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Illuminated Addresses, National Identity and Irish Sport, 1880-1901

John Strachan and Kayla Rose¹

Although associated historically with medieval religious manuscripts, exemplified in Ireland by the Book of Kells, the illuminated address was revived and given a more secular, modern, and ephemeral¹ form in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was frequently used in middle-class and mercantile society as a means of commemoration; to celebrate long service, retirement, weddings and so on. And Celtic-inspired illumination also had political overtones in Ireland; ‘illuminated addresses’, as Conor McNamara argued in 2011, ‘were a standard feature of late nineteenth-century nationalism ... presented by voluntary subscription in recognition of outstanding achievement’.² Apart from its wider use in society, the illuminated address was also used as a mode of commemoration in Irish *sporting* culture at the turn of the twentieth century. This essay examines the cultural significance of illuminated addresses as physical expressions of public events in Ireland, and, most particularly, as providing an insight into the cultural and ideological histories of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Irish sport. Clifford Geertz famously argued in 1973 that ‘rituals are narratives through which people tell themselves who they are’.³ The same applies to the illuminated address. Addresses are not merely objects created for an individual; rather, they also serve as vehicles through which we can understand group identity.

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I

From the 1880s to the 1920s, illuminated addresses were at the height of their popularity in Ireland, marking special occasions or outstanding service. They had civic, political, familial - and sometimes sporting - contexts. They did indeed, as McNamara writes, frequently, though by no means exclusively, have nationalist overtones, whether in terms of Home Rule or, indeed, advanced nationalist allegiance. The *Cork Examiner* for 27 November 1900, for instance, records a meeting in Paris where an Irish deputation met Paul Kruger, President of the Transvaal, then at war with the British. Major John McBride, leader of the Irish Transvaal Brigade and later, of course, a leading light of the Easter Rising of 1916, introduced the delegates to President Kruger, who received the Irish Deputation. ‘Miss Maud Gonne presented addresses from Irish Nationalist Societies. Mr John O’Leary then presented an illuminated address in Irish, French and Dutch’ – anything but English – ‘expressing the sentiments that the Transvaal’s enemies were Ireland’s’.⁴

Created to serve as a material and visual indicator and memento of a presentation ceremony, political or otherwise, an illuminated address was often the literal manifestation of a commemorative speech or formal greeting, sometimes beautifully written and illustrated by hand, sometimes printed in elegantly illustrated display copy. Often these memorabilia were given alongside a lucrative financial offering, a ‘pocket-book full of bank notes’, a ‘substantial cheque’, or a ‘purse of sovereigns’⁵ and they frequently included long lists of subscribers and donors keen to have their names associated with the recipient. Intended for public presentation, at their simplest

illuminated addresses provided their recipients with a souvenir of a memorable occasion. Their intended messages are expressed both iconographically and graphically; in writing, the message is communicated through the elegantly written lettering, frequently using Celtic calligraphy, while the visual messages are conveyed through the addresses' use of signs, symbols, portraits, landscapes and other decorative imagery, many of which were explicitly Irish in nature and symbolism. Like sport, like art, like dance, like language, illuminated addresses began to echo national sentiment in the 1880s and beyond, and often, like these other cultural forms, looked back to a golden age of Ireland and Irishness.

Like Irish medieval illuminated manuscripts of a thousand years previously, nineteenth-century illuminated addresses were objects of status, often fairly expensive to produce (though there were more affordable options).⁶ While medieval illumination mainly occurred in book form, at least in terms of its surviving artefacts, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century illuminated addresses borrowed from traditions in heraldry and gift-giving and also took on various other forms, such as scrolls, bound albums and scrapbooks, with some surviving examples contained within specially-made caskets or boxes. The most expensive and highest-quality addresses had decoration which was personalised and commonly included miniature portraits or landscapes relating to the life and work of the person being honoured, as well as the city, region or nation in which their contributions had been made. Taken alongside the significance of the public ceremonies in which they were gifted, illuminated addresses became objects that could communicate identity via borrowing an artistic style from the past, encompassing the

romantic spirit of late nineteenth-century revival movements: the Celtic Revival in Ireland and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Great Britain.

