

March-18



## Time Travellers Club

Dear Club Member,

This month sees that celebration of the most Irish of holidays, St Patrick's Day, except of course the place where it's most celebrated isn't actually Ireland... However, let's not get that get in the way of a good colour inspiration.

The colour most strongly associated with Ireland is green. But it's actually a comparatively recent link. St Patrick himself was more commonly represented by the colour blue, and the Irish Presidential Standard is still a harp on a blue background.

In the 1700's William of Orange (William III) was on the throne of England, he was a staunch Protestant, and unsurprisingly his Protestant supporters used the colour orange to represent their loyalties.

St Patrick famously used the shamrock to teach his converts about the idea of the Holy Trinity, so green was already linked to the Catholic identity. Later that century green also became linked with revolution. In 1789 a young lawyer called Camille Desmoulins picked up a linden leaf whilst giving a speech to a crowd in Paris. He stuck the leaf in his hat, and invited all other patriots to do the same as a representation of their beliefs. Wearing foliage in your hat isn't a particularly practical long term solution, so that leaf quickly became a green cockade.

There was a problem however, green was the colour associated with the Count d'Artois, the younger brother of Louis XVI, so the green cockade was eclipsed with the now familiar red, white and blue tricolour. However, the link remained, in part because of Irish involvement in the French Revolution, and when those Irish returned home they took that use of green symbolism with them. A green flag, often bearing a golden harp became the symbol of the Irish Home Rule movement.

After a long and brutal conflict the Home Rule Act in 1920 set up separate parliaments for Northern and Southern Ireland. The Northern Irish areas were still mainly Protestant, and opposed to separation from the rest of Great Britain. In 1921 the Irish Free State was established, and the southern part of the country became a separate nation. The flag for the country featured green for the Catholic Nationalists, Orange for the Protestants, and the white for the peace that it was hoped would come between them.

Unfortunately that peace took a long time to arrive, the separation of Northern Ireland continued to be a cause of conflict. In my lifetime terrorism as a result of that conflict was a daily fact of life for many all over the UK. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 has resulted in a long period of relative peace.

I'm not one to shy away from the big issues, but this one really is hugely complicated, and one that I really can't do justice in such a short space. However, the development of the colours of the Irish flag are interesting, and they all feature in your fibre this month (because bright Kelly Green is a hard colour for many to wear), along with a nod to the French origin of that green by using a French breed; Rambouillet.

Happy Spinning,  
Katie

Further Reading-

History of St Patrick's Blue-

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/should-st-patricks-day-be-blue-180954572/>

More Information about the Irish Home Rule Movement-

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/home\\_rule\\_movement\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/home_rule_movement_01.shtml)

<http://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/home-rule-for-ireland-a-a>

<http://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/between-armed-rebellion-and-democratic-revolution>

Radio 4 Extra documentary interviewing Monica McWilliams, one of only 2 women to sit at the negotiating table for the Good Friday Agreement-

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09k0p9q>