

**Class, Religion and Society in Limerick City, 1922-1939**

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**Ph.D. (History)**

**Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick**

**2015**

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## **Candidate's Declaration**

This thesis is entirely my own work, based on research in primary and secondary sources.

Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Abstract:

This study focuses on the civil society which existed in Limerick City between the signing of the Treaty and the outbreak of the Second World War. The purpose of the thesis is to examine this civil society outside of the overtly political society. It contrasts the lifestyles of the working poor as opposed to the merchant class and the clubs and organizations which they belonged to by examining the housing crisis in the city, and particularly in Garryowen, in 1922 and the establishment of a police force by the merchant class in the city in 1922. The study also maps the rise and decline of the Gaelic League within the city as a cultural signifier of national identity from the early heady days of the late nineteenth century to the gradual decline following independence in 1922. The Protestant imperial ethos and its decline, as well as the rise of the new Catholic middle class in the city, have also been examined through the medium of an elite boat club. The study also focuses on the temperance movement and its journey from its protestant roots to its dominance by Jesuits and the influence of the Redemptorist Archconfraternity of the Holy Family. One locality in the city, the Boherbuoy (An Bóthar Buí), fondly known as The Yellow Road, came in for special recognition for its influence on working-class rugby football as well as its allegiance to St Michael's Temperance Society, the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band and the Dominican Church. The connections between all of these organizations have been examined from the viewpoint of the social capital which they generated and the horizontal and vertical networks of association which operated within them.

The study is based on research of archives both private and public. It has used local and national newspapers, journals and interviews with people who had memories of the period. It also includes reminiscences by the author of conversations with his father and grandfather who were involved in events of the period. Secondary sources were also frequently used and are contained in the bibliography.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the debt of gratitude which I owe to my supervisor, Dr Deirdre McMahon for her encouragement, guidance, proof reading and eternal patience during our time together in formulating this thesis. I would also like to thank the History Department of Mary Immaculate College for their assistance during my work especially to Dr. Ursula Callaghan, and Dr. Maura Cronin who assisted me when I needed it most. I extend a special debt of gratitude to Fr David Bracken, Limerick Diocesan Archives for his assistance in guiding me through the papers of Bishop Hallinan, Bishop Keane and Bishop Newman. A special word of thanks is due to the staff of the diocesan office for their kindness during my visits. I wish to thank Tony Tynne for his invaluable help with the archives of the Limerick Boat Club and for his insights into the rowing world. My gratitude goes to Kieran Kerr for access to the Archives of St Michael's Temperance Society. I wish to thank Pauline Quinn, who has since passed away, for her insights into the Limerick of the 1920s and 1930s and to Patrick 'Pa' Phealan for his memories and insights of the Yellow Road and the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band. My sincere thanks to my father and my grandfather whose memories I treasure and have recorded in this thesis. My sincere thanks to Fr. Joe McLoughlin, archivist Redemptorist Church Limerick, and to the staff of the library there for their kindness to me during my research. A special word of thanks is due to Michael Maguire of the Limerick City and County Library for his help in my researches. I also wish to thank the staff of the special collections section of the University of Limerick for the help they gave me in my researches, also to the staff of University College Dublin Archives, the National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin, and the National Archives of Ireland.

Above all I wish to thank my wife, Christine, my sons Pdraig and Cathal and my daughters Colleen and Ivanna without whose encouragement and support I would not have been able to complete this thesis.

## Introduction

Limerick city, *Urbs antiqua fuit, studisque asperrima belli*, It was an ancient city, and fierce (most fierce) in the skills of war. When the Limerick writer, Kate O'Brien, was writing of her native city she took exception to the word 'asperrima' in the city's motto. This motto, she said, was composed of 'two bits made into one from the Aeneid'.<sup>1</sup> She obviously had great respect for the city and its people. She felt that they had a 'certain austerity, or rather decorum, underlying the civic character' and that the city was a 'well-proportioned place'.<sup>2</sup> She saw 'repose' in 'its old look of good manners and good sense'.<sup>3</sup> She was willing to accept that not everyone shared her opinion of the city and that there were criticisms that the city had 'too many churches and chapels, and that the Limerick people are cold and suspicious in manner; that they lack style and that the women are not pretty'.<sup>4</sup> She appreciated the remarks of the eighteenth-century English traveller, Arthur Young, of his description of the river Shannon at Limerick 'a most noble river, deserving regal navies for her ornament, or what are better, fleets of merchantmen'.<sup>5</sup> However, this romantic description of O'Brien's and Young's is in strong contrast to that of Frank McCourt, who grew up in the same city and whose memory of churches and the effects of the dampness from the river Shannon differed greatly to theirs: 'worse than the ordinary miserable childhood is the miserable Irish

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<sup>1</sup> Kate O'Brien, 'Warmest Love', part two, *Old Limerick Journal*, Vol. 4, Sept. 1980, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Kate O'Brien, 'My dear native place', in Jim Kemmy, (ed.), *The Limerick Anthology* (Dublin, 1996), P. 332.

childhood, and worse yet is the miserable Irish Catholic childhood'.<sup>6</sup> In his inimitable way he correlated the damp, which arrived in 'great sheets of rain gathered to drift slowly up the river Shannon and settle forever in Limerick', with the religious practises of the native Limerick poor who gathered in the churches, their only refuge of a dry place, and who 'huddled in great damp clumps'.<sup>7</sup> He was well aware of Limerick's well-earned reputation for piety but at heart he knew 'it was only the rain'.<sup>8</sup> David Hanly, writer, broadcaster and journalist, in a brief account of leaving Limerick said his memories of the place 'were visceral, ineradicable, and mostly pleasant'.<sup>9</sup> Like McCourt he had no good words for the religious of the city and in particular the Redemptorists. He recalled that

every male in the city seemed to be a member [of the confraternity]. The effect on their minds was utterly paralysing: each week they were ranted at by trained professionals; the tirades – which purported to be spiritually uplifting – were bigoted, insular and profoundly anti-intellectual, and there was no counterpoint ... Limerick was not given a university college.<sup>10</sup>

Frank Corr, journalist with the *Limerick Weekly Echo* whose maternal grandfather was a pig buyer, described Limerick as a city of pigs, but lovingly so. He recounted the four bacon factories, Matterson's, Shaw's, O'Mara's and Denny's as 'great bustling bacon factories' which were 'locations of feverish activity from early morning and anyone who lived in their vicinity had to grow accustomed to cacophonous squealing of pigs, the

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<sup>6</sup> Frank McCourt, *Angela's ashes* (London, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> David Hanly, 'The most maligned place', in Jim Kemmy (ed.), *The Limerick Anthology* (Dublin, 1996), p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

rattle of carts and a curious sickly smell from the singeing hair and the smoking process'.<sup>11</sup> He witnessed the sad decline of the bacon industry in Limerick through his job in the Limerick Steamship Co. where he saw that 'more of the bacon being shipped through the port was coming from Castlebar and Tralee'.<sup>12</sup>

Limerick city was founded by the Vikings.<sup>13</sup> It received its first charter from King John in 1197 and thereby owed loyalty to the crown rather than a local magnate'.<sup>14</sup> The second charter was granted in 1292 and gave the city the right to elect a mayor. The quid pro quo was that the Crown was responsible for the upkeep of the castle, walls and bridges and the city paid rent, as well as the profits from the fisheries and mills to the Crown. From medieval times Limerick was a trading port city and Bristol was one of the ports with which it traded. However, from the end of the medieval period to the seventeenth century Limerick began to trade with Germany and America.<sup>15</sup>

In the 1841 census the population of Limerick County was 330,029 people but by the 1946 census it had declined to 142,559.<sup>16</sup> The population of Limerick city in 1926, the first census of independent Ireland, was 39,448.<sup>17</sup> The number of Irish speakers in the city had only slightly increased to 8.9 per cent of the city population from 7.9 per cent in 1851. The figure for 1911 was 6.8 per cent. The small increase was probably due to the influence of the Gaelic League in the city. It is, however, noticeable that the figure for Limerick County showed a dramatic drop for the same period, 34.4 per cent in

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<sup>11</sup> Frank Corr, 'City of pigs', in Jim Kemmy (ed.), *The Limerick Anthology*, p. 335.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>13</sup> Brian Hodkinson, 'The medieval city of Limerick', in Matthew Potter, Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh and Liam Irwin (eds.), *Limerick history and society* (Dublin, 2009), p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 32-33.

<sup>16</sup> W.E. Vaughan and A. Fitzpatrick, *Irish historical statistics: population, 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), pp 9, 21, 34-5, 45.

<sup>17</sup> NAI, Census of population, 1926, Vol.4, p. 38.



1851 to 13.7 per cent in 1926.<sup>18</sup> The number of people gainfully employed in 1926 within the city was 16,608. Of this figure some 5,648 people were employed in production, with 327 people employed in agriculture. A significant number, 1,272, were employed as domestic servants. Transport accounted for 2,253 people and commerce for 2,171. There were 1,082 professional people and 767 employed in public administration, with 999 clerks in the city. The balance was described as 'gainfully employed'.<sup>19</sup>

Writing of the city in 1600 Patrick J. O'Connor has described it as 'a small, close set world of grandeur and of squalor'.<sup>20</sup> Edmund Sexton Pery, 'scion of an old city family, politician, landowner', had the visionary drive in building the new Georgian sector of the city. The seventeenth century was one of stagnation and sieges for the city but by the eighteenth century the city began to prosper with trading connections to other parts of Ireland but also to such far flung places as Chester, Liverpool, Bristol, London, Rotterdam, Nantes, Bordeaux, Cadiz, Jamaica and Antigua (West Indies).<sup>21</sup> It was from this activity that Catholic merchants such as Philip Roche and Patrick Arthur contributed to the development of a new modern Limerick.<sup>22</sup> It was the port at Limerick which was the agent and indicator of prosperity in the city. Revenues from the port jumped from £16,000 in 1751 to £192,975 in 1848. However, this wealth was not equally distributed and the new town kept the poverty and squalor at bay. Thackeray's description 1844 of the old town speaks of dirt, 'swarming poverty' where shopkeepers peered out through 'cracked panes' at 'nasty streets' which led inevitably into 'more

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<sup>18</sup> NAI, Census of population, 1926, Vol. 8, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> NAI, Census of population, 1926, occupations, Vol. 2, pp 94-95.

<sup>20</sup> Patrick J. O'Connor, *Exploring Limerick's past: An historical geography of urban development in county and city* (Newcastlewest, 1987), p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

nasty back-lanes'.<sup>23</sup> The population remained stagnant from 1831 to 1851 and O'Connor attributed this to the 'drying up of traditional sources of employment largely in the face of English mass production'.<sup>24</sup> Limerick was the fourth city of Ireland after Dublin, Belfast and Cork.

By spring 1922, following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the resulting split in Dáil Éireann and the IRA, Limerick city became a focal point for trouble due to its strategic position. The Mid-Limerick brigade of the IRA opted for the anti-Treaty side in the conflict and took over some buildings in the city. Within a short period there were approximately 1,000 pro-Treaty troops, mainly from Clare and Galway, and 400 anti-Treaty troops in the city. With the help of Stephen O'Mara, mayor of the city, an agreement was reached in Dublin with the pro-Treaty provisional government which de-escalated the situation. Once fighting broke out in Dublin the anti-Treaty forces in Limerick occupied the four military barracks in the city. Despite efforts by Mayor O'Mara on 11 July 1922 the pro-Treaty forces attacked the ordnance barracks. The fighting lasted until 21 July, just ten days, but left a bitter aftertaste in the mouths of many Limerick people. It is from this time, in Limerick city, until the outbreak of the Second World War that this thesis will examine.

This period is fascinating because it saw the beginning of a process which led to the establishment of the Irish Free-State. Having been born just outside of this period, 1945, I grew up listening to my mother singing rebel songs such as 'Boo-lavogue', the 'Croppy Boy' and 'Bold Robert Emmett'. Pictures of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows gazed down upon me from my earliest years. My father, Paddy

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

Keane, whose memories are recounted in this thesis, told me nothing about the past and his role during the troubles. His only advice to my persistent questioning was 'don't go looking into the past; you might not like what you find there'. In later life I realized that this was tantamount to the Spanish law of the full stop which was put into place following the Spanish Civil War. In folklore 'let sleeping dogs lie'. I spent many hours talking to my grandfather who had served for many years in the Royal Munster Fusiliers and his tales of daring were like magic to a young impressionable boy. He had joined the IRA when he returned to Limerick following the end of World War One. At the time it appeared natural to me that this is what a soldier would do, fight for the freedom of his own country. Bit by bit contradictory questions started to enter my mind. If Ireland was so good why were so many of my uncles working and raising their families in England? Why did my father who had been in Na Fianna not speak Irish? Why did almost all my friends hate both the Irish language and Irish dancing? Gradually the question formed in my mind. What exactly does it mean when people say they are Irish? What exactly is this identity? These were the questions that led me on the journey of discovery. A moment of epiphany arose for me in Oxford in 1970. While working as a volunteer for the Simon Community I met some students from the university. One night one of them asked me if I had read Marx. Ashamedly I told them that I had never heard of him. That was the moment when I resolved to remove the baggage of Catholicism which I had carried since childhood and re-educate myself and try to discover the past from a different perspective.

The transition from British rule to Irish rule was bloody and bitter. Yet other countries had worse experiences in their transitions. When it was all over what had

changed? The education system remained as it had been. The Christian Brothers and the nuns still taught in the schools. The economy, which was mainly agricultural, remained the same. Culturally the city and the country turned in upon itself as conservative forces gained power. Many writers with any imagination or concepts of modernity were banned including Kate O'Brien. Yet it cannot be denied that what had happened in Ireland was the first fracturing of the idea of Empire.

Against my father's advice I decided to look into the past. The period I chose was 1922-1939, not for the overtly political, but rather from the view of the ordinary person, from the point of view of civil society. The principal sections which I wished to research were those areas of hegemonic influence, the Catholic Church, the Gaelic League, the Limerick elite, the temperance movement in Limerick, events at the cusp of change such as the establishment of the Limerick City Police Force and the Town Tenants Protest which encompassed the Garryowen Housing Crisis in 1922. As all my people came from the locality in the city known as the 'Yellow Road', I wished to study the influences which this localism had on people. During my research it was noticeable that there were strong threads which bound people together as well as traditions which tended to pull them apart. In Limerick there were two distinct localities which were always contentious, the Parish and the Yellow Road. They both possessed their individual rugby clubs, Shannon RFC for the Parish and Young Munster RFC for the Yellow Road. Yet all the men were members of the Archconfraternity. These issues will be examined in the thesis. The reluctance to acknowledge any ideas of class conflict was supported by the Catholic Church. It was noticeable that when the reading room was opened in the St Michael's Temperance Society the first items on the agenda to

read were the papal encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum* (On capital and labour) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (reconstruction of the social order). Needless to say there was no mention of Karl Marx.

## **Civil Society**

Civil society is a complex concept which many theorists have written about at length to describe and place it within the body politic. It is a concept very much in vogue today when addressing issues relating to difficulties in cities and particularly in relation to emerging countries and their development. In order to address the Limerick of the period in question, from a perspective of civil society, it is necessary to briefly examine the theory behind the concept. In his book *Civil Society*, Michael Edwards claims that there is confusion as to the meaning and understanding of the term: 'some claim that only certain associations are part of civil society ... others insist that all associations qualify for membership including 'uncivil' society and traditional associations based on inherited characteristics like religion and ethnicity'.<sup>25</sup> According to J. Ehrenberg, in late medieval thought civil society equated with 'politically – organised commonwealths', which allowed people to live in law-governed associations protected by the state. Between 1750 and 1850 there was a crisis of authority among enlightenment thinkers due to the American and French revolutions. They viewed 'civil society as a defence against unwarranted intrusion by the state on newly realised individual rights and freedoms, organised through the medium of voluntary associations'.<sup>26</sup> Edwards states that this theme was taken up by a host of thinkers such as James Madison, Alexis de

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<sup>25</sup> J. Ehrenberg, *Civil society: the critical history of an idea* (New York, 1999), p.X1, cited in Michael Edwards, *Civil Society* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Tocqueville, and more recently by Ernest Gellner and Robert Putnam, who stimulated a new debate on the concept of social capital.<sup>27</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville was born in 1805 into a family of old Norman nobility and educated by a Jansenist abbe. He studied law and history. Having spent nine months in America he wrote two volumes, *Democracy in America*, which gained him widespread fame.<sup>28</sup> One of the dominant themes in his work was ‘the value of voluntary associations in curbing the power of centralising institutions and nurturing constructive social norms’.<sup>29</sup>

The term social capital can be traced back to Aristotle, according to Jean L. Cohen, when she writes that ‘the first version of the concept of civil society appears in Aristotle under the heading of *politike koinonia*, political society/community’<sup>30</sup> and she refers to Aristotle’s polis as an ‘association of associations’.<sup>31</sup> Sunil Khilnani cites the French philosopher Michel Foucault that ‘civil society is a set of practises which renders human beings governable; that is, as a technique of governance’.<sup>32</sup> We can also examine the views of the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci on civil society when he wrote that it

was the site of rebellion against the orthodox as well as the construction of cultural and ideological hegemony, expressed through families, schools,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Cheryl Welch, ‘Tocqueville’, in David Boucher and Paul Kelly, (eds.), *Political thinkers: from Socrates to the present* (Oxford, 2003), p. 288.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Society* (Boston, 1995), p. 84.

<sup>31</sup> Edwards, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Kaviraj Sudipta and Sunil Khilnani, eds., *Civil Society: History and Possibilities; the Development of Civil Society* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 28.

universities and the media as well as voluntary associations since all these institutions are important in shaping the political dispositions of citizens.<sup>33</sup>

Michel Foucault, who died in 1984, held the position of Professor of the History of Systems of Thought at the College de France. He was active in a number of political movements and

social causes, including that of immigrant workers, gay liberation, anti-racist campaigns, Soviet dissidents and solidarity in Poland.<sup>34</sup>

In the preface to their work on civil society Cohen and Arrato remind us that ‘the norms of civil society – individual rights, privacy, voluntary association, formal legality, plurality, publicity, free enterprise – were, of course institutionalised heterogeneously and in a contradictory manner in western societies.’<sup>35</sup> Robert Putnam has examined the effects of civil society in the decline of community in America and in its relation to society in Italy. He quoted Alexis de Tocqueville, who wrote extensively about the disposition of Americans to form associations, that ‘Americans of all ages ... stations in life ... types of dispositions are forever forming associations ... nothing in my view, deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations of America’.<sup>36</sup>

Civil society is located in that sphere not occupied by the state or government but is nevertheless part of the body politic which can influence and direct political activity. This of course presupposes that it exists in a democracy. The state, however, is

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<sup>33</sup> Edwards, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Patton, ‘Foucault’, in David Boucher and Paul Kelly, (eds.), *Political thinkers; from Socrates to the present* (Oxford, 2003), pp 516-517.

<sup>35</sup> Cohen and Arrato, p. xiii.

<sup>36</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone; the collapse and revival of American community* (New York, 2000), p. 48.

not the ideal instrument by which individuals can pursue social life in associations and organizations. Peter Clarke maintained that 'voluntary organizations ... are by their nature more effective and better able to meet the needs of fellow citizens against the over-mighty state and the depredations of global capitalism'.<sup>37</sup> Kaviraj and Khilnani have written that the role of civil society is to secure 'an order in which ordinary individuals can pursue these activities unmolested'.<sup>38</sup> Edwards considers that 'a highly articulated civil society with overlapping memberships was seen as the foundation of a stable democratic polity'.<sup>39</sup> In his essay Kaviraj warns us that government must be put 'under restraint by legal rules' or its unrestrained power might become a threat to other civilizing activities.<sup>40</sup> He maintained that 'commerce based on property, is of primary importance' and quotes the eighteenth century philosopher John Locke, making 'property antecedent to the creation of government' where the primary task of civil government is to protect it.<sup>41</sup> In Limerick in 1922 this principle was clearly evident in the Garryowen Housing Crisis. It was within this sphere which is called 'civil society' that all the organizations and associations were created and which helped to keep the state in check.

As society developed and particularly the development of business under capitalism a 'culture of legality' was developed 'in place of a culture of violence'.<sup>42</sup> Kaviraj asserts that the 'ethic of heroism' was replaced 'by an entirely unheroic ethic of business'.<sup>43</sup> He examined the distinction between revolutionary violence and a

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<sup>37</sup> Peter Clarke, *British clubs and societies 1580-1800* (Oxford, 2000), p. vii.

<sup>38</sup> Kaviraj and Khilnani, p. 292.

<sup>39</sup> Edwards, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> Kaviraj and Khilnani, p. 293.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* p. 293.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p. 296.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*



'structure of secure and reliable legality' which according to him has enhanced and complicated the 'collective civilizational life of the society'.<sup>44</sup> This was noticeable in Ireland following 1916, the War of Independence and the Civil War where the republicans were defeated and a government put in place which gave priority to state building and the development of agriculture and business. The anthropologist, Norbert Elias in writing on the civilising process, accepted this and asserted that for a civil society to exist and function 'special conditions are needed for such a regime to develop and perpetuate itself'. According to Elias in order to function such a society would be dependent upon a country's 'monopoly of physical violence' for 'the stability of a society's internal pacification' and that stability would be dependent 'on the personal restraint-level of the people who formed the society'.<sup>45</sup> Norbert Elias was a German sociologist, who wrote *The Civilizing Process*, and who was highly regarded in the 1970s but before that was 'commonly regarded as an eccentric voice, or even as a Victorian throwback'.<sup>46</sup> With Eric Dunning, a former undergraduate at Leicester University, they went on to establish the field of the sociology of sport.<sup>47</sup> Katherine Lynch saw civil society 'as a public sphere where individuals forged communities, and where competition, and patterns of social inequality also developed'.<sup>48</sup> She noted that when you looked at families 'against the background of civil society' you captured 'individuals in their neighbourhoods, at the marketplace and the workplace, in their

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for excitement: sport and leisure in the civilising process* (Oxford, 1986), p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> Norman Gabriel and Stephen Mennell, 'Handing over the torch: intergenerational processes in figurational sociology', in Norman Gabriel and Stephen Mennell (eds.), *Norbert Elias and figurational research: processual thinking in sociology* (Oxford, 2011), p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> Katherine A. Lynch, *Individuals, families and communities in Europe, 1200-1800: the urban foundations of Western society* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 19.

religious practises, and in voluntary associations'.<sup>49</sup> Clarke also noted this, particularly in relation to women: 'lower-class women often had an informal but intense social life, sustained by kin networks and female rites of socializing, spilling into the public domain of street and neighbourhood'.<sup>50</sup> Lynch agreed that in western society community building constituted 'an extremely long - lived tradition and set of behaviours' which arose out of 'specific sorts of demographic, economic and religious environments'. She cited Robert N. Ballah who referred to those features as 'habits of the heart' 'that informed the building of face-to-face networks of association as well as larger national communities'.<sup>51</sup> These ideas will be addressed in the chapter on the Yellow Road, chapter 3, as well as the chapter on the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family, Chapter 5.

Influenced by these scholars my thesis will explore society in Limerick city during the two decades following the War of Independence and the Civil War focusing on social capital, networks, weak and strong ties of association, how individuals and families constructed their communities, the role of sport and the hegemony of religion. The urgent priority of the Irish Free State in 1922 was the development of the state, nation building, but not the development of civil society which was regarded as being well established since the middle of the nineteenth century and even before this. The War of Independence, which according to IRA leader Ernie O'Malley 'ended for us what we called the scrap; the people later on, the trouble; and others, fond of labels, the Revolution',<sup>52</sup> and the Civil War that ensued contributed to the weakening of social capital within the country. The departure of the British did not put an end to the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Clarke, *British clubs*, p. 450.

<sup>51</sup> Lynch, p. 221.

<sup>52</sup> Ernie O'Malley, *On another man's wound* (1936, new ed., Cork, 2013), p. 436.

influence of British culture any more than the founding of the Irish Free State saw a Gaelic Irish Ireland emerge, even though that was what was desired by the Irish-Irelanders. There were still incidents of armed resistance by republicans up to 1924 in the Munster area which were severely dealt with and several instances were recorded for County Limerick.<sup>53</sup> The elimination of these forces, seen as inimical to state building, was a primary consideration of the new government under Cumann na nGaedheal. During the Civil War of 1922-23 advertisements seeking fifty thousand men to join Óglaigh Na hÉireann, the army of the new Irish Free State, appeared in local papers.<sup>54</sup> In Ireland at that time there was not an abundance of societies or organizations and those that existed were mainly influenced by the Catholic Church as Clarke put it:

In Ireland the more limited penetration of societies outside the principal towns was, as we have seen, affected by low levels of urbanization, continuing economic difficulties, and the important competition of established bodies, not least the Catholic Church.<sup>55</sup>

Senia Paseta reinforced this opinion when she wrote that

The Catholic Church's efforts to promote the well-being of its adherents seemed to concentrate on those closest to political power, as evidenced by clerical involvement in middle-class organizations such as the Catholic Defence Society, The Knights of Columbanus and the Catholic Commercial Club.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Limerick Leader*, 1 January 1923.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Clarke, *British clubs*, p. 456.

<sup>56</sup> Senia Paseta, *Before the revolution: nationalism, social change and Ireland's Catholic elite, 1879-1922* (Cork, 1999), pp 138-139.

The elements which define civil society are organizations, associations and clubs under the aegis of religion, class, ethnicity, education, economics and culture in its widest definition. These may be formal or informal. Some may last for years while others which were formed for a specific function will disappear once that function is realised. Each one of these elements holds within it the key to an understanding of civil society. It is how they interact with each other that define the type of society; how the bonding, bridging and linking elements of social capital occur that define the type of civil society that ensues and we will see many of these aspects operating in Limerick in the period under discussion.

## **Social Capital**

Raymond Grew argues that ‘if social capital were sharply defined, the term would be less usefully suggestive. It seems to refer to those social practises, customs, groups, and institutions that strengthen civil society’.<sup>57</sup> Social capital is a derivative of civil society. But Joanna Bourke has pointed out that ‘a problem with the concept of community based on reciprocal rights and obligations is the need for its members to share a set of moral values.’<sup>58</sup> This view was shared by the former Bishop of Limerick, Jeremiah Newman, who was also a noted sociologist.<sup>59</sup>

In Limerick city the moral values of the population were dictated by the Catholic hegemony of schools, churches, religious orders and confraternities. Like financial

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<sup>57</sup> Raymond Grew, ‘Finding social capital: the French Revolution in Italy’, in Robert I. Rotberg, (ed.), *Patterns of social capital* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 69.

<sup>58</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Working – Class Cultures in Britain 1890 – 1960 Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London, 1994), p. 150.

<sup>59</sup> Jeremiah Newman, *The state of Ireland* (Dublin, 1977), p. 21.

capital, social capital can be used for good or bad in society. Family and kin are at the heart of civil society and social capital, and in a relatively modern society like that of Limerick in the 1920s and 1930s there were several groups, organizations and clubs that overlapped which provided social capital and yet Bourke advises us that 'by examining networks between individuals, we can expose a complex of power relations instead of merely describing a broad stratum of alleged consensus'.<sup>60</sup> There existed in Limerick at that time a 'cultural reinforcement for corruption' among groups with strong kin and family connections. This permitted workers to steal from their employers with no feeling of guilt or shame. In fact it became a badge of honour to look after your family. Bourke, citing Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge, tells us that 'through all our research results, the interest in oneself and one's own home has predominated far and away, over international and political concerns except in the upper middle – class'.<sup>61</sup> Tom Harrisson was an ornithologist-cum anthropologist who spent five years with the cannibals of Malekula and later published his findings in a book called *Savage Civilisation* in 1937.<sup>62</sup> Charles Madge was a journalist with the *Daily Mirror*. Together they formed an organization which they called Mass-Observation. Their idea was to gather information from volunteers on the everyday habits of people. They also used methods of observation of people in everyday situations. Eventually the organization turned into a market research organization. Tom Harrisson commented that over 90 per

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<sup>60</sup> Bourke, p. 151.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>62</sup> Penny Summerfield, 'Mass-Observation: social research or social movement?', *Journal of contemporary history*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Jul., 1985), pp 439-440.

cent of the information collected by Mass-Observation ‘was never used in the compilation of reports and publications’.<sup>63</sup>

As a result of the political turmoil of events in Ireland from 1919 to 1923 communities in Ireland and particularly in Limerick turned back upon themselves and concentrated on those they knew and trusted. Localities and local networks began their renewal. This will be seen in the chapter on the Yellow Road.

## Methodology and Evidence

The general situation regarding the study of Irish civil society or social/class studies of the period 1922-1939 is sparse and the existing studies contain very few chapters on the post-1922 period. Dublin has had three works,<sup>64</sup> Cork has two,<sup>65</sup> Galway has two<sup>66</sup> and Waterford and Limerick have one each.<sup>67</sup> This period, post-1922, has received little attention from scholars compared with the pre-1922 period. It is for this reason that my study of Limerick city in the period 1922-1939 is original and of some importance. It is by no means comprehensive of the period but it lays the foundation for further study of this period in the city’s history.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 451.

<sup>64</sup> For selected works on social/class studies in the 1922-1939 period: Joseph Brady, *Dublin 1930-50: the emergence of the modern city* (Dublin, 2014); Yvonne Whelan, *Reinventing modern Dublin* (Dublin, 2003); Ruth McManus, *Dublin 1910-1940: shaping the city and the suburbs* (Dublin, 2002).

<sup>65</sup> Selected works on social/class studies in the 1922-1939 period for Cork: John Crowley (ed.) *Atlas of Cork city* (Cork, 2005); Maurice Hurley, Gina Johnson and Ciara Brett (eds.), *Old Blackpool: an historic Cork suburb* (Cork, 2006).

<sup>66</sup> Selected works on social/class studies in the 1922-1939 period for Galway; Una Newell, *The west must wait: County Galway and the Irish Free State, 1922-32* (Manchester, 2015); Tomás Kenny, Pádraig Ó Riagáin, Timothy P. O’Neill and Patrick Gerard Moran (ed.) *Galway: history and society* (Dublin, 1996)

<sup>67</sup> Selected works on social/class studies in the 1922-1939 period for Waterford and Limerick: William Nolan and Thomas Power (eds.) *Waterford; History and society* (Dublin, 1992), contains essays on post-1922 Waterford by John Hearne and Emmet O’Connor. John Logan, ‘Frugal comfort: housing Limerick’s labourers and artisans’, 1841-1946 in Liam Irwin and Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh (eds.) *Limerick history and society* (Dublin, 2009).

Limerick people carry within them a strong memory of an oral tradition. They love to talk. Above all they love to talk about Limerick and how the city is perceived by outsiders. There is a legend in Limerick that when St Munchin was building his church the natives refused to help him and he turned to strangers for assistance. Out of this myth came the infamous curse of St Munchin that ‘the natives shall perish and the stranger shall flourish’. This has been recounted to me so many times that one wonders why other cities did not invent a similar curse to explain the lack of indigenous industry. In my research I encountered many talkers and I listened to all of them and then went looking for archival material in order to accept or suspend their version of events. Some people who were interviewed included Pauline Quinn who had a vivid memory of the Limerick of her youth; Tony Tynne who devoted his life to the Limerick boat Club and who gave me access to the LBC archives which was meticulously maintained; ‘Pa’ Phealan a lifelong member of the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band who provided me with a sensitive account of life in the lanes of the Boherbuoy, his schooling in Leamy’s and his working life in the Limerick Clothing Factory, (formally the factory of Sir Peter Tait). In this thesis I have recalled conversations with my grandfather, William, (Bill) Keane who was a soldier with the Royal Munster Fusiliers, and my father Paddy Keane, who devoted his life to rugby, hurling, greyhounds and raising his family. Frank Hamilton interviewed my father, as well as Bud Clancy, the famous trumpeter and dance band leader, and Frank’s book reinforced the memories of those conversations. These memories as well as the collapse of the GAA and the attachment of working-class men to rugby are explored in chapter 3. The Limerick Diocesan archives were invaluable and provided me with access to the writings and views of the bishops of the period. What is contained within the thesis is only a fraction of my research. In particular the

Diocesan Archives provided me with an insight into the thoughts of Bishop Hallinan during the 1922 Garryowen Housing Crisis which is explored in chapter 1. This incident reflected the unrest in the country at large at that time and the concern of the hierarchy of the lawlessness and violence being perpetrated against the elected government after the start of the Civil War in June 1922. These concerns were spelled out in the October pastoral letter by the Bishops.<sup>68</sup> This chapter also portrays the inhuman housing conditions which existed in Limerick city at that time and which were a contributing factor to the Garryowen Housing Crisis. The research for chapter 2 was conducted through the agency of the Limerick City Archives. These archives gave me an insight into the workings of the Limerick City Police Force that came into existence for several months in 1922, when there was a security vacuum in the city following the disbanding of the RIC. Whereas the Garryowen Housing Crisis was an attempt by the poorer working-class people to get decent housing, the establishment of the Limerick City Police Force was the opposite side of the coin in that it was an effort by the Limerick merchant class to provide protection for their property and goods during the interregnum between the RIC and the new *Gárda Síochána*.

It was not only the working-class which interested me. Having rowed for four years with the Limerick Boat Club in the late 1960s, I became interested in their imperial background and the notion that it was predominantly a non-Catholic club in its early days. Their archives are in private hands at the moment and I was granted full access to them. Chapter 4 records the history of this boat club from 1870 to 1939. It depicts the gradual change from a Protestant imperial ethos to a Catholic nationalist

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<sup>68</sup> Patrick Murray, 'Pastoral letter of October 1922' in *Oracles of God; the Roman catholic Church and Irish politics 1922-37* (Dublin, 2000), appendix one, p. 425.



one. Due to the diligence of former Bishop of Limerick Jeremiah Newman in collecting almost every document relating to Limerick that came his way I uncovered a secret history of the Matterson family which had a direct bearing on one of the members of the Limerick Boat Club. This thesis will propose that the social capital which existed in this club facilitated two members, Archibald Murray, in saving Mattersons from bankruptcy and his brother, Bruce Murray, in saving the Limerick Boat Club from a similar fate. It charts the decline of a wealthy Protestant family and also reflected the eventual decline of the bacon industry in Limerick.

The influence of the Catholic Church in Limerick, like most of the country, was immense and all-embracing. Its force was only truly felt when one left the country and looked back. But Limerick had something which was different and even more controlling, the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family run by the Redemptorist order. Almost every male in the city was a member. Their archives are a great source for the scholar wishing to determine the extent of their hegemony in the city. This topic was so important to the thesis I decided to split it into two chapters. The early part of this chapter concentrated on the expansion of the Catholic Church in the city from 1850 to 1904 while the latter part concentrates on the apotheosis of the Catholic Church from 1904 to 1939. The archives contain a handwritten journal which was written by the current spiritual director at any given time. Unfortunately the year of the so called Jewish pogrom, 1904, has been withdrawn from the chronicle. Nevertheless the sermons preached by Fr Creagh were available in the National Archives of Ireland and in the archives of the *Limerick Leader and Chronicle*. Chapter 5 concentrates on the early development of the Archconfraternity and how it was organised on military lines. It

depicts the power which the director had over the members which included almost every male in the city. It also devotes space to two very controversial events in the history of the confraternity, the Dr Long affair and the Jewish boycott. From the point of view of social capital, the Archconfraternity was a revelation as it displayed both horizontal and vertical networks of association. The founding of a savings bank by Fr Creagh, to deter the men from borrowing from the Jews, had a rather murky and ignominious ending when it was ordered to close by the Vatican. This was done just prior to the visit by the illustrious Cardinal van Rossum in 1932 and the Eucharistic Congress.

Chapter 7 has recorded the founding of the temperance societies in Limerick but in particular St Michael's Temperance Society. Once again I was fortunate in locating the original archive of the society which is now in private hands. The records were, like those of the Limerick Boat Club, meticulously kept. Like the Boat Club it recorded the rise and decline of membership in the mid-thirties. Unlike the LBC its membership was working-class and the subscriptions were tiny in comparison. However, both clubs struggled with the problem of arrears. The other difference was that St Michael's was Catholic in ethos and controlled by the administrator of St Michael's parish. The minutes also reflect the nationalist leanings of the members.

In trying to get a balanced view of society in Limerick for this period and to grapple with the thorny issue of national identity it was necessary to explore the Gaelic League. Once again I decided to divide the subject into two chapters. Chapter 8 has recorded the early days of the League and its rise from 1850 to 1921 while the latter part of this chapter explores its decline after independence in 1922. For this chapter I

used the Limerick city library reference section and the Gaelic League newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis* as well as the *Limerick Leader* and the *Limerick Chronicle*. These sources were supported by secondary reading. The Gaelic League is an interesting subject from the point of view of civil society and social capital as it was a predominantly voluntary organization. It is notable how it declined following the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 almost as if it had depleted its supply of social capital. This is one of the elements which will be explored in the latter part of Chapter 8.

In carrying out the research for this thesis I have discovered a wealth of hitherto untapped primary sources, oral and written, private and official. Hopefully, similar sources will be revealed for the study of other Irish cities and towns in this fascinating period.

## Chapter 1: The Garryowen Housing Crisis, the Bishop and the Courts, 1922

The land wars of the late nineteenth century did not penetrate to the slums and rack-rented dwellings of Limerick city. By 1922 society in Limerick city was polarized between the haves and the have-nots as represented by the 'slums' and 'suburbs'. B. F. Graham and Susan Hood saw the issue of urban tenants' rights as one of identity:

The issue of urban tenants' rights, and the campaign for them, has never been addressed because small-town Ireland has largely been depicted as no more than an unimportant adjunct to the rural world within which, it has been held, the defining characteristics of Irishness were to be found.<sup>69</sup>

Even though Graham and Hood were looking at the issue of town tenant protest from the point of view of the 'small town bourgeoisie' and the homogenised view of Ireland as an 'imagined community of 'traditional' values' they raised the question of the more complex geographical patterning of demands related to regional economies throughout the island. The Garryowen Housing Crisis although not instituted or influenced by 'small town bourgeoisie' is a small example of the 'patterning of demands' which Graham and Hood wrote about.

By this time the tenant farmers of Ireland had been accommodated by a series of land acts of 1881, 1885 and particularly the Wyndham Act of 1903 revised by a Liberal government in 1909. Following these acts 314,000 tenant farmers purchased holdings which amounted to 11.5 million acres out of a total of 20 million in the country so that by 1916 63.9 per cent of rural dwellers were property owners.<sup>70</sup> The rural labourer was also accommodated by the 1906 and 1911 Labourers Acts which assisted cottage building for rural farm labourers. It was considered that Ireland's rural labourers were among the best housed in Western Europe having had 48,000 cottages built since 1883 at a cost of £8.5 million. In contrast only 10,000 houses had been provided for urban dwellers at a cost of £5 million.<sup>71</sup> This was one of the factors contributing to the development of slums in the towns and cities of Ireland. According

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<sup>69</sup> B.F. Graham and Susan Hood, 'Town tenant protest in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Ireland', *Irish economic and social history*, Vol. 21 (1994), p. 40.

<sup>70</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London, 2005), p. 63.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

to the 1926 census 36.8 per cent of people in Limerick city lived in accommodation which had three or more people living in one room.<sup>72</sup> The percentage of persons in private families in dwellings of between one and two rooms was 39.4 per cent.<sup>73</sup> It was evident that nearly forty per cent of the population lived in slum conditions. Yet it is shown that by 1926 there were 429 uninhabited houses in Limerick city.<sup>74</sup> This was relatively low compared to other boroughs. Cork borough had a total of 1574 uninhabited houses while the total for the province of Munster was 14,318.<sup>75</sup>

### **'Slum Evil': Not Just Limerick**

Slums were evident in all the major cities of Ireland as well as England, Scotland and Wales. In Dublin the term "Nests of Fever" was commonly used to describe the slums equating moral and medical disease in the same breath.<sup>76</sup> Jacinta Prunty made the observation that Artisan Dwellings Companies were accused of cherry-picking to separate the 'more thrifty' from among the working-class which left 'a residuum' in worse condition than before.<sup>77</sup> It was this residuum that invariably was left homeless or living in slum conditions. This was obvious in Limerick where even today red-brick artisan dwellings are to be seen around the city. One of these was named after Bishop O'Dwyer called Bishop Street just off Nicholas St in the old town. In 1874, 'as a formidable Catholic priest', he established the Limerick Labourers Dwelling Company and succeeded in constructing fifty social housing units in the Watergate area of the city.<sup>78</sup> To this end he founded the Artisans' Dwelling Company and in the process he criticised the wealthy merchants who were members of the Limerick Harbour Board.<sup>79</sup> The people who inhabited these artisan dwellings were the better off working-class. The residue which were left were the people whom Prunty described as the 'lowest strata' of society and who were by-passed by advances in domestic comfort and cleanliness and by educational opportunities.<sup>80</sup> Cork had its share of slums and slum dwellers where 'the destitute rented a

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<sup>72</sup> Census of Population 1926, Vol. 4, housing, table 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., Vol. 4, housing, table 02A, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., Vol.4, p. 148.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Jacinta Prunty, *Dublin Slums 1800-1925: a study in urban geography*, (Dublin, 1998), P. 339.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p.340.

<sup>78</sup> Matthew Potter, *The government and the people of Limerick: the history of Limerick Corporation/city council 1197-2006*, (Limerick, 2006), p.328

<sup>79</sup> Thomas J. Morrissey, *Bishop Thomas O'Dwyer of Limerick 1842-1917*, (Dublin, 2003), p.24.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp 339-340.

room, or a corner of a room, adding to the existing misery and overcrowding'.<sup>81</sup> Cork city, like other Irish and European cities experienced poverty amidst extravagance and yet, according to A.M. Fahy this experience in Cork city 'did not spawn working-class radicalism' and he concluded that this was due to religion and nationalism.<sup>82</sup> Waterford was not unlike Limerick as far as slums were concerned. Julian Walton has written that 'behind the impressive Georgian façade was a warren of back streets and lanes where poverty was rampant'.<sup>83</sup> It was said that 'Belfast shared with Naples the notoriety of having the worst housing in Europe'.<sup>84</sup> The difference between Limerick city and the city of Cork despite their similarities of religion and nationalism was that Limerick portrayed a degree of radicalism. Some of this was construed as bad and some as good depending on which side of the fence one was on.

### **Previous Tensions in Limerick**

During the previous twenty years Limerick city was not unaccustomed to conflicts and tensions, some of which left a stain on the reputation of the city such as the Jewish boycott of 1904<sup>85</sup> and the persecution of Dr Long, a self-professed proselytizer, from 1901 to 1927.<sup>86</sup> It had witnessed the attack on the Irish Volunteers by the women from the slums of the Irishtown and Nelson St (Parnell St.) whose husbands, sons, brothers, and uncles were fighting and dying in the trenches of Europe and whose wages fed and clothed their children at home. Like other parts of Ireland it had suffered from the atrocities of the Black and Tans. In 1919 it witnessed the city-wide strike known as the Limerick Soviet which was led by the same John Cronin of the Limerick Trades Council who had backed the occupation of the Garryowen houses.<sup>87</sup> The soviet collapsed after a week following intervention by Bishop Hallinan and the mayor of Limerick, Alphonsus O'Mara. They engaged in talks with Brigadier-General

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<sup>81</sup> Maura Cronin, 'From the 'flat o' the city' to the top of the hill: Cork since 1700' in Howard B. Clarke (ed.) *Irish Cities*, (Dublin, 1995), p.62.

<sup>82</sup> A. M. Fahy, 'Place and class in Cork' in Patrick O'Flanagan and Cornelius G. Buttimer (eds.) *Cork history and society; Interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 1993), p.796.

<sup>83</sup> Julian Walton, 'From Urbs intacta to crystal city: Waterford 1495-1995 in Howard B. Clarke (ed.) *Irish Cities* (Dublin, 1995), p.214.

<sup>84</sup> Stephen Royle, 'The growth and decline of an industrial city: Belfast from 1750 in Howard B. Clarke (ed.) *Irish Cities* (Dublin, 1995), p.39.

<sup>85</sup> Dermot Keogh, *Jews in twentieth-century Ireland* (Cork, 1998), p.253; Des Ryan, 'The Jews of Limerick', *Old Limerick Journal*, No. 17 (winter, 1984), p.28.

<sup>86</sup> J. J. Long, *History of the Limerick medical mission* (London, undated), Special collections, Leonard collection, University of Limerick.

<sup>87</sup> Liam Cahill, *Forgotten revolution: Limerick soviet 1919* (Dublin, 1990); Ruth Russell, *What's the matter with Ireland* (New York, 1920), pp 130-142.

Griffin, who had patiently waited for the crisis to pass. The *Munster News* reported that the struggle would have dragged on for much longer only for the intervention of the bishop and the mayor who represented both the 'spiritual and temporal interests of the citizens'.<sup>88</sup> There is no record of this meeting in the Bishop Hallinan's papers in the Diocesan Archives. So with the previous record of the tendency of Limerick people to react to adverse conditions the events which unfolded following the evacuation of the British army should not surprize us.

## **Occupation**

On 13 March 1922 an event took place in Limerick which crystallized the antagonisms between urban landlords and men of no property. The catalyst for this event was the evacuation of the British army and the disbandment of the RIC in accordance with Treaty obligations. Although not overtly political of itself this event happened during a critically political period in Limerick, what John Regan described as the 'Limerick Crisis' when a 'strong anti-Treaty force' took over several posts in the 'strategically important city'.<sup>89</sup> Expectations among the working people of Limerick city were high following the rhetoric and violence of the previous five years and changes in their living conditions were hoped for. There were expectations of change in the air.

During the British army's evacuation of Limerick, a group of poor people from the slums under the leadership of William James Larkin of the Limerick City Workers' Housing Association took possession of the houses at Garryowen Villas previously occupied by families of the non-commissioned officers of the Royal Engineers Corps. The commandeering of the Garryowen houses resulted in a conflict between the occupiers of the houses and the property agent Charles Ebrill, a solicitor and member of a prominent Catholic middle class family, who had come to Limerick as Huguenots, converted to Catholicism and prospered in Limerick in the auctioneering and legal professions. Eventually the Bishop of Limerick Dr Denis Hallinan, the Limerick Corporation, the District Court, and the new Civic Guard became embroiled in the conflict. The Garryowen Housing Crisis brought to the surface underlying tensions

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<sup>88</sup> *Munster News*, 26 April 1919

<sup>89</sup> John M. Regan, *The Irish counter-revolution 1921-1936; Treatyite politics and settlement in independent Ireland*, (Dublin, 2001), p.59.

about rights and obligations, morality and spirituality and the complexity of relationships within the city between what the *Munster News* called the 'spiritual and temporal' arena. This complexity was played out between the principal actors in the drama, Dr Hallinan Bishop of Limerick, Charles Ebrill solicitor and agent for Garryowen Villas, William James Larkin President of Limerick City Workers' housing Association, and John Cronin of the Limerick United Trades and labour Council and former chairman of the strike committee during the Limerick soviet. There was some argument about the county affiliations of Larkin but in the minutes of the Trades Council he was listed as being from Dublin.<sup>90</sup>

The act of commandeering houses by workers was revolutionary in that it challenged the status quo of the law of property. However it was not supported by any revolutionary theory. The principal theory behind the seizure of the houses was based on a Catholic document *Rerum Novarum* and the simple expediency that houses should not remain empty while families were homeless. As early as January 1922, at a meeting of the Limerick United Trades and Labour Council, Councillor Cronin called attention to the evacuation of British troops and said that the empty barracks would make suitable houses for workers.<sup>91</sup>

A document detailing the circumstances of the people who had commandeered the houses is available in the Hallinan papers. This document was provided to the bishop by Larkin on 20 December 1922, much later in the conflict. It was referred to in handwriting as the Commandeered Houses Document.<sup>92</sup> Bishop Hallinan was fully aware of the poverty in Limerick at that time as one of the organizations which he presided over was the City Fuel and Blanket Fund which had delivered nearly 340 tons of coal at a cost of almost £1000 to the poor of Limerick in 1922.<sup>93</sup> The total number of people involved in the Garryowen housing crisis was 127,

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<sup>90</sup> Limerick City Museum Archives, catalogue no. 198963, Minute book, Limerick United Trades and labour Council 1921-1923, 24 March 1922. (hereafter LCMA)

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 Jan. 1922.

<sup>92</sup> Limerick Diocesan Archive, (hereafter LDA), box 242, Bishop Hallinan Papers. This consists of a typed list of the twenty families and the absolute poverty of their previous housing conditions. Copy in appendix 1: letter, Larkin to Hallinan 20 Dec. 1922.

<sup>93</sup> *Limerick Chronicle*, 7 December 1922. (Hereafter LC.)



and consisted of forty adults and eighty-seven children.<sup>94</sup> The total number of houses involved was twenty seven.<sup>95</sup> The Commandeered Houses Document acquaints us with their living conditions previous to their occupation of the houses. Eleven of the families lived in accommodation which consisted either of one or two rooms with little or no sanitation and extreme congestion. Of the remainder who lived in what was termed a house we need only read their comments in order to get a glimpse of what these 'houses' were like (See Appendix A).

The Commandeered Houses Document gives an account of the Limerick slum conditions in which poor people had to live and the rents which they had paid on their previous accommodation, which varied from two shillings and six pence per week to two pounds two shillings and sixpence per week. Those horrendous living conditions had existed for many years but little had been done by the authorities to relieve the situation. In comparison to Waterford and Cork city Limerick was at the bottom as far as house building for the poor was concerned. John Logan wrote that between 1887 and 1914 Limerick Corporation had built only '133 dwellings under the artisan housing and sanitary acts' whereas Waterford, with a population of seventy per cent that of Limerick, built 415 artisan and working-class houses and Cork with a population double that of Limerick had built 564 houses in the same period.<sup>96</sup>

The seizure of the Garryowen houses, because of its revolutionary character, caught the authorities off guard. Up to this time such action was only carried out by the IRA and had a nationalistic or military influence. The event highlighted the inactivity of the Limerick Corporation in the area of social housing for the urban poor. The newly installed Provisional Government were too busy with national political matters to take notice of a few houses being taken over by workers. They were more concerned with the Barracks which were being taken over by the IRA in Limerick. In the case of the commandeered houses it was the Limerick City Worker's Housing Association, led by William James Larkin and at arm's length by members of the

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<sup>94</sup> LDA, box 242.

<sup>95</sup> LDA, box, 242, This is a single page with the heading Mr Ebrill and states that there are 27 houses. It also contains seven points which are difficult to read.

<sup>96</sup> John Logan, 'Frugal comfort: housing Limerick's labourers and artisans, 1841-1946' in Liam Irwin and Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh (eds.) *Limerick History and Society; interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 2009), pp 571-572.

Limerick United Trades and Labour Council who were responsible. This was not a question of nationalism but rather one of human dignity taken up by local people who otherwise did not appear to be involved in politics. The only influence from outside Limerick was William James Larkin and he remained a man of mystery. He did, what in Limerick city was inconceivable, he challenged a bishop on matters ecclesiastical.

From March until December 1922 there were many efforts made to resolve the conflict and to address the underlying cause which was the chronic housing situation in Limerick. The essential problem for Limerick Corporation seemed to be that they did not have enough money to address the problem. The reason for this according to Matthew Potter was the 'comparatively larger areas of deprivation contained within its boundaries and the lack of manufacturing industry in the city'.<sup>97</sup> This had been a perennial problem for the corporation and some years before and it was mainly due to the work of Michael Joyce and the Irish Parliamentary Party that two acts came into being which assisted the building of social housing, 'the 1906 Labourers Act which gave a huge subsidy on the loans advanced to local authorities for social housing in rural areas and the 1908 Housing Act, known as Clancy's Act which rejuvenated the social housing sector in the urban areas'.<sup>98</sup> Michael Joyce was the President of the Town Tenants League founded in 1904 whose aim was to obtain the same rights for urban tenants as had been won by rural tenants.<sup>99</sup> In May 1919 the Limerick Corporation had adopted a plan to build 120 houses in Farranshone on city allotments but following recommendations from the Dáil Éireann Department of Local Government that they make the best use of increased subsidies from the local Government Board they revised their scheme to include 228 cottages at Farranshone, sixty-eight in Garryowen and 150 in Prospect.<sup>100</sup> However, they abandoned this plan when they realised that rental income would have left a shortfall of £6,628 which would have had to be met by a rates increase. In August 1920 the Dáil Department of Local Government ordered the Limerick Corporation to cease communication with the Local Government Board which closed down all discussion on working-class housing in

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<sup>97</sup> Potter, *The government and the people of Limerick*, p.362.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.360.

<sup>100</sup> Logan, *Frugal comfort*, p.573.

the city.<sup>101</sup> After 1922 the new Provisional Government announced a £1,000,000 plan for urban housing. This raised expectations of a housing boom and it was at this time that the Limerick City Worker's Housing Association began to demand action from the corporation. The issue of the commandeered houses had been debated at a conference in the Town Hall between the Mayor and representatives of labour. The Limerick Corporation had distanced themselves from the action taken by the LCWHA. The Minister for Local Government in the new Provisional Government, W.T. Cosgrave, was acquainted with the situation and had sent a letter to the Mayor about it. As a result the Mayor had consultations with Mr Ebrill and forwarded a report to Cosgrave.<sup>102</sup> At a mass meeting in March 1922 of the Limerick City Workers' Housing Association, which was addressed by Messrs. Carr and Cronin of the Limerick United Trades and Labour Council, the following resolution was passed

That we, the tenants of Limerick city and members of the Workers Housing Association, assembled here at a general meeting, demand as a human necessity that three thousand houses be built immediately as a substantial instalment and within reach of the working classes, 80 per cent of whom at present live in 300 lanes of slums yard-less and unsanitary, with earthen and paved floors and laneways which reek with disease and sap thousands of families with more deadly havoc than any of the machinations of the recent wars. Considering that for the past eight years not one house has been built and that the present evils are practically beyond the power of the corporation to affect a permanent cure, and that 85 per cent of the rates are burdened on the rent of these houses, and also that as workers, we have withdrawn and sacrificed our demands for years in face of the common enemy, we must now press our onward demands nationally and assert our birth-right. H. Carr Hon. Secretary<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> *LC*, 16 March 1922. There is an error in the spelling of Cosgrave in this article. The Ebrills were a prominent Limerick family who were engaged in auctioneering and the legal profession. Throughout this thesis they appear at different times. They were members of Limerick Boat Club and the Archconfraternity.

<sup>103</sup> *Limerick Leader*, 17 March 1922. (Hereafter *LL.*).

This statement and the appearance of members of the LUTLC on a public platform was brought up at a meeting of the Trades Council by Alf Walsh. He enquired as to the attitude of the council officials on the commandeering of houses in the city. In reply the president said that he did not go on the platform as an official of the Trades Council but as a worker on behalf of other workers. He maintained that a landlord had no right to lock up a house if he was offered a fair rent for it.<sup>104</sup> Three other premises in O'Connell Street which had also housed British forces were occupied by members of the Limerick City Workers' Housing Association on 16 March 1922. William James Larkin, speaking at Carey's Road, accepted responsibility for commandeering the houses on behalf of the association and threatened to take three more that night.<sup>105</sup>

By 24 March 1922 the new Provisional Government had become embroiled in the housing crisis. They passed responsibility, however, to the local authorities encouraging them to raise capital from the rates. If they did that then the government would assist.<sup>106</sup> The problem of raising a rate to house poor people was not a popular one among the ratepayers of Limerick, many of whom profited from the rents from the slum houses of the city. In effect this became a conflict of interest to some councillors so the issue had to be taken up by other bodies. John Logan pointed this out very clearly

In the closing decades of the nineteenth century the property owners who formed the Corporation largely resisted the pressures of the central government to promote schemes of slum clearance and replacement. If the Corporation did act, it was in a manner designed to deflect the cost of slum clearance from ratepayers, most effectively by cautiously encouraging the founding of privately-funded artisan housing companies and schemes.<sup>107</sup>

The call was taken up by Mr J. Carr, President of the Trades and Labour Council, at a meeting of the whole Housing Committee of the Limerick Corporation. He pointed out that three thousand houses were absolutely necessary in order to obliterate the

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<sup>104</sup> LCMA, Limerick Trades and Labour Council Minute Book 1921-1923, Cat. No. 1989.63, 24 March 1922.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 24 March 1922.

<sup>107</sup> Logan, *Frugal comfort*, p. 577.

slums. He estimated that there were 15,000 people in urgent need of houses and urged the corporation to take up the offer of the provisional government. The committee agreed to 'strike a rate of 1s. in the £ which, with the sum that would be advanced by the provisional government, would build sixty working-class houses in the city'.<sup>108</sup> According to the *Limerick Chronicle* at that meeting Carr made no apology for the seizure of the houses and said that 'it was only right that houses should not be allowed to be idle for years', in the same paper Mr Shaw said that 'As one of the private enterprisers' he 'would be willing to do all that was possible in the matter, but labour had already forced those inclined to industrial competition to be chary of their actions'.<sup>109</sup> This conflict between the two men was indicative of the attitudes between the haves and the have nots but as R. F. Foster noted 'the new dispensation of national independence would be very different from a socialist New Jerusalem: nationalism not only absorbed pre-war social radicalism, but apparently negated it'.<sup>110</sup> The issue of slum housing had become important to the haves for two reasons, health and politics. On the health issue those with enough money had abandoned the inner cities, where disease raged, for the leafy suburbs. However even there they were not safe as servants and messengers brought disease to their doors. With the new laws of enfranchisement the poor could now have a say in politics and following the Bolshevik revolution in Russia this political direction was weaning to the left. In Ireland the forces which challenged this drift were Catholicism and nationalism which had become intertwined. The housing problem in Limerick was local but it would require national intervention before it could be solved. The local battles in Limerick city between men of property and men of no property were encompassed in the seizure of the Garryowen houses.

At a meeting of the Limerick Corporation on 6 April 1922 it was agreed to strike a rate of one shilling in the pound for housing and sixpence in the pound to meet repayments of interest and principal on the loan. This was where the issue of rate increases became prominent as the ratepayers grudgingly agreed accepting that something must be done with regards to the housing problem but regretting that

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 March 1922.

<sup>109</sup> *LC*, 30 March 1922.

<sup>110</sup> R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1989), p.446.

there had to be an increase in rates to do it.<sup>111</sup> In October T.J. Byrne , inspector in the Ministry of Local Government, held an inquiry in the Town Hall regarding the application by the corporation for a loan of £11,073 for the building of working-class houses in the city. It was during this inquiry that the issue of the commandeered houses in Garryowen Villas came up again. P. O’Flynn informed the inspector that the rates on commandeered houses had not been paid by the owners as they had received no rent from the houses and raised further fears on the part of local business that the commandeering deterred private builders from building in the city. M. Gough B.C. concurred stating that he had received no rent ‘owing to commandeering’.<sup>112</sup> According to C. Quilligan, the blame for all the trouble lay with ‘Mr. Larkin, who had been responsible for the commandeering of houses’.<sup>113</sup> Here we find the issue of localism being inserted into the argument. Mr. Larkin was not from Limerick therefore he had no right to interfere in local matters, according to Quilligan. This was a common limerick trait usually employed by people who were not themselves native to the city. The issue of preventing private house building was neither here nor there as few houses had been built for the poor anyway. It should also be noted that it was only houses that had been occupied by British personnel that had been commandeered and this was the fatal flaw in the theory that this was a revolutionary action by workers and yet no record of nationalism has been discovered in the research to sustain this. A note of reality was shown by the superintendent Medical Officer of Health, Dr M. S. McGrath, when he stated that ‘in 1919 there were in the city 1,774 houses unfit for human habitation, and today that number was practically double’.<sup>114</sup>

The Garryowen housing crisis had still not been settled by December 1922. At a meeting of the corporation Councillor D. Griffin proposed that the Garryowen houses be purchased by the Corporation under the housing act of 1919, or the Small Dwellings Act. This would be subject to the approval of the Minister of Local Government. As there was no seconder to the motion it fell – an indication that the

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<sup>111</sup> *LL*, 7 April 1922.

<sup>112</sup> *LC*, 17 October 1922.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

corporation was united solidly against radical or unofficial action in relation to housing.<sup>115</sup> This account of that particular meeting was refuted in a letter from the LWHA to Bishop Hallinan. In this letter Larkin stated that there was a seconder, Alderman Casey, but that Councillor Flynn had asked for letters from the ratepayers association and Charles Ebrill be read first.<sup>116</sup> This was a pivotal point in the crisis. This was the public confrontation between ratepayers and the people of the slums, the men of no property. Their champion was William James Larkin, President of the Limerick City Worker's Housing Association, and he was in no mood for compromise. He addressed the meeting and it was during this speech that he uttered the words which would later be a source of conflict with Bishop Hallinan. In addressing the Corporation Larkin said that the correspondence which had been read was 'grossly calculated to confuse the issue' and his association would make a declaration they would stand by, namely 'refuse to recognise the Courts of Law, and if Mr Ebrill brought in bailiffs they would fight them'.<sup>117</sup> This was indeed a radical departure for workers. In the past it was only Fenians, Ribbonmen or irate farmers who challenged courts and bailiffs.

### **The Involvement of Bishop Hallinan in the Crisis**

It is evident from the Papal Encyclicals and the various Pastoral Letters of the Irish hierarchy at this time that there was a nervousness about the advance of modernisms into Ireland. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century the Catholic Church in Ireland had achieved control in the secular areas of education and social care.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless the advent of cinema, theatre, dances and in the political sphere socialism created nervousness in the hierarchy. Bishop Hallinan in his pastoral letter of 1922 on the question of Pope Leo XIII wrote 'His encyclical on the relations between labour and capital, between the working man and his employer, lay down for all time the principals which must guide those who wish to solve that living and difficult

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<sup>115</sup> LC, 9 December 1922.

<sup>116</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan papers, letter, LCWHA to Bishop Hallinan, 8 Dec. 1922.

<sup>117</sup> LDA, box 242, Typed statement of the meeting.

<sup>118</sup> J. H. Whyte, *Church and state in modern Ireland 1923-1979*, (Dublin, 1980), p.17. The almost total control of the lives of the catholic people of Limerick will be addressed in Chapter 6.

problem'.<sup>119</sup> His nationalism was apparent when he wrote on the Treaty. He accepted that people held different views on it but he believed that inevitably it would 'lead to the enjoyment of the highest ideals of the most ardent nationalist Irishman'.<sup>120</sup> He was adamant in his disapproval of the type of entertainment that had occurred on pattern days in the past and stated that 'we have no wish for, on the contrary we strictly prohibit a revival of those amusements which frequently accompanied such celebrations in the past'.<sup>121</sup>

On 20 December 1922 Bishop Hallinan became involved in the crisis when he received a telegram from the three officers of the Limerick Workers Housing Association, Larkin, Crotty and Ryan. The religious tone of the correspondence between the LCWHA and Bishop Hallinan is noticeable. It appears to be genuine and not just condescension to a bishop as will be noted in later correspondence. Once again it must be noted that this is not the work of Bolshevik revolutionaries but rather men who are at their wits end to look after their families. It read

We appeal to your Lordship to mediate in Garryowen tenants cases. Keane evicted; has eight in family and had no home, being a bombed out victim of terror; now again without home. It is a very cruel thing. The other Garryowen tenants in eviction jeopardy; all willing to rent or purchase. We urge your help in God's holy name. Keane is in Jail.<sup>122</sup>

There is a typed statement in the bishop's files which suggests that, despite his apparent silence in the public arena, he was fully aware of the situation. This statement was sent to the bishop by the officers of the L.C.W.H.A. and refers to the meeting of the Limerick Corporation on 7 December 1922 and was signed by Larkin, Crotty and Ryan. This statement contains the battle cry mentioned by Bishop Hallinan 'We will not recognise the courts. We will fight the bailiffs. The writs are dead as far as we are concerned. We therefore call upon the people to stand firm, keep cool – prepare for a fight and win it'.<sup>123</sup> Here we have a dichotomy. On the one hand, in the

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<sup>119</sup> LDA, Pastoral letters, Bishop Hallinan and Bishop Keane 1919-1945, p.4.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p.19.

<sup>122</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan Papers, telegram no. 290, LWHA to Bishop Hallinan, 8 Dec. 1922.

<sup>123</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan papers, typed statement of the Limerick corporation meeting, 8 Dec. 1922..



religious sphere, there is the overtly and it appears genuine religious tone of the appeal to the bishop, but in the temporal field there is this battle cry against the law. There was only one occasion in history when bishops sided with people who were advocating breaking the law. That was the Plan of Campaign during the land wars of the nineteenth century but even then the one bishop who opposed his own hierarchy and sided with the Vatican was a Limerick bishop, Bishop O'Dwyer.<sup>124</sup> With events in Limerick taking a radical path Bishop Hallinan was following a similar path to Bishop O'Dwyer and siding with the law of the land. He had already dealt with the Limerick 1919 soviet and was not about to have a re-run if it could be avoided. William Larkin followed up the telegram with a letter to the bishop on the following day. The reply both to Larkin's telegram and letter was published in the *Limerick Leader* and the *Limerick Chronicle*. The bishop was unequivocal in his reply and told Larkin that unless his 'battle cry is publically withdrawn' that 'it would be unworthy of myself and my office to identify myself with people who are fighting under such a banner'.<sup>125</sup>

In his reply to the bishop on 1 January Larkin wrote 'I desire to say that anything your Lordship wishes in the matter will be complied with' and goes on to say that the statements look worse in print than were intended. Once again the tone of this letter is religious but this was an ambiguous statement and the bishop was fully aware of it. It would appear that Larkin was also aware that the occupiers of the Garryowen houses were not about to put up barricades and declare a soviet. In his letter to the bishop he has softened his stand and proclaimed that he intended to abide by the law also. He stated that he fully intended to 'apply for bail to arrange our defence and at the conclusion of evidence both the justice and the prosecutor acquiesced'.<sup>126</sup> Larkin went on to explain that his 'social notions' were based closely on the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* and that he had the ear of 'a theologian of standing' who informed him that he had conducted the case 'with prudence and perfect moderation'. He hinted that there are aspects to the case which if known would put the Limerick City Workers' Housing Association in a good light as Christians

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<sup>124</sup> Emmet Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the plan of campaign 1880-1888*, (Cork, 1978)

<sup>125</sup> *LL*, 10 Jan. 1923; *LC*, 10 Jan. 1923.

<sup>126</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan papers, letter, Larkin to Hallinan, 1 Jan. 1923; *LL*, 10 Jan. 1923; *LC*, 10 Jan. 1923.

even though the obstacles which were put in their way were 'neither Christian nor fair'. He concluded his letter 'we seek nothing but justice as accorded to true Christians by true Christians. I am my Lord Bishop very respectfully yours.<sup>127</sup> As a postscript to this letter he inserted the quotation from *Rerum Novarum* 'Public administration must daily and solicitously provide for the welfare and comfort of the working classes, otherwise that law of justice will be violated which ordains that each man shall have his due, - (Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*).

The bishop replied promptly in a letter on 7 January 1923 and his tone towards Larkin has hardened to the extent that he in turn quoted *Rerum Novarum* and referred to him as a 'crafty agitator' who was out to 'pervert men's judgement and to stir up the people to revolt'.

I have received your letter, and in reply wish to say that having preached false principles and led some of my people into the evil course of seizing by violence and holding the property of their neighbour against his will, you now seek to justify your teaching and action by a profane and irreverent appeal to the authority of the Encyclical of Leo XIII on the condition of the working classes.<sup>128</sup>

The bishop then castigated those who would use such an 'immortal document' for nefarious purposes. He further quoted the Encyclical on the duties of the worker to his employer and accused Larkin of 'flagrant violation' of this principle. The bishop then very cleverly moved the argument of the existing condition of the housing problem in Limerick as in other Irish cities and referred to it as 'the slum evil' and placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of English rule in Ireland

The slum evil exists in Limerick as in other Irish cities. It is in great part one of the sad consequences of bad laws under an alien government. Leo XIII says, in the paragraph from which you quote an isolated sentence apart from its context, that it belongs to the state and the public administration to remedy such evils as this. Now you are not the state nor the public administration.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> LDA, Hallinan papers, letter, Hallinan to Larkin, 7 Jan. 1923.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

As can be seen from the earlier part of this chapter this was an inaccurate comment as the rural labourers had been well catered for by what Hallinan termed an alien government. In fact little was done by Limerick Corporation in building houses. Under the £1,000,000 scheme devised by the Provisional Government for urban housing in 1922 only sixty-four houses had been built in Limerick city by 1925.<sup>130</sup> Following the publication of the 1926 census which revealed the contrast once again between Limerick, Waterford and Cork, and showed that thirteen per cent of citizens in Limerick lived in one-room tenements compared to eight per cent in Cork and five per cent in Waterford, the Limerick Corporation took action, no doubt helped by the speech of Seán Lemass at a Fianna Fáil rally in the city.<sup>131</sup> This resulted in seventy-four houses being built by 1932. Nevertheless the bishop was intent on isolating Larkin and used all the methods available to him to do so. One of these was to publish the private correspondence between himself and Larkin in the press. Another was to emphasise that Larkin was not a Limerick man. Larkin countered the bishop's strategy by adopting a separate strategy of his own and challenged the bishop to set up a special court to adjudicate between them.

