This is a peer-reviewed, accepted author manuscript of the following article: Whelehan, N. (Accepted/In press). Saving Ireland in Juteopolis: Gender, Class and Diaspora in the Irish Ladies' Land League in Scotland. *History Workshop Journal*, *90*.

Saving Ireland in Juteopolis: Gender, Class and Diaspora in the Irish Ladies' Land League.

Abstract

First established in New York in 1880, the Irish Ladies' Land League soon held branches across Ireland, the USA, Britain, Canada and Australasia and it represented an unprecedented advance in Irish women's political activism. In Dundee, Scotland the organisation found a particularly receptive environment due to the distinctive gender balance of the Irish community there, with working class women representing a large majority. The circulation of mobile agitators and newspapers connected local branches in Dundee with the wider world of the Irish land reform movement, yet this article also seeks to uncover a more textured picture of the people who collected funds, attended rallies, and who are too often considered in the plural, as anonymous supporters grouped together under ethnic or political banners. The picture that emerges challenges existing views of the Ladies' Land League as a predominately middle-class affair. In Dundee the members were overwhelmingly working class and their harsh experiences in the city's jute industry shaped their activism. Local Catholic networks and ideas of religious humanitarianism contributed significantly to the branches, yet clergymen did not direct their activities, rather they responded to women's mobilisation. This article analyses how a transnational movement translated into a local setting and how emigrants' activism was shaped by factors of class, gender and religion.

In the summer of 1881 over 2000 people squeezed into Dundee's Kinnaird Hall to hear Anna Parnell speak. The leader of the Irish Ladies' Land League had arrived in Scotland a few days earlier to rally emigrant communities in support of the agitation to lower rents, stop evictions and end landlordism in Ireland. Speaking in fields and town halls across Scotland, she declared that urgent support was needed to avert catastrophe in rural Ireland and pressed her audiences to start branches of the Ladies' Land League. Parnell attracted much press attention, not least for her description of William Gladstone as a 'hypocritical, bloodthirsty miscreant' in front of a huge crowd in Glasgow. That city housed Scotland's largest Irish community, which turned out in large numbers to see her, but she reserved her warmest praise for Dundee, telling her audience there that 'no matter what other cities in Scotland might boast of, they in Dundee would always know that they were the first to send help'.[1] The following year John Ferguson, the leader of the Irish Land League in Scotland, congratulated Dundee's Irish women on how they had 'eclipsed all other branches on this side of the water'.[2] In the eyes of contemporary leaders, then, there was a striking level of political activism among Dundee Irish women in the 1880s, yet we know almost nothing about them, and little about the Ladies' Land League outside of Ireland and the United States more generally. Dundee provided a highly receptive environment

[1] *Dundee Courier*, 6 September 1881; *North British Daily Mail*, 30 August 1881.
[2] *Dundee Courier*, 12 April 1882.

for the organisation, with an Irish community comprising of twice as many women as men, a highly distinctive demographic in the Irish diaspora. Many of them were factory workers in the city's booming jute industry, which earned it the nickname 'Juteopolis'.

This article investigates how emigrant Irish women engaged with the Irish Land War of 1879-1882. The visits of travelling agitators and the circulation of newspapers from Ireland and the United States played vital roles in bringing local branches in Dundee into conversation with the wider world of the Irish land movement. Yet this article seeks to uncover a more textured picture of the people who collected funds and attended rallies, who are too often considered in the plural, anonymous supporters grouped together by ethnic or political allegiances. Tracing the footprints of grassroots members who left behind no memoirs or speeches comes with challenges, but the increasing accessibility of digitised genealogical records provides some means to get under flat descriptions of memberships and identify women who took on committee or organisational roles, giving glimpses at the local and personal levels of hidden lives.

From 1879 to 1882 the Land League coordinated a popular agitation known as the Land War, which entailed mass meetings, boycotts and collective resistance to evictions. In the late-1870s the agricultural depression combined with a series of poor harvests in Ireland to generate severe hardship and bring conditions of near famine to some western regions. The Land League held the immediate aims of reducing rents and preventing evictions, and in the long term it sought to abolish 'landlordism', viewed as a system of land monopoly and social injustice, and a central plank in the structures of British colonial authority in Ireland. The Ladies' Land League was first established in New York in October 1880 as a separate organisation to the exclusively male Land League. It spread rapidly in the United States, and soon a headquarters was created in Dublin led by Anna Parnell, which was followed by a Ladies' Land League of Great Britain in February 1881. By the end of the year the organisation held some 800 branches scattered across Ireland, England, Scotland, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Both the men's and women's leagues provided a means for emigrants and their children to engage with Ireland and with Irish people on other shores, contributing to diasporic 'sensibilities' in different locations.[3] The Land War resonated with emigrants because it aimed to resolve the injustice – access to land – that had caused many to leave Ireland in the first place. Similar to the men's organisation, the Ladies' Land League mobilised Irish emigrants on a massive

[3] Kevin Kenny, 'Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study', *Journal of American History*, 90, 1 (2003), pp. 134-162, 149.

scale and they provided immense financial support for the agitation and the relief of distress. When most of the male Land League leaders were imprisoned in October 1881, the Ladies' Land League took over the running of the agitation, distributed relief, built huts for evicted families and published the *United Ireland* newspaper.[4] During its short lifespan of about two years, it represented a bold advance in women's political activism.

Types of emigrant activism varied widely and recent scholarship has emphasised the diversity and ambiguity of relations between people of Irish birth or descent and the homeland.[5] This article adds to this complexity through analysing the reception of the Ladies' Land League in a city where working class women predominated in the Irish community, an unusual demographic across the Irish diaspora, and in doing so it seeks to contribute to our knowledge of migrant Irishwomen's activism and experiences.[6] The Ladies' Land League is often associated with a genteel style of radicalism due to the upper- and middle-class backgrounds of leaders in Ireland and the major cities of Irish immigration, yet the Dundee branches were overwhelmingly working class and operated with some independence from the men's organisation. Historians of Irish America have argued that Irishmen's harsh encounters with modern industrial capitalism in nineteenth-century cities led to the fusion of ethnic and class grievances in the Land League movement, and this article considers this perspective for the Ladies' Land League in Dundee.[7] The city's jute mills provided many Irish women with jobs, but they came with low pay, high rents, health hazards and congested living conditions.

The Dundee Irish and the Ladies' Land League

After Glasgow, the textile centre of Dundee was home to the largest community of Irish immigrants in Scotland when the Land War began in 1879. Throughout the nineteenth century it was a fast-growing industrial city that became one of the world's premier producers of linen and jute, a coarse fibre used to make carpets, grain bags and sandbags

[4] Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (Dublin, 1983); Jane McL. Côté, *Fanny and Anna Parnell: Ireland's Patriot Sisters* (Basingstoke, 1991); Ely Janis, *A Greater Ireland: The Land League and Transatlantic Nationalism in Gilded Age America* (Madison, 2015), pp. 137-57; Anna Parnell, *Tale of a Great Sham* (Dublin, 1986).

[5] Enda Delaney, 'Our Island Story? Towards a Transnational History of late Modern Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 37, (2011), pp. 83-105, 104.

[6] D. A. J. MacPherson and M. J. Hickman (eds.), *Women and Irish Diaspora Identities: Theories, Concepts and New Perspectives* (Manchester, 2014); Roger Swift 'Identifying the Irish in Victorian Britain: Recent Trends in Historiography', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 27, 2-3 (2009), pp. 134-151; Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.) *Irish Women and Irish Migration. Vol IV: The Irish World Wide* (London, 1995); Donald MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939* (Basingstoke, 2011).

