry, frugality, veracity, docility, and piety. The two agencies for promoting Catholic confraternities were through the inducements of priests, from the pulpit and the platform on every suitable occasion, and through the medium of the Catholic press: *Catholic Times*, *Catholic Herald* and the *Tablet*.

Analogous with other industrialised counties across northern England the dominant realities of Catholic life in the Victorian and Edwardian eras were those of mainstream English culture, 'in which almost every Irish Catholic immigrant had to participate in order to be educated',[1] play sport and engage in most other forms of recreation. Catholic popular culture in Victorian Yorkshire opened sluggishly and ended in a raging torrent. The Catholic Church of nineteenth century England was anxious to encourage the diffusion of Catholic friendly societies, guilds and confraternities among its adherents based on religious unity, with a greater emphasis on inward religiosity. However, the original impetus for the development of such confraternities was impeded for a time as the Church was fully occupied with rebuilding its ruins. The formation of Catholic friendly societies, guild and confraternities was quickened by the Church during the final quarter of the nineteenth century, making its strongest appeal to the mass of Irish immigrants who continued to give the Church an ongoing bicultural headache.[2]

Of course, it was not the immediate object of the Catholic Church's existence to promote intellectual knowledge or improve the material condition of its adherents. The Church's loftier mission was concerned more with the supernatural than the natural. It attempted to persuade its adherents to fulfil the end for which God made them, and so to work out the salvation of their souls. The Church's office was to teach its adherents to believe and what to do, to direct them how to live and regulate the conduct of their lives, and considered intellectual refinement and social comfort not to be the primary ends of their existence.[3]

Eventually, the Church came to act under the conviction that there was a pressing want, long standing and long felt among working-class Catholic communities, for the

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[1] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p. 57.
[2] S. Gilley, 'The Roman Catholic Church and the nineteenth century Irish diaspora', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 35 (1984), pp. 195-6.
[3] H. McLeod, 'Building the Catholic "ghetto": Catholic organisations 1870-1914', in W. J. Sheils and S. Wood, *Voluntary religion* (London, 1986), p. 431.

formation of societies and associations. In the 1870s, it become apparent to the Church that the deficiency and lack of Catholic societies, associations and confraternities had the result of deadening the Church's social and cultural spirit and diminishing its strength; and consequently, it would be a good work to take some practical measures towards repairing that deficiency. In the mid-nineteenth century, in some of the older and more established missions, in Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield and Wakefield, a number of Catholic societies and clubs had already been formed and did defuse some support.[4] However, they were predominantly associations and confraternities comprised of professional English Catholic men, elevated above the mass of working-class Irish poor by their wealth and education, which united them together.[5] With the strongest possible motives towards association and union they acted as if there was equally no feeling of mutual attraction between themselves and the Irish working-class Catholics, now swelling the ranks of the Roman Catholic Church in the urban districts of the West Riding.

In the mid-nineteenth century Catholic confraternities and societies were embraced with temporary enthusiasm in some districts and ignored in others. Even in those areas where they were met with initial approval they eventually lapsed through a lack of enduring enthusiasm, unfamiliarity and impatience with Catholic committee procedure; and the lack of inter-class co-operation that these societies tried to promote. Indeed, the fact that English and Irish Catholics in the West Riding, in addition to what they shared religiously, should have separate affiliations with the Church through its confraternities and societies was yet another indication that the habits, values, and attitudes of both cultures retained sufficient force to be identified as separate traditions. And both continued to give the Catholic Church an ongoing

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[4] *Catholic Directories*, 1852, 1858, 1861 and 1863.
[5] *Tablet*, 20 November 1852.

bicultural character over and above the forces which, in other contexts, made the Church multi-cultural.[6]

During the 1860s most Catholic confraternities were practically abandoned to the poorest and least educated Catholics, the working-class Irish poor, 'and that one class of people least capable of guiding our societies: the class in fact on which Catholic societies ought chiefly to act and not by any means the class on which it should depend for its actions'.[7] By now most English middle-class Catholics were missing from their places at society meetings, committees, or in the furtherance of Catholic confraternities, guilds and societies. In the social intercourse of their private lives they kept a distance between themselves and the Irish working classes and would not be seen mixing freely or familiarly with say the clerk, the artisan or the labourer. Most bishops rejoiced in the fact that most Catholic societies had got hold of the Irish working classes and were little inclined to flatter the refinements of the middle and upper classes who despised them.[8] In 1888, Bishop Cornthwaite wrote, 'in view of the matter, it would seem that the exclusively working-class character of our societies was the effect not the cause of the abstention of the other classes'.[9] At the same time, it may be remarked that Catholic societies had been inaugurated primarily for the benefit of the working people on whom the evils of society fell more heavily, so that it was well that they were the first to welcome these confraternities, guild and societies.

The effects of this on the Catholic Church, Catholic feelings and Catholic action were very marked. The confraternities and societies which were not formed among Catholics were formed of course among Protestant communities of every sort; and those middle and upper-class adherents who should have striven to surround themselves with the bulwark of Catholic associations, Catholic feelings, and Catholic sympathies found themselves speedily entangled

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[6] *Catholic Herald*, 14 March 1903.
[7] LDA, Leeds Catholic Cub, Minutes of Meeting, 1863.
[8] P. Hughes, 'The English Catholics in 1850' in G. Beck (ed.), *The English Catholics* (London, 1950), pp. 70-8.
[9] *Tablet*, 20 November 1888.

in a network of friendships, habits, ideas and sympathies deemed to be grievously un-Catholic.[10] The want of cohesion among those who should have been the leaders, the man of independent means, the wealthy merchant, or the physician, deprived the Catholic Church's confraternities of social importance and status. Indeed, those who might have been men of influence and have given a status to the Catholic body and its confraternities, guilds and societies did not discern their opportunities, 'and so it has come to pass that as a recognised body, as a social power in the community our associations are unknown and nowhere'.[11]

The operating ethos of Catholic friendly societies, confraternities, guilds and societies was usually, though not invariably, straightforward. Their members were given something to believe in, and he or she better believe it. For the members of Catholic societies, belief was rarely enough. There must be a massive and complex edifice of thought, preferably supported by a massive and opaque canon of religious literature and instruction to underpin the Catholic Church's goals, ensuring conformity with the all-ordering epitome of the Catholic faith.[12] The inculcation of religious doctrinaire, in the Church's view, was the most powerful instrument for changing men's minds and outlook; it was through religious doctrinaire alone that the working-class Irish immigrants could be brought within the orbit of the Church and its institutions, and led to assist, rather than obstruct, the unifying efforts of the Church at this time. The Catholic hierarchy held the view that the working-class Irish immigrant communities of the West Riding, once informed of the realities which so marked their dislocation and difficulties, would understand that it was in their best interests to become calm, orderly and acquiescent to the authority implicit with the tenets of the Church – temporal and spiritual alike. The objects, ends, and aims of the Church, inside and outside the mission doors, were to dominate every life of every Catholic – a necessary step for ensuring

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[10] Hughes, 'The English Catholics in 1850', p. 84.
[11] *Tablet,* 23 May 1868.
[12] LDA, Catholic Young Men's Society, Rules and Constitutions, 1876.

the internal and external stability of its adherents.[13] This desire to establish more firmly their control over the lives of working-class Irish, some turbulent and even revolutionary, led directly to the promotion and diffusion of confraternities, and new forms of Catholic popular culture.

Through the formation of its confraternities, guilds and societies the Church attempted to highlight important expressions of Catholic culture in such a way that Catholics could recognise it as their own, providing its adherents with notions of human perfection and ideals of life. In 1887, Bishop Cornthwaite was quoted as saying that Catholic societies had spiritual feelings that Protestants societies lacked… and… regarded them with a respect and reverence that at least equalled and in most instances exceeded that displayed by Protestants.[14] In varying degrees the obverse side of this confidence was driven by a fear and dislike of all things Protestant, which were seen to corrupt the growth and prosperity of a thriving working-class Catholic community life. In his address to the Bradford Catholic Club in 1878, Bishop Cornthwaite said, 'a too constant or exclusive association with Protestants is most deadening to a Catholic mind. There is a boundary line beyond which our ideas are all discordant and antagonistic and, unhappily, beyond that boundary lay the greatest and most solemn questions that can concern immortal beings'.[15] In other words, acting on the principle and by the method of the Catholic doctrine, freely formed communal associations with English Protestants was strictly taboo. Indeed, during the formative period the Catholic Church introduced ecclesiastic protective decrees to limit the spread of interactions between its adherents and Protestants; decrees that were ultimately designed and issued to eliminate the proselytising efforts of evangelical Protestant religions.[16] We should recall that during the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church remained concerned about Protestant tendencies

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[13] Gilley, 'The Roman Catholic Church and the nineteenth-century Irish diaspora', pp. 195-6.
[14] *Tablet*, 1 May 1887.
[15] *Ibid*., 4 July 1878.
[16] Hughes, 'The English Catholics in 1850', pp. 62-75.

among its adherents, as it continued to erect boundaries and to define itself, in large part, in contrast to the mainstay of English Protestant society – a Protestantism that continued to thrive and that not only competed with the Catholic Church for members but whose very existence challenged the Church's authority and the self-understanding of its working-class Irish adherents.[17] Therefore, protective decrees were issued reflecting not only the Catholic Church's concerns over its Irish adherents, but also, even in a weakened form, to prohibit the rights of its adherents from interacting with Protestants in social, political and cultural spheres. The Catholic Church of nineteenth-century West Riding would understand itself as the sole and universal vehicle for the salvation of the working-class Irish Catholics, who were now mandated to adhere to its catholicising decrees as interpreted by the bishop and the priest in the communities and parishes in which they came to live.[18]

Seeking to be independent of Protestant England, in both their religious, social and cultural life, the Catholic Church began to organise its parishes in such a way that they secured their own interests, and by their own actions constructed the foundations of each parish for a life apart.[19] Unlike its extreme manifestations in say Liverpool, Manchester or Glasgow, in most parishes across the industrial diocese of the West Riding it tended to be more covert and subtle, although, Leeds and Bradford were the exception to that rule: due in part to the large numbers of Irish immigrants domiciled in these towns. So strongly was it held, that according to Steven Fielding, 'where possible, parishioners were provided with their own education, welfare, health and leisure facilities'.[20] More particularly, 'within this separate world', Fielding explains how the Church became the sentinel of all things purely Catholic; to safeguard around one common centre for one common purpose, 'to mould its

[17] McLeod, 'Building the Catholic "ghetto": Catholic organisations 1870-1914', pp. 412-14.
[18] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, pp.56-62.
[19] Gilley, 'The Roman Catholic Church and the nineteenth-century Irish diaspora', pp. 195-6.
[20] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p.56.

adherents', thoughts and activities in hope that it would also improve their civic, moral and - most importantly – religious conduct'.[21]

Having Catholic friendly societies, guilds and confraternities was extremely useful for promoting Catholic interests and for the good of the Church and its missions; serving as a prop and support for the bishop and his priesthood, the guardians of the Catholic faith. In 1872, Father Thomas Holland wrote in his address to the members of the Catholic Young Men's Society at York, 'Let us identify ourselves with every moment which effects the welfare of our respective parishes – there is always something we can do in this way – and we shall thus prove a powerful auxiliary for our good priests to call in when they require help'.[22] Without such confraternities or social cultural bodies, it was feared that many thousands of working-class Irish Catholics would be lost to secular societies and to questionable places of amusement which offered special attractions – and ultimately to a loss in their faith.[23] To counteract the influences of the public-house and the casino, James Dunphy of Sheffield attempted to form a Catholic Entertainments Society to provide, 'rational and intelligent schemes of instruction, entertainment and amusement', especially on Saturday evenings, 'when our streets are filled with Irishmen, aye, and women too, reeling under the influence of strong drink, and that places of vicious resort are doing a roaring trade'.[24]

The more able and ambitious Catholic societies, such as, the Federated Catholic Temperance Society, were determined to improve the health, literacy and material progress of the Irish diaspora. They tried to do this at first by holding consciousness-raising meetings, at which they discussed issues with such titles as, 'The decline of morality, its causes and

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[21] *Ibid.*, p.56.
[22] LDA, Visitation Returns, York St. George's, 1872.
[23] Holy Guild of St. Joseph and St. Hedda, Rules and Constitutions.
[24] *Tablet*, 14 November 1896.

remedies'.[25] These were full of Catholic fervour and read like sermons. The promoters of these societies were generally educated English laymen and priests, who viewed urban and Irish working-class Catholic culture in the diaspora of the West Riding to be, 'wholly degraded, demoralised, irreligious, and beset with antiquated, depressing and pernicious customs'.[26] They also echoed the Church's concerns with regards to law and order and its desire to repress with due ecclesiastic severity the excess of those Irish Catholics who presumed to commit illegal deeds. The language they used was harsh in their identification of those Irish Catholics with turpitude, villainy, and sacrilege; those that lowered and despoiled the status of Catholics and Catholicism.[27] Their undertaking was to reform these working-class Irish Catholic communities and to make them law abiding, sanitary, assiduous, temperate and righteous. Their enlightened instructions were to propose the Bible in its simplest and explicit truths. The major points ascribed were that the Catholic doctrines, which represented a specifically Catholic path to God, and a rejection of evangelical Protestant religious concepts, harmonised the workings of the mind and body, and spiritual realities with physical ones, so that their whole existence was bound up in a unified vision of the Catholic Church, in which each aspect of life was related to every other.[28] The evolution of these temperance societies with their rules and orders, increasingly under the supervision of a priest, brought the working-class Irish under institutional authority. For most Irish Catholics the practices and doctrines of these societies played a greater role in their communal and religious lives than did the bishop or the Pope.[29]

During the nineteenth century, the evils of intemperance and the great social upheavals that accompanied it became a persistent challenge for the Catholic Church. It was certainly the orthodox view that intemperance was most pronounced among the Irish

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[25] *Catholic Herald*, 22 May 1888.
[26] *Ibid.*, 8 July 1889.
[27] LDA, Letter regarding temperance amongst Catholics, 1884.
[28] *Tablet*, 9 May 1876.
[29] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, pp. 57-61.

working-class. All the statistics, as well as the experiences of those whose duty it was to come in daily contact with a considerable number of working-class Irish Catholics, sadly proved it. In most urban areas of the West Riding, the greater number of Catholic people who were habituated to intemperance constituted three-fourths or more of their whole number.[30] The causes were traceable to poverty, wretchedness, and squalor in which they had to live, and to the irresistible temptations which surrounded them; and that their only means of a livelihood was so precarious to make it difficult, if not impossible for them to better themselves.[31] Combine this with the temperament of the Catholic people, 'the greater number of whom are either Irish born or of Irish descent, is by nature convivial and generous, and can understand how it is that such a large number of them fall victims, frequently half-unconsciously, to what is at the same time the most alluring and most demoralising of vices'.[32]

In June 1878, to fight the tribulations of drink, which was so demoralising to such a large number of Irish working-class Catholics, Cardinal Manning advocated temperance in his Catholic Crusade for the Promotion of Temperance, which consisted of two degrees, viz., the First Degree, total abstinence; and the Second Degree, strict temperance.[33] From this period onward we see the establishment of numerous Catholic temperance societies in most parishes across the industrial diocese of Leeds, such as, the Total Abstinence League of the Sacred Heart and the League of the Cross. Such was their success, by 1908 there existed in Great Britain 2,000 centres, whether churches, convents, or schools affiliated to temperance societies.[34] In the Diocese of Leeds there were 76 centres. In the parish of St. Anne's, Bradford, the men's branch of the Sacred Heart had 123 adult members and 325 juvenile members. The women's branch had 109 adult members and 157 juvenile members. In total

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[30] Commons Committee on Intoxication among the Labouring Classes (1864) Q. 3787. Evidence of John Finch.
[31] *Commons' Committee on Emigration* (1871-72) Q. 2095.
[32] LDA, Letter regarding temperance amongst Catholics, 1884.
[33] V. MacClelland, *Cardinal Manning, His Public Life and Influence, 1865-1892* (New York, 1962), p.44.
[34] *Catholic Directory*, 1908.

the membership of the society in the parish of St. Anne's was 714 out of a parish population of 2,354. The *Catholic Handbook* estimates that the total membership of temperance societies in England to be approaching one million – a fifth of the total Catholic population domiciled in this country at that time.[35]

For their proper constitution as religious organisations, the following general regulations were introduced: to have one's name entered on the register of members, and to hold a card or certificate of enrolment; to say daily one 'Our Father' and one 'Hail Mary' for the grace to keep one's pledge, and for the suppression of the vice of intemperance; to join in Annual General Communion of the members on Passion Sunday in Lent, and in the solemn renewal of the pledge; and to get as many fellow Catholics as possible to join one or other branch of the association, and to use one's influence in the promotion of temperance, especially in all clubs and societies where Catholics congregated. In addition to this, they were compelled wear openly a pendant, brooch, or pin bearing a device of the Sacred Heart or the League of the Cross.[36] The wearing of distinctive emblems was not unique to temperance societies, a variety of other confraternities adopted the wearing of badges in the form of a cross, a medal, a sash, or other form of regalia.[37]

In the West Riding, the Church had many temperance societies with rules that varied according to degrees of severity. It was urged by some temperance societies that total abstinence was the only weapon in the war against drink, and nothing should be done to weaken or relax its hold on Catholic society. Some were imbued so strongly with the idea that total abstinence was the sole exclusive remedy that they considered it wicked to countenance the use of alcohol, even in moderation, and proclaimed the doctrine that universal total abstinence should be rigorously enforced. Others advanced a more liberal scheme and considered total abstinence to be, except in extreme cases, not only unnecessary

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[35] *Catholic Handbook*, 1908, 1909 and 1910.
[36] LDA, Rules and regulations governing Catholic temperance societies, 1894.
[37] *Tablet*, 9 May 1876.

but an infringement on personal liberty. This conception advocated a crusade against the abuse of intoxicating liquor but not its use – where moderation was the message. Although working-class Catholics acknowledge the essential need of temperance societies, if they were to improve their lot within society, they demurred to the principle of total abstinence. The promoters of most temperance societies believed total abstinence to be far too narrow and rigid to commend itself to the greater body of Irish Catholics, who might very well have been won over to a society inculcating temperance along more lenient lines.[38]

By the late nineteenth century many Catholic temperance campaigners accepted that the majority of working-class Catholics would never be brought to abandon the use of alcohol completely. This being the state of affairs some representatives from the various temperance societies across the county co-ordinated their societies along more moderate lines, to persuade those who did drink to refrain from excess.[39] To achieve this, some temperance societies in the Diocese of Leeds founded Saturday Leagues, encouraging its rank and file membership, 'to abstain from all intoxicating drinks on Saturdays until God, in his mercy, shall grant peace and triumph to the Church, and liberty to the Holy and Apostolic See'.[40] Catholic opposition to intemperance among its adherents was longstanding and a constant cause of leakage. Indeed, intemperance was the, 'the emissary of every faction', that had come to undermine the multifarious work undertaken by the Church's missions, schools, and confraternities, to improve the lives of it adherents, 'which now lies like a slumbering giant at their feet'.[41] Seeking to suppress a vice so widespread among their creed, Catholic temperance campaigners took a more immediate and direct approach in tackling the evils of drink by engaging in active protest outside local public-houses, clubs and beer-shops, 'and

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[38] *Ibid.*, 12 January 1868.
[39] *Catholic Herald*, 6 March 1909.
[40] *Tablet*, 14 April 1875.
[41] *Ibid,.* 2 November1858.

lobbying local officials to have them closed down'.[42] For example, over a period of eight years, through active protest and continued lobbying, the Vincentians of Sheffield emerged victorious, 'having managed to get twelve public-houses in their parish closed down'.[43] Temperate social meetings, festivals, tea-parties, combined with social instruction, were an essential aspect of Catholic temperance society activities, and many such functions, combining amusement with instruction are described in the columns of the *Tablet* as well as the *Catholic Herald*. According to Steven Fielding, Manning's Catholic Temperance Crusade was intended, 'to help Irish adherents climb the social ladder and strengthen the Church. Catholic leaders reasoned that working-class Irish adherents who were sober, moderate in their habits and obedient to the rule of law would help advance the Church's cause in a hostile world'.[44]

As highlighted in the above, and in previous chapters, the Catholic Church, while intense and strong as it was, or may be, there was in its being, in nature and essence, an ever faithful submission to the teaching of the infallible, to which it had ever clung, and of which it had ever been the defender, a sense of insecurity, viewing matters primarily in self-protective terms. As Catholics they were, 'assailed, bitterly and virulently, by the bigoted sectaries into which Protestantism was split and, was a conspiracy the Church hoped to combat by encouraging members to withdraw behind protective barriers'.[45] Beset as the Catholic Church was, it was on this foundation that confraternities were considered sacred in promoting a closed system of Catholic life.

Catholic friendly societies could be utilised for a two-fold purpose, primarily and above all for Catholic unity and secondarily as guardians, to protect, defend and guard against the proselytising attempts that were made upon their faith. Without a doubt, Catholic friendly

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[42] Supple, ' The Catholic Clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A profile', p. 228
[43] *Ibid*,. p.228
[44] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p. 57.
[45] *Ibid*., p. 57.

societies became the auxiliary forces intended to support the interests of the Catholic Church. According to Bishop Cornthwaite, Catholic Societies were, 'a tower of strength against the assailants of our holy religion, and the Christian truths of which it is the teacher; this will be a weapon of defence to guard the sacred cause of our Faith'.[46]

By the early Edwardian period the industrial Diocese of Leeds had 26 different societies with the holding principles and theories that reflected a wide range of Catholic religious, social and political interests.[47] For example, the Catholic Guardians Association, argued for the retention of Boards of Guardians in the face of possible usurpations of Poor Law functions by local authorities.[48] The work of the Catholic Emigration Society was a good example of Catholic social welfare related to the emigration to Canada of Catholic children in the care of various local authorities.[49] The Catholic Benefit Society, formed in Nottingham in 1871, had twelve local branches in the West Riding, with a membership of over 400.[50] The Catholic Women's League, founded in 1907, had over 300 members and its activities included retreats, hospital visits, study groups and running girl's clubs.[51] Its work varied according to local needs.

Women played a very small role in Catholic societies. The vast majority of Catholic societies were either all-male or admitted women only as secondary members.[52] Of those rare occasions when women founded societies, they frequently exhibited a steadfast of purpose, a degree of financial and organisational acumen, and a lack of interest in petty squabbles, which many male Catholic organisations would have done well to emulate. In the Catholic Church the importance of Mary, the mother of Jesus, was not accompanied by an increasing

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[46] *Tablet*, 14 April 1875.
[47] LDA, *Catholic Directories*, 1888, 1890, 1895, 1900, 1910, and 1920.
[48] J. Bennett, 'The care of the Poor', in G. A. Beck (ed.), *The English Catholics 1850-1950* (London, 1950), p. 42.
[49] LDA, *Second Emigration Report*, 21 July 1891, Home of the Good Shepherd, Shibden, Halifax.
[50] LDA, *Catholic Directory*, 1905 and 1910.
[51] LDA, The Catholic Women's League, *Handbook and Souvenir*, pp. 88-91.
[52] *Catholic Herald*, 19 July 1913.

role for women in its social life. In most cases Catholic women's societies and social activities were restricted on the basis of household codes and the English Catholic Church's pre-Reformation position regarding the validity of the family, which remained its 'most important prop' in a rigorous process of self-definition.[53]

In other words, the well-run household was both a microcosm of and the foundation of a well-run Church. The images of the ideal women in the household codes of the Catholic Church can best be summed up as being pious, chaste, thrifty, faithful, should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, and should be somebody that stayed at home.[54] These household codes were impressed in the minds of young Catholic women from a very young age. In most Catholic schools across the diocese a great deal of instruction was given to young girls in domestic economy. Not only in cooking and preparing food, in making and mending articles of clothing, but also training them to keep their homes particularly clean and to set a proper value on the three God-given blessings of fresh air, light and water.[55] However, this image must be balanced against sources that depict Catholic working-class women participating in a broad range of occupations and activities outside the home.[56]

Perhaps the varied and important roles available to Catholic women in Victorian and Edwardian England were the Church's equivalent of the 'Rosie Riveter' phenomenon in the United States of America during World War II, that is in times of political, social, and spiritual revolution, women have often had exceptional ranges of opportunities. However, during the period of increasing stabilisation that typically follow, many of these opportunities tend to shrink or be lost.[57] For example, on the home front the heroines of the Boer War were

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[53] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1839*, p. 58.
[54] J. Lewis, 'The working-class wife and mother and state intervention, 1870-1918' in J. Lewis (ed.), *Labour and love* (London, 1986), p. 96.
[55] *Tablet*, 22 December 1894.
[56] *Catholic Herald*, 22 May 1906.
[57] J. Lewis, *Labour and love. Women's experience of the family home, 1850-1940* (London, 1986), pp. 142-66.

the wives and mothers of Catholic reservists called up for active service in South Africa, who formed the Women's County Catholic Society in September 1899 – a charitable organisation established to help those families in the West Riding that suffered losses in the conflict, and to raise funds and hospitalities for those Catholic men serving in Africa.[58] To Catholic working-class people they became a symbol of all that was worthy about the Church's contributions to the war effort.[59]

The Bradford branch of the Women's County Catholic Society boasted an active membership of some 200 women, mostly Irish working class, whose husbands were serving with either Irish or Yorkshire regiments.[60] The Leeds branch of the society had a membership of approximately 150, and the Sheffield and York branches had roughly 100 members each. By the time the African campaign ended on 31 May 1902, with the signing of the Boer surrender at Potchefstroom, through their combined efforts, the society had managed to send more than 1,000 aid parcels to Catholic troops serving on the front lines, and had raised more than £600, which they distributed equally among those bereaved families that had lost husbands, sons and fathers, and of course, to assist wounded soldiers in their convalescence when they returned home.[61]

The society was also responsible for organising balls, parties and other scenes of jubilation that accompanied the celebrations to mark the end of the war, as well as, the unveiling of post-war monuments.[62] Several of many priests bore testimony to the high regard of the society.[63] In a gesture which could be interpreted as the Church's gratitude for the women's relief efforts, and their overall contributions to the South African War, Bishop

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[58] *Catholic Herald*, 5 September 1899.
[59] *Tablet*, 17 March 1901.
[60] *Catholic Herald*, 12 November 1899: At the height of the Boer War, local newspapers carried long lists of names of men killed or missing in Africa. Among the first to die in action were: Private Nacey of St. Patrick's, Leeds; Private Carney of St. Maria's, Sheffield; and Colour Sergeant Hughes of St. Patrick's, Bradford. On the 23 February 1900, the *Catholic Herald* published a list of some thirty-two Irish Catholics servicemen hailing from the West Riding, who were either missing or killed in action.
[61] *Catholic Herald*, 8 October 1902.
[62] *Bradford Observer*, 15 July 1902.
[63] *Tablet*, 21 June 1902.

Gordon wrote, 'We have not failed to recognise your charity, which you have ministered to the poor victims of the South African War. You have conferred great honour upon those, whom we represent nationally and from a religious point of view. I need scarcely say that every Catholic in the Diocese thanks you for your undaunted courage, superior character, duty, and true charity that shone out amongst us like the sun in the sky'.[64] High praise indeed, however, the society was disbanded shortly after war, having served its purpose. It should be noted that the Boer War was a first in which a Catholic women's experience of participation in a exclusively all women's society was properly recognised by the Church, thus, laying the foundations for other women's societies that would be cemented so strongly more than a decade later during the Great War.

In the wake of the First World War, Catholic women also offered the stimulus and the strongest uncompromising resistance in the fight against the states initiatives to introduce a programme of social welfare reform which attempted to upset and overthrow the embedded household codes of the Catholic Church. This was unlikely to promote anything but hostility from the established authorities in the Church and its adherents. In the process of active resistance, Catholic women, recruited mainly from the, 'hierarchical structures of the upper and middle classes established the Catholic Mother's Defence League, which was founded to protect Catholic families from the interferences of the State, through an invasion of homes of working-class mothers by a legion of health officials and welfare workers'.[65] These actions were immediately condemned by the Church as a full-scale assault by the state to interfere in the internal management of the Church and remove their altar from power.[66] In other words, just as, at an earlier stage in the Catholic Church's history, fundamental differences between the interests of the state and the Church had come to the forefront. Although the constituted authorities were unsuccessful in their objectives on this matter – due in large part to the

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[64] *Catholic Herald*, 28 June 1902
[65] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1839*, p. 59.
[66] *Catholic Herald*, 12 February 1921.

strengthened resistance offered by the Catholic Mother's Defence League – the Church rigorously opposed any political measures which might interfere with the workings of their household codes; and saw these intrusions as a deliberate attempt to subordinate their ecclesiastical philosophies which aimed to rebuild and maintain the whole structure of Catholic cultural and social affairs.[67] During this latter period, indeed from the 1920s onwards, it became progressively more important for the state to damp down the social and cultural activities of the Church, which threatened to take an independent direction, at variance to the modernising reforms propagated by the state, certainly on matters of social welfare and education.[68]

The contributions of working-class Catholic women to the West Riding of Yorkshire were not just confined to the industrial and the home. The most common forms of political action for Catholic women in this latter period were speaking in public and participating in demonstrations and processions.[69] They also played their part culturally and artistically within the wider Catholic community. But this culture is difficult to chart because of the absence of records, and it is an area of life where evidence of female participation is very elusive. In times of crisis we know that they formed auxiliary organisations, the activities of which were often subordinated to those of the main male order. However, Catholic women still had nothing like the freedom available to men in the choice of social and cultural interactions within the wider Catholic community. Mothers were taught to be professional child carers, and girls learnt home craft in schools.[70] Catholic women, especially working-class Catholic women, were given limited scope for fulfilment outside family life.

Catholic Women who chose to live outside these expectations faced condemnation and ostracism. Even so innocuous an activity as writing poetry in preference to doing

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[67] Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950: Sexual divisions and social change*, p.36.
[68] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1839*, p. 60.
[69] Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950: Sexual divisions and social change*, p.121.
[70] LDA, Roman Catholic Schools Accommodation in the Diocese of Leeds 1892.

housework provoked horror, as Jane Kelly's mother, Annie, discovered in Bradford in 1906.[71] In such West Riding towns, even among families who were poor, pretension and social ambition was rife and women's domestic reputations could be made or lost according to how well they scrubbed their front doorsteps. Right into the 1930s the Catholic Church and the Catholic community, in the words of J. Lewis, 'continued to believe that a woman's place was in the home'.[72]

Catholicism as a culture also became highly relevant in British politics. Certainly, there appears not to have been a single prosperous city in England in which Irish voters did not have to be reckoned with as an electoral power.[73] From the 1870s onwards, in almost every diocese, if not in every parish in the country, accounts of Catholic Tories and Liberal Home Rulers, under the cloak of religion, were going to extraordinary lengths to place their political friends in power.[74] While presuming to speak in the voice of ecclesiastical authority, most were by their very actions, coolly flouting that authority. In the West Riding, wide publicity was always given to the actions of priests making certain recommendations to their parishioners as to whom they ought to vote for in local and national elections, instead of, as the Bishops enjoined, 'ascertaining the views of the candidates and letting these alone be known to the Catholic people so that they might be guided by their own consciousness, happily'.[75]

However, the implicit political message of the Church and its bishops eventually became more focussed. It was reflected and reinforced during the late nineteenth century with the proposed Elementary Education Act of 1895. The only way the Catholic Church could render its schools safe was to bring pressure on the legislators, by voting for those

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[71] *Catholic Herald*, 9 October 1906.
[72] Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950: Sexual divisions and social change*, p.120.
[73] LDA, Canon Earnshaw's ,Record and Reminiscences of St. Patrick's Church, Bradford, 1868; *The Bradford Observer*, 29 August, 1867.
[74] E. Hobsbawm, 'Twentieth century British politics', *Past and Present*, 11 (1857), pp.10-17.
[75] LDA, Bishop Briggs's correspondence 1864.

candidates who promised to protect the rights of Catholic parents. In the crisis, every Catholic voter was being encouraged by the Church to vote in such a way that best forwarded the interests of Catholic schools. These interests were unquestionably religious, and were therefore paramount, and above every other interest. In a circular addressed to his clergy, dated 4 July 1895, Bishop Gordon asked for the following to be read out at all Sunday Masses, 'I do not say that you are to advise your people to vote for this or that political party, but I do say that you ought to advise them to give their vote only to such candidate as will safeguard our schools, and forward their interests'.[76]

The unwarranted interferences of the Church with the elementary rights of Catholic voters was always a prolific cause of disunion and bitterness in the Catholic ranks, injuring Catholic interests of every kind, social and political, as well as religious. However, Irish Catholics hardly required the exhortations of a priest or the bishop to induce them to place their political privileges at the feet of a given political party. The smallest hint of tenderness to Catholic interests (Tory), the faintest insinuation of hostility towards Irish Home Rule (Liberal), was quite enough to carry them to one side or the other. According to Father Charles O'Neill of St. Joseph's, Leeds, 'The Irish Catholic voter is at the disposal of anybody who would tell him that the Pope's rights were at stake on a particular question, yet obedient to the call of their Irish leaders'.[77]

In addition to those societies already mentioned there were many local branches of the Catholic Prisoner's Aid Society, the Association for the Care of Catholic Crippled Children; the Catholic Young Men's Association; Catholic Boys' Brigade; Catholic Association for the Protection of Young Girls, the Catholic School Managers' Association, and the St Vincent de Paul Society. There were specialist organisations such as the Catholic Recorder Society, the Catholic Truth Society, the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom, the Association of Perfect

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[76] LDA, Letter from Bishop Gordon to Regular and Secular Clergy, 4 July 1895.
[77] *Catholic Herald*, 12 August 1895.

Adoration and Work for Poor Churches; the Catholic Reading Guild; the Catholic Needlework Guild; the Catholic Trades Unionists; and the Catholic Federation.[78] The majority of the societies had objectives of a social nature and were, of course, specifically concerned with the enhancement of Catholic interests. We may divide these confraternities or associations for social purposes into six divisions. Endless divisions and subdivisions could be created, but broadly, the aims and ambitions of all Catholic societies fall more or less into one of the six groups: social, benevolent, religious, trade, political and recreational. Other societies will be found in this chapter that are a combination of the various possibilities listed in the above. But at least the categories allow us to bring some order to the welter of societies that existed.

To the two divisions, social and benevolent, belong associations formed to secure the abolition of some abuse, or the pursuit of some charitable cause. These naturally disappear when their object is attained. For example, during the First World War, the Catholic Huts Society was formed to provide accommodation for Catholic soldiers and sailors.[79] Wherever these huts were erected they became quite a necessary part of military camps, furnishing Catholic men with accommodation they could feel was their own. Some fifty years earlier there was the Workhouse Aid Society, in which the Diocese of Beverley and its membership played so prominent a part. By an organised campaign in the 1860s, the Catholic Church under the auspice of the society enjoined the hostile Protestant urban middle-class Poor Law Guardians of Yorkshire – who were acting in direct contravention of clause 19 of the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834 – not to coerce adult Catholic inmates of the workhouses to attend the sacraments of any other denomination except their own; and not accede to children being educated in another faith without parental permission.

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[78] *Catholic Directories*, 1850-1909.

[79] LDA, Catholic Huts Council, 1916, co-ordinated by Mr W. Pepper, 85, Moorland Lane, Shipley: 'Many huts are needed, and must be erected and furnished, that our Catholic men may have huts that they can feel are their own; and for this reason our Catholic societies, with the approval of our Bishop, have taken the matter in hand'.

According to the Select Committee on Poor Relief, 1864, the Guardians of Leeds and Bradford, reluctant or incapable of observing the conventions of the Act, had passed beyond the accepted social pale becoming the most unscrupulous offenders in the county.[80] At variance with the spirit of the existing Act, one ill-directed Guardian from Bradford is reported to have rejected all spiritual, moral and ethical appeals made by the Church to administer the last rites to a ten year old dying girl who had fallen prey to the workhouse. Some measure of his decision may be gauged by his argument that, 'All Catholic children are to be educated as Protestant till they are able to judge for themselves'.[81] The actions of the Workhouse Aid Society essentially helped to ratify the legislation in 1866 and 1868, which was introduced to recognise and resolve these serious social and religious infringements inflicted upon the down-trodden Catholics sojourning in the county's workhouses.[82] Some of these societies and the various campaigns they sought to champion may seem obvious enough to-day, but in Victorian and Edwardian England they were as the voice crying in the wilderness to uphold Catholic rights. Nevertheless, the spirit which they infected roused many Irish Catholics in Yorkshire to associate in social, religious and benevolent perseverance.[83]

Catholic benevolent societies were set up to do some good rather than merely to be enjoyable. They were particularly common in large towns like Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Halifax, Huddersfield, York, Keighley and Wakefield, where the greater mass of Irish Catholics immigrants lived. Many Irish Catholics living in the West Riding distinguished between societies that helped only their members, placing more emphasis on ethnic ties than

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[80] P.P. 1861, xi; 1862, x; 1863, vii; 1864, ix, *Select Committee on Poor Relief* (England).
[81] P.P. 1861, ix, answer 8887, evidence of Fr. John Morris, citing a statement furnished on behalf of the Catholic clergy of Bradford, in E. D. Steele, 'The Irish presence in the north of England, 1850-1914', *Northern History*, 22 (1976), p. 228.
[82] Poor Law Amendment Act, 1866; Poor Relief Act, 1868.
[83] *Catholic Herald*, 10 February 1910.

on financial support and religious unity.[84] Many Catholic societies supported local or other charities, even though the main thrust of their work was directed towards helping their own. Many of these societies were non-religious (not irreligious) where Catholics were banded together for mutual support in distress. Membership of a Catholic society or a club was often the only existing tie between some diasporic Irish and the Catholic Church and as such was useful. In 1884, Bishop Cornthwaite wrote, 'By the adaption of these societies the Irish working-classes will be brought more in touch with each other and by united action there can be no doubt that much useful work will be the result'.[85]

There were many Catholic friendly societies scattered across the diocese, of which, many were founded on the slate club, or sharing-out principle, but they were mostly small and isolated and were lacking either diffusion or cohesion, such as, the United Order of Catholic Brethren.[86] In the West Riding Catholic guilds were especially strong. They combined allowances in sickness and death, according to contributions, with the performance of certain religious obligations. The industrial diocese of the West Riding had good reason to be proud of their Catholic guilds, but many were not registered as friendly societies, which made them weak. According to Father Devine of Wakefield, some societies and guilds in the heavy woollen districts of the county were established by persons animated by the best intentions, 'but ignorant of the management of a friendly society, and came to grief as a result of this benevolent but culpable ignorance'.[87]

In nineteenth-century Yorkshire, Catholic benevolent societies were set up as a form of proto-welfare state, to provide a cushion against accident, old age and in some cases unemployment, but they achieved much more than this. They educated their members in thrift and self-government. The Catholic Benefit Society was certainly the largest and most

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[84] *Ibid.*, 3 January 1891.
[85] *Tablet*, 22 May 1884.
[86] *Ibid,*, 17 August 1893.
[87] *Catholic Herald*, 10 August 1882.

diffused Catholic friendly societies in the West Riding. It was especially strong in Leeds and Bradford, with branches in some of the smaller towns of Dewsbury and Otley.[88] It admitted juveniles as members, as well as adults, and provided benefits for members, their wives, widows and children.[89] Though membership was confined to Catholics no religious obligations were imposed. The Church realised that any attempt to require the fulfilment of various religious duties usually failed in its objectives, 'and that it was better to rely upon and encouraging a Catholic atmosphere engendered by association for mutual benefits'.[90]

The second two divisions of association, trade and political, was the association for economic betterment – the Catholic Trades Unionists and the Catholic Federation. These societies were founded during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were, of course, by no means confined to Yorkshire but diffused across the whole of northern England and the Midlands. Many of the branches established in the West Riding acquired rooms which were opened in the evenings, and included both adults and children. The adults came to read interesting extracts or hear it read from political publications and interesting extracts from newspapers bought by subscription, or engage in political and religious discussions; in larger towns, such as Leeds and Bradford, 'the meeting rooms in a short time became so overcrowded'.[91] Society meetings of this period, whether judged in regard to organisation, politics, religion, or all three, were of high importance in the techniques, development, expression and direction of working-class Catholic agitations.

By 1910, there existed 652 trade unions in England with a total membership of approximately 1.9 million.[92] In 1890, much concerned in protecting the constitutional liberties of all Catholic workers, Cardinal Manning offered the Catholic Trade Unionists his official endorsement; which brought about immediate results in the form of the recruitment of

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[88] *Catholic Handbook*, 1892.
[89] *Tablet*, 12 April 1884.
[90] LDA, *Catholic Directories*, 1888, 1889, 1894, and 1898.
[91] *Catholic Herald*, 18 March 1891.
[92] *Catholic Directory*, 1910.

thousands of Catholic workers up and down the country.[93] But since his tenure, the bifurcation of organised labour and the Labour Party itself had begun to emerge on a considerably larger scale and with it a somewhat altered political complexion. The Catholic unionists were vehemently opposed to the secular disposition of the Labour Party's programme for socialist reform.[94]

The intention and significance of this will be better understood when it is recalled that the Labour Party saw the Catholic Church as one of the main obstacles to political reform; and its ideological influence as the chief means whereby its adherents were held back from action. As the Labour Party took their anti-Catholic propaganda throughout Yorkshire they also enlarged on the subject of education, 'the clear demand for rational, secular education for all is the necessary foundation for good government, as an essential aspect of the struggle for radical reform'.[95] For the Catholics a period of crisis had been reached, one where the struggle for a reformed education fused with the political and religious struggle, and where members of Catholic societies with which they were concerned were fully involved. Indeed, the Catholic unionists, 'particularly attacked the annual resolution of the Labour Party, supported by the Trade Union Congress, in favour of secular education in elementary schools'.[96]

Among the many other societies supportive of the Catholic unionists' opposition to the Labour Party's proposals for a national system of secular education were the Catholic Federations. Although not affiliated to any political party, the objective of the federations was to help acquaint its membership with the social and political knowledge needed to engage in the broader field of British politics; and to impress upon them the morality of the day.[97] Also worth mentioning is the Catholic Truth Society, which also built up a storehouse of easily

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[93] S. Leslie, *Cardinal Manning, His Life and Labours* (London, 1953), p. 125.
[94] K. Burgess, *The Challenge of Labour* (London, 1980), pp.1-17.
[95] *Catholic Herald*, 6 December 1919.
[96] Burgess, *The Challenge of Labour*, pp.1-17.
[97] *Catholic Herald*, 19 October 1901.

available material for the instruction of Catholics on social matters. During the early twentieth century the Catholic Truth Society, which had for its special object the study of social problems and the production of literature for societies dealing with social inequity; namely, the Catholic Social Guild. This guild provided assistance and advice to all those who wished to engage in social study.[98]

To the third division, religious and recreational, they are at once the most obvious and the least obvious of Catholic societies. They are most obvious, because everyone can name a few, but they are the least obvious because there are surprisingly many not very well known. Catholic religious societies include: the Holy Family Confraternity, the Children of Mary Sodality, the Guild of St. Aloysius, the Guild of St. Agnes, the Alter Society, the Apostleship of Prayer, the Catholic Boy's Brigade, the Third Order of St Francis, and the Rosary Society. Religious societies in the West Riding were extremely important in the survival of the Catholicism, both during the period following the Restoration of the Hierarchy, and throughout the nineteenth century when the Catholic Church was subject to spasmodic persecution, which waxed and waned, often in response to local conditions. They worked to sustain the continuity of Catholic missions in any given town or district and the survival of the Catholic faith under persecution. Apart from preserving the faith these societies gave their membership qualities of spirituality and played an important part in the inculcation of religious values. Most parishes in the West Riding managed to establish at least two or three of these religious societies, while in some of the larger parishes local priests were able to support them all.[99]

One Catholic society that demands special attention is the Young Men's Catholic Society, because it was one of the few societies that were practically abandoned to the poorest and least educated Catholics, the Irish. The first Young Men's Catholic Society to be

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[98] *Ibid.*, 17 September 1904.
[99] *Catholic Directories*, 1853-1913.

established in the industrial diocese of Yorkshire was at Sheffield in 1854, with a starting membership of one hundred and forty.[100] In 1857, Bradford had a thriving Young Men's Society, Wakefield, too, had a similar association called St. Austin's Catholic Young Men's Society, with one hundred and fifty members, almost all of whom were reported to be Irish.[101] The Bradford society appears to have flourished throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. On 17 June 1857, it held an Annual Festival at which it acknowledged in excess of seven hundred members, again, the majority of which were Irish.[102] In 1856, 'the Bradford society was responsible for founding a flourishing society at neighbouring Dewsbury, which had a starting membership of one hundred and twenty, all Irish'.[103] In 1861, a Young Men's Society was established in Leeds with a reported membership of between seven and eight hundred.[104] In 1863, St. Patrick's, Bradford established a society with a reported membership of two hundred and sixty.[105]

However, there were many working-class Catholics in the West Riding who were not touched by the society, especially those living in smaller parishes dominated by English upper and middle-class adherents, who believed the society to be too Irish.[106] Some parishes in the towns of Halifax, Keighley, Huddersfield, Barnsley, Rotherham, Goole, Shipley, Bingley and Otley did not establish branches until the late 1860s and 1870s.[107] The Young Men's Society also had a juvenile guild, or juvenile auxiliary, for boys aged between ten and sixteen years. On reaching the age of seventeen they would be drafted into the parent society. In this way the ranks of the society would be recruited with young men, who having been trained from a young age to observe the primary rules of the society would eventually

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[100] *Ibid.*, 1854.
[101] *Tablet*, 9 June 1860.
[102] *Ibid.*, 4 July 1857.
[103] *Ibid.*, 12 December 1856.
[104] *Catholic Directory*, 1861.
[105] *Catholic Herald*, 23 January 1889.
[106] *Ibid.*, 18 September 1896.
[107] *Ibid.*, 15 June 1898.

become its backbone and sinew. The juvenile auxiliary were provided with out-door sports in the summer, with singing and dramatic classes in the winter.[108]

There are a number of explanations why some Catholic societies flourished in some parishes and failed to establish themselves in others. For instance, societies were not all alike, what may have been found to work easily and smoothly in one parish, could cause discontent, stubbornness or rancour in another.[109] Furthermore, priests in charge of some of the county's missions were unwilling to multiply or add to their already existing religious confraternities or societies because they feared that their flourishing condition may suffer from the introduction of new societies. For priests in struggling missions the question of cost was always a matter of anxiety, therefore, financing a society was impracticable, simply because there was hardly a sufficient margin to allow the clergy to cover all the working expenses.[110]

The Young Men's Society had very different roots from most other Catholic societies. It was neither elitist nor traditionalist in origin, though it did draw on old English Catholic precedents. It rose from a vacuum that developed in some Catholic areas during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. On the one hand the Young Men's Catholic Society was a modernising organisation working at public service level to improve the lot of working-class Catholics. On the other, they were community leaders operating according to Catholic doctrines.[111] It was the only Catholic society which endeavoured, both boldly and comprehensively, to grapple with the requirements of the age. Animated with a truly Catholic spirit, it also exhibited a comprehensiveness and an adaptability eminently Catholic. It adapted itself to the circumstances of each locality without sacrificing its fundamental unity.

