# The Irish Anzacs Project

## JEFF KILDEA

### INTRODUCTION

The interest, fascination even, that Australians have always
had with the First World War has, over the past 25 years,
intensified.[1] So much so, that the Australian government felt
it necessary to commit $140 million (€88 million) towards
commemorations of the centenary of the war (about 50 per
cent more than the United Kingdom), a commitment which
was confirmed when, despite a cost-cutting budget, the figure
in 2014 was increased to $150 million (€94 million). The six
Australian states and business interests are expected to match
this federal government commitment.[2]

In Ireland, remembrance of the First World War took a different
trajectory from that in Australia, descending into what F.X. Martin
called 'the Great Oblivion'.[3] This was despite the fact that about
200,000 Irishmen had enlisted in the British army during the war, of
whom an estimated 35,000 were killed.[4] Following independence in
1922, nation-building understandably focused on the struggle for
independence, especially the Easter Rising, not the part that Irish
soldiers had played in what many in Ireland regarded as 'England's
war'. In recent times Ireland has rediscovered the First World War and
with official support and encouragement has begun to acknowledge
the Irishmen who fought and died in it.

While the Irish in Ireland may have had difficulty in coming to terms
with the First World War, this was not the case with the Irish in
Australia, who in the early twentieth century made up more than 20

33

per cent of the 4.5 million people living there.[5] Generally speaking, the Australian Irish participated in the war in proportion to their numbers in the population and, with their fellow Australians, they have commemorated it without reservation, even if in some cases Catholics and Protestants did so separately for reasons of religious sensitivity when prayers were included in the ceremonies.[6]

THE IRISH ANZACS PROJECT

To understand why the Irish in Australia had little difficulty supporting the war effort we need to know more about the Australian Irish who participated in the war: how many of them did so; where in Ireland were they from; what were their religious affiliations; their ages; their occupations? What ranks did they attain? How many died as a consequence of their war service? What decorations did they receive? Did events in Ireland, such as the Easter Rising, have an impact on their enlistment? These are questions for which historians, such as Lloyd Robson, John Connor and myself, have offered some answers over the years, but those answers were tentative in that they were based on limited evidence, namely, small samples of the total numbers involved.[7]

The Irish Anzacs Project, which began in 2012 as a significant research undertaking of the Global Irish Studies Centre at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), aims to identify all those of Irish birth, or as many as possible, who enlisted in the Australian military forces during the First World War and to compile a publicly accessible database containing information on each of them. The outcome will also provide families with information on their Irish-born family members who fought for Australia during the war. The project was made possible by a grant from the Irish government's Emigrant Support Program administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The project involves the following steps:

1 identifying the Irish Anzacs;
2 extracting the relevant data from their service records;
3 publishing the data on a publicly accessible website; and
4 analysing the data and drawing conclusions.

IDENTIFYING THE IRISH ANZACS

In the study, the term 'Irish Anzacs', refers to those members of the Australian military forces who were born in Ireland. These include those who enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), the Australian Naval & Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF) and the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS).[8]

The word 'Anzac' emerged in early 1915 as an acronym for 'Australian and New Zealand Army Corps', comprising men of the 1st Australian Division and the New Zealand & Australian Division, who had been sent to Egypt at the end of 1914 to complete their training before going on to the Western Front. As events turned out, they were sent instead to Gallipoli in Turkey as part of the Dardanelles campaign. Because it was the first major military campaign in which Australians had fought together as Australians, Gallipoli has special significance in Australia. Many Australians regard Gallipoli as the crucible of their nation, when the inhabitants of the six former British colonies that had federated in 1901 were forged into citizens of Australia.[9] Over time the acronym 'ANZAC' became the word 'Anzac', a term used to refer generally to Australian and New Zealand soldiers who fought in the war.

The Irish Anzac Project is confined to Irish-born members of the Australian forces, rather than those of Irish descent, for the pragmatic reason that the searchable 'Item Title' of the service records held by the National Archives of Australia (NAA) includes the person's place of birth. The Irish-born are therefore capable of ready identification. For a soldier born in Australia, the Item Title does not indicate where that soldier's parents or grandparents were born. While a Gaelic surname might indicate Irish ancestry, the corollary is not true – a non-Gaelic surname does not exclude Irish ancestry. For example, in 1890 Smith was the fifth most common surname in Ireland.[10] Consequently, the service records do not enable us to identify any but a small number of AIF members of Irish descent whose place of birth is Australia.

The NAA holds 376,057 AIF service records in a series designated 'B2455: First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914–1920'. Despite such a large number of records, the task of finding items relating to the AIF's Irish-born members is relatively

straightforward as the B2455 service records can be viewed on the NAA's website and the Item Title, which in most cases includes the soldier's place of birth (POB), is searchable online. Of the 371,403 records in series B2455 where the enlistee's POB is ascertainable, 5,774 Irish-born have so far been identified, or 1.55 per cent. How does that compare with the proportion of Irish-born in the Australian population?

