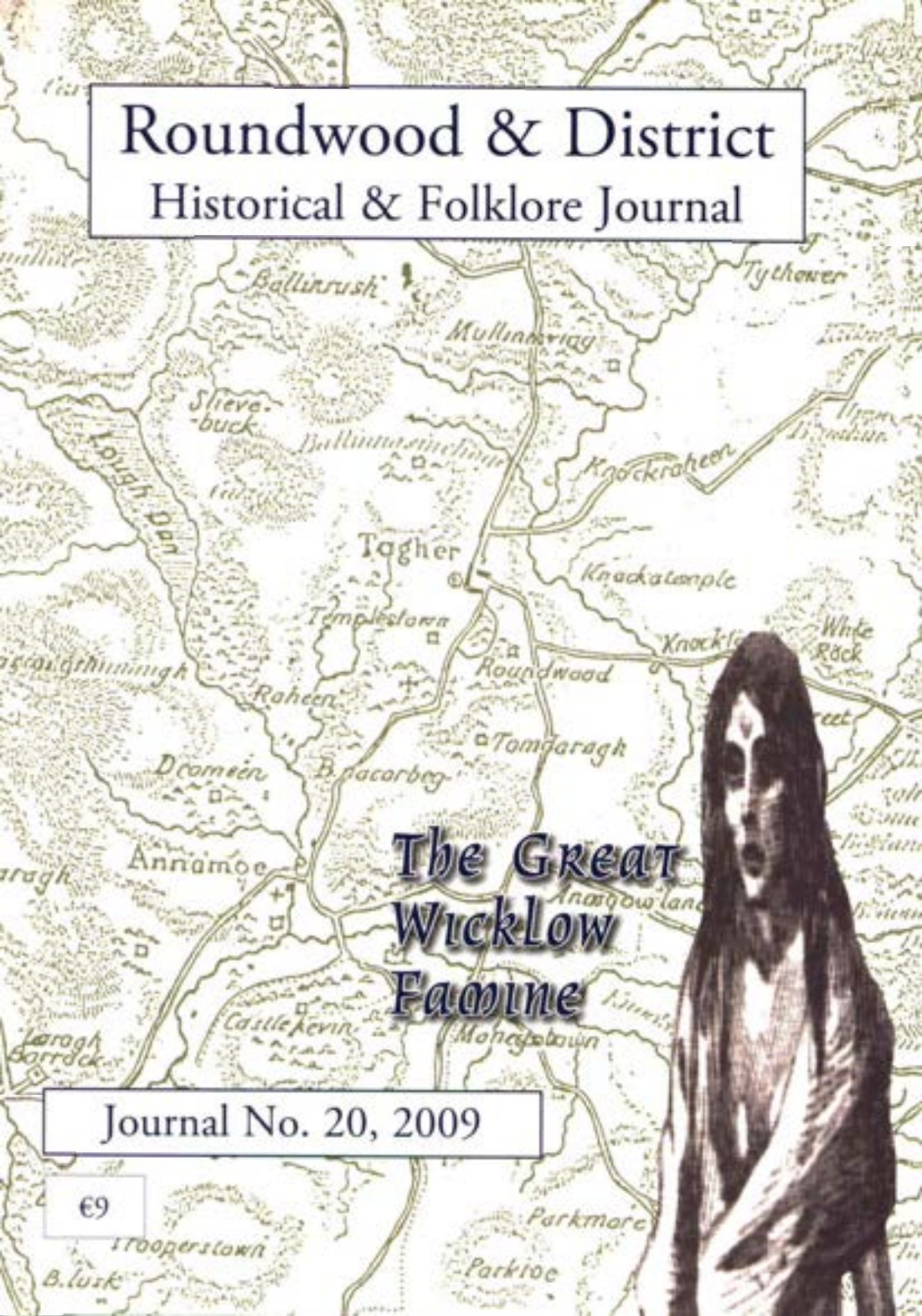
Roundwood & District
Historical & Folklore Journal



The Great Wicklow Famine

Journal No. 20, 2009

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Other publications also available are;

a CD of all previous journals

Corlett, C. and J. Medlycott. 2000.
The Ordnance Survey Letters - Wicklow ISBN 1-9005058-1-9,

McNally, Joseph. 2003
A Pictorial History of Roundwood Martello Press, Blackrock

Kevin Byrne 2008 *Time Did Not Stand Still: The History of St Colman's Hospital, Rathdrum, Co Wicklow* Kevin Byrne, Rathdrum, Co Wicklow

Canon Robert Jennings 2009 *Calary Church & Parish, Diocese of Glendalough, 175th Anniversary 1834 -2009* ISBN 978-0-9563703-0-3

We especially welcome contributions from those living locally or overseas and those who used to live in Co.Wicklow.

Articles and/or photographs may be submitted to any member of the Society, posted to the above address, or e-mailed to rndwdhist@iol.ie

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20 years of Editors

This is a gallery of most of the editors over the twenty years.
Sadly we are missing photographs of Shay Hyland and Christine Holt.
If anyone has one it would be good for our records.

Ian Cantwell

Sean Kavanagh & Monica Farrell

Martin Timmons

Ita Corcoran

Máirtín Mac Siúrtáin

Elinor Medlycott, Claire Chambers, John Medlycott, Ann O'Brien, & Dairine Coffey

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From the Chair

Elinor Medlycott

The Roundwood and District Historical and Folklore Society was founded in 1987 and now are proud to publish the 20th Journal.

This year has continued to be lively, with an increased attendance at lectures and outings. In March Liam Clare gave a very interesting talk on Enclosing the Commons at the Sugar Loaf mountains and Bray 1830-1870. In April, Chris Corlett showed old photographs of Dublin and Leinster by Chapman and Cooke, which provoked much nostalgia. Then in May we held our 10th Saturday Seminar. The topic was 'The Great Famine in Wicklow'. This was most successful and we have articles from it in this Journal al the speakers. For this Seminar, we were delighted to receive one of the twenty-two Heritage Awards from Wicklow County Council, which were presented on Heritage Day at a ceremony in Avondale.

In June the Society had an expedition to see Vincent Pierce's woolstore in Rathdrum. This proved extraordinarily interesting, especially to those of us as sheep-farmers. Vincent was able to show accounts of the price of

wool going back to his grandfather a hundred years ago and also gave a full explanation of the fate of all the wool. Our outing in July was to North Dublin, where we were given a fascinating tour of Glasnevin Cemetery by Shane Mac Thomais. We focused on Wicklow connections and also the elaborate Daniel O'Connell Memorial. Shane said no group before had recognised the monument to Sir John Grey, the first chairman for the Vartry reservoir. It included Vartry water being poured from a pitcher by a grateful maiden! Lunch in the National Botanic Gardens was followed by a tour of the Casino, Marino, and Malahide Castle.

Within a 10-day period in May, the district welcomed both Archbishop Diarmuid Martin and Archbishop John Neill to bless and open the new Church facilities, Archbishop Martin, the new Parish Hall in Roundwood, Archbishop Neill, the upgraded Church Room in Calary. Both addresses from these occasions are included in this journal. In September and October there were continued celebrations to mark 175 years since the consecration of Calary Church. Three of our members were involved in updating the history of the parish.

We marked the 125th anniversary of the GAA with a meeting just before the national celebrations in November. This particularly concentrated on the events in this area

Whole hearted thanks to Mary Byrne, the outgoing chairman, for her enthusiasm and energy during her tenure of the office and now her continued support. She inspired all the office holders to do more! Thanks also to these unsung heroes.

We are particularly grateful to all our editors, contributors and patrons who have put so much into the twenty journals. New members to the society and contributors to the journal are always welcome.

Wicklow & the Famine[1]

Ken Hannigan

1. Introduction

Wicklow has tended not to feature very much in the general histories of the Famine. Standard works on the subject understandably focus on those parts of Ireland, especially in the south and west, where the consequences of the blight were most acute and deaths were most numerous. It would be wrong, however, to assume that all was well in Wicklow during the Famine years. A closer look at the evidence reveals a more complex situation.

The paper that follows is based largely on documentary evidence in two main categories, both of them official sources. Firstly there are the published Parliamentary Papers of the time, including the published decennial Census Reports and the volumes of evidence gathered by two wide-ranging Commissions of enquiry which took evidence in Co Wicklow in the years just prior to the famine. These were the Poor Law Commission of 1835-36 and the Devon Commission, which inquired into land usage and which, in October 1844, interviewed many witnesses in Wicklow, including landlords, agents and tenants. Secondly there are the records of the Famine Relief Commission now housed in the National Archives in Dublin. Many of these records have been indexed and this index is available on the National Archives website.[2] This gives access to what is the single most important source for documenting the extent of distress in local areas from 1845 to 1847. The papers comprise applications for aid and accompanying documentation from local relief committees in all parts of the country.

Wicklow being such a county of contrasts, it is all the more important that conditions be studied at the level of the smallest administrative unit. With its varied topography and demographic contrasts, between east and west and between highlands and lowlands, Wicklow can also be regarded as resembling something of a microcosm of the country as a whole. As a

consequence, Wicklow's experience of the Famine also varied greatly from region to region with some parts of the county experiencing conditions that were as critical as those in the south and west of Ireland, albeit on a much smaller scale, while others escaped the worst consequences of the crisis.

2. Pre-Famine Wicklow

The major factors influencing the development of County Wicklow in the pre-famine years, and by extension its experience during the Famine, were

a) Its proximity to Dublin

b) Its wild mountainous core which made it totally unlike any other county in Leinster

c) Its position on the coast, and particularly the fact that this was the East Coast.

On the eve of Famine, Wicklow was among the most prosperous of Irish counties, and indeed it would continue to prosper in the decades following the Famine, another factor that leads easily to the assumption that it escaped famine altogether. The county contained a strong, comparatively wealthy, and comparatively resident, gentry. The point has been made that many Wicklow landlords had estates elsewhere in Ireland in addition to their Wicklow estates, but that they tended to live on their Wicklow estates because of their proximity to Dublin and the east coast. [3] Although they would have been regarded as absentee landlords elsewhere in Ireland, in Wicklow they were resident. It is true, that not all the landlords in Wicklow were resident, but there was a fairly high level of residency by Irish standards. It is also true that some of the larger landowners were absentees, notably Fitzwilliam (by far the largest), and Downshire, but these two in particular had active and assiduous resident land agents who managed their estates in an active (if not by later standards a humane and enlightened) manner. [4]

Assessing wealth in terms of the proportion of its population living on income from property or land, Wicklow was second only to Dublin among Irish counties, and in terms of numbers living in first class houses (houses with more than nine rooms) it ranked fourth among Irish counties.

Wicklow's population in 1841 was higher than it had ever been before with 126,143 people living in the county.[5] This figure had been rising in the decades before the 1840s but not dramatically so. It had risen from 110,767 in 1821 and 121,557 in 1831. In other words there had been almost a ten percent (9.7%) increase between 1821 and 31 and this had slowed to less than four per cent between 1831 and 1841. The actual number of inhabitants may already have begun to decline by the mid 1840s, even before the Famine. Landlords who were most actively involved in managing their estates made every effort to prohibit sub-division of lands and to discourage early marriage among their tenants and servants, forcing many of them to seek livelihoods elsewhere. One historian has suggested, on the basis of evidence supplied to the Poor Enquiry, that in the decades just before the Famine, rural misery may have been worse in the more advanced counties such as Wicklow precisely because Leinster proprietors had been more successful in displacing smallholders and cottiers. In the West of Ireland, by contrast, virtually all families held some land.[6]

On the vast Fitzwilliam Estate in South Wicklow, for instance, systematic clearances had already begun long before the Famine[7] and one witness at the Devon Commission Enquiry in October 1844 told of how those who had been cleared from estates around Ashford a little time before had ended up on what was called the Common between Ashford and Rathnew:

> *It is said that this common was given by some lady but it was refugium peccatorum for these men. There are hundreds of them there and it was very fortunate for the country that it was there.*[8]

Wicklow's proximity to Dublin also influenced the county's demographic structure to a huge extent. In no other part of Ireland was there such a high rate of inter-county migration as there was between Wicklow and Dublin. The pull of Dublin was so strong that by 1841 one person in every seven born in Wicklow had moved to Dublin. Many of these were women who were working as domestic servants. The number of young women migrating from Wicklow to Dublin was noted by the Census Commissioners as being so great as to distort the balance of sexes among those remaining in the county. This was particularly so among those of marriageable and child-bearing ages. Within the age band 26 to 35, men outnumbered women by almost two to one.[9] Apart from the implications

for marriage and fertility within the county, the fact that such a high proportion of Wicklow-born people were already resident in Dublin facilitated further migration to and through the capital. Another factor which must have facilitated migration was Wicklow's linguistic profile. Wicklow was totally English-speaking at this time and had been for as long as anyone could remember. It was unique in this respect. In no other county was the Irish language so completely absent.[10]

The population was overwhelmingly rural, the only sizable towns were Arklow, which had a population of 3,254, Bray, which had a population of 3,169 (a third of whom were actually in County Dublin), Wicklow with 2,794 and Baltinglass with1,928. Rathdrum was the only other town containing over a thousand inhabitants. There were 21,182 families in the county, two-thirds of whom depended on agriculture for their livelihood and by far the largest single category of employment was farm labour. Out of a total of just under fifty one thousand (50,861) individuals who were returned as having an occupation, labourers or servants numbered just under half (21,914) while a further 6,835 people, mostly female, were employed as domestic servants. Overall in the county there were 6,211 farmers with 9,466 holdings of various sizes over one acre. Within Co Wicklow, agricultural labourers were most numerous in the north east, in the lowland baronies of Newcastle and Rathdown where the capitalisation of agriculture was more advanced. Here labourers outnumbered farmers by more than three to one. By contrast, in the upland baronies of Ballinacor and Talbotstown, the numbers of farmers and labourers were about equal. Elsewhere in the county there was just a slight preponderance of labourers. [11]

Apart from the numbers engaged in agriculture and domestic service, there were 638 fishermen and 721 miners in the county. There were large numbers of trades people including carpenters (890), blacksmiths (504),

boot makers (777), dress makers and seamstresses (1078) and tailors (591). Fishing was concentrated mainly in Arklow and was at its most intensive for two periods of about six weeks beginning in May and again in November when the herring shoals arrived off the coast. The size and value of the Arklow herring fishery was said to be the second largest in the country. Earlier in the century it had been claimed that the size of the catch in a normal season allowed the fishermen to survive for the rest of the year on the money earned from it.[12] Already by the 1840s, however, things had begun to change. The export value of copper sulphates, available in large quantities as by-product of copper mining in Avoca, had just begun to transform the port, its transport infrastructure, and the work of its fishermen who now began to ply between shallow waters of the estuary and the anchorage, together with the boat owners who now began to build larger vessels to transport this cargo.[13] At this stage, however, on the eve of the Famine the town was still heavily dependent on fishing and its attendant industries such as net-making and hemp-weaving. It was a type of subsistence economy that was to prove in its own way as precarious as the subsistence agricultural economy in the rural uplands. Contemporaries maintained that the distress which Arklow experienced in 1846 and 1847 was caused as much by non-arrival of the herring shoals in these years as by the failure of the potato crop. It is notable that according to the reports of the Society of Friends relief efforts, it was the provision of funds to allow the Arklow fishermen to redeem their nets from pawn that helped to get the local economy moving again in the late 1840s.[14]

As for mining, the other main source of non-agricultural employment, the numbers employed by the mines, including carters and craftsmen of various sorts, amounted to several thousands (Robert Kane put it at two thousand) and this number was increasing in the early 1840s. The scale of mining enterprises around Avoca, Glendalough and Glenmalure are difficult to imagine today. Mining operations in the Avoca valley just before the Famine were on such a scale as to make the Barony of Arklow quite unlike any other in the county (Arklow Barony stretched from Wicklow Town to the town of

Arklow and stretched inland as far as the Vale of Avoca. It included the towns of Arklow and Wicklow). Among Wicklow's eight baronies, Arklow was the only barony with substantial numbers of non-agricultural labourers. It contained more than one and a half times as many non-agricultural labourers as the rest of Wicklow combined and had almost three times as many non-agricultural labourers per head of its population as any other barony. It also had the greatest population density of any Wicklow barony. Apart from miners and labourers, large-scale mining activities also supported many attendant artisans such a boot making, harness making and even clog making, and contributed significantly to the development of the harbours at Arklow and Wicklow.

The mines had even changed the agricultural economy of the area. Potatoes, which elsewhere in the county would have been grown mainly as subsistence crops, were grown here as a cash crop to feed the miners. At the other end of the social spectrum, many of Wicklow's landlords had invested in the development of the mines. Mining also provided something of a safety net for agricultural labourers or small farmers, though this tended to be as a very last resort. and although the mine workers were considered to be in a better condition than the agricultural labourers, the agricultural labourers were not attracted to mining work.[15]

Mineworkers, therefore, tended to come into an area from outside rather than from the local community and to remain a largely homogenous group divorced from the agricultural world. According to evidence given at the Devon Commission, many of the miners tended in the past to migrate back and forth between Ireland and Great Britain.

Taken separately, rural Wicklow had the lowest population density of any county in Leinster and the second lowest in Ireland. However, the picture was of course distorted by the great mountainous core which was largely uninhabited or sparsely inhabited. Because of Wicklow's mountainous terrain, only 56.1% of its land was arable, compared to Meath's 94.3% and Wexford's 88.5%. Of Wicklow's 1362 townlands, 40 had no inhabitants at all in 1841. Again this disparity tends to distort many of the statistical analyses done on a county-wide basis and also comparisons made on a county by county basis. In the lowland areas where most of the county's population was concentrated, there was a much higher population density.

If arable land only were to be considered, Wicklow would have been one of the most densely populated counties, ahead of the neighbouring counties of Wexford and Carlow.[16]

As was true for most of Ireland, the vast majority of the nine thousand holdings in Wicklow were under 30 acres. Over two and a half thousand farms (2643) were from 1 to 5 acres. Those above 30 acres accounted for only a little over one fifth of all farms, although the number of larger farms in Wicklow was above the Irish average and above even the average for Leinster. This is evidence, perhaps, of a more assiduous landlord class taking steps to reduce subdivision, but also a legacy of an earlier time when strong Protestant farming families were granted leases to middling farms on the larger estates. Competition for these leases from among the more affluent Catholic tenants in the less restricted post-penal years of the late 18th century, combined with a long period of rising prices and rents, contributed to the sectarianism that so characterised the events of 1798 in Wicklow and Wexford.[17]

Following the type of ethnic cleansing that accompanied and followed those melancholy events in these parts, there was a kind of retrenchment in the awarding of leases. Years of falling prices at the end of the Napoleonic Wars also contributed to less competitive and more traditional practices in the granting of leases, with resident landlords tending to let directly to established, mainly Protestant, tenants. On the estates of absentees, and especially where middle men operated, lands tended to be given, in smaller lots and for shorter lettings, mainly to Catholics. Eugene Curry, writing from Powerscourt in 1838, for instance, noted that the Catholics there were settled on the higher ground.[18] This pattern of settlement throughout the county was to find an echo as late as the 1901 Census which showed neighbouring townlands in some areas of Wicklow almost exclusively Catholic or Protestant. In the Electoral Division of Calary, for instance, comprising the townlands of Ballinastoe and Glasnamullen, 58% of the inhabitants were Protestant, while in the neighbouring electoral division of Togher, containing most of the village of Roundwood and the townlands north of it, 96% of the inhabitants were Roman Catholic. Overall, with Protestants accounting for 22% of its inhabitants, Wicklow had the highest proportion of Protestants of any county outside Ulster. In

the baronies of Arklow, Newcastle, Rathdown and Shillelagh, Protestants comprised 25% or more of the population.