The Young Men's Society, wherever it was established, aimed at forming libraries, opening reading-rooms, soirees, concerts, excursions, indoor games, establishing classes and

[108] *Tablet*, 4 June 1899.
[109] *Catholic Herald*, 7 May 1901.
[110] *Ibid.*, 12 June 1892.
[111] *Catholic Handbook*, 1896.

giving lectures.[112] All these things were calculated to induce young men to take an active interest in the society, and eventually to join. Naturally, the Young Men's Catholic Society became the mentor of the Church's interests in England. One of the Catholic Church's aims, through the work of its Young Men's Society's, was to keep its members in their society rooms, playing games they preferred with their companions, rather than sending them to questionable places of amusement. They offered various kinds of amusements as an inducement for men to join. In the West Riding, branches of the society allowed dominoes, chess, bagatelle, billiards and the playing of cards in its society rooms, under proper restrictions and supervision of course.[113] The playing of cards was not always recommended, but when used as an amusement it was a source of pleasure to many who would otherwise have been drawn to questionable places to seek that enjoyment from which they had been debarred, if, of course, cards were excluded from the Young Men's society rooms. The secretary of the Bradford branch explained that two-thirds of its membership was comprised of Irishmen, 'and inasmuch the only game they care about is cards and they should not be prevented from playing for a small stake, so as to induce them to frequent our rooms and keep them under the influence of good companions'.[114]

Throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods a good deal of Catholic popular culture was also derived from ceremonial processions and festivals that punctuated people's lives. The Church's calendar included saints' days, Corpus Christi day, and festivals commemorating events in the life of the Virgin Mary. At St. Mary's, Leeds, 'as part of the celebrations of the Feast of the Sacred Heart', in 1873, 'the Oblates of Mary Immaculate organised a procession, in which, Catholics marched through the streets accompanied by bands, flowers were scattered in front of the Blessed Sacrament, and non-Catholics looked on

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[112] *Catholic Herald*, 13 February 1892.
[113] *Ibid*., 21 April 1899.
[114] *Ibid*., 17 December 1898.

with a respectful demeanour'.[115] By the 1880s Corpus Christi processions became an annual event at some of the county's larger missions. In 1899, the *Catholic Herald* describes how no other Catholic community in Yorkshire observes the Corpus Christi processions with greater fervour and enthusiasm than that of Bradford, 'During the past few years the city has been the scene of many striking and memorable gatherings in celebration of this festival'.[116] Throughout the nineteenth century, ceremonial processions had Catholic cultural pride as their focus, and continued to do so well into the twentieth century, often enforcing, in ritual form, an ideal of cultural separateness from the mainstream of English society 'to raise structural fences' around its adherents.[117] Certainly, their value underlie attempts made by the Church to turn its adherents in on themselves – as individuals and as families – and to confirm some of the most profoundly imprinted social patterns of Catholicism.

They also served to place Catholics into a kind of never-never land, safely beyond the social and cultural preoccupations of contemporary English Protestant life. Most visibly, as far as the Church was concerned, ceremonial processions were a show of Catholic unity and coherence, which tended to blind non-Catholic observers with the umbilical connections the Church had with its adherents, 'who marched behind its banners'.[118] Those watching Catholic processions would have been very much aware that they were glimpsing into a world quite different from their own.[119] Indeed, Catholic religious processions suggested to English Protestants a distinctively Catholic way of life and one that seemed indistinguishable from place to place. They also sentimentalised Catholic culture to the point of unreality and brought with them a whiff of antiquity and high English culture, 'which could immediately be recognised as processional celebrations from a previous age'.[120] In one sense these

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[115] *Tablet*, 28 June 1873.
[116] *Catholic Herald*, 6 March 1899.
[117] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholic in England, 1880-1939* , p. 73.
[118] *Ibid*,.p.72.
[119] *Ibid*,. p.73.
[120] *Bradford Observer*, 23 August 1892.

processions represented no more than a formal recognition of the Church's position that had existed prior to the Reformation. But they had symbolic value. Indeed, ceremonial processions were a major leavening agent that reinforced and ratified the real progress the Catholic Church had made in laying the foundations as a national religious and cultural institution. In 1890, a correspondent writing for the *Leeds Mercury* described the sheer magnitude and force of Catholic processions in that town as symbolically representing the idyll of city and suburban culture, 'which redress the grievances of the past and ensure a perfect future'.[121]

Irish and English Catholic societies, running on separate but parallel tracks in the industrial diocese of the West Riding, each displayed considerable internal cohesion and conformity when it came to ceremonial processions. Adherence to Catholic values in the form of ritual processions persisted in Irish working-class communities and English middle and upper-class communities to an extent that surprised such observers as journalist Eric Ramsden and Bradford Magistrate Frederick Bennett. They noted that the protocols and ceremonial conduct that surrounded Catholic processions, 'continued to be the quality that undermined such things as status and class',[122] and were great spectacles that openly abandoned the labyrinth of class cliques that infected the mainstay of Protestant English society. 'To draw into one bond of unity intelligent and influential Catholic classes with the greater portion of Irish working class Catholics through the spirit and pride of its parades moves even the broadminded Protestant to ignore…the vicissitudes of one's own religion and status'.[123]

The continued exercise of processions in the West Riding did a great deal to create and enhance feelings of local Catholic identity and community cohesion, which quickly became impressed on the public imagination. They also provided a hinge for the Catholic

[121] *Leeds Mercury*, 6 June 1890.
[122] *Bradford Observer*, 22 June 1897.
[123] *Catholic Herald*, 7 August 1904.

Church's history, a link between past and future traditions. Church processions continued to be a dominant feature of Catholic life that spanned the passage of the nineteenth century into the twentieth, to the joy of those who felt Catholic, and to the exasperation at times of those who felt Irish. Indeed, ceremonial processions served to reiterate the double patriotism that existed among the Church's Irish adherents – that of the Catholic Church and the wider patriotism of Ireland, to which they were proud to belong. Certainly, Irish Catholics continued to place a great deal weight on Irish identification through ceremonial processions, as Fielding explains: 'Irish Catholics used the processions to assert their national as well as their religious identity'.[124] Alderman John McCann the Mayor of Dewsbury, noted in 1913, that Irish Catholics in that town were, 'extremely proud' of their Irish nationality. 'They claim, in fact, to be even more Irish than their kin of the Motherland, and that no doubt accounts for the intensely loyal spirit which characterise church processions'.[125]

Not surprisingly, England bestowed relatively few opportunities for the diasporic Irish to openly commemorate the validity of their national heritage. 'On those few occasions when they did take to the streets it was generally in protest of England's transgressions in Ireland'.[126] The only variegations to this were festivities marking St. Patrick's Day. 'Even then they were discretely hidden away from the gaze of the general public. Apart from the few sprigs of shamrock worn in the streets few of those born outside Irish Catholic families would have known that it was St. Patrick's Day'.[127] However, a commitment to Irish values through St. Patrick's Day celebrations remained most pervasive throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods, which some referred to as the heartbeat of Irish culture.[128] They believed that St. Patrick's Day celebrations provided the best opportunity for Irish culture, identity and

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[124] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholic in England, 1880-1939*, p. 73.
[125] *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 17 November 1913.
[126] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholic in England, 1880-1939*, p. 73.
[127] *Ibid,*. p.73.
[128] *Catholic Herald*, 21 March 1892.

confidence to recover after the trauma of the nineteenth century famines and subsequent land confiscations.[129]

Despite their sincere commitment to the Church and Catholic values Irish diasporic communities in the West Riding continued to come together to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Celebrations varied from parish to parish and district to district. In most Irish communities, celebrations included morning church services followed by evening lectures with an attendant Irish theme. For example, at Batley in 1888, celebrations were marked by a morning service, where, Rev. F. Soden of Chorley preached the panegyric of the Saint. In the evening a Mr Sullivan delivered an eloquent lecture on the 'Songs of Ireland'.[130] In addition to these calmer expressions of devotion, and those alluded to in the previous chapter, St. Patrick's Day was predominantly, 'celebrated in private, at home, in the public-house', or at the local branches of Home Rule clubs, 'therefore, when Irish Catholics took to the streets it was usually to ostensibly express their Catholic faith rather than Irish nationality'.[131] Across industrialised Yorkshire, as elsewhere, the most important Catholic procession was the annual Whit parade, or perambulations. During the Whit week both Anglicans and Catholics promenaded the streets preceded by a band of music. Whitsuntide was a traditional period of revelry, to suspend the wheel of daily toil during Whitsuntide.[132]

Sport too reflected Catholic social and religious principles. Since the restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy, Irish and English Catholics lived in corporative communities, united by their Catholic religion and culture, which divorced them from the mainstay of the evangelical Protestant majority. Consequently, all cultural activities, including sports activities, were internalised, which represented the best interests of the Church. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, and trailing the English Protestant Church by three decades, the Catholic

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[129] *Tablet*, 12 March 1868.
[130] *Dewsbury Chronicle*, 28 March 1888.
[131] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholic in England, 1880-1939*, p. 73.
[132] *Ibid.,* p. 74.

Church slowly began to establishing its own sports societies. The establishment of Catholic sports societies and the individuals banded together in local sports societies, clubs and institutions, in pursuit of a common Catholic interest, came to embody what is termed 'Muscular Catholicism'.[133] In the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods sports societies were inculcated to play a leading part in the struggle to combat anti-Catholic sentiments, epitomised by English Protestants who detested both Irish immigration to England and the Catholicism immensely, and in equal measure.[134]'Muscular Catholicism' emulated 'Muscular Christianity', a nineteenth century Protestant movement, spearheaded by Anglican preachers, to promote the fundamental principles of preserving as well as restoring healthiness and manliness among the upper and growing middle classes; one whose influence might spread to the established education system. Indeed, its immediate impetus aroused tremendous interest and was subsequently sanctioned and diffused by headmasters of British public schools to fill the principle stations of active life, one that would fit middle and upper class youth for the business of manhood.[135]

The long-drawn struggle of 'Muscular Christianity' – health, strength and hardiness of body, and agility – had, at this stage, a two-fold aspect. It involved first, a sharp ideological attack against the apparent 'effeminacy' of the Anglican High Church, and, with this, the formulation of a positive alternative strategy to disseminate more widely the form and practice of physical wellbeing, healthiness and manliness; second, to promote and diffuse these ideologies among the upper and middle classes through the medium of sports, in their own institutions under their own control, serving their own purposes, untrammelled by the

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[133] M. Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity Since 1884* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 8-12.
[134] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, pp.33-7.
[135] C. Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880- 1920* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 143.

High Anglican Church and clerical control.[136] The movement had a progressive and considerable influence on British public schools, 'where competitive sports were played and considered the source of gentlemanly masculine qualities as well as imperial military might'.[137] For the Catholic Church the practice of sport and physical exercise arose from the practical necessity of creating a new Catholic and consolidating Catholic unity. By the late nineteenth century members were sufficiently numerous to muster thousands of Catholic men and boys onto the county's playing fields, to represent their respective parishes in the Catholic Church's annual sports tournaments, which in the sporting atmosphere of the day must have come close to an incitement to a religious riot.[138]

In the mid-nineteenth century, sport within the Catholic community was a relatively new phenomenon. With a few early exceptions, Catholics started participating in organised sports in increasing numbers, establishing many Catholic sports clubs of their own during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Sport held exceptional consequence for the working-class Catholics in the industrial Diocese of Leeds, in particularly rugby football, which is discussed at greater length in chapter six. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century the Catholic Church's attitude towards sport mirrored its distinctive religious standpoint. It shared the objective to produce a new Catholic, but this new Catholic was also a devoted observant of Catholic doctrines – stimulating the body was a means to religious spiritual ends. The engagement of Catholics in rugby football, both as sportsmen and as spectators, was condemned by some Catholic priests in the diocese and often regarded as a precarious precursor of assimilative evangelical Protestantism.[139] While some priests encouraged the playing of rugby football and emphasised its life-saving possibilities, others raised objections

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[136] J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 38-45.
[137] J.A. Mangan, 'Imperial Sport as Moral Metaphor, Political Symbol and Cultural Bond', in J.A. Mangan (eds) *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society* (London, 1992), p.10.
[138] *Catholic Herald*, 16 May 1900.
[139] *Ibid.*, 11 April 1898.

to it, especially since it drew people away from their religious duties, 'To ask people to give a shilling a year seems to some Catholics quite a extravagant request…the price of a place at a rugby match'.[140] Clergy attitudes to sport and rugby football varied throughout the late nineteenth century, but 'Muscular Catholicism' was not intrinsically adversative to Catholicism and some priests approved of physical culture as a constructive leisure interest.[141]

In 1892, Bishop Gordon wrote that a, 'hale and hearty body', was a very important condition for health and for soul and sanctified sport as praiseworthy endeavour. He believed that the Catholic people needed to regenerate their courageousness for the sake of rebuilding the religious identity of the Catholic Church, and deemed sport as an admirable and appropriate means to that end.[142] Phases of Catholic recreational and sporting activities, their popularity and growth are exemplified by the establishment, of not just parochial societies, but also county-wide societies. By the 1900s there existed in the Diocese of Leeds: the West Riding Catholic Billiards Association, West Riding Catholic Draughts Association, West Riding Catholic Chess Association, West Riding Catholic Whist Association, West Riding Catholic Shooting Club[143], West Riding Catholic Water Polo and Swimming Association, West Riding Catholic Athletics Association, West Riding Catholic Rugby Football Association, West Riding Catholic Association Football Society, West Riding Catholic Boxing Society and many more recreational organisations which were established throughout this period.[144]

Having passed through the nineteenth century, in which its adherents continued to give the Church an ongoing bicultural character, the ecclesiastical hierarchy had aspirations for the values and imperatives of Catholic culture to be recognised and taken more seriously

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[140] *Tablet,* 6 June 1885.
[141] *Ibid.*, 27 September 1892.
[142] *Ibid.,* 23 June 1886.
[143] *Catholic Herald*, 7 December 1900.
[144] *Catholic Directories*, 1882-1900.

by its adherents. This success is exemplified by the number of Catholic confraternities and societies that existed in the industrial diocese of the West Riding throughout the period under investigation. This outline of the nature of these confraternities, guilds and societies show what an enormous influence they must have had over the working-class Catholic people throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and fully justified the wisdom of the Catholic Hierarchy in calling attention to them. From whatever point we look at them we see how completely religion entered into the lives of their members, not just religious observances, but the practice of religion by charity, fraternal love and union.

In these confraternities they united prayer, the Holy Mass, and in reverence we can easily picture the pride they took in their Church, their altar, their guilds, and in all things connected with their religion. Through its guilds, societies and confraternities the Diocese of Leeds provided amusements and enjoyment for the greater mass of Irish working-class Catholics, which, too, were permeated by religion and doctrine: we can only attempt, however, to envisage the enthusiasm and delight with which they embraced festival days, processions, shows, meetings, annual dinners, and so on. This thesis does not allow a comparison between these guilds and confraternities, or to examine how far exactly any of their special features penetrated the diasporic Irish communities. It is hoped however, that this chapter has highlighted sufficiently, the impact and moral importance these Catholic societies may have had as an incentive in making the Irish Catholics more prominent; and perhaps furnishing hints of how they adapted to the development of the religious objectives these societies had at heart.

In sporting terms, Catholics had a special talent for playing sports. The playing of rugby football was especially helpful at boosting the self-esteem of working-class Catholics, and it also taught them to unite and to co-operate with each other, and to employ 'manly discipline'. Rugby football was especially important to the people of the West Riding,

providing cohesion and coherence to thousands of working-class people in an era marked by ongoing social situations and encounters, which invoked both class interests and increased class antagonisms. The relationship between Catholic and Irish identities in rugby football are profoundly entrenched and intertwined in the history of Irish Catholic diasporic immigration to the West Riding of Yorkshire – conventionally spanning the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Before considering the nomenclature that reflect the contributions of Catholic and Irish diasporic immigrants in the history of rugby football, the next chapter, will firstly, examine the social experience and importance of rugby football in the West Riding. The history of rugby and rugby league football is a vital part of evaluating how the Catholic community in the West Riding of Yorkshire evolved as rugby itself evolved. It is therefore essential to examine the history of rugby in Yorkshire. The discussion that follows is arranged chronologically and topically to give a broad outline of the times, and how Yorkshire society responded to rugby football as a regional winter pastime.

CHAPTER 5

A RUGBY REVOLUTION BEGUN

The Emergence and Diffusion of Rugby Football and the Origins of Rugby League in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

The last four chapters have considered the social, religious, nationalistic and cultural activities of the Irish Catholic diaspora in the West Riding of Yorkshire. It is now necessary to examine developments in light of their relations with rugby football. In order to examine this course of events this chapter will first consider the emergence, diffusion and popularity of rugby football in the West Riding throughout the second half of the nineteenth and the opening decades of the twentieth century; but of a kind and in a ways which will express the progress of rugby football union, which marked a swift rapprochement between the working classes of the West Riding and the game itself. It will briefly consider conflicting attitudes on the question of amateurism and professionalism in the light of conflicting class interests which dictated opposing attitudes; marking a crucial moment in the history of rugby football and culminating in the emergence of rugby league football, in which the working classes took an increasingly prominent place.

The popularity of rugby football in the West Riding provides an instructive key to understanding the way in which the industrial classes sought to let a little entertainment into their lives in the few hours they were spared from the grind of their normal working day. By the late nineteenth century rugby football become the great panacea of the northern industrial working classes, providing comfort and consolation to thousands of workers in the chief centres of industry to make their lives more tolerable. One of the most intriguing aspects regarding the history of rugby football is the light it sheds on the social life of those classes who played and watched the game. During the mid-nineteenth century rugby football, as we might naturally expect, was developed and played exclusively by members of the upper and

middle classes, and was confined to English public schools in the central and southern districts of the country. As the century progressed, however, so did the games popularity and its diffusion.

By the late nineteenth century rugby football had spread both geographically and down the social ladder, laying the foundations of a new democratic game. Not only did the upper and middle classes play the game but also members of the industrial working-class. It had radiated out from the public schools and had ceased to be a socially exclusive pursuit played by those privileged few in the upper-circles of Victorian polite society.[1] In the West Riding, the diffusion of rugby football was achieved, above all, through the mass participation of the working classes, to free themselves from toil and drudgery of industrial life. Not only did rugby appeal to the working classes but many of the county's factory owners and industrialists who, in an increasingly commercialised world, welcomed the game as a new conception of service to the working class communities.[2]

Following the establishment of the Yorkshire Challenge Cup competition in 1877 many new rugby clubs were established with extraordinary impetus in the chief centres of industry, such as, Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, and in many of the smaller towns and villages scattered across the West Riding. This description is confirmed by a correspondent writing for the *Leeds Mercury*: 'The enormous crowds that once flocked to watch a Yorkshire Cup-tie match, or a regular fixture, could not conceivably have been foreseen by its founding members when a number of Yorkshire's senior clubs were first established'.[3] Throughout the 1860s, and most of the 1870s, the day-to-day running of rugby club was a fairly straightforward matter. There were no excursions in luxurious saloons to the south of England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland. National and local newspapers gave little attention to the game. There were no special football editions in the evening papers; no

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[1] T. Collins, *Rugby's great split: Class, culture and the origins of rugby league football* (London, 1998).
[2] *Athletic News*, 22 May 1879.
[3] *Leeds Mercury*, 9 November 1892.

columns or paragraphs about the chances of this and that club, or the performances of this and that player; and no listings of teams for tomorrow's matches. Indeed, throughout this early period sporting news was virtually absent from the popular press. Gate-money, too, was not thought a great deal of – at any rate it was not taken in large amounts.[4]

When the Yorkshire Challenge Cup was first established in 1877, some matches were played on fields so inadequately protected that spectators were at liberty to saunter in without having to pay. One can scarcely conceive that kind of thing happening today. Rugby football quickly became widely diffused in the urban and manufacturing towns of the West Riding, and soon became a major spectacle attracting huge sums in gate-money; so much so, that what was once originally pursued for its own sake was followed up, in the majority of cases, for the sake of monetary gain. In some of the smaller country towns and villages rugby was practically unknown. According to contemporary sources, the establishment of the Yorkshire Challenge Cup was a chief means of promoting and diffusing the game which, by the 1880s, ultimately led to the increased number of rugby clubs now being founded in almost all of the county's towns and villages.[5]

Rugby matches played during the 1860s passed pretty much unnoticed, with the exception of those locations where it was played, and even then, match reports and results of Saturday's matches occupied exceptionally few spaces in the columns of Monday's or Tuesday's evening newspapers. In the pre-Yorkshire Cup days only a small number of clubs existed across industrial regions of Yorkshire – Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield, Huddersfield, York, Hull and Halifax all had clubs.[6] Therefore, and according to nineteenth century sources, 'it is to the Yorkshire Challenge Cup competition that we are beholden to for the

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[4] *Athletic News*, 18 October 1885.

[5] E. Dunning, *Figurational contributions to the sociological study of sport*, in J. Maguire and K. Young, (eds) *Theory, Sport and Society* (London, 2002), pp. 102-124.

[6] *Athletic News*, 2 March 1876.

promotion and popularisation of the game in the county'.[7] Indeed, where there had previously existed only a small number of rugby football clubs, before 1877, there quickly became a multitude; spectators came to be numbered by their thousands, where they had once been enumerated by the score. Playing techniques became infinitely better, more improved in technique, more scientific, and less dependant on sheer brute-strength and ignorance. The style and mode of play was enhanced by the interchange of ideas. Consequently, visits by leading Scottish, Welsh and southern English teams to the county helped to accomplish this par excellence; and a football enthusiast who happened to find himself in a village or out-of-the-way market town on a Saturday afternoon could, by and large, be certain of seeing his much-loved game being played with some degree of pretention, skill and science.[8]

The games that came of age during the mid-nineteenth century, whether under association or rugby rules, can lay no bona fide claim to antiquity. It was not until 1863 that the Football Association (FA) was established and further eight years before the Rugby Football Union (RFU) was founded in 1871.[9] Yet, football of one type or another has been played in these islands from almost time immemorial. When we are brought face-to-face with some of the earliest records we are unable, however, to unearth the game's true origins. Whether or not, as some will have it, 'it flew hither with the eagles of Caesar'[10], it is certain that the Romans played it prior to the Gaelic Invasion and it is probable that they derived it from the Greeks, who undoubtedly had some knowledge of the game.[11] The Romans, indeed, seemed to have anticipated modern rugby methods to the extent, at any rate, of using their

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[7] *Leeds Mercury*, 9 October 1881.
[8] C. Smith, *Leisure and Society in Britain* (London, 1982), p. 8.
[9] L. Allison, 'Association Football and the Urban Ethos', Stanford Journal of International Studies, 13 (1978), p.8; P. A. Greenhalgh, 'The History of the Northern Rugby Union Football, 1895-1915' (Lancaster University, unpublished PhD thesis, 1992), p. 14.
[10] *Athletic News*, 30 June 1878.
[11] N. Elias, and E. Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process* (Oxford, 1986), p 27.

hands as well as their feet. But both in ancient and modern times, until the establishment of the FA and the RFU the game was played in a very primitive fashion.[12]

By the mid-nineteenth century rugby football was scarcely developed outside its mob or folk form, or beyond the confines of the public schools; and did not universally commend itself to the sporting public at large. The variety of cultural and sporting material in the contemporary Yorkshire press, something not always glimpsed at in books, provides only limited information concerning early forms of football played in the West Riding throughout this period. Although contemporary newspapers did a great deal to reflect the nature of Yorkshire society the reporting of early forms of football were restricted to limited notices, advertisements and to a litany of correspondence that tended to denounce the social politics and morality of the game. For instance, a letter published by the *Leeds Mercury*, 25 May 1850, condemned a football tournament held at Heath Common, Wakefield as a 'moral outrage that betrayed the good values of the town'.[13] A letter carried by the *Sheffield Mercury*, 21 May 1853, rebuked an annual football gathering at Stainsborough Park, Barnsley as nothing more than an, 'extreme laxity of morals'.[14] Similarly, a correspondence published by the *Halifax Courier*, 16 June 1859, attacked the vulgarity of football as being, 'little more than a nursery for vice played by the lewd rabble which infests this town'.[15]

Such beliefs are somewhat predictable given the social location of the press at that time, which was far removed from the mainstay of Yorkshire's working-class population. Indeed, the provincial newspapers of mid-Victorian Yorkshire embodied the interests and viewpoints of the middling order (or polite society), asserting a somewhat unsympathetic attitude towards those as yet lacked a voice in the press (the working classes). Neither did the press foster any feelings of a regional identity. Yet, behind the paper and ink residue of the

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[12] G. Scambler, *Sport and Society: History, Power and Culture* (London, 1996), pp. 4-12.
[13] *Leeds Mercury,* 26 May 1850.
[14] *Sheffield Mercury,* 21 May 1853.
[15] *Halifax Courier,* 16 June 1859.

nineteenth century press one can detect, however faintly, polite society developing their taboo against recreational and leisure activities, drawing heavily on major cultural themes to achieve this. They campaigned relentlessly for the moralising of a supposedly degenerate Yorkshire population, making ethical points that favoured a programme of moral improvement. The degree to which newspapers favoured a programme of moral improvement can be related to the manner in which football was discussed and debased.

Whatever the irritations directed towards early forms of football and other recreational pursuits, by individuals yearning to see their names and prejudices recorded for prosperity, does not suggest, however, that they were affirming values shared by all. Indeed, a number of curious testimonies by some of Yorkshire's leading industrialists, in 1844, put forward contrasting views to those expressed by the middling order and their disapproving resonances towards football. The extent to which some industrialists favoured recreational pursuits is best summed up by the following comments:

> The time not consumed by meal is devoted to some noisy active game – often football or cricket bats are in requisition – is the immediate resource. We do not think that much risk would be incurred in favour of these activities. Will more cheerful smiling faces, more boisterous mirth, or energetic motions ever be seen when men engage in muscular games of football that were not generally thought to be a favourite occupation of the oppressed and exhausted? These are occupations (cricket and football) we should take great delight in and encourage. We must not separate the working man from his games.[16]

The time-honoured link between 'old ball' practices and the games played in the playgrounds, on the village greens and in the streets of Yorkshire are furnished by the Whitsuntide diversions.[17] In the latter, football was always at the forefront, albeit in a very unconventional and rough-and-ready guise.[18] Balls were kicked about the streets of towns

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[16] *Leeds Mercury,* 20 April 1844.
[17] N. Elias and E. Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport Leisure in the Civilising Process* (Oxford, 1986), p. 42.
[18] T. Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851 – 1914* (London, 1991), p. 225.

and villages, 'marking their fortuitous flight by the crash of broken windows, and, in the quarrels which ensued, occasionally resulted in a few throbbing ears and smarting behinds'.[19] As E. Dunning, J. A. Maguire and R. E. Pearton have noted, 'modern rugby was descended from these types of games played over both open countryside and through the streets and towns'.[20] The primitive forms of football played in Yorkshire, similar to that played in other parts of the country, had very few rules and were easy to comprehend. The rules tended to be by word of mouth and locally specific rather than written and instituted by a central controlling body.[21]

The technical, scientific and systematic advances in these games were at a discount, comparatively speaking, and it is more than probable that this prevented the game from becoming more popular, simply because: 'men did not particularly care for mere horse-play, *per se*'.[22] It becomes strikingly apparent that there was a vast difference between the measurement of ancient and modern games played during the first half of the nineteenth century.[23] Most public schools had long had their own particular games, but apart from these distinct games, football was a rough-and-ready pastime. Indeed, little more than a quarter of century before 1871, when the RFU was first founded, comparatively few rugby football matches were played in Yorkshire. 'At schools, sides were chosen; it was played in a haphazard sort of way at the Universities; and provided that the ball was eventually forced between the posts, it mattered little how it got there'.[24]

Many of the theories which were current among those who played primitive forms of football were of little value to those concerned with their historical origins, but did serve to

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[19] *Athletic News*, 17 March 1878.
[20] E. Dunning, J. A. Maguire and R. E. Pearton, *The Sports Process: A Comparative and Developmental Approach* (Leeds, 1993), p. 51.
[21] *Ibid*., p. 51-2.
[22] *Bell's Life*, 6 November 1859.
[23] R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations and English Society: 1700 – 1850* (Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 8.
[24] T. Mason, *Association Football and English Society*, 1863 – 1915 (London, 1980), 45.

illustrate the desire for an ancient and hallowed pedigree, which was fairly typical throughout much of the nineteenth century.[25] Like most other places in Britain, a variety of myths and legends circulated throughout the communities of Victorian West Riding placing the origins of their games among the Romans and other ancient peoples.[26] As the first half of the nineteenth century turned into the second half football remained relatively violent and was only just being organised in wider English society. In its early stages of development few people in the West Riding would not have been aware of rugby football.[27] Had events veered only slightly, the game might have remained only a blip on history's radar screen. Instead, it evolved into an all empowering winter pastime widely appreciated by the working-class inhabitants domiciled in the county's thickly populated commercial centres, both creating and fostering special feelings of local identity and cohesion; especially at a time when the county's economic and cultural position was under threat from a wide variety of centripetal forces.[28]

During the first half of the nineteenth century legislative changes had combined with technology and economic expansion to create a major discontinuity in public culture.[29] Newly expanding urban centres in the manufacturing districts of the West Riding owed very little to traditional disciplines and searched for new ways to communicate a new sense of identity.[30] This process was accentuated by the tremendous mobility of mid-Victorian society as massive urbanisation drew on extensive migration within the British Isles.[31] By the early

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[25] D. Brialsford, *British Sport – a social history* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 94.

[26] Bale, 'Sport and National Identity: A Geographical View', pp. 18 -41; Scambler, *Sport and Society: History, Power and Culture*, p 183; Brailsford, *Sport, Time and Society: The British at Play*, p. 18; D. A. Reid, 'Folk Football, the Aristocracy and Cultural Change: A Critique of E. Dunning and K. Sheard' *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 5 (1998), p. 225.

[27] J. Naughright and T. Chandler, *Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity* (London, 1996), p. 234; E. Dunning, and K. Sheard, *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players: A Sociological Study of the Development of Rugby Football* (Oxford, 1979), p.12.

[28] D. Russell, 'Sport and Identity', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25 (London, 2004), pp. 75-85.

[29] Young, *Early Victorian England, 1830 – 1865*; J. Williams and J. Hill, *Sports and Identity in the North of England* (Keele, 1996), p.38.

[30] G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (London, 1952), p. 135.

[31] W. Ashworth, *An Economic History of England 1870 – 1939* (London, 1972), p. 22.

1870s this consciousness of belonging was provoked by a growth in the interest in sports and other recreational pursuits.[32] The growth of the working classes, living separately from the middle and upper classes, in large urban concentrations required new forms of social control, and modern industries required a more skilled and stable workforce. These twin requirements gave rise to a series of developments which brought the institutionalisation of male workers' recreation (e.g. brass bands, rugby and soccer clubs).[33]

The growing interest in rugby football was slowly beginning to articulate with a swiftly altering Yorkshire society. By the 1870s rugby football was increasingly being embraced by large numbers of Yorkshiremen as a form of regional endeavour; its heroes were immortalised by bards, and some of its players became household names among those who treasured the glories of the game.[34] Each player became the champion of his own town or village.[35] For the most part, the majority of these men, with the exception of the county's elite players, never achieved county or national eminence but were, in equal measure, of great consequence to the subsequent evolution and popularity of the game in Yorkshire. These were men, often well-known locally, whose lives, beyond the occasional newspaper biography, published team-sheet or obituary, went largely unrecorded.

Many of the county's leading rugby teams achieved notable victories both regionally and nationally, and to mark their sporting accomplishments a team would, on occasion, return home to the triumphant sounds of a brass band or the delights of a victory parade through the streets of their local towns to display the spoils of their victories.[36]. The intention and significance of these victory parades allowed local dignitaries, politicians, officials and

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[32] J. Hargreaves, *Sport, Power and Culture: A Social and Historical Analysis of Popular Sports in Britain* (Cambridge; Polity Press, 1986), p.15.
[33] Brialsford, *British sport – a social history*, p. 305; D. Birley, *Sport and the making of Britain* (Manchester University Press, 1993), p121.
[34] *Athletic News*, 28 October 1876.
[35] *Ibid.*, 5 July 1879.
[36] E. Dunning and K. Sheard, 'The Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League' *International Sociology of Sport* (1976), p. 49.

citizens alike to share in the pretensions of their team's sporting endeavours. Rugby also created intense and sometimes fierce rivalries. Indeed, much of the local rivalry and dislike of other places found particular expression in rugby matches. By default, such rugby matches were often violent and sometimes associated with uproar, confusion, and even fighting.[37] By the late nineteenth century, however, rugby was more institutionalised and had become a rule controlled manifestation of local competitive feelings and antagonisms, although, in the early 1890s, around Halifax, rugby was said to have increased, 'the intense dislike and contempt felt for neighbouring towns, especially Wakefield'.[38]

This was a serious occupation. Inter-parish rivalries also meant that you despised your brother or nearest friend if he happened to live or follow a team in a different parish to your own. If a player from an opposing team got injured, then supporters hastened in all sympathy to communicate the disaster. If a local football hero developed some ailment before match-day then foul play was suspected. Then there was the big day itself when teams met before thronging crowds. Reporting on the popularity of rugby football in the West Riding, a correspondent for the *Athletic News,* 1883, wrote, 'As you looked into the sea of faces in the gloom of a December afternoon, there was not a second when a match was not being struck'.[39] This image must have resembled something like the monster demonstrations of the Chartists some forty years earlier and their simultaneous torch-light processions. The report goes on to describe how at rugby matches in the West Riding, 'the roar of expectation starts low, rises as the score line rises, and drops in disappointment. The next moment the tension is broken, and the vast crowds split up into buzzing groups, each explaining exactly how it happened and what should be done with luckless defaulters'.

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[37] J. Williams, 'Sport, The Town and Identity', in K. Laybourn (eds.) *Social Conditions, Status and Community 1860-c.1920* (Gloucestershire, 1997), pp. 123-38.
[38] *Athletic News*, 27 November 1892.
[39] *Ibid.,* 26 December 1883.

At the other end of the spectrum news of a defeat precipitated a hail of criticism, and players or a luckless defaulter viewed as hero one match could be relegated to the rank of villain by the next. A clue to the unfavourable dissatisfaction directed towards rugby players and rugby teams by their own supporters can be found in the *Athletic News*,16 April 1879, under the heading, 'Dead March in Saul in Halifax'. When the news of their Yorkshire Cup semi-final defeat to local rivals Wakefield Trinity reached Halifax, blinds at local public-houses and hotels were at once drawn. The Halifax team were so confident of winning the match that a brass band had been instructed to greet the team at the local railway station, but in light of their defeat the Halifax captain, with great forethought, telegraphed ahead to have the musicians dispersed. Ignoring his request the brass band assembled on the station platform and when the special train carrying the Halifax team arrived began to play 'Dead March in Saul'.[40]

The extraordinary growth in the number of rugby clubs appears to have taken place as the county's towns expanded in size and travelling facilities became infinitely more improved. Indeed, geographical factors were no longer an obstacle in the progress and wider diffusion of the game. It was now possible for teams from most urban and rural, regardless of distance and geographical separation, to compete with one another in open competition without too greater difficulty. By the 1870s rugby was certainly being spread and transformed by the expansion of the railways, linking obscure towns and villages with the chief centres of industry. From the late 1870s onward, special train services were introduced by the region's railway companies to convey rugby teams and their legions of supporters across the full length and breadth of Yorkshire.[41]

There were, however, from time to time, some logistical problems for the region's railway companies. For example, the new rugby season was commenced in earnest on the

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[40] *Ibid.*, 16 April 1879.
[41] *Ibid.*, 9 May 1877.

first Saturday of October each year. However, the region's railway companies made no special arrangements for the transportation of rugby teams and their respective supporters until the first week of November, when they introduced the new winter timetable. Needless to say, this created a great deal of rancour among the county's rugby supporting public.[42] Furthermore, unable to keep pace with the rapid popularisation and diffusion of the game among the working classes, there was a serious lack of available third-class accommodation. Fortunately, the region's railway companies responded to this sporting crisis, and to maximise their own profits for sure, by renovating dilapidated cattle trucks and converting them into third-class accommodation to transport the legions of working-class football supporters across the county; and occasionally into neighbouring Lancashire to watch matches between their teams and the top-flight clubs of Lancashire.[43]

The development of rugby football in the West Riding, as elsewhere in northern England, embraced people from every social class and occupation, and from both town and country – urban gentlemen, doctors and clergymen right through to farmers and the industrial classes, colliers, mill workers, and dockhands.[44] In most schools it was the only male winter sport available, and in some of them participation was compulsory.[45] However, E. Dunning and K. Sheard remark that, 'fewer public school or old school boys seem to have taken part in rugby football in Yorkshire'.[46] Such a class of people appear to have been repelled from playing or joining some of the county's football clubs simply because it was too much confined to the merchant and working classes, and the rough and ready ways of the latter certainly did not commend themselves to these men of culture.[47] Furthermore, in the late

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[42] *Ibid.*, 16 May 1877.
[43] *Athletic News*, 15 January 1879.
[44] Collins, *Rugby's great split: Class, culture and the origins of rugby league football*, p124.
[45] J.W. Adamson, *English Education* (London, 1930), p. 142.
[46] Dunning and Sheard, 'The Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League: a Case Study of Organisational Conflict and Change', p.46.
[47] *Athletic News*, 2 February 1876.

nineteenth century the fostering of convivial class relations that had once existed, however small, was starting to fracture and break down.[48]

It was precisely this period that saw the relocation by some of the county's leading industrialist families and employers, who gradually, but increasingly, became absent from their commercial undertakings in the manufacturing industries. Their yearning for an alternative kind of life-style, detached from that of the industrial towns, was all too clear. Moreover, the sons and heirs of leading industrialists, basking in the aura of their public school and university educations, shared new interests and aspired not to a vocation in manufacturing but the armed services, the professions, politics, or pursuing the life of a gentleman of leisure – to some the latter seemed the most important work to be done. This profound shift away from the industrial towns led not only to a lessening interest in their respective businesses and their workforces, 'but what's more it led to the replacement of direct involvement by a mode of thinking which was more concerned with the amount of money they could   squeeze out their firms for conspicuous consumption elsewhere'.[49] Therefore, mixing it on the rugby fields of West Riding with a class of people they ostensibly loathed and pressed hard to endow them with tremendous wealth was not an attractive incentive. Indeed, there is no doubt that fastidiousness, fear of ridicule, and the like, probably kept these free living fine gentlemen of the upper classes away from the sport in the West Riding. Thus, it follows that the distinctive middle and working-class character of rugby football in Yorkshire was probably the effect and not the cause of this abstention by the upper classes.[50]

Naturally, the game played during the 1860s was immeasurably unlike that which we would identify with today. For one thing the players were not allowed to carry the ball at all; if they should carry it they were predisposed to having their shins hacked, where upon, out of

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[48] Birley, *Sport and the Making of Britain*, p.32.
[49] Scambler, *Sport and Society: History, Power and Culture*, pp.2-6.
[50] *Ibid*., p.18

consideration of their shins, they dropped it. Yet, compared with soccer, they could stop the ball with their hands and make a fair catch. It was for the most part a game of their own creation, a hybridised form of early rugby and soccer. In the early years of the game's development in the county, and owing to the want of more football teams and regular fixtures, clubs such as Leeds Athletic had to be contented with playing games arranged among their own membership, generally forty aside matches.[51] The Leeds club also selected twenty of their finest players to form a first team, which competed regularly against forty of the club's second team players.[52] The first team always wore blue shirts and the second team red. Admission fees to watch these games were charged at 1*d.* In July 1864, Leeds Athletic played fifteen medical students in Royal Park, Leeds, which became a regular tussle due to the lack of alternative fixtures.[53]

By 1865, the Norfolk Football Club, Sheffield was founded and commenced regular fixtures with Leeds Athletic Rugby Club.[54] In the early career of the Bradford club, players had to be satisfied with games arranged with Old Boy's clubs and fixtures with Leeds Grammar School; and in later years with Leeds Athletic Club, Halifax Rugby Football Club and Darlington Grammar School.[55] It is owing to the football notes of 'Old Ebor', whose pen-name appeared at the head of many rugby articles in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* during the nineteenth century that we are able to gauge some of the difficulties that some of the county's first rugby clubs had to endure in their efforts to arrange a regular fixture list. A fixture card supplied by the Bradford club, dated 1872/73, illustrates thoroughly what a painstaking undertaking it was to fill up dates, 'for in the middle of the many blank spaces their appear such fixtures as, A to F versus G to Z, Captain's Side versus Secretaries' Side',[56] and so on,

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[51] *Leeds Mercury*, 2 May 1864.
[52] *Ibid.*, 9 May 1864.
[53] *Ibid.*, 1 July 1864.
[54] *Ibid.*, 15 June 1865.
[55] *Ibid.*, 2 November 1868.
[56] *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 4 October 1874.

which provides a reasonable indication as to the embryonic state of the Bradford club; and moreover, the general state of rugby across the West Riding throughout this early period.

The development of rugby football in the West Riding during the early 1860s sprang from the pioneering efforts of the bourgeoisie and merchant classes.[57] It is also suggested, that prior to the formation of the RFU in 1871, rugby in West Riding was, 'monopolised at first by the upper and middle classes'.[58] Indeed, 'the class characteristics of some clubs were inaugurated primarily for the benefit of the upper and middle classes, such as, the Leeds based Yorkshire Wanderers and, the original Hull and York clubs'.[59] On the other hand, existing sources of information do contrast with this assumption and subsequently allow for more than one interpretation on the matter. It is generally accepted that the founders of some of the county's first rugby football clubs were derived from the upper and middle classes. However, the emphasis placed upon the upper and middle classes dominating the horizons of rugby football to the exclusion of all others, simply obscures the fact that a significant number of working-class men were actively participating in regular games of rugby football from as early as 1864; a period when a number of county's leading clubs were beginning to form.[60]

The general bias towards this type of class interpretation is partly a reflection of the homogenous nature of rugby football that existed in the south of England, and to a lesser extent in Lancashire, where the game was played exclusively by the upper and middle classes. Moreover, such assumptions are based purely on the class disposition of a club's founding members and not it's playing membership. Take for example the comments of Henry Irwin Jenkinson, one of the founding members of the Leeds Athletic Club, who is less intent on calling attention to the dominant control of the club by the upper and middle

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[57] T. Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History* (London, 2006), p. 3.
[58] E. Dunning and K. Sheard, 'The Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League: a Case Study of Organisational Conflict and Change', p.45.
[59] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History*, p.3.
[60] *Leeds Mercury*, 2 May 1864.

classes; advocating the idea that all classes of people were similarly welcomed in the club and encouraged to engage in its harmonious support and membership: 'At present the club numbers 250 members, of all ages from thirteen to fifty, and of every class, and others are joining every day. Any one is allowed to join to club who will play without roughness and in a gentlemanly manner, and, since the subscription is 1*s.* per annum, every barrier against the predominance of class is removed'.[61]

In like manner, Bradford Athletics Club, Halifax Rugby Football Club, and Huddersfield Athletics Club also adapted themselves to the ways of the classes from which they recruited. They commended themselves to all sections of urban society and recruited their membership along more lenient lines of social interaction and class tolerance, as well as facilitating the greater body of working-class men that were won over by these clubs.[62] This was not done, however, out of some high-minded respect for the working classes; rather, their class-based leniency was driven by enlightened self-interest. By reconciling the central authority of their rugby clubs with members of the working classes these founding members were simply strengthening their clubs numerically and financially, as well as reinforcing their own civic position as social elites.[63]

It was only natural for the West Riding's rugby clubs to recruit from the lower strata of society, since the great mass of the population was, for the most part, working-class; and it was only natural that this predominant element within society should give its tone and colour to the development and advancement of rugby football across the county. Indeed, rugby football was adaptive to the environment and localities where it was developed and reflected the partisan sentiments and social tastes of all section of people domiciled in the manufacturing districts of the West Riding. The class based characteristics of the county's rugby clubs are merely extrinsic and accidental because rugby football was shaped according

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[61] *Leeds Mercury*, 20 May 1864.
[62] *Bradford Telegraph*, 9 October 1866.
[63] *Athletic News*, 2 October 1884.

to the nature in which it was received, but also by a large measure of elasticity and adaptability, so that each separate club had its own distinctive characteristics. Consequently, the significance of upper and middle class monopolisation, as far as some of these clubs were concerned, became somewhat diminished. The evidence leads to a general conclusion that working-class players had been assimilated into the game much sooner than was first believed; and moreover, the homogenous intercourse that existed between rugby football and the upper and middle classes in the south of England, and in Lancashire, did not necessarily follow suite in the West Riding.

As the 1870s progressed, so did rugby football, spreading both geographically and down the social strata at a rapid rate of knots. Nevertheless, the central organisation and overall control of the game remained in the hands of the governing and/or middle classes, who, as Tony Collins has highlighted, 'had no objections to the working-class men playing what they viewed as their game, provided it was on their terms'.[64] In any study relating the development of rugby football, the attitude of the governing classes generally must play an important part, for those who controlled the game had it in their power to create conditions which would help or hinder it. Throughout much of the period under investigation the influential classes appear to have understood the attitudes of the working-class and their relationship with rugby football only partially, to the extent that in some cases the working-class player was feared and loathed as much as he was admired.

This failure to understand naturally made their advice not only less welcome but much less effective than it might otherwise have been.[65] In this period the working-class rugby player, and the mass of working-class spectators, were constantly subjected to the trenchant criticisms of the economically advantaged who were opposed to them participating in the sport. This opposition is difficult to characterise and is multifaceted, but its sources are

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[64] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History*, p. 16.
[65] *Athletic News*, 25 March 1889.

class bound, offering elevated concepts which attempted to reinvigorated and strengthen upper-class unity, and ultimately to impose their authority and control over the game.[66] For these reasons statements made about the spread of working-class participation in rugby were frequently coloured by authors whose opinions highlight the clash of incompatible class systems: 'Why are so few public schoolmen and clergymen found in our leading fifteens? It is because the associations of the game are now becoming so distasteful to any gentleman of sportsmanlike feeling. They do not care to be hooted and yelled at as part and parcel of a sixpenny show or to meet and associate with men who care nothing for the game other than as a means to an end'.[67] In large part, these critically minded judgements mirrored the widespread opinions expressed by a large proportion of the privileged classes throughout the nineteenth century.[68] Yet, and despite all their criticisms, it did very little to ebb the rising tides of working-class participation in rugby.