The bishop thanked Larkin for agreeing to comply with his wishes and appeals to him to cease propagating false principles amongst his people, which incited them to disorder violence and injustice. He concluded that the fate of the people would be better in other hands than in Larkin's and advised 'that you leave the fate and future of the dupes of your policy to others, in whose hands, it is possible they may be better consulted for, when freed from yours'.<sup>132</sup> In a postscript he informed Larkin that he was sending the correspondence to the press. The press wasted no time in publishing the correspondence. As far as the press was concerned this was a coup; the private correspondence between a bishop and a supposed radical. The letters appeared three days after Larkin's last letter to the bishop, 10 January 1923.

Larkin's answer was not published in the press but is in Bishop Hallinan's papers. Incensed by the attitude of the bishop he replied in a handwritten letter of 10

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<sup>130</sup> Logan, *Frugal comfort*, pp 573-574.

<sup>131</sup> Logan, p. 574.

<sup>132</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan papers, letter Hallinan to Larkin, 7 Jan. 1923; *LL*, 10 Jan. 1923; *LC*, 10 Jan. 1923.

January 1922. He first informed the Bishop that he had sent his letter to the wrong address. This again was probably deliberate on the part of the bishop to emphasise that Larkin was not from Limerick. He maintained that 'there are very grave charges made against me in that letter, it will take time to consider and reply to'. However, he wasted no time and immediately requested the bishop to set up a court consisting of nominees of the Archbishop of Dublin, the Archbishop of Cashel, the Bishop of Down and Conor and 'a nominee of Your Lordship'. What began as a housing problem in Limerick had now in Larkin's eyes taken on a new dimension 'The matter is not now diocesan, it is on a very much broader plane'. Not happy with his request for a court hearing he continued to berate the bishop for threatening to publish their correspondence and for asking him to 'do what I cannot do – leave the fate and future of the people of slum ridden Limerick to others'. He said that he had no open enemies except the *Limerick Leader* 'which on occasions since my arrest has wilfully and flagrantly outraged all sense of press decency by putting into my mouth words that were never uttered and deeds that were never done – an openly immoral action.' He would not yield to the bishop's exhortations. He refused and stated that 'On these grounds I feel more than secure in Gods eyes, and in the mercy of his sacred and non-vindictive heart'. It is noticeable that the language being used by Larkin has an overtly religious tone to it. He went on to protest his innocence, his desire to bear no malice nor evil to any man and that he loved his faith, his 'catholic faith'. He accused the bishop of bringing terrible charges against him and 'in the present condition of things ... you almost direct my execution'.<sup>133</sup> These were very grave charges to make and Bishop Hallinan's reply was immediate and final. In a letter, this time addressed to 2 St Patrick's Villas, Upper Clare St., the bishop left no doubt as to his feelings 'Dear Sir, I received your letter yesterday, and beg to say that I decline to have any further correspondence with you on the subject'.<sup>134</sup> Larkin's reply was unusually terse. His letter was on headed notepaper, Limerick City Workers' Housing Association, in cooperation with all branches of the Irish Tenant (Workers') Association and dated 13 January 1923 'My Lord Bishop, I am in receipt of yours bearing yesterday's date and

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<sup>133</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan papers, letter Larkin to Hallinan, 10 Jan. 1923.

<sup>134</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan papers, letter, Bishop Hallinan to Larkin, 12 Jan. 1922.

thank you. May God bless me for what is false.’<sup>135</sup> What began as a slum problem in Limerick city was raised to a new level by the actions of the LCWHA to include the Bishop of Limerick, Dr Hallinan. The occupation began on 13 March 1922 but the bishop had never made any pronouncement on the matter. Neither had the Limerick City Police Force which had been active since April 1922. There was no condemnation from the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family of the forceful occupation either. Larkin only made contact with the bishop once the eviction of Keane and his imprisonment had taken place. This could be construed as a very astute move on the part of Larkin or a firm belief that he had in the tenets of *Rerum Novarum* and that the bishop would concur. The bishop did not concur and proceeded to isolate Larkin.

### **Eviction and conflict**

Ebrill, the solicitor and agent for the Garryowen Villas houses, finally made his move on 18 December 1922. By this time the new Gárda Síochána had been installed in Limerick and the Limerick City Police Force had been disbanded. The forces of the Free State now became involved in a conflict which had been simmering for several months. With his bailiffs and members of an Gárda he evicted William Keane, his wife and eight children from 8 Garryowen Villas. During the eviction one of the Gardaí, Sergeant Noone was slightly injured by a hurley. A number of tenants and officers of the LWHA, which included Larkin, were charged with assault. Those arrested at the scene included William Keane, William J. Larkin, Cornelius Ryan, John Crotty, Maurice Keane, and Edward Deegan. They were taken to William St. Barracks.<sup>136</sup> They found themselves before District Justice Joseph M. Flood B.L. at a special court hearing on 19 December 1922 having been charged with assaulting, resisting and wilfully obstructing Sergeant Noone in the execution of his duties at Garryowen on 18 December. This court returned the accused for trial on bail of £30 each and personal bail of £40, to the next competent court.<sup>137</sup> At the subsequent court case they were acquitted of all charges of obstruction and assault by a jury. Following this trial and with the assistance of the Limerick Trades Council Keane was allowed by Ebrill to return to the

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> LC, 19 December 1922.

<sup>137</sup> LL, 20 Dec. 1922.

house at 8 Garryowen Villas as caretaker until such time as he received compensation from the government for the burning of his house.<sup>138</sup> The Limerick United Trades and Labour Council had intervened and bailed Keane out of prison on the grounds that all charges against him would be withdrawn.<sup>139</sup> The *Limerick Leader* reported that all charges against him were to be withdrawn but did not mention the involvement of the LUTLC.<sup>140</sup> The question remains as to why Ebrill waited ten months before he proceeded with evictions. It was an uncertain period. The interregnum between the withdrawal of British forces and the institution of Irish authority left a vacuum. The Limerick middle class tried to fill this vacuum of authority with the establishment of the Limerick City Police Force. Yet in the minds of the business people of Limerick was the vista of the Limerick Soviet of 1919 just three years before when the city confronted the might of the British Empire. There was no condemnation by the IRA of the seizure of the properties and it would seem that the LCWHA had chosen their targets well. How could the IRA condemn the seizure of what was considered British army billets by poor Irish people, particularly as they were taking over the empty barracks. It could be that he was not confident of the loyalties of the Limerick City Police Force, which was mainly made up of IRA men who had previously been in the republican Police Force, or it might have been the unsettled political climate due to the civil war. Diarmaid Ferriter gave an example of the unruly times of the early 1920s in his book *Cuimhnigh ar Luimneach* when he quoted John Quaid, former County secretary, who had resigned in 1926 following an auditor's report on the county's finances 'I frankly admit that there were some things which were not strictly within the law. It was impossible, as a matter of fact, to carry out the law'.<sup>141</sup> He had made efforts to have the crisis resolved

### **The Court Case**

Several issues emerged during the court case for obstruction and assault which reflected the disturbed nature of the country at that time. The civil war was still raging

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<sup>138</sup> Appendix A, this referred to the burning of Keane's house at Blackboy Pike by the Black and Tans, p.308.

<sup>139</sup> LCMA, Limerick Trades Council Minute Book 1921-1923, cat. No. 1989.63, 29 Dec. 1922.

<sup>140</sup> *LL*, 22 Dec. 1922.

<sup>141</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, *Cuimhnigh ar Luimneach: a history of Limerick County Council 1898-1998* (Limerick, 1998), pp 50-51.

and destruction of property and killings were commonplace. What was at stake was the legitimacy of the government and as a consequence, the law itself. During the court hearing Judge Pigot was insistent that only the matter at hand was relevant. The issue of Larkin's county affiliations were raised by Moran for the prosecution when he declared that Larkin was neither a Limerick man nor a worker.<sup>142</sup> In his summation Judge Pigot considered the charge to be of 'considerable gravity' and that 'civic order' must be maintained.<sup>143</sup> This was a reflection of both central and local government of the time. However, the main problem of housing was not before the court and the defendants were found not guilty and acquitted of assault.

## **Resolution**

Even though the L.C.W.H.A. had won the court case it turned out to be a pyrrhic victory. Ebrill was intent on carrying through with the evictions. While letters were being exchanged between Larkin and the bishop there was a simultaneous correspondence between the bishop, Ebrill and the occupiers of the houses. None of these letters were included by the bishop for publication in the press. While the bishop had terminated contact with Larkin, he was still communicating with Ebrill and the tenants. On 12 January 1923 Ebrill wrote to the bishop pleading his case that he had been in consultation with several parties since March 1922. These included Rev Fr Robinson C.ss.R, the Mayor of Limerick and the deputy Mayor, the Rev. Fr Hennessy OSA, and Stephen O'Mara Snr. He had also written to the Limerick United Trades and labour Council to plead his case.<sup>144</sup> He had advised them that 'The people I represent are determined to realise a large portion of this property ... with the houses empty as they were given to me by the military'.<sup>145</sup> Originally there had been twenty seven houses involved in the conflict but by this time that number, with the re-installment of Keane had gone down to fifteen houses. He maintained that he had promised to sell a number of them and let the rest but blamed the tenants for upsetting these plans. He

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<sup>142</sup> *LL*, 22 Dec. 1922.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> LCMA, LUTLC minute book 1921-1923, cat. No. 1989.63, 10 March 1922.

<sup>145</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan Papers, letter, Ebrill to Hallinan, 12 Jan. 1923.

further stated that a sum of £400 in rent had been lost and that legal costs were at £200. He was aware of the difficulties that eviction would pose and told the bishop that he would use every effort not to inflict undue hardship but that 'the occupants of these fifteen houses must leave or the law must take its course'.<sup>146</sup> Ebrill wrote two letters to the bishop on 15 January 1923. In one he stated that he had postponed some evictions which were 'fixed for tomorrow morning'<sup>147</sup> and that he did this as a courtesy to the bishop and in this letter he concluded that 'I will wait on your Lordship at 2.30 on Thursday at the College'. The other letter stated his willingness to meet with the bishop but that he could not post-pone evictions and suggested that the tenants 'give up possession quietly' but he 'can hold out no hope of permanent settlement with the fifteen'.<sup>148</sup> This could be viewed as a victory for both sides. Twelve families had got accommodation and Ebrill got back fifteen houses out of twenty seven.

On 15 January 1923 a letter was sent to the bishop from the occupying tenants signed by eighteen of them which initially accepted that their 'action at the time was quite wrong, was subversive of all social order, and opposed to the principles, that we, as good Catholics are bound to stand by'.<sup>149</sup> This letter appeared to emanate from a meeting which the tenants had with the bishop on the previous Sunday morning. The letter went on to state that even though they had repudiated their actions with regret for what they had done, they still wished the bishop to 'see your good way to ask Ebrill to negotiate for an amicable settlement'.<sup>150</sup> The final letter in the file suggests that all was in vain and that the tenants had lost their battle. One strange feature about this final letter from the tenants was that all the signatories signed their names in Irish.<sup>151</sup> The first paragraph revealed the despondency of the tenants

My Lord,

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan papers, letter, Ebrill to Hallinan, 15 Jan. 1923.

<sup>148</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan papers, letter, Ebrill to Hallinan. This was the second letter he sent to the bishop on the same day.

<sup>149</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan papers, letter, occupying tenants to Hallinan, 15 Jan. 1923. This letter contained the signatures of the eighteen occupiers.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> LDA, box 242, Hallinan papers, letter, occupiers to Hallinan, 24 Jan. 1923.



I desire to inform you that I have put the result of your Lordships interview with Mr. Ebrill before a meeting of the occupiers of the above property. They have instructed me to inform you that they would be prepared to comply with your wish that they go out peaceably before the date specified.

This letter was full of pathos. It signified defeat for a small group of workers who were willing to challenge the establishment. Even though the occupation of the houses had occurred during a time of extreme violence and political unrest, it had become evident to the people that essentially nothing had changed. The law of property still ruled and the Catholic Church would uphold that principle. As a final plea to the bishop the signatories asked for pardon for the liberties which they had taken but 'we do so because of the concluding sentence of your letter which led us and still leads us to believe that our fate and future which left in other hands may be better consulted for'.<sup>152</sup> This referred to the letter of the bishop to Larkin and showed that the people had turned once again to the church to protect them. The register of electors for 1923 - 24 records the twenty families who had occupied the houses. By 1931 all but two of the families had vanished from the register.<sup>153</sup> It is unclear why they had left. Perhaps they had emigrated or maybe the rents were too high.

This incident was merely a symptom of a much larger problem which was the slum conditions under which the majority of poor people in Limerick, and in most of the rest of the country, were living and which Graham and Hood referred to when they wrote that 'the failure of urban tenants to gain the freedoms granted to their rural counterparts was a final and enduring source of tension'.<sup>154</sup> The Garryowen Housing Crisis was one of those events which appear native to Limerick. The people from the slums organised themselves into an association which challenged the status quo during a time of political turmoil. I could find no reference to similar action being taken anywhere in Ireland at that time. The Garryowen housing crisis involved the entire spectrum of the public space in civil society: the civil and criminal court system, the Catholic Church, private property and urban landlordism and the public spaces in

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Register of Dail Electors, Local Government Electors, and Seanad Electors for the Year 1923 -24, Limerick City Reference Library.

<sup>154</sup> Graham and Hood, 'Town tenant protest', p. 43.

which the drama was played out, city hall, the bishop's palace, the chamber of commerce, and the street itself.

On 19 January 1923 a large and enthusiastic meeting of citizens was held at the Limerick Town Hall organized by the Limerick City Workers housing Association. The purpose of this meeting was to present William J. Larkin with a gold key as a symbol of the people's choice to award him the freedom of the city. This was not the accepted official freedom of the city which was a reserved function for elected councillors but rather a reputedly spontaneous appreciation by the poor of the city for a man who had stood up for them against the forces of oppression. The meeting, which was chaired by Mr John Crotty, chairman of the LCWHA, passed the following resolution:

We, the people of Limerick, in a meeting at the Town Hall assembled on this Friday evening, 19 Jan. 1923, place on record our appreciation of the 'homes first' campaign, conducted so successfully by the Limerick City Workers housing Association, and it is our wish and desire that the 'homes first' campaign be continued until the shockingly housed inhabitants of Limerick are properly housed; further and jointly we desire to emphasise our appreciation of the 'homes first' cause by granting to Mr William J. Larkin, our leader, the full and complete freedom of the City of Limerick and its vicinity, as a proof of our esteem for him for the work he has done in the 'homes first' cause in Limerick and elsewhere in Ireland; and further be it resolved, we present to Mr William J. Larkin, our leader, a golden key, in token of such freedom of action as he may see his way to following future for our housing betterment; and we hereby also invite him to come to us at all times that it is convenient for him to do so and banishing the foreign importation of bestowing freedom of cities on worthy citizens or visitors to municipalities, we, the people of Limerick, open up this new era of freedom which every just and righteous citizen or visitor is entitled to.<sup>155</sup>

This was the vista which Bishop Hallinan and the hierarchy were nervous of. In the vacuum left by the departing British was the possibility of real revolutionary action.

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<sup>155</sup> LL, 22 Jan. 1923.

The Garryowen Housing Crisis had brought to the surface the volcano of need, due to slum conditions, which had simmered for years in Limerick city. This need was primarily due to the failure of Limerick Corporation to provide sufficient social housing from the late nineteenth century despite the fact that other cities had done so. The philosophy behind the Limerick City Housing Association, which led the dispute, was similar to that of the Tenant League in the early 1900s but it was far more radical. This may have been due to the President of that association, William James Larkin, who appeared and disappeared from the scene just prior to and following the conclusion of the crisis. The action of commandeering the houses met with the approval of some members of the Limerick United Trades and Labour Council but it did not have the approval of this body as an organization. Needless to say the Limerick Corporation distanced itself from the action. The event occurred in a climate of political lawlessness, where former RIC and British army barracks were also being seized by the IRA, and this was the context in which it maintained itself until that political crisis had abated in late 1920. This inevitably points to the fact that the occupiers of the Garryowen houses got free pass from the IRA while other rural workers had been, and would be in the future, harassed by them for occupying creameries. Larkin had been shrewd in picking a place and time for his occupation but the fatal flaw lay in his perception of the meaning of *Rerum Novarum* vis a vis the perception of Dr Hallinan, Bishop of Limerick. By challenging the bishop Larkin had allowed himself to be isolated and lost control of the situation. Like the Limerick soviet it was Bishop Hallinan who eventually ended the crisis and got back most of the houses for Charles Ebrill.

Although insignificant in the context of national unrest at that time in Ireland the commandeering of the houses at Garryowen Villas reflected some of the national tensions which were alive at that time. Civic unrest was widespread in the social and security vacuum left by the departing RIC and British army. This departure created a hiatus of power which several different groups tried to fill. Different sections of the IRA sought to gain military advantage by the seizure of barracks in Limerick. It was this climate of unrest that facilitated the seizure of the Garryowen houses. It is unlikely that this action would have taken place without the leadership of William James

Larkin, President of the LCWHA. The fact that he was not from Limerick was seized upon both by the bishop and the legal officer at his trial. Fear of strangers was not common to Limerick as all Limerick people were familiar with the curse of St Munchin but nevertheless the people of Limerick had not treated the Jews or Dr Long with courtesy in the previous decades. Larkin was a different matter. The poor people took to him and eventually gave him a 'people's freedom of the city'. One of the other fears that the Garryowen Housing Crisis was that of socialism, or Bolshevism as it was called by some. This fear was the glue that bound the Catholic Hierarchy and the emerging nationalist middle class together. The fear engendered in both of these groups by the Limerick Soviet, just three years earlier, cannot be underestimated. One of the leaders of that soviet, John Cronin, played a part, albeit at arm's length, in the Garryowen Housing Crisis. There were hidden hands from both sides in this conflict. The IRA remained silent. The Archconfraternity, which in other less serious events took a leading role, remained silent. The Limerick United Trades and Labour Council seemed to be supportive of the occupiers, but at a distance. Once Bishop Hallinan became involved in the controversy he wasted no time in isolating Larkin, taking note of Ebrill and eventually arriving at a compromise where twelve houses would remain with the workers but fifteen families had to leave. Like Bishop O'Dwyer before him he insisted on a written apology from the occupiers, even though it appears that they were cowed in what to write. They bowed the knee, kissed the bishop's ring and quietly left. Bishop Hallinan did not see out the year. He died in July 1923. William James Larkin vanished into the turbulent years that were to come.

## Chapter 2: Bourgeois Limerick: The Limerick City Police Force 1922

The formation of the Limerick City Police Force was a result of the political chaos which existed not just in Limerick but in every corner of Ireland at that time. There was uncertainty in the mind of the general public as to the legitimacy and authority of the new provisional government established in January 1922 and 'even the leaders of the independence movement were divided on the issue of government legitimacy'.<sup>156</sup> Despite the wishes of Michael Collins, minister for finance in the new Provisional Government the disbandment of the RIC went ahead. He was unhappy with the unsatisfactory nature and workings of the Irish Republican Police and in a letter to W.T. Cosgrave, minister for local government, he referred to them as 'the wretched Irish Republican Police System and to the awful personnel ... attracted to its ranks'.<sup>157</sup> The Irish Republican Police had been formed in June 1921 under a general order and Simon Donnelly was appointed as Chief of Police.<sup>158</sup> Volunteers were required to co-operate closely with the police 'in a spirit of true citizenship' not to 'interfere in civil matters' and to 'confine themselves rigidly to military duties'.<sup>159</sup> Austin Stack, former minister for home affairs who had been strongly anti-Treaty and who had resigned his position because of his opposition to it, was concerned as late as March 1922 that the IRP were being side-lined in favour of a 'Volunteer Police Force'. Stack was a member of the IRB, having been enlisted by Cathal Brugha in 1908, and also Minister for Home Affairs from November 1919 to January 1922. On 7 March the *Irish Independent* announced the formation of the *Gárda Síochána* or the Civic Guard.<sup>160</sup> The IRP officers received letters informing them that their 'services were no longer required' and also included were application forms for the new Civic Guard.<sup>161</sup> The terms of the Treaty had shackled Collins in his attempt to postpone the disbanding of the RIC. According to Allen, 'the British government could not tamper with the Treaty, even it had wished

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<sup>156</sup> Tom Garvin, *1922 The Birth of Irish Democracy* (Dublin, 1996), p. 113.

<sup>157</sup> Gregory Allen, *The Gárda Síochána: Policing Independent Ireland 1922 – 1982* (Dublin, 1999), p. 10.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*

to throw Collins a lifeline'.<sup>162</sup> Limerick city had a separate police force to the RIC since 1807 and it was known as the Night Watch. Its duty was to patrol the city during the hours of night which the RIC had refused to do. It was disbanded at the same time as the RIC in 1922.<sup>163</sup>

Limerick city, like many other parts of Ireland, reflected the disturbed position of the time. The repercussions from the Treaty vote, which saw the treaty passed with a majority of only seven votes, on 7 January 1922 reverberated throughout the city. The IRA, following a meeting in March of the Irish Republican Army Convention in Dublin, issued an official statement which included the instruction to 'all officers and other ranks at present serving in the 'regular' army and members of the civil guard return to their respective units, and that recruiting for these forces shall cease forthwith'.<sup>164</sup> This instruction was contradicted by General O'Duffy, Chief of Staff, who relieved officers and men from the responsibility of obeying orders by 'any superior officer who has severed his connection with the IRA by reason of his having attended at the irregular Convention held on Sunday 26 March or of recognising the 'Executive Council' elected at that irregular convention'.<sup>165</sup> Between these two statements was the recipe for civil strife. The Catholic hierarchy was aware of the implicit danger and in his Lenten Pastoral Dr Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, warned the people that although 'Ireland is now the sovereign mistress of her own life' and 'the rusty chains of bondage' were scrapped forever they must be careful they 'do not put them on again'.<sup>166</sup> He recognised the reality of the division between the two parties who 'had held so firmly together in days of danger'.<sup>167</sup> He referred to the political position in Ulster as the 'Northern difficulty' which he had no doubt time would cure.<sup>168</sup> The situation in the North, however, was making itself felt in Limerick on two separate fronts. From a Limerick perspective Bishop Hallinan had been communicating with the Minister for Local Government in the 1919 Dáil, Liam Cosgrave, on matters relating to

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>163</sup> Larry Walsh, 'Abolition and reinstatement of the Limerick Night watch', *The Old limerick Journal*, No. 36, 1999, p. 48.

<sup>164</sup> *LC*, 30 Mar. 1922.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid

<sup>166</sup> *LC*, 28 Feb. 1922.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

hospitals in Croom and Rathkeale. This indicated that he was in favour of the underground Dáil.<sup>169</sup> However, by November 1921 he was writing to Cosgrave, who was now President of the Provisional Government, on a completely different matter. This time he was complaining about the conditions under which republican prisoners were being kept in Limerick prison. Cosgrave replied that in the matter of relieving overcrowding ‘every effort will be made to do so in course of two or three days’.<sup>170</sup> This was happening at the same time as the Garryowen Housing Crisis detailed in chapter 1. It is clear from the Pastoral Letter of 1922 that Bishop Hallinan was pro-Treaty even though he left the door open for those who opposed the Treaty.

Preceding from some details in those articles of agreement between the plenipotentiaries of the two nations, about which people may legitimately hold different views, in our judgement that treaty has made a complete and radical change in the status of our country.<sup>171</sup>

The Protestant population of Limerick city and county had felt the need to call a public meeting in order to express their disgust at the sectarian killings and outrages which had occurred in Belfast. This reflected the attitudes of the protestant population who had got on very well with their Catholic neighbours up to this time. During this meeting the chairman, Sir Charles Barrington, stated that ‘he hated and detested the murders and outrages which were now being committed upon their Catholic fellow – countrymen in Belfast’.<sup>172</sup> In his speech he pointed out the good relations that Catholics and Protestants had enjoyed in Limerick and had praise for the toleration shown to the Protestant minority was insistent that protestants ‘had thrived’ in a Catholic community.<sup>173</sup> These sentiments were supported by Captain Delmege, a prominent landlord in County limerick and County Clare, who considered ‘that they should counteract the statements made in sections of the press that southern Protestants had been treated with intolerance’ and finished his statement to applause when he declared that ‘they have received nothing but kindness, courtesy

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<sup>169</sup> LDA, box 242, letters, M/58, Minister for Local Government, William T. Cosgrave to Bishop Hallinan, 20 Sept. 1921; 22 October 1921; 7 Nov. 1921; 16 Nov. 1921.

<sup>170</sup> LDA, box 242, Letter, Presidents Office to Most Rev Dr Hallinan, 18 Nov. 1922.

<sup>171</sup> LDA, Pastoral letters of Bishop Hallinan Lent 1922, p. 13.

<sup>172</sup> LC, 4 April 1922.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid

and goodwill at the hands of their fellow – countrymen’.<sup>174</sup> The experience of Limerick Protestants was not widespread throughout the country although in Cork according to Ian D’Alton the Protestant gentry ‘was still setting the style, even if that style was brittle and often vacuous’.<sup>175</sup> The experience of Monaghan Protestants was recorded by Terence Dooley when he noted the profound changes that the Protestant community underwent between 1912 and 1926. They had to adapt to the reality of living in a state which was ruled by a nationalist government from Dublin whereas they had hoped to be included in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless they adapted and produced two remarkable Protestant politicians, Ernest Blythe and Erskine Childers who became President of the Irish Republic in 1973. Dooley concluded that they ‘had less to grieve about than the Catholics in neighbouring south Fermanagh, south Tyrone and Armagh who were living under Belfast rule’.<sup>176</sup> In the present study, the chapter on the Limerick Boat Club suggests a growing convergence between the local middle classes of both denominations as, very gradually the Catholic urban middle class became members of a club, Imperial in tone and almost totally Protestant in membership.<sup>177</sup> Ian D’Alton wrote that in Cork the attempts at realigning Irish politics on the basis of ‘mutual group economic interests’ were not seen in the large towns in the 1840s but when Catholics and Protestants did eventually come together in defence of their mutual interests ‘they found the ground they covered had not been entirely unexplored’.<sup>178</sup> The meeting of the Protestants of Limerick was an extraordinary occasion which overflowed with emotions of almost love for the Catholic population, some of which, that same week had bombed the Limerick Protestant Young Men’s Association in O’Connell Street and which some weeks before had fired six bullets through the windows of the same building.<sup>179</sup> It was also the city in which the Masonic Hall was raided and which obliged Charles Barrington to write to the press to explain that the Masonic body was a ‘purely philanthropic’ body which had no connection with any ‘political or sectarian party’ who were subsequently

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid

<sup>175</sup> Ian D’Alton, ‘Keeping faith; an evocation of the Cork protestant character, 1820-1920’ in *Cork history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1993), p.786.

<sup>176</sup> Terence Dooley, *The plight of Monaghan Protestants, 1912-1926*, (Dublin, 2000), p. 59.

<sup>177</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>178</sup> Ian D’Alton, *Protestant society and politics in Cork 1812-1844* (Cork, 1980), p. 234.

<sup>179</sup> *LC*, 30 Mar. 1922.



awarded compensation of £306 for damage caused to the furniture, fixtures and fittings by Judge Pigot at the County Court quarter sessions.<sup>180</sup> This was also the same city which on 29 March saw the Limerick Protestant Young Men's Association (LPYMA) pavilion in Farranshone burnt to the ground causing damage estimated at £1000.<sup>181</sup> There was also an attempt by armed men to set fire to the Kilpeacon Rectory situated about five miles from Limerick city. This outrage obliged the *Munster News* to issue a statement condemning the outrage.<sup>182</sup> These instances, serious as they were, do not appear to have been carried out on a systematic basis by any organised group if we are to believe the letter from Liam Forde, Colonel Commandant, and O.C. Mid-Limerick Brigade where he stated that these actions were 'cowardly and unjust' and he warned that 'drastic action' would be taken 'against those to whom such conduct is traced'.<sup>183</sup> A similar avoidance of violence towards the local protestant gentry was evident during the war in Clare. General Michael Brennan recounted the time when the flying column took over Knappoque Castle, the home of Lord Dunboyne for a county council meeting. He advised the butler to serve tea and to keep note of the cost and of any damage done. Lord Dunboyne, who was not at home at the time, later sent a message to Brennan and refused to accept any payment and said that no damage had been done to his home.<sup>184</sup> Just four weeks previously the Limerick City Workers Housing Association had taken over twenty seven houses in Garryowen Villas and three houses in O'Connell Street to the dismay of the landlords and agent of these properties. In the climate of that time there was a distinct possibility that the working poor of the city were being radicalised and might have taken matters into their own hands if the elite of the city failed to act. This then was the atmosphere that propelled the Mayor of Limerick, Stephen O'Mara, to call a public meeting to discuss the possibility of forming a Limerick City Police Force. The local press carried an announcement that a public meeting would be held in the 'Chamber of Commerce', located at 96 O'Connell Street, at half-past four on Friday 5 May 1922 with the

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid

<sup>181</sup> Ibid

<sup>182</sup> Ibid

<sup>183</sup> *LC*, 4 May 1922.

<sup>184</sup> Michael Brennan, *The war in Clare 1911-1921* (Dublin, 1980), p. 75.

‘purpose of taking immediate steps to form a police force in the city’.<sup>185</sup> The reason given for establishing a police force was ‘the present state of insecurity’.<sup>186</sup>

This announcement is interesting from several points of view. Firstly, the person who called the meeting was a major manufacturer of bacon in the city and also a very good friend of de Valera who had stayed in O’Mara’s house on the night the Treaty was signed. O’Mara was a former member of the IPP and had co-founded the Irish National League as an alternative to the IPP and joined Sinn Fein in 1918.<sup>187</sup> He was referred to by Arthur Griffith as ‘a supporter of Mr Valera’s’.<sup>188</sup> The Mayor refused to be drawn by Griffith’s statement except to say that he went to Dublin ‘not as a follower of Mr de Valera, but to offer myself as a mediator’.<sup>189</sup> Stephen O’Mara had also been appointed a trustee of the Dáil Éireann Funds after his brother James O’Mara had resigned following disagreements.<sup>190</sup> Secondly, the venue chosen for the meeting, the Chamber of Commerce, defined the meeting as one for the upper echelons of Limerick society. Thirdly, the timing was significant. Most working men or women would not finish work until 6.00pm or later in some cases.<sup>191</sup> So this ‘public meeting’ was in essence a meeting for the traders and manufacturers of Limerick even though a public notice appeared in the local press signed by Deputy Mayor Paul O’Brien requesting ‘all citizens interested to attend this meeting’.<sup>192</sup> So this was a ‘public meeting’ which gave the illusion that the public were invited. This being so it could be concluded that the purpose of a Limerick City Police Force was primarily for the protection of the property of the Limerick bourgeoisie. The meeting took place as scheduled and was attended by fifty people, fourteen of whom had also attended the

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid

<sup>186</sup> Ibid

<sup>187</sup> John O’Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick: the republican campaign for independence in Limerick 1913-1921* (Dublin, 2010), p. 55.

<sup>188</sup> *LC*, 11 Mar. 1922.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid

<sup>190</sup> Patricia Lavelle, *James O’Mara a staunch Sinn – Feiner* (Dublin, 1961), p. 256; Matthew Potter, *The government and people of Limerick: the history of Limerick corporation/city council 1197-2006* (Limerick, 2006), p. 382.

<sup>191</sup> This is evident in the interview with Pa Phealan of the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band, chapter 3.

<sup>192</sup> *LC*, 4 May 1922.

public meeting of the Protestant community in April.<sup>193</sup> At this meeting it was the deputy Mayor, Councillor O'Brien, who presided even though the Mayor was at the meeting. The Mayor gave his opinion as to why he thought a police force was necessary in the city stating that for fourteen days the city had no police force and he declared that 'any citizen was liable to be held up, knocked down, robbed, or murdered, without a criminal being made amenable'. The Mayor's argument was that 'all governments had their police forces' but he went on to question the position that the country had no government so therefore it was the business of 'the citizens to organise a police force for its protection, independent of any government'.<sup>194</sup> This is a tenet of civil society and will only operate effectively where there is an abundance of social capital, both bonding and bridging. Strangely in his speech he made no mention of the Irish Republican Police Force, which was responsible for policing following the disbandment of the RIC which had left Limerick for Mullingar on 23 February.<sup>195</sup> He told the meeting that they would have to maintain the force and that he would 'guarantee to get the requisite number of men who were trained to police duties'.<sup>196</sup> He never mentioned where he would get these men from. However, a letter from the Mayor published in the local press in April suggested how they might be recruited. In this letter he outlined how 'an efficient force of volunteer police exists in the city' and that 'they have been doing duty for many months, and are still without pay from any source', concluding that 'it may be necessary in the near future, to call on the citizens to initiate a fund for that purpose'.<sup>197</sup> Although not explicitly stated by the Mayor it would appear that these men were in fact the Irish Republican Police Force which was in disarray due to national events taking place in Dublin and Kildare. A mutiny had taken place in Kildare by ex IRA members who were being trained as the new Irish police force. They objected to former RIC being involved in this force. They had left William St. Barracks on 22 April when 'a strong detachment of Free State troops,

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<sup>193</sup> *LC*, 6 May 1922. J.P. Goodbody, C. Cleeve, Philip Rookby, R. Mulligan, A.B. Hamilton, Dr. W.A. Fogarty, W. Holliday J.P., M.D. Shaw, George Morris, A. Woodhouse, A. Goodwin, A. Cleeve, A. McIntyre, G.E. Goodbody.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, 23 Feb. 1922.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, 6 May 1922.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, 1 Apr. 1922.

commanded by Captain Murphy' took over the barracks'.<sup>198</sup> An article in the local press supports this when it stated that 'a letter received this evening and signed by Messrs. Costelloe and Fitzpatrick, police officers, says the Force has been recruited exclusively from the Irish Republican Police'.<sup>199</sup> Strangely the same article in the *Limerick Chronicle* omits this sentence.<sup>200</sup>

The meeting suggested that a force of thirty men including officers would suffice and that the cost would be about £100 per week. At this stage Mr Shaw of Shaw's Bacon Co. stated that the 'feeling of the meeting should be taken'.<sup>201</sup> The Mayor interjected and said that the corporation had the sanction of both armies for 'forming a civil police force'.<sup>202</sup> He then proposed that 'this meeting of the merchants and traders of Limerick authorise the formation of a police force in Limerick ... for a period of ten weeks'. The motion was seconded by Mr Bourke. The Mayor at this stage emphasised the necessity of the force 'because of the insecurity of property'.<sup>203</sup> This was a reference to the commandeering of property in the city by the LCWHA and probably the seizure of barracks by the IRA. The vacuum of authority which existed in the city was allowing all sorts of gremlins to emerge. Dr Fogarty felt that the number of men required should be stated in the resolution and that they should come under the control of the Mayor and the Corporation. This was agreed and carried. There is no record of dissention but neither does the report say that it was unanimous. The committee elected to oversee the project consisted of M.D. Shaw, B. O'Mara, G.E. Goodbody, J. O'Connell, J.H. Roche, G.R. Ryan and Dr W.A. Fogarty, three Protestants and four Catholics. There were no clergy at the meeting. Fogarty and Shaw were appointed as trustees of the fund which was to be raised by way of cess.<sup>204</sup> Even though this was primarily a meeting of the Limerick bourgeoisies it does not detract from the positive effects that a civic police force had on a city when the country was tottering on the brink of civil war.

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 22 Apr. 1922.

<sup>199</sup> *LL*, 10 May 1922.

<sup>200</sup> *LC*, 9 May 1922.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, 6 Apr. 1922.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid

<sup>203</sup> Ibid,

<sup>204</sup> Ibid

When the traders and merchants of Limerick decided to establish a police force in May 1922 they were following a tradition which was more than one hundred years old. The new committee lost no time in organizing the new police force. A letter from the Mayor's office dated 15 May 1922 and signed by the Deputy Mayor Paul A. O'Brien was circulated to all businesses in the city. This letter referred to the meeting of merchants and traders held on 5 May 'to arrange for the maintenance of a Local Police Force'.<sup>205</sup> The recipients of these letters were expected to subscribe a set amount to the fund. Within ten days the Limerick City Police Force consisting of thirty eight-men was active. This was a remarkable feat as no advertisements had been placed for any vacancies reinforcing the suspicion that the Mayor had men ready and available to take up paid duty. The authorised collector for the subscriptions was John A. McNamara. The Chief of Police was a Mr Morgan Costelloe who refused monetary compensation for his efforts but 'expected to be compensated in some other way' stating that he held a commission from Dáil Éireann.<sup>206</sup> The Limerick Trade Directory for 1933 showed that he was indeed compensated as he was then clerk of the District Court.<sup>207</sup> At a meeting of the sub-committee held on 12 May it was decided that a period of ten weeks should be sufficient for the force. This meeting also authorised the supply of armllets, leather belts, holsters and automatic pistols at a cost of £35-11-0. This was in keeping with the belief at the time that the police should be armed despite requests by the RIC to disarm their force. According to Garvin the RIC 'wished to be converted from a gendarmerie to a genuine constabulary'.<sup>208</sup> However the new Garda Síochána force which was being formed in Dublin eventually became an unarmed force following the Kildare Mutiny.<sup>209</sup>

The events taking place in Limerick city during these crucial weeks were closely allied to national events taking place in Dublin and Kildare. There appeared to be confusion among the supporters of the Treaty as to what kind of police force should be in the country. Collins, as stated above, would have been agreeable to retaining the RIC in a regenerated form but it seems that in the early stages 'the Provisional

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<sup>205</sup> Limerick Archives, (hereafter LA), IE LA L/PC.

<sup>206</sup> LA, IE LA L/PC 12 May, 1922.

<sup>207</sup> Limerick City Directory 1933, p.17.

<sup>208</sup> Garvin, 1922, p. 106.

<sup>209</sup> Allen, *Gárda Síochána*, pp 31-48; Garvin, 1922, pp 107-108.

Government might have considered recruiting Simon Donnelly's men as regular police'.<sup>210</sup> What was at stake was a crisis of legitimacy of the Provisional Government but this crisis also enveloped the forces which included the Irish Republican Police and the Dáil Court system which had been operating in tandem with the British system. The desire for an acceptable police force paralleled the desire for control of the army. In a country 'where revolution had thoroughly subverted respect for almost every instrument of authority'.<sup>211</sup> It was essential that an acceptable police force be instituted as quickly as possible. The Provisional Government was well aware of this and preparations had been under way three months before the postponed disbandment of the RIC for new recruits.<sup>212</sup>

Collins had taken control of the organization of a national police force as far back as January being disillusioned by the failure of Eamonn Duggan and Michael Staines to make better progress in raising the new police force.<sup>213</sup> Eamonn Duggan was Minister for Home Affairs and Michael Staines had an impeccable record having joined Sinn Fein in 1905. Staines was one of the first Irish volunteers to join Eoin MacNeill in 1913 and he became treasurer of the National Executive. He had fought in the 1916 rising as staff officer to Patrick Pearse and was elected to the Supreme Council of the IRB on release from internment. Elected as a TD in the 1918 general election he became involved in the organizing of the Dáil courts. It appears that Duggan would have been more at home reconstituting the law courts rather than being squeezed between Austin Stack and his Republican Police Force and the pressure of calling for a 'Volunteer Police Force' as envisaged by Collins.<sup>214</sup> Here we see the genesis for what was to follow in the army split and the Kildare Mutiny of the nascent Garda Síochána. At this stage Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Home Affairs, behind the scenes had taken responsibility for finding suitable men from the ranks of the RIC and DMP, who would be favourably disposed to the Provisional Government, and 'willing to train a new police force'.<sup>215</sup> A former RIC District Inspector called Walsh

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>211</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands* (Oxford, 1998), p. 117.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, p. 127.

<sup>213</sup> Allen, *Gárda Síochána*, p. 13.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

was recommended and Collins wrote to him on 28 January inviting him to a meeting in Dublin with a view to offering him a position of authority in the new force. This meeting took place in the Gresham Hotel on 9 February and was attended by Collins, Duggan, Staines and General O'Duffy and General Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Defence in both the Dail cabinet and the provisional Government. Present also were Volunteer officers.<sup>216</sup> It was Mulcahy, the 'most dutiful disciple of Collins'<sup>217</sup> and not Duggan who took the chair and who laid out 'in general terms ...the lines which were to be followed in the formation of the new force'.<sup>218</sup> The decision to put former RIC men into positions of authority in the new force was to ignite the passions of the ex-IRA recruits into what became known as the Kildare Mutiny. By the end of the mutiny the original strength of the old force of 1,500 had fallen to 1,150. It is estimated that the 350 young men who left quietly and returned home were disillusioned. Although there were staff changes and some resignations 'no member of the Guard was punished or discriminated against for any action he had taken in the mutiny'.<sup>219</sup> It was in this unsettled period that the Limerick City Police Force, a civic body founded and financed by voluntary contributions and responsible only to the civic authorities, operated.

The city courthouse was to be the headquarters of the force as the Town Hall was unsuitable. Costelloe was asked to submit a weekly report to the sub-committee and authority was granted to him for the purchase of an additional six revolvers. This meant that the majority of the force were to be armed.<sup>220</sup> The question of the legitimacy and legality of the force was discussed and the law agent for the corporation was asked his opinion. He was evasive about the force and advised leaving the 'matter stand as it is, as it was improbable that the powers of the force would be questioned'.<sup>221</sup> He appeared to accept that Costelloe had the 'necessary

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid, p 15. The officers present were Brigadier Michael J. Ring, West Mayo Active Service Unit; Colonel-Commandant Patrick Brennan TD, Meelick, County Clare, East Clare ASU; Jeremiah Maher, former sergeant in the RIC, Commandant Martin Lynch, brigade police officer, County Laois.

<sup>217</sup> J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: politics and society* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 153.

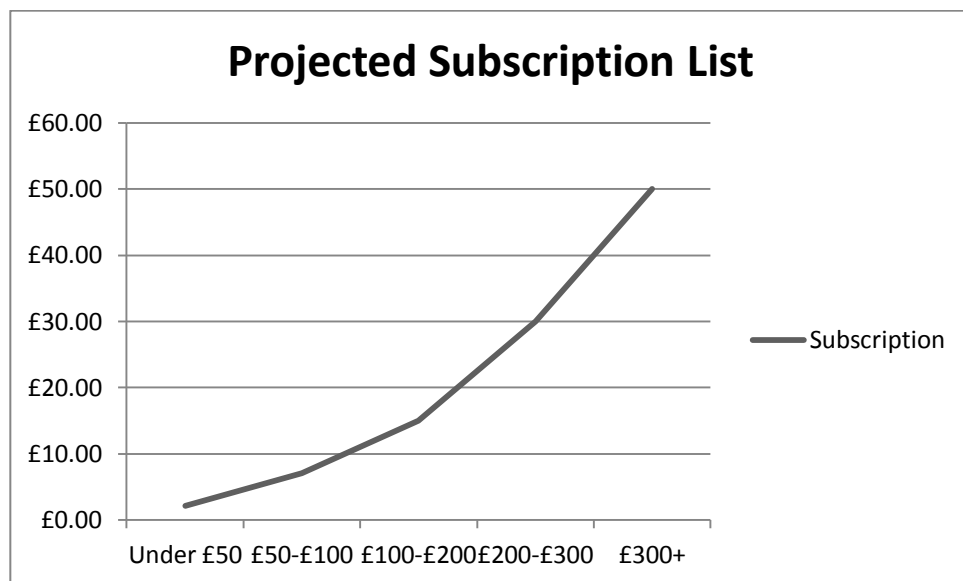
<sup>218</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>220</sup> LA, IE LA L/PC.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid

authority to establish the force under his commission from the Dail'.<sup>222</sup> Having established some legal basis for the force, however suspect, the committee addressed the problem of financing it. This was agreed on a simple basis of valuation and the telephone directory, (table 3).The secretary submitted a list of traders contained in the directory together with the relevant rateable valuation 'extracted from the official valuation books'.<sup>223</sup> There is no record of any opposition to the force being formed in Limerick city. It is quite possible that this was because the force consisted of ex-IRP men anyway. Again one can detect the hidden hand of the IRA.



**Figure 1: Projected Subscriptions to Limerick City Police Force May 1922.**<sup>224</sup>

At the next meeting of the sub-committee on 15 May a list of subscribers was agreed and the actual payments expected from them. This amounted to a total of 299 firms contributing £2350. The five banks had agreed to pay £50 rather than the £30 for which they were rated. Some other changes were made to bring the £50 list up to

<sup>222</sup> Ibid

<sup>223</sup> Ibid

<sup>224</sup> Compiled from minutes of sub-committee LCPF 12 May 1922, LA, IE LA L/PC.

Rateable Valuation	Subscription
£300+	£50
£200 - £300	£30
£100 - £200	£15
£50 - £100	£7-10-0
Under £50	£2-10-0



twenty firms, (table 4). John A. McNamara, late of Messrs, Wallis,<sup>225</sup> was given the job of collecting the subscriptions at a commission rate of two and a half per cent. The list was adopted and given to him with the command to make a list of those who refused to subscribe. This would have been considered a comfortable job in a way similar to a rate collector.

General O'Duffy was anxious to get control of the LCPF and to that end he was prepared to finance the wages of the force.<sup>226</sup> However, he wanted them to place themselves under the authority of Dáil Éireann. This was not acceptable to Paul O'Brien, deputy mayor, as he considered the force to be a purely civic one. As far as O'Brien was concerned the LCPF already had the backing of O' Duffy's troops which were stationed in the old RIC barracks in William Street as well as the anti-treaty troops in the city. At the public meeting which had organised the police force the mayor had said that the project had the support of both armies.<sup>227</sup> This was obviously a reference to the split in the IRA. Paul O'Brien, deputy mayor, was left with the impression from O'Duffy that a refund for the force might be forthcoming once the political situation was settled.<sup>228</sup>

The minutes of the meeting of 19 May offer us the name of another police officer, Mr Fitzpatrick who was listed as O/C Police Force showing how the force was composed and the work done from 9 May to 18 May. Unfortunately there is no record of the other members of the force. This is an illuminating document as it gives an impression of what the city was like in those troubled times. The force was composed of one District Inspector as officer in Command. This was obviously Costelloe, one adjutant, one clerk, one sergeant as Intelligence Officer, eight sergeants, twenty four men for patrol and general police work and two men for station duty and emergency work. This amounted to thirty eight men which was one fewer than the old Night Watch. With this body of men the city was policed from 9.00am until 3.00pm using a two shift

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<sup>225</sup> John Wallis , 4 Cecil St. is the only Wallis listed in the Limerick City Directory in 1933, p.21. He was listed as a carrier (transport).

<sup>226</sup> LA, IE LA L/PC.

<sup>227</sup> LC, 15 May 1922.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

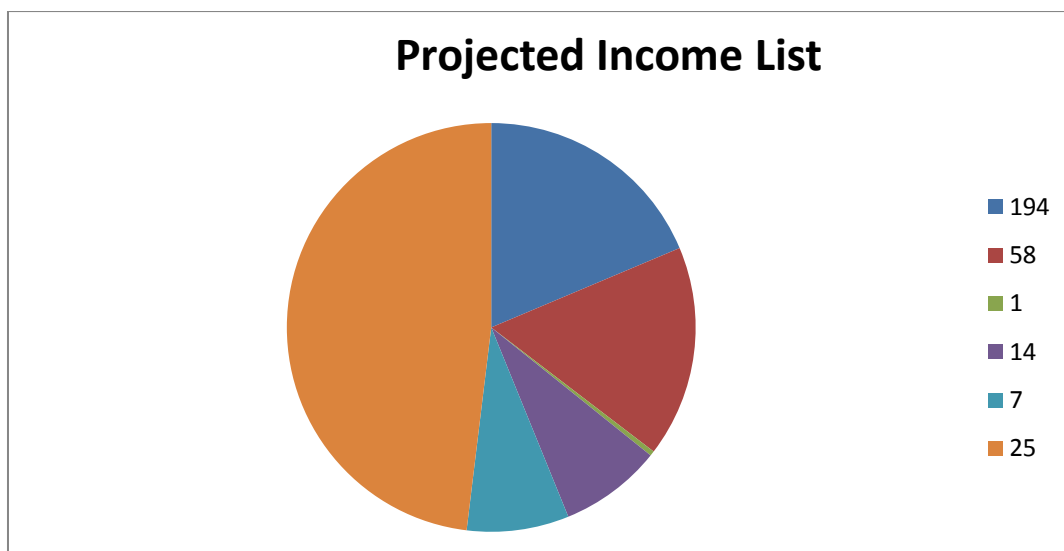
system. Unlike the old Night Watch the LCPF did not patrol the city during the night.<sup>229</sup> The pay sheet for that week amounted to £145-3-0 with expense bills for £3-16-0. Monies collected by McNamara by that time amounted to £500.<sup>230</sup> This was important as it showed that the Limerick traders supported the police force by financing it. A total of £2350 was collected by McNamara in the period for the force although at times he was finding it hard to get in some of the money and the secretary submitted a further list of traders containing one hundred and one names. This would not have been unusual because in any fundraising drive there will always be some people who will try to avoid paying. It is a human trait. By the middle of June the committee was still trying to get in funds and both Guinness Limerick and Great Southern & Western Railways were reluctant to submit further payments. In a letter dated 16 June Great Southern & Western Railway replied that Headquarters had fully considered the matter but regretted that the company would be unable to contribute to the scheme. Their reasoning was that if they paid in Limerick then they may have to pay all along the line. This appears to be a spurious argument as there is no record that any other police force was formed in the country. On the other hand it is possible that they may have feared that the IRA may have looked for money if Limerick got it from them. The letter from Guinness stated that they understood that the police force was only to be in place for ten weeks and that after that the new Provisional Government would take over policing.<sup>231</sup> It was suggested by Dr. W. A. Fogarty that extracts from the report be submitted for publication to the local press.

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<sup>229</sup> A full account of their work can be found in appendix D.

<sup>230</sup> LA, IE LA L/PC.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid



**Figure 2: Projected Income of Limerick City Police Force by business.** <sup>232</sup>

It was not until the meeting of 23 May that the sub-committee began to worry about risk to the policemen and the public. This once again raised the question as to the legitimacy of the police force. The position of the law agent, Dundon, that the commission held by Morgan Costelloe from the Dáil was sufficient to legitimise the force was beginning to weaken. In retrospect it seems that one of the first issues which would have been dealt with by businessmen would have been insurance but it was not until late May that the question arose. It was at this meeting that the question of insurance was discussed and the meeting agreed unanimously to take out insurance 'so as to indemnify the committee against any accident to the members of

<sup>232</sup> Compiled from minutes of sub-committee LCPF 12 May 1922, LA, IE LA L/PC

Firm	Subscription	Amount
Bank of Ireland	£50	£50
Ulster Bank	£50	£50
Munster & Leinster Bank	£50	£50
National Bank	£50	£50
Provincial Bank	£50	£50
20	£50	£1000
7	£30	£210
14	£15	£210
1	£10	£10
58	£7-10-0	£435
194	£2-10-0	£485
<b>Total</b>		
<b>299</b>		<b>£2600</b>

the force or to a third party'.<sup>233</sup> There was however a problem with the possibility of irregular and unlawful actions of the force and the law agent Dundon was asked for his opinion. His opinion was that they could take out an employer's liability policy but he warned about third party risk policy. It was his opinion that the committee 'had no legal power behind them that could be conferred on the force to legalise the use of firearms – they had no power to shoot'.<sup>234</sup> One wonders why, if they had no power to shoot, they were carrying guns. Furthermore in a reply to a question from a committee member he stated that 'he did not think an insurance company would take the Corporation as the employers, as the council had no legal authority to establish the force'.<sup>235</sup> Here again there is a dilemma. If the council, meaning Limerick Corporation, had no legal authority to establish a police force how then could a group of limerick businessmen. Despite this opinion the committee decided to take out an Employer's Liability Policy and to make enquiries regarding third party insurance. Unemployment and national health Insurance 'was left stand for consideration at a future meeting'.<sup>236</sup> It was also decided that court cases arising out of police action would be dealt with 'by the law agent of the Corporation'.<sup>237</sup>

What appears to be one of the final meetings of the sub-committee took place on 28 July 1922. This meeting was attended only by four of the committee and the secretary.<sup>238</sup> When the supposed legitimacy or legality of the force is taken into account it is possible that some members were getting cold feet. At this stage the balance in the bank was a mere ten shillings and sixpence and they required more money in order to pay off liabilities. O'Mara raised the possibility of establishing a permanent police force for the city and suggested communicating with General O'Duffy about it. Shaw, however, stated that the Chamber of Commerce 'had sent a deputation to General Brennan who gave an undertaking to police the city by Military pending some permanent arrangement'.<sup>239</sup> Again this seemed unusual. If General Brennan was ready to police the city in July, why was he not asked to do it in the first

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<sup>233</sup> LA, IE LA L/PC.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid

<sup>235</sup> Ibid

<sup>236</sup> Ibid

<sup>237</sup> Ibid

<sup>238</sup> Ibid Those present were M.D. Shaw, S. O'Mara, J.A. O'Connell, G.R. Ryan and secretary P.T. Conlan.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 28 July 1922.

place. General Michael Brennan was O/C East Clare Brigade and had been a committee member of the strike committee that organized the Limerick soviet.<sup>240</sup> At this meeting the secretary was asked to withdraw while they discussed liabilities and 'payments due to the Chief of Police, secretary etc.'<sup>241</sup>

During its brief existence the Limerick City Police Force gives us a glimpse of what crime was like in the city in the early months of 1922. Out of 146 reported and investigated cases there was one case of domestic abuse which resulted in the husband spending a week in prison; eleven cases of men being drunk and disorderly and one of a woman; fourteen cases regarding children which included hurling on the streets to not attending school or swimming in public places; five reports of water wastage, leaving taps running. Theft was a common crime although of a petty nature. In total there were thirty-two reports of goods stolen of which six were recovered. Women featured on four occasions where two of them were charged with keeping an 'improper house' and receiving stolen property. One was ordered to leave the city. The remainder were of a minor nature except for one case of child abuse where the perpetrator named Bray was accused of molestation. This was eventually dismissed in court due to lack of evidence. Kevin O'Higgins once made a statement referring to this period as a time when a culture had 'gone temporarily hysterical in a country that had reverted to a Hobbesian state of nature'.<sup>242</sup> Certainly in some parts of the country which was unpoliced 'gangs of young men roamed at will and burnt out unionists, shopkeepers, and those they regarded as either political anathema or agrarian enemies'.<sup>243</sup> This was not the recorded experience of the Limerick Police Force and this may have been due in retrospect to the decision of the Limerick elite to implement this force. These elite were well known to each other and did business on a daily basis. The record of the Limerick City Police Force peters out just before the civil war begins in earnest in July but the record reminds us that once the merchants of Limerick stood together to defend themselves against the forces of anarchy.

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<sup>240</sup> Michael Brennan, *The war in Clare* (Dublin, 1980), p. 36.

<sup>241</sup> LA, IE LA L/PC.

<sup>242</sup> Garvin, 1922, p. 93.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid*, p. 105.

The organization of a civil police force in Limerick city in 1922 reflected the concerns, not of the city workers, but of the Limerick merchants and urban landlords who had something to lose if anarchy persisted in the city. They were familiar with a previous force, the Night Watch, but the civil police force which they established did not patrol the city at night. The members of the LCPF were former members of the Republican Police Force but they were no longer under the control of that organization. They were subject to civil control which in a way presaged the *Gárda Síochána*. Unlike the *Gárda* they were subject to their paymasters, the Limerick traders. Their role according to their reports was to protect property and keep children off the streets as far as possible. There was obviously fear among the traders about the seizure of property nor did they want a repeat of the Limerick soviet of 1919. They played no role in the seizure of the Garryowen houses or the other houses seized in O'Connell St. There was a doubt as to their legality by the law officer Dundon and they tried to cover up this discrepancy by taking out an insurance policy. The LCPF disappeared as quickly as it had been formed. More serious crime in the form of civil war was about to overtake Limerick.

### Chapter 3: Working Class Limerick: The Yellow Road

The 'Yellow Road' is synonymous with the locality known as Boherbuoy. The Irish name for the locality was An Bóthar Buí but this was seldom referred to by the people who lived there. It was in this locality, which was later declared a slum, that working-class people helped each other to survive and created their own culture through music, sport and religion. The music was supplied by the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band, the sport by rugby clubs such as Young Munster RFC and Pirates RFC, by soccer clubs like Prospect, Trojans and a hurling club called Shamrocks. It was also referred to as 'Carey's Road', or 'the back of the monument'. There is some confusion as to which monument this is, the statue of Daniel O Connell in the Crescent or that of Thomas Spring Rice in the People's Park.<sup>244</sup> Either monument would suffice as there were slum

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<sup>244</sup> Matthew Potter, *The Government and the People of Limerick*, p. 322. This park was created between 1874 and 1877 in memory of the wealthy merchant and philanthropist Richard Russell (1803-71) who had constructed Plassey House in 1863 as his country residence. The park was opened on 20 August 1877.

areas adjacent to both places but in between them were the affluent houses of Newtown Pery. Judith Hill has written that 'the town was planned and built in a relatively short period of time by a small, powerful and wealthy section of the population'.<sup>245</sup> Colm Lennon explained that this section of society in the cities this was due to 'the success of the counter-revolution ... which created the dilemma of clashing religious and political alliances for the ruling elites ... which was the major cause of their loss of power in urban government in the mid-seventeenth century'.<sup>246</sup> In 1654 the Civil Survey showed that only '5% of the city property owners were Protestant ... but by 1659, the census recorded that 53% were Protestant ... yet some of the major trading families succeeded in maintaining their commercial hold'.<sup>247</sup> In this locality wealth and poverty existed side by side. The beautiful Georgian buildings looked down upon the slums of Vize's Fields and the cottages of Carey's Road. The physical difference of the buildings reflected the social distance of the people who lived in both areas. The locality of the Boherbuoy was a singular and bounded place, socially, culturally and economically. On its southern side it was flanked by the Roxboro Road, on its western side by Punche's Cross, on its northern side by the People's Park and Newtown Pery, and its Eastern flank ran all the way through Nelson Street (now Parnell St.) with its myriad of shops, to the corner of Roche's Street and Gerald Griffin Street. These small shops were an important element in the cohesion of the people of the Yellow Road. As Patricia Garside noted in relation to the residents of the Sutton Dwellings Trust in England, 'local shops also promoted sociability, neighbourliness and mutual recognition'.<sup>248</sup> .<sup>249</sup> The reader will get a flavour of the type of shops and businesses in the locality from table 1.

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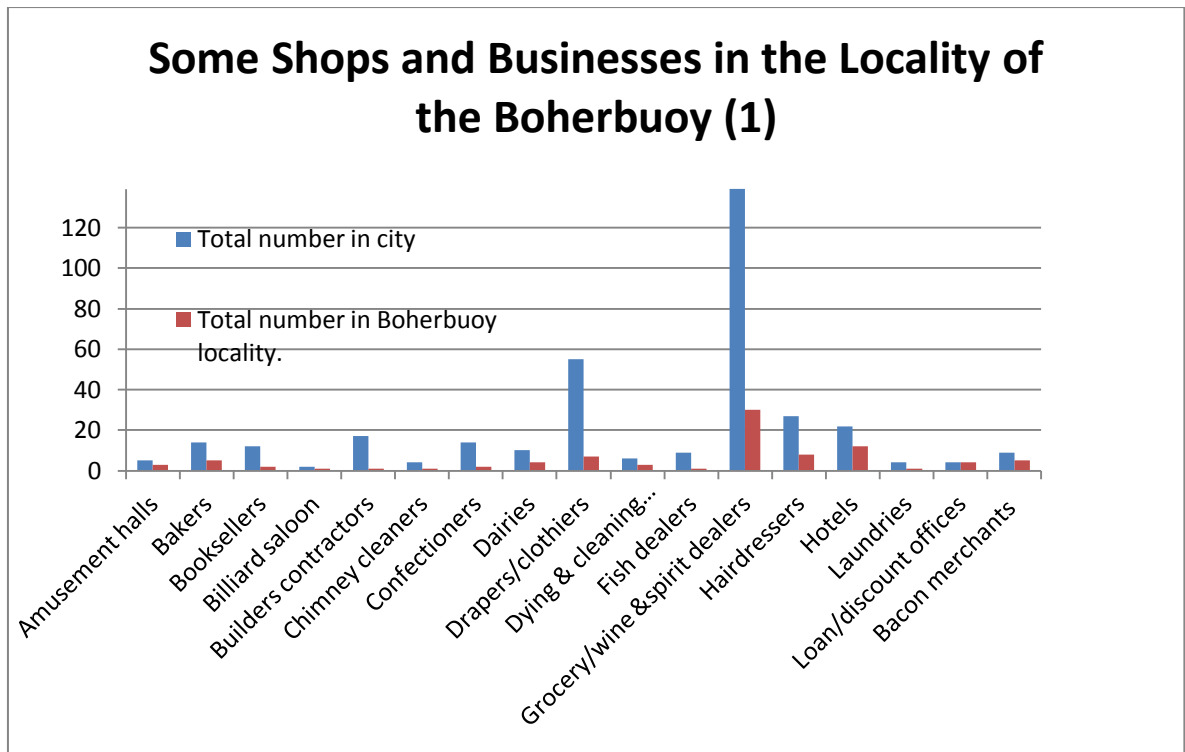
<sup>245</sup> Judith Hill, *The building of Limerick* (Cork, 1997), p. 25.

<sup>246</sup> Colm Lennon, *The urban patriciates of early modern Ireland: a case of study in Limerick*, The 28<sup>th</sup> O'Donnell Lecture (Dublin, 1999), p. 4.

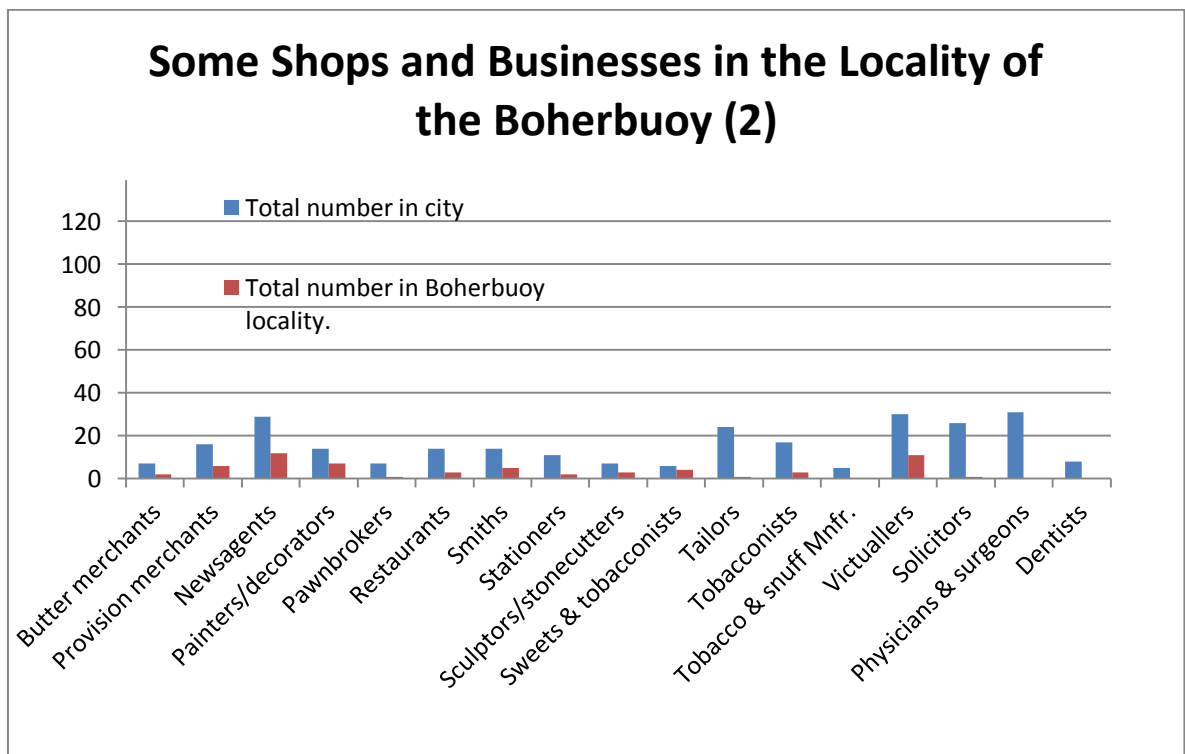
<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>248</sup> Patricia L. Garside, 'Citizenship and quality of life' in Robert Colls and Richard Rodger (eds.), *Cities of ideas-Civil society and urban governance in Britain 1800-2000*, (Aldershot, 2004), p. 267.

<sup>249</sup> The history behind Sutton Dwellings, Chelsea, <http://chelseasociety.org.uk/history-behind-sutton-dwellings-chelsea/>. William Sutton was a Victorian philanthropist whose donations were specifically directed towards the building of social housing.



**Figure 3: Some Shops and Businesses in the Locality of the Boherbuoy (1)<sup>250</sup>**



**Figure 4: Some Shops and Businesses in the Locality of the Boherbuoy (2)<sup>251</sup>**

<sup>250</sup> Limerick Directory 1933.

<sup>251</sup> Limerick Directory 1933.



The people who lived there were working-class and worked for small wages in the industries which surrounded the area, the locomotive works, the railway station, Matterson's bacon factory, McMahon's timber yard, Rank's flour mills, the docks and Peter Tait's clothing factory. It was Sir Peter Tait who brought employment and industry to the city in the form of the Limerick clothing factory, the 'biggest such

Type of Business	Total number in city	Total number in Boherbuoy locality.	Directory Page number
Amusement halls	5	3	19
Bakers	14	5	20
Booksellers	12	2	20
Billiard saloon	2	1	20
Builders contractors	17	1	20
Chimney cleaners	4	1	21
Confectioners	14	2	21
Dairies	10	4	21
Drapers/clothiers	55	7	21
Dying & cleaning establishments	6	3	23
Fish dealers	9	1	23
Grocery/wine & spirit dealers	139	30	23-27
Hairdressers	27	8	27
Hotels	22	12	27
Laundries	4	1	27
Loan/discount offices	4	4	27
Bacon merchants	9	5	27
Butter merchants	7	2	28
Provision merchants	16	6	28
Newsagents	29	12	29
Painters/decorators	14	7	29
Pawnbrokers	7	1	29
Restaurants	14	3	29
Smiths	14	5	31
Stationers	11	2	31
Sculptors/stonecutters	7	3	31
Sweets & tobacconists	6	4	31
Tailors	24	1	31
Tobacconists	17	3	31
Tobacco & snuff Mnfr.	5	0	31
Victuallers	30	11	32
Solicitors	26	1	32
Physicians & surgeons	31	0	32-33
Dentists	8	0	33

concern in the world and best equipped factory in Eire.’<sup>252</sup> A clock was erected by public subscription in 1867 to commemorate the dynamic industrialist Sir Peter Tait (1828-90) who had served as Mayor of Limerick on three occasions (1866-68).<sup>253</sup> He had one of the most advanced clothing factories in the world located in Lord Edward St. in the heart of Boherbuoy. Just across from the Dominican Church was Goodbody’s jute factory and Matterson’s bacon factory.