It was hardly surprising that in the decades after 1798 there was much mutual distrust and fear among the county's Catholic and Protestant communities. The annual twelfth of July Orange demonstrations in Carnew were a potential, and sometimes actual, flashpoint. There were periodic waves of hysteria which caused members of the respective religious communities to gather together or stay up all night in expectation of an attack by their neighbours of the other faith, notably in December 1824 when Protestants from Bray to Arklow were reported to be in a state of alarm, being apprehensive of some sudden attack by Catholics, in February 1829 when Catholics in Tinahely were reported to be sitting up every night expecting to be murdered by Protestants, and again in the June 1832 when Protestants around Tinahely locked themselves in the Market House, fearing an imminent massacre as a consequence of an outbreak of religious hysteria among the Catholics throughout the county, hysteria that was partly engendered by the cholera epidemic of that year.[19] These fears had begun to subside in the more tranquil times of the 1840s, but it did not take much to start a panic. Elizabeth Smith of Baltiboys, for instance, recorded the panic caused by the taking of the Census in June 1841:

> *The poor people here are all terrified that they were to have been kidnapped or pressed or murdered on the night of the 6th. Half of them were not to go to bed and had barricaded their doors.*[20]

Most people in the county who appeared before the Devon Commission in 1844 believed that the state of agriculture in Wicklow was improving, but most also believed that the condition of the small farmers and labourers was a cause for concern, many of the farmers relying on loan funds to pay their rent and many becoming increasingly indebted to them. One witness told the Devon Commission that even the larger of the small farmers (those holding from ten to thirty acres) were dragging out a miserable existence, unable to afford meat even once a week and living mainly on potatoes and milk.[21] The Devon Commission was also told of farmers borrowing

from one loan fund to pay off their debts to another from which they had borrowed to pay their rent, thus getting themselves into a spiral of debt. Their hold on the land was therefore very tenuous. The condition of the labourers was of course considerably worse.

Other contemporary commentators, however, claimed that the misery that obtained in other counties was comparatively unknown in Wicklow, and that the land there comfortably supported those who worked it.[22] This may have been a little over-optimistic, but other benchmarks by which progress could be measured tended to indicate improvement. Despite the internecine tensions and fears mentioned earlier, the county had been remarkably peaceful in the decades before the Famine. This is something that is especially remarkable given how disturbed it had been in the late 1790s and early 1800s, but it is attested to on many sides. All those who gave evidence to the Poor Law Commission of 1835-36, for instance, were agreed that, apart from some protests here and there against the payment of tithes, the county was perfectly peaceful. Likewise, those giving evidence to the Devon Commission in 1844 said that there had been little or no agrarian outrages. Very few homicides had been recorded in the county after the very early years of the 19th century and this was particularly so in the immediate pre-Famine years, there being two in 1843, none in 1844 and one in 1845. Most of these homicides were classified as manslaughter or accidental death rather than murder. The assize judges regularly ended their sessions by complimenting the inhabitants of the county on Wicklow's peaceful demeanour.[23] A comparison of the crime statistics of these years with those for Tipperary, for instance, shows Wicklow to have been a remarkably tranquil county.[24]

Though Wicklow may have been better off than many other counties, poverty was still present to a great extent among the labourers and cottiers. Twenty-eight per cent of families in County Wicklow lived in one-roomed mud cabins. There were concentrations of these around most towns and villages, particularly in the more densely populated east of the county, where the greatest numbers of landless labourers were concentrated, and around Baltinglass in the West. In some parishes, one-roomed mud cabins accounted for 40% or more of the inhabited houses. These included such places in the east of the county as Ennereilly just north of Arklow (48%),

Redcross(44%), Kilmacanogue (44%), Rathnew (42%), and Arklow (40%). In Ballinalea, outside Ashford, for instance, 37 of the 51 inhabited houses were one-roomed mud cabins. [25]

However, as mentioned above, most contemporary observers in the years before the famine believed that things were improving. The Poor Law Commission of 1835-36 sent out questionnaires to parishes throughout the county and among the questions asked was one as to whether the general condition of the poor had improved, become worse, or had remained stationary, since the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815. Most of those in County Wicklow who answered this question stated that there had been a slight improvement. Wicklow and Wexford were the only two Irish counties to register more positive than negative answers to this question. However, this optimism was by no means unanimous and it may be significant that in Co Wicklow the most strongly negative responses to this question came from the Roman Catholic clergy who were possibly most familiar with conditions among the very poor.[26]

For the labourers and cottiers, conditions were particularly hard in the summer months when the previous year's supply of potatoes began to run out. The labourers' crop was usually not ready until September or even later. The period between the consumption of one crop and the digging out of the next amounted to what was described as an annual return of temporary half-famine. One witness from West Wicklow who gave evidence to the Poor Law Commission of 1835-36 told how it was customary for the wives and children of the poorer labourers to take to the road and become beggars during these months every year and that in seasons when potatoes were scarce, the labourers lived on nettles and other weeds, something that was also reported by Thackeray in 1842.[27]

Everywhere in Wicklow potatoes constituted the food of the poor, in many cases their only food. Once again the Poor Law Commission of 1835-36 provides the evidence. Reports which it published from twenty-nine

respondents in Co Wicklow indicated that labourers ate little other than potatoes for much of the year. Eleven of the twenty-nine respondents in Co Wicklow reported that herrings also formed part of the diet of the poor, which would indicate that the failure of the herring shoals in the mid-1840s must have had a devastating effect far beyond the town of Arklow. Although wheat was extensively grown at this time on the low-lying lands along the coast, it was not consumed by the poor and it was only among the mining communities of Avoca that bread was reported as being included in the diet of the poor.[28]

Such then was the state of Wicklow on the eve of the Great Famine.

3. The Famine in Wicklow

Among the Relief Commission Papers, the first reports of the potato blight in Wicklow date from the end of October 1845. The initial reactions tended to be fairly complacent and confident that even damaged potatoes could be used for food. Elizabeth Smith noted in her diary that the blight had attacked some large conacre fields but, typically, she had no doubt that the situation could be overcome and she believed that even in the worst cases the starch could be removed from diseased potatoes and mixed with wheaten flour to make bread.[29] The belief that even potatoes damaged by the blight could be used for food was widely held but wildly optimistic.

By January 1846 it was clear that the situation in much of the east of the county and around Baltinglass in the west was becoming very serious. Local relief committees had been, or were being, established in parishes throughout the county to co-ordinate relief efforts and to liaise with government. Indeed, initially the greatest distress in this first famine year seems to have been among the agricultural labourers and cottiers in the east of the county and in the populous centres of Arklow and Baltinglass, where sharply rising food prices had an immediate effect. The main problem in this period, and indeed for most of Wicklow in the Famine period, was not the absolute absence of food but the gap which opened up between the cost of basic foodstuffs in the absence of the potato and what the labourers could afford to pay, or indeed what the farmers could afford to pay the labourers.

Though the partial failure of the 1845 potato crop led to distress, the combined effects of local relief committees, the distribution of cheap

food, the organisation of public works and the new Poor Law, seemed to have coped with the situation. In this first famine year for instance, the new workhouses covering Co Wicklow never exhausted their capacities. The statement that had the potato famine of 1845 lasted just one year, it would probably have merited no more than a few paragraphs in the history books would seem to be accurate in respect of Wicklow.[30] It was of course the failure of the crop the following year and in successive years that did the real damage in Wicklow as much as anywhere else. According to police returns, 88 % of the potato land in Wicklow which had been planted in 1845 was planted again in 1846. When this is broken down by barony, however, it emerges that the amount re-planted varied considerably, with the sharpest decline in the coastal baronies of Rathdown (72.8% re-planted) Newcastle (79.%) and Arklow (83.2) (those baronies which had the highest concentrations of labourers) and the least decline in Shillelagh (96.2% re-planted) and Ballinacor South (94.5%). Although the amount of conacre land in the county declined overall by one fifth, the picture barony by barony was again very different. In the baronies of Arklow and Newcastle the amount of conacre land re-planted in 1846 was considerably less than it had been in 1845 while in Shillelagh and Ballinacor South it had actually increased, evidence perhaps that those who could do so, especially the smallholders, were increasing their dependence on the potato as the cost of other foodstuffs increased.[31]

The renewed appearance of the blight, this time resulting in the complete destruction of the potato crop, turned the crisis of 1845-46 into a disaster in 1846-47. It is significant that in Wicklow, despite the fact that statistical evidence points to a prolonged period of excess death and distress over the entire period from 1846 to 1850, it was specifically the winter of 1846-47 that was remembered by those who lived through it as the Famine period. Many contemporaries, such as William Hanbidge of Donoughmore who dictated his memoirs in 1906 when he was 93, and Fr John Gowan of Roundwood and Glendalough, referred to the Famine as something that happened in 1847.[32]

Many contemporaries recalled vividly the speed with which the blight spread in 1846. Fr John Gowan, dated the appearance of the blight in his area precisely to 19 July 1846. Within a matter of days the blight had appeared in every part of the county.[33] Early in September 1846

questionnaires were distributed to ascertain how long the potato crop would supply the labouring population with food. Among the Relief Commission Papers, returns to this questionnaire are extant for Carnew, Hacketstown, Rathdrum, Tullow and Tinahely and indicate that the supply was expected to last only until the end of the month. Most replied that the labouring population would not be able to survive the winter without some form of public relief.[34]

By the end of September 1846, people throughout the county were clamouring for the start of relief works which had been authorised by the Government. These were road building and drainage schemes on which those who had no other source of income or food could be employed for minimal rates of pay. Their melancholic legacy can be seen in many parts of the county even today. Every area has its 'Famine road'. For instance, the coast road from Wicklow Town to the Silver Strand was known until relatively recent times as the 'Famine Road' as it was commenced as a relief work at this time. Until the early 1950s, when it was extended to meet the coast road from Brittas Bay and Arklow, the Famine Road ended abruptly at the point it had reached when the relief works were suspended in 1847.[35]

The crisis had changed in 1846, not only in scale but also in its nature. For the agricultural labourers on the more densely populated lowlands, the problem would continue to be the gap between what they could afford to pay and the cost of food. For the cottiers and smallholders on the slopes of the mountains and in the isolated glens who had subsisted almost totally on the produce of their land, it was the absence of any infrastructure to provide an alternative supply of food that was the problem, and this is the main factor that distinguishes the Famine in Wicklow from its manifestation in most other parts of Leinster.

James Boyle, Superintendent Engineer for the Board of Works Relief Department, who was in charge of organising relief efforts in Co Wicklow, began a series of reports in December 1846, which charted the deepening crisis in the county.[36] By mid-December he was claiming that there was not enough food in store in some areas to keep the population fed for four days and warned of what would happen if there was to be a fall of snow heavy enough to disrupt or delay communications. He reported that carts

which had been sent from Arklow to Enniscorthy for meal returned empty, because people in Co Wexford would not allow food to be taken out of the county. He claimed that destitution had spread from the cottiers to reach the small farmers of from one to six acres and was even beginning to reach those who held larger farms.

As 1846 turned into 1847 the situation worsened. One measure of distress is the extent to which the workhouses, the last resort of the destitute, were filling up. As mentioned above, the new workhouses in Wicklow had not filled the previous year, despite the crisis. Indeed they had never before reached full capacity. By November 1846, however, this began to happen. First Baltinglass was reported full on 14 November, then Rathdrum on 5 December, Rathdown on 12 December, Naas and Shillelagh on 18 January.[37] By the middle of January 1847 the numbers employed on the relief road works in the south and west of the county had risen in one month from one thousand to more than five thousand. James Boyle reported on a tour which he made during the second and third weeks of January when he travelled nearly 190 miles criss-crossing Wicklow. Many of the public works were over-crowded. On one two and a half mile stretch of road near Tinahely alone, 570 men were working. In the Barony of Ballinacor South one tenth of the population was employed on the public works. With food prices continuing to climb relentlessly upwards, the pay of one shilling per day for those on the public works was too little to feed themselves and their families. Boyle was struck by the appearance of young men who when they joined the relief works a few weeks previously had a healthy appearance but were now fainting from hunger. Many of those he had met before he could now scarcely recognise. Disease was rampant, leading to more frequent fatalities. Boyle was particularly worried about the supply of food to Tinahely. Tinahely was supplied from depots in Carlow and Enniscorthy and was the distribution point for much of the interior of the county, including the most isolated areas. It had little or no stock of food and if the supply routes were to be cut, catastrophe would follow.

As it happened, there was a snow storm on the night of 6 February and the following morning, which isolated large parts of the county. It was in the wake of this that the first reports of death from starvation began to be recorded in the Relief Commission papers. James Boyle reported from

Arklow on 10 February that the district was deep in snow and that there had been several deaths from hunger. In the mountainous region around Macreddin, where one of his assistants had been stranded while attempting to cross from Rathdrum to Tinahely, there were reports, reminiscent of those from the south and west of Ireland, that whole families had simply taken to their beds to await death.[38]

Already in January 1847 a widespread scheme of relief using soup kitchens had been put into operation. This was intended to replace the road works as a form of relief. There were strong lobbies arguing that as long as the relief works were available, labourers would cling to them and refuse to take other work where it was available. In the towns and the more populous areas of Wicklow soup kitchens were already operating by February. Seven hundred families were being relieved from the soup kitchen in Arklow. Had it not been for this, it was claimed, many of them would have died.[39] A soup kitchen had also been established in Wicklow Town where 471 families, numbering 2277 persons, almost equal to the entire population of the town, were receiving relief.[40]

On 25 February 1847 Boyle reported that 30 men who had been on the public works had died, some actually on the work, some returning from it. Despite this, the labourers were refusing to leave the public works and accept agricultural work which by now was being offered by some of the farmers, or to join the army, despite the presence of recruiting parties in Baltinglass and Arklow. He believed the situation in and around Baltinglass to be especially critical. In the south of the county in the baronies of Shillelagh and Ballinacor South, where there were almost 3,000 men employed on the relief works, he reported that many were dying.[41]

By the beginning of March 1847 the numbers employed on public relief works in Wicklow had reached a peak of 6678.[42] Winding up of the public works was to begin with an immediate reduction of 20% from 20 March, with the rest to follow by 1 May. The closure of the public works caused widespread panic and resentment. There was a widespread perception that relief by way of public works preserved the dignity of those availing of it, whereas the relief provided by the workhouses and the soup kitchens carried a stigma.

The establishment of food depots by voluntary associations at Arklow and Wicklow and in the west of the county ensured that food supplies, however meagre, were getting through to these areas, as a result of which the poorest survived. It was at this time in mid March 1847 that the Parish Priest of Arklow, James Redmond, wrote an extraordinarily exultant account of the situation in his area. He regarded the survival of the population of Arklow and the surrounding area as nothing short of a miracle:

> *I have news for you that will fill your mind with gladness. Out of ten thousand souls one and he a farmer, died during the week in the country district around Arklow. One, and he a broken down constitution, died in the town. Two persons in seven days in time of Famine die out of ten thousand! Blessed be the God of Heaven.*[43]

Some indication of the extent of destitution in Co Wicklow at this time can be gauged from the figures compiled by the Relief Commissioners in respect of people who were supplied with food rations in the spring and summer of 1847. These showed that in the south of the county 20% of the population had been supplied with food rations or soup. In the north of the county the figure was around 13%.

From spring 1847 the Central Relief Commission began to be wound up, and all official schemes of relief would thereafter be channelled through the Poor Law Unions. A more centralised and powerful network of relief committees was put in place based on the electoral divisions of each Poor Law Union. This was a fundamental shift in Government policy on relief which up to now would not have sanctioned relief being given through the workhouse system other than to those who entered the workhouses.

In Wicklow some of the individual Poor Law electoral divisions reported extremely high percentages of their inhabitants on relief. Rathdrum, with 48 per cent on relief, was the highest in Wicklow, followed closely by Delgany with 47 per cent, Arklow at (35%), Ballymore-Eustace (34%) and Dunganstown (31%).

As mentioned above, several sources point to 1847 as being the worst year of distress in Wicklow. The number of deaths recorded in the county for that year, at 2776, was two and a half times as high as that recorded for pre-Famine years Although the number of deaths attributed directly to starvation was 29, it is clear from the reports of contemporaries that hunger played a part in many more deaths, particularly in the winter of 1846-47. For the remainder of the decade the death rate in Wicklow continued at twice the annual pre-Famine average, most of the excess being attributed to contagious diseases carried by the destitute poor who thronged the centres of relief and the roads between them. Although fever was rampant from 1846, Wicklow largely escaped the cholera epidemic, which swept other parts of the country. Notwithstanding this, 68 deaths from cholera were recorded in Bray during an outbreak there in 1849.

Other indications that things were far from normal over the rest of the 1840s were the annual crime statistics. Many commentators noted a rise in crime in the mid-forties, an increase which continued through the late 1840s. These were almost exclusively crimes against property, clearly Famine-related offences. The vast majority of reported crimes in the county involved cattle and sheep stealing and these reached a huge peak in the worst year of distress in 1847. As late as the summer of 1849, however, the Resident Magistrate was reporting from the Summer Quarter Sessions that he had never experienced such a number of crimes, nine out of ten under the heading of larceny:

> *A great number of cases arose from robberies committed in the several workhouses with a view of getting sent to gaol where they are better fed and also by persons not admitted to the workhouse that they might be sent to gaol.*[44]

Despite the alarm of the resident magistrates during these years, there was no general breakdown in law and order. There were no major disturbances (the most serious crowd disturbances were related not to food shortages, but to the perennial problems surrounding the annual Twelfth of July celebrations in Carnew). Despite reported cases of intimidation against farmers who attempted to take men off the public works, the overwhelming demeanour of the county remained peaceful. Landlords expressed surprise at the docility of their labourers, something that was also commented on by Fr John Gowan.

There are indications that Wicklow also experienced a high rate of emigration in the 1840s. However, it is not possible to give a definitive account of emigration from Wicklow in these years as comprehensive information on emigration from Irish counties began to be collected only in 1851 when rates in Wicklow would already have declined. According to the official statistics, 8,668 people emigrated from Co Wicklow to places outside the United Kingdom from 1851 to 1856.[45] This represented 8.75% of the county's population in 1851 but was less than the rate of emigration for Leinster as a whole. It is almost certain, however, that emigration from Wicklow during the previous five years was at a much higher rate. Over 6,000 individuals were cleared from the Fitzwilliam Estates alone and given assisted passages to North America, over 4,000 of these in the years 1847-50 and fourteen hundred in the years 1851-56.[46] A large proportion of the 965 assisted emigrants from Irish Workhouses in 1848-49 came from Wicklow[47] and of course there was mass exodus of parishioners from Whitechurch (Tinahely) and Killaveny to found a colony in Ohio in 1850 organised by their parish priest Fr Thomas Hore.[48]

The phenomenal migration from Wicklow to Dublin in the pre-Famine period became a torrent during the 1840s. The numbers of Wicklow-born people living in Dublin increased sharply between 1841 and 1851, and by 1851 the number of Wicklow-born people living in Dublin had risen from one in seven to one in five.[49] Emigration and excess mortality obviously contributed to the overall decline in Wicklow's population between 1841 and 1851. At 21.5%, this was double the rate of decline for Wexford, about one third greater than Kildare's. By 1861 the county's population had declined to nearly a third of what it had been in 1841. Here again, however, county-wide statistics are deceptive. The rate of decline varied greatly within the county, with the greatest decline in the south-west. While the population of Shillelagh, Talbotstown Upper and Ballinacor South almost halved between 1841 and 1861, Arklow, Rathdown and Ballinacor North lost one fifth or less. But of course in these parts of North and East Wicklow the decline was offset by a considerable influx with the development of the mines and the extension of the railway. Between 1841 and 1861 the proportion of non-Wicklow-born Irish people living in Wicklow almost doubled from 7.5% to over 14%, another factor that disguises the effects of famine.

