USE OF THESSES

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Corrigenda and Addenda

Vol. 1

p.52, 11th line from bottom: Arles is not a civil parish, but a village

p.176, 1.17: Fig. 6.2 should be 6.6

p.187, n.6: author's name is Breandan Mac Cnaimshi

p.194, 1.14: Power Law should be Poor Law

p.203 et seq. the newspaper here should be the Londonderry Sentinel

p.206, 1.17: the village is spelt St. Johnston
Aspects of Irish Assisted Emigration to New South Wales, 1848-1870

by

Richard E. Reid

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the Australian National University

March 1992
I certify that this thesis does not include, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or a diploma in any university; and that, to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Richard Reid

Canberra,
March 1992
Acknowledgements

In preparing this thesis for submission I owe an enormous debt to my supervisors, Professor Oliver MacDonagh and Dr. Allan Martin. Without their untiring assistance, swift correction of drafts and constant encouragement I doubt I would have made it to the final full stop.

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Two people to whom I owe much are Steve Harrison and Norma Chin. As a comparative computer illiterate both my Irish immigrant data base, and the quantitative statistical material which it was able to generate, would have been impossible without Steve's willingness to help whenever required. At the eleventh hour Norma Chin worked hard to make sure the final manuscript was as well presented as possible. Whatever errors remain are my own.

In researching this topic I have over the years received help from hundreds of Australian genealogists. Many have shared with me the fruits of their painstaking work in shipping lists, land title deeds and the basic records of an ancestor's birth and death. They have my thanks and best wishes in a search which I know will absorb most of them for the rest of their lives.

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Lastly I thank my wife and children. They have lived with this project off and on for ten years. I only hope they can put up with the prospect of more of the same now that my interest in the subject is thoroughly aroused.
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Abstract

Contrary to popular mythology only 12% of the Irish who went to the Australian colonies in the 19th century did so as convicts. From the late 1830s it was government assisted emigration which gave Australia its Irish population. This study deals with key aspects of the emigration of approximately 44,188 Irish who went as assisted emigrants to Sydney between 1848 and 1870.

The distinguishing feature of the assisted passage was its organisation by a government agency in Britain — the Land and Emigration Commissioners. Their procedures tried to ensure that only those from the rural labouring and skilled artisan classes within certain ages were selected. From the moment the emigrants left Ireland until they reached the colony their welfare was the responsibility of the Commissioners and, on arrival, the local immigration authorities helped them during their first days in the colony. In general the Irish who went on government ships to Sydney were well cared for.

Young, single adult male labourers and female domestic servants made up the bulk of the emigrants. The evidence from one key Tipperary parish suggests that in the main these people were drawn from the poorer, but not the poorest, sections of rural society. While the personal financial outlay required generally prevented the poverty stricken from obtaining an assisted passage special schemes in the late 1840s and early 1850s brought some destitute Irish to Sydney.

The emigrants were from every county in Ireland but by far the greatest number came from west Munster and southwest Ulster. Until the mid-1850s most were selected upon application from Ireland to the Commissioners but, from then on, an ever increasing proportion were sponsored for a passage by friends and relatives in New South Wales.
For ease of reading this thesis has been presented in two volumes. Volume 1 consists of the text and bibliography. Volume 2 contains all Figures, Documents and Maps referred to in the text.
INTRODUCTION

In a now famous phrase Charlotte Erickson once described emigrants as invisible.¹ Most emigrants from 19th century Great Britain and Ireland left only the slightest statistical trace of their departure from the old country and their arrival in the new land. Confronted by this absence of nominal records about emigrants historians have devoted much of their attention to the results of immigration. There are numerous accounts of immigrants’ experiences in their adopted country, their assimilation into or alienation from its mainstream culture and their contribution to its evolving ethos.² By contrast this study is concerned with emigration — with the emigrants themselves and their journey and initial reception at their destination. Specifically it examines a number of aspects of the emigration of 44,188 Irish who received a government assisted passage to the British colony of New South Wales between 1848 and 1870.

Studies of the Irish in Australia have devoted little space to the processes which brought them there. Instead analysis has focused on those features of their behaviour in the colonies which made them stand out from the supposedly homogeneous mass of British immigrants.³ Until fairly recently this often involved treating them as part of a

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³ The standard work on the Irish in Australia is O’Farrell’s The Irish in Australia, Sydney, 1987. Although he devotes a long chapter (Chapter 3 “Immigrants”) to immigrants. O’Farrell has little to say about the process of assisted immigration which brought the majority of the Irish to the colonies although he does speculate about the general effect of assistance on the social composition of the immigrants (p.65). There is no entry under assisted immigration in his index but it is referred to in the text. C. McConville’s Croppies, Celts, and Catholics — The Irish in Australia, Melbourne, 1987, devotes little space to a consideration of how assisted emigration actually worked despite the fact that he recognises it as a distinctive feature of Irish movement to Australia. R.B. Madgwick’s pioneering work, Immigration into Eastern Australia, 1788-1851, Sydney, 1969, deals mainly with policy developments and stops short of the gold rush period.
distinctive Catholic sub-culture rather than as Irish.⁴ Significantly, Allan Martin has suggested that immigration to Australia has only received academic attention when perceived as a “problem” and, in this context, it is worth noting that the major study of mid-19th century Irish immigration to N.S.W. and Victoria remains Paula Hamilton’s unpublished thesis on the effect of anti-Irish prejudice on the development of immigration policy in these two key colonies.⁵ Other historians have only touched in general terms on who the assisted emigrants were, where they came from, their social status, how they obtained a passage and how they fared on the long voyage to Australia.⁶

One historian who has drawn attention to the importance of the way in which the Irish reached Australia for the subsequent development of Irish attitudes and values once in the colony is Oliver MacDonagh.⁷ His analysis highlights some critical differences between the post-Famine emigration to Australia and the enormous exodus from Ireland across the North Atlantic during and immediately after the Great Famine of 1845 to 1852. Within Ireland, MacDonagh maintains, the most distinctive feature of the Australian emigration was its intense regionality which led to the over-representation among the emigrants of certain areas and counties. Even within counties it is possible to speak of “Australian” parishes.⁸ The Australian emigration was predominantly an assisted emigration, the emigrant’s fare being paid by a colonial government. State selection for a passage imposed standards which led to the embarkation for Australia, not of the most destitute segments of rural Ireland, but its “petite bourgeoisie”, those from “the fourth and fifth rather than the sixth and seventh rankings in the scale”.⁹ Once chosen the state assumed the responsibility for seeing them carried safely across the vast oceanic distances

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⁴ The major study of the Irish in New South Wales in the first six decades of the nineteenth century is still James Walderssee’s Catholic Society in New South Wales, 1788-1860, Sydney, 1974. Walderssee acknowledges that the description “Catholic” and “Irish” were almost synonymous during that period.


⁶ Even theses whose titles might suggest otherwise pay little attention to the process of emigration. M.E.R. MacGinley’s work on the emigration of the Irish to Queensland from 1885 to 1912 has a chapter called “Background to Migration” but it says little about the organisation of the journey itself beyond a description of the various passage schemes available and the extent to which the Irish availed of them. M.E.R. MacGinley, “Irish migration to, and settlement in, Queensland, 1885-1912”, M.A., University of Queensland, 1972. In 1971 R.J. Schultz analysed the Sydney Immigration Agent’s lists but concentrated on a presentation of the basic statistics on all the assisted immigrants from 1838 to 1850: R.J. Schultz, “The Free Settlers of New South Wales”, Ph.D., Australian National University, 1971.


⁸ Ibid. p.160.

⁹ Ibid. p.161.
which divided Ireland from Australia. On arrival they were not left to the mercy of those who waited on the wharfs of most great immigrant ports to see what they could extract from each gullible newcomer. Instead they continued to receive some level of government assistance until their first offer of employment.\textsuperscript{10} MacDonagh concludes that all this contributed to the development of an Irish/Australian ethos very different from that of Irish/America, where memories of the Famine emigration encouraged a “bitter folk-memory or hereditary myth of hunger, disease, dispossession and even genocide”.\textsuperscript{11} These propositions about the uniqueness of the Australian emigration experience deserve detailed study. But how can this be done if, as has been asserted, emigrants from Ireland were only so many numbers totalled up at the end of a long week by weary port officials responsible for clearing dozens of ships and thousands of people?

One of the ironies of 19th century British and Irish emigration is that the best records about the emigrants were kept by the authorities at that movement’s most distant destination — the Australian colonies.\textsuperscript{12} In particular these records cover the assisted emigrants who in every colony, with the exception of Victoria during the “gold rush” and Tasmania, made up the majority of arrivals from Great Britain and Ireland.\textsuperscript{13} In Sydney between 1838 and 1870 the assisted were 77% of all immigrants.\textsuperscript{14} Two official bodies were responsible for the N.S.W. emigrants — the colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners in London and the N.S.W. Immigration Department — and both kept detailed records of their general day to day administration. At Sydney this involved the Immigration Agent in an extensive correspondence with the Colonial Secretary, with captains and surgeons of immigrant ships and with individuals all over N.S.W. dealing with matters ranging from high policy to mundane arrangements for immigrants to be transported into country areas. For certain periods — notably the 1860s — large quantities of papers relating to individual ships and the reports made on them by the N.S.W. Immigration Agent and by the Immigration Board have survived, creating a unique record of the passage organisation and experiences of thousands of immigrants. But the central records of the Sydney Immigration Department between 1848 and 1870,

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. p.162.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. p.160.

\textsuperscript{12} All of the state archival bodies in Australia have published guides, usually for genealogists, to their immigration collections. For example see Guide to the Sources of Genealogical Information Held in the South Australian Archives, Adelaide, 1979, p.3: Reference 313, Official lists, mainly of immigrants arriving in South Australia under United Kingdom assisted passage schemes, 1847-1886.

\textsuperscript{13} R. Schlamowitz and R. Haines, Nineteenth Century Emigration from the United Kingdom to Australia: An Estimate of the Percentage who were Government-Assisted, Adelaide, 1990, Table 14, p.77.

\textsuperscript{14} See Chapter 1, Figure 1.4.
the records which make possible the investigation of the emigration process at an individual level, are the surviving assisted passenger lists compiled by the N.S.W. Immigration Board.\textsuperscript{15}

Before being allowed to leave to join friends or seek employment each immigrant appeared before the Board and had his or her personal particulars recorded by the Board’s clerk. This record is known simply as the Immigration Board’s List and these lists, covering thousands of British and Irish immigrants, are extant for the period 1848 to 1890. All the Australian colonial immigration authorities were interested in and recorded the immigrant’s name, age, occupation, sometimes religion, and county of origin. The Sydney Board in addition recorded “Native Place” within a county, parents’ names, whether the parents were alive or dead and if alive where living, names of relatives already in the colony and finally the scheme under which an immigrant had received a passage. How accurate is this information? One check on the accuracy of the information supplied by immigrants to the Board is to see if it allows these immigrants to be linked with baptismal and marriage entries in Irish parish records. In the case of 434 immigrants from the south Tipperary parish of Clonoulty 92\% of them can be associated with entries in the Clonoulty register.\textsuperscript{16} These N.S.W. Board’s Lists constitute therefore one of the most detailed, if not the most detailed, and comprehensive extant set of records on mid-19th century Irish emigration to any destination.

Using the surviving 19th century Sydney immigration material it is possible to examine in depth an important segment of the Irish/Australian emigration in relation to MacDonagh’s views of the uniqueness of that movement. In order to investigate this Irish element in the Sydney assisted immigration between 1848 and 1870, all of the recorded information about each individual Irish immigrant from the Immigration Board’s lists has been transferred to a computer data base. The main advantage in constructing this comprehensive data set is that subsequent analysis is not affected by the problems, and limitations of techniques, of statistical sampling. One can be sure that, for example, all the immigrants from a particular parish, region or county are on the data base and can be examined in their own right. Conversely, generalisations about the nature of Irish immigrants as a whole should possess a precision difficult to achieve from a smaller random sample. This Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848–1870, supplemented by information from the surviving N.S.W. Immigration Department and U.K. Emigration

\textsuperscript{15} For a detailed description of the N.S.W. immigration records see bibliography, Contemporary Sources: Official.

\textsuperscript{16} See Chapter 5, p.139.
Commissioners’ records, forms the central core of evidence for the following investigation of the nature of Irish assisted emigration to mid-nineteenth century Sydney.

The *Vocalist* arrived in Sydney Cove on 9 October 1856 with 236 Irish on board. From the details recorded on two typical pages of the passenger list dealing with families and single immigrants we can see the main features of this assisted immigration which, once explained, should lead to an understanding of the movement as a whole as it related to the Irish. [Document 1] In the far right hand column of the list there is a reference to the scheme under which that individual or family was granted an assisted passage. Often, as is the case here, the financial contribution demanded of the migrant in the U.K. or from his or her nominator in the colony was also recorded. The *Vocalist* immigrants arrived under three passage schemes operating throughout 1855 and early 1856, when these people were approved by the emigration authorities in London — the Assisted Immigrant Act, abbreviated to “A I Act”, the remittance regulations, abbreviated to “R R” and the Land and Deposit Regulations, abbreviated to “L and D R”.

These were not the only passage arrangements in operation between 1848 and 1870. In the late 1840s and early 1850s many ships brought large numbers of orphan girls from Irish workhouses under a special emigration scheme and the girls were recorded on arrival as having come out under this scheme. Similarly when large numbers of emigrants from Donegal came to Sydney between 1859 and 1864 under the colonial nomination regulations — the remittance regulations — the fact that they had obtained their passage through the nomination of the Sydney Donegal Relief Committee was duly noted on the list by the Board’s clerk. Obtaining a passage was the initial obstacle which any assisted emigrant had to overcome before he or she could prepare to leave for Sydney and Chapter 1 deals with this aspect of the emigration process as well as the relative importance of assisted passages in helping the Irish to reach Australia.

Other columns, and stray pieces of evidence, on the *Vocalist* list show the importance of how the journey to Sydney was organised. As all the Commissioners’ ships sailed from English ports the Irish faced a lengthy pre-embarkation trip within the U.K. and Ireland. The McNamara family of Kilrush would have had to travel across country either to Dublin or Cork and then undertaken a channel passage before reaching the *Vocalist*. [Document 1] For a larger family, like the Malones from New Ross, County Wexford, the costs involved in reaching the embarkation port could have been

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17 *Vocalist*, arrived 9 October 1856, Immigration Board’s Lists, hereafter IBL/NSW, Archives Office of New South Wales, 4/4964.

18 See for example *Earl Grey*, arrived 6 October 1848, IBL/NSW, 4/4905.

19 See for example *Sapphire*, arrived 24 May 1859, IBL/NSW, 4/4980.
considerable. That the N.S.W. immigration authorities were concerned about the next section of the journey, the trans-oceanic voyage to Sydney, is evident from the column provided for immigrant complaints on arrival. An aspect of the arrival procedure itself is visible from the marginal annotation “Depot” next to Philip Malone’s two eldest daughters, Eliza and Margaret. On reaching Sydney all single females over 15 were housed in the protective confines of this Female Immigrant Barracks. A detailed account of such aspects of the journey from Ireland to Sydney should illustrate whether this was indeed a less traumatic experience than emigration to America. Chapters 2 and 3 will examine the organisation of the voyage to Australia and the facilities provided for government immigrants at the port of Sydney.

There are many scattered statements in the historical literature about the general characteristics of the Irish/Australian emigrants. Like MacDonagh, virtually every writer draws attention to the intensely regional character of the movement.20 Going further, Fitzpatrick uses colonial immigration agents’ figures to tabulate the changes in such things as the age structure, literacy levels and religious composition of the Irish arriving at Sydney over five time periods from 1848 to 1869. The individual nominal records, such as those of the Vocalist immigrants, supplied to the Sydney Immigration Board allow us to go beyond these published statistics and to construct a more detailed account of regional emigration patterns, age patterns, sex ratios, comparative literacy between different groups of emigrants, family composition, denominational distribution and occupation. Chapter 4 uses the Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848-1870 to present a comprehensive set of statistics on these basic aspects of mid-nineteenth century Irish immigration.

Historians have also speculated about the social and economic background of the Irish/Australians emigrants. MacDonagh’s view that they came from the “petit-bourgeois” — the fourth and fifth rather than the sixth and seventh rankings of rural society — finds support from writers such as McConville, O’Farrell and Fitzpatrick.21 O’Farrell, for example, argues that the costs involved, even in an assisted passage, would have prevented the most destitute of the Irish from going to Australia.22 Three pieces of information on the Sydney lists make it possible to reconstruct an emigrant’s socioeconomic situation within rural Ireland — the columns relating to “Native Place and County”, “Parents’ Names” and “Age”. It is these details which rescue the Sydney

22 O’Farrell, op.cit., p.65.
immigrants from anonymity and allow many of them to be located within the economy and society of small rural parishes all over Ireland. A James Taylor arriving in Sydney from County Antrim would be virtually untraceable in Irish records; there is a reasonable chance of uncovering the background of James Taylor, a Protestant, aged 21, son of John and Sarah Taylor of Magheragholhill, County Antrim, on the *Vocalist.* [Document 1] By linking this personal information with local land and church records in Ireland it is possible to provide a better description of the socioeconomic circumstances of the Sydney emigrants. Clearly it would be an enormous task to do this for all 44,188 assisted Irish who went to N.S.W. between 1848 and 1870; but in order to show the potential of this approach, it has been attempted for all the emigrants from one parish. Chapter 5 describes the pre-emigration situation of the emigrants from the parish of Clonoulty, County Tipperary, and sets them within the context of the broad demographic, social and economic changes in that parish from 1831 to 1871.

Whatever the socioeconomic situation of the majority of the assisted emigrants there is little doubt that three groups who arrived in Sydney between 1848 and 1850 had suffered considerable hardship in Ireland before emigrating. These were the orphan girls from Irish workhouses, the wives and families of convict emancipists in New South Wales and a small number of children left by their parents in Ireland when they emigrated to the colonies in the early 1840s. These emigrants travelled to Sydney under different schemes from those selected under the normal regulations by the Emigration Commissioners in London and this fact was noted by the Immigration Board in Sydney. These undoubtedly destitute emigrants were a significant proportion of all the Irish granted a passage to Sydney between 1848 and 1850 despite the fact that the Commissioners normally refused to apply colonial emigration funds to the relief of distress in the United Kingdom. How they managed to obtain an assisted passage and the circumstances surrounding their emigration will be described in Chapter 6.

Most Irish/Australian emigrants, O'Farrell states, were not Famine emigrants but he also suggests that for them the Famine was "history not direct experience".23 However, apart from those born after 1850, the adult Irish who arrived in Sydney in the 1850s had lived through that calamity and must surely have witnessed many harrowing scenes and the flight from the land to the ports. What set them apart from the Famine emigrants was that they had survived in Ireland and did not leave until the worst had passed. Nevertheless they brought with them to New South Wales a consciousness of what had happened and they remained responsive to news of particular hardships in Ireland. Between 1859 and 1864 the Immigration Board recorded in their "Remarks" column the

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arrival of 1,236 immigrants nominated in the colony by the N.S.W. Donegal Relief Committee. A portion of the fare of each of these Donegal immigrants was paid for by the donations of thousands of previous Irish immigrants who were encouraged by the leaders of the N.S.W. Irish community to see these people as the destitute victims of landlord eviction and tyranny. Chapter 7 examines how the Irish in N.S.W. used the assisted passage scheme to relieve what they perceived to be destitution in Donegal.

A final aspect of the Sydney emigration suggested by the information on the Board’s Lists was the existence of considerable chain-migration among the Irish. Certainly the published county figures point to this type of emigration for, as Fitzpatrick has shown, those counties which sent the greatest proportion of emigrants in the early 1850s continued to do so until the termination of the assisted passage in the mid-1880s.24 When the emigrants reached Sydney they were asked to state the names and addresses of family members already in the colony and their responses were recorded under “Relations in the Colony” on the passenger list. [Document 1] From 1848 the N.S.W. government established an official remittance scheme whereby colonial residents could sponsor their friends and relatives in the U.K. for an assisted passage and family connections between a colonial nominator and an immigrant can be observed through the “Relations in the Colony” information on the ship’s list. These links are easy to see on the Vocalist as the name of the colonial sponsor was also recorded in the “Remarks” column along with the fact that an individual had emigrated as the result of a colonial nomination. [Document 1] As more assisted Irish arrived in Sydney under the provisions of the remittance regulations than any other passage scheme, the administration of these regulations and how they were used by the Irish will be described in Chapter 8.

Irish emigration to New South Wales was but a fraction of that enormous outpouring which in the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s went from virtually every parish in the country to North America, especially to the United States. From an Irish historical perspective the importance of the Australian assisted emigration lies in the general contrast which it provides to the well known, and more studied, Atlantic movement. Australia, from its remoteness and the comparatively small emigrant stream which fed it, never acquired in the Irish psyche the status of another “Amerikay”. From an Australian perspective, however, this Irish immigration was socially, economically and demographically of the utmost significance as in no other 19th century emigrant destination did the Irish form such a large proportion of the local population.25 Moreover

24 Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p.49.
25 Oliver MacDonagh, “The Irish in Victoria, 1851-1891: A Demographic Essay”, Australian National University Historical Journal, Nos. 10-11, 1973-74, p.67. MacDonagh points out that in the United Kingdom during the nineteenth century the Irish and Catholic element of the population fell away to
from 1840 onwards Australia’s was an Irish population derived largely, not from the transportees of popular ballad and myth, but from the free assisted immigrants.\(^{26}\) To understand who these assisted Irish were and how they came to the colony of New South Wales between 1848 and 1870 is to understand an essential element in the development of colonial society in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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\(^{26}\) David Fitzpatrick, “The Irish in Australian History”, Ireland/Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs, Dublin, Fact Sheet 3/85, 1985, p.2. Fitzpatrick puts the total Irish/Australian emigrant figure at approximately 340,000. Of these only 12%, 40,000, were convicts.
Chapter 1

"He wrote to a friend of his to speak to the head Commissioners about us ...": Obtaining an assisted passage to N.S.W. 1848–1870

Peter O'Rourke's journey to Sydney began when his father James, the turnkey at Bathurst Gaol, filled in a form in September 1847 headed 'Application for Free Passage for Children' in conformity with the Government Notice of 26 May 1846.1 Peter, then only six, did not come to the colony under these regulations. He arrived eleven years later in 1858 after his mother had filled out yet another form, Form A, under the N.S.W. remittance regulations of 10th August 1857 applying to have Peter brought from Ireland at government expense.2 In Ireland Peter had also to fill out a similar form and send it to the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners in London. When accepted the Commissioners sent him an Embarkation Order for the David McIver, which left Liverpool for Sydney on 4 June 1858.3

Widow Godfrey and her family's journey began at Shanganalden, County Limerick. Her initial enquiry for a passage in 1852 involved filling in a Preliminary Form. As Margaret Godfrey was illiterate this was probably filled in by son Martin, aged 14, or a kindly neighbour.4 This form enabled the Commissioners' clerks to determine whether it was worthwhile for the Godfrey family to proceed with filling in a full Form of Application for a free passage to N.S.W. under the provisions of the Commissioners' general regulations. Such bureaucratic procedures were the hallmark of the first stages of obtaining an assisted passage to Sydney between 1848 and 1870.

No matter which regulations they travelled under the initial stage of an intending emigrant's journey to Sydney required them to deal with the Commissioners in London. It was with their approval that Peter O'Rourke, Widow Godfrey and 44,182 other Irish received some measure of colonial government assistance to emigrate to Sydney between

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1 Application for Free Passages for Children, James O'Rourke, September 1847, Immigration Correspondence (hereafter IC/NSW), 9/6190, Archives Office of New South Wales (hereafter AONSW).

2 Nomination, Jane Rourke for Peter Rourke, 2 February 1858, Immigration Deposits Journals (hereafter IDJ/NSW), 4/4579, AONSW.

3 David McIver, arrived Sydney 24 September 1858, Immigration Board's List (hereafter IBL/NSW), 4/4973, AONSW.

4 Widow Godfrey and family arrived on the Blundell in 1853. Blundell, arrived 5 May 1853, IBL/NSW, 4/4790, AONSW.
1848 and 1870. How important was such assistance in providing N.S.W., indeed Australia, with its mid-19th century Irish immigrant population? Under which of the various assistance schemes in operation between 1848 and 1870 did the Irish go to N.S.W.? How did these people manage to obtain a passage?

1. The Importance of the Assisted Passage to the Irish, 1848–1870

To quantify Irish reliance on colonial government assistance to reach Australia is only possible from 1853. In that year the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners began publication in their annual reports of the U.K. regional origins of emigrants leaving British ports for overseas destinations. [Figure 1.1] During the years 1853 to 1870 the Irish proportion of the total U.K./Australian emigration never fell below 21% and represented 30% of the overall total. Clearly then to examine the Irish movement to Australia is to examine a major U.K. regional contribution to the growth of the mid 19th century Australian population. How significant was government assistance in this movement?

Assisted passages to Australia began in 1832 overlapping the final years of transportation, but really taking off with the “bounty emigration” to N.S.W. in the late 1830s and early 1840s. The Irish contribution to this immigration was sizeable and there is no reason to doubt that this was the main method by which the Irish were reaching the colony at that time. However, it is only in the 1850s with the advent of the Commissioners’ regional departure figures that the full extent of this pattern becomes clear. Their statistics show that between 1853 and 1859, 82,197 Irish went to the three major Australian colonies of whom 58,236 — 71% — were assisted. [Figure 1.2]

While assistance was a vital factor in Irish/Australian movement to the colonies as many as 29% paid their own way. Most remarkable are the years 1856, 1857 and 1859 when reliance on assistance fell to below 60%. Some corroboration for the Commissioners’ statistics comes from the single year in which the Victorian Immigration Agent kept a record of the regional origin of U.K. unassisted immigrants to that colony: in 1855 2,237 Irish arrived there as private passengers. This increase in the unassisted after 1854 probably resulted from Irish gold diggers using the banking system to send funds home for family emigration purposes in similar fashion to the North American Irish.\(^\text{6}\)

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\(^\text{5}\) For a full description of these early schemes see R.B. Madgwick, *Immigration into Eastern Australia*, second edition, Sydney, 1969.