The inclusivity of rugby football also provided the canvass on which the county's Irish Catholic communities could pour out their own feelings of injustice towards bigoted, discriminatory treatment, infected by a virus of anti-Irish and consequently anti-Catholic feelings. Indeed, Irishness and Catholicism was a football jersey the diasporic Irish of the West Riding put on when they walked onto the county's football fields. There was certainly more mixing of ethnic and religious ingredients on the rugby football fields of West Riding than there was off it, or in any other sphere of social and cultural life at that time. However, one of the most divisive elements within English communities at this time in history, the Protestant–Catholic split, was well and truly observed on the playing fields of the West Riding. Some matches were marred by hostilities, bad feelings and the occasional acts of violence, which could involve all possible combinations of players, officials and spectators. For example, on 12 October 1881, the *Athletic News* carried a report concerning a dispute

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[66] *Ibid*., 8 February 1881.
[67] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History*, p. 2.
[68] *Ibid*., pp. 2-4.

which flared up during a football match between Horbury and Dewsbury Shamrocks – the county's first Irish football team. The game had to be brought to an abrupt halt after serious fighting broke out because of anti-Irish comments made by players from the Horbury team.[69]

It was not unusual for some of the most fertile seeds of conflict to be settled on the football fields of the West Riding. Some observers openly disapproved of Irish Catholics being assimilated into the sport, fuelled in part by anti-Papal and anti-Irish sentiments.[70] Clearly, intense theological ferment brewed among some sections of West Riding society, seeking as they did to restrict cultural interactions threatened by Irish Catholic hegemony, and were resistant to any social, religious or cultural assimilation on the football fields of the county. As a snapshot, a correspondent writing in the *Athletic News*, 18 October 1880, was so alarmed by the level of Irish Catholic–Protestant interactions on the football field that he made the following exclamatory remarks, 'One can't help feeling that the spirit of tolerance is somewhat carried to excess on the football fields of Yorkshire when one finds Protestants playing Irish Catholics. One admires their love of the game more than their wisdom, their heart more than their head'.[71]

If church organisations and religion reflected the fundamental separation of Irish and English domains, rugby football did not. Apart from warfare, in fact, the one national and regional activity to which the Irish Catholics contributed was rugby football. Furthermore, from the late 1880s onward Eastern European Jews were also distinguishing themselves on the county's rugby fields. They founded a number of successful rugby clubs in the central districts of Leeds, where the greater majority of Jewish people were domiciled. Not surprisingly, restrained and not so restrained methods were found to communicate discontentment among some sections of society at the formation of immigrant football teams. The formation of Irish Catholic football teams shall be discussed in much greater detail in the

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[69] *Athletic News*, 12 October 1881.
[70] Bossy, *The English Catholic community, 1550-1870*, pp. 240-95.
[71] *Athletic News*, 18 October 1880.

proceeding chapters, with some reference to Jewish teams, but for now, it is sufficient to simply recognise that their existed a significant number of exclusively working-class, Irish and Jewish rugby teams playing out of the northern industrial districts of the West Riding; and they competed regularly in both local and regional fixtures.

Formerly a county with fixed ethnic borders, the populous of nineteenth century West Riding quickly became a multi-centric people identified not geographically or economically but by ethnicity; where a amorphous cluster of religious and cultural markers were perceived differently depending on whether the eye of the beholder was looking from inside or from without. In the West Riding, immigrant communities and English society, running on separate but parallel tracks, each displayed considerable internal cohesion and conformity when it came to rugby football, without any loss of communal historical consciousness or national culture. Notwithstanding, radiating systems of prejudice and persecution, which blurred the boundaries between the immigrant and host communities, rugby football served to radically simplify these matters and for the most part was tolerant of religious diversity and long-standing nationalistic agitations and tensions fanned by xenophobic sentiments. Both Irish and Jewish immigrants also served as the 'exotic other, to highlight and confirm to their own identity and distinctiveness. Wrestling with the challenges posed by these variegations, rugby football episodically passed through much of the nineteenth century as an all-encompassing sport that fashioned an intensely loyal spirit across all sections of West Riding society, with its interweaving of class, ethnicity and religion, and community identity.[72]

Association football of course had a following, especially in Sheffield and its immediate neighbourhood, but it is the rugby game that is unique to the rest of the West Riding, since it was followed by the public in a way unknown elsewhere in England at that

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[72] *Catholic Herald*, 9 June 1994.

time.[73] As one commentator so succinctly put it, 'Rugby football is too thoroughly grafted, I am afraid, in the West Riding sporting stock to give much room to the dribblers. An attempt was made to form an association club in Bradford some time ago. I suppose the club is still in existence yet – but nobody knows it'.[74] For a time, especially around the 1860s, the game appears to have existed in an almost experimental state, it had not yet radiated out among the masses and only a handful of rugby clubs existed. From the mid to late 1870s, however, it had taken root, and from that moment onwards there was nothing that could stir a Yorkshire man more than going to watch his local heroes play against the stalwarts of another club.[75] As a consequence a rich male culture grew up around the lives of such men that played and followed rugby football, becoming the contemporary substitute for modern pugilism, with the added possibility of having your leg, arm or neck broken.[76] As a whole, for men of the West Riding, playing and following rugby football was the great common denominator they could share as players and supporters and as a sure-fire topic for socially bonding conversation.[77]

Cricket too had a following, local and national, but nowhere near as large or as socially diverse as that enjoyed by rugby.[78] Compared with cricket, rugby included more people than it excluded, even among those who worked for a living. Other sports attempted to make an impression on the Yorkshire public, but failed enormously. In 1889, American baseball players held an exhibition match at Bradford Park Avenue in an attempt to promote and diffuse their sport globally. However, at the conclusion of this sporting exhibition, over 1,500 spectators waited outside the ground to vent their feelings, with true Yorkshire gusto and politeness. It was hardly necessary to disguise the fact that the exhibition was a

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[73] *Athletic News*, 28 September 1881 and 27 September 1882.
[74] *Ibid.*, 23 April 1889.
[75] *Ibid.*, 5 July 1886.
[76] R. W. Cox, 'History of Sport', in M. Shoebridge, (ed.), *Information sources in sport and leisure* (London, 1992), p.24.
[77] *Athletic News*, 3 March 1878.
[78] D. Hodgson, *The Official History of Yorkshire County Cricket Club* (Wiltshire, 1989), p. 24; D. Russell, 'Amateurs, Professionals and the Construction of Social Identity', *The Sports Historian*, 16 (1996), p. 51.

magnificent failure. The chief objection to it, as one correspondent lamented, 'was its want of backbone; it is not sturdy enough; it isn't rough enough; it can't kill a man'.[79] Evidently, the game was not robust enough or manly enough to satisfy the pugilist appetites of those in attendance. So far as the West Riding public were concerned, in this town at least, baseball was not about to send the county's football clubs screaming and kicking into the bankruptcy courts.

Interests in horse racing, again largely but not exclusively among men, was almost as high, however, with its ranks of owners, trainers, riders and club officials, was not as demotic as rugby. Indeed, the private boxes and the members stand pointed to a continuing distinction between the respectable and the rough. A wide variety of other sports popular among the working classes of Yorkshire, included boxing, wrestling, knur and spell, foot-racing, hare-coursing and pigeon shooting, which were all pursued for monetary gain or other reward. A correspondent writing for the *Northern Star* of 1864, following the events of a West Riding by-election, also noted that, 'the old and barbarous practice of cock-fighting was still common in this district. Monday was set apart for such purpose. It being seven o'clock in the evening before I arrived, I cannot describe the actual scene, but in the evening almost every public house was crowded with drunken men – the topics of conversation were cock-fighting and man-fighting, and all the gross bestiality I ever heard from the lips of men stands unequalled, compared with the brutal coarseness and obscenity I here listened too'.[80] In the West Riding the correspondent found a different type of working man. Nowhere in England, he reported, does the working man so enthusiastically partake in barbarous sports for their personal amusement and financial gain than in the West Riding. In these activities there is a clear link between the working classes and monetary gain. This has been reiterated by Tony Collins, who notes that it is folly to think that the labouring classes would engage in

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[79] *Athletic News*, 18 March 1889.
[80] *Northern Star*, 2 December 1864.

amusements that did not offer some financial incentive or reward: 'To the industrial working classes, it was unthinkable that excellence in sport should go unrewarded'.[81] It is highly likely that gambling was the main impetus for promoting many of these popular activities, and with it, a continued working-class support. Indeed, behind most working-class amusements there loomed many bookies operating illegally to take bets and reward those who backed a winner.[82]

Betting was a popular topic in all spheres of Victorian life, including rugby. It was reported in the *Athletic News*, 28 November 1877, that the diffusion of betting had become widespread on the terraces at some of Yorkshire's premier rugby matches, and was entrenched within the clubs themselves: 'The issue of betting in some games are worth an enormous amount of money to certain spectators in Yorkshire, which is corrupting football as it has corrupted the turf'.[83] The following week, according to the *Athletic News*, the county's rugby clubs had come to a formal agreement with the governing authorities of Yorkshire Rugby Football Union (YRFU) not to tolerate betting inside their grounds and to stamp it out.[84] By 1890, despite taking measures implicit with the tenets of the YRFU, some clubs were unable to suppress betting on their terraces, notwithstanding the comments of the YRFU, 'There is no manner of doubt that betting does still exist, but what we do deny is that it publicly takes place on any of the grounds on which the matches are decided'.[85] However, a correspondent writing for the *Athletic News,* 24 March 1890, stated that at a match at Castleford, gambling was taking place right under the noses of the YRFU committee, despite having made the following pledge that very same day: 'The notice of the county committee having been called to the prevalence of betting on football grounds, they call upon the committees of the different clubs to assist them in putting down this growing nuisance. If

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[81] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History*, p. 2.
[82] *Athletic News*, 2 November 1882.
[83] *Ibid.*, 28 November 1877.
[84] *Ibid.*, 5 December 1877.
[85] *Ibid.*, 24 March 1890.

continued, the committee may feel it their duty to approach the local police authorities of the different districts with a view to co-operate with them in taking legal proceedings against offenders'.[86]

According to contemporary sources, betting at rugby matches had been ongoing for many years, and in most quarters no genuine endeavour was ever made to discourage or restrain it.[87] It is not surprising that for many people betting was seen to be an unnecessary evil that degraded the sport, especially when they encountered men at football grounds shouting the 'odds' with all the professional expertise to that witnessed in the betting enclosures at large horse-race meetings. Despite all the rancour, and supposed resolutions sanctioned by the YRFU to suppress betting, there are no obvious instances of individuals being prosecuted for illegal betting at any of the county's football grounds. This being the case, resolutions approved by the YRFU clearly had very little impact at eradicating betting on the terraces at its football matches. And with no obvious power actively pressuring individuals to give up their gambling ways at football gatherings, the trade-offs probably seemed, at least to those who considered them, more positive than negative. The ineffectual actions of the YRFU on this matter are best summed up by the speculative comments of a keen gambler, who believed betting was firmly entrenched among the committee members themselves: 'I'll bet any County committee man a dollar on that myself. Beg pardon, I forgot, the committee men never bet – when they are not pretty certain of winning'.[88]

In spite of issues surrounding gambling in the sport, rugby was the game that eclipsed all other sports in the northern districts of the West Riding and by the late 1870s it had grown to be the preferred winter pastime.[89] Praised by some and dismissed by others, rugby football was the form of athletic amusement that grew powerfully and quickly on the affections of the

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[86] *Ibid.*, 7 April 1890.
[87] *Ibid,*. 14 April 1890.
[88] *Ibid.*, 17 March 1890.
[89] Dunning, Maguire and Pearton, *The Sports Process: A comparative and Developmental Approach*, p.306.

Yorkshire man, or woman, who began to take an interest in it. It was seen by most people to be more exciting than cricket, keeping players and spectator's wits at a state of high tension for the duration of the seventy or eighty minutes of actual play.[90] The ardour of such enthusiasm was caught by the players themselves through the cheering roars in their ears while the game was ongoing. The so-called greater prominence of rugby football over cricket in Yorkshire was published in a series of interesting articles carried by the *Athletic News*, 31 January 1877, entitled 'Football as a Rival to Cricket', in which a well-spirited correspondent goes into meticulous detail on the subject of how rugby football was more exciting to watch, healthier, and much less expensive to play than cricket; making it significantly more appealing to the industrial working classes: 'A rugby football match beats cricket out of the field for sheer excitement and interest and the working classes of the Yorkshire applaud it'.[91]

Such was the popularity of rugby in West Riding that each year numerous summer cup competitions were organised by clubs from across the county. In 1884, however, YRFU made several determined attempts to prohibit them, especially those competitions where gate-money was taken, offering the following explanation for their intervention, 'Summer football contests engender, envy, hatred, malice and un-charitableness. Football under such circumstances has a tendency to destroy the interest which ought to be legitimately felt in the recreation during its own proper season'.[92] Despite their interference, the YRFU were unable to prevent the widespread playing of summer football contests, which were to continue for another six years.

To navigate a path around the resolutions sanctioned by the YRFU, and to exploit the then by-laws, promoters of summer football contests simply reduced the number of players in a team to ten-a-side, or less. By doing this it rendered the YRFU powerless. In their ruling the YRFU merely outlawed the playing of fifteen-a-side football matches; this simply meant that

[90] *Athletic News*, 21 March 1878.
[91] *Ibid.*, 31 January 1877.
[92] *Ibid.*, 18 May 1884.

summer football contests played with reduced numbers of players fell outside of their then bye-laws and rules of the game, and ultimately, beyond the control and direct authority of the YRFU. By 1890, however, at the annual general meeting of the RFU held at the Westminster Palace Hotel, London, the following resolution was passed to stamp out summer football contests for good: 'That it shall be illegal for a member of any club in England in membership with the Rugby Union where gate-money is taken unless agreed that not less than fifteen players on each side take part in the match. That no football contest of any character, either for charity or otherwise, where gate-money is taken, be allowed during the close season'.[93]

When one comes to write about English sport one is assuredly struck by the lightening-like speed with which rugby football achieved its popularity among the masses, and how it monopolised the affections of the Yorkshire people. Yet, popular amusements, which came to dominate the recreational landscape of Victorian Yorkshire, aroused deep resentment and provoked clerical protest. Indeed, under a veneer of theology lay a core of social condemnation and clerical petition, ranging from the bizarre to the ridiculous, from the perennial of drink to dancing. However, the greatest spectator sport of all that held the utmost abhorrence among clergymen was rugby football.[94]

The reactions of some clergy, during this period, appear to have arisen out of clerical jealousy as the mass of working men reverently prostrated themselves before this new sporting deity. Indeed, it was precisely this period that saw a great enhancement of the prestige of rugby, whose newly formulated popularity was elevated by the working classes almost to the status of a religion, rivalling that of the established religions. As Rev. F. E. Toyne of Leeds remarked, 'The place of novelty savouring in the character of football is

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[93] *Ibid.*, 3 October 1890.
[94] *Yorkshire Catholic Herald*, 23 February 1887.

more of Deism than of Christian faith'.[95] Other members of the clergy based their opposition on feelings that rugby was somehow atheistic.[96] Since these comments appeared to provide unanswerable arguments for the unrestricted sway of rugby, they were profoundly congenial to some clergymen providing a firm ideological basis not only for ecclesiastical action against rugby but also for a moral outlook consistent with the growth of all innocent amusements. It was the alarming progress and popularity of rugby among the industrial classes that clergymen of most religious denominations used as the inconvenient instrument to account for declining congregations.

Yet, at the same time, there were some clergymen who felt that rugby was extremely useful and that its diffusion should be encouraged. In 1864, Rev. J. Blomefield, incumbent of St. George's Leeds, and speaking on behalf of Baptist, Wesleyan and the Independent, called for the immediate introduction of bodily exercise, gymnastic sports and the establishment of church rugby clubs for its membership.[97] Paradoxically, not without some difficulty, the clergy were, in fact, foremost among those who succeeded in establishing some of the county's earliest rugby teams, becoming players and honorary members themselves, despite clerical remonstrations from some quarters.[98] Although the majority of county's rugby clubs were non-religious some were, however, affiliated with church societies; Leeds Parish Church, Leeds St John's, Wakefield Trinity, and Bradford Trinity are to mention but a few.[99] And being a member of a church rugby team was probably the only existing tie between some working-class men and the church.

The worship of rugby football appears to be distinctly idiosyncratic to Yorkshire, born initially of the tremendous material advances that accrued through the engines of the industrial revolution. Change; constant change and advancement, this became the operating

[95] *Leeds Mercury*, 7 April 1877.
[96] *Athletic News*, 18 November 1876.
[97] *Leeds Mercury*, 15 December 1864.
[98] *Athletic News*, 13 January 1890.
[99] *Ibid*., 4 March 1882.

ethos of the age. And no doubt it was one reason why rugby football became so acceptable to Victorian Yorkshire; because it could be shaped within the same mould.[100] Yorkshire men had their own notion about sport like everyone and everything else; and like an arrow through time the rugby population of the West Riding became actively engaged in a constant process of improving the function and form of the rugby game, making clever adaptations which were constantly being honed to be yet cleverer. Rules were formulated and amended, the game had taken on new scientific developments and the working-class players themselves became more proficient.[101]

The overall effect of this was one of unease which only added to the resounding worries supposed by the RFU that the influential upper and middle classes were gradually being forced out of the sport at the hands of the working classes. The often anguished minds of the RFU were accentuated even further by the unparalleled success of northern teams. Indeed, within the first seven years of RFU's county championship competition, Yorkshire were triumphant on no less than six occasions.[102] 'This led one London correspondent to write: The majority of the Yorkshire fifteens are composed of working men who have only adopted football in recent years, and have received no school education in the art'.[103] Undeniably, the class-based composition of the Yorkshire county rugby team was predominantly working-class. Furthermore, the Yorkshire county team, being English county champions on such a regular basis, had the honour of playing against a 'Rest of England' team in a trial of rugby superiority, whom they frequently beat.[104]

Much of the West Riding's sporting culture dates from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It documents the rich, unique features about what people thought of them

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[100] *Ibid.*, 3 November 1880, 'Football Followers of Yorkshire'. This article considers the growth of Rugby football in Yorkshire and attempts to unveil some of the fundamental reasons why the game developed so quickly in this county.
[101] *Ibid.*, 17 November 1880, 'Football Science'.
[102] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History*, p. 3.
[103] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[104] *Athletic News*, 13 January 1890.

selves, or wished to think of themselves; and the concept of regional character and its relationship with rugby football; how it articulated relations between civil society and between class interests and class conflicts.[105] The perspective being adopted here implies that there was an almost unavoidable or a natural relationship between rugby football and the social construction of class and regional identities in the West Riding, fashioned and/or consciously invented.[106]At the municipal level, rugby football had developed from the enthusiasm and pride of the local people – this still remained – but from the late 1880s commercialisation took hold of the game, a hold that has remained to this day.[107]

Certainly, the commercial sophistication and financial judgements of some of the leading clubs in the West Riding were well developed and extremely lucrative. Some rugby clubs were so economically efficient, financially secure, and self-confident, that they could afford to place shares in their clubs on the open market. For example, on 25 February 1889, Leeds, Cricket, Football and Athletic Company, advertised its prospectus in the local and national press, highlighting the exceptional benefits to those who had the commercial audaciousness to purchase any of the 25,000 shares that the club had floated on the open market, at a price tag of £1 per share.[108] At the close of the preceding week the *Athletic News* reported that each and every share had been snapped up and the preliminary business had, 'gone on as merry as a marriage bell and with such a capitally organised board of directors the company cannot fail to succeed'.[109]

It seems to have been almost customary among some of the county's leading rugby clubs to publish their end of season finances in both the local and regional press, providing an interesting insight into the amounts of money these clubs accrued over any given season. For

[105] J. Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes, 1870 – 1914* (Manchester, 1993), p.97; P. Bourdieu, 'Sport and Social Class', *Social Science Information*, 6 (1978), pp. 819 – 40.
[106] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), pp. 203-10; R. Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford, 1989), p.15.
[107] Collins, *Rugby's great split: Class, culture and the origins of rugby league football*, p.45.
[108] *Athletic News*, 25 February 1889.
[109] *Ibid.,* 3 March 1889.

example, the balance sheets for Bradford Rugby Club for the 1882/3 season show total receipts amounting to £732; of which £560 was for gate-money taken from the 90,000 spectators who watched all matches played at the Bradford ground; and £172 from membership subscriptions. Their overall expenditure amounted to £282 leaving the final balance at £450.[110] In 1885, Halifax Rugby Club published its annual financial statements for the season 1884/85, showing an income of £1,598 from gate and stand receipts, and a further £285 from subscription fees. The total expenditure of the club was £1,236, showing an overall profit of £647.[111]

Again, in the 1884/5 season Bradford Rugby Club published its annual accounts. This time the balance sheets show that its overall receipts amounted to £2,874; the principal item being gate-money £2,281 (175,000 paying spectators watched the various matches played on the ground over the course of the season); and members' subscriptions £593 (there being 2,202 members and 60 life members); the expenditure amounted to £1,130 leaving a balance of £1,744.[112] In addition to the financial affairs of the Bradford club, this information also uncovers the exceptional augmentation in the number of spectators gripped by the sport in little more than two seasons – finances at the club had increased four-fold and attendance figures had almost doubled. Indeed, this pattern was fairly characteristic across the whole of the county and was not just unique to the Bradford club – Manningham, Leeds, Huddersfield, Hull, Dewsbury, Batley and Wakefield all enjoyed similar end of season returns.[113]

It is extremely interesting to observe the incredibly modest approximation which was placed upon the Bradford club's business enterprise in 1879/80, when the club relocated to Bradford Park Avenue. 'A clause in the agreement (which is the private property of the Bradford Park Avenue Association Football Club reads as follows: A sum of a bout £100

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[110] *Ibid.*, 6 June 1883.
[111] *Leeds Mercury*, 2 May 1885.
[112] *Athletic News*, 16 May 1885.
[113] *Ibid.*, 22 September 1887.

shall be the normal expenditure per annum of the Football Management', but it also added: 'The expenditure in all probability will be kept within this sum'.[114] This illustrates how little the then administration of the Bradford club had been able to anticipate the growth and development of the game in that town and the expansion their club.

It seemed that everybody was trying to make money out of rugby and its popularity, except football players themselves, that is, who were not even allowed to take a gin and bitters presented to them without getting into serious difficulties with the YRFU on grounds of professionalism.[115] Even the hypocritical prize-giving newspapers, that made such a moral point of preaching the purity of amateurism in rugby, were making money out of the game. In addition, the lure of cup competitions springing up across the county, organised and sponsored by enterprising tradesmen and offering an array of prizes that ranged from clay pipes to large furniture items didn't help.[116] This again called into question the so-called purity of amateurism when clubs competed in said competitions.

The professional suspension rod was frequently wielded reprovingly around by the YRFU, and its supporters, who campaigned relentlessly to neutralise professionalism from within the game and to punish any club or individual player for their professional sins. The very nature of these so-called professional witch hunts dominated the rugby scene throughout much of the late nineteenth century, which saw the suspension of several clubs and their players for violating the highly cherished amateur code. As noted by Tony Collins, 'Between October 1888 and January 1890 six leading clubs were suspended for periods of up to fourteen weeks for offering money or jobs to players. In the same period, ten players were put on trial by the Yorkshire committee, six of whom were suspended from the game for

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[114] J. V. Greenwood, *A Short History of Bradford Football Club* (1969), p. 4.
[115] *Athletic News*, 16 November 1889.
[116] *Ibid.*, 6 January 1890.

receiving cash, testimonial gifts and, in one case, an unauthorised wedding present from his club'.[117]

No later than 1879, there was much discussion across the county both in the local press and in private circles regarding professionalism and many blamed the success of the Yorkshire Challenge Cup competition for it.[118] Some strongly believed that many of Yorkshire's leading clubs were already steeped in the professional dye.[119] They also believed that the least encouragement by the YRFU would have been eagerly snatched upon and utilised by these clubs as a pivot on which the wheels of professionalism could be turned with such velocity that it would be difficult to withstand.[120] Had professionalism been legalised in rugby, many commentators of the day were wholly convinced that Yorkshire would have been its hotbed, just as Lancashire had in the association game.[121] From this period forward, rugby witnessed unprecedented ruptures between some of the county's senior clubs and the governing body of YRFU, who were frequently at odds with each other over the payment of players.[122] By and large, it had become widespread practice in these shadowy intervening years for leading players to benefit from their sporting endeavours, 'receiving open-handed gifts, varying from food-stuffs to suits and watches to alluring offers of employment, to grease their palms and retain their loyalties to a club'.[123]

Although a great deal was said in praise of the YRFU and the steps it had taken to stamp out professionalism, and keep the amateur flags flying above the county's football grounds, many clubs had good grounds for believing that, 'because one or two, or even more clubs could not get their county members to understand their concerns regarding professionalism, this led to agitation and on-going encounters between the clubs and the

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[117] Collins, *Rugby's great split: Class, culture and the origins of rugby league football*, p.84
[118] *Athletic News*, 2 March 1879.
[119] *Ibid*., 29 January 1889.
[120] *Ibid.,* 26 October 1893.
[121] *Ibid*., 4 April 1889.
[122] Collins, *Rugby's great split: Class, culture and the origins of rugby league football*, pp. 102-8.
[123] *Athletic News*, 21 September 1886.

county representative'.[124] These issues raged on until 1895 when the Northern Union (NU) was founded and the amateur flags were eventually lowered across many football grounds in Yorkshire, replaced by the professional banner.

Despite the extraordinary effusions concerning the amateur/professional debate rugby had become a common experience for nearly all Yorkshiremen and those from the immigrant communities. For the first time a 'double patriotism' was emerging which took pride in being both Yorkshire and English.[125] The pride in their victories on the football field and the deep shock and discussions provoked by any controversial losses hint that a large part of the county's identity would be invested in this particular sport. There became a growing opinion amongst the inhabitants of the smoke begrimed manufacturing towns of Yorkshire that there was no place like home. By the 1870s Yorkshire people were beginning to speak egotistically of the grandeur of the architectural features their towns and cities had to offer, the morality and industry of their men, and the exceptionally endowed talents of their footballers and rugby teams.[126] According to one writer, 'Yorkshiremen expressed their opinions so loudly and often about the superiority of their games of football as would leave a unprejudiced traveller to think that rugby football played in the Broad-acres was the freedom and birthright of every Tyke'.[127] In a letter to the editor of the *Athletic News*, 9 June 1877, a Lancastrian correspondent commented that, 'As an outsider, I don't know many pleasanter ways of spending a Saturday afternoon than going out of town with some football team – say Huddersfield, or one of the crack Yorkshire clubs'.[128]

Publications devoted to rugby football also indicate how the game had become an important element in the social pattern of Victorian life in the West Riding. In 1876, a pamphlet promoting the establishment of Yorkshire's rugby football clubs was first published

[124] *Ibid.*, 16 October 1893.
[125] *Ibid.*, 28 November 1883.
[126] *Ibid.*, 4 October 1884.
[127] *Ibid.*, 18 February 1877.
[128] *Ibid.*, 9 June 1877.

and entitled: 'Football in the Broad-acres' (Yorkshire was commonly referred to as the Broad-acres during this period).[129] In 1889, the YRFU commissioned the 'The Official Guide of the Yorkshire Rugby Football Union', published by Briggs and Rochfort, Bingley. This guide book contained useful and interesting matters pertaining to rugby football in Yorkshire, which is a remarkable testimony to the activity and growth of rugby within the county. One commentator remarked: 'A more comprehensive reference book in little compass could not be conceived. It is a veritable *multum in parro*'.[130]

In the mid 1870s, the provincial press and periodicals also played a major role in popularising the game, disseminating detailed match reports, statistics, commentary and instruction. The *Athletic News*, 28 October 1876, carried the following: 'We are desirous of making the *Athletic News*, as we have in the past, the best paper on all football matters'.[131] This was a successful periodical that dominated sporting news in the north of England in this period. It provided lists of teams down to play in the various matches, with full information about the places of meeting, the dressing rooms, times, and any arrangements that may have been of the slightest use to any individual player or spectator. Besides these they provided a series of articles with explanations and comments on the rules of the game and detailed accounts of the best manner of playing them.

Without doubt, the *Athletics News*, which began publication in 1874, was a powerful medium that accomplished a great deal in popularising rugby football in Yorkshire. But rugby was also reported extensively in other newspapers, for example the *Leeds Mercury*, *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, and *Halifax Guardian*, and periodicals, such as, *The Yorkshireman* magazine. Vivid accounts of rugby matches became a main feature, particularly with the development of the Yorkshire Challenge Cup, which was first instituted in 1877. The heightened excitement created by this competition did not limit itself, by any

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[129] *Ibid.*, 2 May 1876.
[130] *Ibid.*, 11 February 1889.
[131] *Ibid.*, 28 October 1876.

means, to the spectators and players actively taking part in the contest. All the evening papers published special reports, and the slightest scrap of information regarding the course of the competition was read with great avidity. Moreover, with the introduction of the 'tannergram', telegraph clerks could now communicate the progress of the competition to a much wider audience, both nationally and internationally.[132]

Indeed, at the semi-final of the Yorkshire Challenge Cup, played at Bradford in1884, between 400 and 500 private telegrams, representing approximately 7,000 words, were handed in between 5pm and 6pm, including some for the Continent and the Commonwealth, 'which fully stretched the resources of the make-shift Post Office situated at the ground'.[133] At Cardigan Fields, Leeds, during the 1885 Yorkshire Cup final between Halifax and Bradford, a temporary telegraph office had to be arranged to communicate the widespread interest of this encounter, and besides the long newspaper reports, an immense number of 'tannergrams' were handed in. Three wires were laid, one to Leeds, one to Bradford and one to Halifax. The Halifax papers used a large number of courier pigeons to fly between the reporters and their respective press offices, and were among the first papers to publish the result of the game. Another evening paper from Bradford went to great lengths to rig together a portable telephone line to communicate the progress of the game both locally and nationally.[134] The interest manifested in this annual event was something quite marvellous for the rugby loving population of Yorkshire, and in equal measure, quite surprising to the casual onlooker or outsider not familiar with the immense interest taken in the competition.

Although the provincial newspapers made good press from the coverage of Yorkshire Challenge Cup competition, they also reported on other aspects of the game. Newspapers like the *Leeds Mercury* not only offered detailed match reports but devoted whole columns and pages to the chances of this and that player and the chances of this and that team. County and

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[132] *Ibid.*, 7 June 1886.
[133] *Ibid.*, 3 March 1885.
[134] *Ibid*, 6 April 1886.

international fixtures also enjoyed similar prominence. Rugby football news also included a great deal of correspondence, for instance, a letter concerning spiked shoes being worn by football players, printed in the *Leeds Mercury*, 21 November 1879,[135] or the controversy over football players and benefit societies reported in the same paper on 12, 19 and 24 July 1881.[136] Anecdotes and information concerning professionalism and amateurism were also widely printed.[137]

With rugby football, as with much of the press coverage during this period, it was the human interest, and therefore it was the exceptional items that attracted attention. Indeed, this was reflected in the article headings carried in newspapers and periodicals such as, the *Athletic News*, *Leeds Mercury* and *Bradford Daily Telegraph*. The headline 'Proposed Football Club for Inmates of Deaf and Dumb Institution in Yorkshire' appeared on 28 January 1880 in the *Athletic News*.[138] In the final quarter of the nineteenth century lists of rugby fatalities and serious rugby accidents were also published under headings such as, 'Rugby Football: Danger to Life and Limb'.[139] The headline 'Outrageous Perils to which Players are Exposed', appeared in the *Athletic News* in 1882.[140] In January 1891 the headline 'Bright Young Life Cut Short in Football Match' was carried by the *Bradford Daily Telegraph*.[141] Fatalities and serious injuries were quite prevalent in the game, the horrors of which were reported by the press and by some section of polite society calling for the game to be banned. They viewed rugby players as nothing more than brawling savages 'Industriously trying to kick one another or inflict some mortal injury to one's opponent'.[142]

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[135] *Leeds Mercury*, 21 November 1881.
[136] *Ibid.* , 12, 19 and 24 July 1881.
[137] *Athletic News*, 9 March 1886.
[138] *Ibid.*, 28 January 1880.
[139] *Leeds Mercury*, 15 December 1879.
[140] *Athletic News*, 30 January 1882.
[141] *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 8 January 1891.
[142] *Athletic News*, 14 December 1881.

Although rugby had its rules and regulations, as formerly codified as those of any other sport, the 'rough' element in the sport was as strongly marked as ever during the nineteenth century. In the rugby variety, indeed, the danger to life and limb was far greater than in the old 'go-as-you-please' encounters of days gone by. The list of fatal and serious casualties was lamentably long.[143] Although society at large was disturbed by the large number of fatalities and serious casualties sustained on the rugby field, nobody in Yorkshire ever recommended or called for the emasculation the sport, they did, however, welcome with some satisfaction some modifications in the rules, with the aim of minimising the outrageous perils to which players were exposed under certain playing conditions.[144]

In its incidental and calamitous results, a rugby match was reported to bear all the hallmarks of a combat zone rather than that of a friendly arena of contest.[145] A young life cut short, or robbed of all its future possibilities of work or play was often the outcome of furious 'mauls' which played a prominent part in rugby football. It is no wonder that commentators such as Max O'Rell contemptuously branded the game, 'fit for savages'.[146] The most important innovation in the game, however, is found in the new rules that were promulgated by the governing body of the RFU and relate directly to the appointment of referees in 1885.[147] The old rules rendered the appointment of umpires optional, leaving the settlement of disputes to the captains of teams; however, this was abandoned in favour of the far more satisfactory ruling which made two umpires and one referee compulsory in all matches.[148]

As previously mentioned, it was by no means disputed that rough play existed within the game, particularly during Yorkshire Cup-tie matches. By the mid 1880s, however, with the introduction of new rules some of the more harmful practices were weeded out of the

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[143] Collins, *Rugby's great split: Class, culture and the origins of rugby league football*, pp122-28.
[144] *Athletic News*, 14 April 1844.
[145] *Ibid.*, 22 March 1885.
[146] *Ibid.*, 6 October 1887.
[147] *Ibid.*, 28 April 1885.
[148] *Ibid.*, 22 September 1885.

game. Notwithstanding, objections to the rough and ready nature of rugby football, even the most inveterate hater of the game could not have failed to have been struck by the immense interest that was taken in the sport and the annual Yorkshire Challenge Cup competition. The popularity of the Yorkshire Cup competition is reflected by the large sums of money it accrued and the number of spectators it attracted.[149] For instance, in 1885 it was calculated that over 100,000 spectators turned out to watch the competitions first round matches.[150]

At the Bradford ground alone the attendance figures were estimated to be in excess of 20,000, with gate takings totalling £300, such was the widespread interest in the Bradford and Hull encounter. In 1884, in the first round of the competition, no fewer than 960 players were engaged in different cup-tie matches, which the *Athletic News* described as, 'a small army fighting in football warfare'.[151] In 1885, at the semi-final match between Bradford and Batley £493 was taken in gate-money.[152] In the second semi-final that year, held at Leeds, the total gate was £600.[153] In 1886, the preliminary rounds of the Yorkshire Cup competition attracted a staggering 171,560 spectators, with gate receipts totalling £3,328. It is believed these figures could have been much higher, since some club secretaries had failed to supply their financial and attendance returns. In several cases the attendance figures were spoiled by inefficient field barriers, which allowed many people to enter matches free of charge. The admission fees varied between 2*d* and 1*s*.It was normal practice for the YRFU to receive the proceeds from the semi-final rounds and the final, which were subsequently distributed among local charities.[154] Gate-money was also one factor that encouraged the county's Irish National League clubs to establish their own rugby clubs; to accrue funds for the Irish Parliamentary Party, which shall be discussed in greater depth in chapter seven.

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[149] *Ibid.*, 15 July 1886.
[150] *Ibid.*, 21 March 1885.
[151] *Ibid.*, 10 March 1884.
[152] *Ibid.*, 7 April 1884.
[153] *Ibid.*, 14 April 1884.
[154] *Ibid.*, 8 June 1886.

The vitality of rugby football enjoyed in the West Riding during the latter stages of the nineteenth century, and the democracy it engendered, attracted many members of the working and industrial classes, including the Irish, therefore, acting as a centripetal force that galvanised what might otherwise have been a rather tenuous link between the county's inhabitants and the popularisation of rugby football. The organisation and development of rugby football right across the industrial belt of Yorkshire, emphasising the involvement of all football clubs and their membership regardless of class, religious orientation or nationality, which stood in sharp contrast to the decision making processes and organisational structures of the sport that existed in the southern counties of England; where the game was dominated by the middle and upper class orders and tended to ratify class division rather than seeking adequate forms of transcendence on behalf of the working classes.[155] That is not to say that hierarchical disputes of unequal partnerships between the upper and middle classes and working classes didn't exist in Yorkshire, which, for the most part, the former stood in opposition to the working classes having an equal footing on football ladder. Indeed, many propagandists were mobilised at the behest of the RFU and those individuals favourably disposed to discredit and denigrate working-class participation in the sport, their clubs and their supporters – such animosities were severe and frequent enough to find their way into the local newspapers.[156]

During the last three decades of the nineteenth century massive economic de-skilling was taking place across much of the West Riding of Yorkshire. These events had practical consequences which enhanced bourgeois tendencies to divide citizenship from work, area from work-place; consumption from production, leisure from work, and culture from politics

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[155] Dunning and Sheard, 'The Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League: a Case Study of Organizational Conflict and Change', pp. 43 – 47.
[156] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History*, p. 5.

and economics.[157] It was in this climate of change, strain and assertiveness that rugby football in Yorkshire, for its part, had shifted beyond some of the more conventional and divisive elements of class division that had previously existed. The proliferation of rugby football throughout Yorkshire and the changes in its social composition, filtering downwards in the social class hierarchy, led to a transformation in the configuration and dynamics of the game, challenging and brusquely rejecting some of the traditional class dominated leisure modes which went beyond the structured framework of class relations within which they had once operated.[158]

From the early 1890s onward, however, issues pertaining to professionalism and the frequent appeals by football clubs calling for 'broken-time' payments had not been fully suppressed by the RFU, notwithstanding their puritanical crusade to drive out even the slightest hint of professionalism, however 'veiled' it appeared. Given the fission-fusion relationship that existed between the RFU and many of Yorkshire's leading clubs it did very little to deter the latter from fighting hard for 'broken-time' payments to compensate their players for lost wages, as well as canvassing for parity for all players, regardless of class.[159] The official response by the RFU was fairly ambivalent at best and openly cynical at worst and at its annual general meeting in 1893 the vote in favour of 'broken-time' payments was heavily defeated by a majority of 282 to 136.[160] Accordingly, the majority of RFU committee members (the so-called paragons of football culture), with the few exceptions, perceived the role of the working-class player and professionalism as highly embarrassing incidences which were only too gladly swept under the rug and forgotten – one is irresistibly reminded of the reactions of a Victorian family when one of its members conceived an illegitimate child. These were a tiny minority of powerful men who recognised a very different social

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[157] Dunning and Sheard, 'The Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League: a Case Study of Organizational Conflict and Change', p. 44.
[158] *Ibid*., 45
[159] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History*, p. 3.
[160] *Ibid*., p.5.

reality – a reality based on the overwhelming power of upper and middle class unity which served as an authority to enact far-reaching control over the game.[161]

Although the RFU reluctantly recognised the importance of working-class participation in the development of the game they tended to look with suspicion at any working-class accomplishments within the sport. Suffering from what can best be described as a self-destructive paranoia. The RFU watched on nervously, simply because they didn't want the prestige of what they deemed to be their game to succumb to the pressures of the working classes and for it to suffer the similar fate to that bestowed upon the association football game – that was working-class dominance. The RFU was controlled by an elite, self-perpetuating body of men, who were elected from one term to the next to lead the RFU and, through it, to stem any working-class aspirations or runaway powers they might lay claim to, including 'broken-time' payments. Needless to say the 'broken-time' incident had long-term repercussions and remained at a point of high tension for a further two years.[162]

This disagreement about 'broken-time' payments was the fundamental difference that eventually isolated working-class players from the RFU, and caused the creation of a separate body called the Northern Rugby Football Union (NU). By 1895, rugby had passed through a rite of passage, a tripartite process of transition from one social state to another like an adolescent; its temper was explosive and quarrelsome leading to the great rugby schism, ushering in a new chapter in the history of rugby. Having failed unsuccessfully to negotiate any sort of compromise with the RFU over 'broken-time' payments, the representatives of Brighouse Rangers, Halifax, Leeds, Bradford, Hull, Huddersfield, Hunslet, Wakefield Trinity, Manningham, Liversedge, Dewsbury, Batley, Oldham, Broughton Rangers, Leigh, Warrington, Tyldesley, Wigan, St Helens and Widnes convened at the George Hotel, Huddersfield on 29 August 1895, where the unanimous decision was taken to form the NU,

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[161] Dunning and Sheard, 'The Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League: a Case Study of Organizational Conflict and Change, pp. 43 – 47.
[162] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History*, p. 4.

which immediately set about ratifying proposals for 'broken-time' payments which were initially fixed at 6*s* per day.[163] Indeed, this new functioning body came to power amid great hopes, painting an optimistic picture for rugby football and its working-class players and spectators in the north of England.

The formation of the NU was brought about chiefly by two causes; first by the disputes with the County committees over the management of the Senior Competitions of Lancashire and Yorkshire; and secondly through the rules formed by the RFU for an ideal amateurism that was totally unworkable in the northern counties, where teams relied heavily upon working-class players to form the mainstay of their playing membership. Moreover, the RFU, who were locked in an extremely hierarchical class system of control over the sport and armed with their grab-bag ideologies, were not prepared to relinquish their control over the game to the thronging mass of upstart working-class players and their legions of supporters, who had taken such a keen interest in the sport in the northern regions of England. The formation of the NU, on the other hand, was more in touch with contemporary football, with a special view to meeting the requirements of the working-class player. By 1898 the NU or Rugby League, as it later became known, 'developed into a fully professional game, with strong working-class support in parts of the industrial North, leaving Rugby Union to reign unchallenged in the South'.[164]

According to Tony Collins, the game played under NU rules seemed to lose its popularity during the late nineteenth early twentieth century. The attendance figures at some matches were reported to be much smaller than they had previously been recorded and as a consequence many clubs were getting into financial difficulties because of it. 'The game was now regarded by many to be less interesting to watch than it was at first, while some alleged that the rigid application of the professional laws were making players become less

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[163] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[164] *Ibid*., p. 5.

skilful'.[165] Nevertheless, and amidst the growing popularity of soccer, 'which had made significant inroads into the rugby playing heartlands of the West Riding',[166] especially in Leeds and Bradford, Rugby football played under the auspice of the NU lived up to the hopes of its admirers, missing no opportunity to improve the function and appeal of the game.

Initially, NU clubs played their games under Rugby Union rules; however, shortly after the accession of the NU, the governing body of this fledgling organisation was poised to ensure a smooth transition away from rugby union rules. Not later than 1897, the NU had come to appreciate their own power in determining what constituted a better playing spectacle, 'abandoning line-outs and reducing the value of kicked goals'.[167] Some other minor alterations and modifications to the playing laws saw the game gradually, but surely, 'moved away from the relentless rucking and mauling seen in the rugby union game, thus placing greater prominence on the scoring of tries'.[168] By 1906, as Tony Collins notes, the setting out of new rules, 'reduced the number of players on a team to thirteen and allowed a tackled player to get to his feet and play-the-ball back with his foot. He also notes that, 'these changes completed the break from the playing rules of rugby union and marked the birth of rugby league as a distinct sport with its own distinct rules.'[169]

The NU was born in an era marked by ongoing social situations and encounters, whole classes or strata of society in the north of England were, in some degree, tasting power for the first time; and as they pushed their way out of the inarticulate and into the articulate part of the communities, a kind of upstart arrogance became vocal with them. In religion, in social relations, in politics, in business and in leisure and sports men grown contemptuous of the old ideals were stridently asserting new ones. It was an era of growth and strain, of

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[165] *Athletic News*, 4 March 1900.
[166] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History*, p. 4
[167] *Ibid.*, p.5.
[168] *Ibid.*, p.4.
[169] *Ibid.*, p.4.

idealism and reaction, of swelling changes and of seething unrest.[170] The nineteenth century saw rugby pass from the public schools into the mainstream of British culture. Expansion brought with it conflict. 'The adept working-class rugby player wanted to be paid, if only in the sense of compensation for time off work and for the costs of travel'.[171] The middle classes saw this as the downhill slide towards professional players, who would threaten the moral ethos of the game. The RFU fought hard for the principle that the game should be played for the game's sake and banned all professionalism within its clubs. The middle-class objections to professionalism and the razor-edged competitiveness of the game divided the world of rugby along both social and geographical lines.[172]

By the Edwardian years of 1914 rugby league, as it later became known, had asserted itself as increasingly significant social and sporting force in the West Riding, and with it the reaction against the RFU had grown correspondingly.[173] The NU game especially appealed to men from the lower strata of society, which set it apart from the RFU, breaking all ties with their roots in RFU. From the RFU's perspective the NU was an unconventional organisation, outside any long-standing tradition. As such they were potentially dangerous and subject to a variety of criticisms, many unwarranted. For example, what concerned the RFU was the substantial number of northern working men still playing in RFU team, and the question was now being asked how many players would go over to the NU? This depended more than usual upon the standard of football that could be maintained by rugby union clubs in the North.[174] There were plenty of men in NU clubs who did not want pay but play. And if they could get the latter at its best in the one union they invariably went over to the other.[175] Over a very short period of time NU football gained official acceptance within the industrial North.

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[170] Dunning and Sheard, 'Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League', p. 49.
[171] Collins, *Rugby's great split: Class, culture and the origins of rugby league football*, p.12
[172] *Ibid*., p.12.
[173] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[174] *Athletic News*, 23 February 1900.
[175] *Ibid.*, 4 March 1900.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the NU was already beginning to create an intensely parochial structure and common doctrine that would eventually enable the game to dominate in the North. On the basis of this structure, the working-class world would become the NU world in the districts of the West Riding and beyond.

Rugby football was immensely important to the working-class communities of the West Riding throughout the nineteenth end early twentieth centuries. Both rugby union and rugby league, along with drinking in public-houses were the twin pillars of Yorkshire male culture during this time. This has to be understood if we are to place the Irish Catholic immigrants within this culture. The next three chapters aim to examine how, or if Irish Catholic communities in the diaspora assimilated into Yorkshire society through the medium of rugby football union and rugby league. The first of these chapters will examine Catholic rugby football teams, the second focuses upon the evolution ethno-religious Irish Catholic rugby teams, and the third examines the experience of the Irish Catholics with rugby league football. They will suggest that the Irish Catholic communities had an impact on both codes of rugby during the period under investigation, albeit, at a punctuated rate and in some cases for very different reason to those propagated by the English proletariat.