The nature of Wicklow's agriculture had also changed. In 1841 small farms of from one to thirty acres accounted for nearly four-fifths of all holdings. By 1851 they amounted to just over half. There were over two and a half thousand holdings of from one to five acres in 1841. Sixty per cent of these had disappeared by 1851.[50] Many of these smallholders were among those who had emigrated. Others had become agricultural labourers. Notwithstanding the fact that many smallholders had joined their ranks, the numbers of labourers also shrank and would continue to do so for the rest of the century.

4. Conclusion

Many factors influenced change in Wicklow in the nineteenth century, but the change in the demographic landscape that occurred between the censuses of 1841 and 1861 stands out as a marker for what was the single most important historical event influencing the development of Wicklow in the last two centuries. Mere statistics, however stark, do not reflect the harsh reality that individuals faced in that period. As mentioned above, the total number of deaths in Co Wicklow attributed officially to starvation (as opposed to the many deaths from associated causes) in the 1840s amounted to twenty-nine. This was considerably less than the number of Wicklow inhabitants who drowned over the same period. Yet it is not difficult to imagine how we would react today to the news that 29 people had starved to death in Wicklow in our time. It would be shocking. And indeed it was shocking to all shades of opinion in Wicklow at that time. Clergy of all denominations, government officials, landlords, doctors, all whose reactions have been recorded were aghast at what was happening or what seemed to be about to happen. To state that Wicklow escaped lightly is to ignore not only the suffering visited upon the poor of those times, but also the very great efforts made by many within the county who were tasked with administering relief and who by their efforts ensured that the numbers who starved did not reach into the thousands.

Illustrations used from William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Irish Sketch Book*, 1842.

References

[1]Earlier versions of, or parts of, this paper appeared in two articles in the Journal of the Wicklow Historical Society, Vol 1, Nos. 5 and 6, 1992 and 1993. For a more comprehensive account of Wicklow in this period see K. Hannigan, "Wicklow before and after the Famine" in K. Hannigan and W. Nolan (eds.) Wicklow: History and Society, (Dublin 1994)

[2]www.nationalarchives.ie

[3]R.F.Foster, Charles Stewart Parnell: The Man and his Family (Sussex, 1979), pp. xiii - xiv

[4]William Nolan, "Land and Landscape in County Wicklow", in K. Hannigan and W.Nolan (Eds.), Wicklow: History and Society (Dublin, 1994), pp. 649 - 691

[5]Census of Ireland 1841. It is remarkable that the most recently taken census, that of 2006 showed that the population of Co Wicklow, at 126,194, was almost identical to what it had been on the eve of the Famine –a difference of only 51.

[6]Mary E. Daly, The Famine in Ireland, (Dubin Historical Association, 1986), p. 33.

[7]Jim Rees, Surplus People: The Fitzwilliam Clearances 1847-1856, Cork, 2000, pp 24-25

[8]Evidence of Simon Moran of Milltown, near Wicklow, Devon Commission, Vol. iii, p 705.

[9]Census of Ireland 1841, Introduction to the General Report, pp xxiv-xxvii

[10]Ken Hannigan, 'The Irish Language in Co Wicklow' in Wicklow Historical Society Journal, Vol 1 No. 1, 1988, pp. 20-34.

[11]Census of Ireland 1831 and 1841.

[12]The Rev. Henry Lambart Bayly, "Statistical account of the Parish of Arklow" in William Shaw Mason, Statistical Account or Parochial Survey of Ireland, ii, Dublin, 1816.

[13]Frank Forde, Maritime Wicklow (Dublin, 1988), pp. 19-22

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[15]Devon Commission, Vol iii p.70 evidence of John Nolan of Ballymoney nr. Rathdrum, 24 October 1844.

[16]Census of Ireland 1841.

[17]L.M.Cullen, The Emergence of Modern Ireland 1600 -1900, Dublin 1983, pp. 210 - 233

[18]Christiaan Corlett and John Medlycott (eds), The Ordnance Survey Letters: Wicklow (Roundwood and District Historical and Folklore Society, 2000), p 5.

[19]For instances of such events see K. Hannigan "Aspects of Wicklow Life in the Early Nineteenth Century" in Wicklow Historical Society Journal, Vol. 1 No. 3, 1990, pp52-54, K. Hannigan, "A Miscellany of Murder: Violent Death in 19th Century Wicklow", in Wicklow Historical Society Journal Vol 1, No. 7, 1994, p.22.

[20]David Thomson with Moyra McGusty (Eds.) The Irish Journals of Elizabeth Smith 1840-1850, (Oxford, 1980), p32.

[21]Devon Commission, Vol iii, p 538-543, evidence of Edward Burke of Liscoleman nr. Tullow.

[22]George O'Malley Irwin, The Illustrated Handbook to the County of Wicklow (London 1844).

[23]Ken Hannigan, "A Miscellany of Murder: violent Death in 19th Century Wicklow", Wicklow Historical Society Journal, Vol 1, No. 7, 1994

[24]National Archives, Returns to Chief Secretary's Office from Constabulary, Monthly Returns of Outrages 1840s

[25]Census of Ireland,1841.

[26]Joel Mokyr, Why Ireland Starved: a Quantitative and Analytical History of the Irish Economy, 1800-1850 (London, 1983), p.12

Poor Enquiry 1836, Vol XXXI Supplement to Appendix F.

[27]Poor Enquiry 1836, Vol XXXI Appendix D, p.48. William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Irish Sketch Book*, 1842, (reprinted Belfast 1985).

[28]Poor Enquiry 1836, XXXI, Appendix D pp. 146-54., Devon Commission, Vol III, p.695

[29]David Thomson with Moyra McGusty (Eds.) The Irish Journals of Elizabeth Smith 1840-1850 (Oxford, 1980), p80.

[30]C.Ó Gráda, Ireland Before and After the Famine: Explorations in Economic History, 1800-1925 (Manchester 1988) p.5.

[31]National Archives, Relief Commission Papers IV/2, Constabulary Returns of the Potato Crop, Co Wicklow.

[32]Rev. John Gowan C.M. "The Irish Famine of 1847" in Roundwood and District History and Folklore Journal, No. 9, 1997. William Hanbidge and Mary Ann Hanbidge, Memories of West Wicklow 1813-1939 (Dublin 2005), pp. 56-57.

[33] Thirteenth Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, 1847.

[34] National Archives, Relief Commission Papers, II/2a (Wicklow)/5878.

[35]K. Hannigan, "Eye-witness accounts of the Famine in Co Wicklow" in Wicklow Historical Society Journal, Vol 1, No. 6, 1993

[36]Boyle' reports for 16 December 1846, 17 January 1847, 20 January 1847, and 25 February 1847 were printed at the time in the Parliamentary Papers 1847, Relief of Distress in Ireland, Board of Works and Commissariat Series, (Reprinted as Volumes 7 and 8 of the IUP Parliamentary Papers Famine Series. A compilation of extracts from these reports and others has been produced by Maeve Baker under the title "The Famine in Wicklow, 1846-47" in the Journal of the West Wicklow Historical Society, No. 3, 1989. Other unpublished reports by Boyle dated 17 December 1846, 19 December 1846, and 10 February 1847 are contained in the Relief Commission Papers in the National Archives, refs II/2a (Wicklow)/8462, 8633 and 10893. The reports quoted in the text here come from both sources but for reasons of space have not been separately referenced.

[37]Thirteenth Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, 1847.

[38] National Archives, Relief Commission Papers, II/2a/11008 (Wicklow)

[39] Boyle report (see footnote 36)

[40] National Archives, Relief Commission Papers,RLF COM II/1/417

[41] Boyle reports (see footnote 36).

[42] Sixteenth Report of the Commissioners of Public Works (Ireland), 1847, Appendix R.

[43] National Archives, RLF COM II/5/2/12

[44] National Archives, Outrage Papers 1849 32/103

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[46] Jim Rees, Surplus People

[47] Eva Ó Cathaoir, "The Poor Law in County Wicklow" in K.Hannigan and W. Nolan (eds) Wicklow: History and Society (Dublin 1994)

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Famine reports 1845: Letters of Diocesan priests

John Medlycott and Teresa Healy

In the autumn of 1845 news of the famine in Ireland reached Rome and this seems to have greatly concerned Pope Gregory. He apparently wrote to the Irish hierarchy requesting a report from each diocese on the state of the country. In the Dublin Diocesan Archives, there are a number of letters from Parish Priests in reply to Archbishop Murray's letter of 27th November 1845 requesting details of the effect of the famine on individual parishes so that he could furnish a full report to Pope Gregory. The letters concerning Rathdrum, Wicklow and Arklow make very interesting reading. Unfortunately the letter for the parish of Glendalough, which included Roundwood in those days has been mislaid.

In 1845 Father John Gowan was curate in Roundwood, Father Clarke was Parish Priest at the time. In the Freeman's Journal of 14 Nov 1845 Father Gowan's Famine report stated 'The potato crops are in a bad way, while digging out it did not appear to be a great loss but in every case where they have been pitted for some time rot is quite evident. One third are lost and what portion of the rest can be saved is not known, price is 4/6 per barrel for the best. Mr Barton is going to buy up all the oats in the neighbourhood at market prices and in the Spring and Summer return to those who may want it at cost price. Our oat crop was more than average'.

In Journal 7, the late Dr James de Valera Mansfield wrote a short account of the life and works of Father Gowan and in Journal 9, Father Gowan's lecture on The Famine, which he gave in 1878 was reproduced. (There are still a few of both these Journals available for purchase!)

Interestingly, the letters were delivered on Friday 28th November, a day after they were written. As the three replies are dated 30th Nov 1845, which was a Sunday, it would seem if using the same delivery system, that they would have arrived, at the latest, at Archbishop's House on Tuesday, 2nd December 1845.

There is no record of the papal response, but Pope Gregory died in 1846. He was succeeded by Pius IX and events on the Continent especially the 1848 revolutions seem to have preoccupied Rome.

Wicklow

Nov. 30th 1845

My Lord

I have deferred replying to your Grace's letter of the 27th [....] until I would have the advantage of meeting with my parishioners on this day, and to ascertain, from them, as accurately as possible the present state of the potato crop ——

I can now state, My Lord, and there can be no doubt of the fact, that within three miles from the coast, in this parish, one half of the crop is totally lost by this general and awful malady, and the same can be safely said to be the case from Bray to Arklow ——

The more inland Districts, towards the mountains, I am happy to be enable [sic] to say, are not so severely affected – There is no Garden, however, but has some share of the disease; and on the whole in those favoured districts from all I can learn, one fourth may be fairly said to be the loss on the average ——

Under this fearful visitation there is now, thank God, some grounds, of hope & consolation in the unanimous [sic] persuasion that the disease has not, for the last fortnight, progressed in the least – Those that were then affected have not since got worse, nor have these then sound been since affected ——

All stratagems have been tried, but none found effectual to save them from the misterious [sic] malady; and the people found that leaving them in the ground undug was by far the safest ——

More than half the crop are still left undug, and are not getting worse but how they can escape the winter is altogether unknown.

My opinion on the future is, that should the present stock now sound, continue so, there would not be much fear of want during the ensuing Summer, altho' at the same time it cannot fail of being oppressive and very severe on the poor, as two thirds of the population depend on their days labour for sustenance and without they get employment the result will be dreadful. The people in this quarter have calmed down very much in their alarm from the impending danger of famine that hung around them ——

There is little now spoken about it, and I trust in God that he will in his mercy avert the threatened danger.

I am My Lord

Your Lordships most obedient [...]

J Grant

His Grace Doc. Murray.

Rathdrum,
Nov. 30th 1845.

My Lord.

In reply to your Graces letter, of Thursday's date. I am happy to inform you that the hope you have entertained, respecting the favourable State of the Potato Crop, in this Parish, is, in a great measure, realized. It is true, indeed, that almost every Townland, in the Parish, has been visited with the Potato disease. In some localities – particularly the vicinity of Rathdrum – it has been very general and severe – but, thru' the greater part of this Parish, it has been both light and partial. I have been attending the Stations, in the several divisions of the Parish, almost daily, for the last two months. I made particular enquiries, as to the state of the crop, in every Townland that I visited – I examined the Potatoes that had been taken out of the ground – and, inspected every field, where I saw the people digging – and, from all I have seen and heard, on the subject, I have calculated that about One eighth of the whole crop has been seriously damaged – and about one twentieth, utterly destroyed. I fear, however – from the unwillingness of the people to make any alteration in their usual mode of storing their Spring and Summer supply – that a great part of what they have deposited in their old fashioned pits will heat – and consequently, rot – before the 1st of March. The progress of the disease – if not entirely terminated – has been certainly checked, in this district, for the last week or ten days. And, if the people could be, now, induced to adopt some simple system of ventilation, I am certain the potatoes, which are healthy up to this period, would keep, untainted – until the next crop comes in. I happened to have, this year, something better than three acres of Potatoes, planted. I suffered as sorely, by the disease, as any of my neighbours.

I, however, let them ripen well before I had them ploughed out. I got [these], then, heaped up on [seed] platforms, made of poles – four feet wide – ten inches high – and moderately covered with straw. They were then thatched with a light covering, and carefully roped. They are now a fortnight in this state – and altho' they were covered with mud, when putting them up – they are now so dry, so firm and so hard – and so well seasoned – that I am certain, they will keep good, with the ordinary care, until next August. Everyone, that sees them admires and approves of my plan – but none will take the trouble, to imitate it... I have not been outside the limits of my Parish, for the last two months – and therefore, cannot give your Grace any information respecting the state of the Potato Crop, in the Neighbouring districts, except from the reports of others. These reports represent it to be very bad, indeed, particularly, in the district between me and the sea. But still, I think, they are much exaggerated. However, your Grace will be correctly informed, on this part of your inquiry, by the Neighbouring Clergymen – most probably – before you receive this.

I should have replied to your Lordships inquiry immediately on the receipt of your letter, last Friday – but, as I am generally visited by people, from all parts of this Parish, on Saturdays – I considered it better, to defer writing, until I would receive the latest accounts. Everything, however, that I heard yesterday confirmed still more in the opinions I have [laid] before your Grace.

I am, My Lord, with very great respect,

Your Lordships obt. & [humble] servant.

Jas.Mc.Kenna.

Most Rev. Doctor Murray.

[Editorial Note : There may be occasional errors where it was difficult to decipher in original but spellings and punctuation have been carefully followed. The square brackets [....] indicate transcription uncertainties. The quality of the originals make it difficult to provide a facsimile.]

Arklow
Nov. 30th 1845

My Lord,

Yesterday, on my return from Dublin I had the honor of receiving your Grace's favour of the 27th.

In reply I beg to say, my Lord, that I find it difficult to describe the effects of the labours of the most excellent Missionaries in this Parish. It might be conveyed by saying that they left the people universally prepared to profit of every opportunity to make their peace with Almighty God by a good Confession. I do deliberately affirm that a sufficient number of [confessions] is only wanting to put the people of this Parish in a state of grace. I never imagined a whole people could be so thoroughly impregnated with religious sentiments in so short a time. So intense have been the feelings of contrition that in some cases the poor penitents proclaimed their sins aloud, regardless of shame & character. Our work is multiplied fourfold & nothing but the want of [assertion] prevents me from applying to your Grace for another Assistant. Your Grace will not be surprised if, relying on [providence], I do so before very long.

With regard to the Potato-crop, my enquiries have ascertained the results: - about 1/3 is already lost in the mountain lands; 1/2 in the midlands; and 2/3 in the sea side or flat lands. In all there is a gradual decline steadily going on in the above proportions so as to create uncertainty & alarm in the minds of all. I have found a great variety in each district; for instance one man in the mountains has lost 20 Barrels of 25; a man in the mid-lands having only a few stone sound in a Horse load; while a man on the sea side has lost 40 Barrels out of 50. However the first is the nearest average.

I beg to say finally, My Lord, that about 100 men have been employed during the last five months in constructing a Quay Wall & Pier on the North side of our River. This work was suspended last night & will not, I understand be [resumed] till next April. Strangers for the most part were engaged. There is no other employment worth notice at present for the poor.

I hasten to close, My Lord, before the Post, with the expression of the warmest wishes for your Grace's long life, health & happiness & write myself your Grace's most respectfully devoted & most humble servt.

Jas. Redmond

The Most Rev. Dr. Murray.

& : & :

Acknowledgements

These letters have been received from the Dublin Diocesan Archives in Archbishops House Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Thanks to Noelle Dowling for her courtesy and cooperation in searching and posting them to me

Extracts from the Rathdrum Union Minute Books 1842-50.

Kevin Byrne

Life in the Workhouse

Rathdrum Workhouse was opened in March 1842. It was designed to hold 600. To deter all but the totally destitute, discipline was strictly enforced in the Workhouse. All able-bodied men, women and children were expected to break stones. A man could break from a ton to a ton-and-a-half per day. The stones were broken on the Workhouse grounds. Selected paupers performed routine work, which included: washing and cleaning, child minding, acting as attendants in the Infirmary while others were placed in charge of the mentally ill in the lunatic wards. The grounds of the Workhouse were also tilled and used for the production of food. All fit boys of twelve years and upwards worked for four hours a day, under supervision, to plant the remaining ground with potatoes. As a further deterrent no tobacco or alcohol was allowed and contact between male and female whether husband and wife, or children was strictly forbidden. All meals were taken in complete silence, broken only by the Master reading the Workhouse rules. The Board of Guardians ordered that only two meals be served per day. These consisted of oatmeal stirabout and potatoes with buttermilk.

Owners and occupiers, with land valuation over £4 and entitled to vote, were required to pay the Poor Law rates to support the poor in the Workhouse.

The Workhouse in the Great Famine

Whatever else may have been expected it can hardly have been envisaged the catastrophe, which occurred soon after the Rathdrum Workhouse opened its doors. The Rathdrum Minutes Book from 1845 to 1851 serves to record such misery that it can only be imagined what life was like in the Workhouse when the Famine broke.

By January 1846, the situation in the east of the County was causing concern. Relief Committees were established in most parishes throughout Wicklow. There were reports from Newtown, Newcastle and most other

parts that there was much suffering with the partial loss of the potato crop. The problem in the initial period of the Famine was not the lack of food but the cost of it, which was in excess of what most labourers could afford.1

On January 6th 1846, the Poor Law Commission recommended that relief be given to the poor affected by fever. A Fever Hospital on the Workhouse grounds was essential as fever patients were sent to Wicklow Fever Hospital. In March 1846, an order instructed that a draft of £29 2s 9d be drawn in favour of Wicklow Fever Hospital for maintenance of paupers from Rathdrum Workhouse.

The passing of the Temporary Fever Act meant that the Guardians were expected to set up temporary fever Hospitals, dispensaries and provide a medical officer where necessary. The Dispensary doctors reported 'Fever is now prevalent and in their opinion it was mostly due to the eating of bad potatoes. The Fever Hospitals in Arklow and Wicklow are not sufficient to contain the cases occurring.'