Carey’s Road consisted of one long road which led from Lord Edward St. to the Roxboro Rd. and encompassed many lanes all of which contained small two roomed cottages. Bud Clancy, the famous dance band leader and trumpeter with the Boherbuoy Band during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, remembered the living conditions of that time: ‘There was a network of laneways where people were born and lived all their lives. The ordinary workers were struggling. Everything from the earthen floors of the houses was swept into the lanes’.<sup>254</sup> The distance between these cottages was a hands length. Pauline Quinn, who lived in the locality all her life, recorded that ‘they paid their rent to Nash’s office -agents – had a lot of property, or to Welpley in O’Connell Street’.<sup>255</sup> Richard Hoggart reminds us that ‘the working-classes ... have their own recognisable parts of towns, they have, almost city by city, their own recognisable styles of housing – back-to-back or tunnel-backs there: their houses are usually rented, not owned.’<sup>256</sup> Paddy Keane, who also lived in the locality all his life, confirmed this when he said that ‘you could stand in your front door and shake hands with the person in the house across from you’.<sup>257</sup> He also recalled how ‘young people played hurling in the mud, or marbles in the soft earth of the kitchen in their homes’.<sup>258</sup> This was reinforced in an interview with Pa Phealan, former President

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<sup>252</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, *A rocky road: the Irish economy since the 1920s* (Manchester, 1997), p. 51. Sir Peter Tait operated a clothing factory in Lord Edward St. which employed hundreds of women from the area. It was known as the Limerick Clothing Factory and supplied army uniforms to the British army and to both sides in the American civil war.

<sup>253</sup> Potter, pp 322-323.

<sup>254</sup> Frank Hamilton, ‘The life and times of Bud Clancy’, Frank Hamilton (ed.), *Limerick in days gone by* (Limerick, 1978), p. 10. Interview with Bud Clancy.

<sup>255</sup> Pauline Quinn interview, 5 Feb. 2013.

<sup>256</sup> Richard Hoggart, *The uses of literacy: aspects of working-class life with special reference to publications and entertainments* (Middlesex, 1958), p. 19.

<sup>257</sup> Frank Hamilton, ‘Down the Yellow Road again’ Frank Hamilton (ed.), *Limerick in days gone by* (Limerick, 1978), p. 46. Interview with Paddy Keane.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

of the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band, which was founded in 1851, who was born in a cottage in Stoke's Lane on the Yellow Road, when he said that 'in the lanes at that time now you could see what was going on in the window in the house across the lane'.<sup>259</sup> Pauline Quinn, who was over ninety years of age, had fond memories of the Boherbuoy 'Limerick was very quiet, lovely – all factories going – plenty of work ... money was small, no one had big money that time' and when asked about the living conditions of the people of the Boherbuoy she replied 'Oh, hovels, but lovely decent families'.<sup>260</sup>

Because the cottages had no room to socialise the men of the locality constructed a clubhouse which they called the 'Rangers Club'. It was situated opposite the kiosk in the People's Park.<sup>261</sup> Pauline Quinn had memories of the Rangers Club as a place where men did 'nothing – sit outside on benches in the summer'.<sup>262</sup> This was a theme taken up by Pa Phealan also. He spoke of men who worked in the lime kilns in the locality from 6.00am to 6.00pm and then 'had nothing to do'.<sup>263</sup> Bud Clancy also had memories of those lime kilns

In Carey's Road they had names like Welshes Lane and Stokes Lane, and at the end of it there was a lime kiln. In the area there were about seventy or eighty houses and on Sunday mornings the women used to go out with their half head and cabbage in the pots and place them around the kiln to boil.<sup>264</sup>

He remembered that it was 'all men from the locality built the Rangers Club' and that the Boherbuoy Band had played there.<sup>265</sup> This clubhouse was the nucleus from which most sporting activity in the locality came, which included rugby, soccer hurling and cricket. Both Pauline Quinn and Pa Phealan had memories of their mothers helping out other families who had fallen on hard times. Pa remembered that his mother 'gave dinners to other people' after she had fed her husband who worked in the

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<sup>259</sup> Pa Phealan interview, 14 Jan. 2013.

<sup>260</sup> Pauline Quinn interview.

<sup>261</sup> This kiosk is still there today as it has been preserved by the Limerick City and County Council.

<sup>262</sup> Pauline Quinn interview.

<sup>263</sup> Pa Phealan interview.

<sup>264</sup> Hamilton, 'The life and times of Bud Clancy', p. 12. A half head refers to a half of a pig's head. Some poor people could not afford the full head.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

railway.<sup>266</sup> Pauline remembered that ‘people were very poor. My mother used to bring in children to feed them’.<sup>267</sup> These networks provided crucial social and psychological support for less fortunate members of the community. In his interview with Frank Hamilton Paddy Keane did not mention Shamrocks Hurling Club but he described three other hurling teams ‘there were three hurling teams drawn from the Yellow Road. Star held sway in Upper Carey’s Road, in the centre, Harp was supreme, and down at Coffey’s Corner, it was the Shannon team. He also played rugby but ‘he played under a different name because of the GAA ban’.<sup>268</sup> This type of locality vanished in the 1930s when the city corporation began a slum clearance of the Boherbuoy and Parnell Street. Although the corporation believed that they were doing well with this policy it has subsequently been recognised by historians and sociologists who have studied slum clearance that the sense of community was greatly weakened.<sup>269</sup>

## Rugby

As the rugby clubs in Limerick were of junior status they served as feeder clubs for Garryowen FC. This was particularly true of Shannon RFC but Young Munster also serviced Garryowen FC in this regard.<sup>270</sup> Charles Mulqueen has written that ‘Shannon made their most significant contribution in the early days as a “nursery” to Garryowen and the “Parish” and Garryowen were synonymous for many years’.<sup>271</sup> As the senior club in the city Garryowen promoted junior rugby amongst the other clubs and benefitted by getting the best players from those clubs to play in the senior ranks for them and because of this reciprocity ‘a structure of mutual dependence quickly developed’.<sup>272</sup> When Young Munster RFC became a senior club then Pirates supplied

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Pauline Quinn interview.

<sup>268</sup> Hamilton, p. 47.

<sup>269</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass frontier: The suburbanization of the United States* (New York, 1985), pp 272, 279-280, cited in Putnam, *Bowling alone*, p.210-211.

<sup>270</sup> O’Flaherty, pp 17-19, this refers to Peter Galbraith who was the first Young Munster player to be selected on the Munster senior team that played Ulster. He won Munster senior cup medals with Garryowen, 1913-14 and 1920. He became the Garryowen representative on the Munster Branch IRFU. He proposed Young Munster to join the senior rank in 1922-23. He became President of Garryowen and the Munster Branch.

<sup>271</sup> Charles Mulqueen, *Limerick’s rugby history* (Limerick, 1978), p. 6.

<sup>272</sup> Liam O’Callaghan, *Rugby in Munster; a social and cultural history* (Cork, 2011), p. 32.

players to them. On the famous Bateman Cup winning Young Munster team of 1928 there were six Pirate junior players.<sup>273</sup> This form of reciprocity was common among all the junior rugby clubs in Limerick. Shannon RFC also supplied players to Garryowen. The Yellow Road provided just this type of dense network of reciprocal social relations.

The previous section has examined the rise of rugby as the premier sport of the men of the Yellow Road. This section will examine another phenomenon which influenced both the women and the men of the locality. This was their devotion to two religious figures, located in the Dominican St Saviours Church in Dominic St, our lady of Limerick and Blessed Martin de Porres (now St Martin). According to Jeremiah Newman, a distinguished sociologist and former Bishop of Limerick:

Society is not something that is kept together physically; it is held by the invisible bonds of common thought ... a common morality is part of the bondage. The bondage is part of the price of society and mankind which needs society, must pay its price.<sup>274</sup>

The 'common morality' which the bishop spoke of was supplied by the Dominicans of St Saviour's church in Glentworth St. and the Redemptorists of St Alphonsus. This morality was inculcated into the boys from the Boherbuoy at an early age through school, the confraternity and the attendance at mass and benediction in the Dominican church. Many of them would have served as altar boys in that church. These young boys found leisure, following their religious duties, when they kicked around a pig's bladder playing the game of soccer. Soccer was truly the poor man's game but some of these boys would later gain fame as international soccer players and referees.<sup>275</sup> So in the early part of the twentieth century hurling, soccer and

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<sup>273</sup> O'Flaherty, p. 63. The players were, John Joe Connery, Henry Raleigh, Michael Flaherty, Danagher Sheehan, Joe O'Dea, and Tommy Hickey.

<sup>274</sup> Jeremiah Newman, *The state of Ireland* (Dublin, 1977), p. 2.

<sup>275</sup> Rory Keane was capped for Ireland IFA, prior to the split between the northern and southern football associations in 1948. He received four more caps for Ireland FAI between 1948 and 1949. William (Blarney) Keane, his brother was a founder member of the referees section of the FAI. Both came from Lee's Lane in the Boherbuoy. They were brothers to Paddy Keane mentioned earlier and sons of William Keane of the Royal Munster Fusiliers. Other soccer Internationals from Limerick were Bud Aherne from Prospect (Luton Town), Billy Hayes, the Parish, (Wrexham), Jackie Gavin, Fairgreen, (Norwich), and Sean

rugby were played by the working class men and boys of the Yellow Road. They made no distinction as to the nationality of any game. As far as they were concerned their sense of belonging to a place, community was foremost in their minds. It was this sense of belonging that created the environment through which identity and status were determined. In their study of the social and economic value of sport in Ireland, Liam Delaney and Tony Fahy made the observation that

the social dimensions of sport are unequally distributed in society: they are less prevalent among the socially disadvantaged ( for example, in that the unemployed and the low skilled are much less likely to volunteer for sport than the employed and those in professional occupations).<sup>276</sup>

If this conclusion is to be believed then it must follow that the ‘boys’ of the Yellow Road were remarkable in that they not only played all sports but in fact excelled at them. It could be concluded that the social capital generated in the community was sufficient to allow this to happen. Delaney and Fahy concluded that ‘the social value of sport is defined in terms of social capital’ which included ‘making new friends’ which assisted other activities other than the sport and that

such socialising has been placed at the heart of modern theories of social capital formation and it is clear that sport has a significant role in promoting the type of low-level relationship building and network formation implicit in the social capital approach.<sup>277</sup>

Rugby gave the working man of Limerick and the Yellow Road the status which he could never achieve in his job. The marching bands and the music they played produced a similar status. Bud Clancy recalled that ‘music was a source of pride to the people. One man I knew played in his band and in the morning took off his dickey bow, put on his old clothes and swept the streets of Limerick ... that was his job’.<sup>278</sup>

### **Rugby in Limerick City**

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Cusack from Thomondgate, (Limerick United). I am grateful to Kevin Fitzpatrick, former goalkeeper for Limerick City, for this information.

<sup>276</sup> Liam Delaney and Tony Fahy, *Social and economic value of sport in Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), p. x.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>278</sup> Hamilton, ‘The life and times of Bud Clancy’, p. 9.

Just as Young Munster RFC became synonymous with the Yellow Road so also rugby became synonymous with Limerick and in particular with working-class Limerick. This thesis will propose four reasons for the dominance of rugby in Limerick city. They were: the Parnell split, which affected the GAA in the city; the GAA ban, which will be discussed in a later chapter, resulted in three hurling clubs disappearing from the Yellow Road. Because of the ban those who wished to play rugby or soccer were obliged to use false names as the GAA used their own people to check on those playing 'foreign games'; the influence of the Christian Brothers in Sexton Street up to 1934 on schools senior rugby. I will then analyse how these reasons reflect the process of embourgeoisement as outlined by Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard.<sup>279</sup>

Each identifiable locality in Limerick city had its own rugby club, marching band, rowing club and temperance society. This could be compared to the French experience of rugby where

the traditional peasant values of the *pays* still held sway; that is to say the essential frame of reference was the immediate neighbourhood and the local community, as opposed to the *patrie* (the national unity imposed, as Eugene Weber has put it, in quasi-colonial fashion by the centralizing Third Republic, although not without considerable opposition, especially from the inhabitants of the *Midi*).<sup>280</sup>

Elite clubs, such as Limerick Boat Club, were instrumental in the founding of Limerick Golf Club and later Bohemians Rugby Football Club.<sup>281</sup> The one common feature among all the localities was the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family, (which will be discussed in chapter 4), which did not interfere in the men's choices of sport as long as the sport did not interfere with the confraternity.

There was, however, a strong difference between the locality of the Yellow Road and that of the 'The Parish'. 'The Parish' which comprised St Mary's parish was

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<sup>279</sup> Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard, *Barbarians, gentlemen and players: a sociological study of the development of rugby football* (Oxford, 1979), p. 67.

<sup>280</sup> Philip Dine, Money, identity and conflict: Rugby League in France, *Sports Historian*, No.16, (May, 1996), p. 104.

<sup>281</sup> Austin Reid, *A history of Limerick Golf Club* (Limerick, c. 1991), p. 81.

located in the old quarter of Limerick and was dominated by, 'as Garvin expressed it, tiny capitalists', of pig buyers and Abbey fishermen.<sup>282</sup> John McGrath wrote that 'there were a number of different social groups in the parish that claimed unofficial dominion over different quarters of the island ... formed usually because of common occupational background and shared social and/or economic status or families'.<sup>283</sup> With the building of Newtown Pery this part of the old city fell into decay and 'as personal wealth increased in the new town the inhabitants of the old town became increasingly poverty stricken'.<sup>284</sup> O'Connor tells us that 'for all its charm the old city probably exuded squalor in at least an equal proportion and by 1769 its halcyon days were already being consigned to the memory bank'.<sup>285</sup> These two groups formed separate rugby clubs. The Abbey fishermen formed the Abbey RFC and the pig buyers formed Shannon RFC. Athlunkard Boat Club was formed mainly by the pig buyers and dominated by Shannon RFC.<sup>286</sup> There were also two bands in the Parish; St Mary's Fife and Drum Band and the Number Nine Band. The song adopted by Shannon RFC was one of Scottish origin 'There is an Isle'. This was possibly because the parish was based on King's Island. Even to this day it is considered a sacrilege for a Young Munster man to sing that song. Whereas the Shannon anthem is geographically located as an island the Young Munster song has echoes of masculinity and locates itself in the manliness of 'The boys from the Yellow Road'. It emphasises the beauty, not of geography, but of the men themselves. It is called 'Beautiful Beautiful Munsters'.

Beautiful, beautiful Munsters

Star of my soul fade away

I sigh when I think of Young Munsters

With whom I played many a game.

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<sup>282</sup> Maura Cronin, *Country, class or craft? The politicisation of the skilled artisan in nineteenth-century Cork* (Cork, 1994), p. 241.

<sup>283</sup> John McGrath, 'An urban community: St Mary's parish Limerick and the social role of sporting and musical clubs, 1895-1905', in Jennifer Kelly and R.V. Comerford (eds.) *Associational culture in Ireland and abroad* (Dublin, 2010), pp 127-128.

<sup>284</sup> Hill, p. 103.

<sup>285</sup> Patrick J. O'Connor, *Exploring Limerick's past: an historical geography of urban development in county and city* (Limerick, 1987), p. 48.

<sup>286</sup> *LL*, 21 Feb. 1902.



It is highly probable that the 'Star' mentioned was the hurling team that Paddy Keane referred to. There was a marked difference between the rugby social scene in England and that of Limerick and it can be readily seen from the type of songs which rugby clubs had in the two locations. One of these differences was the singing of obscene songs and the initiation ceremonies of English rugby clubs. According to Dunning the central constituent of this ceremony was 'the male 'striptease', a ritual mocking of the female stripper'. The initiate was then stripped and his genitals smeared with shoe polish or Vaseline.<sup>287</sup> Dunning equated rugby in England with the upper classes and correlated them with the suffragettes which he proposed offered a threat to their masculinity.

The songs of the Limerick rugby clubs bore no relation to those of the English clubs so we could speculate that either there was no threat coming from women or that the Limerick rugby players had been conditioned by the confraternity to have respect for women. In the early days of rugby in Limerick the main role for women was as spectators. At a match in the County Ground on the Ennis Road there were '3000 spectators 'including many ladies''.<sup>288</sup> During the 1893/94 season a match in the Markets Field attracted over '4000 spectators, a large number of them being of the fairer sex'.<sup>289</sup> Limerick also had the honour of hosting an international match between Ireland and Wales which was held at the Limerick Cricket Club in Lansdowne on 19 March 1898.<sup>290</sup> Although there were no Limerick players on the Irish team the accolades which the Welsh team received from the crowd and the city enhanced the reputation of the city as a rugby city. The *South Wales Daily* compared it to a Royal reception: 'it was reminiscent of the landing of a member of the Royal family in Wales'.<sup>291</sup> As a comparison the gate receipt for the match 'was £700 more than was netted at Lansdowne Road the previous year when Ireland played England'.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Eric Dunning, 'Sport as a male preserve: notes on the social sources of masculine identity and its transformations', in Eric Dunning (ed.), *The collected works of Norbert Elias*, Vol. 7., Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for excitement: sport and leisure in the civilising process*, revised edition (Dublin, 2008), p. 249.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24; Charles Mulqueen, *Limerick's rugby history* (Limerick, 1978), p. 10.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 28-29.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33; Mulqueen, p. 15. This cricket club was located on the Ennis Road in Limerick in the locality known as Lansdowne.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Enthusiasm for the game and good gate receipts outstripped the provincialism of Limerick on that occasion. As there were no Limerick players on the Irish team the question of class did not arise as it would on other occasions.

Following the founding of Garryowen FC in 1884 rugby was adopted by the working-class people of the different localities in Limerick and it came to signify their local identity. Exactly how this came about has become a matter of much debate. O’Callaghan has proposed that it was primarily because of the structure of junior rugby as administered by Garryowen FC allied to the introduction of Sunday rugby that assisted in rugby taking a firm hold.<sup>293</sup> Limerick in the early twenties was a city of contrasts where sport was concerned. Tennis, rowing, hockey, cricket, association football and rugby were played in the city but the Gaelic sports of hurling and football were also important, table 2. Tom Hayes has recorded many other sports which were prevalent during the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>294</sup>

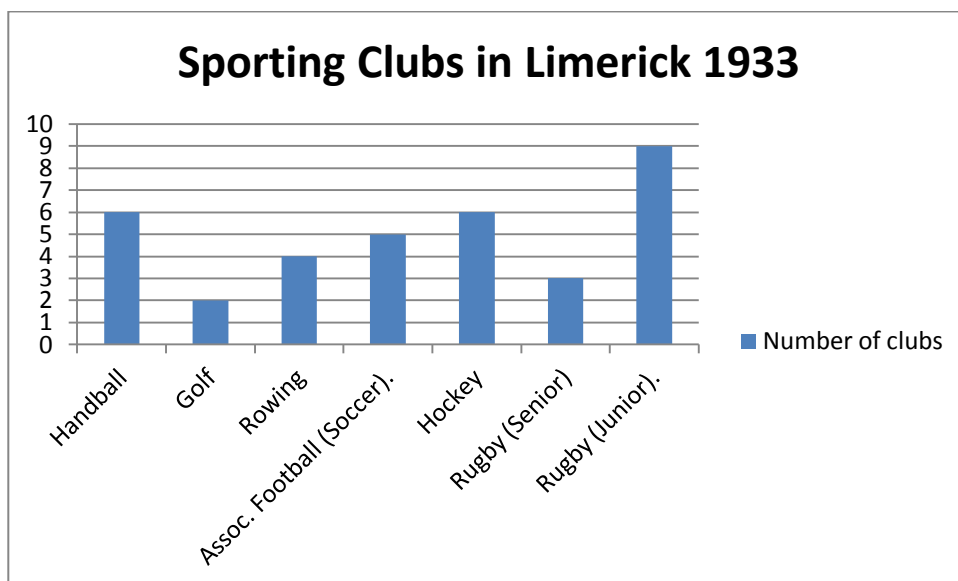


Figure 5: Sporting Clubs in Limerick 1933.<sup>295</sup>

<sup>293</sup> O’Callaghan, *Rugby in Munster*. Rugby matches were played on Saturdays as well as Sundays. LL 21 Feb. 1902, Garryowen vs Bective Rangers, Markets Field; LL 4 Jan. 1901, North Munster vs South Munster, Markets Field; LL, 24 Feb. 1902, Athlunkard vs United Limerick,

<sup>294</sup> Thomas Hayes, ‘A spirit of emulation’: the transformation of sport in North Munster, 185-1890, (unpublished PhD, Mary Immaculate College 2009), pp 122-207. Some of the sports he included were, Angling, shooting, coursing, poaching (although this could hardly be called a sport, more a means of survival), cricket, croquet, archery, athletics, cycling, baseball, swimming, billiards and sailing.

<sup>295</sup> *Limerick Directory 1933*. There were no GAA clubs listed in this directory.

Type of sport.	Number of clubs
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Two of the most familiar sports played in Limerick during the 1920s and 1930s, rugby and rowing, had a similar origin as those same sports which were played in France, Great Britain.<sup>296</sup> The game of football, however, had been played in Galway as far back as 1527 and it was also played throughout Ireland long before the founding of the GAA in 1884.<sup>297</sup> Rugby migrated from England through Trinity College around 1854 and owed as much to generations of Irishmen who had been educated in England and who brought back English public school ethics to Ireland.<sup>298</sup> It was because the Blackheath FC in London in 1863 refused to join the newly founded Football Association that the Rugby Union of England was formed and it was this decision that allowed rugby to be established in Ireland.<sup>299</sup>

### **Influence of the Gentry on Rugby in Limerick**

Rugby, like a chameleon, had the ability to adapt itself to its environment. In the North of England it split and formed rugby league, ostensibly on money and the payment of players, although it was suspected that it was really on class grounds. In Wales it was adopted by the Welsh as a symbol of national identity. France took to it as a symbol of local and middle class identity. In Limerick city, although introduced by the gentry, it metamorphosed into a game which straddled all classes but in particular it developed as a working-class sport. Charles Barrington was a member of the Barrington family who resided at their castle, Glenstal Castle, in Murroe Co. Limerick. The Barrington family was well known and respected in Limerick and was responsible for the building of Barrington's Hospital which served the needs of the poor as well as the wealthy of Limerick. Joseph Barrington was responsible for the building of

Handball	6
Golf	2. This included Lahinch Golf Club.
Rowing	4
Assoc. Football (Soccer).	5
Hockey	6
Rugby (Senior)	3
Rugby (Junior).	9

<sup>296</sup> Dine, 'Money, identity and conflict', p. 101. Charles Barrington was responsible for bringing rugby and rowing to Limerick.

<sup>297</sup> Neal Garnham, *The origins and development of football in Ireland: being a reprint of R. M. Peters Irish Football Annual of 1880* (Belfast, 1999), p.1.; Jack Mahon, *A history of Gaelic football* (Dublin, 2000), p.1.

<sup>298</sup> Garnham, p.3.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid*, p.6.

Barrington's Pier on the Shannon which served to unload the red bricks for the building of the fine houses on the Ennis road.<sup>300</sup> Charles Barrington, who had succeeded to the baronetcy in 1890, eventually left Limerick in 1921 after the killing of his daughter by a group of armed men, most likely the IRA, never to return.<sup>301</sup> He died in August 1943, aged 93 years.<sup>302</sup> Stokes was a Protestant, Justice of the Peace who came from Dundrum in Dublin, and was educated at Rathmines. Both Barrington and Stokes were among the founding fathers of the first rugby club to be formed in Limerick, Limerick County. Although Stokes played for the club and held several positions in it, including captain, secretary and president, it never won the Munster Senior Cup although playing in the final in 1887 and 1889.<sup>303</sup> Stokes was also instrumental in the formation of the Garryowen Football Club which was founded on 19 September 1884 in the Athenaeum (now the Royal Cinema) and was its first President. Also present at that meeting was Michael Joyce MP, of Merchant's Quay, who was elected as the first Club Hon. Treasurer and Tom Prendergast, baker, of Edward Street. All three were involved in politics. Michael Joyce served as MP for the city from 1900 to 1918. He also served two terms as Mayor from January 1905 to January 1907. He was a member of the Home Rule Irish Party under John Redmond and became President of the Limerick Branch of the Tenants League. He decided not to stand in the 1918 election and was replaced by Michael Colivet, the Sinn Féin candidate.<sup>304</sup> It is believed that this club had been in existence for at least one year prior to this, as an unofficial side, and was known as 'Park Rangers'.<sup>305</sup> Park Rangers merged with Catholic Institute Football Club to form Garryowen Football Club.<sup>306</sup>

Although rugby dominated in Limerick soccer was also important to working-class men. Soccer had a different genesis to rugby. It was more associated with the British military. There were soccer clubs in existence but there was little mention of it

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<sup>300</sup> Hill, p. 112.

<sup>301</sup> LC, 17 May 1921, 19 May 1921; cited in Jim Kemmy (ed.), *The Limerick anthology* (Dublin, 1996), pp 62-63.

<sup>302</sup> Michael O'Flaherty, *The home of the spirit: A celebration of Limerick rugby* (Limerick, 1999), p. 18.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Potter, p. 359.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid, I am also grateful to Billy Purcell of Garryowen FC for this information.

<sup>306</sup> O'Callaghan, *Rugby in Munster*, p. 77.

in the press prior to 1925.<sup>307</sup> The men of the Boherbuoy, and of other Limerick localities, loved all sport and were willing to engage in many different codes. There was a soccer club, Prospect, in the Boherbuoy locality founded in 1904 which had two of its players killed in World War 1.<sup>308</sup> Several of these soccer players also played rugby with Young Munster RFC. In 1933 the Association Football League wrote to St. Michael's Temperance Society asking them to affiliate to the League but as the Society had no soccer club at that time they had to decline.<sup>309</sup> By 1933 there were five association football clubs in Limerick city - Dalcassians, Prospect, Ignatians, Crusaders and Trojans.<sup>310</sup> There was no problem with class as far as soccer was concerned. It was a working-class game.

### **Class and Rugby in Limerick**

Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard maintain that rugby and soccer had 'descended from the winter 'folk-games' which were a deeply rooted tradition in pre-industrial Britain'.<sup>311</sup> Both Mahon and Garnham accepted that a similar situation had existed in Ireland with the added game of hurling. Dunning and Sheard detected five stages in the development of rugby and soccer and it was during the fourth stage, 1850-1890, that rugby came to Ireland where Gaelic games which had begun in 1884 competed with rugby, soccer and hockey.<sup>312</sup> Although included as one of the four official games of the GAA, rounders, according to Dunning and Sheard, was in fact an English game from which American baseball developed.<sup>313</sup> They were also of the opinion that

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<sup>307</sup> *LL*, 21 January 1925. This report stated that the home team defeated Limerick Commercials by 2-0 and that it was the first soccer match played at Ennis for over ten years. There was an immediate refutation from an official of Limerick Commercial Football Club to the *Leader* on 24 January who stated that they were a G.A.A. club. Some ex-members of their club had taken up soccer and he assumed that was the reason for the mistake.

<sup>308</sup> They were Mick and Jim O'Sullivan, from Jack the Lads lane

<sup>309</sup> Minutes, St. Michael's Temperance Society, (hereafter SMTS), 28 October 1933.

<sup>310</sup> *Limerick City Directory* (Limerick, 1933), p.17. I am grateful to Roy McCormac for this directory.

<sup>311</sup> Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard, *Barbarians, gentlemen and players: a sociological study of the development of rugby football* (Oxford, 1979), p. 1.

<sup>312</sup> Dunning and Sheard, *Barbarians, gentlemen and players*, p.3.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

modern game forms developed 'on separate though interconnected levels of social integration' but because it was industrialization which 'formed the 'prime mover' that it was this that operated at the societal level and thus led to a change in the balance of power between the classes'.<sup>314</sup> They asserted that this occurred because of the 'increase in power of the bourgeoisie – the urban-industrial middle classes – relative to the aristocracy and gentry'.<sup>315</sup> They referred to this change 'as a process of *embourgeoisement*'. They explained it in this way

Embourgeoisement ... refers to the assimilation of the working into the middle class ... to the gradual emergence of the bourgeoisie as the ruling class ... their growing control of major institutions, and ... spread of their values through society ... it is therefore as meaningful to talk of the *embourgeoisement* of the aristocracy and gentry as the working-class.<sup>316</sup>

This was happening in England but there was a different process at work in Ireland although the end result was the same. Even before the nationalist insurrection and the civil war there was a marked retreat of the Protestant ascendancy and gentry from Ireland, accelerating a process that had started in the nineteenth century. This vacuum was filled by the emerging Catholic middle class who readily adopted the social values of the departing ascendancy and gentry and using them, as Dunning and Sheard maintained, as a 'reference group'.<sup>317</sup> Kurt Bowen has written of the 'fading social influence' of the Church of Ireland community accompanied by a fairly rapid decline of population of 34.2 per cent in 1926. Twenty five per cent of this decline was due to the 'withdrawal of the armed forces and their dependents'.<sup>318</sup> Bowen stated that the Church of Ireland gentry 'with their ostentatious loyalism, their ascendancy backgrounds ... stood out as helpless symbols and as convenient targets for anti-British sentiment'.<sup>319</sup> However, in Limerick it is noticeable that the landed gentry achieved a type of accommodation with the population. Lord Monteagle, Lord Emly, Lord Dunraven and the Barrington family fit neatly into the process of

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., p.306.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>318</sup> Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic State: Ireland's privileged minority* (Dublin, 1983), pp 20-22.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

embourgeoisement. Each in their way contributed to the process: Mary Spring Rice, daughter of Lord Monteaigle, who had nationalist sympathies, was involved in gun running for the Irish volunteers in 1914, Lord Emly became a Catholic and had close connections with the Christian Brothers Sexton Street through Brother Walsh, and was instrumental in bringing the Redemptorists to Limerick,<sup>320</sup> Lord Dunraven brought Catholic schools and teachers to Adare and, through the Barrington family, Limerick city received the two sports for which it became noted internationally, rowing and rugby. Browne wrote that the emerging Irish Catholic middle class began to absorb the values of the disappearing Protestant communities and their concern with social class 'absorbed their [traders] excess energies directing the better-off traders to ally with members of the various professions to form tennis clubs and golf clubs, establishing these as the symbols of polite social improvement'.<sup>321</sup>

### **Christian Brothers School Sexton Street**

In Limerick city all of the Catholic schools, even the nationalist Christian Brothers, adopted rugby as the sport of the school. Barry Coldrey has questioned the influence of the Christian Brothers on nationalism in view of the evidence that school influence can be limited as against that of family and community but he concluded that 'there does appear to have been a distinctive contribution of the Christian Brothers to the development of Irish nationalism'.<sup>322</sup> Christian Brothers Sexton Street won the Munster Senior Schools Cup long before Crescent College, Mungret or St Munchin's, in later years considered the nursery of rugby in the city. Christian brothers Sexton Street won the Munster senior cup in 1926, 1931, 1933 and 1934. It was not until the 1940s that Mungret College, Crescent College and eventually St Munchin's College won this trophy.<sup>323</sup>

Christian Brothers School Sexton St was located very close to the Boherbuoy and it got many of its pupils from the sons of farmers, the skilled, semi-skilled and some

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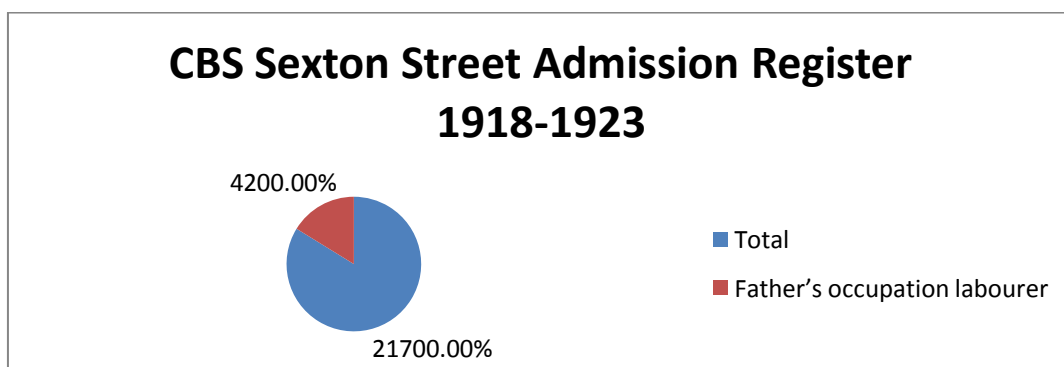
<sup>320</sup> Richard Aherne, 'A history of the Christian Brothers in Limerick', part one, *Old Limerick Journal*, Vol. 21, Autumn 1987, p. 16.

<sup>321</sup> Terence Brown, *Ireland: a social and cultural history 1922-1985* (London, 1981), p. 90.

<sup>322</sup> Barry Coldrey, *Faith and fatherland: The Christian Brothers and the development of Irish nationalism 1838-1921* (Dublin, 1988), p.272.

<sup>323</sup> Edmund Van Esbeck, *The story of Irish rugby* (London, 1986), pp 298-299.

unskilled labouring men who lived in that locality. Up to 1934 both rugby and Gaelic games were played in Sexton Street. This mixture of sports, but particularly rugby, had a leavening effect on the class divisions which existed among the pupils of the school. CBS Sexton Street, as a rugby school, should therefore be considered as a major contributory factor in the development of rugby in the city. Most of the sons of the unskilled in the Boherbuoy went to Leamy's Academy. This was a subtle discrimination between the so-called artisans and the labouring people within the working-class. So it is reasonable to suggest that Limerick city became involved in the process of *embourgeoisement* and that working-class people in the city were willing to use the 'aristocracy as a reference group, i.e. as a model on which to base their own social standards'.<sup>324</sup> A brief examination of the Admissions Registers of the Christian Brothers schools in Sexton Street and St Munchin's reflects this subtle discrimination against the sons of unskilled labourers, table 4 and 5. Between the years 1918-1923 at CBS Sexton St only five point eight six per cent of their pupils were the sons of 'labourers' while St Munchin's in Thomondgate had a much higher rate of nineteen point three five per cent. Leamy's school was a different proposal entirely and eventually reflected the desire of the Catholic Church to control education of Catholics in the city.



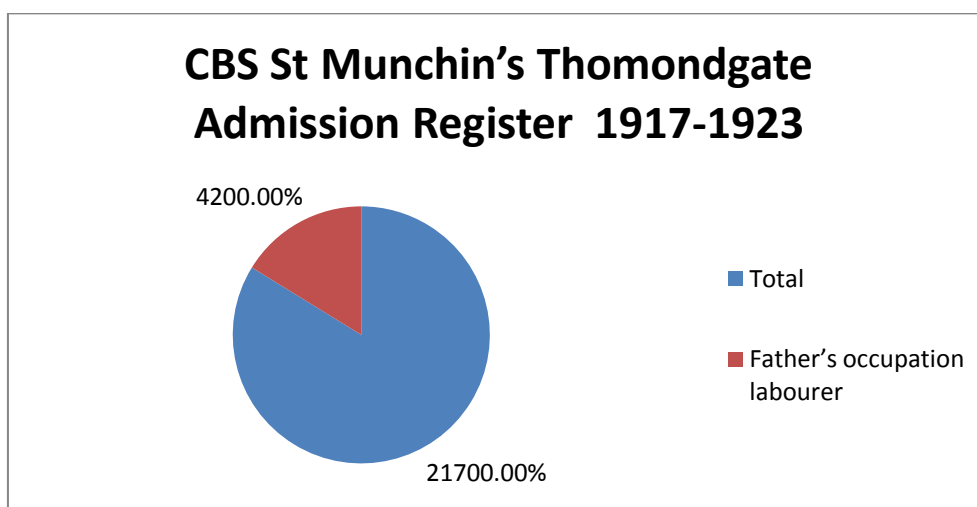
**Figure 6: Social class of boys admitted to CBS Sexton Street 1918-1923.**<sup>325</sup>

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>325</sup> LA, P.34/9, Admission Register CBS Sexton St., 1918-1923.

Page No.	Total	Father's occupation labourer
101	30	0
103	31	4
105	31	3
106	31	3





**Figure 7: Social Background of Boys admitted to St Munchin's Thomondgate 1917-1923.** <sup>326</sup>

#### Leamy's School Harstonge St Limerick

This school was founded as a direct result of piracy. William Leamy, a native of Limerick city 'who had amassed a considerable fortune through piracy' left money in his will which was to be used for the education of the children of the poor in Ireland, principally those in and about Limerick'.<sup>327</sup> Although initial attendance was good

107	31	1
108	31	1
109	31	0
110	31	1
117	31	4
118	12	0
Total	290	17

<sup>326</sup> LA, P.34/6, Admission Register CBS St Munchin's Thomondgate 1917-1923.

Page No.	Total	Fathers occupation labourer.
53	31	5
54	31	4
55	31	2
56	31	7
57	31	11
58	31	11
59	31	2 (13 occupations not listed)
Total	217	42

<sup>327</sup> Michael V. Spillane, *Two centuries of popular education; an historic survey of the educational institutions of Limerick 1700-1900* (Cork, 1973), p. 1.47: Thomas J. Morrissey, *Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer of Limerick 1842-1917* (Dublin, 2003), p.147. The sum remaining in August 1831 for this was £9,722 which was to be invested in government stock at 3%.

numbers had fallen to one hundred and forty four by 1855 During the 1860s the clergy opposed the attendance of Catholics in mixed religion schools and as a result of this all the Catholics withdrew from Leamy's. In 1886 the Catholic Bishop of Limerick, Dr O'Dwyer, withdrew all Catholic children from Leamy's and demanded that the Leamy endowment be divided between Catholics and Protestants. He stated that while he was bishop that he would never allow the Catholics of Limerick to attend a mixed school.<sup>328</sup> At this stage William Leamy's religion became a point of contestation. The Protestants said he died in Lisbon and was buried as a Protestant and had letters to prove it. The Catholic side produced a Mr Griffin, grandson of a Mrs White, who was a sister to William Leamy. He said that 'his grandmother and her family were reared as Catholics'.<sup>329</sup> A final settlement was reached in April 1894 to the satisfaction of Bishop O'Dwyer.<sup>330</sup> The Catholic Board received possession of the buildings on 15 October 1894. Within one year there were 600 boys on the role for Leamy's school. Leamy's closed in 1957 as most of the poor had been dispersed to the new working-class housing estates. Frank McCourt attended Leamy's School.<sup>331</sup> So also did Pa Phealan of the Boherbuoy Band. According to Morrissey the Leamy's School dispute added to the reputation of Bishop O'Dwyer in the field of primary and intermediate education.<sup>332</sup> Donald H. Akenson held a slightly different view when he wrote that 'the true triumph of the Catholic Church in the field of education was ... that its hegemony was won ... by articulating ideas and attitudes compatible with the popular will'.<sup>333</sup>

### **The GAA Ban**

The community of the Yellow Road were like the working class communities in Britain about which Joanna Bourke wrote when she said that their 'identities were based on the locality or family. This was not because the locality was generalised to represent

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<sup>328</sup> Thomas Morrissey, *Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer*, p.150.

<sup>329</sup> Michael V. Spillane, *Two centuries of popular education*, p.1.50: Thomas J. Morrissey, *Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer*, p.148.

<sup>330</sup> Thomas J. Morrissey, *Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer*, p. 150. The protestants received £2,000 and the Catholics obtained the school buildings and the remainder of the money, £4,000.

<sup>331</sup> Frank McCourt, *Angela's Ashes: a memoir of a childhood* (London, 1996).

<sup>332</sup> Thomas J. Morrissey, p.150.

<sup>333</sup> Donald Harman Akenson, *A mirror to Kathleen's face: education in independent Ireland 1922-1960* (London, 1975), p. 108.

the national, but because, for the individual, the distinction was irrelevant'.<sup>334</sup> The population of the Yellow Road created a paradoxical identity in that although it was a well-known republican stronghold during the war of Independence and Gaelic games were played by the men who lived there, as was soccer, it was ultimately the game of rugby to which they gave their allegiance. Garnham has examined this apparently contradictory phenomenon of identity in relation to soccer which could just as easily be ascribed to the game of rugby:

If, for example, soccer was rejected primarily because of its association with the military and Unionist communities the questions are raised as to why horseracing and boxing remained so popular in Ireland. Both these sports saw their administrations dominated by men from military and pro-union backgrounds yet they remained extremely popular amongst the wider nationalist constituency.<sup>335</sup>

When the all-Ireland Gaelic Convention, which was held in Thurles in 1902, adopted a resolution to the effect that any Gaelic footballer who took an active part in rugby matches would be disqualified, it had a negative effect on those men from the Yellow Road who at that time played both codes. Some also played soccer.<sup>336</sup> In order to do this the men played under pseudonyms, which in a way was similar to those men in Northern England who had played Rugby League and had to use false names in order to play Rugby Union in England.<sup>337</sup> This was one of the strands which led to the working-class men of the Yellow Road taking up the game of rugby. The Limerick County club was not in favour of the ban. At the Limerick County Convention in 1926 the motion to remove the ban was carried by 34 votes to 28.<sup>338</sup> A similar situation

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<sup>334</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Working-class cultures in Britain 1890-1960: gender, class and ethnicity* (London, 1994), pp 169-169.

<sup>335</sup> Neal Garnham, 'Football and national identity in Pre-Great War Ireland', *Irish Economic and Social History*, Vol. 28, (2011), p. 14.

<sup>336</sup> *LC*, 19 March 1985, Photograph of Park Rangers A.F.C. 1938, winners of the Cromer Cup included two brothers Rory and Donall Keane; *LC* 19 May 2009, Photograph of Wanderers A.F.C. – 1930s and early 1940s. This team includes Tom Clifford who played rugby for Young Munster and was capped for Ireland in rugby as well as Rory Keane who was capped for Ireland soccer, IFA and FAI. Trojans A.F.C. 1936/37, Cromer Cup winners. This team included three Keane brothers, Don, Eddie and 'Blarney' as well as the Irish rugby international and Young Munster player Danagher Sheehan.

<sup>337</sup> Tony Collins, 'The ambiguities of amateurism: English Rugby Union in the Edwardian era', in *Sport and history*, 26:3, p. 402.

<sup>338</sup> *LL*, 1 Feb. 1926,

existed in Co Clare where an even greater majority voted to have the ban removed 'by 19 votes to 9 the Convention directed and bound their representatives to vote, at the All-Ireland Congress in Dublin, in favour of removal of the ban'.<sup>339</sup> On the Yellow Road it was rugby that came to dominate as the sport of men. Soccer was to come later but rugby was always seen as the supreme test of manhood and masculinity.

### **The GAA and the Parnell Split**

The Parnell split had a devastating political effect of the country at large but it also impinged upon sport and in particular the GAA, which as a body supported Parnell, and in the process nearly destroyed the GAA and left an open door for sports such as rugby to gain a foothold in working class Limerick.<sup>340</sup> Gaelic games such as hurling; Gaelic football and handball were played in the city and it was a Gaelic football club, Commercials, who won the first All-Ireland for Limerick on 29 April 1888 when they defeated Dundalk Young Irelands by 1-4 to 0-3.<sup>341</sup> 'They had to wait for twenty years to be awarded their medals when many were either dead or had emigrated'.<sup>342</sup> Limerick was to win it again in 1896 and that was their last win ever in County Gaelic football.<sup>343</sup> The Parnell split of 1891, when the GAA supported Charles Stewart Parnell over the Kitty O'Shea divorce case, nearly destroyed the GAA. Limerick was one of the places affected by the split when 'Commercials stood by the old IRB board, chaired by Paddy "Twenty" O'Brien, against Father Sheehy's board' and this split was a factor in the rise of rugby in the city.<sup>344</sup> In the GAA 'the number of clubs plummeted from 1000 to 220 in 1892'.<sup>345</sup> In 1901 a letter writer, John Reidy, to the *Limerick Leader* bemoaned the decline in the GAA: 'a few short years ago Limerick boasted of thirty odd teams; today six fairly good hurling and football clubs cannot answer a referee's whistle'.<sup>346</sup> A similar situation had arisen in Cork. Donal O'Sullivan has written that in 1890 there was a large drop in the number of GAA clubs nationwide and that in 1891 out of the seven counties that entered the hurling championship only five took part.

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<sup>339</sup> *LC*, 27 Jan. 1926.

<sup>340</sup> Donal O'Sullivan, *Sport in Cork: a history* (Dublin, 2010), pp29-32.

<sup>341</sup> Jack Mahon, *A history of Gaelic football* (Dublin, 2000), p. 9.

<sup>342</sup> Eoghan Corry, *Catch and kick: great moments of Gaelic football 1880-1990* (Dublin, 1989), p. 27.

<sup>343</sup> Mahon, p. 10.

<sup>344</sup> Corry, p. 26.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>346</sup> *LL*, 25 Jan. 1901.

At the annual convention in 1892 only six counties were represented by eighteen delegates O'Sullivan stated that Marcus De Búrca attributed the decline to the split within the Home Rule party from which he said the GAA would take a decade to recover.<sup>347</sup> In those early days the rules of Gaelic football had not been coded completely and it was felt by some that 'the rules that were in use in Cork city were branded as "rugby undisguised" at a GAA meeting in October 1885'.<sup>348</sup> By 1887 the GAA was in trouble with 'two official journals and an impending crisis between clergy-led and IRB inspired officials'.<sup>349</sup> An example of the crossover between rugby and Gaelic football in Limerick may be seen from a county match between Commercials and St Michael's which was won by St Michael's. However, Commercials objected that St Michael's had fielded 'five rugby-playing players' and got a walk-over. The five players were 'barred from the replay by the new "foreign games" ban'.<sup>350</sup> This was one of the contributory factors which allowed rugby to prosper in the city.

### **Young Munster and the Royal Munster Fusiliers**

The other common feature among the localities of Limerick in the early part of the twentieth century was enlistment of Limerick men in the British army. This brought with it the twin sacrifices of death and shame. It was from the lanes of the Boherbuoy, as well as other poor localities of Limerick city, that the British army recruited soldiers into the Royal Munster Fusiliers and other British regiments. Bud Clancy remembered that

as a boy I marched after them, the gallant men of the Munster Fusiliers, they came out of every lane and alleyway of Limerick, with their bugles, fifes and drums ... these brave men in dirty shirts who had won the highest battle honours of the British Army.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Donal O'Sullivan, *Sport in Cork: A history* (Dublin, 2010), p. 29.

<sup>348</sup> Corry, p. 19.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>351</sup> Hamilton, p. 9.

Although never conceded in their centenary book there is a suspicion that the Young Munster Rugby Football Club, which was synonymous with the Yellow Road, had connections to the Royal Munster Fusiliers. Young Munster RFC was founded in 1901-02 but had been in existence prior to that. Flaherty has written that ‘in September 1896 officials of the long established Treaty Club approached Flavin and O’Brien with the idea of an amalgamation’ and that by 1901-02 saw the re-emergence of Young Munster RFC when their first AGM was held in ‘their rooms , Bedford Row’.<sup>352</sup> There are several indications of a connection between Young Munster RFC and the Royal Munster Fusiliers which have been erased from the club’s memory. The Royal Munster Fusiliers had their own rugby club comprised mainly of officers.<sup>353</sup> In an interview conducted by John McGrath with Whacker Casey, he said that in the early years of the club when they took the field they were met with shouts of ‘C’mon the Young Munster Fusiliers’.<sup>354</sup> The colours which they adopted were the black and amber, the colours of the Bengal tiger. Bengal in India was one of the places where the Royal Munster Fusiliers had been stationed and my grandfather, who was a soldier in the RMF, often related stories of Bengal to me. There is also a terrace of houses in Limerick, Bengal Terrace, built by the Irish Soldiers and Sailors Land Trust for retired soldiers.<sup>355</sup> They also adopted the three crowns which were on the RMF crest. Another British regiment which was stationed in Limerick was the Third Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and their mascot was a goat. In later years Young Munster RFC adopted a goat as their mascot. There is an anecdote that following a heavy defeat to a rival club the person in charge of the goat threw him into the Shannon.<sup>356</sup>

However, one of the strongest indications of a link between Young Munster RFC and the British army was an incident which occurred in 1923 at the inaugural senior rugby match between Young Munster and UCC in Cork.<sup>357</sup> One of the Young Munster players, Michael ‘Goggin’ Hickey, was shot dead by Captain John Cosgrove in

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<sup>352</sup> O’Flaherty, p. 13.

<sup>353</sup> O’Callaghan, *Rugby in Munster*, p. 46.

<sup>354</sup> John McGrath, *Sociability and socio-economic conditions on St Mary’s Parish, Limerick, 1890-1950* (Unpublished MA Mary immaculate College, 2006), p.90. : I am grateful to Tadhg Moloney for bringing this reference to my attention.

<sup>355</sup> I am grateful to Tadhg Moloney for this reference.

<sup>356</sup> This is a common story told among Young Munster men.

<sup>357</sup> O’Flaherty, *Young Munster RFC*, p. 29.

Cork city on 10 March 1923. Captain Cosgrove was charged with murder and a court-martial took place in Collins Barracks on 7 July 1923.<sup>358</sup> The two witnesses, Harry Stapleton and Jack Halpin, who had been with Hickey when he was shot, travelled to the court-martial in order to give evidence. A third person, T.H. Guerins, accompanied them to Cork and paid their expenses.<sup>359</sup> As he was not listed as a member of the Young Munster Club in Flaherty's book it was intriguing as to why he was there. It was later discovered that he was secretary to a pensions committee for the Limerick Veterans of the Great War.<sup>360</sup> This association eventually merged with the British Legion. The Irish army refused to pay him the full amount of his expenses. When he tried to recoup these expenses the army questioned each and every item.<sup>361</sup> The Guerins family had moved from Kilkenny to Limerick and lived in a house, The Moorings, owned by Michael Joyce MP.<sup>362</sup> So the Young Munster players, who were witnesses at the court-martial, had their expenses paid from the coffers of the Limerick Veterans of the Great War, some of whom would have been the fathers or relatives of Young Munster players. Certainly my grandfather, William Keane, had been a soldier in the Royal Munster Fusiliers and fathered five sons who played with Young Munster RFC. It was in the docks that Michael Hickey had worked. His father was also a docker but in very poor health. This then was the community from which Hickey came. He was a noted athlete and an exceptional boxer as well as a talented rugby player. According to his father, in a letter which he wrote to Mr O'Connell TD, he said that his son was not politically active 'during the lifetime of Michael Hickey that he was never connected with any side of politics'.<sup>363</sup> This letter also shows the deference which working-class people had for authority 'we do not want to fall out with the government, all we want is justice. We rely on their mercies'.<sup>364</sup> This is consistent with the conclusions of Peter Hart on the vocational identity of IRA volunteers, who found that 'other groups, such as fishermen and dock labourers, were

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<sup>358</sup> MAI, IE/MA/DOD/A/12012.

<sup>359</sup> MAI, IE/MA/AFO/3/Civilians/370. This document is an inventory of the expenses incurred by the witnesses, Harry Stapleton and Jack Halpin.

<sup>360</sup> Franz S. Haselbeck's, *Ireland selected photographs* (Cork, 2013), p. 87.

<sup>361</sup> MAI, IE/MA/AFO/3/Civilians/370, The expenses claimed were for £64-8-0. The army conceded £6-14-0.

<sup>362</sup> I am grateful to Tadgh Moloney for this reference.

<sup>363</sup> MAI, IE/MA/AFO/3/Civilians/370, letter from John Hickey (father) to Mr O'Connell TD, 18 June 1924.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

almost completely unrepresented'.<sup>365</sup> Michael Hickey's father, John, received an ex-gratia payment of £100 for the death of his son.<sup>366</sup>

It was difficult to find a list of the names and addresses of those who joined the British army from the Boherbuoy. Research on those who died in the Great War revealed a list of names and addresses and it was from these sources that the number of men from the Boherbuoy locality who had perished in that war was accessed. The number of dead from the city as a whole was 213. The number from the Boherbuoy locality was 76. Of these 45 were members of the Royal Munster Fusiliers.<sup>367</sup> These figures give an indication of the numbers who may have enlisted which for the Boherbuoy could have been between five hundred and seven hundred. In her interview Pauline Quinn mentions a figure of 505.<sup>368</sup> Des Ryan has written that from the 8000 men that had 'passed through the ranks of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Munsters, ... 4,261 were classed as killed, wounded and missing'.<sup>369</sup> From these incidences it would be reasonable to propose that there was a link, however tenuous, between the Royal Munster Fusiliers and young Munster RFC. However, when these soldiers returned from the war they found that their sons and younger brothers had become involved with the IRA and Na Fianna. Their sacrifice had been diminished as was the uniform which they had worn. Some, like my grandfather, William Keane, joined the IRA 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, but remained members of the British Legion.<sup>370</sup> Following the civil war many, like Pauline Quinn's father, John Buckle, joined the new Óglaigh na hÉireann because 'nobody would give them a job, they joined Michael Collins. My father was in Cork with him'.<sup>371</sup> So the 'stain' of fighting with a British regiment was wiped away by donning the uniform of the IRA or that of the Free State and rugby continued in the Yellow Road as one of the signifiers of local identity. Marilyn Silverman addressed this

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<sup>365</sup> Peter Hart, 'The social structure of the Irish Republican Army, 1916-1923', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (March, 1999), p. 210.

<sup>366</sup> MAI, IE/MA/DOD/A/12010.

<sup>367</sup> *Soldiers died in the Great War 1914-19*, part 72, the Royal Munster Fusiliers, (London, 1921), pp 3-32; Patrick J. McNamara, *The widow's penny: the memorial record of the Limerick men and women who gave their lives in the Great War*, (Limerick, 2000), pp 250-404.

<sup>368</sup> Pauline Quinn interview.

<sup>369</sup> Des Ryan, 'The second Munsters in France 1914-1918', *Old Limerick Journal*, Vol. 25, Summer 1989, Special French issue, p. 161.

<sup>370</sup> *LC*, 11 June 1985, this picture shows members of the Mid-Limerick Brigade of the Old IRA E Company with some members of the Ranger's Club. William Keane is seated in the front row, fourth from left.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*



paradox when she wrote that ‘subordinate groups identified with a dominant culture even as they sought to challenge it’.<sup>372</sup> This partly explained what happened on the Yellow Road.

### **Trouble on the Yellow Road**

While the men of the Yellow Road were off fighting with the British army their sons and brothers had taken up the nationalist cause and joined the Fianna and the IRA. They were organized as Gaelic sports clubs. According to John O’Callaghan these Gaelic clubs were organised around five companies comprising the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Battalion of the I.R.A.<sup>373</sup> Sinn Fein had organized hurling clubs to act as semi-paramilitary fronts. One such club was Shamrock Hurling Club which was located in Boherbuoy and affiliated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion Con Colbert Club, D company. Paddy Keane was captain of this hurling team and was later to become captain of the rugby team known as Pirates. O’Callaghan notes contemporaries like Ernie O Malley and Peadar McMahon commented on the working class nature of the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion. O’Malley ‘noticed that there was a good deal of working men in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn’ and McMahon highlighted that ‘the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion were a different type of people – decent fellows but they were all working people’.<sup>374</sup> McMahon was a member of a Limerick baking company to which he returned following his release from Frongoch in late 1916. While there he helped to reorganise the Limerick battalions. Paddy Keane, who was one of those working men who had to leave school at thirteen years of age and start work as a pit boy in McMahon’s timber yard, was aware of his place in Limerick working-class society ‘I had to go out to work and that was it’.<sup>375</sup> Judith Hill referred to this when she wrote that ‘behaviour was defined and circumspect and determined by an awareness of place in society’.<sup>376</sup> During the War of Independence Paddy Keane became captain in the “E” company of Na Fianna and so started his involvement with the move for independence.<sup>377</sup> One of the reasons why the people of the Yellow Road locality

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<sup>372</sup> Marilyn Silverman, *An Irish working class: explorations in political economy and hegemony, 1800-1950* (London, 2001), p. 12.

<sup>373</sup> John O’Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 65.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> Hamilton, *Limerick*, p. 49.

<sup>376</sup> Hill, p. 129.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*

became radical was attacks by the Black and Tans on the district. One of these attacks by the Black and Tans and the RIC resulted in the destruction of the Ranger's Club, the Boherbuoy Bandroom and the houses of several IRA men and republican sympathisers.<sup>378</sup> Despite overwhelming odds the people of the Yellow Road continued to resist the forces of the crown at every opportunity.<sup>379</sup> The paradox is that so many of the men from that area had joined the British army and in particular the Munster Fusiliers and that they accepted rugby as their sport of choice rather than GAA games. This resistance to what was perceived as a threat to the community succeeded in producing an even greater degree of social capital and helped to bond the people of the Yellow Road.

### **Rugby as a Transnational Force on Civil Society in Ireland, England, Wales and France**

In essence rugby is fluid in terms of cultural and national identity. The game in England split between the Northern counties of mainly working-class miners and the southern counties of the middle and upper classes. In those northern counties of England

by 1914 football dominated the lives of males, young and old. It permeated the work-place where it formed a topic of conversation at 'bait' times. Pubs, schools, churches and temperance groups were all subject to football mania ... football certainly helped miners to expand their horizons, come in contact with different social groups, see different places and faces, and provide them with a focus for community pride.<sup>380</sup>

In Wales it assumed a status of Welsh national identity. David Andrews believed that 'Welsh national solidarity was fuelled by a 'sense of antagonism towards the English as the politically and economically dominant force' and that 'between 1890 and 1914 ... Wales was intent on developing a separate identity out of historical difference, rather than one based on hostile resistance' and they achieved this by promoting 'an

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<sup>378</sup> Brian ÓConchubhair, *Limerick's fighting story: told by the men who made it* (Cork, 2009), p.322; Thomas Toomey, *The war of independence in Limerick- 1912-1921* (EU, 2010), p.414.

<sup>379</sup> Ó Conchubhair, *Limerick's fighting story*, p.322, p 341; Thomas Toomey, *The war of independence in Limerick*, p.270, p.382, p.398/9, p. 415/6.

<sup>380</sup> Alan Metcalfe, *Football in the mining communities of East Northumberland, 1882-1914*, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 5 no. 3 (1988), p. 285.

indigenous Welsh culture' of rugby with a 'distant but acknowledged Celtic past'.<sup>381</sup> In Ireland it was the GAA which took on this sporting role of cultural nationalism as Garnham has pointed out:

The GAA also imposed more distinctive and unique divisions into sport in Ireland through its choice of patrons, its administrative framework, and the involvement of committed republicans from the inception of the organization, the GAA portrayed itself as Catholic, rural, and, most importantly, politically nationalist.<sup>382</sup>

When rugby came to Ireland, through the ascendancy and the upper classes, it was mainly seen as an upper class sport except in Limerick. In Limerick it had the ability to encapsulate all classes and particularly the working classes unlike France where 'the new English sports in particular were conceived as the exclusive preserve of the privileged few, who were to be guided by a spirit of elitist amateurism'.<sup>383</sup> Richard Holt has written that 'the unifying thread which runs through this vast and diverse world of popular sports is the idea that workers make their own culture rather than having their play organised for them or sold to them'.<sup>384</sup> There was, however, a difference between the British working class and the Limerick working class and it was in the context of religion. In England 'the indifference of the town labourer to the Church (explicit atheism was still uncommon) became a pressing concern because of middle- and upper-class fears for political stability and the sanctity of property' but in Limerick there was the ever-present Archconfraternity which controlled the lives of the 'town labourer'.<sup>385</sup> In Limerick city rugby ingrained itself into the fabric of civil society. Holt noted that in England 'working-class society was rooted in the street and the pub' and it was the same in Limerick.<sup>386</sup> Paddy Keane often relayed stories to me of having to drag men out of the pub in order to play a game. Holt also referred to the importance

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<sup>381</sup> David Andrews, 'Sport and the masculine hegemony of the modern nation: Welsh rugby, culture and society, 1890-1914', in John Nauright and Timothy J. L. Chandler (eds.), *Making men: rugby and masculine identity* (London, 1996), pp 54-55.

<sup>382</sup> Neal Garnham, 'Rugby's imperial connections domestic politics, and Colonial tours to Ireland before 1914' in Alan Bairner (ed.), *Sport and the Irish; histories, identities, issues* (Dublin, 2005), p. 44.

<sup>383</sup> Dine, 'Money, identity and conflict', p. 102.

<sup>384</sup> Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: a modern history* (Oxford, 1989), p. 135.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

of place names and their sustaining role of the neighbourhood in sport when he said that 'loyalty to a street or parish was deeply felt'.<sup>387</sup> This was so true of Limerick when you consider that even today the names of the 'Yellow Road' or the 'Parish' can conjure up strong emotions. The rugby clubs of Limerick eventually bought their own grounds by organising raffles, dances or any other fund-raising idea they could come up with. Holt referred to this 'as a development of artisan traditions of good-fellowship and community rather than part of a capitalist welfare system'.<sup>388</sup> He referred to team sports as more than exercise and offered the view which is accepted as the essential part of social capital that 'to be part of a team was to have friends, to share a sense of loyalty and struggle together, and to represent *your* street or workshop, *your* patch of territory'.<sup>389</sup>

### **Young Munster RFC and the Bateman Cup**

By 1887 there were two senior rugby clubs and ten non-senior clubs in Limerick city.<sup>390</sup> The people of Limerick saw in rugby a status enhancing event which was open to any man with brawn or brains. In 1895 the Tyler Shoe Company put up a cup for under 18s. It was the first minor cup and was open to schools and club teams. It attracted ten teams which included Christian Brothers Sexton St. and Young Munster. According to O'Flaherty 'it was usual for boys living in Carey's Road, Boherbuí, Dixon's Lane and Parnell Street to play impromptu rugby matches in the nearby park' and training was provided by Paddy Flavin and Michael O'Brien. So, 'when the opportunity came to play in the Tyler Cup, the necessary finance for the entry fee was raised locally'.<sup>391</sup> Young Munster won the cup. It was their first win in rugby and the 'players were carried on the shoulders of their excited supporters the short distance back to the Yellow Road'.<sup>392</sup> The poor people of the Yellow Road had discovered that status came in many guises and rugby was one way of achieving it. This status was recognised by Criostoir O Flynn who recalled, while out walking in the Boherbuoy as a child with his father, the figure of Danagher Sheehan being pointed out to him as a

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid., pp 153-154.

<sup>390</sup> O'Flaherty, *The home of the spirit*, p. 21.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

hero of the Yellow Road.<sup>393</sup> Karl Johnston also wrote about the status accorded to the 'mighty prop from the Young Munster Club', Ireland and the Lions, Tom Clifford, and stated that he became 'a living legend in Limerick'.<sup>394</sup> Mick Doyle in summing up the meaning of rugby to the people of Limerick wrote that

Unlike anywhere else, rugby in Limerick is about communities. Every player, no matter how exalted he may become in the game, knows exactly what door, in which street and from what area he came – and never forgets it. Rugby is the Limerick man's game – like it used to be from Wales. This is reflected nowhere else in Ireland.<sup>395</sup>

Nowhere was this more evident than when Young Munster achieved the highest honour for rugby in Ireland when they won the Bateman Cup in 1928. The 1926/27 season had been encouraging when they won the Munster Junior Cup and in 1928 they attracted 8,000 spectators to the Markets Field when they played Bohemians in the Munster senior cup. Although the match was a draw Young Munster won the replay and met Cork Constitution in the final on 31 March 1928.<sup>396</sup> They beat Constitution well and the Young Munster captain that day was Phony Nealon whose brother had been killed in the First World War fighting with the Royal Munster Fusiliers. The Bateman Cup had been put up by Robert Bateman and was to be played for by the four provincial cup winners. Young Munster defeated the Connaught winners, Galwegians, and were due to play the Leinster winners, Lansdowne as the Ulster champions did not compete that year. The prevailing wisdom of the day was that Young Munster would have been lucky to get away with a 20 points defeat as Lansdowne 'included many of the great Irish players of the day'.<sup>397</sup> However, as Charles Mulqueen has written, 'on Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, a never-to-be-forgotten game was set in motion at Lansdowne Road, Dublin'.<sup>398</sup> The Lansdowne Club, who had that season, defeated the Welsh champions, Newport; the Scottish champions, Herriots

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<sup>393</sup> Criostoir O Flynn, *There is an isle* ( ), p.93.

<sup>394</sup> Karl Johnston, 'Tom Clifford' in Jim Kemmy (ed.), *The Limerick anthology* (Dublin, 1996), p.209.

<sup>395</sup> Mick Doyle, 'Game of the people' in Jim Kemmy (ed.), *The Limerick anthology* (Dublin, 1996), pp 214-216.

<sup>396</sup> Mulqueen, p. 25.

<sup>397</sup> Mulqueen, p. 26.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

F.P. and Manchester, were put to the sword by the boys from the Yellow Road.  
Another song verse was composed by the songsters

### **Young Munster Again**

All praise to the boys of the Munster team.

Their work will be held in high esteem.

The best the south has ever seen,

Are the boys from the Yellow Road.

Oh, well deserved was the acclamation.

Honours the city bestowed.

On Young Munster boys from the Yellow Road.

All praise to the boys in amber and black.

In their onward march they never slack.

And long may the Bateman Cup abide,

Be here with the boys of the Yellow Road.<sup>399</sup>

Even though this song would not win any poetry contest it concentrates on 'the boys' and on 'locality'. Don Sabo and Sue Jansen have written on the construction of masculinity in sports and stated that

The athletic male body – its discipline, symmetry, strength and performance – is synonymous with power ... in short , since antiquity the sexual economy of symbols in the West has equated masculinity with physical performance: with feats of physical strength, dexterity and sexual prowess.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>400</sup> Don Sabo and sue Curry Jansen, 'Prometheus unbound: construction of masculinity in sports media performance' in Lawrence A. winner, (ed.), *Media sport* (London, 1998), p. 202.

In their analysis of rugby Dunning and Sheard commented that 'folk and public school football were play-forms adjusted to the life of close-knit communities. Participation was less a matter of choice than the accompaniment of a particular status'.<sup>401</sup> There was no payment for rugby in Ireland. Irish rugby did not follow in the steps of Rugby League in the north of England and become professional. The pay-off for working-class Limerick players was twofold. They could play their bosses and win and they could achieve status within their own community. Liston related this to social capital when she wrote that 'social capital is socially constructed. It can lead to rewards based on other forms of capital such as economic capital (e.g. corporate sponsorship or symbolic capital (e.g. social status and prestige)'.<sup>402</sup> Even though women were excluded from participation in most field sports at that time (apart from archery and tennis for the middle class) they could bask in the esteem and honour which their sons, brothers and fathers brought to their locality which enhanced their feelings of local identity. Bale emphasised this when he wrote that 'whether at local, regional or national level, sport is, after war, probably the principal means of collective identification in modern life'.<sup>403</sup>

### **The Influence of Religion on the Yellow Road**

The previous section has examined the rise of rugby as the premier sport of the men of the Yellow Road. This section will examine another phenomenon which influenced both the women and the men of the locality. This was their devotion to two religious figures, located in the Dominican St Saviours Church in Dominic St, Our Lady of Limerick and Blessed Martin de Porres (now St Martin). According to Jeremiah Newman, a distinguished sociologist and former Bishop of Limerick:

Society is not something that is kept together physically; it is held by the invisible bonds of common thought ... a common morality is part of the

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<sup>401</sup> Dunning and Sheard, pp 106-107.

<sup>402</sup> Katie Liston, 'Some reflections on women's sports in Ireland' in Alan Bairner (ed.), *Sport and the Irish*, p. 220.

<sup>403</sup> J.Bale, 'Sport and national identity: a geographical view', *British Journal of Sports History*, 1986, 3 (1): pp 18-41, cited in J.Tuck, 'Rugby Union and national identity politics' in Alan Bairner (ed.), *Sport and the Irish*, p.105.

bondage. The bondage is part of the price of society and mankind which needs society, must pay its price.<sup>404</sup>

The 'common morality' which the bishop spoke of was supplied by the Dominicans of St Saviour's church in Glentworth St. and the Redemptorists of St Alphonsus. This morality was inculcated into the boys from the Boherbuoy at an early age through school, the confraternity and the attendance at mass and benediction in the Dominican church of St Saviour in Dominic Street/ Baker Place.

The Dominican church in Baker Place, St. Saviour's, came originally from the old town. It was the '1<sup>st</sup>. recorded Catholic Chapel-Dominican Chapel- Fish Lane in 1730 during the period of the penal laws'<sup>405</sup> and reconstructed when Newtown Pery was established. This church was noted for the devotion of the people of the Boherbuoy to 'Our Lady of Limerick' who was represented by a statue of Mary which had survived the penal times during its stay in the old Dominican Chapel in Fish Lane. The local legend was that the statue had been hollowed out, turned upside down and used as a pig's trough. In later years the men and women of the Boherbuoy donated gold medals, bracelets and jewellery in order to have a golden crown made for the statue. In giving up their jewellery to make a gold crown for the statue the people of the Boherbuoy were exercising both an individual and communal act at the same time. The result was communal in that all the people of the locality could venerate the statue in the knowledge that they had also made an individual contribution. This fulfilled the three basic functions of religious images which Eli Heldaas Seland wrote about

A normative function in presenting *civitas Dei*, objects of faith that the owner or viewer identifies with; a formative function in shaping a *sensus fidelium* in terms of suggesting a common identity with other believers, and a way of making the sacred present – what she describes as a '*praesentia sacri et genius loci*.'<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Jeremiah Newman, *The state of Ireland* (Dublin, 1977), p. 2.