\(^\text{6}\) From 1849 the Emigration Commissioners began publishing the total amount remitted home by emigrants in America and after 1859 this included sums sent from Australia. In 1859 this amounted to £45,798, in 1860 to £66,713 and in 1861 to £78,095 — 7%, 10% and 15% of the total remitted.
None the less the relative Irish/Australian emigrant dependence on assistance in the 1850s emerges dramatically from a comparison between the Irish and mainland British emigrants. [Figure 1.3] All told only 45% of the mainland British received a government passage compared to 71% of the Irish between 1853 and 1859. Without assistance therefore Australia would have been largely an English and Scots enclave. Moreover it is likely that Irish unassisted emigration would never have reached the level it did in the second half of the 1850s without the assistance that brought the large Irish intake of the early gold rush years. The emigration of the Browne family from Clonoulty, County Tipperary, between 1853 and 1857 illustrates this point.

On the 18 September 1853 sisters Maryanne and Bessy Browne arrived in Sydney from County Tipperary as assisted immigrants on the Telegraph.7 Ten months later they were joined by brother John, an assisted immigrant on the Araminta.8 The Brownes worked in Sydney for about a year before leaving for Melbourne. Maryanne wrote home in 1856 telling of John’s success as a gold digger:

... we are admiring the Large nuggets of Gold just now I have had the pleasure of holding a little bag of Gold in my hands more than ever I see in my life ...9

This quotation comes from a section of the letter headed “NB” and was specifically addressed to the youngest in the family, Edmund. He was assured that if “you were here you would do better”.10 These successful Brownes now extended to Edmund the offer to pay his fare themselves:

... I wish you Ned to come your passage we could pay ...11

Edmund arrived in Melbourne on 14 July 1857 as a private fare paying passenger and made his way to his sisters’ store on the Ovens diggings. The movement of the Brownes

in each of those years. Clearly a great deal must have gone home at the height of the gold rush between 1852 and 1856: Appendix 27, Return Showing Amounts of Money Remitted by Settlers in North America to their Friends in the United Kingdom from 1848 (the first Year in which we have any Information) to 1861, both inclusive, 22nd Annual Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners (hereafter CLEC), p.101, British Parliamentary Papers (hereafter BPP), Vol.22, 1862.

7 Telegraph, arrived 18 September 1853, IBL/NSW, 4/4936.
8 Araminta, arrived 29 July 1854, IBL/NSW, 4/4938.
9 John Browne and his sisters MaryAnne and Bessy Browne, Melbourne, to their brothers including Pat and their sister Bridget, Clonoulty, County Tipperary, 18 November 1856, Brown letters, Reverend Brien Maher, Bungendore, N.S.W.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
to Australia had been achieved by a combination of government assistance and family gold.  

Emigration to Sydney from the U.K. from 1838, through the gold rush days of the 1850s and down to 1870, was dominated by government emigration. [Figure 1.4] As the unassisted poured into Melbourne from 1852 on, sending the assisted portion of the total down to about one third, the Sydney assisted never constituted less than 50% of all U.K. arrivals. Unassisted Sydney arrivals in the three periods 1838–1845, 1848–1855 and 1856–1865 were 22%, 25% and 18% respectively. Overall unassisted arrivals in N.S.W. were a mere 23% of the total between 1838 and 1870.

Right from the beginning of the assisted passage the Irish were a familiar sight disembarking from government ships in Sydney Cove. Their presence was more obvious in some years than others: throughout the 1860s they formed the great majority of the assisted and from 1861 to 1866 were never less than 51% of all arrivals. [Figure 1.4] The period 1848 to 1858 however was marked by greater swings in the Irish intake which could range from a high of 66% of all immigrants and 76% of the assisted in 1850 to 23% of the assisted in 1857. A full examination of the causes of these yearly swings in assisted immigrant proportions is outside the scope of this study but in general they reflect the efforts of the Commissioners to balance the numbers selected from the various regions of the U.K. in response to colonial demands to limit the numbers of Irish receiving subsidised passages.  

Only by considerable recruitment efforts on the British mainland in 1848, 1854–55 and 1856–57 were the Commissioners able to hold the overall Irish percentage between 1838 and 1870 to 46%. When N.S.W. immigrant selection from 1861 to 1867 was solely in the hands of colonial sponsors under the remittance regulations the Irish dominated the system. [Figure 1.4]

Probably only a handful of Irish ever paid their own fare to Sydney. Returns from the Immigration Agent between 1848 and 1852 show that only 4% of the Irish arrived in this way, compared with 33% of the English and 39% of the Scots. [Figure 1.5] The first year of the Victorian gold rush, 1852, recorded an increase in the number of unassisted

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12 Edmund, John, Maryanne and Bessy Browne, Beechworth, Victoria, to their brother Pat Browne, Clonoulty, County Tipperary, 28 August 1857, Browne letters.

13 Throughout the whole period of assisted immigration there were frequent complaints from sections of the colonial population about Irish immigration. For a full account of the influence of this on the framing of immigration policy see Paula Hamilton, “No Irish Apply — Prejudice as a factor in the development of immigration policy in N.S.W. and Victoria, 1840–1870,” Ph.D. thesis, University of N.S.W., 1979. The Commissioners also supplied a number of instances of anti-Irish feeling to the Lord’s Select Committee on the Operation of the Irish Poor Law in 1849: Appendix to Minutes of Evidence before Select Committee on the Operation of the Irish Poor Law, pp.60/63, BPP, 1849, Vol.16.
Irish from 79 in 1851 to 191 in 1852 but this was dwarfed by the unassisted English who rose from 515 to 2,516 at the same time. Even if the proportion of unassisted Irish from 1852 on rose to 10% in any one year which, given these early 1850s figures, is hard to credit, this still leaves the assisted passage as by far the dominant method by which the Irish were reaching the colony at any time from 1848 to 1870. To examine Irish emigration to N.S.W. during those years is effectively to examine Irish assisted emigration.

Such a study however has a relevance beyond the borders of the colony of N.S.W. Those years for which figures are available, 1853 to 1870, show that the N.S.W. assisted Irish formed 23% of all the Irish reaching Australia. [Figure 1.6] From 1853 to 1859 this figure was even higher at 28% of all Irish Australia bound emigrants. Moreover during the 1850s the Commissioners had control over assisted emigration to all Australian colonies and consequently the journey arrangements they adopted would have been much the same for each of the three mainland colonies — N.S.W., Victoria and South Australia. The story of the Irish assisted who arrived in Victoria and South Australia from 1853 to 1859 would have varied but little from their compatriots who went to Sydney. [Figure 1.2]

The statistical evidence shows the importance of Irish assisted emigration in mid-19th century Australia and justifies its examination both in its own right and in relation to total U.K./Australian emigration. Its significance from an Irish perspective is harder to assess. Between 1853 and 1870 Australia received about 10% of all Irish overseas emigrants as counted by the Commissioners’ agents at British ports of departure. [Figure 1.6] In some years — 1855, 1857, and 1862 — the Australian proportion reached over 15% of the total. To Irish historians however the American figures almost blot out the relevance of alternate destinations. Even Fitzpatrick, who is unusually sensitive to the variety of 19th century Irish emigration in relation to local differences in destination, writes:

But these local axes were swamped statistically by the mighty migratory scattering which mixed up virtually every county of origin with virtually every destination.14

There is no denying the general validity of that assertion. However the Australian emigration was dominated by some significant “local axes” the most notable being the Munster counties of Clare and Tipperary.15 Just short of one third of all the Irish assisted emigrants to Sydney in the 19th century were from these two counties. Partial county of origin figures for Victoria and South Australia point to a similar concentration in their

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15 See below Chapter 4, pp.100-104.
Irish assisted intake in the 1850s. While the Australian percentage of Irish emigration may have been small in these Munster counties it was far greater. Moreover in certain Clare and Tipperary parishes emigration to an Australian destination was as much part of local emigrant experience as that to Boston or New York.

2. "He wrote to a friend of his to speak to the head Commissioners about us ...": Obtaining a passage to New South Wales, 1848–1870

One image of Irish emigration in the early 1850s showed the office of G. O'Neil, Emigration Agent. At Cork, it depicted the emigrants' encounter with the first problem of the Atlantic passage — buying the ticket. At O'Neil's can be seen a range of emigrant experience: two ticket touts have waylaid a likely customer and while one holds him from the rear the other expounds the advantages of buying from them, a woman sits and weeps, a man with a bemused look digs deep into his pocket for the money he does not have, a flashily dressed tout explains the nature of their ticket to an apprehensive elderly couple and a weary mother and children sit waiting for father on a trunk labelled "Jack Sullivan Goin' to Amerikay". These emigrants were on their own, having to make for themselves the many decisions involved in the journey to the New World and exposed to the rogery and trickery which was practised on mid-century Irish emigrants at the ports. The scene at O'Neil's was a complete contrast to obtaining a passage to Sydney as an assisted emigrant.

No matter when an Irishman or woman left for N.S.W. on the assisted passage between 1848 and 1870 their first encounter with the journey began, not at an agent's office in Cork, Dublin or Liverpool, but with application to the offices of the Emigration Commissioners in London. Again no matter when during those years this application was processed by the Commissioners' clerks the emigrants fell into one of two broad categories — those applying on their own behalf from Ireland and those nominated by friends and relatives in N.S.W. In the first case the decision to grant a passage lay entirely with the Commissioners; in the second they could only refuse a passage if the emigrant failed to meet medical or general occupational criteria stipulated in the regulations. All things being equal colonial nominees were virtually assured of a passage. Of the 44,188 assisted Irish who sailed through Sydney Heads during those 23 years 39% were selected by the Commissioners and 59% were nominated in the Colony. The

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16 For the figures for Victoria between 1850 and 1856 see Table 5, Native Places of Assisted Immigrants, Anne Stock, "Assisted migration during the Fifties with Special Reference to Victoria, 1851–1857", unpublished BA Honours thesis, University of Melbourne, 1958. Just over 40% of the Irish arriving in Victoria came from counties Clare and Tipperary.

17 Paying the passage money at the emigration agent's office in Cork 1851, drawing, Illustrated London News, 10 May 1851.
records failed to indicate how the remaining 2% obtained their passage. [Figure 1.7] However within these two broad categories assisted immigrants came to Sydney under a number of different passage arrangements. An examination of the emigrants from the Tipperary parish of Clonoulty in the years 1849, 1855 and 1864 shows the main schemes in operation.

A. 1849: Special groups and general regulations emigrants

The 1849 emigrants displayed the greatest diversity of passage arrangement. Catherine Ryan was one of 2,117 orphan girls from Irish Workhouses sent to Sydney under an orphan emigrant scheme designed to help Irish Poor Law Unions at the height of the Famine dispose of their huge number of child inmates. 18 [Figure 1.8. 49.1 and Figure 1.9] Unlike any other Sydney-bound emigrant of the period 1848 to 1870 none of these girls would have made direct contact with the Commissioners’ London office. Having put themselves forward as candidates for emigration in the Workhouse, they were chosen by the Commissioners’ agents in Ireland. Also they were the only Irish assisted emigrants who paid nothing towards their passage or the supplementary costs of the journey such as sea clothing.

A similar group of emigrants were the Breen and Stapleton families. [Figure 1.8. 49.3-5] Their fare was paid for out of a special Westminster financial grant aimed at reuniting those families separated by the transportation of a male or female breadwinner. Margaret Breen’s husband, John Breen of Clonoulty, was tried at Clonmel in 1836 and transported to Sydney on the Earl Grey in the same year. 19 Under regulations gazetted in N.S.W. in 1847 John, as a recommended time expired convict, was entitled to have his wife and family brought to the Colony at Imperial government expense. 20 Accordingly he lodged a nomination for Margaret Reilly (his wife’s maiden name) and four children on the 18 November 1847. 21 Altogether 479 Irish “wives and families of convicts”, as they were described on the Immigration Board’s Lists, received free passages until the cancellation of the regulations in 1852. [Figure 1.9]

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18 For a fuller account of the orphan immigration see below Chapter 7. See also Joseph Robbins, The Lost Children: A Study of Charity Children In Ireland, 1700–1900, Chapter 9, “Orphan Emigration to Australia”, Dublin, 1980, pp.197-221.

19 Earl Grey, convict ship, arrived Sydney 21 November 1833, Irish Indent X641, AONSW.

20 For a fuller account of the wives and families of convicts scheme see below Chapter 7. The regulations governing the scheme appeared in the N.S.W. Government Gazette, 27 August 1847. For another account of the scheme see Margaret Kiddle, Caroline Chisholm, Melbourne, 1950, p.109.

21 Application of John Breen for Margaret Breen and four children, 18 November 1847, in Despatch No. 251, Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, 20 December 1847, Colonial Office/N.S.W. Original Correspondence (hereafter CO/NSWOC), CO.201/386.
A third special group during the period 1848 to 1851, not represented among the Clonoulty emigrants, who received completely free passages were the children of earlier “bounty” immigrants. These were children like Peter O’Rourke, mentioned above, whose parents were unable to afford the high additional cost charged by emigration agents to bring them from Ireland in 1841 and 1842.\(^{22}\) Only 13 of these children were described as such on the Board’s Lists but there were undoubtedly more. The Regulations of 26 May 1846, under which parents could have these children brought out at government expense, were cancelled in 1851.\(^{23}\) All of these groups will be treated in more detail in Chapter 6.

The only Clonoulty family to emigrate under the Commissioners’ general regulations in 1849 were the Heffernans.\(^{24}\) [Figure 1.8. 49.2] With various revisions these general regulations operated right through the 1850s and, apart from the remittance regulations, were the main method of obtaining an assisted passage. It was these general emigrants over whom the Commissioners exerted the greatest control in terms of selection. Application for a passage had to be made to the Commissioners, who had full power to either accept or reject any applicant. Under the 1849 regulations the Heffernans fell into the most desirable category of applicants — a married couple not over 40 years of age, eligible for a passage under Class 1 — “Agricultural Labourers, Shepherds, Herdsmen, and Female Domestic and Farm Servants”.\(^{25}\) On arrival in Sydney Edmund described himself as an agricultural labourer and his wife as a farm servant.\(^{26}\) They were required to pay £17 as their contribution towards the passage: £2 each for Edmund and his wife, £2 each for the two children above 14, £1 each for two more children but £5 for the final child as the family had three children under ten. This payment was seen by the Commissioners, not solely as contributing to the fare, but as payment for the bedding and mess utensils provided during the voyage. Emigrants were allowed to keep these items on arrival in Sydney.\(^{27}\) When they had a large surplus of applicants the Commissioners

\(^{22}\) For a fuller account of this scheme see below Chapter 7. For a brief description of the scheme see Margaret Kiddle, *op. cit.*, pp.110/112.

\(^{23}\) N.S.W. Government Gazette, 29 May 1846, pp.658/659. For the recommendation to cancel these regulations see N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 7 March 1851, Copies of letters sent to the Colonial Secretary re migration to N.S.W., 4/4613, AONSW.

\(^{24}\) Copies of these regulations are scattered in the Colonial Office files in London. For each set of regulations between 1847 and 1851 see No. 3, Comparative Table showing the Regulations to be Observed in Selection of Emigrants for Free Passages to N.S.W., as published by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, in the years 1847 to 1851, in Immigration — Return to Address — Mr O’Shanassy, *Votes and Proceedings*, Legislative Council, Victoria, 1852.


\(^{26}\) *Sarah*, arrived 10 December 1849, IBL/NSW, 4/4913.

\(^{27}\) CLEC Regulations, May 1849, enclosed with CLEC to Colonial Office, 10 October, 1849, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/423.
raised contribution levels both to reduce the call on government funds and to ration passages. In general they sought to limit the financial requirement to a level not far removed from the cost of a trans-Atlantic fare and resisted suggestions that up to half the passage cost be recovered from the emigrants.28

A major cause of complaint in the colony concerning the Commissioners’ selections was the extent of fraud and deception by applicants and their referees. The N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, claimed that the Commissioners were “liable to have advantage taken of them”.29 This was not due to lack of care in the running of their office but to false documents sent in by applicants, documents which were not scrutinised carefully enough by the Commissioners’ “subordinates”.30 Many of the marginal annotations on the Sydney shipping lists deal with the uncovering of such deceptions on arrival. One Clonoult family who seem to have been able to manipulate the system to their advantage were the Stapletons who arrived on the Emperor in 1851.31

The Stapleton group consisted of a family of four — Michael, 33, wife Alice (nee Rawley), 35, Hannah, 7 and Norry, 3 — and Michael’s brothers and sisters — William, 30, Thomas, 15, Catherine, 25, and Mary, 15. A note on the Board’s List about Mary shows its incredulity concerning sister Catherine’s statement regarding Mary’s age: States that her sister Mary is 15 — she cannot be more than 7.32 The matter was not pursued but the Board had unwittingly glimpsed the method by which the Stapletons had managed to avoid payment of the full amount of their pre-passage contribution and indeed how Alice Stapleton managed to obtain a passage at all.

Michael Stapleton, son of William Stapleton and Mary Hare, was baptised at Clonoult in January 1819.33 The Clonoult register also records the baptism of his brother, Daniel, in September 1816.34 In 1844 a Daniel Stapleton and an Alice Rawley began having children baptised in the parish — Mary in 1844, William in 1846, Judith in 1847 and Honora in 1848.35 The internal family evidence points to this being Daniel, the

28 Madgwick, op.cit., p.105.
29 Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, to Select Committee on the Immigration Department, p.4, Votes and Proceedings, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1855, Vol.2.
30 Ibid.
31 Emperor, arrived 6 June 1851, IBL/NSW, 4/4920.
32 Ibid., Marginal annotation by Immigration Board, Mary Stapleton.
33 Parish register, Roman Catholic parish of Clonoult, County Tipperary, typescript indexed version, p.634, Mid West Regional Archives, Limerick, County Limerick.
34 Ibid., p.633.
35 Ibid., all p.637.
son of William and Mary Stapleton, as he called his first female child after her paternal grandmother and his first male child after his paternal grandfather. However when the Stapletons appear on the Emperor it is Michael who now claimed to be Alice Rawley’s husband. Their child Norry, age 4, is probably the Honora baptised in 1848 and the Mary claiming to be the 15 year old sister of William, Catherine and Thomas is probably the Mary baptised in 1844. The Board was accurate in putting her age at little more than seven as she was baptised in November 1844 and the Emperor anchored in the Cove in June, 1851. Moreover William and Mary Hare, Michael and Daniel’s parents, had a child called Mary, born in January 1813, and in 1848 living in Clonoulty married to Edmund Murphy. Why this elaborate deception by the Stapletons?

The most likely explanation is that Daniel, Michael’s elder brother and Alice’s husband, died sometime after January 1848 when his last child, Honora, would have been conceived. Daniel was not recorded as a householder in the parish valuation, the Griffith Valuation, conducted in Clonoulty in the spring and early summer of 1848, a fact which supports the idea of his having died around this time. Another Stapleton brother, Robert, had already emigrated to Sydney during the “bounty emigration” of 1841 and doubtless he was encouraging his siblings and the young widow to join him. Widows with very young children however were totally unacceptable to the Commissioners and Michael may have posed as Alice’s husband to make the family fit the regulations. In addition, passing Mary off as 15 years old, and a sister of the other Stapletons, saved the family £3. As a fifteen year old year Mary had only to pay £2 towards her fare: as a member of a family with more than two children under fourteen £5 would have been required for the third child. There was also a chance that the Commissioners could have rejected the family outright as having too many children under ten in any situation where more suitable applicants were available. Given the relatively high child and infant mortality on the voyage families with fewer and older children were preferred.

36 Ibid., pp. 449/451 record the baptisms of the children of Edmund Murphy and Mary Stapleton. For Mary Stapleton’s baptism see p.633.

37 General Valuation of Reteable Property in Ireland: Union of Cashel, County Tipperary, Dublin, 1850, parish of Clonoulty (hereafter General Valuation), pp. 26/37. No entry was recorded for a Daniel Stapleton in the townland of Clonoulty from which all of the children of Daniel and Alice Rawley were baptised. However a Michael Stapleton was recorded in this townland in a cabin valued at 5/. This was possibly Daniel’s brother Michael and the family may have lived there. No land holding was recorded for this Michael Stapleton and it seems likely that the family were extremely poor.

38 Immigrant’s entitlement certificate, Robert Stapleton, Comet, arrived 3 December 1841, 4/4865, AONSW.

39 The emigrant contributions recorded for the Stapletons indicate they were selected under the 1850 regulations. For these see, Comparative Table showing the Regulations to be Observed in the Selection of Emigrants etc. ..., Legislative Council, Victoria, op.cit.
Age was therefore an area in which the Commissioners could be deceived. Throughout the period of operation of the Commissioners’ general regulations applicants were required to have a local magistrate, vicar or Roman Catholic clergyman certify to the accuracy of all the information supplied on their application form. Once the form had passed the Commissioners’ clerks in Whitehall in the early 1850s they were not carefully questioned again about their age until they appeared in front of the Immigration Board in Sydney. Here the Board’s marginal comments are revealing: “Apparently much older”; “Appears older than thirty”; “Aged”; “Much older, forty at least”.\textsuperscript{40} The Board was instantly suspicious of Margaret Reilly of Golden parish, County Tipperary who arrived on the \textit{Lord Stanley} in August 1850. She claimed to be a forty five year old dairywoman who had paid the requisite £6 towards her passage as required for Class 1 female emigrants. Questioning led to the following marginal comment:

Utterly useless, told by nephew what her age was, does not know her age, at least seventy.\textsuperscript{41}

Margaret’s nephew, James Cunningham of Golden with his wife and five children, was also on the \textit{Lord Stanley} and this deception possibly enabled him to bring out his dependant aunt who may have been living with the family.\textsuperscript{42} Given Margaret’s real age she might have been forced to enter the Workhouse once the Cunninghams had emigrated. Moreover if she had been accepted by the Commissioners at her real age, the family would have had to pay £15 towards her fare, virtually a full steerage passage.\textsuperscript{43} What most of these cases came down to was a desire to pay as little as possible to the Commissioners and to appear as young as possible in order to stand a better chance of being offered a passage.

How widespread was the practice of giving a false age to the Board on arrival? An examination of the stated ages of 271 emigrants from the Parish of Clonoulty, County Tipperary, checked against the baptismal entry for each individual, reveals that just over half of them gave their correct age. [Figure 1.10] Those who did not rarely understated their age by more than five years. In these cases applicants may have thought that, although they were well within the age range for the lowest emigrant contributions, appearing slightly younger would increase their chances of selection. Thus Maryanne

\textsuperscript{40} Board’s comments recorded on Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848—1870. The great majority of the comments concerned immigrants who arrived between 1848 and 1853.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Lord Stanley}, arrived 27 August 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4790.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{43} Comparative Table showing the Regulations etc. ..., \textit{op.cit.}, Contributions table for 1851.
Browne reduced her age by three years from 30 to 27.\textsuperscript{44} Judging from the behaviour of the Clonouity emigrants age only became something to hide where a higher passage contribution was involved. The one female who put her age up by eight years was Mary Stapleton whose case was examined above. Those who lowered their age to some purpose were men like Patrick Kearney who told the Board he was 30 and for whom £4 had been paid under the remittance regulations in 1854.\textsuperscript{45} Kearney appeared to qualify for this deposit being between the age of 14 and 40. He was actually 44 and £2 more should have been deposited.\textsuperscript{46}

A more serious kind of deception uncovered by the Board was impersonation. Again the emigrant’s motivation was to appear eligible to the Commissioners. The case of the Inglis family from County Tipperary on the \textit{Kate} in 1850 is fairly typical. This family consisted of the widow Ellen Inglis aged 40, daughter Ellen aged 22 and sons Pierce and Matthew aged 19 and 17.\textsuperscript{47} They acquired a passage not as a family but as single men and women. What the Board’s questioning revealed was that Widow Inglis had been refused a passage in her own name, an application which she probably lodged for the whole family. She applied again using the name Connelly, possibly her maiden name, as a single woman and was accepted. Moreover two local clerics and a J.P. signed her application as Connelly. Son Pierce applied and travelled under the name of Pierce Brien claiming to the Board that altering names on application forms was common in County Tipperary. Son Matthew and daughter Ellen seem to have been selected under their own names.\textsuperscript{48} Mary Irwin aged 45 of Newport, County Tipperary, on the \textit{Ellenborough} in 1853 was also given a passage as a single woman. The Board found her to be over fifty and that the two sisters she claimed to have in Sydney were in reality her daughters. The Board felt hers to be the “worst case of personation” which it had encountered.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Telegraph}, 1853, arrived 18 September 1851, IBL/NSW, 4/4936. Maryanne stated herself to be 27 on that date but was baptised on 7 May, 1823 making her 30 years and 4 months on arrival. Parish register, Clonouity, p.32.

\textsuperscript{45} Nomination, Bryan Kearney for Patrick Kearney, 12 December 1853, IDJ/NSW, 4/4576: \textit{Stamboul}, arrived 31 October 1854, IBL/NSW, 4/4791. Patrick Kearney stated himself to be 30 years old but he was baptised on 19 December 1809 making him 44 years and 10 months old. Parish register, Clonouity, p.143.

\textsuperscript{46} Remittance regulations, N.S.W. \textit{Government Gazette}, 7 January 1852.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Kate}, arrived 13 October 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4918.

\textsuperscript{48} These deceptions having been uncovered by the Board the whole family was listed together on the \textit{Kate} and neither Matthew nor Ellen Inglis was recorded as having applied to the Commissioners using a false name.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ellenborough}, arrived 12 October 1853, IBL/NSW, 4/4931.
Among the 17,172 Irish selected by the Commissioners for N.S.W. the cases of deception and impersonation noted by the Board stand out in the shipping lists. They generated written complaints to London along with demands for explanation and so aroused curiosity as to the pre-emigration situation of those involved. What most angered colonial officials was the fact that supposedly respectable clergymen and magistrates in Ireland were prepared to connive at these frauds. Such men, however, were closer than their colonial counterparts to the actual social and economic situation of the emigrants which, in rural Ireland in the early 1850s, was commonly a situation of severe poverty. The Commissioners saw their task as providing the colonies with suitable workers and colonists and not helping the destitute to emigrate but, in an Irish context, magistrates and clergymen must have felt pity for their impoverished neighbours. More practically many of these, like Widow Irwin, could eventually become a charge on the local poor rates. In these cases it is not surprising that some were prepared to help by witnessing false application documents. From the number of comments on the Board’s Lists this practice seems to have been more common in Ireland than in mainland Britain. However these relatively numerous comments on the Irish could have been due to a tendency to question them more closely once one or two of these frauds had been uncovered.

