

## Historical Review

# “Who fears to speak of ninety-eight”?

Hume Logan

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Tonight, ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to cast your minds back 200 years — to 1791 — the year of the Mutiny on the Bounty, the death of Mozart and the publication of Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*. Dublin, the second city in the British Empire, had a population of 200,000. It was grand and elegant. In contrast, Belfast had a population of 18,000 and was small and squalid.

On this day, 10th October 1791, 200 years ago, two men boarded the coach in Dublin at 10.30 am. Few could have imagined the carnage which would result from their trip to Belfast. The two men were Theobald Wolfe Tone and Thomas Russell. Wolfe Tone is the most famous name in Irish history. He was the son of a Protestant coach builder in Dublin and his ambition was to join the army. His father opposed this and insisted that he entered Trinity College, Dublin, to train as a lawyer. Later he eloped with Matilda Withering of Grafton Street, and went to the Middle Temple in London for two years to become a barrister. When he returned to Ireland he joined the Leinster Circuit but he did not really like the law and was a failure as a barrister. He was more interested in politics and became involved with the Whig Club in Dublin which had been started by Lord Charlemont who was also the commander of the Volunteers. Tone started to write political pamphlets and as a result he was appointed secretary to the Catholic Committee which was then campaigning for catholic emancipation. Tone wrote a pamphlet entitled *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* in the summer of 1791, which brought him to the attention of the radical section of political thought in general and of the Volunteers of Belfast in particular. This



Fig 1. Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763 – 1798). (from Madden, *The United Irishmen*, 1846: Reference 10).

was a group, all protestant at first, which had been reactivated to protect the island from invasion by the French, but which had become much more active in promoting catholic emancipation, free trade and freedom of the Irish parliament from its English counterpart. Some of the Volunteer leaders invited Tone to come to Belfast to discuss the setting up of a radical group there. (Fig 1).

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Fig 2. Thomas Russell (1767–1803).  
(from Madden, *The United Irishmen*, 1846:  
Reference 10).

Tone brought with him Thomas Russell, a Protestant born in Cork who had met Tone in the gallery of the House of Commons and they became firm friends. Unfortunately he had gone bail for an American who had absconded and he had to sell his army commission to pay the forfeit. He was a tall handsome man who, while in the army had been posted to Belfast where he became very popular. (Fig 2). He met many of the liberals at this time and it was through him that Tone was invited to Belfast by the leaders of the Volunteers. These were mainly well-off merchants who could afford their own uniforms and arms. The organisation in the north was purely protestant

and mainly presbyterian as the catholics were not allowed to carry arms and the protestants did not really want them to do so as arms were a symbol of supremacy. It must also be noted that while they supported catholic emancipation they were staunchly against the catholic church. When Tone came to Belfast they were loyal to the Crown, but later this was to change.

The Volunteers were commanded by Lord Charlemont who had formed the Dublin Whig Club in 1789. This movement spread to Belfast the following year largely to control the exuberance of the Volunteers and they were much less committed to catholic emancipation. The co-founder and secretary in Belfast was Dr Alexander Henry Halliday. (Fig 3). He was born in 1728, the son of the minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Rosemary Street. He matriculated in Glasgow in 1743 and graduated there in 1751. Where he received his medical education is not known as there was not any clinical teaching in Glasgow till 1794 when the infirmary was opened. He wrote in 1751 to Dr Cullen who had been appointed Professor of Medicine in Glasgow stating that he had been in Paris at the time of the appointment; it might therefore be assumed that Halliday was studying in Paris before his graduation. Later he practised in Belfast and travelled all over the province of Ulster, charging one guinea per mile — despite this he was very popular. He had a long association with the Charitable Society and was President of the Linenhall Library from 1792 to 1798. Martha Matier wrote to her brother Dr William Drennan, perhaps a little uncharitably “I think they had an eye to his books more than to himself when they paid him the compliment”.