<sup>405</sup> Hill, *The building of Limerick*, p. 79.

<sup>406</sup> Eli Heldaas Seland, '19<sup>th</sup> century devotional medals' in Henry Laugerud and Laura Katrine Skinnebach (eds.), *Instruments of devotion: the practises and objects of religious piety from the late middle ages to*



The other devotion which was very strong in that church was to Blessed Martin de Porres who was later to be elevated to sainthood. The image of Martin, a mulatto, who had been sired by 'John de Porres, a noble Spanish gentleman and Knight of the Order of Alcántara, and of Anna Velázquez a free negress' and who had devoted his life to the poor of Peru sat easily with the poverty stricken people of the Yellow Road.<sup>407</sup> When he was accepted by the Dominicans at the monastery of the Holy Rosary he specifically requested the 'humblest post in the monastery', that of "donado" a lay helper, and 'he was given the task of sweeping the cloisters and the corridors, and of cleaning the toilets'.<sup>408</sup> This image was readily received by the people of Boherbuoy, particularly the women, as they knew what it was like to live in cottages which had no toilets. Judith Hill, Frank McCourt and Louie Byrne have given us an idea of what the sanitation of Limerick city was like at this time. Even in the wealthy area of Newtown Pery it was the maids who had to dispose of the human waste before pipes were laid when it 'had to be conveyed by hand and dumped in the sewers'.<sup>409</sup> In Frank McCourt's case it was the McCourts who had to look after a toilet which serviced six houses in Roden Lane.<sup>410</sup> Louie Byrne who wrote a trilogy of his boyhood days in Limerick has recalled two places where he lived without sanitation, the Strand Barracks where each family was given one room which had no sanitation and no water<sup>411</sup> and Arthur's Quay which was four stories high with two basements and no toilet in the house.<sup>412</sup> Martin's life was one of extreme spirituality with 'a deep sense of respect for authority that it amounted to veneration. This applied to all authority, whether ecclesiastical or civil'.<sup>413</sup> The Dominicans in St Saviour's preached these virtues to their parishioners from the Boherbuoy. The wealthier Catholics from Newtown Pery had the Jesuits to guide them. As well as the Dominican Order there was also the Redemptorist Church in St. Alphonsus Street which boasted the largest

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*the 20<sup>th</sup> century* (Aarhus, 2007), pp 157-72, p.169, cited in Lisa Godson, 'display, sacramentalism and devotion: the medals of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family, 1922-39' in Colm Lennon (ed.) *Confraternities and sodalities in Ireland: charity, devotion and sociability* (Dublin, 2012), p118.

<sup>407</sup> Giuliana Cavallini, *St Martin de Porres apostle of charity* (Rome, 1957), pp 4-5.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>409</sup> Hill, *The building of Limerick*, p.125.

<sup>410</sup> Frank McCourt, *Angela's ashes* (London, 1997), p.99.

<sup>411</sup> Louie Byrne, *Tears on my pillow* (Luton, 1998), p.11.

<sup>412</sup> Louie Byrne, *Dare you ripple my pond* (Luton, 1993), p.2.

<sup>413</sup> Cavallini, *St Martin de Porres*, p. 54.

men's confraternity in the world, the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family. Women were not allowed to mix with the men in this confraternity, they had their own on a Friday night but this never reached the numbers of the men's confraternity. One of the important elements of bonding and bridging social capital in this area was St. Michael's Temperance Society located in Lower Cecil St. but order to become a member of this society a man or boy had also to be a member of the Archconfraternity which suggested exclusion and subtle sectarianism. Even though temperance was seen as a unifying factor between the various religions as espoused by a former mayor, captain Garrett Hugh Fitzgerald, when he addressed a large meeting in Limerick and stated that 'Mr. Mathew (Fr. Mathew) had never asked any man a question with regard to his political or religious creed'<sup>414</sup> St Michael's Temperance Society will be addressed in chapter x. So in this one area, a portion of St. Michael's parish, all the elements of civil society were present and it produced both bonding and bridging social capital. We will see when we look at St. Michael's Temperance Society that this was an organization which was also rich in bonding and bridging social capital.

This chapter has concentrated on the working-class of the area known as the Yellow Road. This area was a microcosm of Ireland. The industries were in the main supported by the surrounding agricultural area of the Golden Vale. Cattle, pigs and wheat supported the main factories of the city. The only industrial machinery was in the railway and in the factories but it was of a minor nature. It was Peter Tait's clothing factory which gave meaningful employment to both men and women. It also provided skills in the clothing industry which assisted many workers to get employment once the factory closed either in Ireland or England. These factories provided low-paid employment to the men and women of the locality and also the staple diet of offal which was high in protein.<sup>415</sup> The religious commitment of the people was divided between the Redemptorists and the Dominicans. The parish church was St Michael's and St Josephs had been built as a church of ease but it was

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<sup>414</sup> LC, 11 December 1839.

<sup>415</sup> There was an incident recalled for me that a group of professional men were having a drink in Myles Breens pub when one of them said that young Munsters looked good that year. The reply from one of the men, a Garryowen supporter, was 'offal must be cheap'. I am grateful to the writer, Michael Curtin, for this reference.

to the Dominicans that the people of the Yellow Road gave their allegiance and in particular to Our Lady of Limerick and St Martin de Porres. The working-class housing was in stark contrast to the luxury of the Georgian villas of Newtown Pery whose shadow they lived in. The People's Park, where the Boherbuoy brass and Reid Band played every week, served as no-man's land. Yet in this working-class area there was little or no radicalism. What radicalism there was expressed itself in nationalist terms more as a reaction to the excesses of the Black and Tans than an ideological position. The locality produced many soldiers for the British regiments particularly the Royal Munster Fusiliers but in the aftermath of the Great War and the events of 1916 to 1922 their sacrifice was airbrushed from history and many returned soldiers joined the IRA during the war of independence. Even the Black and Tans did not distinguish returned soldiers from the Great War as they rampaged through the Boherbuoy in August 1920.<sup>416</sup> Education, for those who could afford it, was available at the CBS Sexton Street for the sons of artisans, clerks and farmers. Girls were catered for by the nuns of the Presentation in Sexton St. Once Bishop O'Dwyer had got hold of it Leamy's School served the sons of the semi-skilled and unskilled labourers of the Boherbuoy. The many and varied shops in the locality as well as the Milk Market (Saturdays only) served as meeting points and sociability for the women of the Boherbuoy. However the great paradox of the Yellow Road was its love of rugby. A locality which had given many men to the British army eventually turned against it because of the terror and cruelty of the Black and Tans, which proved counterproductive, but it never turned its back on rugby. The black and amber jersey of Young Munster became a signifier of identity with the Yellow Road. However, there was a dark side to some people from the Boherbuoy which Robert Putnam referred to as negative social capital.<sup>417</sup> This was the Jewish boycott in 1904 and the persecution of Dr Long both of which will be addressed in Chapter 5.

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<sup>416</sup> Thomas Toomey, *The war of independence in Limerick*, p.414.

<sup>417</sup> Robert Putnam, *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community* (New York, 2000), pp 350-363.

## Chapter 4: Social, Economic and Religious Change in Limerick: The Example of the Limerick Boat Club

This chapter will examine the history of the Limerick Boat Club from its foundation in 1870 as a predominantly non-Catholic and elite club through to the religious changes of membership, which became apparent in the mid-twenties, and which correlated with the decline of the Protestant population and the entry of the Catholic middle class to the sport of rowing in Limerick. This boat club acted as a touchstone for the changes which were occurring in the wider community. The records of the club portray the decline of the protestant members and the rise of the Catholic upper and middle class. Allied to the club's records is the secret history of the Matterson family which was in the possession of the former Bishop of Limerick Dr Jeremiah Newman and which records the rise and fall of a protestant middle class business family. It will examine the ties which bound members to the ethos of the club and to the ethos of rowing in Ireland and highlight the decline of the connections with imperial Britain which was gradual. It will explore in particular the strong bond between two brothers, Archibald Murray Jnr. and Bruce Murray who were of Scottish descent, and were members of the LBC and of the Presbyterian community. This chapter will argue that it was the bonding social capital, created within the Presbyterian community and the LBC, which facilitated the reprieve of LBC and Mattersons.

The origins of competitive and recreational rowing in Ireland, like those of rugby, can be traced back to Trinity College in Dublin. From its inception rowing was perceived as an elitist sport meant only for those educated in universities. The Dublin University Boat Club emerged from the amalgamation of Pembroke and University rowing club in May 1847 and a resolution was passed 'that only persons matriculated in the University of Dublin should henceforth be eligible as members'.<sup>418</sup> In the early days of boat racing the amateur status was absent and races were for money and expensive silverware which caused problems in both Dublin and Cork. Up to 1860 the rowing code was the same as that approved by the universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the Irish amateur Rowing association was established in the 1880s on similar lines.

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<sup>418</sup> T. F. Hall, *History of boat racing in Ireland* (Dublin, 1939), p. 2.

Twenty-eight clubs from all over Ireland including Limerick Boat Club and Shannon Rowing club affiliated to this body which also included clubs from Belfast, Coleraine, Derry and Newry. The class-based nature of this association was contained in its definition of an amateur:

An amateur Oarsman or Sculler must be an officer of Her Majesty's Army or Navy or civil service, a member of the learned professions, or of the Universities or public schools, or of any established Boat or Rowing Club not containing mechanics or professionals; and must not have competed for either a stake or money or entrance fee, or with or against a professional for any prizes; nor have ever taught, pursued, or assisted in the pursuit of, athletic exercises of any kind as a means of livelihood, nor have ever been employed in or about boats, or in manual labour, nor be a mechanic, artisan or labourer.<sup>419</sup>

In the great tradition of Irish organizations a split developed between this association and the Committee of the Metropolitan Regatta. On 3 February 1899 in the Grosvenor Hotel, Westland Row in Dublin, the Irish Amateur Rowing Union was formed. It consisted of eight rowing clubs which included three from the North of Ireland.<sup>420</sup>

Limerick Boat Club was founded on 3 February 1870 at a meeting held in the Athenaeum Buildings; Cecil St.<sup>421</sup> They adopted the binary colours of black and white, the blackball system colours, as their colours and took the crest of Limerick City as their crest. The initial membership of this club included the elite of Limerick society at that time. The initial club subscription was set at two guineas, £2-2-0. This elite was Protestant but on the cusp of change. Its population in Limerick city had gradually declined from 11.5 per cent in 1871 to 3.1 per cent by 1936.<sup>422</sup> Thomas Hayes maintained that 'the development of the gentleman amateur ethic, particularly in rowing, was an elite class attempt to build a sporting kraal impenetrable by

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>420</sup> The clubs were: Bann R.C., City of Derry Boating Club, Drogheda R.C., Newry R.C., Pembroke R.C., Shandon Boat Club, University B.C., Waterford B.C.

<sup>421</sup> Minutes Limerick Boat Club, (hereafter referred to as LBC).

<sup>422</sup> Census of Population 1936, Vol. 3, religion and Birthplaces, Part 1, Religion, table 09, p. 17.

unapproved persons'.<sup>423</sup> The names of the people present at that meeting included William Spillane, Mayor of Limerick at that time, the owner of a tobacco factory as well as the elite businessmen of the city.<sup>424</sup> These people represented the major employers in the city. Two of them, Beauchamp and Murray, became closely involved in later years with the survival of Joseph Matterson & Sons Ltd., one of the principal bacon factories in the city, in what could be termed a significant example of bonding social capital. These people were the economic elite of Limerick society at that time and this was the case with other rowing clubs in Ireland and Great Britain. This elitism has continued to the present day. It was evident in the way in which the Catholic middle class adopted the mores of the declining Protestant upper and middle classes even though the emerging new political elite of Irish nationalism propounded the equality of all its people. Robert Putnam has challenged this stating that

elite recruitment based on educational credentials is often seen as a means of breaking the patterns of political inheritance by which elites have traditionally bequeathed power to their children ... but where educational credentials are essential for elite membership, the school in effect screens elite aspirants.<sup>425</sup>

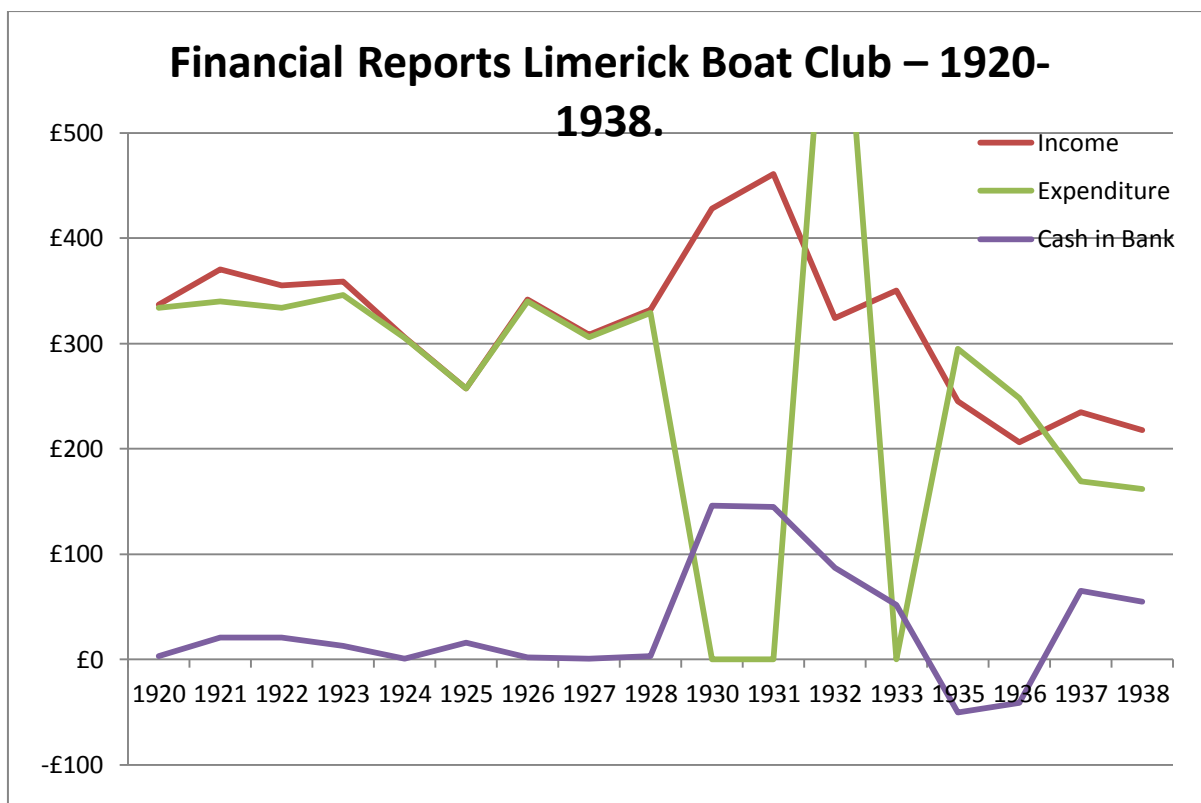
The record left by LBC is fastidious and representative of the mind-set of businessmen and people who had attended elite schools. Minute books were neatly written and each aspect of the club's life was recorded in detail. The club also had annual reunions where dress was formal. This may be seen from Fig. 1 on membership and fig. 2 on financial reports.

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<sup>423</sup> Thomas Hayes, *The transformation of sport in North Munster 1850-1890* (Unpublished PhD, Mary Immaculate College, 2009), p. 81.

<sup>424</sup> LBC Minutes. Spillane donated £10 plus his subscription of £2-2-0; Colonel Gascoyne £5, Joseph Matterson, bacon factory owner £5, de Courcy coroner, Wallace solicitor, Beauchamp solicitor, Archibald Murray Jr., MD of Wm. Todd & Co. £1, D. Tidmarsh £1, James Spaight businessman £1, W. Matterson bacon factory owner £1, A. Shaw and J.T. Shaw £5 each, bacon factory owners, William Boyd £1, retailer.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.



**Figure 8: Financial Reports Limerick Boat Club – 1920-1938.** <sup>426</sup>

The denominational mix in Limerick Boat Club was predominately Protestant and Unionist with an imperial ethos. However, by the late nineteenth and early

<sup>426</sup> Minute book and annual accounts LBC.

Year	Income	Expenditure	Cash in Bank
1920	£337-16-0	£334-3-7	£3-12-5
1921	370-15-2	340-0-1	21-15-1
1922	355-10-7	334-10-0	21-0-7
1923	359-11-8	346-11-2	13-0-6
1924	306-12-3	305-12-3	1-0-0
1925	257-17-0	257-0-2	16-10
1926	342-18-1	340-1-0	2-17-1
1927	308-3-4	306-6-3	1-17-1
1928	332-11-5	329-0-5	3-11-0
1929	not available		
1930	428-12-3		146-2-5
1931	461-1-0		145-1-11
1932	324-14-0	764-18-3	87-7-4
1933	350-3-11		52-15-10
1935	245-14-2	295-17-10	-50-3-8
1936	206-10-5	248-4-1	-41-13-8
1937	235-0-3	169-0-8	65-19-7
1938	218-9-8	162-12-2	55-17-6

twentieth century the membership was slowly absorbing Catholics. Mayor Spillane, one of the founder members, was an exception. In 1903 the membership listed the Ebrill brothers, who were Catholic, solicitors and auctioneers by profession. These were the same Ebrills who were involved in the Garryowen Housing Crisis in 1923.<sup>427</sup> In 1927 the very successful LBC crew which won the coveted senior eight championships, contained at least five Catholic oarsmen in the crew.<sup>428</sup> This victory was recorded by Michael Johnston, himself an oarsman and rowing coach for Trinity and Gárda Siochana Boat Club

The entry for the event was the largest ever – nine clubs from all four provinces, which has never been equalled ... the stroke of the winning crew, Tom O’Donnell, would be elected president of the IARU in 1932, and served in that office for two years: he is the only winner of the championship to have served as president.<sup>429</sup>

Even the *Cork Examiner* was surprised at the outcome of the race, as was those who had bet against them, ‘... Limerick Boat Club rowing a beautiful oar all the way left the issue in no doubt, though as usual when a crew from this club wins they have not many friends in the betting market.’<sup>430</sup> This was a victory, not just for LBC, but for the interdenominational mix of the crew.

The decline of the Protestant population in Limerick was mirrored by the decline of membership of the LBC.

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<sup>427</sup> NAI, Census of Ireland 1911. The Ebrills were listed as resident at 51 and 53 South Circular Rd. Limerick. It was one of these, namely Charles Ebrill, who was involved in the eviction during the Garryowen Housing Crisis, see chapter 1.

<sup>428</sup> Tony Tynne interview, 24 May 2013. The five Catholic members were Larry Harte, General Manager Bank of Ireland, Martin Maguire, Croom Mills Bakery, Bill Treacy, Halpin’s Tea, Tom O’Donnell, solicitor and his brother W.L. O’Donnell who coxed the boat. Ted Russell would have been in the crew but he injured himself just prior to manning the boat. The other members were J.F. Ewart, J.F. Stearn, W.W. Stokes and K.T. Rea.

<sup>429</sup> Michael Johnston, *The big pot* (Dublin, 1992), p. 30.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*



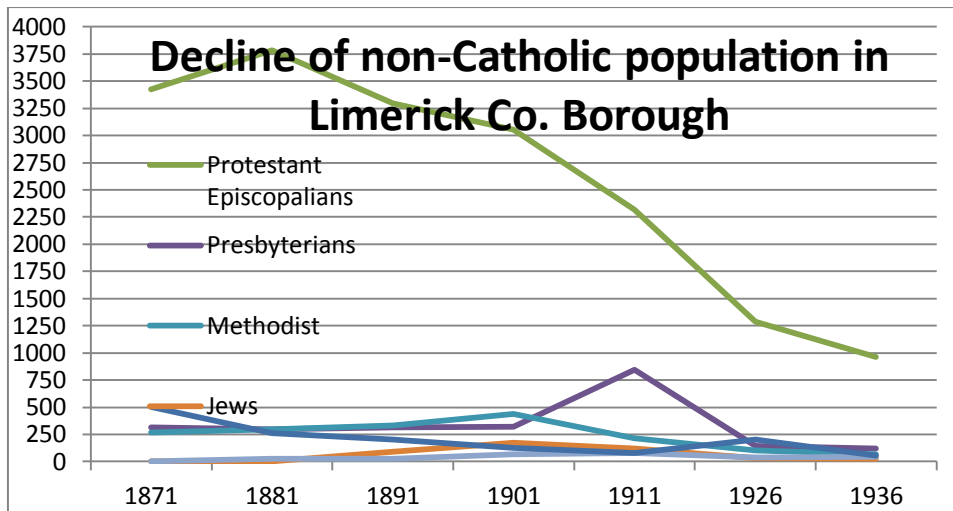


Figure 9: Decline of Non-Catholic Population in Limerick Borough. <sup>431</sup>

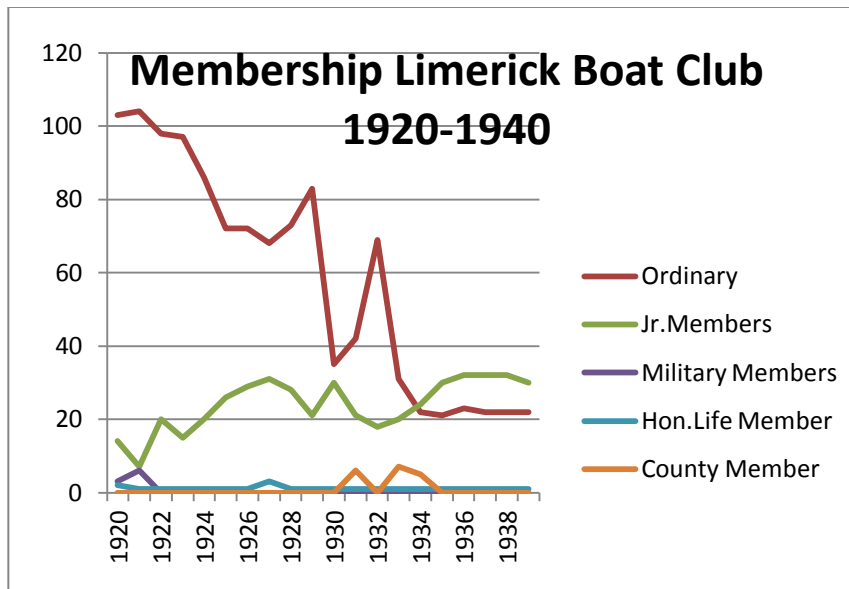


Figure 10: Membership Limerick Boat Club 1920-1940. <sup>432</sup>

<sup>431</sup> Census of population 1936, Vol. 3, religion and birthplaces, part 1 religion, table 09, p. 17.

Year	% Total	Actual number	Protestant Episcopalians	Presbyterians	Methodist	Jews	Baptist	Others
1871	11.5	4,517	3,427	316	267	2	4	501
1881	12.1	4,671	3,781	300	300	4	24	262
1891	11.5	4,261	3,294	315	331	93	27	201
1901	10.9	4,174	3,053	320	436	171	66	128
1911	9.5	3,653	2,316	847	213	119	79	79
1926	4.6	1,808	1,285	147	104	30	38	204
1936	3.1	1,274	964	118	68	25	44	55

<sup>432</sup> LBC, Annual reports 1920-1940.

The membership of LBC declined by fifty six per cent from 1922 to 1938 while the Presbyterian membership declined by sixty five per cent from 1871 to 1936.<sup>433</sup> From 1927 the junior members were predominantly Catholic. Members were proposed, seconded and elected under a blackball system. This system ensured that no undesirable people would be admitted into the club. This was reminiscent of the same system which was operated by the County Club Limerick which had based their rules on the Kildare Street Club.<sup>434</sup> Farmer tells us that there were some slight modifications and points out the rule regarding black-beaning:

The Master of the House is to attend the Ballot, to take down the names of the persons that ballot. After the ballot the drawer with beans to be opened in the presence of the Members, and the number of black and white beans to be taken down. One black bean in seven to exclude. The ballot to begin at 2 o'clock on Saturday, and to end at 3 o'clock.<sup>435</sup>

Year	No.	Jr.Members	Military Members	Hon.Life Member	County Member
1920	122	14	3	2	
1921	118	7	6	1	
1922	119	20		1	
1923	113	15		1	
1924	107	20		1	
1925	99	26		1	
1926	102	29		1	
1927	102	31		3	
1928	102	28		1	
1929	105	21		1	
1930	66	30		1	
1931	64	21		1	6
1932	88	18		1	
1933	52	20		1	7
1934	47	24		1	5
1935	52	30		1	
1936	56	32		1	
1937	55	32		1	
1938	55	32		1	
1939	53	30		1	
1940					

<sup>433</sup> Table 1 and table 2.

<sup>434</sup> Gerald E. Farmer, *Rules of The County Club, Limerick, (1813) adopted March, 1909 with a list of members names*, (Limerick, 1909), Limerick University, Special Collections.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 8-9.

Limerick Boat Club adopted the same system for the regulation of its members with a slight modification. In LBC the ratio was one black in five to exclude.<sup>436</sup> It is important to note that nowhere is it recorded that religion would be a matter for disbarment. In fact religion of any hue is not mentioned in any of the written records of the club. However, the records show that the club was class based and catered to the needs of the disappearing Protestant community and the rising Catholic bourgeoisie. Even though the use of this blackball system is not recorded, there was one incident where the minutes state that 'during the season twenty-three candidates were admitted to membership and of these twenty-two qualified and were enrolled'.<sup>437</sup> In its early years and up to 1924 the club was imperial in tone and aspiration. The timbre of addresses by presidents placed emphasis on those who fought, died or were wounded, with the British army, which to the members of LBC was the army of their country and the one with which they identified. This point is emphasised by Hall in reference to the attitude of the rowing community to the Boar War 'the year 1900 was somewhat dulled by the shadow of the South African War. It was inevitable this should loom to some extent over the domain of rowing as many of its votaries were naturally among the most likely aspirants for military honours.'<sup>438</sup>

This attitude had not altered by the eve of the outbreak of World War One:

With the Limerick regatta the season virtually finished and few could then have anticipated that before Irish oarsmen again foregathered at regattas four years of war were to intervene. During that time rowing men were called to sterner conflict than boatracing and many of the best laid down their lives on foreign battlefields.<sup>439</sup>

The existence of rowing clubs in Limerick and their growing Catholic membership was an indication of the rising aspirations of the catholic middle class who were gaining in confidence and wealth. The Limerick Boat Club was located on a small man-made island in the river Shannon and in later years it shared this island with

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<sup>436</sup> Tynne interview, 24 May 2013.

<sup>437</sup> LBC Annual report, 1919, p. 10.

<sup>438</sup> Hall, *History of boat racing in Ireland*, p. 35.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49.

another boat club, Shannon Rowing Club, which had been founded four years previously in 1866 and was 'the first official rowing club to be founded in Limerick'.<sup>440</sup> This was Catholic in ethos even though one of its most famous members, Jack Glazier, was Protestant as was one of its founding members Peter Tait, a Scotsman who had risen in the world to become a major businessman. Following his arrival in Limerick he founded a clothing factory and became a director of Cannock & Co. This was one of the prestigious department stores which catered in the main for the emerging strong farmers and the Limerick middle class, both Catholic and Protestant. The other prestigious department store was Todds in O'Connell St. This island was formed from stones left over after the building of the Wellesley Bridge (now Sarsfield's Bridge). According to Tony Tynne most of the members of the Limerick Harbour Board were also members of LBC and it was this Harbour Board that offered a site on the man-made island to LBC in order to build a boathouse in February 1870.<sup>441</sup> The symbolism of two clubs with similar aims on a small island, one of Catholic ethos and the other of Protestant ethos, is striking and in a way symbolised the island of Ireland even to the extent of fighting between the oarsmen of both clubs. This resulted in the tunnel which connected both clubs being closed.<sup>442</sup> Between both clubs was a statue of Lieutenant John Charles Henry Fitzgibbon, the twenty five year old son of Richard Hobart Fitzgibbon, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Clare, of Mountshannon House, Castleconnell County Limerick who had died in the Charge of the Light Brigade while serving with the 8<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Hussars.<sup>443</sup> This statue was blown up by persons unknown in 1930. The damage to LBC was limited to some windows in the fanlight being broken. The cost of repairs was £7-10. The fact that this event merited little comment in the minutes of the LBC is indicative of the changing political outlook of the members of the club by this time. The minutes made no mention of the symbolism of this destruction. They merely state that 'references were made to the damage to club property the morning the Fitzgibbon statue was destroyed by an explosion'.<sup>444</sup> Ironically this statue was later to be replaced by a monument to the Easter Rising depicting Thomas Clarke who faces

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<sup>440</sup> Denis O'Shaughnessy, 'Limerick Boat Club's great tradition', *The Old Limerick Journal*, No.44, winter, 2010, p.43.

<sup>441</sup> Tynne interview, 24 May 2013.

<sup>442</sup> O'Shaughnessy, p. 44.

<sup>443</sup> Tadhg Moloney, 'The Fitzgibbon memorial at Limerick', *The Irish Sword*, (vol. XXVI no. 9, 106), p. 401.

<sup>444</sup> LBC Minutes, 17 June 1930.

Shannon Rowing Club with his back to Limerick Boat Club. A further irony was that the old Fenian John Daly, Clarke's father-in-law, was refused membership of the Shannon Rowing Club. According to his daughter Kathleen Clarke, widow of Thomas Clarke, 'about this time he (John Daly) applied for membership of Shannon Rowing Club ... to our surprize he was blackballed'.<sup>445</sup> He was one of the few to be blackballed by 'a self-policed system requiring potential members of Limerick's boat clubs to submit their names for ballot'.<sup>446</sup> SRC used the same exclusionary methods as LBC. There was a sense of exclusivity in both clubs irrespective of their religious make-up. Many members of Shannon Rowing Club worked in Todds but would not, or could not, join LBC as that was the club of their bosses, the Murrays.<sup>447</sup> A further irony is that when Daly became mayor of Limerick he automatically became a member of SRC. This honour was bestowed on only two people, the mayor of Limerick and later the President of Ireland. Limerick Boat Club did not have similar arrangements.<sup>448</sup> The Limerick Boat Club was typical of many clubs in that it was rich in bonding social capital. The minutes of the club contains many references of condolences to the relatives of deceased members. Also recorded in every annual report from 1915 to 1932 are the names of all its members wounded and killed in World War 1. Tradition and continuity were sacred to members of LBC as with most rowing clubs to the extent that 'rowing more than any other sport is largely nourished by continuity of tradition, continuity of recruiting and continuity of practise'.<sup>449</sup> Its bridging social capital extended not only to the other rowing clubs in Limerick but also to rowing clubs throughout Ireland North and South. They even extended this to other visiting clubs of a different sporting persuasion, as evidenced by their invitation to the visiting North Wales University Football Club, who were invited guests of the club following a rugby match in the city.<sup>450</sup> Rowing, like most rugby clubs, may have been exclusionary in its membership policies, but once in, an oarsman like a rugby man was respected for his prowess in his sport.

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<sup>445</sup> Kathleen Clarke, *Revolutionary woman* (Dublin, 1991), p. 22.

<sup>446</sup> Hayes, p. 81.

<sup>447</sup> Tony Tynne interview.

<sup>448</sup> Tynne interview, 24 May 2013.

<sup>449</sup> Hall, *History of boat racing*, p. 105.

<sup>450</sup> LBC Annual report, 1926, p. 14.

The LBC was unreservedly imperial in its ethos. At the AGM held on 6 March 1915 chaired by Dr H.S. Laird 'it was proposed and agreed to unanimously: - That members serving with the colours be retained on the roll as ordinary members, but without liability for subscriptions'.<sup>451</sup> The speech of the chairman that year contained many references to the war and in his opening address he declared that 'the year 1914 will be a memorable one ... owing to the stupendous war which so suddenly and unexpectedly ... convulsed Europe as the summer was drawing to a close'.<sup>452</sup> The remainder of the speech contained the usual references to the rowing crews but he returned to the war at the conclusion when he referred to the boatman 'John Tobin, of the R.N.R.' being 'called up on the mobilization of the fleet, and has since been serving his King and Country on the sea with fidelity and zeal, one of the many upholding the best traditions of the British Navy'.<sup>453</sup> In his concluding remarks he made reference to 'the peoples of these islands' and how they have desisted from 'amateur sports of all kinds' [for the duration of the war] and how he believed it unlikely that they would be resumed until 'peace with honour has been promulgated'.<sup>454</sup> He cleverly equated those who had joined the army to fight with 'those of us who, for one reason or another, are unable to follow the good example set us and toe the fighting line [and to whom] will devolve the duty ... of safeguarding the interests and furthering the well-being of our club'.<sup>455</sup> Every year after that the annual report, which was printed, contained a page entitled 'Pro Patria' for those who had been wounded and from 1917 onwards contained a further paragraph 'Pro Patria Mori' for those who had been killed. This practise continued at least until 1932.<sup>456</sup>

The club hosted an annual dinner which always proposed toasts. The toasts were an indication of the prevailing ethos of the club. The difference between the toasts of 1908, 1938 and 1940 is notable as it marked the changing pattern of political reality through which the club had emerged. At the annual dinner held in Cruises Royal Hotel on 7 Nov. 1908 the toast was 'The King', 'Speak and be brief, be subtle in

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<sup>451</sup> LBC Annual report, 13 March 1915.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>456</sup> LBC Annual report, 1932, p. 5.

thy words' Dante.<sup>457</sup> By 1938 at the reunion dance of past and present members held in honour of Bruce Murray the toast was 'Ireland' proposed by A.E. Goodwin and by 1940 the toast was 'Eire' proposed by W. F. Treacy.<sup>458</sup> In 1916 the sentiment was distinctly imperial when the chairman W. J. O'Sullivan delivered his address. He referred to the absence of the younger men from the sailing fraternity and how the older generation had kept up the practise and how they 'endeavoured to do their bit to sustain and cheer the gallant defenders of the Empire, some of whom have gone from your midst' and stated that sadly three of them had been killed.<sup>459</sup> In his conclusion he spoke about the war and how men's minds were fully occupied with 'enterprises of great pith and moment' and how there was no leisure for less serious matters and yet he hoped that the war would end soon but until that time he hoped that the present members would pass on the prestige of the club untarnished and unsullied to the future generation

In his address to the 1920 AGM the president, J.S. Gaffney, briefly mentioned the war when he stated that 'while a number of clubs had not been affected by the war – not losing a single man ...others had been hard hit, yours for example'.<sup>460</sup> This was a muted address and was indicative of the changing political environment in Ireland at the time. His concluding statements reflected a subtle change in the habits of the Limerick bourgeoisie. This was the Jubilee year for LBC and Gaffney expressed his thanks that the club was still in existence 'bearing in mind the five strenuous and critical years through which we have just passed' and he reminded his audience that when the club was founded 'there were few, if any, counter attractions to engage the young men of the city'.<sup>461</sup> He went on to outline the rival sports to rowing which included lawn tennis, cycling, and golf but he was confident that the club would overcome these intruders. His address, like all such addresses, was indicative of the changing times. The old certainties were passing into history and new ideas and inventions were arriving in Ireland. He was not alone in being suspicious of the modernisms which were encroaching on the life of the club, the Catholic hierarchy

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<sup>457</sup> LBC Annual report, 7 Nov. 1908.

<sup>458</sup> LBC Annual report, 28 Nov. 1938, 3 Feb. 1940.

<sup>459</sup> LBC Annual report, 1915-16, p. 7.

<sup>460</sup> LBC Annual report, 1919-1920, p. 8.

<sup>461</sup> LBC Annual report, 1919-1920, p. 11.

were likewise suspicious as was the Irish Irelanders. He was a little shaken when he considered the 'latest craze – the Cinema Shows'. He was confident that they would survive these also with their 'faked pictures, insults to human intelligence' but a note of concern was expressed that 'some young men in their anxiety to be present nightly are unable to give time to gain some little knowledge of the arts of rowing and sailing' and he concluded his address with a desire that the LBC would 'continue to foster clean sport and healthy social recreation' and that the club would 'retain its honourable position amongst kindred associations'.<sup>462</sup> This sentiment was echoed five years later by the archbishops and bishops in their statement on the *Evils of Dancing* pamphlet

There is a danger of losing the name which the chivalrous honour of Irish boys and the Christian reserve of Irish maidens had won for Ireland ... the danger comes from pictures and papers and drink ... purity is strength, and purity and faith go together ... and there is no worse fomenter of this great evil than the dancing hall.<sup>463</sup>

The vicious civil war which was raging in the country was only relevant in that it might have an effect on rowing. Apparently the civil war did not affect the membership. The fact that the club could increase membership fees at this time indicates the middle class nature of the membership. Gaffney was also president the following year and was happy to announce that the financial position of the club was improving due to a fifty per cent increase in subscriptions for senior members with a corresponding twenty five per cent increase for junior members. He advised against any increased outlay until membership was increased and expenditure was lowered. He briefly made reference to the civil war in the country stating that 'the outcome for an enjoyable boating season this summer is not at the moment promising; should the curfew be continued in force ... rowing will also be seriously affected should things not settle down and civil law be restored'.<sup>464</sup> This view was expressed also by Hall regarding the civil war 'in addition to the difficulties already mentioned, civil

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> LDA, box 246, Bishop Keane papers, Statement of the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland issued at their meeting, held in Maynooth, on 6 October, 1925,

<sup>464</sup> LBC Annual report, 1920-1921, p. 10.



disturbances throughout the whole country adversely affected the activities of the clubs and it was not until the season 1923 that anything approaching normal conditions was established'.<sup>465</sup>

A subtle change in tone, between 1921 and 1922, when Gaffney gave way to A. E. Goodwin was noted. Gaffney was anti-betting and anti-modernism in his outlook whereas Goodwin embraced the changes with glee. The notion of moral good gradually gave way to economic necessity when Goodwin became the proprietor of the Grand Central cinema. In his address to the 1921-1922 meeting Gaffney, as vice-president, deplored the practise of betting at regattas. He considered it lowered the status of the sport and the 'classes who developed and supported rowing' and deplored the diminishing number of those who 'took an active interest for the love of the sport and not for gain'.<sup>466</sup> There was a new president for the 1922 season, A.E. Goodwin, owner of a large retail establishment in the city which sold glassware and giftware. His address to the fifty-third AGM was reminiscent of previous addresses. As before he commented on the weather and these reports could have served as a meteorological history of conditions in the Shannon estuary during that period. This one recorded the building of the draw bridge between the island and the city and the treacherous conditions which it imposed on those trying to access 'the Clare side of the river'.<sup>467</sup> It was noticeable that the political events which were unravelling in the country did not impinge on the regular lives of the LBC members. It appeared that as long as business was being done the military events had little to do with LBC members. The civil war was regarded as more of a nuisance than a life-changing event and there was no regatta held in the city that summer as the city was 'in a state of siege on the day fixed for the re-union' with 'intermittent firing to the end of June' as the 'greatest obstacle to pleasure boating' making it 'unpleasant and unsafe to be on the water'.<sup>468</sup> While the oarsmen suffered the sailors enjoyed 'a very fair time' on the water despite the risks both near the city and on the open stretches of the river. He followed in the tradition of previous presidents when he waxed lyrical about their

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<sup>465</sup> Hall. *History of boat racing*, p. 105.

<sup>466</sup> LBC Annual report, 1921-1922, p. 7.

<sup>467</sup> LBC Annual report, 1922-1923, p. 6.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*

endeavours and the bravery they showed against all risks for ‘a whiff of the briny and a few hours beating windward in the deep and broad waters of the lower Shannon’.<sup>469</sup> The damage inflicted on the clubhouse by the civil war raging in the city centre included some brickwork of the boathouse being ‘struck in a few places’ and a number of bullets which had ‘penetrated the felt roof’. This was considered slight compared to the damage caused to the pleasure craft due to careless handling by members who used them ‘for overland excursions’ where ‘nothing but rocks could have caused the injuries to them’.<sup>470</sup> This view reflected how they perceived the political struggle being waged in the city as if the island on which they stood was in some way immune from the changes being forged by force outside their ambit. They were more at home lamenting their deceased members such as W. J. Riordan who had died in December 1922 and who was remembered not only as a great oarsman but also as a soldier who had ‘served in the late European war as did four other members of the eight, one of whom had made the supreme sacrifice – holding at the time of his demobilization the rank of Captain in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers’.<sup>471</sup> In his closing remarks Goodwin also referred to the members’ predilection for the cinema, this time it was not on moral or intellectual grounds, but rather economic, hoping that the additional subscription would not interfere with their ‘nightly visits to the pictures’.<sup>472</sup> This was the subtle change. The moral standpoint of Gaffney had been replaced with the economic imperative of Goodwin. Goodwin was later to become the owner of a cinema in Bedford Row called the Grand Central. This cinema was a converted chapel of the Congregational Union, a small non-conformist sect at 6 Bedford Row, which had been used by Sir Peter Tait when he married Rose Abraham.<sup>473</sup> This then could be viewed as a watershed moment where economic good rather than moral good became contingent on the survival of a sports club.

The ending of the civil war did not deserve a mention in the life of the LBC. However, as a gesture of the exclusivity of the club and the wealth of its members the new president J. O. Myles presented the club, in the spring of 1925, with a 17ft. half

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<sup>469</sup> LBC Annual report, 1921-1922, p. 7.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 7-8.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>473</sup> John E. Waite, *Peter Tait a remarkable story* (Stoke sub Hamdon, 2005), p. 9.

decked sailing boat, 'The Falcon'.<sup>474</sup> This was in keeping with the status of the club as a boat club and not merely a rowing club. The club had a successful season winning five races out of six rowed. Myles resumed his presidency in 1926 and his opening words in the fifty sixth annual report contained the usual meteorological report of the unkind weather at the early stages which then turned mild 'according to some people – oppressive'.<sup>475</sup> He recalled the 'venturesome expedition' of Captain Tidmarsh<sup>476</sup> and J.F. Ewart in their 21ft. half-decked boat who sailed to Valentia Harbour through the Blasket Sound and on their return journey 'running into the Shannon before a strong westerly blow, an enterprise of moment successfully accomplished by pluck and seamanship'.<sup>477</sup> He congratulated T. J. Herriot, club captain, who had just received an appointment in Penang and wished him 'success and happiness in the distant land to which he has gone'.<sup>478</sup>

From 1926 onwards there was scarce comment on imperial matters or military endeavours although the annual reports still contained the lists of those who served, were wounded or who died in World War 1. The fifty-eighth annual report for the year 1927 regretted the deaths of two valued members of the club, T. H. Kenny 'who was a man of high principle who graced an honoured profession for many years in the city of his adoption' and in October Archibald Murray 'the last of the original members passed away'.<sup>479</sup>

### **The Murray Brothers**

The record of the two Murray brothers Bruce and Archibald is intermingled with business, religion and sport. It is impossible to write about Limerick Boat Club without reference to Bruce Murray. It is also impossible to write about Matterson & Son bacon factory without reference to Archibald Murray. The Limerick Boat Club was the organization where all three crossed. They would also have served on other organizations such as Barrington's Hospital board but it is the contention of this thesis

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<sup>474</sup> LBC Annual report, 1924 -1925, p. 7.

<sup>475</sup> LBC Annual report, 1926 -1927, p. 6.

<sup>476</sup> Tidmarsh appears in many other places in this thesis.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 6-7.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>479</sup> LBC Annual report, 1928, pp 14-15.

that the social capital generated by membership of the LBC that accorded the saving both of the club and Matterson's bacon factory. Archibald Murray was a member of the Presbyterian Church in Limerick and the older brother of Bruce Murray of whom it could be said saved the Limerick Boat Club from extinction. Two brothers, both Presbyterian, devoted themselves in assisting two distinct organizations to survive, one a boat club and the other a bacon factory. There is no doubt that the Murrays had a deep sense of commitment to their community, their church and to the Limerick Boat Club, but whereas Bruce devoted his life to the club Archibald was more intent on business. The LBC accounts for the years 1937, 1938 and 1939 show a sum outstanding to Bruce Murray for £385-10-11 for accounts paid by him in 1932, 1934 and 1935 when the club was in financial distress.<sup>480</sup> Both also contributed generously to the new Presbyterian Church located at the corner of Henry Street and Lower Mallow Street.<sup>481</sup> The Church no longer serves a religious function as it has been converted to offices. However, there was a brass plate in the apse which recorded that 'this Church was built by the congregation in the year 1900. It was chiefly through the care and devotion of Mr Thomas A. Ferguson and Mr A. Murray (Jnr.) and the Rev R.H. Semple this was accomplished'.<sup>482</sup> Archibald Murray also replaced the old organ in the church in 1915 'at his own expense for £900'.<sup>483</sup> There were other prominent members of the LBC who were also of that faith and they included Robert A. Ewart, Robert Goodwin, J.S. Gaffney, E. I. Wickham, and James Stewart.<sup>484</sup> Both Archibald Murray (Jnr.) and Bruce Murray played an active role in the affairs of Limerick Boat Club. Both men died unmarried. Their father had married Eliza Todd the sister of William Todd and founder of Wm. Todd and Co. Ltd. Drapers and House Furnishers of William St. and O'Connell St. Both Murray and Todd came from Scotland like many of the city's businessmen. Archibald and Bruce Murray took over the firm after the death of their father.<sup>485</sup> His role in saving Matterson's from bankruptcy could be described as opportunistic or philanthropic depending on how the facts are interpreted. Joseph

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<sup>480</sup> LBC Annual accounts, 1932-1939.

<sup>481</sup> Hugh Lilburn, *Presbyterians in Limerick* (Limerick, 1959), p. 8. Lilburn describes their generosity when he states that 'the cost of the new Church was £8000 and the greater part was defrayed by Messrs' Thos. A. Ferguson and Archibald Murray.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 41-44.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Matterson was not a Presbyterian but a member of the Church of Ireland and yet Archibald Murray (Jnr.) went out of his way to help him in his hour of need. It is possible that they may have formed a friendship in the Boat Club or in the Limerick Protestant Young Men's association of which Murray was President for fifty five years or it could have been when he was on the governing committee of Barrington's Hospital.

In the Limerick Diocesan Archive lies a manuscript which narrates the 'decline of the Irish bacon trade and its far reaching effects on the families fortunes', in this case the family referred to was the Matterson family.<sup>486</sup> This manuscript was part of the estate of Archibald Murray when he died in 1927. The people involved in the narrative included Joseph Matterson senior, William Matterson senior, Archibald Murray financier and director of William Todd & Co., Thomas Cleeve, William Fry senior and junior directors of J. Matterson & Sons, J. Barry of the Provincial Bank Limerick, Hugh Earls, Agnes S. Matterson and Benjamin Bennett. Most of these men were members of LBC.<sup>487</sup> Matterson's was established in 1820 and exported quality cured hams to England, Wales, Scotland, France, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Egypt, South Africa, India, China, North and South America and their products received gold medals at every exhibition.<sup>488</sup> It had representatives in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Cardiff, Dublin, Cork and its continental agents were Joseph Leete & Sons London. Its brand was suitably Irish, the shamrock brand. However the Matterson family was like other members of Limerick Boat Club Imperial in identity. The year 1890 was a pivotal year for the Limerick bacon trade and in the opinion of Gordon Matterson it marked the end of a time when 'curers could not help making money in spite of the absence of exact business methods', but now Danish bacon of 'good quality and favourable price have appeared on the British market'.<sup>489</sup> This was also a period of financial and political instability due to agricultural depression, the land agitation and the Plan of Campaign in Ireland. In his comments he stated that the

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<sup>486</sup> LDA, Newman papers, box 16. This document is a personal history of the fortunes of the Matterson family from 1 Jan.1890 to 31 Dec. 1929 compiled in 1930 by Gordon Matterson, son of Joseph. It was intended to be destroyed after his death but Bishop Newman clearly ignored this request. (Hereafter referred to as MF).

<sup>487</sup> Annual report, LBC, 1903, pp 30-33.

<sup>488</sup> LDA, MF, Epiloque, p. 3.

<sup>489</sup> LDA, MF, Newman papers, box 16.

family were living beyond their means 'procured by the overdrawal of their personal accounts'.<sup>490</sup> The Irish branch of the family had increased in number from six to nine and in late 1895 Wm. & J. Matterson had turned their business into a limited liability company.<sup>491</sup> By 1896 there was little improvement in business due to the increased pressure of Danish bacon. There was also a subsequent fall in the value of Dunlop shares which the family held but there was no reduction made or contemplated in the family budget.<sup>492</sup>

One of the serious errors which Joseph Matterson made was when he invested in the Cork Blackrock and Passage Railway Company. It was primarily this decision which nearly bankrupted him. On 29 April 1897 William Beauchamp, a solicitor from Limerick, who was also solicitor to the Presbyterian community in Limerick,<sup>493</sup> and a member of Limerick Boat Club, signed a deal with the Cork Blackrock & Passage Railway Co. for a capital issue with a total value of £80,000. Two people, Samuel Merrick and Jonas Wolff underwrote £54,000 of this and Joseph Matterson took the remainder. Tom Ferris noted that 'two companies were authorised to build railways in 1845 and 1846. The latter was the Cork, Blackrock & Passage Railway which opened its short 6 ½ mile line from a terminus at Victoria Road in the city to Passage in June 1850'.<sup>494</sup> This line was one of only three narrow gauge lines in Co. Cork even though it started life as a broad gauge but was changed to three feet in order to save money. However, unlike other railways at that time 'there were no baronial guarantees around here, it will be noted; the Crosshaven extension was promoted and financed in the traditional way, probably to the regret of the directors of the company, for it proved a very expensive undertaking'.<sup>495</sup> It was completed and 'eventually opened by

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<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

<sup>491</sup> The authorised capital was £120,000 with £80, 000 issued. This consisted of 9000 £5 preference shares and 7000 £5 ordinary shares. W. Matterson and J. Matterson as vendors received 3000 £5 preference shares and 7000 £5 ordinary shares with a value of £50,000. The balance of 6000 £5 shares were placed on the market and were fully subscribed. Additional capital amounted to £30,000.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>493</sup> Hugh Lilburn, *Presbyterians in Limerick* (Limerick, 1959), p. 7.

<sup>494</sup> Tom Ferris, *Irish railways: a new history* (Dublin, 2008), p. 42.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., p. 89. The engineer in charge was Sir John MacNeill and the builder was the famous William Dargan and it was estimated that £30,000 was saved by this on the nine and a half mile extension to Crosshaven.

the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Dudley on 1 June 1904.<sup>496</sup> Despite good receipts the line eventually closed. 'The last train left Albert Street on 10 September 1932 having been taken over in 1925 by the GSR'.<sup>497</sup>

It was the failure of the failure of the railway company in 1898 that drove Mattersons to the brink of bankruptcy and it was only the intervention of Archibald Murray that saved them from disgrace and poverty. With the failure of the new railway company issue there was a call on the underwriters. J. Matterson's shares of 1583 at £10-10-0 less five per cent commission amounted to £15,839 which he did not have. He borrowed from a Dublin bank and the loan was secured against ordinary and preference shares at not less than 5% which amounted to £12,000 and the sale of Marconi shares valued at £4,000. However, there was also a private office account which was in debit to the value of £1,500.<sup>498</sup> Their hopes for a 'bacon boom' never materialised and by 1902 their income was approaching 'vanishing point'. Dividends were paid at the expense of capital, goodwill was written up to £45,000 and the overdraft in the office had reached £5000. We are told that '1902 ended in gloom'.<sup>499</sup> By 1903 Matterson's were in deep financial crisis and it was at this stage that 'an old friend Archibald Murray entered the picture'.<sup>500</sup> Archibald Murray who had been a founder member of the LBC, chief executive of William Todd & Co. the most prominent department store in Limerick and a prominent member of the Presbyterian community in Limerick. When he examined the financial position of Mattersons he discovered that they were in deep debt to the amount of £16,400, excluding £1,400 which was hidden from him. The directors of the Dublin Bank had become suspicious as nothing had been paid on debts since 1898. This bank appears to be the National Bank in Dublin. There was a suggestion by Leo Matterson that the pressure from the bank was due to a generally held belief that 'the head of another curing firm, one of whose branches was also in Limerick, got to know of Matterson's embarrassments and it was through his "machinations" that the bank were got to press for payment' in

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<sup>496</sup> Ibid. Before the line was completed the company had to seek a loan from the Public Works Commissioners in 1901. The total cost of the line came to £200,093.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>498</sup> LDA, MF, p. 3.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid., pp 4-5.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

the hope that competition would be reduced or better still liquidated.<sup>501</sup> At that stage Archibald Murray was asked to help and he joined the board of Matterson's in order to assist his fellow LBC member. If he had not the bank could have realised its assets by selling the ordinary and preference shares in J. Matterson's & Sons with a consequent bankruptcy of Joseph Matterson.

The bonding social capital which existed in the LBC now came to the fore. Murray, even though he was very upset when he discovered the £1,400 office debt, was reputed to have said that 'had I known how bad things really were I would never have undertaken to help put them right'; nevertheless he adopted a strategy to put the business on an even footing. His strategy was simple. The Limerick bank in his opinion 'knew too much' so he paid them off. They held the personal and business accounts of Joseph Matterson. Secondly he decided to get an income for Matterson in order to meet his needs and pay interest on his debts. He approached the Provincial Bank with a proposition. He was aware of J. Barry who worked in the bank. He offered the bank the two accounts of J. Matterson & Sons Ltd. on the condition that they would receive an £8,000 loan on more reasonable terms than the National Bank. On several occasions following this Murray came to the rescue. He lent £1,600 to solve the debt in the Limerick bank and lent £500 interest due on the £7,000 borrowed from the Provincial Bank.<sup>502</sup> Important as this help was, when Joseph Matterson died at the age of sixty-six on 2 April 1906, the estate was left in debt amounting to £4784 and his widow and family were left penniless.<sup>503</sup> According to the account the following thirteen years were a struggle to 'exist on the smallest income' and to 'chip away at the millstone around its neck – the debt at the office'. Things were so tight financially that Murray once remarked to Mrs Matterson, 'let me emphasise upon you, Mrs Matterson, that in your case it is not a matter of pennies, it is one of farthings'.<sup>504</sup> By this stage extreme measures had been taken to reduce the outgoings of the family. Horses were sold, staff dismissed both indoor and outdoor. One son at an English public school, Ian Gordon, was brought home to work as an office boy while a small

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<sup>501</sup> Ibid, Appendix part I, p.1. In Limerick at that time there were four bacon factories, Matterson's, Shaw's, O'Mara's and Denny's.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid., p. 13.



allowance to another son, Leo, was reduced from £5 to £3. Even this was wholly withdrawn after six months.<sup>505</sup> The inexorable decline of a Protestant middle class Limerick family continued and in June 1906 the eldest daughter Agnes was quietly married and left Castletroy House. In October of the same year the furniture was sold at public auction and the house was let. A series of changes affected the family over the next few years. Mrs Matterson moved into a small house with her two sons and daughters where she stayed until 1912. During those years Hugh Earls, former secretary, died and his 100 shares reverted to the estate of Mrs Matterson. Castletroy House was sold to a Mr McMahon, with the nickname, 'The Hurler', for £535.<sup>506</sup> It remained uninhabited until 1929 when it was divided into apartments for three German families working on the Shannon scheme. More was made out of the rent than had been paid for the house and land in total.<sup>507</sup> A son and daughter immigrated to Canada and in April 1912 Mrs Matterson gave up the lease of her house, stored her furniture in Messrs. Todd & Co. and with her two daughters moved to London where she died on 12 September 1932. In March 1909 Murray sold 4,450 Dunlop shares that he had been holding as securities. The London agency of J. Matterson & Sons was closed in 1912 and the manager moved to Dublin and took over the agency hitherto held by Messrs. Johnson Bros. & Co.

Like most businesses war was good for business and particularly the meat business in Ireland. With the onset of the First World War the fortunes of the company changed. Louis Cullen acknowledged this when he observed that

The First World War, and especially the two years after it, were the most hectic period of agricultural prosperity in Ireland's history, surpassing even the best years of the Napoleonic wars. Agricultural prices trebled from a base figure of 100 in 1911-13 to 288 in 1920. The rise was roughly paralleled by bank deposits.<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid., appendix, p. 7.

<sup>508</sup> L. M. Cullen, *An economic history of Ireland since 1660* (London, 1972). P. 171.

The record tells us that 1914 'was a good year for business with dividends of 5% on 2709 ordinary shares declared for the first time in twelve years'.<sup>509</sup> The £650 available for disposal was divided between the office debt and Agnes Matterson. The two sons returned from Canada and fought in the war and in August 1915 a daughter, Vera Sutherland Matterson, also returned from British Columbia. The First World War changed the fortunes of the Matterson family beyond all recognition. By 1918, when millions of lives had been lost in the war, the Matterson diary recalled that the year

has proved to be a year of such exceptional prosperity that at its close, not only were the dividends on ordinary shares increased to 6%, but a substantial bonus was added. The war brought the benefit of a British government control by which a fair price was fixed for the supply of raw material, a just division through factories of quantities available was imposed and a fair profit on the finished article was assured to curers.<sup>510</sup>

As demand for their products increased so also did supplies of raw materials and due to the good trade the office debt was extinguished. This particular debt above all others was a source of anxiety but by February 1919 due to the increase in trade the final payment was made on this office debt. Leo Matterson acknowledged that it was the fortunes of war which eventually restored the fortunes of the Matterson family. In this regard he wrote:

...and what about the 'bumper harvest – the bacon boom? Yes, truly after fifteen years of tedious toil, of weary waiting they had arrived at last, but there must ever exist some feelings of regret that the family fortune should have found rebirth in the welter of war and fortune renewed, phoenix like from the ashes left by the conflagration of Europe.<sup>511</sup>

Between 1919 and 1928 we are given a thumbnail sketch of the survival of Matterson's through the war of independence, which was briefly mentioned, to the collapse of prices for bacon following the end of the war and the establishment of an

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<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*,

Irish Free State and finally to the death of Archibald Murray in 1927. From 1919-1920 the company continued to pay 6% on ordinary shares to which were added 'substantial bonuses' and this prosperity was 'due entirely to the continued British government control'.<sup>512</sup> By 1921 British government control was lifted but the 'political state of Ireland is in ferment' and earnings were reduced considerably which led to a poor year financially but nevertheless they were able to pay 'the 6% due on ordinary shares ... out of profit',<sup>513</sup> This continued into 1922 where the same dividend was paid despite the 'great civil disorders in Ireland' even though it was 'a poor year'.<sup>514</sup> The following years of 1923 and 1924 were similar in nature. Mary Daly emphasised that 'the year 1924 was especially difficult for Irish farming, marked by exceptionally wet weather and cattle disease; although agricultural output rose during the remainder of the decade, it failed to regain the volume achieved on the eve of the Great War'.<sup>515</sup> Cullen illustrated this stating that 'the great agricultural boom collapsed in 1920. Prices slumped. The index of agricultural prices fell from 288 in 1920 to 160 in 1924 ... the years 1921 to 1923 were years of economic contraction'.<sup>516</sup> The establishment of the Irish Free State was acknowledged in the same breath as the 6% dividend was paid. The bacon producers of the Irish Free State had lost their market share in Britain which 'was the most open market in the world for agricultural produce, accounting for 99 per cent of world exports of ham'.<sup>517</sup> Daly further notes that in Britain 'imports of Irish ham and bacon fell by 50 per cent though the total British consumption had increased'.<sup>518</sup> By 1924 they were barely able to pay the dividend and it had to be paid out of the 'interest on the large reserves which had been carefully invested'.<sup>519</sup> It was in 1924 that the railways of the Irish Free State were amalgamated and under this scheme the southern railway took over the Cork Blackrock and Passage Railway Co. and reorganised its capital. The Matterson family lost heavily due to this amalgamation. Joseph Matterson had held 1,583 ordinary

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<sup>512</sup> LDA, MF, epilogue, p. 1.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid.

<sup>515</sup> Mary Daly, 'The Irish Free state and the great depression of the 1930s: the interaction of the global and the local', *Irish Economic and Social history*, Vol. 38, (2011), p. 21.

<sup>516</sup> Cullen, p.172.

<sup>517</sup> Daly, 'The Irish Free State and the great depression of the 1930s', p. 29.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>519</sup> LDA, MF, Epilogue, p. 1.

shares which were then held by Agnes Matterson and had a nominal value of £15,830. These were written down to £1,585 in £100 bonds and were issued to her against the holding. These were the shares which had been bought in 1897 by Beauchamp, solicitor and member of the Limerick Boat Club.<sup>520</sup>

The years 1927 and 1928 showed a continued steep decline in the bacon industry. According to Leo Matterson the bacon industry in Ireland was undergoing vital changes with supplies much reduced and accordingly more expensive and ‘what little there was not at all of the right type’. The competition from Danish bacon as well as other competitors was extensive. There was also a new export trade of live animals to meet a new and increasing demand for fresh pork. The year 1928 was no better for Mattersons. It was a ‘bad trading year’ and once again dividends were paid out of interest on investments and to cap it all Archibald Murray died ‘full of years at 84’.<sup>521</sup>

It was decided in 1929 to close the Waterford branch due to increasing losses. The dividends for this year were paid out of reserve capital and the company accepted that ‘the very profitable days of the manufacture of bacon, so far as Ireland is concerned, are now a thing of the past’. Leo Matterson blamed two distinct reasons for this decline. On the one hand he accepted that ‘Danish and other foreign bacon is on all British markets in abundance’ but he also blamed the ‘Irish peasant’ who in his opinion had ‘changed in type and ideas’. He adopted a very superior and colonial tone when he referred to this ‘Irish peasant’

No longer will he, or rather his daughter and wife bother to look after and care for “The gentleman who pays the rint” even though assured of good payments for doing so. The bare legs are now clothed with artificial silk stockings. The Ford is at the door and the cinema calls.<sup>522</sup>

It is difficult to reconcile his view of the reasons for the decline of the industry with the figures for the period. Although pig production in the Free State declined from

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<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*

1,483,000 in 1900/01 to 1,337,000 in 1926/27 the monetary value increased from £4,871,000 to £8,271,000 during the same period.<sup>523</sup>

Their son Leo was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Wicklow Artillery Militia while Ian served in the Munster Fusiliers. They were a wealthy family which fell on hard times. However their conception of hard times was far removed from that of the ordinary worker in their factories. From a statement of affairs at the time of Murray's intervention the family had to exist on £595 per annum. The average wage of a working man at that time in one of their factories would have been £50-£60 per annum. The private history of the Matterson family written by Leo Matterson may be viewed as biased but the financial detail cannot be disputed. The involvement of Archibald Murray in the family was recognised by Leo and In the epilogue to his history he was emphatic that it was through the intervention of Murray and the services which he provided that saved both the Matterson family and the company of J. M. Matterson & Sons from bankruptcy and disgrace. He listed these services which Murray provided.<sup>524</sup>

In order to succeed with this plan Murray provided financial aid in March 1903 of £3,000, with a further £500 in April 1904 and April 1905 and arranged for the balance of £9000. For this he had as security '600 ordinary shares in J. Matterson & Sons Ltd. which were worth nothing plus a payment of interest on sums lent of £150 which could have ceased at any moment'.<sup>525</sup> Murray arranged loans in order to raise £1,600 quickly as he had no 'free cash' and for this he had £2,000 worth of Dunlop shares which were doubtful and going down in value. From 1903 until his death in 1927 Murray took an active and 'very successful part in directing the financial side of Messrs. J. Matterson & Sons Ltd. Leo was full of praise for the role which Murray had

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<sup>523</sup> R.O'Connor and C.Guiomard, 'Agricultural output in the Irish Free State area before and after independence', *Irish Economic and Social History*, Vol. 21 (1985), p. 68.

<sup>524</sup> LDA, MF, Epilogue, p.1. These included £12,000 to save Mattersons from bankruptcy; clearing of £1,400 debt plus £200 interest to National Bank Limerick; guaranteed payment of life premiums; arranging sources of income for Joseph Matterson and his wife after he died; acting as executor in entangled estate; establishing Mattersons as a flourishing business.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

played stating that it was fair to say that 'he gave services as director for fifteen years for nothing'.<sup>526</sup> Murray stated in a letter to William Fry senior

Personally I am giving to this business as much thought and attention as I am giving to my own ... more cannot be done by those who have undertaken to try and revive a good old business and to place it if possible in time in the position it ought to occupy. Nor do I think more should be expected from those, some of whom at least, never had any connection with the working of the business, remunerative or otherwise, in the past and who have I may say no remuneration in the present.<sup>527</sup>

In his closing paragraph of his epilogue Leo resorted to nautical metaphors, typical of LBC text found in the annual reports, to describe the near destruction of the company 'many long years before this occurred the ship charged with the family fortune had been so tossed in troubled waters as to have lost its captain overboard'.<sup>528</sup> The family of Joseph Matterson and the company which he founded were very lucky to have found another captain in Archibald Murray through their associational relationship with the Limerick Boat Club.

The Limerick Boat Club from its inception reflected the wider political perspectives of Ireland during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The sport which it embraced was one which initially involved mainly Protestants but was an all-Ireland sport. It was class based rather than political but it did have an imperial ethos which was reflected in its publications. The gradual inclusion of Catholics into the club reflected the rising catholic middle class of Limerick city and in some cases county. There was no hint of sectarianism or disagreement among the different religious members. Apart from rowing the business of the majority of members was business and if outside events did not impinge on rowing or business then it was considered peripheral. The records which the club kept were meticulous and give us a greater understanding of how middle class Catholics and Protestants could combine without rancour or bitterness. They also provide us with a

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<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid. This was a letter to Mr William Fry senior, a director of J. Matterson & Sons Ltd.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

different perspective of the approaches of modernism and how this affected the club. From a civil society perspective and its corollary, social capital, the work of the two Murray brothers is instructive, although some may say tenuous. What is not tenuous is that one, Bruce, saved the Limerick Boat Club and the other, Archibald, saved Matteredsons and all were members of the Limerick Boat Club.

The Limerick Boat Club continued to attract members of the Catholic middle class as well as the residue of the middle class Protestants until the 1960s when the first working class oarsmen were admitted. Between the 1920s and the 1930s the club oversaw the deconstruction of a British imperial identity within the comfort zone of its rules, which remained unchanged, despite the gradual construction of a new Catholic Irish identity being forged within it. The Limerick Boat Club provided a safe harbour for those Protestants in Limerick who may have been apprehensive of the new political reality outside the walls of the club. It provided the emerging catholic middle class with a whiff of imperialism without the taint of West Briton being cast upon them. In a word it was accepted as respectable. The employees of their respective firms had the experience of rowing with the sister club, Shannon Rowing Club, on the other side of the bridge which also gave them the same respectability. It was an example of the embourgeoisement discussed in Chapter 3.





## Chapter 5: The Expansion of the Catholic Church in Limerick, 1850-1904

In order to analyse the history of the Catholic Church in Limerick after 1922, it is vital to understand the wider historical context going back to the 1850s and the Devotional Revolution set in train by Cardinal Cullen as this legacy remained largely intact until the 1970s. Emmet Larkin has proposed that ‘the Devotional Revolution ... provided the Irish with a substitute symbolic language and offered them a new cultural heritage with which they could identify and be identified and through which they could identify with each other’.<sup>529</sup>

From the middle of the nineteenth century more Catholic churches were built in Ireland than at any other time before or since. The post-famine Devotional Revolution made the Catholic Church part of every aspect of the lives of the Catholics of Limerick. Civil society in Limerick was permeated by this Catholicism. Cohen and Arato observed that

through its organization of everyday social life in “civil” institutions such as church functions, education, neighbourhood festivals, and its own press, the Catholic Church was able to occupy many of the trenches of civil society and to constitute a powerful barrier to the formation of liberal, secular bourgeois hegemony on this terrain.<sup>530</sup>

There were between eighty four and eighty eight priests in the city to minister to the Catholic population, an average of one priest for every 440 people.<sup>531</sup> During the eighteenth century the average was one priest for 1,764 people<sup>532</sup>. In the diocese as a

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<sup>529</sup> Emmet Larkin, ‘The devotional revolution in Ireland, 1850-75’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (June, 1972), pp625-652; Emmet Larkin, *The consolidation of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1860-1870*, (Dublin, 1987), p. xviii.