[7] Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York, 1980), pp. 150-200; Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*: *Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford, 1985), p. 550.

used in wartime. Dundee was a whaling port and the availability of whale oils used to process raw jute contributed to the rapid expansion of the industry from the 1840s, with produce sold in European, Atlantic and imperial markets.[8] By the century's end, there were over one hundred mills in the city that brought huge fortunes for the so-called Jute Barons. The mills gave Dundee a distinctive workforce in comparison to other Scottish cities, with women representing about seventy-five per cent of jute workers. About one-third of them were the main breadwinners for their homes, and many households were dual income.[9] The largest mill was the Cox Brothers' Camperdown Works, located in the Lochee neighbourhood. It employed nearly 5000 people and at one point claimed to be the largest jute factory in the world. Lochee was home to many Irish and in the Whorterbank enclave over half of the residents were Irish immigrants and their children. Lochee was sometimes known locally as 'Little Tipperary', although relatively few migrants were from that county; most came from the north and north-midlands of Ireland. The Camperdown works was their main source of employment, particularly for women.

Migration from Ireland to Dundee rose along with general movement to Scotland in the 1800s. During the Great Famine the flows greatly intensified, and about eight per cent of the extraordinary number of emigrants who left Ireland between the Famine and the Irish Revolution arrived in Scotland, and provided a ready supply of labour for the expanding mining, steel, textile and shipbuilding industries .[10] In 1881 Irish-born people counted for about six per cent of Scotland's population of 3.7 million, and just under one-third of those had arrived in the previous decade. By far the largest concentration was found in Glasgow, where Irish-born immigrants numbered some 70,000, and communities of 10,000 or less lived in Edinburgh, Greenock and Paisley.[11] In Dundee the Irish-born population had peaked at 15,000 during the Famine, representing nearly twenty per cent of the city's population, among the highest proportions in Britain. By the 1880s this dropped to 11,500, but included many more second and third generation Irish.[12]

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[8] William M. Walker, *Juteopolis: Dundee and its Textile Workers, 1885-1923* (Edinburgh, 1979); Jim Tomlinson, *Dundee and the Empire: 'Juteopolis' 1850-1939* (Edinburgh, 2014).

[9] Eleanor Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland 1850-1914* (Oxford, 1991), p. 142.

[10] Brenda Collins, 'The Origins of Irish Immigration to Scotland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in T M Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 1-18.

[11] 1881 Census of Scotland, Vol. II, pp. 390-394, 426-8, 431.

[12] Walker, *Juteopolis*, pp. 115-16. The two most detailed studies of the Irish in Dundee are unpublished doctoral dissertations: Brenda E. A. Collins, 'Aspects of Irish Immigration Into Two Scottish Towns (Dundee and Paisley) During the Mid-Nineteenth Century', M. Phil. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, (1978); Richard B. McCready, 'The Social and Political Impact of the Irish in Dundee, c. 1845-1922', PhD Thesis, University of Dundee (2002).

Two thirds of Dundee's Irish community were women, a distinctive demographic that differed from the relatively even gender balance found among Irish migrants in other British and international cities, though resembling some eastern American mill towns in the nineteenth century.[13] Irish women were attracted by opportunities in the jute mills to use skills that they had acquired at home. Domestic spinning and weaving declined in Ireland in the early-nineteenth century due to market changes, which hit women harder than men. Across all sectors, job opportunities for women steadily declined throughout the century and they emigrated in large numbers. By the mid-nineteenth century Irish women, typically single and in their early twenties, who had emigrated alone or in small groups with parents, siblings or friends, made up over half of the spinning workforce in Dundee.[14] In 1881, these migrants and their children provided fertile ground for the Ladies' Land League.

The Land War provided new impetus for Irish activism in Dundee, representing a substantial advance from previous flickers of nationalist activity. In 1880 branches of the men's Land League were formed and immediately proved popular, with 700 people squeezing into a Catholic school house at their first meeting to hear John Ferguson decry the 'rule of buckshot and bayonet in Ireland'.[15] Prominent Home Rule politicians T. P. O'Connor and Tim Healy came to speak and Michael Davitt, who apparently lived briefly in Dundee, was particularly popular in the city and Scotland more generally.[16] From the outset, local newspapers observed high numbers of women in attendance at Land League meetings.[17] Anna Parnell's rousing tour of Scotland in August 1881 led to the establishment of the Ladies' Land League in Glasgow, but the Dundee branch predated her visit. Knowledge about the organisation reached Lochee through personal networks, local newspapers and the circulation of the *Nation*, *Freeman's Journal* and *United Ireland* from Dublin, and Boston's *Pilot* and New York's *Irish World*, all of which were available in Scotland. In July 1881 Irish women in Lochee corresponded with Anna Parnell and

[13] 1881 Census of Scotland, p. 426-7. Gender balance fluctuated between decades and host communities, but from 1870-1900 the outflow from Ireland was relatively even. The United States was the most popular destination for women, followed by Britain. MacRaild, *Irish Diaspora in Britain*, p. 141; Kerby Miller, David N. Doyle and Patricia Kelleher, '"For Love and Liberty": Irish women, Migration, and Domesticity in Ireland and America, 1815-1920', in O'Sullivan (ed.) *Irish Women and Irish Migration*, pp. 41-65, 43; Bernadette Whelan, 'Women on the Move: A Review of the Historiography of Irish Emigration to the USA, 1750-1900', *Women's History Review*, 24 (2015), pp. 900-916, p. 903.

[14] Brenda Collins, 'Proto-Industrialization and Pre-Famine Emigration', *Social History*, 7, 2 (1982), pp. 127-146, p. 145; idem, 'Aspects of Irish Immigration Into Two Scottish Towns', p. 50.

[15] *Dundee Advertiser*, 10 December 1880; *Dundee Courier*, 17 January 1881.

[16] *Weekly News* (Dublin), 4 November 1882; McCready, 'The Irish in Dundee', p. 202; Máirtín Ó Catháin, 'Michael Davitt and Scotland', *Saothar*, 25 (2000), pp. 19-26.

[17] *Dundee Advertiser*, 10 December 1880.

established the first Scottish branch of the Ladies Land League at the local St. Mary's Hall. By August the branch had sent £6 to Dublin and in September the combined men's and women's branches sent the substantial sum of £50. A second women's branch – St Andrew's – was established the following month.[18]

The visits of touring speakers were crucial to the development of Irish diaspora activism and in Dundee public talks by Anna Parnell and Marguerite Moore helped knit the new branches together. Both speakers encouraged members to organise as part of a larger diaspora community, even calling on them to not be outshone by emigrants in other locations. Advertisements for Parnell's Scottish tour proclaimed 'Harcourt says the Land League is supported from America. Tell him that 400,000 Irish of Scotland can and will support it also'.[19] Parnell filled the venue, and the mainly female audience was greeted outside by the St Patrick's Temperance League flute band and two of the St Mary's Catholic flute bands, underlining how different strands of Irish activism and Catholic associational culture were intertwined. Typically, the male leaders introduced the speakers at demonstrations and Edward Roche, head of the Lochee men's branch, chaired the event. At the same time, Parnell was introduced by Jane Keenan of the Lochee women's branch. Her remarks reflected a mix of nationalism and Catholic humanitarianism, welcoming Parnell as someone who had 'done so much for [Ireland's] homeless children, for her imprisoned martyrs'.[20] Parnell gave detailed reports of evictions, arrests and police brutality, and called on the journalists present to truthfully report on Irish conditions. She then attacked the Liberal party and claimed Gladstone was 'a man who had sold his soul for power'. A few nights earlier, the provost of Greenock had boycotted her lecture because of her anti-Gladstone comments. To laughter in the hall she joked that it was for the better that he did, as 'there might have been an unseemly dispute, and they might even have come to blows over it'.[21] Journalists' regularly observed the use of humour by Ladies' Land League speakers, to a greater extent than their male counterparts, suggesting either the latter were a more humourless bunch, or that women used humour more to negotiate the newness of public political speaking.