In 1911, the year of the last census before the First World War, Australia's population was just under 4.5 million of whom about 140,000 were born in Ireland, i.e. Irish-born Australians were 3.13 per cent of the general population.[11] At first sight, this suggests that the Irish-born, at 1.55 per cent of AIF enlistments, did not support the war in proportion to their numbers in the population. However, a closer examination of the 1911 census reveals a startling fact about the Irish-born, namely that they were an ageing population, with 74 per cent being 45 years and over, compared to 19 per cent for the general population.

This trend is due largely to the fact that in the second half of the nineteenth century Irish immigration to Australia slowed both in absolute terms and as a relative contributor to population growth. While the Irish made up about a quarter of immigrants arriving in Australia throughout the nineteenth century, the overall immigrant proportion of the population was declining as the number of native-born Australians increased.[12] In addition, with the annual intake from Ireland having reached a peak in 1883 with 6,009 arrivals, Irish emigration to Australia began to decline so that in only one year after 1892 did it exceed 1,000.[13] As a result the Irish-born proportion of the population decreased from 15.4 per cent in 1861 to only 3.13 per cent in 1911. But if one counts only males of military age (that is, between 18 and 44 years), the proportion of eligible Irish-born males to all eligible Australian males is not 3.13 per cent but 1.8 per cent. Furthermore, if you have regard to the fact that in 1911 it was those aged 15–41 who would be of enlistment age in 1914, the proportion for that cohort is 1.41 per cent. Consequently, the enlistment rate of 1.55 per cent for the Irish-born exceeded the proportion of eligible Irish-born in the population.

While 371,400-odd records in series B2455 show the soldier's POB, 4,658 do not, with the Item Title indicating 'POB N/A'. Applying the 1.55 per cent figure to those records, there are likely to be another 72 Irish-born in that group. However, preliminary searches of those records indicate that it is unlikely that many will yield the enlistee's place of birth. However, in some cases, extraneous information may provide a clue. An example is James Whiteside McCay, who in July 1916 commanded the 5th Australian Division at the Battle of Fromelles. He was born at Ballynure, County Antrim, but for some unknown reason his service record does not include his attestation form, the form on which the place of birth is recorded, and accordingly the cataloguer has assigned him a POB of 'N/A'. Because McCay is an historically significant person his biographical details are readily ascertained. But the birthplaces of most of those in the POB N/A category are likely to remain unknown. A detailed survey has not yet been conducted. However, six soldiers have so far been identified using extraneous information, including information supplied by soldiers' relatives.

Problem areas such as these indicate that the project's aim of identifying all the Irish-born in the AIF will not be easy to meet. However, the research has uncovered an even bigger obstacle to its achievement. According to the official statistics of the war published by the War Office in London in 1923, a total of 416,809 Australians were 'mobilised, enlisted or trained' during the war.[14] This figure, which the Australian Department of Defence first released in 1919, has been quoted ever since in books, articles and official publications on Australia's participation in the war.[15] However, there are only 376,000-odd items in series B2455. At first this suggests that almost 41,000 service records have not been included in that series, of which about 635 would relate to enlistees born in Ireland, applying the figure of 1.55 per cent. Two explanations might assist to explain the discrepancy.

Firstly, the figure of 416,809 relates to enlistments whereas series B2455 relates to individuals, some of whom enlisted on multiple occasions.[16] An examination of the service records in series B2455 relating to the Irish-born reveals that those 5,760 individuals enlisted a total of at least 6,029 times. There may be more as the count is not

yet complete, but using that figure it can be seen that there are 4.67 per cent more enlistments than there are enlistees. Applying that percentage to the 376,000 records in series B2455 would account for 17,560 of the 41,000 'missing' enlistments.

Secondly, in addition to series B2455 the NAA has another collection which also comprises service records. It is series MT1486/1 which, although entitled 'Applications to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force', includes many records where the soldier had not only applied to enlist but had in fact enlisted in the AIF.[17] Consequently, many of those whose service records have been filed in series MT1486/1 rather than series B2455 were in fact members of the AIF.[18] As at 30 September 2015 series MT1486/1 comprised 84,462 items. But it continues to grow at just under 1,000 a month, as more records are catalogued.[19] What the final number will be is also difficult to know. In 1938 the Australian Official War Historian Charles Bean noted that Base Records of the Defence Department held 510,000 personal files.[20] That suggests that series MT1486/1 could eventually comprise about 134,000 files, given that there are 376,000-odd items in series B2455. Many of those will be mere applications to enlist, but many will also be AIF enlistments, 1.55 per cent of which may relate to Irish-born.[21]

This problem, which is an obstacle to the Irish Anzacs Project's aim of identifying all Irish-born who enlisted in the AIF, is in fact a symptom of a far greater problem concerning the statistics of Australia's participation in the war which David Noonan recently identified in his PhD thesis *Those we forget: recounting Australian casualties of the First World War*, which was published as a monograph in 2014.[22] Noonan's research shows that many of the statistics concerning Australia's participation in the war, which for decades have been accepted and quoted extensively in official publications and histories of the war, may be unreliable.