Fig 3. Dr Alexander Halliday (1728–1802).  
(Reproduced by kind permission of Mrs Martin  
de Bartolomé).

In 1770 Halliday was involved in an episode when Lord Donegall raised the rents on his estates in Co Antrim. The leases fell due at that time and fines were imposed on top of the leases. The tenants agreed to pay the increased rents but did not have the ready cash for the fines. This led to rich speculative merchants from Belfast taking over the leases and subletting the lands for profit. A co-operative organisation, the Hearts of Steel, incensed by this carried out various outrages on the cattle and farms of the tenants and when caught were prosecuted by the speculators. One of these was David Douglas, who was arrested by Mr Waddell Cunningham for haughing the cattle of his partner Mr Gregg, and was lodged in the barracks in Belfast. This resulted in a meeting of the Hearts of Steel in Templepatrick at which it was resolved to proceed to Belfast and free Douglas. Men having been collected *en route* to Belfast, some 1200 surrounded the barracks in Barrack Street and sent in a message demanding the release of the prisoner. This being denied they went to Cunningham's house at the lower end of Royal Avenue, broke into it and proceeded to break up the furniture. Dr Halliday mixed with the crowd and expostulated with them but was taken prisoner. He agreed to go to the barracks and try to procure the release of Douglas, promising that if he failed he would return and surrender himself as a hostage. At this stage the barrack gate was thrown open and shots were fired into the crowd by the soldiers, killing five and wounding nine of them. Halliday's interference prevented further firing but as he had not returned the crowd set fire to Cunningham's house and threatened to destroy Halliday's as well. The risk of the town being burnt down was so great that the prisoner was released and the crowd dispersed. When related it is not usually disclosed that Halliday had a lease for 539 acres with a rent of £120.6.0 and a fine of £500. Perhaps his efforts were not entirely altruistic.

The journey from Dublin took Tone and Russell thirty-six hours. On arrival they arranged a meeting for Friday, 14th October in Sugarhouse Entry, off High Street, to formulate the resolutions to be put to the inaugural meeting of the Society of United Irishmen, which took place on the 18th October. Tone is therefore credited with formation of the society — but did he? A year earlier he had formed a small club of nine people to discuss politics in Dublin. Two of the members were doctors — Whitley Stokes of whom Tone wrote "The very best man I have ever known" and who later became Professor of Medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons. The other doctor was William Drennan about whom I have already addressed this Society. Drennan had worked in Newry and then moved to Dublin. Later, on his return to his native Belfast he was a founder member of the Belfast Medical Society and was instrumental in the foundation of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution and therefore of our medical school. Drennan had earlier written to his brother-in-law about setting up a secret society and through their political club Tone must have known of this: I would submit that the true founder of the United Irishmen was William Drennan.

Tone left Belfast after the foundation of the society and returned to Dublin where further societies were set up. He did not return to Belfast till 1795 when he was on his way with his wife and family to exile in America. This was part of a deal made with the government when he had been associated with William Jackson who had come to Ireland as an emissary of the French. Before embarking he went out to the Cavehill and near McArt's Fort he and some of the founders of the society (Russell, Neilson, Simms, McCracken) made "a most solemn obligation . . . never

to desist in our efforts until we have subverted the authority of England over our country, and asserted our independence". Having been fêted in Belfast and presented with £1500 Tone and his family sailed to America. He did not stay long in the New World as he was pressed to go to France and try to encourage the French to invade Ireland. He soon became friendly with General Hoche, and with his support the Directorate mounted a force to invade Ireland in 1796. This was a disaster, the commander's ship was separated from his troops, and when they gained the Irish Coast the seas were so rough many could not even enter Bantry Bay. Those who did get into the bay were unable to disembark their troops, and ultimately the ships cut their cables and fled back to France.