CHAPTER 6

NO PRAYER NO PLAYER

Catholic Experience with Rugby Football in the Late Nineteenth and Early

Twentieth Century

With over 100,000 adherents in the industrial Diocese of Leeds in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the majority of which were of Irish descent, it is a question of great interest how many Roman Catholics in the West Riding gravitated towards rugby football, given the regional importance of rugby as a dominant winter pastime. The term 'rugby football' is used here to represent both rugby union football and rugby league football, except where it is inappropriate. The history of Roman Catholic rugby players and Roman Catholic rugby teams in the industrial diocese of the West Riding of Yorkshire, throughout the modern era, can be traced back to the late 1870s and early 1880s. Indeed, Catholics living in the West Riding have always been part of rugby football since its inception, albeit, at a much slower and punctuated rate than that observed within the mainstream of evangelical Protestant English society.

The most common explanation for this is that the original impetus for the development of such rugby teams was impeded for a time as the Catholic Church was fully occupied with rebuilding its churches.[1] Secondly, given the welter of prejudices ranged against Catholics during the nineteenth century, the only way to guarantee that Catholics in the industrial Diocese of Leeds could participate in sport was for them to establish their own Catholic sports clubs and rugby teams. According to a report carried by the *Catholic Herald*, 26 October 1898, some Irish Catholics in Bradford were attempting to improve their status by joining in games of rugby and other activities, 'and this intrusion prompted some English

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[1] S. Gilley, 'The Roman Catholic Church and the nineteenth-century Irish diaspora', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 35 (1984), p. 12.

Protestants to attack the Catholic community, at times violently'.[2] The third and, perhaps, the most important explanation is that the Catholic Church was anxious to encourage the diffusion of Catholic sports societies and rugby teams among its adherents based on religious unity; with a greater emphasis on the inculcation of religious beliefs, Catholic virtues and values, and inward religiosity.[3]

The Catholic Church, then, was primarily concerned with clerical control over its sports societies. Indeed, the establishment of Catholic sports societies is a further example which highlights the rigorous attempts being made by the Church to establish a complex collective social and cultural identity – to mould the outlook of its adherents to willing co-operation within the new forms of social relations, then so rapidly developing – a rare atmosphere that was eminently detached from the mainstream of evangelical Protestant English society. By the late nineteenth century the religious and cultural value of Catholic sports societies and rugby teams could never be too firmly believed, or too carefully kept in view. Indeed, the Church conditioned its adherents to appreciate, through ecclesiastic instruction and religious indoctrination, that enlightened religious observance and Catholic virtues should form the ideological basis upon which its sports societies should be founded, if they were to fulfil their true social and cultural function. Such appreciation of the harmony of social relations between the Church and its adherents would be the inevitable outcome of the promotion and spread of Catholic sports societies and rugby teams across the industrial diocese of the West Riding. By the late nineteenth century, they had become the more numerous successors of Catholic confraternities which had started to develop in the 1870s. The moving force behind these sports societies helped to create and develop a unique Catholic consciousness among the mass of Church's adherents which later served as models elsewhere within Catholic culture, particularly in schools.

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[2] *Catholic Herald*, 26 October 1898.
[3] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholic in England, 1880-1939*, pp. 58-62.

Following the great rugby split in 1895, some Catholics stuck to the old rugby code, while others embraced the new. Catholic Church teams did not initially embrace the new code for reasons which will be addressed in chapter eight, but did eventually succumb to its popularity among some sections of its community. Many of the best sweeping studies of this period do not attempt to explain or explore Roman Catholic leisure activities; and/or the value of rugby football within the communities in which Catholics came to live.[4] The general explanation for this underlines preconceived notions about Catholic participation in sport and rugby football that are largely distorted in the history of sports culture in England throughout the nineteenth and opening decades of the twentieth century. Furthermore, comparatively few studies have dealt with Catholic leisure and recreational activities. To date there is no comprehensive research that documents correlations between Catholics and both codes of rugby football, although, some have circuitously acknowledged their existence in exotic footnotes.[5]

When disposed to examine the social and sporting connections between Catholic and evangelical Protestant religious communities it becomes clear that the preconceived ideas of some historians is that sport constantly prepared the soil for the growth of cross-cultural socialisation; eventually becoming the essential concomitant of convivial social and cultural relations between these two very different religious groups.[6] These ideas necessarily see sport as a means of habituating people from minority groups to the prevailing Protestant social

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[4] J. MacClancy, *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity* (Oxford, 1996); A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1997); R. Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford, 1989); G. Jarvie, 'Rugby and the Nostalgia of Masculinity' in J. Nauright and T. Chandler (eds.), *Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity* (London, 1996); J. M. Bradley, 'Political, Religious and Cultural Identities: the Undercurrents of Scottish Football' *Politics*, 17 (1997); G. Williams and T. Mason, *Sport in Britain* (Cambridge, 1988); L. Allison, *The Politics of Sport* (Manchester, 1986); and J. A. Mangan, *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism : British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad* (London, 1988).
[5] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History*, p.22; and T. Kelly and D. Gilroy, *Wakefield's Sporting Catholics* (Wakefield, 1978), p. 10.
[6] Brailsford, *British Sport: A social History*, p. 103; S. Cornell and D. Hartmen, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (London, 1998), p. 21; A. Guttman, *A Whole New Ball Game* (London, 1988), p. 94; P. McIntosh, *Physical Education in England Since 1800* (London, 1986), p.21; and S. Opotow, 'Moral exclusion and injustice: An introduction', *Journal of Social Sciences,* 46 (1990), pp. 1-20.

order. This was not, as has been suggested, the spirit in which nineteenth century Catholics and evangelical Protestants approached the question. There is no disputing the fact that sport was an expression of the unity of interest across all sections of society in nineteenth century Yorkshire. However, this unity of interest does not necessarily mean that sport was concomitant with any congenial cross-cultural socialisation between Catholic and Protestants at all. Indeed, such ideas violate the main principle, that of the natural identity and cultural interests of the Catholic Church, which were profoundly at variance with many aspects of the prevailing social order of evangelical Protestant religions.

In the late Victorian and early Edwardian West Riding of Yorkshire there is not one scintilla of evidence to suggest that the Catholic Church, either through their established sports societies or other cultural activities, vigorously sought to participate in any cross-cultural socialisation with evangelical religious groups, just a blind faith by those who tend to keep preaching it. Looked at more generally the Catholic Church saw such matters in a completely different light to those radiated by some historians; and it certainly wasn't in favour of its adherents participating in any cross-cultural socialisation with evangelical Protestants, no matter what sporting vehicle you decide to strap it in. Throughout the nineteenth century the Catholic Church worked actively in the cause of the enlightenment of its adherents to internalise all facets of their lives, detached from the interferences of English Protestant society. Therefore, cross-cultural socialisation with Protestants was deemed to be detrimental to Catholic interests. In 1888, Bishop Cornthwaite wrote:

> All Catholic sports played in the Diocese to be affective must be Catholic. I mean it must be animated by no meaner motive than religious conviction; it must derive its strength from religious fervour. In our ideal of recreation and leisure we seek to produce the all-round man, and for this reason we insist that physical development must proceed side by side with the spiritual. We claim that we can promote both our physical and spiritual development to the highest possible standard by directing our young men to not engage in sport outside the Holy Faith.[7]

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[7] *Tablet*, 14 March 1888.

As highlighted in previous chapters, across the northern industrial cities of England, the Catholic Church was closely engaged in an internecine struggle to shield its faithful from the harmful and incipient influences of rival religious organisations to internalise all facets of their lives. The objective result of their efforts was the erection of new and impassable religious barriers which created a truly narrow and exclusive Catholic world that prevented the entry of evangelical English Protestants. It was against this background that the Catholic Church had gained the enviable reputation among other religious groups for its capacity to impress upon even its poorest working-class members – those cut off from traditional and official Catholic culture – the morality of the day; and that it was in their best interests to become calm, orderly and acquiescent to their religious duties and withdraw behind the Church's impassable religious barriers for their own protection. In fact, contemporary evangelical Protestant prelates and clerics, frustrated by their own ineffective campaigns to bring their own labouring poor under the same ecclesiastic control, increasingly came to recognise and admire the remarkable progress made by the Catholic Church in their unfeigned preoccupations on this matter, where unity and piety became the watchwords.[8]

There can be no doubt, according to Charles Booth, that, 'the Catholic Church's domination over its adherents was carried to a degree of perfection and stamped with a thoroughness which make all the Protestant methods seem pinchbeck in comparison'.[9] With the single undeviating purpose of promoting the eternal welfare of its adherents the Catholic Church, was in fact, preparing them for the fit discharge of their social and religious duties detached from the rest of English society. This was done on grounds of efficiency, which is reiterated by Steven Fielding, who certainly believes with some justification that, 'while this objective was pursued with exceptional dynamism the process was not exclusively Catholic.

[8] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholic in England, 1880-1939*, pp. 58-9.
[9] C. Booth, *Life and labour of the people in London. Third series: religious influences. Summary* (London, 1903, p. 241; M. C. Bishop 'The social methods of Roman Catholicism in England', *Contemporary Review*, 39 (1877), p. 607; A. O'Day, *A Survey of the Irish in England* (London, 1990), pp. 97-8.

Evangelical Protestant bodies developed comparable methods to influence sections of the English working-class to adhere to their specific beliefs and realities of the world, but they did not arouse the same stimulus as the Catholic Church'. [10]

The Catholics communities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century West Riding, while maybe not affecting rugby football momentously have, nevertheless, had a long-standing and multifaceted relationship with the sport, which chimed in both with rugby union football and rugby league football. Researching the antecedents of players and teams operating out of the West Riding has produced some interesting information concerning their activities. While Catholics totalled only a small percentage of those who played rugby in the chief manufacturing centres of the West Riding, there were nonetheless, Catholic rugby players and Catholic rugby teams actively participating in both codes of rugby throughout the period under investigation. However, when fleeting through the many fixture lists and results pages printed in the sporting columns of contemporary newspapers and sports journals there are relatively few references to Catholic rugby teams. This is simply because, they did not engage in games with other religious denominations and, like its confraternities and guilds, they had been internalised by the Church, hidden from public gaze.

By the late nineteenth century over 100,000 working-class Catholics, most of which were of Irish origin, were still crowded away in unsanitary pestilential streets in an atmosphere loaded with the smoke and exhalations of the West Riding's chief manufacturing centres.[11] In the industrial towns and cities of the West Riding the actual living and working conditions of the mass of working-class Catholics was driving them desperate. It is in these stifling conditions that the inculcation of rugby football was factored in as a way of providing and/or lessening the intolerable pressures that existed within these squalled and often overcrowded living spaces. Rugby football by the 1890s had grown to become the regional

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[10] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholic in England, 1880-1939*, p. 58.
[11] *Catholic Directories*, 1851-1901.

game to anyone who wanted to play it, including working-class Irish Catholics.[12] The presence of working-class Irish Catholics continued, outwardly at least, to develop a consciousness of opposition against them from the county's host society, whose foremost interests were focused on the maintenance of the established evangelical Protestant English population of Yorkshire; over and above the social dislocation and difficulties experienced by the mass of working-class Irish Catholics. Internally, dangerous disaffection was also growing among, mainly, second generation Irish Catholics.[13] Indeed, it was in this period, the ardour for rugby football among the working-class Irish Catholics was untouched and was to a great extent capable of inflaming real disagreements between the Church and its younger adherents.[14] A battle of ideas was under way, one if, it went undirected would sow the seeds of a more dangerous disaffection among the working-class Catholic communities settled in the county.

In the 1870s, before the Church sought to promote the establishment and diffusion of its sports and recreational societies, rugby had a profound effect on the relationship between the Church and its adherents in a variety of ways. More than merely being an instrument of integration, sport had developed into a medium of expression for many working-class Catholics to distinguish who they were and how they were going to live their lives. It cultivated common values joined to Catholic practices and culture, while at the same time underpinning conventional evangelical Protestant English principles. Amidst the social and political upheavals which marked this period of their history, for many working-class Irish Catholics, rugby would function as a buttress to ease their emotions of vulnerability and disaffection, while, at the same time, preserving and maintaining their religious cohesion. The *Catholic Herald* of 15 August 1898 proclaimed that very few Catholics played rugby football during 1870s because the Catholic Church was a great stickler for education and actively

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[12] Dunning and Sheard, 'Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League', p. 42.
[13] E. R. Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1984), p. 140.
[14] *Catholic Herald*, 6 March 1909.

encourage its working-class adherents to acquire a positive moral education.[15] The Catholic Church, much troubled with the poverty and squalor of its working-class adherents, and, as already mentioned, profoundly interested in education, saw in co-operation not only an immediate means of rescuing the mass of working-class Irish Catholics from their present distress but also the potential for building a just Catholic society. Hence, it seemed that the primary focus of the Church was on mental culture – education, moral training and guidance, religious study, observing the sacraments, and reaching a higher moral and spiritual status – and not on sporting culture. Whatever the Church's intentions as regards training up its adherents in habits of sobriety, industry, independence and prudence, and in the proper discharge of their religious duties, the idea that sport and physical exercise could ease the way to self-improvement and perseverance never entered the minds of those prelates and clerics introducing religious and social reforms.

One factor which seems to have conspired in the Church's favour in its attempt to shield its working-class adherents from the rapid diffusion of rugby football in the West Riding during the 1870s is linked to the reporting of rugby, or lack of it, in the ecclesiastically controlled Catholic newspapers and popular periodicals. When evaluating the media coverage of rugby football – in the years before the establishment and subsequent diffusion of Catholic sports societies – it is evident that the Catholic press paid very little attention to the significance of either rugby or sport. Indeed, Catholic journals and newspapers, such as the *Tablet*, *Catholic Times* and *Catholic Herald*, propagated a largely separate social milieu, providing reading matter for reflection and discussion that went right to the very heart of Catholic cultural life; as well as devoting a great deal of space to welfare and educative issues. In the outcome, while the general cultural standard maintained by the Catholic press was extremely high and extremely popular, it is difficult to propose that most

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[15] *Ibid.*, 15 August 1898.

working-class Irish Catholics read these widely disseminated Catholic newspapers and journals. Conversely, the powerful influences of the Catholic press, may have, perhaps, helped the Church in its avowed attempts to open the eyes of its adherents to ways of religion and education to the exclusion of sports and rugby football.[16]

There can be no doubt that the Catholic Church had a steadying stranglehold on the lives of most of its working-class adherents; yet, by the 1880s, there were many overriding influences which encouraged young Catholic men and boys to ignore the centre of Catholic control and gravitate towards rugby football. Equally, far from seeing the wide diffusion of rugby as the answer to their immediate problems there were, however, several factors which influenced some diasporic Irish Catholics to reject rugby and English culture. Indeed, with the growth in Irish immigration, which peaked in the late 1870s, there came a corresponding proliferation of Irish social and cultural vitality in many parts of the West Riding; political and nationalistic consciousness, too, was fermenting.[17] So far as some Irish Catholics in the diaspora were concerned, the monopoly of one culture (English) was substituted by another (Irish), which was even harder to break. This national transformation of the Irish working-class Catholics also corresponds with the increase in the number of Irish Catholic priests now working in the Diocese of Leeds. In addition, the available sources for this period provide much important information about the nature of any exchange or acculturation of behavioural patterns between the English and Irish working-class populations. Indeed, texts of all types, political, literary, scientific, commercial, and religious, uncover the many distinctive features of the Irish Catholic diaspora.[18]

Although some of these factors would illustrate an uglier and much more realistic West Riding for many working-class Catholics, there is evidence to suggest that rugby was

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[16] R. McCready, 'Irish Catholicism and Nationalism, 1850-1922', *Irish Studies Review*, 6 (1998), p. 246.
[17] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p. 5.
[18] L. B. Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport, 1968), pp. 40-68.

being played by more Irish Catholic men and boys during these periods of increased hostility. In 1879, it was reported that in the neighbourhood of Goit Side, Bradford, the popularity of the rugby game among young Catholic boys had grown to be an annoyance, and as a result was suppressed by order of the local parish priest.[19] Whether this had the consequence of rendering the game less popular or not, we cannot say, but one way or another, the game's popularity did not diminish. In 1880, the priest at St. Anne's, Leeds noted, 'Rugby football is a common amusement with the young men and schoolboys of this parish, who also preserve the custom of cockfighting, drinking and fist fighting'.[20] At Halifax, on Shrove Tuesday 1881, there was a rugby football match between the married and unmarried Catholic men of that parish; and according to contemporary newspaper reports it was recorded that, 'the former are always victorious',[21] which suggests that this was not some curious one-off exhibition, but a common occurrence among the Catholic community. In 1882, at Barnsley, a similar match was played between Catholic bachelors and married men, 'beginning at two o'clock, and playing until sunset'.[22]

By the closing third quarter of the nineteenth century it is abundantly clear from the sources that in their social, political and cultural lives the Irish Catholic diaspora of the West Riding inevitably shared at least some perspectives with their English contemporaries. They were familiar with English cultural expressions and freely adopted and adapted them in articulating their own specific formulations. For instance, in just one generation, in order to improve their economic and social status, English personal names were adapted by some Irish Catholic families, whilst others dropped the 'O' from their family names, such as, O' Kelly,

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[19] *Bradford Observer*, 18 October 1879.
[20] *Athletic News*, 28 October 1880.
[21] *Ibid.*, 7 April 1881.
[22] *Sheffield Mercury*, 12 April 1882.

O' Reilly and so on.[23] For sure fashions did change in another generation, when Irish names were given again to children as national feelings were revived in the 1880s.[24]

Although a divide had been crossed, only peripherally did the Irish Catholic diaspora of the West Riding assimilate evangelical Protestant English cultural characteristics – their cultural sphere was, for the most part, Catholic and Irish as they held on to their genealogy, as well as their oral family traditions, which served as both arena and object of conflict between the working-class Irish Catholic diaspora and the host society. By the late 1880s, not only first generation, but second and third generation working-class Irish Catholics are known to have maintained a semblance of their former national identities, or reinvented their Irishness.[25]

Since many working-class Irish Catholics were infamously housed in some of the county's worst centres of industry, there were often economic and spatial factors that prevented many children from playing organised rugby, or indeed, participating in any other form of organised sport. Although the encumbering restraints of overcrowding and no suitable field space were obvious imperatives to participate in most organised team sports, this naturally led some Catholic youth, in some of the county's urban districts, to develop their own rudimentary street games as a substitute, which were viewed by some contemporaries as an, 'indescribable jumble closely resembling an amalgamation of fives, wrestling, racing and football, but not fairly entitled to lay claim to any particular game'.[26] However, the playing of such rudimentary street games in what were crowded and unsanitary alleyways, streets and yards, was no real substitution for playing rugby in a uniformed manner on a properly marked out playing field.

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[23] *The Irish Liberator*, 22 December 1863.
[24] Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain*; and O'Day, *The English face of Irish Nationalism: Parnellite Involvement in British Politics, 1800-1886*, p. 47.
[25] *Irishman*, 8 February 1888.
[26] *Tablet*, 5 May 1875.

Although there was limited coverage in the Catholic press which celebrated the athletic achievements of some early Catholic rugby teams – such as Halifax St. Joseph's and Bradford St. Patrick's, which had formed in the mid 1870s and were the exception not the rule – their was, however, an abundance of press coverage in the local media, sports periodicals, and journals arguing the inferiority of Irish Catholic immigrants. Working-class Irish Catholic immigrants in the industrial diaspora of the West Riding were stereotyped as weak, unhealthy, physically unfit, living on charity in houses unfit for human habitation, or in the workhouses, falling prey to alcohol, habituated to violence and criminal activities, without any sense of identity or belonging or empathy with other people; and, as a consequence, contributing disproportionately to all negative Irish Catholic statistics.[27]

Certainly, such alarming fears and fantasies were compatible with the tenor of the times and mirror the opinions expressed by nineteenth-century writers, whom exaggerated a one sided condemnation of working-class Irish Catholics for being the disseminators of disease. No doubt the effects of increased infection during this period were exacerbated by the increase in emphasis on nutritionally poor foods. Indeed, it was reported that large numbers of working-class Irish Catholics were sustaining themselves on a diet of draff grains alone (the residue of husks after fermentation of the grain in brewing, used as cattle fodder), or mixed with oatmeal, if they were fortunate enough.[28]

This miserable diet made them less resistant to infectious pathogens and rendered them more susceptible to infectious disease. A correspondent for the *Halifax Guardian* wrote in the early part of 1874, 'I visited 88 Irish dwellings in the borough, selected at hazard. They were destitute of furniture save old boxes for tables or stools, or even large stones for chairs; the beds were composed of straw and shavings. The food was oatmeal and water for breakfast, flour and water with a little skimmed milk for dinner, oatmeal and water again for

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[27] R. Miles, *Racism and Labour Migration* (London, 1982), p. 172.
[28] *Northern Star,* 25 February 1876.

a second supply'.[29] He also says that in no single instance was I asked for relief, 'I never before saw poverty which inspired respect and misery which demanded involuntary homage'.

The *Catholic Herald* of 25 July 1905 carried a report that, in 1878, in a published paper entitled 'Physical deterioration in its relation to the Irish immigrant industrial classes', a Mr Harry Wilson, Inspector of Factories in the West Riding, contrasted the height and weight of working-class Irish Catholics in the industrial centres of Sheffield, Bradford and Leeds with those of persons born and bred in the rural districts of the county. In his conclusions he explained that the working-class Irish Catholic population in the industrial centres of the West Riding were being artificially stunted to a grave extent that they were undersized and weak-muscled. He found that the average height of the working-class Irish male to be 5'5" and the average weight 10 stones. The average height of rural workers was 5'8" and the weight was 10 stones 4 pounds. He expressed the opinion that, 'deterioration was largely a matter of poverty, poor sanitation, poor housing, poor diet, evil habits, drink, and a lack of bodily activity'. In his closing remarks he poised the question, 'Is it the pig that makes the sty or the sty that makes the pig?'

These remarks and findings are somewhat surprising considering that most Irish Catholic immigrants were accustomed to physical labour and toiled on major industrial construction projects and public works programmes to serve the capitalist needs of the localities they inhabited. They came as factory operatives, navvies and construction gangs, the iron and steelworkers, the miners and coal-heavers, textile workers and the miscellaneous poor.[30] At very different times throughout the nineteenth century heavy concentrations of Irishmen provided the immense physical labour required to construct bridges and the national

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[29] *Halifax Guardian*, 8 February 1874.
[30] J. E. Tennent, *Proceedings of the National Association for the promotion of Social Sciences* (1860); *Second Report of the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom*, 1866–67; Report by Statistical Committee of Town Council, 1849, in J. F. C. Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain*, 1831 – 51, (London, 1988), p. 59.

web of roads, canals and railways connecting the great manufacturing capitals of Yorkshire with the rest of the kingdom.[31]

Therefore, the figures provided in the above present the false idea that all Irish Catholics were physically deteriorated or unfit. Nevertheless, it is enough to note for now that there were all sorts of occasions for friction on social, cultural, economic, and religious levels, and such animosities were severe and frequent enough to find their way into the newspapers.[32] Accurate or other wise, these views were widely circulated and provided a filter through which even eyewitnesses viewed the Irish. The Irish were also accused of activities that society in general condemned – drunkenness, lasciviousness, thievery and disease. As such, the Irish shared the burdens of beleaguered provincials – those occupying the very bottom rung of the social ladder.[33]

Other articles relating to Irish Catholics and rugby football carried similar disparaging tones that implied that Irish Catholics in the West Riding were, 'temperamentally in poor condition to engage in any manly recreational pursuits or games of rugby', and, 'on the note which deals with Irish Catholics and sport we took no notice at the time, as we thought rugby might improve the breed, but we regret to say we find nothing of the kind – they are morally unprincipled and depraved of any healthy respect for their persons and worthy of reprobation from the game'.[34] *Bell's Sporting Life*, 2 October 1885, carried an editorial which reiterated these abuses, 'On the matter of healthy exercise and physical recreation, which is so liberally afforded our industrial classes, we have learned that the proud game of rugby football is being played, even celebrated, by those class of people considered to be lacking in cultural,

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[31] In 1827, the Select Committee on Emigration noted that in any major construction project of roads and canals or drains one "should not feel in the least surprised to find, that of a hundred men employed in it, ninety were Irish"; Poor Law Enquiry (Ireland): Appendix G: Report on the State of the Irish poor in Britain, 1835, p. 7.
[32] W. E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870* (Cambridge, 1957), p.351.
[33] A.W. Dicey, Law and Public Opinion in England During the Nineteenth Century (London, 1905), pp.42-44; Tennent, *Proceedings of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Sciences*, p.142; E. Chadwick, *The Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (Edinburgh University Press, 1842), p.199.
[34] *Athletic News*, 9 May 1876.

moral, physical and intellectual enlightenment: the labouring Irish Catholics which infest our towns and cities'.[35] The *Leeds Mercury*, in one of its articles, suggested that Irish lacked the physical courage to participate in rugby and, 'it is known that they are more likely to risk themselves with prostitutes, where disease is known to be rife, than taking pleasure in games of rugby'.[36]

Responses in Catholic newspapers do suggest an appreciation within the Catholic Church to tackle these problems through its educational system. By the late 1870s, Catholic schools in the industrial Diocese of Leeds were starting to offer its young adherents instruction in physical activity. Indeed, most parish schools worked hard at promoting physical activities, making for a finer Catholic manhood and womanhood.[37] While some early mission schools were rather modest, compared with evangelical Protestant schools, they did view active participation in physical recreation as a way of training proper Catholics.[38] In Catholic schools fresh air, physical exercise and games became particularly important during the latter stages of the nineteenth century. But the Catholic Church's general conception of physical education extended more widely than this. Catholic children must not only experience physical activity but must be led to understand why and how fresh air and exercise were essential to health.[39] Instruction, therefore, included not only the rules of health, but human physiology. Since rugby was the regional winter pastime young Catholic student males would soon come to associate a celebration of rugby football as an illustration of proper Catholic masculinity. And while within the Catholic community, rugby as a means of social mobility was an idea that would continue to be ridiculed; the greatest impediment to

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[35] *Bell's Sporting Life*, 2 October 1885.
[36] *Leeds Mercury*, 27 January 1875.
[37] *Tablet*, 5 October 1879.
[38] Tablet, 7 September 1884.
[39] *Catholic Herald*, 18 May 1898.

working-class Catholics in the West Riding from playing the game may have been the overt anti-Catholicism that existed in both sport and in wider society.[40]

From the mid 1880s onwards, most Catholic schools in the industrial diocese of Leeds had established their own rugby teams, which simultaneously gave rise to the impetus and development of the game within the wider Catholic community. Rugby football throughout this period was very much in vogue in most Catholic schools, and it seemed at one point that the game would sweep all before it, simply because for a number of years it had no regularly organised rival to compete with it.[41] By the 1890s, some Catholic schools had introduced association football as an alternative to rugby football. It appears, however, that association football was more popular in the southern parishes of the West Riding, Sheffield and its neighbourhood, whereas, only a handful of teams existed in the central and northern parishes of the county.[42]

Writing in a pastoral letter, 21 July 1891, and following his visit to the Catholic Boy's Industrial School of the Good Shepherd, at Shibden Hall, Halifax – which boasted a swimming pool, running track, gymnastics facilities, as well as providing teachers to instruct its students in several sports, cricket, rugby and soccer – Bishop Gordon wrote: 'Rugby football affords perhaps the healthiest of all occupations for this class of boys'.[43] In 1896, H.M. Inspector for Schools wrote of the school, 'I was especially glad to see so good a swimming bath, and to find how large a proportion of the boys can swim, and also to see them engage in rugby football with such vigour. I was also glad to see a playground with not just football in it, viz, arrangements for fives or handball. The rugby field and the gymnastics facilities are a capital addition to the schools resources'.[44] Furthermore, the Church insisted that young Catholics should be instructed in physical and moral training by teachers who

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[40] *Ibid*., 2 March 1899.
[41] *Ibid.*, 2 October 1892.
[42] *Tablet*, 14 June 1886.
[43] LDA, Pastoral Letter by Bishop William, 21 July 1891.
[44] LDA, H.M. Inspectors Report for the Boy's Industrial School of the Good Shepherd, Shibden, 1896.

believed in what they taught, and supplemented their instruction and teaching by the good example of their own lives. Hence, they demanded Catholic schools and Catholic teachers for their young adherents.[45]

During the 1880s rugby was riding the crest of a wave, however, contemporary sportswriters of the period must have been perplexed why so few working-class Catholics or Catholic teams were engaged in rugby football, especially in view of the fact that a number of Irish nationalist teams had been founded and were participating in open competition with evangelical Protestant teams. The expedient explanation for this is, they were, but their participation was internalised by the Catholic Church, they had become the chameleons of rugby football, present, but camouflaged from public gaze. Not only did the figures presented by contemporary reviewers, as shown in the above, prove false the idea that Catholics were unfit to play rugby, but also proved incorrect in other active sports. As well as rugby, many young Catholic men also engaged in boxing and wrestling, which in comparison to rugby were equally as physical and dangerous. Indeed, by the early 1890s, in the parishes of Sheffield, Leeds and Bradford, a significant number of Catholic boxing clubs had started to emerge.[46] Therefore, all the myths about the emaciated Catholics not being physically capable of engaging in dangerous and sometimes violent sports is a complete nonsense, they were present and they were actively participating in all forms of sports, but they were blended into the mysterious world of the Catholic Church, hidden from the evangelical Protestant English, who either despised them or failed to understand them.[47]

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century many noble efforts had been made by the Catholic Church, and the societies it promoted, to modify the evils induced by mammon worship, and to ameliorate the conditions of the Catholic working class and those directly

[45] *Ibid*., p.4.
[46] *Catholic Herald*, 1 August 1913.
[47] S. Gilley, 'English attitudes to the Irish, 1780-1900' in C. Holmes (ed.), *Immigration and minorities in British society* (London, 1978), pp. 107-108.

above them in the social scale; but these efforts were chiefly directed towards an abridgement of the period of daily labour and the encouragement of intellectual amusements in the hours snatched from the toil. Indeed, history seems to suggest that not all working-class Catholics in the Diocese of Leeds had the opportunity to actively participate in these societies they lived among. In this atmosphere some working-class Catholics pursued more anti-social pursuits or other forms of questionable amusements because of the limited time they had at night after work. Their living conventions were also extremely unhealthy, and they were a people significantly outnumbered by the English Protestant proletariat, downtrodden by the anti-Catholic and anti-Irish sentiments propagated by an unsympathetic English press.[48]

These were low ends which were indefatigably pursued by the Church in an attempt to improve the lives of its adherents. As per the information outlined in previous chapters, no one who is observant will fail to see, however, that the tendency of the Church in the second half of the nineteenth century was, on the whole, in favour of indoor amusements. Doubtless, they were of real service to the urban working-class Catholic population in social and moral advancement. However favourable the situation, in which many diasporic Irish working-class Catholics fulfilled the honest desire for self-improvement, the Catholic Church in third quarter of the nineteenth century appeared opposed to the principles of out-door amusements, especially at a time when the physical recreation of the English people was rendered a subject of national importance.[49] Indeed, as a means of social, moral and spiritual mobility, history seems to suggest that the Catholic Church in the West Riding of Yorkshire understood that rugby did not provide the best means of societal, moral and spiritual ascension.

The Catholic aristocracy in the country were, indeed, as fond as they ever were of their field sports and athletic exercises. The men who could afford to keep their horses and

[48] G. M. Young, *Victorian England* (London, 1936), p. 138.
[49] *Common's Committee, Health of Large Towns* (1864), Q. 1315; G. Finn, 'Racism, Religion and Social Prejudice: Irish Catholic Clubs, Soccer and Scottish Society: Social Identities and Conspiracy Theories', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 8 (1991), pp. 70-91.

hounds were still true to the instinct of their ancestors, but among Catholic clerks and apprentices, among artisans and mechanics, and more so those who in common parlance were termed 'working men', the idea of recreation was generally associated with theatrical representations, with lecture rooms and cheap concerts, with amusements that caught the eye or attracted the ear, and too often with less innocent pleasures – the casino and the tap-room, and by other allurements even more ensnaring.[50]

In the early 1870s, when the Catholic Church was enquiring into the health of its adherents it questioned witnesses upon the opportunities for amusement and out-door recreation: 'What amusements had the Catholics of the West Riding? None athletic' exclaimed one witness 'except when a number of the more disorderly stole off to the borders of Lancashire to have a mill'.[51] By the late 1870s the Catholic Church was starting to exert its influence in favour of out-door recreational activities to produce healthier men, physically as well as morally, loosened by the advent of alternative amusements found elsewhere in the West Riding at that time: gymnastics, athletics, association football, rugby football and cricket. They hoped to turn their supposedly vulnerable, unhealthy, emaciated working-class adherents, whose stereotypical traits were predisposed by both anti-Irish and anti-Catholic concepts, into robust, courageous, manly and energetic Catholics, while at the same time, reasserting the totality of the Catholic religion and its doctrines. In their ideal the Church sought to produce the all-round man, and for this reason insisted that spiritual development must proceed side by side with mental and physical development. The Church avowed that, 'we can promote both our physical and mental development to the highest possible standards by directing it to the glory of God'.[52]

The Catholic Church in the West Riding soon came to realise that unless healthful and invigorating amusements were put in the way of its working-class adherents, then they were

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[50] *Catholic Herald*, 12 May 1898.
[51] *Tablet*, 7 October 1873.
[52] *Catholic Herald*, 2 May 1901.

certain to resort to vicious and demoralising pleasures. By the early 1880s the Catholic Church responded to this challenge with a variety of cultural alternatives which offered comfort and consolation to thousands of working-class Catholics; and that they co-operated with the growth of Catholic social services to make their lives more tolerable. The Church optimistically believed that the very process of offering recreational games and facilities would lead all its participants, including those working-class Catholics living on the fringes of society, back to the lap of purified Catholicism and, ultimately, to strengthen their religious observance. In 1882, Bishop Cornthwaite wrote on the subject stating that, 'No matter in what way we take it, whether we consider it in the selfish light of merely providing an attraction so as to induce young men to join us, or whether we have in view the greater and higher object of making good Catholics and citizens of all Catholic men, I say that the practice of out-door amusements is necessary in any society of young men'.[53]

Virtually all out-door amusements were local in their organisation and came under the direct control and moral guidance of the Young Men's Catholic Society (YMCS), and the various other local parish Catholic clubs or Temperance confraternities, if there happened to be no YMCS. Indeed, nobody was allowed to join a Catholic cricket, association football, or rugby football club who was not already a member of the YMCS, and/or local parish Catholic club or Temperance society, and attended his religious duties as often as the rules enjoined – no prayer no player.[54] The frequent playing of games such as cricket, football and rugby, or the practice of gymnastics, or athletic exercise quickly became the importance of Catholic youth. The want of out-door amusement had been the missing link in the chain which the Catholic Church sought to surround its young men. The Church had guarded their souls by insisting on monthly confession and adhering to the sacraments, it had guarded their minds by providing Catholic schools and libraries, and now it sought to guard their bodies by

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[53] *Ibid.*, 14 July 1882.
[54] *Catholic Herald*, 20 August 1898.

providing healthy amusements. In 1890, Bishop Gordon wrote, 'Young men, as I have stated before, will have amusements, and if we do not provide it they will seek it elsewhere. I contend that we should provide it and so prevent our members seeking it in doubtful company'.[55]

During the final quarter of the nineteenth century the Church had begun to express its concerns over the growing recognition that a number of its young adherents were becoming a fearful engine of mischief, unrestrained and beyond ecclesiastic control.[56] 'These were working-class adolescents who had just left the protective confines of the local parish school and were about to cross the threshold of employment and an uninhibited youth street culture'.[57] Youths were often, in many communities across the county, considered 'crude' or a 'social problem' whether from evangelical Protestant communities or from urban Catholic communities. According to Steven Fielding, they were judged, 'to be most exposed to anti-Catholic influences, adolescents were moreover the section which most noticeably rejected the Church's authority'.[58] In 1890, Bishop Gordon describe how far too often the vows made by adolescents on a Sunday were broken immediately by the influence of bad companions picked up on the recreation grounds or in the streets. The Church wanted to guard against this.[59] Therefore, through its various sports clubs, the Church attempted to watch over its young men as much as possible, but above all, over their hours of leisure. The Church was resolute that, 'any young athlete aspiring to play cricket, football or rugby for any Catholic team must neither smoke nor drink to excess or he at once would lose his nerve and his place of honour among his companions'.[60]

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[55] *Tablet*., 8 November 1890.
[56] F. Neal, 'English-Irish Conflict in the North East of England', in J. Belchem and P. Buckland (eds), *The Irish in British Labour History* (Liverpool, 1993), pp. 59-85.
[57] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p. 65.
[58] *Ibid*., p.65.
[59] *Tablet*, 15 November 1890.
[60] *Ibid.*, 5 September 1887.

In attempting to understand the Church's concerns over its adolescents, and the high propensity of social problems among them, it is worth considering the socio-geographical characteristics distinguishing the working-class Catholic districts where adolescents were domiciled. They included overcrowding, with its attendant deficiencies in sanitary provisions with high specific disease mortality rates, tuberculosis and fever associated with dirt and bad housing. General and infant mortality rates in such environments were exceptionally high, as were delinquency rates.[61] In Leeds, it was estimated that 600 Irish Catholic adolescents were living in lodging houses in the narrow alleys running out of Kirkgate, inter-mixed with working-class brothels and beer shops.[62]

In 1873, J. C. Lymons, of the Children's Employment Commission, wrote, 'I am confident that of the 600 persons I saw living in these lodging houses, not above one quarter were above 17 years of age. In four lodging houses I counted 17 who were under 16 years of age. In some there were mere children. In almost all the places I visited there was a professed sprinkling of prostitutes'.[63] Lymons also notes that at a third of those lodging houses he visited several boys were identified by his police guide as being professed thieves. He also inspected two rooms at an Irish lodging house in Boot and Shoe Yard. 'These rooms were not above four square yards each, and contained no less than nineteen people'. Primitive violence and drunkenness were rarely far from the surface in such communities. The tradition of fighting and disorderly conduct made young working-class Catholic adolescents less acceptable to the mainstay of Yorkshire society, 'especially in an era where drink received the most sustained criticism'.[64] In such conditions there is little wonder that the feelings of Catholic adolescents were blunted, that there health was affected, and that they sought relief

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[61] *Leeds Mercury*, 15 August 1861: Edwin Chadwick, the Secretary to the Poor Law Commission and an ardent sanitary reformer, who reported that for every 1,000 children born in Leeds, 570 died before the age of five.
[62] *Ibid.,* 8 April 1872.
[63] *Report on the Children's Employment Commission: Habits of Juvenile Classes in Leeds, 1873*. J. C. Lymons Esquire.
[64] Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*, p.27.

in surroundings given to drinking and brawling. The instances of disorder and disturbances which occurred in the working-class Catholic districts were without doubt the inevitable outcome of their situation and their environment.[65]

During the second half of the nineteenth century, without exception, 'there were almost weekly references in the local press to assaults on the police, offences against the person, common assault, brawling, breaches of the peace, including drunkenness and disorderly conduct'.[66] Most offences represented by the glut of contemporary statistics reveal that adolescents were the main offenders. Composed as they were, the central townships became a breeding grounds for vice and crime for working-class Catholic youth. They were judged by many to share no common ethnic or national affiliation with their English counterparts, and they normally led a marginal and sometimes lawless existence on the fringes of industrial Yorkshire society. Indeed, they constituted, in effect, a loosely defined, inferior social class composed of shifting and shifty population elements without secure ties to settled communities.[67]

Thus, by shifting its energies into youth work the Church was not only responding to a number of acknowledged threats and social evils that plagued its adolescents, 'but also the proselytising activities of other evangelical Protestant denominations focussed on attracting young men into their ranks'.[68] Rugby and sport, in the Church's view, were the most powerful instruments for changing Catholic youth's mind and outlook; it was through sport alone that the working-class Catholic youth could be brought back within the orbit of Catholic civilisation, and led to assist, rather than obstruct, the establishment of the Church.[69] This was the Church's perspective at this stage. It led directly to the promotion of various forms of popular nineteenth-century sports, including rugby. Regular and secular clergy in

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[65] *Bradford Observer*, 12 March 1876.
[66] Richardson, Irish Settlement in Mid-Nineteenth Century Bradford, p.55.
[67] Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England*, p. 4.
[68] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p. 65.
[69] *Catholic Herald*, 16 June 1904.

the West Riding held the view that if Catholic youth were turbulent it was because no appeal had been made to their reason. The Church's tactics of suppression combined with religious indoctrination, as well as, the desire to use rugby and sport to establish more firmly the existing ecclesiastical social order; the ecclesiastical hierarchy maintained that Catholic youth, once informed of the realities which underlay the social ills ubiquitous to working-class life, would understand the need that it was in their best interest to become calm and orderly.[70]

More optimistically, the Church wished to segregate its adolescents from the rest of society and away from the rugged individualism that had come to dominate English Protestant life, and the game of rugby as it became even more popular; and to enrich them socially, morally and spiritually. The county's Catholic Boy's Clubs, which catered for the bulk of Catholic youth, was of necessity – more so in some smaller parishes – an ephemeral institution, depending for its very existence on individual initiative; dependent upon the benevolence of businessmen, tradesmen, manufacturers and lay-adherents. Further lack of capital meant that some Catholic Boy's Clubs were sometimes small and ill-equipped. Indeed, the lack of finances and resources, 'meant that undertakings were piecemeal', and as such, 'the number of Catholic Boy's Clubs and sports teams was always less than what was deemed desirable'.[71] Undoubtedly many clubs offered very limited recreational activities and resources, while some were unbelievably bad.

The most strenuous efforts, designed to encourage the furtherance of sport and rugby to fill the principal stations of Catholic life, one which would fit Catholic youth for the business of manhood were projected by a keen and accomplished sportsman by the name of Antonio Fattorini of Bradford.[72] Born in 1862, of Italian Catholic descent, Antonio Fattorini was a member of the Fattorini family, a respectable retail family of nation-wide repute which

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[70] J. Springhall, *Youth, empire and society. British youth movements, 1883-1940* (London, 1977), pp. 45-52.
[71] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, p. 65.
[72] *Bradford Observer*, 29 September 1889.

founded a chain of prosperous jeweller's shops and businesses across the county. During the nineteenth and early twentieth century the nature of the triangulated connections between the Fattorini family, the Catholic community and popular pastimes and leisure pursuits became quite marked, consequently the family business quickly came to be referred to as the 'Catholic Sporting Firm'.[73]

According to F. Dyson, by the late nineteenth century the Fattorini family business had managed to, 'build up an enormous commerce in trophies for the sporting world'. All its merchandise was completed to the firm's own special design and specifications by sub-contractors operating out of Birmingham and was traded through the Bradford shop.[74] 'They designed and supplied countless pieces to commemorate celebrated events, provided gold and silver medals to schools and colleges, cups and medals for sporting clubs, awards for flower shows, chess clubs, learned societies and hundreds of other organisations throughout the country'.[75] In rugby terms, they designed and manufactured the Yorkshire Cup ('T'old tin pot' as it was referred to) for 45 guineas,[76] the Otley Challenge Cup for 50 guineas, the West Leeds Challenge Cup for 50 guineas, the Aire/Wharfe Cup for 45 guineas,[77] and numerous other rugby trophies for the many local and regional cup tournaments that were played during the period under investigation. On 13 March 1899, the *Catholic Herald* explained that, 'An interesting collection of football trophies is on exhibition at Messers Fattorini's Kirkgate establishment. The Northern Union Challenge Cup; the Senior Competition Shield; and the Yorkshire Union First Competition Cup are among the most notable exhibits, and a fine array

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[73] *Catholic Herald*, 13 January 1899.
[74] F. Dyson, 'The Fattorini Family and its Contributions to the Mail Order Trading in the United Kingdom' (unpublished PhD thesis Bradford University, 1977), pp. 40-4.
[75] *Ibid.*, p.47.
[76] *Bradford Catalogue*, 1879.
[77] *Ibid.,* 1889.

of gold medals for presentation to the winners is also conspicuous. The whole of the exhibits have been designed and manufactured by Messers Fattorini'[78].

By 1907, the Fattorini family had expanded its business portfolio by founding a new and completely unconnected business, trading under the name of the Northern Trading Company. As F. Dyson points out, this was the retail organisation, 'of Sports and Pastimes, founded to take maximum advantage of the Fattorini's ever-mounting trade in sports trophies by selling sports garments and equipment'.[79] By the Edwardian period life was not all about labour, and if the working man was to work well he also had to play. To this end, Sports and Pastimes was established for the sole purpose of supplying an increasing social requirement, retailing premier sporting garments and equipment that reached the Yorkshire man's sporting wardrobe and kit bag, 'for the launch of the shop happened at a time when there was a considerable development in what is now called the leisure industry'.[80] The industrial classes were now working fewer hours and they were spending more time and money on leisure activities, 'and local authorities and industry were providing more recreational facilities in the form of playing fields, swimming pools and the like'.[81] The merits of their business lay in the cheapness and durability of the garments and equipment they produced and sold, rather than in their beauty or delicacy of finish. 'This new business enterprise occupied a large shop in Bradford's Cheapside and was marketed as being a firm in the famous Fattorini and Sons Limited Groups. Sports and Pastimes was a triumph, and independent of the business carried out in the shop, was soon supplying sports organisations, schools and colleges all over the country'.[82]

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[78] *Catholic Herald*, 13 March 1899.
[79] Dyson, 'The Fattorini Family and its Contributions to the Mail Order Trading in the United Kingdom', pp. 47-48.
[80] *Ibid*., p.48.
[81] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire* (London, 1963), p. 163-70.
[82] Dyson, 'The Fattorini Family and its Contributions to the Mail Order Trading in the United Kingdom', p. 62.

The *Catholic Herald* reported, that being a staunch and prominent Catholic family, the Fattorini's had close and acrimonious connections with the wider Catholic community of Bradford and its immediate neighbourhood, 'and under their own personal benevolences freely donated medals and trophies to the Church's different sports organisations'.[83] They also supplied many Catholic sports teams in the Bradford district with their own sports kits and jerseys, either at a discounted rate or free gratis, especially those teams and clubs whose membership were composed of the very poorest Catholic adherents.[84] 'An event of great consequence in 1911 that further enhanced the company's status in sporting circles was the accomplishments by the Kirkgate establishment to design and supply a new silver cup for the Football Association. The cup was 19 inches high and weighing 175 ounces, is the one played for at Wembley today. It cost 50 guineas (£52.50)'.[85] By happy coincidence Bradford won the cup that year by beating Newcastle United in a replay match at Manchester.[86]

In his early years, under the guidance and instruction of his name-sake uncle, Antonio Fattorini served his apprenticeship as a watch maker at the family's shop in Harrogate, and owing to his knowledge of watches and his active interests and involvement in sports, 'he became identified all over Britain as the sporting timekeeper, in due course acting in this office at the Olympic Games'.[87] He was also the President of the Yorkshire Cross Country Association, Secretary of Manningham Rugby Football Club,[88] and became the popular Secretary of the Northern Rugby Union's Senior Yorkshire Competition in 1895.[89] In 1996, he was presented with a silver bowl, on one side of which was the Yorkshire rose at the centre. On the reverse side was the Manningham badge in the centre of a rugby football, and on the festoons at the top of the bowl were the names of all the clubs forming the Yorkshire

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[83] *Catholic Herald*, 31 March 1889.
[84] *Ibid.,* 23 February 1900.
[85] *Athletic News*, 12 March 1911.
[86] *Ibid.,* 24 May 1911.
[87] *Bradford Observer*, 12 August 1909.
[88] *Leeds Mercury*, 27 October 1896.
[89] *Athletic News*, 12 September 1895.