The entwining of sport and politics in the illuminated address is exemplified in figure 1, the illuminated address presented by the County Cork branch of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1887 to William Gladstone, MP, in this account the ‘foremost English Statesman of the century, the friend of Ireland and of her constitutional freedom’. This beautiful artefact was presented at the visit of Mr Gladstone to a monster rally held in his honour on Saturday 4 June at Singleton Park in Swansea, where, as the *South Wales Daily News* put it on 6 June 1887, ‘100,000 Welshman marched past’ the visiting dignitary, whose speech to the assembled ranks included an ‘important declaration of Home Rule’.⁷ Amidst the many marching groups were several delegations of Irish folk and those of Irish stock: ‘the green sashes worn by the next delegation showed that the sons of Erin had arrived. They are the Swansea Irish, led by the eloquent Canon Richards’. However, the *News* goes on to point out that the next contingent was from the island of Ireland itself: ‘one of the most interesting features in the proceedings was the presentation made by the Cork Contingent, which numbered about 150 persons’.⁸ Among them were ‘the County Cork executive of the Gaelic Athletic Association, which has been established for the revival and presentation of ancient Irish games and pastimes. The delegation offered their illuminated address, inscribed: “To The Right Hon. W.E. Gladstone M.P.:

Dear Sir – On behalf of the County Cork Committee of the Gaelic Athletic Association we ask your acceptance of the accompanying Presentation, as a small token of the esteem in which you are held by our body: our only regret being that we cannot make a presentation commensurate with the affection of our hearts in regard to you, the foremost English Statesman of the century, the friend of Ireland and of her constitutional freedom, you have obtained a place in the heart of every

true Irishman that nothing can banish or efface. We are happy to say that the Gaelic Athletic Association has been a great success in popularising the Ancient Irish Game of Hurling among the manhood of the present day, its membership now reaching to about Fifty Thousand over the country, and before another year has passed away we confidently anticipate that the number will be doubled. Contemporaneous with the arrival of that period, we fervently hope that you will see the great object to which you have devoted your priceless energies crowned with full success – the right by Irishmen to legislate for Irishmen in Ireland.

4th June, 1887

Signed D. Horgan, Alderman, Chairman.

D. M. Lane, Hon. Sec.

T. O’Riordan, Provincial Hon. Sec.”’.

Fig. 1. ‘Gaelic Athletic Association. To the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone MP’ (1887).

Chromolithographed onto card and silk by the Cork printing firm Guy and Co., the address, a substantial 12 by 10in, was contained within a large gilt frame and decorated with scenes depicting the sports and activities associated with the GAA, such as Irish football, hurling, bowling, handball, hammer throwing and Irish dancing. The images are a riot of Irish symbolism; as the newspaper account of the event put it, ‘the address ... was beautifully illuminated, and in its sections were introduced emblems of Ireland’.⁹ Landscapes on either side of the border at its middle are the epitome of a certain form of nostalgic Irishness, with the one on the right showing a church and round tower set in the Irish countryside and the left depicting the Irish harp in front of a background displaying the Irish coast.

The nationalist message is further strengthened by the choice of border, which uses blue, green and gold, those borders filled with two distinctly Irish forms of interlace: one a purely abstract form, taken directly from the Book of Kells and other medieval Irish manuscripts, with the other in the shape of flowering, interwoven shamrocks. The top part of the border proclaims the ‘Gaelic Athletic Association’ alongside four portraits: Michael Cusack, founder of the GAA, and the first patrons of the GAA, - Michael Davitt,

Irish republican founder of the Irish Land League, the aforesaid Charles Stewart Parnell, Irish nationalist politician who encouraged Gladstone's adoption of Home Rule, and Archbishop Thomas Croke, for whom Croke Park in Dublin is named.

The notion of a GAA delegation paying obeisance to an establishment British parliamentarian might seem a little remarkable but the Cork party were enthusiastic constitutional Home Rulers in this particular context, though their imagery also pays tribute to Irish republicanism via Davitt. Indeed, the Cork GAA was accompanied in their travels to South Wales by reformist constitutionalists from the Cork Branch of the Irish Protestant Home Rule Association, who, via J. C. Ledlie (High Sheriff of Cork City), presented its own address to Gladstone, which began:

To the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone. M.P.

Sir, - We have the honour of appearing as delegates from the Cork Branch of the Irish Protestant Home Rule Association. At a meeting specially convened we were deputed to convey to you the assurance that the Protestant Home Rulers of the South of Ireland - not only those who belong to the association, but also the much larger number who, from reasons we need not here specify, and in view of the consequences certain to follow, are debarred from openly expressing their opinions on the subject - regard with feelings of respect and gratitude your efforts to settle the Irish question. We gladly take this opportunity of paying you this slight compliment in company with some of our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens, who come here on a similar errand. We desire to work cordially with them in every effort for the good of our country, and to put behind us forever the remembrance of the religious animosities which, in the past, were unhappily so often fanned into flame by un-scrupulous politicians for their own ends.¹⁰

The Protestant Home Rulers explicitly link their cause to the sportsmen of a Catholic Ireland, and present their own address 'in company with some of our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens'.