The threat of invasion and its ultimate occurrence frightened the authorities. The Militia Act of 1793 had produced by ballot a force of catholics officered by protestants to act as local police. However, the threat of invasion had taken them from their local role to a national one, and consequently they had to be replaced by yet another group — the Yeomen. These units were formed in 1796 and were made up largely by loyalists and Orangemen. Political activity had driven some of the catholics into the United Irishmen and the societies were becoming much more organised and were arming to the best of their ability. The government needed to get information about what was going on and who was involved in the secret societies. They did this by bribing members of the societies to inform on their colleagues. Soldiers were also quartered in the local houses — something which was hated by the inhabitants. Intimidation was widespread and took the form of flogging, hanging, the application of pitch caps and burning of home-steads. These atrocities were perpetrated by the soldiers and often initiated by the local magistrates who were loyal, Orange in outlook and anything but impartial.

By 1797 things were becoming so serious that General Lake issued a proclamation which in effect established martial law, protecting informers and encouraging all arms to be given up under threat of death. The object was to disarm the rebels but it probably had the opposite effect and it was said there were 280,000 United

Irishmen at this time. They were poorly armed as most had hardly enough to live on. Local blacksmiths forged pikes which were hidden in thatched roofs, the houses of the better off were raided, their guns stolen and their garden statues taken to melt down into musket balls.

By this time the United Irishmen were highly organised. Each local group sent a representative to a higher group and ultimately to provincial groups and a directory in Dublin. One of the leaders there was Lord Edward Fitzgerald, a brother of the Duke of Leinster and a member of the premier family in Ireland. Wealthy and influential, the Duke owned Carton, a grand house in the country, and Leinster House in Dublin which is now the seat of Dail Eireann. In 1798



Fig 4. Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763–1798).  
(British Museum).

Lord Edward was thirty-five. He had spent most of his life in the army and had travelled widely in Europe as well as in Canada and America. He was married with a young family and had been a member of the Irish parliament. Uncharacteristically here was an outstanding member of the ascendancy who had become a leader of the revolutionary United Irishmen. (Fig 4).

Early in 1798 plans were being made for the rebellion and the government were fully aware of what was happening, due to its informers. On 12th March a meeting of the directory was to take place in Oliver Bond's house in Bridge Street in Dublin. The government were informed about this meeting by a man called Reynolds, a confidant of Lord Edward, and the whole directory were arrested at one time. The only one to escape was Lord Edward — for which no explanation has ever been given. He may not have been present when the police arrived or he may have escaped. It was said that he was breakfasting with his friend Dr Macneven and they were preparing to go to the meeting when the police arrived and arrested Macneven but let Lord Edward go. Realising he was in danger of arrest he seems to have made his way to Dr Kennedy's, from where he is known to have left with Surgeon Lawless. He spent some time in a widow's house beside the canal and then moved around houses in central Dublin. By this time it was early May and the rebellion was due to start. Lord Edward had been on the run for two months and £2000 was offered for his arrest. This was too much for some and on 19th May the authorities arrived at the house of a feather merchant called Murphy to arrest Lord Edward. He was resting in bed when they arrived but defended himself with a dagger which he had hidden in the bed. He stabbed Captain Ryan in the groin but Major Sirr arrived and shot Lord Edward in the right shoulder. His wound having been dressed by Dr Adrien he was taken by sedan chair to the Castle where he was examined by the Surgeon General — George Stewart. As he had been captured by civil authorities they demanded he be taken to Newgate gaol where he was attended twice daily by Stewart and Dr Lindsay. Ryan died on 30th May and Lord Edward's condition started to deteriorate on 1st June, the thirteenth day of his confinement. It was decided that Dr John Armstrong Garnett should be employed to live in the prison and look after Lord Edward. Garnett left a diary which accurately recounts all that happened. On 2nd June a man called Clinch who had been a militia officer and had gone over to the rebels was hanged for treason outside Lord Edward Fitzgerald's cell: the noise involved in erecting the gallows and in the execution seemed to upset the prisoner. Garnett noted that Lord Edward was very agitated. His tongue was thrust forward and his jaws closed with "the most rigid spasm". After a time he became much better and was able to eat a little. It was recorded that "his pulse flutters excessively". On 3rd June Garnett was able to read to him, and he had requested "the account of our Saviour's death". Later in the day he had been rational but then developed twitching and in the evening his breathing became more difficult and he raved. Around midnight he was visited by an aunt and his brother; he was said to know them and embraced the brother but at 2.00 am he succumbed. It has been recorded "an inquest was held in Newgate on the body of Lord Edward Fitzgerald and on the evidence of Surgeon Leake a verdict returned of death from water in the chest". There is other evidence to suggest that a post mortem was carried out but I have been unable to obtain the details. However, I have no doubt that Lord Edward Fitzgerald died of tetanus as all his symptoms were typical of this disease.