Anna Parnell was recognised internationally as the leader of the Ladies' Land League, but her appeal in Scotland was rivalled by Marguerite Moore. In December 1881 Moore addressed an enthusiastic audience that gathered in Dundee's Thistle Hall at one day's

[18] *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 11, 23 August, 15 Sept 1881; *Nation* (Dublin), 25 March, 1 July 1882; *Dundee Courier*, 6 August 1881.
[19] *United Ireland*, 27 August 1881.
[20] *Nation*, 10 September 1881; *Dundee Courier*, 6 September 1881.
[21] *Dundee Courier*, 6 September 1881; *North British Daily Mail*, 19 Oct 1881.

notice, and local marching bands again played 'national and popular airs' outside the venue. Inside she was greeted with 'loud cheers, the audience rising en masse to their feet and waving their hats and handkerchiefs'. Moore's Donegal connection no doubt added to her popularity in a city where many Irish held links to the north-west, and she later emphasised the similarities between Scotland and Ulster.[22] Present on the platform were representatives of the various men's branches, but they were joined by Catherine Hopper and Sarah McCarron from Lochee, and Mary Gray, Annie Darcy and Ellen Stewart from the St. Andrew's branch. They all worked as weavers and spinners in the jute industry and their presence was significant, illustrating how working class representation was part of the public face of the city's Ladies' Land League. The appearance of five single women on the platform, and three at Moore's talk in Glasgow a few days earlier, was unusual by the standards of Irish nationalist meetings and was indicative of the changing views of women's roles in the movement.[23]

Moore's December visit came after the outlawing of the Land League and the imminent crackdown on the Ladies' Land League in Ireland, and her speech struck a militant tone. She raged against the government's attempts to suppress the organisation, and claimed that coercion was ultimately counter-productive, because without it, 'the Land League would never have been the power it [is] today'. Repeatedly poking fun at Irish Chief Secretary W. E. Forster, she insisted that Irishwomen 'would go gaily to their prison' if forced to, as indeed she would do some months later. She insisted that without the efforts of members in Ireland and the diaspora, the 'helpless tenant farmers of Ireland would be wholly and completely in the power of the landlords'. Making emotional links between land reform and emigration, she proclaimed that 'still the emigrant vessel was leaving [Irish] shores laden with thousands of breaking hearts', a statement with obvious resonance for her audience. The chair Edward Roche called on all those eligible to register their vote in order 'to make their power felt when the time for action came', even though most of the audience were women with no vote, and his closing remarks tempered some of Moore's more militant statements.[24]

Moore promised to return to Dundee the following April, with the caveat 'Forster permitting'. As she predicted, imprisonment in Ireland prevented her from coming, but on the day she was due to speak a demonstration of some five hundred people was held, who were 'chiefly ladies' according to the local press. John Ferguson announced to boos

[22] Marguerite Moore, 'Dawdlings in Donegal', *Catholic World*, 62 (1895), pp. 167-178, 174.
[23] *Dundee Advertiser*, 24 December 1881; *Glasgow Herald*, 22 Dec 1881.
[24] *Dundee Courier*, 22 December 1881.

and hisses that Moore was in Tullamore jail, and read out a letter that she had sent from her cell in which she maintained her imprisonment spoke 'as eloquently to the hearts of the people as any address I could make'. Resolutions were passed condemning the 'cowardly and unjust imprisonment of that much esteemed lady' and one of the men present called 'on every Irishwoman in Dundee and Lochee to become members'. Yet the women's branches had already exceeded expectations. By that point, they estimated that they had collected over £200, 'to succour men, women and children who had been evicted by tyrannical landlords', and Ferguson congratulated them on surpassing all other British branches.[25] Given the variegated ways in which money was collected and forwarded to Dublin, this claim is difficult to verify and likely inaccurate, but it is clear from the subscription records that Dundee was disproportionately represented and the local branches there were at the forefront of the organisation across Britain.

Despite Ferguson's praise, actual members of the Ladies' Land League were absent from the platform that evening, in contrast to Moore and Anna Parnell's previous visits. Ferguson focussed on party politics and voter registration, aiming principally at the male minority in the audience.[26] He repeated the Land League's call for 'war against the Liberal party' at the next election, calling on 'the men of Dundee' to vote Conservative, 'a thankless task. Nevertheless it had to be done'. At the same time, Ferguson was careful not to open too great a gap with the Liberals, probably remembering the furore caused by Anna Parnell's previous attacks on Gladstone. Not long after her visit, the local Liberal MPs George Amritstead and Frank Henderson condemned the Land League.[27] Ferguson maintained it was a source of regret to 'see a good man [Gladstone] go wrong', as Irish people simply demanded the same rights as existed in Britain, and were ready to follow the 'constitutional way'.[28] In contrast to Anna Parnell's and Moore's confrontational lectures, the men's meetings typically adopted a more moderate tone, which reflected the increasing difference between the Ladies' Land League and the men's organisation in Ireland. At another meeting local Land Leaguer Thomas Flanagan stated that he 'was in favour of a settlement of the land question…without infringing on the rights of the landlord', a sentiment clearly at odds with the radical outlook advanced by Anna Parnell and Moore in their talks.[29]

[25] *Dundee Advertiser*, 12 April 1882; *Dundee Courier*, 12 April 1882.
[26] *Dundee Courier*, 12 April 1882. Women could vote in municipal elections in Scotland from 1885.
[27] *North British Daily Mail*, 20 October 1881.
[28] *Dundee Courier*, 12 April 1882; *Nation*, 22 April 1882.
[29] *Dundee Courier*, 14 March 1881.

In Ireland the social radicalism of the Ladies' Land League surpassed that of many on the executive of the men's organisation. Local studies of branches in the United States have also identified women who challenged conservative male leaders and aligned themselves with the radical wing of the land movement associated with the New York's *Irish World* newspaper.[30] In Dundee it is difficult to establish the political views of members due to the scant records they left behind beyond their fundraising. Yet their activities were shaped by the Scottish context where, more so than in Ireland or England, the ideas of land nationalisation and Henry George were firmly stamped on the Land League. George was a radical American economist who came to Ireland for one year during the Land War and aimed, along with the *Irish World*, to radicalise the agitation and advance nationalisation as the solution to the land question. During his stay in Ireland, George became increasingly interested in the Scottish land question and in the *Irish World* he called for the Irish of 'Dundee and Paisley and Glasgow [to] go out in delegations amongst those oppressed Scotchmen, and impress upon them that their cause is our cause, and that our common cause is the cause of God'.[31] In Scotland John Ferguson was a firm supporter of George, as were the key Land League organisers Edward McHugh and Richard McGhee, who built alliances with land reformers in the Highlands.[32] The leader of the Glasgow Ladies' Land League, Ellen Quigley, named her first child after Henry George. Both Anna Parnell and Marguerite Moore worked closely with George when he came to Ireland in 1881 and, after the Land War came to an end, Moore moved to New York to continue working with him. In Scotland, the members of the Ladies' Land League were arguably more exposed to the radical wing of the land movement than the more moderate land reform policies of Charles Stewart Parnell, the Land League president (and Anna's brother).