The sporting men of Cork also presented Gladstone with a pair of hurley sticks and a ball (though it is not known if the right honourable member for Midlothian tried his hand at the game): 'Together with the address was presented two hurleys and a playing ball

used in the performance of an ancient Irish game. The wood of one of these hurleys was only cut on Friday morning from a tree adjoining Blarney Castle, and both hurleys were inscribed with solid silver shields, and were perfect models'.¹¹ The delegation also presented Gladstone with a watch-chain pendant, another souvenir resonant with Irish sporting and national sentiment. The *Dublin Weekly Nation* took up the story on 11 June 1887: 'the principal item of the testimonial is a solid eighteen-carat gold hurley, adapted for watch-chain pendant, which is also inscribed. This is a perfect model of a well-proportioned *camán* ... The case in which this is set is a gem. The lining, &c, of the inside is of pale green. ... while there is mounted on the boss a neat miniature ball of Galway marble. ... A shield bearing the following inscription - "To the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M. P., from the Cork County Executive of the Gaelic Athletic Association, 1887", is surmounted by the Cork arms, and on either side of the shield are the Irish emblems the wolf-dog, tower, and harp, the whole resting on a spray of shamrocks'.¹²

The Cork sportsmen's decision to use Irish imagery, ornament and style in an address presented to a British figure with strong Home Rule sensibilities highlights the political message being conveyed – that this is an Irish declaration of respect and admiration to a friend of the Irish nationalist cause. Gladstone's address highlights the 'esteem' to which he is held, while also making note of the GAA's role in popularising the specifically Irish sport of hurling 'among the manhood of the present day'. It should also be noted that the Cork Association highlights Irish sports' importance in foregrounding and developing masculinity; the GAA is a school for manliness.¹³ Irish sports, like so much else in Revival-era Ireland, looked back to a form of nationhood before British rule and before

the proliferation of the sports of the Sassenach, ‘in popularising the Ancient Irish Game of Hurling’.

However, in the end the GAA’s address to Gladstone moves beyond a proclamation of manliness and pride in civic achievement in the service of sport; it makes a clear and ubiquitous claim for Irish Home Rule, fervently stating the hope that the statesman will see his ‘priceless energies crowned with full success – the right by Irishmen to legislate for Irishmen in Ireland’. This illuminated address stands as an example of the inextricable ties between sport and national identity in Ireland, making an overt statement that a national game and the growing number of people associated with it, have a significant role to play in driving national politics forward.

II

Turning now to another, slightly later, example of the Irish illuminated address which uses sporting imagery, figures 2, 3 and 4 show details from the highly elaborate, illuminated ‘Address and Presentation to John James Esq. on the occasion of his Marriage’ (1893), which is held in the National Library of Ireland (in specially-fashioned boards as MS 32,724). This address, at least on first inspection, seems less explicitly ideologically charged than the GAA’s gift to Gladstone, but it, too, is culturally revealing. The illuminated offering, presented to the Dublin horse-breeder, race-horse owner and sportsman John James ‘on the occasion of his marriage’ in July 1893 takes the form of an album, hand-written and beautifully illustrated with symbols and miniature paintings associated with both love and marriage and racing and riding. Its dedicative text is purposeful:

Dear Sir,

We the undersigned acting on behalf of the subscribers beg your acceptance of the accompanying presentation as a memento of the happy event in connection with which we wish to convey our most sincere congratulations. The hearty support which the project received from its inception is proof of the esteem in which you are held. To us personally the task of organising the presentation was only a pleasure, and in wishing you every happiness and prosperity we are but re-echoing the desires of your many friends in Ireland and elsewhere.

Fig. 2. From 'An Address and Presentation to John James Esq. on the occasion of his Marriage' (1893) (MS 32,724). By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland.

Fig. 3. From 'An Address and Presentation to John James Esq. on the occasion of his Marriage' (1893) (MS 32,724). By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland.

Fig. 4. From 'An Address and Presentation to John James Esq. on the occasion of his Marriage' (1893) (MS 32,724). By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland.

As is the custom with illuminated addresses, the text here is exceedingly formal and polite, representative of the decorous and ceremonial nature of middle- and upper-class civic society. The language asserts the recipient's status and serves to legitimise his civic position. Certainly, it has the obsequiousness and periphrastic pleasantries customary in such addresses. Mr James is a person of high 'esteem' in the sporting and mercantile world, and his friends are indeed delighted to offer their splendid encomium to a person of such high regard. However, it is the illuminations themselves which particularly catch the eye here. The recto first page of the album, figure 2, shows the happy couple themselves in a frame of the orange blossom flowers often used in wedding bouquets.¹⁴ In subsequent pages of the album, James's professional association with the turf and the Irish-inflected symbolism of the illumination become more apparent. Figure 3 shows two race-horses at full tilt towards the finish line, while figure 4 shows a jockey's helmet crossed with two horse shoes and a rider's crop, set against more wedding flowers and, this time, Irish shamrocks.