Fr John Gowan noted the sudden reappearance of blight in July 19th 1846 with the total destruction of the potato crop. This added to the urgency. By October 8th 1846 Dr Manning stated that in the Workhouse at present there were ten cases of fever, three of whom were refused admission to Wicklow Fever Hospital and he would humbly beg to impress on the members of the Guardians the necessity for having a house in the neighbourhood for which to contain those poor labouring under contagion. By October 27th 1846 the Sub-Committee reported that the New Brewery could be used at £40 per annum, and required an expenditure of £30 for conversion. It was unanimously decided that it would suit as a Fever Hospital. The New Brewery belonged to a family named Ellis from Kilpool, which had been idle for a number of years. It is on the site of the present Gun Club. The cost of the necessary alteration was not to exceed £45.

The people of Rathdrum requested the Board that the door to the proposed Fever Hospital should not open onto the public road. It was thought that Fever could be caught through an open window or door. The Board ordered that the door opening onto the coach road be closed up and to open a small doorway onto the yard with an entrance through the horse gate. The contractor was ordered to do so at a total cost not to exceed £4.

By early December 1846, Rathdrum Workhouse was declared full. The Medical Officer (MO) stated that the Workhouse was at full capacity of 600 paupers and it would be advisable to look for accommodation elsewhere. A decision was that the paupers would be accommodated in the Flannel Hall, (today the Rathdrum Development Association Hall). Mr Bernard Kelly was appointed superintendent on a salary of 15 shillings a week. As well as managing the buildings and supervising the paupers he was to assist the Matron and Clerk of the Workhouse working under their supervision. He also had to give two sureties of £50 each for due performance of his duties.

The numbers in the Workhouse were still rising with a total of 792 on Christmas Day 1846. In January 1847, there were 78 further admissions with 23 others refused. Numbers fluctuated from 620 to 792 throughout the year. The MO requested a salary increase from £50 to £80. At the same time, the Schoolmaster was called before the Board and instructed to take charge of the Workhouse during the Master's illness, he had contracted fever. The Commissioners decided that sleeping galleries should be erected in the upper dormitories of the male and female sides of the Workhouse to provide much needed sleeping accommodation. These were to be completed by February and cost £49. However they were not completed until August. The contractor, John Byrne of Greenane, died of fever while working on the sleeping galleries in the Workhouse. The Guardians paid his widow the £49 due to him.

The numbers continued to rise in 1848, reaching 1140, 870 in Workhouse and 270 in Flannel Hall. It is hardly surprising that deaths occurred at rates between 6-11 a week with about half of these children under 15 years.

In February 1848, a deed of charge on the Poor Law Rate for the sum of £800 was received from the Public Works Commission for the construction of a new Fever Hospital. The numbers in the old Fever Hospital sited at the New Brewery had reached an all time high with 108 patients but the number dying was slowly declining.

In October 1849 the Medical Officer Samuel Manning reported to the Board. 'May I beg to draw the attention of the Board to the present state of the Workhouse. I find by the Masters book that the population on Saturday

last was 842 being over by 242. I should remark the problem exists on the female side. The female and infant population is 573 and the male side 269. This over crowded state in the dormitories and day rooms particularly I describe as intolerable for the patients and especially the infants and children. Many of the children are sick with whooping cough. I would therefore recommend the Guardians to adopt some measures for reducing the population especially the young females.' Fever and whooping cough were not his only problem. 'Blood flux' or dysentery and 'Small Pocks' was also increasing. To reduce the blood flux, he considered that 'we discontinue the use of rice in the diet for the moment.' Issues of cross contamination were being realised and so patients were, if possible, being segregated by disease. He also suggested 'to remove the boys from the Brewery Auxiliary workhouse for the purposes of converting the building into a Pock Hospital'.

By January1850, there were 1254 inmates in total, 32 in the fever hospital, 275 in additional, 120 in temporary and 827 in the Workhouse.

All the time, issues such as warm clothing and exercise in the fresh air were being emphasised, particularly for the children. This led to knock-on effects of break-ins and robberies from the stores.

Death was a consequence of poor nutrition and infections. By December 26th 1846 it was decided that the Guardians should select an Irish acre of land for use as a Workhouse burial ground, as 'that already laid out in the local burial grounds is now objectionable and almost at full capacity'. An area was laid aside for paupers in both Kilcommon and Whale Abby burial grounds. By September 14th 1847, the Clerk was directed to write to Lord Fitzwilliam requesting 1 acre of ground at the Cops in the town land of Ballygannon for use as a burial place. All burial grounds in the locality were almost exhausted. The correspondence also referred to the problem taking the dead such a distance and through the town. Lord Fitzwilliam's Agent met with the Board and agreed that a burial ground should be attached to the Hospital as an extension to that already laid out for the Guardians for the Workhouse and Fever Hospital.

The fate of the Workhouse staff

1848 was a hard year for the staff. In January the Clerk reported the death of the Schoolmaster Nathan Wickham from fever. An immediate

advertisement for a replacement was placed. Mr Arthur McConnell was appointed in February with a salary of £20 with rations, furnished apartment and candles. Sadly he died of the fever in April. The newly appointed Matron, Mrs Mary Ogilby, also caught fever but she recovered and continued as Matron for many years.

An order was issued instructing that an advertisement for another Schoolmistress, at a salary of £15 per annum with rations, be prepared. The PLC sanctioned an increase in salary of the RC Chaplin to £60 due to the major increase in his work.

Food in the workhouse

The estimated costs for the provisions for the week November 11th 1845 was £26-0-5½, the actual cost for the week was £24-7-5½. This worked out as 1 shilling and 5 pence per week per Pauper. The provisions were 140 loaves of bread, 40 lbs of meat, 20 barrels of potatoes, 1 ton of oatmeal, and 200 gallons of butter milk, 160 gallons of sweet milk, 2 hundredweight of salt, 7 lbs of sugar, 2 bottles of wine and 6 lamp mantles. Other payments in November were £25 for 100 barrels of potatoes, ten coffins each 7/- and Dr White £8 14s 6d for vaccinations.

The diet in the Rathdrum Workhouse in March 1847:

The Medical Officer ordered that the adult diet for the stirabout be made out of using 4oz of oatmeal and 4oz of Indian meal. Initially, the only meat seemed to be at Christmas, as annually the Board agreed that sufficient quantity of meat be purchased to give the paupers a Christmas dinner.

	Breakfast	**Dinner**	**Supper**
Adult	7oz Indian meal 1 pint of milk	6 oz of bread 4 oz biscuit & 1½ pint soup	4 oz of bread Same for working women
Children 9 to 15 yrs	5 oz Indian meal with new milk	4 oz of bread & 1 pint of soup	4 oz bread 1 pint of new milk
Children 2 to 9 yrs	3 ½ oz Indian meal with new milk	¾ pint of soup with 4 oz of bread	4 oz bread ½ pint new milk

On 25th September 1848 a new soup diet was introduced, three sheep heads to every ten gallons of water and vegetables when available. Sheep heads cost 6d each and were usually supplied with 2 lbs of mutton as well.

Hunger was still a problem within the Workhouse. In October 1848, the Clerk reported 'That on Tuesday, last while the Board was sitting, farm boys by the names of Joseph Connolly, Philip Manley, Thomas James and Michael Fitzharris got out over the wall into a field belonging to a man by the name of Byrne to steal turnips (to eat). It is apparent that the boy named Fitzharris was chased out of the field and in an attempt to cross the river, he drowned, his body was later retrieved in Arklow.'

All this sterling work was being achieved against a backdrop of other financial problems. Collection of the Poor Law rates was difficult. The Government issued orders to the Relief Committees, to establish Soup kitchens. These were set up in Wicklow and Arklow. Arthur Stanley Bride from Ashford reported, 'Many are starving and if the weather conditions continue to deteriorate many more will die'.

By March 1847, Arklow District Relief Committee said 'Due to the prevalence of Fever in the town and the neighbourhood all money at our disposal has been expended. We ask the Board to administer the patients now in our care.' In June 1847 the Irish Poor Law Extension Act was passed, giving no further aid of any form to Ireland. Even though many landlords were unable to pay the Poor Law rates, they were now expected to bear the expense of maintaining the poor outside the Workhouse. The Master reported that a man named Andrew Fleming was brought to the Workhouse in a dray by Mr Woodward of Ballycullen who found him at his gate in dying state. Before he was removed from the dray he expired. The Coroner was called and an Inquest was held on his remains. The verdict was that he died of want and natural decay.

Acknowledgements

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More information can be found in Kevin Byrne, (2008) 'Time did not Stand still: the history of St Colman's Hospital, Rathdrum, Co Wicklow'

Before the Catastrophe
Wicklow and Roundwood c: 1820 - 40

Pat Power

Fig 1 Lough Dan Du Noyer 1846

The opening of the County Wicklow Military Road to the travelling public in the early decade of the nineteenth century acted as a spur to the incipient tourist industry of Wicklow. Scenic areas that were closed to all but the hardiest and knowledgeable of locals were now accessible and the true majesty of the newly christened 'Garden County' became known. With its strategic position in the high country Roundwood quickly became a hub of this new leisure industry, an economic benefit that lasts to this day.

Twenty years before the Great Famine the little town already had two good inns and several small lodging houses where refreshments could be

Fig 2 Wicklow society at Rossanagh 1815: Hamilton

bought. Surrounding Roundwood were several prominent houses of the middle and minor gentry described as 'seats', glorying in the names of Roundwood Lodge, Roundwood Park, Oldtown House, Diamond Hill House, Lake View and Fair View, the latter two reflecting their strategic locations. Set on the principle route to Glendalough, long a famed beauty spot and pilgrimage centre, many local roadside small holders of the area were able to glean a few pence serving those pilgrims and tourists of more modest means (and they were many) to whom inn prices were prohibitive and who had no other means of travelling but footing it.

Fig 3 Glendalough Patron 1815 Thomas Peacock

A halfpenny would purchase a slurp of buttermilk; a penny would buy a wholemeal bap and a cup of refreshing milk, or something stronger perhaps. Nine fairs per year were held in the Roundwood Street and these occasions were the main outlets of retail commerce for the area. As well as the buying and selling of farm animals and agricultural materials travelling stallholders would descend on the Roundwood fairs. Theirs was a well established routine making their circuit from fair to fair selling such items as old clothing, second, third and even fourth hand, domestic utensils, tin ware, cloth and sewing accessories, flour, salt fish, cheap transportable novelties and other goods.

As the coming calamity affected the lower echelon of society most acutely, it will not due to constraint of space be possible to dwell too deeply on the upper social bracket of the county and Roundwood during the famine, but to recall that they too suffered to some

Fig 4 Interior Wicklow Cottage: Spilsbury c 1820

degree, financially, socially and ultimately politically. And in some rare instances, physically by contracting diseases and conditions awakened by the famine debility.

In 1831 Roundwood contained about twenty good stone and slated houses. To be sure there were a large number of cottages and tiny one-roomed hovels in the environs as well, but to the assessors of commercial directories these would not be classified as 'houses'.

The town's population was given as 127 persons. Again, these statistics were based on incomplete census information and educated guesswork. Throughout Roundwood and its parishes were several layers of land occupancy all invariably described as 'farmers' regardless as to their size or economic viability. These holdings varied from reasonably affluent consolidated farms, above 35 acres and able to support a typical family along with a few full time in-residence servants and labourers, in the values of the time, to utterly destitute subsistence plots of a few miserable acres or less whose occupiers literally did not know where their next meal was coming from and whose economic purpose in life was little more that a rent statistic for whoever was the immediate landlord.

A concise overview of the state of farm occupancy with all its problems and complexities in County Wicklow is given in the proceeds of the

Fig 5 Powerscourt estate Barrett 1760

Devon Commission of 1843 where the picture emerges of a rural population subject to grinding poverty and insecurity and in which the ubiquitous potatoes plays its central role in sustaining an ever increasing and impoverished population.

And yet the poorer inhabitants of County Wicklow escaped the very worst of the Famine. So what was available in Wicklow besides subsistence farming and the casual opportunities of serving visitors to the county that gave them the surviving edge?

County Wicklow had indigenous wealth out of proportion to its size. The county consists of near enough a half million acres, but of which only half again is productive arable land. In the 1830s Seventy-four 'great' families still owned nearly all the land of the county, the largest of these was the Fitzwilliam estate of over 89000 acres, followed by Lord Powerscourt 36000, Lord Waterford 26000 and Meath 14500.(See Fig 5)

Within the various Wicklow estates were many degrees of lease and rental holdings. These consisted of middle and minor gentry with long term and rock solid leases holding large acreage of up to 4000 acres. Below that were long established, mostly economically strong Protestant farmers. Layered within this relatively affluent social band were a high proportion of wealthy, but landless persons who chose to reside in the county in fine purpose built houses and what were described as 'villas'. (see Fig 6)

Fig 6 Bray, artist unknown from Irish Varieties

Fig 7 A Wicklow wood gatherer 1818 Spilsbury

Such residents clustered specially on the Dublin border area to be close to the city. Collectively they generated a significant amount of casual work and indigenous spending to the immediate locality. Rising Catholic landholding affluence was also consolidating in the county after generations of civil discrimination. Numerous too were various middlemen of mixed fortunes holding land, many of them subletting and dividing into lesser plots and so on downward to the small holder and cottiers described as tenants 'at will' who sometimes had six degrees of ownership between them and a head landlord. (See Fig 7)

Smallholders were multitude and reflect the dire economic poverty of the county in general. 2620 'farms' were less than 1 to 5 acres, a further 3000 described as farms subsisted on holdings of 5 to 15 acres. In all there were 7433 holdings under 30 acres scattered around the county, a fair portion of them in the parishes surrounding Roundwood.

These reasonably accurate statistics were compiled in 1838. By the time of the actual Famine the population of poorer peasantry had significantly increased. Despite restricted opportunity for sustained employment in occupations outside of agriculture and land work there were embedded divisions of labour that ensued some kind of regular living to the poor. A good ploughman was never unemployed.

Fig 8 Rural workers and artisans c 19th Century Shelton Abbey (Power Collection)

Farming was labour intensive and large areas of the county had the safety valve of supplying the Dublin city food market. Wicklow also had significant turf reserves and regular seasonal work for the gangs of turf cutters supplying Dublin. Serving

the wealthier estates were large numbers of rural skills like sawyers, gardeners, dairy keepers, stewards, gamekeepers, pleshers, ostlers and others. Artisans like blacksmiths, whitesmiths, carpenters, coopers, drain makers, seamstresses, stone cutters, masons, and those hand crafts mostly now lost to us were in every town and village and always had a way of earning some small cash wages. Wicklow's estates tended to be well managed by professional agents and if diligent attention to duty was demanded, so too were wages and conditions slightly better than in similar positions in neighbouring counties. During the famine years, regular income, however small, was often the difference to weathering the terrible storm to come

Fig 9 Cronbana Mine Vale of Avoca 1824

Wicklow was fortunate too in that it had something almost unique in the eastern counties in its mineral wealth. Real earning opportunity lay in working the mines of Avoca, Glendalough, Luganure, the Ballinvalley gold washings and various trial mines dotted up and down the county. It happened the famine coincided with a particular prosperous times for the mines with high demand for sulphur, copper and lead ore. Indirect wealth spread out from these economic areas even as far as Roundwood.

There was some mining activity around Lough Dan, Lough Bray and Powerscourt. Trial digs were made too in Derrylossary parish. Much of the mining work was labour intensive and large gangs of labourers were assembled from time to time to clear new mining land. This casual work consisted of road making, undergrowth clearing and the building of walls, houses and toghers across wetland. During the 1820 and 30s so many labourers were required that the mining operators were complaining that sufficient labour could not be recruited in the county. For the small holder the chance to go work in Avoca or Van Dieman's land above Glendalough was an earning opportunity. While locational statistics are not available it can be taken that many Roundwood smallholders would have availed of the opportunity to walk to the distant vistas of Glendalough and its adjacent valleys for mining work. Next in prominence to mining was

quarrying for granite and slate. The main granite works were at Golden in Blessington. Their principle market the erection of public buildings in Dublin had already peaked, but huge quantities of granite were still cut to satisfy civic projects and the burgeoning cemetery industry at Glasnevin and Mount Jerome.

The first railways too were in gestation and boosted the quarrying industry. Its expansion coincided with the famine years. The west Wicklow stone industry employed up to 500 carters daily and it ensued some cash income to hundreds of surrounding smallholders. Closer to Roundwood, the Synge family had slate quarries on their lands of Glanmore. It was also a labour intensive industry as all the slates were measured and cut by hand.

Along the coast were the fishing ports of Bray, Wicklow, Kilcoole and Arklow. These supplied cheap seasonal fish inland as far as the upland country of east Wicklow. Collectively the basic economics of the county had just enough activity to stave off widespread disaster when the blight finally struck. But it is as well to put to bed the myth that the Great Famine did not affect Wicklow at all. Pockets of death occurred. Not all got an opportunity to garner a few shillings at work. People died of starvation and exposure in Glenmalure in the terrible year of 1847. Thousands crowded the counties five workhouses and Famine diseases ravaged the poor. Communal soup kitchens saved hundreds of lives. Yet despite the catalogue of horror unleashed by the blight, the basic wealth of the county cushioned the majority of the Wicklow and Roundwood population from dire want that was to be the fate of their peer groups of Mayo, West Cork and the east of the Shannon.

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Thomas Sautelle Roberts and the Military Road

Mary Davies

Two large watercolour paintings of the Wicklow Military Road by Thomas Sautelle Roberts came up for sale together in 2009; they date from 1802 and give fascinating glimpses of the road under construction. The first *(Fig. 1)* is a panoramic view from Glencree near Curtlestown on the branch of the Military Road leading down to Enniskerry. The Irish Sea can be seen in the distance at the extreme left, with shipping, as well as Bray Head. The Little Sugar Loaf is in the centre and it and the Great Sugar Loaf (once collectively known as the Giltspurs or Golden Spears) are both accurately painted; so is the ridge immediately in front of the Little Sugar Loaf. The palatial entrance front of Powerscourt House is recognisable in the middle distance at the left, with the demesne lands extending to a substantial wall pierced by a gateway. The house at Bushy Park is also shown, and another distant building beyond Powerscourt may be Robin Adair's house at Hollybrook.

This spur of the Military Road running down the north side of Glencree was built at the instigation of Richard Wingfield, 4th Viscount Powerscourt, who persuaded the authorities that it would be a useful supply road leading towards the coast — though with his own purposes in view.

The second painting *(Fig. 2)* is a view of the Military Road from the vicinity of Upper Lough Bray, and in this view Thomas Sautelle Roberts shows the wild upland scenery, somewhat exaggerated, along the route of the partly completed road above Glencree. The viewpoint appears to be a small quarry (which still exists) near Upper Lough Bray, one of many from which stone was extracted. The cliffs at the extreme left are those adjacent to Lower Lough Bray; the road at the right, with a puff of smoke that may indicate blasting, leads down towards Glencree and in the distance is seen snaking away over the Featherbeds towards its terminus at Rathfarnham.

Both these paintings show the Military Road under construction. Built to subdue the remaining pockets of insurgents after the 1798 Rebellion, the road was begun in 1800 under the supervision of the army engineer Major

Fig 1 View from Glencree toward Powerscourt and the Great & Little Sugar Loafs (courtesy Gorry Gallery).

Alexander Taylor. It was well underway at the time of Roberts's visit in 1802 and labourers with pickaxes, shovels and wheelbarrows are shown at work. According to Michael Fewer in The Wicklow Military Road: history and topography, Taylor had requisitioned 200 spades, 200 shovels, 30 pickaxes, 40 handbarrows and 20 crowbars at the start, and he was allowed to employ up to 200 local people in addition to army personnel, mainly from the Scottish regiments then stationed in Ireland.