The circulation of Irish and Irish-American newspapers was vital to the transnational networks of the Ladies' Land League. The *Irish World* was sold in Scotland by three Glasgow newsagents: James Lindsay, Thomas Lynch and Lizzie Connolly. A second generation immigrant in her twenties, Connolly had joined Marguerite Moore and Ellen Quigley on the platform in Glasgow's city hall.[33] Copies of the paper made their way from Glasgow to Dundee through the organisation's networks for news of Ladies' Land League branches in scattered locations, as well as seeing acknowledgement of their own activities.

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[30] Timothy J Meagher, *Inventing Irish America*: *Generation, Class and Ethnic Identity in a New England City, 1880-1928* (Southbend, Ill., 2000), pp. 184-5; Janis, *Greater Ireland*, p. 155-6.
[31] *Irish World* (New York), 18 March 1882; 10 June 1882.
[32] Andrew Newby, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands, c.1870-1912* (Edinburgh, 2007).
[33] *Irish World*, 28 January 1882; *The Post-Office Annual Glasgow Directory*, *1879-80* (Glasgow 1879); Census of Scotland, 1881; *Glasgow Herald*, 21 December 1881.

The paper observed that, 'In Dundee also a great Irish colony is rooted, and they have shown their opinions and determination to co-operate with the rest of us, in every practical way, until our nation is thoroughly quit of the English garrisons.'[34] Irish nationalist newspapers were sold by Home Ruler and newsagent John Green in Dundee's Scouring Burn, which provided news of developments in Ireland and the diaspora, but also allowed members to see their branch names in print. Sending money to the central fund in Dublin ensured the branch name, usually along with that of the secretary or treasurer, would be published in the fund columns in the *Nation* and the *Freeman's Journal*. Through naming men and women's branches in various locations of Irish settlement the fund columns functioned as a map of an 'Irish international imagined community'.[35] The lists also generated a sense of rivalry between different branches in Scotland, England and further afield, as to who could donate the most.

The branch members and the jute industry

The grassroots members of the Ladies' Land League in Britain left few statements behind about their identities or motives for involvement, which has resulted in their anonymity in the scholarship. Yet utilizing subscriber lists and reports published in Irish and Scottish newspapers, and piecing this information together with genealogical records, it is possible to excavate some details about the women who participated. The bulk of members remain elusive, but it is possible to trace twenty women who volunteered as secretaries, presidents, treasurers, and other committee roles in order to gain insights into the mechanics of the organisation in the local environment.[36]

Jane Keenan was president of the Lochee branch. Born locally to Irish parents in 1857, her father worked as a weaver and her mother as a jute winder, a job that her older sister Mary Ann also held. Her parents arrived in Scotland from Donegal in the late-1830s, settling first in Leith and then moving on to Dundee. By 1881 Keenan lived alone with her father. She was the odd one out in the family because she did not work in the jute industry, instead she was a school teacher and her family presumably made sacrifices in order for the youngest child to avoid working in the mills. Teaching was a valuable avenue of social

[34] *Irish World*, 21 January; 15 April 1882.
[35] Cian McMahon, *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and Popular Press, 1840-1880* (Chapel Hill, 2015), p. 174.
[36] The information on other committee members is gathered from the following sources: *Dundee Advertiser*, 6 Aug 1881; *Weekly News* (Dublin), 12 February 1881; *Dundee Courier*, 18 Feb 1881; *Nation*, 12 February, 1, 8 July 1882; *Freeman's Journal*, 23 March 1882; *United Ireland*, 10 Dec 1881. The genealogical records used for this section are the Census of Scotland, 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891. Accessed at ancestry.co.uk and findmypast.co.uk.

mobility for Irish emigrants and their daughters in Britain and the United States, and the position carried some status in the community and was of considerable economic importance for the family.[37] Keenan's educated lower middle-class status was likely a factor behind her assuming the role of branch president at the age of twenty-four.

Keenan's profession stood her apart from her fellow members, who worked as weavers, spinners, reelers and cleaners in Dundee's many mills and factories. They were a relatively young group: of the twenty women in this sample, most were aged in their early to mid-twenties, and only one was married, corresponding to the generational profile of the Ladies' Land League in Ireland. Twenty-six years-old Lucy Paterson, a worker in the Camperdown mills, was originally named president of the Lochee branch when it began, though she soon stepped aside for Keenan and took on another role. She emigrated to Dundee with her mother and five siblings in the 1860s and lived in the Albert Street enclave. Before she was fifteen, she had joined her sisters and brothers to work in the jute factory. Her brother James joined the workforce before he was eleven, serving as some indication of the expectations of children's work.

Annie Darcy was the treasurer of the St Andrew's branch and organised the sending of subscriptions to Ireland. Like Keenan, she was aged twenty-four and was second-generation Irish. Darcy's parents had emigrated together, first to England, where she was born, and then to Scotland in the 1860s. In 1881 she lived with her widowed mother, two brothers and a lodger, Mary Byrne, on a street a short distance away from St Joseph's Catholic church and school rooms. She worked as a weaver, as did Byrne, while both her brothers worked in the textile industry. Though Keenan and Darcy were second generation Irish, women born in Ireland were in a slight majority in our sample. Between the Lochee and St Andrew's committees, twelve women were Irish-born, six were born in Scotland and one in England, while only one – branch secretary Catherine Hopper – had no discernible family links to Ireland. Counties of origin are traceable in a few cases only and fit with general patterns of movement from Ulster and northern Leinster, with some women hailing from Monaghan, Cavan, Donegal and Longford. Where traceable, members of the men's Land League also hailed frequently from the same regions. The Irish county of origin was not systematically recorded in the census, yet it was listed in occasional entries. Perhaps some determined enumerators sought to delve deeper when collecting information, but it is also plausible that some migrants preferred to state their county or town as well as their country when asked where they were born. This suggests

[37] Janet Nolan, *Servants of the Poor: Teachers and Mobility in Ireland and Irish America* (Notre Dame, 2004).

the lingering importance of regional identities, and how participation in the land movement could be motivated by a desire to take action to improve conditions in specific regions of Ireland, even though donations could only be collected on a national level.

Along with contacts made on the mill and factory floor, an entry-point into the Ladies' Land League was through acquaintances made in boarding houses near the mills. Due to the shortage of housing and the increasing population, Dundee had an overcrowding problem that, after Paisley, was the worst in Scotland. Low wages and high rent prices, that were often well above the national average, meant that it was common for women working in the jute industry to board with families in cramped rooms.[38] Lucy Paterson's family of seven, for example, shared their home with occasional lodgers. Mary Gray of the St Andrew's branch boarded with Kate Clarke and her family. Born in Ireland in 1835, Gray worked as a weaver at the Pleasance Works and was part of an older generation of members. Before the Dundee branches were formally established in 1881, she had already collected money among her co-workers and forwarded it to Dublin under the factory name. Twenty-two years-old Kate Clarke had come to Dundee with her father and sister in the 1870s. She worked at the North Dudhope Works and similarly collected and forwarded money to Dublin under the mill name.[39] Also living with the Clarkes was Elisabeth Murray, who came to Dundee from Ireland in the 1860s. Some branch members emigrated with siblings, such as sisters Margaret and Bridget Burbage, who boarded with the Donnelly family near the Camperdown Works. Sisters Bridget and Mary Connor boarded in a house on Lyon's Close, close to St Joseph's church, with the branch secretaries Mary Hagan and Sarah Donohue. The workplace and accommodation were very much interlinked, and the boarding houses close to the mills were part of the ancillary networks of the Ladies' Land League.