The wedding feast was held at the Gresham Hotel on O'Connell Street, but the actual presentation was made afterwards at a reception at James's residence at his premises at Merrion Hall¹⁵ at Sandymount. The Society setting, the reception in an upmarket hotel, the celebration at the grand-sounding residence and, indeed, the sporting pals who could band together to sponsor an expensive illuminated address, all serve to dignify James, in social, sporting and national terms. The opulent illuminated address becomes a signifier of wealth and of status in the sporting life of Ireland.

However, despite its aristocratic and society links, horseracing in Ireland was never very far from the disgraceful, and underpinning James's life as a highly-visible figure in Irish racing - sponsor of handicap races, owner of runners and winners in both Ireland and in England, charitable benefactor of athletic contests for the poor - was a more questionable side, at least as far as polite society - and the law - was concerned. John Henry Adolphus James was born in 1859, 'in England, but educated in Ireland, in which country much of his life has been spent',¹⁶ and maintained an extensive bloodstock operation at his premises at Merrion Hall. But James also ran a turf commercial agent's premises in central Dublin and his early wealth was, in large part, derived from his activities as a bookmaker. A report in the 'police intelligence' section in the *Freeman's Journal* of 3 May 1890 describes a case in the southern division before Mr Justice Woodlock; 'John James, Esq.' was one of a number of Dublin bookmakers who had been charged with running a betting house,¹⁷ and was up before the magistrate:

THE PROSECUTION OF MR JOHN JAMES.

Mr John James, Merrion Hall, and 47 Fleet Street, described on the charge sheet as a betting man was charged, on bail, with his two clerks, Joseph Booker, 38 St Bridget's Avenue, North Strand, and Charles Burne, 70 Lower Dorset Street, held with keeping a gaming house at 47 Fleet Street.

Mr Col, Chief Crown solicitor, appeared to prosecute, and Mr M'Inerney (instructed by Mr Wm Flood), represented the defendants. After evidence Mr Woodlock held that the place was used for ready-money betting. He had evidence that money was sent up, and telegrams dealing with betting transactions were found by the police. He convicted and fined the defendant £50, and two other defendants (the clerks) £1.

The fines were paid, but it is stated that the defendant, Mr James, will appeal on the point of law raised by his council.¹⁸

James's conviction was for keeping a betting house and indulging in off-course ready-money betting, which was against the law.¹⁹ However, this did not inhibit his activities as a turf commission agent, which was not against the law, feeding bets into the legal Ring on race days via telegram or telephone. Indeed, James plainly advertised himself as a 'commission agent' in the advertising columns of the *Irish Times* a couple of months after his court case, in August 1890: 'John James, Esq. Turf Commission Agent, 47 Fleet Street (Double events executed, win, and 1, 2, 3)',²⁰ and was still issuing paid columns along these lines at the turn of the twentieth century.²¹

Plainly, John James trod a very fine line between respectability and the disreputable, but his 'many friends in Ireland', in offering him this lavishly illuminated address, were planting him firmly in the respectable camp - despite his criminal conviction - as a sporting gentleman, a good husband, and, with their shamrocks - despite his place of birth - as a man of Ireland. Those friends were also sponsoring the cottage industry of illumination which had developed in the Revival era. An ancient trade, that of illuminator of manuscripts, had come back into vogue, and some of its participants were well known in Irish artistic circles. The 1880 Parnell address, for instance, was completed by the well-known Irish illustrator and cartoonist Thomas Joseph Lynch of Middle Abbey Street, Dublin, whose daughter, Sr Mary Concepta Lynch (1874-1939), was also well known as a Celtic illuminator (and most renowned for the sixteen years she

laboured to decorate the oratory of the Dominican Convent at Dun Laoghaire). Women like Lynch were highly visible within illuminative art, and the creative industries associated with them. Indeed, the John James address was also the work of female commercial illuminators, in this case the sisters Mary and Lily Fitzpatrick of Drumcondra Road, Dublin (and was principally the responsibility of the former). The *Freeman's Journal* for 3 July 1893, in its account of the festivities at Merrion Hall, attributes the address to Mary Fitzgerald, the eldest of the two sisters:

On Saturday evening, at their residence at Merrion Hall, the presentation, which had been so liberally and extensively subscribed for on the occasion of their marriage, was formally presented to Mr and Mrs John James. The members of the committee who had charge of the arrangements were entertained to a sumptuous dinner ... Mr Healy was requested to make the presentation, and in doing so remarked how widely the public had responded to the appeal for funds ... so that ample testimony was afforded of the popularity enjoyed by Mr James. Mr James in a few well-chosen words returned thanks on behalf of himself and his wife The proceedings, which lasted until a late hour, were agreeably interspersed by vocal and instrumental music, ... The splendid service of plate was... manufactured by Messrs Waterhouse and Co., of Dame Street ... An illuminated album containing an address and complete list of subscribers - was provided by Miss Fitzpatrick, of 82 Drumcondra Road.²²

