



Historical origins

The Ulster Defence Union, often referred to as the Ulster Defence Association, was formed in February 1893 to oppose the Irish Home Rule movement, following a rally at the Ulster Hall, Belfast. Its principal aim was to resist the Second Home Rule Bill of 1893.

The UDU was launched by the publication of a manifesto on 17 March 1893, the signatories of which included Colonel Edward Saunderson, MP. Shortly after its creation, it adopted the motto *Quis Separabit* (Who shall Separate)

On 1 September 1893, the Second Home Rule Bill was passed by the House of Commons, but when it came to the House of Lords it was heavily defeated.

By October 1893, the UDU had a Central Assembly described as comprising six hundred gentlemen, which first met on 24 October

1893, from among whom an executive committee of forty was elected. This committee also included the Ulster Unionist members of both houses of parliament. In October, 1893, at an Ulster Defence Union meeting in Belfast, Saunderson said, celebrating the scale of opposition in the Lords "Home Rule is dead. It was dissected in the House of Commons, buried in the House of Lords, and even the Irish people would not trouble to give it a wake."

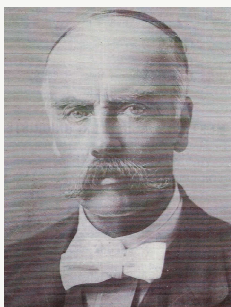
Eventually, in 1905, the organisation took part in the formation of the Ulster Unionist Council, which was a precursor of the Ulster Unionist Party.

The Ulster Defence Union would become the birth stone of the Ulster Defence Association, as we looked to the patriotism of our forefathers to defend our communities against the onslaught of militant republicanism.



Statue of Colonel Edward James Saunderson erected at Portadown

Colonel Edward James Saunderson



Saunderson was born at Castle Saunderson, County Cavan and educated abroad. Saunderson's political career as a representative of Irish Unionist had begun. He had entered the Cavan militia (4th battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers) in 1862, was later made major (1875), became colonel in 1886 and was in command of the battalion from 1891 to 1893.

He was elected MP for Cavan in 1865, losing his seat in 1874, and by 1885, when he again entered parliament for North Armagh, he had become a prominent Orangeman and a Conservative; the question of Irish home rule had now come to the front, and

In March 1893, Saunderson was one of the signatories of the manifesto of the Ulster Defence Union, launched to organize resistance to the Second Home Rule Bill of 1893.

The Ulster Unionist Council

"That an Ulster Unionist Council be formed, and that its objects shall be to form an Ulster union for bringing into line all local Unionist associations in the Province of Ulster with a view to consistent and continuous political action, to act as a further connecting link between Ulster Unionists and their parliamentary representatives; to settle in consultation with them the parliamentary policy, and to be the medium of expressing Ulster Unionist opinion as current events may from time to time require, and generally to advance and defend the interests of Ulster Unionism in the Un-



THE ULSTER DEFENCE UNION

The election of a central assembly

“We present this week, for the satisfaction of Ulster Unionists, the names of the six hundred gentlemen composing the Central Assembly of the Ulster defence Union. These have been chosen from every class and creed, and are fully representative of the Unionism of the Imperial Province. They have been selected with great care and consideration, and cannot fail, by what is known of their antecedents, in giving sat-

isfaction to those who have delegated them to such important work. This body meets for the first time on Tuesday, the 24th inst, in the Ulster Hall, when they will proceed to the election of a council of forty, and the consideration of other important matters. The occasion is a great and serious one in the history of Ulster, but will, it is expected, mark an epoch in her peace, prosperity, and material developments.”

North Belfast members:

Ulster Defence Union

Mr W.Q. Ewart, Crumlin Road.
 Thomas M'Cormick, 34 CliftonPARK Avenue.
 Alexander Bryans, 48 Duncairn Street.
 W Mc Cammond J.P Fortwilliam Park
 George Andrews, J.P. Ardoyne.
 B.W.D.Montgomery, The Drift, Antrim Road.
 W.H.Dixon, J.P. Dunowen, Cliftonville.
 R.W.M'Dowell, 22, Oldpark Crescent.
 W.Swanston, Cliftonville Avenue.
 John Malone, Cliftonville Avenue.
 F.W.Finlay, Wolfhill House.
 Rev. J. Wilson, Cliftonpark Avenue
 Samuel Wilson, Corporation square
 George S Clark, Dunlambert, Fortwilliam.
 Thomas A. McKnight, 156 York Street.
 James Haveron, 13 Lawther Street.
 James Ledgerwood, 14 Brougham Street.
 William Nicholl, 11 Hillman Street

Published in Belfast weekly News , October 21st 1893.

Quis Separabit

- *First used by the Knights of Saint Patrick*
- *Taken as the motto of the Royal Irish Rifles & the Irish Guards.*
- *It was the motto of the Ulster Defence Union in 1896.*
- *In 1970, the newly formed Ulster Defence Association adopted the motto which it still holds.*

Thomas Sinclair

Thomas Sinclair was born at Hopefield House, Antrim Road in North Belfast on 23 September 1838, from an influential Presbyterian family, Thomas was closely involved with the Church all his life. His father had contributed to the building of Duncairn Church, while Sinclair Seamen's Church, in Corporation Square, was built, largely with funding from the family, as a memorial to his uncle John Sinclair. Thomas himself became Clerk of Session at Duncairn Church at the age of 29.

Thomas saw Gladstone's subsequent intention to introduce Home Rule for Ireland as a betrayal and made the following declaration in one of his famous speeches-
'We shall show the world, that come what may Ulster will never consent to yield up her citizenship, or be expelled from the Imperial Parliament to be degraded to a junior partnership in a subordinate colony'.