The Board was also concerned with how much an immigrant had paid towards his or her passage. This payment was related to age and occupation and was altered frequently to suit colonial requirements. The extent to which the Irish as a group paid the correct contributions is impossible to discover without enquiring into each individual case. However the Board did record that a number had been given financial help by benefactors in Ireland and that others had managed to evade payment altogether. The clearest case of the former concerned 42 of the 69 Irish on the Blundell in 1853: all of them were from parishes around the town of Foynes in County Limerick, the location of the Mount Trenchard estate of Lord Monteagle.\textsuperscript{50} Monteagle’s involvement in the Australian assisted emigration was well known and he had helped all the Blundell emigrants from Foynes with their passage money.\textsuperscript{51}

Of those who received Monteagle’s aid on the Blundell 32 came out as families. Under the regulations the Sheehy family would have had to pay £18; Maurice Sheehy informed the Board that he paid £4 and that Lord Monteagle had paid the rest. Cornelius O’Brien, who would have had to pay £16 for himself and his family, was not sure how

\textsuperscript{50} Blundell, arrived 5 May, 1853, IBL/NSW, 4/4790. The emigrants came mainly from Shanagolden near Foynes.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
much Lord Monteagle had paid for him.\textsuperscript{52} Clearly he had paid nothing himself. Assistance to families like these enabled landlords like Monteagle to reduce the numbers on their estates thereby hastening consolidation of farms.\textsuperscript{53} This particular case of landlord assistance happened to have been noticed by the Board, possibly because of the size of the group.

It is highly likely that other families on the estates of consolidating landlords were given financial help to reach Australia. The Sullivan family who arrived from Clonoulty on the \textit{John Knox} in 1850 may have been just such a family. The Sullivans consisted of Jeremiah Sullivan, wife Grace, Eliza, five and John three.\textsuperscript{54} In Clonoulty Jeremiah had rented a cabin and seven acres of land in the townland of Srahavarella on the Hawarden Estate.\textsuperscript{55} As will be discussed in detail in Chapter\textsuperscript{5} this was a part of an estate that Lord Hawarden's agent, Mr Stewart, had been attempting to reform since the early 1830s. The Sullivans were the type of family that he would have wanted to be rid of. If John Sullivan had asked him for the £6 needed to pay the family's contribution towards an assisted passage to Sydney, Stewart might well have given him the money. This is speculation but fits the known wishes of consolidating landlords. The full extent of landlord assistance among these general regulation emigrants to Sydney will probably never be known, but it may have been considerable.\textsuperscript{56}

Some emigrants were the recipients of personal or institutional charity. From the Widow Murphy, who arrived on the \textit{Sea} in 1849 with her seven children ranging in age from 19 to seven, the Commissioners would have required £21. Bridget Murphy told the Board however that Lady de Vere of Curragh Chase, County Limerick, had paid her fare.\textsuperscript{57} Mr Arthur Hill Reid of Gorheen Lodge, Dublin helped Mary Burke of Dublin City to obtain a passage on the \textit{Thomas Arbuthnot} in 1849. Mary's parents were both dead and she had never been in service when Reid took her into his home as a children's maid

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Ibid.}


\textsuperscript{54} \textit{John Knox}, arrived 29 April 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4917.

\textsuperscript{55} General Valuation, Clonoulty, \textit{op.cit.}, p.37.

\textsuperscript{56} Fitzpatrick, "Emigration", \textit{New History ..., op.cit.}, p.615. Fitzpatrick calculates the amount spent on assisting tenants to emigrate by certain well known landlords, whose records concerning this aspect of estate management have survived, at £82,515. This sum assisted approximately 12,055 to emigrate, mainly to North America.

\textsuperscript{57} SEA, arrived 29 September 1849, IBL/NSW, 4/4913.
in order that “Mr Reid could certify with honesty that she was a servant”. Reid also appears to have paid her passage contribution. Much sadder was the case of Mary Jones on the Oriental in 1850. Mary, aged 19, was brought up in the Foundling Hospital in Cork City and during the voyage gave birth to a little girl. The Surgeon told her story in his Journal:

... delivered on board of a girl being in the family way by her late Master, James Murphy, Cove Street, Cork [whose wife is one of the teachers in St Nicholas’ School] who gave her her character but did not pay her passage for her, she having paid it herself out of £5 given her by the Foundling Hospital where she was brought up.60

One wonders if the Foundling Hospital knew of Mary’s condition when they gave her the money.

None of this personal financial aid to the emigrants was in any way illegal or contrary to the regulations. The above description of some actual or possible instances where such help was given simply shows the variety of ways in which emigrants became financially capable of applying for a passage. Providing that they were in every other way eligible the Board in Sydney had no objection to them. What did concern them in the years 1849 to 1853, as evidenced by their annotations to the Immigrant Lists, was whether or not emigrants had been eligible for a passage in the Class within which the Commissioners had granted it. Of even greater concern was the extent to which some had concealed their real occupation in order to become more eligible under the regulations.

A number of Irish immigrants who arrived on the John Knox in 1850 gave a false occupation on their application forms. One was John Murray of Navan, County Armagh, who stated, “that he served his time as a Baker to a man named John Lowden, in Lower English Street, Armagh”.61 He had applied and been accepted as a farm labourer, a saving to him of £10 on the required passage contributions. The only Class in which the Commissioners could have approved him and his wife, knowing him to be a baker, would have been Class 3 — “Other persons of the labouring classes if deemed by the

58 Thomas Arbuthnot, arrived 17 January 1849, IBL/NSW, 4/4914.
59 Oriental, arrived 17 April 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4918.
61 John Knox, arrived 29 April 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4917. For full lists of Irish immigrants deemed ineligible by the Board on the Kate in 1849 and the John Knox in 1851 see, a) Kate — Office minute, 31 March 1851, List of Immigrants by the Ship KATE who did not appear to be admissible for passages under Class 1 of the Regulations of May 1849, IC/NSW, 9/6195, b) John Knox — Office minute, 31 March 1851, List of ineligible Immigrants by the ship John Knox, IC/NSW, 9/6195.
Commissioners desirable for the Colony".\textsuperscript{62} This would have required a contribution of £14 for husband and wife. Likewise John Harvey, a clerk, of Ennis, County Clare claimed also to be a farm labourer. His father had a farm and he had worked on it.\textsuperscript{63} What really angered the Board was that neither of these men took labouring employment but left the ship for lodgings in Sydney.

Of all the Irish families granted a passage by the Commissioners under the general regulations none received as much official attention as that of Widow Briscoe and her six children from Parsonstown, Kings County.\textsuperscript{64} Sophie Briscoe’s husband, a lawyer, died about 1846 and she supported the family by working as a domestic servant for two years and for eight months as an assistant schoolmistress in a Workhouse. The Commissioners thought her qualifications would gain her employment in Sydney and that her children would not disqualify her from this. The three eldest aged 16, 12 and 10 could obtain work, while Samuel, aged nine, would soon be in a position to do so. Only five year old Henry would be dependant on her for a considerable time. The Commissioners argued that, considering the state of the labour market in Sydney, they could not imagine that a “woman in the prime of life would be unable from her own wages to support the last mentioned child [Samuel] for the few months during which he would be chargeable to her, and the remaining child [Henry] for so long as was necessary”.\textsuperscript{65}

In Sydney Sophie could find no employment whilst burdened with Samuel and Henry. At the request of the vicar of Christ Church, Revd W.H. Walsh, Governor Fitzroy admitted the two boys into the orphan school to enable their mother to take live-in employment.\textsuperscript{66} Reporting to the Colonial Secretary in London he asked whether the Commissioners had intended to send out at colonial expense those who on arrival would become an instant charge on local charity.\textsuperscript{67} The Commissioners promised to send no more widows accompanied by “a child who is too young to support itself” unless they were sent out to friends or relations under the remittance regulations.\textsuperscript{68} They did point out however that they had exacted from Sophie a payment of £21 which was in excess of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62} *Ibid.*, *John Knox*.
\item \textsuperscript{63} *Ibid.*, *John Knox*.
\item \textsuperscript{64} *Victoria*, arrived 2 September 1849, IBL/NSW, 4/4915.
\item \textsuperscript{65} CLEC to Colonial Office, 7 March 1850, Papers Relative to Emigration — New South Wales, pp.88/89, *BPP*, Vol.50, 1851.
\item \textsuperscript{66} *Ibid.*, Copy of Despatch, Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, 11 October 1849, p.5.
\item \textsuperscript{67} *Ibid.*, Governor’s despatch, 11 October 1849.
\item \textsuperscript{68} *Ibid.*, CLEC to Colonial Office, 7 March 1850.
\end{itemize}
normal contribution for a domestic servant of £17.\textsuperscript{69} Probably to the chagrin of the Commissioners, all the correspondence relating to the Briscoe case was published in the Parliamentary Papers.

**B. 1855: The Assisted Immigrant Act**

On 15 February 1855 Stephen Walcott, Secretary to the Emigration Commissioners, signed a routine letter addressed to the Immigration Agent in Sydney. He enclosed a list of all those given a passage on the *Matoaka* (departed from Liverpool for Sydney on 21 February) who had "signed bonds under 16 Victoria, No.42, to pay passage or to take employment in the colony on arrival".\textsuperscript{70} Of the *Matoaka*'s 405 emigrants 363, 90\% were Irish. Among the Irish 294, 81\%, were emigrating under the provisions of 16 Victoria, No.42 — the Assisted Immigrant Act.\textsuperscript{71} This act was passed by the Legislative Council of N.S.W. in 1853 and implemented in 1854 by the Commissioners as the basis for all assisted emigration to N.S.W. with the exception of colonial nominees under the remittance regulations.\textsuperscript{72} 69 remittance emigrants travelled on the *Matoaka*.

The *Matoaka* also carried the largest single body of Tipperary emigrants on any one voyage to N.S.W. between 1848 and 1870. Among these Tipperary people was the largest single group ever to make the journey together from Clonoulty — 18 persons. All of them, with the exception of the comparatively elderly Simon and Mary Dwan had been offered passages under the Assisted Immigrant Act.\textsuperscript{[Figure 1.8. 55.17-21]} All told 38 of Clonoulty's 1855 emigrants travelled under the Act, the remaining 28 being sponsored by friends and relatives in N.S.W.\textsuperscript{[Figure 1.8]} What these passage arrangements revealed was the gradual shift, beginning in 1853 and gathering force in 1854 and 1855, towards the nomination by friends and relatives in N.S.W under the remittance regulations. By 1856 nomination was accounting for over half of all the Irish who received an assisted passage.\textsuperscript{[Figure 1.11]}

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{70} Stephen Walcott, Secretary CLEC, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 15 February 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6207.

\textsuperscript{71} *Matoaka*, arrived 17 May 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4952.

\textsuperscript{72} An Act to regulate the Indenting of Assisted Immigrants, and others in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, and their employment in this Colony for a certain time after their arrival therein, [Assented to 28th December, 1852], N.S.W. 16 Victoria, No. 42, Supplement, *N.S.W. Government Gazette*, 4 January 1853: Circular, CLEC to Selecting Agents in U.K., January 1854, Correspondence Relative to Immigration, pp.38/39, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1854, Vol..2.
The Assisted Immigrant Act was the recommendation of the N.S.W. Legislative Council’s Select Committee of 1852 on Immigration. The Governor’s words to the Colonial Office it aimed at nothing less than a “complete revolution in the system of Immigration hitherto pursued in this colony”. The Act’s main purpose was to give N.S.W. a “self supporting” immigration scheme by legally bonding emigrants either to repay their passage on arrival or to sign agreements with an employer who would pay half the fare at once and sign a promissory note to pay the rest within a year. Employers would then progressively deduct the passage money from the immigrant’s wages. Clonouilty men like Malachi Dwyer [Figure 1.8. 55.18] and John English [Figure 1.8. 55/19] before being allowed to embark on the Matoaka, would have had to sign a Form of Indenture witnessed by the Surgeon Superintendent to the effect that they would abide by the requirements of the Act. Although this indenture was signed at the port of departure its provisions were set out in the Commissioners’ Application Form sent to intending emigrants.

At this period N.S.W. was in direct competition with Victoria and South Australia for assisted emigrants. As no such bond was required in these colonies how did N.S.W. hope to attract candidates? The colony put its faith in considerably reduced contribution rates compared with the previous general regulations. In 1851 Malachi Dwyer’s family would have had to pay £15: under the Act they paid £8, and no contribution was required from wives or children under 14. Being 46 years old Malachi’s contribution was £5 out of the family’s £8. In all his required passage repayment in the colony was reduced from £12 to £8. The Commissioners had felt that, despite the absence of a bonding system in the other colonies, agricultural labourers with families like Malachi would be attracted to

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75 An Act to regulate the Indenting of Assisted Immigrants and Others in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, and their employment in this Colony for a certain time after their arrival therein, 16 Victoria No.42, Supplement, N.S.W. Government Gazette, 4 January 1852.

76 Form of Indenture or undertaking to be signed at the Port of Embarkation, by every Male or Unmarried Female, of or above 14 years of age, to repay the Balance of their Passage Money, or to serve some Employer in the Colony, who will repay it for them, form signed by Johnston Hempill, emigrant from Ireland on the Ebba Brahe at Plymouth, 11 October 1854, IC/NSW, 9/6208.

77 Emigrant contribution rates under the Assisted Immigrant Act in regulations for selecting emigrants under the Act, CLEC, printed in the Appendix to the Report of the N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 1854, Votes and Proceedings, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1855, Vol.2: Extract from CLEC Report to Colonial Office, 23 January 1854, Correspondence Relative to Immigration, pp.13-14, Votes and Proceedings, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1854, Vol.2. The Commissioners argued that although immigrants would be legally bonded in N.S.W. many poor agricultural labourers would prefer a passage to Sydney rather than Melbourne or Adelaide because they could afford the lower deposit. Also their wives and children could now travel free.
Sydney by the lower emigrant contributions. These were now higher for both Melbourne and Adelaide. The Act did not last long. By the end of 1854 it had been repealed for single females and it was similarly repealed for families and single males in December 1855. The reasons for this failure will be discussed fully in Chapter 3.

C. 1864: The Remittance Regulations

In 1864 all of the Clonoult emigrants were nominated for a passage by a friend or relative in N.S.W. [Figure 1.8] From 1861 nomination under the remittance regulations was the only way to reach the colony as an assisted immigrant. These regulations began to account for a majority of the Irish immigrants from 1856 onwards. [Figure 1.11] After 1855 marginal comments about immigrants are virtually non-existent on the Board’s Lists as it was no longer the Commissioners but their own families who were selecting the emigrants. Moreover 14 days after arrival in Sydney nominees became the responsibility of their sponsors which removed them fairly rapidly from government scrutiny. Even the form which colonial nominees had to submit to the Commissioners, who continued to make all passage arrangements on behalf of the colony throughout the 1860s, indicated that selection had passed out of the Commissioners’ hands. The general regulations forms of the 1850s had asked many questions about age and occupation as emigrant contributions had been linked to these. From 1856 all sections of the “working classes” irrespective of occupation were made equally eligible for nomination under the remittance regulations: it cost no more to sponsor a baker than a farm labourer.

Well before 1861, when N.S.W. moved over completely to the colonial nomination system, the Commissioners were making fewer efforts to recruit emigrants in Ireland than in other regions of the U.K. In the late 1840s, on their own admission, more applications were received from Ireland than anywhere else. Commissioner Murdoch confirmed this Irish eagerness to obtain an Australian passage to the House of Lord’s Committee on Colonisation from Ireland in 1849:

> Have you practically had many more Applications for emigration from Ireland than you have had the Means of satisfying?


80 Remittance regulations, Appendix, N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1857-58. As reference to the N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s reports will be made constantly throughout this study they have been fully cited at the beginning of the bibliography to avoid needless repetition in the footnotes.
We have had a great many more than we have had the means of satisfying.\textsuperscript{81}

During the late 1840s the Commissioners developed an extensive agency network in England: in 1849 they had one main agent in Ireland who worked through sub-agents.\textsuperscript{82}

By 1852 Irish recruitment was in the hands of just five men — two in County Down, one in Londonderry, one in Dublin and one in Cork.\textsuperscript{83} The Cork agent was their own Port Emigration Officer, Lieutenant Hodder, and, given the pressure of duties clearing ships under the Passenger Acts, it is unlikely that he went on lengthy recruiting campaigns for emigrants throughout Munster. An 1857 return of Commission employees listed four Irish agents, two in Down, one in Londonderry and\textsuperscript{84} one in Dublin. The Cork agency, located in the province which supplied N.S.W. and Australia with at least 60% of their Irish assisted emigrants, had been closed.

Whatever recruiting efforts the Commissioners made in Ireland before 1857, by 1858 they were making none as far as N.S.W. was concerned. Writing to the Colonial Office in February 1858 to explain why they were prepared to offer Sergeant Sewell of the Irish Constabulary and his family a passage to Western Australia but not to Sydney, where his friends resided, they explained their refusal in the following terms:

For New South Wales however, we are not at present selecting Emigrants from Ireland, the great preponderance of Irish in the remittances from the Colony, to whom the Colonial Government is pledged, making it necessary that we should restrict our selections to English and Scotch with a view to adjust the proportions as far as is in our power. Under these circumstances we have not felt at liberty to offer Sewell and his family a passage to Sydney.\textsuperscript{85}

The statistics confirm Sewell’s difficulty. In 1858 only 17% of the Irish had successfully applied to the Commissioners for a passage. All the rest had required a colonial nominator to get them to Sydney. [Figure 1.11]

While the Commissioners were inactive in Ireland after 1856 the Irish in N.S.W. themselves opened up a new source of emigrants. In 1858 they set up the Donegal Relief

\textsuperscript{81} Evidence of Commissioner T.W.C. Murdoch, House of Lords select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, Third Report, p.296., \textit{BPP}, 1849, Vol.11.

\textsuperscript{82} Evidence of Commissioner T.W.C. Murdoch, House of Lord’s Select Committee on the Operation of the Irish Poor Law, p.973, \textit{BPP}, 1849, Vol.16. Murdoch defended the comparative inactivity of the Irish agents and sub-agents by stating that, by comparison with England, there had been no need to call meetings to encourage interest in emigration in Ireland: Evidence of Murdoch, 3rd Report, Lords Select Committee Colonization from Ireland, \textit{op.cit.}, p.298.

\textsuperscript{83} Returns of the Names of all Persons, of every Denomination, who were in the Service or Pay of Her Majesty’s Commissioners for Colonial Land and Emigration on the 1st day of July, 1852 ..., Emigration, Return to an Address of the Honourable the House of Commons, 30 June 1852, p.6, \textit{BPP}, 1852/53, Vol.58.

\textsuperscript{84} Returns of the Names of all Persons etc. ...., p.5, \textit{BPP}, 1857, Vol.28.

\textsuperscript{85} CLEC to Colonial Office, 16 February 1858, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/505.
Committee in Sydney to sponsor under the remittance regulations those wishing to emigrate to N.S.W. from parishes in the far north west of the county. Between 1859 and 1864, 1,236 Donegal emigrants reached Sydney as nominees of the Committee. [Figure 1.9] These immigrants were unlike any others who arrived from Ireland under these regulations as they were selected by the Committee’s agent in the U.K. 808 of them came in 1859 forming the most concentrated single exodus to N.S.W. from any region of Ireland in such a short time.\[86\]

Under whatever scheme the Irish obtained a passage to Sydney it entailed dealing with the bureaucracy. The initial hurdle for all emigrants was coping with the system of application. This required them to read and understand the forms and regulations and then to fill out the form itself. [Document 1.1] In the early 1850s, as was shown above by the Godfrey applicants from Shanagolden, there was a form to fill in to see if it was worth filling in the application form. [Document 1.2] When the initial screening was passed and the main application form arrived more local people were drawn into the process: “two respectable householders” had to testify to character, a surgeon to bodily health, and a magistrate or cleric to age and occupation. Many applicants were illiterate and even those capable of reading must have found the official language of the forms hard going. For some the help of literate relatives or friends would have been essential before they could apply at all.

What all this required was the existence at parish level of networks of individuals capable of and willing to help those emigrants who needed it. The best known example of such a network was the assistance given by Lord and Lady Monteagle to emigrants from the Foynes district of County Limerick. Mention has already been made of Monteagle’s financial aid in paying the required contributions but emigrants were also helped to cope with the whole system of application. In 1853 David Nestor, one of Monteagle’s tenants, sent him a letter which looked and read as if it had been written by a local petition writer.\[87\] Nestor stated that he did not wish the farm to be further subdivided between himself and his brother and asked Monteagle to help him and two of his nieces to go to “Astralasia” [sic].\[88\] Nestor knew of Monteagle’s willingness to pay emigrant contributions but, as was added in a “P.S.”, he was not looking for financial help:

\[86\] See below Chapter 7 for a full description of the activities of the Donegal Relief Committee.
\[87\] Application of David Nestor living in Your Lordship’s Estate at Kilquane in the County of Limerick, 12 April 1853, Monteagle Papers, Microfilm Reel M976, National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA).
\[88\] Ibid.
I wish to let your Lordship know that we will pay the entrance money required, and I hope your Lordship will not refuse as being our first request ...  

What Nestor wanted was Monteagle’s help in the actual procurement of a passage from the Commissioners.

The Monteagles were certainly willing to help with the paperwork. In the Monteagle papers are a number of copies of the Commissioners’ Preliminary Form each of them filled out for prospective emigrants. These seem to be duplicates of forms actually submitted to the Commissioners on behalf of the emigrants and the handwriting looks more like that of an educated person than a poor farm labourer. [Document 1.2] These forms most likely were filled in by either the Monteagle’s or one of their employees and similar assistance would have been provided in filling out the main application form when it arrived. The Foynes area was a major region of assisted emigration to both Sydney and Melbourne in the 1840s and 1850s and the Monteagles were often vital intermediaries between the emigrants and the Commissioners. 

Such individuals were probably to be found in any parish where Australia was a significant emigrant destination. Killospuglenane was such a parish in west Clare. Here the local Church of Ireland minister, Dean Armstrong, assumed the role of the emigrants’ friend. In 1854 he secured a passage for Michael Normile and his friends, Pat McGrath and Michael Grady under the Assisted Immigrant Act, despite the Commissioners’ known reluctance to take more than a small number of single men. Michael Normile and friends all received a passage by the Araminta, which sailed from Liverpool in May 1854. Writing from the Depot at Birkenhead to his father, Michael thanked “God we had a good friend” in the Dean, without whose help they would still be in Clare:

... he wrote to a friend of his to London to the head Commissioners [sic] about us and do he did and got us off.

89 Ibid.  
91 Araminta, arrived 29 July 1854, IBL/NSW, 4/4938.  
92 Michael and Bridget Normile, Birkenhead Emigrant Depot, to their father Michael Normile, Derry, Parish of Killospuglenane, County Clare, 28 April 1854, copies of Normile letters in possession of Dr David Fitzpatrick, Trinity College, Dublin.
Chapter 2

"Farewell, Farewell, Farewell my Children" — The Journey of the Irish Assisted Emigrants to Sydney, 1848–1870

In the late-1840s and early to mid-1850s the process of Irish emigration attracted much public attention as, fleeing famine, the Irish made for the ports in their hundreds of thousands. At no other stage of the 19th century was the attention of Parliament so directed to the practical problems of emigrants as it learned of the the hazards encountered by the Irish as they struggled to reach the New World. Witness after witness to Parliamentary Select Committees testified to the fraud and deception of the ports and the miserable conditions of the emigrant ships. But as the tribulations of the American voyage emerged in the ordered calm of the Committee rooms so to did the picture of an altogether different Irish emigrant experience — the assisted passage to Australia. The members of the Select Committee on the Passenger Acts of 1851 were sufficiently impressed with this contrast to highlight it in their report:

It is evident that the Australian passage is comparatively free from the evils and abuses which are charged upon the American passage ...2

As has already been suggested the Australian assisted passage offered those Irish who were accepted for it by the Commissioners an organised and protective emigration system. However that protection did not begin with the application procedure outlined in the previous chapter. While it may have had the effect of saving potential Irish emigrants from the kind of ticket fraud perpetrated on American emigrants at the ports, that was not its main purpose. The Commissioners’ duty, as they saw it at this stage, was to the colony not the emigrant. Their aim was to select from among those who offered a potentially useful colonial working class. Interest in emigrant welfare only began after selection or approval as a colonial nominee under the remittance regulations: then it became the Commissioners’ concern to present the emigrants in a strong and healthy condition to the N.S.W. Immigration Board on arrival in Sydney. It was this official responsibility for the well-being of the emigrant which transformed the Australian voyage into what Blainey has described as a closer thing to a welfare state “than any nation or

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state on land during that era.

The following account describes each stage of the Irish journey to Sydney from the moment the letter of approval arrived from London informing emigrants of the date on which they were to report to a Government Emigrant Depot in England and the name of the ship which would carry them to N.S.W. This is not an attempt to write a definitive account of the Australian assisted voyage of the 1850s and 1860s; rather it is a portrayal of that experience through Irish eyes. Throughout the implicit point of comparison is with the Irish on the Atlantic passage whose sufferings have been well documented by MacDonagh and Coleman. This story of the Australian passage deserves a place in Irish history as much as in the history of Irish emigration or Australian immigration. It shows that for one group of Irish emigrants — those who went on the assisted passage to Australia — their journey was overseen with care and attention by a British government agency.

