The 1798 Centenary and local politics in Limerick city

TADHG MOLONEY

The campaign to organise celebrations of the centenary of the 1798 rebellion in Limerick city is discussed. The central role played by the city's advanced nationalists is highlighted and the attempt to use the commemoration to advance the political career of John Daly is analysed.

Throughout the year 1898 the centenary celebration of the United Irishman rebellion of 1798 united all shades of nationalist opinion in Ireland and was an important factor in the development of political consciousness of both nationalists and those of a trade union/labour disposition. Irish nationalists had seen how successful the Diamond Jubilee celebrations for Queen Victoria in Ireland had been the year before and determined that it was necessary to show where 'Ireland's true loyalty' lay. In honouring the heroes of 1798 they hoped that it would arouse national feeling against the continuance of British rule in Ireland.[1] The most prominent individual involved in these celebrations in Limerick city was John Daly, who had been imprisoned for possession of explosives during the Fenian campaign in Britain in 1884 and who on release from prison on 20 August 1896 concentrated on nationalist political agitation in the city.[2] In particular he became involved in the Limerick Amnesty Association, which was considered to be the parent of all other associations in the country by that name.[3] It had been established during the month of November 1889 for the purpose of securing the freedom of Irish political prisoners, and more especially that of Daly himself.[4] He now took control of this association and used it as the basis for the '98 Centenary Association, which he was instrumental in forming on 9 June 1897.

A week prior to the association's establishment, an advertisement with the title ''98 Centenary Celebrations', had appeared in the local nationalist newspaper, announcing that a small number of the city's inhabitants deemed it appropriate to hold a public meeting to form a committee in order to celebrate 'The men who rose in dark and evil days to right their native land'. The invitation was addressed to all citizens, irrespective of party, creed or class. The men who penned this advertisement certainly knew the words of the song 'The Memory of the Dead', and were aware that such emotive expression was bound to arouse feelings of nationalist sentimentality.[5] Limerick was not of course alone in establishing branches of the '98 Association, other towns and cities had also decided on this course. Roy Foster has argued that these associations did not spring up spontaneously but had come into existence following the initiative of a group of men from Wexford, living in Dublin, probably in 1879 and who believed that the

[1] Timothy J. O'Keeffe, 'The 1898 Efforts to Celebrate the United Irishmen: The '98 Centennial' *Eire/Ireland,* vol. xxiii (1988) pp 52-3.

[2] CO 904/65, County Inspector's Report 3 May 1897.

[3] *Limerick Leader,* (*L.L.*), 22 Feb. 1895.

[4] CO 904/16, Report on the Amnesty Movement (undated).

[5] *L.L.*, 2 June 1897 & T. F. O'Sullivan, *The Young Irelanders* (Tralee, 1944) p. 299.

rebellion was worth commemorating. The Fenians following their disaster in 1867 saw that by infiltrating these associations they were involving themselves 'in the continuing struggle for faith and fatherland against the Saxon'.[6]

No indication was given as to the identity of those who requested the meeting in Limerick. However, it is clear that they came from among the ranks of the city's advanced nationalists. Daly had signalled such a move during the preceding month, when he declared at a meeting of the Amnesty Association that they should transform themselves into 'a '98 committee'. The original proposal however did not come from Daly but from P. O'Reilly, who was the Hon. Secretary of the Association and a member of the Sarsfield Branch of the Irish Independent League, a Parnellite body.[7] It had been argued that of the three major cities, Dublin, Cork and Limerick, the latter was slow to respond. Another key figure was John Crowe, a clerk who resided in Upper William Street, who was a leading and influential member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The police had placed him as number two on the list of Fenian suspects for Limerick.[8] Just as those behind the new movement supported advanced nationalism, they used the opportunity presented by the meeting to generate a nationalist enthusiasm for the commemoration of an earlier insurgency against the Crown that was not only ultimately defeated, but ironically, in which Limerick city did not participate. Daly admitted that such was the case when he suggested that 'if the men of Limerick had the backbone to stand by Wexford, England's power would have gone down before their united strength'.[9] Particularly embarrassing to nationalists was the fact that Crown forces in the form of the Limerick City Militia under the command of Colonel Vereker, had become involved in quelling an aspect of the rebellion in Sligo when they fought against the French in a skirmish at Colooney, and a Limerick street had been named after the scene of their triumph.[10] It became a central issue during the year to have the name of the street changed from commemorating 'the bloody slaughter of Irish peasantry in the West of Ireland.'[11]

The new association was to be used as a catalyst to project John Daly into the mayoralty of the city in 1898 and 1899. Daly had outmanoeuvred the constitutional nationalists by ingratiating himself on the side of the working class, especially through supporting a strike involving sweepers and carters employed by the Borough Council. Quite a number of the men who were involved in furthering the cause of the workers during the dispute were also participants in the Amnesty Association and the '98 Centenary Association, such as William Whelan, President of the Trades Council, John McKnight, Secretary of the Congregated Trades and John Prendergast among others.[12] The former two were also members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and would more than likely have supported Daly anyway, although that was not always the case. They also saw the importance of supporting Daly in order to hold popular support. With such captive supporters, it was decided to put in place plans for the coming year's celebration.