Dundee was not the final destination for all Irishwomen who moved there. In 1884, during an economic downturn, the founder of the Lochee branch Lucy Paterson emigrated to Paterson, New Jersey with her two sisters Catherine and Anne, after living in Lochee for twenty years. Perhaps attracted by the city that shared their name, the sisters were well qualified for employment in Paterson's jute mills. A look at the census returns for their new neighbourhood, also reveals a community littered with first and second generation Irish, as well as many Scottish-born residents whose parents and grandparents were Irish.[40] The city of origin in Scotland was not recorded, but the fact that jute mills were the

[38] Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, pp. 143-4.
[39] *Freeman's Journal,* 24 June 1881.
[40] 1900 and 1910 United States Federal Census. They moved to Slator St in the eight ward, Paterson, NJ.

principal source of employment is suggestive that the Paterson siblings were not the first Irish migrants to arrive in the New Jersey textile city via Dundee.

Across Britain and the United States, leadership roles within the Ladies' Land League were often taken on by the wives, daughters and sisters of prominent male leaguers and politicians, most obviously in the case of the Parnells, the Sullivans in London, or the Blighs and Denvirs in Liverpool. In contrast, there are no discernible family connections between the organisers of the women and men's branches in Dundee. The presidents of the four men's branches in the city were Edward Roche, Thomas Flanagan, James O'Kane and Thomas Smith, and their occupations reflected the petit bourgeois status associated with many local leaders in Ireland, rather than the working-class character of the women's branches. Roche and Flanagan were shopkeepers and O'Kane was an undertaker. They were born in Ireland and were older than many of their female counterparts, with most aged in their thirties and forties. Some members of the women and men's branches shared a platform at large events, but overall they were separate in many respects. The women's branches functioned with a level of independence that gave them some input into managing the visits of key speakers. At the same time, this meant it was more difficult to integrate into, and influence, the men's activities and events.

The members sent money to Ireland to alleviate poverty and hardship, but the situation in their new homes was also grim. The workday lasted from 6am to 6pm, with additional shifts on Saturdays, and many employees also brought home sacks to sew at night. The cost of living was high in Dundee, but industrial wages remained lower than most other British cities in the face of domestic and emerging Indian competition. In the 1880s women's wages in the jute mills were particularly low compared to other textile industries, partly due to an assumption that they were supplementary in dual income households, yet this was frequently not the case.[41] The industry dominated work in Dundee employing 34,000 people, over forty per cent of the entire workforce, yet its exposure to international economic fluctuations brought periods of both high profit and depression, making employment unstable. In the 1880s the industry was experiencing a slump and heightened unemployment, provoking the local Catholic priest in Lochee to lament to his bishop that 'Things are very dull and bleak: so many of our poor people idle here!"[42]

Danger and difficulty came with the work, ranging from the daily risk of accident to long-term illnesses resulting from dust and dirt on the mill floor. The Cox Brothers, who

[41] Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, pp. 145-6; Walker, *Juteopolis*, pp. 87-96.
[42] Father Peter Butti to George Rigg, 20 Jan 1886, Scottish Catholic Archives (SCA from here), DD3, Rigg Papers, 82.

owned the Camperdown Works in Lochee, sought to foster good relations with the local Catholic clergy and in 1871 a papal blessing from Pius IX was arranged for their Irish workers. In 1891 Edward Cox donated £100 to ease the debts of St. Mary's church, beside the mills, writing to the local priest that, 'There is and has always been, although they may not know it, a warm corner in my heart for the Irish people of Lochee'.[43] Given the conditions on the mill floor, Cox was almost certainly right, they didn't know it. The registers of the Royal Infirmary in Dundee reveal high rates of admission of patients who worked in jute mills, many of them suffering from chronic bronchitis and 'Mill fever', respiratory problems that were linked to the heavy dust and oil fumes. In 1881, the register contained 203 Irishwomen, 166 of whom were listed as 'mill workers', over four times as many as all other occupations combined.[44] The high number reflected the centrality of employment in the mills for Irish immigrants, and starkly indicates the long- and short-term health hazards associated with the work. Along with illness, accidents were frequent, typically involving men, women and children getting their hands caught between rollers and spinning frames, often when cleaning them. In 1896, when the Cox Brothers began recording accidents, there were ninety-one instances that resulted in bruised, cut or broken fingers, and episodes where fingers and hands needed to be amputated. Fatal injuries were rare, but did occur.[45] This situation wasn't unique to Dundee and in the mill towns on the east coast of the United States, where the Ladies' Land League also proved popular, textile work was often looked down on as less desirable than domestic service due to the dirt and health risks.[46]

Bad working conditions had provoked some protests in the 1850s and 1860s, but in the 1880s there were few options for women's trade union participation and involvement in labour militancy was not prominent among women jute workers until the years before the First World War.[47] In the absence of trade unionism, the Ladies' Land League may have channelled some of the resentments associated with industrial labour through its calls for lower rents, improved living standards and social and economic rights. Low pay, high rents, overcrowding and hazardous work generated frustrations that, as Kerby Miller

[43] Edward Cox to Father Van de Rydt, 8 July and 20 August 1891, University of Dundee Archives (UDA from here), Cox Brothers Papers (CBP from here), MS66/2/10/59; McCready, 'Irish in Dundee', pp. 81, 85.
[44] Dundee Royal Infirmary Admissions Register, 1879-1885. UDA, THB 1/5/1 (6).
[45] The recording of accidents followed the 1895 Factory and Workshop Act. 'Register of Accidents 1896', UDA, CBP, MS66/iv/7/1. In 1900 a mechanic died following an accident.
[46] Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1983), pp 75-6.
[47] Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement,* pp. 212-260; Walker, *Juteopolis*, pp. 2, 143.

argued for the United States, could be 'easily translated into nationalist expressions and activities'.[48] The 1879 manifesto of the Irish Home Rule Association in Scotland compared the cause of the 'farmers of Ireland' with 'the minors of Lanarkshire' and the Glasgow Land League, one of the most socially radical branches in Britain, linked land reform in Ireland to both industrial workers in Scotland and land reform in the Highlands.[49] The Ladies' Land League may not have explicitly addressed labour grievances, but it undoubtedly offered a voice to people who otherwise didn't have one and new opportunities for political participation.

Activism also represented a form of humanitarian activity that arguably brought a sense of respectability for some members. Fundraising for the relief of deprivation in Ireland was supported by the Catholic Church and recognition for this reputable work may have encouraged members' involvement, as it generated positive attention from within the Irish community. Jane Keenan held close links with the local clergy and was well positioned to organise fundraising for both Catholic charities and the Ladies' Land League. In Dundee and across Victorian Britain charity work carried associations with religion and middle-class respectability. Yet there was an important difference between respectable charitable activities and those that challenged the status quo.[50] Supporting an organisation that was illegal in Ireland was not the same as mainstream philanthropy. In addition, Keenan's profile was different to the other women in the branches and it is more difficult to measure how their participation might have made a real contribution to social mobility in terms of employment. Improving one's social position could be frustrated by gender and class, and the employee registers of the Camperdown Works indicate that although women filled the mill and factory floors, every middling and senior position was taken by a man.[51] For women jute workers, Eleanor Gordon has observed, 'there was no opportunity for vertical mobility'.[52] Marriage was one means of social mobility, and to be a non-working wife was a sign of respectability, but there was only one person fitting that profile in our sample.