1. “Farewell, Farewell, Farewell, my Children”: Preparing for the Journey and Leaving Ireland

At all times during the 1850s and 1860s the government passage to Sydney was an assisted passage not a free one. The first indication that an application to the Commissioners had been successful was the arrival of the Approval Circular. Emigrants were now asked for the required financial contribution upon receipt of which they were sent their Embarkation Order. Even Remittance emigrants had to make a basic minimum payment in the U.K. towards the cost of bedding and utensils for the voyage. The Embarkation Order also listed the clothing stock which each emigrant had to have and without which they would be refused embarkation. In addition to these expenses emigrants selected by the Commissioners had to pay their own fare to an Irish port from which they would receive a free passage to join their ship in England. Remittance emigrants had, at all times between 1848 and 1870, to pay the fare all the way to the

4 CLEC Regulations, January 1857, Colonial Secretary’s Special Bundles, 4/722.1, AONSW. In earlier regulations the Approval Circular was known as the Deposit Circular.
5 Ibid.
6 In 1858 a passage was refused to colonial nominee James Gogarty because he failed to “pay his bedding money”: Monies refunded to Depositors, May/June 1858, List sent by Emigration Commissioners to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 4/4599, AONSW.
7 CLEC Regulations, January 1857.
8 Sums expended in each year in paying the expenses of the transmission of Emigrants from Ireland to each Depot, 1842–1853, Colonial Office/Emigration, hereafter CO/EM, CO.386/118, pp.73/74.
U.K. embarkation port.9 What might all this have cost Irish emigrant families and how did they get to the embarkation port?

Various estimates exist for the cost of the outfit. In 1848 the Commissioners calculated it at £5 per adult.10 The Sydney Immigration Agent in 1852 put it at at least £3 and felt that for a large family this cost was "something very considerable".11 As colonial nominators were able to help their nominees by sending them a contribution towards their sea clothing through the Commissioners, the published Remittance Regulations between 1848 and 1863 contain an official estimate of this expense. From 1848 to 1854 the regulations put a male outfit at £4/10/- and a female at £5.12 All subsequent estimates were for £3 per adult regardless of sex. This indicates a fall in the price of clothing as the actual requirement for males was increased between 1848 and 1857.13 The cost of children's outfits depended upon the age of the child: in 1848 the colonial authorities calculated that £5 would clothe either 3 children under 7, or 2 between the ages of 7 and 14.14 By 1856 the official estimate for clothing this same number of children had fallen to £4.15 Emigrants, and those nominating them in the colony, were cautioned that the kit of a "well grown" boy or girl of 13 would cost as much as an adult's.16

The purpose of the outfit was simple — emigrants faced at least a three month voyage which would take them through various climatic conditions of intense heat and cold. The Commissioners saw their recommended clothing as a compulsory minimum and emigrants were urged to supply themselves with more than this for their own comfort.17 Moreover in addition to the clothing they were to provide towels and a good

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9 For example see Remittance Regulations, N.S.W. Government Gazette, 24 January 1854, Clause 10, "... the expense of reaching the Port of Embarkation ... must be paid by the Emigrant".

10 Evidence of Commissioner T.W.E. Murdoch, House of Lords Select Committee on Operation of Irish Poor Law, BPP, 1849, Vol.16, p.970.


12 Remittance Regulations, 1854, Clause 8.

13 Immigration Remittances, N.S.W. Government Gazette, Supplement, 23 December 1848. Schedule B, Clause 20: Immigration Regulations, N.S.W. Government Gazette, Second Supplement, 7 August 1857. The compulsory requirement in 1848 was — six shirts, six pairs stockings, two pairs of shoes and two complete sets of exterior clothing. In addition in 1857 two "warm flannel or Guernsey shirts" were needed.

14 Immigration Remittances, 1848, Clause 7.

15 Immigration Remittances, 1856, Appendix to N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report for 1856/57, p.16.

16 Ibid, Clause 12.

17 CLEC Regulations, Clause 19, May 1849, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/422, "As a general rule, it may be stated, that the more abundant the stock of Clothing, the better for health and comfort during the passage".
supply of marine soap.\textsuperscript{18} In the wording on the Embarkation Order regarding the importance of having the correct clothes the Commissioners struck the note they intended to maintain with the emigrants throughout the time they were in their care:

This condition will be most strictly insisted on for the sake of the emigrants themselves.\textsuperscript{19}

Travelling within Ireland emigrants would have used a combination of road and rail transport. Increasingly between 1848 and 1870 road transport would simply have been the means of reaching the nearest railway station as the network of lines expanded throughout the country. Even as early as 1849 and 1850 many emigrants, including the large number from Tipperary, could have travelled to Cork or Dublin by train. 1849 saw the completion of the Great Southern and Western Railway’s Dublin to Cork line, a line which passed through central Tipperary from north-east to south-west.\textsuperscript{20} Virtually all of the 434 emigrants from the parish of Clonouly, who went to Sydney between 1848 and 1870, could have taken the train to Cork or Dublin from their local station at Gould’s Cross.\textsuperscript{21} 7,255 emigrants travelled from Tipperary to Sydney; most of them would have completed the main Irish section of their journey by rail.

Up to 1855 emigrants travelling under the General Regulations could only obtain the Commissioners’ free channel passage from either Dublin or Cork. Remittance emigrants paying their own way had more flexibility in choosing a convenient port: Nixon and Faithy Fife from Drumcullion, County Fermanagh went from Derry to Liverpool to embark on the Caribou sailing from Birkenhead.\textsuperscript{22} In general however it would be impossible to trace the enormous variety of routes followed and prices paid by the Irish bound for Sydney on their way to an English port. What is clearer from an examination of the costs for one group of Tipperary emigrants, who used a combination of road and rail transport, is that they would have paid about a penny per mile and perhaps a little more where many miles of road travel were involved.

The group consisted of 27 orphan females from Clonmel Union Workhouse

\textsuperscript{18} Government Emigration Commission, Regulations for the Selection of Emigrants for Passages to Australia, 1857, N.S.W. Colonial Secretary's Special Bundles, Immigration Regulations - proposed amendments, 1856/57, 4/722.1, AONSW.

\textsuperscript{19} Embarkation Order, Michael Casey, 9 May 1864, IC/NSW, 9/6238.


\textsuperscript{21} Information supplied by Mrs Kitty Barry, Clonouly, County Tipperary.

\textsuperscript{22} William Fife, Drumcullion, County Fermanagh, to his children Faithy and Nixon Fife, Goulburn, N.S.W., 18 January 1860, in possession of Fife family, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W. William describes the departure of Faithy and Nixon from Derry. Caribou, arrived 4 October 1859, IBL/NSW, 4/4979.
making for Plymouth in 1849 to join a ship for Port Phillip. The "car" from Clonmel to Thurles 30 miles away by road to the north. The "car" was probably one of those belonging to the well-known Bianconi company, whose network of horse-drawn passenger vehicles extended into remote corners of the south and west of Ireland in the pre-railway age. Given the size of the party the company may well have provided them with one of the largest Bianconi cars — a "Finn McCool" — so named for the legendary Irish giant and capable of seating 20 passengers.

At Thurles they boarded one of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company's third-class carriages for the 95-mile trip to Dublin. The Clonmel/Thurles section cost 2/6d. per girl, roughly 1 penny per mile, and for a third-class Thurles/Dublin ticket the Workhouse paid 5/6d. This gives a total cost for the Irish section of the journey of 8/- or just over three farthings per mile. The Dublin to Plymouth steamer ticket was 13/6d. giving an overall price per girl from Clonmel of £1/1/6d. A similar group doing the same journey in 1850 was charged £1/7/- each, the main increase being in the steamer passage which had risen to 18/.-.

These may well have been group discount rates but they do give some idea of the cost of an adult fare to one of the three Sydney embarkation ports used by the Commissioners in the 1850s and 1860s.

Based on the above figures, and adding in the required emigrant contribution as set out in the Commissioners' printed regulations, we can arrive at some estimate of maximum and minimum pre-embarkation costs for families. The families on three ships — two in 1852 and one in 1855 — have been chosen for this purpose as in these years the three main passage systems in operation between 1848 and 1870 overlapped — the Commissioners' General Regulations (1848–1860), the Assisted Immigrant Act (1854/55) and the Remittance Regulations (1848–1870). [Figures 1, 2 and 3] After 1855 the number of Irish selected by the Commissioners declined sharply. Even the minimum possible payment needed by these families highlights the point made earlier that assisted emigration was not free emigration. Moreover the amount required before families of similar size could even leave home varied according to the regulations in force. Thus in 1851, the year in which they were selected, the O'Briens of Lisdoonvarna, County Clare

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23 Clonmel Union, County Tipperary, Board of Guardians' Minute Books, 7 April 1849, p.239, typed extracts from the Minutes, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

24 Ibid.


26 Clonmel Union, Board of Guardians' Minute Books, 7 April 1849.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.
paid £6 contribution under the general regulations, [Figure 2.1. No 8. Joseph Somes] while the Mungavins from Doora, County Clare, paid only £1 under the Assisted Immigrant Act in 1854. [Figure 2.3. No 7. Ebba Brahe] Even those going out under the remittance regulations in 1855 were paying almost as much as selected emigrants as they had to find the full fare to the embarkation port. Thus remittance emigrants like the Armstrongs, even though they had a smaller family, had greater pre-embarkation costs than the Mungavins selected under the Assisted Immigrant Act. [Figure 2.3. Ebba Brahe. Nos. 2 and 7] Were families actually faced with the often considerable maximum outlays shown in Figures 1 to 3? Certainly they had to meet the minimum payments for the compulsory emigrant contribution and U.K. travel. Precisely how much they laid out for clothing is impossible to say. The clothing figure assumes they outfitted themselves from scratch — an unlikely situation as they would have possessed some clothes which would have passed inspection by the Commissioners' officers. On the other hand it is difficult to believe that they did not have to spend something on clothing in order to satisfy the regulations. However even the minimum payments show that, no matter what regulations a family sailed under, some of them needed a reasonable amount of money before they could consider an assisted passage.

This payment suggests that these families, while not affluent, were also not destitute. Some, as has been described, received landlord assistance to emigrate. In 1848 Commissioner Elliot stated that the Irish reached the coast "by their own means, or the means of the Proprietors who assist them".29 Also by 1848, well before the official N.S.W. remittance system became widely known about or used, earlier emigrants were already sending money home to assist relatives with emigration costs. This was certainly happening on the Monteagle estate at Foynes, County Limerick.30 John Besnard of Cork, who had been one of the main recruiters of Australian emigrants in the period 1830 to 1845, told a House of Lords Select Committee that considerable sums were being remitted home through London merchants and the Australian and Union Bank.31 However only 6 of the 15 families on the Joseph Somes [Figure 2.1] and 4 of the 22 on the David McIver [Figure 2.2] had any relatives in the colony who might have helped in

29 Evidence of Commissioner T.F. Elliot, Third Report, Select Committee House of Lords on Colonization from Ireland, p.59, BPP, 1849, Vol.11.

30 Preliminary Form, Bridget Shanahan, age 60, Monteagle Papers, Reel M976, NLA. The following appears in the Remarks column of this form: Applicant's Son is at Melbourne for more than four years and has sent home money for paying her expenses".

31 Evidence of John Besnard, First Report, Select Committee House of Lords on Colonization from Ireland, p.175, BPP, 1847/48, Vol.17.
this way.\textsuperscript{32}

When N.S.W. introduced the remittance system in 1848 depositors were given the opportunity to assist their friends and relatives with the costs involved in outfitting themselves and getting to the ports. All the money so deposited was officially entered as "For Emigrants Benefit Before Embarkation" and was sent on by the Commissioners to the nominee in Ireland.\textsuperscript{33} They could apply this money in any way they wished. An analysis of the surviving original remittance forms of Irish depositors shows that up to 1857 they deposited an average of 16/- per nominee.\textsuperscript{34} As we have seen this would not have met all pre-embarkation costs although it was substantially more than the 5/- per head put down by 1863 depositors. [Figure 2.4] These initial costs could deter nominees from accepting a passage: in 1864 the Wilson family of Tyrone were prevented from going "for want of means to procure clothing and necessaries for the voyage".\textsuperscript{35} Also in 1864 Patrick Hogan nominated three Hogans from Lorra, County Tipperary one of whom, Mary, informed the Commissioners that she would not be using her Embarkation Order because she "was unable to find her way to the Port of Embarkation for want of means".\textsuperscript{36}

Some depositors did provide substantial help. In 1851 Maurice Leehy of West Maitland sent Thomas Leehy of Listowel, County Kerry, £12 and in 1853 Elizabeth Martin of Bathurst sent her niece, Mary Brady, of Arvagh, County Cavan, £8.\textsuperscript{37} These sums would have provided Thomas and Mary with clothing and taken them to the Commissioners' depot in England. More commonly depositors sent either enough to cover the outfit cost as stated in the regulations or simply what they could. Thus Margaret McManus of Macquarie Street, Sydney, most likely a domestic servant, sent her sister Catherine McManus of Oldcastle, County Meath, £2 to help her on her way.\textsuperscript{38}

On the \textit{Ebba Brahe} in 1855 [Figure 2.3] only two families were given any

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Joseph Somes}, arrived 1 February 1852, IBL/NSW, 4/4925: \textit{David McIver}, arrived 9 April 1852, IBL/NSW, 4/4923.

\textsuperscript{33} IDJ/NSW, 4/4576-4/4587, \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{34} Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848–1870. Before December 1857 the Immigration Deposit Journals did not include the nominee's address in Ireland. This information has been extracted, along with amounts deposited, from the extant original forms scattered through the N.S.W Immigration Correspondence, 1848–1857.

\textsuperscript{35} Form sent by CLEC to N.S.W. Immigration Agent indicating why the Wilson family was unable to emigrate, 5 April 1864, IC/NSW, 9/6238.

\textsuperscript{36} Form sent by CLEC to N.S.W. Immigration Agent indicating why Mary Hogan was unable to emigrate, 8 May 1864, IC/NSW, 9/6240.

\textsuperscript{37} Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848–1870. Immigration deposits, 1848–1857. See note 34.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid}.
assistance of this kind by their colonial nominators to meet pre-embarkation costs. Ellen Ryan helped her widowed mother and sister with £5, probably enough to purchase some clothes and get them to Plymouth. 39 Mary Rooney’s husband, Lawrence, who had preceded her to the colony, sent the family £10; again perhaps just sufficient for their needs. 40 However one looks at this question of cost it would appear that potential emigrants and, if nominated in the colony, their sponsors were willing to pay reasonable sums to obtain an Australian passage. What concerned the Commissioners was that the cost of going to N.S.W. should not greatly exceed the cost of a passage to America. If it did the colonies would be unable to attract enough emigrants.

Contributions paid and outfit ready, every emigrant now faced the final farewell to both home and country. Many mid-19th century illustrations attempted to capture this emotional moment — the priest, hand upraised, bestowing a final blessing to the kneeling family at the cabin door, crowded scenes at the dock and ships departing. 41 The individual circumstances of departure of the Sydney emigrants varied enormously. Some, like the 2,107 orphan girls who left between 1848 and 1850 from local Workhouses all over Ireland, made public departures. John Holden, a Guardian of the Workhouse, saw the first party off from Belfast:

I saw all the females embark, and heard each name called over and heard Mr Senior lecture them before they moved from where they were first mustered in Barrack Street: I could, I think, say that none of them were above 20 ... We took a kind of pride out of the females selected when we walked them down the street; I was proud that we had been able to select so respectable and good a party of emigrants. 42

A more harrowing scene were the final moments in their home parish of some of the victims of one of Ireland’s best known 19th century evictions — the tenants of Derryveagh on the Donegal estate of John George Adair. 43 On their way to join the ship for Sydney in early February 1862, “they passed their ancient burial ground [Gartan near Derryveagh] and here in a body they knelt, flung themselves on the graves of their relatives, which they reverently kissed again and again and raised for the last time the

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Both drawings in Illustrated London News — The priest’s blessing, 10 May 1851: Emigrants on the quay at Cork, 10 May 1851.
42 Evidence of John Holden, Guardian of the Belfast Union, to Mr Otway, Poor Law Inspector, in Otway’s report to the Poor Law Commissioners for Ireland on the girls selected from the Belfast Workhouse for the ship Earl Grey, papers relating to Earl Grey case, p.52, Votes and Proceedings, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1848, Vol.2.
43 For an account of the Derryveagh evictions see William Vaughan, Sin, Sheep and Scotsmen — John George Adair and the Derryveagh Evictions, 1861, Belfast, 1981. See also Chapter 7, p.207.
Irish caoine”.44 Each of them also prostrated themselves on nearby Lecknacoo — “The Flag of Loneliness”. This stone is reputedly the birth place of St Columcille and it was, and still is, believed that those who prostrated themselves on Lecknacoo would find their separation from family and friends easier to bear.45 The party then left Letterkenny by train for Dublin where, before boarding the steamer for Plymouth, they were given a farewell dinner in Flemming’s Hotel. There they were addressed by a local Donegal priest who urged them not to neglect their religious duties, to write to parents left behind and not to forget “poor old Ireland”. This final injunction was received with cries of “Never — never, God knows”.46 Given the publicity surrounding these evictions it is not surprising that this Australian departure aroused some public interest.

Another group departure, which must have led to similar scenes, took place in Donegal three years earlier. In 1859 there occurred the largest group departure for Sydney from any parish in any one year between 1848 and 1870. 628 people left Ireland’s most north-westerly parishes — Gweedore and Cloughaneely — in three groups: 252 went in late January, 233 at the beginning of April and the final 187 in early July.47 All of them were nominees under the remittance regulations of the Donegal Relief Committee of N.S.W. selected locally by the Committee’s agent, Mr Scott Durbin.48 Durbin probably had each group brought together for a collective departure. No railway ran to this isolated region and, after moving through the parish, each party would have walked the 30 odd miles behind carts carrying their boxes to the station at Letterkenny. Until 1859 this was an area with few Australian emigrant associations and this large, concentrated and sudden outpouring to such a distant destination must have produced many visible moments of individual and communal grief.

On the other hand departures for Sydney and the other Australian colonies from the rural parishes and towns of Tipperary were everyday events. In the 1850s and 1860s residents of the parish of Clonoulty, near Cashel in Tipperary, were used to the sight of small groups of Australian government emigrants making for the local station at Gould’s Cross. [Figure 2.5] Similar scenes were commonplace in adjacent Tipperary parishes stretching down through the county’s central valley from Templemore in the north to Tipperary Town in the south. These Tipperary and Clonoulty departures were spread

45 Information on Lecknacoo supplied by Mrs May McClintock, Letterkenny, County Donegal.
47 Ships Sapphire, Caribou and Lady Elma Bruce, all arrived Sydney in 1859, IBL/NSW, 4/4979 and 4/4980.
48 For a full account of Durbin’s activities in Donegal see below Chapter 7.
over time and would rarely, if ever, have made so sudden an impact as the 1859 exodus from Gweedore and Cloughaneely. In a county like Leitrim however Sydney hardly featured as an emigrant destination and the small number of people involved came from parishes spread throughout the county. [Figure 2.6] Nevertheless for the families concerned it mattered little where one left from, the emotions would have been the same.

O’Farrell has suggested that these emotions were not always the conventional ones of sadness and gloom. To correct this he cites material collected by the Irish Folklore Commission dealing with midland counties in the 1870s. Rather than the “inconsolable anguish” of families being torn apart there is the “spree” held before departure in south Meath and merry frolics in Mullingar.49 Optimism may well, as O’Farrell has it, have been the dominant emphasis at such occasions but the feelings of the emigrants themselves most probably ranged across hope, expectation, excitement and grief. Moreover while the emigrants could look ahead to the building of their own lives it was their parents who were left behind to bear the real anguish of the torn family, a family which was most likely separated forever. Nowhere is this better illustrated than by the experiences of William Fife.

All five of William’s children by his first wife emigrated to Sydney between 1859 and 1866.50 The last of them, Eliza, left the station at Enniskillen, County Fermanagh on 20 November 1865, accompanied by others from her home parish. William wrote of her departure to his daughter Faithy in Goulburn:

I hope I will never witness such a parting as that was every one Bewailing their own. I thought I would be case harned to such scenes. But no, that Farewell Brought to mind all the Former ones with me ...51

This was William’s third such experience in six years and the one which involved the final child of his first marriage. But Eliza’s departure probably reminded him of those of his eldest children, Faithy and Nixon. Both went as Remittance emigrants to Sydney in 1859 and William accompanied them to the quayside at Derry where they caught the steamer for Liverpool. William’s description to Nixon of this scene, and of his feelings as he saw them go, can be allowed to stand for those of thousands of 19th century Irish parents who lived on in a home to which their scattered children in Australia never returned. It is difficult to imagine that they ever felt very optimistic about that reality:

Both of yous mentioned that yous saw me on the Quay of Derry when the boat was

50 Information on family tree supplied by Fife family, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.
51 William Fife, County Fermanagh, to Faithy Fife, N.S.W, 10 December 1865, Fife letters.
going out that was the second or third time that I stole Down as it were From I parted with yous, I kept at a distance thinking I might see yous in the Crowd among the people I did not Wish that either of yous would see me as I did not wish to have a second parting. The thoughts of parting with yous so preyed upon me that I wished the moment to arrive that I might have it past, my Dear Children you might think it strang of your Father althoug I parted with you in Body my heart and the affections of a Father went with yous, I thought I could have stopped in Foyle street untill the Boat would have gone away But when I saw her going away I hurried Down close to the side of the water thinking I might have got one sight of Fathy’s Black Bonnet or your Jacket as I would have known them I would have waved my hat you your hand. For the last time But I could see neither though I looked with more Desire than the Watchman Doth for the Morning then I came to the side of the wall where I bid yous Farewell and I stood untill I could not Discern the Liverpool Boat From the Glasgow one The cry of my heart at that moment was Farewell Liverpool Farewell My Children.\(^5^2\)

2. “The most uncomfortable part of the whole voyage”. The Irish Sea Passage

One of the ironies of the Australian journey was that its briefest maritime section was regarded as the worst. Between 1848 and 1854 no less than four parliamentary enquiries heard of the often frightful conditions encountered by poor passengers on the various short sea crossings from Ireland to England.\(^5^3\) The shipping companies knew them as “deckers” — those whose only covering on the crossing was the sky.\(^5^4\) No food was provided and “deckers” often arrived, after over thirty hours at sea exposed to the weather, in a wet and emaciated condition. Orphan emigrants arriving at Plymouth in late October 1849, “presented a forlorn appearance, after the discomforts of their preparatory voyage from Dublin, on board of a crowded steamer”.\(^5^5\) On her way to join the *Araminta* at Liverpool in 1854 Bridget Normile of Derry, County Clare was seasick on the Dublin/Liverpool boat.\(^5^6\) Brother Michael, who stoically claimed that he “did not feel no more than if I was on my bed at home”, purchased Bridget a bed for 3/- .\(^5^7\) Unless they were willing to pay for such added luxuries, all the Commissioners’ Sydney emigrants from Ireland between 1848 and 1870 had to make this deck crossing as ships despatched


\(^5^6\) Bridget and Michael Normile, Birkenhead Emigrant Depot, to their father Michael Normile, County Clare, 28 April 1854, Normile letters, Dr David Fitzpatrick, Trinity College, Dublin.

\(^5^7\) *Ibid.*
"Departure of the NIMROD and ATHLONE Steamers, with Emigrants on Board, For Liverpool". Illustrated London News, 10 May 1851, p. 387.
to the colony sailed from only four ports — Plymouth, Liverpool, Southampton and London.

Those making for Plymouth, Southampton or London were longest at sea. Depending on the weather the Cork/Plymouth trip could last over 30 hours, Cork/Liverpool up to 36 hours and Dublin/Plymouth 36 hours.\(^5^8\) Those who were allocated a Liverpool ship probably took the relatively shorter Dublin/Liverpool crossing, about 14 hours, even where Cork was closer to home. An analysis of departure ports shows that the majority of the Sydney emigrants, 62%, made the longer sea crossing to Plymouth or Southampton. [Figure 2.7] This favouring of the southern ports continued even after Liverpool began to be used as an embarkation port in 1852. Most emigrants from the northern and midland counties could have been embarked at Liverpool saving them the long Dublin to Plymouth passage. This was never seen by the Commissioners as an option: the ports used by the emigrants from the northern county of Fermanagh indicate that an even greater proportion of them, 64%, sailed from Plymouth or Southampton. [Figure 2.8]

Most of the 3.5% who are shown as sailing from London probably embarked at Plymouth. [Figure 2.7] The Commissioners chartered many of their ships from the Pool of London and the records sometimes show London as the departure port. In fact these vessels sailed to Plymouth to take on more emigrants. Some of the emigrants heading for Liverpool from the far south may have taken a Cork/Liverpool passage but most would have preferred taking the train to Dublin for the shorter crossing. None of the witnesses from Cork, who testified to the Committee on Emigrant Ships in 1854, mentioned government emigrants heading to Liverpool: they had much to say about those going to Plymouth.\(^5^9\)

It was on arrival at Dublin or Cork that the emigrants first encountered the Commissioners’ concern for their welfare. The local Emigration Officer was responsible for seeing them properly embarked on the steamer.\(^6^0\) His task was to ensure that they were given the special covered accommodation and food for which the Commissioners paid £1 per head on the Cork/Plymouth run.\(^6^1\) In 1848 John Besnard of Cork was not

\(^5^8\) Information on passage times as follows: Dublin/Liverpool - Captain Denham’s Report on Passenger Accommodation on Board of Irish Steamers, p.10, BPP, 1849, Vol.51: Cork/Plymouth - Evidence of John Besnard, Select Committee on Emigrant Ships, op.cit., p.92: Cork/Liverpool, \textit{ibid.}, Evidence of Constable John Duross, p.75. The Dublin/Plymouth time is my own calculation based on the time taken and miles travelled on the other routes.

\(^5^9\) Select Committee on Emigrant Ships, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.92-93.

\(^6^0\) Evidence of John Besnard, Lords Committee Colonization from Ireland, First Report. \textit{op.cit.}, p.179.