It should be acknowledged that Mary Fitzpatrick's work as a commercial artist had some clear nationalist overtones, as, indeed, had her client base. Mrs and Mrs John James were not the first couple to receive an address designed and illuminated by Miss Fitzpatrick. In March 1891, for instance, the journal *Irish Society* noted that she had performed similar duties for the wedding of William O'Brien, nationalist MP, prison hero, and journalist, to Sophie Raffalovich. This particular address had been sponsored by some three thousand Irishwomen:

The exquisite art of illuminating is not likely to suffer at the hands of the gifted artist, Miss Fitzpatrick, of 82 Drumcondra Road, to whom was entrusted the execution of the illuminated album address presented to Mrs William O'Brien on the occasion of her marriage, by the women of Ireland. It is indeed a work of rare

beauty, and in its originality of design and brilliant yet harmonious colouring, we believe it to be one the finest works of its kind ever to be produced in this city. We congratulate Miss Fitzpatrick on the success of her latest work.²³

The journal with which William O'Brien was most closely associated, *United Ireland*, certainly read the sisters Fitzpatrick's work in national terms, as a column published in that newspaper in February 1891 demonstrates:

I dropped in few mornings ago to 82 Drumcondra-road, by invitation of the Misses Fitzpatrick, to see the presentation album from the Women of Ireland to Mrs. Wm. O'Brien. I ... could only stand looking on in wordless admiration [at this] magnificent specimen of illumination ... The title page consists of a heavy border of shamrocks and orange blossoms on gold, blue, and crimson backgrounds. The lettering is mediaeval, in rich colours, with initial letters of intricate Celtic interlacing on bands and scrolls of pale green and pink. The second page includes the names of the committee, surrounded by an elaborate border in fifteenth-century style, with brilliant colouring.²⁴

In this account, her work on the trademark shamrock and orange blossom borders (which were also evident in the work for the Jameses two years later) marks out Mary Fitzpatrick as a significant Irish artist: 'The combination of colour in these borders, and the originality, taste, and variety which characterise them, stamp Miss [Mary] Fitzpatrick a true and most judicious artist'. The diarist also praises the lettering in the gargantuan subscription list here, the work of Lily Fitzpatrick: 'I was very much struck, too, with the marvellously correct manner in which Miss Lily Fitzpatrick has engrossed the three thousand names'. The journalist's overall assessment of the address is highly laudatory:

It an achievement; worthy, indeed, to rank beside many of those of the old artist-monks of the middle ages. The cover is in Irish poplin of St. Patrick's Blue, with silver corners, ornamented by Celtic interlacing, and monogram in centre ... The volume is enclosed in case of dark-green morocco leather, lined with crimson and silk velvet. I congratulate the Miss Fitzpatricks; they really have produced a work of art which is a credit, not alone to themselves, but to Ireland.²⁵

Here, as in the James address, the Fitzpatricks' work is highly and recognisably Irish in nature, using the ornamentation characteristically associated with ancient 'Celtic' art such

as spirals, interlace, triskeles and zoomorphic motifs, alongside Celtic Revival symbols like shamrocks, harps and round towers.

In addresses such as the GAA gift to Gladstone, illuminated by Thomas Joseph Lynch and that of the bookie's benefactors, fashioned by Mary and Lily Fitzpatrick, we see illumination created for, or on behalf of, participants in different sports and those associated with them. Here illustrations of the tools and symbols associated with these sports and of the Irish nation serve as visual indicators, of social status and of geography, and, in particular, of Irish cultural identity and Irish cultural politics.

The productively paradoxical Irish revivalist notion that, in order for Ireland to assert its identity in a modern age, its art, language and literature ought principally to be taken from its own past ('worthy of the middle ages' as *United Ireland* has it), its own people, and its own land was commonly evident in the Irish illuminated address, with its frequent interchange of past and present, and its back-to-the-future, post-Kells modernity. In the work of the Lynches and the Fitzpatricks is embodied a belief that Irish art and design should echo national feeling.

III

The growing cultural nationalism of post-1870s Ireland had clear iconographical resonance in the illuminated address and Gaelicising gestures were sometimes language-related. Throughout the period, addresses produced for the Gaelic Athletic Association or presented on behalf of its members have a deliberately 'Irish' character, commonly through the use of the visual imagery associated with the Celtic Revival. This was also sometimes demonstrated in the use of the Irish language itself in illuminated addresses, in

part or in whole, whether in the use of a few familiar words or, indeed, an entire address in Gaeilge. Figure 5, another example of an illuminated address presented by the Association, this time to an Irish as opposed to an English recipient, shows a 1901 illuminated address to Pádraig Archer (1866-1949), a prominent member of both the GAA and Gaelic League, and then manager, under Eoin MacNeill's editorship, of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, a paper forever associated with advanced nationalism as a consequence of Pádraig Pearse's tenure as editor between 1903 and 1906.