The sites for the four permanent barracks at Glencree, Laragh, Drumgoff and Aghavannagh were chosen in 1802; before their construction the soldiers lived in turf huts or, in summer, in tents. Taylor's main base camp was in the vicinity of the later Glencree barracks, now Glencree Reconciliation Centre, perhaps just out of view in this painting, although it may be represented by an indistinct collection of features on the distant hillside. G.N. Wright, in his A guide to the county of Wicklow, which first appeared in 1822, describes Taylor as having procured 'a company of the Highlanders already encamped, in turf huts, on the head of Glencree, at Aurora — near where the barracks now stands …' and as having 'induced the people in the Glen (by good wages) to join them …'. Wright explains that Aurora was so named because the first rays of morning sun hit the spot — making a cheering start to the soldiers' day, perhaps, in what must often have been bleak surroundings.

Although the Glencree camp is shown faintly if at all, Roberts does include a detailed portrait of a small summer camp in a hollow by Upper Lough Bray, with a low central thatched building with two chimneys, a smaller structure that may be a kitchen, two guard houses and a number of conical tents. The standing figure with a staff on the massive boulder at the right may possibly be taking measurements — this area, particularly Eagle's Crag above the two Loughs Bray, had extensive views and was convenient for surveying the route. In the foreground Roberts's patron, Lord Hardwicke, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, is shown on horseback talking to an impressive figure in Highland dress, presumably a Scottish officer.

Thomas Sautelle Roberts RHA (c. 1760–1826) was the younger brother of the famous landscape painter Thomas Roberts, and was also a well-known landscape artist if not as talented as his brother. He painted a number of

Fig 2 Thomas Sautelle Roberts, View of the Military Road from the vicinity of Upper Lough Bray (courtesy Gorry Gallery).

watercolour views of the Military Road, and some of these also appeared as engravings. The art historian Dr Paul Caffrey has written that Roberts collaborated with the miniature portrait painter John Comerford, and it was Comerford who added the portrait of Lord Hardwicke.

Although the Military Road was built for military purposes, local landowners like Viscount Powerscourt saw it as opening up the Wicklow mountains to settlement and cultivation. This was over-optimistic, but in the event the Military Road was speedily to become an important part of the visitor attractions of County Wicklow, an asset to the tourists who were by the early 1800s flocking to the beauty spots of the 'Garden of Ireland'. Today it is still an essential way to access the heart of the mountains and Wicklow would be a poorer place without it. Thomas Sautelle Roberts's paintings of the road under construction are not just works of art, they are part of Wicklow's historical record.

This article is expanded from Mary Davies, text to accompany nos 3 & 5, Gorry Gallery catalogue, Dublin, June 2009, with thanks to the Gorry Gallery. Many thanks, to John and Elinor Medlycott, who joined in an expedition to identify the two viewpoints.

'The awful visitation which fell upon the country and its attendant evils'

The Great Famine and Crime in County Wicklow

Joan Kavanagh

The fungus phytophthora infestans which destroyed the potato plant first struck in the eastern United States in the summer of 1843. It was transported to Belgium, devastating the potato crop in Flanders, Normandy, Holland and southern England. By 20 August 1845 the blight was recorded at the Dublin Botanical Gardens. In the moist sunless summer of 1845 it spread rapidly. Its spread to Wicklow was reported in the Dublin Evening Post on 16 October 1845 by a correspondent who ended his report with the prophetic statement 'I do not know what will become of the poor.'

Father John Gowan, a curate in Glendalough, was an eyewitness of the Famine. Some years later he described how he first came across the blight in July 1846:

> *'Everybody knows that the cause or at least the occasion of the great Irish Famine of 1847 was the potato blight. The severest blight fell upon the potatoes on July 19 1846. It was a very warm day. I was descending the mountains going towards the seaside about 3 o'clock on that day when I saw a thick fog gradually creeping up the sides of the hills. When I entered it I was pained with the cold. I at once feared some great disaster. The next morning when I travelled about in discharge of my duty I found the whole potato crop everywhere blighted. The leaves were blackened and hanging loosely on their stems, and a disagreeable odour filled the air.....*[2]

Wicklow on the eve of the Great Famine was a relatively prosperous county in comparison to elsewhere in Ireland. It had only been shired in 1606[3], the last area to come under official English administration and this, along with its proximity to Dublin had led to the rapid exploitation and development of the county's natural resources.

It had a thriving mining industry in the valleys and mountain range which runs through the spine of the county, a flannel and freize industry

Wicklow Gaol

in Rathdrum (though no longer flourishing at the time of the Great Famine) herring fishing in Arklow, tillage, cattle and sheep rearing, a tourist industry and a settled landlord fraternity such as the Powerscourts, Howards, Carysforts and Parnells.

The population of Ireland in 1801 was estimated at 5.2 million people. By 1841 this figure had increased to almost 8.2 million. The population of County Wicklow rose from 110,767 in 1821 to 126,143 in 1841. By 1871 this figure had declined to 78,697. It is interesting to note that it is only in this century that the population for the county at 126,194 has reached similar figures to that of 1841.[4]

With a growing population in a county with a vast mountain range the majority of the peasantry lived on those mountainous slopes. While relative prosperity reigned, according to Lewis '... the habitations of the lower tenants and cottiers are for the most part extremely wretched, being roughly formed of sods or stones supporting a thatched roof not impervious to the weather. The squalid misery of these in some of the mountain districts is extreme; in some places even the roof is formed of sods taken from the mountain side.'[5]

Of the 21,182 families in Co Wicklow 14,032 were engaged in agriculture, while 4,740 were involved in manufacture and trade. The number recorded as being employed was over 53,000. Nonetheless, Wicklow was seen as a place akin to the west of Ireland for its barrenness and subsistence living. This was the view of Charles Edward Trevelyan, the Assistant Secretary to the Treasury in London with responsibility for administering relief during the famine in Ireland. He represented the British government's controversial policies of minimal intervention and encouragement of self-reliance. In a letter written in 1847 he described the county thus: *'The barren mountain which make it so attractive to the tourist, have allowed the existence of a state of society, and a dependence on the potato, approaching to what prevails in the wildest districts of the west, and it is only within the present century that this district has lost its former reputation for lawlessness.'*[6]

Wicklow had had a reputation for lawlessness dating back to the exploits of the O'Byrnes, the O'Tooles and the Kavanagh who dominated the area known as the O'Byrne Country prior to its shiring in 1606. Once the

Rebellion of 1798 was over – the surrender of Michael Dwyer in 1803 closed this bloody episode in Wicklow's and Ireland's history – the county seemed to settle down and became relatively peaceful.

Wicklow Gaol was the symbol of law and order in the county from 1702 and the destination of apprehended offenders from 1706 to its closure as a prison in 1924. Additions were built to the Gaol in the 1790s, 1824 and the 1840s following the requirements laid down in prison legislation from the late 18th century onwards.

The National Archives of Ireland holds registers for Wicklow Gaol from 1846. There are, regrettably no precise details of those committed to Wicklow Gaol, nor the crimes committed during the early years of the 19th century. Information gleaned from such sources as the Rebellion Papers, Prisoners' Petitions and Cases, Convict Reference Files, Outrage Papers, State of the Country Papers and the Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers (CSORP), all held in the National Archives of Ireland,[7] as well as from newspapers, give an indication of the nature of crimes committed during this time. In the main they were robberies, breaking and entering, sheep and cattle stealing, drunkenness at fairs, receiving stolen goods, assault and the occasional case of bigamy. While these crimes seem petty they were offences for which one could be transported beyond the seas.

The transportation of convicts 'beyond the seas' is usually associated with the penal colonies of Australia which commenced in 1788. This practice, of getting rid of the wretches of society and the undesirables goes back to the 17th century when Irish people were transported to Barbados and the new emerging states in America. Its origins lie in the desire of the authorities to punish criminals severely and yet show mercy to the masses. It was widely used during times of increased criminal activity to clear prisons of the most vile and immoral of inmates. It was also a merciful alternative to the death penalty. Following the American War of Independence Britain had to find a new location for its 'dregs of society' and the Tierra Austral[8] was selected with the first fleet arriving into New South Wales in January 1788. The advantages to Britain were two fold: the banishment of its criminal classes to a very distant place, acting as a deterrent back home and an opportunity to stake a claim to a new land before the French could do so. The authorities were acting locally and

thinking globally by dealing with crime on the ground, clearing the gaols and transporting convicts to the far side of the world and founding a new colony. Transportation to New South Wales ceased in the main in 1840 and Van Diemen's Land then became the prime destination for Irish convicts up to 1853 when transportation to that colony ended.

The Devon Commission, established in 1845 to enquire into the practice of the occupation of land, also looked at the state of law and order in the country. Witnesses were called to give evidence on their respective counties and there are many accounts of atrocities, murders, maiming of cattle, daring robberies and secret societies throughout the country, but especially from counties Limerick, Tipperary, Galway, Cork and Dublin. Wicklow only warranted a couple of lines, 'all is peaceful in this county'.

When the potato crop was attacked by the fungus again in 1846 the impact on those already only barely surviving on subsistence living was devastating. Throughout the country crime increased considerably. In 1845 20,000 people were before the courts on charges. By 1849 this figure had risen to 41,989. Gaols were inspected on an annual basis from 1823 and reports presented to the British parliament. The Inspectors-General on the State of the Prisons of Ireland lamented, in their report of 1847, the fact that years of untiring work in bringing the majority of the gaols in the country to an improved state and efforts to build on those improvements was now stopped 'when the terrible catastrophe, which has disorganised the whole framework of society in Ireland, fell with its full force upon the establishments under our charge.'[9] In their 1849 report the Inspectors-General remarked that '*... the majority of the gaols, overcrowded with malefactors and vagrants, afford a spectacle from which the most sanguine enthusiast on the subject of prison discipline might well recoil.*'[10]

As the table below shows the number of committals to Wicklow Gaol increased during the Famine years. The Irish Constabulary was established in 1836 as a fully armed national force located in almost 9,000 barracks throughout the country. Its establishment at that time was no doubt reflected in the number of inmates committed to Wicklow Gaol in 1838, 1839 and 1840 with the figures stabilising thereafter.

Number of Prisoners in Wicklow Gaol 1838 – 1857[11]

Year	No. Of Inmates
1838	545
1839	580
1840	509
1841	350
1842	461
1843	323
1844	503
1845	412
1846	488
1847	761
1848	780
1849	735
1850	642
1851	758
1852	642
1853	578
1854	469
1855	342
1856	260
1857	347

The increase in crime during the period of the Famine, was in offences against property and not against people. The Relief Works brought cash into areas where it had never been before and this led to an increase in crime. The most common crime was theft, of either food or clothing which could be sold or pawned for food. In 1849 the total number of inmates in the gaol was 735, of which 149 were recidivists (repeat offenders). Fourteen deaths occurred in the gaol that year. The daily average number of inmates confined in that year amounted to 154 with the highest number at one time reaching 189. As the gaol had 77 cells, to accommodate only one prisoner per cell and 4 rooms with beds, thus providing accommodation for 87 prisoners, the gaol would have been considerably overcrowded at that time. The Inspectors-General referred to the fact that if a cell contained more that one prisoner it was a requirement by law that the must cell be occupied by three prisoners.[12]

That year, 1849, saw 10,967 prisoners held in gaols throughout the country, with 1,345 of these under sentence of transportation. The Inspectors inferred that the influence of the famine had produced a 'lamentable increase in crime.' While the daily average number of prisoners in Wicklow Gaol during the 7 years preceding 1847 was 76 and for the years 1847, 1848 and 1849 the daily average was 142, an increase of over 87% this increase meant that Wicklow was 6th from bottom of the table in terms of an increase. As would be expected counties such as Tipperary, Clare, Kerry, Galway, Limerick and Cork with larger populations and a history of higher levels of crime had the highest percentage increase in inmate numbers ranging from 184% to 353%.

The Inspectors-General believed that people were deliberately committing crime in order to be committed to prison:

'... the evil thus produced is so enormous, as to threaten the total demoralisation of the lower orders; showing itself in the abolition of all distinction between right and wrong, and generating a habit of committing crimes either for the sake of obtaining board and lodging in a gaol, where comfort with a moderate degree of labour tend to make the loss of liberty of comparatively little consequence; or else for the remoter advantages of superior diet in the convict prisons, and the ultimate benefit of gratuitous emigration.'

This last comment referred to the sentence of transportation.

In the years preceding the Famine the diet in Wicklow Gaol recorded in the Inspector-General reports was potatoes and mixed milk for breakfast and dinner. By 1847 the effects of the Famine was reflected in the diet. *'In the kitchen there is an apparatus for steaming potatoes. This is at present, of course, useless for that purpose, and likely to remain so, as a return to that diet is not so probable.'*[13]

Breakfast	4 oz oatmeal	**Dinner**	1 lb of brown bread
	4 oz Indian meal stirabout		1 pint of mixed milk
	1 pint of mixed milk		

By 1849 a difference in the diet of the male and female prisoners was recorded:

Breakfast	***Male***	***Female***
	8 oz meal in stirabout	7 oz meal in stirabout
	½ pint of new milk	½ pint of new milk
Dinner	***Male***	***Female***
	14 oz of bread	12 oz of bread
	1 pint of new milk	¾ pint of new milk

The food was purported to be of good quality during these years and the Inspector- General only had one complaint from a prisoner regarding the food but on investigation it was deemed to be unwarranted. In a number of instances it was alleged that people deliberately committed a crime in order to be sent to gaol where two meals a day were guaranteed and where the food was better than in the workhouses. A local Wicklow resident

magistrate, Bartholomew Warburton expressed the following sentiments in 1849, described steps recommended to be taken by the authorities in Wicklow to deter such occurrences:

'The greater number of cases in the other divisions of the county principally arose from robberies committed in the several workhouses with a view of getting sent to gaol where they are better fed and also by persons not admitted to the workhouse that they might be sent to gaol. On this state of things being represented to our respected Assistant Barrister he recommended that the parties should not be indulged by a long confinement but the term of imprisonment should be short, accompanied by hard labour, solitary confinement and whippings as the cases might be with the strictest prison discipline all of which would we felt assured be carried out by the excellent governor of the gaol. This arrangement has been carried out all through the sessions to the great disappointment of the prisoners who expressed their satisfaction at not having been transported and disclosed that as soon as they got out of gaol they would commit some offence which would ensure their being transported.' [14]

As stated previously, the increase in crime within Wicklow was predominantly crime against property and not against people. During the years 1846 and 1850 of a total of 1,263 returns of outrages reported to the Constabulary only nine were cases of murder. Assaults amounted to 27 cases while threatening notices or letters accounted for 34 instances. Incendiary fire accounted for 51 offences, burglary and housebreaking 73 and robbery 104. By far the highest crime returned was for cattle and sheep stealing which amounted to 826 offences.

On 24 February 1847 Christopher Bryan was convicted of sheep stealing and was sentenced to 7 years transportation. While in Wicklow Gaol a petition, signed by a number of noted local people, was sent to the Lord Lieutenant in Dublin Castle seeking mercy. Bryan admitted his guilt. He claimed he had never been in trouble with the law before but that *'in consequence of the horrifying want and destitution of himself, wife and two small children in these times of dearth and famine he was prompted and influenced to perpetrate a crime which under other circumstances he would never have attempted.'* He implored the Lord Lieutenant for mercy and requested that his sentence be changed to imprisonment with hard

labour. The petition was forwarded to the judge at his trial for comment who replied that from the evidence given in court Bryan was a miner in Avoca at the time of the offence. He stated that he would not have inflicted such a heavy punishment for a first offence if he felt Bryan had been a truly deserving case. While Bryan's sentence of transportation was not commuted at this time and he is listed in records in the National Archives of Ireland as being transported to Van Diemen's Land aboard the convict ship *Pestonjee Bomanjee*[15] a record of his arrival into Hobart in the Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT) has not yet been located.

Anne Rickerby, a 27 year old needle woman and shirt maker from Tinahely, was charged with stealing potatoes, was found guilty and sentenced to transportation for 7 years in April 1852.[16] She was transported aboard the convict ship Midlothian which sailed in November 1852 and arrived into Hobart in February 1853. By September of that year Anne had absconded from her place of assignment and was given six months hard labour. She was delivered of an illegitimate still born child in the Female Factory in Hobart Town in March 1854. She applied for permission to marry Charles Foskett in March 1855 which was granted and they married in April. She received a Conditional Pardon in February 1857.[17]

Children were not immune from incarceration in gaols in this period and there are numerous instances of child inmates. Two sisters, Margaret and Mary Anne Spenser, aged 8 and 9 respectively, from Castlemacadam were given a sentence of one fortnight's imprisonment in 1848 for malicious injury to timber. This charge would suggest they had cut and stolen timber which they hoped to either use for firewood or to sell in order to buy food. An eleven year old Shillelagh boy, Edward Kirwan, was sentenced to one day's imprisonment for stealing eggs in 1847. Catherine Dunne, aged 15 and from Delgany, stole turnips and spent one week in Wicklow Gaol. John Weadock, from Rathdrum, aged 13, was given a month's imprisonment and hard labour for stealing a quantity of gooseberries. Thomas Leonard, 13, stole from the old chapel a quantity of old rope and was imprisoned for a fortnight, with hard labour and was to be whipped once. Disorderly conduct in Baltinglass Workhouse was the charge against 14 year old Lawrence Murphy who was also imprisoned for a month. Henry Wilson, from Hacketstown, aged 15 stole from the Workhouse at Shillelagh, was given a fortnight's imprisonment, with hard labour, one week solitary and

to be whipped once. A month's imprisonment with hard labour was the sentence given to 13 year old Richard Kiddy from Newcastle for rooting with intent to steal a quantity of potatoes.[18] These cases would appear to confirm that the recommendation of the Assistant Barrister of giving short terms of imprisonment, accompanied by hard labour, solitary confinement and whippings to those found guilty during this period was accepted and put into practice.

There were a number of forces which impacted on the amount of prisoners in Wicklow Gaol. The lack of food was, of course the primary factor and the closure of relief works in 1847 put added pressure on a population already struggling to survive who then turned to crime to relieve their distress.

The Vagrancy Act of 1847 prohibited begging in a public place and was intended to stop people wandering around the countryside from town to town, possibly spreading fever and disease in their wake. A term of imprisonment and a fine which was to be paid at the end of the term of imprisonment was imposed on those convicted of vagrancy. The sentence also stipulated that if the fine could not be paid the prisoner was sentenced to a term of transportation, usually for 7 years. As such prisoners were convicted of begging for alms they were most unlikely to have a sum of money to pay their fine which resulted in their being transported to the penal colony of Van Diemen's Land. The Crime and Outrage Act of 1847, enacted to stop the killing of landlords, also put additional pressure on gaols as those living in the vicinity of a landlord shooting could be arrested and held for two years if they did not co-operate with the authorities. The cessation of transportation to the penal colony of New South Wales in 1840 had the effect of prisoners awaiting the arrival of a ship to take them to Van Diemen's Land. During the years 1845 to 1853 a total of 18,721 people were sentenced to a term of transportation.

