

UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

‘Yet we are told that Australians do not sympathise with
Ireland’

A study of South Australian support for Irish Home Rule,
1883 to 1912

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List of abbreviations

HACBS	Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society
INA	Irish National Association
INF	Irish National Federation
INL	Irish National League
IPP	Irish Parliamentary Party
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
LOISA	Loyal Orange Institution of South Australia
LOL	Loyal Orange Lodge
MLA	Member of the South Australian Legislative Assembly
MLC	Member of the South Australian Legislative Council
PDA	Protestant Defence Association
SALL	South Australian Land League
SAPDA	South Australian Protestant Defence Association
SLSA	State Library of South Australia
UIA	United Irish Association
UIL	United Irish League

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution in my name and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Abstract

Although a small cohort, often deemed insignificant, the Irish in South Australia developed an extensive network of social, business and political connections with the wider colonial society which aided them in their support of the long constitutional struggle for self-government taking place in Ireland during the four decades from 1870. Through the lens of the colonial press and an investigation of the support given to Irish nationalists this study shows the extent to which that small cohort extended its influence to the wider South Australian community to the benefit of the Home Rule movement. This was no mean feat considering the established view of scholars that the group faced the 'unquestionable primacy of Anglo-Scottish colonisation'.¹ Looking at the visits of the envoys of the Irish Parliamentary Party which took place between 1883 and 1912, this study, through a consideration of fundraising, the reputation of the Irish in the colony, the colonial press' treatment of Irish issues and a lack of Orange opposition to Home Rule, investigates the impact and reach of this small Irish community during the years of Ireland's foremost constitutional political movement. In its conclusion the research shows that underlying the long assumed quiet assimilation of this ethnic group into the general 'Britishness' of the colony, the Irish, from the outset, were aware of and consistently

¹ Eric Richards. "Irish Life and Progress in Colonial South Australia " *Irish Historical Studies* 27, no. 107 (1991): 21

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maintained a separate cultural identity and, during the period under consideration, this was augmented by an increased politicisation amongst the group – a world development which affected the Irish at both the macro and micro level. This thesis further reveals that in South Australia the Irish Home Rule movement garnered strong support in a colony where the majority of the inhabitants were neither Irish nor Catholic and this was due to a number of factors. Amongst these were factors which contrast sharply with characteristics of the Irish and the Home Rule movement in other Australian colonies, particularly the size, unity and nature of South Australian Irish nationalists, the lack of a structured opposition to Home Rule, the colony's natural affinity with the notion of self-government and the fraternal bonds which came about through the issue of land ownership and control. While fundraising was the prime object of a series of visits to Australia by Irish MPs between 1883 and 1912, acceptance of the Irish claim for Home Rule amongst Australians in general proved equally important. Despite the small community of Irish people residing in South Australia during the most active years of the movement the colony subscribed generously to the cause. While the loyalty and support of the Irish-born and perhaps even the next generation might be expected more surprising is the widespread involvement of the non-Irish and non-Catholic citizens of the colony.