

Ireland

A LITTLE IRISH HISTORY

From earliest times, the island of Ireland was divided into a number of petty kingdoms, usually four or five. Rivalry between the ruling clans was endemic, particularly for the position of High King of Ireland, which had to be secured by force of arms. In 1169, the Norman King Henry II of England was invited to help resolve one such squabble. The resulting Norman invasion of Ireland was the beginning of the long and often tragic history of involvement between the two Islands. At first, the Anglo-Norman influence was confined largely to the south eastern quarter of the island and to the towns and cities round the coast. Eventually, the island came to be divided into thirty two administrative counties, grouped into four provinces which roughly approximated the original kingdoms.

Since the Reformation, Irish history has been largely influenced by the antagonism between Protestants and Catholics in Europe. Protestant England, a great world power, sought to dominate and colonise Catholic Ireland and colonisation was partially successful in the northern and eastern parts of the island. In 1801 the Act of Union provided for the complete political union of Ireland as a whole with Great Britain. Ireland then became directly ruled from London, whereas prior to that it had had its own Parliament within the British Empire.

English control of Ireland had always been peppered with periodic rebellions by various groups with various aims. The most recent of these was the Sinn Féin rising of 1916, which led to eventual independence. Though the armed uprising of 1916 was a military failure, it proved to be a political success, and led to a movement in most of the country for complete independence.

In the general election of 1918, Sinn Féin stood its candidates on an independence ticket. They won an overwhelming mandate, taking 73 of the 79 seats in the British Parliament that went to Nationalist candidates. 26 seats were won by

Unionist candidates (who wished to maintain the union with the English Monarchy), mainly in the north eastern part of the island. The 73 Sinn Féin Members of Parliament refused to take their seats in the Westminster Parliament and set up their own assembly in Dublin. Called Dáil Éireann¹, it met on 21 January 1919 and declared independence from the United Kingdom. This resulted in the War of Independence with Britain.

During the War of Independence, the Government of Ireland Act was passed in London. It provided for Home Rule in Ireland, with the establishment of two Parliaments on the island, one each in Dublin and Belfast. The Parliament of Northern Ireland would govern six of the nine counties of Ulster, where the Unionists were in a majority. The other twenty six counties were to be ruled from the Parliament in Dublin. The British Parliament in London however retained overall control, and legislated on a number of matters, including currency control.

In May 1921, two elections were held simultaneously in Ireland, one for each Parliament. The Unionists won massively in the six counties, with Sinn Féin winning near total control in the remainder of the island. However, only four Unionist MPs (elected by Dublin University) attended the Dublin Parliament, with Sinn Féin boycotting it. Thus the Parliament in Dublin as provided for in the Government of Ireland Act never came into being, and the twenty six counties outside of Northern Ireland continued to be governed from London.

A truce was signed in the War of Independence on 8 July 1921, with a treaty being signed in London on 6 December 1921 after lengthy negotiations. The treaty granted dominion status to the twenty six counties outside of Northern Ireland, which were to be called Saorstát Éireann (The Irish Free State). The treaty was accepted and ratified by a small majority in Dáil Éireann on 7 January 1922. This

1. Dáil Éireann is the name given to the Parliament of the Republic of Ireland.

led to a civil war in the twenty six counties, between supporters of the treaty and those who wanted a united Ireland, independent from the United Kingdom.

The Parliament of the Irish Free State was inaugurated on 6 December 1922. It was totally independent from the British Government in Westminster in nearly all respects, including currency matters and foreign affairs. The

Parliament of Northern Ireland however had only powers of home rule, and thus did not have control over the currency that circulated within its domain or its foreign affairs.

In the Constitution of 1937 the name of the 26 counties was changed to Ireland or Éire. The country formally became a Republic in 1949.

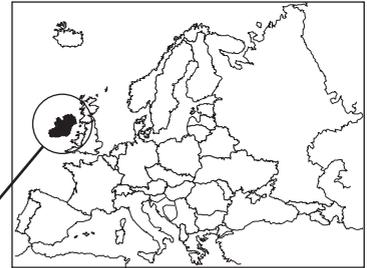
Thus were established the circumstances that governed the creation of an Irish currency.

IRELAND

The main map shows the thirty two counties of Ireland, which is divided into the Republic of Ireland (formerly the Irish Free State) consisting of twenty six of the counties, and Northern Ireland, which consists of six of the nine counties of the province of Ulster.

The ancillary map of Ireland shows the four provinces of the island.

Ireland in Europe



The Four Provinces of Ireland