The Great Famine altered the course of Irish history for generations to come. It was a watershed in that nothing could ever or was ever the same again. Crime abated in Wicklow in the years following the Famine and, as the prison at Mountjoy in Dublin was opened in the 1850s, those prisoners sentenced to terms of penal servitude instead of transportation from the mid 1850s were generally removed to that prison. Wicklow Gaol was

demoted to a Bridewell, holding only prisoners for minimum terms of imprisonment of days and weeks, in 1877 and it finally closed its doors in 1924.

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[1] Twenty-Ninth Report of the Inspectors-General on the General State of the Prisons of Ireland, 1849

[2] Rev John Gown CM, 'The Irish Famine of 1847' in Sister M. Assisi (ed.) Sisters of the Holy Faith (Dublin, 1967)

[3] See The Last County- the Emergence of Wicklow as a County- 1606 – 1845 County Wicklow Heritage Project, 1995

[4] Central Statistics Office, Census Returns of 2006

[5] A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, Samuel Lewis 1837

[6] Charles Edward Trevelyan to Mr Jones Lloyd, Jan 26th 1847 PP 1847, Relief of Distress in Ireland (Commissariat) IUP Famine Series Vol. 7 p.377.

[7] The NAI is located in the old Jacob's Factory in Bishop Street, Dublin 8.

[8] The Portuguese explorer de Quiros named this new land after his King's Austrian ancestry while punning on the words tierra austral meaning the "south land".

[9] Twenty-Sixth Report of the Inspectors-General on the General State of the Prisons of Ireland, 1847

[10] Twenty-Eight Report of the Inspectors-General on the General State of the Prisons of Ireland, 1849

[11] Wicklow Gaol Register NAI

[12] Twenty-Sixth Report of the Inspectors-General on the General State of the Prisons of Ireland, 1847

[13] Twenty-Seventh Report of the Inspectors-General on the General State of the Prisons of Ireland, 1848

[14] See From Shadow to Sunlight A History of St. Colman's Hospital, Rathdrum by Kevin Byrne for details regarding inmates sent to Wicklow Gaol for committing offences while in the Workhouse

[15] NAI, CRF (Convict Reference File) 1847/B9

[16] NAI Wicklow Gaol Register of Persons Sentenced to Transportation, 11 July 1848 – 4 January 1880

[17] AOT Convict Conduct Record CON41/1/46

[18] NAI Wicklow Gaol Register of Persons Committed charged with Criminal Offences, 29 May 1846 – 12 March 1851

In memory of Pat O'Brien, who died this year

Pat was a regular contributor to the Journal. This contribution from him was first printed in Journal 9. We are fortunate to have some of his memories but what else we have missed? May he rest in peace.

The Royal Visit

The Royal visit to Glendalough of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and their four children, 2nd August 1849. I was only six years old when my grandmother died. I was constantly reminded of the part she had played in the preparations for the visit of the Royal Family. She was working as a domestic servant in the Prince of Wales Hotel, or the Roundwood Inn as it is now named. Of course they got ample time to make sure everything was spick and span. The building next to the hotel, the one where the Credit Union is now situated, was then the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.) Barracks and for the duration of the visit there were an additional twenty policemen drafted in.

She told me that every house on the route had to display the Union Jack. As a precaution Dublin Castle made arrangements for a food taster to be in residence for a week to check the food was perfect. I might remind you that Queen Victoria did not travel with her family bur remained in the Viceregal Lodge, which is now Aras an Uachtarain.

Then came the big day. The four wheeled, two horse drawn carriage pulled in front of the hotel and the occupants made their entry. I have no idea what the food consisted of but you can be sure the presence of the food taster made sure it was the best. When the meal was complete and they were provided with a fresh pair of horses they continued to Glendalough.

This visit of Queen Victoria happened in the middle of the terrible famine of starvation and mass emigration to the U.S.A. and as a gesture of her feelings to the Irish people she presented a cheque for £10,000 for the relief of the hungry people. On her return to London she presented £50,000 towards the building of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Pat O'Brien

In Memoriam

Rita Byrne

This year has been a sad one, not only for our society but for all Roundwood. It will never be the same without Rita, the legendary newsagent, the catalyst in bringing people together.

The well-known and loved member of our community, Rita Byrne, passed away in springtime, so unexpected. Our sympathies go to her son JJ and her little pride, her granddaughter, together with her sisters for whom she was taking such good care.

She was always there for anyone in need. One can define her as a best friend, unselfish and ready to help, always with a charming smile, an iconic figure already in her lifetime. Her lovely manner was the result of the good education she was priviledged to get at the Holy Faith Sisters School in Glasnevin, Dublin, (the founder was Fr John Gowan; who was the priest in our parish during the famine). Her deep faith manifested itself at every Angelus when she would drop everything (even her coke with rum) to turn herself to the higher power.

We all remember a special person in our village, 90 years old Ben Murray and his cottage near the Roundwood Park estate. Rita made Ben tea every morning and looked after him, and every night a small fire would glow in Ben's cottage.

And what is Rita's legacy to us? Smile and be kind and helpful to your neighbour. Rita will be missed so much, but we all have the treasury of her memory and her love of life and the sense of fun.

May she rest in peace in beautiful and holy Glendalough.

A de V M

Living History: A record of the visits of the Archbishops of Dublin to the district.

Two celebrations were held within a ten-day period to mark the completion of the new parish facilities in both the local Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic Parishes.

The first celebration was when Archbishop John Neill came to Calary Church on 1st of May for a special service to bless the new extension of the Church Room. This was built in time to be ready for 175th Anniversary of the Consecration of Calary Church. In his address, Archbishop Neill reminded us that, *A Church must reflect the life, death and rising of the one whom it serves - Jesus Christ. The Gospel of the feast of St Philip and St James is drawn from St John, chapter 6, in which Jesus describes himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life. In today's Ireland, it is all too easy for us to be drawn into a way of living, which is self-centred and self-serving. A church building stands as a sign of another way - the way of the Cross. This is the way of self-giving, living for others. It is a contradiction to the way that we so easily slip into - a Church at its best is 'counter-cultural' in this respect. When Jesus describes himself as 'The Truth', we are reminded that the Church - which is both a building and the people of God - must always point to Jesus and proclaim the reality and the power of Jesus. We have a duty to pass on faith through teaching and proclamation. Finally, Jesus describes himself as 'The Life'. The Church in which we meet, and the Church we are as the baptized people of God, must be a place of life-giving, life receiving. Here we are fed by Word and Sacrament, by Scripture and by the Body and Blood of Jesus. Here we come for renewal together. Here we come to enrich and to be enriched. This is what the Church stands for and it is with joy that we celebrate this evening its 175 years of witness, and even more its enlargement and enhancement through the work of parishioners.*

The second celebration was when the Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, the Most Rev. Diarmuid Martin came to open the long-awaited new Parish Hall on the 10th of May. The Archbishop had a very busy day first saying Mass in Moneystown and then in Roundwood. In his homily in Roundwood was very thought provoking and reiterated the thoughts of Archbishop Neill.

Even in a rural parish like this, I imagine that there would be very little knowledge in this community of how to grow vines. Even with accelerated climate-change it will be a very long time before the culture of cultivating vines will play a significant part in Irish agricultural life. To understand then what Jesus is telling us in the Gospel, we have to look a little more closely into something about which we know little.

The first thing to remember is it takes after planting before they begin to produce any fruit at all. Damage done to a vine - even in a matter of a few hours - can set back the patient work of years. A surprising hailstorm can in minutes destroy an entire year's harvest should it come just at the wrong moment. It is not surprising then that Jesus used the image of the vinedresser to explain to the population of his time the loving care of God for his people. God is careful and attentive with his people and he wishes them to flourish with the best fruit. God cares for us and wishes us to have a full and fulfilling life. They require constant, vigilant attention to produce the best fruit possible. A person like myself who has grown up in the city does not really understand pruning. We tend to look on the process of pruning a tree by looking at the end result. The tree looks bare and it is clear that much has been cut away. The purpose of pruning is not to cut back, but to encourage new growth.

A branch which is cut off from life stream of the vine becomes totally useless is useful only to be burned. The same applies to the Christian life. Being a Christian means that we bear fruit. There is no such thing as a passive Christian, just parked there, not having any sense of direction or purpose. Our faith is not something static, something that we can park in the back of minds and only recall for special occasions or moments of crisis. If we are not connected with the life-giving circulation which comes from the Father to Jesus and then on to us, though we may still like to call ourselves Christians, but all there is in us may be an empty, dry outward sign destined to wither. There is no way in which we can call ourselves Christian and not live like Christians. We can go through all the outward expressions of belonging to the Church, but unless we possess the life of Christ within us and unless we attend each day to see that that life of Christ is cleansed and pruned to produce higher quality fruit, then we will never attain Christian maturity and will be relegated to mediocrity or worse. Cut-off from the life of Christ we can do nothing.

But the image of the vine is a still more complex one. The life source of the entire vine is the same. Each branch which is never independent and autonomous, but one which belongs within the complex reality of the entire plant, with its good and its weaker branches, with its stronger and more fragile shoots. The vine is the image of the Church, through which the lifegiving energy of Jesus is mediated to us in complex and intricate ways. Christ comes to us within the reality of the Church and that Church must also renew and purify itself so that it is clearly rooted in Jesus Christ himself.

We are today witnessing a challenging period in the life of the Church in this Archdiocese of Dublin. A challenging situation requires a response of discerning, deciding and responding. I believe that there are great things happening in the parishes, large and small, urban and rural, of this diocese. I believe that we have parishes which are more vibrant today than they have been at any time in their history. I am here in this Parish of Roundwood to celebrate an important event, the opening of a new Parish Hall and Centre. Congratulations to all those who have played any part in this process. The new hall is not just a building, but a space where that renewal of Church life can be fostered, where people can gather to deepen their faith, especially through the appreciation and understanding of the word of God. A parish centre is a place where solidarity and care can be fostered and people can work together to develop the fundamental model of care that belongs to the Church of a God who reveals himself as love.

My prayer is that at this time of renewal in the Church all of us can come to realise that being a Christian is not about a list of rules and norms, but is about establishing a real personal relationship with Jesus Christ, allowing his life to come to us as the life flow of the vine brings life to the branches and they produce that quality fruit which witnesses to Jesus in our world.

The weather was magnificent, was this the power of prayer or a sign of approval from on high? What was very pleasing was to see the spirit of ecumenism in the community as both parishes mingled with local dignatories, those involved in the building and representatives from other neighbouring parishes. As would be expected at both events, magnificent refreshments were laid on, tea flowed and the noise of greetings was such that it could have raised the roof but for the quality of the workmanship!

Roundwood Fair

Frank Nuttall

Roundwood Fair was a general fair of cattle, sheep and pigs, which took place on the second Tuesday of the month. The cattle were sold on the Fair Green, where the new school is at present. The sheep were on the Main Street and the pigs on the square in front of Fanning's Pub.

The pigs were nearly all bonhams - young pigs, which were sold from a cart in which they travelled to the Fair. The sheep and cattle would have been walked to the fair. Selling was done by individual bargains between the owner and potential buyers who, very often in the case of the cattle, were dealers, who were hoping to turn a quick profit on them.

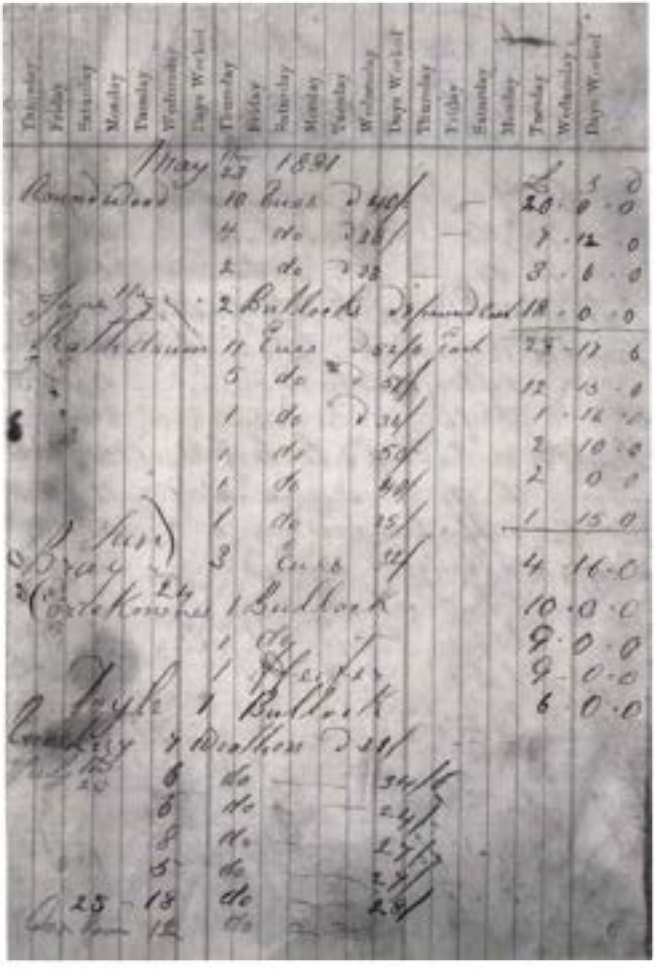
I started attending the fair in 1953 by which time it was beginning to die because of competition from the marts in Blessington and Ashford.

My father had a lorry with a plate on it, which entitled you to draw for hire reward. Our customers, when they had bought a load of cattle, would drive them down to Billy Doyle's yard, which is now the car park of the Roundwood Inn or Keenan's yard, which is now the back buildings of the Coach House. There was a loading bank in both yards for loading stock. In the September and October fairs I would nearly always get one or two loads of sheep out of the Fair, which I would bring to farmers in Kildare or South Wicklow. The fair also had a stall selling secondhand clothes, mainly ex army. In the Spring there was always someone selling cabbage plants. Sometimes patent medicines - wonderful cures for man or beasts - were offered for sale.

Fairs died out as they were a difficult way to sell stock unless you were very well informed. That is why the marts succeeded though now they are also in rapid decline, with only the larger marts surviving. It is a matter of costs as everyone prefers to go to the larger marts as there were more buyers and the lorry drivers have chance of full loads. The fair in Roundwood was finally dead by 1961. Rathdrum died in the late 1950s. Newtown(mountkennedy) and Enniskerry had gone before my time (1953). Other fairs survived for longer, especially the horse fairs. Some of these still survive, eg Ballinasloe and Spancil Hill, Buttevant, Maam

Cross and until fairly recently Tinahely. There was also a poultry fair at Billy Byrne's statue in the market square in Wicklow town until the late 1970s.

Memorable fairs jump to mind. Around 1959-1960, I remember seeing a ballad singer singing badly but trying to sell sheet music at a fair in Ardara, Co Donegal probably one of the last in the world. Another never-to-be-forgotten Roundwood fair was the vision of Owen Coleman and a runaway ram. It had tried to jump over him. A smaller man would have been flattened but Owen stayed on his feet and the pair waltzed down the Main Street for quite a distance to great cheers.



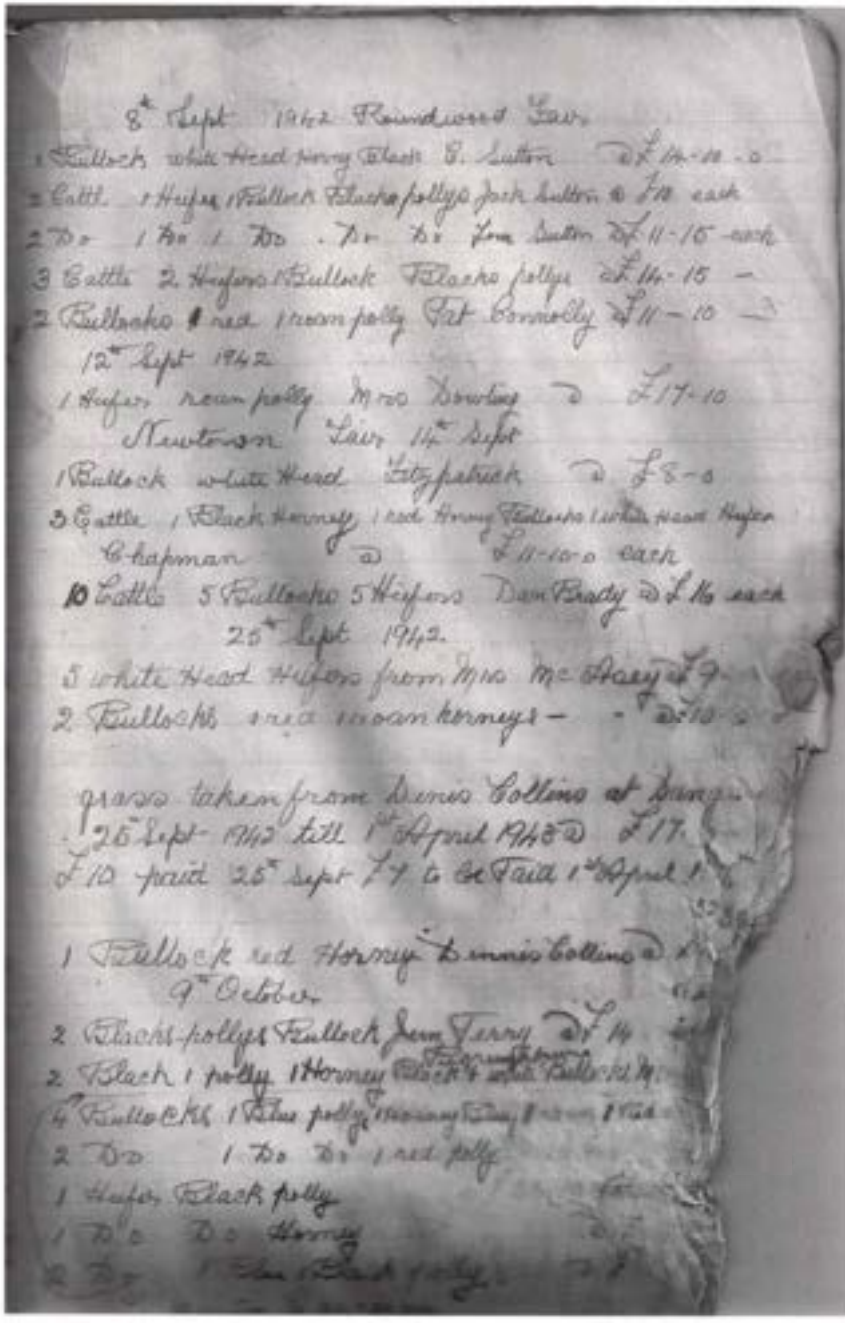
Fair Deals

Frank Maguire

I remember hearing about Roundwood fairs since I was a toddler. The Maguire family have attended the fairs in Roundwood for a long time. The earliest records I have are from my grandfather who was born in 1840, just before the famine, and died in 1892 aged 52 years as the result of an accident with a horse. My father was 16 years old when my grandfather died. A few years earlier he had saved a foal that had got stuck in a drain. It was sent to graze for a year or two at Duleek, in Co. Meath, where my grandfather had land rented. Then my father walked him back the forty miles to Glencullen to be trained and finally put under a cart. My grandfather and another man held it either side of the head, but the horse started to plunge and the other man let it go and unfortunately, it swung round and the grandfather was hit by the shaft and pinned to a tree and broke his ribs so badly that he died shortly afterwards. The horse my father saved killed my grandfather.