<sup>530</sup> Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Boston, 1994), p. 144.

<sup>531</sup> *Irish Catholic Directory and Almanac* (Dublin, 1930-1938), pp 277-283.

<sup>532</sup> John Begley, *The diocese of Limerick from 1691 to the present time*, Vol.3 (Dublin, 1938), pp 245-248.

whole this figure was one priest for 1,034 people.<sup>533</sup> The Christian Brothers had schools in four parishes of the city which by 1939 catered for 2,330 pupils, all boys and all working-class. The existence of such statistics does not always mean that the people are devout. J.H. Whyte has pointed to this when he noted that Italy, Spain, Portugal and some Latin American countries had a higher proportion of Catholics but he concluded that Ireland was unusual in that it had 'committed and practising Catholics'.<sup>534</sup>

This then was the Catholic milieu in which the people of Limerick lived, worked and played in the early years of the new state. The Catholic Church controlled the private and the public spaces in which people congregated. However, there was a very clear demarcation between the classes exercised by the Catholic Church. The Jesuits ministered to the wealthy merchants and the professional classes whilst the Christian Brothers, Redemptorists, the Presentation nuns and the Sisters of Charity administered to the working-class. The Redemptorists in particular controlled the male, and to a lesser degree, the female population both youth and adult by means of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family.

### **The Redemptorists and the Limerick Archconfraternity of the Holy Family**

This chapter will examine one of the most influential institutions ever established in Limerick city, the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family and it will map its role in developing bonding social capital among its members as well as establishing an ingrained Catholic civil society in the city which lasted for well over one hundred years. The archconfraternity is a fascinating study of civil society as it encompassed both horizontal and vertical networks of association. The power and hegemony which the Redemptorists possessed was unsurpassed in the city and this study will map that path of the Redemptorist order in Limerick. The other important aspect of the Archconfraternity was that it managed to facilitate all manner of localism. Once inside the doors of the church or participating in a public procession the men were as one. The War of Independence, the Civil War, the Limerick Soviet, regattas, rugby matches or any other sporting activity were as nothing compared to the attendance at the

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<sup>533</sup> LDA, LDA/BI/JY/2/52, catalogue papers of Dr John Young 1746-1813, pp 43-44.

<sup>534</sup> J.H. Whyte, *Church and state in modern Ireland 1923-1979* (Dublin, 1980), p. 4.

men's confraternity. The chronicle in the Redemptorist archives write off all these historical incidents with the flourish of a pen in a few lines. The important issue was how many men or boys attended meetings and received communion.

From the first mission in 1851, delivered by an Austrian Redemptorist, Fr Prost, it grew to accommodate nearly ten-thousand men and boys and three-thousand women by the late 1960s.<sup>535</sup> There had been religious associations of lay men and women in ... Ireland since the middle Ages and they 'performed an acculturating role ... in respect of ... the reforms of the Catholic renewal after Trent, or the Roman and continental pieties of the ultramontane church'.<sup>536</sup> Trends in international piety accounted for over 'forty confraternities and sodalities ... in Ireland'.<sup>537</sup> The role of the confraternity in building social capital has been examined by Terpestra who states that 'members of confraternities built wide ranging informal networks whose weak ties of social kinship built up more social capital than blood kinship could'.<sup>538</sup> The increased activity of sodalities and confraternities in the late nineteenth century should be seen in the context of the arrival of Paul Cullen from Rome in 1850 as Archbishop of Armagh.

The trauma of the Irish Famine had created the conditions which enabled the flourishing of both temperance and confraternities. Paul Cullen arrived at the most opportune time in which to complete his task. Cullen was an ultramontanist and 'his task was clear: to put the Catholic Church in Ireland on a war footing against Protestantism and every other enemy of the Supreme Pontiff'.<sup>539</sup> Ultramontanism was a movement particularly important in France and combined 'a highly dogmatic and

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<sup>535</sup> Holy Family Chronicles (hereafter referred to as HFC) 1898-1975, Vol. 11, Limerick Redemptorists Archive, (hereafter referred to as LRA). This journal is hand written and appears to have been written by each current director of the confraternity as the handwriting changed as each director changed. Hereafter referred to as HFC.

<sup>536</sup> Colm Lennon, 'Confraternities in Ireland: a long view', in Colm Lennon (ed.) *Confraternities and sodalities in Ireland: charity, devotion and sociability* (Dublin, 2012), p. 15.

<sup>537</sup> Colm Lennon and Robin Cavanagh, 'The flowering of the confraternities and sodalities in Ireland, c. 1860-c.1960', in Colm Lennon (ed.) *Confraternities and sodalities in Ireland: charity, devotion and sociability* (Dublin, 2012), p. 79.

<sup>538</sup> Nicholas Terpstra, 'Afterward, social capital and civil society: comparisons, contexts and questions' in Colm Lennon (ed.) *Confraternities and sodalities in Ireland: charity, devotion and sociability* (Dublin, 2012), p. 194.

<sup>539</sup> Desmond Bowen, *Paul Cardinal Cullen and the shaping of modern Irish Catholicism* (Dublin, 1983), p. 106.

anti-rationalist theology with a warm emotional piety, and preference for a life within a Catholic ghetto'.<sup>540</sup> Limerick city became such a Catholic ghetto. Upon arrival in Ireland he saw that he would have 'to battle with the essence of Gallicanism' and as a zealot he was of the view that 'local custom was not to be tolerated'.<sup>541</sup>

Cullen decided that 'no longer was there to be Roman toleration of the now traditional agitating role of the 'priest in politics'. Cullen saw that his principal role in Ireland 'was to establish Catholic ascendancy in his native land.' During the late nineteenth century the role of the laity was reduced to that of 'quasi-passive devotionism'.<sup>542</sup> The Catholic clergy became ascendant in the field of education as well as in areas of social need such as treating the poor or the sick. During this period women on the whole 'reverted to the role of devout sodalists, while lay men had an outlet for their social activism in the newly founded Society of St Vincent de Paul from the 1840s'.<sup>543</sup>

In order to assess the impact this confraternity had on civil society in Limerick it is necessary to track the origins of the Redemptorist order in Limerick city and their approach to disseminating their particular brand of Catholicism on its population. Several people were fundamental to the establishment of the Redemptorists in Limerick, William Monsell, Lord Emly, Brother Patrick Walsh, Christian Brother, and John Quin a Limerick merchant.<sup>544</sup> There was a strong transnational element to the establishment of confraternities in Ireland. The first Redemptorist to establish a mission in Limerick, Fr Joseph Prost C.ss.R (1804-1885), was an Austrian by birth and we are told that he led an 'interesting and stormy life'.<sup>545</sup> In June 1851 he was appointed superior of the Redemptorist Foundation at Bishop Eton in Liverpool and it was from here that he eventually found himself in Limerick city.

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<sup>540</sup> Eli Heldaas Seland, '19<sup>th</sup> Century devotional medals', in Henning Laugeraud & Katrine Skinnebach (eds.), *Instruments of devotion: the practises and objects of religious piety from the late middle ages to the 20<sup>th</sup> century* (Bergen, 2007), p.167, cited in McLeod Hugh, *Religion and the people of western Europe 1789-1989* (Oxford and New York, 1997), p. 47.

<sup>541</sup> Bowen, *Paul Cardinal Cullen*, p. 209.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>544</sup> LRA , box 11, manuscripts on Monsell, Quin and Br. Walsh.

<sup>545</sup> Emmet Larkin and Herman Freudenberger (eds.), *Irish narratives: a Redemptorist missionary in Ireland 1851-1854, memoirs of Joseph Prost C.ss.R* (Cork, 1998), p. 1.

His attitude towards the temperance movement in Ireland is indicative of the strategy which the Redemptorists used to promote spirituality in the people. He believed that Fr Mathew's temperance drive was only a temporary success. 'Fr Mathew had huge success, but it was only temporary, because he lacked the necessary foundation, i.e. Prayer and the holy sacraments' and worse than that his movement was 'but an imitation of the Protestant temperance societies in North America.' To add insult to injury the temperance movement 'earned such a great reputation as a result of his supposed success that Queen Victoria assigned him a £400 yearly pension'.<sup>546</sup>

At this stage William Monsell of Tervoe Co. Limerick entered the picture. Monsell was of the landed gentry, a wealthy Protestant Church of Ireland, by birth, who at one time hated the Catholic religion, but had converted to Catholicism in 1850. His biographer Matthew Potter ascribes his conversion to Newman's theological influence as well as to that of Ambrose de Lisle and the empathy he felt with the Catholic peasants because of his 'Famine experience'.<sup>547</sup> According to Potter he was received into the Catholic Church at Grace Dieu Manor, the home of Ambrose de Lisle in Whitwick, Leicestershire, England, on 12 December 1850 'in the presence of de Lisle, his family and his servants'.<sup>548</sup> Monsell heard of the Redemptorists in England and through the assistance of Bishop Wiseman, Vicar Capitular of London and he approached Fr Frederick de Held, the English superior, and invited the Redemptorists to come to Limerick. Edward Muir in his work on Italian confraternities states that 'it would hardly be an exaggeration to suggest that the lay confraternities provided the single most important lesson about cooperation of any Italian civic institution.'<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> Larkin, *Irish narratives*, p. 28; Colm Kerrigan, *Father Mathew and the Irish temperance movement 1838-1849* (Cork, 1992), p.183. He states that Fr Mathew received a pension of £100 which was later raised to £300.

<sup>547</sup> Matthew Potter, *William Monsell of Tervoe 1812-1894: Catholic Unionist, Anglo-Irishman* (Dublin, 2009), p.43..

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.* The date of 13 Dec. 1850 is recorded as the day on which he became a Catholic in a letter from Bro. Thomas Kearns in which he quotes from the diary of Laura de Lisle who was present at the time, LRA, box 12

<sup>549</sup> Edward Muir, 'The sources of civil society in Italy', in Robert I. Rotberg, (ed.) *Patterns of social capital* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 53.

Sharp suggested that ‘the Redemptorists were regarded by the secular clergy with equanimity, if not enthusiasm, mixed, at times, with awe and respectful admiration’.<sup>550</sup> This view was obviously appreciated by the people of Limerick as they flocked in their thousands to the Redemptorist missions. Prost believed that the people had to a great extent lost the spark of religion but he saw a great opportunity to reverse that particularly with the arrival of Cardinal Cullen:

I know that a people whose religion has decayed can never reform itself. Reform has to come externally, especially from Rome. The present Pope Pius IX therefore sent a reformer to Ireland ... this was the present Cardinal Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Cullen.<sup>551</sup>

Even though they were dedicated and ministered to the poor Prost admitted that it was not an easy task as the poor were difficult to bear and his experience provides an insight into the conditions of poverty that existed in Limerick city at that time:

This dedication was not easy. It required that we overcame the smell of the ragged and the all too visible vermin that moved on their clothing. Every day when we returned home from hearing confessions we had to search our clothing for vermin. The lice were unusually large, so that they brought us to the point of wanting to vomit<sup>552</sup>

Between 1842 and 1880 nearly two-thousand missions were given in Ireland and the Redemptorists accounted for three-hundred and fifty of these between 1851 and 1880. Limerick was the biggest confraternity containing more than three-thousand members in 1888. The latter part of the nineteenth century was a transforming one both in religion and political identity. Larkin and Freudenberg maintained that

this extraordinary religious revival, however, not only transformed the religious practises of the majority of the Irish people; it also provided them with a new national cultural identity ... Irish Catholicism, which was

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<sup>550</sup> Sharp, *Reapers of the harvest*, p. 37.

<sup>551</sup> Larkin, *Irish narratives*, p. 30.

<sup>552</sup> Larkin, *Irish narratives*, p. 39

characterised by a moral rigorism, a pious intensity and a sexual puritanism that profoundly affected popular values and mores..<sup>553</sup>

This church was dedicated on 7 Dec. 1862 by Dr Butler, coadjutor bishop of Limerick, and the sermon was preached by Bishop Moriarty of Kerry. Among the congregation on that day were William Monsell and the Earl of Dunraven. The first Superior of Mount St Alphonsus was Fr Bernard Hafkenscheid. Early in the New Year a mission for men was held which was described as 'the great mission *par excellence*'. It was the enthusiasm engendered by this mission that premised the founding of the Confraternity of the Holy Family on 20 Jan. 1868. Within a few days there were in excess of one-thousand five hundred recruits to this confraternity, which was led by Fr Thomas Edward Bridgett in his role as Spiritual Director. He laid the foundation for the success of the confraternity.

The structure of the confraternity was on military lines. As the numbers increased it was split into two divisions, St John's became the Monday Division while St Michael's was termed the Tuesday Division. There were fifty sections and each section contained about thirty members. Each section had a Prefect and Sub-Prefect appointed to manage the men in their section. In 1891 following a request from Bishop O'Dwyer, who wished to see something done for the 'working boys of the city', a Boys Division was formed. This met on a Wednesday night. According to John J. Doyle C.ss.R the confraternity prospered because of 'the all-powerful grace of God, the excellence of the object of the confraternity, the efficacy and character of the means employed, and the practical manner in which the confraternity is organised, and the zeal of the various officials'.<sup>554</sup>

In examining these reasons Doyle stressed the 'popular' exercises of the weekly meeting and stated that 'as a body men prefer devotions that are neither tedious nor sentimental'.<sup>555</sup> He referred to the 'Spell of the Blessed Sacrament' which was 'cast over all' and maintained that it was this spell which kept the men coming

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<sup>553</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>554</sup> LRA, John J. Doyle C.ss.R., typed manuscript, A Confraternity of the Holy Family for Men, pp 4-5. This was reprinted from the September number of The Ecclesiastical review, Philadelphia, no date.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

back again and again. He laid stress on the impartiality and equality which reigned amongst the members once they entered the church, 'take their place in their section' and 'hang their medals round their necks'.<sup>556</sup> All members were expected to receive Holy Communion at least once a month and as an added incentive to do so the Prefect of each section marked their attendance to this duty. Failure to attend to this duty for more than three months meant exclusion from the confraternity. In his manuscript on how to manage confraternities Fr Bannon explains the rationale behind this 'I hold it for certain that the expelling of careless members is an essential element to promote the well-being of a confraternity'.<sup>557</sup> A general communion was held twice a year, once at the annual retreat, usually in April, and the other in October. The annual retreat was given by a missionary specially engaged for that work and it lasted one week for each division. The first Mass was at 5.45 am but it had to be finished by 7.00 am in order for the men to attend work. In some cases an extra hour was granted to workers, both by Protestant as well as Catholic employers, in order to allow them to attend the Mass. The evening devotions began at 8.00 pm and consisted of a sermon, the Rosary and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The closing of the retreat was 'a scene never to be forgotten' when 2,500 men stood lighted taper in hand and renewed their baptismal vows.<sup>558</sup> Another devotion which 'animated' the men of the confraternity was the Forty Hours Adoration. During the Adoration groups of men from different sections took turns to keep vigil for the hour allocated to them. This went on through the night and some men stayed all night to accompany the Director who said Mass at an early hour, 'night was turned into day – but seldom for a better purpose'.<sup>559</sup> Other devotional practises included the Solemn Requiem Masses for deceased members which were celebrated twice yearly and the May and October processions in honour of the Mother of God. These practises helped to bond members of the confraternity to each other. The further spectacle of the public mass display of banners, marching bands, religious symbols with marching men and boys at specific events cemented the confraternity within the public sphere of the city. These displays showed that they controlled the public space, which they considered to be Catholic.

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<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> LRA, Box 5, W. Bannon C.ss.R, 'Confraternities and how to work them' handwritten manuscript.

<sup>558</sup> Doyle, p. 8.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid., p. 9.



Henrik von Achen explains these practises as actions aimed at establishing relations with God:

The piety expressed is not something which is merely articulated through any suitable devotional practise – the piety itself is intrinsically shaped and formed by its practise. A dialectical relation exists between the two, and it is not easy to determine where the exact border lies between piety and practise, between mental and physical devotion.<sup>560</sup>

The control of the confraternity was primarily in the hands of the Spiritual Director who was appointed by the Provincial of the Redemptorists in Ireland. Apart from preparing and delivering his discourses to the Monday and Tuesday divisions, he invariably had to prepare and deliver one to the boys' division on Wednesday also. He was obliged to visit the sick, both those at home and in hospital. However, in terms of control, the most important visitation was to those 'backsliders' whose attendance was 'unsatisfactory'.<sup>561</sup> He also had to deal with a myriad of interviews, from those who wished to renew a pledge, or who sought a letter of recommendation for a job, or a wife or mother who had made a complaint against husband or son. These interviews were supplementary to the main ones of meeting with 'each Prefect privately, and to receive from him an account of each of the members of his section' and in 1900 with more than seven thousand members there were more than two-hundred Prefects to interview.<sup>562</sup> Many of the men also made the Director their Spiritual Director for confession thereby giving him an intimate knowledge of their private as well as their public lives. The appointment of Prefects was a reserved duty of the Director. With military precision these men were picked and trained. They had a Sub-Prefect to assist them in their duties. As a further controlling mechanism these Prefects and Sub-Prefects had to surrender their office at the end of each year. Many were re-appointed but some, for reasons of age, ill health, or inefficiency were quickly replaced. Expulsion from the confraternity was a weapon which the Director used as

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<sup>560</sup> Henrik von Achen, 'Piety, practise and process' in Henning Laugerud & Laura Katrine Skinnebach (eds.), *Instruments of devotion: The practises and objects of religious piety from the late middle ages to the 20<sup>th</sup> century* (Bergen, 2007), p. 28.

<sup>561</sup> Doyle, p. 10.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

‘the knife with which the withered branches are cut away’.<sup>563</sup> This weapon according to a former Director was so useful that ‘the more he cut away from the confraternity, the more it grew and prospered’ but there was a sequence of events which had to be met before the drastic step of expulsion was used.<sup>564</sup> ‘Friendly admonition’ by a Prefect was the first step and if that failed the Director’s attention was ‘drawn to the matter’.<sup>565</sup> Through the Prefect the Director sent a written warning for the member to improve or he would be summoned before the Director. If the recalcitrant member neglected a summons from the Director an ‘urgent summons’ was sent to him which called on him to appear before the Director on a set date. If he failed to appear at this meeting then he was removed from the register. When a member was expelled from the confraternity his confraternity medals ‘would cease to carry spiritual favours’ and even if the member was re-instated ‘they should not be allowed to wear their medal again for a period of two or three months’.<sup>566</sup> Most Directors insisted on a personal interview with a recalcitrant before the final step was taken as expulsion from the confraternity was ‘regarded in the light of a curse by the great body of men’ and these men believed that those who were expelled ‘came to no good end’.<sup>567</sup>

Some of the other duties of the Director are explained by Doyle and these included supervision and inspection and approval of all plans for outdoor processions as well as arbitration ‘between workers and employers’.<sup>568</sup> Doyle refers to the ‘evils’ of striking workers and how the Director was instrumental in solving industrial problems mainly due to his influence over the men and their respect for him. One incident which confirms this was the strike at the Irish Wire Products on the Dock Road in Limerick in January 1940. The workers went on strike because one of their colleagues was sacked when he was caught with a woman in a shed ‘in rather uncompromising circumstance’.<sup>569</sup> Fr Corey, Director of the confraternity at the time,

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<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

<sup>566</sup> Lisa Godson, ‘Display, sacramentalism and devotion: the medals of the archconfraternity of the Holy Family, 1922-39’, in Colm Lennon (ed.), *Confraternities and sodalities in Ireland: charity, devotion and sociability* (Dublin, 2012), pp 121-122.

<sup>567</sup> Doyle, p. 12.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>569</sup> LRA, HFC, Fr Corey C.ss.R. This was hand written by the Director on the reverse of the typed letter from the chairman of the Irish Wire products. The letter is inserted in the chronicles.

referred to it as 'a very disgraceful strike' because the man 'a labour demagogue in the factory' was married and 'going with a single girl'. One wonders whether it was the fact that the man was possibly a socialist or that he was having extra - marital sex that made the strike 'disgraceful'. It is a little unclear whether it was the directors of the factory who contacted the Director of the confraternity, or a confraternity member in the management of the factory, but the result was that the confraternity Director took the matter in hand. In his journal notes he stated that he questioned the man concerned. It does not say if he spoke with the woman. The result was that he told the strike committee that 'the strike must stop' and following a meeting the strike committee voted 45 to 15 to resume work and he told the two dismissed workers that they could appeal to law over their dismissal.<sup>570</sup> The brother of the dismissed girl left the confraternity in protest against the Director's action. The Director made a note of this with the exclamation 'O tempora, o mores!!!'.<sup>571</sup> Needless to say the directors of the Irish Wire Products factory were delighted with the outcome and the chairman wrote to Fr Corey expressing the 'sincere appreciation' of the board for his actions.<sup>572</sup> In this incident can be seen the power of the Director of the confraternity in matters both moral and temporal. By the end of the nineteenth century the Redemptorists had effectively achieved control of the spiritual lives of the majority of the male population in Limerick city. Anything or anybody who confronted this control was harshly dealt with. This occurred in the case of Dr Long, the Limerick Regatta Committee, the Jewish population and the public performances of both plays and films. In order to understand the power relationship and hegemony of the Redemptorists between them and the people of Limerick this paper will look at several incidents which occurred from 1899 to the early 1920s which helps to explain the source of this power.

### **The Dr Long Affair**

One of the first major incidents which occurred under the directorship of Fr Tierney was that of Dr Long and the Irish Church Mission. Dr Long had been sent to Limerick in

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<sup>570</sup> Ibid.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid, LRA, HFC, Letter from chairman of Irish Wire Products Limited to Fr Corey 19 Jan. 1940. Insert in chronicles.

1899 by the Irish Church Missions in order to open a dispensary for the poor of Limerick and to teach them the 'gospel of Jesus Christ'.<sup>573</sup> A house was procured and furnished in 47 Thomas St and patients began to arrive daily. On Saturday 24 September 1899 the dispensary was invaded by Fr Tierney, director of the Archconfraternity, described by Dr Long as a 'red monk'. Tierney called upon all Catholics in the dispensary to leave as 'this house is a souper's house'

There was one incident recorded by Dr Long which created uproar in the city. A young girl, Violet Hegarty, had been brought up as a Protestant as her parents. Violet was arrested and accused and found guilty of stealing and was sent to St Joseph's Roman Catholic Reformatory. Her father brought a successful action to have her released from a Catholic reformatory but the nuns refused to allow her out when Dr Long went to get her. Her father had to proceed with an order of Habeas Corpus to the high court in order to have her released. The secular clergy, in the form of Fr O Donnell, Administrator of St Michael's Parish, joined in the attack against Dr Long. In an address to St Michael's Temperance Association he declared:

If differences be accentuated now, it is not the fault of Catholics but the fault of those who have become aggressive to the Catholics of this city ... The people – the poor, the needy, and the sick and suffering are offered something in exchange for their faith: they are asked to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage.<sup>574</sup>

Yet the verbal and physical attacks continued against Dr Long. Following a hostile attack 'four young men were charged by the police with disorderly conduct' and were brought before the Petty Sessions Court, presided over by Mr E. F. Hickson, R.M. and 'was supported by six other magistrates, several of whom were members of 'Fr Tierney's confraternity'.<sup>575</sup> Dr Long was 'cross-examined and lectured by the bench' and the 'whole responsibility for the disturbance in the city' was laid at his door.<sup>576</sup> There were, however, some Roman Catholics who disagreed with the treatment which

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<sup>573</sup> J.J. Long, *History of the Limerick medical mission* (London, undated), p. 10. UL, Special Collections, Leonard Collection.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*

Dr Long and his Mission were receiving and sent letters to him 'expressing sympathy, and approval for the stand' he had taken 'against priestly tyranny'.<sup>577</sup>

Even though he and his family and friends suffered greatly by physical attacks, legal challenges and boycott Dr Long persisted with his efforts.<sup>578</sup> Interestingly, although Dr Long suffered persecution because of his proselytising there was no mention of the Protestants who left their church to join the Catholic religion. One hundred and seven are recorded in the Redemptorist records which peaked in the years 1921-1924.<sup>579</sup> Dr Long was still in Limerick in 1926 when the Limerick Medical Mission challenged 'the decision of the Valuation Commissioners not to exempt from rating the premises 47 Thomas Street'.<sup>580</sup> As before, in a Limerick courtroom, the decision went against Dr Long and his medical mission. The judge, E.J. McElligott, in his summation 'said he expressed no opinion as to the good or otherwise of the charity side of it ... he held that the premises in question were not liable to exemption because they were not used exclusively for charitable purposes'. There was a consistent effort to fight off any Protestant advances in any section of society as Terpstra pointed out:

Daire Keogh shows that among the currents animating educational efforts was a determination to fight parallel Protestant efforts which were advancing either directly through church missions or indirectly through state schools, and which easily capitalised on widespread disaffection with church institutions among poorer Catholics in urban areas.<sup>581</sup>

### **The Limerick Regatta Committee Incident**

While the persecution of Dr Long was at its most intense Fr Tierney also found time to have altercations with another group in the city who were mainly, but not completely, composed of members of the various Protestant denominations. These were the

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<sup>577</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid., p. 108. In 1909 the attendances at his dispensary numbered '7,530 of which 6,006 were made by Roman Catholics'

<sup>579</sup> LRA, box 17.

<sup>580</sup> LL 20 Feb. 1926.

<sup>581</sup> Terpstra, *Afterward, social capital and civil society*, p. 205.

members of the Limerick Regatta Committee. The kernel of this controversy lay within the perceived role of the director of the confraternity. According to Bannon:

So important is the role of the Spiritual Director in a confraternity that its importance could not be too often dwelt upon and could scarcely be exaggerated. To such an extent is the Director part and parcel, so to say, of a confraternity that he is not only its head, but also its heart, its soul and its life.<sup>582</sup>

This advice was taken literally by Fr Tierney and his ire on this occasion was directed against the committee of the Limerick regatta in 1901. The committee, on a directive from the central committee in Dublin, had decided to run the annual regatta on the evenings of Monday 15 July and Tuesday 16 July. Fr Tierney's outburst against these dates occurred when he addressed members of the confraternity on Monday 8 July and Tuesday 9 July. The tone of his sermon was very similar to that adopted when he berated Dr Long and the sermon was carried in the *Munster News*.<sup>583</sup> In it he outlined how the Monday and Tuesday nights were to be protected from any outside interference:

Very recently I had to protest in the name of the members of the confraternity against certain political meetings and athletic sports got up on evenings when the men of the confraternity are supposed to come to their usual weekly meetings in this church. I did this because until lately these two meetings have been held sacred by all classes.<sup>584</sup>

Because of the hegemonic nature of the confraternity it was inconceivable to the director that any organization in the city would dare to interfere with their weekly meetings by holding another event. In his view the very size of the confraternity in Limerick made it unassailable to other events. Here he propounded a conundrum. If the confraternity was small there would have been no problem but because it was the largest confraternity in the world no other organization had the right to hold any

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<sup>582</sup> Fr Bannon, LRA, box 5, *How to organise a confraternity*, handwritten manuscript.

<sup>583</sup> *Munster News*, 13 July 1901: Also in LRA, HFC.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*

functions while it was in progress. One would have thought the opposite would have been the case. Its very size should have been its protection but Tierney thought differently. Based on the uniqueness of its numerical superiority Tierney justified his position of protesting against anything that would keep his members from fulfilling their duties. One would have thought that the exceptional uniqueness and size of the confraternity would have made it impervious to outside interference, but no, a regatta on the river Shannon, in Tierney's mind at least, had the power to disrupt the confraternity. As he progressed through his sermon it became obvious that there was another agenda and his views were clearly tainted with sectarianism, 'has there been wire-pulling by those who hate the confraternity, and whose hatred of it has been intensified by recent events ... the ascendancy party and the sour-faces seem to be able to rule the actions of some of our public boards and committees'.<sup>585</sup> Undoubtedly this referred to the trouble he was having with Dr Long. The word 'sour' took on connotations of difference, of Protestant, as in 'sour apple tree' in the ditty sung by children about Dr Long. In his sermon Tierney challenged the local regatta committee for their failure to consult the central committee in Dublin about the dates of the regatta. His anger now was directed against those who had arranged a 'fisherman's race' on the Monday night with amusements to begin at 7.30 pm. In his mind he owned the fishermen as well as their friends 'these men with their friends and well-wishers all belong to Mondays division and of course the fact of their races coming off on Monday at such an hour would prevent many from coming to their confraternity meeting'.<sup>586</sup> His sectarianism was displayed once again when he made reference to a local band which 'was befooled ... to play on Monday evening thus making them play second fiddle to "Tommy Atkins Band"'.<sup>587</sup> By making reference to a "Tommy Atkins Band" he obviously meant a British military band but this displayed a misunderstanding of the meaning of the poem by Rudyard Kipling in which the name Tommy Atkins appeared. This poem, 'Tommy', portrayed the indignity offered to a mere private soldier by members of the middle class during peacetime, until war was declared, and they needed his services:

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<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

I went into a public-'ouse to get a pint o' beer  
The publican 'e up an 'sez, 'We serve no red-coats here'.  
The girls behind the bar they laughed an' giggled fit to die,  
I outs onto the street again an' to meself sez I:  
O it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' 'Tommy go away';  
But it's 'thank you, Mister Atkins', when the band begins to play-  
The band begins to play, my boys, the band begins to play,  
O it's 'Thank you Mister Atkins', when the band begins to play.<sup>588</sup>

The local band, which was not mentioned by name, sent a delegation to Fr. Tierney to assure him, on hearing of his objection to their playing, that they would not play 'if they got a thousand pounds for playing'.<sup>589</sup> Tierney's objection to a local band playing at the regatta was also inflected with a nationalist tone 'of course a mere Irish band would not be listened to by the sour faces and their admirers on Tuesday and moreover a mere Irish band would not consent to play "God Save the King" as a wind up to the day's amusements'.<sup>590</sup> Tierney was in no mood to listen to any excuses, whither it was suitable tides or anything else. He intended to protest by having the city bands out on Monday and Tuesday evenings to parade the streets of the city and then to march up to the church. He called upon the men of the confraternity to attend the confraternity in their thousands. In his sermon he emphasised his Ultramontanist as well as his sectarianism when he told the men to

come and listen to their own bands playing not 'God Save the King' but 'God Bless the Pope, the great, the good'. To leave boat racing on Monday and Tuesday to the sour faces and their shoneen Catholic friends, the friends also of "Tommy Atkins and his band".

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<sup>588</sup> Henry Ketcham, *The poems of Rudyard Kipling* (New York, 1900), pp 5-8.

<sup>589</sup> *Munster News*, 13 July 1901.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*



He then went on to threaten any man who attended the regatta 'If any member remains from his meeting on Monday or Tuesday I will take it as a personal insult and as an act of treachery to the confraternity, as a taking of sides with the sour- faces and all those who hate us and the religion we profess'.<sup>591</sup> Such a statement from the director of the confraternity left no room for doubt in any member who may have wished to attend the regatta. This was intimidation and bullying at its rawest. It was quite simply incitement to hatred. He concluded by pouring scorn on anyone who pretended to nationalism but who might nevertheless attend the regatta ' we have persons in Limerick, who, according to themselves were shouldering their muskets in the days of old, who will be shouldering the Union Jack on Monday and Tuesday and lifting their hats to the tune of "God Save the King"'.<sup>592</sup>

The reaction of the regatta committee to this sermon by Tierney was to immediately write to Bishop O'Dwyer. In their letter the members explained that 'in fixing the date of the regatta, we had no intention of interfering in any way with the confraternity. This was done quite inadvertently'.<sup>593</sup> The letter went on to accept 'the good work done by the Redemptorist Fathers for our city' and finished by hoping 'that under the circumstances Fr Tierney will see his way to allow any of the members who so wish to see our sports on tomorrow'.<sup>594</sup> The bishop suggested that the committee insert a sentence in the letter which read 'that we will do our best in the future to prevent a recurrence of the inconvenience'. This was inserted as a postscript to the letter.<sup>595</sup> The *Chronicle* recorded that the bishop called twice to the Redemptorist house to meet with Fr Power, superior in the absence of the rector, in an effort to calm the situation. The bishop was not anxious to meet with the Director 'but begged Fr Power to see what could be done'.<sup>596</sup> Having read the account in the newspaper 'he saw clearly that it would not do for the director to give in and the battle had to be fought out to the end , unless he could arrange some compromise'.<sup>597</sup> The

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<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

<sup>593</sup> LRA, HFC, letter to the bishop inserted in the chronicles.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid. This letter was signed by W.W. Slade Hon. Sec., William Correy President Limerick Boat Club, and P. O'Connor, President Shannon Rowing Club.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid.

<sup>596</sup> LRA, HFC.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid.

compromise had already been arranged and the bishop sent a letter, with the letter from the regatta committee, through a solicitor Mr Ralph Nash. In his letter to the Redemptorists the bishop explained that he had 'asked Mr Nash to get a sentence introduced into the letter to the effect "that they will do their best in future to prevent a recurrence of this inconvenience". He went on to advise the Redemptorists that in accepting the regatta committee's assurances that they may 'do it at my request' and that 'the thing you may be sure will never happen again and therefore I think you will show good sense and prudence by saying that you are satisfied'.<sup>598</sup> The director promised to withdraw his objection but there is no record of it in the *Chronicle*. On the Monday night 'led by St John's band, 4000 men were inside the church and 2,000 outside. Only thirty persons attended the band parade'.<sup>599</sup> Shortly after this Fr Tierney was replaced with another spiritual director, Fr Creagh, who was appointed on 28 April 1902 and who was to cause even greater problems both for the Bishop, the image of the confraternity and Limerick city. One of his first duties on appointment was to expel men who did not attend monthly communion and he had Fr Bannon reintroduce the marking of attendance at monthly communion.<sup>600</sup> But it was for his sermon on the Jewish religion which caused the problems which echo to this day in Limerick.

## **The Apotheosis of the Catholic Church in Limerick: The Archconfraternity, 1904-39**

### **Fr Creagh and the Jews of Limerick**

The events of 1904 have haunted the perceptions of Limerick, in regard to anti-Semitism, as well as the mistaken notion that a 'pogrom', in the accepted form of that word, occurred in the city during the months of January to April 1904. Perception without regard for fact has created an unbalanced view of what occurred during those early weeks of 1904 and has remained so to the present day. The Holy Family Chronicles were unhelpful as when I attempted to read the events of 1904 I found

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<sup>598</sup> Bishop's letter, LRA, HFC, bishop's letter inserted in chronicles.

<sup>599</sup> LRA, HFC.

<sup>600</sup> LRA, HFC.

that this year was absent from the Chronicles. Dermot Keogh did not appear to have this problem as he has referenced the Chronicles in his work.<sup>601</sup> The Jews who arrived in Limerick 'settled mainly in Lord Edward Street and Colooney (now Wolfe Tone) Street'.<sup>602</sup> The *Limerick Leader* printed a small column on this persecution just one week before the fateful sermon by Fr Creagh. The piece, which was by the Odessa correspondent of the *Morning Leader*, referred to the recent pogrom in Kishineff.

The Jewish population that had arrived in Limerick had settled to the extent that just a few months previously on 27 June 1903 the then Mayor, Alderman John Daly, a well-known Fenian, had attended a presentation of a gold medal to Mr Bernard Weinronk by members of the Jewish community in Limerick. Mr Weinronk was honorary secretary of the Zionist movement in Limerick and was due to leave for Pretoria, South Africa. Mayor Daly made the presentation to Mr Weinronk and 'a hearty vote of thanks was expressed by a Mr Solomon M. Goldberg to Alderman Daly for presiding'.<sup>603</sup> Jonathan McGee observed that there had been some incidences of attacks on Jews in 1884, 1892 and 1896 but despite this the Jews had settled down in Limerick and felt secure enough in 1902 to buy a plot of land, for £150 in Kilmurray, for a Jewish cemetery.<sup>604</sup> There was disagreement between Fr Creagh's interpretation and that of Standish O'Grady as to the rate which the Jewish traders charged for their credit.<sup>605</sup> The system which they used was suitable for many thousands of poor and destitute Limerick people who were already familiar with the pawnshop system. The customers of the Jewish pedlars and moneylenders were the poorest of the poor and unable to get credit from any other source. Today this type of customer is referred to as sub-prime. Criostoir O'Flynn tells us that 'the vast majority of the citizens of Limerick were working-class or unemployed, there was no social welfare of

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<sup>601</sup> Dermot Keogh, *Jews in twentieth-century Ireland* (Cork, 1998), p 253.

<sup>602</sup> Des Ryan, 'The Jews of Limerick', *Old Limerick Journal*, No. 17 (winter, 1984), p. 28.

<sup>603</sup> Jonathan McGee, 'The Mayoralty and the Jews of Limerick' in David Lee (ed.) *Remembering Limerick: historical essays celebrating the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Limerick's first charter granted in 1197* (Limerick, 1997), p. 160.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159. The three assaults were Jacob Barron in 1884 was assaulted by John Murphy; Benjamin Jaffey and William Stein and a woman whose teeth were knocked out in August 1892; Moses Keane's house was attacked on 25 Nov. 1896.

<sup>605</sup> Hyman, p. 215.

any kind, and most people lived from hand to mouth in overcrowded tenements or squalid slums'.<sup>606</sup>

Poverty was endemic in the city and the Redemptorists were well aware of it as had been noted by Fr Prost as far back as the 1850s. The one social crime and the only sin mentioned specifically in the Redemptorist Chronicles was that of drunkenness. All the Redemptorists preached against it but Fr Creagh especially took a very hard line with the local vintners and 'he even went to the court to protest against the leniency of the fines meted out by magistrates to errand publicans'.<sup>607</sup> Dermot Keogh has recorded that Fr Creagh directed 'those same forensic skills ... against the Jews in the city'.<sup>608</sup>

Fr Creagh delivered his first sermon on the Jews on 12 January 1904 but he had presaged this sermon the previous week by announcing to the congregation that he was going to deliver a sermon on a 'special subject' and 'it was a subject which, when he begun, he would trash it out and do it full justice'.<sup>609</sup> On the following week he delivered his sermon and in it he decried the Jews for their high usury. During this sermon

he read extracts from the Mayor's Court of Conscience Book, showing the number of summonses issued week by week for the past two years by Jews, according to which over 500 summonses had been issued by the Jews against people in Limerick. He said he simply asked the men of his association, of which he was the director, to have no dealings with the Jews for their own sakes.<sup>610</sup>

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<sup>606</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>608</sup> Dermot Keogh, *Jews*, p. 27.

<sup>609</sup> *LL*, 6 Jan. 1904.

<sup>610</sup> *Munster News*, 13 Jan. 1904; McGee, p. 160; Des Ryan, 'The Jews of Limerick'. p.36, The Mayor's Court of Conscience was a type of free legal aid for those people who could not afford a solicitor. It was also used to recover small sums of money. It was said that the Jews used it because it would take them too long to recover their money through the normal procedure of the civil courts.

Creagh's sermon, according to Keogh, could only be described as anti-Semitic. It was full of phrases designed to put the Jews in a bad light both historically and currently. Creagh used phrases such as, Jew usurers, leeches, worms, and even their speech was termed as 'their sweet tongue' and the goods which they sold as 'miserable'. He equated Jews with Freemasons as the greatest enemies of the Catholic Church.<sup>611</sup> It was what occurred following this sermon that caused all the controversy about Limerick. O'Flynn maintained that it was Rabbi Elias Bere Levin, the appointed Rabbi for the Limerick congregation, who exaggerated the situation and drew in notables such as Michael Davitt and John Redmond into the fray and through his efforts and that of the *Jewish Chronicle* brought the events to an international audience. Rabbi Levin wrote to the county inspector of the RIC, Thomas Hayes, on 13 January 1904 and stated that:

I beg to inform you that every member of my community regards his life at this moment in peril, as a matter of fact several of us have been already in these two foregone days insulted, assaulted, and abused with menacing language. Therefore I beg you dear sir on behalf of my community to secure them ample protection'.<sup>612</sup>

He was primarily concerned about a boycott on trading with his people but he was challenged by the delegates of the Congregated Trades who 'endorsed the action of Fr Creagh concerning the Jews. They considered the Jewish system of trading 'detrimental' to the workers of the city' but there was at least one voice who in a letter to the editor of the *Limerick Chronicle* pointed to the Jews as the Irish equivalent of the 'gombeen man' as 'the scourge of the Irish village' who during times of need and especially the 'famine of 1845-49' charged 'exorbitant prices' and in a letter to the editor of the *Limerick Chronicle* which pointed to the Jews as the Irish equivalent of the 'gombeen man' as 'the scourge of the Irish village' who during times of need and especially the 'famine of 1845-49' charged 'exorbitant prices' and 'without ever having the Jews in the city Irishmen were more than capable of operating an unfair

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<sup>611</sup> Keogh, pp 28-29.

<sup>612</sup> Levin to Hayes, 13 Jan. 1904, CSORP/ 1905/ 23538, NAI; Ryan, p. 32.

credit system themselves.’<sup>613</sup> Hyman quoted a similar opinion by Standish O’Grady, editor of the *All-Ireland Review*, in answer to a letter from a correspondent who called himself ‘A Black North-man’:

The Jews ... have not taught us all these vile tricks and dishonest shortcuts to wealth; we had them and practised them long before he [sic] came, and are at them still, and would be at them were we to expel the whole race of Jews en masse tomorrow. If there were no Jews in Ireland, our own Irish Christian usurers ... would be just the same bad work, only without competitors.<sup>614</sup>

Opinion both in Limerick and internationally became entrenched. The legal establishment, political notables such as Davitt and Redmond as well as Bishop Bunbury, the Church of Ireland bishop of Limerick, supported the Jewish position, probably due to the fact that what the Jews were doing was not illegal and that they were being persecuted just as Dr Long had been. The members of the archconfraternity and some dubious anti-Semitic organization in England were on the side of Fr Creagh. The Bishop of Limerick, Dr O’Dwyer, who after the 1916 Rising, had no fear in confronting General Maxwell, remained silent to the power of the Redemptorist Archconfraternity. He may, as his biographer, Thomas J. Morrissey claimed, have been working behind the scenes:

The departure of the Jews was not universally welcomed in the city ... but they had no effective voice. The climate of opinion and feeling that had been created made disagreement difficult. The one public voice that would probably have been heard, and which had frequently been raised on unpopular issues, remained silent ... he quietly took steps behind the scenes to alleviate the situation.<sup>615</sup>

Finally though like the Limerick Corporation he ‘insisted that the issue was a commercial one, not a religious one’.<sup>616</sup>

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<sup>613</sup> McGee, p. 161.

<sup>614</sup> Hyman, p. 213.

<sup>615</sup> Thomas J. Morrissey, *Bishop Edward Thomas O’Dwyer of Limerick 1842-1917* (Dublin, 2003), P. 326.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*

The events which occurred following Fr Creagh's sermon have been described by Dermot Keogh as a 'pogrom' and he explained why in his book<sup>617</sup> but Keogh's opinions have been hotly disputed by Criostoir O'Flynn in his book.<sup>618</sup> Whither he was anti-Semitic or such an avid Catholic that he stood behind Fr Creagh is difficult to determine. The tenor of Fr Creagh's sermon, dignified by his role as Spiritual Director of the archconfraternity, gave *carte blanche* to some members of his congregation to assault, insult and terrify the Jewish population. He later denied that he had intended such a thing to happen and in the report of his first sermon the *Munster News* stated that he had ended it with the advice to 'have no dealings in any manner he had described, with the Jews. If they had any transactions with them they should get out of them as soon as possible, and then afterwards keep far away from them'.<sup>619</sup>

In his second sermon on the events Fr Creagh resorted to patriotic language 'I appeal to you not to prove false to Ireland, false to your country, and false to your religion ... if the Jews are allowed to go on as they have been doing in a short time we will be their absolute slaves'.<sup>620</sup> He also made reference to the Spanish Inquisition and stated that 'the Jews have always been a danger to Christian people. They were the cause of the Spanish Inquisition being instituted'.<sup>621</sup> Louis Hyman, however, enlightens us with a quote from Leopold Bloom in Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*:

'- Jews he softly imparted in an aside to Stephen's ear, are accused of ruining. Not a vestige of truth in it, I can safely say. History – would you be surprised to learn? Proves up to the hilt that Spain decayed when the Inquisition hounded the Jews out and England prospered when Cromwell, an uncommonly able ruffian, who, in other respects has much to answer for, imported them. Why? Because they were practical and proved to be so.'<sup>622</sup>

In his 'defence of Limerick' O'Flynn asserts that what happened in Limerick could have 'occurred in any other city in Ireland or Britain' but because of 'a set of

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<sup>617</sup> Keogh, *Jews in twentieth-century Ireland*, p. vii, p.26.

<sup>618</sup> O'Flynn, *Beautiful Limerick*, p. 224.

<sup>619</sup> *Munster News*, 13 Jan. 1904.

<sup>620</sup> *LL*, 20 Jan. 1904.

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>622</sup> Hyman, pp 213-214.

curious chance'' the outbreak occurred in Limerick. The refusal of Bishop O'Dwyer to enter the fray was indicative of a bishop who saw danger and was intent on avoiding it at all costs. His remoteness from the events concerning the Jews has cast a shadow on him. One can only determine that he had sympathy with the views of Fr Creagh or that he did not want to upset the Redemptorists. As long as the Bishop failed to rein in Fr Creagh, or opposed his findings of exorbitant usury on the part of the Jewish traders, the vast majority of the people of Limerick supported Fr Creagh. As far as O'Flynn is concerned the only reason for the trouble with the Jews in Limerick was this extravagant interest rate which he maintained was seventy-five per cent.<sup>623</sup> This was disputed by Bishop Bunbury at the General Synod of the Church of Ireland on 15 April 1904. He was applauded by the congregation when he declared that he had been informed by Rabbi Levin that 'the Jews did not charge one sixpence more on their goods than the respectable shopkeepers of Limerick'.<sup>624</sup> Bishop O'Dwyer, who as a young priest, 'had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Home Rule movement' but who had been opposed to secret societies like the IRB and differed with Davitt and Parnell in their Plan of Campaign against the landlords, refused to meet with Rabbi Levin and Sol Goldberg when they called to see him at his palace in Corbally on 19 January 1904. He also refrained from his customary 'annual visit to the Redemptorists at the time of the general communion of the confraternity' which O'Flynn described as 'his neutral attitude'.<sup>625</sup> If this was intended as a slap on the wrist to the Redemptorists it was a light one.

The result of Fr Creagh's sermons on the Jews was several common assaults by people from the slums and a boycott on the hire purchase schemes which the Jews ran. This resulted in several Jewish families leaving the city as they could not conduct their normal business. This supports the conclusions of Katherine Lynch who stated that 'civic communities used their powers of regulation to banish or expel those (the poor, the religiously deviant, political enemies) who did not have sufficient wealth or demonstrate behaviours needed to belong'.<sup>626</sup> The decline of the Jewish population in

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<sup>623</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>624</sup> Keogh, p. 47; *Irish Times*, 16 April 1904; *Munster News*, 20 April 1904.

<sup>625</sup> O'Flynn, pp 189-190.

<sup>626</sup> Lynch, *Individuals, families and communities*, p. 16.



the city began following this persecution. There were 171 Jews in Limerick in 1901 and this number had dropped to 122 by 1911 and would further decrease to 33 in 1926 and with a slight rise to 38 in 1936.<sup>627</sup> However, during the period 1901 to 1910 more Jews entered the city so that by 1910 there was a net decrease of 46 people. The one incident which remained in the public memory and the only one which saw a person jailed was that of fourteen year old John (Johnny) Raleigh. He was charged with throwing stones at Rabbi Levin and injuring him in the ankle. He spent a month in Mountjoy jail and on his return to Limerick was hailed as a hero, lifted high on the shoulders of a waiting crowd and awarded a silver watch and chain for his travails.<sup>628</sup> The festivities which greeted Raleigh on his return from one month's incarceration for physically assaulting a Jewish Rabbi were in strong contrast to the treatment meted out to another fourteen year old boy Willie Moran. Moran had been charged with stealing 'some apples from a street vendor in William Street' as well as the 'larceny of a cash box with a few coppers in it'.<sup>629</sup> The article in the *Limerick Leader* was headed 'A Happy Riddance'. Moran was sentenced to five years in a reformatory. For stealing a few apples and a few coppers he entered the maw of Ireland's Catholic gulag system never to be heard of again. Raleigh was later to become a wealthy businessman and a close Limerick friend of de Valera.

The 1904 controversy showed that the Redemptorist order had become one of the principal hegemonic forces at play in the city and through its spiritual director of the archconfraternity, regardless of the personality, was intent on imposing its world view on the members of the confraternity and through them on the Catholic population of the city as a whole.

### **The Archconfraternity Savings Bank**

This bank was established by Fr Creagh on 12 December 1904. The purpose of the bank was to assist the members to save small amounts of money in order to release

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<sup>627</sup> Census of population 1936, vol. 3, religion and birthplaces, part 1, religion, table 09, p. 17.

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 May 1904.

<sup>629</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 Jan. 1904.

them from borrowing from moneylenders i.e. the Jews. The reality turned out different. Creagh was one of the trustees the others being Ald. Stephen O'Mara and David Tidmarsh,<sup>630</sup> who was also listed as a member of Limerick Boat Club in 1904. The account was in the Munster & Leinster Bank which offered terms of 2 ¾ per cent on all sums up to £10,000 and 3 per cent on sums over that amount. It was proposed by Ald. O'Mara and seconded by Tidmarsh 'that the confraternity savings bank be opened that very evening and henceforth to the appointed days'.<sup>631</sup> By 1905 the bank was firmly established to the point that a resolution was passed that those who had conducted the clerical business of the savings bank be awarded 'some little remuneration for services rendered' and an excursion was proposed, not to exceed £20, to Quin Abbey in Co. Clare.<sup>632</sup> At a special meeting on 29 April 1906 'Fr Creagh announced his appointment to the Philippine Islands and introduced Rev B. Hackett as his successor as director at the confraternity and member of the Savings Bank and trustee thereof'.<sup>633</sup> Ald. O'Mara expressed sorrow at his departure and Mr McGann also expressed 'how dearly they felt his departure'. On the following evening 30 April 1906 a proposal was passed to award a sum of £50 to the 'testimonial fund now organised by the confraternity towards paying the expenses of the Redemptorists Fathers' new foundation in the Philippine Islands'.

The amount of money in the bank and the individual deposits were a cause of concern from 1907 and it creates a doubt about the bank itself and who exactly was putting money in and why. Although there is no financial record of the amount of money in the savings bank it can be estimated that it was in excess of £10,000 by January 1907 as the Munster & Leinster Bank increased their interest rate to three and a quarter per cent. This was an enormous amount for what was supposed to be minimal savings of working men. On 18 January 1910 a resolution was passed 'that henceforth deposits under ordinary circumstances be restricted to twenty five pounds per annum. Exceptional cases to be decided by the manager'.<sup>634</sup> This was a recognition

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<sup>630</sup> This was the same Tidmarsh who was a member of the Limerick boat Club.

<sup>631</sup> LRA, Box 2, manuscript, pp 1-2.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid., p. 3, 6 June 1905. Followed in subsequent years by excursions to Lisdoonvarna, Ballybunion, Killarney and the Cliffs of Moher.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid. Present was Fr Creagh, Fr Bernard Hackett, Ald. O'Mara and Bryan J. McGann.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid., p.14, 18 Jan. 1910.

that perhaps money was going into the bank which was exceptional for ordinary working men.

At this stage of its operation there is a feeling of unease in the writings in the *Holy Family Chronicles*. On 15 January 1912 a resolution was passed accepting the instructions contained in the Decree of the Sacred Congregation Consistorial dated 18 Nov. 1910. It does not say what was in this Decree. About this time three-thousand bank pass books were ordered to replace the old books. This indicated that that membership of the savings bank were that number or less but not more. The confraternity at this time numbered seven thousand members so less than half were members of the bank which seemed to defeat the original purpose of founding it. On 10 July 1913 the first refusal of money by the Redemptorists was recorded. Fr Hartigan refused an offer of £200 for church expenses and directed Fr Mangan to return the cheque. No explanation was given for his extraordinary refusal to accept money from the savings bank run by his own order. On 19 January 1914 a proposal was passed to purchase £300 original stock in Great Southern and Western Railways.<sup>635</sup> By July 1914 there were rumours circulating about changes in the bank and Stephen O'Mara mentioned it at a meeting but the director thought it inopportune to make any definite statement about it.<sup>636</sup> On 5 July 1915 a resolution was passed by the bank committee

That Fr Mangan be asked to announce from the pulpit that the trustees were desirous that all depositors of over £100 should withdraw their monies and invest them in good securities. Attention was also to be called to the fact that 4 ¼% and 5% interest was easily obtainable now without any risk, whereas all they received from the Confraternity Savings Bank was 2 ½%.<sup>637</sup>

Bonuses were awarded to the clerical staff to the amount of £135 on 14 July 1916. A deputation was dispatched to the Munster & Leinster Bank for an increase in the interest rate and this was acceded to by the bank. The new rate was fixed at 3 ½ per

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<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27, 19 Jan. 1914.

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28, 17 June 1914.

<sup>637</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34, 14 July 1916.

cent which included current account balances.<sup>638</sup> By August 1924 the then director, Fr Cleary, stated that he had been directed by the Very Rev Fr Provincial to call the trustees attention to the very large sum of money in the savings bank and to request that steps be taken towards having the amount reduced. It was decided to limit the amount of deposit in every case to £300. This points once again to the unusual position of high sums being deposited in the bank. One wonders where this money was coming from. In 1927 Fr Cleary stated that the General of the Order in Rome wished to have a special auditor for the accounts of the bank at intervals of two years and also to limit the amount of deposit in each case to £250. Legal council's opinion was obtained on how they could dispose of surplus profit, having provided for principal and interest of 2 ½ per cent. Mr Michael Comyn KC was of the opinion that they could dispose of surplus under existing rules but he preferred that the rules be amended.<sup>639</sup> It would appear that surplus profit could have been returned to depositors by increasing the deposit rate.

In July 1929 once again the offer of money was rejected for the second time by the Redemptorists and in December of that year a third rejection of money occurred. The then director, Fr McLoughlin, reported that the Fr Provincial thanked them for their offer of £1000 towards the decoration of the church but as he had no need of the money 'he was compelled to decline their very kind proposal'.<sup>640</sup> By December of that year the Fr General 'refused to allow the trustees to defray the cost of erection of new lavatories for the confraternity'.<sup>641</sup> The bank had paid for the erection of a lavatory for use of members of the confraternity in 1920.<sup>642</sup> The Very Rev Fr Provincial directed that Fr McLoughlin make a collection to defray the cost. A sum of £500 was issued as a loan so that the builder could be paid but this later changed to a contribution of £300 and an outstanding loan of £200.<sup>643</sup> This must be one of the very few occasions when a religious organization refused money. It began to look like there was something not quite right about this bank.

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<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 33-36, 19 Jan. 1917.

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid.*, pp62-63, 3 May 1929.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63, 3 July 1929.

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67, 23 Dec. 1929.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45, 18 August 1920.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67, 23 Dec. 1929.

The savings bank had lasted for twenty-eight years giving a lower interest to savers than they would have received in a commercial bank and was rebuffed on two occasions when it tried to give money to the Redemptorists. By 1932, the year of the Eucharistic Congress, the hierarchy of the Redemptorist order in Rome was completely unhappy with the operation of this bank and a special meeting was called regarding the closing down of the savings bank. Present at this meeting were, Very Rev Fr Fitzgerald Provincial, Fr Thomas consultor, Fr Whelan consultor, Fr Murray director, James J. Roche, James O'Brien trustees and Bryan McGann manager. Fr Fitzgerald informed the trustees of the bank that he was in contact with the Very Rev the General of the Order in Rome regarding the closing of the bank and expected his reply within a short time.<sup>644</sup> He told them that he would inform the trustees when the bank was to be closed. By April of that year a resolution was passed 'that the bank be closed as soon as possible and that all deposits with interest to date be repaid to depositors'. Stephen O'Mara sent a letter consenting to the closure.<sup>645</sup> Income tax for the years 1925-1932 amounted to £803-7-6. At a final meeting in February 1933 £770 was distributed among staff by way of a final bonus. The remaining £1150 was deposited for the benefit of the confraternity men in general and the director was to have discretionary powers to spend up to £30 per annum. It seems that the Redemptorists wanted rid of the bank prior to the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin that year.

It can be seen from these incidents, which occurred in the opening years of the twentieth century, that the directors of the archconfraternity held enormous spiritual and temporal power over the people of Limerick. As the new century progressed through the turbulent years up to 1923 it is remarkable how the events of those times are recorded in the Chronicles of the confraternity. All the major political events are assessed only in so far as they impacted on attendances at the confraternity. There is no mention of the attack on the volunteer's parades in the city in 1915. The local

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<sup>644</sup> Ibid., p. 73, 28 Jan. 1932.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid., p. 74, 5 April 1932.

papers described them as ‘Sinn Fein volunteers’. The incident referred to as ‘The Limerick Soviet’<sup>646</sup> was dismissed in a few lines:

The annual retreat had to be postponed owing to a general strike in the city against martial law. The work however suffered nothing in consequence. Attendance was very large and a pleasing feature of it was the record attendance at Holy Communion on Friday and Saturday mornings.<sup>647</sup>

This was the one occasion when the working class people of Limerick came closest to achieving class consciousness. Following the death in custody of Robert Byrne in 1919, described as a republican and trade unionist, the British army proscribed Limerick city. This resulted in workers having to submit to searches and identity cards as they went to and from work. The reaction of the Limerick United Trades and Labour Council was to call a general strike in the city. A confrontation between the military and the workers was possible. By adopting a strategy of civil containment at the point of a bayonet the British Army provided the legitimation for civil society, in the form of the workers unions, to take control of the city. Jim Kemmy in his forward to Liam Cahill’s *Forgotten Revolution* claimed that following a mass demonstration of workers in Limerick on 1 May 1917 they paid tribute to their Russian comrades for waging a ‘magnificent struggle for their social and political emancipation’ and he maintained that this showed the extent of their development in class consciousness.<sup>648</sup> However he also accepted that Sinn Fein’s rise to power was another ‘potent influence’ on working-class consciousness.<sup>649</sup> The three major influences of the Limerick working-class were Catholicism, nationalism and a sprinkling of socialism and by declaring the city a proscribed area the British army had inadvertently provided the glue which bound these elements together. John Cronin, ‘the carpenter who was father of the baby soviet’ replied to Ruth Russell, when she questioned him on the ideology of the strike, ‘yes, this is a soviet’.<sup>650</sup> However, the Bishop of Limerick, Denis Hallinan, when questioned by Russell had no worries ‘the Church, he said, had nothing to fear from

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<sup>646</sup> D.R. O’Connor Lysaght, *The story of the Limerick soviet*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Revised (Limerick, 2003).

<sup>647</sup> LRA, HFC, April 1919.

<sup>648</sup> Liam Cahill, *Forgotten revolution: Limerick soviet 1919* (Dublin, 1990), p. 7.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>650</sup> Ruth Russell, *What’s the matter with Ireland* (New York, 1920), p.130.

the soviet'. When Russell agreed 'certainly not from the Limerick soviet ... it was there I saw a red badged guard rise to say the Angelus' the bishop was amused 'Isn't it well ... that communism is to be Christianized' he replied. <sup>651</sup>

As far as the Redemptorists were concerned it was of little consequence what happened in the city once the numbers attending the confraternity and receiving Holy Communion remained steady. During the War of Independence all disturbances were nuanced in relation to the confraternity so that between 11 April and 15 April 1920 'owing to military disturbances the boys retreat had to be postponed'. <sup>652</sup> There were several entries regarding the behaviour of the police and the Black and Tans, both of which were interchangeable, 'police became very aggressive. One man was shot when returning from meeting. Thank God he recovered. Boy's May procession had to be abandoned owing to disturbed state of the city'. <sup>653</sup> An arrangement between the Director and the RIC District Inspector, that the men attending Adoration at night would not be interfered with, was broken and 'many of them were searched, threatened and grossly insulted, especially by the Black and Tans'. <sup>654</sup> Despite the activities of the Black and Tans who ran amok in Carey's road in August 1920 <sup>655</sup> the confraternity adapted to the situation and because of a curfew the weekly meetings commenced at 7.30 instead of 8.00. <sup>656</sup>

Despite the killing of a Silver Jubilarian, Michael Blake, 'by the military or police', the fact that 'raids, shootings and arrests were on the increase' and that there was 'total unrest in the city' the attendance at monthly communion was very good. It is possible that because of the troubles in the city that the men found it necessary to seek spiritual comfort. The numbers attending the confraternity in October 1920 was slightly higher than those in 1922. <sup>657</sup>

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<sup>651</sup> Ibid., pp 141-142.

<sup>652</sup> LRA, HFC, 11-15 April 1920.

<sup>653</sup> Ibid., May 1920.

<sup>654</sup> Ibid., June 1920.

<sup>655</sup> Toomey, *The war of independence in Limerick*, p.414; Ó Conchubhair, *Limerick's fighting story 1916-1921*, p.322;

<sup>656</sup> LDA, HFC, 15 August 1920.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid., Nov., Dec. 1920. The number of men attending and receiving communion in October 1920 was 5439 and in October 1922 was 5230. This included the Monday and Tuesday divisions.

No mention was made of the ending of the conflict other than the arrival of the new Civic Guard in October 1922.<sup>658</sup> Of the fifty members attached to this force forty nine were Catholic and they all joined the confraternity and formed a new section 'under the patronage of Our Lady Queen of Peace'.<sup>659</sup> The Civil War received less mention than the War of Independence. It was referred to as civil strife and the confraternity called on all men to refrain from civil strife and to reinforce this a great religious demonstration took place which consisted of general communion, a procession and an address by the Bishop of Limerick. During this demonstration it was frequently acknowledged that Catholic Limerick had done another good days work for God and Ireland.<sup>660</sup>

It is notable how God (meaning a Catholic God) and Ireland had become one. The attendances marked for Holy Communion during 1923 showed a marked increase on the previous year. and the Redemptorists rejoiced that 'nearly all associated with the irregular outbreak have taken their places in the confraternity. There were a few dozen at most who refused to come back and these were accordingly expelled'.<sup>661</sup> Over the following years the Redemptorists, in keeping with the ultra-conservative Free State government turned their attention to matters of social and moral import. Radicals among the workers, particularly those with a whiff of socialism, were attacked at source.

In 1924, Jim Larkin's union, the Workers Union of Ireland intended to form a branch of its union in Limerick and Patrick Thomas Daly was given the task of achieving this. Daly, son of a tailor and a republican and trade unionist, had a chequered history. He was a member of the IRB and a supporter of the Irish Socialist Republican Party. He worked voluntarily as a printer for the paper founded by James Connolly, the *Workers' Republic*. He was also involved in the establishment of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Although not involved in the 1916 rising he was interned in Frongoch camp. He was instrumental in the split within the labour

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<sup>658</sup> This is noteworthy because Charles Ebrill made his move against the occupiers of the Garryowen houses just a few weeks later.

<sup>659</sup> LDA, HFC, October 1922.

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 1923; *Limerick Herald*, 26 Feb. 1923.

<sup>661</sup> LRA, HFC, Oct. 1923, attendances at communion in April – 7,300, October – 6,869.



movement in 1918 when he initiated an attack on the leaders of the ITGWU and had a tetchy relationship with William O'Brien, who had defeated him for the position of secretary of the ITUC in that year. He served a month in prison for failing to pay the legal cost of a suit he had brought against O'Brien. The suit involved Daly's misappropriation of IRB funds. He regained his post as secretary of the DTC in 1929 and was an avid anti-fascist campaigner.<sup>662</sup> Daly tried to form this trade union just some months following the Garryowen Housing Crisis when another James Larkin had publicly clashed with the Bishop of Limerick. It would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to form a union in the face of opposition of, not just a bishop, but of the almost entire working male population of the city organised as a confraternity apart from the fact that Daly was encroaching on another established trade union in the city with close links to the confraternity.

Unknown to him this trade union, the Transport Union Resident and Caretakers, already established in the city and with close links to the confraternity, objected to the WUI gaining a foothold in Limerick and they appealed to the Director of the confraternity for help. He was glad to help and preached a sermon against the WUI where he referred to them as a 'bolshevist union'. A public meeting had been planned for Bank Place on 19 August. Mr Daly arrived flanked by 'a half a dozen local members' and there were a considerable number of people in the square 'apparently all workers'.<sup>663</sup> After speaking for a few minutes he was heckled from the audience and 'the situation became hotter'.<sup>664</sup> Mr Daly had to abandon the meeting due to the hostile reaction of sections of the crowd. Following the sermon by the director of the confraternity it became impossible for Daly to form a branch of the WUI and the

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<sup>662</sup> 'Patrick Thomas Daly' in Dermot McCabe and Owen McGee (eds.), *The Royal Irish Academy's Dictionary of Irish Biography from the earliest times to the year 2002* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), ii, 678-82.

<sup>663</sup> *LL*, 19 August 1924.

<sup>664</sup> *Ibid.*

attempt had to be abandoned.<sup>665</sup> Membership of the confraternity rose during 1924 - 1926.<sup>666</sup>

Throughout these years there was an increasing opposition from the hierarchy to certain dances, films and plays. The genesis for this opposition went back as far as 1913 when there was a censorship movement in the city known as the Limerick Vigilance Committee. A large meeting of over five-thousand people was held in the city on 29 November 1913 which protested against the sale of evil literature. Many of those on the platform were members of the archconfraternity and they included Alderman Michael Joyce MP, Ald. Prendergast city councillor, and W. Ebrill Auctioneer (relative of the Ebrill involved in the Garryowen Housing Crisis). In March 1924 the director took umbrage and 'attacked a certain dance held in the Lyric Theatre'. He appealed to parents to be watchful of their daughters. The matter was taken up by the Bishop in a public letter. Because of this interference the chronicle reported 'the result is that dancing in Limerick is ended for the present; and this St Patrick's Day for the first time in living memory, there is no dance of any kind'.<sup>667</sup> In 1926 the Limerick Corporation considered a proposal that pictures (cinema) could be shown on Sunday evenings. The Limerick Exhibitors Association, an organization of city cinema owners, had sent a deputation to the corporation with a view to extending their licences from six days to seven days.<sup>668</sup> They believed that their business was one which 'is enlightening the public and one to which the most fastidious could not take exception'.<sup>669</sup> They did not reckon with the fastidiousness of the Catholic Church. At the Corporation meeting held to decide upon the matter, a letter from Rev W. O'Dwyer PP St Munchin's was read which confirmed his opposition to the application.

Ald. Donnellan was against the application and moved that it be rejected. He stated that 'he felt there was a moral obligation on him to do so when the pastors of the

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<sup>665</sup> LRA, HFC, August 1924. The author's father, Paddy Keane, recalled for him before his death that he was questioned in the confessional as to whether he was a member of the WUI. When he replied that he was the priest instructed him to leave the communist union immediately. Paddy Keane, who was fearless against any man, meekly accepted the priest's instruction and left the WUI.

<sup>666</sup> LDA, HFC, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927. The numbers on the books in 1924 stood at 7,038 for the Monday and Tuesday divisions and the figure for general communion attendance in 1927 was 7,112.

<sup>667</sup> Ibid, March 1924.

<sup>668</sup> LL, 23 Oct. 1926.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid.

Church had stated that the granting of such an application would tend towards the violation of the Sabbath'.<sup>670</sup> Clerical opposition proved too strong for those supporting the application. When a vote was taken on Ald. Bourke's amendment it was lost on a vote of 13 to 10.<sup>671</sup>

This was a small victory for those opposing modernism and supporting censorship but was considered a 'striking triumph for the confraternity'.<sup>672</sup> But one of the more serious expressions of opposition to the arts and one which threatened to resurrect the Jewish question was the attitude of the director, and also secular priests in the city, to a play *Biddy* by a Jewish author, Laurence Cowen.