6 Roy Foster, 'Remembering 1798' in Ian McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001) pp 77-8.

7 *L.L.*, 16 April & 17 May 1897.

8 *L.L.*, 2 March 1898, 24 May 1897 & N.A.I., CBS 4755/S. 2 April 1892. There is also a police profile on John Crowe in CO 904/17.

9 *L.L.*, 11 Oct 1897.

10 John Begley, *The Diocese of Limerick: From 1691 to the Present Time* (Dublin, 1938) p. 133. The name of this street was later changed to Wolfe Tone Street.

11 *L.L.*, 1 April 1898.

12 *L.L.*, 10 May, 21 May & 11 June 1897.

The inaugural meeting 'for the proper observance in Limerick of the centenary of the '98 heroes'[13] was held in the Town Hall on 9 June 1897 with a very large attendance which transcended the class divide. John Daly was elected as the permanent chairman of the Centenary Executive Committee, which consisted of fifty-nine members, in addition to the treasurer and three secretaries. It was apparently envisaged that although seemingly cumbersome, such a large committee would be necessary to represent the brigades or associations that were to be formed leading up to the commemoration. Also serving on the committee was the editor of the *Limerick Leader*, T.B. Naughton, who was to be very useful to the association for publicity. At least six of the committee were to be elected to the city council a couple of years later; John Godsell, President of the Congregated Trades, Richard O'Connor, a printer, David Gilligan, a publican, James Kett, a master cooper, William Whelan, a fitter, and James Hishon Moran, a solicitor, the latter three of whom were members of the Parnellite National League in 1892.[14]

The meeting in the Town Hall included delegates from the trades' guilds such as the bakers', plumbers' and masons' and the nationalist bands such as the Parnellite Boherbuoy, Sarsfield, No 9 Independent and the anti-Parnellite, St. Mary's. Despite their differences and rivalries these bands wanted to be involved in the celebrations, and their attitude was symptomatic of the general political consensus prevailing at that time. The Parnell Young Men's Brigade and the Parnellite Sarsfield Branch of the Irish Independent League were also present. While there was a notable absence of any formal anti-Parnellite group, this did not mean that there was not any participation by individuals from that faction.[15]

During the course of his address to the meeting Daly set forth a challenge to the people of Limerick:

> I am sure there is enough of manhood in Limerick to celebrate this event in a manner worthy of Limerick's traditions and Limerick's history. This may become a test question, and afford an opportunity of showing what people in the city are prepared to come forward and honour themselves and Limerick in honouring the patriotic dead, and when this is over perhaps we will be able to know who are the hypocrites who are prepared to do the patriot's duty only when it is fashionable to do so.[16]

In tandem with the establishment of a movement to commemorate the rebellion, it was decided to initiate a major challenge to established constitutional nationalism in the city when it was resolved that Daly should challenge for the position of Mayor of the city for 1898, with the declaration, 'what more becoming or fitting man could they have in the Civic Chair on that occasion than John Daly'.[17]

A vacancy had occurred in the Irishtown Ward in the city following the resignation of a councillor, Mr Kennelly, and John Daly saw this as an opportunity to facilitate his election to the civic chair. However this also exposed just how fragile nationalist unity was, even some of the 'natural' followers of advanced nationalism were unhappy with

[13] *L.L.*, 11 June 1897.

[14] They attended the convention for the selection of candidates on 15 June of that year for the forthcoming general election, *Limerick Chronicle [L.C.]*, 16 June 1892.

[15] *L.L.*, 11 June 1897 & 29 Nov 1897.

[16] *L.L.*, 11 June 1897.

[17] *L.L.*, 13 Aug 1897.

Daly's attempt to sideline them. Local constitutionalism also reacted unfavourably and the Sarsfield Branch of the Irish Independent League (IIL), who viewed Daly as a threat to their hegemony in the Borough Council decided to put forward their own candidate in opposition. The membership of the Council was, with the exception of a few, Parnellite in composition.[18] Following the nomination of three candidates, Thomas Dillon, grocer/publican as the IIL candidate, John Daly and William Whelan, a fitter who was a staunch supporter of Daly, the mayor as chief magistrate heard objections, as was normal procedure, against any of the nominees. It transpired that John Daly's name was not on the burgess roll. Evidently it had been struck off, and he was 'therefore not legally eligible for office'. Also, the nomination paper handed in by him had as his proposer, seconder, and (with one exception) assenters identical to those of William Whelan. Because of these inconsistencies, Daly's nomination was declared null and void.[19] Whelan, who was elected, remained on the council for only a short period, as he was also struck off the roll. In any case Whelan was as far as the '98 Centenary Association was concerned merely holding the seat for John Daly in the Irishtown Ward until Daly became eligible to represent the Ward.[20]