Whatever the cause it was a great loss to the rebels as he was the only man who had sufficient military experience to direct the strategy for the rebellion which had already started at the time of his death.

It is interesting to look at the history of these doctors who looked after Lord Edward. Dr John Adrien was a United Irishman and was educated in Paris. His son became the first Professor of Medical Jurisprudence in the Royal College of Surgeons. Dr William James Macneven was a member of an old Ulster catholic family transported to Connaught by Cromwell. He had an uncle in Germany who was a doctor and had married well and became Baron Macneven. He brought his nephew to the continent and educated him in Prague and Vienna where he graduated in 1783 at the age of 20 years. He returned to Dublin where he practised until he was arrested in 1798 and taken to Kilmainham Jail and later transported to Fort George in Scotland. On his release in 1802 he went to France and joined the French army but resigned in 1805. He then emigrated to New York where he was appointed Professor of Midwifery at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1808. Three years later he changed to the chair of chemistry and in 1816 added the chair of *Materia Medica*. He died in 1841.

Surgeon William Lawless was born in 1764 and was indentured to Michael Keogh in 1781 for five years. He was elected Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in the Royal College of Surgeons in 1794, the year he joined the United Irishmen. After the arrests at Bond's house he became a member of the new directory but was informed that there was a warrant out for his arrest and so he left Dublin. On approaching his mother's house his sister signalled from the drawing room window that Major Sirr was there searching for him, so he went to the house of a Mr Byrne at Kimmage where he was concealed in a garret. To help him leave Ireland his brother sent a carriage for him, and dressed as a woman he went with the three Miss Byrnes to Dublin, where he changed into a sailor's suit. As he had a long easily recognisable face he carried a cable on his head and he was not recognised by Major Sirr whom he passed on the way to the quay. He boarded a ship and went to France and after his arrival joined the French army, attaining the rank of Brigadier General in the Irish brigade, having been decorated with Legion of Honour by Napoleon.

George Stewart was born in Co Tyrone in 1752 and his father was the High Sheriff at that time. He set up practice in Dublin in 1773 and was Surgeon to the Charitable Infirmary on Inns Quay and Jarvis Street. He was one of the group who started the Dublin Society of Surgeons in 1780, their main function being to petition for a Royal Charter to separate the Surgeons from the Barbers, which led to the founding of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1784. He was the eighth President of the College in 1792 having been appointed State Surgeon in 1785 and Surgeon General to the Forces in 1787. A bust of George Stewart was placed in the College on the motion of the great Abraham Colles as Stewart had encouraged him to change from being a physician to being a surgeon.

John Armstrong Garnett was born at Thurles in 1767, the son of the master of Tipperary Grammar School. He obtained his letters testimonial in February 1798 and in 1803 he became Surgeon to Dean Swift's Hospital and to the General Dispensary, and later that year Professor of Surgical Pharmacy. He left Ireland in 1811 because of poor health and died in 1831 from paralysis. It should also be

recorded that William Dease, first Professor of Surgery at the College, was a member of the United Irishmen.