\(^6^1\) \textit{Ibid.}, p.180.
convinced that this supervision necessarily guaranteed the emigrants these conditions.\textsuperscript{62} No particular space seemed to have been reserved for them, the rather vague arrangement being that if the horse stalls on deck were free they should use those and, if not, something would be provided between deck. Such was the general confusion of departure that no supervision at that point, Besnard argued, could ensure them proper covering. This could only be done after sailing and “a careful man should be sent in charge of them, to see they get their food”.\textsuperscript{63} Colonial embarkations from Liverpool began in 1852 and, although no evidence exists on this point, similar provisions would have been made for those making for Liverpool on the Dublin/Liverpool steamers.\textsuperscript{64}

General conditions on these ships did not improve between 1848 and 1854. Before the Select Committee on Emigrant Ships in 1854 John Besnard again condemned the whole system of deck passages. His most telling comment was in reply to a question implying that the shippers’ concern was more with their cargoes than with people:

The pigs are taken care of? — Much better than the emigrants. Somebody has an interest in their lives, but nobody seems to care about the poor emigrants.\textsuperscript{65}

Asked whether he included government emigrants “who are provided with shelter” in his condemnation of the conditions on the Plymouth passage he replied:

I have known Government emigrants below to ask permission to leave the between decks, from the smell of the pigs occupying part of the same place with them.\textsuperscript{66}

The Committee’s Chairman was kind to the Commissioners: he suggested the nature of the cargo in the Cork steamers was defeating their “merciful intentions”.\textsuperscript{67} Nothing was said of the failure in supervision which had permitted this situation to exist since 1848 when Besnard had first drawn attention to the problem. No provision had ever been made for the “careful man” to accompany the emigrants and ensure they received the treatment which the colony was buying for them.

The Commissioners took these revelations of 1854 seriously. Two months after Besnard testified, they wrote to the Colonial Secretary setting out reasons for the possible

\textsuperscript{62} Evidence of John Besnard, House of Commons Select Committee on Emigrant Ships, \textit{op.cit.}, p.103.

\textsuperscript{63} Evidence of John Besnard, Lords Committee on Colonization from Ireland, First Report, \textit{op.cit.}, p.180.

\textsuperscript{64} CLEC to Colonial Office, 5 November 1852, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/459. This letter refers to the opening of the Birkenhead depot in January 1852.

\textsuperscript{65} Evidence of John Besnard, House of Commons Select Committee Emigrant Ships, 1854, \textit{op.cit.}, p.93.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Ibid.}, p.106.

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}
establishment of one of their depots at Cork. Australian ships could embark the Irish there and eliminate the deck passage of St George's Channel which, they now acknowledged, the Committee on Emigrant Ships had exposed as "the most uncomfortable part of the whole voyage". They also conceded their failure, despite the arrangements with the shipping company, to provide the emigrants with adequate protection, a result of "the crowds on board [and] the numbers of pigs, sheep and cattle". Nothing came of this proposal as the colonial emigration, especially to Victoria, began to fall off in the period during which the Commissioners were negotiating for a suitable local building. By September 1855 they had abandoned the idea, largely because of cost. Although they did whatever they could to make the channel crossing as comfortable as possible this was one part of the journey where the Australian emigrants, despite the efforts made on their behalf, shared many of the same discomforts as the American emigrants.

3. "Like as I have seen cattle leaving a steamer": The Government Emigrant Depots

In the 1850s 4 out of every 5 Irish emigrants making for North America embarked on the Atlantic passage at Liverpool. Early in the 1850s John Besnard witnessed the arrival there of an Irish cross-channel steamer carrying emigrants. Weakened by the journey many were "scarcely able to walk" and as soon as they left the ship they were "seized hold of by those unprincipled runners, so well known to Liverpool". These runners conveyed them to shipping agents, lodging house keepers and general merchants, each one of whom provided the poor emigrant with some necessity, or alleged necessity, of his journey and the runner with a commission. The Irish were now in the grip of that system for which Liverpool was notorious throughout the U.K. — a system which, while it eventually conveyed them to New York, tried to deprive them of as much of their small resources as possible during their stay in the port. However, if there were any Sydney bound assisted emigrants on the ship observed by Besnard each would have possessed a piece of paper enabling them to avoid the problems facing their America bound countrymen — the Commissioners' Embarkation Order admitting them to the

68 CLEC to Colonial Office, 26 July 1854, Colonial Office/Emigration Original Correspondence, hereafter CO/EMOC, CO.384/92.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 CLEC to Colonial Office, 11 September 1855, CO/EMOC, CO.384/94.
72 Evidence of John Besnard, Commons Select Committee Emigrant Ships, 1854, op.cit., p.92.
73 Ibid.
Government Emigrant Depot at Birkenhead on the other side of the Mersey.

Depots were established by the Commissioners at Plymouth, Southampton, Deptford (London) and Birkenhead (Liverpool).\textsuperscript{74} Their stay at the depot, however brief, allowed the Irish in particular to rest after the rigours of the channel crossing. The enforcement of strict hours ensured that enough sleep was taken to make up for that lost on the deck passage and, in the dormitories, the Commissioners began that segregation of married people, single men and single women which was to be continued on board ship.\textsuperscript{75} Whether or not they had received any food on the steamer, they were now well fed. Some allowance was even made for variation in national diet — the Irish and Scots were entitled to oatmeal and molasses if they wished rather than the normal tea, sugar and butter.\textsuperscript{76} Regulations forbidding alcohol tried to ensure that they would not embark in a worse state than that in which they had arrived.\textsuperscript{77} All in all an enforced stay at the depot removed them from the snares and temptations of a port city like Liverpool, an advantage of which the Commissioners were well aware. Those who broke the rules were not permitted to proceed further. Thomas Marland of County Limerick, holding an Embarkation Order for the \textit{Shackamaxon} in 1863, was “dismissed from the Depot for riotous and disorderly behaviour”.\textsuperscript{78} This ordered life of the depot both allowed for recuperation and provided an acclimatisation to the coming discipline of the long ocean voyage ahead.

The main purpose of the depot however was to carry out a series of pre-embarcation checks. Until they arrived at a depot no employee of the Commissioners, apart from the Emigration Officers at Dublin and Cork, had actually sighted the emigrants. Now their papers were scrutinised, and they were medically examined and their boxes checked by depot staff to ensure they had sufficient clothes for the voyage.\textsuperscript{79} Usually these procedures seem to have been carried out fairly carefully. John Browne of Tipperary had apparently had his box packed for him and, when he opened it at

\textsuperscript{74} Numbers of Emigrants in each year who have been sent with free passages from each Depot, and the number of such Emigrants who have been Irish, CO/EM, CO.386/118. This document lists these four depots.

\textsuperscript{75} William Cormack Calder, “Jottings by the Way”, an account of his journey as an assisted emigrant to Adelaide in 1858, PRG/223, p.13, Mortlock Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

\textsuperscript{76} Tender documents, Board and Lodging of Emigrants in Depots, p.13, \textit{BPP}, 1851, Vol.40: “Irish and Scotch emigrants may, if they prefer it, receive one pint of oatmeal and two ounces of molasses, in lieu of the tea, sugar and butter”.

\textsuperscript{77} Calder, “Jottings ..”, \textit{op.cit.}, p.16.

\textsuperscript{78} Form sent by CLEC to N.S.W. Immigration Agent indicating why Thomas Marland was unable to emigrate, no date, IC/NSW, 9/6238.

EMISSION DEPOT AT BIRKENHEAD.

EMISSION DEPOT AT BIRKENHEAD, FOR THE RECEIPT OF GOVERNMENT EMIGRANTS TO AUSTRALIA; WITH A VESSEL ALONGSIDE THE WHARF PREPARING FOR THE VOYAGE.
"Government Emigrants' Mess Room". Illustrated London News, 10 July 1852, p. 520.
Birkenhead, found himself short a pair of trousers and two pairs of stockings.\footnote{80} He was sent into the town to make up the deficit at a cost of 7/- to himself.\footnote{81} According to a Scots emigrant, who observed the clothing examination, the Irish were searched with great thoroughness:

The Scotch and English got off pretty easily: not so the poor Irish, every article belonging to them was most minutely examined and not without reason, as nearly the whole of them had forbidden articles secreted. Eggs, meal and a host of other articles, including, of course, all sorts of intoxicating drinks are most wisely forbidden.\footnote{82}

The examination was not always adequate. Three ships, which sailed from Plymouth in late 1851, over 77% of whose passengers were Irish, the *Neptune*, the *Agincourt* and the *David McIver*, were quarantined upon arrival at Sydney for typhus.\footnote{83} Port Health Officer Savage, who knew Ireland well, attributed these repeated detentions to the weakness of the emigrants brought on by winter journeys in the northern hemisphere and the poor diet to which they had been accustomed at home before departure.\footnote{84} Poverty and distress, both with regard to food and clothing, had been their common experience. Moreover they had sailed without adequate clothing despite the Commissioners’ regulations. The Surgeon on each of these ships told Savage that the Irish had not possessed even one change of clothing.\footnote{85} All these officials were in the best position to assess this situation which pointed to a lack of care at the Plymouth depot. Failures of this nature in the system were regularly reported back to the Commissioners. As they made frequent visits to the depots, local officers probably tightened up considerably on their supervision of the clothing requirement.\footnote{86}

There is no doubt that much care went into the running and supervision of the depots and that the Irish in particular benefited from such protection. But the depot experience also marked them out as an ethnically separate group within the United

\footnote{80}{John Browne, Birkenhead Depot, to his brother Patrick Browne, County Tipperary, 29 April 1854, Browne letters, Rev. Brien Maher, Bungendore, N.S.W.}

\footnote{81}{Ibid.}

\footnote{82}{Calder, “Jottings ...”, *op.cit.*, p.16.}

\footnote{83}{*Neptune*, arrived 18 February 1852, IBL/NSW, 4/4926: *Agincourt*, arrived 8 April 1852, IBL/NSW, 4/4922: *David McIver*, arrived 9 April 1852, IBL/NSW, 4/4923. All three ships were quarantined on arrival: Returns of the number of Ships in quarantine at Spring Cove from the year 1849 to the 22nd May 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6207.}

\footnote{84}{Evidence of Port Health Officer, A. Savage R.N., Select Committee on Immigration, p.40., *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1852, Vol.2.}

\footnote{85}{Ibid.}

\footnote{86}{Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, p.4, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, 1855, Vol.2.}
Kingdom. At Birkenhead, and undoubtedly at the other depots, English, Scots and Irish ate separately and slept separately. A contemporary drawing of the mess hall clearly showed this division. The emigrants themselves may well have thought nothing of it; indeed they may have welcomed it as a device which kept them with friends, with the familiar. When Michael Normile from Derry, County Clare, arrived at Birkenhead he was delighted to find a little bit of Derry had preceded him:

We [Michael and his sister Bridget] came to the Depot there we met our comrades, and you might think it was out of the heavens we came to them Micheal Gready Patt McGrath and Bridget Neylon were as glad as if we Gave them a thousand pound for we being along with them I hope we will have luck.

Unfortunately no material has come to light which conveys how depot life and their fellow English and Scots emigrants appeared to the Irish. Others, however, certainly noticed them. Scots Presbyterian William Calder, from Glasgow, passed through Birkenhead as an assisted emigrant on his way to Adelaide in 1858. Calder kept a rather self-conscious diary to which he gave the title, “Jottings by the Way”, hoping perhaps for future publication. In his description of the other emigrants at the depot he devoted more space to describing the Irish and their behaviour than to any other regional group. Initially it was the punishing effect of the channel crossing which engaged his sympathy:

Here is a group of Irish from the extreme west of Ireland, and having had a long and coarse journey having all lain down on the floor like as I have seen cattle after leaving a steamer.

His felt too for the “poor Irish widow with two children”, also from the west, who had suffered a rough crossing. The eldest child was now having a fit in her arms while “his Grandfather and Grandmother look sorrowfully on”. Others enlivened the scene with “jigs” danced to the “inspiring strains of some amateur fiddler or flutist”.

On the other hand all those described by Calder as trying to beat the system or prey on the charity of others seem to have been Irish. It was a married Irishman who “imposed upon the Commissioners” by pretending to be single. His wife threw herself on the parish and, as authority had now caught up with him in the depot, he was going “round

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87 Emigration Depot at Birkenhead, drawing, Illustrated London News, 10 July 1852, p.520.
88 Bridget and Michael Normile to Michael Normile, 28 April 1854, Normile letters.
89 Calder, “Jottings ...", op.cit.
90 Ibid., p.12.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid., p.11.
cap in hand begging for assistance to take him back to the wife he has deserted".\textsuperscript{94} Moreover it was the Irish who persisted, almost childishly, in trying to evade the rules. Many Irish had brought eggs, even though the regulations did not allow them to be taken on board, and one "fellow after making several narrow escapes with a basket containing six dozen was found out on going on board and basket and eggs were quietly dropped in the Mersey".\textsuperscript{95} But the Scots Presbyterian in Calder reserved his most unflattering description for what he saw as pure craftiness and superstition — an Irishman unwilling to pay out pennies to meet his debts but preserving his shillings for blessings:

The luggage of the emigrants is brought up from the steamer at a charge of three pence ... and here may be seen another going round begging for a few coppers to pay for his luggage and, not succeeding, the carter is forced to let him off, but after a bit the priest comes and he give him two Shillings and sixpence for a certain number of masses and one Shilling a piece for certain flowers which his Reverence had previously blessed.\textsuperscript{96}

Calder's whole attitude towards the Irish was one of superiority tinged with sympathy for those in obvious distress. The Irish assisted emigrants in their letters never seem to notice the English or Scots; their concerns are all for family, friends and travel conditions. Whatever they thought of the behaviour of their fellow British subjects they did not commit it to paper. Calder's view can be balanced somewhat by considering his own behaviour. Having derided the Irish for their childish attempts to smuggle food on board, he did the same thing himself only to be caught by the depot Superintendent and threatened with a search of his bags on the following day. A careful emotional tactician, Calder waited till he saw the Superintendent helping Calder's aged mother on board:

... and as I was afraid of his threatened visit next day I said quietly to him that I was sorry to give him so much trouble but I had my Mother to attend to as well as a wife and four children. To which he replied that I had nothing to do now but look after my family ... So this quiet talk of mine had the desired effect as I heard no more of his threat.\textsuperscript{97}

Given the lack of evidence from the Irish themselves, it is difficult to know how they reacted to new situations in which they might have felt a sense of separateness, of Irishness. Roman Catholics were 80\% of all the N.S.W. Irish assisted, a figure which would have been little different for the Irish heading to the other colonies.\textsuperscript{98} At Plymouth the Irish Catholics encountered the well intentioned Protestant evangelical fervour of the

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., p.12.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., p.11.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., p.18.
\textsuperscript{98} Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848–1870. For a full outline of the denominational composition of the Irish assisted emigrants see below Chapter 4, pp.112-115.
Reverend Mr Childs and the British Ladies Emigration Society. Typical of Society activities was the visit to the Kate on 27 June 1850, just after she had embarked 300 emigrants for Sydney, 219 of them Irish. Those of them on deck looking back towards Plymouth would have seen the Society’s “Emigrants’ missionary boat” approach, decorated for the first time with “the graceful and characteristic emblem of peace and love; a blue flag, bearing a dove and olive branch”. The ladies set about supplying tracts and books to the married people and the children and conversing with them in general. Childs took on the more difficult task of the young men, mainly Irish, who showed at first “an indisposition to receive the Word of God”. Prominent among them was John O’Meara, a clerk from Tipperary, who was the “most intellectual and best educated of the party”. Childs seems to have put to them the common evangelical position on salvation being obtainable through exposure to the word of God as encountered in personal reading of the scriptures. O’Meara engaged him in a lengthy discussion on 2 Peter, chapter 3, verse 16 which warns the “unlearned and unstable” against trying to understand the difficult parts of scripture for themselves. Childs claimed he showed no spirit of controversy towards John and eventually had him asking for a Bible for himself. At this “the rest followed his example”. Where the Catholics were less amenable to Childs’ message they reverted in his eyes to the level of “Irish Papists of the lowest grade”. In 1853 Childs was appointed official Emigrant Chaplain at Plymouth by the Commissioners.

At Birkenhead any possible attempts at proselytism did not go unchallenged. In 1853, Canon Browne, parish priest of St Werburgh’s, Birkenhead, complained to the Colonial Secretary that he was being obstructed by Church of England lay personnel in ministering to the Catholic emigrants at the depot and that a room there was being used as a tract distribution centre. Browne also claimed to have received complaints from the

99 KATE, arrived 13 October 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4918.
100 The Emigrants Penny Magazine, Plymouth, Vol.1, No.4, August 1850, p.91. Copies of this publication are held by the Mitchell Library, Sydney.
101 Ibid., Vol.1, No.5, September 1850, p.117.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid., Vol.2, No.9, June 1851, p.19.
106 Return of the names of all persons, of every Denomination, who were in the Service or pay of Her Majesty’s Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners on the 31st day of December 1854 ..., p.5, Return to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons, 9 August 1855, BPP, 1856, Vol.44. Childs’ stipend as Emigrants’ Chaplain began in April 1853.
107 Canon Browne to Duke of Newcastle, Colonial Secretary, 22 May 1853, CO/NSWOC,
colonies concerning attempts to convert Catholics on the voyage, something which could only lead to them taking from home sentiments of "bitterness" rather than "affection". Official denials arrived swiftly pointing out to Browne that the alleged tract room was not actually part of the depot proper but belonged to the Harbour Commissioners and was lent by them rent free to the Church of England. This room had been set up by the Church for general emigrant recreation and contained nothing more sinister than "newspapers and journals". Moreover it was government policy to make provision for the religious needs of all faiths and Browne was offered an official Roman Catholic Chaplaincy for a stipend of £40 per year. Browne accepted the post and by 1854 was saying Mass on emigrant ships before departure.

At Plymouth however Childs and the ladies of the Emigration Society seem to have had the field to themselves. Ships were visited throughout the 1850s and those Irish Catholics who left from there would have regularly been offered tracts and King James Bibles. At least up to 1857 there is no evidence of a Catholic chaplain being appointed to the port. But the occasional priestly visit must have occurred; Childs heard that a "Romish priest" had visited a ship after him, and on being asked by a "Papist" what to do with a Bible Childs had given him the priest replied that he should "light his pipe with it". Whatever feeling of separateness Irish Catholics brought with them to Australia, their experience of English evangelical Protestantism at the ports can only have strengthened the Catholic part of that identity.

4. "She would prefer the old porridge and plenty of Good milk and the open fields to walk in": The Voyage to Sydney

Between 1848 and 1870 the Irish generally sailed to Sydney in the company of other Irish. Out of 323 government ships which made the voyage 307 carried Irish emigrants. [Figure 2.9] The Irish component could vary enormously from the Ascendant in 1855, carrying a solitary Irishman [Figure 2.10. 1855/No.10] to the Lady Peel in 1849, all of whose emigrants were Irish. [Figure 2.10. 1849/No 17] However an analysis of the

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108 Ibid.


110 Ibid.

111 CLEC to Colonial Office, 11 June 1853, CO/EMOC, CO.384/94.

112 Return of the Names of all Persons etc. ..., p.5., op.cit. Canon Browne's official stipend was paid from October 1853.

ships in 1849 and 1855, 2 of the 5 years when the Irish percentage of the overall emigration fell below 40%, shows that even then they usually made the voyage in the company of large numbers of other Irish. In 1849 71% of them went in groups of over 100, a figure which rose to 87% in 1855. [Figure 2.10. 1855] In 1849 this was not so much a deliberate policy of the Commissioners as a reflection of the nature of the emigration: 53% were either Workhouse orphan girls or the wives and families of convicts for whom special shipping arrangements were made. There was nothing special about the 1855 emigrants and the fact that the great majority sailed in groups of over 100 suggests that the Irish were being kept together as much as possible. Such a policy would have been increasingly irrelevant from 1859 onwards. As the remittance regulations became the main, and from 1861 the exclusive method of selecting emigrants, Irish dominance of the system ensured that the voyage became a largely Irish affair. In 1864 there was not a single ship where the Irish were less than 63% of all emigrants on board and in that year 72% of them travelled in groups of over 250. [Figure 2.10. 1864]

Individuals would not have seen themselves as travelling in such large groups. If questioned about how they had come to Sydney they would have pointed out the friends or relatives who had accompanied them all the way from home. From the information they supplied to the Immigration Board on arrival 56% can be identified as having relatives or friends on the same ship, the largest identifiable group being those in families or childless couples. [Figure 2.11. Nos 2/4-7] However, it is unlikely that only 17% came with relatives other than in a family group or with friends. [Figure 2.11. No.3] Firstly, unless they had a common relation in the colony, the many cousins, who undoubtedly teemed up for the journey, cannot definitely be linked from what they told the Board. The two Governy females from the parish of Arles, Queens County, who arrived together on the Matoaka in 1855 are in this category. Second, many must have travelled in loose friendship groups, suggested by the number of single emigrants with no relatives who arrived on the same ship with others from the same parish. There were 11 people from Arles on the Matoaka, 8 single women and 3 men, all selected by the Commissioners. None of them had any relatives in the colony and Queens County was not an area which had, or was ever to develop, much emigration to Sydney. What may have brought them to N.S.W. was their meeting in 1855 in Ireland with Father Keating, the parish priest of Bathurst N.S.W., who advised them to seek work there. None of them would, if asked, have been likely to say they were travelling alone. From certain parishes in Clare and Tipperary, counties which between them supplied just over

114 Matoaka, arrived 17 May 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4952.
115 Archdeacon McEncroe to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 25 May 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6207.
30% of all the Sydney emigrants, it was rare to travel without a fellow parishioner or relative on the same ship: only 10% of those from Quin, County Clare, and 8% of those from Clonoulty, County Tipperary, came alone. [Figure 2.12] Given these factors the real percentage of those who made the journey without some relative, friend or acquaintance was certainly less than 44%, possibly considerably less. [Figure 2.11. No.1]

These pre-existing relationships between the emigrants were not ignored at embarkation. The Commissioners’ local official responsible for a government ship before departure was the port Emigration Officer and one of his main tasks was the allocation of emigrants to berths and messes. At London the Emigration Officer, Lieutenant Lean, followed a procedure which both ensured orderly boarding and took account of emigrant needs. Names and numbers were put on berths before boarding and Lean took “great care to put relatives, friends and persons from the same neighbourhood alongside of and near each other”. People were put into messes on a similar basis. The Commissioners made this standard practice and it can be seen in action in the female mess arrangements of two Plymouth ships — the Fitzjames in 1857 and the Hornet in 1858. [Figures 13 and 14] On both ships the Irish were messed almost exclusively with their own countrywomen and, where possible, with their relatives and fellow parishioners. Thus seven of the 11 girls in Mess 25 on the Fitzjames were from east Clare parishes and the Dreany sisters and Sarah Struthers, all related, were put into Mess 26 on the Hornet. [Figure 2.13 and Figure 2.14] More interesting is that Protestants and Catholics, on these two ships at least, were messed together and there is no mention in the official diaries of the Matrons in charge that this caused any problems. However, Mess 22 on the Fitzjames stands out as being exclusively Protestant although we have no way of knowing whether by chance or choice. [Figure 2.13]

There may have been times when the Protestants wished to keep themselves apart. At Plymouth Rev. Childs noticed with approval the separation of the “Protestant Irish from their Roman Catholic brethren” on a South Australian government ship. Childs claimed this to be a welcome separation:

Nor shall we easily forget their grateful acknowledgements for the comforts which surround them, and not least amongst them the Christian communion of their

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116 Extract of a letter, Lieutenant Lean, Government Emigration Agent, London to CLEC, no date, in CLEC to Colonial Secretary, N.S.W., 3 November 1847, Votes and Proceedings, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1848.

117 Ibid.

118 Penny Magazine, op.cit., Vol.1, No.2, June 1850, p.44.
Protestant fellow voyagers.\textsuperscript{119}

Eliza Fife, a Methodist, travelled with 3 Protestant companions from County Fermanagh to Sydney on the \textit{Africana} in 1866.\textsuperscript{120} Whatever she felt about the majority of her Catholic countrymen on board went unrecorded but she was forthright in writing to her father about the ship:

I had two letters from Eliza she says the ship is a very uncomfortable place a hard Bed and the tea not very sweet she says she would prefer the old porridge and plenty of Good milk and the open fields to walk in to anything she has seen in the Africana just yet. I hope she will bear up and be resigned to her situation for a time.\textsuperscript{121}

Eliza’s “situation” was that of any Irish assisted emigrant to Sydney between 1848 and 1870 when the colony entrusted their care during the voyage to the Commissioners. How successfully did they care for the \textit{Africana}’s emigrants?

On arrival at Sydney all the Commissioners’ ships were inspected by the Immigration Agent, who sent a general report to London on the circumstances of the voyage and the performance of those in official positions.\textsuperscript{122} The format and concerns of these reports changed little during the 1850s and 1860s: each dealt systematically with the suitability of the ship for carrying government emigrants, the quality and adequacy of the rations and water supply, the efficiency of the Commissioners’ appointee in absolute charge of the emigrants — the Surgeon Superintendent — the extent to which the ship’s officers and minor officials were entitled to their gratuities and finally emigrant mortality. If either the Agent or the Board was dissatisfied with any aspect of the voyage or the treatment of the emigrants they could at once hold an official enquiry, the results of which, along with a recommended course of action, were sent to the N.S.W. government minister responsible for the Immigration Department. Both the Agent’s Report and the Board’s Enquiry Report on the \textit{Africana} reveal how the Commissioners ran their ships and the nature of the problems encountered on this and other voyages.\textsuperscript{123}

The accommodation areas and the fittings of every government ship were inspected and assessed on arrival by the Immigration Agent. The \textit{Africana} was not considered a

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Africana}, arrived 15 March 1866, IBL/NSW, 4/4991.

\textsuperscript{121} William Fife, County Fermanagh, to Faithy Fife, N.S.W., 10 December 1865, Fife letters.

\textsuperscript{122} These reports to the Colonial Secretary have not survived for all years between 1848 and 1870. For this study those for 1855 and 1864 have been consulted in full: Reports by Immigration Agent on condition of immigrants and ships on their arrival, hereafter ASR/NSW, 1855:4/4623, 1864:4/4624, AONSW.