The aftermath of this debacle saw Daly endeavouring to cajole, embarrass, insult, court and intimidate the Borough Council into accepting him. At a meeting at the O'Connell Monument in August, he noted the fact that its members had from time to time taken delight in professing their nationalist predilections and thereby would not object to announcing that the preferred candidate of the people would also be their candidate for the mayoralty of the city for the centenary year.[21] In an effort to persuade the city fathers to accept him, Daly informed those present that a delegation would approach the representatives of the various wards, and enquire as to whether they would be prepared to surrender to the wishes of the people, and if there was not any compliance he threatened to use the Parnellite tactic of boycott against them, which was not lost on those who were of that political persuasion. He warned that it would be their 'duty to point out the men who defied the people', and that the shops of the men who showed such resistance would be shunned. He also harkened back to his election as a Parnellite MP for the city at the general election of 1895, relating how the electorate of the city had selected him to be their representative at Westminster, and insisting therefore that it was proper for him to represent the Irishtown Ward.[22]

A similar tactic had been utilised by a group of people in Dublin who were more than likely members of the Amnesty Association and who were representing James Egan, an ex-Fenian convict, in an effort to have him appointed as the rate collector for Limerick city. During the course of the meeting, Egan was, just like John Daly, portrayed as 'one of Ireland's latest martyrs who though innocent of crime, has been nine long dreary years in a British dungeon for the sake of Ireland'. It was on this basis they believed that all other candidates should step aside in favour of Egan who should be given the position. It was intimated that the Mayor of Limerick, Bryan O'Donnell, had promised Egan that the first lucrative position that became available under the remit of the Council would be his. They now accused the mayor of being two faced and of merely posing as an Irish Nationalist:

[18] CO 904/66, Report of the Divisional Commissioners Office, Cork, 9 October 1897.
[19] *L.L.*, 11 Aug 1897 & *L.C.*, 9 Oct 1897.
[20] *L.L.*, 13 Aug 1897, 25 Oct 1897 & CO 904/66, Report of Divisional Commissioners Office, Cork, November 1897.
[21] *L.L.*, 13 Aug 1897.
[22] *L.L.*, 15 Aug 1897.

> [He] ought to retire in Mr Egan's favour. The Amnesty Association was endeavouring to put those ex-political prisoners in as good a position as they had before they were imprisoned. It was strange that the first position which became vacant in his native city, and which Mr Egan was promised that the Mayor of Limerick should oppose him.

Furthermore it was said that it had never been heard of before that 'the Mayor of any city going for a position in the Corporation during his term of office. It was reported by the police that no person was prepared to propose Egan for the position of collectorship.[23] One of the other candidates William M. Nolan, Town Councillor had let it be known that he would withdraw from the contest for the job if the other contestants did likewise. For this 'patriotic' action, he was thanked by the Dublin group. In any event the others did not do so, and Bryan O'Donnell, the serving mayor was elected to the position.[24]

Support for Daly came from working class organisations such as the Congregated Trades at a meeting of what was described as skilled workers, held in the Mechanics' Institute, at Bank Place. This is not surprising, as the Congregated Trades was involved in the formation of the Centenary Association, and James Kett, a member, who supported the resolution for Daly's candidature, had proposed him the month previously at a public meeting at the O'Connell Monument. In so doing he explained:

> He had been a comrade of John Daly's since his boyhood…He did not see what John Daly had done since he came out of prison, only the one noble and patriotic action of throwing in his lot with the working people of the city of Limerick…On that account alone he [Kett], as a working man would support John Daly altogether apart from the sufferings he endured in the cause of Ireland.[25]

This approach was not new: similar remarks had been made at the O'Connell Monument. The Congregated Trades had some seventeen years previously indicated that 'The Trades of Limerick have always been identified with struggle for the welfare of our Country…',[26] and readily associated itself with Daly as he seemed to epitomise these sentiments. However, in spite of the sponsorship that he was receiving, John Daly did not have it all his own way and found the constitutionalists more than a match for him. Several councillors were approached with a view to obtaining their support, and were visited by a deputation of the '98 Committee. It had been announced that eight members of the Council were due to retire in November 1897 by rotation, and Daly threatened that if they would not support him he would nominate candidates to oppose them.[27] Of the six councillors that they intended to persuade, two could not be contacted; one of these was deemed to be too antagonistic and was not approached. Another was retiring and therefore was not worth the effort. Two gave categorical refusals to co-operate with the Committee. They were Councillor Michael McDonnell

[23] N.A.I. CBS 9583/S. 11 February 1895 & *L.L.*, 11 Feb 1895. The police had appended a report from the *Daily Independent*, 11 February 1895 of the meeting that took place in the National Club, Dublin. There is also reference to Egan's attempt at gaining the city rate collectorship in a police profile of him in CO 904/17.