Lord Edward Fitzgerald was arrested on 19th May and the rebellion started on 23rd May despite the arrest of all the leaders in Oliver Bond's house two months earlier. There was no doubt at this time that the main feeling for the rebellion was in the south: in the north there had been a diminishing revolutionary fervour. Nothing happened in Ulster until 6th June when a number of insurgents attacked Larne where the garrison was 20 men and one officer. The insurgents were making progress when information was passed to them that Carrickfergus Castle had been captured. This was incorrect but the rebels decided to abandon the attack on the garrison and proceed to Donogore hill to join the main body which was to attack Antrim. This group was led by Robert Simms, who had been in charge of the United Irishmen in County Antrim, but he did not agree with the rebellion at that time and Henry Joy McCracken was hastily chosen to replace him. (Fig 5).



Fig 5.  
Henry Joy McCracken (1767–1798).  
(Ulster Museum).

McCracken was born in High Street, Belfast in 1767 and so at the time of the rebellion he was 30. His father was captain and part owner of a ship which traded between Belfast and the West Indies. His mother was Anne Joy, a daughter of Francis Joy who had started the Belfast Newsletter in 1737 and she had two brothers, Henry and Robert.

Lord O'Neill had convened a meeting of magistrates for the 7th June in Antrim to discuss the rebellious state of the country. The rebels therefore decided to attack Antrim on that date. Through their informers the authorities knew to expect this event and preparations were made. McCracken gathered his men at Roughfort, but there were only 20 of them, many fewer than had been expected. The enthusiasm for rebellion had waned — "some were seized with most violent bowel complaints, cramps, rheumatic pains; the wives of several given out to be on point of death, others suffered ankle strains etc. Some of these, notwithstanding their piteous wailings, were forced along to the ranks, while others after a few hearty kicks were suffered to remain". The rebels proceeded from Roughfort to Templepatrick where two cannons from the earlier Volunteer days were hidden in the old presbyterian church. One of these was unserviceable because it did not have a carriage, the second carriage was very poor but was just the same. By the time they arrived at Antrim some 5000 men from the surrounding country had joined the party.

McCracken set up his flag in the old graveyard and proceeded into the town up the main street. The battle went well for the rebels, who were winning until the

cavalry were released to attack them. The cavalry thought they were surrounded and galloped off towards Ballymena. Rebel reinforcements from Randalstown arrived at this critical time but were confused and consequently retreated. The battle was over, the rebels being defeated. The whole battle lasted from 2.45 to 4.00 pm. The rebel force may have amounted to 5000 men of whom 100 were killed during the battle and 200 during the retreat. The bodies were carried in carts to a sandy burying ground near Lough Neagh. A Yeoman officer in charge of the burying asked the driver of a cart sitting on his ghastly load "where the devil did these rascals come from!" A poor wretch feebly lifted his head and said "I come frae Ballyboley". He was buried with the rest.

Lord O'Neill was present at the battle and after emerging from the Market House to cross to the Castle was piked by a rebel. It was said that a Dr Morton and his family were hiding in the cellar of their house on the corner of High Street and Massereene Bridge when there was a loud hammering on the door. The doctor thought it was the rebels who had come to shoot him, but it was some soldiers who had come to seek help for Lord O'Neill who they feared was dying. Another account states that his lordship was taken to Dr Bryson's where he sat on the steps, and as there was no answer from within he was carried back to the Market House. This account stated that he was then taken by boat to Shane's Castle but in fact he probably died eleven days later in Antrim Castle as stated in the Belfast Newsletter. The surgeons were fourth in order of the cortege after the firing party, Lord O'Neill's horse and the clergy, all of whom preceded the hearse drawn by six horses. I have been unable to trace the names of the surgeons. What the doctors, if any, did at the battle does not seem to have been recorded. Dr Agnew owned a public house in Templepatrick where the United Irishmen met. He was warned that he was wanted by the army and escaped, but his house was burned down. Dr Thomas Houston of Carnall was away treating a patient and did not get back till 2 pm when he set out for the battle — presumably it was over when he arrived. Later he removed bullets from one Samuel Barron of Ballylinney.