Timothy Meagher has observed how 'a sense of gender solidarity' that derived from the collective taking on of public roles in a movement dominated by men contributed to

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[48] Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 550; M. A. G. Ó Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Problems of Integration', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 31 (1981), pp. 149–173, p. 173.
[49] Terence McBride, 'John Ferguson, Michael Davitt and Henry George—Land for the People, *Irish Studies Review*, 14 (2006), 421-430, 422.
[50] Heather Laird, 'Decentring the Irish Land War: woman, politics and the private sphere', in Campbell and Varley (eds.), *Land Questions in Modern Ireland*, pp. 175-193, 183; Lorraine Walsh, *Patrons, Poverty and Profit: Organised Charity in Nineteenth Century Dundee* (Dundee, 2000).
[51] Employee returns 1872, UDA, CBP, MS6/1/7/1, 2.
[52] Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, p. 148.

the vibrancy of the Ladies' Land League in Worcester, Massachusetts.[53] This gender solidarity was evident in the Dundee group, but was further shaped by the dynamics of the workplace. The main class distinction in the jute industry was between a small core of well-paid male supervisors and the mass of female workers, which hardened the realities of gender division and arguably contributed to a heightened sense of solidarity amongst women. There were also class differences within the female workforce among weavers and spinners. The latter did the more labour intensive and hazardous work on the mill floors, and came from less well-off backgrounds. The weavers were slightly better paid and the work was cleaner, and the position was perceived to be a more respectable one.[54] Jane Keenan's mother and sister were weavers as were treasurer Mary Gray and secretary Mary Hagan in the St Andrew's branch, giving some indication that workplace distinctions translated into committee roles. Yet, this was not always the case: Annie Darcy was a spinner, as was Lucy Paterson. It would be unusual that perceptions of status did not transfer from the workplace into the branches, but it did not lead to exclusiveness. The women on the platform with Marguerite Moore in Thistle Hall, for example, included both weavers and spinners. Overall, the membership was dominated by working class women whose chances to elevate their occupational status were slim, but outside the workplace participation could improve their social standing in the Irish community.

It is difficult to see how the members could not have been class conscious given conditions in the workplace, and this was also evident in fundraising. Published subscription lists were a central part of Land League fundraising, and when representing a particular community, reflected social hierarchies and Catholic clergymen's desired position in them. In 1881 the amounts given to a Land League collection by men and women were printed in the local newspaper, with the names listed for all to see according to the amount donated. At the top of the list of some seventy names was the city's senior Catholic clergyman, Robert Clapperton, who donated £1, and he was followed by four other priests who gave smaller amounts. Donations from lay people then followed under the clergymen, from the largest downwards, even if some had given more money than the clergy. John McCheyne topped the list of lay people with £1. A Presbyterian from Ulster, he emigrated in the 1860s and owned drapery in the city centre.[55] Toward the bottom of the list we find some members of the Ladies' Land League, including Annie Darcy of the St Andrew's branch, who donated six pence. The list revealed who supported the Land

[53] Meagher, *Inventing Irish America*, p. 186.
[54] Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, p. 156-7.
[55] McCheyne actually filed for bankruptcy the following year. *The Edinburgh Gazette*, 2 May 1882.

League, but also represented a ladder of respectability, publicly marking out class and gender hierarchies in the community in both the host city and the homeland: the list was first published in A. M. Sullivan's *Weekly News* in Dublin, then in the *Dundee Courier*.[56]

The profile of the Dundee branches challenges assumptions about the class dimensions of the Ladies' Land League. In his recollections the Land League leader Michael Davitt acknowledged the prominent roles of upper and middle-class women, observing that Archbishop McCabe, who condemned the Ladies' Land League because it undermined women's 'modesty', was only concerned because they belonged 'to families at least as respectable as his own'.[57] Women from prominent backgrounds featured strongly on committees in Ireland, Britain and the United States. Frances Genevieve Sullivan, wife of politician and journalist A. M. Sullivan, led the London branch and Mary Agnes Bligh, wife of the local Land League president and surgeon, led the Liverpool branch. With her on the committee were Mary and Anne Denvir, daughters of the bookseller John Denvir, a prominent Land Leaguer and member of the Catholic Total Abstinence League. Local studies of branches in rural Ireland have highlighted how the more vibrant ones 'drew active support and leadership from middle-class and urban groups'.[58] Yet branches in Scotland and northern England point to strong support among emigrant industrial workers and their children. In Dundee, the women's league was very much rooted in the working class culture of the jute mills. The Glasgow branch president was Ellen Quigley, an immigrant seamstress from Donegal. In England, beyond the branches in Liverpool and London, the organisation drew strong support among workers in the textile towns of Lancashire. In the United States, too, a study of a branch in Woonsocket, Rhode Island has demonstrated that many members worked in the city's cotton and woollen mills.[59] The social backgrounds of members varied according to environments and local perspectives offer a corrective to assumptions that the movement was entirely a middle-class affair. The more vibrant branches in Britain appeared in industrial towns and cities with a large presence of working class Irish women.

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[56] *Dundee Courier*, 18 February 1881.
[57] Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Fuedalism in Ireland, or the Story of the Land League Revolution* (London, 1904), p. 314.
[58] J. W. H. Carter, *The Land War and its Leaders in Queen's County*, *1879-82* (Portlaoise, 1994) p. 114; Donald E. Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland: County Mayo from the Planttion to the Land War* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 295-7, 299-300. Outside of the Ladies' Land League women played important roles in eviction protests. Janet K. TeBrake, 'Irish Peasant Women in Revolt: the Land League Years', *Irish Historical Studies*, 28 (1992), pp. 63-80.
[59] Janis, *Greater Ireland*, p. 156.

In studies of Irish immigration in Victorian Scotland, particularly on the west coast, sectarianism and ethnic prejudice are familiar themes. These tensions were not so sharp in Dundee where the numbers of Orange Lodges and parades were lower, but neither was the city free of anti-Irish prejudice.[60] When reporting on Anna Parnell's visit the *Dundee Courier,* published by DC Thompson, commented that she was blind to the faults of Irish Catholics and 'sees no want in them of that quality which makes Scotchmen generally so prosperous and content with fewer privileges'. When she famously challenged the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland on a Dublin street by grabbing the headcollar of his horse, an editorial likened her actions to those of a 'maniac, or the escaped inmate of a lunatic asylum'.[61] As soon as the Lochee branch of the Ladies' Land League was established, the paper published an angry letter proclaiming that 'Irishmen, and those of them residing in Lochee especially, are rank cowards, or else they would not resort to such a mean dodge as mix up their sisters and daughters with a movement the outcome of which is a disgrace to the civilisation of the nineteenth century'. The letter reflected a central thread of hostility in Britain toward the Ladies' Land League, which viewed women as the men's stooges, not activists in their own right. The correspondent continued that he also opposed the new branch because 'the majority of the Irish people are unfit for self-government, and that no time should be lost in placing them on the same footing as the people of India'.[62] For Glasgow's *North British Daily Mail,* the Ladies' Land League was a 'much more objectionable body' than the men's league, the result of 'an unnatural application of the doctrines of those strong minded ladies who champion the extreme form of women's rights'.[63] Reports on the organisation across the Scottish press indicates how involvement could bring hostility for emigrant women. Membership also brought other risks. Collecting and securing large sums of money until sent to Dublin was not without danger. In May 1882 Kate McCabe, a sixty-year-old emigrant in New York, was murdered by her sixteen-year-old stepson in order to steal Land League money kept in her flat.[64] Most Irish-American newspapers ignored the case, presumably because of the negative publicity it would bring, and the episode is suggestive of lesser-reported dangers associated with fundraising.

[60] McCready, 'The Irish in Dundee', pp. 91-2, 110; J. E. Handley, *The Irish in Scotland* (Cork, 1947), pp. 93-121; Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow, the Uneasy Peace: Religious Tension in Modern Scotland* (Manchester, 1987).
[61] *Dundee Courier*, 12 August; 6 September 1881, 16 June 1882.
[62] *Dundee Courier*, 12 August 1881.
[63] *North British Daily Mail*, 22 Dec 1881.
[64] *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 16 May 1882.