In the 1960s, by a lucky accident after a floor collapsed, we found some accounts books, which my Grandfather had kept dating back to 1875. He had a stonecutting business as well as dealing in cattle. His customers from the stonecutting business included prominent institutions such as Trinity College, Guinness, Powers. He kept very good records of all his stock dealings. A sample page from 1881 (see previous page) gives the prices paid for sheep and cattle at fairs in Roundwood, Rathdrum, Bray and Enniskerry. How he would have got to and back from Rathdrum fair I do not know but it was some distance covered and the price paid was high! He also went to Carrickmines, Rathfarnham and Newtownmountkennedy. Some of the entries referred to people by name, but the cattle were described and the price always were recorded. He sold the stock on in Duleek or at the fairs in Drogheda. In 1881 he sold on 316 sheep and 70 cattle.

Fast forwarding to 1940, to my uncle Paddy's account books, also found when the floor collapsed, there was very little change in price of stock over the 60 years from 1880 to 1940. If you compare the sample pages, bullocks were between £6 - £18. The prices soared in later years. Some Roundwood names were Terry Kavanagh, Jack Sutton, Paddy Fanning, Owen Coleman.



8th Sept 1942 Roundwood Fair.
1 Bullock white Head Horny Black P. Sutton @ £14-10-0
2 Cattle 1 Heifer 1 Bullock Black polly's Jack Sutton @ £12 each
2 Do 1 Do 1 Do Do Do Tom Sutton @ £11-15 each
3 Cattle 2 Heifers 1 Bullock Black polly's @ £16-15 -
2 Bullocks 1 red 1 roan polly Pat Connolly @ £11-10 -
12th Sept 1942
1 Heifer roan polly Miss Bowling @ £17-10
Newtown Fair 14th Sept
1 Bullock white Head Fitzpatrick @ £8-0
3 Cattle 1 Black Horney 1 red Horny Bullocks 1 white Head Heifer
Chapman @ £11-10-0 each
10 Cattle 5 Bullocks 5 Heifers Dan Brady @ £16 each
25th Sept 1942.
5 white Head Heifers from Miss Mc Carey @ £9 -
2 Bullocks red roan kerneys - @ £10 -

grass taken from Denis Collins at Bunga
25th Sept 1942 till 1st April 1943 @ £17
£10 paid 25th Sept £7 to be Paid 1st April 1
1 Bullock red Horney Dennis Collins @ £
9th October
2 Black polly's Bullock Jem Terry @ £14
2 Black 1 polly 1 Horney Bullock & white Bullock
4 Bullocks 1 Blue polly Horney 1 roan 1 red
2 Do 1 Do Do 1 red polly
1 Heifer Black polly
1 Do Do Horney
2 Do 1 Blue 1 Black polly

The Roundwood Fair meant a long day but also was a great meeting place. A friend, Mr Lenehan of Ballybrack who lived 2 miles from where my father would call to to pick him up on the way to the Fair in Roundwood. They would be having a good meal before setting out on the journey around 12 o'clock at night. It would take three hours to walk to the Fair in Roundwood. Often at the Fair, there were would be three members of the Maguire family and some Lenehans so there could be quite a number of cattle going home.

My first memory of Roundwood Fair was the day after the August Bank Holiday Monday in 1946. We came by pony and trap and tied up the pony at the hotel near the Fair Green. The talk was all about the plane that crash-landed on Djouce Mountain outside Roundwood. Miraculously everyone on board was saved.

The Fairs began around 8.30 or 9.00 a.m. On arrival at the Fair, we would walk around surveying the animals, like the other buyers. Men came in from West Wicklow, such as Louis Murphy, Patsy Murphy, Peter Mackey, Maurice Byrne, Tim and Ned Kerrigan and then the men coming with the trucks. I personally felt that the Roundwood men didn't need an Auctioneer to sell the cattle for them. At least that was my experience!!!! I remember someone asking my uncle had he bought any cattle and him replying 'No, and I won't buy any unless men are prepared to take less for them'. Once things got going, the fair would be sold out within an hour or so.

When we bought the cattle, then we would have to turn around and walk them home. Sometimes we would have a meal in Keenans before setting out on the road for home. Drink was always available but never have more than two. Bringing them home was not always easy. There were often runaways, which caused chaos. The first stage of the cattle's journey was to Glencullen or Miss O'Connor's land in Newcastle, Co. Dublin. Renting land was expensive. They used to joke that if Uncle Paddy married the same lady they would have saved a lot of money. After a short time, they would continue on to Duleek, Co. Meath to the rented land.

Fair Day Memories

Sean Malone

My first brush with selling was January 1947, just before the big snow. We had two batches of bonhams. The creels of the bonhams were put on the dray. and we went down to the market. The last thing my mother said to my father going out the yard 'Do not bring them home the weather is not good' as. But he was only being offered £2 apiece and felt it was too little and brought them home. The next thing the snow fell. I remember my mother had a big 4 stone pot. We had to wash the potatoes in trough in the yard and bring them into the pot of boiling water. The turf ran out, I was only 8 or 9 but I spent all the time in the snow cutting the timber. Nine weeks later, when the snow was going but only the main road was clear, my father wanted to sell them again. He hired Ned Mason's lorry. We were not able to lift the pigs into the dray as they were now stores. Anyway they went to market and what did they get - £2 a piece after the nine weeks hardship and having eaten half the potatoes in the place!

Going on the cattle. Everyone had their own stand in the Fair Green, some at the top ditch, we were on the side ditch going down and Ballinastoe were at the back of the this, the Old School. Jimmy Hatton was in the middle of the Fair green. He had the quietest of cattle of all, they just stood there, not trying to break into the others. The dealers, 3 old Maguires (including Frank's Father), two or three Lenehans, the two Mackeys, old Patsy Murphy would all go round bidding for this cattle or that cattle. They would walk away and then come back to see if you would give them, if you would not, they might give you more or the danger of no more. The danger would be the shout from John Lenehan 'Let them out. We're going home'. If you were near the price, you would give in.

I remember one day, Peter Mackay went in under Patsy Murphy. Peter Mackey holding up two ashplants. They took a stance and fists were waving, so you might as well shut up shop. There was kind of a gentleman's agreement you did not cut in other buyers, even though you were trying to get the best bargain. But there were times it had to be done, as Bill Murphy was always waiting up where Paddy Fanning's Togher House is now. He had a room at the back of where he collected the rates. He would

be paid in cash, there were few cheques then. He would get half or more of what you got. The rates had to be paid, that was it.

The sheep fairs were held September, October and November. I do not know how the people of Roundwood put up with the sheep in the streets. We parked our sheep right up by between Patricia Byrnes' hall door and the shop, 30 or 40 sheep standing there all day. Tobe miley was a little further down where the chip shop is now, Jack Byrne where the petshop is now and Ballinastoe were down here at the school. The rams would be tied to the posts. This happened month after month and we never thought to go back and clean up the tow path!

There was hardship. I remember Jack Carthy from Glenmalure just standing there all day, without a bite to eat till he got home that evening. He never left his post and never sold one and then had to head back with them all.

I remember Rathdrum fair in when I was about 14. My father bought a blue-grey heifer, Thinking back he was quite daft, trying to drive the single beast home. First running down the Rathdrum street with the heifer turning this way and that and then every field we got to the gate was open. After four or five miles, it finally settled down and walked home alright. Also Jimmy Hatton bought a wild one. He got it reasonable but everyone said 'how will you get it home'. He put a halter on it and tied to the back of the dray, it went mad for a while and then quieten down. When he set off and it followed the dray back home without a bother.

No Jitterbugging Here - Roundwood in 1957

Elinor Medlycott

Just over fifty years ago as a project for my geography course at college I made a very amateur survey of Roundwood with the help of Mrs George Timmons. It seemed possible then for her to recall every house and person in the village. I very much doubt if anyone now could do that as completely as she did then. I have added the names of the shopkeepers though they would not have been in the original and trust that I am correct.

In 1957 I wrote 'Roundwood is a small village, remembered by the rest of Ireland for two things: it is the highest village, being over 700ft, and it has the country house of President and Mrs O'Kelly at Roundwood Park, a quarter of a mile away. Unfortunately the house was burnt down at the beginning of October 1957, as a result of an accident when the house was being redecorated. It is to be rebuilt.

The population of Roundwood is just over 200 in 45 houses. Of this, over 100 children from the village and district are enrolled in the two-roomed school, under Mr Reddin and Mrs Brennan. Twelve young men and women have emigrated during the last two years to England, most working in the metal industry in Coventry. The majority of the men in the Roundwood area find employment in the forestry. Forty men work in the Roundwood Forest altogether under a resident forester who lives in the village. They work in the nursery at Mullinaveigue, at Ballinastoe, Slemaine and more recently at drainage work at Luggala. Twenty five men work for Dublin Corporation at the Waterworks, and, during the summer months, Wicklow County Council gives work to ten to fifteen at the turf bogs on the Sally Gap. Six men are employed as agricultural labourers in Roundwood Park and a few more to other local farmers. During the winter months up to twenty draw unemployment benefit, but most of these get work during the summer at turf-cutting, harvesting and additional forestry work.

There is to this day an uncommonly large proportion of houses of entertainment in the small village, there being five public houses and a village hall. There are five grocery shops, (Mason's, Curley's, Brady's, Byrne's and Donoghue's), two drapery shops (Healy's and Armstrong's),

a new chemist, which replaces a failed bookmaker, and a butcher (Fred Doyle's). The smallest grocery shop is also a stationer and hardware shop and another gives teas as does one of the private houses beside the Post Office. The Post Office is in charge of an elderly man, Willie Gilbert, his sister Annie with a young girl Bridie Timmons as assistant. The telephone call system goes through Newtownmountkennedy and is often rather slow. There are very few private telephones and no telephone booth on the street. If a call is necessary after the Post Office is closed it may be made in one of the public houses or in the Guards' Barracks. The Guards used to have a small house at the head of the street but have recently amalgamated with those in Glendalough in a new well-built house opposite the Post Office. There are usually three civic guards, besides the President's private detective, when he is in residence. There are two garages, which supply petrol and do small repairs, (Mason's and Doyle's). Willie Doyle also operates the three blue St Kevin's Buses which connect Roundwood with Bray and Dublin.

The village hall is a wooden construction used for the showing of a film once a week, for dances and occasionally for amateur dramatics, sales, children's parties or whist drives. It is under the control of the Parish Priest. The Catholic parish has had to subscribe much recently to the restoration of the roof and woodwork in St. Laurence O' Toole's Church, to a new priest's house and a new curates' house. There are usually two curates in the parish, which includes a large area right up to the Sally Gap, Lough Dan, Moneystown, Annamoe and Mullinaveigue. There are practically no Protestants in Roundwood village, those there are belong to Derralossary parish which has a charming old church, situated about a mile towards Glendalough.

There are 27 new houses in Roundwood, built during the last ten years by Wicklow County Council. Ten of these are semi-detached with large gardens at the corner of the Roundwood-Newtownmountkennedy Road

The others are a little further on the Dublin side side of the village and form what is called Vartry Terrace. These houses all have E.S.B. but are not adequately supplied with water or sanitation. It is rather a paradox that Roundwood, which supplies so much of Dublin with water, should have inadequate supplies itself. The fact is that the village is above the level

of the reservoirs and as there is no pumping system the water has to be got from a spring in a field above the village. This has to be piped to two pumps and to a public convenience which has recently been built beside the Guard's Barracks. The Roundwood guild of the Irish Countrywomen's Association has passed a resolution to the County Council that every house built should have water and that when five houses are grouped together they should have proper sanitation. The I. C. A. has about 20 members and at their monthly meetings have a variety of lectures, demonstrations nd competitions.

The Togher Agricultural and Industries Committee was started years ago for the organisation of Ploughing matches. They used to award certificates saying how many trees each *'Forestry Volunteer'* had planted in an effort to encourage afforestation. Roundwood is a village renowned for its champion ploughmen. During the previous few years both Wicklow's representatives in the horse-ploughing section have been from Roundwood. On Calary, Jack Sutton, who was for three years Champion ploughman of Ireland has cut in topiary work blackthorn trees on his hedge to indicate the three cups which he won. Roundwood has just started a branch of the National Farmers' Association, but there is no Macra na Feirme nearer than the Glen of the Downs. There are Sheepdog Trials held annually near Roundwood in which many of the hill-farmers, particularly of Glenmacanass, compete.

There is a Gaelige Football Club and a cycling club and also a brass band which is reputed to be the first founded in Ireland. Every 15th August there is a fete held in aid of the district nurse usually over a £100 being raised during it and the dance which follows. Fair Day is on the second Tuesday of the month, it includes cattle, sheep, pigs and occasionally horses. There are special two-day Autumn Sheep sales in September also, at which fat lambs and old ewes and rams are sold.'

There was also certain standards of behaviour. Who remembers the delightful notice in the old Parish Hall which read NO JITTERBUGGING HERE? Would it be a good idea if some young student was to undertake a similar study of the Roundwood district today and then like me he or she could publish it in the Roundwood and District Historical Journal of 2060?!

Society Events

Photographs

125 Years of the GAA

From the village of Carron on the edge of County Clare's rugged Burren came Michael Cusack, a man who was to change the landscape of his country.

Qualified as a National teacher, a succession of jobs took him to various locations around the country, north, east, south and west before setting up the renowned Civil Service Academy in Gardiner St. Dublin.

An athlete of note, a national shot put champion, he also played rugby, but it became a source of annoyance to him that sport in Ireland was run by those of Anglo-Irish persuasion.

His heartfelt belief was that 'any Nation seeking independence needed to revive, promote and cherish its own indigenous games'.

Michael Cusack and his supporters called a meeting in Hayes Commercial Hotel on Saturday 1st November 1884, The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded. The rest is history.

Based on pride of Parish, the honour of the little village, teams began to spring up in every nook and cranny. Inside two years inter-county activity began to take place.

In 1887 the first All-Ireland hurling and football championships took place. They have become the highlights of the Irish sporting calendar.

However the GAA's stronghold remains the club's, who have put down strong roots by purchasing and cultivating playing fields, determined to have a home of their own.

In 1908, Frank Brazil Dineen purchased a sports ground on Dublin's Jones Road. It set the Limerick man back £3,250, a sum he went into debt to produce, having failed to convince the GAA that the ground would be a good investment. Five years later, Frank Dineen gifted the title of the sports ground to the GAA for no charge. That ground has become the one and only Croke Park.

This is the GAA headquarters, and over the years, they have developed the venue. It now ranks with the best stadiums in the world.

1950 Team
Back Row: Peter Hatton, Tim Timmons, Liam Timmons, Gerry Byrne, Jimmy Byrne, George Timmons. Middle Row: Martin Traynor, Joe Nolan, Sean Kavanagh, Joe Kennan snr. Terry Kavanagh, Pa Brennan, Matt Keenan, Billy Brien, Anthony Brennan, Paddy Kenna, Ned McHugh, Malachy Brennan snr. Joe Newsome, Jim Doyle. Front Row: Michael Rooney, Frank Keenan, Pat Hughes, John Keenan, Jack Mason, Joe Keenan.

An Tochar under 14 Girls (Féile 1994)
Back Row: Claire Healy, Nicola Newsome, Helen Coleman, Linda Cummins, Brona Keeley, Denise Byrne, Margaret Brady, Patrice Brady, Aishling Healy, Sharon Kenna. Front Row: Siobhan Brady, Nicola Jackson, Angelina Brady, Miriam O'Toole, Wendy Byrne, Ciara McGillycuddy, Monica Lynch, Aoife Patterson, Lynda Shannon.

Reprinted from Journal 1:

The Football Firsts of Roundwood G.A.A.

(Compiled by Martin Timmons)

First Club:

The first football club under the new G.A.A. rules was formed in Roundwood on the 8th of August 1885 by Larry Murphy of Togher House. He was then a student in Dublin and it was there that he first learned the new G.A.A. rules.

A Club had been formed in Ashford a short time previously by Jack Byrne, a friend of Larry's who was himself a student in Dublin at that time.

First Match:

Although formed in August 1885, Roundwood did not play their first official match until March of 1886. Their first big try-out was against Ashford on St. Patricks Day, which that year fell on a Monday

On Sunday morning a heavy fall of snow covered the pitch (on which the Parochial House now stands). Undaunted, the local team and supporters assembled on the field on the Sunday and cleared the pitch with shovels.

Ashford who had the benefit of playing two games prior to this match (against Dalkey and Barndarrig) won the game.

It was hardly surprising to find that Larry Murphy and Jack Byrne captained their respective teams as these two friends had introduced the G.A.A to Wicklow, with Ashford and Roundwood being the first two clubs to affiliate.

We don't know the rest of the team who played in Roundwood's first match, but it is reasonable to assume that it was much the same line-up as played seven months later in a famous Inter-Club competition between Wicklow and Wexford teams. It was played before 12,000 spectators (including Michael Cusack) in the grounds of Avondale House on Sunday October 31st 1886 and featured six teams from each county.

Roundwood salvaged Wicklow pride that day when they not only became the only Wicklow team to win a match but in the process beat Rosslare who were then the Wexford champions by 4 points to nil.

The Roundwood team on that occasion was as follows: Larry Murphy (Captain), Patrick Keane, Mick Keenan, Jim and John Murphy, Andy Doyle, Andy Halpin, Pat Murphy, Gerry McDonnell, Charlie Nolan, John Martin, Morgan Byrne, John Redmond, Tom Jones, Dan Redmond, Jim Brady, Jim Meath, John Keane, Jim Mason, Mick Keogh, Jack Mason and Christy Byrne in goal.

First Delegates:
The first convention of the county took place in Wicklow Town Hall on the 26th of December 1886 and the first delegates from Roundwood were Larry Murphy and James Kennedy.

First Championship Match:
Roundwood played their first game in the Wicklow Championship at the Willow Grove on the 19th of February 1888. The opposition were Newtown O'Connells, and Roundwood were well beaten by a scoreline of 1-7 to 0-1.

First Ever Title:
Roundwood won their first ever title in 1931 when they beat Ballymanus in the Intermediate Football Final at Rathdrum after a replay by a score of 2-3 to 1-1.

The team that made history and brought the first title to Roundwood wore black jerseys with an amber band and were as follows: Paddy Davis, Matt Davis, Ger McDonald, Ben Clarkson, Billy Hughes, Joe Keenan, Bill McCabe, Mick Meehan, Jack Byrne, Mick Donohoe, Jimmy Timmons, Jack Doyle, Bill Keenan, Joe Malone, Jack Fortune, Ben Malone.

46 years after Larry Murphy had set the ball rolling, Roundwood had won a title and we heard that there was no hay made in Roundwood that year!

First Senior Title:
Two years after winning their first title Intermediate Grade in 1931, Roundwood won their first and only Senior Championship in unusual circumstances.

The first game ended in a draw, we don't know what happened in the second game, the third game was abandoned due to incidents, but finally, on the 14th of April 1934, the Roundwood team had a clear cut victory 2-4 to 0-3 in Bray. Ballymanus objected after this game and this took some

time to sort out before the Leinster Council finally decided that the player concerned was legal to play for Roundwood.

The team were then fixed to play Blessington in the Senior Final towards the end of 1934, but for some unknown reason, Blessington failed to field a team and gave a walkover. Thus did Roundwood win the Senior Football Championship of 1933, their first and only Senior title.

The team was as follows: Joe Keenan (Captain), T. Doyle, W. McCabe, B. Clarkson, M. Meehan, J. Byrne, J. Timmons, P. Burke, M. Doyle, L. Timmons, D. Carthy, S. Murphy, G. McDonald, T. McGuirk, W. Doran, Subs: M. Davis, J. Doyle, B. Hughes, M. Donohoe.