McCracken led the remainder of his men out of Antrim with the intention of going on to Ballymena and helping the rebels there. However, he was diverted to Slemish with 100 survivors, the rest having melted away. Ultimately 20 men set off with him heading at first for Saintfield but diverted again to Colin mountain. After some weeks in hiding it was arranged that he would leave the country by boat from Carrickfergus, but when he got there he was recognised by a Yeoman as he crossed the Green. At first imprisoned in the Castle he was later brought to Belfast for trial, where he was found guilty of treason and hanged at the corner of High Street and Cornmarket. His body was not mutilated and was given immediately to his family. At this time there had been talk of reviving people who had been drowned, and the famous Dr James McDonnell was sent for. He did not come but sent his brother Alexander. Despite efforts "to restore animation" McCracken did not respond and he was ultimately buried in the church yard in High Street.

County Down was as militant as County Antrim. The first United Society in the county was formed in Saintfield in 1792. and the rebels grouped there the day after the battle at Antrim. They heard that the army and yeomen were coming from Comber and they ambushed them in the demesne of Mr Nicholas Price — Saintfield House is still in the same family, the children from the Ulster Hospital



were treated there after the air raids in 1941. The rebels at this stage were under the command of Dr Jackson from Newtownards who led them to Creevy Rocks. A party of rebels also set out from Donaghadee and Bangor area to take the garrison in Newtownards but failed to do so. They retreated to Conlig and then returned to Newtownards to find the garrison gone. Having been joined by groups from Killinchy and Killyleagh they spent the night at Scrabo and then proceeded to Creevy Rocks. On Sunday the Rev Birch preached a sermon on the text "Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand". He was tried for this but got off because his brother, a doctor in Ballybeen, was a friend of Lord Londonderry.

General Nugent in Belfast proclaimed that all loyalist prisoners were to be released by the rebels and all arms given up or he would burn all the houses around Saintfield and everyone who was armed would be put to the sword. He proceeded to Saintfield, carrying out his threat. The rebels meanwhile had gone to Ballynahinch under the command of Henry Munro — a draper from Lisburn — and Nugent followed them. The first battle was at Bells Bridge and the army then captured Windmill Hill near the centre of the town. (Fig 6). One rebel was hanged from the sail of the windmill. The rebels retreated into Montalto, the estate of Lord Moira, and the army proceeded to get drunk in the town. Munro was encouraged to attack the army from Ednavady during the night but would not do so. Nugent attacked at 4 am but Munro beat the army troops back into the centre of the town. The loyalist buglers sounded the retreat, but the rebels mistook this for the signal to attack and they retreated. Nugent was the first to appreciate the situation and pursued the rebels who fled.



Fig 6. The windmill at Ballynahinch.

The Battle of Ballynahinch was fought between 5–7000 rebels and 2–3000 troops. Of the rebels 300 were killed in the battle and 200 in the retreat. Nugent claimed that six soldiers had been killed and seventeen wounded — an absurdly low figure. Munro escaped but was betrayed and ultimately hanged in Market Square, Lisburn across the street from his own shop. Little is known of the man but he presented two jugs to a local masonic lodge, which later had to be disbanded because of its radical political views.

A total of 129,636 armaments were captured by the army, including 70,000 pikes, 48,000 guns, 4,400 pistols and 4,100 swords, with 22 pieces of ordinance — these figures give some indication of the number of rebels involved.