While the figure of 416,809 for enlistments has generally been accepted since 1919 it has not been clear whether that number relates to the AIF only or for all military forces or for the combined military and naval forces.[23] Nevertheless, the total of 460,000-odd records in series B2455 and series MT1486/1 well-exceeds the generally accepted figure. Resolving the problem is beyond the scope of this paper but

ultimately it is relevant to the project's aim of identifying all Irish-born enlistments and making comparisons with the AIF as a whole. But more importantly, it is an issue that needs further investigation in order to answer what is a fundamental question, namely, how many did enlist in the AIF? Noonan argues that based on his sampling of the MT1486/1 series a further 5,650 enlistees can be added to the number in the B2455 series to give a total of about 386,000 who actually enlisted in the AIF.[24] However, Noonan did his sampling when the MT series comprised only 36,340 records. Given the current size of series MT1486/1, the additional figure would now be 13,132 enlistees giving a total of about 393,500 individuals who enlisted.[25]

To summarise the position on the numbers: applying the 1.55 per cent figure to the generally accepted figure of 416,809 enlistments we arrive at a figure of 6,480 Irish-born enlistments in the AIF. Because of multiple enlistments, the number of individuals who enlisted is less. So far, 5,760 individuals have been identified in series B2455 (of whom 30 are females, i.e. nurses), 43 in series MT1486/1 and 20 in the Second World War series, giving a total of 5,823, but more work needs to be done to identify all Irish-born enlistees. In series B2455 there are probably another 70 or so Irish-born among the POB N/A group. In series MT1486/1 there are probably another 80-odd.[26] All up, it is reasonably safe to conclude therefore that the total figure for the number of Irish-born who enlisted in the AIF is about 6,000.

EXTRACTING THE DATA

After identifying the Irish-born, the next step is to extract the data from their service records. Those records typically, but not always, include the soldier's attestation form from which is extracted basic information: name, town and county of birth, age, occupation, marital status, next of kin location, previous military service, date and place of enlistment and religion. In addition to that basic information, some service records contain other information such as recommendations for decorations, correspondence from family members, court martial records, and so on. Consequently, service records with interesting additional information are flagged with a view to returning later to extract further details from them, as the project also aims to tell the stories of some of the more interesting individuals.

The next step is to cross-check the data with that in other records such as that kept by the Australian War Memorial (AWM), including the Roll of Honour, the Embarkation Roll, the Nominal Roll, the list of Awards and Honours and the files kept by the Red Cross relating to the wounded and missing and to prisoners of war, as well as information held by other agencies, ultimately producing for each soldier or nurse a comprehensive record of his or her war service.

ROLL OF HONOUR

The Roll of Honour records and commemorates members of the Australian armed forces who died during or as a result of their service in wars and other conflicts in which Australia has been involved. As regards the First World War, the Roll of Honour lists those who died 4 August 1914–31 March 1921 during or as a result of service while a member of an Australian military force or unit which was or could have been sent overseas.[27] According to the Australian War Memorial 61,524 persons died as a result of their service during that period.[28] Of these 61,337 died serving with the military forces and 187 with the navy.[29] So far the project has identified 894 Irish-born. This figure represents 14.67 per cent of the 6,098 enlistments by the 5,823 Irish-born currently in the database, a close match. It may be that the number of Irish-born who died due to war service will not increase much above the present figure, perhaps rounded to about 900.[30]

Most of the Irish-born who died due to their war service were killed in action (65.77 per cent) or died of wounds received in action (19.80 per cent). Illness and accident accounted for 12.20 per cent, while four committed suicide and three died while prisoners of war. Another 13 are listed in the Roll of Honour as having died after discharge of wounds or illness suffered due to their war service. This last group comprises those who died on or before the Roll of Honour's cut-off date of 31 March 1921. However, many returned soldiers continued to die after that date from war-related causes, but their names are not included in the Roll of Honour. According to David Noonan an additional 8,000 war-related deaths can be added to the official Australian death toll up until the outbreak of the Second World War.[31] Of these, 124 would have been Irish-born, using the 1.55 per cent

figure discussed above, bringing the total death toll among the Irish-born to more than 1,000.