Senior Competition in the season 1895-1896. The inscription read as follows: 'Presented to Mr A. Fattorini in appreciation of his services as secretary during the first year of the Northern Rugby Union season 1895-96'.[90] His uncle, John Fattorini, was also a representative on the Manningham Rugby Football Club Committee and in 1903 was instrumental in introducing association football at Valley Parade, which had been such a stronghold for both codes of rugby over the years, hence the demise of Manningham Rugby Club and the establishment of Bradford City Association Football Club.[91]

Messers Fattorini helped finance a number of Catholic youth initiatives across Bradford and Shipley. By the late 1880s they had established a number of Catholic Boy's Clubs in some of the poorest missions in Bradford. John Fattorini financed, promoted and became a loyal supporter of the Catholic Lad's rugby club in the parish of St. Patrick's, which benefited those adolescent youths living in the slum districts of Wapping, Goitside, Black Abbey and White Abbey. According to the *Bradford Observer* of 29 May 1889, at an enthusiastic gathering in St. Patrick's School Hall, Mr John Fattorini urged the local priest and members of the newly founded St. Patrick's Lad's Club to, 'go in for games that pinned their faith to the rugby code'.[92] It is understood that the St. Patrick's Lad's club had a playing membership of 200, and had to run seven different rugby teams to accommodate them all'.[93] It is also claimed that the establishment of these sports teams and clubs had brought about a reduction in street crime, 'obviously something the Catholic Church was keen to encourage'.[94]

The Church was determined that its cricket, football and rugby fields should be, particularly in large towns, situated well away from public-houses, thus, the greatest dangers

[90] *Leeds Mercury*, 27 April 1896.
[91] *Athletic News*, 16 June 1903.
[92] *Bradford Observer*, 29 May 1889.
[93] *Tablet,* 9 October 1893.
[94] *Bradford Observer*, 20 March 1991.

and greatest temptations to their members were removed, if not altogether avoided.[95] For instance, cricket and rugby football teams representing St. Anne's Young Men's Society, Bradford, and St Patrick's Senior Guild of St. Aloysius, Bradford, both played their games at Apperly Bridge, some four miles from their respective parishes.[96] The Keighley Catholic Association and the Young Men's Society of St. Anne's, Keighley, obtained a field for cricket and rugby in a 'lovely' location close to the river Aire at Riddlesden, a rural setting a mile and a half out of town.[97] In 1886, Huddersfield St. Josephs acquired a pitch at Fartown, again over a mile out of town.[98]

During the nineteenth century, the question of a ground and the difficulty of obtaining one were greatly magnified, and it varied according to the locality in which a Catholic sports society or club was established. In almost all the urban districts there were plenty of public parks or recreational grounds for which permission to play was rarely refused.[99] Of course in the rural missions a sports field was more readily obtainable and the laying down of a cricket square or rugby pitch was accomplished at a comparatively small cost. Therefore, the amount of club subscription charges, of course, varied depending on the expenses likely to be incurred through the rent and care of a ground. The reality for most urban sports societies was for them to play their games in public parks or local recreational grounds.[100] Indeed, most of the Leeds parish clubs played their games on Woodhouse Moor or at Crown Point. In Bradford teams tended to play their games in Bowling Park or Manningham Park, although some did, on occasion, play their games at Esholt, again some four miles out of town and away from public-houses.[101]

[95] *Ibid.*, 7 July 1896.
[96] *Catholic Herald*, 22 April 1899.
[97] *Ibid.*, 19 May 1899.
[98] *Ibid.*, 4 January 1901.
[99] *Tablet*, 8, October 1888.
[100] *Catholic Herald*, 21 November 1899.
[101] *Tablet*, 27 September 1889.

In the nineteenth century one of the first issues the Church had to consider was what class of games would be most suitable for its members. The games they advocated were easily established and were also the most popular in the West Riding at that time – cricket, soccer, rugby football, quoits and bowls.[102] With regards to establishing the first, the grand old game of cricket; it was highly recommended that each parish in the diocese should have a cricket club attached to it. With a cricket committee in existence it was believed that the formation of an association football club or rugby football club for the winter presented no difficulties and followed as a matter of course.[103]

By the late nineteenth century every YMCS, temperance society or parish Catholic association in the industrial Diocese of Leeds either had its own cricket, soccer or rugby football team, or all three in some of the larger parishes. They played and watched cricket, they played and watched soccer but among Catholic men domiciled in the West Riding rugby was the leading winter pastime, especially in the northern and central manufacturing districts of the diocese. In 1900, Bishop Gordon wrote, 'Many members of our societies are the best rugby players in local clubs throughout the county, and, I insist, we ought to avail ourselves of their talent, and show the various evangelical Protestant bodies surrounding us that not only is our conduct worthy of imitation in matters of Faith and morals, but that it is also well worthy of imitation in the field of play'.[104] Indeed, the *Athletic News* of 14 September 1881 wrote of Halifax St. Joseph's 'they have some good material in their ranks'.[105] In 1892, of Otley St Joseph's, a correspondent for the *Athletic News* wrote, 'the Catholic youths, though of lighter build were smarter than their opponents and should develop into a really first class team'.[106] In 1893, Wakefield St. Austin's were described as, 'the promoters of great courage

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[102]C. Smith, *Leisure and Society in Britain* (London, 1982), p. 8.
[103] *Catholic Herald*, 2 April 1898.
[104] *Tablet*, 21 July 1900.
[105] *Athletic News*, 14 September 1881.
[106] *Ibid.*, 3 March 1892.

and skill'.[107] Again, in 1893, the *Athletic News* wrote of Leeds St. Patrick's, 'The Mount Street Saints have often enough shown that they can play a good game of rugby, and they kept up their reputation on Saturday'.[108]

The want of sport in the industrial Diocese of Leeds in the late nineteenth century had long been felt among its adherents and it soon justified its existence by its careful regulation of soccer, rugby and cricket and other games, and by the large number of athletics clubs founded under the auspice of the Catholic Church in every part of the county. 'This is as it should be' wrote Bishop Gordon in 1893 'and as we have the experience of the good work of every Catholic man in the field of athletics we wish every success to this new development'. The Church also had something to say about the physical superiority of rugby over soccer:

> Certainly if football be intended as an exercise of the body, as played under Rugby rules, it is perfectly adapted to that end. In Association football the hands are very little used, their place being taken by the head. This is certainly a defect from a physical point of view, and it is with the greatest merit of Rugby football that in playing it the muscles of the arms and legs are equally developed. The use of the hands, too, in Rugby tends to lesson the danger of the game, as there is no necessity for high kicking. Indeed we say that the spread of Rugby football should be pursued for the preservation and cultivation of our young men and their pastimes.[109]

Loosely speaking, during the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church prohibited its sports teams from competing in open competition with English evangelical Protestants teams.[110] That is not to say of course that some Catholic teams didn't, much to the annoyance of the Church. For example, at Halifax, St. Joseph's cricket and rugby football teams competed against local Protestant teams on a regular basis.[111] In addition, Huddersfield's St. Joseph's and St. Patrick's, Castleford St. Joseph's, Dewsbury St. Paulinus, Hemsworth Sacred Heart, Ilkley Sacred Heart, Keighley St. Anne's, Otley St. Joseph's, Skipton St.

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[107] *Ibid.*, 17 November 1893.
[108] *Ibid.*, 21 December 1893.
[109] *Ibid.*, 3 September 1884.
[110] *Catholic Herald*, 7 July 1904.
[111] *Athletics News*, 8 January 1879.

Stephen's, Wakefield St. Austin's and Wetherby St. Joseph's were all competing against local Protestant opposition, as well as other Catholic parishes across the diocese.[112] There is a straightforward and logical explanation why this materialised: in those urban districts such as Leeds, Bradford and their immediate neighbourhoods, where there existed countless Catholic sports clubs, there was no requirement for these teams to compete against external opposition. Conversely, in the smaller towns and districts of the diocese, where there existed only a handful of teams, members had to either play among themselves, owing to the absence of regular Catholic opposition and established fixtures, therefore, they were compelled to compete against external opposition if they were to survive.[113]

Without doubt, different Catholic rugby teams were in every respect debarred from playing football matches against each other because of geographical factors, and with some degree of confidence it might be said that they would definitely have gone to the wall if it hadn't been for playing games of rugby football against local Protestant opposition. Recognising these problems, the matter was brought to the attention of the Catholic hierarchy. It was therefore decided, by the Catholic hierarchy, that the answer to this sporting dilemma was to allow some of its teams to compete against Protestant teams, only in those towns and districts where there was a lack of internal Catholic opposition, but they were forbidden, 'absolutely', from taking part in any evangelical Protestant tournaments, cup-competitions, local leagues, or any other manifestation of local club competition.[114] However, by the late 1880s, we do see the inclusion of Halifax St. Josephs and Wakefield St. Austin's taking part in the Yorkshire Challenge Cup; consequently, there must have been a relaxing of the rules in relation to open competition. Yet, an analysis of the various cup competitions throughout the period under investigation reveals that no other Catholic parish teams were engaged in open competition.

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[112] *Catholic Herald*, 15 October 1898.
[113] *Ibid.*, 15 August 1898.
[114] *Ibid.*, 19, August 1888.

Furthermore, throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century, regardless of geographical factors, lack of internal opposition, and so on, Catholic school's teams in the Diocese of Leeds were not permitted to play against any team outside of the Catholic faith.[115] As alluded to in chapter three, successive Liberal governments attempted to introduce a secular education system across Britain. Politically, the Catholic Church was Conservative and was in favour of a non-secular education, which of course the Conservative party supported. The Catholic Church fought long and hard during the nineteenth century to retain a non-secular education for its faithful, therefore, had the Catholic Church not prevented its students from participating in any organised secular sporting activities against evangelical Protestant schools it would have been endorsing secular educational objectives, which would have brought into question the Church's position on the religious needs and spiritual importance of an independent non-secular Roman Catholic education.[116] They were determined in their opposition to the establishment of a national system of purely secular education. In their ideal for education the school, therefore, was not primarily an appendage of the state, but of the Catholic family.

Of course this was only part of the equation, but it was an important one nevertheless. Parish schools were seen by the Church as the most powerful agency for producing a distinct independent Catholic identity. They were to a great extent more than places of education: they were a means of guaranteeing the survival and continuation of a Catholic culture. 'They were situated at the nucleus of the parochial network'.[117] They were an important tool for the promotion and safeguarding the religious autonomy and the most religious issues of the Catholic Church. Therefore, 'schooling was an experience that integrated Catholic with Catholic and separated them from all Protestants, pitching the two groups into deliberate

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[115] *Tablet*, 27 August 1885.
[116] *Ibid.*, 9 May 1885.
[117] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* (Buckingham, 1993), pp. 61-5

rivalry'.[118] According to Mary Hickman, 'the aim of Catholic elementary education was to incorporate the children of Irish migrants by strengthening their Catholic identity at the expense of weakening their Irish identity. As Steven Fielding points out, 'to be Catholic was not really to be English, but rather, it was to be attuned to an alternative culture of secrecy and doubleness'.[119] In 1898, speaking of the purpose and principle of a non-secular Catholic education Bishop Gordon stated that:

> Education to the Catholic is the cultivation of all the faculties, the moral as well as the intellectual. Man is not an admirable machine with the faculties working in separate compartments, with the moral side carefully cut off from the intellectual. Consequently a Catholic seeks first for a basis for the moral education of youth, and adds to that the intellectual development that completes the building. Let us clearly bear in mind the fact, so irritably ignored by those who differ from us, that such a moral basis does not in anyway exclude, nor diminish in importance, the very highest intellectual training. Quite the contrary, the very nature of a Catholic's moral training presupposes a high intellectual training for its satisfactory accomplishment. And, as facts are always valuable to illustrate a contention, let me remind you of the extraordinary scholastic successes attained by the Catholic schools of this county.[120]

By the late nineteenth century the Catholic Church appears to have softened its guard, following the establishment of inter-school sports competitions, which became the preferred arena of religious combat in that period.[121] In 1899, under rugby union rules, Catholic schools from across the township of Leeds were allowed to compete in the Leeds School League for the very first time. In the final of that season St. Charles' met St. Peter's on Holbeck Moor. The 'Roman Catholics', as reporters delighted in calling St. Charles', failed to mention that seven of its players had been selected to play in district trials matches, such was the quality of

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[118] *Ibid*., p.62.
[119] *Ibid*., p.61.
[120] *Catholic Herald*, 21 October 1898.
[121] *Ibid.,* p. 67.

its players.[122] For sure, inter-school sport became far more widespread during the early years of the twentieth century and Catholic-Protestant rugby matches, union and league, in towns like Leeds, Huddersfield, Halifax, Bradford, Dewsbury and Wakefield had a special competitive edge. For example, contests between St. Bede's (the Catholic Grammar School Bradford), and Bradford Grammar School were apparently 'grudge matches'.[123] The intense dislike and contempt felt for each other took many rowdier forms. Catholic youths in the West Riding would engage in pugilistic combat against their Protestant neighbouring equivalents, the fights often taking place outside the school gates or at remoter but significant sites on the parish boundaries, cheered on by rival inhabitants of the parishes concerned, who themselves might join in.[124] Faction fighting, usually involving youths and young men, was extremely common between Catholics and Protestants, and in some parishes in Leeds and Bradford it had become almost customary.[125] According to contemporary sources, Leeds market provided the venue for fights of this sort, in which localised anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant feelings were often a strong undercurrent and motive.[126]

The Church also wished to show that rugby football complemented rather than contradicted the spiritual path. It instructed its young students to play without violating the doctrines of the Catholic faith. The Church held a great deal of organisational control and authority over issues of playing sport in its schools. While it was now keen on participation in local school competitions, the Church was still worried about the malign influences of Protestants. When anti-Catholic feelings were vented at Catholic-Protestant school rugby football matches it wasn't unusual for Catholic teams to withdraw from local competitions. In 1902, following an incident at a rugby match between St. Anne's School, Bradford, and St. Michael's Protestant School, Bradford, the parish priest refused to allow his team to continue

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[122] *Ibid.*, 21 April 1899.
[123] *Ibid.*, 13 January 1899.
[124] J. Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700-1890* (London, 1979), pp. 51-2.
[125] *Bradford Observer*, 2 September 1895.
[126] *Leeds Mercury*, 17 May 1899.

playing after alleging that both players from the opposing team and the referee had made derisory anti-Catholic statements. The terms 'Popery in Quod' and the 'Crimson curse' were alleged to have been used. In protest, Catholic schools from across the Bradford district were withdrawn from the competition for the remainder of that season.[127]

Throughout much of the nineteenth century Catholic sports teams competed in the Church's various cup competitions, or regional Catholic leagues, over and above competing against Catholic teams from across the Dioceses of Lancashire and the North and East Ridings.[128] For example, the Catholic Industrial School's Cup Competition; which was established in 1892, pitted young Catholic men from Lancashire, Cheshire, Yorkshire, and Northumbria against each another in this annual dust up.[129] They also played sports teams affiliated to the Irish National League clubs, simply because they were Catholic.[130] By the late nineteenth century almost every Catholic confraternity or Catholic guild appears to have founded its own rugby team, playing in a series of regional Catholic cup competitions, such as, the Catholic Temperance Society's Rugby Competition and the League of the Cross competition.[131] There were also a number of annual Catholic charity matches, played between such teams as; the Catholic Smokers versus Catholic Non-Smokers,[132] Catholic Butchers against Catholic Shoemakers,[133] Leeds Catholic Police versus Bradford Catholic Police,[134] and the Bradford Catholic Orchestra versus the Bradford Catholic Draughts Club,[135] and so on.

There is evidence to suggest that following the rugby split in 1895 and the rule changes introduced by the Northern Union in 1906 – which condensed the number of players

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[127] *Catholic Herald,* 22 October 1902.
[128] *Ibid.*, 6 March 1899.
[129] *Tablet,* 28 March 1892.
[130] *Catholic Herald*, 5 September 1900.
[131] *Ibid.,* 27 October 1899.
[132] *Ibid.*, 21 January 1899.
[133] *Ibid.*, 7 March 1899.
[134] *Ibid.,* 19 May 1900.
[135] *Ibid.,* 24 November 1899.

and moved away from rucking and mauling and had introduced playing the ball back at the breakdown – there was a great deal of confusion when one Catholic charity team from one area met a Catholic team from another about which rules should be played. Some preferred the old RFU rules while others preferred the new NU rules. The consequence of all this was, when any two charity teams played a match, the foremost issue to be decided upon was which rules ought to be observed, more often than not the discussions resulted in each side conceding some peculiar characteristic of their own game, therefore, the game was played according to a set of amalgamated rules of the two codes. At a match between the Smokers of St. Patrick's, Bradford, and the Non-smokers from St. Mary's, Halifax, each side inadvertently made mistakes, due to the confused nature of the rules, which resulted in a number of heated exchanges and much ill-feeling between the two competing sides.[136] Apparently, the average age of the players was forty-five years and some were so accustomed to the old rucking ways they were unable to adhere and adapt to the new NU rules. In a charity match played between St. Bernard's Catholic Association, Halifax, and St Patrick's Senior Guild, Bradford, in 1907, it was agreed to play the first half under RFU rules and the second half under NU rules.[137]

It wasn't until 1914 that the mainstay of senior Catholic sports teams began competing in secular tournaments with evangelical Protestants. Indeed, at a meeting on 15 January 1914, Catholic parishes in the Diocese of Leeds announced their intentions of entering their respective soccer and rugby teams in local football competitions for the very first time, which had now received full ecclesiastic backing.[138] It should also be noted that from as early as 1898, we also witness Catholic billiards teams from Leeds and Bradford regularly entertaining billiards teams from the Leeds Jewish Institute, Leeds Central, Leeds

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[136] *Ibid.*, 17 February 1909.
[137] *Ibid.*, 5 April 1907.
[138] *Ibid.*, 15 August 1914.

Judean Club and the Bradford Judean Club.[139] By 1901, both communities were competing in cross-cultural soccer, rugby and cricket matches.[140]

Nevertheless, most rugby and soccer matches between these two religious denominations appear to have been played during the mid-week because of the many religious laws against playing sport on the Sabbath.[141] Some historians argue that part of the explanation for the English Saturday half-holiday, gradually institutionalised during the nineteenth and twentieth century, was that it would free the Sunday/Sabbath from all secular activities.[142] Therefore, Saturday afternoon freedom gave sport a justifiable break in the week, calculated and constrained, yet assured. For Catholics the playing of sports on a Sunday was strictly taboo, therefore, the playing of sports, such as rugby, was restricted to Saturday afternoons or the mid-week. The Catholic Church designated sport as one of the blasphemous Sunday practices to which they staunchly raised objections to. 'The sacredness of the Sabbath is deep-rooted in God's cessation from work on the seventh day of creation and His rest'.[143]

For the Jewish community, the Sabbath fell on the Saturday, 'a festive day which was devoted to religious pursuits, such as prayer in the synagogue and reading, studying and discussing religious scriptures',[144] and should not be wasted on needless or meaningless activities. Therefore, 'in addition to the biblical prohibitions on performing any work-related task on the Sabbath, there were an assortment of rabbinic proscriptions instituted as an enclosure to the Torah, encompassing acts that were not essentially or immediately connected to employment; leisure activities, writing, handling money or tools'.[145] Notwithstanding this,

[139] *Ibid.*, 11 May 1912.
[140] *Ibid.*, 26 November 1901.
[141] *Ibid.*, 21 October 1899.
[142] D. Brailsford, 'The Sporting Weekend', *Sport, Time and Society: The British at Play* (London, 1991), pp.104-22.
[143] *Ibid.*, p. 105.
[144] E. Krausz, *Leeds Jewry: Its History and Social Structure* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 47.
[145] *Yorkshire Evening News*, 21 January 1925.

by the early twentieth century, when sport had become a popular leisure interest among emergent sections of the Jewish community in Leeds, 'many Jews had ceased to comply with Judaic religion and its conventions, including the religious Sabbath rest'.[146]

This is especially evident in their association with rugby league football. The passion for rugby football among the Jewish population of East Leeds was exceptionally marked. During the early 1890s before the great rugby split, scores of young Jewish men found their Sabbatarian diversions by watching and supporting Leeds Parish Church rugby team. Since most games of rugby were played on the Saturday/Sabbath Jews were not permitted to carry any money or conduct any monetary transactions, which presented the Parish Church club with a dilemma – they were unable to take gate-money from their now burgeoning Jewish support at their home games. Apparently, the situation became so serious that in 1893 the Parish Church club was forced to move to an alternative ground to attract those spectators and supporters who could and would pay gate-money to see their games.[147]

Again, there is a simple explanation why Catholics were permitted to play sports teams from the Jewish community, say, above those from the evangelical Protestant community. In 1898, there was unique gathering in Leeds to discuss Jewish and Catholic relations. Prior to this date, Catholic and Hebrew members of the Leeds community had never been very intimately associated. Father Mulcahy, who was one of many speakers who attended the meeting, protested against Protestant accusations that the Russian Jews living in Leeds used Christian blood in their rituals. Another speaker, Bishop Maguire, went on to say that, 'the persecution suffered by Jews and Catholics under the British Crown…these persecutions and the denial of them and of the ordinary rights of British subjects are a tie between the Jews and the Catholics'.[148] The meeting concluded that it should link together

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[146] T. Collins, 'Jews, Antisemitism, and sport in Britain, 1900-1939', in M. Brenner and G. Reuveni (ed.) *Emancipation, Muscles, Jews and Sports in Europe* (London, 2006), pp. 142-55.
[147] *Yorkshire Evening News*, 28 January 1925.
[148] *Ibid*., 13 March 1898.

Catholic and Jewish societies and organisations, 'and give our people the strength which comes from numbers and unity, and the wisdom which comes from wide experience, social interactions and multiplied counsel'.[149]

In the long history of rugby football many Catholics encountered challenges to their beliefs, values, and culture both within and outside their communities. Rugby football and the proponents of the sport said that it provided useful social functions because it taught Catholic children, youths and adults, important values like hard work, sacrifice, self-reliance and independence.[150] However, before, during and after the great rugby split in 1895, rugby football union in some Catholic parishes of the West Riding was not democratic, did not necessarily build character, nor did it actually actively help to enjoin working-class Catholics with middle and upper-class Catholics.

In urban districts of the industrial Diocese of Leeds it was only natural that the predominant element, the working classes, should on the whole, give its tone and colour to the Church's rugby teams. And on the same principle it would seem to be reasonable that rugby teams established in localities that were not predominantly working class should take a different local colour. Many middle-class Catholics in the urban districts felt that rugby teams established in these districts were far too Irish and working-class Catholic, 'that its guards were robed in the rebel green, and their songs and their end of season speeches exhaled a subtle aroma of Fenianism'.[151] Therefore, many middle class and upper-class English adherents refused to join such clubs and tended to become members of those evangelical Protestant clubs that were class bound to the exclusion of the working classes.[152] In like manner, in those satellite towns and rural districts, where greater numbers of English middle

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[149] *Ibid.*, 20 March 1898.
[150] LDA, Pastoral Letter Bishop Gordon 1892.
[151] *Bradford Observer*, 18 October 1884.
[152] *Tablet*, 21 March 1887.

and upper-class Catholics lived in cloistered seclusion, the singing of the 'Roast Beef of England', rather than the 'The Wearing of the Green' was much louder.[153]

In sporting parlance, the disagreement about class and nationality was the fundamental difference that eventually isolated English middle and upper-class Catholic football teams from working-class Irish Catholic rugby teams, and ultimately the mixing of the two. Class prejudice varied with the social prestige of a club and illustrates the carefully balanced power relationships the middle and upper-class English Catholics held together, because they were not in favour of relinquishing their status in codes of football, by either playing with, or against the working classes.[154] For example, in towns like Ilkley, Skipton, and Wetherby, where tradition-bound middle and upper-class Catholic families, valuing formal material progress and social status above all other endeavours were in the majority, tended to dominate sporting activities and local Catholic rugby teams in these localities.[155] Those working-class Catholics living in such places were more likely to face overt class discrimination, and as such, found themselves socially disqualified from becoming a member of the local parish sports club or rugby team.[156] In these rural districts there was no unity of purpose and of action on the part of the wealthier classes, and more than anything else, they tended to nullify all efforts made by the Catholic Church to promote leisure activities that were congenial to all sections of the Catholic people. Hence, working-class Irish Catholics domiciled in these districts, who did not receive support from within their community to pursue sport as means of social mobility, did not play or pursue the game of rugby.[157]

In peaceful parts of the county, which never had to face the misery and degradation found in most manufacturing towns and cities, the majority of rugby clubs were dominated by the middle and upper classes, who rarely ventured into the industrial towns to mix it with

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[153] *Catholic Herald*, 19 May 1898.
[154] *Tablet,* 25 February 1887.
[155] *Catholic Herald,* 22 September 1898.
[156] *Ibid.*, 4 March 1900.
[157] *Tablet.*, 13 October 1887.

the working classes in inter-parish competitions.[158] Because of the escalation in local class dissimilarities within the diocese, and because privileged English Catholics were in opposition to any passive participation in social activities which involved the working classes, who they generally deemed to be unnecessary and barbaric, they formed their own little leagues and tended to play games of rugby with those teams of a similar social disposition – middle-class against middle-class, upper-class against upper-class, middle and upper-class against middle and upper-class.[159] Clearly, privileged English Catholics used rugby to their own ends, to shore-up relationships with the upper echelons of Catholic society, and to bring upper and middle-class Catholics closer, and forge an identity outside the mainstream of working-class Catholicism.

Catholic rugby teams established in the late nineteenth century were intended to improve the spiritual and social life of its members. They were seen as another means of transforming irreligious Catholics into devout citizens. Rugby had become the physical manifestation of Catholics at play. Rugby like Catholicism was a venerate tradition with a focus on community and emphasised Catholic values regarding the nature and importance of the interplay between the individual and the community. Rugby taught patience, humility, faith and hope. The Church guarded its member's souls by insisting on monthly confession and adhering to the sacraments, it had guarded their minds by providing Catholic schools, and now it guarded their bodies by providing healthy amusements in the form of rugby football; which it eventually internalised in its endeavour to throw a protective shield around its flock and safeguard them from the malign influences of Protestant England.

By internalising its sports teams Catholics were spared the religious prejudices they experienced in other aspects of their daily lives. However, it does seem that the intention of these rugby teams, apart from the entirely laudable aim of self-improvement, was, in

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[158] *Sporting Gazette*, 2 November 1883.
[159] *Catholic Herald*, 7 October 1898.

addition, a desire to maintain control over the spiritual moral and physical development of Catholic youth. The establishment of sports and rugby clubs gave the Church, generally in the form of a priest, a controlling influence over a considerable area of social interaction, especially in an era contemporary with Home Rule for Ireland, which came to play an important part in the rugby drama of the period in the West Riding.

The prevalent manifestation of the Irish sporting diaspora in the late nineteenth century West Riding of Yorkshire is intimately connected with rugby football. During the late nineteenth century the towns and cities of the West Riding had become the great citadels of rugby football in England. Rugby football in Yorkshire attracted much participation and media attention, which gave rise to working-class Irish immigrants establishing their own non-parochial rugby football teams, which acted as sporting auxiliaries and cash cows to the various Home Rule clubs scattered across the county. Since the main objective of the Home Rule organisation was to offer financial support and political muscle to the Irish Parliamentary Party, this chapter will argue that the establishment of Irish nationalist rugby football teams initially centred on the sport's by products', namely commerce and gate-money, cashing in on the craze that was rugby football. For most Irish nationalist clubs in the West Riding, their incomes were derived from admission fees to watch rugby matches. Indeed, rugby football became an important fiscal tool to accrue funds for the Home Rule cause, as well as consolidating national identity, which brings into question the wider debate concerning Irish immigrant participation in British sports and reasons why they became involved in them – love of the sport or love of the lucre. The interaction of rugby football and Irish nationalism must now be traced over ground very different from that traversed between the Catholic Church and rugby football in the previous chapter.

Over the past few decades the history of sport has achieved a wide currency. It is currently fashionable to speak of the histories of sport in England, as if there are many versions (which there are) and many ways of approaching such histories (which there are), and as if they were all of equal value and validity (which they are not). But, looked at more

generally, the history of sport in England is full of incident and interest, touching all sides of life, on the outlook and interests of all classes of society, including the forgotten Irish diaspora. The present historical framework and chronological treatment of questions relating to the Irish diaspora and sport in England are repeatedly relegated to superficial explanations, no more than a foray into fields of rich material. These issues are compounded even further by the conspicuous absence in the literature of analysis of the role of Irish nationalist confederations for the Irish émigré. To date there have been no comprehensive studies concerning Irish immigrants and their experiences with rugby football. Instead, attention is focussed on the black/white binary of colonial thought, which renders the Irish invisible because white diversity is ignored. On this basis, this chapter seeks to redress these major failings and directs attention to the neglected aspects of the county's Irish nationalist rugby teams. This chapter attempts to, through careful selective consideration of both primary and secondary sources to establish connections between Irish nationalist organisations in the West Riding and what effect rugby football had on Irish nationalists.

First, it will examine the establishment of Home Rule clubs and what the setting up of these clubs reveals about the collective social identity of the communities which wished to retain pride in their Irish ancestry; Home Rule clubs also reveal the dual social identity of the community as Irish-English. It might be more accurate to call these 'exile societies', because Irish people rarely felt the need to band together with their countrymen when they are in their own country. Logically, therefore, Home Rule clubs were ethnic societies. Typically, Home Rule clubs provided three things: one the chance to reminisce and exchange news about the old country; the second is a way to try to preserve the culture of the old country in the new generation; and third is a benevolent aspect, a formalisation of helping one another out. The range of activities undertaken by these Home Rule clubs was extraordinarily wide. They were mutual assistance clubs; they were charities; they were civic service clubs; and they were

Catholic; they even had the overtones of a modern political party machine. Of course there were forms of this sort in societies inside their own cultural milieu in Ireland, which functioned to reinforce Irish culture. Certain political organisations such as Home Rule and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) served such a purpose, whose function was to preserve, and indeed, reinvent the culture of their forbears. This chapter will, moreover, explore the inter-relationships between social identities and rugby football, given the welter of prejudices ranged against Irish Catholic immigrants. Lastly this chapter attempts to examine whether the presence of Irish nationalist confederations in rugby football intensified feelings of hostility and prejudice and/or provided Irish nationalists with a means of assimilation and acculturation.

When discussing the subject of Irish Home Rule and the establishment of the Irish National League confederation (INL) one cannot help dwelling on the history and the value of this national organisation since its creation under the auspice of the National Irish Land League (NILL). The NILL was the forerunner to the INL, comprised of individuals banded together in local societies and institutions in the pursuit of one common interest, Home Rule for Ireland. Adherents of this political organisation, representing Irish interests, would play a leading part in the struggle for Parliamentary reform which culminated in Irish independence in 1922. The demand for Home Rule developed as an essential aspect of this movement. In October 1879, Charles Stewart Parnell was elected President of the Land League; Patrick Egan, Treasurer; and Michael Davitt and Thomas Brennan, Secretaries. It was the activities of these men which were primarily responsible for bringing Irish issues into the mainstream of British political life during this period. It was chiefly Parnell's appointment, 'which had a steadying influence on the League and in conjunction with Davitt's rebellious political drive, gained universal support throughout the world wherever the diasporic Irish settled, in

particular in America, Canada, Australia and England'.[1] Indeed, the radical political views inspired by Parnell and his colleagues laid the foundations for the widely diffused formation of branches of the League in many of these countries. In the West Riding of Yorkshire, as in the other industrialised counties of northern England, there was overwhelming support for the organisation among the diasporic Irish, who founded their own Land League clubs in the towns of Batley, Barnsley, Bradford, Dewsbury, Doncaster, Halifax, Huddersfield, Keighley, Leeds, Rotherham, Sheffield, Wakefield and York to lend both financial support and political muscle.[2]

Those who took up the cause represented a new political grouping on a national scale. It was from this time that there begins a conscious struggle against the outmoded and corrupt political system that existed in Ireland, which was primarily concerned in upholding the interests of large landowners as against those of all other sections of the rural community; a struggle that was fought up to the achievement of reform through land reforms in 1881 and later through to the conclusive victory with the introduction of the Land Act in 1885. In order to assess the achievements of this movement it is necessary briefly to consider the general ideas advanced by Parnell and his colleagues and how they were applied. There fight for reform took the form of demands for a radical overhaul of the economic dislocation brought about by high rents, low profits and lower wages accompanied by widespread distress. Thus, the objectives of the League were, 'to reduce the rents, by withholding them if necessary, to prevent evictions for non-payment, and to return the land into the native hands and to lobby for the nationalisation of the land'.[3] The determination of the Land League to bring about fundamental economic changes was having such a consequence that the British Government had to acquiesce, sweeping away the old legislation and drafting up a new treaty with Parnell

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[1] O'Day, *The English face of Irish nationalism* , pp. 62-6.
[2] *Tablet*, 20 May 1880.
[3] O'Day, *The English face of Irish nationalism*, p. 62.

called the Kilmainham Treaty. 'The Land Act resulting from this treaty was based on the principle of the three Fs: Fixity of tenure, Fair rents, and Free sale'.[4]

Home Rule for Ireland dominated much of the political agenda, and where the Land Acts of 1881 and 1885 had made some concessions in paving the way for peasant proprietorship, 'the members of local branches of the League adopted the theory, perhaps borrowed unconsciously from the notables of Grattan's parliament and fuelled by Daniel O'Connell and numerous subsequent political leaders, that they were the Irish nation'.[5] A certain unity of national action was inevitable. In other words, it is against this background that the likes of Parnell seized the opportunities achieved through the agitations and actions of the League, 'to rule in its name'.[6] This was certainly the orthodox view. The fact that the INL, 'had been established by Parnell in October 1882 with the clear purpose of using it to secure Home Rule lent legitimacy to the local branches'.[7] So strongly was it held that some historians, such as Perry Curtis, have suggested that, 'they became the established government'.[8] Undoubtedly many contemporary observers held the view that the INL was not just an acquiescent and obliging electoral instrument for the parliamentary party, 'but rather the only acknowledged power in Ireland'.[9]

Since that date the INL organisation, was, its safe to say, one of the most remarkable political movements of its time. Whilst its first and chief object was the securing of self-government for Ireland, at the same time it had always been an absolutely democratic organisation, fighting for and supporting every form of progress on behalf of the Irish people, no matter by whom initiated. It was held together by nationalist aspirations and democratic principles, and was all the time independent of the various British political parties. It was

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[4] H. V. Brasted, 'Irish nationalism and the British empire in the late nineteenth century', in O. MacDonagh, W.E. Mandle and P. Travers (eds.), *Irish culture and nationalism, 1750-1950* (London, 1983), p. 111.
[5] *Ibid.,* p. 28.
[6] L. Perry Curtis, Jr, *Coercion and Conciliation in Ireland, 1880-1892* (Princeton, 1963), p. 128.
[7] Brasted, 'Irish nationalism and the British empire in the late nineteenth century', p. 112.
[8] Perry Curtis, Jr, *Coercion and Conciliation in Ireland, 1880-1892*, p. 129.
[9] *Ibid.*, p.147.

obedient to the call of its leaders and was a potent factor on more than occasion in changing or shaping local governments.[10] The INL, which later became known as the United Irish League (UIL), was a disciplined life of its own, unique and unparalleled in the politics of Britain throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. There were also numerous social and industrial questions of the age which the UIL held the Irish diasporic communities in England together, and for which they could fight and become an influential body, securing the benefits of the people as a whole. The UIL was a distinctive national title, appealing to all the Irish in Great Britain, whose interests were the bonds of race, of nationality and of religion.[11]

Branches of the INL were active across the whole of England, the West Riding among them. Often they were called after notable Irish patriots. Indeed the criteria by which the diasporic Irish identified their own brand of heroes or persons of repute had deep roots in the naming of their INL clubs. For example, the Dewsbury branch was named after Robert Emmet; Batley boasted Michael Davitt and John Dillon; Batley Carr, Robert Emmett; the Leeds branches of the Home Rule confederation were named after John Redmond, Robert Emmet, Henry Grattan, John Dillon, and Daniel O'Connell; Hunslet was named after Thomas Sexton; Holbeck, Thomas Davies; while the Bradford branches were named after Wolfe Tone, Michael Dwyer, Henry Grattan, Dillon O'Brien; Birstall, Daniel O'Connell; and the Keighley branches were named after Wolfe Tone and Anne Delvin. In other towns Home Rule confederations were called Shamrock clubs, such as those at Castleford, Morley, Eccleshill, Otley, Pontefract, Rotherham, Barnsley, Normanton, Goole, Shipley, Bingley, Pudsey, Heckmondwike and Sowerby Bridge. In the towns of Halifax, Huddersfield, Skipton, Sheffield and Wakefield they were simply called Irish National League clubs.[12] By the late nineteenth century most towns in the West Riding with an Irish community had an Irish

[10] F.S.L. Lyons, 'The political ideas of Parnell', *Historical Journal*, 16 (1973), p. 760.
[11] P.B. Ellis, *A History of the Irish working class* (London, 1985), pp. 157-61.
[12] *Tablet*, 27 June 1889.

nationalist club. The *Catholic Herald* of 8 December 1898 wrote, 'the whole county is rapidly falling into line under the banner of the Irish National League'.[13] Most Home Rule clubs in the West Riding also had female auxiliaries called the Ladies United Irish National League and are reported to have been, 'well supported'.[14]

As already seen, the religious identity of working-class Irish Catholics in the industrial Diocese of Leeds was important and long-lasting, but their ethnic identity was also important. For the nationalistic Irish Catholics domiciled in the West Riding there was a need to emphasise the difference between themselves and the English. Therefore, Home Rule clubs became the heartbeat of Irish culture, becoming major institutions that were congenial to the diasporic Irish Catholic communities, providing a firm ideological basis not only for political action but also for a cultural and social outlook consistent with the requirements of Irish nationalist development.[15]As well as offering financial support and political muscle to the Irish Parliamentary Party, Home Rule clubs in the West Riding provided the best opportunity for Irish cultural identity and confidence to recover after the trauma of the famine, the social and cultural consequences of relocation to urban England, and English evangelical Protestant mores not evident in Irish diasporic communities. Home Rule clubs also created the need to redefine aspects of Irishness and the nature of the extended Irish family in the English urban context. They also provided a need for people from different regions and backgrounds to devise ways of co-operating with one another to solve specifically Irish issues. Differences of regional identities had to be resolved, traditional suspicions and antagonisms discarded or submerged. In addressing these problems Home Rule organisations led to the conception and development of Irish unity in the diaspora, and an intensification of a sense of Irishness which grew out of such nationalist organisations.[16]

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[13] *Catholic Herald*, 8 December 1898.
[14] *Ibid.*, 24 February 1899.
[15] *Ibid.,* 2 September 1902.
[16] Gilley,'The Roman Catholic Church and the late nineteenth century Irish diaspora', p.195.

While all these measures did some good, it has been argued that during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, Irish immigrants were losing their cultural identity and their Irish language, which had at one time distinguished them from the mainstay of English society.[17] There were no government initiatives at this time to arrest the decline in the use of Irish language or the erosion of Irish culture. Nor did governments or the Catholic Church favour such policies, because they accepted the blueprint of integration. It was assumed, erroneously, that those who grew up feeling 'less Irish' than their parents and grandparents would by that very fact become 'more English'.[18] Instead, many such people simply grew up in a cultural vacuum and felt directionless and detached from the society in which they emerged as adults; and these formed a large proportion of those subsequently represented in crime statistics.[19]

It was taken for granted by most English, including the Catholic Church and the political leadership of the day, that integration in fact meant assimilation, which required the Irish to become English. Many Irish Catholics were expected to learn the English language and English ways of living, and many Irish diasporic parents and grandparents accepted this as inevitable.[20] As a result, Irish cultural values and institutions had a lower status in English life than their English equivalents. Even Irish who wanted to pursue Irishness as part of urban life were in many respects prevented from doing so because the Catholic Church and the English Protestant Government could see neither the value nor the necessity of such measures. When Irish nationalist organisations advocated such measures they were quickly dismissed as separatist and as a potential source of social divisiveness.[21]

The Catholic Church in England and agencies of the state were committed to reflecting English values, criteria, practices and priorities rather than Irish ones. The more

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[17] J. J. Lee, Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society (Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 7.
[18] Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the nineteenth century*, p. 241.
[19] Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*, p. 132.
[20] *Catholic Herald*, 22 December 1998.
[21] P. Joyce, *Work society and politics* (Brighton, 1982), p. 79.

such factors were recognised and articulated in Irish Catholic quarters, especially in the 1870s and 1880s, the more they came to be resented and resisted. And this resentment led to a rise in the increase in membership of Irish nationalist clubs, organisations which articulated Irish considerations and needs.[22] Such an organisation believed that the diaspora and the Catholic Church had corrupted the spirit of Irish nationalism.[23] They assumed many philosophies from contemporary nationalism, patriotism, national pride, self-definition, a historical view of the land of Ireland, the use of Gaelic as an everyday language and contemporary political organisation.[24] Irish nationalists characterised Irish identity in historical, ethnic and political terms. Irish nationalism occasionally combined religious and nationalist ideals and at other times borrowed traditional Irish Catholic ideas and principles, but fundamentally nationalised and secularised their former religious significance.[25]

Rapidly, Irish nationalist clubs widened their campaign to include the teaching of Irish language. The use of Gaelic language in the diaspora and its use of inspiring modern political ideologies served as new unifiers, forming a national collective identity that could exist independently of the English Catholic Church; in some cases it even included anti-Catholic tones, as part of an extreme reversal of the diaspora.[26] By 1900, most Home Rule clubs across the county were offering their membership Irish language classes.[27] In a notice carried by the *Catholic Herald* of 13 April 1900, attention was called to the subject of proposed Irish language classes, 'All patriotic Irish people in the West Riding whom the love of the ancient language still survives should hail the formation of Irish classes with great satisfaction, and many of the younger people, we trust, will avail themselves of this

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[22] *Tablet*, 18 March 1886.
[23] K.D. Wald, *Crosses on the ballots* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 27-31.
[24] N.W. Walker, 'Irish immigrants in Scotland: Their priests, politics and parochial life', *Historical Journal*, 15 (1972), p.672.
[25] H. McLeod, 'Catholicism and the New York Irish, 1880-1910', in J. Obelkevich, L. Roper and R. Samuel (eds.), *Disciplines of faith. Studies in religion, politics and patriarchy* (London, 1987), p. 348.
[26] B. O'Connell, 'Irish Nationalism in Liverpool', *Eire-Ireland*, 10 (1975), p. 436.
[27] A. O'Day, 'The political organisation of the Irish in Britain, 1867-90', in R. Swift and S. Gilley, *Irish in Britain, 1859-1939* (London, 1989), p. 219.

opportunity to acquire the mother tongue. Already a number of persons of both sexes have signified their intention of joining the classes'.[28] On 11 May 1900, the *Catholic Herald* reported an overall increase in the number of Irish language classes across the region, 'substantial evidence being thus afforded of an ardent desire on all sides of the county to acquire the national language'.[29]

The combined effect of activities advanced by the country's many Irish nationalist clubs was to focus attention on specific Irish issues in a way that had never happened before and gradually to radicalise such organisations and its members.[30] The aim, according to the rules of the INL in England, was to ensure that every member would be adequately trained, 'to promote by all just means in his power, independence for Ireland and its people'.[31] Without doubt the branches of nationalist organisations throughout the country were politically orientated. The predominant driving force was the desire for Home Rule in Ireland, and the West Riding branches were no exception. They arranged lectures on Ireland's history, culture traditions, and leaders.[32] At the same time, the literature on Irish history and culture was also burgeoning, which amounted to a new Irish market for such publications and a growing interest in Irish culture and the fight for Irish independence. Works by literary figures – W. B. Yeats and J. M. Synge among them – attracted a great deal of public attention and advanced the Home Rule cause. 'Writers and poets inspired Irishmen everywhere to be proud of their talents, heritage, culture and country'.[33]

Through this period literary works of this nature were one of the chief means of promoting and diffusing nationalistic views among the Irish communities of the West Riding; indeed, it was in the fight for Home Rule that the Irish Catholic's demand for access to

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[28] *Catholic Herald*, 13 April 1900.
[29] *Ibid.,* 11 May 1900.
[30] E.P.M. Wollaston, 'The Irish Nationalist movement in Great Britain, 1886-1908' (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of London, 1958), p. 25.
[31] *The Times*, 5 May 1904.
[32] *Catholic Herald,* 6 March 1899.
[33] E. Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75', *American Historical Review*, 77 (1972), p. 650.

political and national knowledge on their own terms was mainly expressed. By reading such literary works, which now emerged from time to time, and by attending nationalist propaganda lectures, the Irish diaspora were starting to educate themselves in the political struggle for Irish independence. This process of self-education in the field of Irish politics was of great significance. It helped materially, from among the rank and file of these Irish nationalist clubs, individuals who were able to comprehend and master political, nationalist and social thinking; individuals capable of acting on and communicating their knowledge to other nationalist members at both local and national branch level.[34] The importance of combining education with nationalistic agitation was, then, understood among large sections of the working-class Irish diaspora in the West Riding. As described in chapter three, nor was the significance of this lost on the English Catholic Church, which was directly against this combined educational and nationalistic activity.