Of course, the two battles which have been described in Ulster were a very small part of the rebellion. As I have already stated Ulster had lost its will to fight but this was not the case in the south-east, in Wexford and Wicklow. A very bloody battle had started in May and continued on through July. In Ireland there were probably

190,000 soldiers, militia and yeomen involved on the loyalist side, and perhaps 280,000 rebels. The exact number of deaths is unknown but Madden gave a figure of 70,000; Dublin Castle estimated a figure of 20,000 and the real figure was probably in the region of 30,000. The official military figure not including the yeomen was 1,060 deaths.

The object I set for this address was to establish what happened to the injured on both sides in this rebellion. Sadly I have failed completely, as I have been unable to unearth any information regarding the injured on either side. In the case of the rebels this is fairly easy to understand. Many women attended the battles at Saintfield and Ballynahinch. They made the food for the men and dressed the wounds of the injured and then accompanied them home where they were hidden — if they were found by the army they would have been shot. A letter written to the Marquis of Downshire from an officer of the Yeomen in Hillsborough stated that they were going out to hunt rebels after the Battle of Ballynahinch — this may explain why some of the injured were thought to have been taken to the Isle of Man or Cumberland. Many of the injured rebels were said to have been shot by their colleagues to prevent information and names falling into army hands.

After the *débauche* of the French invasion in 1796 Tone returned to France where he was promoted to the rank of Adjutant-General. Napoleon saw the wisdom of invading Ireland and forces were gathered at Brest, La Rochelle and Dunkirk. All had great difficulty in getting out from the ports, so it was not until 23rd August that General Humbert landed at Killala Bay in Co Mayo. He made his way to the Bishop's Palace at Killala and on to Castlebar where he routed the natives in an action subsequently known as the "Races of Castlebar". He had not had the support of the rush of rebels to join his forces which he had expected, and did not have a clear strategy, and his force was defeated at Ballinamuck. He was to have been supported by two other groups. One, led by Napper Tandy, landed on Rutland Island off the coast of Donegal. Tandy approached the town and took it without bloodshed. He found that the postmaster was an old friend of his and together the two got drunk: the next morning he was carried back on to the ship insensible and the ship sailed for France. The nine ships in the Brest fleet with 3000 men on board were defeated off Lough Swilly on 12th October. Amongst those captured was Tone who was landed at Buncrana on 3rd November.

Wolfe Tone was taken to Derry and then transferred in chains to Dublin. He complained bitterly of this as he claimed that he was an officer in the French army and should therefore be treated as a prisoner of war. He was tried on 10th November, found guilty and condemned to death. He requested in a statement which he made to the court that he be executed as a soldier by firing squad but on the day after his trial he was told he was to be hanged at Newgate. During the night using a penknife he cut his throat and severed his trachea. He was treated by a French immigrant surgeon called Lentaigue to whom he announced that he (Tone) was a bad anatomist. His trachea was sutured and his condition was declared not to be serious and his execution was to go ahead. However, his father obtained an injunction delaying the execution.

In the Freeman's Journal of 20th November there was the following report: *Tone*, that unfortunate and irreligious man, equally a rebel against the laws of his Country and his God, died yesterday morning in consequence of the wound which

he inflicted on himself. An inflammation, which was the result, extended to his lungs and proved mortal. The Coroner's Inquest sat on the body, and brought in a verdict of *self murder* — horrible crime. It is said, his head will be placed on the top of the New Prison, as his death does not exonerate him from such part of the sentence as can be put in execution — that is, if it shall be decided that he died in the legal possession of the military power”.

I started this address with Tone and Russell. Tone died in Dublin, Russell later in Downpatrick. Both gave their lives for their beliefs. I wonder if they knew this would be their destiny when they left Dublin this day 200 years ago.

*“Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?  
Who blushes at the name?  
When cowards mock the patriot's fate,  
Who hangs his head for shame?”*

I wish to express my gratitude to Miss C Davidson for her help with the preparation of this paper. My thanks are also due to Mr N Irvine for the photographs, to Mrs E Doran, Medical Library, The Queen's University of Belfast and to the staff of the Linenhall Library, Belfast, who went to considerable trouble to help with the research.

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