Fig 5. Illuminated address to Pádraig Archer (1901). By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland.

This magnificent address maintains the tradition of characteristically Irish ornament exemplified a decade or so previously in the address to Gladstone, but also uses the Irish language in its address to Archer, a Customs and Excise officer who also occupied a key role at *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the key nationalist newspaper which had been established by Conradh na Gaeilge. Archer was a stalwart of the League, and of the cultural enthusiasms of the Revival in many of its forms: a talented Irish sportsman, a multi-instrumentalist musician, a teacher (*múinteoir*) of Gaelic dancing, and translator (from Irish to English and back again).

Presented to Archer by the GAA when he was transferred from Dublin to Gloucester, the address is hand-written and illuminated on vellum - an echo of medieval codices such as the book of Kells - by fellow Gaelic League member Nioclás Mairséal Ó Cuimín ('Aonghus Draoi' (1877-1902)), the gifted artist, Irish nationalist²⁶ and political cartoonist (for D. P. Moran's *Leader*) who died at the early age of twenty-five. Decorated with zoomorphic initial letters, interlaced borders and pendants filled with

triskeles directly influenced by the Book of Kells, the top border also contains the coats of arms from the GAA and the four provinces of Ireland, united. The address, which is now housed at the National Library of Ireland, was displayed at Cathal McGarvey's famous licensed premises at 30 North Frederick Street, a centre of Gaelicism popularly known as 'An Stad'. It is enclosed within a handsome oak frame, itself with a border almost as intricately detailed as those in the address, containing sporting imagery, here the crossed *camáin* and the *sliotar* of the national sport of hurling, a sport Archer himself was passionate about (and was no mean player).

While the majority of nineteenth- and twentieth-century illuminated addresses contain the text of a speech to be read out in a presentation ceremony, the address to Archer breaks from this tradition. Written in Irish verse, the text deals with the legendary 'Mac Fine Gall' of Fingal. It was composed by the poet, translator and editor of *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* (the *Gaelic Journal*) Tadhg Ó Donnchadha ('Tórna' (1874-1949)), who, like Archer and Ó Cuimín, was a member of both the Gaelic League and enthusiastic supporter of the GAA. The address was signed by 'Tórna', Seán Ó Ceallaigh (the republican politician John J. O'Kelly), and the dramatist and sportswoman Máire Ní Chinnéide, all important members of the Gaelic League, and *An Claidheamh Soluis* itself covered the presentation:

The address to Pádraig Archer by his Gaelic friends on his departure from Dublin may be seen at Mr McGarvey's, North Frederick Street. The address consists of a poem by Tadhg Ó Donnchadha beautifully illuminated in old Irish style by Aonghus Draoi, and surrounded by an oaken frame ornamented by carvings of similar pattern. The crossed camáns [sic] and the liathróid are well in evidence, betokening the interest Pádraig always took in the national game.²⁷

The presentation to Archer, 'beautifully illuminated in old Irish style', is marinated in national feeling and symbolism. Here and elsewhere in the history of sports-related

illuminated addresses in Ireland, the presentation of a material object is a key marker of sporting, civic and national identity. Though the illuminated works are created for specific individuals often tied to a particular organisation, they are created, in a sense, for an entire community. Here, both in language and iconography, the illuminated address provides a link between past and present, using artistic elements and symbols from history, real or imagined, alongside contemporary landscapes and portraits which establish the context and social legitimacy of both the occasion and the individual being honoured.

Illuminated addresses are of artistic and ideological significance both for their physical form and their function; they serve, as Paul Caffrey has written of material culture in Ireland in general, as ‘the physical embodiment of both the culture and the values of the time when they were produced and consumed’.²⁸ As objects, like the Irish sports with which they are identified, they are products of both the past and of modernity, combining elements of each with the tenets and ideals of their particular form of Irish nationalism and identity.