### **The "Biddy" incident**

The arrival of the play, *Biddy, An Irish Stew* by Laurence Cowen was announced in the *Limerick Chronicle* which declared it a 'screamingly funny farcical comedy' and the paper gave great credit to the 'enterprising management' of the Lyric Theatre, Messrs. Laurence and Parsons.<sup>673</sup> The play it declared 'had a most successful run at the Fortune Theatre London' and it received acclaim of the 'highest terms' from the 'Metropolitan Press, the *Daily Mail* describing it as the merriest play produced for many a day'.<sup>674</sup> The *Limerick Chronicle* portrayed the play as an 'irresistible humorous comedy' and urged all 'lovers of dramatic art and Irish wit' not to miss it. The paper advised patrons to book seats in advance as 'crowded houses will be the order of the day'.<sup>675</sup> The reality, however, proved somewhat different. Following the first nights showing on 6 Dec. at 8.00pm the priests of St Michael's parish, where the Lyric Theatre was situated, decided to make a protest against the play the following night:

They got volunteers from some patriotic clubs and asked the director of the confraternity to give his assistance. This he readily granted. The director gave the sub-prefects about 60 tickets for the theatre and sent them down to the

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<sup>670</sup> *LL*, 27 Nov. 1926.

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>672</sup> *LRA*, HFC, Dec. 1926.

<sup>673</sup> *LC*, 3 Dec. 1927.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.*

performance warning them to do nothing violent but to make a dignified protest.<sup>676</sup>

The sub-prefects did their duty and

When the play had gone on for about 15 minutes or so Mr O'Dwyer stood up and protested against the play and called on all to mark their disappropriation by standing up and leaving the theatre. All left except a few and they were cleared out by the men who sang "Faith of Our Fathers".<sup>677</sup>

The Holy Family Chronicle recorded that 'the protest caused a great sensation throughout the country – the papers were full of it' and that 'the players were forced to leave Limerick and the play was also banned in Dublin'.<sup>678</sup> The author of the play described as 'an English Jew' protested that he was unfairly treated in Limerick and requested the manager of the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin to allow him to produce a private performance of the play to which only clergy and pressmen would be invited. The manager of the Gaiety consented and the play was shown to a selected audience. The Redemptorist chronicle maintained that 'there were very few priests present' and that the audience 'was packed with Protestants and Jews'. The general feeling of the audience was in favour of the author but a certain 'Mr Allen (an official of the C.T.S. the Catholic Truth Society) sprang to his feet and pointed out that the audience was a "packed" one and condemned the play.' Mr Burke, editor of the *Munster News*, 'then rose to point out that the play was not the same as it appeared in Limerick.' The author admitted to some changes and even though the audience backed Mr Cowen, the public, meaning those outside of the invited audience, did not and accused Mr Cowen of being 'a trickster of the first order.'<sup>679</sup> The *Limerick Leader* reported that Fr Moriarty C.C. made reference to the banning of "Biddy" at the 12 o'clock mass in St Joseph's Church Limerick on Sunday 11 Dec. In his talk he praised 'the men of Limerick' who brought an 'abrupt ending' to the performance of the play.<sup>680</sup> He praised the 'dignity of the priesthood' and stated that 'Catholics were horrified at

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<sup>676</sup> LRA, HFC, 6 Dec. 1927.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid.

<sup>680</sup> LL, 12 Dec. 1927.

every caricature of it, and were not merely entitled, but were in duty bound to protest'. He protested that in the play 'the priest was represented as an unlettered and ignorant buffoon who could not speak a grammatical sentence, whose language was not merely of the broadest brogue, but vulgar in the extreme'. He thanked the 'men of Limerick for their dignified protest against this wanton insult' and subtly hinted that 'it was not the first time that Limerick had come to the protection of the Catholic faith and given a lesson to the people of Ireland' and finished his sermon with praise for 'the gentleman who rose from his seat in the theatre and led the protest'.<sup>681</sup> He was referring to Mr O'Dwyer who with sixty other sub-prefects and some patriotic men, had "packed" the Lyric Theatre. O'Dwyer felt obliged to place a letter in the *Limerick Leader* refuting remarks made by the play's author prior to the performance in the Gaiety Theatre. One of the remarks reputed to have been made by the author about the Limerick protest was that 'it was the argument of the shillelagh; it was the method employed by the primitive man'.<sup>682</sup> Prior to the performance of the play Mr Cowen tried to make it clear that the play was not ever intended to be a serious work and he stated that he would 'try to make it clear that it is a farce and not a serious work'.<sup>683</sup> Nevertheless Denis O'Dwyer in his letter to the *Limerick Leader* was unrepentant about his part in leading the protest. Following this incident the manager of the Lyric theatre approached the director of the confraternity and

Agreed to have a committee of men selected by the priests of the town who would vet each play on the first night and to have any such play censored for the remainder of the week. The director put this proposal to the priests, who were pleased, and they appointed a censorship committee.<sup>684</sup>

The next problem with a play arose in 1930 when a film version of O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* was shown in Limerick. This film was directed by Alfred Hitchcock and featured such famous Abbey stars as Barry Fitzgerald, Maire O'Neill and Sara Allgood. This time it was not a Jew but a Protestant who was in the firing line of the Archconfraternity. The then director, Fr Murray, used the offices of the 'censorship

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<sup>681</sup> Ibid.

<sup>682</sup> *LL*, 21 Dec. 1927.

<sup>683</sup> *LC*, 18 Dec. 1927.

<sup>684</sup> LRA, HFC, 1927.

committee', mainly priests, to look at the film which was being screened at the Athenaeum Picture Hall and the verdict of Fr Harty and Fr Fitzpatrick was that 'the film was most suggestive in parts'.<sup>685</sup> The director 'spoke against it in the pulpit – without mentioning the film or the hall asking fathers not to allow their children or others in the house to see it'.<sup>686</sup> There are similarities between this sermon and that of Fr Creagh in that Fr Murray preached the gospel of avoidance and exclusion but not violence. However, the result was also similar in that violence did occur. A gang of about twelve men broke into the operator's box in the Athenaeum where the film equipment was and

abstracted reels, took them into the street and destroyed them, to the accompaniment of cheers from a considerable crowd that had congregated in the vicinity. It is understood that this Sean O'Casey drama comprised scenes and incidents in Dublin tenement life which were considered objectionable and were the cause of the destruction of a considerable portion of the film.<sup>687</sup>

Fr Murray wrote in the Chronicles that 'at the assizes the judge, McElligot, condemned the men in the most extraordinary manner – never saying a word against the bad – dangerous ... films'.<sup>688</sup> A shopkeeper from Michael St, Stephen Kennedy, was arrested and 'charged with maliciously causing damage to the film'.<sup>689</sup> A few weeks later it was to have been shown in Derry but people objected and it was withdrawn.<sup>690</sup> Even though the Redemptorists warned their flock to abstain from violence it is evident that the atmosphere created by their fiery sermons created an intense situation where some men took it upon themselves to inflict their views through the use of violence on those outside the circle of acceptance. Despite the strongest efforts of the Catholic hierarchy the outside world was forcing its way into Catholic Ireland and this had to be stopped at all costs. Several pieces of legislation were introduced to stem the alleged flow of indecency which included the Censorship of Films Act 1923, the Censorship of Publications Act 1929 and the Legitimacy Act 1930 and Whyte stated

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<sup>685</sup> Ibid., 10 Nov. 1930.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid.

<sup>687</sup> LC, 11 Nov. 1930.

<sup>688</sup> LRA, HFC, 10 Nov. 1930.

<sup>689</sup> LC, 11 Nov. 1930.

<sup>690</sup> Ibid.

that there was 'no evidence that the hierarchy had to apply pressure to secure them'.<sup>691</sup> This can be readily seen from the actions of the men of the Limerick archconfraternity.

### **The Public Expression of Piety and Devotion**

During the 1920s and the 1930s, when censorship of books, and film was at its most stringent and the Irish Free state was struggling to impose a national identity on the people, the Limerick Archconfraternity of the Holy Family was imposing its own brand of Catholic fidelity by its use of the public space to organise 'triumphal processions' through the city.<sup>692</sup>

The first major procession was in May 1926 which honoured the Diamond Jubilee of the copy of a picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, the original of which was held in Rome. The second major procession was the Diamond Jubilee of the founding of the confraternity itself in 1928 and the third was the attendance of over two-thousand men from the confraternity who attended the celebrations of the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in 1932. One of the icons of the Redemptorist Church in Limerick is a picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. This picture passed into the hands of the Redemptorists Fathers in 1866 following the razing of the church of St Matthew 'during the Napoleonic Wars'.<sup>693</sup> According to the *Limerick Leader* 'the first authoritative copy of the picture reached Limerick towards the end of 1867' and 'it was unveiled in the church of St Alphonsus' on 20 December of that year. It was to this picture that the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family was dedicated.

The *Leader* was fulsome in its praise of the celebrations which took place in honour of Our Lady of Perpetual succour and their headlines proclaimed that it was 'Limerick's Big Day' with an 'impressive display of Catholic piety' and 'an imposing and inspiring demonstration'.<sup>694</sup> The celebrations and processions were organised with military precision and the religious bonus for those taking part was a special 'Jubilee Indulgence' which His Lordship, Most Rev Dr Keane Bishop of Limerick, had made

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<sup>691</sup> J.H. Whyte, *Church and state in modern Ireland 1927-1979* (Dublin, 1984), p. 373.

<sup>692</sup> *LL*, 31 May 1926.

<sup>693</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*

easier by reducing 'to two the number of processions necessary for gaining of the Jubilee Indulgence'.<sup>695</sup> The streets of the city were decorated and businesses like Cannock's, Tyler's, O'Halloran and Devaney received special attention for the display of flags and decorated altars in front of their premises. The Irish Club, the Draper's Club and the City Club were all 'very tastefully festooned'. At the corner of Carey's Road in the Boherbuoy area, where Rabbi Levin had been attacked by Raleigh, a 'Lourdes Grotto' complete with a statue of Bernadette kneeling had been erected. At the junction of Parnell St, Sexton St and Upper Gerald Griffin St 'a very artistic shrine to Our Lady' had been erected with a large banner proclaiming 'Limerick joins Rome in honouring Our Lady of Perpetual Succour'. Throughout the city there were decorations and shrines and in St Mary's parish near Barrington's hospital there was a very interesting altar.<sup>696</sup> In Bank Place, where the WUI had been heckled, there was a large banner erected which read 'Limerick Ever Faithful to Rome'.<sup>697</sup>

The Limerick marching bands played a very important role in the processions as they did in marshalling the men to the confraternity. One could be excused for thinking they were for the exclusive use of the Catholic Church. In the processions the Boy's Division was headed by the Christian Brothers Industrial School Brass Band while St Michael's (Tuesday's Division) was attended by the Boherbuoy Prize Brass and Reed Band and halfway through by the Sarsfield Prize Fife and Drum Band. St Johns (Monday Division) were headed by St John's Workingmen's Brass Band and halfway through were accompanied by St Mary's Fife and Drum Band.<sup>698</sup> In the hothouse of religious fervour local jealousies and competitiveness were put aside in a commonality of Catholic piety and devotion.

Public processions were an important part of establishing the authority and hegemony of the Archconfraternity in Limerick city. They reinforced in the public mind that the city was as one with the Catholic Church. They were also a subtle reminder to non-Catholics of the power of the Catholic Church in Limerick. As ten-thousand men arrived at the Redemptorist church of St Alphonsus a huge altar had been erected in

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<sup>695</sup> *LL*, 22 May 1926.

<sup>696</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*



the open air. The route of the processions had been by Wolfe Tone St (formally Colooney St where most of the Jews had lived) down Lord Edward St and on through the city from there. It was no accident that this was the route taken as by this time there were only 38 Jews left in Limerick.<sup>699</sup> The route through Wolfe Tone St and Lord Edward St was a less than subtle hint as to who had won that battle. The Diamond Jubilee of the founding of the confraternity in 1928 was a re-run of the 1926 celebrations with the exception of a visit from a distinguished Cardinal from Rome, Cardinal van Rossum, who was awarded the honour of being made a freeman of the city. Cardinal Willem Marinus van Rossum (1854-1932) was a Redemptorist and the most high-ranking Dutchman attached to the Roman Curia. He was the first Dutch cardinal since the sixteenth century. He had been appointed Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in 1918 and in this position was one of the most influential persons within the Catholic Church. It is notable that he was involved in 'propagating a mission of conversion among the Jews, while at the same time resisting Anti-Semitism.'<sup>700</sup> One striking addition to the decorations of the city was a replica of the entrance gate of King John's Castle which had been erected at the entrance to Wolfe Tone St. The coat of arms inscription was emblazoned on it 'Urbs Antiqua Studius Que Asperima Bella' (An ancient city studied in the art of war).<sup>701</sup> Wolfe Tone St contained three altars, in Spellacy Square, Mount Pleasant Avenue and one at the junction of Edward St. The street had been drenched in Christianity.

The Archconfraternity of the Holy Family in Limerick city became an institution for the men and boys of the city almost from the time of its inception. It fit neatly into the devotional revolution of Cardinal Cullen and always proclaimed an ultramontanist view. It has been speculated that it was the trauma of the Famine that created an environment in which people were looking for spiritual comfort and explanations for their predicament. Prior to the arrival of the Redemptorists in Limerick the regular clergy did not seem to be able to attract or convince the ordinary people to embrace the church. The Redemptorists changed that with their attitude to money and drink.

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<sup>699</sup> Census of population 1936, Vol. 3, religion and birthplaces, part 1 religion, table 09, p. 17.

<sup>700</sup> A Cardinal of global significance, <http://www.cardinalvanrossum.eu/>, (accessed, 12 August 2015)

<sup>701</sup> LRA, Diamond Jubilee brochure.

Both were forbidden and the people recognised their mission. Above all it was the military precision in which the confraternity was organised that led to its success. Spiritual director, prefect, sub-prefect, medals for good conduct and dismissal for failure to respond to summons from the director were the foundation stones on which success was achieved. Use of the public space for processions and marching bands for effect were a staple diet of the confraternity. During these monster processions they achieved critical mass and advertised to all that Limerick was a Catholic city. The Archconfraternity, as Terpstra discovered, succeeded in building informal networks which produced weak ties of social kinship and built up more social capital than blood kinship could. Each director brought with him his own biases and prejudices which helped to produce negative social capital within the confraternity that took many years to erase. This was clearly seen in the persons of Fr Tierney and Fr Creagh. Both of these directors, who followed one after the other, engaged the confraternity in public disputes which concerned other organizations and religions. They brought to the surface a latent anti-Semitism as well as a Catholic nationalism and the people responded in favour of the priests. The siege mentality of the city was brought to the fore and anyone who criticised the Redemptorists were criticising the city. The Redemptorists had the ability to unite different factions in the city under the one banner of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family. Marching bands which had been pro-Parnell or pro-Healy and who fought each other in public proudly marched and played together behind ten thousand men and boys through the streets of Limerick. The confraternity succeeded as Cohen and Arato stated in occupying the trenches of civil society and in doing so prevented the formation for many years, up to the late 1960s, of a liberal, secular bourgeois, hegemony on this terrain.

## Chapter 6: St. Michael's Temperance Society

This chapter will look at St Michael's Temperance Society which was very much an offshoot of the Archconfraternity. Thanks to the scrupulous maintenance of its records, they give us fascinating social and cultural insights into an organization which was much more than a temperance group.

The first temperance society, which was started in Ireland in June 1817 in in the west Cork town of Skibereen by Jeffry Sedward, was eventually absorbed into a network of societies led by Fr. Mathew.<sup>702</sup> The crusade against alcohol finally reached Limerick city in 1837. Limerick became one of the success stories in the temperance crusade during the nineteenth century. There was some exaggeration about the number of pledges taken there. According to Ferriter, Colm Kerrigan in his book *Father Mathew and the Irish Temperance Movement 1838-1849* charted the transition from moderation to teetotal in mid-1830s temperance societies, a departure which was accompanied by working-class involvement.<sup>703</sup> However, Elizabeth Malcolm suggests that in cities like Limerick, Dublin, Cork and Waterford 'all with substantial drink industries, temperance had only very limited success'.<sup>704</sup> Furthermore she argues that the Catholic Church feared temperance societies as instruments of proselytism and reported incidences of sectarian clashes in areas such as Strabane, Derry and Limerick in 1836 and of the indifference, if not outright opposition, of the priests.<sup>705</sup> She noted that by 1850 'Limerick, one of Fr. Mathew's earliest strongholds, still had four temperance halls in operation. One, 'lighted with gas, and adorned with paintings and prints', had around 300 members, though at one time membership had been well over a thousand'.<sup>706</sup> We get a different picture from G.C. Bretherton quoting Alexander King who had visited Limerick in 1837 and who was to testify to the universal appeal that temperance had in that region and he was especially impressed

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<sup>702</sup> George Cornel Bretherton, *The Irish Temperance Movement 1829-47* (Columbia University, Ph.D., 1978), p. 115.

<sup>703</sup> Colm Kerrigan, *Father Mathew and the Irish temperance Movement, 1838-1849* (Cork, 1992).

<sup>704</sup> Elizabeth Malcolm, *'Ireland Sober, Ireland Free': Drink and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1986), p. 38.

<sup>705</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

with what he saw in Limerick.<sup>707</sup> It impressed him so much that he felt he 'had become more thoroughly an Irishman than ever I was before'.<sup>708</sup> He also noted the large crowds who attended a visit to Limerick by Fr. Mathew. This visit was originally planned to preach a charity sermon for the schools administered by the Presentation nuns<sup>709</sup> but it was discovered by his admirers 'including many who had made the pilgrimage to Cork, sent off to the Mecca of Temperance by the Russells, Harveys, Westropp and the other powerful merchant families of the city' and they swelled the ranks of his followers when he preached in Limerick.<sup>710</sup> According to Bretherton 'when his labours in Limerick were over ... 150,000 persons had taken the pledge, or so it was said'.<sup>711</sup>

There were four temperance societies established in Limerick city by this time St. Mary's, St. Munchin's, St. John's and St. Michael's. Following Fr. Mathew's visit to the city they arranged a 'temperance soiree at Northumberland Rooms which was attended by the local bourgeois including captain Garrett Hugh Fitzgerald who told the crowded hall that 'they had not come there only for the purpose of drinking tea or coffee, but to strengthen that great moral link which bound them all together'.<sup>712</sup> Of these four it was St. Michael's that became the strongest and remains so to this day, a beacon not in terms of temperance but for sporting achievement and a central element in building the social capital which it has accumulated. Throughout the years 1920-1939 it bonded together the working-class men of the parish and bridged that social capital to other organizations.

The membership of St. Michael's Temperance Society while primarily motivated by the temperance crusade of Fr. Mathew, in time came to represent a social, cultural and Catholic ideology through its various activities such as billiards, snooker, chess, soccer, Gaelic football, table tennis, reading room, rowing, its orchestra and dramatic society. Through these it extended its influence to many other

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<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>709</sup> *LC*, 23 November 1839. This contained an advertisement for a charity sermon to be held in St. Michael's chapel, as a ticket only affair. Tickets from 1s. for the aisle to 7s. 6d. for the sanctuary.

<sup>710</sup> Malcolm, p. 213.

<sup>711</sup> Malcolm, p. 216.

<sup>712</sup> *LC*, 11 December 1839.

organizations. This represented both bonding and bridging social capital. But even though it has stood the test of time the important question remains as to whether St. Michael's succeeded in reinforcing the social stratification of its working-class members.

The temperance movement from its inception had a Protestant ethos, 'eight Dublin temperance societies ... were under Protestant domination in 1836'.<sup>713</sup> According to Bretherton both landlords and middle-class urbanites were among the early temperance men who as Protestants felt that their ascendancy in Irish society had been undermined and which culminated in Catholic Emancipation in 1829.<sup>714</sup> This class, always conscious of the cost of maintaining the poor, took up the cause of temperance in part as an effort to prevent implementation of the poor law. However 'neither temperance nor charity could halt the passage of the law, but a successful temperance campaign might restrict the rise in rates that the middle-class feared as a result of the laws implementation'.<sup>715</sup>

The gradual move away from Protestant influence to Roman Catholic began with the entrance to the debate of Fr Mathew, even though he maintained that 'my best and most energetic supporters were members of the Society of Friends, Protestant clergymen and gentlemen'.<sup>716</sup> However, as the temperance movement was moving to Catholic control Fr Mathew wrote on the question to one James Haughton that 'the teetotallers of Ireland are a Roman Catholic body. There are not fifty Protestants with us, though I have made every effort to induce them to associate with us'.<sup>717</sup> James Haughton was a social reformer and philanthropist. He was a Quaker until 1834, when he joined the Unitarian Congregation on Strand St., Dublin. He was convinced that excessive drinking was the cause of crime and poverty in Dublin. After becoming an active member of the Dublin Temperance Society in 1829 he was elected president of the Irish Temperance Union. He regularly wrote letters to the press

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<sup>713</sup> Bretherton, p. 91.

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid.*, abstract.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

promoting temperance, signing his letters 'Son of a Water Drinker'.<sup>718</sup> As the temperance movement became associated with Roman Catholicism it was perceived by 'many respectable people' that it was part of Daniel O'Connell's repeal movement 'and consequently they abandoned temperance'<sup>719</sup> O'Connell lost no opportunity to reinforce his crusade for repeal when he said that he believed 'Father Mathew was sent by God to bless Ireland with virtue, in order that she might be fit for freedom'.<sup>720</sup> However, the statue of Daniel O'Connell stands proud, not in front of St. Michael's Temperance Society but in front of the Jesuit Church. It was a Jesuit, Fr Cullen, who later took up the baton of temperance when he founded the Pioneer Total Abstinence Society on 28 December 1898. Ironically he intended it for women only.<sup>721</sup> Essentially temperance had become entwined with religion and politics. Ferriter states that 'those intent on promoting total abstinence were also sometimes in danger of appearing fanatical, given that temperance had traditionally been more associated with the Protestant rather than the Catholic religion.'<sup>722</sup> In St Michael's we find an organization which leaned heavily towards the Catholic religion, but to a great extent did not involve itself in party politics.

St. Michael's Temperance Hall was officially opened in 1909 by Bishop O'Dwyer following a successful fundraising event known as 'The Shannon Carnival'.<sup>723</sup> This carnival was very similar to another fundraising event in June 1903 which was called 'The Colleen Bawn Fete' in aid of St. John's Hospital building fund.<sup>724</sup> Both events attracted the same type of personages to their committees, the Limerick bourgeoisie but particularly 'the ladies'. This role of the 'ladies' is emphasised by Morris when he writes that 'one set of relationships that was structured by action within the societies was with the 'ladies'. Their main role was running Bazaars.'<sup>725</sup>

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<sup>718</sup> 'James Haughton' in Francis Clarke and James Quinn (eds.), *The Royal Irish Academy's Dictionary of Irish Biography from earliest times to the year 2000* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), ii, 678-82.

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>721</sup> John J. Dunne, *The Pioneers* (Dublin, 1981), p. 13.

<sup>722</sup> Ferriter, p. 57.

<sup>723</sup> *LL*, 17 June 1908.

<sup>724</sup> LDA, Newman papers, No.5, Limerick miscellany.

<sup>725</sup> R. J. Morris, 'A Year in the life of the Bourgeoisie', in Richard Colls and Richard Roger (eds.), *Cities of Ideas: Civil Society and Urban Governance in Britain 1800-2000* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 130.

The central committee of the 'Shannon Carnival' consisted of the Countess of Dunraven as president and the patrons were the Right Worshipful Thomas Donnellan, mayor; Sir Thomas Cleeve, D.L. High Sherriff; the Most Rev. Dr O'Dwyer and the Right Rev. Dr Orpen.<sup>726</sup> Dr Orpen, Raymond d'Audemar Orpen (1837-1930), had been curate at Rathronan and Adare and was ordained to the episcopate as Bishop of Limerick, Ardfert and Aghadoe in 1907. This event was the highlight of the activities of the Limerick bourgeoisie for that season. The 'ladies' played their part in managing the various stalls and when the accounts were finally presented they received their recognition in the press. There was an outdoor amusements committee, an indoor amusements committee, a management committee and a building committee. Those manning these committees give us a flavour of bourgeoisie society at the time; tea gardens and indoor tea stall – President, Mrs Green-Barry – Vice-President, The Lady Emly; Basket stall – President Lady Cleeve; dancing saloon – Sir Thomas Cleeve D.L.; Country produce – President Mrs F. St. Clair Hobson; Sweet stall – President, Lady Nash. The outdoor amusements committee contain the names of two Ebrills one of whom was later to be instrumental in the eviction during the Garryowen Housing Crisis. These common interests were noted by Lennon when referring to urban patriciates in an older Limerick when he writes that 'there was at least a tentative community between Catholic and Protestant merchant interests in respect of business concerns and outlook'.<sup>727</sup>

The opening ceremony of this carnival was performed by Bishop O'Dwyer and eighteen priests. The attendance also included the mayor, aldermen and councillors of the corporation as well as the administrative functionaries including the city engineer. Other notable dignitaries present included, Sir Alexander W. Shaw, J.P.; Lady Shaw; Sir Vincent Nash J.P. D.L.; Lady Nash; Mr J. OG'Delmege, J.P. D.L.; Lord Emly, Lady Emly; Lord Clarina; J. Green-Barry; Mrs O'Brien Southill. The list of local dignitaries was so numerous that they would have been more noted for their absence rather than their presence. What was notable about the event was the enthusiasm generated among the local bourgeoisie in order to assist the 'other' namely the working-class and

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<sup>726</sup> LL 17 June 1908.

<sup>727</sup> Colm Lennon, *The urban patriciates of early modern Ireland: a case study of Limerick*, p. 3.

poverty stricken people of Limerick city. The preface to the programme for the fete contained a condensed history of St Michael's Temperance Society noting its move from the Northumberland Rooms to the new buildings at the corner of Henry Street and Cecil Street, but also noted that the society was always under the care 'of the priests of St. Michael's parish' and that the 'succession of administrators of that parish' also 'marks the succession of presidents for the society'. It commented in particular that with the formation of the Archconfraternity in 1868 large numbers joined the society and a 'more pronounced religious element' was introduced into its rules and constitution.<sup>728</sup> The praise for the introduction of these rules was attributed to a Fr Mulqueen but added that most credit must go to 'Most Rev. Dr. O'Dwyer when he was curate of St. Michael's parish'.<sup>729</sup> It admitted that the society was not for those elevated personages who thronged the various committees of the fete but rather 'it need hardly be said that the members came mostly from the artisan and working-classes generally but there is at all times a fair representation of other less laborious callings'.<sup>730</sup>

From an analysis of the membership during the period 1920-1939 there appears to be no 'fair representatives of other less laborious callings' unless the writer was inadvertently referring to the unemployed. The fete raised a total of £2054-11-1 at an administrative cost of £1193-5-9. This left a profit of just £ 861. The cost of the new building was £3000. More than two thirds of the cost had to be found. The new building was opened on 15 March 1909 by Bishop O'Dwyer before an audience of local clergy and 'prominent people in both city and county'. Dr Orpen and Lord Monteagle sent their regrets by letter. It was noticeable that the same fanfare that accompanied the opening of the fete was absent at the opening of the society's new building.

## **Bonding Social Capital**

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<sup>728</sup> *LL*, 17 June 1908.

<sup>729</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*



By 1920 St. Michael's had established itself as a thriving institution. It was efficiently run with a central house committee, a paid secretary and sub-committees for its various activities.<sup>731</sup> From its beginnings the temperance movement in Limerick consisted of two groupings, the rich and powerful merchant class, and the working-class. Temperance suited the merchant class and for years the Russell's, the Barrington's, and the Rice's, together with other leading Protestant families had tried to reach some understanding with Catholics of their own class and in their view 'what could be better than a cause that brought upper and middle-class Catholics and Protestants together, while it gave them a means of containing the poor and the problem of poverty'.<sup>732</sup> This is what St. Michael's achieved. By 1922 the society had a total of 609 members on its books. This included 187 benefit members and 422 non-benefit members.<sup>733</sup> Benefit members were those who were up to date in their contributions. This number decreased dramatically by 1939 to a total of 271 members, which included 106 benefit and 165 non-benefit members.<sup>734</sup> This trend in declining numbers was also evident in the membership of the Limerick Boat Club as can be seen in chapter 4.

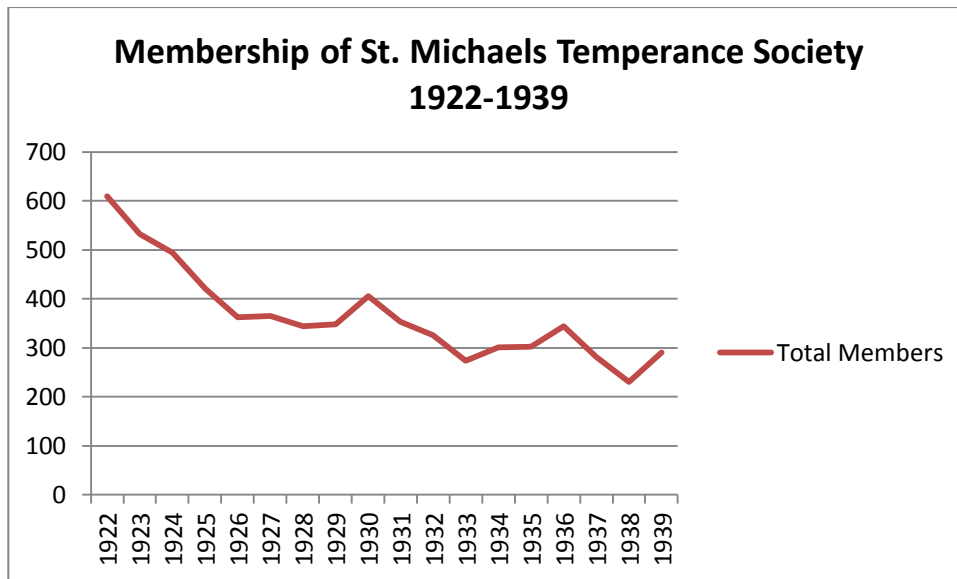
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<sup>731</sup> Minutes, SMTS, 10 February 1932, p. 50. The secretary refused the £5 increase in salary offered and resigned. At the next committee meeting he was offered an additional £4 on top of the £5 and he accepted. In 1936 his salary was £30 per annum.

<sup>732</sup> Bretherton, p. 209.

<sup>733</sup> Membership ledger, SMTS, 31 December 1922.

<sup>734</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 December 1939.



**Figure 11: Membership of St Michael's Temperance Society 1922-1939.**<sup>735</sup>

An analysis of the St Michael's membership ledger for the twenty year period gives us the locations in which the membership resided. Predominantly they came from the working-class areas of St. Michael's parish. In the ten year period from 1930 to 1939 we see areas of high membership in O' Curry St. 80, the Windmill area, 63, Wickham St., 50, Lord Edward St., 47, Carey's Road, 36, and Henry St., Gerald Griffin St., Cecil St. and Prospect Hill recorded a membership of 124 men.<sup>736</sup> These were all working-class districts where people lived in tenements, rooms or cottages many of which were in appalling condition. The most striking thing in examining these ledgers is that the

<sup>735</sup> St Michael's Temperance Society Minutes.

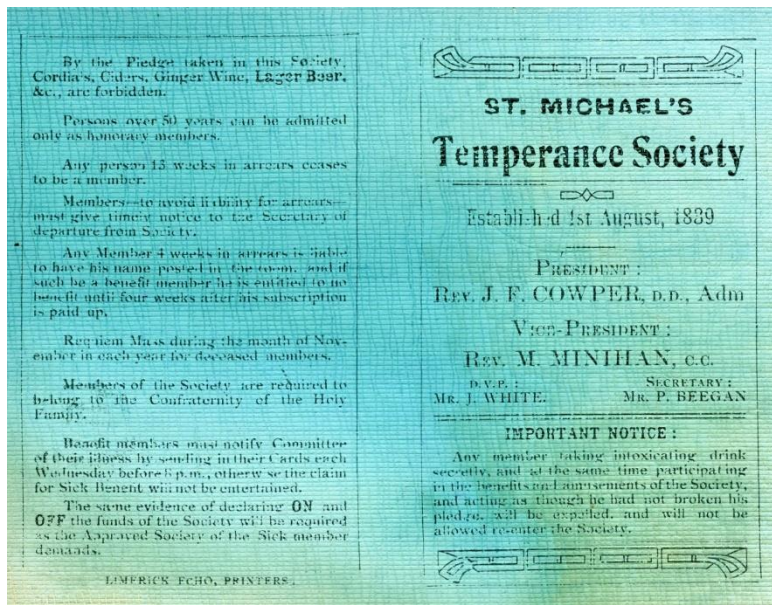
Year	Benefit Members	Non-Benefit members	Boys Under14/16	Adults	Total Adults/Boys
1922	187	422	0	609	609
1923	219	313	0	532	532
1924	222	272	0	494	494
1925	220	201	0	421	421
1926	172	191	0	363	363
1927	159	206	0	365	365
1928	152	192	0	344	344
1929	145	155	48	300	348
1930	150	158	85	321	406
1931	150	158	46	308	354
1932	156	141	29	297	326
1933	143	111	20	254	274
1934	139	113	49	252	301
1935	125	124	54	249	303
1936	125	145	74	270	344
1937	124	117	41	241	282
1938	128	103	0	231	231
1939	106	165	0	271	271

<sup>736</sup> SMTS, Membership ledger, 1930-1939, benefit and non-benefit members.

membership was one hundred per cent male. Women were not members and the only mention of women in the minute books concerned the dramatic society.

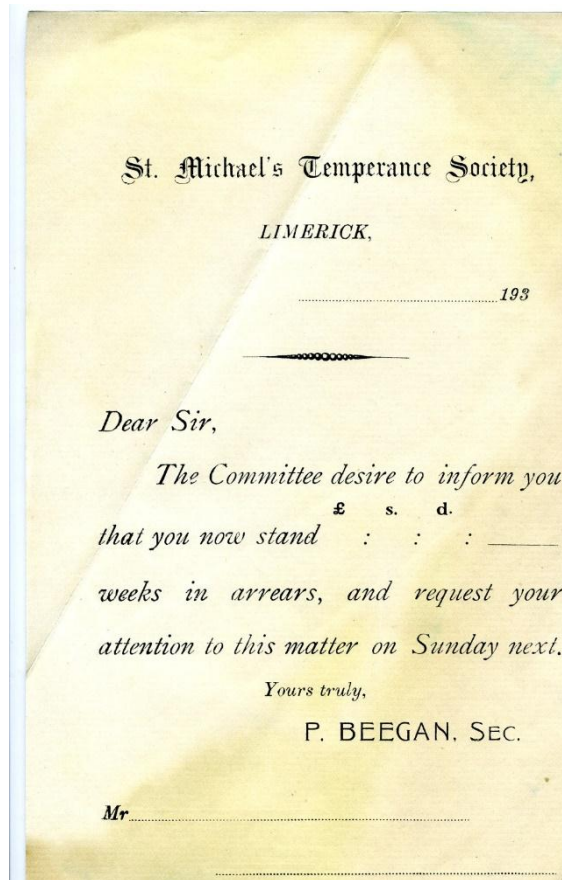
The Catholic ethos dominated St. Michael's, and this was tinged with a shade of green and a much diluted red concerned mainly with trade union parameters. The parish priest of St Michael's automatically became president of the society and the curate became the vice-president. The various bishops also took a close interest in the society. At the quarterly general meeting on 6 October 1918 with Rev. Fr Carroll presiding, the Bishop of Limerick, Denis Hallinan, attended. According to the minutes 'His Lordship was welcomed on behalf of the society'. The bishop in his reply thanked the members for 'a splendid reception' and 'promised his assistance in continuing to pay the interest yearly on the building fund'.<sup>737</sup> The fact that the bishop was giving financial assistance to the society clearly put him in a position of power in relation to it. It was incumbent on each member to be a member of the Archconfraternity and the membership books show each member with his address and the name of the section to which he belonged in the confraternity. The membership card also contained a space for the section of the confraternity to which the member belonged.

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<sup>737</sup> SMTS, Minutes, quarterly general meeting, 6 October 1918.

<sup>738</sup> See top left-hand corner of inside of card.



**Figure 13: St Michael's Temperance Society Summons to Member in Arrears**

No..... Section in Confraternity, St.....

Mr.....

1946	s	d	Sec's Sig.	Ars	1946	s	d	Sec's Sig.	Ars	1946	s	d	Sec's Sig.	Ars	1946	s	d	Sec's Sig.	Ars
Jan 6					Apr 7					July 7					Oct 6				
13					14					14					13				
20					21					21					20				
27					28					28					27				
Feb 3					May 5					Aug 4					Nov 3				
10					12					11					10				
17					19					18					17				
24					26					25					24				
Mar 3					June 2					Sept 1					Dec 1				
10					9					8					8				
17					16					15					15				
24					23					22					22				
31					30					29					29				

Furthermore, if a person was to fall foul of the confraternity he was expelled as a member of St Michael's. This was the case with a man called Brendan Hogan. The minute book recorded that

it is now definitely known that Brendan Hogan is not a member of the confraternity and secretary was requested to write and acquaint him that he must now in consequence of him not a member of the confraternity, he cannot continue as a member of the society<sup>739</sup>

However, Brendan Hogan was persistent and tried to become a member of another temperance society, St. John's, but was refused. He tried again for St. Michael's and his case was reviewed in November 1931 when the committee took a somewhat more conciliatory view 'Re Hogan case. The secretary reported he was refused admittance to St. John's by their Rev. President. Eventually it was agreed to accept him here as a member but to keep a strict watch on him, and maybe he will turn out good in the end'.<sup>740</sup> Perhaps someone had read the parable of the prodigal son. He must have turned out good in the end because the minutes up to 1939 show no further mention of Hogan. The same could not be said for John Carmody. In his case he voluntarily resigned his membership of the society because he no longer 'belonged' to the confraternity. The committee decided that 'as we cannot allow non-members of the confraternity, his resignation was accepted'.<sup>741</sup> Even when membership was beginning to fall and a sub-committee was formed to boost membership it was still decided that 'the confraternity rule is to remain'.<sup>742</sup> The society showed its Catholic ethos in several other ways, from the form of dancing which was acceptable in its concert hall to the print media. This can be seen from the minutes concerning an article in the *Daily Mail*

We protest against the blasphemous insult of our divine founder of our religion in a recent article of the *Daily Mail*. To make our protest practical we resolve not to buy or read this paper in future. We furthermore call on all newsagents not to sell the *Daily Mail*. We consider it high time that the government deal with literature of a blasphemous character in the same way as they have dealt with indecent literature.<sup>743</sup>

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<sup>739</sup> SMTS, Minute book, 6 March 1931, pp. 1-2.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid., 18 November 1931, p. 25.

<sup>741</sup> Ibid., 25 November 1931, p. 28.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid., 18 November 1931, pp 23-24.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid., 6 March 1931, pp 1-2. This related to an article published in the *Daily Mail* 19 Feb. 1931 consisting of extracts from a new book on the life of Christ based on contemporary first century

The minutes failed to mention what the offending article was. This disapproving ethos also extended to the plays and shows which were a feature and an income stream for the society. If the committee did not approve of a show they believed they had the right of censorship, 'we reserve the right to close down at any time if the committee think that this show is not proper for the city'.<sup>744</sup> The type of dances being pursued in the hall was also of concern to the committee and by 1939 had reached the stage where Joe O'Halloran proposed that 'whither for members or hiring out only céili or old time waltzes are to be allowed in the hall'. To the credit of the committee this was opposed but on the amendment the vote was a tie and the president Rev. Cowper cast in favour of the proposition which was carried.<sup>745</sup> However this was rescinded by November 1939 due to the wishes of the rowing club who needed to fill the hall for their functions.<sup>746</sup> During religious periods of the year such as Lent and Advent the society would alter its opening and closing times to suit the religious calendar.<sup>747</sup> On one occasion at a committee meeting a member, Joe Tuite, 'was now congratulated on his daughter entering a convent'.<sup>748</sup> Even the drama class was not impervious to the demands of the religious ethos. The committee urged them at one stage to 'do their utmost to stage a new play or failing that an old play before Lent and a passion play during Lent'.<sup>749</sup> During the 1932 Eucharistic Congress the society was requested 'to be responsible for decoration of O'Connell St. from Cecil St. to Barrington St.'<sup>750</sup> The Intellectual needs of the members were catered for by the reading room and a reading circle was formed. Even here the hand of the Catholic Church was omnipresent as the president, Rev Dr Cowper, suggested that the reading circle should

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accounts, especially those of Flavius Josephus. The book was *Messiah and John the Baptist*, according to Flavius Josephus (London, 1931) by Robert Eisler. He was an Austrian Jewish historian who was later interned in Dachau and Buchenwald after the 1938 Anschluss. He was released and managed to get to England before war broke out. The *Irish Independent* attacked the *Mail* for publishing extracts which it described as 'revoltingly blasphemous'. The *II* also reported that the Rev. J. B. Coyle C.ss.R, speaking at a women's retreat in Galway, described contemporary accounts such as those of Josephus as 'written by the Jewish and Pagan anti-Christ of the first century'. At the conclusion of his sermon, according to the *II*, 'Father Coyle got all the congregation to stand up and renew their allegiance to Christ the King ...'

<sup>744</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 March 1933, p. 109.

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 March 1939.

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 November 1939.

<sup>747</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 February 1931. Due to the general mission fortnight the opening and closing times were changed. Week-days close at 7.15 and re-open not earlier than 9.15. Sundays close at 6.15 and re-open not earlier than 8.15. This notice to be put in showcase.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 April 1932, p. 64.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 November 1933, pp 153-154.

<sup>750</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 May 1937.

‘commence with a reading of *Quodragissimo Anno*, Pius XI’s and Leo XIII’s encyclical on condition of labour’.<sup>751</sup> *Rerum Novarum* – (On capital and labour) – was an encyclical written by Pope Leo XII in May 1891 and appeared to be an attempt to explain the contradictions inherent between capital and labour. It was essentially an attempt to contradict the philosophy and teachings of Karl Marx and communism. *Quodragissimo Anno* – (Reconstruction of the social order) was an encyclical written by Pius XI in May 1931. This was an attempt to understand the rapidly changing nature of society from a Catholic point of view.

Occasionally the activities of the committee ventured onto ground occupied by the trade unions. Many of the members belonged to craft unions if they were tradesmen or general unions if they were not. At one stage the caretaker reported that a new pane of glass was required for the billiard room. At a committee meeting M. Maher proposed the work be given to a member, M. Ryan. However there was an objection from another member, M. Sheehan. He maintained that Ryan was a painter and that it was against the painter union rules for a painter to do glazing work. It went to a vote which was a tie and the chairman had to use his casting vote. He voted against Ryan. This could be construed as a minor victory for the painter’s union.<sup>752</sup> There was also a problem with printing in non-union houses and the president, Fr. Fitzpatrick, pronounced that even though ‘we are not bound in any society to get work done in union houses ... it has always been the custom’.<sup>753</sup> During the economic war with Britain an unusual situation arose. The hall floor needed renewing and the contractors who had won the job were unable to carry it out ‘as they cannot procure the timber specified, owing to government restrictions’.<sup>754</sup> Some members of the committee agreed to contact the carpenters union to ‘see if our own members could put down the floor without objections from the union’.<sup>755</sup> The Athlunkard Boat Club had gone ahead and their members had voluntarily put down a floor without

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<sup>751</sup> Ibid., 6 October 1937.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid., 11 May 1934, pp 187-189.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid., 15 November 1934.

<sup>754</sup> Ibid., 27 November 1934.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid.

permission from the union but 'Joe Whealan says he would like to see union officials first before proceeding with the work'.<sup>756</sup>

Being primarily a temperance society it was a condition of membership that each person took the pledge before being accepted as a member. Inevitably there were people who broke that pledge. The society dealt with them in a severe manner. They encouraged their committee men especially to gather information on any member who was taking drink and 'regarding any person so doing, report to Dr. Cowper'.<sup>757</sup> There was an objection to one member representing the society on the table tennis team 'on the grounds that he with three others frequented a public house in Roche's St. and used playing cards belonging to society. The four in question were to be asked for an explanation at the next meeting'.<sup>758</sup> At the same meeting the Baker's Society was granted use of the hall for a Saturday night dance until 3.00am provided there was no drink.<sup>759</sup>

### **Subscriptions and benefits**

One of the unique aspects of the society was its concept of benevolence based on member's subscriptions. Initial subscription was one shilling and afterwards four pence per week. There was established a benefit fund which members could call upon in times of illness. This amounted to seven shillings per week for 13 weeks and a further three shillings and six pence for a further 13 weeks. In the event of the death of a member £5 was granted to his next of kin. An allowance of £4 was paid to a member on the death of his wife.<sup>760</sup> These benefits however were strictly controlled. A special visiting committee was organised on a rota basis and these men would visit the sick member and record the details in the 'Sick Book'. This book recorded the number of weeks a member was sick and the weekly amount paid to him. In certain cases they would record their impression of the sick member. Figure 14 contains an analysis of payments made between 1916 and 1920. During this time a total of 656

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<sup>756</sup> Ibid., 6 December 1934.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid., 13 March 1938.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid., 4 November 1938.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid.

<sup>760</sup> LL, 12 March 1909.



payments were made to sick members. Unfortunately there is no sick book record available after this date.

Year	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
1916	14	31	27	13	9	10	14	17	13	20	20	19	207
1917	31	48	30	21	37	17	15	4	4	7	10	9	233
1918	10	14	16	7	5	17	26	6	1	15	27	13	157
1919	6	2	13	17	0	0	2						40
1920	8	5	6										19
Total	69	100	92	58	51	44	57	27	18	42	57	41	656

**Figure 14: St Michael's Temperance Society: number of members receiving sick benefit payments from benevolent fund, January 1916 to March 1920 .<sup>761</sup>**

On one occasion the wife of a deceased member, Mrs Kelly, applied for death benefit. The committee having reviewed the case decided that 'as he was not in benefit for nine months of 1936 he ceased to be a member after 13 weeks so no death benefit would be paid. However committee have agreed to have a novena of masses said for him'.<sup>762</sup> This showed the connection between the members of the society. Even if the rules were not strictly adhered to there was always the option of assistance for the afterlife.

The society showed a strong bonding between its members but this bonding was class based along religious lines, the Catholic religion only. At the time this appeared normal and was accepted by all the members. In a time of upheaval and very little money the society provided a safe haven for the Catholic working-class and unemployed. It also reinforced the Catholic ethos which was at variance with the philosophy of the founder of the temperance movement. In conjunction with the confraternity it instituted a negative vision of socialism and supported a conservative attitude towards literature and modernism. It was chauvinist in its attitude towards women accepting them only in a restricted sense in their dramatic section but not as members. Nevertheless this society succeeded in reaching out to many other

<sup>761</sup> Compiled from information contained in the Sick Book of St. Michael's Temperance Society.

<sup>762</sup> SMTS, Minute Book, 3 February 1937.

organizations within the city building networks to these through its own activities and by the letting of its hall and facilities. Appendix B shows a list of these.

### **Relations with other organizations**

Although the society was originally intended as a vehicle for temperance and alternative choices for its members other than the public house, with the construction of the new building at Cecil St. / Henry St. a new vista of cooperation with other clubs and organizations opened up for the society. The internal bonding of its own members was solid and with the facility of a large hall, which could have multi-purpose uses, St. Michael's extended its orbit to all these other bodies. Great care was taken in granting of applications for use of the hall or the other facilities it had available such as tables, chairs, musical instruments and theatre props. From an examination of the minute books it is clear that Young Munster Rugby Football Club occupied a special place regarding use of the hall. Their application was always granted without any charge.<sup>763</sup> They also had an association with Garryowen Rugby Football Club as two of its members were founding members of this club.<sup>764</sup> The Legion of Mary was also accorded preferential status. On one occasion the usual fee of £3 was reduced to four shillings.<sup>765</sup> On another occasion use of the hall was granted to them free of charge for a whist drive.<sup>766</sup> Another organization which was looked upon with favour was the Republican Graves Committee. They were given 150 chairs free of charge when the normal charge would have been three pence per chair.<sup>767</sup> Refusal to grant hall or equipment was rare but sometimes a codicil was added before granting as in the case of Cavendish & Co. Ltd. Dublin. This company wished to hire the hall for a furniture exhibition for three weeks. The request came through the president Fr. Fitzpatrick. 'It was agreed on condition that only furniture made in the Free State was exhibited'. There was one dissenter in the vote.<sup>768</sup> The Franciscan choir was also granted use of

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<sup>763</sup> SMTS, Minute Books, 14 February 1935, 18 May 1936, 9 September 1936, 28 May 1938, 8 September 1938, 19 September 1939.

<sup>764</sup> Michael O'Flaherty, *The home of the spirit: A celebration of Limerick rugby*, (Limerick, 1999), p. 18. The two members were Michael Joyce, an MP for Limerick, and Tom Prendergast.

<sup>765</sup> SMTS, Minute Book, 30 October 1935.

<sup>766</sup> Ibid. 26 April 1933.

<sup>767</sup> Ibid. 28 February 1935.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid. 29 March 1933, pp 114-115.

the hall three nights per week at a charge of five shillings per week.<sup>769</sup> Very rarely did the outside world impinge upon the activities of St Michael's. One occasion when this happened was a request in 1939 from a Mrs Burroughs of Villiers School which was non-Catholic. She applied for use of the hall for a benefit night to raise funds for Jewish refugees. The minutes record that a 'Mrs Burroughs of Villiers school was granted permission to hold a benefit night on the usual terms of £3'.<sup>770</sup> There must have been some soul-searching between this meeting and the next. At the next meeting the secretary was instructed to find out 'why exactly she is getting up this show as it will be on the grounds of what charity it is committee may subscribe'.<sup>771</sup> This minute appears to suggest that the committee may have been willing to forego the fee if they thought the charity was, in their minds, acceptable. This was the only indication of the impending war encroaching on the minds of the society. It may have been the Jewish influence rather than the war that was exercising their minds and in particular the association of Limerick and the Jews due to the well-known controversy in 1904 involving members of the confraternity.<sup>772</sup>

Following the Famine there was a serious drinking problem, both in the rural Ireland and in the cities and towns. This was initially addressed following the Protestant ethic, as was also the purity issue on prostitution in inner Dublin. Following the intervention of Fr Mathew there was a gradual move towards Catholicism taking over the temperance movement despite the fact that Fr Mathew was ecumenical in his views. This move was because of the fear of proselytism which was endemic within Catholicism. This issue raised its head in Limerick during the Dr Long affair. Following Fr Mathew's visit to Limerick, which according to reports was attended by thousands of people reminiscent of the arrival of the Redemptorists, four temperance societies were formed. The largest of these was St Michaels Temperance Society. It was mainly through the efforts of Bishop O'Dwyer that this society became so important and influential. He was also responsible for the rules of the society which were sectarian in nature in that they excluded non-Catholics. To be a member one had first to be a

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<sup>769</sup> Ibid. 27 March 1934, pp 177-178.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid. 8 February 1939.

<sup>771</sup> Ibid., 16 February 1939.

<sup>772</sup> This refers to the events described in chapter 6.

member of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family. In this way the Catholic Church excluded Protestants from the temperance movement.

The initial fundraising efforts for the building of St Michaels was performed by the Limerick bourgeoisie both city and county but when the building was officially opened they were notably absent. The status attached to fundraising for the lower classes, which mainly attracted the wealthy middle class, both Catholic and Protestant, was not to be confused with actually mixing with them. The minute books of the society showed that the membership was almost exclusively working-class. Membership of the society declined from 1920 to 1939 and a similar decline in membership of the Limerick Boat Club was also recorded. It is unclear why membership of clubs declined like that. It may have been due to economic problems or perhaps a return to drinking alcohol. It was notable that when a reading circle was formed that the first items to be read, encouraged by Dr Cowper, were the Papal encyclicals, *Quodragissimo Anno* and *Rerum Novarum*. It will be recalled that it was the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* that caused so much trouble between Bishop Hallinan and William James Larkin during the Garryowen Housing Crisis. St Michael's Temperance Society, whose ethos had been initially Protestant, had become principally a male Catholic dominated organ of the Catholic Church in Limerick dedicated to imposing conservative views on its members.

## Chapter 7: The Gaelic League, Limerick and the Question of Irish Identity 1898-1922

In the latter half of the nineteenth century three organizations emerged which were to have a lasting effect on the concept of cultural nationalism and Irish identity. These were the Gaelic League founded in 1893 by Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill, the Irish Agricultural Organization Society founded by Horace Plunkett in 1894, and the Irish Literary Theatre, which staged its inaugural production, Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen*, in 1899.<sup>773</sup> These organizations grew out of a society which was trying to come to terms with its dual identity, Irish and British. Benedict Anderson has suggested that nationalism should be understood within this milieu, 'what I am proposing is not just political ideology but with the large cultural systems that came before it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being'.<sup>774</sup> This chapter will concentrate on the role of the Gaelic League and its struggle to revive the Irish language in a population which to a great extent had forgotten it mainly due to increasing use of English. As Anderson has argued, 'vernacular languages-of-state

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<sup>773</sup> P.J. Mathews, *Revival: the Abbey Theatre, Sinn Fein, the Gaelic League and the Co-operative Movement* (Cork, 2003), p. 23.

<sup>774</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities* (London, 1991), p. 12.

assumed ever greater power and status in a process which ... was largely unplanned ... thus English elbowed Gaelic out of most of Ireland'.<sup>775</sup> Hindley referred to this period as one of 'romantic revival' and accepted that the 'advent of the League nevertheless coincided with the great flowering in Anglo-Irish culture associated with the names of Yeats, Lady Gregory, Synge and others'.<sup>776</sup> It has been estimated that Irish as a common language of the ordinary person had already started to be superseded by English by 1800, the year of the Union, as 'the majority decided that collectively it needed English for its own utilitarian purposes'.<sup>777</sup> Robert L. Cooper attributed the language shift to English on the population decline following the Famine:

An example of the effects of population decline is the wholesale emigration in the mid-nineteenth century (itself the result of economic exploitation, the failure of the potato crop, and the *laissez – faire* ideology of the English establishment), which led to the irreversible decline of the Irish language as a vernacular.<sup>778</sup>

Self-preservation and self-interest were thus instrumental in the advance of the English language and the decline of the Irish vernacular. In Ulster prior to its industrialization the influence of Protestantism was 'linguistically negative' whereas in Leinster, where Protestants required the services provided by Catholics, these Catholics were willing 'to adopt English the better to advance themselves'.<sup>779</sup> Ó Laoire accepted that in the Galltacht (the speech community existing outside the Gaeltacht) 'by the end of the nineteenth century, the language had passed out of all use, and was devoid of any specific function'.<sup>780</sup> Cooper attributed this to the 'great prestige' that was laid on Latin and Greek in formal education which led to a belief that 'modern European languages, not taught in schools, were inferior, decadent remnants of a

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<sup>775</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>776</sup> Reg Hindley, *The death of the Irish language* (London, 1990), p. 24.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>778</sup> Robert L. Cooper, *Language planning and social change* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 165.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid.

<sup>780</sup> Muiris Ó Laoire, 'An historical perspective on the revival of Irish outside the Gaeltacht, 1880-1930, with reference to the revival of Hebrew', in Sue Wright (ed.), *Language and the state: revitalization and revival in Israel and Eire* (Clevedon, 1996), p. 52.

glorious past'.<sup>781</sup> This tallied with the attitude of native speakers of Irish who were ashamed of speaking the language.

The first account of a Gaelic League branch in Limerick city was at a meeting of the Limerick '98 Association, an association which commemorated the 1798 rebellion, which was held in their rooms in Sarsfield Street on 7 July 1898 with Mr Daly in the chair.<sup>782</sup> During that meeting a Mr Cusack invited the association to establish a Gaelic League branch and the meeting agreed and gave permission for their rooms to be used for the study of the Irish language.<sup>783</sup> The meeting which established the Gaelic League in Limerick took place in the same room on 15 July 1898. The people present at that meeting were in the main Irish – speaking although the chairman, at the conclusion of the meeting, observed that 'any man can become a member of the League even if he was not willing to study the language'.<sup>784</sup> This was a strange comment considering that the objects of the League were to advance the cause of the Irish language and letters. John O'Carroll, following speeches by O'Neill, John O'Brien, O'Connor and Patrick Daly told the meeting that 'Irish was an easy language to learn' and that those who found it hard to learn 'had no love for the subject' whereupon he then delivered a strongly flavoured nationalist speech when he declared that 'we are all nationalists' who hated that Saxon and yet were satisfied to use the 'language of our conqueror'.<sup>785</sup> He did not think that an Irish teacher was required as the Irish - speaking members, with the assistance of Fr O'Growney's books, would suffice to provide 'a knowledge of Irish without requiring any unusual intelligence on the part of the student'.<sup>786</sup> Fr Eugene O'Growney (Eoghan Ó Gramhnaigh), who was a noted Irish scholar from Athboy, Co. Meath was appointed professor of Irish language, literature and antiquities at Maynooth on 15 November 1891 and subsequently was one of the

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<sup>781</sup> Cooper, p. 172.

<sup>782</sup> *LL*, 8 July 1898.

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>784</sup> *LL*, 18 July 1898. The people present at that meeting were James Kett, John O'Carroll, J. O'Connor snr. And Jnr., Williams, T. Creagh, O'Neill, O'Brien, D. Daly. King, J. Ryan, M. Quirke, M. Danagher, T. Bowman and P. Daly.

<sup>785</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>786</sup> *Ibid.*

founding members of the Gaelic League. He was the author of *Simple lessons in Irish* and it was these books that were mainly used for the teaching of Irish at that time.<sup>787</sup>

At their subsequent meeting having considered correspondence from the Dublin Gaelic League they discovered that the Limerick membership was three times larger than required in order to form a branch.<sup>788</sup> An application by the Limerick branch to register 'Craobh Sarsfield' was turned down because the names of all craobhaca in future 'should be identified with the Irish language and literature, as stipulated in the constitution'.<sup>789</sup> According to the League the Irish language was the most distinctive mark of Irish nationality 'and the most effective means of generating and maintaining true national sentiment'.<sup>790</sup> It allied the language to the concept of 'self-reliance', which later became the ethos of Sinn Féin, as well as to the cause of temperance. The League believed that their work would help to create employment, revive native pastimes and stop emigration.<sup>791</sup> By April of the following year the Limerick branch was well established and took 'infinite pleasure' in the fact that the Catholic Institute might host Irish classes due to the influence of Rev P.A. Sheehan P.P. Doneraile who had given a lecture to the Institute on the Irish language.<sup>792</sup> Fr Sheehan in his remarks laid great emphasis on the racial identity of the Irish and the importance of the Irish language as a signifier of that identity:

I have no time tonight to speak to you of the necessity of conserving our racial characteristics, especially our language. I shall content myself by saying of this latter, that I consider its extinction, partial though it be, a greater evil than the Penal Laws or the Act of Union, and its revival a greater blessing than even our emancipation. The Irish race would have had a different history for the past fifty years if it had been welded by a common language, into unbroken solidarity.<sup>793</sup>

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<sup>787</sup> Eugene O'Growney' in Lesa Ní Mhughailé (ed.), *The Royal Irish academy's Dictionary of Irish Biography from the earliest times to the year 2002* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), ii,678-82.

<sup>788</sup> *LL*, 3 August 1898.

<sup>789</sup> Pádraig Ó Fearáil, *The story of Conradh na Gaeilge* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1975), p. 20.

<sup>790</sup> Ó Fearáil, p. 6.

<sup>791</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>792</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis* 8 April 1899.

<sup>793</sup> *Ibid.*



Fr Sheehan, better known as Canon Sheehan, was one of the most popular writers of the time, the author of such books as *Geoffrey Austin, student* (1895), and *The Triumph of Failure* (1898). The latter dealt with the intellectual and social struggles of a young Catholic man who in moments of despair and resentment was tempted to utter the words 'non serviam' which are found later in Joyce's work *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Sheehan had addressed the Marian sodality at UCD while James Joyce was a member. Later novels included *My New Curate* (1900), *Luke Delmege* (1902), *Glenanaar* (1904-05) regarded as his best novel, *The Blindness of Dr Gray* (1909), *The Queens Fillet* (1911) and the posthumously published *The Graves of Kilmorna* (1915). He died in Doneraile, where he had served as parish priest, on 5 October 1913. He influenced young radical nationalists like Terence MacSwiney and later writers like Daniel Corkery.<sup>794</sup> The Catholic ethos was very much present at that meeting when it was decided to hold no meetings during Holy Week or on Easter Sunday.<sup>795</sup> In those early days of the League in Limerick it was noticeable that the temperance societies, which were controlled by the Catholic clergy, took a great interest in the language. Their zeal was praised by *An Claidheamh Soluis* when it stated that 'St Michael's Temperance Society are to organise classes this week for the study of our grand old tongue' and that 'the classes at St John's Temperance Society continue to progress rapidly'.<sup>796</sup>

With the assistance of the old Fenian John Daly, who was mayor at that time, the Limerick branch of the League gained respectability to the extent that they were given rooms in the Town Hall where they could have their meetings. They were also able to influence the political agenda by having the first council elected under the new Local Government Act of 1898 to adopt a resolution to the effect 'that this meeting, which is the first assembled under the Local Government Act, desires to record its approval of and sympathy with the objects of the Gaelic League to preserve and cultivate our native language and Literature'.<sup>797</sup> Lord Emly wrote to the secretary of the League assuring the members of the Limerick branch that he favoured their

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<sup>794</sup> 'Sheehan, (Canon) Patrick Augustine' in Patrick Maume (ed.), *The Royal Irish Academy's Dictionary of Irish Biography from the earliest times to the year 2000* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), ii, 678-82.

<sup>795</sup> Ibid.

<sup>796</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 15 April 1899.

<sup>797</sup> Ibid., 22 April 1899.

endeavours and declared that he had the ‘greatest sympathy with their very laudable and patriotic efforts’ and that after all they were ‘Irishmen, and not West Britons’.<sup>798</sup> This was reinforced when the Council unanimously adopted the views of the League and agreed to put Irish name–plates ‘above the Saxon names on the street corners of our ancient and historic city’.<sup>799</sup> The first Limerick Feis was held on 19 May 1899 and it was a great success. The audience at the Feis, which included the notables of the city and county, also included ‘a large number of Catholic Clergymen’ and ‘on the motion of Mr Ralph Nash, seconded by Mr David Tidmarsh, the Right Hon. Lord Emly took the chair’.<sup>800</sup> Shortly after the Feis both St Michael’s and St John’s Temperance Societies classes expressed a desire to become members of the parent branch. James S. Gaffney, solicitor, wrote to the branch suggesting that they put pressure on the railway company to have their notices in both Irish and English as on the continent.<sup>801</sup> By July of that year a ladies class was well attended whereas the men’s classes had begun to fall away. In August there was a well-attended meeting of railway employees held at the Limerick Terminus who formed a Gaelic society which they named The Railway Servants Gaelic Revival Society.<sup>802</sup> Limerick city then in the early years of the League was vibrant and enthusiastic in favour of the revival of the Irish language. This was probably helped by the presence of John Daly and the so-called Labour Corporation which was nationalist in its political philosophy.<sup>803</sup>

This process of language shift from Irish to English was assisted by parents who saw Irish as a symbol of poverty and English as a symbol of opportunity. In Ireland the spoken language for the majority of people ceased within two generations compared to America where indigenous language change took three generations.<sup>804</sup> This was not because of any deliberate policy by the British government but was mainly a decision of native–speaking parents who insisted that their children ‘should not speak Irish at

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<sup>798</sup> Ibid.

<sup>799</sup> Ibid., 19 June 1899.

<sup>800</sup> Ibid., 8 June 1899.

<sup>801</sup> Ibid., 10 June 1899.

<sup>802</sup> Ibid., 7 August 1899.

<sup>803</sup> Matthew Potter, *The government and the people of Limerick: the history of Limerick corporation / city council 1197-2006* (Limerick, 2006), p. 354.

<sup>804</sup> David Greene, ‘The founding of the Gaelic League’, in Seán Ó Tuama (ed.) *The Gaelic League idea* (Dublin, 1972), p. 9.

all'.<sup>805</sup> In a report to a Royal Commission in 1868 P.J.Keenan, a chief inspector of national schools, stated that in some parts of Ireland the 'anxiety of people to learn English caused them to institute a sort of police system over the children to prevent them uttering a single word of Irish'<sup>806</sup> This system was controlled by the parents and reinforced by the local teacher. The cornerstone of this system was the screen or tally stick which was notched by the parent when a child spoke Irish and punishment was delivered on the child by the teacher.<sup>807</sup> Thomas Davis had also believed this. He accepted that 'children are everywhere taught English and English alone in schools' but what was worse was that they were 'urged by rewards, and punishments to speak it at home'.<sup>808</sup> This system existed outside the remit of the British government, landlords and priests. The reasons given for this cruelty was that without it the child 'had not the slightest chance of getting on in the world' and this applied equally to the child who remained at home or the ones who emigrated.<sup>809</sup> With this practise one of the foundations of cultural identity, the native language, was dismissed as a signifier of national identity and the English language which replaced it, by default, became one of the key signifiers of identity. This was also supported by the Catholic hierarchy at that time:

The national education system created in 1831 left the management of the schools of Catholic Ireland entirely to the Church and with general support it provided the children whose parents could afford it with instruction which was only ever through English.<sup>810</sup>

David Greene contended that the revival of the Irish movement was essentially a 'political device' because it was unsupported by any demand of it from the Gaeltacht. He supported that view with a quote from Douglas Hyde, writing in *Mise agus an Conradh* published in 1937, where he described the struggle of the Gaelic League as a fight between two civilizations. Hyde quoted Tomás Bán Concheanainn that 'every speech we make throughout the country makes bullets to fire at the

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<sup>805</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>806</sup> Ibid.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid.

<sup>808</sup> Thomas Davis, *Our national language* (Dublin, 1945), p. 6.

<sup>809</sup> Greene, p. 11.

<sup>810</sup> Hindley, p. 14.

enemy; isn't it a wonder they don't stop us'.<sup>811</sup> Hyde's policy, described as the de-Anglicization of Ireland, was essentially an effort at reversing the policy of colonization, which was a political act but used civil society as its weapon. Because of its overtly non-political nature and at a time when parliamentary nationalism was at a low ebb it helped to 'stimulate a revival of national pride in which ... both Catholics and Protestants could share'.<sup>812</sup> While the Gaeltacht continued to decline the new nationalist political parties used the Gaelic League as one of its recruiting grounds because it promoted one of the signifiers of national identity, the Irish language. Douglas Hyde, as his biographer Dominic Daly wrote, 'as a young man was fiercely anti-English and altogether in favour of violence to rid the country of English rule'. However, as he matured he 'became more and more convinced that cultural regeneration was more important than political autonomy'.<sup>813</sup> Hyde's dream was to return Ireland to an imagined past 'to know herself as she had been, and to be herself again'.<sup>814</sup>

Unlike previous societies such as the Gaelic Union and the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, which in essence were elite and antiquarian, the Gaelic League was centred on civil society as a popular movement and its organizational structure was solidly set among the people. It existed outside the formal school structure which at the time was hostile to Irish language studies.<sup>815</sup> It operated within the parish structure and was successful wherever there was local clerical approval. One of its organizers, Mr Ó Hourihan, in his report of 1902 stated that 'when visiting a district he first visited the priest then teachers and then Irish members of the community'.<sup>816</sup> In this report he also stated that 'I should not fail to mention that the most powerful branch of all is in Limerick city'.<sup>817</sup> The approval of the local priest was crucial to the development and success of a branch. In his report Ó Hourihan wrote that 'when the priest stands firmly with the people, and shows by word and example that he is in earnest, then, indeed, may we look for good results.

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<sup>811</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>812</sup> Hindley, p. 24.

<sup>813</sup> Dominic Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde* (Dublin, 1974), pp xvii- xviii.

<sup>814</sup> Ibid., p. xix, cited in Donnchadh Ó Floinn, *The integral Irish tradition* (Dublin, 1968), p. 3.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid.

<sup>816</sup> Gaelic League annual report 1901-1902 (Dublin, 1902), p. 44.