EMBARKATION ROLL

The Embarkation Roll lists those who embarked for overseas service. The official figure for all AIF embarkations published in 1923 was 331,781.[32] However, following the 1933 census, that figure was adjusted downwards to 324,000 after the Commonwealth Statistician determined that 7,500 had been double-counted due to their having embarked more than once (e.g. after having been returned to Australia to recover from wounds received or illness suffered overseas).[33] Applying the 1933 figure to the adjusted Noonan figure of 393,500 enlistees, the proportion of enlistees who embarked is 82.34 per cent. Of the 5,823 enlistees in the Irish Anzacs database 4,740 embarked for overseas (81.40 per cent). However, as with the mortality rate the proportion of Irish-born who embarked will decline slightly when more names are added from the home service enlistees in series MT1486/1.[34] Of the 4,740 individuals in the database who embarked for overseas, 886 were killed or died due to their war service (18.70 per cent).[35]

NOMINAL ROLL

The Nominal Roll was compiled, before October 1919 probably at AIF Administrative Headquarters, London, as a record of members of the AIF who had served overseas during the war and to assist with the administrative arrangements necessary to repatriate members of the AIF to Australia.[36] It shows details such as rank, unit and decorations as at the end of the war, which can be informative as to the soldier's progress, as they often changed during the war. The roll also indicates the fate of the individual, such as KIA (Killed in Action), DOW (Died of Wounds), RTA (Returned to Australia), and the date of death or embarkation for return. As yet the Irish Anzacs database does not include entries from the Nominal Roll, but it is intended to add that data in the near future. In the meantime, the service records have been examined to determine the fate of each person in the database in terms of his or her war service.

That examination indicates that 81.32 per cent of enlistees were discharged, while 18.68 per cent were killed or died before discharge. Of those who were discharged 13 subsequently died on or before 31 March 1921, the cut-off date for inclusion in the Roll of Honour.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

A comprehensive list of awards and honours has not yet been compiled as it is difficult to correlate the names in the database with those in the AWM's records. However, over time such a list will be able to be put together. In the meantime the database shows that 223 individuals received awards and honours including one who received the Victoria Cross (Sergeant Martin O'Meara of County Tipperary) and one who was recommended for the Victoria Cross but received the Distinguished Conduct Medal instead (Private Charles Boyle of County Donegal).

OTHER RELATED INFORMATION

In time it is hoped to link the Irish Anzacs database with other sources of information such as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the Irish censuses and Australian immigration records. Unfortunately, Australian census information is not available for linking to the database as the Australian government has always destroyed the primary census forms, keeping only the unattributed statistical information.

PUBLISHING THE DATA

The database was launched on 17 October 2014 by the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Charlie Flanagan TD in Skype link-up with the Irish Studies Centre at UNSW and is now available to the public via the internet at http://repository.arts.unsw.edu.au. Members of the public are able to examine the details of a particular individual, with hyperlinks to the source documents, such as the soldier's service record, Roll of Honour, Embarkation Roll, etc. In addition, researchers will be able to extract statistical information by searching on multiple fields, such as county of birth, religious affiliation, age, occupation and so on.

ANALYSING THE DATA AND DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

By extracting statistical information from the Irish Anzacs database we are able to answer some of the questions set out at the start of this article which historians have endeavoured to answer using sample data only.

ENLISTMENTS BY COUNTY AND PROVINCE

For instance, we can now state conclusively the birth counties of all but a handful of the Irish Anzacs. Table 1 lists the birth counties organised by the four provinces.

| County | Num | Percent | County | Num | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ulster | | | Leinster | | |
| Antrim | 852 | 14.63% | Carlow | 51 | 0.88% |
| Armagh | 154 | 2.64% | Dublin | 772 | 13.26% |
| Cavan | 85 | 1.46% | Kildare | 61 | 1.05% |
| Derry/Londonderry | 241 | 4.14% | Kilkenny | 119 | 2.04% |
| Donegal | 134 | 2.30% | Laois | 43 | 0.74% |
| Down | 255 | 4.38% | Longford | 26 | 0.45% |
| Fermanagh | 68 | 1.17% | Louth | 67 | 1.15% |
| Monaghan | 63 | 1.08% | Meath | 79 | 1.36% |
| Tyrone | 171 | 2.94% | Offaly | 48 | 0.82% |
| | | | Westmeath | 75 | 1.29% |
| | | | Wexford | 110 | 1.89% |
| | | | Wicklow | 78 | 1.34% |
| Total for Ulster | 2023 | 34.74% | Total for Leinster | 1529 | 26.26% |
| Munster | | | Connacht | | |
| Clare | 239 | 4.10% | Galway | 165 | 2.83% |
| Cork | 562 | 9.65% | Leitrim | 36 | 0.62% |
| Kerry | 254 | 4.36% | Mayo | 76 | 1.31% |
| Limerick | 240 | 4.12% | Roscommon | 58 | 1.00% |
| Tipperary | 351 | 6.03% | Sligo | 68 | 1.17% |
| Waterford | 142 | 2.44% | | | |
| Total for Munster | 1788 | 30.71% | Total for Connacht | 403 | 6.92% |
| | | | Unknown | 80 | 1.37% |