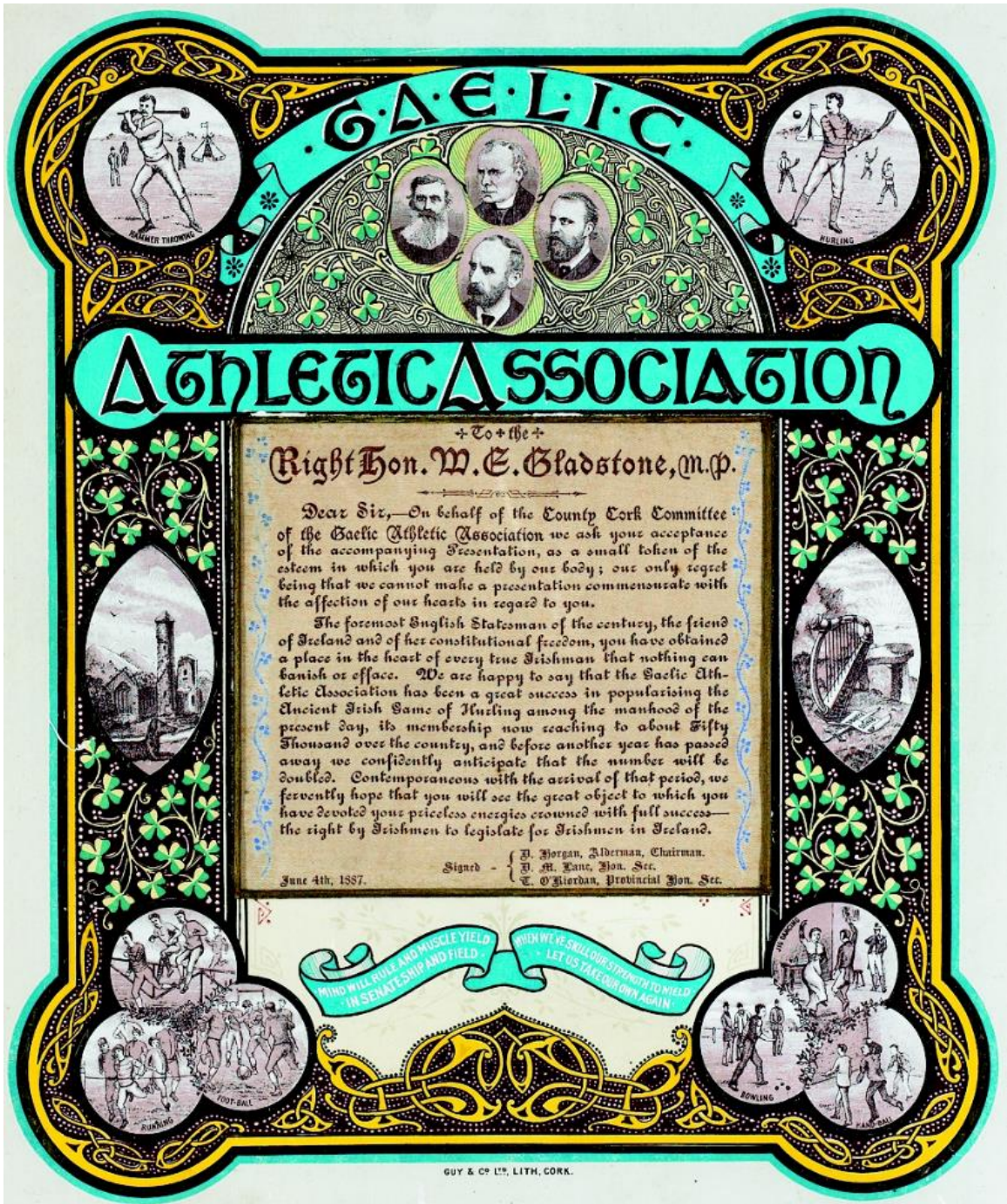


Fig. 1. 'Gaelic Athletic Association. To the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone MP' (1887). Image made available in this version of the article by kind permission of Whytes.com. All rights reserved.

¹ Illuminated addresses pass from the public realm into the hands of an individual, and accessing these objects a hundred years later and more can prove challenging. Few survive in public repositories.

² McNamara, “‘Illuminated Address to Charles Stuart Parnell’”, 32-33. This address, dated 1880, was presented to Parnell to mark the occasion of his address to the United States House of Representatives in February 1880 and is now held at the National Library of Ireland. Parnell had been sent by the Land League to California to fundraise for relief for the west of Ireland in December 1879 and secured the opportunity to speak to United States Congress in February of the following year.

³ Geertz, ‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture’, 9.

⁴ ‘The Irish Deputation. Addresses Presented’, *Cork Examiner*, November 27 1900, 6.

⁵ As, for instance, in an occasion described in the *Cork Examiner* of March 21 1910, in which a Mr Daly, banker and sportsman (Hon. Secretary of the Cork Coursing Club) was rewarded for years of service:

PRESENTATION TO A BANK OFFICIAL.

O’Meara’s Hotel, Nenagh, was the scene of an enjoyable function at the occasion of the presentation to Mr W. R. Daly, for many years accountant at the Munster and Leinster Bank, and who recently has been promoted to Bandon ... The presentation consisted of an illuminated address, a splendid engraved cigarette case purchased at Mr Tobin’s jewelry establishment, and a purse of sovereigns from the members of the Coursing Club and the public.

⁶ Notably available from the illuminated divisions of Irish printers and newspapers which were established by the turn of the century. For instance, the northern printers W. and G. Baird, a company which survives to this day, advertised ‘Illuminated Addresses’ in the *Larne Times* on November 23 1907:

A high degree of artistic skill is required to produce an illuminated address that will reflect credit on those responsible for it.