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Africana}, ASR/NSW, 3 May 1866, 4/4624, and Immigration Board’s Enquiry, \textit{Africana}, 6 April 1866, 4/4703. AONSW.
ship “well adapted” for carrying emigrants. Despite her good ’tween deck clearance of seven feet, Agent Wise found her unsuitable on two counts; the existence of deck houses made too great a reduction in the space available for exercise and both light and ventilation were inadequate in the single men’s and single women’s quarters. Ships which were condemned in this forthright manner by the colonial authorities were not subsequently used by the Commissioners. As ships and their fittings directly affected emigrant comfort it is relevant to consider in what ways the colonial authorities found them, on occasions, deficient. Combined with the Commissioners’ willingness to act on the Agent’s reports this was yet another indication of the overall care taken to ensure that the emigrants had as comfortable a voyage as possible.

Complaints were sent to London concerning 17 of the 37 ships which arrived in 1855. Many of these carried considerable numbers of Irish emigrants. [Figure 2.15. Nos 1/6/13/18-20/27/29/32/34] Of these only the Himalaya was declared too small and the Commissioners asked not to charter her again “except in dire emergency”. [Figure 2.15. No.18] Not surprisingly many comments related to the ventilation and light of the ’tween deck accommodation where the emigrants also had to eat in heavy seas. Going on board straight after arrival the Agent would have had ample opportunity to experience the ’tween deck atmosphere for himself and to assess the provisions made for illuminating and getting fresh air to these areas. The ’tween decks of the Wacousta were very dark because of her lack of stern ports and the Samuel Boddington was badly ventilated as she could only open her sluice and side ports in calm weather. [Figure 2.15. No.1/6] Dampness and wetness from bad caulking or carpentry could also cause the emigrants much discomfort. The Agent found the Golden Era a “fine spacious ship” and well ventilated but the Surgeon had had to have all the port side bunks relocated because of a leak at the main mast.

Standards were higher in the 1860s. [Figure 2.15] Surviving charter contracts (the Charter Party) for seven of the 11 ships, which arrived in 1864, show a ’tween deck clearance of seven feet or more along the whole length of the deck and only one complaint was made by the Agent concerning ventilation. None of these vessels was deemed unsuitable for the emigrant trade. Nevertheless the general fittings were still carefully

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124 Africana, ASR/NWS.
125 Ibid.
126 Himalaya, ASR/NWS, 18 July 1855, 4/4623.
127 Golden Era, ASR/NWS, 17 August 1855, 4/4623.
128 The extant Charter parties for 1864 are in Ships’ Papers, 1864, 9/6284 and 9/6285, AONSW. The Agent’s complaint was about the Queen of the East, ASR/NWS, 18 May 1864, 4/4624.
examined and attention drawn to such things as the inadequacy and bad location of the water closets.\textsuperscript{129} [Figure 2.15. 1864, No.9]

Eliza Fife may have found her bed hard on the \textit{Africana} but she was provided with it free of charge along with all her bedding and basic eating utensils.\textsuperscript{130} Surgeons were also prepared to issue emergency bedding from the ample hospital supply. Thus on the \textit{Coldstream} in 1863 Surgeon White gave Judith Maher and Margaret Kane, both widows from County Tipperary, complete sets of replacement bedding as their own werelice-infested.\textsuperscript{131} White also gave the McCarthy sisters from County Clare a blanket “to make underclothing, they not having any warm enough”.\textsuperscript{132}

The \textit{Africana} emigrants all expressed satisfaction “as to the good quality and sufficient quantity” of the food although Eliza Fife had complained to her father that she had not enough sugar to sweeten her tea.\textsuperscript{133} The adequacy of the food and water was of prime importance in emigrant health and well-being during the voyage and complaints concerning either were taken very seriously by the Board in Sydney. Here the Commissioners were able to exercise a great deal of control over the shipping companies as failure to supply the prescribed provisions, if proved when the ship reached Sydney, was a clear breach of the Charter Party and could result in the imposition of a heavy fine. Moreover if such fines were imposed the Commissioners did not have to obtain the money from the company — they already had it in the shape of the second half of the passage money.\textsuperscript{134} This was paid only when authorised by the colonial government and such authorisation depended upon a satisfactory report on the voyage from the Agent and the Board. Two of the severest penalties imposed upon shipping companies came from their failure to provide the stipulated water supply. The owners of the \textit{Sapphire} lost £1,000 in 1859 and those of the \textit{Sir Robert Sale} £500 in 1864.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Sirocco}, second voyage 1864, ASR/NSW, 11 November 1864, 4/4624.
\textsuperscript{130} William Fife to Faithy Fife, 10 December 1865: “... Eliza she says the ship is a very uncomfortable place a hard Bed ...”.
\textsuperscript{131} Return of Bedding, \textit{Coldstream}, Ship’s Papers, 9/6283, AONSW.
\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Africana}, ASR/NSW, 3 May 1866.
\textsuperscript{134} Charter Party, \textit{Persia}, 13 January 1863, Ship’s Papers, 9/6283: Clause 21, “In order to obtain payment of the second moiety of the Passage Money, there must be deposited with the Commissioners ... the following documents ... a Certificate signed by the Immigration Agent in the Colony ... that the stipulations in the Charter Party appear to have been, in all respects, duly fulfilled ...”.
\textsuperscript{135} For enquiry into and report on \textit{Sapphire} see Governor of N.S.W to Colonial Secretary, London, Despatch No. 73, 10 August 1859, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/509. For enquiry into \textit{Sir Robert Sale} see Immigration Board’s Report, Ship’s Papers, 9/6285, AONSW.
Insufficient quantity rather than poor quality was the most common emigrant complaint about the food. Issuing the rations and the water was the job of the ship’s Third Officer for which he received a gratuity of 1/- per emigrant. The Third Officers of both the Mangerton in 1855 and the Sir Robert Sale in 1864 were dismissed by the Surgeon, the former for misappropriation of stores and the latter for incompetency.\textsuperscript{136} [Figure 2.15. No.29 and No.10] But Surgeons themselves were sometimes found to have taken foolish decisions in the issuing of food. The emigrants on the Himalaya in 1855, 78\% of whom were Irish, were observed by the Board to have “had a haggard, half starved appearance and this was even more apparent in the young children and many of the women”.\textsuperscript{137} Complaints by the emigrants led to a full Board enquiry which found the Surgeon careless and inattentive to the point of “inhumanity”.\textsuperscript{138} In particular the Board found no justification for a considerable reduction in the rations for long periods of the voyage. The Surgeon lost his gratuity and, although it was not specifically stated in the report, it was clear from the Board’s general condemnation of his conduct that they deemed him unsuitable for further employment by the Commissioners.\textsuperscript{139}

None the less the Commissioners did concern themselves with quality of diet. In 1851 American emigrants still had to cook for themselves; all the Australian assisted ships had a cook providing three hot meals a day.\textsuperscript{140} Bakers were also appointed from the mid-1850s; it was their duty to bake bread on Tuesdays and Thursdays and, on every other day, to bake the dough made up by the emigrants.\textsuperscript{141} Experiments were made with machines such as “Doctor Normanby’s Patent Distilling Apparatus” for making fresh from sea water, and Surgeons asked to report on their effectiveness.\textsuperscript{142} Surgeon Elwest on the Ocean Empress in 1862 reported that the distilled water from Dr Normanby’s apparatus “has at all times been preferred by the emigrants to the Ship’s water”.\textsuperscript{143} A reduction in the incidence of diarrhoea and dysentery among the emigrants in the early

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{136} Mangerton, ASR/NSW, 19 September 1855, 4/4623, 1855: Sir Robert Sale, ASR/NSW, 1 December 1864, ASR/NSW, 4/4624.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Himalaya, Immigration Board’s Inquiry Report in ASR/NSW, 16 July 1855, 4/4623.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Evidence of W Bowler, Manager, Canterbury Association, House of Commons Select Committee on the Passenger Acts, pp.405/406, and Evidence of Lieutenant Hodder, Emigration Officer, Liverpool, p.121., BPP, 1851, Vol.19.
\item \textsuperscript{141} Baker’s Instructions, CLEC printed circular, 1854, N.S.W. Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 4/3263, AONSW.
\item \textsuperscript{142} CLEC to Secretary of Lands, N.S.W., 12 June 1862, Ship’s Papers, Ocean Empress, 9/6282, AONSW.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Ibid., Surgeon’s report on working of Normanby apparatus, 2 October 1862.
\end{itemize}
1860s was attributed by Agent Wise to the superiority of this distilled water to the normal cask water.\textsuperscript{144} The diet was also improved in the late 1850s by the addition of a wider range of preserved vegetables such as onions, carrots and turnips.\textsuperscript{145}

Naturally the overriding concern of the Board and the Immigration Agent on the arrival of any ship was with the appearance of the immigrants. Those on the \textit{Africana} struck them as ill and debilitated and their impression was that a "great laxity of discipline" had prevailed on the voyage.\textsuperscript{146} At the centre of the Commissioners' whole medical and disciplinary system was the Surgeon Superintendent. On him devolved total responsibility for all aspects of emigrant welfare from the health problems of the infants to the general moral tone of the single females.\textsuperscript{147} A Board enquiry on the \textit{Africana} found Surgeon O'Donnell inefficient in both his medical supervision and general discipline in respect of the single females.\textsuperscript{148} As this was not the first time the Board had reported him for this, it was now recommended that he not be re-employed and that he be denied the £60 normally given to Surgeons for the return passage to England.\textsuperscript{149}

The Commissioners certainly saw the position of Surgeon as demanding an all-round capacity not given to many men. Good Surgeons were those who had shown "... a peculiar aptitude for the delicate task of conveying, in good health and in good order, large mixed parties of men, women and children, without any of the powers of martial discipline or any direct means of control".\textsuperscript{150} On arrival in Sydney the Board took as evidence of this control healthy looking, well turned out emigrants and a clean ship. Surgeon Speir of the \textit{Bermonsdonay} in 1855 was credited with medical skill but lacked "decision", both ship and emigrants being in a "filthy state".\textsuperscript{151} [Figure 2.15, No. 17] Half of the Surgeons criticised by the Board in 1855 showed similar faults although, if a first offence, this was not considered sufficient cause for refusing re-employment. Most of these disciplinary problems were the result of youth and inexperience and, recognising the need for experienced men, the Commissioners finally offered their Surgeons

\textsuperscript{144} N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, p.2, combined report for 1860, 1861 and 1862.
\textsuperscript{145} Charter Party, \textit{Sapphire}, 3 January 1859, Ship's Papers, 9/6278, AONSW.
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Africana}, Immigration Board's enquiry, 6 April 1866.
\textsuperscript{147} Instructions for Surgeons of Emigrant Ships sailing under the superintendence of Her Majesty's Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, p.21, Immigration — Return to an Address of Mr O'Shanassery, \textit{Votes and Proceedings}, Legislative Council, Victoria, 1852.
\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Africana}, Immigration Board's enquiry, 6 April 1866.
\textsuperscript{149} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{150} Colonial Secretary, London, to Governor of N.S.W., Despatch No. ?, 15 December 1848, Colonial Office/N.S.W. Entry Books of Correspondence, CO.202/56.
\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Bermonsdonay}, ASR/NSW, 13 June 1855, 4/4623, AONSW.
permanent employment. A satisfactory report from the colony gave them payment on a sliding scale after 11 voyages of £1 per emigrant landed alive, a free cabin passage back to England and a guarantee of re-employment on reaching home. To the Immigration Agent in 1858 most of them were "ornaments to their profession" and by 1864 many men were making at least a temporary career of the service. Of the eight for whom records are available, six had already made six or more voyages with the Commissioners.

They needed the experience. To many Surgeons the medical requirements of their position must have seemed straightforward compared to the demands of keeping the emigrants clean and healthy. Surgeon Strutt produced order among his 217 Irish orphan girls on the Thomas Arbuthnot in 1850 "... under the constant steady pressure I keep up against rags, tatters and dirt". All Surgeons were instructed to keep decks and berths clean and the effort required had to come from the emigrants. Deck cleaning was done with sand and holystones, the sand first being heated in swing stoves to a temperature of 200° then spread 1 inch thick on the deck and pushed over the surface with a holystone. A similar procedure was used to clean the berths. Strutt tried to coax a maximum cleaning effort from his girls by bringing those from a dirty area to view a spotless portion of deck and then recording the names of those who seemed incapable of the same result in his "book". Three years after "Black 47" (1847), when thousands of their countrymen had perished of fever on Grosse Isle in the St Lawrence after the Atlantic passage, it is moving to read of the arrival in Sydney of these Famine orphans under Surgeon Strutt's care and the obvious pride he took in presenting his healthy charges to the Board:

... greatly pleased with the order and regularity of the ship, the fatness of my girls and the cleanliness of their berths, tables, deck, pots and pans etc. and to do the poor wenches justice they deserved the praise for they had exerted themselves and worked like horses.

152 N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1860, 1861 and 1862, op.cit., pp.5-6.
153 Ibid.
154 N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1858, pp.2-3. Details on Surgeons in 1864 in Ships' Papers, 1864, 9/6284 and 9/6285, AONSW.
155 Ibid., Ships' Papers, 1864.
156 Surgeon Strutt's diary, p.65, 7 December 1849, Ms.8345, La Trobe Library, Melbourne.
157 Instructions for Surgeons etc. ..., p.23.
158 Strutt diary, p.67, 3 January 1850.
159 For description of "Black 47" see Coleman, op.cit., Chapter 9, "1847, The Plague Year", pp.157/190.
160 Strutt diary, p.70, 4 February 1850.
Of all the clauses in the Commissioners’ contract with the ship owners none was regarded as more important for the achievement of successful discipline at sea than that which prohibited “on the part of the crew or Officers any intercourse with the female passengers”.\textsuperscript{161} Berthed separately in the stern they were to be kept apart not only from the crew but also from the single male emigrants. Matrons were appointed by the Commissioners to help the Surgeon both to enforce this regulation and with general supervision. Matron Brock on the \textit{Africana} was one of the Commissioners’ permanent matrons who, like the Surgeon, was entitled to a gratuity, free return passage and re-employment.\textsuperscript{162} She was however judged by the Board to have become physically incapable of her duties and, while she received her full gratuity, they recommended that she not be re-appointed.\textsuperscript{163}

Permanent Matrons were a feature of the 1860s; previously matrons had been appointed from the ranks of the emigrants. During this earlier period there are indications that some Matrons may have found the Irish females difficult to control. The \textit{Sapphire} in 1859 was an exclusively Irish ship, 98% of the emigrants being Gaelic speakers from Gweedore and Cloughaneely in north-west Donegal.\textsuperscript{164} As Matron the Commissioners selected from among the remaining passengers, Mrs Bleakley, a married middle-aged Protestant from County Tyrone.\textsuperscript{165} The Surgeon, finding her to be of little use surrounded by 111 Donegal Irish speaking Catholic women, dismissed her and appointed one of their own, 20 year old Grace Ferry.\textsuperscript{166} Grace was reported to have “performed well”.\textsuperscript{167} A similar situation arose on the \textit{Wacousta} in 1855 where Surgeon Berncastle dismissed the Commissioners’ English appointee as “unequal to her task of maintaining order among so great a number of immigrant women”.\textsuperscript{168}

Choosing from among the emigrants for what was a demanding disciplinary role can only have been a hit and miss affair. From 1859 the Commissioners, with financial approval from the colony, began building a corps of permanent Matrons who, they felt,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{161} Charter Party, \textit{Sapphire}, 3 January 1859, Clause 27.
\item \textsuperscript{162} N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1860, 1861 and 1862, p.6. For CLEC Matron’s Instructions, 1860, see \textit{Annie Wilson}, Ship’s Papers, 9/6281, AONSW.
\item \textsuperscript{163} \textit{Africana}, Immigration Board’s Enquiry, 6 April 1866.
\item \textsuperscript{164} \textit{Sapphire}, arrived 24 May 1859, IBL/NSW, 4/4980.
\item \textsuperscript{165} \textit{Ibid.}, Entry for Mrs Bleakley.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Report on the Immigrants, Surgeon Davies, 24 May 1859, \textit{Sapphire}, Ship’s Papers, 9/6278, AONSW.
\item \textsuperscript{167} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{168} \textit{Wacousta}, ASR/NSW, 10 January 1855, 4/4623.
\end{itemize}
would gain in experience from making a number of voyages.\textsuperscript{169} By 1864 the system seemed to be working well as all the Matrons in that year were reported on favourably by the Surgeons and the Immigration Agent also deemed it a success. Mary Grady on the \textit{Sandringham} in 1864 however was not impressed with Matron Robertson. Mary was one of a number of girls in Mess 25 who, after being caught by a Sub/Matron speaking to sailors through the water closet door, were placed in Mess 40 — the “Black Mess”.\textsuperscript{170} Mary believed herself victimised by the Matron and accused her of not punishing others as severely for similar offences. In particular two English girls, caught speaking to sailors through the bulkhead separating the single females from the married people, were only kept below for a couple of days and were not placed in the Black Mess.\textsuperscript{171} Irish girls may at times have been treated slightly more harshly by English Matrons but they may also have been the victims of their own quick tongues and unwillingness to show an expected deference. On the \textit{John Knox} in 1850 the schoolmaster regularly complained to the Surgeon about the impertinence of the Irish girls only to be told that what he took to be cheek was “often only Irish readiness of repartee”.\textsuperscript{172}

This tight control over the single women may seem needlessly restrictive but it was probably advisable under the circumstances. Where ships arrived in a small port like Sydney in the 1850s it quickly became known if activities shocking to conventional morality had occurred during the voyage. The safeguarding of the reputations of the single females, as well as their own, was regarded as of first importance by the Commissioners and the local authorities. Moreover many of these girls needed to find positions with Sydney’s middle and upper middle classes: to be branded as one of the “girls from that ship” would have been a slur none would have wished to carry. The voyage was also a period of transition for many of them from a small, crowded cabin in rural Ireland to the solid homes of Macquarie Street. Patronising though his comments were Immigration Agent Browne was right to praise the Matron and the Surgeon for their supervision of the single women on the \textit{Wacousta} in 1855.\textsuperscript{173} Browne described most of them as Irish who had never been in service but thanks to the Matron and the Surgeon they now “manifested evident signs of improvement from the habits of industry which had been inculcated in their minds during the voyage and rendered them more suitable for

\textsuperscript{169} N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1860, 1861 and 1862, p.6.

\textsuperscript{170} Statement of Catherine Grady an immigrant per \textit{Sandringham}, Ship’s Papers, 9/6284, AONSW.

\textsuperscript{171} \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{172} Surgeon Greenup’s comments on report of schoolmaster, J.F.H. Jones, May 17 1850, IC/NSW, 9/6194.

\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Wacousta}, ASR/NSW, 10 January 1855.
domestic service ... than has hitherto been the case with girls of their description". They had no complaints about them.

The last official on the Africana to have his gratuity approved of by the Agent was the schoolmaster, Thomas Daly. Thomas, a policeman from Drumlish, County Longford, had been appointed from among the emigrants by the Commissioners and received the standard amount of £5.175 His school had been attended by 68 adults and 33 children. As no Schoolmasters’ report has survived for this ship we cannot tell if Eliza Fife was among those adults who made use of his services.176 She stated herself to be literate on arrival and it is likely that she was so before departure. These shipboard schools of the 1850s and 1860s were a unique feature of the Commissioners’ ships and their very existence shows that the Commissioners’ concept of caring for the emigrants went beyond a mere concern for their physical well-being.

Mortality on the voyage was a good indication of the effectiveness of all the Commissioners’ arrangements. On average there were 2.5 deaths per voyage on the 56 government ships which arrived in Sydney between 1860 and 1866. The five deaths on the Africana might have concerned the Immigration Agent but he discounted those of Thomas Ryan and David Mulholland from Ireland as, with the connivance of their doctors, both had deceived the depot authorities and embarked suffering from consumption.177 Their deaths therefore could hardly be blamed on anything which might have occurred on the passage.

In general the death rate on the Commissioners’ ships between 1848 and 1870 was low. An examination of three years — 1849, 1855 and 1864 — reveals a steady decline in absolute mortality from 2.1% in 1849 to 0.7% by 1864. [Figure 2.17] In his 1864 report Agent Wise drew attention to the less than 1% mortality rate of the years 1860 to 1863 attributing this to improved sanitary arrangements, better diet, good distilled water and the regular enforcement of the Commissioners’ regulations by the Surgeons.178 This absolute decline however contained some striking differences between age groups: the adult death rate in 1849 was only 0.7%, that for children 6.4%. Even in 1864, when the adult rate had shrunk to 0.3%, that for children was still a relatively high 2.7%.

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174 Ibid.
175 Africana, ASR/NSW, 3 May 1866.
176 Schoolmasters’ reports have been located for 17 ships between 1858 and 1867. Most are in the Ships’ Papers collection but some were found in a search through the Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence for 1855 suggesting that many more could be located in that record series.
177 Africana, ASR/NSW, 3 May 1866.
178 N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1860, 1861 and 1862, p.2.
retrospective mortality table produced by the Commissioners in 1869 reveals further that it was those aged 4 and under who were most at risk, 60% of all deaths among those despatched to N.S.W. from 1855 occurring in that age group.\textsuperscript{179} [Figure 2.16]

The Irish however were no more likely to die on the voyage than other U.K. emigrants. Between 1848 and 1855, the only years for which comparative national figures are available, the Irish had a lower death rate than either the English or the Scots. [Figure 2.17] What is perhaps surprising here is that even those who emigrated during the last years of the Famine, 1847 to 1851, had a low mortality rate. Of all the N.S.W. assisted Irish these people might have been expected to be in a weakened state and hence more susceptible to the rigours of a very long ocean voyage. The impoverished condition of immediate post — Famine Ireland did show up in the figures for one year — 1852. The Irish death rate of 3.9% in that year was considerably higher than for any other year for which national figures exist and was caused by the outbreak of typhus in three ships carrying large numbers of Irish emigrants.\textsuperscript{180} As was explained above, in relation to the inadequate clothing of these people, the Sydney Health Officer attributed their deaths to a heightened vulnerability to disease brought on by poverty and distress at home.\textsuperscript{181}

Irish children between 1 and 13 also had a slightly lower death rate than the English or Scots. [Figure 2.18] Only among the infants do the Irish seem to have been slightly more vulnerable but here rates were high all round. Again, surprisingly, the Famine years of 1849 and 1850 show a lower death rate than for English infants. [Figure 2.19] But it was the adults who were the vast majority of the emigrants and here, although death rates were low for each national group, the Irish proportionately lost only half as many people on the passage as the English. [Figure 2.20]

The decline in shipboard deaths on the Australian assisted passage after the mid-1850s has been exhaustively investigated by McDonald and Shломовитц who conclude that these emigrants were the first European seaboard population "whose adult mortality rate at sea was reduced to that on land".\textsuperscript{182} Even in the years of relatively high mortality between 1836 and 1853 the adult assisted emigrants had a death rate just under half that

\textsuperscript{179} Appendix 10, Analysis of the Mortality in Ships despatched to New South Wales during the 15 years ended 31 December 1869, 23rd General Report of the Emigration Commissioners, 1870, p.73, \textit{BPP}, 1870, Vol.17.

\textsuperscript{180} Evidence of Port Health Officer, A. Savage R.N., Select Committee on Immigration, 1852, p.40, \textit{op.cit.}

\textsuperscript{181} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{182} John McDonald and Ralph Shломовитц, "Mortality on Emigrant Voyages to Australia in the 19th Century", \textit{Explorations in Economic History}, No.27, 1990, p.86.
of New York emigrants.\textsuperscript{183} For children during the same period the picture was less bright on either passage but the American figures for deaths among those under 1 were a third as much again as those for Australia.\textsuperscript{184} However, after 1853 mortality rates for infants and children, while still much higher than the adult rates, also declined dramatically on assisted voyages to all the Australian colonies.\textsuperscript{185} Given that the N.S.W. Irish figures for 1848 to 1855 were little different from those for other U.K. emigrants, there is no reason to think that Irish death rates did not decline in line with the general Australian figures. For the Irish therefore, as for the other emigrants, the assisted passage was a safe passage.

The above account, of necessity broad and general, nevertheless conveys the essence of the system adopted by the Commissioners to ensure reasonable conditions of emigration for the Irish and indeed all the Australian assisted emigrants of the 1850s. What of general conditions on the Atlantic voyage during this same period? Rather than making the comparison repetitively point by point a single quote from MacDonagh captures that journey and provides a stark contrast with how the Irish were treated on their way to Sydney:

There was no sanitary system whatever on most vessels before 1850, and never one which worked; and there was no privacy. Men and women had to clothe and unclothe (if they did), and “relieve nature” ... in sight of one another. Some did not even bring “utensils” aboard, and more or less filth ... accumulated on the floors and especially below the bottom row of bunks. The wooden berths bedded at least 4 people — often more. On 9 vessels out of 10 no attempt was made to segregate the sexes before it was made obligatory to do so in 1849; and as late as 1860 the separation was not effectively enforced. Even young girls travelling alone were allotted beds at random with other passengers. Some sat on their bundles night after night rather than expose themselves to molestation.\textsuperscript{186}

One final aspect of the voyage, touched on above in describing the depot and embarkation, was the extent to which the Irish Catholics were the objects of a religious or racial prejudice which might have had the effect of developing and strengthening a sense of national separateness. In those parts of the Immigration Agent’s reports dealing specifically with the passage there is no indication of any such prejudice. It did occasionally emerge in official enquiries resulting from complaints to the Board by the emigrants. On the *Ocean Empress* in 1864 three Catholic girls, Eliza Duffy from Monaghan, Ann Callaghan from Tipperary and Mary Cashin from Kilkenny, all accused

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid. Table p.96.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{186} MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, op.cit., p.49
the Matron, Mrs Charlotte Wale, of calling them “Dirty Irish”. Another Catholic, Ellen Keogh from Dublin, refuted this charge having heard the Matron say that the Irish were dirty “when they did not do their duty in cleaning up”. Mrs Murphy also testified to Mrs Wale’s kindness. It would be unusual if at times of stress officials had not occasionally resorted to racial insults but reports of this are rare in official sources. Perhaps this is to be expected as it was only likely to come to light when individuals felt aggrieved enough to bring it to the Board’s attention.