Table 1: Birth counties and provinces

It is not surprising that Antrim, Dublin and Cork were the counties with the most enlistees given that Ireland's three major cities are in those counties. Also, some of the enlistees from Belfast nominated County Down as their birth county adding to that county's total.[37] Tipperary, Kerry, Limerick and Clare were counties from which large numbers emigrated to Australia during the nineteenth century and that may account for the fact that more enlistees came from Munster than Leinster.[38] An interesting statistic emerges if one compares the number of enlistees from the 26 counties which became the Irish Free State with the six counties which became Northern Ireland. Those from the 26 counties made up 68.73 per cent of the Irish-born who enlisted in the AIF while those from the six counties made up 29.9 per cent.[39]

ENLISTMENTS BY RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Another point of interest is the religious affiliation of the Irish Anzacs. Table 2 shows that 58.42 per cent were Catholic and 40.31 per cent were Protestant.

| Religion | Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Catholic | 3402 | 58.42 |
| Anglican | 1364 | 23.42 |
| Presbyterian | 787 | 13.52 |
| Methodist | 126 | 2.16 |
| Other Protestant | 70 | 1.20 |
| Non-Christian | 6 | 0.10 |
| Non-Religious | 19 | 0.33 |
| Unknown | 49 | 0.85 |
| Total | 5823 | 100.00 |

Table 2: Religious affiliation

At the 1911 census 71.29 per cent of Irish-born described themselves as Catholic, while 28.21 per cent described themselves as belonging to one of a number of Protestant denominations.[40] At first sight this suggests that Irish-born Catholics did not enlist in proportion to their numbers in the Irish-born population. But the difference may be explained, at least in part, by the pattern of immigration in the years leading up to the war.

Up to the 1880s, Irish emigrants to Australia were mostly from the south and west, particularly the province of Munster, and predominantly Catholic. Thereafter the emigration map changed, with Leinster and Ulster, provinces that were more Protestant than Munster, accounting for an increasing proportion of immigrants, with Ulster taking the lead in the early 1900s. Consequently, with ageing of the Irish immigrant population, the relative proportion of Catholics of enlistment age, among the Irish-born, would have been lower than the census figure indicates. Furthermore, it may well be the case that Irish Protestants from the north-east showed greater enthusiasm for the war than Irish Catholics from the south and west, thus changing the relative proportions without necessarily indicating a reluctance on the part of Irish Catholics to enlist proportionate to their numbers in the general population. Unfortunately, the census report on religious affiliation by birthplace does not dissect adult respondents into age bands, so it is not possible to extract from the adult population the number who were of enlistment age.[41]

IRISH-BORN ENLISTEES BY STATE OF ENLISTMENT

Table 3 compares the number of Irish-born in each of the states and federal territories with the number of Irish-born who enlisted there.[42] What the table shows is that Victoria is well below its proportion in terms of its contribution of Irish Anzacs (-11.28 per cent), while Western Australia is well above (+7.61 per cent).

| Place of enlistment | Irish-born | Proportion | Enlistees | Proportion | Difference |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NSW | 46,656 | 33.46% | 2,041 | 35.12% | +1.66% |
| Victoria | 41,477 | 29.75% | 1,073 | 18.46% | -11.28% |
| Queensland | 31,599 | 22.66% | 1,448 | 24.91% | +2.25% |
| South Australia | 7,997 | 5.74% | 333 | 5.73% | -0.01% |
| Western Australia | 9,451 | 6.78% | 836 | 14.38% | +7.61% |
| Tasmania | 2,155 | 1.55% | 70 | 1.20% | -0.34% |
| Territories | 99 | 0.07% | 11 | 0.19% | 0.12% |
| All places | 139,434 | 100.00% | 5,812 | 100.00% | |

Table 3: Irish-born and enlistees by state of enlistment

So what was it about the Irish-born in Victoria and Western Australia and their attitudes to the war? In the case of Victoria, one might immediately think that it was the influence of Archbishop Daniel Mannix, a well-known leading opponent of conscription and a supporter of Sinn Féin. But Mannix only became widely associated with the issue of the war in a public way after the first conscription referendum in October 1916. Yet, from the start of the war the contribution of Victoria's Irish-born population to the AIF was well below par, admittedly dropping rapidly in 1917 and 1918 when Mannix had become prominent on the issue of the war. Something else must have been in play, as well as any influence Mannix might have had, in 1917 and 1918.