<sup>817</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

But if the priest shows only apathy or indifference, the people usually grow careless'.<sup>818</sup>

By 1902 the Limerick branch was well established and the influence of the local Catholic clergy was being felt. Rev T. Lee, administrator of St John's parish 1894-1904,<sup>819</sup> was the President of the branch and under his guidance they had established a 'vigilance committee' the previous November. Part of the work of this committee was to interview promoters of local concerts and to induce them to cease staging 'music hall and other objectionable songs'.<sup>820</sup> It was noted in February 1902 that attendances at Irish classes were declining and members were urged to attend the Christian Brothers schools on Sundays where the Irish language, history and historical geography were taught. One correspondent in the *Limerick Leader* noted that the Gaelic League in Limerick wanted to start a hurling club and he was enthusiastic to get them involved in the GAA and to use the combined efforts of both organizations to stop Irish youth from joining the 'King's army'.<sup>821</sup> He was of the opinion that the Gaelic League would help to purify the national games. He wanted the League to uproot and destroy the weeds of Anglicisation and that the Gaelic League and the GAA if combined would do this.<sup>822</sup> The Dublin executive had requested a general simultaneous collection in aid of the Irish language fund to commence on 16 March 1902 and the Limerick branch had taken up the idea. Their strategy was to involve leading citizens and public men who 'though not able to take active part in the work of the Gaelic League, were earnest sympathizers of the movement'.<sup>823</sup> A public meeting was to be called and the city was to be divided into districts with committees and collectors appointed. They would seek the assistance of other groups such as the St Mary's branch, the Parteen branch and the Draper's Club Gaelic class. It was at this meeting that a proposal was adopted unanimously to have St Patrick's Day adopted as a national holiday. Mr Cusack, who supported the resolution, stated that the Pork

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<sup>818</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

<sup>819</sup> Matthew Tobin, *The priests of the Diocese of Limerick 1878-1917*, (MA thesis, Mary Immaculate College, 2004), appendix A, p. 59.

<sup>820</sup> *LL*, 7 Feb. 1902.

<sup>821</sup> *LL*, 20 Jan. 1901.

<sup>822</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>823</sup> *Ibid.*

Butchers Society had always observed this holiday.<sup>824</sup> This was commented on by John Leahy in a letter to the *Limerick Leader* in 1939 where he said that

the primary credit for making St Patrick's Day a National holiday belongs to the Limerick Pork Butchers Society. As far back as 1890 that made a rule to refrain from work on that day, and also on Lady Day, August the 15<sup>th</sup> a rule they have rigidly adhered to since.<sup>825</sup>

Fr Lee, who had put the resolution, decried the fact that holidays introduced by 'foreigners' were observed in Ireland but St Patrick's Day was not 'observed for many years past in the large towns as a holiday' but that things looked brighter now owing to the work of the Gaelic League.<sup>826</sup>

The influence of the clergy on the work of the League was persistent. A romanticised view of Ireland's past was constantly being presented. This was evident at a meeting of the members of St Michael's in February 1902 when a man from Carrigaholt in Co Clare recited in Irish Brian Boru's address to his army. A priest, Fr Tierney C.ss.R, spiritual director of the Archconfraternity, addressed this meeting and presented this romanticised view of 'the good old cause' and encouraged the men to join the League. This was received with the greatest enthusiasm by the members present. St Munchin's Temperance Society in Thomondgate was addressed by Fr Begley on the same issue and there was hope that this branch would prove a great success due to the number of Irish speakers in the district.<sup>827</sup>

A branch, believed to be the second of its kind, was formed in Foynes Co. Limerick due nationalist tendencies of Lord and Lady Monteagle. Fr Donor PP became President and the Hon. Miss Mary Spring Rice became the vice-president of the branch. Their classes were held in the Foynes Workingmen's Club room where between sixty and seventy young men and women attended, which included the Hon. Miss Spring Rice, daughter to Lord Monteagle. These were members of the ascendancy but considered themselves to be Irish. They had the wealth and option of

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<sup>824</sup> Ibid.

<sup>825</sup> *LL*, 25 March 1939.

<sup>826</sup> *LL*, 20 Jan. 1901

<sup>827</sup> *LL*, 12 Feb. 1902.

living in London during the winter season.<sup>828</sup> With Erskine Childers she later smuggled arms for the Irish Volunteers into Ireland on board the *Asgard*.

### **Promotion of St Patrick's Day as a National Holiday**

The Irish Language Week, which was in part a national fund-raising effort as well as a conscious raising idea for Irish nationalism was set to commence on 17 March 1902. The *Limerick Leader* reminded us that Limerick was 'a stronghold of Irish nationalism' and should always be in the forefront in giving 'visible proof' of this. Maud Gonne was scheduled to give a lecture at the Athenaeum on 'The Ireland of today' which the *Limerick Leader* believed would prove 'a stirring filip to the national cause in our city'. This newspaper was at the forefront of the idea of an Irish Ireland 'We have over and over again drawn attention to the great importance of the Irish language revival, and pointed out the leading part the movement must take in the regeneration of our country'. Nationalism and Catholicism were very much in evidence on 17 March 1902 when St Patrick's Day was promoted in Limerick city as a national holiday. The *Limerick Leader* had expectations that the coming of St Patrick's Day would be observed reverentially by all Irishmen. The paper hoped that the experiment would prove to be a precedent for the future. Many of the city's establishments would be closed for the day and it hoped that in the future this would become 'universal on our national festival'.<sup>829</sup> The paper published a retrospective of St Patrick's Day in Limerick in 1840 and it noted that at that time it was the 'temperance movement that was at its height; today it is the Gaelic movement'.<sup>830</sup> In this sentence the paper joined the idea of temperance with the idea of Gaelic revival and hence of Irish nationalism. St Patrick's Day in 1902 was a great success according to the *Limerick Leader*. It proclaimed that it was 'the dawning of a new day for Ireland' and that

our gratitude must in a large measure go out to those patriotic societies at present doing so much for the revival of our native language, to the Young

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<sup>828</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>829</sup> *LL*, 14 March 1902.

<sup>830</sup> *LL*, 17 March 1902.

Irelanders, to political organizations, and last, though by no means least, to our good priests, who threw themselves heart and soul into the movement.<sup>831</sup>

Several premises which did not close were 'prevailed' upon to do so by Fr Tierney, director of the Archconfraternity.<sup>832</sup> The day was lauded in the Gaelic League Annual Report of that year by Mr Ó Hourihan who said 'I had the pleasure of seeing the power of the Limerick Gaelic League on Lá le Padraig when it succeeded in making the greatest West Britons of the city honour the national festival'.<sup>833</sup>

The effort to promote St Patrick's Day as a national holiday was first mooted in Limerick. This move was supported by many organizations and such controversial priests as Fr Tierney and Fr Creagh.<sup>834</sup> There was an effort to keep country people out of the city on that day as it was felt that they would use it as an excuse for drinking and carousing. Following the success of the St Patrick's Day festival in Limerick in 1902 there was a strong movement to make it a national holiday. In a letter to the *Limerick Leader* a member of the Limerick branch of the League disagreed with Ó Hourihan stating that it was by keeping the country people out of the city that success was achieved. He quoted the fact that even though the country people celebrated St Patrick's Day they did so by visiting the towns which remained open and spent 'the later hours in a way not creditable to Irishmen.' He was insistent that it was the Limerick agitation the previous year which kept the country people out of the city and that 'all our efforts were directed to that end'. A public meeting had passed a resolution which called on 'the country people to stay away' and this was achieved by circularising the parish priests and the Limerick markets on the Saturday before St Patrick's Day. This letter was signed by Seosamh Ó Puirsealaigh, Connradh na Gaedhilge, Craobh Luimnigh. Limerick city was encouraging all to adopt their stand on St Patrick's Day. The secretary of the Gaelic Association Limerick wrote to the Limerick County Council asking them to adopt a resolution in favour of making St Patrick's Day a national holiday in Ireland. The resolution was unanimously adopted. Several civil

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<sup>831</sup> *LL*, 19 March 1902.

<sup>832</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>833</sup> *Gaelic League annual report 1901-1902* (Dublin, 1902), pp 47-48.

<sup>834</sup> Fr Tierney was the priest who harassed Dr Long and the Limerick Regatta Committee. Fr Creagh was the priest who made defamatory sermons against the Jews in 1904.



organizations in the city, including the Daughters of Erin (Inghinidhe na hÉireann), St Michael's Temperance Society, St Mary's branch of the Gaelic League, Limerick branch of the Irish Drapers Assistants Protective and Benefit Association, and the Drapers' Club committee, also adopted the resolution. They also called on the clergy and the City Borough Council and District Council to support the movement and 'follow the example of Limerick traders by closing their places of business and allowing their employees cease all labour on St Patrick's Day as on Sundays'. Mr E. Daly, president of the IDAPBA could see no reason why the 'movement led by Fr Lee and Fr Tierney in Limerick last year could not be accomplished in all nationalist centres if taken up in the same wholehearted fashion'. Fr Creagh, spiritual director of the Archconfraternity, called for suitable celebrations of Ireland's patron saint and for members to follow the teaching of the Gaelic League and he also called on 'members of the licensed trade to keep their houses closed on the occasion'.<sup>835</sup>

The period from 1902 to 1920 was one of progress as far as the League was concerned and it saw a series of Irish concerts, resolutions by teachers unions on the language question and the continued struggle to have St Patrick's Day proclaimed as a national holiday. The period ended with a major fund raising effort in 1918 which gave an indication of the support for the League both financially, socially and geographically. In 1903 the Limerick branch held an Irish night at the Theatre Royal which included a play in the Irish language, *Tadhg Saor*, by Rev P. O'Leary, better known as an tAthair Peadar Ó Laoghaire who was a prolific Irish language scholar. *Tadhg Saor* is described as the first drama in Irish. Other works by Ó Laoghaire include *Séadna* (1904) and *Mo scéal féin* (1915).<sup>836</sup> The evening also Irish singing by the girls attached to St John's class. The entertainment also included the Irish pipers class and Mr D. J. Nono of Ennis a 'typical blind piper' as well as the star of the evening Miss Olive Barry.<sup>837</sup> By 1904 the Limerick Teachers Association at their quarterly meeting held on 23 January resolved:

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<sup>835</sup> *LL*, 1 Jan. 1903.

<sup>836</sup> 'Peadar Ó Laoghaire' in John A. Murphy (ed.), *The Royal Irish Academy's Dictionary of Irish Biography from the earliest times to the year 2002* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), ii, 678-82.

<sup>837</sup> *LL*, 20 Feb. 1903.

That as facilities are now afforded for the requirement of a knowledge of the Irish language, by the establishment of an Irish class at the Gaelic League rooms, Clare Chambers, on Saturdays, for the special convenience of teachers from country districts, it is the duty of every teacher, who can profit by the lesson given, to become a member of the class immediately.<sup>838</sup>

The Irish theme continued into 1905 when the committee, called the National Holiday Demonstration Committee, met to make arrangements for the St Patrick's Day celebrations. This committee was composed of six priests, the President and secretary of the Mechanics Institute and two members of the Gaelic League. It was hoped that the event would be as successful as the previous year.<sup>839</sup> Another Irish concert was held in the Theatre Royal in 1906 which was termed 'a great success'. This included a play by Douglas Hyde, *The Tinker and the Fairy*, which was followed by the tenor P.J. O'Shea and Miss B. McMahon. However the hegemony of the League began to show some cracks as soon as the campaign began to ensure public jobs would only be given to those with knowledge of the Irish language. It also highlighted the class bias of those involved in the promotion of the Irish language and in particular it opened a rift between those involved in technical education as opposed to those involved in secondary education.

### **The Limerick Technical Institute and the Irish Language**

Technical instruction and the Irish language had an uneasy start. In 1903 a notice from the City Technical Education Committee appeared in the *Limerick Leader* condemning the suggestion that Irish classes were to be abandoned due to insufficient numbers attending. The article had stated that 'if it be shown that there is no hope of a class being taken advantage of, the expense of a teacher for that particular class should not be continued'.<sup>840</sup> By this time the Limerick Gaelic League had started a campaign to

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<sup>838</sup> *LL*, 29 Jan. 1904.

<sup>839</sup> *LL*, 6 March 1905.

<sup>840</sup> *LL*, 13 Feb. 1903.

ensure that any public jobs should only be awarded to those with knowledge of the Irish language and that a test should be administered to applicants for jobs. The Limerick City Council had made an agreement with the League on appointments but the class bias of the League against manual labourers appeared when a position of sub-sanitary officer was advertised which stipulated knowledge of Irish. This was challenged at a meeting of the city council by Ald. Daly who contended that this position was one of manual labour and would not be violating any promises made to the Gaelic League by excluding the language test from the appointment.<sup>841</sup> There was division in the ranks of the councillors as to whether the position was regarded as one of manual labour or not. One councillor, Mr Whealan, stated that 'it would be an injustice to the working classes of the city if they made a knowledge of the language compulsory'.<sup>842</sup> An amendment to the resolution was taken and won on a vote of 19 for and 7 against. Instructions were given to re-advertise the position of sub-sanitary officer with the language test excluded.<sup>843</sup> It was clear from this discussion that those with knowledge of Irish would be favoured in rising through the ranks of the emerging Irish nationalist middle class.

By February 1906 the Gaelic League was in confrontation with the City Technical Education Committee, which was charged with technical education in the city. The confrontation arose because of the agreement between the League and the Limerick Corporation who had agreed to appoint only those 'conversant with the Gaelic language to all clerical offices in the council's gift'.<sup>844</sup> The council had adopted this view and tried to impose it on the Technical Committee who rebelled against it. The chairman of the Technical Committee, Rev Andrew Murphy, Administrator St John's 1905-1910,<sup>845</sup> stated that 'they had been treated with the most extraordinary want of courtesy by the Gaelic League who had in no way recognised or approached them on the subject'.<sup>846</sup> Even though the Technical Committee was appointed by the Corporation its function and powers were derived from the Act of Parliament of 1899

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<sup>841</sup> *LL*, 20 Jan. 1906.

<sup>842</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>843</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>844</sup> *LC*, 27 Feb. 1906.

<sup>845</sup> Matthew Tobin, *The priests of the diocese of Limerick*, p. 70.

<sup>846</sup> *LC*, 27 Feb. 1906.

and did not need the sanction of the Corporation for the validity of any of its acts.<sup>847</sup> The chairman refused to yield to coercion from any outside body. He went on to point out that the majority of the teachers in the technical school were Irish, with the single exception of the sanitary science teacher, but he insisted that the primary function of the Technical Committee was the building up of technical instruction. They refused to accept the principle of inserting Irish as applicable to their vacancies. Mr Barrington stated that the teaching of the Irish language was a waste of money and also that the Corporation had no power in the appointment of technical teachers. The chairman concurred but was aware that the members of the Technical Committee could be replaced by the Corporation the following year. He also stated that they had been the first body in Ireland to start an Irish class but that it had failed for want of numbers. The class had restarted and now had an average attendance of eight per cent. A compromise of sorts was arrived at on a motion of Rev Mr Dowd that due regard would be given to Irish-speaking candidates but consistent with the promotion of technical instruction.<sup>848</sup>

By January 1910 *An Claidheamh Soluis* reported that Craobh Luimnigh was flourishing mainly due to the work of three people, an tAthair Ua Haodha [father Hayes], Liam Puirséal and an tAthair de Bhal [Father Wall]. It gave an account of the number of people in the branch and their level of Irish study. The total number, which included 400 children, was 592.<sup>849</sup> The paper accepted that many of the young people 'hated Irish' but they blamed this on the teaching methods. They praised the Christian Brothers in Limerick and also a Mr Clancy 'whose Irish lesson was the most popular lesson of the day' and perhaps with a hint of prophesy noted that 'they will yet figure largely in the fight for Irish Ireland'.<sup>850</sup> Laurel Hill Convent, the school for the female children of the emerging Catholic middle class, featured strongly as the school doing the best for the Irish language.<sup>851</sup> In February another concert was held in the Theatre

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<sup>847</sup> Ibid.

<sup>848</sup> Ibid.

<sup>849</sup> CS, 15 Jan. 1910.

<sup>850</sup> Ibid., 5 March 1910.

<sup>851</sup> Ibid.

Royal over two nights which attracted a large and enthusiastic audience ‘consisting of an operetta, a short drama, with an obvious moral, and a concert’.<sup>852</sup>

*An Claidheamh Soluis* during 1910 continued the assault on English newspapers, periodicals and books. It was aghast that even in the heart of Connemara they had seen ‘English publications on sale that no clean-minded man could read without shame’.<sup>853</sup> These were referred to by an Irish priest in England, Very Rev Dr William Barry, as ‘moral poison’.<sup>854</sup> He believed that there was a very high incidence of the ‘intellectual capacity’ of the Irish being affected by the reading of this material. He declared that ‘intellectual, moral and national evils result from the promiscuous reading of periodicals from London’.<sup>855</sup> This article associated crime in England, France and the United States with the reading of ‘mercenary cheap literature’. The idea of nationality was just ‘vaguely felt’ by many Irish people and according to *An Claidheamh Soluis* was leading to a ‘life-and-death battle’. The theme of purity was very prevalent when the Irish language was being contrasted with the English language. The paper declared that when Ireland left the English language and embraced Irish ‘and Irish-speaking Ireland, when it is realized, will be an intellectual, and a merry, and also a clean Ireland’.<sup>856</sup> The article concluded with the proposition that ‘patriotism ... without the language is impossible’.<sup>857</sup> However, this proposition clashed with the views of Pearse who maintained that even without the Irish language a man could be a patriot. *An Claidheamh Soluis* celebrated the fact that an Irish sermon was preached in St Mary’s Protestant Cathedral in Limerick and saw this as a ‘big advance’ anticipating that this was the first step towards the permanent use of Irish in all churches. It was also pleased that a new piper’s band made its first appearance on St Patrick’s Day in Limerick.<sup>858</sup>

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<sup>852</sup> Ibid.

<sup>853</sup> CS, 29 Jan. 1910.

<sup>854</sup> Ibid.

<sup>855</sup> Ibid.

<sup>856</sup> Ibid.

<sup>857</sup> Ibid.

<sup>858</sup> CS, 25 March 1911.

The effort to keep the League out of politics was an impossible task.<sup>859</sup> People like Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh, a member of the IRB were encouraged to help infiltrate IRB into the league.<sup>860</sup> Maureen Wall has pointed out how this was done.<sup>861</sup> Brian Ó Cuív noted that The IRB were aware of a potential split in the League due to its politicising and Douglas Hyde resigned in 1915 when he realized that the organization was moving in a political direction.<sup>862</sup> It had taken twenty one years between the founding of the Gaelic League and its acceptance by the Ard-Feis of a political aim as political freedom.<sup>863</sup> The contacts and organizing strategies of the League were to prove useful later on in political and military organization.<sup>864</sup> The Gaelic League, although ostensibly a civil society organization, proved to be a nursery for the separatist political movement. By 1917 Cardinal Logue, who had initially been a fervent supporter of the League,<sup>865</sup> But in 1917 he declined to attend a Gaelic League function at Fermoy and his stated reason was that the League ‘has become a political society’.<sup>866</sup> *An Claidreamh Soluis* attacked both the Freeman’s Journal and the Independent as ‘anglicizing agencies’ despite the fact that they had supported the League with Irish columns. Limerick remained aloof from the internecine feuds and little was heard about the League following the Rising. There was a protest from a quarterly meeting of the League on the deportation without trial of members and officials of the Coiste Gnótha. One of these was Seán Ó Murthile, a member of the Coiste Gnótha from Limerick.<sup>867</sup>

### **Fundraising For the League in Limerick**

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<sup>859</sup> Kevin B. Nowlan, ‘The Gaelic League and other national movements’ in Seán Ó Tuama (ed.), *The Gaelic league idea* (Dublin, 1972), p. 43.

<sup>860</sup> Brian Ó Cuív, ‘The Gaelic cultural movements and the new nationalism’ in Kevin B. Nowlan, (ed.), *The making of 1916: studies in the history of the rising* (Dublin, 1969), p. 17.

<sup>861</sup> Maureen Wall, ‘The background to the rising: from 1914 until the issue of the countermanding order on Easter Saturday 1916’, in Kevin B. Nowlan, (ed.), *The making of 1916; studies in the history of the rising* (Dublin, 1969), p. 181.

<sup>862</sup> Brian Ó Cuív, ‘The Gaelic cultural movements and the new nationalism’, in Kevin B. Nowlan, (ed.), *The making of 1916: studies in the history of the rising* (Dublin, 1969), p. 24; Senia Paseta, *before the revolution: nationalism, social change and Ireland’s Catholic elite, 1879-1922* (Cork, 1999), p. 149.

<sup>863</sup> Brendán S. MacAodha, ‘Was this a social revolution’ in Seán Ó Tuama, (ed.), *The Gaelic League idea* (Dublin, 1972), p. 23.

<sup>864</sup> Ó Cuív, p. 16.

<sup>865</sup> CS, 23 June 1900.

<sup>866</sup> CS, 29 Sept. 1917.

<sup>867</sup> CS, 10 March 1917.

Despite the reservations of Cardinal Logue, by 1918 the Limerick executive committee of the Gaelic League contained no less than six priests.<sup>868</sup> The work of this committee centred on stabilizing the organization in County Limerick. The affiliation payment of a branch was ten shillings to An Coiste Gnótha and two shillings and sixpence to An Coiste Countae. This committee also decided to concentrate their resources on small *Feiseanna* which would be 'held under the auspices of the several Coiste Ceanntair in the county'.<sup>869</sup> The League in Limerick received a further boost from the Catholic clergy in 1918 when the new bishop of Limerick, Dr Hallinan, in a letter, assured the Limerick County Committee of the Gaelic League that they had in him 'in the future as in the past a sympathetic friend and promoter'.<sup>870</sup> At their general meeting in March plans were made for a language collection which was to begin on St Patrick's Day. A progress report at that meeting showed that the organization was 'taking a firm hold in the county'.<sup>871</sup> The details of this 1918 collection which were published in 1919 give an accurate picture of the support which the League had at that time in Limerick. The total number of contributors was 1,224 which accounted for approximately three per cent of the population. The total amount collected was £194-18-2. The total number of collectors was 89. In the main the people who contributed were of the middle class. There were no significant sums reported from the working class of Limerick. This can be seen from the chart and from Appendix E which support the contention of Ó Laoire that the revival was largely a middle class initiative. He maintained that the Gaelic League failed to muster significant support among the working classes and that its main support came from the middle-income groups and from businesses in the city. The trust and nature of the ideology of the language revival movement 'remained closely influenced by the cultural nationalism model' and concluded that the efforts to revive the language on that model proved 'alien to the culture and aspirations of the vast majority of the population'.<sup>872</sup>

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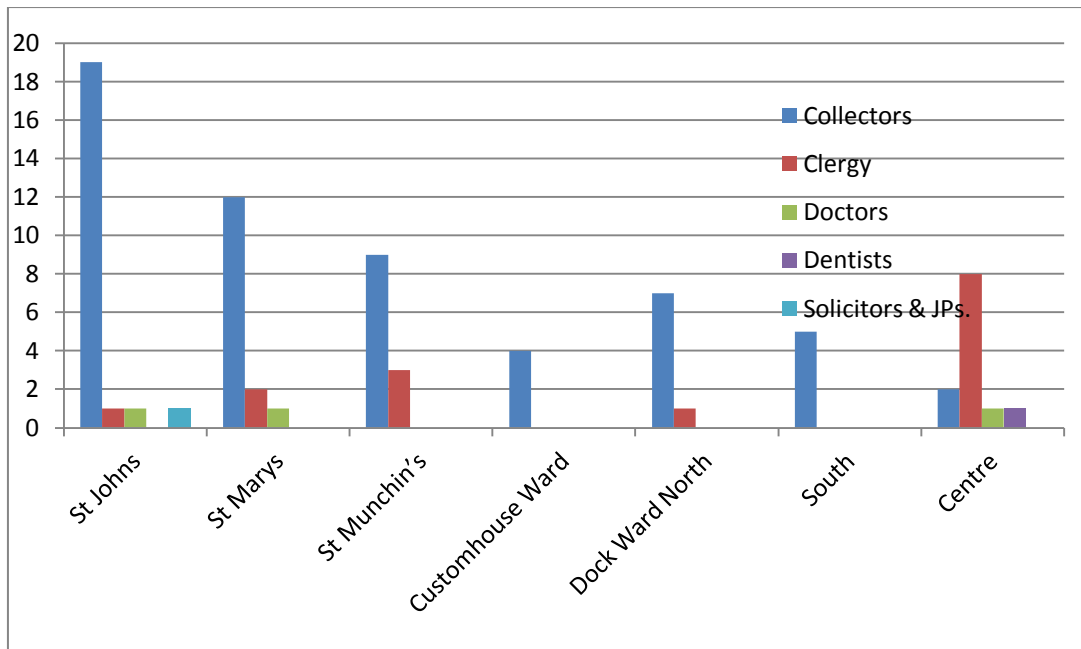
<sup>868</sup> *LL*, 30 Jan. 1918.

<sup>869</sup> *Ibid.*

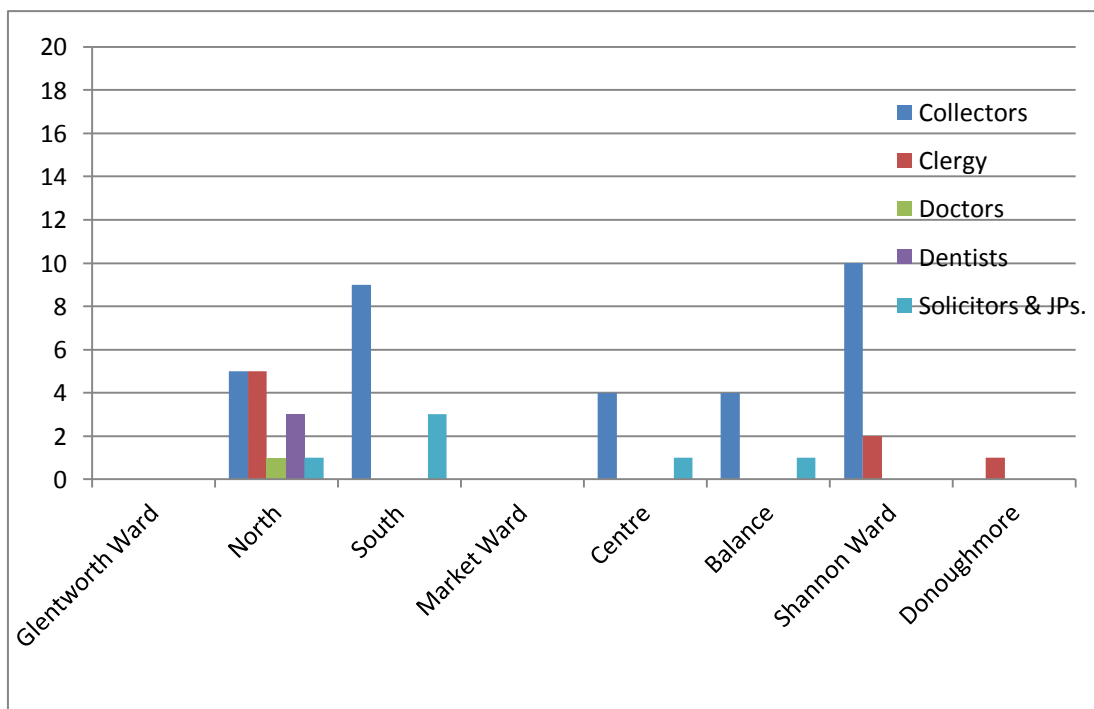
<sup>870</sup> *LL*, 11 March 1918.

<sup>871</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>872</sup> Ó Laoire, p. 56.



**Figure 15: Gaelic League Funding in Limerick by Electoral Division (1)**



**Figure 16: Gaelic League Funding in Limerick by Electoral Division 1918-19 (2)**<sup>873</sup>

<sup>873</sup> *The Gaelic League to the people of Limerick, 1919.*

Area	Collectors	Clergy	Doctors	Dentists	Solicitors & JPs.
St John's	19	1	1		1
St Mary[s	12	2	1		
St Munchin's	9	3			
Customhouse Ward	4				



## The Revival of the League

According to newspaper reports of the time the Gaelic League was expanding in Limerick and Clare throughout 1918 and 1919. At the Ard-Fheis held in Killarney in 1918 the general secretary, Mr T. O’Kelly, declared that it was the most significant year in the history of the League.<sup>874</sup> Seven senior organizers and 23 sub-organizers had been appointed and 16 new county committees had been formed. New branches established numbered 171 and 150 lapsed branches had been revived.<sup>875</sup> The fact that the Gaelic League had been proclaimed a dangerous organization and banned by the British authorities had not deterred the formation of new branches. O’Kelly stated that the government was pursuing a policy of interference in regard to meetings of *Feiseanna* and that many people had been imprisoned for speaking Irish to policemen but he was ‘certain that the Irish people will stand firmly in support of the language’.<sup>876</sup> In January 1919 the Limerick branch was prospering, according to Rev Dr O’Brien, who presided at the quarterly meeting of the League. The Hon Secretary declared that ninety new members had been enrolled and that classes ‘were exceptionally well attended’. In his address the chairman was uncertain of what the New Year might bring but he was certain that ‘no matter what change took place unless they retained their language they would not be true Irishmen’.<sup>877</sup> His overall

Dock Ward North	7	1			
South	5				
Centre	2	8	1	1	
Glentworth Ward					
North	5	5	1	3	1
South	9				3
Market Ward					
Centre	4				1
Balance	4				1
Shannon Ward					
	10	2			
Donoughmore		1			
Total	89	23	4	4	7

<sup>874</sup> *LL*, 12 August 1918.

<sup>875</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>876</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>877</sup> *Ibid.*

message was that no matter what happened, the work of the League must be continued in order to establish 'the regeneration of the race'.<sup>878</sup>

The rise and decline of the Gaelic League in Limerick followed a pattern very closely related to the rise and decline of militant nationalism. The language had been in decline since 1800 and the Irish speaking people had decided that English was the language of the future. They acquiesced in forcing their children to learn and speak English. The antiquarian nature of the study of the Irish language and culture gave way to a more determined proposition of reviving it with the advent of Douglas Hyde and Eoin McNeill in establishing the Gaelic League. Limerick took up the challenge in 1898, a fortuitous year it might be said, as the Limerick Corporation was composed of the old Fenian John Daly who promoted the idea and lent nationalist credence to the establishing of the League in Limerick. In the early years the League attracted many followers including the temperance societies, priests and members of the ascendancy. One of the reasons for the success of the League was the structure of the organization and the fact that it existed outside of the formal educational structures. This presaged a time when an Irish government would also exist outside and in parallel to the legal government. Because it was parish based the local parish priest and schoolteacher played an important function. It also provided the Catholic hierarchy with an intimate understanding of the progress of the organization. By 1902 the local clergy in Limerick were entrenched in the League. Limerick took a lead part in the advancement of St Patrick's Day as a national holiday and in doing so helped to romanticise the notion of Irish nationalism. This nationalism was further radicalised by the infiltration of the IRB into the ranks of the League which prompted the clash with Cardinal Logue but the Bishop of Limerick, Denis Hallinan, assured the League that they had a friend and promoter in him. An important event from the League's point of view was the annual collection. The collection in Limerick in 1918 gives us an insight into who was supporting the League at that time. Out of a population of forty thousand just three per cent, one thousand and two-hundred people contributed. These were primarily the Limerick middle class composed of doctors, solicitors, dentists and clergy. The working-class of the city ignored the appeal for funds. This was the same working-

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<sup>878</sup> Ibid.

class who contributed their pennies every week to the collection plates in their churches. The Gaelic League in Limerick was a middle class organization with middle class pretensions.

## Chapter 8: After Independence: The Gaelic League in Retreat, 1922-1939

Margaret O'Callaghan in her essay 'Language, Nationality and Cultural Identity in the Irish Free State, 1922-7' has given a succinct account of the conflict between two views of Irish identity, that of the Anglo-Irish and the Gaelic Irish.<sup>879</sup> Chapter 7 concentrated on the origins and development of the Gaelic League as a civil society organization. The role played by the Anglo-Irish, mainly non-Catholic, was important in the antiquarian phase of the revitalisation of the language, as it was in the temperance and purity movements. Many of the comments which she expressed in her essay, particularly the views of the *Catholic Bulletin* will be found in this chapter. It was noted in chapter 7 that the assistance of the parish priest was essential in the early organization of league branches. In this chapter the role of the catholic clergy is highlighted in the efforts to maintain a momentum which was largely lost by 1923. The efforts of the clergy to hold back the tide of modernization has been captured in the writings of A.E. (George William Russell) and Francis Stuart in the pages of the *Irish Statesman*. Stuart wrote about the mentality of the 'sterile tradition' as a 'spirit of smugness and deadness that we fought against and were defeated by ... to stop Ireland falling into the hands of publicans and shopkeepers and she had fallen into their hands'.<sup>880</sup> A.E. wrote of the inclination of those who had followed nobler men who were 'enthusiasts for physical force and for ramming things down peoples throats' especially children who had left national schools with half an education and whose political ideas remained stillborn at age fourteen.<sup>881</sup> The many meetings of the Gaelic League in the 1920s and the 1930s concentrated on trying to renew the lost spirit of the previous decade and eventually ended in a split with the GAA over removal of the ban .

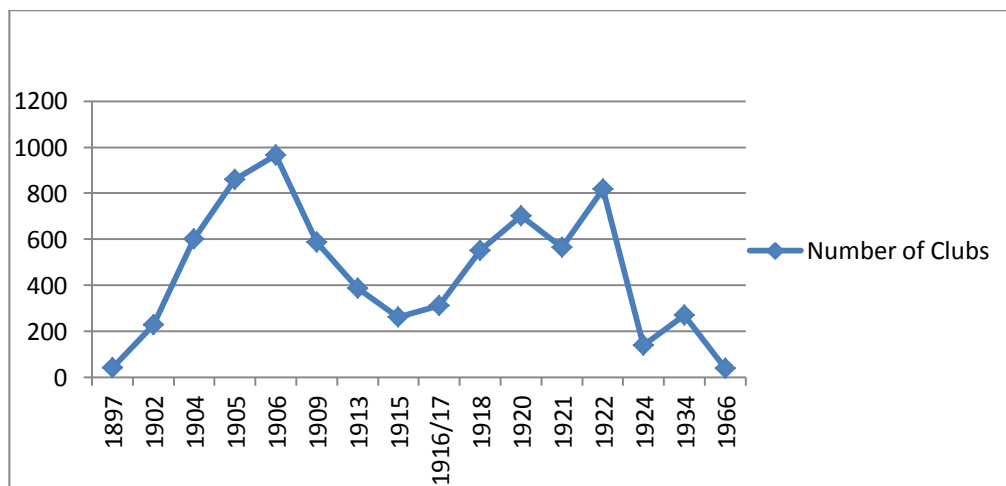
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<sup>879</sup> Margaret O'Callaghan, 'Language, Nationality and Cultural Identity in the Irish Free state, 1922-27: The "Irish Statesman" and the "Catholic Bulletin" Reappraised', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 94 (Nov., 1984), pp 226-245.

<sup>880</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>881</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

Earnán de Blaghd, however, believed that both the physical force movement and the constitutional movements of the nineteenth century ‘engaged in promoting what must amount to the liquidation of the historic Irish nation’ and brought into existence ‘a substitute West British entity’ and that the Gaelic League, who after the Rising, had moved into a new period of ‘activity and expansion ... was no longer anything like the sole guardian of the interests of the Irish language’.<sup>882</sup> Mac Aodha was equally scathing of the role of the new Free State. This new state having achieved ‘success in attaining political independence for part of the country’ side-lined civil society, in the form of the Gaelic League, as having a role in defending ‘the nation’s culture’ and between partition and the Civil War, which engendered feelings of disunity and disillusionment, this new state handled the language renewal in a ‘ham-handed and hypocritical way’ which ‘made it difficult for the League to function effectively’.<sup>883</sup> He identified the problems which the League faced in its struggle to revive the language which included the scale of the problem, the fact that it had no control over economic issues, that it had become involved in political affairs ‘thereby identifying the nation and the state’ but then opted out after the State was formed whose dedication ‘to its Gaelic ethos was permitted to become in large measure a dead letter’.<sup>884</sup>



**Figure 17: National Gaelic League Branches 1897-1966.**<sup>885</sup>

<sup>882</sup> Earnán de Blaghd, ‘Hyde in conflict’, in Seán Ó Tuama (ed.), *The Gaelic League idea* (Dublin, 1972), pp 33-34; 38-39.

<sup>883</sup> Brendan S. Mac Aodha, ‘Was this a social revolution’, in Seán Ó Tuama, (ed.), *The Gaelic League idea* (Dublin, 1972), p.24.

<sup>884</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 29-30.

<sup>885</sup> Mac Aodha, p.20: Ó Fearáil, p.24.

Figure 17 illustrates the expansion and contraction of Gaelic League branches from its inception. The three high points were 1906 with 964 branches, 1920 with 700 branches and 1922 with 819 branches. The decline had already started by 1909 and by 1915 the branch network only accounted for 262 branches. There was an increase in branches up to and including the War of Independence but following the Civil War the network declined to 139 branches in 1924. Limerick, however, was one of the few counties which continued to revive old branches and establish new ones. This could have been because of the twin strategies of establishing Gaeltacht scholarships for children to spend time there during the summer and the resurrection of the Fainne Gasrai in the county.<sup>886</sup>

By mid-year 1922 the Provisional Government had taken in hand the question of education under the leadership of Michael Hayes, Minister of Education in Dáil Eireann and Fionan Lynch, Minister of Education in the Provisional Government. Both men were in favour of the need for teaching the Irish language in the schools. At the fifty fourth annual congress of the Irish National Teachers Organization both men spoke.<sup>887</sup> A new programme of primary instruction had been prepared by the National Programme Conference and had been issued to the managers and teachers of Irish national schools for adoption at the beginning of the school year 1922-23. The Irish language, as a subject and as an instrument of instruction, was to be elevated in status while drawing; elementary science, cookery and laundry, needlework, hygiene and nature study were eliminated as obligatory subjects.<sup>888</sup> The reason given for this change was that the previous programme was 'out of harmony with national ideas and requirements'.<sup>889</sup> This policy failed in its efforts to revive the Irish language and Ó Laoire maintained that it was because of the government's policy of 'promoting Irish monolingualism rather than achieving a societal bilingualism' and for this he laid the blame on the Irish-Ireland movement that 'endeavoured to foster a culture and image

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<sup>886</sup> *LC*, 17 Jan. 1922; 4 Feb. 1922.

<sup>887</sup> *LC*, 20 April 1922; T.J. O'Connell, *History of the Irish National Teachers Organization 1868-1968* (Dublin, 1968 ), pp 352-353.

<sup>888</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>889</sup> *Ibid.*

that was diametrically opposed to all British influence'.<sup>890</sup> There was an interesting codicil inserted into the programme which allowed for a situation where if the majority of children's parents objected to the obligatory nature of English or Irish then their wishes would be complied with. There is no record that any parents raised any objections. The Limerick branch of the INTO at their monthly meeting in June 1922 objected to non-members participating in the Irish summer colleges and instructed their members to refuse to work with them.<sup>891</sup>

### **Jobs and the Irish language**

The thorny question of corporation jobs and knowledge of the Irish language was again voiced in the letter column of the *Limerick Chronicle* in November 1922. The Gaelic League once again took the Limerick Corporation to task in relation to the Irish language test for the position of coroner which had become vacant. Mrs O'Donovan, a councillor, had maintained that candidates for the post had not been dispensed from the language test and that the Limerick Corporation had adhered to their agreement, of 1904/05, with the League.<sup>892</sup> In a letter to the *Limerick Chronicle* this was challenged by Colm Ó Madagáin, runaire [secretary] Limerick Gaelic League. In his letter he reprimanded the council that in the past they did not have to remind them of their duty to the Irish language and their main point was that the examination in the Irish language should have taken place before and not after the appointment had been made. He was very insistent that this was the 'duty' of the council and that 'it should not be left to the Gaelic League, or any other body, to advocate the cause of the language'.<sup>893</sup> He was adamant that 'with or without co-operation' from Ald. O'Donovan the Gaelic League would 'continue to do their duty ... in the hope of seeing the day when it will not be necessary to remind people of their duty – at least as regards their own language'.<sup>894</sup>

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<sup>890</sup> Muiris Ó Laoire, 'An historical perspective on the revival of Irish outside the Gaeltacht, 1880-1930, with reference to the revitalization of Hebrew', in Sue Wright (ed.), *language and the state: revitalization and revival in Israel and Eire* (Clevedon, 1996), p. 56.

<sup>891</sup> *LC*, 24 June 1922.

<sup>892</sup> *LL*, 28 Nov. 1922.

<sup>893</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>894</sup> *Ibid.*

By March 1922 the Provisional Government had taken control of the post office in the Free State and one of their first undertakings was to issue a bi-lingual circular, *Iris an Phuist*, which replaced a previous circular which had been issued from London. Its declared aim was 'to make the staff the most contented of staffs, and to make the service as a whole the most efficient service in Europe'.<sup>895</sup> It was desired by the Postmaster General that 'all officials of the Irish Post Office should, as far as possible, possess a good knowledge of the Irish language, in order that its use for official purposes may be gradually extended'.<sup>896</sup> Underneath this article in the *Limerick Chronicle* was an item regarding postmen's claims. The postmen and those in the service on lower grades were very unhappy and at a well-attended meeting of the Irish Postal Workers Union, which was attended by members of the executive council, a resolution was passed which called on the executive council to 'put forward a strong and just claim for better pay and conditions on behalf of the postmen and the lower grades in the service'.<sup>897</sup> Copies of the resolution were sent to all branches of the association, the press, and the Postmaster-General. There was no talk of the Irish language in this press release by the post office workers.<sup>898</sup>

The issue of jobs and the Irish language was also prevalent within the League much later in 1936 when an article in the *Limerick Leader* highlighted the fact that participation in the Irish classes would greatly benefit those who had to sit Irish exams such as 'civil servants, post office officials and students' and noted that they would 'find the classes very suitable to their requirements'. It had become clear that entrée to the lower ranks of the new Irish middle class was dependent upon a knowledge of Irish irrespective if you ever spoke it.<sup>899</sup>

### **Decline of the League**

Even though the League was stronger in Limerick than in other counties during this period there is no doubt that it was a declining force. Devlin pointed this out when he wrote that

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<sup>895</sup> *LC*, 21 March 1922.

<sup>896</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>897</sup> *LC*, 21 March 1922.

<sup>898</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>899</sup> *LL*, 2 Sept. 1936.



The history of the Gaelic League in the mid-twenties is one of declining membership, branches dying out, classes melting away, and in the deeper dimensions of its endeavour, the fading of the mental vitality revealed in its publications and the inexorable congealing into cliché of the literature it had called into life in Irish.<sup>900</sup>

By the mid-twenties it had become apparent that the fight for the revival of the Irish language had entered a new phase. The *Limerick Leader* published an article titled an 'Appeal to Gaels' to take up the language which it said had fallen into a 'slough of despond' and that 'the gauntlet' had been thrown down 'by the "ultra-loyal" element in the country'.<sup>901</sup> A letter writer to the same paper under the pseudonym 'Honesty' was concerned about the possibility of a split in the Gaelic League because of the allegiance declaration but was also suspicious of what he termed 'the big bosses, the fireside warriors and their lackeys'.<sup>902</sup> He felt that the county committee of the Gaelic League should have shown better leadership than talking of splits but he was adamant that the 'declaration of allegiance on the Irish teachers' was an injustice. He felt that some people were using the League for political purposes despite the fact that the Gaelic League was struggling for existence. In February 1926 the Very Rev John Kelleher, S.T.L president of the Waterford branch of the League delivered a lecture to the Catholic Literary Institute in Limerick in which he decried the 'toadies and slaves' who opposed the revival of the Irish language. He emphasised the struggle which Irish Irelanders were having and had no time for the Abbey Theatre which in his opinion was 'only Irish in a superficial sense'. He was willing to build a wall around the Free State to save the language.<sup>903</sup>

Kelleher saw the schools and the universities as the means to the restoration of the language and believed that the older people would follow and pick up the language. In an era when poverty was rife he had no problem with pouring scarce resources into the language restoration and declared that any trouble and expense

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<sup>900</sup> Brendan Devlin, 'The Gaelic League – a spent force?' in Sean O Tuama, (ed.), *The Gaelic League Idea* (Dublin, 1972), p. 87.

<sup>901</sup> *LL*, 11 Jan. 1926.

<sup>902</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>903</sup> *LL*, 6 Feb. 1926.

was justifiable for that purpose. He was of the opinion that there was a conspiracy against the Irish language despite reassurances given him by friends following his evidence to the Gaeltacht Commission some time previously. He recognised the odd grumbler in the body of the teachers and the 'mischief-makers' among that body who had 'been trying to stir up discontent' amongst them but he was certain that these people would be 'doomed to grievous disappointment'. Finally he was confident that 'in a spirit of mutual respect and toleration' the language movement would provide the bond that would 'unite all good Irishmen ... in harmony and friendship'.<sup>904</sup>

### **The Allegiance Test**

Once the Free State had been established following the Civil War it set about consolidating its position by demanding a declaration of allegiance from employees of the state. This declaration was opposed particularly by Irish language teachers. One teacher in Co. Clare, Brian Lowe, refused to sign the declaration and Mr T. Greene, a member of the County Clare Committee of Agriculture, on hearing of it declared that 'the Department were suspicious of Irish teachers'.<sup>905</sup> The 'allegiance test' as it became known came up for discussion at a meeting of the Limerick Municipal Technical Committee in April 1926. A letter from a government department was read out which stated that part-time teachers had to comply 'with section 71 of the Local Government Act, 1925' and that the committee 'should re-affirm the appointment of all part-time teachers, who should, within one month of re-affirmation, make and subscribe the declaration required by the Act'.<sup>906</sup> The essence of this Act was to force teachers and other employees of the state to recognise and bear allegiance to the Irish Free State 'as by law established' or else face the possibility of financial hardship.<sup>907</sup>

The Limerick Technical Committee was unhappy about the new Act but concentrated mainly on the fringes of the Act in relation to when a teacher might be

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<sup>904</sup> Ibid.

<sup>905</sup> *LC*, 11 March 1926.

<sup>906</sup> *LL*, 28 April 1926;

<sup>907</sup> Section 71, Local Government Act, 1925.

paid and up to what date if they refused to sign the declaration. Once the committee realized that if they paid teachers who refused to sign that they would not be compensated by the department they accepted a proposal from Miss Doyle which asked the department to sanction payment up to the date of refusal.<sup>908</sup>

### **Unusual Event in Co. Clare**

A relatively minor event in Ennis, Co Clare, in June 1926 brought to the surface the notion of the Gaelic League as a non-political organization, the image of de Valera looking into his heart and seeing what the Irish people wanted and the confluence of the new political party Fianna Fáil and the idea of a Gaelic Ireland. The event occurred in question was when the Clare Feis and Industrial Exhibition was abandoned due to 'a refusal by Mr de Valera to postpone his meeting in Ennis' on the Sunday when the Feis was due to be held.<sup>909</sup> The reason given for postponing the Feis by the secretary, Mr John Gordon, was that they would not permit any political party to take advantage of the Feis as the Gaelic League was non-party political and their sole concern was for 'the promotion of the Irish language and industrial revival'. Fianna Fáil's position on this matter was that they had moved the meeting from 29 June because it would have clashed with the Clare Agricultural Show and he believed that de Valera should have been invited to the Feis as the objects of Fianna Fáil and those of the Feis committee were the same. The promoters of the de Valera meeting considered the abandonment of the Feis as an insult to de Valera and further asserted that the general committee were not consulted about the decision and that it was organised by a 'small working committee'.<sup>910</sup> It was their view that this decision would seriously affect the Gaelic movement in Clare. *Feiseanna* were the public acknowledgement that a Gaelic Ireland existed and they occupied the public sphere to advertise this. The event in Clare was either the work of a small contingent opposed to de Valera or else a genuine belief in the Gaelic League that it was non-political. Remembering its infiltration by the IRB during the conflict with Britain this appears as political amnesia on the part of those who had cancelled the Feis.

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<sup>908</sup> *LL*, 1 May 1926.

<sup>909</sup> *LC*, 24 June 1926.

<sup>910</sup> *Ibid.*

## **The Thomond Feis 1926; Indifference, Apathy and the Allegiance Test**

The Feis in Limerick, called the Thomond Feis, which was set for June 1926 brought to the surface tensions regarding status in a rowing club, the conservative view of the clergy and their opposition to the allegiance test and the indifference and apathy to the revival of the language. The *Limerick Leader* printed an angry letter from John Healy, secretary of Athlunkard Boat Club, regarding the flying of bunting during the Feis.<sup>911</sup> In a previous letter to the *Limerick Leader* Mr P. Flanagan, Secretary Thomond Feis, had thanked 'certain rowing clubs' for agreeing to fly bunting but Athlunkard Boat Club had been omitted from the list. John Healy insisted that ABC would fly the bunting 'Mr Flanagan's letter notwithstanding'.<sup>912</sup> The Thomond Feis opened on 18 June 1926 and the entrants were so numerous that St Michael's Temperance Hall and the Grand Central cinema as well as St Ita's hall had to be utilised for the events. The opening address was given by Rev Dr Cowper who initially spoke in Irish but then reverted to English. In his address he acknowledged that the Gaelic movement had been greatly hampered and impeded by the widespread indifference and apathy, and sometimes too unfortunately, by open opposition from certain sections of the Irish population.<sup>913</sup> He believed that there was a re-awakening in the country even though there were anti-Irish forces at work but his faith for the revival rested with the children. He was sure that 'Irish Irelanders despite all opposition' would win through.<sup>914</sup> This speech brought together all the elements of a conservative Catholic nationalist view. It was subtly subversive in that he declared that he would not take the oath of the allegiance test and called on the people of Ireland to get the government to remove the law. The logic of this stand was that he did not recognise the state 'as by law established'. Despite his enthusiasm for the future of the language it was beginning to die even in the Feenagh branch which had been very active during the war of independence.

## **The Protestant View**

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<sup>911</sup> *LL*, 16 June 1926.

<sup>912</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>913</sup> *LC*, 19 June 1926.

<sup>914</sup> *Ibid.*

There was a difficulty in the Church of Ireland regarding the teaching of Irish in schools. At the General Synod held in Thurles in May 1926 Canon W.S. Kerr objected to compulsion in the teaching of Irish and declared that the system was ‘a cruel tyranny and a crime against childhood’.<sup>915</sup> This was prompted by a motion at the Synod to provide a grant of £100 ‘towards a regular service in Gaelic in a Dublin church’. Following some disagreement the motion was passed by a majority on a show of hands.<sup>916</sup> This incident, displayed the sensitive feelings that Protestant Churches had towards the language. On the national scene the Protestant population was encouraged by Dr Gregg in his Presidential address to the United Synod of Dublin in 1926 to take advantage of the new programme which was ‘shortly to be enforced’ by the government regarding the teaching of Irish in schools. He stated that if the new programme was not against his principals he was ready to support it and concluded by saying that ‘as a Church’ they would be foolish ‘if they did not determine to make the fullest use of the opportunities placed in their way’.<sup>917</sup> Even though he regretted constitutional change he pledged the loyalty of the church to the Irish Free State and assisted with the integration of the Protestant community into the new state with views such as his acceptance of the teaching of compulsory Irish in national schools. By 1927 St Patrick’s Day had become a national festival and the *Limerick Chronicle* gave an interesting report from a Protestant point of view. It stated that ‘the shamrock was donned by everyone’ and religious services were observed ‘appropriate to the occasion in the city churches’.<sup>918</sup> It made reference to the ‘cheap excursions’ which had been made available by the Great Southern Railway Company to Cork and Thurles for football and hurling and to Dublin for the Baldoyle races. It then recalled the hockey match, which had taken place in the earlier part of the day, between

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<sup>915</sup> *LC*, 23 May 1926.

<sup>916</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>917</sup> *LC*, 24 June 1926; ‘John Allen Fitzgerald Gregg’ in Helen Andrews (ed.), *The Royal Irish Academy’s Dictionary of Irish Biography from the earliest times to the year 2002* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), ii, 678-82. John Allen Fitzgerald Gregg was the youngest and only son of Rev. John Robert Gregg 1831-82, and his grandfather John Gregg had been bishop of Cork while his uncle R. S. Gregg had been archbishop of Armagh. Having been ordained deacon at St Luke’s Church Belfast 1896 he served as curate at Ballymena, Co. Antrim 1896, Cork 1899, rector of St Michael’s, Blackrock, Co. Cork 1906-12 and on his appointment as Archbishop King’s professor of divinity at TCD 1911-15 became canon of St Patrick’s cathedral, Dublin, chaplain to the lord lieutenant 1912-15 and examining chaplain to the archbishop of Dublin 1913-15 before joining the episcopal bench as bishop of Ossory 1915-20.

<sup>918</sup> *LC*, 19 March 1927.

Railway Union and Protestant Young Men's Association which had taken place in the P.Y.M.A. grounds in Farranshone and which had been watched by 'a big crowd'.<sup>919</sup> P.Y.M.A. was defeated. It then recalled the rugby match between Garryowen and Manchester University which had been played in the Markets Field and which also had attracted 'a big crowd'. Garryowen won and treated their guests to a dance in the Lyric Theatre that night. The *Chronicle* also made reference to the Church Lad's Brigade who had entertained their colleagues from Cork in a visit to the Shannon Scheme.<sup>920</sup> It finally accepted that 'a conspicuous feature of St Patrick's Day had been a schoolchildren's procession which had been organized by the Limerick branch of the Gaelic League. This procession had been accompanied by the Boherbuoy, St John's and St Mary's bands. The cinema houses and an Irish night at the Gaiety were all patronised by the citizens of Limerick that night. There was a special service held in St Mary's Cathedral where appropriate hymns, including 'St Patrick's Breast Plate', were sung. The bishop preached a sermon and 'a very attractive organ recital' was given by Mr F. Muspratt. This was the image of St Patrick's Day from a Protestant viewpoint.<sup>921</sup>

### **Poverty in the Gaeltacht**

By early 1927 the Limerick branch decided to hold a public meeting in order to arouse public interest 'in the deplorable condition obtaining in the Irish-speaking districts' and to have 'put into effect the linguistic and economic recommendations of the Gaeltacht Commission'.<sup>922</sup> The main issues which concerned them were the ageing population and emigration of young people from the Gaeltacht. This meeting, which was held in the Town Hall, attracted no fewer than ten priests and also included W.P. Clifford, President of the Central Council, GAA.<sup>923</sup> They equated the language decline with poverty but never considered the possibility that it was in fact the lack of development and economic opportunities that had insulated the Gaeltacht from encroachment by the modern world.<sup>924</sup>

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<sup>919</sup> Ibid.

<sup>920</sup> Ibid.

<sup>921</sup> Ibid.

<sup>922</sup> *LC*, 8 Jan. 1927.

<sup>923</sup> *LC*, 15 Jan. 1927.

<sup>924</sup> Hindley, pp 28-29.

### **Irish Scholarships for Children: Coiste na bPáistí and the Fáinne**

A scholarship system was established by the Limerick County Committee to enable school-going boys, girls and adults who were members of the League, to attend a Gaelic college for a summer term.<sup>925</sup> In September 1926 the Limerick County Committee of the Gaelic League condemned a decision by the Limerick County Council to withdraw Irish scholarships to students of the Irish language. The League pledged to 'stand by the parents of the children affected' and would support them in 'any action they might take to recover what is by right due to them'.<sup>926</sup> Late in 1935 the Limerick County Committee of the Gaelic League discussed the possibility of sending children from the city and county to the Gaeltacht.<sup>927</sup> They tried to attract the schools, trade unions and the professions to raise funds for this venture. Each child would cost £5 and if a school collected £10 then two children would be selected to travel and the central fund would sponsor two more children. Individual unions would have children of their members selected. Following this a further meeting was held in December where the details were worked out. At this meeting it was noted that the 'Gaelic movement today is not nearly as strong as it should be' and they believed that it was the 'disastrous Civil War of 1922' that was to blame for this and that the movement had been neglected and forgotten by politicians 'except for the lip-service paid it by them at election times'.<sup>928</sup> The meeting decried the increasing attacks being made on the League by some of those people 'who would call themselves friends of the language'.<sup>929</sup> The League was pinning its hopes of a revival of the language on the Gaeltacht scholarship scheme which it believed 'would go a long way towards the complete Gallicisation of our own country'.<sup>930</sup> This appeal was made to the general public but also especially to teachers.

During 1936 there was a consolidation of the organization and attempts made to start new branches. A Convention was held in Newcastle West in order to further these aims. The Fáinne featured prominently as a means of revival, as was the Coiste

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<sup>925</sup> *LC*, 18 Feb. 1922.

<sup>926</sup> *LC*, 25 Sept. 1926.

<sup>927</sup> *LL*, 12 Oct. 1935.

<sup>928</sup> *LL*, 28 Dec. 1935.

<sup>929</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>930</sup> *Ibid.*

na bPáistí, the organization responsible for sending children to the Gaeltacht.<sup>931</sup> Following this a meeting of the Limerick County Committee of the Gaelic League was held in Limerick on 18 January 1936. The purpose of this meeting was an attempt to revive old branches and establish new ones. Speakers were selected whose job it was to attend meetings in different villages and towns in the county. In order to 'strengthen the League and further its cause' a Convention of the League was arranged to be held in Newcastle West on 23 February. It was also decided to revive the old Gasra, the organization of Fáinne holders, and to establish Fo-Gasra in the City Technical School and the Customs and Excise office. Both national and secondary schools were invited to communicate with the county secretary if they were interested.<sup>932</sup> The Fáinne had been designed by Bulmer Hobson and Piaras Beasláí in 1915 as a symbol of people's ability and willingness to speak Irish. Following a meeting of the County Committee, held in St Ita's Hall in February 'very satisfactory reports were received from delegates from the city and county'.<sup>933</sup> July 1936 saw a 'very large and representative meeting of the Limerick Gaeltacht Scholarship Committee' which took place in St Ita's Hall. The purpose was to draw the names of those children who had been selected to travel to the Gaeltacht.<sup>934</sup> In total 52 children, (other accounts mention 63 children), were selected to travel to the Fíor Gaeltacht in Coolea Co. Cork for one month. The committee was disappointed by the 'poor response made by the general public and other public bodies in the city'.<sup>935</sup> Two bodies which did contribute £5 each were the Limerick Division of the Gárda Síochána and the GAA.

### **The Gaelic League and the anniversary of the Coming of St Patrick**

The contradiction at the heart of the language revival movement was evident at a public demonstration in 1932 organized by the Limerick branch of the League. Language revival was linked to Catholicism, industrial revival and the womanhood of Ireland, which was a sub-text for the purity movement, while real language enthusiasts were imprisoned in Arbour Hill prison. This public demonstration included

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<sup>931</sup> *LL*, 4 Jan. 1936.

<sup>932</sup> *LL*, 22 Jan. 1936.

<sup>933</sup> *LL*, 8 Feb. 1936.

<sup>934</sup> *LL*, 8 July 1936.

<sup>935</sup> *Ibid.*



the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family, various sodalities, the Mayor, Corporation and five city bands. The reason for this demonstration was the occasion of 'the fifteenth centenary of the coming of St Patrick'.<sup>936</sup> The procession also included the Catholic Boy Scouts, Catholic clergy, and members of the Dáil, which included Ald. D. Bourke T.D., Ald. J. Reidy T.D., T. Crowley T.D. and G. Bennett T.D. The procession marched to St Patrick's well in Singland. At the ceremony both Fr Reynolds C.ss.R and Cormac Breathnach T.D. agreed that the Irish language in a convoluted way had become connected to Catholicism, was a barrier against paganism and supported industrial revival and the womanhood of Ireland.<sup>937</sup> No mention was made of another Limerick man, Frank Ryan editor of *An Phobhlacht*, who had spoken in Irish before a military tribunal just a few weeks previously where he had refused to recognise the court and demanded a public enquiry into the conditions in Arbour Hill prison where he claimed that the Gilmores 'were being slowly done to death'.<sup>938</sup> The Gilmores, George and Charlie were republican socialists who had fought with Seán Lemass and Frank Aiken during the 1920s and they also had close relations with Frank Ryan, Peadar O'Donnell and Seán Russell. The two brothers had been imprisoned in Mountjoy jail by the Free State government on several occasions where George was treated viciously by prison officers.

### **Monsieur le Roux, Daniel Corkery and Irish Ireland**

In 1935 the noted Breton author, Monsieur Le Roux, author of the *Life of P.H. Pearse*,<sup>939</sup> gave a lecture in the Grand Central cinema on his impressions of 1916. To applause from a large audience Mr Michael Danagher, President of the 1916 committee, introduced the lecturer as the author of a book on the life of Pádraig Pearse, which he recommended to the audience, where they 'would find the doctrine of the republic, the doctrine that had never changed and never would'. During the lecture, which ranged from 1791 to 1916, Monsieur Le Roux delivered a nationalist view of Irish history where he made one small reference to the Irish language revival where he accepted that the revivalists 'did certain valuable work but unless they entered into

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<sup>936</sup> *LL*, 19 March 1932.

<sup>937</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>938</sup> *LL*, 13 Jan. 1932.

<sup>939</sup> Le Roux Louis N., *Life of P.H. Pearse* (Dublin, 1932).

the spirit of Irish Ireland and warmed themselves at the flame which the Fenians kindled and accepted the righteousness of the spirit of aggression their help was but the help of sympathy'.<sup>940</sup> In the preface of his book he equated Pearse with sainthood 'Pearse was more than a patriot; he was a virtuous man. He possessed all the qualities which go to the making of a saint to a degree that it is hardly within my province to analyse'.<sup>941</sup> This concept of Irish Ireland was also taken up by the Legion of Mary Sodality which held a most successful céilidhe mór in the Lyric ballroom. The céilidhe was attended by Mr Tadhg Small who played 'rousing Irish dance tunes' into the early hours of the morning finishing at 4am. Fr Moriarty C.C. was very impressed with the gathering and was not bothered that only twenty five per cent of the patrons could perform the various dances, which included the Fairy Reel, Siege of Ennis, Walls of Limerick and Haymaker's Jig. He was confident that 'those present would now realise that it was possible to obey the wishes of the bishops in their pastorals by supporting Irish dances and still enjoy themselves thoroughly'.<sup>942</sup> The attendance included Rev Dr Cowper C.C., Rev Fr Kelly C.C., several national school teachers and a good mix of the Limerick middle class.

In March 1936 Limerick had a visit from the renowned professor Daniel Corkery of UCC. Corkery joined the Gaelic League under the influence of the *Leader*, which was edited by D. P. Moran, an advocate of Irish Ireland, and became an Irish Ireland follower. His friendships included such people as Frank O'Connor writer, Seamus Murphy the stone sculptor and writer, Sean O'Faolain and Terence MacSwiney although he later fell out with O'Faolain and O'Connor. He was appointed professor of English in UCC even though his estranged protégé, Sean O'Faolain, was his main rival for the post. Seán Ó Tuama was a disciple and distinguished student of Corkery and said he was the best teacher of literature he had ever met. He wrote several plays and his most famous book *The Hidden Ireland* has been acclaimed for its literary and cultural insights. There was criticism of it, however, as flawed social

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<sup>940</sup> *LL*, 13 Jan. 1932.

<sup>941</sup> Le Roux, *Pearse*, p. x.

<sup>942</sup> *LL*, 6 March 1935.

history.<sup>943</sup> In *The Hidden Ireland* Corkery was trying 'to recover the memory of a vanished Gaelic civilization'.<sup>944</sup> Seamus Heaney wrote that Corkery's work was central to his own intellectual and poetic formation.<sup>945</sup> Even though his book concentrated on the Gaelic Munster poets, described by Fanning and Garvin as 'at best, hapless men out of tune with their times', he omitted Brian Merriman, author of *Cúirt an Mheadhón Oíche* (The Midnight Court) a bawdy satire on peasant society, from his work on the grounds that County Clare should rightly be considered part of Connaught.<sup>946</sup> He was a divisive figure between those who saw him as a visionary intellectual and chief philosopher of the Irish language and those who saw Ireland developing in a different way with regard to the nature of the Anglo-Irish.

It was Corkery's opinion that a second coming was underway for the revival of the language and he had no time for those who saw failure in this revival. He viewed coercion as a successful strategy for those who had to use the language in their work and referred to the dead as a signifier of nationality.<sup>947</sup> He wrote later of the reasons for the decline of the Gaelic League, following the establishment of the Free State, that many members were absorbed into 'the army, the Gardaí, and above all into the branches of the civil service'.<sup>948</sup> In his opinion it was the civil service and not the schools that was the 'pivotal point' but he was also conscious of the negative role played by other agents:

The civil service is the pivotal point, not the schools, ... it was the civil service, England's civil service, that drained Ireland of its native language ... we are not unconscious of the unfortunate part played by the Church, by O'Connell, by Catholic Colleges ... the attempt to create an Irish spirit in the civil service was strangled at birth.<sup>949</sup>

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<sup>943</sup> 'Daniel Corkery' in John A. Murphy (ed.), *The Royal Irish Academy's Dictionary of Irish Biography from the earliest times to the year 2002* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), ii, 678-82.

<sup>944</sup> Bryan fanning and Tom Garvin, *The books that define Ireland* (Sallins, 2014), p. 106.

<sup>945</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>946</sup> *Ibid.*, p.111.

<sup>947</sup> *LL*, 9 March 1936.

<sup>948</sup> Dónall Ó Corcora, *What's this about the Gaelic League?* (Dublin, 1956), p. 4.

<sup>949</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 16-18.

Corkery's view of Irish in the civil service may have been correct as Martin Maguire has noted that 'knowledge of Irish was noted, but does not seem to have been as important as knowledge of book-keeping and accounting'.<sup>950</sup> However, Maguire also points out that nationalists found it convenient to forget the benefits which had been achieved during the period of pre-revolutionary independence

Nationalists uncritically accepted the denigration of the pre-independence civil service, not reflecting that, among many achievements, it had successfully transferred the land to the tenants, democratised local government, set up a local health service through the dispensary system, transformed the western areas of greatest poverty and overseen the construction of one of the densest railway networks of Europe.<sup>951</sup>

Corkery never accepted that Irish culture could operate in two languages and he separated those who saw language as a signifier of nationality as opposed to those who saw it as a signifier of culture.<sup>952</sup> He maintained that once the Dail was established the concept of an Irish Ireland was forgotten and that 'the men who were very vocal in Irish before going into the Dail became so very much less vocal, even when far away from Leinster House, once they have been broken to it's ritual'.<sup>953</sup> Neither had he any kind words to say about the Abbey Theatre which he accused of not sharing in the spirit of the Gaelic League and who in fact 'were against it'.<sup>954</sup>

### **Concerts and Fundraising**

By 1935 the Gaelic League in Limerick was in terminal decline. They were now concentrating on the origin of the material used as uniforms for the female assistants in Woolworth's department store which they described as 'foreign material'.<sup>955</sup> Despite this they continued to organise events such as drama classes and debating classes. It was noticeable that later in the summer the Thomond Feis included a

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<sup>950</sup> Martin Maguire, *The civil service and the revolution in Ireland 1912-1938: shaking the blood-stained hand of Mr Collins* (Manchester, 2008), p. 157.

<sup>951</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>952</sup> Ó Corcora, *What's this about the Gaelic League*, p. 23.

<sup>953</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>954</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>955</sup> *LL*, 16 March 1935.

section on Christine Doctrine which was judged by Dr de Cuiper (Dr Cowper) and an t-At. D. O'Brian.<sup>956</sup> An Irish dramatic society was formed in Limerick to promote plays in the Irish language under the tutelage of Sean MacCathbaid.<sup>957</sup> A special debating class in Irish was formed in the Technical Institute Limerick.<sup>958</sup> Irish classes were being well attended and the weekly Sunday night ceilidhe had proved to be a tremendous success.<sup>959</sup> It was probably this social element of the League that helped to keep it alive in the city. District organizing committees were established in centres around the county and the call still went out to all Gaels to achieve the ideal of making Ireland 'Gaelic from shore to shore'.

### **Apathy, Lack of Spirit**

Despite Corkery's belief the County Committee was still finding apathy regarding the Gaelic League in some parts of the county. It put this down to the fact that the general public was not aware of the chief objectives of the League and a sub-committee was appointed to correct this by drawing up a list of the chief objectives of the League and have them printed and distributed in all parishes.<sup>960</sup> It is unbelievable that after a period of over forty years, a War of Independence, a Civil War, the establishment of a Free State and a new educational system which encompassed Irish as a compulsory subject that the people were unaware of the objectives of the Gaelic League. The reality, which the League ignored, was that the majority of the people, excluding those who benefitted financially because of the requirement of Irish for their jobs, had abandoned the idea of an Irish language revival. The Catholic Church held onto the idea because it had joined the language revival to temperance and purity. At a meeting of the City Vocational Education Committee, held in the Technical Institute on 24 July 1936, Mr Sheehan drew attention to the fees charged to students sitting for the Fainne examinations. He maintained that these 'were exorbitant as far as the children of working class people were concerned'.<sup>961</sup> Because they could not afford the fees they did not sit the examination. He expressed surprise at this state of affairs

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<sup>956</sup> *LL*, 8 June 1935.