Participation in the Ladies' Land League was obviously more hazardous in Ireland than in the diaspora, particularly after the authorities' proscribed the organisation in December 1881. Yet it was also a different matter to protest against the British government, send money to an illegal organisation and cheer the imprisoned Marguerite Moore in Dundee, than it was from the distance of New York or Melbourne. In Scotland ethnic prejudice combined with pejorative views of women's heightened radicalism in the Ladies' Land League. Members faced considerable animosity, perhaps to a greater extent than the men. Yet they were also left to organise and fundraise relatively free from official interference. One of the reasons for this was the considerable support they received from the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church

From the outset, Catholic institutions and personnel were intermeshed with the branches. The Catholic hierarchy had mixed opinions of the organisation, with some bishops condemning women's political activism, including the Glasgow-born bishop of Cleveland, Ohio, Richard Gilmour, who considered membership to be 'incompatible with womanly modesty', comments that were reprinted in the Dundee press.[65] Local clergymen did not publicly voice similar sentiments, however, and were significantly involved in the organisation and Irish nationalist events more generally. In an influential essay on the Dundee Irish, historian William Walker argued that Catholic priests promoted moderate Irish nationalism in Dundee 'as a distraction from the politics of class'.[66] While many priests likely found Irish nationalism preferable to socialism, ethnic and class politics were not so neatly counterposed. Walker's argument also provokes questions about immigrants' agency and the extent to which they could have been so easily marshalled by the Catholic Church.[67] There was considerable clerical involvement in the Ladies' Land League, but not always on their own terms.

From the mid-nineteenth century the Catholic Church expanded in Scotland, with substantial growth in the numbers of men and women religious. Irish migration contributed to this expansion and, while tensions existed between Scottish and Irish-born Catholics, there were held high levels of Irish involvement in Catholic institutions in

[65] Côté, *Fanny and Anna Parnell*, pp. 169-177; *Dundee Courier*, 5 June 1882.
[66] William Walker, 'Irish Immigrants in Scotland: Their Priests, Politics and Parochial Life', *The Historical Journal*, 15, 4, (1972), pp. 649-667, 663.
[67] Martin J. Mitchell, 'Irish Catholics in the West of Scotland in the Nineteenth Century: Despised by Scottish Workers and Controlled by the Church?', in Martin J. Mitchell (ed), *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008), pp. 1-19.

Dundee. This was partly due to the Fermanagh-born Stephen Keenan, the city's senior Catholic clergyman from the 1840s to 1862, who invited an Irish order of the Sisters of Mercy to establish a convent in Lochee in 1859. They sought to bring a Catholic moral influence to life in the area and started a school for children and women under twenty-five who worked in the mills, providing an education for many Irish in the area.[68] Irish Catholics had complained to the Cox Brothers that children who worked in the mills and attended half-time schools were 'compelled to learn the Protestant catechism'.[69] Yet, by the end of the 1870s there were four Catholic Churches and six schools in the city, double what had existed in the previous decade.[70] In 1878 the Catholic school in Lochee was expanded to incorporate more rooms and a teacher's house, and by the time of the Land War the influence of Catholicism in Irish life in Dundee had expanded significantly.[71]

The names of the Land League branches reflected a religious sense of place in the city. The men's organisation was divided into four branches that corresponded with the four Catholic parishes of St Andrew's, St Joseph's, St Mary's and Lochee. The women's organisation was divided into the Lochee and St Andrew's branches. William Jenkins has observed how the Catholic parish offered 'the ideal spatial unit for the Land League branches' in Toronto and Buffalo, and the same was true in Dundee, where social, political and parochial worlds were very much entangled.[72] At the same time, there were also significant associations with the workplace and funds were occasionally sent to Dublin under the names of the mills where the members worked, rather than the branch name, including the North Dudhope Works, the Pleasance Works and Camperdown Works.

The church made itself visible when prominent Irish nationalists came to town. Catholic flute bands paraded before Anna Parnell and Marguerite Moore's talks, and when Home Rule MP T. P. O'Connor addressed the local Land League's first big event, he was joined on the platform by four local Catholic priests. When Michael Davitt spoke in 1882, he was accompanied by no less than eight priests.[73] In Lochee the local curate Peter Butti was present at the founding of the Ladies' Land League branch and regularly stewarded

[68] S. Karly Kehoe, *Creating a Scottish Church*: *Catholicism, Gender and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Scotland* (Manchester, 2013), p. 104; Bernard Aspinwall, 'Catholic Devotion in Victorian Scotland', in Mitchell (ed), *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland*, pp. 31–43, 33.
[69] Peter Grant to George Cox, 23 Nov 1869, University of Dundee Archives, Cox Brothers Papers, MS6, 1/3/2/12, 13.
[70] Walker, 'Irish Immigrants in Scotland', p. 656.
[71] *St. Mary's, Lochee, Dundee: Souvenir Brouchure 1866-1966* (Glasgow, 1966), p. 51-2; Alexander Elliot, *Lochee: as it was and as it is: and a series of sketches descriptive of olden time vestiges in the neighbourhood* (Dundee, 1911), p. 71.
[72] William Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion: the Irish in Buffalo and Toronto 1867-1916* (Ithaca, NY, 2013), p. 205.
[73] *Dundee Advertiser*, 10 December 1880; *Dundee Courier*, 2 Nov 1882.

meetings and assisted with collecting donations. Meetings were usually held in the Catholic St Mary's hall, which he managed. Butti was popular, evident when local Irish petitioned the Bishop to prevent him being switched to another parish.[74] There were no St Patrick's Day parades, but annual meetings were held in Lochee and central Dundee that were chaired by Butti and Robert Clapperton, then the leading Catholic clergyman in the city. Speeches and celebrations easily spilled over into politics, with one local priest proclaiming, 'Ireland for the Irish was as loud on the shores of the Mississippi as on the banks of Ireland's Shannon'.[75] Catholic clubs, the Temperance League, the St Vincent de Paul charity, the Catholic Young Women's Association and the Young Men's Society were intertwined with nationalist politics. The head of the Lochee Land League branch was also chairman of the local committee of lay Catholics. Women were excluded from many male-dominated societies, yet the considerable presence of Irish women religious in the city and their promotion of charitable causes meant that some women had experience of raising money and the Ladies' Land League branch could operate in a public space that was already partially carved out.

In one of the first calls for a women's Land League in New York, Ellen Ford asked, 'No one thinks it's wrong for women to beg for church fairs, sell tickets for lotteries, picnics, lectures, etc.; and why should they not form clubs or societies for the relief of the wives, mothers and sisters in Ireland'.[76] In Dundee fundraising for the Ladies' Land League was partly a form of Catholic humanitarianism for evicted tenants, as well as protesting landlordism and advancing nationalist politics. When Jane Keenan introduced Anna Parnell in Kinnaird Hall she explicitly evoked the language of Catholic welfare: 'Like a true sister of charity you take your stand by the poor and oppressed, bringing peace and comfort to many a well-nigh broken heart', though Parnell herself refuted the idea that the Ladies' Land League was a charity.[77] Keenan's relationship with Butti was shaded by the fact that the school where she taught in Lochee was funded by the diocese and administered by him.[78] This relationship likely complicated her ability to act independently, and finds some parallels with women's charitable societies in Ireland, where 'the clergy exerted a powerful control over the direction taken by women philanthropists'.[79] Access to space for events is vital to the success of any movement, and the Ladies' Land League

[74] R. A. Smith to Clapperton 7 February 1888, SCA, DD4 Clapperton Papers; *Dundee Courier*, 6 August 1881.
[75] *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 18 March 1881, 18 March 1882.
[76] *Irish World*, 25 Sept 1880.
[77] *Dundee Courier*, 6 September 1881.
[78] Butti to Rigg, 16 October 1880, SCA, DD3 George Rigg Papers.
[79] Maria Luddy, *Women and Philantropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995) p. 23.

depended on church schoolrooms and halls. The men's and women's leagues held monthly meetings in the Young Men's Hall on Tay Street, purchased by the Catholic Church in 1873, and St Mary's Hall in Lochee and schoolrooms on Larch Street were also in regular use.[80] Access to the large venues of Thistle Hall and Kinnaird Hall were no doubt made easier through the support of Clapperton. Providing, or denying, access to buildings gave clergymen additional influence over the types of events organised by the branches.