Again the answer lies in the demographic make-up of the Irish-born and a different position emerges if one compares the number of Irish-born in the states and territories of military age in 1914 with the number of Irish-born who enlisted there.

| Place of enlistment | Irish-born | Proportion | Enlistees | Proportion | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NSW | 6,314 | 34.48% | 2,041 | 35.12% | +0.64% |
| Victoria | 3,294 | 17.99% | 1,073 | 18.46% | +0.47% |
| Queensland | 5,237 | 28.60% | 1,448 | 24.91% | -3.68% |
| South Australia | 713 | 3.89% | 333 | 5.73% | +1.84% |
| Western Australia | 2,510 | 13.71% | 836 | 14.38% | +0.68% |
| Tasmania | 2,155 | 1.23% | 70 | 1.20% | -0.02% |
| Territories | 19 | 0.10% | 11 | 0.19% | +0.09% |
| All places | 18,312 | 100.00% | 5,812 | 100.00% | |

Table 4: Irish-born of military age and enlistees by state of enlistment

It turns out that Victoria had the oldest of the Irish-born communities with 81.36 per cent of males being above enlistment age, while the frontier state of Western Australia had the youngest with only 54.63 per cent. It further emerges that it was Queensland where the Irish-born of enlistment age fell short of their proportion. One explanation might be the influence of Queensland Premier T.J. Ryan, of Irish parents, who was an outspoken opponent of conscription.

## EVENTS IN IRELAND

Another way in which the Irish Anzacs database can assist historians is by comparing enlistment rates with the dates of events in Ireland. The most important event in Ireland during the war and one which received widespread publicity in Australia was the Easter Rising of 1916. After initially deploring the rising, the Irish in Australia soon became very critical of Britain's response once the executions began.[43]

### IRISH ANZACS AND AIF ENLISTMENT DATES
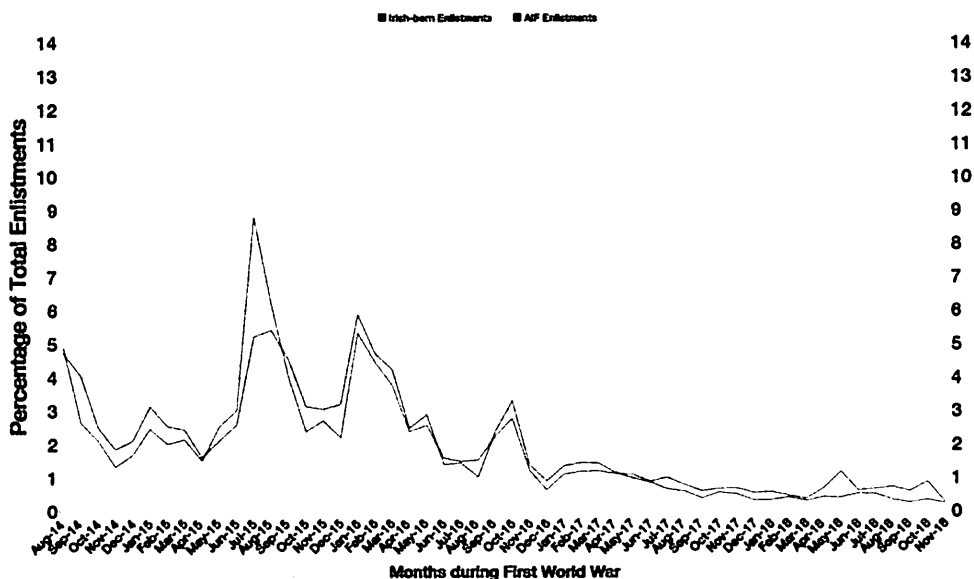


Nevertheless, the Irish-Australian anger did not translate into a decline in support for the war among the Irish-born as demonstrated by the following graph, which compares the Irish Anzacs enlistment rate with that of the AIF generally.

As can be seen, throughout the war the rate of enlistment of the Irish-born population is similar to that of the AIF, with the exception of July/August 1915, which is due to a technical statistical factor outside the scope of this paper. Furthermore, the rate of enlistment of the Irish-

born after the Easter Rising does not differ significantly from that of the AIF generally.

CONCLUSION

The Irish Anzacs Project is the first comprehensive examination of the contribution of the Irish in Australia to the nation's war effort during the First World War. It provides family historians with a wealth of information about the war service of their family members, while at the same time enabling local historians and historians of Irish Australia to extract statistics relevant to their research interests.

NOTES

1   The reasons for this recent increase in interest in the war are beyond the scope of this paper. Mark McKenna has examined some of them in 'Anzac Day: How did it become Australia's national day?' in Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds (eds), *What's Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History*, New South, Sydney, 2010, pp 110–34.
2   Paul Daley, 'Australia spares no expense as the Anzac legend nears its century', *The Guardian*, 14 Oct. 2013 (www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/14/australia-anzac-legend-centenary-war (accessed 6 May 2014)); Jamie Smyth, 'Australia's first world war commemorations raise questions', *Financial Times*, 30 Jul. 2014 (www.ft.com/cms/s/0/971309d8-171c-11e4-8617-00144feabdc0.html (accessed 2 Aug. 2014)).
3   F.X. Martin, '1916 – Myth, Fact and Mystery', *Studia Hibernica*, No. 7, pp 7–124 at p. 68.
4   Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000 at pp 33–5.
5   In this context the Irish in Australia includes both those born in Ireland and those born in Australia of Irish descent. As explained below, this article is mostly concerned with the subset of this group, being those born in Ireland.
6   Jeff Kildea, 'Who Fears to Speak of '14–'18: Remembrance of World War I in Ireland and Australia' in Laurence M. Geary and Andrew J. McCarthy, *Ireland, Australia and New Zealand: History, Politics and Culture*, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2008; John Luttrell, 'Cardinal Gilroy's Anzac Day Problem', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 85, Jun. 1999, pp 1–19.
7   L.L. Robson, 'The Origin and Character of the First AIF, 1914–18: Some Statistical Evidence', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 61, 1973, pp 737–48 at p. 748. Robson was concerned with Catholics rather than Irish-born from the