This last matter was also approached entirely from the standpoint of the INL who had a specific interest in loosening the hold of the English Catholic Church and, at the same time, in weaning its members off Church censured literature and onto more diffused reading materials. Nationalist journals and other publications were, as has been shown in chapter three, the essential reading matter of nationalist, working-class diasporic Irish. As such, most branches of the INL provided well stocked libraries offering a wide variety of Irish literary material which might serve to increase the usefulness of its members to the nationalistic cause. They were also served by nationalist newspapers and pamphlets, Irish newspapers, and the various regional and national editions of Catholic newspapers and journals.[35] By the late nineteenth century Home Rule clubs also undertook a considerable amount of educational work of the Labour Movement and despite the fact that many of its members overlapped with the Liberal Party, they retained their separate identity and policies. On municipal election

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[34] Wollaston, 'The Irish Nationalist movement in Great Britain, 1886-1908', p. 25
[35] Huddersfield Central Library Archives, Minutes from the Irish National League Club, Huddersfield, 1898.

matters it often found itself opposed to the dogmatic electoral tactics of the Catholic Church and was invariably in conflict over the Catholic Church's suggestion that the Conservative Party should be the official political party for all Catholics because it was a safeguard in favour of non-secular education.[36]

In the 1870s and 1880s, Irish culture and national heritage in the diaspora had long been suppressed and disintegrated. This was not to be for long. In the subsequent decades there was a shift to revive and strengthen it. In the opening years of the twentieth century there was an Irish cultural renaissance and ample evidence to suggest that, as a movement, Home Rule for Ireland was gathering momentum. This time, however, the INL began to make itself felt. In this new atmosphere of Irish nationalism there was an increase in the number of newly founded Home Rule clubs that sprang up across the county from twenty-three in 1898 to thirty-four in 1904.[37] Yet, and perhaps, the single most pervasive influence on Irish culture, though not greatly commented on in contemporary historical literature, was the Gaelic League, which had branches in most of the major towns and cities up and down the country; operating within the central structures of the various Home Rule clubs.[38] INL clubs now promoted cultural activities side by side with Irish nationalist activities. In general, the nationalist struggle to promote Irish culture was inseparably linked with continuing action to secure Irish independence. It seems clear that this marked a new stage in so far as Irish culture was now seen as an aspect of winning the bigger battle for Irish Home Rule in the political field. From this new vantage point Irish nationalist leaders of the INL and Gaelic League movements foresaw the lines on which the fight for Irish independence must develop, and the diffusion of Irish cultural activities were central to this process.[39]

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[36] *Catholic Herald*, 13 March 1897.
[37] *Leeds Mercury*, 5 September 1904.
[38] P. Hennessay, *Gaelic Athletics Association: A Century of Service*, 1884-1994 (Dublin, 1994), p.79.
[39] Wollaston, 'The Irish Nationalist movement in Great Britain, 1886-1908', pp. 32-8.

By the late 1880s, therefore, the establishment of Gaelic League could figure as part of a Irish nationalist political programme, as one of a number of indispensible organisations chiefly concentrated on building up an Irish cultural identity. As well as propagating Irish national identity, by teaching and encouraging the use of the Gaelic language, the Gaelic League was also responsible for securing and reviving ancient Irish games such as hurling, and the creation of Gaelic football, as harbingers of this new cultural political programme.[40] This development was to have a new impetus and formed the core of the League's cultural efforts in the years between 1884 and 1922. From 1884 onwards, 'a cultural and political transformation developed where many in Ireland looked to overturn the British colonial authority and to give a boost to Irishness as a focus for self-respect and celebration'.[41] The objective of these cultural and political measures was for the nationalisation and re-establishment of Ireland's indigenous customs and identities, including the restoration, rehabilitation and maintenance of the Irish language and Gaelic sport. As K. Whelan notes, 'Part of this transformation was manifest with the advent of the Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA) and its creators wished to use Gaelic sports as a nationalising expression, a representational language of identity filling the void created by the speed of the cultural colonisation of Ireland'.[42]

In this prevailing atmosphere Irish ethnic newspapers carried an extraordinary amount of community news and information that illustrated, clearly, the main Irish political and cultural preoccupations of the GAA and the INL in Ireland at that time. Indeed, such sporting and cultural accomplishments in Ireland were consciously promoted and moderately emulated by Irish immigrants domiciled in the West Riding. This becomes quite marked with the establishment of some of the county's first hurling and Gaelic football teams.[43] Following

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[40] Hennessay, *Gaelic Athletics Association: A Century of Service*, *1884-1994*, pp.79-82.
[41] *Ibid*., p. 80.
[42] K. Whelan, 'The Geography of Hurling', *History Ireland,* 1 (1993), pp.27-31.
[43] S. King, *The Clash of the Ash in Foreign Fields: Hurling Abroad* (London, 1998), p. 185.

the ideological and nationalistic philosophies propagated by the GAA, some Irish nationalist clubs across the industrial diocese of Leeds severed all links with English sport, especially rugby and association football.[44] They concerned themselves primarily with the promotion of Irish language, culture, literature and Irish sports.

Young Irishmen drawn to the Gaelic League competed in hurling and Gaelic football matches, which soon developed into regular fixtures between teams from Leeds, Halifax, Bradford and Keighley. On 24 October 1908, the *Catholic Herald* reported that, 'The Gaelic games of hurling and football have made great strides in popularity in recent years and are now firmly established in the public favour of Irishmen in the West Riding'.[45] In 1909, from the *Catholic Herald* we find a series of advertisements of some athletics sports to be held at Bradford on Sunday September 19 and 26, under G.A.A. rules. The programme on the first Sunday included general athletics, cycling and glass ball competition. The Sabbath following was to be given to tugs of war, hurling and a Gaelic football tournament.[46] In 1912, the Gaelic Football Club from Bradford announced that it had arranged, 'a good series of fixtures across the West Riding for the season'.[47] On 14 November 1913, the *Catholic Herald* reported a large attendance at a Gaelic football match played between Keighley Gaelic Football Club and Halifax Gaelic Football Club.[48] On 25 July 1914, the *Catholic Herald* also carried a story that Irish ladies of Keighley had established a hurling club in connection with the Gaelic Athletics Association, 'Countrywomen in Yorkshire and Lancashire by playing Irish games, the game of hurling as adapted for ladies, apart altogether from the patriotic point of view, is equally as good, and as health-giving as hockey'.[49] On 27 June 1914, the first round of the O'Connor Cup and Provincial Hurling Championship was played at

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[44] *Catholic Herald*, 21 June 1907.
[45] *Ibid.*, 24 October 1908.
[46] *Ibid.,* 31 August 1909.
[47] *Ibid.*, 7 November 1912.
[48] *Ibid.,* 14 November 1913.
[49] *Ibid.*, 25 July 1914.

Aintree, Liverpool. It was reported that contestants representing Scotland, Lancashire, Yorkshire, London and Wales were in attendance.[50] The playing of Gaelic sports was one in a series of measures, if only in small part, which so changed the face of Irish life in the West Riding during the early twentieth century.

The constitution of all Home Rule clubs in the West Riding required them to provide their membership with social intercourse and rational entertainments. Popular on the club circuit during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was Mr Devine's Band from Bradford, which was advertised as being, 'one of the most efficient of local combinations and the excellent quality of the music, as well as its thoroughly Irish character, is guaranteed'.[51] The Dewsbury Home Rule club entertained its members with theatrical dramatics by Mr J. R. Cassidy, a well known Irish actor, who regularly toured the district performing his new plays and frequently addressed the nationalists of Dewsbury and Batley Carr on the Irish question.[52] Members of this club also arranged outings to the Yorkshire Dales, Grassington and Kilnsey Craggs, to which they rode from Skipton railway station in wagggonnettes, as well as, annual pilgrimages back to the old country.[53] Throughout the 1880s and early 1890s most Home Rule clubs in the urban districts of the West Riding were busy in relieving the poor and providing free meals for the children of Irish immigrants; on one occasion the Wolfe Tone Club Bradford, was feeding 300 children and then entertaining them 'by a magic lantern show and a variety of other entertainments'.[54]

Most, if not all, Irish Home Rule clubs across the West Riding had facilities for its members to participate in normal club room games, such as billiards, darts, cards and dominoes. In 1899, a billiards tournament, promoted by Leeds and District Federation of INL clubs, was widely received as a means of improving mutual intercourse and good fellowship

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[50] *Ibid.*, 27 June 1914.
[51] *Ibid.,* 17 March 1899.
[52] *Ibid.,* 27 April 1898.
[53] *Ibid.*, 15 August 1896.
[54] *Ibid.,* 27 March 1890.

among the members of the various clubs in that district, 'and the shield which will go to the successful club does honour to the Federation and to the manufacturers Messers Fattorini and Sons, of Kirkgate, Bradford. The design is unmistakably Irish that familiar emblems of the old country being introduced in a manner which excites admiration as such for the task and skill employed in the work as for the result which has been achieved'.[55] All clubs competed in the Yorkshire INL Federation Games of 25s (cards) dominoes and the Billiard Shield.[56] As well as being entertained by professional singers, comedians and club games, Home Rule clubs devoted a great deal of time to Irish political affairs and arranging Irish events and socials, especially Irish music and dancing. The Irish diaspora joined in social occasions and reacted to impromptu political and national speeches with great gusto.[57] A commitment to Irish nationalist values remained reasonably strong at this time, despite the fact that most Irish Catholics were nominally members of the Catholic Church's many confraternities.[58]

In default of detailed local and national research, and the lack of contemporary nineteenth-century sources, it is difficult to say exactly how popular and how widespread the INL movement was in the West Riding and how many clubs were started and how many were successfully maintained. Beset, as these clubs were at times, not only with financial difficulties but also with religious and political obstruction amounting often to persecution, their path was not an easy one.[59] These obstacles were, of course, by no means confined to the clubs of the West Riding but covered the whole of the country. This has led some historians, who have previously studied Irish nationalism in England, to question whether Home Rule clubs were or were not effective, and are usually either fully for or against the

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[55] *Ibid.*, 6 October 1899.
[56] *Ibid.,* 18 October 1913.
[57] *Bradford Observer*, 2 October, 1893.
[58] J. Supple, 'The Political Attitudes and Activities of Yorkshire Catholics, 1850-1900', *Northern History*, 21 (1985), pp. 239-49.
[59] *Catholic Herald*, 12 May 1898.

notion.[60] This is understandable considering the decline of the movement in the few remaining years of the nineteenth century. At this period, there was already a much wider realisation among the Irish immigrants not only of rigid clerical and state opposition to any real Home Rule advancement but also the divergent aims of the Irish nationalist leaders themselves which were acting as a hostile force, causing a conflict of interest between the Irish and English proletariat.[61]

An assessment of the number and nature of INL clubs in the industrial centres of the West Riding is given in a series of conflicting reports produced by the *Catholic Herald* in 1899, based on a survey of local INL clubs in Bradford and Leeds. In 1899, it was reported that attendance figures and membership numbers at INL clubs across Bradford were in a poor state, 'and it is deplorable indeed that a large number of Irishmen in the district so few were members of the National League. It was the duty of every Irishman and Irish woman to be members of the League'.[62] By contrast, the Leeds branches of the INL are reported to have been flourishing and had not only increased the number of its clubs in that town, and its immediate neighbourhood, but had also multiplied the number of its membership.[63] On 1 December 1899, the *Catholic Herald* reported, in spite of the obstacles put in the way of the INL organisation, the sturdy Irish nationalists of Leeds were expeditiously establishing a number of nationalist clubs in the outlining districts of the city, an increase which coincided with large numbers of Irish immigrants relocating away from the central townships:

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[60] Wollaston, 'The Irish Nationalist movement in Great Britain, 1886-1908, p. 76; A. O'Day, 'The Irish influence in parliamentary elections', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian city* (Beckenham, 1985), p. 118.
[61] Wollaston, 'The Irish Nationalist movement in Great Britain, 1886-1908, pp. 76-9.
[62] *Catholic Herald,* 24 November 1899.
[63] *Ibid*., 1 December 1899.

Members of the INL in the city of Leeds will view with sympathy and satisfaction the efforts of a small body of ardent Irishmen in the Holbeck district to establish a branch of the National League. There must be several hundred Irishmen in the district who are not members of the League and the attempt to organise them and get them in their proper places in the Nationalist ranks is deserving of the fullest encouragement. The branch will be known as the Thomas Davies branch. Many prominent Irishmen were present at the opening ceremony. At present the members meet in the Commercial Inn, Sweet Street, but it is hoped that when sufficient members have joined, the branch will be in a position to secure rooms of its own.[64]

In the proceeding years, provincial newspapers reveal that INL clubs across the county were on the increase. Indeed, the provincial newspapers of this period are full of advertisements and reports promoting the increase in the number of INL clubs and their activities. In issues of the *Bradford Observer*, *Leeds Mercury* and the *Catholic Herald*, for instance, INL clubs located in and around the industrial centres of the West Riding were making conscious appeals to the dispersed Irish communities to band together behind the nationalist cause. On 9 November 1905, the *Bradford Observer* reported that the combined membership of the Bradford Federation of the UIL had increased to 1,606.[65] On 5 October 1906, the *Leeds Mercury* reported that the Leeds Federation of UIL had a membership of 2,200.[66] In the same period the UIL club at Dewsbury is reported to have had a, 'large and intelligent number of Irishmen, who in spite of all the depressing circumstances by which the Irish National cause has been surrounded these last nine years had managed to keep the spark of Irish Nationalism burning brightly'.[67] The West Riding Federation of the UIL, at its annual conference, held in Leeds on 19 December 1907, is reported to have had 37 branches with a united membership of 10,000.[68]

It is clear that Home Rule clubs in some parts of the county were much more influential than in others at very different times and determined what was done or not done.

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[64] *Ibid.,* 1 December 1899.

[65] *Bradford Observer*, 9 November 1905.

[66] *Leeds Mercury*, 5 October 1906.

[67] *Catholic Herald*, 20 January 1899.

[68] *Ibid.,* 23 December 1907.

Indeed, from a political stance, perhaps Irish nationalist confederations were not that impressive as a potent political organisation in deciding parliamentary elections, as is propagated by some historians. Whilst some of these clubs maintained an existence over a considerable period, others disappeared following Irish independence. Although many INL clubs across England only maintained themselves for two or three decades does not detract from their cultural significance. In the West Riding, INL or UIL clubs witnessed both Irish language and Irish culture survive well into the twentieth century and they were impatient with anything less than full equality with English citizens and an independent Ireland. All those people who became members of Irish nationalist organisations spoke out for Irish interests emphatically and abrasively, and would question whether legislation, with the British Government reserving for themselves key decision-making positions, were the most appropriate ones to deal with the needs and aspirations of the Irish people in the diaspora or in Ireland.[69]

One of the problems the Irish nationalist confederations of England identified with was that consecutive British governments and the Catholic Church, by the early twentieth century, had legislatively based procedures to protect the values and sensibilities of one culture (the English) and not the other (the Irish).[70] However, the Irish culture in the West Riding of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was not a frozen culture. It changed and grew dynamically according to changing needs and circumstances and it continued to do so well into the twentieth century. But there is nothing extraordinary in that: cultures, all cultures that are alive, change over time and their words change their meaning. Irish culture in the West Riding continued to borrow and to learn from English culture.[71] Equally, by the twentieth century many English people were now a couple of decades away from the stance which viewed Irish culture as primitive, backward or barbaric. For the reality was, Irish

[69] D.A. Hamer, 'The Irish question and Liberal politics, 1886-1894', *Historical Journal*, 12 (1969), pp. 516-18.
[70] Springhall, *Youth, empire and society. British youth movements, 1883-1940*, p. 84-97.
[71] C. Holmes, *Immigrants and Refugees in Britain, 1871-1971* (London, 1986), pp. 136-9.

culture in the West Riding had been adopting English culture long before the end of the nineteenth century. Contemporary Irish culture was so strong in its renaissant form in part because of the ability of its adherents to select successfully from a wide range of concepts and activities that English culture had to offer, and to incorporate those things into their culture on the basis of Irish needs and concepts of usefulness.[72] One spectacular example was the Irish use of English sports and recreational pastimes. In the West Riding this can be observed to greatest effect in relation to rugby football. Irish rugby football teams achieved success across the industrial West Riding during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but the paradox here is that the Irish nationalists in the West Riding were expressing their distinctiveness on the field of play with two of the most loathed 'foreign' games.[73]

Although some Irish immigrants brought their native Gaelic football and hurling with them, as previously discussed, members of the various nationalist clubs also enjoyed competition in rugby football, soccer and cricket. For instance, on 7 May 1898, the Bradford INL Cricket League was formed.[74] On 1 October of that same year, it was reported that a large audience of Irish ladies and gentlemen had assembled in the Central Branch rooms of Irish National League, Lumb Lane, Bradford to witness the presentation of medals to the Bradford Gaelic Cricket Club, who were victors in the above competition. The league was comprised of teams from Bradford Central (Gaelic), Birstall INL, Bradford John Dillon, Bradford Dillon O'Brien, Bradford Henry Grattan, Bradford Michael Dwyer and Shipley INL.[75] A Celtic Cricket League was also instituted on a regular basis in 1895, initially drawing teams from seven INL clubs across the Leeds district to fight for the Fattorini Shield.[76] On 24 November 1898, the Leeds and District Federation of the INL, comprising

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[72] C.G. Pooley and I.D. Whyte, *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: A Social History of Migration* (London, 1991), 79-85.
[73] *Athletic News*, 27 March 1896.
[74] *Ibid.*, 14 May 1898.
[75] *Ibid.,* 7 October 1898.
[76] *Tablet*, 5 June 1895.

Robert Emmet (East Ward), John Dillon (North Leeds), Hunslet and Thomas Sexton, formed the Leeds INL Northern Rugby Union League.[77] On 21 April 1899, Mr John Harland, described as a well known sportsman from the Daniel. O'Connell Club, Birstall, established the Bradford and District INL Northern Rugby Union League.[78]

However, the formation of Irish rugby teams in the closing years of the nineteenth century was nothing new. From as early as 1879, Irish nationalist clubs across the whole of the county were beginning to establish their own rugby teams and were competing in open competition on a regular basis, in both local and regional tournaments. Indeed, rugby was the first social arena in which the Irish communities of the West Riding could break through to demonstrate their equal competence. By the early twentieth century this impulse to participate in English sports came from a growing conviction among younger generations of Irish immigrants or the descendants of Irish immigrants that their culture was no longer the same culture of origin from which it had sprung – that it had become, in fact, a second indigenous culture.[79] By the same process the Irish diaspora, consciously or otherwise, had, through participating in English sports, developed English culture. Therefore, the process of assimilation and acculturation had begun, and rugby had become one of the many sporting vehicles to permeate this.

By the late nineteenth century the activities of non-parochial Irish nationalist rugby teams also reveal a change in the political orientation of Irish nationalists from a solely Irish affair to a working-class labour affair, which challenged economic individualism in terms of itself; that is to say they were learning to incorporate into their clubs the meaning of self-help by voluntary association with socialist movements.[80] Certainly, so far as national working-class movements were concerned the Irish of the late nineteenth century West Riding were

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[77] *Ibid.*, 24 November 1898.
[78] *Ibid.,* 28 April 1899.
[79] K. Lunn, *Hosts, Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Responses to Newcomers in British Society, 1870-1914* (Folkestone, 1980), p. 163.
[80] *Catholic Herald*, 8 January 1901.

not without their impact. Many Irish Catholics were involved in Trade Union and Labour movements which were concerned with matters closer to their everyday lives, notably wages and working conditions.[81] In addition to playing games of rugby to accrue funds for the Home Rule cause, several INL clubs in the West Riding appeared to be in a new critical mood and were participating in games of rugby to generate funds for socialist and industrial movements. In July of 1891 a very detailed strike fund balance sheet was produced and audited by Bradford Trades Council's Auditors in relation to the Manningham Mills strike. The strike fund balance sheet reveals that the Yorkshire Federation of the INL had organised a series of rugby matches to generate funds for the striking mill workers, and managed to raise £28, 8*s*. 10. from the gate receipts.[82] The outcome of this reveals the greater working class strength of the Irish nationalists through the industrial and political questions of the age. Over and above gate-money from rugby matches the various INL clubs donated monies through collections in boxes and club concerts.[83]

Again, in 1892, the INL clubs of Yorkshire participated in a series of rugby football matches to accrue funds for striking miners in the Yorkshire coalfields, raising £21, 4*s*. 9. In 1895, three years after a long and bitter strike, the INL took to the rugby fields again in an urgent appeal by the Yorkshire miners for relief funds. Subscription lists reveal that the combined efforts of the Leeds branches of the INL had raised £18, 7*s*. 6. from a rugby tournament organised on the playing fields situated in York Road.[84] The Bradford branches of INL raised £16, 5*s*. 11. from football matches played in Bowling Park; and the Keighley INL raised £8, 4*s*. 8. in a charity rugby match against the Halifax INL at Riddlesden.[85] The Irish continued to play games of rugby, and association football, to accrue funds for a number of industrial organisations and to financially support the industrial actions of their

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[81] R. Moore, *Pit-men, preachers and politics* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 93-119.
[82] B. Turner, *Short History of the General Union of Textile Workers* (Heckmondwike, 1920), pp. 141-50.
[83] *Bradford Observer*, 8 February 1891.
[84] *Leeds Mercury*, 5 September 1895.
[85] *Bradford Observer*, 9 February 1896.

membership right the way down to the national coalminers strike in 1912 and up to the commencement of the First World War. A careful analysis of the lists of donations published in the columns of local newspapers throughout the period supply the most powerful and effecting proof of the widespread sympathy for the trade unions and their membership, which at that time prevailed among all classes in the West Riding. Of the sum of money raised during the miners strike in 1892 one-third had been contributed by individuals, firms, and parishes. In fact 397 subscribers gave their names. Of those names a dozen were Irish. The remaining two-thirds of the money was the outcome of general collections made in the towns and villages up and down the county.[86] In some reports there is no mention made of particular sources whence the money came, but there is no doubt that there must have been numerous small contributions from poor kindly Irish who were earning their bread in the West Riding.[87]

This marvellous and unnoticed benevolence of the Irish people – of which no other record exists in the annals of nineteenth century history pertaining to Irish immigration – casts them in a very different light to that observed so far. Notable in this regard was the influence exerted by the INL of Yorkshire and their athletic endeavours. In 1912, during the national coalminers strike, Father O'Rourke, who, in his valuable charity work across the county, had these grateful words for the Yorkshire INL, 'While officials' he says 'and other relief committees across other areas of county did very little, the INL and the Irish people of Yorkshire, held sports festivals and concerts to help raise funds to relieve the distress of the striking coalminers and their families in the Yorkshire coalfields'.[88] Notwithstanding, these rare interludes of altruism, there was an assertion held by many commentators that what was achieved by the Irish people and the INL to lessen the mournful tribulations of the miners

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[86] The aggregate results were obtained from fourteen lists published by *The Times* newspaper between 11 February 1892 and 29 August 1892.

[87] *Leeds Mercury*, 17 August 1892.

[88] *Catholic Herald*, 24 January 1913.

was done through fear, not love.[89] In other words, the dangerous race figments of Anglo-Irish hostilities remained. Ironically, the apparent benevolence exhibited by the Irish and the various branches of the Yorkshire INL Federation towards the English proletariat did not lead to an appreciation of Irish nationalist sensibilities or an extended hand of friendship towards them. Equally, the benevolence exhibited by those Irish living and working in the industrial towns of the West Riding towards the English proletariat had not been exhibited towards the Irish immigrants a generation or two earlier, when they were uprooted by the potato blight of 1845/47 and the resulting starvation.

The relationship between Irish diasporic identities in the West Riding, sport and rugby football is profoundly entrenched and intertwined in the history of Irish Catholic immigration and the growth in Irish nationalism, conventionally spanning the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The earliest recorded information about a non-parochial Irish rugby team being formed in the West Riding was that of the Westtown Shamrocks, established in October 1878 in the Dawgreen area of Dewsbury. Their first match was against Heckmondwike Cricket and Football Club on 8 October 1878.[90] On 8 January 1879 Dewsbury Shamrocks Football and Athletics Sports Club was formed by the local branch of the Irish Land League. This is the earliest recorded non-parochial Irish nationalist rugby club to have been founded in the West Riding. Their first match was played against Earlsheaton St. Peter's on 5 March 1879.[91] According to the *Dewsbury Reporter*, in 1871:

> A large number of Irish assembled on the wasteland in Middletown Road, Westtown, Dewsbury to establish the Irish Land League which intended to purchase land for the first Irish National Club in Dewsbury. Women as well as men were encouraged to become members and subscriptions were 1p a week – over 50 people enrolled immediately. And further funds were raised by collecting pennies and knocking on doors. Strong feelings of camaraderie were quickly fostered and local Irish sports' clubs, such as the Dewsbury Shamrocks, were formed to swell funds of the Land League.[92]

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[89] *Leeds Mercury*, 8 July 1912.
[90] *Athletic News,* 15 October 1878.
[91] *Ibid.,* 12 March 1879.
[92] *Dewsbury Reporter*, 9 February 1996.

At a meeting on 5 June 1879, to revise the progress of the sports club, Mr A. Newsome (club captain) presided and delivered the opening address. He was reported to have said that he was proud to see so many of their sisters before him. He stated that their presence would not only a guarantee that their order and propriety would be observed at their meetings and on the field of play, but the influence which they could exercise would be most useful to the Irish cause and the progress of the sports club, 'In most cases women can influence their husbands – in all cases their sweethearts, while as mothers they can instil in the minds of their children a sacred love of the old country and a love of their athletics and football teams, which will cling to them and actuate them throughout life'.[93] The success of the Dewsbury Shamrocks was due to the fact that the members had been united in a common bond. The test of membership had been a desire to help and a readiness to make sacrifice for the Irish cause. In spite of diversities, the members maintained a magnificent unity which calls for admiration and congratulations.

In 1897, with such co-ordination, guidance and support the INL club of Dewsbury 'had raised sufficient funds to purchase an old warehouse in Middle Road and there was no shortage of willing hands to convert it into a club. Membership increased quickly and much of the profits were spent on helping to improve the lives of members, especially children and the elderly, and a literary debating society was formed'.[94] In this prevailing atmosphere the INL club made a concerted effort to provide activities for its members, their wives and husbands, children and nominees and funds were raised to acquire new premises. Here in subsequent years, the club offered temperate social meetings, festivals, tea-parties, combined with social instruction, Irish nationalist activities which combined amusement with instruction. The intention and significance of the Dewsbury INL club will be better understood when it is recalled through a brief history carried by the *Dewsbury Reporter*:

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[93] *Athletic News*, 9 June 1879.
[94] *Dewsbury Reporter*, 9 February 1996.

Annual parties and trips to the seaside were arranged for the children. One party which had been arranged for 250 youngsters ended up with 700 children turning up, most of whom were not entitled to attend because their parents were not members of the club. But none were turned away. Kind-hearted officials agreed to include them in the festivities and marched them with the rest of the children down to the Dewsbury Co-operative Hall where the party was being held. The club came into its own in the twenties – by then membership had swelled, finances were strong and the club was thinking about building new premises. They bought the Horse and Jockey Hotel nearby and converted it into a club at a cost of about £1.500 – a princely sum in those days. Mr J. S. McDermott, president, said members were not of the leisure class, but of the working-class and the fact that they could expend £1,500 on new premises without getting into debt, spoke volumes for the support of the Dewsbury Irish National League. [95]

Dewsbury Shamrocks was one of the first Irish rugby football clubs to have been established in the West Riding, and the most successful in the county, and was composed entirely of working-class Irishmen all belonging to the Dawgreen area of that town. Thereafter, Irish rugby teams multiplied rapidly across the West Riding – at Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Keighley Otley and Wakefield. Dewsbury provides an interesting insight into the embryonic state of Irish nationalist rugby clubs during this period. When the club was formed in the 1870s all the players paid for their own sports kit and requisites, as well as their own travelling expenses, 'but the Irishmen of Dewsbury being great sportsmen rose to the occasion'.[96] The Dewsbury Shamrocks soon made a name for themselves amongst the best company in Yorkshire. Thomas Foley, who had red hair, is reported to have been one of the most, 'brilliant full backs that ever played in that position during the 1880s.[97] The *Athletic News* of 1 March 1882 reported that Jack Neville, the Shamrocks' captain, who was a loose forward, 'was certainly entitled to a County Cap, but never got it'.[98] Tom Haslam, who played three-quarter back, and joined Batley in 1884, 'became famous as a Yorkshire

[95] *Ibid*, 9 February 1996.
[96] *Athletic News,* 13 December 1879.
[97] *Ibid.*, 14 September 1881.
[98] *Ibid.*, 1 March 1882.

County three-quarter'.[99] John Bould, another three-quarter with Dewsbury Shamrocks founded Ossett Celtic, and Larry Cannon, a forward, who hailed from Huddersfield, helped to establish Huddersfield St. Joseph's, of which he was captain, playing for several seasons before eventually retiring from the game. He is reported to have been, 'a fine sportsman and well respected in Huddersfield'.[100]

Following the rugby split, on 29 August 1895, the Dewsbury Shamrocks switched to association football. Some of the West Riding's smaller clubs were in favour of the rugby split, however, the Shamrocks were not, simply because the bigger clubs would always be able to offer greater inducements to players.[101] Nevertheless, the club moved back to Northern Union in 1910 (a questionable date believed to have re-formed in the 1912 season) under the name of Dewsbury Celtic. The first mention of Dewsbury Celtic was on 8 February 1913 in the *Dewsbury Reporter*.[102] The club won the Yorkshire Amateur Cup (Heavy Woollen District Intermediate League Northern Union) on 22 April 1913, beating Batley Clarence, after beating Birstall Celtic in the semi-final on 19 April of that season.[103] They also won the league competition and the *Dewsbury Reporter* Cup, 'The exhibition of football they had had that evening proved they had plenty of good stuff 'home grown' talent without going abroad'.[104] The club disbanded during the First World War and reformed again in 1919 and disbanded again 1939 at the start of the Second World War.

Following the success of Dewsbury Shamrocks, during the winter of 1881/2, several comprehensive attempts were made by the various branches of the National Irish Land League, across the West Riding, to institute non-parochial Irish rugby football teams, which were thoroughly canvassed by a number of contemporary Catholic newspapers, periodicals

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[99] *Ibid.,* 21 October 1893.
[100] *Ibid.,* 8 October 1886.
[101] *Ibid.,* 14 November 1895.
[102] *Dewsbury Reporter*, 8 February 1913.
[103] *Ibid.,* 21 April 1913.
[104] *Ibid.,* 10 April 1914.

and magazines.[105] This elicited numerous letters from the many representatives of the county's different Land League branches who brought forward many objections to the playing of rugby rules football and English sports and, after a lengthy paper war, the matter was eventually dropped.[106] It was scarcely mentioned again throughout the remainder of 1882, but was revived with increased vigour in 1883 by the *Catholic Herald* newspaper.[107]

Subsequent to this media blitz a series of meetings were held by the now newly formed branches of the Yorkshire Federation of the INL, which commenced in earnest on 26 October 1883, at the Wolfe Tone Club, Bradford.[108] To solidify support in founding Irish sports and social activities that embodied the football interests of the Irish diaspora, representatives from all the branches of the INL in the West Riding were invited to attend − at which marks the occasion when rugby football became the sport of choice for the INL Federation of Yorkshire in its attempts to establish a distinctly Irish rugby football league as a means to accumulate funds for the Irish Parliamentary Party. 'Branches affiliated with the INL should establish in every parish rugby football teams as a means or increasing funds, and each branch shall forward on the first day of each month half of the gate-money; and with it a monthly statement to the Central Executive'.[109] Representatives from a number of INL clubs attended but refused to join the newly formed Irish Rugby Football League.[110] On the surface, the representatives of some branches unanimously refused to enrol themselves until a universal agreement to do so was made by all INL clubs.[111] At a deeper level, however, a number of clubs refused to join because they wished to play association football, such as, those INL clubs in Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham and Barnsley, where association football

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[105] *Catholic Herald,* 8 October, 1881.
[106] *Ibid.*, 12 August 1882.
[107] *Ibid.*, 20 October 1883.
[108] *Bradford Observer*, 26 October 1863.
[109] *Catholic Herald*, 27 October 1883.
[110] *Bradford Observer*, 28 October 1883.
[111] *Catholic Herald*, 29 October 1883.

was very much the preferred winter pastime.[112] After rancorous debates it was decided that the laws of the association game should be played in the southern districts of the county and rugby in the central and northern districts of the county.[113] One reason affairs were chaotic in the Yorkshire Federation of the INL was that the membership was a mixture of strong personalities with varied regional interests. Another was that most of the personalities involved had had little experience of acting politically for the common good.[114]

Gate-money was ascribed as the most baneful influence to have crept into amateur sport during the late nineteenth century. With increased popularity, athletics and rugby football became increasingly remunerative, so that what was originally pursued for its own sake was followed up in the greater majority of cases for the sake of gain.[115] The fact is that athletics and rugby, like champagne, ceased to be a luxury monopolised by the rich. The playing of sports was no more the exclusive diversion of the few. The proletariat had got hold of it, and there was no more probability of it returning to its so called primitive purity.[116] Like other sporting organisations, gate-money was extremely important to the INL and its many branches scattered across the region, which organised annual sports festivals to attract athletes and sports teams from far and wide.[117]

Indeed, the annual sports festival hosted by Dewsbury Shamrocks Athletics and Football Club attracted athletes and rugby teams from across both Yorkshire and Lancashire. On 12 May 1880, the club secretary, James Haley, stated that entries were numerous and attracted football teams from Leeds, Bradford and Manchester.[118] As well as offering athletics, the centre piece of the tournament was a six-a-side football competition played

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[112] Dunning and Sheard, 'The Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League: A case of Organizational Conflict', p. 43.
[113] *Catholic Herald*, 27 October 1883.
[114] Hammer, 'The Irish question and Liberal politics, 1886-1894', pp. 513-20.
[115] *Athletic News*, 28 October 1876.
[116] R. Holt, *Sport and the British* (Oxford, 1989), p.98.
[117] C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London, 1963), p.76.
[118] *Ibid.*, 12 May 1880.

under RFU rules. The proceeds from this festival went towards the Irish Distress Fund. It goes, if there was no gate-money the prizes would have been of nominal value; there would have been few events, because scarcely anyone would have taken the trouble to make a journey of any importance for the off-chance of winning a trophy worth intrinsically next to nothing; the number of competitors at festivals would have been less for there would have been no inducement for people to devote their time and money in order to obtain prizes of inconsiderable amounts.[119] Thus, we find that gate-money lies at the root of Irish sports festivals and rugby matches, which enabled them to land substantial sums of money for the Irish Parliamentary Party and other worthy charities. One commentator writing in the *Athletic News* of 7 April 1888 had this to say of Keighley Shamrocks and the INL branch in that town in relation to rugby and gate-money, 'This club, which is forever hovering on the debatable line between the amateur and professional, is the bastard offspring of gate-money, and a curse to amateur sport'.[120] In a commercial age, the INL Federation of Yorkshire, like everything else went with the stream. John Kelly, the secretary of the Wolfe Tone Athletics and Rugby Football Club, Bradford wrote in 1886, 'Morality is not inconsistent with business, neither should it be impossible to reconcile it with rugby football to serve our purpose'.[121]

From the early 1880s onwards we see an increase in the number of non-parochial Irish rugby clubs emerging out from the various Home Rule clubs scattered across the county. In October 1883 Halifax Celtic was founded by Mr Owen Canning. He was of Irish descent and was one of the founders of Halifax branch of the Irish Land League, which became the Irish National League in 1883, and at that time he was also a representative on the regional and national executive.[122] In the same year Birstall Celtic was formed.[123] The closing decades of the nineteenth century echoed in an era which saw most Irish communities across the

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[119] *Ibid.,* 28. January 1884.
[120] *Ibid.*, 7 April 1888.
[121] *Catholic Herald*, 21 October 1886.
[122] *Halifax Guardian*, 10 December 1883.
[123] *Athletic News*, 3 December 1883.

manufacturing centres of the West Riding well represented in local rugby circles. Indeed, by 1885 there were fourteen Irish rugby clubs in the West Riding, which had been founded by the various INL clubs in an attempt to gain funds for the Irish Parliamentary Party. These included: Dewsbury Shamrocks, Westtown Shamrocks, Keighley Celtic, Keighley Shamrocks, Birstall Celtic, Batley Celtic, Ossett Celtic, Halifax Celtic, Leeds Gaelic, Leeds Shamrocks, Bradford Gaelic, Bradford Celtic, Bradford Shamrocks, and Otley Shamrocks. In this period, then, members of the various INL clubs regarded the establishment of its rugby teams as an integral aspect of their life and work. Equally, their existence evidently demonstrates that the county's Irish played a significant part in the development and historiography of the game during the period under investigation.[124] Furthermore, and to add to the standpoint of this thesis, it must also be acknowledged that the majority of these rugby clubs had comparatively short-lived histories. In the West Riding, only Dewsbury Celtic, Birstall Celtic and Otley Shamrocks remained in existence beyond the first decade of the twentieth century playing in open competition on a regular basis. By now most clubs had switched to association football, which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

The complex histories of Irish nationalist clubs draw attention to the intricacy of the social and rugby connections involving mainstream and marginal communities in the county. 'Therefore, sport cannot be detached from the society which plays it, and so it is to be anticipated that prejudice in the treatment of Irish rugby clubs would arise'.[125] It was symptomatic of this age that sports competitions closely connected with the vigorous upthrust of Irish rugby clubs cultivated unrestrained and evocative consequences far outside those of a simple rugby match. In such a situation, games of rugby were, at times, interspersed by prejudicial sentiments of the greatest detestation and abhorrence, vindictive malice and acts

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[124] *Catholic Herald*, 13 October 1898.
[125] J.A. Mangan and R.B. Small, *Sport, Culture and Society* (London, 1986), p. 47; G. Jarvie, 'Dependency, Cultural Identity and Sporting Landlords: A Scottish Case-Study', *British Journal of Sports History*, 3 (1986), pp. 42-54.

of violence, which denigrated them as a farce. As the designated least civilised members of the population, the Irish were seen to evince just those unhelpful, or actively destructive, characteristics as were currently regarded as prejudicial to the national interest. In the case of rugby, Irish clubs impinging directly upon English culture were found to communicate displeasure, and their characteristics were seen as adding fuel to an already urgent public debate, in their economic fecklessness and religion. As 'less civilised outsiders', therefore, the Irish were thought to be setting a bad example to the native working classes in almost every respect.[126] While there were those, of course, who felt that on balance the Irish were benefitting from cultural contact with the natives than they were corrupting them from their ways and those, in addition, who felt that the Irish were often too different and too isolated for much influence to operate either way, most public opinion seems to have seen the Irish as at least the epitome, if not a cause, of social and cultural shortcomings.[127] Not surprisingly, the areas of concern encompassed by public reaction to Irish rugby clubs in the West Riding tended, more or less, to correspond to those same social issues as were generally exercising public opinion and prompting prejudice.

It has been argued earlier in this thesis that inequality and discrimination were built into the fabric of British capitalist society, and had an impact on the Irish in various ways. The degree of prejudice in any area was tied to a range of locally-based issues and problems, for example, competition over resources. The general social and economic climate also influenced levels of anti-Irish prejudice; the effects of economic recession and antipathy to 'blackleg' labour (the term itself had Irish famine connotations) were particularly important. Furthermore, immediate issues, and the way in which the Irish were treated by the media had influence on people's attitudes. Much of this prejudice and anti-Irish feeling found particular expression in rugby football matches between Irish and English teams. Anti-Irish sentiments

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[126] S. Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (London, 1990), p.227.
[127] J. Walsh, *The Falling Angels: An Irish Romance* (London, 2000), p. 3.

can be documented for a number rugby matches played in the West Riding before the twentieth century.

Indeed, with an increase in the number of Irish rugby teams during the 1880s, came an associated range of anti-Irish attitudes, and all the xenophobic, sectarian and racist baggage. In 1880s, around Bradford, rugby matches were said to have increased, 'the intense dislike and contempt felt for the Irish'.[128] Many Irish teams were frequently accused by the contemporary press of using foul language and behaving in an extremely rough manner. For example, on 10 September 1879, the *Athletic News* reported that, 'The Shamrocks of Dewsbury, a football club, sent a six to the football competition at Heckmondwike when the Paddies behaved themselves in a very outrageous manner from all accounts, the worst part of the business being the insulting language directed to the referee'.[129] On 19 November 1879, in a match against Dewsbury Savile, the Dewsbury Shamrocks were accused of rough play and, 'One of the Emerald Isle players evidently had a commission for tearing jerseys, for he stripped half a dozen Dewsburyites' jerseys off'.[130] The following week the *Athletic News* stated that the Dewsbury Shamrocks were due to meet Leeds Blenheim in the first round of the Yorkshire Challenge Cup, 'and the Blenheimites had better order some extra double strong jerseys if they mean to have a chance with the Irishmen'.[131] In 1886, in a contest between Bingley and Bradford Gaelic (formed by the Wolfe Tone INL club in 1883), turned out to be an unfriendly encounter. The Gaelic forwards were accused of, 'playing rather roughly at times, but for that matter, this is no new charge against them'.[132] A match report carried by the *Athletic News* of 3 November 1887, describing a contest between Leeds Celtic and Leeds Rovers, states that, 'There is no question as to the brutal conduct of Leeds Celtic.

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[128] *Athletic News*, 6 February 1884.
[129] *Ibid*., 10 September 1879.
[130] *Ibid.,* 19 November 1879.
[131] *Ibid.,* 26 November 1879.
[132] *Ibid*., 12 December 1886.

One word in conclusion, the Irishmen have played as many fair games as foul ones'.[133] According to a match report in 1888, Otley Shamrocks were accused of cheating to obtain two touch-downs against their opponents Ilkley, 'It is a felon by the Irishmen who would obtain by fraud a victory which does not belong to them, and, as such, they are undeserving of the sympathy of honest Englishmen'.[134] On 12 October 1889, a match between Horbury and Dewsbury Shamrocks had to be brought to an abrupt halt after fighting broke out. The *Athletic News* described the match as being the, 'shortest on record', as the Shamrocks exited the pitch.[135]

The formation and disposition of reports – of which the above are only a small example – perpetuated by the contemporary press, symbolize weaknesses in the Irish character and not the strength and successes of their rugby teams. Also contained within the many match reports, with reference to non-parochial Irish rugby teams, were numerous anomalous and ambiguous assumptions pertaining to the natural physical, moral and cultural supremacy of the English evangelical Protestant majority over the supposed inferiority of the diasporic Irish Catholic minority. If non-parochial Irish rugby teams benefitted directly or indirectly at all from the very few favourable accounts circulated in contemporary newspapers and sports journals, this was at best incidental and at worst a matter for annoyance and anxiety among the host society of Yorkshire. Instead of representing an assessment of commonly held viewpoints regarding the true and factual accomplishments of non-parochial Irish rugby teams, match reports disseminated old beliefs and stereotypes that tended to conceal the truth rather than reveal it. In a letter of complaint written to the editor of the *Athletic News*, 26 December 1888, Mr A. Colt of Dewsbury wrote, 'You can readily believe that it is the painful duty to all your Irish readers to have to peruse the slang and abuse of *Flaneur* (the pen name of the paper's a rugby reporter) on the subject of Irish rugby

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[133] *Ibid.*, 23 December 1887.
[134] *Ibid.*, 18 February 1888.
[135] *Ibid.*, 17 October 1889.

teams in Yorkshire. I hope that you will pardon me for trespassing thus far on your valuable space , and I trust that for the future *Flaneur* will not indulge in such off-side play, but will keep on the ball, and oblige, &c'.[136] In other word, stop writing and printing noxious reports and be more factually correct in your reporting of matches concerning Irish teams. However, hostile reports have to be interpreted in relation to an effective public opinion which was merely restricted in its interests but apparently mistaken in many of its beliefs concerning the Irish.

Negative representations do an injustice to the initial successes and athletic accomplishments of the majority of non-parochial Irish rugby teams playing out of the West Riding. In spite of this strong spirit of resistance, this is not to suggest that Irish rugby teams as a whole were a failure – far from it. Some clubs, like Dewsbury Shamrocks, Birstall Celtic, Keighley Shamrocks and Otley Shamrocks did spectacularly well in the districts they played. Once again, the social prejudice the Irish were exposed to, in rugby terms, was nothing atypical to anything which had been deterministically assumed about the Irish in other social and cultural arenas, in terms of moral, intellectual and cultural worth. In part, it seemed no more than an extension of a deeper uneasiness. To contemporary observers the Irish were not merely foreign in a technical sense; they represented an extreme of otherness such as not only offended local social and religious susceptibilities, but gave rise to something approaching panic among a public already on the defensive about their own and the country's prospects.[137] Indeed, many of the stories which circulated about Irish society, culture, religion, and now their rugby teams, were scandalous rather than complimentary.[138] Many contemporary newspapers also took great satisfaction in satirising the sporting activities and achievements of Irish immigrants and their non-parochial rugby teams in their own inimitable way. They were part of a propaganda war which was dedicated to applauding the spirit of one side (the

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[136] *Ibid.,* 26 December 1988.
[137] Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts*, pp. 12-25.
[138] L.P. Curtis, *Nothing But the Same Old Story* (London, 1984), p. 36.

English) and accentuating weakness on the other (the Irish).[139] That they should have been the subject to negative and harmful representations in rugby circles, but never positive contributors to rugby football and sport, would in itself seem indicative of the philosophy of the period.

Like the Irish Catholic immigrants before them the manifestation of Eastern European Jews communities domiciled in the central townships of Leeds during the late nineteenth century also served to exacerbate existing apprehensions and feelings of unease among the receiving societies of Yorkshire.[140] Many Jewish people arriving in the West Riding settled in Bank district of Leeds where housing was substandard, as the Irish before them had also done. Indeed, like the Irish, Jewish immigrants worked in the lowest paid jobs, and as a consequence tended to live in the very poorest parts of Leeds, becoming the poor neighbours to thousands of poverty-stricken working-class Irish immigrants that also shared the same district and same inadequate living space.[141] Ostensibly, therefore, a number of important parallels can be drawn between these two episodes or phases of nineteenth-century immigration. Many of the social problems brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation, such as deficient housing, overcrowding, poor sanitation and unemployment, disproportionately affected the Jewish immigrants. No provisions were made by governments or local authorities to meet their social needs. Pushed as they were into already decaying areas of the inner-city township of Leeds, they found themselves increasingly in competition with the poorest members of the English and Irish working class for a range of scarce resources such as housing and employment.[142] In this situation it was inevitable that Jewish immigrants, like the Irish, came to be seen as the cause, rather than the victims of nineteenth

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[139] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[140] L.P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in Britain, 1870-1914* (London), pp.51-6.
[141] Krausz, *Leeds Jewry: Its History and Social Structure*, p. 58.
[142] Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in Britain, 1870-1914*, p.52.

and early twentieth century inner-city decay; constituting a lower stratum within the working class, and being viewed by the receiving society of Leeds as racially inferior.