What did set the majority of the Irish apart on board once again was the Catholic religion. There are many references to separate religious services: while the Surgeon was holding the official Church of England service, as he was instructed to do every Sunday in the absence of a minister, the Catholics would typically be below at their own prayers. Officially the Commissioners ruled that everyone was entitled to “worship God according to their own consciences”, and this principle was upheld by the Surgeons. On the David McIver in 1858 Surgeon Burrows publicly admonished a Mr Isaacs “who had caused some ill feeling among the Catholics by expounding the Scriptures”. Burrows however, while asserting in public that he had done “all in his own power” to allow separate worship, made his own prejudices clear by “adding that he believed the Bible to be the only guide to Salvation”. Surgeons had of course a duty to prevent and defuse any potential source of friction between different groups of emigrants. The Thomas Arbuthnot in 1850 was a 100% Irish ship carrying Workhouse orphan girls and her Surgeon, Charles Strutt, tried to stop any Protestant/Catholic conflict right from the start:

He next gave them a lesson in Christian charity, by repressing the discontents that were expressed by some of the Catholic girls, at having Protestant partners in their berths; each berth being adapted for two persons; and, vice versa, the Protestant girls, in the same manner, expressing their distaste for their Catholic comrades. He told them, that on so long a voyage together, they would find it was in their interest, as it certainly was their duty, to be kind and accommodate to each other ... [he] should set all those down for HERETICS, who betrayed ill humour,

187 On a sheet of paper, no heading, but clearly notes of evidence for Immigration Board’s Enquiry, Ocean Empress, Ship’s Papers, 9/6284.
188 Ibid.
189 Ibid.
190 There are many references to this separation. For an example see Surgeon Strutt’s dairy, p.63, 11 November 1849.
191 Matron’s diary, David McIver, 5 September 1858, Ship’s Papers, 9/6277, AONSW.
192 Ibid.
193 Ibid.
selfishness, or a desire to make those around them uncomfortable.194

As many entries in his diary make clear Strutt had little personal respect for the Catholic faith but he never allowed this to influence his behaviour towards Catholics either as individuals or in groups. Nevertheless on government emigrant ships Irish Catholics were confronted by an official world which was in general Protestant and this can only have emphasised and strengthened their sense of difference.

No matter where the emigrants came from in Ireland or eventually settled in Australia the journey to Sydney was the central experience for each of them in the emigration process. This chapter has tried to show how that experience was unique in mid-19th century Irish emigration because it was both organised and carefully monitored by government agencies. Their aim was a level of care and supervision unheard of on that most common of Irish emigrant pathways — the journey to North America. From the moment the emigrants reached an Irish cross channel port the responsibility for seeing they arrived safely and in good health at their destination was no longer solely theirs. Moreover it was an experience which varied little from the other colonies, all of whom ran similar emigration systems and entrusted their emigrants to the care of the Emigration Commissioners for their journey to Australia.

Such conclusions however are those of the historian striving for perspective, overview and generalisation. What remains elusive is the felt life of the emigrants and their families of which surviving letters give us a brief insight. Perhaps at this remove of time we can come no nearer to the voyage than William Fife of Drumcullion, County Fermanagh. Hearing of the arrival in 1860 of Nixon and Faithy in Sydney he wrote to them expressing his sense of their journey and ascribing their safe arrival less to the secular concern of the Commissioners than to divine providence:

... I followed yous in imagination every Day of your tedious voyage I looked at you's Sometimes cast Down and sorrowful looking and ready to Say Why did I love home For this state of confinement of Danger and alarm at other times Cheerful and gay Looking forward with Blooming hopes of reching the desired harbour By and By Land was seen Land Land was the General Cry of each passenger, after Sometime the long looked for Sydney appeared Full in view there was Grateful hearts and uplifted hands to the Almighty God For his preserving care ... Gratitude I trust possessed Both your hearts for the preserving care of God unto yous while passing over the Foaming Billows.195

194 Surgeon Strutt, typescript article, _op.cit._, pp.3/4.
Chapter 3

"At No Port is More Regard Paid ... to the Immigrants' Welfare": The Arrival and Dispersal of the Irish Assisted Immigrants at Sydney, 1848–1870

In 1850 an Englishman Robert Garnham heard what MacDonagh describes as the "babel of disembarkation in the modern Babylon" — New York. 1 Asked by the 1851 Select Committee on the Passenger Acts if he had ever seen an Irish vessel arriving at that port Garnham replied:

Yes: I saw several arrive, and the confusion and uproar that they made might be heard a great distance off.

Were they seized on, in the way you have described, by the crowd of persons who seized hold of the other emigrants ...?

Decidedly. That you can see without being close to them. 2

After negotiating the perils of Liverpool and enduring the passage the Irish had now to contend with the perils of the port of New York. Here again were "runners" waiting to seize their bags, inveigle them into low lodging houses and sell them fraudulent or overpriced tickets for onward transportation. 3 As with the voyage it was an experience which contrasted starkly with the arrival of a government ship in N.S.W.

On 3 February 1850 the Thomas Arbuthnot, carrying 217 Irish orphan girls, anchored just off Garden Island in Sydney Harbour. 4 The Colonial Secretary, the Port Health Officer and the Immigration Agent went on board next day and were, according to the Surgeon, highly impressed with the state of the ship and the immigrants. 5 On the 5th a clerk obtained from each girl those personal details required for drawing up the Immigration Board's arrival list and, on the following day, the Board members spent one hour interviewing the girls. The year before they had sat for four days on this same ship

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1 Oliver MacDonagh, "The Irish in Australia—a General View ", O. MacDonagh and W.F. Mandle (eds), Ireland and Irish-Australia: Studies in Cultural and Political History, Sydney, 1986, p.162.


3 For full description of the arrival at New York see Coleman, Passage to America, op.cit., Chapter 11, "Quarantine, Runners and Rackets", pp.209/234.

4 Thomas Arbuthnot, arrived 3 February 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4919.

5 Strutt diary, p.70, 4 February 1850.
to investigate complaints laid by the immigrants.\textsuperscript{6} Finally, five days after arrival, the girls were landed and taken to the female immigrant depot. From there 110 of them were indentured as apprentice domestic servants to employers throughout the city while another group was taken up country and similarly hired out.\textsuperscript{7}

This ordered procedure characterised the way in which assisted immigrants were received in Sydney between 1848 and 1870. Here, as at any port, immigrants faced immediate concerns: with few funds where were they to stay, where were they to find work, what was a fair wage in the colony and how were they to know this, and what would happen if they fell ill before being able to begin employment? The N.S.W. immigration authorities helped them to deal with these problems and, while their efforts were directed to all the assisted immigrants, the Irish were particular beneficiaries of the system as the great majority of them arriving direct from the U.K. did so on government ships.

A. Arriving

The authorities had two main aims when the immigrants reached Sydney; firstly to ensure they were properly looked after while waiting for employment and secondly to assist them in finding work. The former could involve both the Immigration Department and the government in many aspects of immigrant welfare. These ranged from such simple matters as giving the immigrants the opportunity to disembark in a clean state to taking care of single pregnant females. It was not always easy to arrive clean. For most emigrants the last six weeks of the voyage were the worst. As ships ran with the wind across the stormy swell of the Southern Ocean and then beat up the coast for Sydney from the southern corner of Tasmania, passengers were often kept below for days, even weeks. Boxes could not be brought up from the hold and it was often impossible either to wash or to change their clothes. Before the mid 1850s, unless they were quarantined, government vessels made straight for the anchorage point in Sydney Cove. In 1853 the Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, suggested that all ships should first put in at the Quarantine Station at South Head to allow boxes to be opened and clothes to be washed.\textsuperscript{8} In 1852 Browne himself had witnessed the resultant lift in immigrant morale when this was permitted on the \textit{Kate}, half of whose immigrants were Irish:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[6] \textit{Ibid.}, p.71, 6 May 1850.
\item[7] N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Surgeon Strutt, 18 February 1850, Copies of letters sent to miscellaneous persons re migration to N.S.W. (hereafter CLMP/NSW), 4/4638, AONS.
\end{footnotes}
it would be of great benefit to the people, for as it is they land with a large quantity of dirty clothes ... I am quite satisfied it would be a great comfort to them, for they would land with all their clothes clean. I had a good opportunity of seeing the effect of the Quarantine Regulations, for I was put in quarantine myself, having boarded the Kate before she was admitted to pratique. I then had an opportunity of seeing the people in Quarantine washing their clothes, and there certainly was a great turn out of very dirty clothes from very smart looking boxes.\footnote{9}

By the 1860s, when the Irish were at least 70\% of the passengers on every government ship, it was standard practice to stop for four or five days at the Quarantine Station before moving up to the Cove. In 1864 the \textit{Wanata} spent a week at the Quarantine Station as, according to the Surgeon, there had been no opportunity to wash for six weeks before arrival owing to bad weather.\footnote{10} Inspection by both the Board and the Agent took place only after the final anchorage was reached and, compared to the mid 1850s, few ships after 1860 were reported by the Agent to have arrived with immigrants in a “dirty state”.\footnote{11}

Even on final arrival emigrants remained a government responsibility. From 1848 right through the 1850s and 1860s the Commissioners’ contract with the ship owner provided for 14 days free accommodation and food beginning with the day after arrival.\footnote{12} During these “lay days”, as long as any immigrant remained on board, the ship was not to be converted to carry cargo by having the bunks removed.\footnote{13} For those on board the diet was to be improved by the issue of fresh meat and vegetables.\footnote{14} The instructions issued by both the Commissioners and the local authorities informed the Surgeon that his responsibilities ceased only when the last immigrant disembarked.\footnote{15} Rather hopefully these same instructions suggested to the Surgeon that “so far as it may be practicable” the same discipline be maintained in harbour as was “observed on the passage”.\footnote{16} To assist him a policeman was stationed on the ship whose main duty was to prevent any immigrant leaving before the Board’s inspection or any unauthorised person coming on

\begin{footnotes}
\item[9] \textit{Ibid.}
\item[10] Surgeon Holman, Spring Cove, to Immigration Agent, 9 September 1864, \textit{Wanata}, Ship’s Papers, 9/6285.
\item[11] \textit{See Agent’s Shhips Reports, 1862-1866, 4/4624, AONSW.}
\item[12] Charter Party, 1847, p.15, Clause 14, CLEC to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 3 November 1847, miscellaneous papers and letters relating to immigration, \textit{Votes and Proceedings}, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1848.
\item[13] \textit{Ibid.}, Clause 15.
\item[14] \textit{Ibid.}, Clause 9.
\item[15] Surgeon’s arrival instructions, printed circular from N.S.W. Immigration Department, Clause 8, \textit{Persia}, Ship’s Papers, 9/6283.
\item[16] \textit{Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
board. In particular no employer was allowed to have any contact with the ship until the advertised time for hiring. In 1849 the “notorious Kitty Wright”, a brothel keeper from Castlereagh Street, had tried to gain access to the ship to hire single females, allegedly as servants, but was recognised and turned away. Assisted emigrants therefore would have left home knowing that at Sydney they would not be dumped on shore and left to fend for themselves. Strangely, the fact that they had 14 days free board on arrival appeared on only one of the Commissioners’ circulars to intending emigrants that for 1848. Perhaps it was felt that to emphasise this benefit would act as a disincentive to immigrants to hire themselves as quickly as possible.

Immigrants who arrived sick did not have to worry about medical attention as they were entitled to this free. On his arrival on the Ramillies in 1850, Patrick Collins of Tipperary, was certified by the Port Health Officer to be in a “debilitated condition”. The Surgeon reported this in person to the Immigration Office and was issued with a form authorising Patrick’s admission to the Sydney Infirmary. The cost of his treatment was borne by Department funds. Families were similarly looked after. Edward Nagle, who arrived in 1848 from Abbey, County Clare, on the Hyderabad was placed straight away into the Invalid Establishment at Parramatta. His family were initially boarded in Sydney at the old Immigrant Barracks in Bent Street but then removed to Parramatta to lodgings in the town at government expense. They were also issued with rations from the government store. Upon Nagle’s recovery, the Police magistrate at Parramatta was instructed to assist him in finding employment.

Pregnant single women were similarly cared for although only after they had been segregated from the other women. In 1848 the Colonial Secretary authorised the Agent to meet their medical expenses but not to house them in the Barracks. They were to be sent to the old Female Factory at Parramatta where a special room was set aside for them.

17 Ibid., Clause 2.
18 Ibid.
19 N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Revd. Dr Ross, 23 November 1849, CLMP/NSW, 4/4637.
20 Notice on Free Emigration to Australia, January 1848, CLEC Circulars 1817/1851, CO/EMOC, CO.384/87.
21 The Health Officer to the Agent for Immigration, recommending Patrick Collins, an immigrant per Ship Ramillies, for admission into the Infirmary, N.S.W. Immigration Department form, 14 August 1850, IC/NSW, 9/6194.
22 Ibid.
23 N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Parramatta, 22 May 1849, CLMP/NSW, 4/4635.
24 Ibid.
25 N.S.W. Colonial Secretary to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 28 August 1848, IC/NSW, 9/6193.
By 1852 this special room was at the Lunatic Invalid Establishment at Parramatta and it was there that Julia Ballinger of Kilkeedy, County Clare, gave birth in July 1852.\footnote{Medical Superintendent, Lunatic Invalid Establishment, Parramatta to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 13 September 1852, IC/NSW, 9/6197.} Julia had arrived on the \textit{Neptune} on 18 February 1852 clearly pregnant but with a number of months to go before the child was due.\footnote{\textit{Neptune}, arrived 18 February 1852, IBL/NSW, 4/4925.} However the Department would not have allowed her to hire out in that condition and she was sent to Parramatta. The infant died on the 11th of September and the only position Julia was then able to obtain was that of a wet nurse “for as long as her services are required”.\footnote{Female Servant’s Agreement, Julia Ballinger, with Medical Superintendent, Parramatta to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 13 September 1852, IC/NSW, 9/6197.}

Families in distress were also offered assistance. On 20 May 1850 the Fennelly family from Mullinahone, County Tipperary arrived on the \textit{Thetis}.\footnote{\textit{Thetis}, arrived 20 May 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4919.} The Agent sent them up country on 24th to hire out from the Goulburn depot. When the family breadwinner, Robert Fennelly, died in the depot, the depot superintendent was authorised to send the widow Fennelly and children back to Parramatta at government expense. There the children were admitted to the Roman Catholic Orphan School and their mother helped to find employment locally.\footnote{N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Depot Superintendent, Goulburn, 12 August 1850, and N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Parramatta, 1 September 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.}

In port as on the voyage the single females were carefully looked after and strictly supervised. Agent Browne had “the girls removed to the depot as soon as possible after the arrival of the vessel”.\footnote{Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on Retrenchment in the Public Expenditure, p.62, \textit{Votes and Proceedings}, N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, 1858, Vol.3.} This he felt prevented any new liaisons being formed in the harbour, as voyage discipline inevitably slackened; such removal also terminated any “intimacy” that had occurred on the passage.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} A common sight at Sydney Cove between 1848 and 1870 was that of large groups of young female immigrants, the majority of them Irish, being ferried ashore by steamer from a government ship. From there they walked through the town to the Female Immigrant Barracks at Hyde Park. On the 8 February 1850, with much “weeping and wailing”, the Irish orphan girls from the \textit{Thomas Arbuthnot} left the ship, were taken by steamer to shore and, with Surgeon Strutt at their head, walked up Macquarie Street to the Barracks.\footnote{Strutt diary, p.71, 8 February 1850.}
This building, the old Hyde Park convict barracks, was vacated by the Superintendent of Convicts in the middle of 1848 and renovated to house the Irish Workhouse orphans.\textsuperscript{34} It was then used, right to the end of assisted immigration in the 1880s, as a reception and hiring-out centre for all single females. In early 1848 Agent Merewether had been opposed to any kind of shore depot in Sydney for newly arrived immigrants feeling that all who failed to hire from the ship should be sent at once into the interior.\textsuperscript{35} However, in late August, faced by the imminent arrival of the \textit{Earl Grey} with the first large consignment of Irish orphans, and the prospect of more to come, he proposed taking over the old convict barracks, not only for the orphans, but for all “unprotected females on their arrival”\textsuperscript{36} From 1848 on the Barracks was virtually an Irish institution. Only in 1857 and 1858 was the combined total of English and Scottish servants passing through Hyde Park greater than that of the Irish.\textsuperscript{37}

Life in the Barracks was disciplined and regulated. [Document 3.1] The girls had to rise at 6 a.m. and clean the dormitories as they would a “military barracks”. This area was locked up at 12 noon and the inmates were then directed to occupy themselves with sewing or reading in the dining room. From 2 to 4 p.m. all the girls had to be present in the Hiring Room “prepared to see applicants for servants”. With permission from the Matron, an inmate was permitted two hours leave every alternate day during her stay, provided this leave never extended beyond 4 p.m. Supper was at 6 p.m. and all lights were extinguished at 10 p.m. No outsider was permitted to “see or communicate” with any girl without the permission of the Agent and, where this was allowed, the meeting had to take place in the Hiring Room without any other immigrant being present. Every effort was made to enforce this rule against outside communication. In July 1859 two men and a woman scaled the wall between the institution and the adjoining government establishment and held a conversation with some recently arrived girls from County Donegal off the \textit{Lady Elma Bruce}.\textsuperscript{38} The Agent wrote at once to the Colonial Architect to have the wall built up to a sufficient height to prevent any further infringement of the regulations. All in all the colonial authorities did everything in their power to carry out the

\textsuperscript{34} The first suggestion that the old Hyde Park convict barracks be used as an Immigration Depot was put forward by N.S.W. Immigration Agent, F.S.L. Merewether, in 1848 to cope with the expected arrival of the first shipload of Irish workhouse orphans. N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 31 August 1848, Copies of Letters sent to Colonial Secretary re migration to N.S.W. (hereafter CLCS/NSW), 4/4610, AONSW.

\textsuperscript{35} N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 27 January 1848, CLCS/NSW, 4/4610.

\textsuperscript{36} N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 31 August 1848.

\textsuperscript{37} In 1857/58 a total of 2,168 English and Scots female domestics arrived compared to 1,371 Irish. N.S.W Immigration Agent’s Reports, 1856/57 and 1858, Table F (both reports), Trades and Callings.

\textsuperscript{38} N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Colonial Architect, 25 July 1859, 2/642B, AONSW.
Commissioners’ request that single women be provided with a highly protected environment on arrival. Indeed Agent Merewether felt the employing classes could put their trust in girls obtained from the Barracks as they were kept there “in the same privacy as they would be subjected to in respectable service”.

Concern for the girls became overbearing when it extended to opening their letters although this was not a requirement under the printed regulations. Such treatment was revealed in the illegally written letter of an inmate to a sailor:

I would write you a few lines has I find no pleasure in anything else its such a miserable place to be in you are kept like so many prisoners caged ... dont write to me here as I am told all the letters are broke open I shant be able to write unless I can get them out on the sly ... one girl has been kept here a fortnight for receiving a letter from one of the sailors.

This letter from an English girl on the Fitzjames in 1857 was sent to a sailmaker on the ship but intercepted by the Captain; he sent it to Agent Browne, who undoubtedly had words with the writer. Moreover Barracks regulations were strictly and impartially enforced, as was shown in 1849 by the Agent’s rebuke to Matron Capps for allowing Mary Bourke of Dublin to go out without permission. Mary, aged 29, was felt by the Matron not to “require the surveillance that inexperience demands”. Agent Merewether saw this as no excuse and censured Mrs Capps accordingly:

It is essential that the Regulations of the Institution should be observed by all the inmates alike without distinction of persons.

One aspect of the single Irish girls to which Agent Browne took great exception was their alleged lack of personal cleanliness. The great majority of single female arrivals in 1854 and 1855 were, as Browne put it, “from the farming districts of Ireland and Scotland ... who, when received into the Institution [were] found to be in a very filthy state”. That some of the girls undoubtedly were not clean enough to hire on arrival is corroborated by the experience of Alexander Moore of Pitt Street who hired Margaret Fahey of Galbally, County Tipperary, from the Barracks on 23 August 1854. One month later Moore asked to be released from his contract with Margaret as “to our great surprise

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40 Letter, no date, no signature, addressed to “Dear Charley”, and Captain Hamilton to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 8 April 1857, IC/NSW, 9/6213.

41 Matron Capps to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 7 February 1849, IC/NSW, 9/6191. For Agent Merewether’s comments see the marginal annotations to this letter.

42 Ibid.

43 N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 29 December 1854, N.S.W. Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence (hereafter CSC/NSW), 4/3282, AONSW.
and disgust she is overrun with vermin”\textsuperscript{44} This condition, she admitted to Moore, existed before she had hired to him. Moore wanted another servant but made no specification that she should not be Irish, only that she should be someone “upon whose cleanliness Mrs Moore can depend”\textsuperscript{45} In explanation Browne mentioned that the Surgeon of the ship on which Margaret arrived, the \textit{Lady Elgin}, had been seriously ill and that consequently the immigrants had been in a “filthy condition”.\textsuperscript{46} Even a “compulsory cleaning” carried out at the Barracks had not been entirely satisfactory.\textsuperscript{47} The inconvenience to Moore was regretted but this was not a sufficient reason to override the contract. Never the less Browne determined to do something about the whole question of unclean arrivals.

In late December 1854 he requested permission to build a small bathroom with hot and cold water in the yard beside the Barracks.\textsuperscript{48} The girls should not be allowed to enter service until “not only their linen but also their persons are in a cleanly state”.\textsuperscript{49} The Colonial Secretary was surprised that nobody had thought of having a bathroom at the Barracks before and authorised the Colonial Architect to proceed with estimates for its construction.\textsuperscript{50} However the personal cleanliness of Irish immigrants became less of a problem when the cost of building the baths was estimated at £1,000. “I think we must be content for the moment without the bath” was the Colonial Secretary’s response.\textsuperscript{51}

Religious provision was not neglected at the Barracks. From 1848 an official Church of England clergyman was appointed to both the immigrants on board ship in the Cove and to the females at Hyde Park.\textsuperscript{52} The Catholics were attended to on a voluntary basis by the parish priest of St Mary’s and the Sisters of Mercy.\textsuperscript{53} Surgeon Strutt left a colourful description of the impact of the Sisters on a group of high spirited Irish

\begin{footnotes}
\item[44] Alexander Moore to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 23 September 1854, IC/NSW, 9/6206.
\item[45] \textit{Ibid}.
\item[46] \textit{Ibid.}, Agent Browne’s draft reply to Moore.
\item[47] \textit{Ibid.}, Browne’s draft reply.
\item[48] N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 29 December 1854.
\item[49] \textit{Ibid}.
\item[50] \textit{Ibid.}, N.S.W. Colonial Secretary’s marginal annotation.
\item[51] N.S.W. Colonial Secretary’s marginal annotation on Colonial Architect to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 23 February 1855, CSC/NSW, 4/4382.
\item[53] \textit{Ibid}.
\end{footnotes}
orphans. Four days after he had delivered the *Thomas Arbuthnot* girls into their spiritual care he visited the Barracks:

These good ladies, with their black dresses, venerable years, and grave and somewhat austere countenances, spread a monastic sphere of quietness and gloom throughout the place.54

His girls rushed to greet him claiming that they had prayed enough.55

For Church of England adherents the Emigrant Chaplain was instructed to hold Sunday services at St James’s just across from the Barracks while the Catholics went to mass at nearby St Mary’s. Soon however it was felt that this church attendance outside the institution was bad for discipline. In 1855 Agent Browne recalled that, when allowed out to church, many Irish Catholic girls would “loiter” about outside instead of going in.56 They also showed a reluctance to return which had been “detrimental to the discipline of the establishment”.57 For this reason a Roman Catholic chaplain was appointed who came in to conduct services and the practice of sending out the Protestants to St James’ was also stopped.58 This situation, which arose during the period of Irish orphan immigration from 1848 to 1850 may not have lasted into the 1860s, when all the single female arrivals were older remittance immigrants. In general however Browne praised the contribution of the Chaplains of both faiths, not only for their official religious duties, but also for the general advice they were able to offer the girls on colonial conditions and in assessing employers.59

To a limited extent the protection of the Barracks was also extended to those who had left it. A number of Irish orphan girls, whose indentures with their employers were cancelled by the courts, had to be accepted back as they were legally wards of the state.60 Throughout the period of orphan immigration it was also common practice to re-admit any immigrant girl to Hyde Park but, on becoming Immigration Agent in 1851, Captain Browne refused to do so except “in certain cases”.61 Indeed in the printed regulations framed by Browne the Matron was forbidden to “afford the protection of the Institution to

54 Strutt diary, p.71, 12 February 1850.
55 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
any servants out of place”.

To regain this protection a girl had now to approach Browne and obtain his written authority. Of the 31 readmitted in 1854 21 were Irish. In 11 of these cases employment had been lost through illness and the girls placed at government expense in the Sydney Infirmary. When they recovered they were allowed to hire again from the Barracks. Browne’s policy was to accept back those who could produce a good character from their employer and who had not been dismissed through any fault of their own. Mary McCue, who arrived from Enniskillen, County Fermanagh on the Fortune in April 1853, returned from the country in 1854 and, having no friends in the city, was allowed to hire again from Hyde Park.

Others seeking re-admission were not so successful. Jane Taylor from Dublin went with her mother to Maitland in 1855 to live with her uncle, James Quiggan. She wrote to Browne claiming she could find no employment as a housemaid and requesting that she be allowed to hire from the Barracks as it was “a place for the friendless female”. Browne refused but did allow her to use the local Maitland depot. Moreover incompetency was not accepted as a sufficient ground for taking a girl back. On 11 July 1864 Bridget Shanahan of Killokennedy, County Clare recently arrived on the Sandringham, was hired as a general servant by John Jenkins of Watson’s Bay, Sydney. On the 15th Mrs Jenkins wrote to Agent Wise claiming that Bridget was incapable of performing her duties and asked that the Matron at Hyde Park find her another situation. Wise replied that once engaged servants could not simply be sent back to the Barracks for reasons such as those given by Mrs Jenkins. Clearly cases for re-admission were judged on their individual merits and immigrants were left in little doubt that the “protection of government” would only be extended to them, after they had found employment, in exceptional circumstances.

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63 Return, shewing the Number and Names of the Single Female Immigrants, as well as the Ship by which they arrived, who were received into the Institution at Hyde Park Barracks during the Year 1854, subsequently to their having been placed in Service; and the Reasons for their Re-admission, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, 1855, p.7.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Jane Taylor, Maitland, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 13 September 1855, IC/Nsw, 9/6208.