geographical entity 'Great Britain', within which, presumably, he includes Ireland. John Connor, 'Irish Soldiers in the 1st Australian Imperial Force' in Rebecca Pelan (ed.), *Papers Delivered at the Seventh Irish-Australian Conference July 1993*, Crossing Press, Sydney, 1994. See also John Connor, 'Some Examples of Irish Enlistment in the Australian Imperial Force, 1914', *Irish Sword*, Vol. 21, No. 83, pp 85–94. Jeff Kildea, *Anzacs and Ireland*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2007, pp 81–8.

8    For simplicity the term AIF will be used to cover all three groupings.

9    This view is not without its critics. See, for example, Lake and Reynolds (eds), *What's Wrong with Anzac: The Militarisation of Australian History*.

10   Sean J. Murphy, 'A Survey of Irish Surnames 1992–97', *Studies in Irish Genealogy and Heraldry*, Windgates, Wicklow, 2009, pp 14–24, at p. 18.

11   *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia* for 1911, Vol. 2, p. 116 shows a total population of 4,455,005 of whom 139,434 were born in Ireland.

12   Oliver MacDonagh, 'The Irish in Australia: A General View' in Oliver MacDonagh and W.F. Mandle, *Ireland and Irish-Australia: Studies in Cultural and Political History*, Croom Helm, London, 1986.

13   D.A.E. Harkness, 'Irish Emigration' in Walter F. Willcox (ed.), *International Migrations*, Vol. II, National Bureau of Economic Research, New York, 1931.

14   *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War 1914–1920*, HMSO, London, 1922, p. 759.

15   In March 1919 the Defence Department issued a statement setting out the number of enlistments. See, for example, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 Mar. 1919, p. 6 and *The Argus*, 7 Mar. 1919, p. 6. N.B. the SMH report indicated the figure was for the Australian Imperial Force and not the combined military and naval enlistments. Furthermore, in September 1919 Assistant Minister for Defence, George Wise, gave the figure in parliament in answer to a question from Dr William Maloney (*Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* 17 Sep. 1919, p. 12,392).

16   The Australian Official Medical History notes that 'enlistments do not represent individuals, as multiple enlistments were common among certain classes of men who were unfit or for other reasons resorted to impersonation or misstatements at enrolments' (A.G. Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914–1918*, Vol. III – Special Problems and Services, AWM, Canberra, 1943, p. 882).

17   According to the Australian Official Medical History, 'The "AIF" officially includes all men attested after medical examination' (A.G. Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services*, p. 892). The series description for MT1486/1 states: 'This series consists of records for those individuals who applied to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force, and were either rejected, discharged while still in training, or went on to serve within Australia only', indicating that items in the series relate not only to applicants but also to those who enlisted in the AIF as defined by Colonel Butler.

18   It is not clear on what basis individual service records were allocated to series B2455 rather than series MT1486/1 and vice versa. For example, William

Joseph Mitchell of Galway, whose service record is in series B2455, was found unfit and never attested (Item barcode 7984074). Wilfred Seymour of Dublin, whose service record is in series B2455, was attested on 21 August 1914 and discharged the same day (Item barcode 8076960). In addition, the service records of many soldiers who enlisted for service within Australia only are in series MT1486/1. But series B2455 also includes service records of soldiers who enlisted for home service only (e.g., Thomas McCarthy of Cork (Item barcode 1939443) and Michael Power of Waterford (Item barcode 8022010)).

19   In December 2013 series MT1486/1 comprised 64,487 items. As at 6 May 2014 it comprised 68,886 items. In October 2014 it was 74,315.

20   C.E.W. Bean, 'The writing of the Australian official history of the Great War – source, methods and some conclusions', *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, vol. XXIV, part 2, 1938, pp 85–112 at p. 99.

21   A search in Dec. 2013 of the Item Title for series MT1486/1, which then comprised 64,487 items yielded 633 Irish-born, less than the 1,000 that would be expected using the 1.55 per cent proportion. However, a large number of items in the series (in excess of 20,000) do not include POB information in the Item Title. This makes the task of identifying the Irish-born in the series very difficult.

22   Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2014.