[24] *L.L.*, 8, 11 & 13 Feb 1895. There were four candidates for the position, the Mayor, Bryan O'Donnell, William M. Nolan, James F. Egan and a Mr. Delaney but the latter two did not figure at all in the election.

[25] *L.L.*, 10 Sept 1897.

[26] *Munster News* (*M.N.*), 3 Nov 1880.

[27] P CO 904/66, County Inspector's Report 9 Sept 1897 & *L.L.*, 17 Sept 1897.

of the Castle Ward, who was later elected Alderman of the Market Ward, and Councillor Michael Donnelly of the Irishtown Ward, who not only had ambitions of becoming mayor himself, but had proposed the candidate previously mentioned for the ward.[28] He had been elected to the Executive Committee at the formation of the Centenary Association and was one of three chairmen who had been elected unanimously, but did not like the direction that it was taking and had resigned.[29]

Some established local politicians were obviously concerned at the growth of a personal Daly cult and embarked on a policy of disparagement. This idolisation of Daly was noticed by the Parnellite MP for St. Patrick's Constituency, Dublin, William Field, when he came to Limerick to explain the objects of the new Sarsfield Branch of the Parnellite Irish Independent League. In the course of his speech, he praised the actions of John Daly in the cause of Amnesty and humanity, but was to be challenged by a person attending with the remark 'he [Daly] did more than all the members of Parliament put together' and had to defend his and that of his fellow nationalist constitutionalists by 'reminding him that every time the Queen's Speech was read the Independent members always introduced an amendment on that subject in the shape of a motion asking for the Amnesty of political prisoners but for the action of the Irish Independent Party the question would have sunk almost into oblivion in Parliament'.[30]

Further splits in the ranks of local nationalism extended to the rank-and-file membership of the Independent League. At a meeting of the Council held on 28 September, Councillor David Nelson, a seed merchant, expressed the opinion that the '98 Centenary Committee in Limerick city was not a *bona fide* committee, but a John Daly Election Committee, 'John Daly wanted to be Mayor for '98 and that was the pure and simple reason for which the Centenary Committee was got up'. Nelson also maintained that Daly was using the tactic of intimidation, of which he was a master, in order to attain his goal. William Whelan sought to avenge his and Daly's treatment by Nelson who was the main objector to Daly's name being on the Burgess Roll by taking a case to the Revision Court to have him also removed from the roll. Not succeeding there, he appealed the verdict before the Queen's Bench Division, but they upheld the original decree made by the Mayor and Assessors, after which Whelan ended up having to pay the legal costs.[31]

Members of the '98 Committee had also broken into and occupied a room that had been used by the Sarsfield Branch of the Irish Independent League of which Councillor Michael Donnelly was President, for the purpose of holding a meeting. This had taken place after they were refused the use of a room to hold their meetings by the Council. The League had in the past given the '98 Committee the benefit of the room but now withheld such permission, justifying their action on the basis that 'the Centenary body was a leverage in support of Mr John Daly's well boomed candidature for the Mayoralty'. This resulted in splitting the members of the League into two sections, a substantial number who were in favour of their President being elected to the civic chair, and those who preferred to patronise the '98 Committee and John Daly.[32] Constitutional nationalists were able to control the movements of the marching bands by implementing legislation already in existence. The Mayor, Councillor Michael Cusack a

28 *L.L.*, 11 Aug, 3 Sept 1897 & *L.C.*, 17 Jan 1899.

29 *L.L.*, 27 Aug 1897. The vacancy was filled by James Kett: the other two chairmen were Michael Prendergast & John Crowe.

30 *L.L.*, 17 May 1897.

31 *L.C.*, 30 November 1897.

32 *L.C.*, 28 Sept 1897 & N.A.I. CO 904/66, Divisional Commissioners Office 9 Oct 1897.