At the same time, of course, there were also manifest dissimilarities – both in relation to the character of the immigrants themselves and in relation to the social and political environment into which they came.[143] Again, like the Irish immigrants before them, it was generally supposed that Jewish people could be, without difficulty, easily recognised, though not simply because of their standard of living and culture, but because of their supposed inferior racial traits which led them to have particular physical features quite different from those of the English. While both stood apart from the mainstay of the English population, thanks to their idiosyncratic appearance and deportment, along with their predilection to cluster together, differences of language, religion, and culture were that much more manifest in the Jewish case. Jewish immigrants, moreover, were all the more confined, and therefore prominent, in their geographical dispersal than the Irish domiciled in Leeds had ever been.[144]

Thus, analogous with the Irish, Eastern European Jews domiciled in the Bank district of Leeds were subjected to comparable kinds of antipathy from the receiving society of the West Riding. There were noteworthy comparisons to be perceived between the remarks passed about the Jews and those previously broadcast in public about the Irish Catholic presence. [145] In spite of the conspicuous divergences of background, culture, and economic characteristics of these two immigrant groups; host society publicised reactions to their presence as low-status intruders would seem to have been extraordinarily unwavering. Anti-immigrant groups, such as the British Brothers' League which included racist and anti-Semites, were keen to portray Jews as a drain on social recourses. This nationalistic and racist articulation of the Jewish hindrance is exposed by some of the watchwords used at the time,

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[143] W. Fishman *East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914* (London, 1975), p. 16.
[144] Krausz, *Leeds Jewry: Its History and Social Structure*, pp. 35-57.
[145] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

such as 'England for the English'.[146] The themes upon which attitudes and judgements were disseminated about the Jews were largely indistinguishable to those articulated previously about Irish immigrants concerning public health and morals, standards of living, employment conditions and rates of pay, and law and order.[147] And, like Irish rugby football teams, Jewish football teams playing out of Leeds received similar prejudices. Rugby, indeed sport, was a relatively new phenomenon among the Jewish immigrants of Leeds.[148] Jews started participating in organised sports and rugby football in the 1890s and established the Leeds Judean Sports Club, Leeds Central, and the Leeds Jewish Institute. A number of senior players qualified later for places in the premier local senior teams such as Hunslet and Headingly under Northern Union rules.[149] Unlike games against Catholic Church teams, INL clubs in the West Riding had no problems entertaining the Jews in games of rugby football on the Sabbath.[150] Indeed, it could be argued that these early games between the two immigrant communities produced the prototype or forerunners to Sunday football which we have become so accustomed to seeing in the present era.

Obviously, it is extremely difficult to sort out the different ways in which Yorkshire people experienced and perceived non-parochial Irish rugby teams, and feel what is usually referred to as racial prejudice. It is also impossible to say how far such negative reactions to Irish and Jewish immigrants might have built up during this sporting era had these two immigrant groups not been quite so visible on the playing fields of the West Riding and had they not seemed so drastically different from the host population is impossible to say. As it was, contrasts of language, dress, and custom between the English proletariat and these two immigrant groups were only heightened and rendered the more obvious, and off-putting, by the tendency of the Irish and the Jewish to engage in English culture and English sports,

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[146] J. Geipel, *The Europeans: An Ethnohistorical Survey* (Harlow, 1969), pp. 163-4.
[147] Krausz, *Leeds Jewry: Its History and Social Structure*, p.72.
[148] *Leeds Mercury*, 22 March 1894.
[149] Krausz, *Leeds Jewry: Its History and Social Structure* , p. 47; *Yorkshire Evening News*, 30 January 1925.
[150] *Athletic News*, 4 November 1903.

namely rugby football.[151] This was enough, in itself to prompt fearful, defensive reaction.[152] The English way of life in the West Riding of Yorkshire, whatever that might be, seemed under threat. Interestingly enough, however, the Irish could by now be accounted as part of the people rather than outsiders themselves, at least in face of the Jewish invasion.

It would, however, be misleading to represent too schematic a picture as to suggest that negative representations of Irish football teams was as clear-cut as outlined in the preceding paragraphs. By the early 1890s attitudes towards non-parochial Irish teams and the reporting of Irish football matches became slightly more favourable. For example, on 17 November 1891 the *Athletic News* reported that:

> The increasing popularity of the glorious game of rugby football we have noticed year by year developing among the Irish of the Broad acres (Yorkshire) has received full impetus so far this season, and its commencement has been marked with a great deal of spirit and improvement in every way. The leading Irish clubs, in the towns of Leeds, Bradford, Keighley and Dewsbury have shown great vitality in the large number of fixtures made; and the relative strength of these clubs with leading clubs in Yorkshire and the North of England will leave no doubt at the end of the season as to the actual merit and proportionate power of these Irish teams in the football field, as compared with their previous seasons.[153]

It would appear then that contemporary newspapers and the Yorkshire people, in sporting terms, were slowly awakening to something like a sense of gratitude and charity towards the Irish and their sporting achievements on the rugby field. For example, in a game played between Dewsbury Shamrocks and Salterhebble, 16 March 1892, a Salterhebble player is reported to have said, 'Yo,w call'em Shamrocks, do you? I think they are real rock'.[154] The most positive feature of these reports would seem to lie, not necessarily in response to the acceptance of Irish rugby teams, but popular public opinion towards the Irish

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[151] *Yorkshire Evening News*, 2 February 1925.
[152] *Athletic News*, 3 March 1893.
[153] *Ibid.*, 17 November 1891.
[154] *Ibid.,* 23 March 1892.

in general. Whether or not changing viewpoints at this time were premeditated in order to accept, accommodate and assimilate the wider sensibilities of the diasporic Irish is hard to say. In the late nineteenth-century Ireland and the microcosm of Irishness in the West Riding Irish diaspora came under increased examination by the host society, an examination perhaps inequitable to the actual significance of more pressing social, political and economic issues in the county and the country itself. This interest, due to Ireland's presence at the nucleus of the British Empire, exasperated Irish self-consciousness and self-importance. In relative terms, the protracted expansion of 'Irishness' in the diaspora of the West Riding, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was accredited largely to the endurance of an extraordinary mode of traditionalism, considered as both rooted in Irish Catholic norms and promulgated by conservative Catholic clerics with an inward looking religiosity, as described in previous chapters.[155] Working-class Irish Catholic immigrants were given a subordinate role in this framework; considered, in comparative terms, to have been repressed by the English Catholic Church in the evangelical Protestant landscape of industrial West Riding of Yorkshire.

As was discussed in previous chapters, accompanying the augmentation of Catholic churches there came to be a corresponding growth in Catholic culture, which saw the establishment of Catholic sports and rugby teams being established across the industrial Diocese of Leeds. Simultaneously, there was, in addition, a corresponding growth in Irish nationalism and the establishment of Irish Home Rule clubs, which many working-class Irish Catholics in the West Riding became committed members of. Indeed, for the great majority of Catholics domiciled in the West Riding, that is to say, those of Irish descent, political beliefs meant Irish nationalism. Even if they were not affiliated to one of the many nationalist organisations that existed between the 1870s and 1922, the affairs of Ireland were frequently

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[155] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, pp. 28-56.

of more concern to them than the activities of English political parties.[156] Irish nationalist clubs were to do their utmost to act upon Irish nationalist and cultural beliefs. The work done by the INL Federation in the West Riding is of the most invaluable kind. As a nationalist and cultural institution its influence cannot be overestimated. As businesses they were extremely effective at accruing funds for the Irish Parliamentary Party, and by the late nineteenth century, in respect of general charities, rather than simply Irish ones. However occasional, or idiosyncratic, negative representations might have been throughout this period the Irish were evidently sufficient in number and authority to establish Irish Home Rule clubs across the West Riding, and to prompt the establishment of rugby football teams and athletic organisations to generate funds for nationalist, trade union and other charitable organisations. They offered their membership and array of activities from Gaelic sports to Irish history.

These activities, with the formation of drama societies, and other organisations, formed the basis of what was a thriving Irish culture until the 1920s. In November 1893 it was reported, by the Yorkshire Federation of the INL, to have a paid sporting membership of 2,000.[157] As previously suggested, the activities of the Home Rule clubs were immensely variable, but the outstanding recreational pursuit was rugby football. However, the relative decline in non-parochial Irish rugby teams in the West Riding during the closing years of the nineteenth century should not be allowed to obscure their earliest remarkable success-stories; and just as their earlier success cannot be explained in religious terms, neither can their later period of relative decline under the banner of Northern Union Rugby. Following the great rugby split in 1895, some Irish teams turned to association football, while other continued to play rugby under Northern Union rules.

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[156] Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British Policy, 1871-1971*, p. 11.
[157] *Catholic Herald*, 18 November 1893.

CHAPTER 8

CRACKS IN THE RUGBY PLINTH

Irish Catholic Experience with Rugby League Football

The working-class communities of northern England who shaped rugby league became, as they developed, shaped themselves by rugby league. The historical record of rugby league football is the extraordinary record of a great social adventure which uncovers how late nineteenth and early twentieth century industrial working classes were conditioned by the earliest vestiges of the sport. In particular, it provides an example of how rugby league shaped the lives of mostly anonymous ordinary people among the working-class communities scattered across the industrial belt of northern England, and how it encapsulated the industrial spirit of late Victorian and early Edwardian Britain. It documents how rugby league offered cohesion and coherence to thousands of working-class lives in an era marked by ongoing social situations and encounters, which invoked both class interests and increased class antagonisms.

Over recent decades' historians and social and cultural researchers have produced several substantive studies juxtaposed in order to provide a vivid picture of the class-based connections and equivalences that existed between predominantly working-class communities in the industrial centres of northern England and their special relationship with rugby league.[1] Each of the distinguished contributors within this area of research are extraordinary scholars of length and breadth, who have scrutinised and analysed the social and cultural features of British society – at leisure, at home, at work and in politics – to

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[1] Dunning, *Figurational contributions to the sociological study of sport*; Elias and Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*; Dunning and Sheard, 'The Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League'; Collins, *Rugby's great split*; Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain*; Collins, 'Racial Minorities in a Marginalised Sport: Race, Discrimination and Integration in British Rugby League Football'; Collins and Melling, *Crossing the Colour Line in Rugby League*; Spraklen, 'Black Diamond Black Pearl: Exploring Racial Identities in Rugby League'; Long, and Carrington, *What's The Difference? A Study of the Nature and Extent of Racism in Rugby League*.

conceptualise the central issues of class homogeneity and to capture the distinctive working-class consciousness engendered by rugby league.

The story of rugby league provides the overtures of a national sporting epic, set at the end of the nineteenth century that tells how the adept working-class player, 'campaigned for his right to be paid, if only in the sense of compensation for bona-fide time off work (broken-time payments) and for the costs of travel'.[2] The influential classes of the Rugby Football Union (RFU), preoccupied with asserting privileged class boundaries held sway over the matter and saw broken-time payments as a downwards slide to professionalism, which would threaten the moral and amateur ethos of the game. This was a blow that struck at the very heart of the populous districts of the industrial north, where the overwhelming majority of players were working men. This issue remained a distinctive feature of rugby football from the late 1870s to 1895, during which time the distinction between amateurs and professional rugby players became much clearer. This would create a tempestuous period in the history of rugby football, placing a dividing line between the industrial working classes of northern England and the bourgeoisie bulwarks of the RFU, who motherly embraced the amateur principle – however much the stepmother it seemed to the working-class player.[3]

During the third quarter of the nineteenth century rugby football had passed from the public schools into the mainstream of British culture and became a highly popularised winter pastime among the working-class communities of northern England; at the same time it offered elevated concepts that would join the industrial working classes of northern England to the rest of the culturally and economically advantaged of Victorian society. Instead, the expansion of rugby football – which permeated such geographical areas as the major industrial towns and cities of Lancashire and Yorkshire more rapidly and wider than it had done elsewhere in England – brought with it division and conflict that sharpened class

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[2] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 6.
[3] Collins, 'Myth and Reality in the 1895 Rugby Split', pp.19-27.

boundaries between the working man player of the industrial working classes and the social elites that governed the RFU.[4] This set in motion a chain of events that would radically alter the social and geographical landscape of rugby football in England.

The geographical and working-class social make-up of rugby football in the industrial districts of northern England, consciously or otherwise, challenged the authority and higher class ideologies held by the upper echelons of the RFU and their over-developed sense of cultural superiority. The bourgeoisie of the RFU represented the best of their inherited traditions, which they believed to be superior to the best culture and ethics of the working classes, who had an attendant disregard for the amateur ethos of the game. In large part, the growth of working-class interest in rugby football undoubtedly ran more in the direction of popular culture – divorced in a sense – from the high culture that articulated the bourgeoisie leadership of the RFU.[5] Not infrequently these distinctions led to social intolerance between the two classes. By the 1880s the situation had become increasingly intolerable, ushering in a period that created unprecedented ruptures and social fragmentation, which sought to put class-based loyalties above all other considerations within the game. By the close of the 1880s the process of separation was well under way. The RFU's official hierarchical apprehensions concerning working-class intrusions and domination of the game in the industrial north, thus developed into a set of collective feelings regarding bourgeoisie superiority; intellectual, moral and cultural.[6] The well-to-do bourgeoisie of the RFU believed in retrogression – interwoven into the social questions of the age – combining hollow if punctilious practices with the likelihood that working-class participation in rugby football, by now a valued aspect of northern working-class life, would be denied the working man because they would have no time or money to pursue the game. The judicial bigwigs of the RFU ruthlessly prosecuted their anti-professionalism laws in a binge of higher-class

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[4] Dunning and Sheard, 'The Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League', pp. 36-40.
[5] Collins, *Rugby's great split*, pp. 92-96.
[6] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain*, pp. 2-7.

overindulgences. They introduced an amalgam of impracticable amateur ideologies which were augmented to protect the bourgeoisie from the alien ways of the industrial working classes, whom they believed were presenting a genuine threat to the social and moral order of what they termed 'their' games.

Corollary to these bourgeoisie cherished ideologies, many senior clubs in the north of England believed in progression, which attempted to convey a sense of opportunity and social unity among the industrial working classes, and was more democratic than anything espoused by the official leadership of the RFU. They embarked on a path to recompense working men players for wages lost, who otherwise could not afford to take time off work to play rugby. The RFU's official judgements – when faced with the knotty questions of broken-time payments and the difficulties associated with professionalism – did not run on lines that best occupied the foremost position of the working-class player and the northern people, rejecting outright all proposals to introduce payments to the working man player for the loss of wages. The RFU fought hard for the principle that the game should be played for the game's sake and banned all professionalism in its clubs.[7]

The year 1895 brought this chaotic era to an end, dividing the world of rugby along both social and geographical lines. 'Rugby league, as it was soon to became known, developed into a fully professional game with strong working-class support in parts of the industrial north, leaving rugby union to reign unchallenged in the South'.[8] The RFU's objections to broken-time payments led to the formation of the Northern Union (NU). On 29 August 1895, representatives from a number of the foremost rugby teams in Lancashire and Yorkshire, appalled by the unfair practices of the RFU, and having exhausted all possibilities of a compromise over the issue of broken-time payments, unanimously decided that they no-longer wanted to be affiliated with the RFU. Consequently, they severed all connections with

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[7] Collins, *Rugby's great split*, pp. 129-149.
[8] Royale, *Modern Britain: A Social History 1750-1997*, p.233.

the RFU, whose principles they did not believe in, and whose bylaws were not practicable. The founding members of the NU had grown contemptuous of old ideals and were stridently asserting new ones which best served the industrial working classes and immediately set about instituting payments for bona-fide broken-time.[9]

The history of rugby league football in the West Riding of Yorkshire and the number of first and second generation rugby players of Irish Catholic descent who played the game is a figure that deserves attention. After the rugby schism of August 1895 most ethno-religious Irish Catholic rugby teams either switched to association football or continued to play rugby football under RFU rules.[10] As discussed in the previous chapter, most rugby clubs in the Irish Catholic diaspora were not in favour of the split because the bigger clubs would always be able to offer greater inducements to attract and retain players. There is a general agreement that the great rugby split in 1895 accompanied a fairly basic shift in the character of sport in the north of England in which divisions became more marked.[11]

There is no general consensus about the number of Irish Catholics in the West Riding that were actively involved in rugby league outside the social and cultural structures of their own ethno-religious rugby football clubs. By the late nineteenth century the county's Irish Catholic communities had all but abandoned attempts at promoting or creating new ethno-religious rugby clubs.[12] Indeed, the formation of the INL Federation's Northern Union Rugby Football League in 1898, and the Catholic Church's omnipresent Rugby Football League (keeping rugby enthusiasts in an Irish and Catholic atmosphere), represented a more general withdrawal to within their own communities.[13] The rationale for this corresponds broadly with the consensus view, highlighted in the previous chapter, that a significant number of

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[9] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 5.
[10] *Athletic News,* 14 November 1895.
[11] Collins, *Rugby's great split*; Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 6; Dunning and Sheard, 'The Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League', pp. 50-68.
[12] *Athletic News,* 13 October 1897.
[13] *Catholic Herald*, 18 November 1898.

working-class Irish Catholic communities scattered across the industrial landscape of the West Riding did not take up everything their English neighbours did and remained separate distinct communities with their own separate and distinct culture, not wanting to engage in any cross-cultural socialisation with their English counterparts. Besides, none of the amateur rugby football clubs founded by the diasporic Irish Catholic communities of the West Riding during the closing decades of the nineteenth century were incapable of expanding into large clubs with a mass support base capable of challenging the top-flight clubs within the host society, which had now transferred their sporting allegiances over to the NU and in doing so had transformed themselves into fully-fledged professional rugby clubs. Taken together, these few factors, which spanned a range of Irish Catholic communities, provide some explanation why so many Irish ethno-religious rugby league clubs did not survive beyond the late nineteenth century.

What else, then, can account for the slowing down of the West Riding's Irish Catholic rugby clubs following the rugby split, and why only a handful of clubs participated in games of rugby football under NU rules following the great rugby split of 1895? The key points relating to this slowing down and/or the retardation and termination of some of the West Riding's ethno-religious Irish Catholic rugby clubs can be summarised as follows. First, and underlying this shift in sporting preference at this stage in history of sport and leisure, it is likely that one of the foremost elements that were seized upon by the diasporic Irish communities in the West Riding was the widespread popularity of other newly-founded forms of entertainment of late Victorian and early Edwardian England. For example, most prominent among these new developments was cinema, which was highly popular in the Edwardian period; the cycling craze was exceptionally popular in the late 1890s and the walking craze in 1903. Like elsewhere in England, these new forms of entertainment contributed to a new blueprint of leisure interests and pastimes in the West Riding. But the

greatest spectator sport of all which lured many Irish Catholics away from rugby league football was soccer.[14]

The second cause and effect, and perhaps most interesting, explanation that may have reflected the retardation or termination of the West Riding's ethno-religious Irish Catholic rugby clubs, in this context, can be casually deduced from the increased absence or lessening of social and cultural impediments that prevented Irish Catholic communities associating with rugby league football.[15] In other words, rugby league reflected differing values among the receiving communities of the West Riding, including the transmission of working-class cohesion and increased levels of cross-cultural socialisation, which allowed some working-class Irish Catholics in some districts the opportunity to participate in games of rugby league football outside of their ethno-religious clubs as playing members for some of the county's senior professional teams, without any obvious examples of resentment, opposition or antagonism. Indeed, the presence of some Irish Catholics participating in rugby league football for a number of the county's leading senior professional teams, outside of their own social structures and their ethno-religious teams, is counted here as a supplementary unit of information that can be utilised to examine the functional hypothesis in relation to the assimilation and acculturation experience of Irish Catholic immigrant communities domiciled in the West Riding.

The aim of this chapter is to piece together a number of reasonable explanations and, moreover, to draw some initial conclusions about the number of first and second generation Irish Catholics domiciled in the West Riding that participated in rugby league football at the senior level of competition, a subject that has long been conflated. Unfortunately, some issues will remain unresolved until further information is available. The fundamental premise of this chapter is to examine connections and equivalences between Irish Catholic communities with

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[14] Mason, *Sport in Britain*, p.5; Bale, *Sport and Place: A geography of Sport in England, Scotland and Wales*, pp. 24-35.
[15] Finn 'Racism, Religion and Social Prejudice', pp.70-91.

that of rugby league football through the exploration and analysis of the Northern Rugby Union's player registers, which are central to the research theme of this thesis. The NU registers present a summary record, year to year and season to season, of the number, names and identities of rugby players registered with county's senior rugby league clubs. Indeed, this important source provides us with an historical picture incomparable from any other available archive corresponding to the precise patterns of interaction between Irish immigrants and senior/professional rugby league.

Their assessment, combined with sound judgement and a modicum of imagination adds to our understanding of the chronological and geographical spread of rugby league football among the county's Irish Catholic communities, and the transformation it brought in the sporting lives of Irish and English proletariat at the centre of this historical picture. Taken as a whole, this chapter will attempt to broaden, to a great extent, our perceptions of the assimilation-acculturation experience and the impact Irish immigration has had on the historiography of rugby league football in the West Riding throughout the late nineteenth and opening decades of the twentieth century. Thus, the very nature of this chapter endeavours to make a significant contribution towards the growing body of knowledge that seeks both to challenge and confirm immigrant identities in rugby league, broadening the focus of earlier scholars on the subject.

Unfortunately, as far as the availability of other historical records in connection with nineteenth and early twentieth century Irish Catholic immigration to the West Riding is concerned, there is relatively little information available to flesh out the exact number of Irish Catholics who participated in professional or amateur rugby league. The paltry documentary material includes only a few texts, if any, which only peripherally enter into the complex relationship that existed between Irish Catholics and rugby league; and prove, in many respects, to be relatively insignificant, less than complete, and less than appropriate for the

purpose of this research. Despite much searching and enquiry, it is extremely difficult to trace any literature or documentation that embarks upon any such study that examines the inter-relationship between Irish Catholic communities and rugby league football. Without a doubt, this area of research remains a virtual dark age, due to the paucity of contemporary sources. The NU registers, therefore, remain the main recourse at the disposal of this enquiry.

To take account of this problem the methods and techniques developed here are heavily dependent on the choice of strong Celtic/Irish surnames, The purpose of this chapter, then, is to interpret and infer the numerical strength of Irish Catholic immigrant participation in rugby league football that can be implied on the basis of Celtic/Irish surnames taken from the NU's player registers. The NU's player registers are the most valuable source of information available that can be chartered, at least intermittently, in assessing the temporal sequence of connectedness in descriptive characters between Catholics of Irish descent and professional rugby league football throughout much of the period under investigation. Thus, the method used here involves generating a bifurcating genealogical tree as a means of assessing the widely divergent relationships that emerged among the different Irish Catholic communities domiciled in the West Riding with that of rugby league football. This tree may then be used as a framework for the comparative analysis of other, independent features for assessing the temporal historical relationship that existed between some multi-generational Irish Catholic communities and rugby league football in the West Riding.

This research approach may sound warning bells of general bad history or bad science to those trained in the traditional views of experiment and design and quantitative analysis. However, it is worth stressing from the very outset that the appropriateness of the techniques suggested here, as an indirect measure for assessing the degree of Irish Catholic participation in professional rugby league has, to a great extent, been forced upon the research due the overall lack of available contemporary sources. It may also be worth stressing at this point

that, due to fragmentary nature of the NU's player registers, it is impossible to determine with any degree of precision or accuracy the exact number of players with Celtic/Irish surnames involved in professional rugby league football before 1906. Therefore, the data collated and analysed in this chapter relate solely to the number of players participating in rugby league at the senior professional level between 1906 and 1920.

The unequivocal raw data gathered for the NU's player registers, and their subsequent analysis, give us a privileged glimpse, if ever so briefly and imperfectly, that conveys some important and essential truths about diasporic Irish Catholics and their relationships with rugby league football. Indeed, the data seems to suggest that Irish Catholics, or the descendents of Irish-born immigrants domiciled in the West Riding, turned out to be remarkably well represented in some of the county's senior professional rugby league clubs. Geographically, Irish Catholics (or those of Irish descent) tended to be better represented in some rugby clubs than in others. Suffice to say, this is not that surprising given the geographical location and demographics of the Irish Catholic diaspora across the county's industrial landscape.

The discussion so far has been orientated toward one kind of evaluation research situation – that of the NU's player registers – to examine Irish Catholic connectedness and participation in rugby league football. Therefore, to try and create a much broader reconstruction and expand our knowledge of, and appreciation for, issues relating to the assimilation-acculturation experience of this immigrant group with rugby league football, this chapter shall, moreover, integrate those social, religious and nationalist influences at work; which sharply differentiated the English from the Irish during the first two decades following the great rugby split of 1895. As was discussed in the previous chapters, it is from this time that there begins an open, conscious struggle by many Irish Catholics domiciled in the West Riding to strengthen their cultural and national identity in the fight for Home Rule, one that

was fought up to the achievement of Irish independence in 1922. There fight for Home Rule took the form of integrating Irish sports and the rejection of English sports.

Researching the ranks of Irish Catholic players during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century has turned up some surprising evidence. While this group totalled a relatively small percentage of all those who played the game, there was a number Irish Catholics, and/or the descendants of Irish Catholic immigrants, playing rugby league football at senior professional club level. While there were just three well-known Irish Catholic players, according to contemporary sources, playing rugby league for some of the county's senior professional clubs in the early twentieth century, there were approximately 79 other players of Irish descent that preceded them between 1906 and 1909, forming 6.7 per cent of rugby league players representing NU clubs in the West Riding (Table 8.1 refers).[16]

Table 8.1. Number of Known Roman Catholic Players of Irish Descent 1906/09

Name of Club	Number of Players on Register	Number of Players of Irish Descent	Percentile of Players of Irish Descent
Batley	59	18	30.5
Bradford	102	4	3.9
Bramley	106	6	5.7
Dewsbury	139	15	10.8
Halifax	99	4	4.0
Huddersfield	100	1	1.0
Hunslet	97	4	4.1
Keighley	87	5	5.7
Leeds	116	1	0.9
Pontefract	40	2	5.0
Wakefield	124	2	1.6
York	111	17	15.3
Total	1180	79	6.7

Source: NU Players Register 1906-09 University of Huddersfield Archives

Between 1913 and 1920 there were 132 Catholics of Irish descent playing for senior rugby league teams across the county, constituting 6.7 per cent of the total number of players

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[16] (U)niversity of (H)udderfield (A)rchives, (N)orthern (R)ugby (U)nion (P)layer's (R)egister 1906/09.

representing senior rugby league teams in the West Riding (Table 8.2 refers).[17] It is also worth bearing in mind that these figures also represent the war years of 1914-18. The first three recorded Irish rugby league players, Albert Freear, Andrew McDormagh and George Wilfrice, were among the first Irish players to make their mark on rugby league in the West Riding between 1904 and 1914. In fact, Freear, once an Irish international winger, is considered by rugby historians to be the first Irish professional rugby league player, signing for Hull in 1904. According to Robert Gate, 'Freer became the first Irishman to win international honours in rugby league when he represented Other Nationalities against England at Bradford in 1905'.[18] Both McDormagh and Wilfrice were serving soldiers with the British Army, before being release from military service at Strensal Barracks, York in 1906. Subsequent to leaving the service both men registering with the York club.[19]

Table 8.2. Number of Known Roman Catholic Players of Irish Descent 1913/20

Name of Club	Number of Players on Register	Number of Players of Irish Descent	Percentile of Players of Irish Descent
Batley	76	21	27.6
Bradford	106	15	14.2
Bramley	54	10	18.5
Brighouse	64	2	3.1
Dewsbury	95	32	33.7
Featherstone	53	0	0.0
Halifax	87	12	13.8
Huddersfield	62	13	21.0
Hunslet	105	9	8.6
Keighley	94	4	4.3
Leeds	91	2	2.2
Pontefract	92	1	1.1
Wakefield	124	13	10.5
York (NoTeam)			
Total	986	132	13.4

Source: NU Players Register 1913-20 University of Huddersfield Archives

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[17] UHA, NRUPR 1909/20.

[18] Robert Gate, 'History of Irish Rugby League', Rugby League Ireland Web, <http://rli.ie/history>, 9 April 2007.

[19] *Athletic News*, 2 November 1896.

Though logically desirable, a number of practical obstacles can stand in the way of indentifying and confirming Irish Catholic rugby league players by surname. The following brief discussion considers two important constraints. First, the NU's player registers, in a very real sense, are quite prohibitive in that they only make available limited information regarding the personal details of each individual player registered with the county's senior rugby league clubs. Putting aside any national or religious affiliations of the county's rugby league players for the moment, in most cases, all player information derived from the NU's player registers is discrete and un-continuous and do not always provide personal information such as a player's date of birth, and in most cases not always a player's forename, only their initials. They do, however, make available a player's residential address and their club transfer details – which club a player originated from and moved onto.[20] Second, and perhaps the greatest challenge, there would need to be some independent method of checking identity, or some supplementary source which could correlate surname with the nationality and religious identity of each individual rugby player examined. To overcome this predicament the foremost serviceable sources used in this research, which do correlate and confirm distinctions between Irish surnames with religious affiliation, are the Catholic Church's registers held on record at the Leeds Diocesan Archives, and those parish records held by the West Yorkshire Archives. In several instances these records supplement the NU records by specifying details not included in player registers. When they overlap with NU information, the census and Catholic records provide a valuable comparison for measuring the national and religious antecedents of those registered players with Irish/Celtic surnames.

First, in order to confirm or disconfirm their national and religious identity, the residential addresses of all players with strong Irish/Celtic surnames registered with the NU were cross-referenced with contemporary nineteenth and early twentieth century census

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[20] UHA, NRUPR 1906/20.

records.[21] Through the census records it was possible to determine a player's age, place of birth, their nationality, and in most cases the nationality of their parents. Having established the age and place of birth of a player it was then possible to cross-reference those particulars with local Catholic parish records, which are annotated with information such as, dates of a person's baptism, marriage and death. Catholic baptism registers, more often than not, contained the following information: date of birth, date of baptism, child's name, father's name, mother's maiden name and names of sponsors (Godparents). Some registers also recorded the residence of the parents.[22] It is through the details of a player's parents that this research was able to determine what generation Irish each individual player was. By and large, those players of Irish descent registered with the NU, between 1906 and 1920, tended to be either second or third generation Irish Catholics. In a small number of cases, some player's had either a second generation Irish father and first generation Irish mother, or visa-versa – such as, Joe Delaney of Wakefield Trinity, 1906/07 season.[23]

Owing to the Diocese of Leeds' educational records it was also possible to determine where each individual player was educated, and in which parish school.[24] The accessibility of the census registers and Catholic records have facilitated significantly in lessening the inconsistencies in the information available in the NU's player registers. They provide an instrument for isolating the diasporic Irish and identifying their declared religious and national ancestry. The implementation and the value of sources used in this research, both to corroborate and authenticate both the national and religious affiliations of players with strong Irish/Celtic surnames, makes this research at least a justifiable attempt that permits to make potential matches between rugby league football and the Irish Catholic diasporic communities of the West Riding. The processes used in this research, however, can lay no

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[21] *Census Records for Great Britain*, 1861-1921.
[22] LDA and (W)est (Y)orkshire (A)rchives; Catholic Baptism Records, Marriage Registers and Death and Burial Registers 1880-1921, Collection References: RC1-RC26, KX322, WYL859/4/1,
[23] WYA, *Census Returns for Great Britain*, 1901; RC24
[24] LDA, Education Records 1881-1921.

claim to any scientific art form and the procedures used at this juncture, to overcome the problems of identifying Irish Catholics, are not out of the ordinary to those research techniques employed genealogists well acquainted with investigating family ancestry.

The findings of this analysis demonstrate that the number of recognised rugby league players born of Irish Catholic ancestry in the West Riding increased from 6.7 per cent in 1906 to 13.4 percent in 1920, relative to the number of all players registered with the county's senior rugby league clubs.[25] We can also derive from the data that at Batley, between 1906/09, the number of Catholic players of Irish descent corresponded to one-third of the total playing membership of that club, which remained comparatively constant right the way through the opening two decades of the twentieth century. The data also reveals that between 1913 and 1920, there was a proliferation in the number of Catholic players of Irish ancestry registered with clubs in the Heavy Woollen district towns of Huddersfield, Dewsbury and Batley. The most unanticipated and astonishing results of all, however, are derived from the diminutive number of Catholic players of Irish descent represented among the professional rugby league clubs of Bradford and Leeds, especially since both these two large cities played host to the greatest number of diasporic Irish Catholics across the whole of the industrial diocese of the West Riding.[26]

Indeed, Catholic players of Irish ancestry registered with senior professional rugby league clubs in Bradford and Leeds are at a much lower level when contrasted with the number of Catholics of Irish descent registered with senior teams playing out of Batley, Dewsbury and Huddersfield. So while conventional wisdom might have led us to expect a greater number of senior rugby league players of Irish Catholic descent to be quite distinct and quite numerous in Bradford and Leeds, compared with their Catholic compatriots in the Heavy Woollen district towns of the West Riding, this did not seem to be the case in the

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[25] UHA, NRUPR 1906/09.
[26] *Ibid.*, 1909/20

years between 1906/1909. As can be observed from Table 8.1, the number of Catholic players of Irish descent representing senior rugby league clubs hailing from Bradford and Leeds is negligible at best.

According to NU records, and subsequent to cross-reference records checks with the census and Catholic registers between 1906 and 1909, out of a total playing membership of 102, Bradford had only 1 player of Irish descent representing the club, J. O'Rourke.[27] For the same period, Leeds had 2 players out of a total playing membership of 91, P. Greaney and C.L. Gillie, which comprised 2 per cent of players.[28] Hunslet faired slightly better with 4 players out of a total playing membership of 97, J. Culley, J. Mahone, W. McLean and P. Gerrard, forming six per cent of the club's senior players.[29] Finally, Bramley had 6 players from a total playing membership of 106, G. Connolley, J. Kelly, J. Fitzsimmons, J. Flynn, J, McManus and W. Riley, forming 8 per cent of the club's players.[30] The data also illustrates that for the same period, Batley had more Catholic players of Irish ancestry registered with its club than Bradford and the three Leeds based clubs combined. Indeed, 51 per cent of all Catholic players of Irish origin appear to have been registered with senior rugby league clubs playing out of the Heavy Woollen district, compared with 19 per cent of players represented by the Bradford and the Leeds based clubs collectively; 22 per cent of Catholic players of Irish ancestry were registered with York, and the remaining 8 per cent were registered with Pontefract and Keighley.[31]

A number of probable explanations present themselves why so few Irish Catholics in towns like Leeds and Bradford participated in professional rugby league. It could be that the internal cohesion of the Irish Catholic population within the institutions of the Catholic Church acted as a factor, precluding its adherents from participating in non-parochial rugby

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[27] *Ibid.*, and WYA, Collection Reference: RC4, 1881-1905.
[28] *Ibid.*, and WYA, Collection Reference: RC11, 1875-1900.
[29] *Ibid.*, and WYA, Collection Reference: RC14, 1862-1906.
[30] *Ibid.*, and LDA, Educational Records, 1888-1904; and Census Returns for Great Britain, 1881-1901.
[31] *Ibid.*, and WYA, Collection Reference: RC8 1880-1900.

league football teams, and that the corresponding institutions of the Irish National League acted in an identical fashion on the other side of the divide. Or, alternatively, it may be that the comparative disadvantage of Irish Catholics in these towns, weighed against towns like Dewsbury and Batley, could be the result of the way in which discriminatory stereotypes were constructed, which consequently made participation in professional rugby league football much less attractive. In an effort to try answer this dilemma, and according to contemporary academic research, it is suggested that the greater the number of immigrants active in any given area the greater the degree of hostility and resentment ranged against them from the host society, which might have proved to be a permanent degree of disjunction and social divergence in Bradford and Leeds.[32] It follows, then, that the less significant the number of immigrants domiciled in a given locale the lower the scale of hostily from the receiving society, which allowed social and cultural patterns to coalesce and new understandings to percolate through society to develop a measure of cohesion.[33] Therefore, ethnic boundaries created by the host communities in towns like Leeds and Bradford may have been appreciably more distinct when contrasted with those smaller industrial towns with smaller numbers of Irish Catholic immigrants, such as Dewsbury, Batley, Huddersfield and Wakefield, where the sense of balance of the primary relationships between the Irish Catholic diaspora and the host society would appear to have been more convivial.

Indeed, nowhere is this better reflected and more clearly demonstrated than the number of Catholics of Irish descent participating in rugby league at the senior professional

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[32] D. Fitzpatrick, 'The Irish in Britain: Settlers or Transients?', in P. Buckland and J. Belchem (ed.) *The Irish in British Labour History* (1993), pp12-14; S. Castles and G. Kosack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe* (Oxford, 1998), p. 25; K. Fitzgerald, *The Face of the Nation: Immigration, the State, and the National Identity* (Stanford, 1996), p. 62.

[33] D. Coleman, 'The Demography of Ethnic Minorities', *Journal of Biosocial Science Supplement*, 8 (1983), pp. 43-7; J.H. Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1980), p. 5; R. Erikson, R. Goldthorpe and L. Portocarero, 'Social Fluidity in Industrial Nations: England, France and Sweden', *British Journal of Sociology*, 33 (1982), pp. 415-21.

level in the locales where they were born and raised.[34] For instance, reviewing the inventory of players registered with either the Batley, Dewsbury and Huddersfield senior rugby league clubs, it becomes quite apparent that the majority of players with Irish/Celtic surnames were predominantly native to these towns, or at least originated from the surrounding towns and villages within their immediate vicinity; and not, foreign imports or interlopers from other towns or counties across industrialised northern England. Data from the registers of players enrolled with the NU, moreover, suggest that following the rugby split a number players from Dewsbury Shamrocks, Batley Celtic and Huddersfield St. Joseph's, which all switched over to association football in 1895, had enrolled as players with NU clubs at Batley, Dewsbury and Huddersfield respectively. For instance, the player's inventory of 1906/09 reveals that J. Augty, H.R. Augty, W.R. Augty, J. Fitzgerald, J. Fozzard, J.W. Debney J. Foley J. O'Brien, J. Deleaney, P. Kale, and S. Kelly, late of Batley Celtic,[35] were all registered and playing for Batley; and subsequent cross-references checks with contemporary census records and Roman Catholic registers reveal categorically that they were all born of that town and were cradle Catholics.[36] Likewise, players from Dewsbury Shamrocks, such as, A. Gildea, J. Garrity, S.B. Haley, B. Ryan, and F. Halloran all registered with Dewsbury; and a subsidiary examination of personal details examined alongside census and Catholic parish records conclusively reveal that they were all players local to that club and were all cradle Catholics of Irish descent.[37] The same applies for, H. Finnigan, T. Flynn, W. Gollick, E. McNally, W. Millcan and J. McGee who signed for Wakefield Trinity from Wakefield St. Austin's, and whose declared religious identity and national ancestry was confirmed and checked in the census and religious records.[38]

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[34] LDA, Catholic Registers of Birth and Baptisms for Batley, Dewsbury and Huddersfield; WYA Collection References KX322 and Census Returns for Batley, Dewsbury and Huddersfield 1871-1911.
[35] *Athletic News*, 27 March 1896.
[36] LDA, Catholic Birth Registers for Batley 1885-1900.
[37] LDA, Catholic Birth Registers and Educational Records for St. Paulinus 1880-1900.
[38] WYA, Collection Reference: RC24, Baptisms, Marriages and Death Records 1856-96.

What is also revealing from the data is, following the great rugby split in 1895, many players from ethno-religious Irish Catholic teams from other towns across the county were also registered with senior professional rugby league clubs in the Heavy Woollen district of the West Riding; instead, that is, of registering with senior rugby clubs in their own locales or their immediate neighbourhood. For example, when Birstall Celtic switched to soccer for a number of years, before reforming as a rugby league club in 1898,[39] we discover that a significant number of their players were registered and playing professional rugby for the senior rugby league clubs of Batley, Dewsbury, Brighouse and Wakefield.[40] It could be argued that geographical factors were responsible for this influx of Irish Catholic players and that the teams playing out of the Heavy Woollen district towns of the West Riding were easily more accessible compared with teams based in Leeds and Bradford. However, this does not resolve the issue, and begs the question why so many other Catholic players of Irish descent from other ethno-religious clubs, as far away as Castleford and Pontefract (such as Castleford Celtic and Pontefract Celtic),[41] were also registered with senior NU clubs playing out of the Heavy Woollen district towns of the West Riding and not the with senior clubs in their own towns. Indeed, between 1906/20 a contingent of players hailing from the Castleford, Normington and the Pontefract areas, such as, J. Frain, J Heaney, J Brear, R. Augty, S. Gilling, L. Darcy, J. Galbraith, H. McNamara, J. Driscoll, W. McDermott, E. Higgins, E. McNally, R. McGee and A. Kelly, to mention but a few, were all playing senior rugby league football for clubs playing out of the Heavy Woollen district towns.[42]

Clearly, those towns situated in the Heavy Woollen district and their respective professional rugby league clubs were an alluring attraction for many Catholic players of Irish descent from across the county. It is also apparent from the data that the number of Catholics

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[39] *Catholic Herald*, 2 March 1898.
[40] UHA, NRUPR 1906/09.
[41] *Catholic Herald*, 21 October 1905.
[42] UHA, NRUPR 1906/09.

of Irish descent playing senior rugby league in the West Riding was geographically very specific. The numbers maybe very small, relative to the overall number of players registered with the NU at the senior level, but we find definite signs that Catholics of Irish descent gravitated towards the senior professional rugby league clubs playing out of the Heavy Woollen district towns of Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield and Wakefield, instead of teams in Leeds or Bradford, which were, on the whole, geographically closer and more accessible. What is also obvious from the NU's player registers, there are no Catholics of Irish descent from either Leeds or Bradford playing for rugby teams in the Heavy Woollen District, which may suggest that the game was not that popular among the Irish Catholic communities in these two towns (Tables 8.1 and 8.2 refer).

These results take us back to the general historical evidence. Once re-examined, the findings from the above data become considerably less unexpected. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when massive, economic de-skilling was occurring through bourgeois tendencies to divide citizenship from work, area from work-place, consumption from production, leisure from work and culture from politics and economics, the Catholic Church tended to ratify such divisions rather than to seek adequate forms of their transcendence on behalf of its people.[43] The Catholic Church, for its part, acted to divide its adherents from factory, labour from trades councils – with industrial action for political ends, or mixing politics with categories like education or Catholic culture. Rather than challenging dominant capitalist leisure modes, for example, the Catholic Hierarchy in the industrial Diocese of Leeds tended to use the images which those modes projected at most people (the masses) as justification for their own retreats in sports and leisure. Therefore, the sporting

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[43] McLeod, *Religion and the working class in nineteenth century Britain*, pp.380-2.

leisure activities of working-class Catholics in the diaspora were internalised by the Catholic Church.[44]

As was explained in chapter six, in those urban districts, such as Leeds, Bradford and their immediate neighbourhood, where there existed countless Catholic sports clubs, there was no requirement for these teams to compete against external opposition or in open competition with evangelical Protestant teams.[45] Conversely, in the smaller towns and districts of the diocese, such as Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield and Wakefield, where there existed only a handful of Catholic sports teams in any given parish, members had to play games of rugby among themselves. Owing to the absence of regular Catholic opposition they were obliged to contest in games against external opposition if they were to survive.[46] By the turn of the twentieth century, the Catholic rugby teams playing out of the Heavy Woollen district of the West Riding had already been competing in open sports competitions with the host/donor society teams in these locales for more than two decades, by which time, the processes of the assimilation-acculturation paradigm between Irish Catholics communities in towns like Batley, Dewsbury and Huddersfield, and their association with rugby league football, was more implicit than any such patterns of assimilation-acculturation observed in those Irish Catholic communities in Bradford and Leeds, where life, sports and culture was internalised and considerably more insulated against the activities of the host/donor society.

Through the medium of rugby league football, it would appear, then, that there is a more general level of assimilation-acculturation among some Irish Catholic communities in some of the county's smaller industrial towns, such as Batley and Dewsbury. This becomes the more obvious when they are measured and contrasted against some of the larger Irish communities domiciled in Leeds and Bradford, where Irish Catholic gestalt remained strong during the period under investigation. Indeed, it could be argued that the adoption of rugby

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[44] Gilley, 'The Roman Catholic Church and the nineteenth century Irish diaspora', p. 196.
[45] *Catholic Herald,* 28 April 1899.
[46] *Ibid.*, 15 August 1898.

league by Irish Catholic communities domiciled in the Heavy Woollen district was a homogenising agent, whereby, national and religious identity was inactive, or diluted. Similarly, it could reasonable be assumed that this assimilation was functional and homogeneity rather than heterogeneity was the desired state. Thus, the heavy emphasis is that those communities living in the Heavy Woollen district of the county were slowly beginning to strip away all their ethno-religious distinctions in favour of more English cultural pursuits, and rugby league became to act as one catalyst in the process.

Although Irish communities in both Leeds and Bradford continued to adopt British sports from the donor society that best fit their purpose, interactions with the host society in sporting spheres were nominal at best.[47] But this does not answer the question why so few Catholics of Irish ancestry residing in large towns like Leeds and Bradford did not interact or participate with the senior rugby league clubs of these towns. The following discussion will attempt to focus on several considerations which probably played an active role in the interactions, or lack of them, between the large Irish Catholic communities in Bradford and Leeds, the host/donor society, and rugby league football. Part of the explanation for the lack of interaction and participation could be that in Bradford, during the opening years of the twentieth century, reports suggest that attendance figures at the town's two premier rugby league clubs, Manningham and Bradford, were chronically depressed. The *Catholic Herald* of 4 March 1902 reported that, 'For some reason, not yet determined the game played by Northern Union clubs seems to be losing its popularity. The attendances at the matches are smaller than they were and consequently many clubs are getting into financial difficulty. The game is regarded by many as less interesting than it was at first, while some allege that the rigid application of the professional laws is making players become less skilful'.[48]

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[47] *Tablet*, 5 June 1895.
[48] *Catholic Herald*, 4 March 1902.

By 1903, Manningham had moved over to association football and Park Avenue, which had long been the home to amateur and professional rugby players alike, was taken away from rugby and passed over to soccer following the emergence of Bradford City Association Football Club. The popularity of soccer during the early twentieth century unquestionably played its part in catching the attention of the Irish Catholic diasporic communities in Bradford and away from rugby football, whatever the code. Indeed, mirroring the sporting preferences of the general population of the town the majority of Catholic parish sports clubs switched to soccer during this period. That's not to suggest that NU rugby wasn't popular, because it was. Again, as was discussed in previous chapters there existed a number of Catholic rugby teams playing both codes of rugby. It just so happened, however, that soccer had also become an extremely popular winter pastime among the working-class communities of that town. As Tony Collins Highlights, 'In 1903 the Football League had established a beachhead in the rugby heartland of West Yorkshire'.[49]

The Fattorini family and their direct involvement with the both the wider Catholic community of Bradford and Shipley and their association with Bradford City AFC, in a administrative capacity, had a tremendous influence in swaying many young Catholics away from playing rugby league to association football.[50] As they had once promoted rugby football among Catholic youth they now championed association football among the many Catholic Lad's clubs they sponsored. Similarly at Leeds, Leeds United Football Club was enjoying similar popularity among the working-class populace of that town. By 1904, the administrative management of the Holbeck NU club, which played its games at Elland Road, disbanded the club and established Leeds City, the predecessor of Leeds United. Tony Collins underscores the mutually reinforcing role association football played in the West Riding during the early twentieth century and asserts that, 'In many previous strongholds of

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[49] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 7.
[50] *Catholic Herald*, 7 October 1904.

rugby across the north, professional soccer clubs began to challenge the oval ball's dominance. 'Wherever it was played, soccer attracted huge crowds which dwarfed those of rugby, and the simplicity of the game made it easier to watch and play. More than that, it was a truly national sport, giving it an attraction beyond the regional appeal of the NU or the social exclusivity of rugby union'.[51] Whether association football had the consequence of rendering rugby league less popular, or not, among the Irish diaspora of these two towns, we cannot say, but one way or another the popularity of both rugby league and rugby union had gradually diminished, and we find it, even as far on as 1906, scarcely being practiced by the Irish diasporic communities, and even then only among a few ethno-religious Irish Catholic clubs. However, this issue might only answer part of the puzzle why fewer Catholics of Irish descent did not participate in non-parochial senior rugby league clubs.