23   The *Statistics of the Military Effort* states that Australia 'mobilised, enlisted or trained 412,953 military and 3,856 naval men, making a total of 416,809' (p. 759). However, the *Australian Official History*, Vol. 3, chapter XVII, in Table No. 11 on p. 882 shows that 412,953 enlisted in the AIF, 3,651 enlisted in the infantry component of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF) and 2,861 in the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS), which makes a total of 419,465. It also states that in 1918 the strength of the Royal Australian Navy was 5,050 seagoing personnel, of whom 4,225 were in the RAN and 825 on loan from the Royal Navy, plus 3,093 in the RAN Brigade. When the Defence Department published the figure of 416,809 in March 1919 it was described as relating to the AIF (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 4 Mar. 1919, p. 6; *The Argus* 7 Mar. 1919, p. 6) and was adopted by the *Australian Official History*, Vol. XI, pp 871–2 in a table that shows monthly enlistments by state.

24   David Noonan, *Those we forget: recounting Australian casualties of the First World War*, Melbourne University Press Academic, Melbourne, 2014, p. 57) concluded from his sampling of series MT1486/1, which then comprised 36,340 files, 5649 (15.55 per cent) were actual enlistments and 30,690 were non-enlistments. Consequently, he determined that the figure for enlistments was 386,000 which he derived by deducting from the 416,809 enlistments the 30,690 non-enlistments in the MT series. He then deducted a further 7,000 as being 'non-military personnel' in series B2455 to reach a final figure of 379,000. How that 7,000 is made up is not clear but it includes nurses and navy personnel.

25   Noonan's methodology assumes that the official figure of 412,953 military enlistments is made up of the 376,012 enlistments in series B2455 and 36,340

in MT1486/1, which totals 412,352, 'remarkably close and indicating only a small loss of files' (*Those we forget*, p. 51). But the number of items in those two series is now 376,057 and 84,462, which totals 460,519, significantly different from the official military enlistment figure, indicating that there is not the direct relationship that Noonan suggests. Nevertheless, his sampling technique enables us to estimate the number of enlistees in series MT1486/1 to be added to the number in series B2455 to give an estimate of the total number of enlistees.

26  The task of searching series MT1486/1 is daunting as only a small proportion of the service records are available online. As at 30 Sep. 2015, the number was 6,364 out of a total of 84,462 records (i.e. 7.5 per cent). In addition, the Item Title in a large number of cases does not disclose the POB.

27  www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll_of_honour/introduction/ (accessed 30 Sep. 2015).

28  www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/war_casualties/ (accessed 30 Sep. 2015).

29  The naval figure was determined by searching the Roll of Honour database using the terms 'HMAS', 'HMS', 'bridging' (for the Royal Australian Navy Bridging Train), 'expeditionary' (for the Australian Naval and Military Expedition Force or ANMEF) and 'naval' (to exclude naval members of the ANMEF). For the ANMEF 63 deaths are recorded of which 5 were members of the Royal Australian Navy.

30  It is likely that there are another 70 Irish-born enlistees among the POB N/A group which are yet to be identified and added from series B2455, and 80 Irish-born enlistees yet to be identified and added from series MT1486/1. That would translate into 75 enlistments and 11 fatalities from the former group, and 80 enlistments and no fatalities from the latter, based on existing patterns. That would give a total death toll of 905 from 6,249 enlistments or 14.48 per cent.

31  Noonan, *Those We Forget*, p. 182.

32  *Statistics of the Military Effort*, p. 759.

33  Noonan, *Those We Forget*, p. 57.

34  Embarkations total 4,896 of which 156 are subsequent embarkations. Of the 70 Irish-born enlistees among the POB N/A group in series B2455 about 57 would have embarked, while none of the 80 enlistees yet to be added from series MT1486/1 would have done so. That would give a total of about 4,800 embarkees from 5,973 enlistees or 80.36 per cent.

35  Eight died in Australia due to illness or accident before embarking bringing the total to 894 fatalities.

36  www.awm.gov.au/research/people/nominal_rolls/first_world_war/introduction (accessed 30 Sep. 2015). Cf. Noonan, *Those We Forget*, p. 58, who suggests it might have been prepared in consequence of the 1933 census.

37  Enlistees from Belfast either stated their birth county as County Antrim or County Down or did not indicate a county. Where no county was indicated the enlistee's birth county has been entered as Antrim. In individual cases that arbitrary designation may be incorrect.

38    MacDonagh, '*The Irish in Australia*', p. 160.
39    The birthplace of 1.37 per cent of enlistees is unknown making up the
      100 per cent.
40    The remainder were non-Christian or without religious affiliation.
41    More work needs to be done to gain a true understanding of the discrepancy.
      Some of the complexities in this regard are discussed by Don Akenson in
      *Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants 1815–1922*,
      McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal, 1988, pp 59–84.
42    Seven Irish-born enlisted overseas and the places of enlistment of four others
      are unknown.
43    Jeff Kildea, *Tearing the Fabric: Sectarianism in Australia 1910–1925*,
      Citadel Books, 2002, pp 134–7.