'House and Ecclesiastical Painter' by profession, living at 49 George Street,[33] representing the Glentworth Ward, and an Anti-Parnellite, prevented the nationalist bands by proclamation from playing music in the streets at night after six o'clock, which was the time that meetings were held by Daly. The proclamation was sent to the District Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary for enforcement and was worded as follows;

> As Chief Magistrate of the city, I have to call upon you to kindly have the necessary steps taken to prevent any of the local bands from playing or parading the streets of Limerick after the hour of six o'clock p.m. on any evening until further notice. Please serve the usual notice on the leaders of the bands that if they disobey this order they will be prosecuted.[34]

Before the police could act on the directive given by the mayor, an order had to be received from the magistrates, which was granted.[35] For this action Cusack incurred the invective of the *Limerick Leader* which was unequivocally supporting Daly and branded the former as being a coercionist who was 'thoroughly inoculated…with the *virus* of anti-Nationalism'.[36] The *Limerick Leader* had been established on 9 August 1889 by Jeremiah Buckley who was a staunch Parnellite. The first issue indicated that it would be a dedicated and loyal newspaper of the Irish Party in both the counties of Limerick and Clare, and its first editor John McEnery, a native of Tralee, County Kerry, was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment in 1890 for subscribing to the twin objects of boycotting and intimidation in his newspaper during the plan of campaign.[37] McEnery had had an interesting and varied career. Having joined the Royal Irish Constabulary in 1882, he lasted for only two months, getting into some trouble at the Depot he resigned. He then enlisted in the army, that too did not last and his father secured his discharge in 1883. Following on from these two misadventures he decided on a journalistic career, and was employed on the staff of the *Kerry Sentinel, Kerry Evening Post*, and *Kerry Weekly Reporter* respectively, and in 1887 received employment with the *Freeman's Journal* and from there was appointed editor of the *Limerick Leader* on the date of its establishment.[38]

The playing of music by bands was a sure way of attracting the electorate to meetings, and Daly had used this very effectively and then addressed them with the message that he wanted to disseminate. He had seen the importance of having bands present to keep the audience enthralled. In fact members of the Sarsfield Fife and Drum Band who were supporters of Donnelly alleged that Daly had used a system of terrorization in endeavouring to solicit votes in the Irishtown Ward and that the '98 Centenary Committee promised them uniforms if Daly became mayor and was conditional on the band always being ready 'when called upon to support his candidature, by playing or otherwise'. However, the band quickly informed them that

[33] Strattens' *Dublin, Cork and South of Ireland: A Literary, Commercial and Social Review* (London, 1892) p. 302. Michael Cusack was also a decorator, importer of French and English Paperhangings. He also controlled with the aid of his son a similar business in Grafton Street, Dublin.

[34] CO 904/66, Divisional Commissioners Office 9 Oct 1897.

[35] *L.L.*, 1 Oct 1897. In addition to the mayor as chief magistrate, the other magistrates who signed the order were J. Guinane, James O'Mara and E.M. Hickson, who was the resident magistrate

[36] *L.L.*, 15 Oct 1897.

[37] Siobhán Jones, 'The War of the Words: Limerick's media in the 1890s' in David Lee & Debbie Jacobs (eds), *Made in Limerick*: *History of Trade and Commerce Volume I* (Limerick, 2003) pp 218-19.

[38] CO 904/18, Undated file on John McEnery.

they 'were never bought over for a suit of clothes'.[39] During the lead up to the elections of 1898, he delayed the commencement of a meeting for over an hour and a half until a band showed up.[40]

On the eve of the centenary year the association had two hundred placards posted and placed in the windows of public houses throughout the city advertising that 'A Great Public Meeting will be held tonight-New Years Eve to usher in the Centenary year of glorious '98', which would include a procession in which all the city bands would participate. This was to commence at 9 p.m., which was as has been shown within the time that bands were not allowed to play music in the streets. Following this announcement the District Inspector W. Hetreed of the Royal Irish Constabulary informed the bands that the mayor's order had not been rescinded, and that by playing in the streets they would have been responsible for any breach of the peace that would have occurred. Also if the bands took part, which would have been at variance with the direction given by the police it would have more than likely 'result badly for their instruments' and they knew this from previous experience. This led to the non participation of any band in the parade and although there was a large attendance at the demonstration, it was described as a lack lustre event, which was attributed to their absence.[41] The prohibition was not removed until 4 March 1898 and then the bands were only allowed to parade and play music until ten o'clock in the evening.[42] For the issuing of such a decree Daly accused the mayor of implementing the work of the 'English garrison' in Ireland, and on another occasion of being 'an Amnesty supporter today, a 'flunkey' tomorrow and God only knew what he'd be the day after'.[43]

Another constitutional politician to incur the displeasure of Daly was Alderman Laurence Carr, Merchant, who had been involved in the Amnesty Association and elected to the Executive Committee of the Centenary Association. He had been a member of the Sarsfield Branch of the Irish Independent League, which was obviously a sufficient reason for his expulsion not only from the committee but from the association. While Daly did not refer to Carr by name, he mentioned that 'an Alderman came forward and found it convenient to allow himself to be elected on the executive, and it lay with them to expel him and let no more of his class into this Association'. There was no other Alderman on the committee, and the members following Daly's lead expelled him unanimously.[44] With this planned act Daly was to ensure that any person who held an elected municipal position, with the exception of Whelan, would never be a member of the association, never mind a member of the committee. Ordinary members of the constitutional movement continued to remain members; he plainly saw that these men could be transformed into supporters.