One could assume the presence of Irish men and women religious in Dundee helped cultivate a close relationship between the church and emigrants. Seventeen of the eighteen nuns resident at the Sisters of Mercy convent were Irish-born, and three priests in the city were Irish-born, though came via a Scottish seminary.[81] Yet a closer look complicates the picture. Far from being Irish-dominated, the Catholic Church in Dundee had transnational dimensions and incorporated many priests from different European missions who came to Britain specifically to serve working-class parishes.[82] The three parish priests that served Lochee during the 1870s and 1880s were Francis Beurms, from Belgium, Peter Butti, born in Edinburgh to Italian parents, and Alphonsus Van de Rydt, from the Netherlands.[83] The latter two were present at a number of Land League and Ladies' Land League meetings, and Butti was particularly closely involved with the women's branches. The most senior clergyman in Dundee was Robert Clapperton, who hailed from Moray and had no links to Ireland. Stephen Keenan was Irish-born, but was very much a product of the Scottish and Roman education system. He emigrated as a young child with his parents to the south-west of Scotland and was educated in Aberdeen and the Scots College, Rome.[84] He died in 1862, before the Home Rule movement began. Most clergymen associated with Irish politics in Dundee did not hold direct links with Ireland.

The diverse background of Catholic clergymen raises questions, then, about their connection with diaspora nationalism and Walker's interpretation that they used moderate nationalism to stifle class politics. It seems more likely that they felt there was an expectation among parishioners that they be seen at nationalist events. In this sense, they were responding to local engagement with the Land War, rather than shaping it, and they then sought to align themselves with the more moderate, and wealthier, elements within the movement. It would also be misleading to assume all men and women religious in the

[80] *The Nation*, 20 August 1881, 17 December 1881.
[81] Census of Scotland 1881: Report Volume I, p. 185; Census of Scotland 1871: Report Volume I, p. 178; 'A History of St Andrew's, Dundee', SCA, DD19/2.
[82] John. F. McCaffery, 'Politics and the Catholic Community Since 1878', *Innes Review*, 29 (1978), 140-155, 145.
[83] *St. Mary's, Lochee, Dundee*, p. 23-9.
[84] Ibid, p. 14.

city shared the same political views: the land movement received support from radical as well as conservative clergymen.[85]

There are some indications that not all clergymen in Dundee were comfortable supporting the Ladies' Land League. Local priests were always eager to be present on the platform at Land League events, but they were occasionally absent from women's demonstrations. Curiously when Annie Darcy, Ellen Stewart, Catherine Hopper, Sarah McCarron and Mary Gray accompanied Marguerite Moore on the platform in Thistle Hall, no clergymen were present, and neither was Jane Keenan.[86] Similarly, when Moore spoke in Glasgow two nights earlier, she was joined by three local women and no priests. Perhaps their absence reflected a discomfort with single women assuming public roles, or they were simply less interested in associating with low paid jute workers. Equally, they may have been cautious of appearing with Moore, who held views that were to the left of the Land League executive in Ireland. Priests were again absent at the demonstration for the imprisoned Moore in April 1882. Whatever the motive, the meetings indicate that the Ladies' Land League had some autonomy and events did not always go ahead with priests in attendance. The close alliance of Jane Keenan with the Catholic Church was not representative of all members. In many ways the local branches benefitted significantly from the Catholic Church's material resources, but priests did not steer the direction of the organisation.

* * *

Marguerite Moore returned to speak in Dundee in September 1882. She was joined by Edward McHugh, who had just come back from a tour of the Isle of Skye where he addressed crofters on the similarities of the Irish and Scottish land questions, and had been identified by police as a troublesome agitator.[87] His presence on the platform alongside Moore again linked the Ladies' Land League in Scotland with the radical, Georgite wing of the wider land movement. Moore was given six pounds raised by local members, yet by that stage the Ladies' Land League in Ireland had been disbanded after an acrimonious dispute with Charles Stewart Parnell and the diaspora branches were thrown into uncertainty. Her visit was the last public meeting of the Lochee and St. Andrews branches, and over the following months the organisation faded. In November Michael Davitt spoke

[85] Stephen Bell, *Rebel, Priest and Prophet: A Biography of Dr. Edward McGlynn* (New York, 1937).
[86] *Dundee Courier*, 12 April 1882.
[87] *United Ireland*, 9 September 1882; *The Nation*, 30 Sept 1882; Peter Speirs, Sheriff Substitute, Portree to Sheriff Ivory, 31 May 1882, National Records of Scotland, Papers of Sheriff William Ivory (1825-1915), GD1/36/1/38; Andrew Newby, *The Life and Times of Edward McHugh* (Lewiston, 2005), pp. 42-50.

in Dundee, yet he made no mention of the contribution of local women during the Land War.[88] During a short lifespan of little over one year, however, the branches of the Dundee Ladies' Land League were among the most vibrant in Britain. Dundee was, as the saying goes, a 'women's city', and the high proportions of women in the textile workforce, sometimes as the main breadwinners, and their predominance in the Irish community, provided a congenial environment for the organisation and led to branches that rivalled those in much larger centres of Irish settlement in Liverpool, Glasgow and London. There was no comparable mobilisation of Irish women in Dundee for the rest of the century, and while existing studies suggest Irishwomen were not significantly involved in trade unionism or suffragism in subsequent decades, both areas are under-researched and merit more scrutiny.[89]

Adopting transnational perspectives on the Ladies' Land League is necessary because the organisation connected people in multiple locations, and local branches can not be fully understood in isolation. Yet taking a large-scale view, as Lara Putnam has observed, risks 'overemphasizing the importance of that which connects, and underestimating the weight of that which is connected'.[90] The Ladies' Land League in Dundee was plugged into networks of Irish activism through the circuitry of mobile agitators and newspapers, but local situations and experiences gave the branches a distinctive stamp. Their vibrancy was based on the interpersonal networks and class-based camaraderie developed through members' jobs and living circumstances. There was considerable overlap with the Catholic Church and religious humanitarianism, but priests responded to women's mobilisation rather than initiating it. The local membership profile challenges assumptions that the organisation was primarily a middle-class affair and suggests that the agency of working class women in late-nineteenth century Irish diaspora activism has been neglected. The Ladies' Land League disrupted gender expectations and offered emigrants an unprecedented opportunity to publicly protest injustice in Ireland, and also provided an outlet for frustrations rooted in urban industrial life.

[88] *Dundee Courier*, 2 Nov 1882; *Freeman's Journal*, 2 Nov 1882.
[89] Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, pp. 212-13; Walker, *Juteopolis*, pp. 2, 143; Norman Watson, 'Daughters of Dundee. Gender and Politics in Dundee: the Representation of Women 1870-1997', PhD Thesis, Open University (2000), p. 62.
[90] Lara Putnam, 'The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast', *The American Historical Review* 121, 2 (2016), pp. 377-402, p. 377-8.