First All Ireland Medal:
'The first Roundwood player to win an All-Ireland medal with his native county was Joe Keenan, who played in the 1936 Junior Campaign. This was the first All-Ireland title ever won by Wicklow and came to fruition on September 13th of that year when they beat Mayo in the final at Croke Park 3-3 to 2-5.

First Senior Final In Roundwood:
The first and only time the County Final of the Senior Championship was held in Roundwood, was on the 30th of May 1927, when Kilcoole faced Annacurra in the final of the 1926 competition.

The match was played at Diamond Hill in the field across the road from the entrance to Roundwood Park estate, recently used as a soccer pitch.

This match was noteworthy for two other reasons as well. It drew the biggest crowd ever to attend a County Final up to that time with large crowds of people arriving in Roundwood from early morning by pony and trap, on sidecars, bicycles and walking.

Annacurra were kingpins-of the game at that time, being the holders and with seven previous titles to their credit. While Kilcoole were 'just up from Junior' grade. Kilcoole created an upset by winning the match easily, 4-3 to 1-1. However, Annacurra, somewhat unsportingly objected because a Kilcoole player's Christian name was incorrect. Despite many appeals, Annacurra went ahead with the objection and were awarded the match and championship.

Roundwood - Making their name in the GAA

Seamus Gaskin

Key dates

1886

Roundwood made a bit of history when they beat the Wexford champions, Rosslare, in the famous six match one-day tournament at Avondale on October 31, 1886. In the early years there were teams from Clara, Laragh, Moneystown, Roundwood, Raheen, Knockraheen, Parkmore, Knockrath, Carrigower, Trooperstown and Glendalough representing this part of the county on the Wicklow Gaelic scene.

1896

Roundwood had two teams in 1896 and they were only beaten by two points in the Senior Championship by Rathnew 0-7 to 0-5 at Broomhall, on March 1st, 1896. Rathnew later won the championship by beating Wicklow 1-8 to 0-6. The same day Roundwood B team beat Rathnew B team in a friendly game. Roundwood reached the semi-final of the Senior football championship in 1902 and put up a powerful show against unbeatable Rathnew before going down 0-7 to 0-4 at Annacurra. It was regarded as a victory in Roundwood where the local poet wrote as follows:

Bravo then, to you Captain Jim, you are a champion boy,
We drink a toast to Christy Roche, to Dan and Jack Molloy,
To Pat McGuirk, he did great work, to Kenny and Malone,
To Andy Brien and the other boys,
who brought the honours home.

1934

Roundwood figured in one of the longest marathons ever recorded in Wicklow. It was the Senior Football Championship semi-final with Ballymanus and it went on for over a year. Eventually Roundwood recorded a clear cut victory and survived an objection to qualify for their second county senior football final. That game was played at Bray on April 15th, 1934, and Roundwood won 2-4 to 0-3.

They were then fixed to play Blessington towards the end of the year, but, by then, Blessington had no team and gave a walkover Thus did Roundwood

win their first and only Wicklow senior football championship. The team on that occasion was as follows: J Keenan (captain), T Doyle, W McCabe, B Clarkson, M Meehan, J Byrne, J Timmins, P Burke, H Doyle, L Timmins, D Carthy, S Murphy, G McDonald, T McGuirk, W Doran. Subs included Jack Doyle, Matt Davis, Billy Hughes, Mick Donohoe.

1950

Another generations of Keenans had arrived – Frank, John, Joe and Matt, and in 1950 they scored a rather comfortable victory over Blessington in the junior final with the following panel – Joe Hayes, Pa and Anthony Brennan, Pat Hughes, Tom & Liam Timmins, Gerry Byrne, Jack Mason, Frank, Matt, & John Keenan, Michael Rooney, Paddy McCabe, Billy Brien, Mick Farrell, Jim Moran and Tim Darcy. A year later this team won the intermediate final beating Blessington at Aughrim 0-6 to 0-3.

Ballinastoe GAA Club

The original Ballinastoe Football Club was founded in the early fifties. The team was brought together by Tom Mulligan who with Joe Molloy, arranged the first match which was played against Knockraheen. This took place in George Murphy's field. The first set of, black jerseys were organised by Hugh Muldoon, and the football used in the first match was supplied by Bob Taylor and originally belonged to a Carrigower team so was well over thirty years old. Joe Molloy's field was used for matches for the first two years. Club sports were held in this field and in a field at Ballinastoe cross-roads, owned by his brother Peter.

Members of the first team: Jack Roche(goal) Jim Davis, Joe Molloy, Tom Mulligan, Dave Mahon, Kit Hughes, Peter Molloy, Hugh Muldoon, Jack Roche (Carrigower) Sean Fitzmaurice, Andy Kavanagh, Jonny Murray, Martin Kavanagh. First officers of the club: Chairman Bill Cunningham, Secretary Pat Molloy, Treasurer Jim Donnelly, Committee: Ben Clarkson, Bob Power, Bob Taylor and Cormac Davis.

Ballinastoe won the County Junior B Championship in 1958 with the following panel Jack Roche, Jim, Cormac & Murt Davis, Jack Mason, Tom Mulligan, Vincent Halpin, Willie Cunningham, Kevin Devereux, Matt & John Keenan, Sean Malone, Billy Brien, Robert Power, Jim

McManus, PJ Ferguson, Michael Rooney, John & Gerry Byrne, Paul Doolin and Pa Brennan.

Ballinastoe went on to win the Schweppes Cup in 1963, 1967 and 1969.

From 1968 onwards Ballinastoe Football Club held meetings and training sessions at Annacarter School, which had been acquired from the parish as a result of negotiations between Bill Cunningham and Fr O'Connell PP.

Matches continued to be played in Cunningham's field at Ballinastoe. The committee during those years included Fr Quilter, Bill Cunningham, Jimmy Byrne, Anthony Mulligan, Don Ferguson and Seamus Gaskin.

'Ballinastoe's day of glory' so read the headlines of Gaelic Parade on August 29th 1975. after the County Intermediate Championship August 1975 Ballinastoe V Avondale. This was one of the closest and most sporting games played in Aughrim, and was anybody's match to the final whistle. With Fr Quilter chewing every blade of grass in sight and performing 'kangaroo hops' on the sideline, Frank McGillick pacing the pitch, and supporters on both sides going wild with excitement and both teams playing their hearts out, a draw looked inevitable. The final seconds were ticking away when Harry Cunningham shot the ball over the bar bringing victory to the 'Maroon and Blue'. After such a thrilling game, supporters were in exuberant mood and the victory bonfire in Keenan's field burned long into the night and club members held open house for supporters and friends in the Parish Hall.

Team:- Paddy Cunningham, Billy Clarkson, Vincent Halpin, Kevin Doyle, John Davis, Donal McGillycuddy, Seamus Gaskin, Peter Kennedy, Don Ferguson, Jimmy Davis, Harry Cunningham, Edmond Doyle, Willie Byrne, P.J. Davis, Eamonn Kavanagh, John Halligan, Willie Kenna. Manager: Frank McGillick

It was even celebrated in verse by Mick Bolger of Tomriland, Roundwood.

Ballinastoe Victory: Intermediate Championship 1975

On Aughrim's grounds the sun shone down,
and added beauty to the vale.
For the Intermediate Championship between
Ballinastoe and Avondale.
This great display, we'll ne'er forget as each
team played like giants,
But victory went to Ballinastoe by just, a single point.

The backs were sound like walls of steel and
Pat Cunningham's catch was true
The brothers Davis at midfield, sure they no longer knew.
The forwards dash was like lightening flash,
Willie Byrne was hard to hold.
His great five points flew o'er the bar and they a story told.

Time ticked on and the whistle went, the first half told its tale,
The men from 'neath the Sugar Loaf were four points on the tail.
But they battled on like men inspired and P.J Davis got the ball,
His sizzling shot the goalman beat and we watched the green flag fall.

The green and white of Avondale put on the dash and speed,
Pat Doyle and Baker fought like mad to hold that one point lead.
A fifty, then for Ballinastoe and Gaskin strikes with no delay,
And the towering star sends o'r the bar the point that saved the day.
A draw it looks like now with two minutes still to go,
Avondale give all they know and likewise Ballinastoe.
Harry Cunningham's in possession, they're hot upon his trail,
He kicks! It's going goalwards! He has beaten Avondale!

Let's salute the founder - Bill Cunningham is his name,
He kept that flag flying proudly high when victory to them came
The fire he kindled long ago is very much a-glow
And his cry of surrender brought the cup to Ballinastoe.

Avondale though in defeat were sportsmen true and bold
And the story of their effort will many times be told.
Next year we'll go to Aughrim the rousing cheers to swell
When Avondale take back the cup to the home of Stewart Parnell.

Field & Recreational Committee 1975

February 19th 1975 the field and recreational committee were formed. Officers were Chairman Fr Quilter, Vice Chairman Arthur Hall, Secretary Donal McGillycuddy, Treasurer Anthony Mulligan and Trustees Paddy Cunningham, Anthony Mulligan, and Arthur Hall.

The fund was launched with a lodgement of £100.00 from the Ballinastoe Football Club. Fundraising began with the introduction of 10p a week scheme from as many people as possible. Dedicated members involved in this scheme included Fr Quilter, A Hall, A Mulligan, D McGillycuddy, S Gaskin, E Kavanagh, P O'Brien, T Jackson, D Ferguson, P Cunningham, R Power, and P Kennedy. Various other events were organised to help raise much needed money. On August 1st that year in conjunction with Macra na Feirme we held our first sports day. This event started with a sports day in Mrs Donoghue's field in Mullinaveigue and a dance in the Parish Hall. During the following years, this was extended to two days and then a weekend with night time events in a marquee and later again the festival stretched into a two week event.

In 1978, local man Pat Doyle made a site of 5.72 acres available at a reasonable cost. An enormous amount of money would be needed to build our sports complex. Enquiries were made to Pairc an Chrocaigh regarding the availability of grants etc. The response was reassuring and negotiations commenced. Final agreement was made to purchase the site in January 1979. Planning permission was applied for and finally granted in February 1980. Our building of 140 feet by 60 feet was ready to get off the ground. Arús an Tochár is now a well used venue for many activities. Pairc an Tochár has hosted many championship and league matches and is also utilised by the County Fixtures committee due to the high standard of the pitch and its central location.

Birth of An Tochár December, 1981

As a result of a motion passed at the AGM of the club the name was changed from Ballinastoe/Roundwood to An Tochár.

An Tochár Key Victories

1986 Schweppes Cup

1987 Junior A Championship

1988 Intermediate Championship

1995 Senior Championship.

The first senior title for An Tochar, since 1934, beating Baltinglass who were attempting to win their ninth consecutive championship. The Miley Cup celebrations continued for many months after this victory. This team successfully progressed to the Leinster Final, but were eventually beaten by Eire Og (Carlow) in a very exciting replay.

Team: G Keenan, D Wolohan, C Davis, P Murphy, C Molloy, A Jenkinson, D McGillycuddy, L Cullen, P McGillycuddy, S Nolan, B Power, E Davis, N Wolohan, D Brady, N Nolan, T Hall, K Power, E McGillycuddy, S Cullen, B Brady, F Mulligan, J Price, S Nolan, M Davis, N Brady, P Brady and G McGillycuddy.

2001 Leinster Junior Championship

This 2001 victory was possibly the most exciting football match ever witnessed in Roundwood. The Leinster Championship was run on a league basis, with An Tochar successfully defeating Innis Falls captained by Noel Wolohan.

Team: J Power, N Nolan, B Power, L Nolan, P Kenna, A Jenkinson, J Price, D Brady, N Wolohan, E Nolan, D Fanning, N Kavanagh, S Cullen, L Ferguson, N Brady, R Brady E Kavanagh, D Murphy, J Carr, A Wolohan, N Davis, D Davis, B Lawless, S Nolan, D Healy, S Smith, J Dixon, J Brady, D O'Brien.

An Tochar Ladies Football

An Tochar Ladies Gaelic Football club was set in up 1989 by Paraic Corbett, Catherine McGillycuddy, Gertie Fee, Myra White, Eithna Kavanagh and Maura Gaskin.

Our most successful team won six county finals in a row and reached three Leinster Finals.

Nicky Dunne won a Ladies All Star in 1996 with Anne McGillycuddy getting a replacement All Star the same year. Bernie Byrne, Theresa Cowman and Jackie Kavanagh won a Junior All Ireland medal with Wicklow in 1990.

Scór and other activities

I would like to emphasise that the GAA is much bigger than our field games. Our club has taken a very active part in Scór and Scór na nÓg. Maire Hall was county Scór Secretary for ten years in the late 80s. An Tochar has participated fully in Ceili dancing, set dancing, recitation, novelty act, question time, solo singing and ballad group. The club have been very successful in ceili and set dancing.

Mary McGillick reached the All Ireland Final in the Gaiety with her recitation with Sarah Holt reaching the Leinster Final with the recitation 'If I were a Lady' in Scór na nÓg.

Summer Camps have been a big part of our summers since its inception, at these camps skills are taught, practised and new friends are made, great fun is had by all. The club also provides coaching for school children for a number of weeks each year.

Wool Trading - An Old Family Business

Vincent Pierce gave a most interesting and informative talk to the Society when we visited his wool store just outside Rathdrum. The store was built conveniently beside the new railway system. Rathdrum station was opened in 1861, bringing a revolution in transport to the area. This was a great opportunity for the Pierce family, providing easy access to the east coast ports.

One feature of their success has been their adaptability. The original company dealt as an agricultural merchant that branched into wool of all types. Their profile is constantly changing to meet new demands. How many of us will have knitted with the 'Heather Wool' brand and realized that it originally came from so close to home?

Since the decline in the value of sheep fleeces to the point where shearing a sheep often costs more than the value of the shorn fleece, the present generation of the Pierces has expanded its interests into sheep wool insulation and other areas. (Sheep's wool makes a luxurious, long-lasting and non-irritant substitute for fibre-glass or rock-wool, and provides a new and ecologically friendly use for the coarser wools such as the Wicklow Cheviot's. And it has a lovely warm feel!) The insulation material is produced in tandem with a German company, making it an inter-European Community product. Pierces also have three or four companies in Belarus, one for scouring Russian Merino wool for local use, and black Karakul wool for insulation purposes; the other companies for knitting yarns and hand-knitted garments. Their trading contacts have spread beyond Europe to Russia, the Middle East, Kazakhstan, India, China, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa etc., while not forgetting the home trade and countries near to home.

Vincent Pierce brings great energy and imagination, with an exceptional amount of knowledge and experience to the wool trade in one of the oldest family-owned businesses in this part of the world. It would be interesting to hear from some other successful companies that have stayed in the same family for so long!

Brief History of Wool and Wicklow Fleece Wool

Vincent Pierce

Despite being the fifth county for sheep numbers in Ireland, Wicklow has always been known as the sheep county. Perhaps this is because it is such a mountainous county, there were no other options for its farmers. Sheep would roam the mountains for the summer months and would only come down for lambing and shearing.

Throughout the 18th and 19th century, wool was a valuable commodity and very good profits were made from keeping sheep only for wool. Lamb was the secondary product. Many local industries sprung up in the county - such as Avoca Woollen Mills, a forerunner of the Avoca Handweavers - and almost every farmstead in the hills had looms to weave cloth, over the winter months. Rathdrum became a centre of trade for this produce and we still have a building called the wool exchange.

As the mountains were poor and craggy grazing areas, the breed of sheep that became predominant originated in the Cheviot Hills of England, and is called the Cheviot. This, today, is still the basis of Wicklow hill sheep. Its wool is quite coarse and best suited for the weaving of heavy overcoats, jackets, upholstery material and spinning for carpet yarns.

From one sheep, a farmer could expect 5 to 6 lbs of wool. At a price of about 5/- per lb, which was about one day's wages for a farm worker in the 1920s to 1950s, he could make a good income. Most general merchants in the mountain towns around the county bought this wool in summer. The clip from most farmers was sufficient to pay their grocery and feed bills for the year, with a surplus remaining. The day of selling wool was one of the great days in these farmers' calendar with much price haggling and followed by long sessions in the bars!

Wars saw wool prices at very high levels due to the demand to clothe and provide blankets for the great numbers of soldiers. In fact, during the 1914 -18 war, wool was so scarce, prices reached £1 per lb. The British government of the time commissioned many industries to find a solution. In the mid 1930s, Dupont, with laboratories in New York and London, came up with this, NY-LON, called after the locations of their research

units. The demise of wool began in the 1950s. In 2009, a farmer is getting €0.45 a kilo, the equivalent of 5% of the minimum wage of €8.45 per hour or 20 kilos per hour.

This is a long way from the days when Richard the Lion Heart's ransom was paid in wool and the Chancellor of the Exchequer called his seat in the house of Parliament, the 'Wool Sack' to remind folk of where the source of UK wealth originated!

Irish Greasy Fleece Wool

There are important measures of quality both for the buyers and sellers of wool. There are two major types of Irish Greasy Fleece Wool, fine and coarse.

The fine type of wool, for the textile trade, is from the Galway, Suffolk and Texel breeds that are about 65% of all sheep in Ireland. These are found in lowland areas, usually kept below 400 ft. above sea level. The pure bred Galway is disappearing, as they are not good lamb producers and are now crossed with the other breeds. The coarse type of wool, used for carpets, is from the Irish Cheviots, the Blackface and crossbreeds including found in the hilly areas at about 500 feet above sea level, mainly from Wicklow Kerry, Conemara and Donegal.

The fleece is classified by fibre length and fineness. Fineness is measured several ways. The old fineness measure is the Bradford Count (BC). This is a number that indicates the fibre thickness, based on the length of yarn spun from one pound of wool, eg 56 will spin 56 yards; 46 will give 46 yards. So, the lower the count, the less yarn and the coarser the wool. Now, this is being replaced by a new fineness measure, the mean fibre diameter, given in microns (μ, one millionth of a metre).

Other important factors are the colour and yield. White fleeces make premium quality, while those that may have a yellowish hue or be stricken with grey, usually from older sheep, do not make as much money. These cast or stricken fleeces tend to a lower yield of washed wool and contain higher levels of vegetable matter.

What the buyer needs to know to select the best for his requirements:

Wool type/ Colour	Fibre			Yield	
	Length	Fineness			
	inches	BC	micron	W	VM
FINE for Woollen or Worsted spinning					
231 Galway good white	3 - 5	50 - 54	34.5 - 35.5	69	<1
238 white	3 - 5	50 - 56	33.5 - 34.5	69	<1
238 Cast	3 - 5	50 - 56	33.5 - 34.5	66	~1.5
238 Light Stricken	3 - 5	50 - 56	33.5 - 34.5	68	~1.5
COARSE					
09 - Cheviot & Crossbred white	4 - 6	46 - 50	33 - 35.5	71	<1
16 (09-Cast)	4 - 6	46 - 50	33 - 35.5	67	~1.5
14 (09- Light Stricken)	4 - 6	46 - 50	33 - 35.5	68	~1.5
070 (Blackface)	5 - 8		38 - 44 (irregular)	70	~1.5

BC: Bradford Count, **W:** percentage of washed wool from greasy fleece wool, **VM:** percentage of vegetable matter (seeds, grass etc in the fleece)

The wool from around the head and legs may be known as 'kemp' that although white, is an inelastic fibre, straight, opaque, coarse, non-felting that will not take a dye; hence, its presence in wool is most objectionable. A further quality problem is 'cotty wool' that is matted or felted on the sheep's back, resulting in excessive fibre breaks in processing the fleece. It is caused by insufficient wool grease being produced by the sheep, usually due to breeding, injury, or sickness.

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Most photographs courtesy of the Wicklow Times