For the present, however, once his bid for the mayoralty had proved abortive, constitutionalism had triumphed and having failed in his attempt to get nominated for the Council, Daly decided to leave for America. Addressing a meeting on 28 October, the day before his departure, he admitted that 'the Corporators of Limerick have defeated me in my efforts to serve the people', and could not resist having a swipe at those in authority, namely the middle and upper classes, who refused to support him

39 *L.L.*, 4 Oct 1897.

40 N.A.I., CSORP 18261/S., there appeared to have been a difficulty in getting a band to attend: the No 9 Independent Fife and Drum Band eventually turned up.

41 N.A.I., CBS 1898, 15009/S. 31 Dec 1897 & 3 Jan 1898.

42 *L.L.*, 29 Sept 1897, CO 904/66, Report of Divisional Commissioner, Cork, 9 Oct 1897 & *L.L.*, 4 March 1898.

43 *L.L.*, 29 Oct 1897 & 23 June 1897.

44 *L.L.*, 27 Oct 1897. His position on the Executive Committee was filled by J.H. Moran, Solicitor.

(and whom he was apt to call West Britons) and the working class who were supposed to be of no consequence to nationalism. Was this a deliberate echoing of what Wolfe Tone said when he uttered the famous words that if the men of property will not assist us, then we will get the respectable men of no property to do so? If at the time he spoke such words in the eighteenth century, the men of property were the landlords and those 'of no property' was the middle class, Daly gave his own interpretation to these words, as others would do in the years to come.[45] Portraying himself as the eternal martyr, he announced that 'there was a braver and better and a nobler Ireland across the ocean, to an Ireland that will not tolerate men, who will become the cat's paw and the instruments of the garrison in Ireland in throwing out the people'. Furthermore, he indicated that he would be returning in the spring of the following year to honour the men of 1798, and praised the men of the Irishtown Ward who were not reticent in supporting him, and that, given half a chance, would not have hesitated in doing so. Using the law when it suited him, he blamed his defeat on the members of the Borough Council who did not act in accordance with the laws as laid down by Government but followed the advice of the law advisor to the council, though it is difficult to know how else the law advisor could have acted as his function was to advise on the legislation as it existed.[46]

John Daly's departure did not mean that the '98 Movement went into abeyance; it continued to be a thorn in the constitutionalists' side, with branches being organised throughout the city in working class districts. The overall character thrust of the movement was, in essence, urban-orientated. By the end of 1897 there were eight branches in the city with an approximate membership of three hundred and ninety. Of these at least three were actively increasing their membership so that by March 1898 there were eleven branches with a total of seven hundred and fifty nine members, averaging sixty nine members to each branch. Obviously there were branches with more than that, it was therefore estimated that these branches varied in number from forty to one hundred and fifty members and expected to be more so on Daly's return, whereas the members of the county branches were much smaller ranging from twenty to fifty.[47] These branches adopted the military connotation 'brigade', obviously seeing themselves as similar to the Irish Brigade of the eighteenth century, which fought in the service of France against England. Their appeal was locality-based, being generally composed of men from the 'lower orders' in such areas as the Windmill, St. Mary's, Pennywell, Blackboy Pike and Watergate.[48] The new bodies used the names of popular patriots: Wolfe Tone's Own Brigade, Young Emmet Brigade, Lord Edward Brigade and Parnell Young Brigade, which was aligned to the Irish Independent League. The '98 Committee was also responsible for organising the procession to the monument at Mount St. Lawrence Cemetery commemorating the Manchester Martyrs, at which event particular prominence was given to these brigades.

The '98 anniversary became the battleground between rival nationalist groups in Limerick. The commencement of 1898 saw the constitutionalists attempting to take over the celebrations. The Council chamber at the inauguration of the mayor on 1 January was adorned with the motto '1798-1898-Let us all be United Irishmen once again'. The mayor during the course of his speech of acceptance referred to the centenary and the

[45] Marianne Elliott, *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence* (Yale, 1989) p. 418.

[46] *L.L.*, 29 Oct 1897.

[47] N.A.I., CBS 15200/S Return of '98 Centenary Committees or Clubs as existing on 31 Dec 1897 &15984/S Return giving the number of Clubs, number of members and funds on hands in each County, and major cities in Ireland on 31 March 1898 & N.A.I. CO 904/68 Report of County Inspector March 1898.