<sup>957</sup> *LL*, 21 Sept. 1935.

<sup>958</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>959</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>960</sup> *LL*, 14 March 1936.

<sup>961</sup> *LL*, 26 Sept. 1936

considering all that had been said 'about the desirability of everyone helping the language movement'.<sup>962</sup> It was decided to consult the Gaelic League on the matter. There were stirrings of discontent coming from the county as well. At a public meeting held in Mountcollins, under the auspices of the Gaelic League, Mr M. de Burca spoke about invoking the name of God and Mary into everyday conversation. Having made reference to the 64 children who had been sent to the Coolea Gaeltacht, he noted that not one had come from Mountcollins and the reason for this was that 'the spirit of the Gaelic League is dead, or, if I may say, it is asleep'.<sup>963</sup>

Following his speech it was decided to form a branch of the League in Mountcollins the following Sunday. At the AGM of the Limerick branch of the Gaelic League held in St Ita's hall the schools were criticised for failing to assist the League in their Irish classes for the children of the city. The AGM praised the City Vocational Educational Committee for holding classes two nights per week. However, the attendance 'was very poor when the large attendance of children at the city schools was taken into consideration'.<sup>964</sup> The meeting laid the blame on the city schools who failed to lend their support to the classes. This meeting also criticised the lack of support given to the League for their scholarship scheme for children which were sent to the Gaeltacht. Only 'meagre financial support' was provided outside of that given by the League itself. The teachers in most schools came in for heavy criticism because in the opinion of the League the teachers were absolutely indifferent as to the success or failure of the scheme. They also cast blame on the trades bodies in the city as well as the general public who failed to deliver on their promises of support.

By 1936 it had become obvious, even to the staunchest supporters of the League, that terminal decline had set in for the revival of the language. The name they gave it was apathy and the reasons which they applied to this apathy were the modernisms of cinema, dances and radio. They had no conception of the poverty in the city other than the cheap costs to the poor for these entertainments. National

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<sup>962</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>963</sup> *LL*, 17 Oct. 1936.

<sup>964</sup> *LL*, 31 Oct. 1936.

school teachers also came in for rebuke for failing to join the League in significant numbers.

Similar statements were being delivered in other parts of the county and in Co Clare also. In Killaloe in December 1936 Fr Hamilton, c.c. Ennis, Chairman of the Clare Board of the G.A.A., delivered a speech which also invoked the dead as well as the notion that it was the English who had used torture and persecution to kill the Irish language.<sup>965</sup> Again he addressed the issues of modernisms such as cinema; press and radio which were for traitors. These were the reasons for the decline of the language and he longed for that past which had been simple, virtuous and honest. The absence of any reference to the poverty and hardship of life on the poor was noticeable in all speeches made by people from the League.

### **Nationalism**

At the County Feis, held in Newcastle West in July 1936, the concept of nationality and language was joined in an oration given by Fr Kelly P.P. Templeglantine. Fr Kelly had been one of those priests alluded to by General Maxwell when advising Bishop O'Dwyer he needed to be silenced.<sup>966</sup> In his oration Fr Kelly spoke of forgetfulness: 'how the Young Ireland Party had forgotten all that Daniel O'Connell had achieved through the Emancipation Act 1829, that Sinn Fein thought too lightly of what the Irish Parliamentary Party had achieved for Irish farmers, the three F's, the various land Acts and the Labourer's Cottage Acts'.<sup>967</sup> He praised the priests, (speaking of course of West Limerick only), nine of whom had stood on the platform in the square of Newcastle West and condemned conscription, while there was no layman present. His speech went back to the fight to make Irish compulsory for university and he continued

Side by side with the cause of the language was the cause of nationality; and now I am going to say something that I know a great many will not agree with. I submit that in theory you can separate language and nationality; but in

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<sup>965</sup> *LL*, 5 Dec. 1936

<sup>966</sup> Morrissey, *Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer*, p.376.

<sup>967</sup> *LL*, 4 July 1936.

practise they cannot be separated. In every nation struggling for freedom the two go hand in hand.<sup>968</sup>

He stressed that it was mainly members of the Gaelic League who were foremost in the Rising and that it was they 'during the long bitter struggle' that administered the laws of the land 'independent of the English code of law, and of the English courts'.<sup>969</sup> In his speech 'he drew a veil' over the Civil War and the consequences for both nationality and the language. Despite assertions to the contrary, he accepted that they were not making any real progress in reviving the language. He blamed this on the apathy of the people. He had hopes that *Feiseanna* would be the best means of getting adults to take an interest in the revival. He finished his speech by naming four organizations that should do more for the language, the County Councils, the GAA, the Dáil and the Catholic Church.

### **An Irish Review**

July 1936 also saw the publication of the first issue of a new Irish review, *An Raitheachan*, which was intended to take the place of 'imported periodicals'. It was described as 'racy of the soil' and was written by 'leading Irish writers' such as Fr Murray of Louth with a piece on Michael Scanlan, 'Poet-Laureate of Fenianism'.<sup>970</sup> Other contributors included Maurice Walsh with a short story 'The battle of Tippermuir', Daniel Corkery with an essay 'Courage', Alice Milligan and Peadar Kearney and a writer of 'Irish history and historical philosophy', Roddy the Rover.<sup>971</sup> Maurice Walsh, originally a civil servant prior to and after the foundation of the Irish Free State became a professional writer after retiring from the civil service on full pension in 1933. During his career he had written twenty books but is probably most famous for his short story *The Quiet Man*, first published in the *Saturday Evening Post* of 11 February 1933, and subsequently made into a film by John Ford in 1952.<sup>972</sup> 'Roddy the Rover' was the nom de plume for Aodh de Blácam who worked as a

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<sup>968</sup> Ibid.

<sup>969</sup> Ibid.

<sup>970</sup> *LL*, 11 July 1936.

<sup>971</sup> Ibid.

<sup>972</sup> 'Maurice Walsh' in Carmel Doyle, (ed.), *The Royal Irish Academy's Dictionary of Irish Biography from the earliest times to the year 2002* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), ii, 678-82.



journalist for the *Irish Press*. He was a Scot with a love of the Irish language who went, on his retirement, to live on Tory Island where Irish was the spoken language of the inhabitants. This first issue also included a song by Douglas Hyde, referred to as An Craobhin Aoibhín, and an article in Irish by Pádraig MacConmidhe on 'national identity in the Six Counties'. This quarterly review was on sale for an annual subscription of 3/- from Croke House in Dublin, or Easons.

### **Donnchadh Ó Briain TD and the Railway Shares**

At the annual convention of the Limerick County Committee of the League, held in October 1936, Mr D. O'Brien (Donnchadh Ó Briain) T.D. said that even though they had a bigger membership than previously there was a 'lack of proper co-operation'.<sup>973</sup> He continued, once again, to equate the Irish language with an invisible barrier that could keep the modern world out of Ireland:

The Irish language is the greatest defence we have against the new paganism that is being brought in on us from all parts of the world. It is a pity the people do not realise that the language work is a beautiful work, spiritually and patriotically. Let us work harder than ever.<sup>974</sup>

Donnchadh Ó Briain, who had been a long time member of the Gaelic League as well as a member of Sinn Féin and the West Limerick brigade of the IRA, had been influenced by Fr Tomás de Bhál. He was a Gaelic League organiser in Co. Limerick from 1920 and from 1925 in that role for all of Munster. He served as general secretary of the Gaelic League from 1928 to 1932 and was elected as TD for Limerick in 1933. Throughout his career he spoke Irish in the Dail.<sup>975</sup> He was an influential figure in the Limerick Gaelic League to the extent that in 1932 the Limerick branch wrote to him for advice in selling their shares in the Great Southern and the Great Northern Railway Companies.<sup>976</sup> They were anxious to do this because the Limerick branch, according to the balance sheet in their annual accounts, had lost £377-19s-2d for the period to

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<sup>973</sup> *LL*, 24 Oct. 1936.

<sup>974</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>975</sup> 'Donnchadh Ó Briain' in Paul Rouse (ed.), *The Royal Irish Academy's Dictionary of Irish Biography from the earliest times to the year 2002* (9 vols, Cambridge), ii, 678-82.

<sup>976</sup> UCDA, Ó Briain papers, P83/327. The Limerick branch held debentures valued at £300 in the Great Northern Railway Co. and £350 in the Great Southern Railway Co.

October 1932.<sup>977</sup> The Limerick committee congratulated itself on forming new branches and reviving old ones. Doreen Deegan N.T. said that members of the county committee had acted as voluntary organizers during the year as no official organizer was available. The establishment of Fainne Gasrai and the sending of 63 children to the Gaeltacht were also praised. Dissatisfaction was expressed at some people in the Dublin League who seemed to be withholding funds needed in the country. The President of the Gaelic League, known as Cu Uladh, was criticised for his speech about tourists bringing 'foreignisms' into the country. Mr Flanagan said that tourists should be welcomed and 'the blame for any 'foreignisms' in places like Dun Loaghaire rested on the people themselves'.<sup>978</sup> They were pleased with the result of the Thomond Feis especially the 'numbers and high standard of the competitors' but unfortunately the Feis lost money, which they blamed on bad weather and the visit of the Limerick hurling team to the USA prior to the end of the hurling tournament. The meeting called for more help from the younger members in the running of the dances as 'this work invariably fell on the shoulders of the same members every year'.<sup>979</sup>

### **The Gaelic League and the Ban**

Limerick city was the chosen venue for the Annual Gaelic League Congress in 1938 and it proved to be a controversial one. It attracted more than 300 delegates from all parts of the country and the president of the League, Cu Uladh P.T. McGinley, addressed the gathering which was held in the Town Hall. During the congress concern was expressed by Michael O Maolain that unless all bodies working for the Irish language 'welded' into one organization 'the language movement would soon be dead'. In his Presidential address P.T. McGinley re-stated the first principal of the League which was to make 'Ireland free and Gaelic'. He also referred to the 'good Gaels' who had left the League for personal reasons and the fact that some people thought there was 'no further need for the League, because they now had a native government'. Several important motions were discussed including Irish-speaking emigrants and their

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<sup>977</sup> UCDA, Ó Briain papers, P83/326.

<sup>978</sup> *LL*, 24 Oct. 1936.

<sup>979</sup> *Ibid.*

difficulties in England, the League's attitude towards independent *Feiseanna* because of the situation where the title Feis was being given to functions 'at which the English language predominated'. However, the most controversial resolution, which was proposed by the Limerick County Committee of the Gaelic League, and carried by a majority of two votes, was the proposal to remove the ban on 'members of committees attending or promoting foreign dances or games'.<sup>980</sup>

The aftermath of this decision was swift and unequivocal from the G.A.A. At a meeting of the Limerick County Board of the G.A.A. held on 23 April they 'unanimously decided to withdraw all support and co-operation from the Gaelic League. The G.A.A. also called on the Munster Council to 'withdraw the permit for the Thomond Feis hurling tournament, and also on the Limerick County Board to withdraw the county team from same, and to cease co-operation with the Gaelic League in any form'. The answer from the Gaelic League was just as swift. A letter from the League to the G.A.A. was read at the meeting which sought to explain the reasons for the removal of the ban. Essentially it said that the League had not changed its position in regard to foreign games or dances and that paragraph 2 of the rule 13 of the League's constitution had been added during the Gaelic League Comhdháil in Belfast in 1932. The Cu Uladh stated 'that it was regrettable that such a rule was ever brought into existence' and he was aware that its removal would be open to misinterpretation. The facts were that according to its constitution members of the League 'cannot promote, sponsor or organize any foreign games or dances'. He believed that the decision of the G.A.A. to prevent hurling teams from playing in *Feiseanna*, particularly in the Thomond Feis, would only damage 'Irish-Ireland ideals'. These explanations were not welcomed by Sean Lanigan, who had been responsible for co-operation between the G.A.A. and the League for many years and he had resigned from the Gaelic League because of the matter. According to him the ban had been originally instituted at the Belfast conference because of the degeneration of the Gaelic League and because the Congress was unable to stop the degeneracy they had removed the ban. He accepted that the Irish language played 'a very important part in the national movement, but there are other parts which are as important'. He maintained that members of the

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<sup>980</sup> LL, 23 April 1938.

Gaelic League were ‘suffering from an egotistical obsession’ due to their ‘limited – very limited knowledge of Irish’ and that those involved in other aspects of Irish identity were ignored.<sup>981</sup>

This was a direct attack on the very core of the Gaelic League. Lanigan had opened the possibility that people who had little or no Irish were just as entitled to call themselves Irish and that the Gaelic League sneered at those outside their clique who were trying through politics to advance the ‘national effort’ but that ‘it was now time that the G.A.A. took action and showed where its duty lay’. There was objection from the chairman to taunts from Mr J. Jackson, a member of the Gaelic League and one who had voted to remove the ban, and said that the decision of the League to remove the ban ensued that ‘their spiritual home’ now lay ‘in Lansdowne Road’. This was a reference to the home of rugby which was very popular among Limerick people.

The controversy continued on the letters page of the *Limerick Leader* with a letter from D. Ní Dhuibhgin (Doreen Deegan NT), runaidhe, Coiste Co Luimnighe, Connradh na Gaedhilge. In her letter she explained the reasons for the removal of the ban on foreign games and dances. Her main point was that ‘such a rule should not be and is not necessary’. She insisted that all members of the League were aware that they should not attend any foreign function knowing that membership of the League was ‘inconsistent with supporting foreignism in any shape or form, and under any auspices, even that of the Gaelic Athletic Association Ltd.’. She continued with the fact that the Gaelic League had flourished for thirty years ‘until the Civil War in 1922’ and she believed that the spirit of that time could be revived ‘by teaching and propaganda rather than by rules and bans’. The sting in her letter came in the final chapter. First she referred to the statement of the Limerick County Board G.A.A., made at their meeting of 23 April, that the Limerick County Committee of the Gaelic League had ‘proposed the inclusion of waltzes in ceilidhe at a previous Comhdháil’.<sup>982</sup> This she said was an ‘untruth’ and denied that any such motion ‘was ever forwarded from any branch or committee in the county or city of Limerick’. She found it amusing that the

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<sup>981</sup> *LL*, 25 April 1938.

<sup>982</sup> *Ibid.*

G.A.A. felt that the Gaelic League was no longer a fit organization for them to associate with, considering that

for many years the work of the League in almost every parish has been hampered by the running of Jazz dances by the G.A.A. in defiance of their own rule 12, official guide. This also applies to almost every county in Ireland. There has never been any action taken against the clubs, and we can only conclude that the County Board accept as their spiritual home the Jazz dens of London and Paris.<sup>983</sup>

In order to further clarify the position the Limerick City Branch of the Gaelic League issued a statement to the *Limerick leader* which detailed the inclusion of 'a new paragraph' into its constitution at the 1932 congress in Belfast, 'any member of the Gaelic League who takes part in foreign dancing or is present at a foreign game shall not be eligible for membership of a Gaelic League committee. Taking part in foreign dancing means to practise, organise or be present'. As an explanation of this rule the statement from the League said that 'we would like to stress that the restriction did not apply to members of the Gaelic League – it only applied to officials'. It believed that the ban was unnecessary but should it in any way 'anglicise the Gaelic League' then the Limerick members would be the first to review the position. The statement went on to vilify the attack made by Lanigan at the Cork County Board meeting of the G.A.A. and attacked the Limerick County Board of the G.A.A. on its attitude to the language, foreign dances and games which it stated was 'one of complete indifference'. It accused some members of the Board, who had applauded Lanigan's attack, of being involved in 'promoting and organizing foreign dancing, while céilidhe, run by the Gaelic League have been hampered by foreign dances run by the G.A.A. clubs' and also cast doubt on the enforcing of rules being applied on foreign games: on this they said 'no comment is necessary'. It was common knowledge in Limerick that many G.A.A. players attended rugby and soccer games. The question of the Thomond Feis was also addressed and explained that it was an independent event and not run by the city or county branch of the League but they were confident that 'all fair-minded Gaels and the public in general will support the Feis as always'.

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<sup>983</sup> *LL*, 30 April 1938.

Lanigan replied to all the allegations and accepted none of them. The President of the League, P.T.McGinley, responded to the controversy at a meeting of the Coiste Gnótha, held in Dublin on 30 April. He re-stated the rule of article 13 as it then stood:

No branch or committee will be permitted to practise anything but Gaelicism at any function under the Gaelic League. We understand by Gaelicism the promotion of the language, culture, games and dances of the Gael; and the achievement of national freedom ... no one will henceforth be allowed on a Gaelic League platform who does not subscribe fully to the objects of the League ... nor will anyone be permitted to speak without giving an undertaking beforehand not to say anything against the objects as stated in this rule.<sup>984</sup>

Even this statement did not quell the controversy and just a week later the Vice Chairman of the County Committee of the League, Michael de Burca, wrote to the *Limerick Leader* and called the secretary of the Limerick City G.A.A. Board to task for his utterances. He had said that the Gaelic League was a spent force this many a day and that it would be better if they devoted more attention to doing something for the language'.<sup>985</sup> In his reply to this allegation de Burca outlined the various events which the League had undertaken in County limerick including the fact that with thirty affiliated branches Limerick had 'twice as many as any other county in Ireland'.<sup>986</sup> He pointed out that the League had spent £900 over the previous two years sending Limerick children to the Gaeltacht and that the G.A.A. had contributed 'the magnificent sum of £5' to that venture. He also stated that ceilidhe advertised by the County Board included 'such dances as old -time waltzes, military two-steps and Valettas' and declared that 'these functions were in fact pseudo-ceilidhe'.

At a meeting of the Knockaderry Hurling Club, held to consider future relations with the Gaelic League, Mr de Burca N.T., chairman of the club as well as President of the Limerick County Gaelic League Committee, explained why he and the other Knockaderry delegate voted for 'the removal of paragraph 2, rule 13, from the

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<sup>984</sup> *LL*, 2 May 1938.

<sup>985</sup> *LL*, 7 May 1938.

<sup>986</sup> *Ibid.*

constitution of the League'.<sup>987</sup> He said that his committee 'after mature consideration' decided to propose and support the removal of the paragraph 'as its members were of the opinion that the time had once more arrived when the Gaelic League would revert to its policy of national advancement without the aid of ban or hindrance of its individual members'. To applause, he invoked the names of Pearse, Colbert and Heuston and declared that the aims of the League were the same as in their time 'an Ireland free and Gaelic – and no amount of uninformed criticism is going to divert it from its aim'. Following this explanation the club agreed to co-operate with the Gaelic League and that the chairman should attend the next meeting of the Limerick County Board and 'hand in a notice of motion to have the resolution, severing connection with the Gaelic League and withdrawing from the Thomond Feis rescinded and deleted from the minutes'. This motion was put to the next meeting of the County Board of the G.A.A. but on a show of hands it was defeated by a large majority.<sup>988</sup>

After that the controversy disappeared from the pages of the local newspapers and both organizations went their own way until April 1939. The issue was raised again at a meeting of the Limerick County Board G.A.A. on 1 April because of an application by the Thomond Feis Committee for permission to hold a hurling match on 18 June. The chairman of the Board, Rev E. Punch P.P., felt that as the dispute between the Gaelic League and the G.A.A. had not been 'fixed' the League should 'fix up the dispute with the Munster Council' before any application was made to them.<sup>989</sup> Later in that meeting a deputation from the Gaelic League, which consisted of Donnchadh Ó Briain T.D., M Burke N.T. Knockaderry and M. Tuohy President Limerick Branch Gaelic League, met with the board in relation to their application. The chairman told the delegation that they would have to approach the Munster Council on the matter. A tit for tat ensued between the delegation and the GAA board which did not lead to a resolution. Despite pleas by Tuohy for closer co-operation the meeting was adamant that until the trouble between the Gaelic League and the G.A.A. was fixed they could do nothing. As a corollary to this meeting the Munster Council had also met on 1 April and a letter from the Thomond Feis Committee had been read

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<sup>987</sup> *LL*, 7 May 1938.

<sup>988</sup> *LL*, 28 May 1938.

<sup>989</sup> *LL*, 3 April 1939

which requested a date for the Feis hurling competition but the council refused to fix a date. There was no further mention of this dispute in the press up to the end of 1939. It would appear that both organizations were in fact looking for the same thing but the Limerick contingent of the Gaelic League showed that they were more progressive in eliminating the ban from their constitution years before the G.A.A. had the courage or foresight to do so. Nowlan summed it up when he conferred 'that remarkable crusading spirit' on both organizations 'which sought by active means, to save the nation from Anglicization'.<sup>990</sup>

In spite of this controversy the League continued on its path and the Limerick Gaelic dramatic society staged three plays in Irish at the Catholic Institute which brought their season to a close in May 1939.<sup>991</sup> The City Technical School Band had provided traditional Irish music during the intervals. The Gaeltacht scholarship scheme continued and 100 children were due to attend the Coolea Gaeltacht that summer.<sup>992</sup> In July, at the Killaloe Aeridheacht, Senator Hogan B.L., raised the issues, of language, nationalism and Anglicisation. In his address he declared that it was his belief that 'the Irish language is in serious danger unless the work done in the schools is continued in its natural way in the ordinary life of the people'.<sup>993</sup> He was also of the belief that compulsion was bad for the language. He said that 'language is more the badge of a distinctive nationhood than a parliament or a flag'.<sup>994</sup> Also on the platform was Mr M. Edmonds B.A., who said that many people believed that beauty spots like Killaloe were 'strongholds of anglicising influences' but that the fine gathering in Killaloe 'gave the lie to that assertion'. He encouraged the young people 'to stay at home and by some means work out their own salvation in their native districts' rather than immigrating to the cities. He did not explain what these young people were supposed to live on without work. In Adare at the county Feis in the same month James Hough, known as '*an fear mór*', gave a rousing speech which praised the Geraldines who had

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<sup>990</sup> Kevin B. Nowlan, 'The Gaelic League and other national movements', in Sean Ó Tuama (ed.), *The Gaelic League idea* (Dublin, 1972), p. 43.

<sup>991</sup> *LL*, 15 May 1939.

<sup>992</sup> *LL*, 1 July 1939.

<sup>993</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>994</sup> *Ibid.*



come as strangers but had become friends and he quoted a poem from Davis.<sup>995</sup> In his address he accepted that the Irish language was 'dying in every Gaeltacht' and that *Feiseanna* and *Aeidheachta* were well in good but would not keep the language alive. He accepted that the parents of the Gaeltacht were not speaking Irish to their children and would not do so until they could 'make a living in their own land'.<sup>996</sup> He then went on to blame West Britons and seoinins for the inability of the Gaelic League to revive the language. His cure was to call on the government to bring in a short Act of Parliament to make all business transacted after 1950 to be in the Irish language. At the lough Gur Feis similar calls were made by Rev Dr Lee C.C., D.D., James Timmony of Cappawhite and Sean Morrissey, secretary of the Diocesan Council of Muintir na Tíre.<sup>997</sup> The theme was taken up at the Newcastle West Aeridheacht in September. This gathering was smaller than expected and the bad weather was blamed for that. Peadar Ó hAnnrachain, Gaelic scholar, gave 'a very spirited address' in which he questioned the crowd as to how many of them had added to their knowledge of Irish over the last ten years. He acknowledged that the Irish language could not be saved in the schools and said that In fact it was 'perhaps, largely killed in the schools'.<sup>998</sup> Public opinion had to be 'aroused again' in order to get people to speak the language 'outside school hours and after leaving school'.<sup>999</sup> He went on to blame modernization for the collapse of the revival:

I am forced to admit that the picture houses have too largely taken the place of the class-rooms and that unless some provision is made to fight against the foreign influences of cinemas, foreign dances and things of that kind a great deal of the work affected for Irish-Ireland will be lost in our time.<sup>1000</sup>

He thought that the time had come to once again organize the masses of the Irish people but that it had to be done quickly as the old people were dying and the young people who had got the opportunity to learn Irish in school were indifferent to it.

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<sup>995</sup> *LL*, 3 July 1939.

<sup>996</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>997</sup> *LL*, 22 July 1939.

<sup>998</sup> *LL*, 16 Sept. 1939.

<sup>999</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1000</sup> *Ibid.*

At the Annual Convention of the Limerick County Committee of the Gaelic League, held in October 1939, M. Burke N.T. Knockaderry, challenged anybody to say that 'school instruction through the medium of Irish was detrimental to children'. He attributed this attitude to the 'old ascendancy outlook' by people who did not realize that 'a new order existed'.<sup>1001</sup> That summer 124 children had been sent to the Coolea Gaeltacht at a cost of £600. In November the Limerick Gaelic Dramatic Society began their season 'to a packed and appreciative audience in the Catholic Institute'. As usual the Municipal School Ceilidhe Band played during the intervals. A branch of the Fainne was established in Abbeyfeale at a well-attended meeting in November. Risteard O'Kelly, organizer of the event, explained the aims and rules of the association in Gaelic. For those who studied Irish the results were good as was noted in Athea where eleven out of twelve students received the Fáinne. However, in the wider context apathy to the language was the order of the day. The failure to involve the working classes, as well as modern excitements, was noted in an article in the *Limerick Leader* as the causes for the failure of the revival of the language.<sup>1002</sup>

The Gaelic League was one of several civil society organizations which evolved from the political vacuum following the death of Parnell. The League differed from the other two main organizations, the Irish literary movement and the IAOS, in that neither of these movements was seen as signifiers of Irish identity. The League was seen as such and because of that it attracted elements of the nationalist separatists to it. From the beginning the language movement attracted the elite of society, initially in the form of antiquarians, and later people who had an interest in reviving it as a spoken language of the people. There was a significant Protestant interest in the language in the early stages. It was noticeable that in Limerick the ascendancy took an avid interest in the language movement. The Catholic hierarchy were initially not favourably disposed to the language but at the parish level there was significant assistance given by parish priests and curates both at the early stages and later on the various committees. One of the key features of the Gaelic League was that although it was initially led by the elite it succeeded in establishing itself at parish level among the

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<sup>1001</sup> *LL*, 9 Oct. 1939.

<sup>1002</sup> *LL*, 11 Nov. 1939.

ordinary people. In a convoluted way it was this success which attracted the elements which moved the organization from a cultural to a political sphere. Its organizational structure was ideally suited to infiltration by elements which saw it as suitable for their purposes, an instrument with which to further the cause of Irish nationalism. As the League prospered it was noticeable that it became entangled with the temperance movement which by that time, although initially of Protestant ethos, was now firmly in the hands of Catholicism. In Limerick it also, with the temperance movement, became involved in the vigilance and purity movement. Eventually the language revival movement had within its ranks elements of nationalism, temperance, and purity. In Limerick city it never captured the imagination of the mass of the working-class people. It was essentially a middle class initiative and the conflict which arose in the corporation between manual labourers and clerical workers as to the need for Irish for a job was indicative of that. This was a fault line in the structure and philosophy of the organization which has been alluded to in this chapter.

As the League declined nationally it was noted that Limerick continued to prosper to the extent that as a county it had more branches than any other. The Civil War was blamed by some for the decline but it can be seen from the branch chart, table 1, that the decline had started long before the Civil War. Following the establishment of the Free State there was a downgrading of subjects such as Art, Science, Nature Study and Home Economics in favour of compulsory Irish. This did not help to revive the language and according to some people helped in its decline. Some people were willing to build a wall around the country in order to save it from modernization and there were many hints at disloyalty to the concept of revival of the language. The main threat however came from modernizing influences such as cinema, newspapers, non-Gaelic sports and poverty. Apathy and indifference were a symptom not a cause of the decline of the language. The new Free State, in an effort to force recognition of its status, and achieve legitimation, or to dismiss those who were opposed to it, introduced the allegiance test which appeared to affect teachers of Irish more than others. There were some like Corkery who believed in the second coming and that Irish revival was at hand but even he recognised that the social capital which had been generated in the early days of the League had been dissipated

by the many members who had joined the army, the Gardaí and particularly the civil service. The acquisition of the language had benefited those who found employment in these professions. The many who did not acquire it, mainly the working-class, either emigrated or took up unskilled labour which did not require knowledge of Irish. There was much criticism of the failure of the revival at many *Feiseanna* in the decades following the establishment of the Free State and eventually the fault line in the movement cracked when the ban on foreign dancing and games was removed at the Congress in Limerick in 1938. The situation was summed up at a meeting in Mountcollins when a speaker proclaimed that 'the spirit of the league is dead'. Following this there was criticism of teachers and schools and eventually of an 'ascendancy outlook'. The Gaelic League had turned in on itself and was devouring itself from the inside. By 1940 the social capital which had been accumulated over the years was almost depleted.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to find the elusive social capital, beloved of some sociologists, which is deemed to be embedded in communities, clubs, associations and groupings of people in various situations. In order to develop a better understanding of Limerick city from the perspective of civil society and social capital this study concentrated on those organizations, societies, clubs and localities which were present in Limerick during these critical years 1922-1939 as Francis MacManus described them 'The Years of the Great Test'.<sup>1003</sup> Was social capital present in the city during these years? This thesis shows that it was but it was no kumbaya social capital. As the thesis has shown there was negative social capital present just as much as positive social capital. This study has also shown the extent of the horizontal and vertical networks of association which had developed in organizations, confraternities and societies within the city. The study has also shown the importance of localism to those living in slum conditions. This was tempered by the overarching presence of the Redemptorists Archconfraternity of the Holy Family who succeeded in eliminating the idea of localism once the men entered the Redemptorist Church. The areas of research and study included the Catholic Church and particularly the influence of the Redemptorists which permeated the entire male population of the city. To a great extent it was this Catholic hegemony that prevented any radicalism from taking hold in the city despite the presence of a strong united trade's council. The major incidences of civic disruption were firstly against the volunteers in 1915 mainly by the

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<sup>1003</sup> Francis MacManus (ed.), *The years of the great test 1926-39*, the Thomas Davis Lectures (Cork, 1967).

wives of men in British regiments fighting in the Great War and secondly by the Limerick United Trades and Labour Council against British militarism in 1919 following the death of Robert Byrnes. This was an indication of the duality of consciousness of Limerick people. The resistance to modernism also had its impact on the labour movement and this is evidenced by the failure of Jim Larkins Workers Union of Ireland to get established in the city. The move against the union was directed by the Archconfraternity both in public and privately in the confessional. This was confirmed by Paddy Keane, a former captain in Na Fianna, fearless on the field of play or in the custody of the RIC, who meekly submitted to a priest, in the privacy of the confessional, of the Archconfraternity when told to leave Larkin's union as it was 'a communist union'. He left the union. It may be deduced from this that it was the policy of the Redemptorists to confront all the men in the confessional on this matter.

This thesis began as an idea about the challenges which faced the ordinary people of Limerick during the changeover from British imperial rule to Irish nationalist rule. What I was interested in was the views and attitudes of ordinary people as opposed to the overtly political people. The thesis has explored working-class, middle class and ascendancy issues and concluded that the process of embourgeoisement was evident in Limerick and was one of the influences on the establishment of rugby as a working-class sport in the city. The thesis begins with the final break with British imperialism in 1922 but in order to contextualise it I had to go back to the final years of the nineteenth century to explore the genesis of the Gaelic League and the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family. The twentieth century had opened up the question of national identity and the emerging cultural organizations such as the

Gaelic League, the GAA, the literary movement and the cooperative movement were at odds on the question of Irish-Ireland and Anglo-Irish identity. The question of identity, although a national question, was debated in meeting rooms and the local press in Limerick. The approach of this thesis to the question of civil society is influenced by the work of Robert Putnam and Benedict Anderson and many others. Putnam championed the idea of social capital, while the question of nationalism was explored by Anderson.<sup>1004</sup> The role of the Catholic Church and particularly the Archconfraternity was critical to an understanding of how civil society functioned in the Limerick of the 1920s and 1930s. The hegemonic influence of the church was overpowering. As there was no place to hide from this hegemony, or practically no place, men in their ingenuity found relief and private space in the pubs, cinemas and dancehalls, and in the case of the Yellow Road the Rangers Club. Above all the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and the Irish-Irelanders tried to hold back the tide of modernism each group having its own words to describe this development. To the Catholic Church it was 'evil' and to the Irish-Irelanders it was 'West-British'. This can be seen from the various pastoral letters from the hierarchy. In particular it can be seen in the circular, issued following the meeting of the Bishops of Ireland held in Maynooth on 6 October 1925, which was to be read at the principal masses in all churches on the first Sunday of each quarter of the ecclesiastical year titled 'Evils of Dancing'. This circular contains the words 'Irish dances do not make degenerates'.

During the period under study the housing situation in the city, as well as in the rest of the towns and cities of Ireland, was chronic and in 1922, following the departure of the British army from several cottages in Garryowen Villas, a group of

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<sup>1004</sup> Putnam, *Bowling alone*; Anderson, *Imagined communities*.

poor people, who had been living in absolute appalling conditions, under the banner of the Limerick Workers Housing Association decided to take over the cottages. The air of expectation by these poor people, following the political changes in the country and the establishment of a Free State, was quickly dashed as they began to realise that just because the British had left did not mean that a revolution had taken place. The laws of property remained the same after their departure as before. This event crystalized the conflict between the Catholic Hierarchy and those who espoused social ideas. It also showed that the role of the clerics, many of whom came from farms in protecting the property rights of the middleclass. The social capital which the LWHA generated was quickly dissipated as they confronted the bishop and the law. The vacuum left by the political events and the evacuation of the police and military was recognised and quickly filled by the middle class of the city, both Catholic and Protestant, with the establishment of the Limerick City Police Force which patrolled the city until the arrival of the newly formed unarmed Garda Síochána in late 1922. The fact that these men had been formally members of the Irish Republican Police may have influenced them in not taking action against the Limerick City Workers Association which had commandeered Garryowen Villas.

The effects of localism, on the working-class, in the city was mapped by exploring one of the most famous and least written about areas in the city, the Yellow Road, which gave to the city the Young Munster Rugby Football Club, Pirates RFC, the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band, Prospect and Caledonian soccer clubs and several hurling clubs which disappeared with the advance of rugby. This area of study explored the conditions which gave rise to rugby football being embraced by the



Limerick working-class and puts forward four propositions why this was so. It also briefly looked at the role of the Royal Munster Fusiliers on the locality and the sacrifices which the, mainly working-class, men from the Boherbuoy made in order to feed their families and how on their return from the killing fields of Europe were obliged to wipe clean the stain of their sacrifice by donning the uniform of the IRA or the newly formed Free State. Localism was an essential part of Limerick city. The locality chosen for this thesis is known affectionately as the Yellow Road, An Bóthar Buí, or the Boherbuoy. In this locality during the period in question it was possible to perceive the social capital which the people generated. In this society your family came first, then neighbours, then the rugby club, religion and encompassing all that was the state of mind which bound you to the Yellow Road. Anyone who encroached upon your neighbourhood became the enemy, the 'other'. In the case of the Boherbuoy in 1904 it was the Jewish population who were cast in the role of the 'other'. Then there was Dr Long, who set up his dispensary at 47 Thomas Street in 1899 and continued to operate under severe discrimination into the late 1920s, and his crusade to heal the sick and bring them to what he believed to be the real Christ. From 1919 to 1921 there were the Black and Tans who became the invaders and who were challenged in a more severe way. On a weekly basis, during the rugby season, the enemies were Shannon, Garryowen, Bohemians, St Mary's and the other rugby clubs from Cork or Dublin. This was the nature of a relatively closed community. Sometimes it was not pretty and the persecution of Dr Long and the Jews has shown this. This is what is termed by Putnam as negative social capital. However, localism was tempered by the Archconfraternity who condoned the 'othering' of these people. The nature of social capital can be positive or negative. In the case of Dr Long and the

Jews it was negative as it discriminated against people who were doing no harm to the community. In the case of the Black and Tans it could be seen as positive as they were harming the community. The Archconfraternity and their public processions tried to make the streets of Limerick sacred from the profane. An example of this was the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in May 1926. Every street in the city was decorated and ten thousand men marched through the city to the Redemptorist church for an open air mass. Wolfe Tone Street, formally Colooney Street where most of the Jews had lived, was decorated from end to end with Catholic symbols as if to erase any hint of non-Catholic presence in the street. They succeeded for many years. Within this locality, apart from the influence of the Redemptorists, there was the influence of the Dominicans from St Saviour's Church in Glentworth Street and the devotion which the local population had to two religious figures, Our Lady of Limerick and St Martin de Porres.

The history of the Limerick Boat Club was significant in mapping the decline of the Protestant population and its cultural influence as the Catholic middle class emerged to take their place. The thesis examined the decline of the Protestant population and the assimilation of the Catholic middle class with the Protestant middle class in this boat club. There was no discrimination by religion but there was certainly by class. This development was visible in the membership books, annual reports and minute books of the Limerick Boat Club. The existence of a private history of the Matterson family, owners of a large bacon factory and members of the Limerick Boat Club, gave an insight into the success of what Putnam refers to as weak ties of social capital when the company and the family were saved from bankruptcy by

Archibald Murray, a Presbyterian, another member of the Limerick Boat Club. The club records also show how the Limerick Boat Club was saved from destruction by his brother, Bruce Murray. Neither brother profited financially from their efforts. The Matterson family eventually declined as the bacon industry came under international pressure and their decline could be construed as the precursor or the death knell some years later of the once very successful bacon industry in the city. The thesis proposes that the social capital generated by membership of the Limerick Boat Club was responsible for the saving of both Mattersons and the Limerick Boat Club.

Temperance as a movement originally having a protestant ethos was gradually eroded by the incursion of the Catholic Church and eventually the Jesuits into this arena and this was mapped by examining the history of St Michael's Temperance Society. The study has shown that the temperance movement in the city was closely aligned to the Archconfraternity and to the sitting bishop through the administrator of St Michael's parish who was automatically the president of the temperance society. The temperance society gradually became involved in drama, music and rowing and supported the Gaelic League in the early years of the League.

The Gaelic League and its mission to promote the Irish language as a signifier of national identity was examined from the heady heights of the late nineteenth century to its gradual decline from 1922 following the achievement of independence. Once again the clerical influence on an organization was noted as meeting after meeting was dominated by their presence and their attempts to impose the idea of an Irish-Ireland on the membership. The local newspapers carried many statements from Gaelic League meetings where anyone opposed to the idea of an Irish-Ireland were

described as 'shoneens' or West-Britons'. The League, which was predominately a middle class movement, precluded the working-class and particularly the semi-skilled and unskilled from its ranks was a prelude to decline. Its ranks were filled by the priests of the city and county and its decline was mirrored by the stabilizing of the Free State government. Limerick was seen by the Gaelic League as one of the best counties for the dissemination of the Irish language but not even that could hold back the wave of modernism. Limerick had formed more Gaelic League branches than any other county in the country. Despite the efforts of the League the language was to a great extent lost and the new Irish state was unable to revive it.

While there is a dearth of local literature for the period 1922-1939, two authors offer a glimpse of Limerick, each from their own perspective, and clearly these perspectives are worlds apart. Kate O'Brien in her work offers us an insight into the world of the Irish Catholic middle class in the city and strong farmer society in the county but did not penetrate to the core of working-class Limerick. Frank McCourt, on the other hand, many years later, offers a deeper insight into what it was like living in a Limerick that could have slum cottages in the shadow of beautiful Georgian style buildings. The Boherbuoy with their thousands of slum cottages lived within a stone's throw of the Tontine buildings of Pery Square. Most men from the working-class localities, like, Paddy Keane or Pa Phealan, went to work at an early age, twelve or thirteen. However, even within this working-class there was subtle and sometimes not-so subtle, class distinctions. Leamy's school was reserved for those like McCourt who were the sons of men of no property, in Limerick described as men of straw.

Above all other influences on the working-class of Limerick it was rugby which signified them as different from the working-class of other Irish cities. The influences which brought this about were examined in the thesis. One of these was the theory of *embourgeoisement*. This was seen in England as a process by which the aristocracy and the emerging middle class and working-class began to merge. The influence of the ascendancy in the County Limerick was towards the emerging nationalism as is shown in the thesis. As research continued I found that the question of identity as well as status within the community was paramount. The promise of Home Rule had engendered a particular form of Irish identity which also encompassed the British one, albeit with a small b, as William Monsell declared 'we are not West-Britons'.

How then was a man to achieve status in his community if he could not accumulate financial capital? He did so by accumulating social capital. He did this by excelling in sport, particularly rugby, or in rowing, soccer, boxing or GAA. This thesis attempts to explain why rugby was the sport of choice rather than Gaelic games for the working-class of the city. The county men took up the Gaelic games. One would have thought that with the tide of nationalism sweeping the country that Gaelic games would have been their first choice. I believe that like their escapes to the pubs, cinemas and dance halls, their choice of rugby as their main sport was a psychological snub to those Irish-Irelanders who in the early years of the Gaelic League maintained that labouring men had no need of Irish. The Irish language was reserved for those who would enter clerical positions or the new avenues opened up by the new Free State, Gardaí, civil servants, teachers and army officers. So for Limerick people 1922 in

a way became year one of the fourth siege of Limerick. The 'others' became all those outside of your locality or the city.

The themes dominating the civil society that existed in Limerick city in the 1920s and the 1930s were Catholicism, poverty, temperance, class, national and local identity and sports but particularly the sport of rugby. People accepted Catholicism and its religious tenets to a point; the thesis shows that they struggled to escape from its grasp whenever they could. On the other hand the Irish-Ireland ethos did not penetrate to the working-class. It belonged mainly to a middle class movement and was seen as such by the working-class population of the city. This can be seen from the collections made on behalf of the Gaelic League which were almost exclusively from the middle class, doctors, dentists, solicitors, and business men. This produced a paradox as it appears that the majority of the people of Limerick did not support the idea of cultural nationalism but were happy to allow a Sinn Féin candidate to take the seat in the 1918 election. The ties of kinship and community bonding were ruptured by the slum clearances of the 1920s and 1930s and in time led to an increase in delinquency and crime in the city. The results of these slum clearances was recorded in a study conducted by Fr Liam Ryan in the late 1950s.<sup>1005</sup>

The thesis has attempted to identify those sources of social capital, both positive and negative, which existed in Limerick city during the 1920s and 1930s. It has shown that networks of association were built which helped people to survive the slum horrors and helped middle class families to survive bankruptcy. Disaster did not

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<sup>1005</sup> Liam Ryan, *Social dynamite: a study of early school leavers* (Cork, undated), this study named the area as Parkland. It was actually Ballinacurra Weston, one of the areas built to relieve the slums of the Boherbuoy. The correct area was mentioned by Bishop Newman in the Limerick Diocesan Archives.

always happen only to the poor. The thesis has shown the hegemonic influence of the Catholic Church and how the lives of the population were dominated by this hegemony which was a barrier to any socialist radicalism. To a great extent the question of identity was trashed out, not in political meeting rooms, but on the rugby field where local identity superseded that of the national. One of the dominating features of this study can be seen in the charts which show the decline of membership of clubs and societies such as Limerick Boat Club, St Michael's Temperance Society and the Gaelic League. The decline of the once powerful Archconfraternity took a little longer. This decline was also mirrored in America by Robert Putnam in his book *Bowling Alone* which recorded the collapse and revival of American community. Decline of membership of clubs and societies was a precursor to the decline of social capital and the collapse of community. The disconnect between cultural nationalism and political nationalism was not tested in 1918 as the sitting MP, Michael Joyce, withdrew his candidacy at the last minute making way for the Sinn Féin candidate, Michael Colivet to take the seat. The decline of several organizations as shown in this thesis was a forerunner of the economic stagnation and eventual decline of Limerick industries in the 1950s and early 1960s. The unemployment, emigration and collapse of community which followed cemented a process which had been in place for some time. The revival is for another thesis. The thesis concludes that social capital was present in the city during the 1920s and the 1930, and yet, according to Harrison and Madge, quoted earlier, interest in the local was more important than national political concerns, except in the upper middle class.

# Appendices



## Appendix A: Statement of 'commandeered' houses in Garryowen.

(Source: Diocesan archive, Hallinan papers, box 242).

Name	Present address	Previous address	Room or house	Was it sanitary	No.in family	Ages of children	Last rent	Comments
M.Dowd	1 Garryowen Villas	18 Ellen St.	Room	Yes	5	2-8	3/-wk.	Eating, sleeping and cooking in 1 room. 1 lavatory for 5 families
M.Ryan	2 Garryowen Villas	Boherbuoy	House	No	6	1-9		
J.Murphy	3 Garryowen Villas	8 Boherbuoy	Rooms	No	4	3-7	5/6 wk.	Premises unfit for human habitation. Bad smells. Children never free from illness.
J. Kehoe	4 Garryowen Villas	36 Cecil St.	Room	Yes	4	1-2	7/- wk.	Eating, sleeping, cooking in one room. 1 lavatory for 7 families
D.O'Dwyer	5 Garryowen Villas	5 St. James St.	House	No	8	18-28	5/-wk.	2 small rooms + kitchen. Bed in kitchen. Family packed like animals.
Mrs Shanahan	6 Garryowen Villas	32 Cecil St.	Room	Yes	4	14-22	7/-wk.	Mother, daughters 2, & son sleeping and eating in 1room, 3 beds.
Wm. Drake	7 Garryowen Villas	Round Ho.	Room	Yes	5	6-10	5/-wk.	Eating and sleeping in 1 room 2 beds.
Wm. Keane	8 Garryowen Villas	Blackboy Pike	House	No	8	12-22		Kitchen, small room and loft. House burned down during Black and Tan regime.

L. McKeown	6 Geraldine Villas	Catherine St.	Room	Yes	2			
J. Cambell	8 Geraldine Villas	Pennywell	House	No	2			Small room and kitchen. Bed in kitchen. Worse than mud cabin.
B.O'Donnell	9 Geraldine Villas	29 Roxboro Rd.	House	No	11	1-15	7/9wk.	Small room & loft. Children housed like animals. House condemned by M.O.H. Children never free from illness.
Thom. McCarthy	11 Geraldine Villas	39 Roxboro Rd.	House	Yes	10	1-12	5/9wk.	Small room & loft for 4 beds. Children packed like animals for want of space. House in bad repair. Walls weeping. Children never free from illness.
J. McKeown	2 Fairview	4 Greenhills	Room	No	4	1-3	4/9wk.	Eating & sleeping in 1 room.
Mrs Russell	3 Fairview	8 Greenhills	House	No	8	10-21	Free	1 room & kitchen. 2 beds in kitchen for young men to sleep.
J. Maher	4 Fairview	15 Barrington St.	Room	Yes	8	1-9	8/-wk.	Eating & sleeping in 1 room. 1 lavatory for 12 families.
J. McInerney	5 Fairview	13 Ellen St.	Room	Yes	8	1-3	7/6wk.	Eating & sleeping in 1 room. 1 lavatory for 3 families.
Mrs Tierney	7 Fairview	19 Garryowen	House	No	6	13-24	2/6wk.	Room & kitchen for 3 beds. Roof fell in house. Only a cabin fit for swine.
J. Long	8 Fairview	55 Clare St.	House	Yes	12	8-20	4/-wk.	Sewer always stopped. 3 beds in 1 room. Children never free from disease. Several deaths.

F. Lynch	10 Fairview	42 Colooney St.	Rooms	Yes	8	1-7	10/-wk.	Bad sanitation. 1 lavatory for 5 families. Illness very frequent.
E. Dunne	11 Fairview	42 Colooney St.	Room	Yes	4	1 year	£2-2-6	Lost house. Burned down during Black and Tan regime.

## Appendix B: St Michael's Temperance Society Hall

A table showing the applications received from clubs and organizations in Limerick city for use of the hall or facilities in St. Michael's Temperance Society from September 1934 to December 1939.

(Source: Compiled from minute books of St. Michael's Temperance Society 1934 – 1939).

Date	Organization/ club/ Individual and purpose.
12 Sept. 1934	Franciscans – hall. Agreed for Monday plus Saturday at 10/- for 2 nights. Labour exchange – hall. Felt it was unsuitable
12 Oct. 1934	Fr. Kelly – hall. Education Dept. – hall agreed.
15 Oct. 1934	Technical school-P. Toomey- Loan of drums- Agreed.
27 Nov. 1934	St. Johns Temperance Society- Use of chairs- agreed. Legion of Mary – Bridge night – agreed at £3. Changed to 10/- on 27 January.
13 Dec. 1934	Fr. Quinlan – Copswood – tables and chairs. Agreed. P.Barry – Salesians – tables and chairs. Ballyhoura dramatic class – 3 costumes.
21 Dec. 1934	Technical school – Lights. Agreed.
3 Jan. 1935	Mungret dramatic class – hall. Agreed at £3. Royalties to be paid. Ranks staff – hall. Agreed.
17 Jan. 1935	British legion – tables and chairs. Agreed at 3d each.
24 Jan. 1935	Rev. Fr. Moriarty – Hall for physical culture for girls. Agreed at 10/- Thursday and Saturday.
7 Feb. 1935	Gaelic League – Hall for 16 March. Agreed at £3.

14 Feb. 1935	Children's fancy dress dance – 10 March.
14 Feb. 1935	Young Munsters Rugby Football Club – Hall for formation of forwards. Agreed
28 Feb. 1935	Republican graves – Mr Barry. 150 chairs – Agreed free.
14 Mar. 1935	Limerick Boxing Club – chairs. Agreed at 3d each. St. Munchin's Temperance Society – 100 chairs. Limerick Clothing Factory – 24 chairs. Mungret dramatic Class – Hall. Agreed at £3 plus royalty fees. Miss O Rourke for Feish – Hall. Agreed no charge
11 Apr. 1935	Boy Scout Diocesan council. For show at Catholic institute.
6 Jun. 1935	Gaelic League – Hall Friday and Saturday for Feish. £6.
19 Jun. 1935	A.J.Sexton – Hall for auction. £7 each auction
28 Aug. 1935	St. Munchin's Boy Scouts Fr. McCarthy – 48 chairs for 17 days. 3d each.
12 Sept. 1935	Wynne Travelling Variety entertainer - \not agreed to. Hall in use.
3 Oct. 1935	Miss Roycroft – Hall. Agreed at £3.
20 Oct. 1935	Miss Lily Wogan – For dancing purposes. 50/50 on expenses.
30 Oct. 1935	Legion of Mary – Miss Purtil. Reduced fee of 4/-.
21 Nov. 1935	St. Michael's church organ fund – Chairs plus bulbs. Agreed no charge.
4 Dec. 1935	St. Johns Hall – for chairs. Not granted.
18 Dec. 1935	Dock yard – Thomas Clarke Club – Concert. Agreed.
7 Jan. 1936	Miss McNamara – dance. Agreed.

29 Jan. 1936	Bohemian Football club – Whist drive on 1 March. Miss Gardner of London – Play of one and a half hours.
12 Feb. 1936	Miss Gardner – 23 Feb. to be advertised.
19 Feb. 1936	Rev. Fr. O Brien – Irish drama. Agreed £3.
26 Feb. 1936	Choral class practise on Sundays. Miss O Dea in charge. Miss Cogans Band – St. Patrick’s day.
4 Mar. 1936	John Healy and others – rehearsals.
25 Mar. 1936	Owners of boat, St. Brendan.
15 Apr. 1936	Miss Carey.
13 May 1936	Young Munster AGM.
1 Jul. 1936	Catholic Institute – Hall for dance. Not entertained. Society not holding Sunday night dances.
9 Sept. 1936	Young Munster RFC. No charge.
14 Oct. 1936	Fianna Fail. Application put back pending decision of drama class.
18 Nov. 1936	Miss Julia Dundon- Hall for jumble sale. St Joseph’s Young Priests Society.
2 Dec. 1936	Clare farmers – Hall for meeting. £1.
30 Dec. 1936	Drama League – Hall 18-21 Dec. £5.
24 Mar. 1937	Leaseholders Association – Hall. £1.
6 May 1937	Feis committee – Hall. £6. Legion of Mary – Hall for jumble sale.
8 Dec. 1937	Crescent Dramatic Society – Hall for rehearsal. No charge.

15 Dec. 1937	M. Daly – hall for golf lessons. £1 per day.
16-19 May 1938	Board of Education – Hall £3 per day.
26 May 1938	Young Munster RFC – Hall no charge.
23 Aug. 1938	Rathbane tennis Club – Hall. Not agreed to.
8 Sept. 1938	Young Munster RFC – Hall no charge.
20 Sept. 1938	Shelbourne tennis Club – 30 tables. Refused all in use.
24 Oct. 1938	Legion of Mary – Use of tables and chairs for drive in Desmond Hall.
4 Nov. 1938	Bakers Society – Hall for social.
10 Nov. 1938	GAA – Room for meeting every fortnight. Pending.
12 Nov. 1938	Technical school – Loan of instruments.
7 Dec. 1938	Mrs G. Shaw – Whist drive – Municipal dinners. 10/- incidental expenses.
8 Feb. 1939	Mrs Burroughs Villiers School – Hall for Jewish refugees. £3.
25 Feb. 1939	Trojans Young Ireland – 45 Drive. There was a question of what profit this could make?
18 Mar. 1939	Catholic Institute Field Committee – Hall for dance. Not given, unanimous.
30 Mar. 1939	Commandant T. Crean – Tables and chairs. 40/- deposit
30 May 1939	Kevin Hilton – Hall for concert for Reparation Convent.
17 Jun. 1939	Br. Young boy's choir.

19 Sept. 1939	Young Munster RFC – Hall for 28 Sept. 5/- for lighting
18 Oct. 1939	Augustinian Church building fund – Cannot give as rowing club has it. Miss Carey – Hall for dance
8 Dec. 1939	Br. Young – Hall.



## Appendix C: Geographical locations of members St. Michaels Temperance Society 1930 – 1939.

(Source: Compiled from membership ledgers of St. Michaels Temperance Society 1930 – 1939)

Street	Total	Street	Total	Street	Total	Street	Total
Alphonse St./Ave.	25	Doyle Cottages	10	McNamara Lane/Tce.	22	Peoples Park	7
Athlunkard St.	14	Distillery new houses	1	Mt. Vincent Cottages	18		
Arthur's Quay	17			Myles St.	5	Rossa Villas	13
Anne St.	9	Ennis rd.	1	Mungret St.	15	Reeves Path	11
Bridge St.	3	Emmett Pl.	16	Market Villas	5	Roxboro Rd.	3
Bowman St.	3	Ellen St.	47	Mt. Kenneth House	8	Roches St.	17
Back Davis St.	6	Edward St	34	Mt. Kenneth Cottage	1	Ryans Cottages	6
Boherbuoy	21					Rutland St.	1
Bank Place	14	Francis Pl.	3	Newnham St.	10	Rosbrien	6
Browne's Sq.	2	Frederick St./Pl.	13	North Strand	15	Roxtown Tce.	8
Barry's Pl.	2	Fitzgerald Blds.	1	Naughtons Lane	1	Rossa Ave.	11
Bedford Hotel	1	Farranshone	5	Nicholas St.	9		
Bedford Row						Society Rooms	10
Brennans Row	13	Gerald Griffin St.	34	O'Connell St.	2	Sexton St.	10
Back Clare St.	10	Garryowen	18	O'Curry St./Pl.	80	St. Joseph St.	14
Bishop St.	2	Glentworth St.	1	O'Briens Range	4	St. Michaels Church	6
Barrack Hill	8			Osmond Place	7	Shannon St.	2

Charlotte Quay	2	Henry St.	38			Sandmall	2
Cecil St.	33	Henry Pl.	2	Park View Tce.	4	Sth. Circular Rd.	10
Catherine St. /Pl.	24	High St.	19	Piggots lane	6	Strand Villas	1
Carr st.	2	Howleys Quay	4	Prospect	32	St.lelia St.	2
Careys Rd.	36			Parnell St.	27	St.Jose.Church	1
Carrick Villas	14	Janesboro	5	Punches Row	5	St.Johns Sq.	1
Church St.	1			Pery Sq.	7	Sarsfield Ave./St.	3
Cathedral Pl.	7	Lr. Glentworth St.	1	Peter St.	11	Shelbourne Rd.	8
Cornmarket Row	10	Landsdowne Pk.	5			Thomas St.	22
Charles St.	5	Lower Park	2			Thomondgate	8
Cannocks	8					Taylors Row	12
Clontarf Pl.	8	Military House	2				
Chapel St.	3	Mt. Pleasant Ave.	6			Vizes Fields	28
Clanmaurice Ave.	1						
Clareview Tce.	1					Wolftone St.	28
Denmark St.	29					Watergate	17
Dixons Lane	16					Windmill	63
Dominic St.	2					Wickham St.	50
Dock Rd.	12					William St.	3
						Walters Well	8

## Appendix D: Detail of work done by Limerick City Police Force from 9 May to 22 June 1922.

(Source: Compiled from Limerick City Archive IE LA L/PC, *Limerick Chronicle* and *Limerick leader*).

Date	Event	Outcome
9 May 1922	Sailor arrested. Charged with breaking windows in Crescent Avenue and with being drunk and disorderly.	Fined.
	A man named O'Brien arrested for wife beating.	One week in prison.
	Children prevented from swinging on trees and gas lamps and boys hurling in the streets.	Dispersed.
	Breaking of windows in signal cabins at railway station.	Station patrolled.
	Gold watch and chain stolen from Mr Gleeson.	Recovered.
	Gambling parties apprehended.	Dispersed.
	Water found running in several premises during the night.	Reported to authorities.

10 May	Attempted robberies at Ryan's William St. and Hickey's Sexton St.	Parties escaped.
	Young lads and girls stealing hay at Limerick markets.	Cautioned and dispersed.
	Young man trespassing on field of Sisters of Mercy Clare St.	Dispersed.
	Further reports of water waste.	
	Men trespassing on grounds of protestant Young Men's Association.	Cleared off.
11 May	Arrested a man named Liddy on suspicion of stealing cloths at Thomas St.	Remanded to County Goal.
	Four men arrested on suspicion of robbing a boat at docks.	Released. No charge proved.
	Encountered a party of men fighting in Nicholas St.	Dispersed.
	Cleared boys from gas house.	Cautioned them.
	A man named Reidy charged with stealing a silver cup from Cruises Hotel.	Remanded to County Goal.
12 May	Conveyed a lunatic named Hurly to mental home.	
	Ventilators stolen from Dominican Church.	Recovered in People's Park.

	Conducted inquest at Barrington's Hospital on boy scout Tubridy.	
	Sent escort to accompany manager of Labour Exchange from bank.	Escort duty.
	Two men drunk and disorderly at 2.00am.	Arrested.
	Sent patrol on picket duty at Cleeves.	Picket withdrawn when military took up duty.
	Assisted with dragging operations to recover body of sailor drowned at docks. (Rogers).	
	Found wire surrounding PYMA cut in several places.	
13 May	Parcel stolen off car at markets.	Found and returned to owner
	Conduced inquest on body of John Rogers sailor who drowned in docks.	Inquest.
	Arrested six men stealing motor car.	Released on bail pending trial.
	Questioned motorist out late this night.	
14 May	Arrested motor cyclist who knocked down child on William St.	
	Found dead horse on Fairgreen.	

	Gamblers found in different districts.	Dispersed.
	Found premises at 77 O'Connell St. open.	Reported cases of water waste.
15 May	Usual patrol work. Keeping vigilant watch on special districts.	
16 May	Found people hurling and handballing on streets.	Stopped them.
	Found children swinging with ropes on lamps.	Ropes taken by police.
	Held up motorist to prove identity.	
17 May	Usual patrol work. Heavy firing from Cleeves premises held by military.	
18 May	Conducted cases at court.	Acquitted on certain conditions.
	Liddy robbery.	Sentenced to three months.
	7 persons charged with robbery and receiving goods stolen from Mt. Vincent Terrace.	3 acquitted. 2 on bail. 1 fined (pawnbroker). 1 sentenced to 1 month, afterward cancelled and placed on heavy bail.
19 May	Arrested two men on suspicion – charge, evading liabilities in various hotels in	

	town, and having a motor car and not paying fare.	
	Investigated report of bed-clothes stolen from 7 Patrick St.	
	Bicycle found in Theatre Lane during early hours of morning.	Returned same to owner
	Arrested young lad on charge of stealing portmanteau with contents from railway station.	
	Dispersed boys stone-throwing in Glentworth St.	
	Two men arrested for loitering in North Circular Road.	
	Man arrested on suspicion of being connected with robbery at Wickham St.	
	Sailor arrested for being disorderly and obstructing police.	
	Reported several cases of wastage of water.	
20 May	Three men arrested for being drunk and disorderly.	Sentenced to seven days each.
	Recovered £5 note given in error for £1 to city trader.	
	Small party visited Birr, King's county, and recovered bicycle stolen in city	

	some weeks previously.	
21 May	Arrested man in patrickswell in connection with attack on Fr. Nunan, Ballyagrane.	
	Another man arrested, drunk and incapable.	
	Dispersed noisy crowds in several parts of the city.	
	Sailor arrested on charge of stealing keg of paint from ship in docks.	Fined and paint recovered. Defendant ordered to leave city.
	Stolen dog recovered and returned to owner.	
22 May	Assisted in getting boys to school of the streets.	
	Arrested three men on charge of highway robbery on dock Road on Saturday night.	
23 May	Usual patrol work. No complaints.	
24 May	Recovered £10 stolen by a lad.	



	Country man arrested for being drunk and incapable in charge of horse and car.	Fined
26 May	Usual patrol work. Court work; 6 men charged with stealing a motor car.	Found guilty. Three released under First Offenders Act. Three others ordered to find bails, to be of good behaviour for three months.
	Three men charged with holding up ship's captain.	Ordered to refund value of stolen property (watches recovered through police) and find bails to be of good behaviour for twelve months.
	Report of attempted burglary.	
27 May	Burglary investigated and men arrested.	
	Horse found straying.	Placed in city pound.
	Man arrested and charged with stealing a motor car	Remanded until 1 June.
	Bicycle stolen returned to owner.	

	Reports of water waste.	
28 May	Motor car found and taken possession of.	
	Man arrested for being drunk and disorderly.	
29 May	No reports of any consequence.	
30 May	Raided house in Wickham St. on complaint of it being used for improper purposes.	
	Found stolen property.	
	Parents warned to send children to school.	
	Man arrested for house breaking.	
31 May	Special Courts. Man charged with stealing motor car.	Remanded to 1 June.
	Man arrested for being drunk and disorderly.	
	Special Court – Woman charged with keeping a disorderly house in Wickham St. and being found in possession of stolen property.	Ordered to leave city.

1 June	Two men charged with stealing motor car.	Remanded to 7 June.
	Woman charged with being drunk and disorderly.	Sentenced to one month's imprisonment.
	Boys and men swimming in public places.	Warned that they would be prosecuted if they were caught again.
	Man arrested for being drunk and disorderly.	
2 June	Man arrested drunk and disorderly.	
	Special Court: Woman sent to prison for loitering.	
	Man arrested and charged with robbery at a city hotel.	Remanded for eight days in custody.
3 June	Investigated report of attempted burglary at Circular Road.	
	Warned youths from swinging in public places.	
4 June	Usual patrol work.	
5 June	Usual patrol work.	
6 June	Bicycle found by police and returned to owner.	

	Investigated complaint. Parcel stolen in Thomas St.	
	Warned parents of children not attending school.	Lists supplied by schools.
7 June	Seized animals found trespassing.	Put in Pound.
	Recovered stolen bicycle.	
	Special Court: Three men charged with stealing a motor car.	Dismissed for want of evidence.
	Warned men and boys against swimming in public places.	
8 June	Parish Court: Man charged with robbery, again remanded in custody for further enquiries.	
	Woman charged with robbery and receiving stolen property.	Remanded in custody until next Thursday
	Boys hurling in Roche's St. warned.	
	Special patrols at Town Hall in connection with Housing Association deputation.	
	Raided houses for men charged with stealing motor, one arrested by military	

	and handed over to police.	
9 June	Man arrested and charged with indecently assaulting a child.	Remanded to next court day in custody.
	Cleared boys from swimming at Lr. Cecil St. skip.	
10 June	Usual patrol work and robbery investigations.	
	Man arrested and charged with attempting to disarm police.	Special court ordered his remand in custody till next court day. He was later released on bail by two magistrates without having consulted the police.
11 June	Usual patrol work.	
12 June	Investigated complaints of trespass.	Warned parties concerned.
	Old man knocked down in street and found to be destitute.	Sent to Croom County Home.
	Parents of children not attending school warned.	
13 June	Usual patrol work, no complaints. Cleared boys swimming at St. Michaels Boat Club.	

14 June	Sent man to asylum.	
	Youth destitute and found wandering examined by doctor and taken to County Home hospital.	
	Inquest on child found drowned in Shannon at North strand.	
	Special patrol at Town hall.	
15 June	Court day. Three cases adjourned till next court day.	
	Woman found destitute and demented.	Sent to Co. Home.
	Man charged with assault.	Remanded till next court day.
16 June	Investigated complaint of robbery at clothing factory.	
	Special patrol sent to Picture House [Cinema].	
	Cleared men from hurling on railway field.	
	Investigated report of attaché case said to have been stolen.	Case found at hotel and returned to owner.
	Re robbery of bank officials between Croom and Adare – man arrested on	Tried by Special Court and remanded on

	suspicion.	heavy bails.
17 June	Report of bicycle stolen investigated.	Found at Redemptorists Church and returned to owner by them.
	Stolen punt recovered.	
	Woman arrested and charged before a special court with stealing a sum of money.	Remanded to next court (Thursday) in custody.
	Dispute at markets between farmers.	Settled to satisfaction of both parties.
	Man charged with being drunk and disorderly and assault.	Brought before a Special Court and remanded in custody until next court day.
18 June	Usual patrol work. No complaints.	
19 June	Adjourned inquest on Michael O'Connell concluded.	
	Investigated complaint re attack on a man in the County.	Made an arrest in connection with same.
	Child injured and taken to hospital.	

	Raided a house for stolen property.	
20 June	Woman found destitute and wandering about the streets.	Committed to City home.
	Youths hurling in John St. warned.	
	Cleared youths from premises of Power house and Gas works.	
21 June	Clothes stolen.	Found by police and returned to owner.
	Woman arrested and charged before a Special court with obtaining money and goods by means of a worthless cheque.	
22 June	Kitty O'Brien, Tarbert, charged and convicted of stealing £6-2-0, the property of Mary McMahan.	Sent to prison for 6 months.
	Ellen Fleming charged with receiving stolen property and keeping an improper house and disobeying court orders.	Sent to prison for 6 months.
	William Houlihan, a County Limerick man, pleaded guilty to stealing a suit of clothes, top-coat and other articles. Also charged with stealing bank draft.	Sent to jail for two months.
	Ann Riordan, charged with stealing a quantity of bed clothes, dress material	Prisoner had already been in jail on remand.



	and other articles, pleaded guilty.	Owing to condition of her health she was cautioned and allowed out.
	Michael Quilligan, tinker, charged with assault on captain John Shinnors of John St. Barracks and scout Lysaght when placed under arrest.	Was discharged with a caution as he had already done 6 days on remand.
	A man named Brady returned for trial to Circuit Court for indecent assault on girl under 5 years.	



## Appendix E. Gaelic League Fundraising (by business) 1918-1919)

Companies	Amount	Sums collected by amount.	Total
Halpin & Co.	5/-	£5	1
Cleeves Staff	£2-10-0	£2-2-0	2
Cannock & Co. Staff	£1-9-0	£2-10-0	1
Cannock & Co.	£1-0-0	£2-7-0	1
Ebrill Bros.	5/-	£2	3
James McMahan Ltd.	5/-	£1-3-6	1
Condensed Milk Co.	£1-0-0	£1-1-0	1
McBirneys	£1-0-0	£1	22
E.G.Fitt	5/-	10/-	47
Irwin Bros.	5/-	7/6	2
Joyce & Co.	2/6	6/-	1
J.Quin & Co.	£1-0-0	5/-	122
City Printing Co.	£1-0-0	4/6	1
Spaights	5/-	4/-	3
Gallagher Ltd.	5/-	3/6	4
Limerick carting Co.	1/6	3/-	16
Irish Co-op Society	£2-0-0	2/6	293
Wm. Lloyd & Co.	£1-0-0	2/-	216
Central Garage	5/-	1/9	2
Shaw & Sons	5/-	1/6	15
Leonard & Co.	2/6	1/3	1
J.Clune & Co.	10/-	1/-	468
Todd & Co.	10/-		

F. O Donnell & Sons	5/-		
Goodwin & Co.	2/6	Total	1224

These figures are taken from The Gaelic League to the people of Limerick 1919 fundraising report.

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