Our Illuminating Work increases substantially year on year. This is because our artists are highly skilled, because they exercise their ingenuity and do not slavishly copy old models.

We are always striving to turn out better work than we ever turned out before, and we succeed. That is why our Addresses give satisfaction – invariably.

W. & G. Baird, Royal Avenue, Belfast.

The *Irish Times* had an illuminating division by 1900 (see number for 20 October 1900, 1) and the *Derry Times* was advertising its own ‘Celtic Illumination’ department in the 1920s (see issue for December 31 1923, 4).

⁷ *South Wales Daily News*, June 6 1887, 6.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The address continues thus: ‘Our feelings in this respect are, we fully believe, honestly reciprocated by the bulk of our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen. We look upon the granting of a liberal measure of Home Rule as a measure which will give to Irishmen in their own Parliament the management of all matters purely Irish as distinguished from matters of an Imperial nature - as a step necessarily precedent to any marked improvement in the industries, manufactures, and trade of the country’ (ibid.).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *Dublin Weekly Nation*, June 11 1887, 1.

¹³ For the GAA and masculinity, see Patrick F. McDevitt, 'May the Best Man Win': *Sport, Masculinity and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 14-36.

¹⁴ Mrs John James was a Roman Catholic whose brother was a well-known priest in Morpeth, Northumberland and in Liverpool. Both died in 1906 (see 'A Double Sorrow. Sister and Brother Buried', *Irish Independent*, May 21 1906, 6: 'Mr James has received innumerable telegrams of sympathy with him in his double bereavement').

¹⁵ Not the Merrion Hall on Merrion Street Lower which was the Dublin home of the open branch of the Plymouth Brethren.

¹⁶ *The British Turf and the Men who have Made It: Being an Historical and Contemporary Work on Racing in the British Isles from its Earliest Inception to the Present Day*, 256.

¹⁷ RAIDS ON ALLEGED DUBLIN BETTING-HOUSES.

B. Division made a raid upon an alleged betting-house, No. 47, Fleet Street, and arrested John James, who described himself as a commission agent, but is described by the police as a 'betting man', and two clerks named, James Booker and Charles Byrne ... Police made another raid on an alleged betting-house, at 3, Price's Lane, and arrested Samuel Bryce, stated to be the proprietor, and six men who were found on the premises. ... The prisoners were subsequently brought up at the Police Court. Bryce was charged with keeping a betting-house, and was fined £35, or three months' imprisonment. The others were discharged.

(*Freeman's Journal*, April 20 1890, 6).

¹⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, May 3 1890, 7.

¹⁹ See O'Callaghan, 'Bookmakers, Betting Offices and the Business of Gambling': The Betting Act 1926 revolutionised the business of bookmaking in Ireland. Up until to this point bets could only legally be placed with bookmakers on horseracing courses, or on credit over the telephone and by telegram through commission agents. The hitherto illegal activity of cash betting ... would now be transacted in state-regulated offices operated by licensed bookmakers' (208).

²⁰ *Irish Times*, 7 August 1890, 3. The same column features complementary advertisements by bookies James Plant and William Kearney:

I AM HERE

JEM PLANT will be standing in all Rings in Ireland. [ADVT].

SO AM I. SO AM I.

WILLIAM KEARNEY all the way from the West, with a Connemara chair to let – take a rest. Good prices for Galway; prompt settlement.; will also be represented outside the Ring [ADVT].

²¹ See, for instance, *Dundalk Examiner and Louth Advertiser*, 5 November 1904; *Irish News and Belfast Morning News*, 11 July 1901.

²² *Freeman's Journal*, July 3 1893, 4.

²³ *Irish Society*, March 14 1891, 210.

²⁴ *United Ireland*, February 28, 1891, 1. ‘The remaining twenty-nine pages contain the names of the subscribers, each page surrounded by an illuminated border of varied design and colouring, no two pages being alike’.

²⁵ *United Ireland*, February 28, 1891, 1.

²⁶ Born in England, ‘Nick got “Irishism”’, writes John Chartres Moloney in *The Riddle of the Irish* (1927); ‘he cultivated an academically bloodthirsty hatred of England, and every moment he could spare from medicine [he was a medical student at Trinity] he devoted to the Irish language’, 116.

²⁷ *An Claidheamh Soluis*, August 31 1901, 1. The plural of *camán* is *camáin*; the contributor appears to have created a neologism, using *camán* as an English singular word and then adding ‘s’ to signify a plural, as with most English nouns. Brain Griffin points out another oddity here - the newspaper’s use of the word ‘liothróid’. This word does indeed mean ‘ball’ in English, but it is ‘ball’ in a generic sense; it does not describe the spherical object used in hurling - any GAA fan or fan of hurling would know that hurlers propel a “sliotar” with their hurleys, not a ‘liothróid’.

²⁸ Caffrey, ‘Irish Material Culture’, 29.

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