[48] CO 904/68. County Inspector's Report dated 2 July 1898.

fact that Irish Americans would be visiting the country but regretted that Limerick was not on the list of places to be visited by the Irish-American exiles. There was no explanation given for this. Could it have been due to the realisation that Limerick did not have a role in the insurgency? In any case, it illustrated both the importance of local pride and the cut-throat competition between the nationalist factionists in the city. In an effort to stymie the local '98 Committee and extol their own nationalist credentials, the constitutionalists through the mayor recommended that the Dublin Executive be contacted; they, he believed, would rectify the matter and place Limerick on the list.[49]

Two separate central executives existed in Dublin at this time, each receiving 'support from different local committees. One was the original '98 Centenary Executive, which was mainly IRB in orientation and the other was the United Irishmen's Centennial Association, who 'profess[ed] to admit all Nationalists without distinction'.[50] It was probably this executive that they contacted. The constitutionalists did not have long to wait before Daly's supporters in the '98 Association took issue with this. A statement that the mayor was responsible for having Limerick placed on the list for the exiles visit was published in the Dublin *Evening Standard*, and reproduced in the *Limerick Leader*, they immediately refuted it, declaring:

> To John Daly alone the credit of that longed for approaching visit, and no other man, not even the Right Worshipful the Mayor of Limerick, has the slightest right or claim whatever to the thanks which the citizens owe on the matter to their dauntless Felon.[51]

As far as Daly's supporters were concerned the only person responsible for the inclusion of Limerick on the list for these exiles rested with him alone, and anybody attempting to claim otherwise was not being truthful. In the end there was to be no visit of Irish-American exiles to Ireland, due to circumstances of the Spanish American war, which was beyond their control.[52]

Two councillors, John Kivlehan and David Nelson, possibly with the advent of the Local Government Act that was to come into force in January 1899, and looking to their future election prospects, proposed renaming some of the streets after the patriots of the rebellion, and that councillors should have the option of wearing their official robes in green or red, and that the Royal Arms displayed above the mayor's office be replaced with the City Arms. But sound business sense triumphed over nationalism. Despite the argument in favour of the proposed street name changes that 'it was a disgraceful thing that the leading thoroughfares of the city should be called after English kings, who did everything they could to demean this country and lower it', the proposal did not even receive a seconder. The second proposal, namely that of changing the colour of the robes, was treated with derision and amusement, and although it received a seconder, it was asserted that 'if they wanted to honour the memory of the men of '98 they ought to do something practical – let them start a factory and not be going on with this cheap patriotism'. The motion was defeated by twelve votes to seven, with two not voting.[53] In fairness to Kivlehan, he had by way of resolution, proposed at a Council meeting as early as June 1898:

49 *L.C.*, 1 January 1898.
50 CO 904/68, Inspector General's Report, February 1898.
51 *L.L.*, 11 March 1898.
52 *L.L.*, 20 May 1898.
53 *L.C.*, 1 Nov 1898.

> That to commemorate this centenary year of the rebellion of 1798, some or all of the following streets, or any other streets the Council may decide on be renamed as follows: - William street to Wolfe Tone street; Henry street to Henry Grattan street; Nelson street to Lord Edward Fitzgerald street; Military road to Robert Emmett street; and George street to O'Connell street.

This had been unanimously adopted, there being twenty two members of the Council present, including the mayor. It was later decided to add in Colooney Street as an amendment to the resolution with the proviso that a suitable name could later be agreed on. The *Limerick Leader* praised the action of Kivlehan as patriotic and expressed the view that all the members of the Council 'will support him to a man and thus discharge a national duty which is incumbent upon the members as self-respecting Irishmen'.[54] But as we have seen this label of self-respecting Irishmen did not mean anything to the councillors when it came to voting on the issue. With the exception of the robes issue, it was the new Council of 1899 under the mayoralty of John Daly that was to follow through on implementing the other matters.

Surprisingly, for a newspaper that had eulogised Daly in the strongest possible terms, serialising the events that led to his apprehension and trial including his speech from the Dock, and given much publicity to the '98 Committee, the *Limerick Leader* only devoted a small column informing its readers that the centennial year had been commemorated in the city with a large and successful demonstration with tar barrels burning.[55] In fairness to the *Leader*, it was still very much disposed towards the Parnellite constitutionalists, as it had been since the fall of Parnell. This was exemplified by the advertisements that appeared in its pages publicising *The Parnellite*, a monthly newspaper magazine and *United Ireland*, the leading national weekly journal.[56] Throughout the month of January publishing articles by their leader John E. Redmond, entitled 'The Truth about '98', these articles related the events leading to the rebellion, the revolt itself and the aftermath, and were quite inflammatory. In one of these articles Redmond equated the rebellion to a civil war, accusing the Orangemen of being responsible for it and offering the view that the Orange Order in perpetuating such a crime was 'a faction which must take its place in history besides that of Robespierre, Couthon and Carriere' and that the Orangemen seemed to have reached a pitch of fiendish cruelty which was scarcely attained by the Jacobins'.[57] Language such as this was designed to stir the emotions of nationalists and placing the Orangemen in the invidious position of being on par with the leaders of the French Revolution, and was not doing any favours to loyalists. Also to equate the terror allegedly perpetrated by the Orangemen in '98 with that of the Jacobin terror was historically incorrect. The terror meted out by the Orangemen was that of a reactionary force quelling a rebellion, whereas the terror of the Jacobins was that of a state in a revolutionary situation.