Thomas's eloquence would continue to play a significant role in the developing Union-

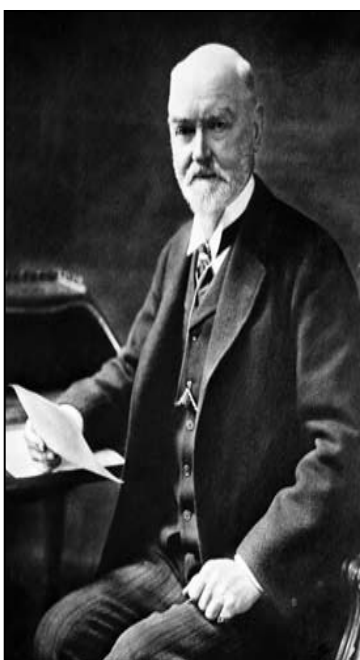
ist opposition to Home Rule. It was he who conceived the idea for and organised the Ulster Convention of 1892, when 12,000 delegates met to pass resolutions outlining the Unionist case against Home Rule. Thomas, was also the man who wrote the final text for the Solemn League and Covenant of 1912. Sir Edward Carson, who led the Unionist opposition to Home Rule at the time, saw no need to "alter a word in the declaration which I consider excellent". It would soon be signed by nearly half-a-million people. Thomas subsequently drafted the constitution of the provisional government of Ulster.

Thomas Sinclair was a prolific writer on behalf of the Unionist cause and a particularly fine example of his work was an essay entitled The Position of Ulster. This appeared in a volume of essays with the title Against Home Rule - The Case for the Union, which was published in 1912. In it Sinclair said: *'The Ulster Scot is not in Ireland today upon the conditions of an ordinary immigrant. His forefathers were 'planted' in Ulster in the trou-*

blous times of the seventeenth century.'

The Central Assembly of the Ulster Defence Union which consisted of 600 members, who had been returned to it by the enrolled Unionists of Ulster, with the mandate to declare their policy and direct their defence in the event of a Parliament in Dublin being set up. The Assembly chose their 40 representatives, who, acting with the Unionist Ulster members of both Houses of Parliament, constituted the Executive Council, with Mr. Thomas Sinclair as chairman.

Sinclair died at his home, Hopefield House, on 14 February 1914, as the crisis of the Third Home Rule Bill reached a crescendo and was subsequently buried at the City Cemetery. A memorial window was unveiled in Church House, the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church, on 8 June 1915 and the Sinclair Memorial Hall at Duncairn Presbyterian Church was opened on 10 September 1915.



THE ULSTER DEFENCE UNION



The Ulster Convention

On the 17th of June a great convention, at which over 11,000 delegates, representing Ulster, were present, was held in a building specially constructed to accommodate so large a gathering. The object of the convention was to prove that Ulster would not submit to Home Rule. The Duke of Abercorn was followed by Sir William Ewart, one of the greatest representatives of the linen trade in the world. He moved the six resolutions, which were seconded by Mr. Thomas Sinclair. The words of Mr. Sinclair's speech, which won the heartiest approval, were in reply to the threat he stated Gladstone had recently made, to coerce the Ulster Unionists, if necessary, with the Queen's troops. "**Fellow-countrymen, Mr. Gladstone's threat is a serious one, but, nevertheless, we can never falter in our resolve. We are children of the Revolution of 1688, and, cost what it may, we will have nothing to do with a Dublin Parliament.**"

Ulster Defence Resolutions: *That we avow our fixed resolve to retain unchanged our present position as an integral portion of the united Kingdom, and to protest in the most unequivocal manner against the passage of any measure that would rob us of our inheritance in the imperial parliament, under the protection of which our capital has been invested and our homes and rights safeguarded. That we declare to the people of Great Britain our conviction that the attempt to set up such a parliament in Ireland will inevitably result in bloodshed, such as have not been experienced in this century, and announce our resolve to take no part in the election or the proceedings of such a parliament, the authority of which, should it ever be constituted, we shall be forced to repudiate. As a last resource we are prepared to defend ourselves and will do so.*

The Ulster Covenant

In 1916 seven men signed the Proclamation of the Republic in Dublin. The American Declaration of Independence of 1776 had fifty six signatories. However, in 1912 virtually an entire community put their signatures to the Ulster Covenant, as the defacto birth certificate of Northern Ireland. In Ulster, on 28th September 1912, 218,206 men signed the Covenant; and 228,991 women signed a parallel Declaration associating themselves with the men in their uncompromising opposition to the new Home Rule Bill. A further 19,162 men and 5,055 women of Ulster birth signed in Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, York, Liverpool, London, Manchester and Bristol.

The Ulster Covenant was a truly impressive demonstration of the resolve of early twentieth-century Ulster unionists to remain citizens of the then United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The Covenant also demonstrated a spontaneous solidarity in defence of that Union. Furthermore, the Covenant also demonstrated that Ulster unionism was a popular, broadly-based and democratic movement.

By the end of the historic 'Ulster Day', the unionist population had demonstrated their resolve to the British parliament, to the rest of the British people and to the world. The Northern Whig declared: "*Ulster had delivered an ultimatum to the British Government which was as enthusiastic and unanimous a pronouncement as was ever made by a people placed on their defence against an assault on their liberties.*"

The formal establishment of the Provisional Government of Ulster, in July 1914; directly attributable to the resolutions passed at the Ulster Convention, made it abundantly clear that unionists were standing by their pledge to defend themselves and to organise their defence accordingly.