It is also worth considering that in both Leeds and Bradford, the interests of Irish nationalism and Home Rule for Ireland dominated the outlook throughout much of the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century. This had its long and lasting effects, especially at a time when rugby league football was becoming popularised among the mainstay of working-class Yorkshire society. Again, when contrasted against the Home Rule organisations in the Heavy Woollen district, the augmentation of the INL Federation in Yorkshire was on the rise, especially in Leeds and Bradford, where there was an overall increase in the number of INL clubs being established both in these towns or their immediate neighbourhood, and an increase in the organisation's membership.[52] That is not to say, however, that Irish Catholic communities in the Heavy Woollen district towns of Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield or Wakefield were in any way less nationalistic than their countrymen in Leeds and Bradford. Nevertheless, the nationalistic and Home Rule activities of Irish Catholics in the industrial Diocese of Leeds were significantly more heightened in the

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[51] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 6.

[52] *Catholic Herald,* 23 December 1907.

towns of Leeds and Bradford, where there existed substantial numbers of Irish Catholic immigrants.[53] Consequently, the activities of the INL clubs in these two large industrial centres of Irish immigration were appreciably more internalised, which, ultimately, made it easier for these Irish Catholic communities to form rugby football and sports teams with a specifically ethno-religious identity to participate in internalised competitions with other Home Rule clubs in their districts without ever having to compete in games against teams in the Protestant host society.[54]

Indeed, as highlighted in the previous chapter, on 24 November 1898, the Leeds and District Federation of the INL: Robert Emmet, East Ward, John Dillon, North Leeds, Hunslet and Thomas Sexton, formed the Leeds INL Northern Rugby Union League.[55] On 21 April 1899, Mr John Harland, described as a well-known sportsman from the Daniel. O'Connell Club, Birstall, established the Bradford and District INL Northern Rugby Union League, which was comprised of teams from: Bradford Central (Gaelic), Birstall INL, Bradford John Dillon, Bradford Dillon O'Brien, Bradford Henry Grattan, Bradford Michael Dwyer and Shipley INL.[56] In the same way, most Catholic parish teams participating in rugby football in Leeds and Bradford, which had not converted to association football, continued to engage in recreational games of rugby football in internalised Catholic leagues. Although there existed Catholic rugby league teams, their participation was internalised by the Catholic Church and remained hidden from public gaze. In some of the smaller towns of Otley, Skipton, Ilkley, Goole and Wetherby, where Catholic rugby teams were subjugated by middle and upper-class Catholics, parish teams continued to take part in games of rugby that fell under the banner of the RFU.[57] On 31 March 1899 the *Catholic Herald* reported that for the first time in

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[53] *Bradford Observer*, 9 November 1905.
[54] *Catholic Herald*, 27 June 1914; 17 March 1899; 27 April 1898; 15 August 1896; and 27 March 1890.
[55] *Ibid.*, 24 November 1898.
[56] *Ibid.,* 28 April 1899.
[57] *Craven Herald and Pioneer*, 19 January 1898; *Leeds Mercury*, 12 October 1898; and *Athletic News*, 15 March 1897.

the history of the competition an 'Irish club' has succeeded in reaching the semi-final of the Yorkshire Challenge Cup competition and, 'every praise is due Otley St Joseph's team for a highly credible performance in reaching this stage of the contest. In the third round on Saturday last they met Bottomboat Trinity, and after an exciting tussle they emerged successful by three points to nil'.[58]

The competing forces of Catholicism and Irish nationalism had a large impact on the sporting endeavours of the Irish communities in both Leeds and Bradford. For many years, during the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods, Irish Catholics in Leeds and Bradford lived in corporate communities, tied by their Catholic religion, which clearly separated them from the Protestant majority. Also, Irish nationalism took a corporation role and became a unifying power that had become yet another response which effected the growth and popularity of rugby league football among the Irish communities in these two large industrial centres. Irish Catholic nationalists defined Irish identity in historical, ethnic and political terms, inspired by nineteenth century Irish nationalist movements, such as, the Irish Land League, the Irish National League and the Gaelic League.[59] Following the establishment of the GAA in 1884, which sought to de-Anglicise Ireland and had begun to cultivate ideas to transform and regenerate the Irish people, Irish nationalist clubs in Leeds and Bradford responded by incorporating Gaelic sports as cultural alternatives to those offered by English society, which radically secularised their membership more notably so than anything witnessed in those towns situated in the Heavy Woollen district towns.[60]

By the early twentieth century, a number of Home Rule clubs in Leeds and Bradford consciously severed links with English sports, especially the popular winter pastimes of rugby and association football and replaced them with Gaelic sports, 'as a comportment of

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[58] *Catholic Herald*, 31 March 1899.
[59] *Ibid.*, 24 October 1908.
[60] *Ibid.,* 31 August 1909.

challenging the British and celebrating one's Irishness.[61] As Patrick McDevitt explains, 'The games provided the Irish nationalists with a symbolically defiant act broad enough to encompass aspects of ritual, nostalgia for legendary Irish past of united independence'.[62] Between 1908 and 1920 Home Rule clubs in Leeds and Bradford concerned themselves primarily with the promotion of Irish language, culture, literature, and Irish sports. Young Irishmen drawn to the Gaelic League competed in hurling and Gaelic football matches, which soon developed into regular fixtures involving teams from the Home Rule clubs of Leeds, Halifax, Bradford and Keighley.[63] For men in the nationalist communities of Bradford and Leeds the notion of manhood, patriotism and resistance were so interconnected as to be almost conflated, and the ideals of nationalist philosophy were drawn together most dramatically by the national pastimes of hurling and Gaelic football.[64]

As Patrick McDevitt explains, 'This was a profound moment of self-definition that presented muscular counter-images to the reminiscences of weak and emaciated Famine victims'.[65] Thus, by putting into practice the playing of Gaelic games Irish men domiciled in the West Riding, like those in other parts of the country and back home in Ireland, 'were performing a conscious act of profanation in the face of cultural imperialism and the political ascendancy of Great Britain. While other peoples in the British Empire challenged English sports by beating the British at their own games, the Irish blasphemed in a different manner'.[66] As Delvin makes clear, 'by rejecting the fundamental conventions of British imperial religion, Irish Catholics discarded the precept that the games representative of the supremacy of British manhood'.[67] Gaelic games were ultimately tied to Catholicism, 'and

[61] *Catholic Herald*, 21 June 1907.
[62] P. McDevitt, 'Muscular Catholicism: Nationalism, Masculinity and Gaelic Team Sports 1884-1916', *Gender and History*, 9 (1997), p. 265.
[63] *Catholic Herald*, 7 November 1912.
[64] Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletics Association and Irish Nationalist Politics 1884-1924*, pp. 10-17.
[65] McDevitt, 'Muscular Catholicism: Nationalism, Masculinity and Gaelic Team Sports 1884-1916', p. 263.
[66] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p.203.
[67] Devlin, *Our Native Games*, pp. 35-6.

Gaelic sports complemented their Catholic environment when contrasted with Protestant English games'.[68] According to Patrick McDevitt, 'the creation of the anti-rituals of their own games became most visible, viable, and successful pillar of the cultural renaissance'.[69] In addition, Gaelic sports were not isolated from the remainder of the revival movement; rather Home Rule clubs and the Gaelic League in Leeds, Bradford, Keighley and Halifax, 'surrounded the games with fêtes, music, and oratory that unequivocally discarded the imperial doctrine implicit in British games'.[70]

Of all the contemporary records and sources examined during the course of this analysis there are no references, whatsoever, in relation to any Irish Catholic teams hailing from the Heavy Woollen towns of Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield or Wakefield participating in Gaelic games throughout the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Thus, in attempting to establish why so few Irish Catholics participated in rugby league football at the senior level in towns, such as, Leeds and Bradford, it can be reasonably implied that there was a much stronger correlation between the communities in these two towns and their association with Gaelic games, Irish nationalism and Irish culture than anything experienced in the Heavy Woollen district. And, therefore, in towns with strong Irish nationalist movements there were fewer Catholics of Irish ancestry participating in games of rugby league at the senior level. However, the so called assimilation-acculturation process of those diasporic communities in towns situated in the Heavy Woollen district does not necessarily suggest that by partaking in games of rugby league football at a general or senior level means that assimilation-acculturation was an all or none phenomenon, and that by adopting rugby league as their preferred sport had in any way transformed their cultural Irish gestalt.

Rather, it should be considered that just as there are differing individual rates of assimilation-acculturation there may also be differing rates in different spheres of activity

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[68] Whelan, 'The Geography of Hurling', pp. 28-31.
[69] McDevitt, 'Muscular Catholicism: Nationalism, Masculinity and Gaelic Team Sports 1884-1916', p. 268.
[70] *Catholic Herald*, 21 April 1899.

within the diaspora.[71] Specifically, the Irish diaspora of the West Riding may have readily adopted the technological and political domains of the donor culture yet clung tenaciously to expressive domains or spheres of activity of their own culture, which the Irish in the Heavy Woollen district did to a much greater degree than that witnessed in Leeds and Bradford. It is inferred in the literature that a group is less assimilated if it adheres to its own forms of leisure interests or exhibits any ethnic expression different to host society sports forms,[72] which those communities in Leeds and Bradford most certainly did to a much greater degree than those communities in the Heavy Woollen districts. Therefore, what can be inferred from the evidence is that those Irish communities in both Leeds and Bradford were significantly large enough to enable them to retain their own cultural identities and to assume Irish nationalistic games and activities more intensely than those Irish Catholic communities located in the Heavy Woollen districts.

Furthermore, the role of identifying Catholics of Irish ancestry is frequently viewed through the perspective of the host society. Thus, minority group identification has been often considered dysfunctional and those who wanted to move into the dominant mainstream were somehow prevented from doing so by a xenophobic host society that aimed to exclude. In other words, the receiving society determined and controlled the pace of the assimilation-acculturation processes and that the Irish had no say or control over the matter. Although it is accepted that in every community which aims to unite and include, exclusion of others is a necessary step in the process. However, what is clear from the evidence, Irish diasporic communities of the West Riding were not excluded from participating in rugby league football by either the working-class host majority or the county's senior rugby league clubs. Rather, those Irish communities in the large industrial centres of Leeds and Bradford, which

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[71] Mangan, *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society*, p.5.
[72] E. Dunning, J.A. Maguire and R.E. Preston, *The Sports Process: A Comparative and Developmental Approach* (Leeds, 1993), pp. 48-53; R.B. Small, E.Spon and F.N. Spon, Sport, *Culture and Society: International Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (London, 1986), pp. 6-9.

attempted to create an independent Irish identity to the exclusion of the host society, excluded themselves from rugby league football and not the other way around.

Indeed, Irish Catholic communities domiciled in large industrial urban centres like Leeds and Bradford were sufficiently large enough and dominant enough to determine their own preferences in relation to the levels of interaction and integration with the host society; and ultimately, their participation in British sports was something they decided and, therefore, was not necessarily influenced or controlled by the actions of the host society. Based on the available evidence, in the West Riding at least, there can be little doubt that Catholicism and Irish nationalism were extremely closely linked among the Irish communities, but Irish nationalist activities and Irish nationalist sentiments ran much deeper and much stronger in both Leeds and Bradford than in any of the other districts across the county. Indeed, the implicit nationalist message and Irish identity became far more distinguished and more focussed in Leeds and Bradford, and to a lesser extent in Halifax and Keighley. Equally, compared with some of the smaller towns across the county, in the context of sports and cultural activities, Catholic sporting clubs in both Leeds and Bradford became more segregated – where they were plentiful enough in number to internalise their sporting preferences without any interference from the host communities and visa-versa.

Nevertheless, between 1909/1920, records do reveal that there was an overall increase in the number of Catholic players of Irish ancestry, local to Bradford, registered as senior professional players with the Bradford club.[73] In contrast with earlier periods, there was an overall increase in the number of second/third generation Irish Catholics players from 1 to 15, forming more than 14 per cent of the total playing membership of the club, which stood at 106 (Table 8.2 refers). There was also overall increase in the number of Catholic players of Irish ancestry registered with both the Bramley and Hunslet clubs. Between 1909/1920,

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[73] UHA, NRUPR 1909/20.

Bramley increased the number of players of Irish descent from 6 to 10, out of a total playing membership of 54 registered with the club, and formed 18 per cent of their total playing membership. Hunslet increased its number from 4 to 9 players, out of a total playing membership of 105, forming 8 per cent of the club's playing membership. Leeds, however, showed no marked increases with only 2 Catholic players of Irish descent representing the club. Of note, the increase in the number of players of Irish descent representing both Bramley and Hunslet coincided with the relocation of Irish immigrants from the central township districts of Leeds. From 1914 through to the 1930s, churches and parishes were formed in developing working class housing areas – Council and private housing estates – where working-class Irish or the descendents of working-class Irish immigrants were re-housed from the old inner-city slum clearance districts.[74]

By contrast, according to contemporary NU records, at those senior professional rugby league clubs located in the Heavy Woollen district towns there were 81 players of Irish descent playing for these clubs out of a total of 132 playing the game at senior level across the county; Batley had 21; Brighouse, 2; Dewsbury, 32; Huddersfield 13; and Wakefield, thirteen. Halifax also showed an increase in the numbers of players of Irish descent, from 4 to 12 players, and forming 14 per cent of the clubs registered players (Table 8.2 refers). Despite the increase in the number of players registered with the Bradford club and the two Leeds based clubs, Bramley and Hunslet, again, the overwhelming number of Catholics of Irish ancestry representing the West Riding's senior professional rugby league clubs were playing their rugby in the Heavy Woollen district. If we factor the number of players representative of Halifax – which for those who are not familiar with the region, Halifax neighbours Brighouse, Huddersfield and Dewsbury – into the general statistics of Catholic players of Irish descent represented by clubs playing out of the Heavy Woollen district then it becomes

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[74] Bell, 'The Evolution of a Multi-Cultural Society', 1982.

quite clear that 93 players, 70 per cent, of all Catholic players of Irish ancestry in the West Riding were residing and playing senior professional rugby league football in towns geographically separated by only a few miles.

To reinforce this point – and to make more manifest the strong connections that existed between rugby league football and the Irish Catholic diasporic communities from this particular district – by the early twentieth century a number of Irish rugby league clubs, which had initially moved across to association football following the great rugby split in 1895, had by now reformed and were playing amateur/junior rugby league football, either sporadically or regularly in open competition in local leagues.[75] These clubs, in the main, were concentrated in a small triangulated area some eight miles by ten miles, bound by Halifax in the north, Wakefield in the east and Dewsbury in the west – forming the three cloves of the shamrock. These clubs included, Dewsbury Celtic, Westtown Shamrocks (Dewsbury), Birstall Celtic, Batley Celtic, Ossett Celtic, Morley Celtic, Wakefield St. Austin's and Halifax Celtic. It just so happens that the re-establishment and formation of these Irish rugby league clubs also coincided with a series of new rule changes that were introduced by the NU in 1906, to make the game more free flowing and more of a sporting spectacle. According to Tony Collins, 'The very real prospect of being buried under the landslide of soccer's popularity focused the minds of the NU leadership on the long-running debate over the rules of the game'.[76] Following the rugby split, the dominant rules of rugby league football were still very much those of rugby union. However, between 1897 and 1906 the NU's administrative leadership introduced a succession of rule changes, which ultimately directed the game away from the relentless rucking and mauling of rugby union, and, moreover, placed greater importance on scoring tries. 'By 1897 the line-out was abolished and the value of all kicked goals was downgraded to two points. Eventually, in 1906 the

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[75] *Catholic Herald*, 29 October 1909.
[76] Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 6.

number of players in a team was reduced to thirteen and an orderly plat-the-ball, whereby a tackled player had to get to his feet and roll the bell behind him with his foot was introduced. These two changes completed the break from the playing rules of rugby union and marked the birth of rugby league as a distinct sport with its own unique rules'.[77] Indeed, the position of the game depended on the quality of the game rather than the quantity of the support it received from enthusiasts.

But more importantly, the establishment of these Irish clubs and the increase in the number of Catholics players of Irish origin playing in the Heavy Woollen district also corresponds with the remarkable achievements the senior professional rugby league teams playing out of this district were enjoying throughout the opening decades of the twentieth century; not just in the Yorkshire club and cup competitions, but across the industrial north of England in the Championship competition. For example, in the preceding four years leading up to 1915 Huddersfield managed to, 'finish top of the Champions table every season, won the Challenge Cup twice and the Yorkshire Cup three times'.[78] Indeed, the professional rugby league player and the professional senior rugby league teams from the Heavy Woollen district lifted the game to the height of a scientific art, and rugby league connected with the practice of the scientific arts: it even had something of an ethical quality, and it connected itself with the practice of the virtues. It is a conception which, on a physical basis, erected a structure that was half aesthetic, a quarter scientific and a quarter ethical. To quote Tony Collins, Huddersfield, 'played the game in a fast, open style that made the fullest use of the opportunities provided by the NU's rules, developing new tactics' which 'moved the game away from far away from the static set-pieces of its origins'.[79] During the late nineteenth century rugby football like other things suffered a change. However, by the early twentieth with the improvements of methods of production and mechanisation the rugby league

[77] *Ibid*., p. 6.
[78] *Ibid.,* p.7.
[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

machine had also lifted itself to a higher plane of invention and production that eschewed the idea of rigorous training with the essence of mental faculty and physical efficiency for victory, such was the attraction of the game in the Heavy Woollen district of the West Riding.

The working-class unity and diversity in rugby league football in the Heavy Woollen district of the West Riding – or more exactly, the mixture of working-class unity and diversity – makes rugby league standout among other sports. As Tony Collins explains, with reference to racial minorities in rugby league football, 'few British sports, if any, have a record of racial integration on the playing field which can compare to that of rugby league'.[80] Indeed, there appears not to have been a strict line of division in rugby league football based on ethnic identity compared with other sports. During the early twentieth-century rugby league football provided opportunities for all to participate in the game, and as such, permeated the concepts of colour, creed and race to slide into one another with the 'meritocratic' ideologies of the game, without any overt displays of prejudice or organised objections from the host society on the playing field. This is manifested by Tony Collins' work corresponding to the first black professional rugby league players participating in the sport before the Great War.[81] To broaden, strengthen and complement the work of Collins, pertaining to racial minority group participation in rugby league, we can now adjoin the Irish diasporic communities of the West Riding to that record.

This chapter has sought to demonstrate the viability of using Strong Irish/Celtic surnames to distinguish diasporic Irish Catholics or Catholics of Irish descent participating in professional rugby league football in the West Riding during the opening decades of the twentieth century. While the match is not perfect, it at least seems possible to identify the number of Irish immigrants or the descendents of Irish immigrants that participated in senior

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[80] Collins, 'Racial Minorities in a Marginalised Sport: Race, Discrimination and Integration in British Rugby League Football', p. 152.

[81] Collins and Melling, *Crossing the Colour Line in Rugby League*; Collins, 'Racial Minorities in a Marginalised Sport: Race, Discrimination and Integration in British Rugby League Football'.

professional rugby league. Due to lack of other primary and secondary sources the use of this approach has enabled us to derive some significant and unexpected findings from the NU's player register, especially when they are cross-referenced with census records and the Catholic Church's registers. Identifying players of Irish descent enables a much more detailed understanding of their participation in different locales across the county.

The first major finding of this research concerns the relative lack of participation in rugby league football at the senior professional level in Leeds and Bradford where the greatest number of Irish immigrants settled during the nineteenth century. Second, strengthened by the evidence it is clear that Irish Catholic immigrant communities domiciled in the Heavy Woollen district towns of Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Wakefield and Halifax were all well represented in senior professional rugby league clubs playing out of these towns. Third, professional rugby league clubs hailing from the Heavy Woollen district played host to players of Irish Catholic descent, not only from their own locales, but from diasporic Irish Catholic communities from across many other districts of the county – Castleford and Pontefract. Forth, all ethno-religious Irish Catholic rugby teams participating in open competition and in local leagues during the early twentieth century hailed from the Heavy Woollen district towns, and not, as one might expect, from Leeds or Bradford, where their sporting activities were internalised by either the Catholic Church or the Home Rule Federation.

Finally, there is evidence that some Irish communities in the large industrial centres of Leeds and Bradford attempted to deliberately secularise their sporting activities. This is also true, to a lesser extent, among some Irish Catholic communities in Halifax and Keighley. It would appear that in towns with religiously mixed neighbourhoods, where Irish Catholic communities were much smaller, there is far more assimilation-acculturation and integration in the context of sporting life and rugby league. In this process, among those Irish Catholic

communities in Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Wakefield and Halifax rugby league football seems to have been an extremely important sporting endeavour, where their participation in rugby league provided a direct challenge to ethnically defined boundaries and social stereotypes that existed elsewhere. It is here that the contrast with Leeds and Bradford is most telling. In Leeds and Bradford, participation in rugby league football was much narrower and more circumscribed. In these two towns, with the single largest areas of labouring employment in the West Riding, Irish Catholic communities appear to have provided a continuing basis for ethnic and religious stereotyping well into the twentieth century. Whatever the reasons for the lack of participation in rugby league in Leeds and Bradford, there is sufficient evidence that in other industrial towns Irish Catholic communities actively participated in rugby league football at both amateur and professional levels and continued to do so well after the Great War.

CONCLUSIONS

Compared with cities such as, Liverpool, London and Manchester, the nineteenth-century West Riding of Yorkshire was a relative backwater in terms of the number of Irish immigrants domiciled in the county. However, similar to these large centres, Irish immigration during the nineteenth century had an enormous influence on the West Riding of Yorkshire and its population. This thesis began by, first, attempting to articulate how significantly that presence functioned on occasion to make obvious the relationship between primarily working-class Irish Catholic immigrants and the receiving Protestant communities of the county's industrial centres, and to ascertain its problem-exacerbating potential that was present during the period under investigation. Secondly, it has endeavoured to uncover correlations between the county's working-class Irish Catholic diasporic communities, the English Catholic Church and Irish nationalist organisations. Finally, it has attempted to explore some of the connections and equivalences that existed between Irish Catholic immigrants, the Catholic Church and Irish nationalist organisations with both rugby union and rugby league football. The encounters between the diasporic Irish Catholics and rugby football have clearly been one of increasing complexity and strength. What has materialised is a multifarious inter-connectedness between the emergence of the Irish Catholic community in the West Riding, sport and rugby football.

In the nineteenth century working-class Irish Catholic immigrants settled mainly in the county's urban districts where distinct Irish Catholic diasporic communities were rapidly established. Some early Irish immigration to the county was a consequence of religious tension between Catholics and Protestants. Some immigration was seasonal as Irishmen moved to England to seek harvesting work, returning home to Ireland once the harvest was completed. Irish immigration to England picked up the pace during the nineteenth century for two main reasons. The first was the severe economic suffering brought about by the potato

famine of 1845-7 and which epitomises a significant feature of colonial exploitation of the Irish economy. During the famine the Irish economy continued to export food while Irish people went hungry. The second foremost reason was the exigency for all forms of labour from a rapidly expanding industrialising British economy, which enticed many Irish itinerant workers to factories across the industrial landscape of northern England. Indeed, Irish Catholic immigrants settled in urban areas and distinct Irish communities were established in Liverpool, Lancashire and Yorkshire.

In industrial towns and cities across the West Riding, as elsewhere across northern industrialised England, Irish people suffered many of the social problems that afflicted some of the poorest members of the English working-class during the period of industrialisation. Such problems were worsened for many Irish who left comparative rural tranquillity for accommodation in overcrowded urban areas where their living conventions were determined by the English proletariat. Composed as they were of so largely of uprooted people, the central townships of the industrialised West Riding became a breeding ground for vice and crime. Irish immigrants were judged by many to share no common ethnic or national affiliation with the English proletariat – they spoke no common language, and they more often than not led a marginal and sometimes lawless existence on the fringes of English society. In the mid-nineteenth century the English proletariat and a number of contemporary writers commented on the Irish – some favourably, some unfavourably, and still others in mixed vein, all influenced by a variety of cultural and social factors and by their sources of information. Unfortunately, the hostile words and characterisations were more often preserved, and they influenced later generations of English people to think and act antagonistically toward the descendents of the first generation Irish Catholic immigrants. Indeed, even by the late nineteenth century Irish immigrants still came to constitute, in effect, a loosely defined, inferior social class composed of a shifting and shifty population without

secure ties to settled communities. Yet, in the face of negative statistics and gloomy prognostications Irish immigration began to acquire all the characteristics of a 'chain migration' as other Irish people sought to link up with family and friends who had already moved to the West Riding. Irish immigration to the West Riding of Yorkshire, before, during, and after the famine of the mid 1840's was on the rise at the same time as mainland Britain itself was undergoing a tremendous demographic and economic transformation. The incursion from Ireland accompanied a relatively fundamental adjustment in the disposition of mass political philosophies, in which divisions along the lines of religion, local community and ethnicity became more obvious. The Irish worked at the lowest paid jobs (an inordinate number were hawkers of pots, baskets and hardware items), and as a consequence were predisposed to dwell in the very poorest areas of the county's large industrial towns and cities.[1]

Taken as a whole, the Irish were poorly fed and scantily clothed, infamously housed, poorly educated, poorly attended to in sickness and distress and poorly provided with leisure and opportunities for recreation and amusement.[2] They arrived in the West Riding as pauperised, besmirched peasantry whose own indigenous society had been trampled by some centuries of English subjugation, 'into a flotsam and jetsam of old customs, mutual aid and kinship solidarity, held together by a generically Irish 'way of life' (wakes, songs and so on), by hatred of England and by a Catholic priesthood of peasants' sons and brothers'.[3] What is in dispute about this acknowledged description is not its correctness but its portrayal. Indisputably, the Irish of the West Riding did play a significant part to their own circumstances by conveying their rural habits straight into these urban and industrialised towns. It is, moreover, accurate that the funeral customs of the Irish, involving the keeping the corpses for days, and celebrating death with excessive drinking, horrified many of the

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[1] Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in Nineteenth Century Britain: Problems of Integration', p.168.
[2] Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England*, pp. 4-16.
[3] Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in Nineteenth Century Britain: Problems of Integration', p.169.

puritanical and increasingly health-conscious respectable classes in the host communities. There was undoubtedly a conflict of cultures. Yet it is also accurate that the Irish had little choice.[4]

In conjunction with the influx of working-class Irish Catholics who settled in the West Riding came a corresponding augmentation and resurgence in Catholicism. Indeed, Irish immigrants carried with them the love of their religion and a determination to uphold that religion and to make sacrifices for it.[5] Irish immigrants, it should be borne in mind were essentially a Catholic people, and therefore it is no wonder that as soon as the trammels were shaken off they should show their accustomed devotion to their faith and their clergy. Their presence resulted in Irish issues being debated and the arrest and expulsion of some who supported the Fenian cause of Irish independence.[6] It also resulted in a demand for Irish priests and bishops to serve the county's burgeoning Irish Catholic population and in an eventual change in the character of the Church in England from an English institution to a largely Irish one.[7] The concentration of Irish communities and their Catholicism provoked hostility on the part of the host society. Whether or not the discrimination experienced by the diasporic Irish Catholics immigrants can be categorised as racist has been an important area of debate. It is clear, however, that degrading Irish stereotypes of laziness and fecklessness were quite common, as was anti-Catholicism. Irish immigrants were often victims of violent attack because of cultural distinctiveness.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a series of major and irreversible adjustments had been made in the relationship between the working-class Irish immigrants and the Catholic Church. The Church had by now become a far more visible component in every aspect of the urban Irish working classes than it had been a generation or

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[4] Swift and Gilley, *The Irish in Victorian Cities* , pp. 24-6.
[5] F. M. Allen, *Through Green Glasses* (Bradford, 1878), p. 18.
[6] M. C. Bishop, 'The social methods of Roman Catholicism in England', *Contemporary Review*, 39 (1877), pp. 610-12.
[7] Supple, 'The Catholic clergy of Yorkshire, 1850-1900: A profile', pp. 212-14.

two earlier. For the first time things were bending slowly, but decisively, in the direction of Irish Catholic needs and aspirations. The momentum of these changes would be maintained by the Church, but not without controversy. The Church had come to incorporate a world-view and way of life that appeared to avoid the excesses and unacceptable features of outsiders, religions and cultures; at the same time it offered elevated concepts that it hoped would join working-class Irish Catholics to the rest of English Catholic culture.[8] To achieve this goal the Church would have to wrestle with the omnipresence of Irish secret societies, Fenianism, Irish Home Rulers and Irish cultural practices; all of which had an impact, in one form or other, on the diasporic Irish Catholics living in the industrial centres of the West Riding.

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century the assumptions among most Irish Catholic immigrants was that their own culture was strong enough and pervasive enough to persist through despite any vicissitudes or challenges it might encounter.[9] And perhaps it was. They imagined that the special measures undertaken by secret oath-bound societies or Irish nationalist organisations to protect and strengthen Irish language, politics and culture were necessary because of their vulnerability, and that such measures would not in any way threaten the viability of the Catholic Church and their position within it. As discussed in the previous chapters, for large numbers of diasporic Irish, although connected to the Church through the sacraments of birth, marriage and death, they had long lived without its immediate presence in Ireland. Therefore, secret oath-bound societies provided additional comfort when they arrived in the West Riding.[10] Most Irish immigrants continued to draw their strength and identity not just from being Catholic, but also from being a member of a particular Irish secret society and from being embraced by the people the history and tradition of that society. The origins of Irish Catholic self-help organisations (or secret societies) were

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[8] *Ibid.*, 15 March 1853.
[9] Bossy, *The English Catholic community, 1550-1850*, p. 249.
[10] Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain*, pp. 7-14.

formed principally as a direct reaction to Orangemen and Protestant oppression in Ireland.[11] It ought not to be a matter of bewilderment, then, that many Irish immigrants should be attracted to secret societies, they were, after all, a minority group living in a Protestant country.

Many English clerics felt that oath-bound societies were competing with the Catholic Church for the affections and support of the diasporic Irish working class. In most places the Catholic clergy in England had little sympathy or understanding for Irish political and social issues. The claim to oath-bound societies outraged some priests, so most attempted to maintain a balance between modesty and offending those who wanted to pay homage to them. The Church, however, had no such inclination of moderation. It embraced a more absolute sense of authority in its attitude towards illegal oath-bound organisations and raged against anyone who became a member. And raged they did. Thus, Irish Catholics who challenged the Church's authority on this issue, or were identified as members of an illegal secret organisation were punished with excommunication.[12]

By the late nineteenth century the cultural and sub-cultural aspects of Irish nationalist life and the Irish nationalist scheme of identity were an important part of the activities of the Home Rule clubs in the West Riding. Although the vitality of these activities varied from time to time, it is quite clear that Irish cultural activities remained an important nucleus of Irish cultural life up to, and beyond, the Great War. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century Home Rule clubs proved to be one of the most vibrant forces for Irish political independence and Irish culture in the West Riding, defining the identity of what had become a multi-generational diaspora. The nationalist grand narrative both sustained and equipped

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[11] T. Gay, *The Orange Order* (London, 1972), p. 8.
[12] Frost, *Secret Societies of the European Revolution, 1776-1876*, pp. 280-91.

members of the various Home Rule clubs with a legitimacy and authority that united many working-class Irish Catholics in the diaspora together.[13]

The same period was also formative with the evolution of Catholic societies and confraternities that functioned largely independent of each other, but controlled by the central councils of the Church. These institutions or societies were an effective means of developing a Catholic identity and forms of self-legitimisation that would come to increase Irish Catholic communal and religious life. They were indispensible to the cultural expansion of the Church and the spirit of Catholic association in late Victorian and early Edwardian West Riding of Yorkshire. The immediate purpose of these societies was moral and spiritual provision, but they achieved much more than this. They owe their existence to the same powerful reaction of the Church against the moral and material deterioration of English Protestant society; these societies worked side by side with the Catholic Church; they mutually supplemented each other; and they became the twin children of the same spirit.[14]

Having passed through the nineteenth century, in which its adherents continued to give the Church an ongoing bi-cultural character, the ecclesiastical hierarchy had aspirations for the values and imperatives of Catholic culture to be recognised and taken more seriously by its adherents. This success is exemplified by the number of Catholic confraternities and societies that existed in the industrial diocese of the West Riding. This outline of the nature of these confraternities, guilds and societies show what an enormous influence they must have had over the working-class Catholic people throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and fully justified the wisdom of the Catholic Hierarchy in calling attention to them. From whatever point we look at them we see how completely religion entered into the lives of their members, not just religious observances, but the practice of religion by charity, fraternal love

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[13] N. Lebow, 'British Historians and Irish History', *Eire-Ireland,* 8 (1973), pp. 37-8; C. Hall, K. McCelland, and J. Rendell, *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867* (Chicago, 2000), p.220.
[14] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939*, pp. 56-78.

and union. Within these confraternities they united prayer, the Holy Mass, and in reverence we can easily picture the pride they took in their Church, their altar, their guilds, and in all things connected with their religion. Through its guilds, the Diocese of Leeds provided amusements and enjoyment for the mass of working-class Catholics, which, too, was permeated by religion.[15] Conversely, diasporic working-class Irish Catholics – at any rate, before World War I – were divided into two camps, those that participated in Catholic confraternities, guilds and societies and those who followed the cultural activities of Home Rule clubs and engaged in the amusements they had to offer.

In sporting terms, Catholics had a special talent for playing sports. The playing of rugby football was especially helpful at boosting working-class Catholics' self-esteem and to teach them to unite, co-operate with each other and employ 'manly discipline, in order to achieve the shared goals of the Catholic Church. Rugby football was especially important to the people of the West Riding, providing cohesion and coherence to thousands of working-class people in an era marked by ongoing social situations and encounters, which invoked both class interests and increased class antagonisms. Indeed, Rugby football during the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries throws some light on the way in which the industrious classes of the West Riding of Yorkshire sought to let a little entertainment and colour enter their drab lives. It provided comfort and consolation to thousands of workers to make their lives more tolerable. One of the most intriguing aspects of the history of rugby football is the light which it sheds upon the social life and the classes which played and watched the game. The development of the game began, as we might naturally expect among the upper and middle classes and was confined to clubs and public schools in the southern counties of England. However, as the century progressed so did the popularity of rugby football. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century it had spread

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[15] Bossy, *The English Catholic community, 1550-1850*, pp. 162-67.

both geographically and socially, not only did the upper and middle classes play the game, but also members of the working-class. It had spread to the schools and ceased to be a socially exclusive pursuit played by those in the upper-circles of Victorian society.[16]

The history of Roman Catholic rugby players and Roman Catholic rugby teams in the industrial diocese of the West Riding of Yorkshire throughout the modern era can be traced back to the late 1870s and early 1880s. Indeed, Catholics living in the West Riding have always been part of rugby football since its inception, albeit, at a much slower and punctuated rate than that observed within the mainstream of evangelical Protestant English society. The most common explanation for this was, the original impetus for the development of such rugby teams was impeded for a time as the Catholic Church was fully occupied with rebuilding its churches.[17] Secondly, given the welter of prejudices ranged against Catholics during the nineteenth century, the only way to guarantee that Catholics in the industrial Diocese of Leeds could participate in sport was for them to set up their own sporting clubs.[18] The third and, perhaps, the most important explanation: is the Catholic Church was anxious to encourage the diffusion of Catholic sports and rugby teams among its adherents based on religious unity with a greater emphasis on inward religiosity.[19] Therefore, the establishment of Catholic sports and rugby teams is a further example which reveals the attempts made by the Church to establish a complex collective social identity, a rare atmosphere that was eminently detached from the mainstream of evangelical Protestant English society.

Catholic rugby teams established in the late nineteenth century were intended to improve the spiritual and social life of its members. They were seen as another means of transforming irreligious Catholics into devout citizens. Rugby had become the physical manifestation of Catholics at play. Rugby like Catholicism was a venerate tradition with a

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[16] Collins, *Rugby's great split*.
[17] Gilley, 'The Roman Catholic Church and the nineteenth-century Irish diaspora', p. 12.
[18] *Catholic Herald*, 26 October 1898.
[19] Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholic in England, 1880-1939*, pp. 58-62.

focus on community and emphasised Catholic values regarding the nature and importance of the interplay between the individual and the community. Rugby taught patience, humility, faith and hope. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century the Church had managed to guard its member's souls by insisting on monthly confession and adhering to the sacraments, it had guarded their minds by providing Catholic schools, and now it guarded their bodies by providing healthy amusements in the form of rugby football; which it eventually internalised in its endeavour to throw a protective shield around its flock and safeguard them from the malign influences of Protestant England. By internalising its sports teams Catholics were spared the religious prejudices they experienced in other aspects of their daily lives. However, it does seem that the intention of these rugby teams, apart from the entirely laudable aim of self-improvement, was, in addition, a desire to maintain control over the spiritual moral and physical development of Catholic youth. Therefore, the establishment of Catholic sports and rugby clubs gave the Church, generally in the form of a priest, a controlling influence over a considerable area of social interaction, especially in an era contemporary with Home Rule for Ireland, which came to play an important part in the rugby drama of the period in the West Riding.

During the late nineteenth century the towns and cities of the West Riding had become a great stronghold of rugby football in England. Rugby football in Yorkshire attracted much participation among the working classes, which gave rise to the establishment of non-parochial Irish nationalist rugby football teams, which acted as the sporting auxiliaries to the various Home Rule clubs scattered across the county's industrial towns. Since the main objective of the Home Rule organisation was to offer financial support and political muscle to the Irish Parliamentary Party, nationalist rugby football teams initially centred on the sport's by products', namely commerce and gate-money, cashing in on the popularity of rugby football. For most Irish nationalist clubs in the West Riding, their incomes were derived from

admission fees to watch rugby matches. The establishment of Irish rugby clubs from different communities also signalled the willingness of a community to participate in English sport and the rest of English society. However, Irish nationalist clubs were to do their utmost to act upon Irish political and cultural beliefs. The work done by the INL Federation in the West Riding was of the most invaluable kind. As a nationalist and cultural institution its influence cannot be overestimated. As businesses, they were extremely effective at accruing funds for the Irish Parliamentary Party, and moreover by the late nineteenth century in respect of local general charities rather than just Irish ones.

During the late nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century the West Yorkshire branches of the National Irish League were energetically involved in generating finances for the Irish Parliamentary Fund, who depended, to a certain extent, upon the Irish League of Great Britain for financial support. They organised social events and collections to further the cause of the home rule movement and to support evicted tenants in Ireland. The Irish of West Riding organised themselves into societies dedicated to getting the British out of Ireland once and for all, which undoubtedly contributed to outbreaks of anti-Irish feeling.[20] However occasional, or idiosyncratic, negative representations might have been, throughout this period, the Irish were evidently sufficient in number and authority to establish Irish Home Rule clubs across the West Riding and to prompt the establishment of rugby football teams and athletic organisations to generate funds for nationalist, trade union and other charitable organisations. They offered their membership an array of social and educational activities from Gaelic sports to Irish history. These activities, with the formation of drama societies, and other organisations, formed the basis of what was a thriving Irish culture up to the 1920s and beyond.[21] The activities of the Home Rule clubs were immensely variable, but the one stand out recreational pursuit that was not variable was rugby football,

[20] G.K. Peatling, 'The Whiteness of Ireland Under and After the Union', *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005), pp. 115-33.
[21] *Catholic Herald*, 18 November 1893.

that is, until their decline in the latter years of the nineteenth century. However, the relative decline in non-parochial Irish rugby teams in the West Riding during the closing years of the nineteenth century should not be allowed to obscure their earliest remarkable success-stories; and just as their earlier success cannot be explained in religious terms, neither can their later period of relative decline under the banner of Northern Union Rugby. Following the great rugby split in 1895 some Irish teams turned to association football, while other continued to play rugby under Northern Union rule.

Most ethno-religious rugby clubs in the Irish Catholic diaspora were not in favour of the rugby split of 1895 because the bigger clubs would always be able to offer greater inducements to players. Consequently, there is no consensus on how many Irish Catholics were actively involved in rugby league outside of the ethno-religious football clubs emerging from the Irish Catholic communities in the West Riding. By the late nineteenth century attempts at creating rugby clubs by the Irish and Catholic communities had all but been abandoned.[22] The formation of the INL Federation's Northern Union Rugby Football League in 1898 and the Catholic Church's Rugby Football League in towns like Leeds and Bradford represented a more general withdrawal to within their own communities for Irish rugby in the West Riding.[23] None of the groundswell of amateur clubs formed from within their communities, during the 1880s and 1890s, was cultivated into organisations of mass following capable of challenging the finest of those in the host community that had now moved over to NU, and transformed themselves into professional clubs. The most important factor in the retardation and termination of the West Ridings ethno-religious Irish Catholic rugby clubs would seem to have been the absence of any considerable social impediments to the Irish Catholic community associating in rugby league football.[24] In other words, rugby league reflected differing values among the host communities of the West Riding, including

[22] *Athletic News,* 13 October 1897.
[23] *Catholic Herald*, 13 October 1898.
[24] Finn 'Racism, Religion and Social Prejudice', pp.70-91.

the relative level of class cohesion, which allowed working-class Irish Catholics in some districts of the county the opportunity to participate in games of rugby league football outside of their ethno-religious clubs as playing members for some of the county's leading professional senior teams without any obvious examples of hostility.

The evidence suggests that some Irish communities in the large industrial centres of Leeds and Bradford attempted to deliberately secularise their sporting activities. This is also true, to a lesser extent, among some Irish Catholic communities in Halifax and Keighley. It would appear that in towns with religiously diverse neighbourhoods, where Irish Catholic communities are much smaller, there is much more assimilation-acculturation and integration in the context of sporting life and rugby league. In this process, among those Irish Catholic communities in Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Wakefield and Halifax rugby league football seems to have been an extremely important sporting endeavour, where their participation in rugby league provided a direct challenge to ethnically defined boundaries and social stereotypes that existed elsewhere. It is here that the contrast with Leeds and Bradford is most telling. In Leeds and Bradford participation in rugby league football was much narrower and more circumscribed.

All the evidence considered and referred to in this study suggests that the popularity and relationship between the Irish Catholic communities of the West Riding and rugby league football was not wholly chance. On the contrary, rugby league served consistently to attract certain Irish Catholic communities in some districts of the county at particular times. More fundamentally, and more to the point in this context, is the evidence that rugby league, on the one hand, Irish Catholic immigrant communities, on the other, were both closely connected in the West Riding during the early twentieth century, especially in the Heavy Woollen district towns of Batley, Dewsbury, Halifax, Huddersfield and Wakefield. However, in Leeds and Bradford the interests of Irish nationalism and Home Rule for Ireland dominated the outlook

throughout the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century. This had its long and lasting effects, especially at a time when rugby league football was becoming highly popularised among the mainstay of Yorkshire society. Home Rule, its popularity and its growth among the communities of these two large industrial centres created greater division than anything experienced in other areas, where nationalism was evident but more moderate. For example, while the ludicrous stage-Irishman, 'Paddy', and the simian, savage Celt featured regularly in the popular press in the mid-nineteenth century, the latter became increasingly prevalent as political tensions heightened during the course of the century and into the twentieth.

Thus, the political influence that British anti-Irish prejudice is said to have exerted in the Home Rule debates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century created a real source of opposition and division in those towns where large concentrations of Irish nationalist lived.[25] Implicitly, therefore, anti-Irish prejudice was the real source of opposition to Home Rule in towns like Leeds and Bradford and would appear to have roots directly in the arguments put forward by supporters of Home Rule at that time. In this context, this put a greater strain on the Irish and host society relationships in Leeds and Bradford. Hence, Home Rule, with all its seeming permanence as a proof of separateness badly affected the relationship between the Irish and rugby league football, which is clearly reflected by the lack of participation in the sport at the senior professional level in both Leeds and Bradford, as well as at local amateur club level.

Again – when contrasted against the Home Rule organisations in the Heavy Woollen district – the augmentation of the INL Federation in Yorkshire was on the rise, especially in Leeds and Bradford, where there was an overall increase in the number of INL clubs being established both in these towns or their immediate neighbourhood, and a proliferation in the

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[25] Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts*, p.4.

organisation's membership.[26] In the same way, most Catholic parish teams participating in rugby football in Leeds and Bradford, which had not converted to association football, continued to engage in recreational games of rugby football in internalised Catholic leagues. Although Catholic rugby league teams existed, their participation was internalised by the Catholic Church and remained hidden from public gaze. Following the establishment of the GAA in 1884, which sought to de-Anglicise Ireland and had begun to cultivate ideas to transform and regenerate the Irish people, Irish nationalist clubs in Leeds and Bradford responded by incorporating Gaelic sports and cultural alternatives, which radically secularised their membership more notably so than anything witnessed in those towns situated in the Heavy Woollen district.[27] Young Irishmen drawn to the Gaelic League competed in hurling and Gaelic football matches, which soon developed into regular fixtures involving teams from the Home Rule clubs of Leeds, Halifax, Bradford and Keighley.[28] For men in the nationalist communities of Bradford and Leeds the notion of manhood, patriotism and resistance were so interconnected as to be almost conflated, and the ideals of nationalist philosophy were drawn together most dramatically by the national pastimes of hurling and Gaelic football.[29] In such communities, and among such men, rugby league was not their preferred sporting pastime, which, again, reflects the lack of participation in the sport in these two towns.

This research has sought to distinguish diasporic Irish Catholics or Catholics of Irish descent participating in professional rugby league football in the West Riding during the opening decades of the twentieth century. While the research methods used in the process are not without problem, it at least seems possible to identify the number of Irish immigrants or the descendents of Irish immigrants that participated in senior professional rugby league

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[26] *Catholic Herald,* 23 December 1907.
[27] *Ibid.,* 31 August 1909.
[28] *Catholic Herald*, 7 November 1912.
[29] Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletics Association and Irish Nationalist Politics 1884-1924* , pp. 10-17.

football during the late nineteenth and opening decades of the twentieth century. Owing to, and despite, the lack of primary and secondary source material the approaches used in this research have enabled us to derive some significant and unexpected findings from unexpected sources. By identifying players of Irish descent provides a much more detailed understanding of their participation in different locales across the county. Life was not all labour and rosaries for the Irish Catholic communities of the West Riding. If a man works well, he must also play. The Irish Catholics of the West Riding played cricket and watched cricket, they played football and they watched football, they played rugby and they watched rugby; but by the early twentieth century rugby league was the leading sport among most diasporic Irish Catholics communities across the industrial landscape of the West Riding, becoming, indeed, the dye in the wool for those playing out of the Heavy Woollen district towns.

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