The death of a leading member, John McKnight, secretary of the '98 Association one month before the official commemoration saw the various brigades of the association participate in his funeral service, not only were they paying homage to one of their own but also used it as a dress rehearsal for the forthcoming celebration. The panegyric on the man was full of glowing terms, describing him as a Fenian who was a 'consistent

[54] *L.L.*, 3 June & 11 July 1898.
[55] *L.L.*, 22 & 29 Oct, 3 & 5 Nov 1897 & 5 Jan 1898.
[56] *L.L.*, 7 Jan 1895.
[57] *L.L.*, 24 Jan 1898.

and uncompromising Nationalist from his boyhood, and figured conspicuously in the '67 movement with the other good and true men at that time'. His involvement in the Amnesty Association with the part he played in arranging the commemoration of the Manchester Martyrs was expressly highlighted. His participation as a trade unionist/ employer was described as being without blemish as 'he treated his employees in an honest manner and was ever ready to grant them concessions'. His occupancy for a number of years as president and secretary of the Mechanics' Institute and that as secretary of the Consolidated Trades and as a serving committee member of the Parnellite Sarsfield Branch of the Independent League ensured that many of the organisations and members who were also attached to the '98 Association attended the service.[58]

Clerical participation in the actions of the various '98 Associations or brigades leading up to and including the celebrations was practically negligible. There were two instances where there was a clerical input locally; a lecture was delivered in the Catholic Literary Institute by the Administrator of St. John's Parish, Rev Father T. Lee, entitled 'Remember '98'.[59] This had no connection and was not planned in conjunction with the '98 Association, obviously because of Daly's involvement. In contrast to this a Redemptorist, the Rev Father Daniel Tierney, who was the Director of the Confraternity of the Holy Family, was praised for his patriotism and action on advising the members from the pulpit 'that the memory of the men of '98 was worthy of the utmost respect and honour'. Furthermore, he praised enthusiastically the fight that these men 'made for their homes and altars and commended the action then taken to protest by force of arms against England's brutal tyranny'. In addition to this he terminated the service early in order that the members could attend the celebrations that were taking place on Monday 23 May 1898, which was the date one hundred years previously that the rebellion commenced.[60] Nonetheless, had there been no altars involved would such a panegyric have been as forthcoming by the reverend? A priest who was later to come to Limerick and became involved in anti-recruiting efforts against the British army during the Boer War 1899-1902, Rev Fr. Kavanagh referred to the '98 Centenary Movement as having a tendency 'to invigorate the enfeebled spirit of Irish Nationality' and 'will help to unite all our bickering factions, who, though they have the same object in view, yet render it unattainable by their dissensions'.[61]

The failure of the main celebration of the centenary that took place in Limerick on 23 May 1898 came not the church or from the forces of the crown but from Mother Nature. Despite all the elaborate arrangements made for the event, the organisers were not prepared for the lack of 'enthusiasm or earnestness displayed', which was in all probability due to 'the rain [that] … came down with redoubtable violence'. This led to the cancellation of the demonstration, which was very poorly attended, and then only by the 'lower orders' according to the police. Anthony Mackey, from Castleconnell, berated those who had not attended, 'there are men enjoying positions in the city and county because of the courage of the men one hundred years ago, but for some unfortunate reason they were not present. There were many who should be present who owed their positions to the voice and the power of the workingman, without which they would be

[58] *L.L.*, 24 May 1897, 6 April & 8 April 1898.
[59] *L.L.*, 21 Feb 1898.
[60] *L.L.*, 25 May 1898.
[61] *L.L.*, 8 Dec 1897.

the merest slaves'.[62] Daly had intimated some days previously that the electorate would, ensure when they got the impending franchise reform 'that the men they would have in the proper positions would be the workmen...'[63] This was a sure indication that preparations were being made for Daly's onslaught to capture the City Council and the mayoralty that had eluded him. For the remainder of the year, the '98 Centenary Association continued to hold their weekly meetings and the occasional lecture on aspects of the rebellion, which were read to interested audiences.[64] But as the centenary year petered out, a far more significant political development was taking place, that of extending the local franchise through the Local Government Act 1898, a measure which was to bring a profound and lasting change to local politics in Limerick and facilitate John Daly in the achievement of his political ambitions.

[62] *L.L.*, 25 May 1898, CO 904/68, Report of the Inspector General for the month of May 1898 & County Inspector's Report 2 June 1898.

[63] *L.L.*, 20 May 1898.

[64] *L.L.*, 30 May & 3 Aug 1898.