

## ***Southern Irish Loyalty in Context***

**Friday 21 & Saturday 22 July 2017**

**Maynooth University**

R. B. McDowell titled his seminal 1997 work on southern Irish loyalists, *Crisis and decline*. In doing so, McDowell was describing a long process that included three 'Home Rule' crises, a Great War, and revolutionary violence, culminating in the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922. Southern Irish independence and partition formalised an already clear separation from brethren in the six north-eastern counties, and marked loyalists as a 'defeated' minority in the south. Recently, there has been significant scholarly debate on the treatment of loyalists (and especially Protestant loyalists) at the hands of republicans in revolutionary Ireland. But who exactly were the southern Irish loyalists (or unionists) and what did it actually mean to be 'loyal' before 1922? What became of those same loyalists afterwards and do terms like 'ex-unionist' or 'ex-loyalist' do justice to a complex set of allegiances and identities?

Moreover, the southern Irish loyalists who witnessed the transition from British control in southern Ireland had been the inheritors of a much longer tradition of opposition to claims for Irish independence. Nor were they alone as a minority population suffering a crisis of identity in inter-war Europe. As well as examining loyalism in Ireland, the conference will aim to put Irish loyalism in a much wider historical context. Whether it is British loyalists during the American War of Independence or ethnic and religious minorities in eastern and central Europe after 1918, for instance, there remains significant potential to draw continuities and divergences with the Irish case.

This **two-day international conference** will bring together scholars interested in Irish loyalism before, during, and after the Irish Revolution (c. 1913–23). It will coincide with the centenary of the Irish Convention, opened on 25 July 1917, an unsuccessful attempt to reach a political settlement on Irish Home Rule and a final all-island political forum for 'Southern Unionists'.

We invite proposals for **30 minute** papers from any academic discipline offering new light and fresh perspectives on issues related to the conference's wider interest in southern Irish loyalism. Themes for discussion may include, but are not limited to:

- the grass-roots impact of war and revolution
- politics and political representation before, during, or after revolution
- southern Irish loyalists as victims or perpetrators of violence
- individual loyalists or loyalist groups
- the roles and experiences of loyalist women
- religion and sectarianism
- servants of the Crown as loyalists
- the creation of the Irish border and its legacies
- identities and experiences as expressed in memoir, literature, and/or art
- points of comparison or departure with southern Irish loyalism in different times and places

Submissions from postgraduate and early-career scholars are particularly welcome, as are suggestions for round-table or panel sessions. It is expected that selected participants will be invited to contribute to a scholarly publication.

Interested parties should submit a **300 word abstract** and **short biography** (no more than 100 words) to Dr Brian Hughes at [southernirishloyalists@gmail.com](mailto:southernirishloyalists@gmail.com) by **30 April 2017**.

The conference is supported by the Irish Research Council's New Foundations scheme, under its 'Decade of Centenaries' strand, and will contribute to the Decade of Centenaries Programme 1917–1922 ([www.decadeofcentenaries.com](http://www.decadeofcentenaries.com)).