67 Mrs Jenkins to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Thursday morning, no date, IC/Nsw, 9/6238.

68 Ibid., Agent Wise’s annotation.
B. Hiring and Dispersal

How the immigrants hired out or dispersed from the ship in Sydney depended to some extent on when they arrived and the scheme under which they had been brought to the colony. All the immigrants fell into three broad categories; general regulations, Assisted Immigrant Act or remittance immigrants. The majority of the Irish arriving under these schemes did so in three distinct time periods — as general regulations immigrants between 1848 and mid-1854, under the Assisted Immigrant Act from mid 1854 to the end of 1855 and as remittance immigrants from 1856 onwards. However to some extent these schemes overlapped between 1848 and 1861. The wives and families of convicts of 1849/1852 were nominated in the colony and, between 1852 and the end of 1855, 22% of the Irish despatched by the Commissioners were remittance emigrants. Moreover of those sent from 1856 to the end of 1861 18% were selected by the Commissioners under the general regulations. After 1861 all the Irish were sponsored by friends and relatives in N.S.W.

1. General Hiring and Dispersal Arrangements, 1848–1870

Single males and families could hire from the ship under the supervision of the Surgeon. The date and time for the hiring and the occupations of the immigrants were inserted in the local papers and in the Government Gazette. [Document 3.2] An Immigration Department clerk was sent on board to supervise the drawing up of official hiring agreements and to advise the Surgeon on the going wage for labourers and tradesmen. From his knowledge of the immigrants gained during the voyage the Surgeon was instructed to point employers in the direction of suitable employees.69 Once an immigrant had agreed to hire the clerk assisted in drawing up the official wage agreement in triplicate — one copy for the immigrant, one for the employer and the third for the Department. These agreements were enforceable by both parties in court; if they were lost, another copy was obtainable from the Department. [Document 3.3] Except under the Assisted Immigrant Act immigrants were not required to hire through this system and were at liberty to go ashore, in the official phraseology, “on their own account”. If hiring from the ship they were expected to accept those offers of employment which departmental officers felt were at fair wages; if they did not they were made to leave. In 1851 the Captain of the Kate was ordered to eject 5 young Irishmen for having refused fair wages and to cease issuing them with rations.70

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69 Surgeon’s arrival instructions, Clause 4.
70 N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Surgeon, ship KATE, 14 October 1851, CLMP/NSW, 4/4639.
Once again the hiring out of the single females was more strictly supervised. As on the ship a day and time were advertised when those seeking servants were admitted to the Hiring Room of the Barracks. [Document 3.4] Even to gain admission to the Hiring Room prospective employers had to obtain a signed and dated permission slip and, if not known to the Department, to produce references from a clergyman or magistrate. This note had to be presented to the Matron who would not allow anyone in without a slip dated for that particular day. [Document 3.5] Publicans were not allowed into the Hiring Room and the girls were not permitted to engage with anyone keeping a pub or licensed premises. In 1855 Margaret Murphy, from Cork, who was accidentally hired to a publican on the advice of a clergyman, was re-admitted to the Barracks by Agent Browne and hired out elsewhere.\(^{71}\) Once a girl had accepted employment an official hiring agreement was drawn up in triplicate to be signed by the employer and the prospective employee and then witnessed by the Matron. [Document 3.6] In general the constant high demand for single female domestics meant that girls seldom spent much time unemployed in the Barracks. When this did occur in 1855 as a result of the working of the Assisted Immigrant Act, which will be discussed below, the Agent did not force immigrants to quit the institution. A number of Irish females on the *Matoaka* in 1855 spent over two months unhired and at government expense in Hyde Park Barracks.\(^{72}\)

Not all immigrants were hired out in Sydney. Between 1848 and the end of 1856 the Immigration Department ran a number of inland depots to which considerable numbers were despatched at public expense. [Figure 3.1] These were set up to assist country employers obtain labour without the expense of going to Sydney; and local Police Magistrates were required to submit regular returns to the Immigration Agent stating the local demand for labour and the level of wages.\(^{73}\) From this detailed month by month knowledge of conditions all over the colony the Agent could confidently recommend a district and in 1848 Agent Merewether also felt that these country depots provided the recently arrived with a better environment from which to hire, as they were removed from the “pernicious influence” of the “idlers in Sydney”.\(^{74}\) Although no precise figures can be given, numbers of Irish were undoubtedly persuaded to try their luck in the country by

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\(^{71}\) Return, shewing the Number and Names of the Single Female Immigrants as well as the Ship by which they arrived, who were received into the Institution at Hyde Park Barracks during the Half Year ending 30 June 1855, — subsequently to their having been placed in Service; and the Reasons for their Re-admission, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, 1855, p.7.

\(^{72}\) Evidence of Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, 1855, p.3.

\(^{73}\) Wage returns from local Police Magistrates are scattered through the N.S.W. Immigration Correspondence. For an example see Wollongong return, half year ending 31 December 1863, IC/NSW, 9/6238.

\(^{74}\) N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 31 August 1848, CLCS/NSW, 4/4610.
the Immigration Agent. 85% of the immigrants on the *Subraon* in 1848 were Irish and Merewether convinced a number of them of the advantages of the Maitland district:

> [many] will gladly avail themselves of the opportunity of proceeding to what I have justly described to them as one of the finest agricultural districts in the colony and one in which they will be likely to obtain comfortable as well as highly remunerative employment.\(^7\)

Conversely the Agent could also steer immigrants away from a district where obtaining employment appeared to be difficult. In February 1849 Merewether began advising temporarily against the Bathurst region, as there were already 66 unhired immigrants in the local depot. The Depot Superintendent felt that it would be the end of March before all these people had obtained work.\(^6\)

The peak period of dispersal to depots was from 1848 to 1851 when the numbers being sent into the country never fell below 33% of all arrivals. [Figure 3.1] No statistics were compiled on the ethnic breakdown of this dispersal but in 1850 and 1851, when the Irish were 70% of all immigrants, many would have made their way up country. With the discovery of gold in 1851 the depots at Bathurst and Goulburn were closed as the government did not wish to help newly arrived immigrants make for the diggings.\(^7\)

Maitland was kept on and, judging from the depot dispersal and census figures, large numbers of Irish single females were sent there. [Figures 1 and 2] The Hunter region showed the greatest proportional and absolute increase of any area outside Sydney in the number of Irish females between the census of 1851 and 1856. Of these girls the great majority, 1,107 (76%), went to the counties of Northumberland and Durham enclosing the valley of the lower Hunter River and the expanding towns of Singleton, Maitland and Newcastle. [Figure 3.2/B. North Coast, North West and Hunter River] However the registry district of Camden to the immediate south west of Sydney and St Vincent, which took in the Illawarra district on the south coast, also showed significant proportional increase in the number of Irish females. [Figure 3.2/C. South Coast and South West] The whole question of Irish settlement in the colony is outside the scope of this study but one factor which influenced the initial destination of many Irish in the period 1848 to 1855 was the dispersal policy of the Immigration Department.

The Department played less of a role in hiring and dispersing the remittance immigrants. Although all the normal hiring facilities, both on the ship and at the Barracks, were available to them the Immigration Agents, in the late 1850s and throughout the

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\(^7\) N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Maitland, 13 April 1848, CLMP/NSW, 4/4635.

\(^6\) N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Depot Superintendent, Bathurst, 13 February 1849, CLMP/NSW, 4/4636.

\(^7\) N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1853, p.4.
1860s, saw as the great advantage of the remittance system, that it quickly removed immigrants from government responsibility.\textsuperscript{78} Indeed colonial sponsors had to undertake to pay for the subsistence of their nominees from 10 days after the arrival of the ship.\textsuperscript{79} Moreover the problem of getting immigrants to go into the countryside was partly solved by the willingness of some of those nominated by country friends and relatives to join them there. Reporting in 1863 on the fact that no very definite information beyond a brief address was kept on those who left the ship to join friends and relatives, Agent Wise continued:

It is known, however that by far the largest proportion of these are immediately distributed throughout the country districts.\textsuperscript{80}

There their labour was “at once useful” and few ever returned to Wise’s office seeking employment.

Wise exaggerated the numbers heading for the country. An analysis of all dispersal lists for 1864 reveals that 58% of the single men and 55% of the families were making for an address in Sydney city or suburbs. [Figure 3.3] Nevertheless the general advantage of the system was clear from the figures: 95% of the families and 90% of the single men were leaving ships on their “own account” soon after arrival. Of the single females 74% quickly left the Barracks to join friends. [Figure 3.8] Thus by the 1860s under the remittance regulations immigrant dispersal was now a personal rather than a government concern. In 1870 Agent Wise testified to the rapidity with which a typical immigrant ship emptied upon arrival in the 1860s. The families and single men always disappeared before the end of the “lay days” and went to their friends, few of them making any use of Wise’s offer of help:

I used to say “I am the Government Officer and if you want advice or assistance come to me” — not half a dozen ever came.\textsuperscript{81}

Remittance immigrants and their colonial nominators did however on occasions look to the Immigration Department for help. In 1858 Agent Browne told a Legislative

\textsuperscript{78} Comments as to how the remittance immigrants went quickly to join their friends, and more especially how these immigrants went up country, were made almost yearly by the Immigration Agent after 1853. For an example see N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1855, pp.10/11. The 1855 Report also mentioned that, by comparison, ordinary immigrants had a fear of going into the bush because of a “foolish dread of the Aboriginal people”.

\textsuperscript{79} Immigration Remittances, 18 September 1856, Clause 12, Appendix to N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1856/1857, p.16.

\textsuperscript{80} N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1863, p.7.

Assembly Select Committee that helping remittance arrivals was taking up an increasing amount of departmental time:

On the arrival of these people, I frequently receive letters from their friends in the country, transmitting £1, £2, or £3, requesting me to hand the money to the parties, and to tell them where to go, by what coach, steam boat, or other conveyance. All this requires time and attention; but these people are so ignorant, and would be so much adrift if they did not get this assistance, that I cannot refuse to afford it; and, besides, they seem to consider themselves entitled to it, having been brought under an arrangement of the Government.\(^{82}\)

The provision of this kind of assistance by the Department was not a trivial matter. Despite Browne’s rather patronising tone he accepted that the Department had a role to play in easing the natural anxiety and confusion which remittance immigrants, the great majority of them Irish, would have felt upon arriving in Sydney and wondering how to reach their friends in the country.

Many country nominators would have found it extremely difficult to come to Sydney to meet a ship. Usually the first intimation they had of the arrival of relatives was the notice published by the Immigration Department in the *Sydney Morning Herald* listing the names of all remittance arrivals and their nominators. [Document 3.7] On 5 October 1863 Bernard McGrath of Braidwood wrote, “Care of George F. Wise immigration gent Sydney”, to his nieces, Bridget and Margaret Shallow, recently arrived on the *Peerless* from Tarmon, County Tyrone:

> I have seen of your arrival on the newspaper i am very glad of your safe arrival but you may have some difficulty in wending your way this far...\(^{83}\)

Bernard further felt that they might “be short of the means to bring yous from there here”, so £2 was enclosed for Wise to hand on to them.\(^{84}\) This was not sufficient to cover the whole journey as the steamer section cost £1/5/- and the coach on to Braidwood £1. Clearly he anticipated that the girls would have brought some money with them. On arrival at the Clyde River they were to see the man “that has the coach going from Braidwood to the Clide” whose name was Malone.\(^{85}\)

Country residents, like Bernard McGrath, would also have known that their female relatives could count on the protection of the Barracks while waiting to depart on the remainder of their journey. In 1862 Patrick Cahalan wrote to Wise a month before the

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\(^{82}\) Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on Retrenchment in the Public Expenditure, 1858, p.63.

\(^{83}\) Bernard McGrath, Braidwood, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 5 October 1863, IC/NSW, 9/6237.

\(^{84}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{85}\) *Ibid.*
arrival of his nominee, Mary Clancy, on the *Hotspur*, asking him to make sure she went into the Barracks and stayed there until he had sent the money for her trip to the Clyde River.\textsuperscript{86} Patrick also wanted to be let know which steamer she was to be sent on as he intended travelling down from the Braidwood area to meet her. All remittance females were transferred along with general immigrants to Hyde Park on arrival and were only handed over to those who could present a nominator’s receipt. [Document 3.8] When Rose Rodgers arrived from County Monaghan on the *Northumberland* in 1862 she wrote at once to her nominator, her brother-in-law John Reid at Albion Park, near Wollongong. Reid sent his son to the Barracks to fetch her but as his father forgot to give him the receipt she was not handed over to him.\textsuperscript{87} Reid then sent it to an agent, Mr Prescott, who took her from the Barracks and put her aboard the Wollongong steamer.\textsuperscript{88}

2. Hiring and Dispersing under the Three Main Passage Schemes

a. The General Regulations Immigrants, 1848–1854

The initial colonial experience of the 54 Irish who arrived on the *John Bright* in 1849 [Figure 3.4. No.14] was typical of those who were selected in Ireland under the Commissioners’ general regulations. The Agent sent 31 families from this ship — and under families were included childless couples and widows with children — to country depots.\textsuperscript{89} Of the eight Irish families six took the steamer for the Parramatta depot accompanied by one single Irish male and one single Irish female. The remaining two families could have been among the eight families sent to Maitland, the four who hired from the ship or the eight who left “on their own account”. Of the other nine single females most probably hired with the 27 women sent to the Barracks, although one or two could have been among the five sent to Maitland.\textsuperscript{90} The ten remaining single men either found employment on the ship or left to seek it in Sydney for themselves.

The Parramatta party reached the depot there on 12 June, four days after arriving in the colony.\textsuperscript{91} They were now split into two groups — the Tully family along with Elizabeth Dowd were sent on to Goulburn while the Halls, the Reynolds, the Egans,

\textsuperscript{86} Patrick Cahalan, Jembaicumbane(?), to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 21 June 1862, *Persia*, Ship’s Papers, 9/6283.

\textsuperscript{87} John Reid, Albion Park, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 19 November 1862, IC/NSW, 9/6235.

\textsuperscript{88} *Ibid.* Agent Wise’s annotation.

\textsuperscript{89} List of Immigrants from the Ship *John Bright* forwarded to Parramatta by the Government, 1 June 1849, IC/NSW, 9/6192.

\textsuperscript{90} *John Bright*, Agent’s Ship Report, 8 June 1849, CLCS/NSW, 4/4611.

\textsuperscript{91} List of Immigrants from the Ship *John Bright* forwarded to Goulburn by the Government, IC/NSW, 9/6192.
the McArdles and Edmund O’Brien set out for Bathurst. The sixth family, Widow Quinn and her four children possibly hired out from the Parramatta depot. They had probably been sent down from Sydney as her two eldest sons, aged 20 and 14, could not be admitted to the Barracks. The authorities would not have wanted to split the family up so hiring out at Parramatta was the logical solution. The Bathurst and Goulburn parties now faced about a week’s journey through the bush by dray to the country depot. Along the way the draymen presented government ration chits to contractors at major stopping points; going to Bathurst four days rations were drawn at Penrith for the long haul over the Blue Mountains and three days rations taken at Hartley for the final stage of the journey. In 1849 one group bound for Goulburn faced a lack of food owing to the incompetence of the draymen. Just after leaving Camden the two drays separated and when camp was made for the night the women and children in the last dray found themselves without food as all the stores were on the lead dray. The Camden correspondent of the Sydney Morning Herald reported that this had happened to two previous groups who, to feed themselves, had had “to beg their way through the village”. The Agent, fearing this “evil to be on the increase”, authorised the Police Magistrate at Parramatta to deduct an “appropriate” sum from the draymen’s account.

What of the Irish encountering for the first time the strange new environment of the Australian bush? In February 1850, at the height of summer, Surgeon Strutt led a large party of Irish orphans from the Thomas Arbuthnot along this same route by dray to Yass via Goulburn. They left Parramatta on the 21st and travelling through Liverpool, Camden, Picton, Berrima and Marulan reached Goulburn on the 26th. Near Camden two drays collided injuring Mary Brandon and Mary Conway for which Agent Merewether held the draymen responsible and fined them £3 for an “unsound harness”. Strutt conveyed to his diary something of the atmosphere of this journey. As the 14 drays made their way through the dense 15 mile long forest of Bargo Brush between Picton and Berrima, “once famous for its robberies”, he felt the “peculiar and mournful aspect from

92 Bathurst Depot, Return for the week ended 30 June 1849, IC/NSW, 9/6192.
93 Requisition chits for immigrant rations, Penrith/four days and Hartley/three days, both given at Parramatta on 26 June 1849, attached to Police Magistrate, Parramatta to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 26 June 1849, IC/NSW, 9/6192.
94 Sydney Morning Herald, Camden correspondent, 28 July 1849.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Parramatta, 28 July 1849, CLMP/NSW, 4/4637.
98 Strutt diary, pp.73/76, 19 to 2 March 1850.
99 N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Parramatta, 1 June 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.
the gum trees with their old bark hanging in rags and tatters about their branches”. The following day saw them still in Bargo Brush:

The interminable forest still, hot, dusty and thirsty. It looks as if the breath of a furnace had passed over it once — everything dried up and parched. Saw several dead bullocks by the roadside — of some nothing remained but the bleached bones — others had the skeleton covered with the sundered hide. They perish from fatigue, thirst, starvation and the tremendous Australian whip ...

As they slept under the drays the party were tormented by ants and fleas and at Paddy’s River Biddy O’Dea from County Clare brought Strutt a “tarantula” in her apron. This was probably a harmless huntsman spider but he killed it none the less. The local Aboriginal people also both frightened and fascinated these young teenagers from the west of Ireland. Goulburn, a town of 1,000 people, Strutt found a “a dull, quiet place” and the immigrant depot “indifferent”.

The arrival of immigrants for hire was regularly reported in the local papers. On April 14 1849 The Goulburn Herald wrote of an “abundant supply” of labour in the shape of 100 immigrants on the way from Sydney for whose services “early application should be made at the depot in Clifford Street”. At Clifford Street, “Mr Bull’s Brick Building, lately used as an Academy”, the immigrants were required to present themselves for hire between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. except on Saturdays when they “will not be required after 1 o’clock”. They were entitled to accommodation in the depot as long as they remained unemployed provided they refused no offer of fair wages. In May 1850 a group of young Irishmen off the Elizabeth were unimpressed with the offer of £16 per year from their countryman, Edward Ryan of Galong. They were dismissed the depot but “afterwards entered that Gentleman’s service”.

b. The Assisted Immigrant Act immigrants, 1854–1855

Michael and Bridget Normile of Derry, County Clare, were among the first Irish immigrants to arrive under the provisions of the Assisted Immigrant Act of 22 December

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100 Strutt diary, p.74, 21 February 1850.
101 Ibid., pp.74/75, 22 February 1850.
102 Ibid., p.75, 25 February 1850.
103 Ibid., p.75, 22 February 1850.
104 Ibid., p.76, 26 February 1850.
105 Goulburn Herald, 14 April 1849.
106 Goulburn Herald, Advertisement for Goulburn Immigrant Depot, 21 October 1848.
107 Goulburn Depot, Return for week ended 18 May 1850, IC/NSW, 9/6196.
1852.108 [16 Victoria, No 42] Before being allowed to embark on the Araminta at Birkenhead in April 1854, each of them signed an indenture promising either to repay the colonial government £12 each for their fares within 14 days of arrival, or to hire out. [Document 3.9] At Sydney both obtained work in the Maitland area. Their employers paid half the passage in cash and for the rest gave a twelve month promissory note to the government. [Document 3.10] Effectively their employers had paid the fare and were, under the terms of the indenture, entitled to deduct this from their wages at the rate of one eighth of the sum every three months. Those who failed to find an employer could be hired compulsorily by Immigrant Department officials.

This Act, devised by the Legislative Council’s Select Committee on Immigration in 1852, aimed to make immigration self-supporting.109 If immigrants immediately paid the fare then the colony suffered no loss; if they did not, while they paid it off, their labour would be retained in N.S.W. But what went unsaid officially was that an immigrant’s real obligation was to the employer who had paid the fare. If he absconded it was the employer who was left with an outstanding debt to the government. The full operation of the Act lasted for less than six months. Its application to single female immigrants was repealed on the 30 November 1854, but it was persisted with for families and single men for another year before being finally and fully suspended on 18 December 1855.110 The failure of this experiment — for both the colonial government and the Commissioners always saw it as that — in self supporting immigration is of great interest and deserves thorough investigation. Here, however, the focus is on the operation of the Act as it was experienced by the Irish themselves. This can only be appreciated in the broad context of its gradual failure as reported on by the Immigration Agent during the last few months of 1854 and throughout 1855.

No problems were experienced with the first three ships to arrive under the Act in July 1854 — the Sabrina, the Plantagenet and the Araminta.111 Labour was scarce owing to the continued pull of the Victorian goldfields and a short lull in the despatch of emigrants from Great Britain. High wages lessened the impact of the required passage

payment under the Act. By the end of October, however, Agent Browne was outlining to
the Colonial Secretary all those elements which were gradually making the Act
unworkable: employers were becoming unwilling to bind themselves for so long to
untested workmen and domestics; compulsory hiring of immigrants was impossible
where employers would not accept them; some immigrants were absconding without
paying their fares; and the depots were filling up with unhired servants and labourers.\textsuperscript{112}
Browne criticised not only the Act but also what he saw as its most unfortunate result —
the introduction of totally untrained domestics, girls predominantly from the southern
counties of Ireland who, because of their lack of experience, remained unemployed for
long periods at government expense.\textsuperscript{113} In explanation, the Commissioners argued that
trained English servants would not consider emigrating under such indentures but that
this had not deterred Irish applicants.\textsuperscript{114} More scathingly, Browne described them as
“poor ignorant creatures [who] ... sign without asking any questions, and do not know
what they are coming to”.\textsuperscript{115}

It was this experience of remaining unhired which, from the point of view of many
Irish immigrants, characterised arrival during the operation of the Act. In late September
and early October 1854, the \textit{Colombia}, the \textit{China} and the \textit{Caroline} brought 381 Irish girls
to Sydney, 344 (91\%) of whom were recruited under the Act.\textsuperscript{116} When the hiring of 108
girls off the \textit{Caroline} took place on October 23 only 11 found employment.\textsuperscript{117} Alarmed,
Browne reported on October 27 that another three ships with similar loads of Irish were
due, while 230 girls remained unemployed in the depots at Sydney and in the country.\textsuperscript{118}
Employers, despite the scarcity of domestics, were unwilling to pay the passage of
servants who, they felt, might not know their duties. At lower wages and the absence of
the passage bond they would be engaged but Browne feared that they would remain in the
depots until the Act, in as far as it applied to single females, was repealed.\textsuperscript{119} He stressed
the urgency of altering a system “distasteful to the majority of the community in

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ibid.}, Immigration — Working of Present System.

\textsuperscript{113} Evidence of Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on Immigration Department, 1855, p.3.

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}, p.4.

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Colombia}, arrived 13 October 1854, \textit{China}, arrived 2 September 1854, \textit{Caroline}, arrived 13 October
1854, all IBL/NSW, 4/4938.

\textsuperscript{117} N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 27 October 1854: Immigration —
Working of Present System.

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid.}
N.S.W."120 The Governor's response was instantly to exclude single females from the working of the Act.

As soon as indenturing ceased for single females the Immigration Department was inundated with requests from employers for a return of their promissory notes, or for a refund of £6 if they had paid the whole fare on hiring their servant. Isabella Acres was worried that she would lose Mary Butler from Kilkenny, hired from the Columbia.121 Isabella's daughter had gone to the Barracks to hire a servant for her and, as the Department's Chief Clerk had refused to accept her promissory note, she had been forced to pay £12 cash. Mary was now being insolent as all her shipmates had been allowed the £6 in their wages.122 In applying for his £6 on account of Mary Nash from Limerick, hired from the Caroline, William O'Brien wrote:

The girl, too, as she came poor to the colony, finds the stoppages are heavy upon her, as they in some measure prevent her purchasing necessary clothing to attend Divine Worship.123

Ellen Russell of Tipperary, an immigrant from the Columbia, also claimed £6. She had gone to John Croaker of Manning River but, not liking his service, had left within two weeks paying him £12 — six which he had paid on hiring plus six for his promissory note. In effect she had paid Croaker her fare and, as the employers were now receiving half of this back, Ellen could see no reason why she should not be reimbursed.124

Cancellation of the bond did not immediately solve the problem of large numbers of unhired Irish females in the Barracks. Because of the delay involved in transmitting such decisions from the colony back to the Commissioners in the U.K., ships continued to arrive up to the middle of 1855 with large numbers of Irish selected under the Act. Between 1 January and 16 June 1855 71% of all single female arrivals were Irish — 1,258 Irish to 525 English and Scots. Moreover the latter came in small groups, 62 English on the Speedy being by far the largest.125 The Irish, on the other hand, arrived en masse, 115 on the Wacousta, 153 on the Ebba Brahe, 142 on the Simmonds and so on.126 Even on vessels with smaller numbers the Irish were often the majority. Such

120 Ibid.
121 Isabella Acres to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 9 March 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6207.
122 Ibid.
123 William O'Brien to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 19 January 1855, CSC/NSW, 4/3266.
124 Ellen Russell to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 10 April 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6208.
125 Return, shewing the Number, Religion and Native Country of the Single Females who have arrived in then Colony of New South Wales, under the Assisted Immigrant Act, from 1 January to 16 June 1855, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, p.7.
126 Ibid.
numbers must have created an impression of overwhelming Irishness at the Barracks as well as a temporary glut of the domestic labour market. Agent Browne always attributed any sluggishness in hiring to the perceived ineptitude of the Irish girls even when the evidence pointed to oversupply as a major cause. Between 29 April and 24 May 462 single females arrived, most of them Irish. [Figure 3.5] The sheer number of potential servants available was the problem confronting these girls in seeking work, not just the fact that they were Irish. Eleven days after their arrival only six from the Himalaya had been engaged and a similar situation arose with the Matoaka, only 22 out of 210 finding employment within their first week. [Figure 3.6] Browne claimed that similar problems did not occur with English girls who had previously been in service, and cited the example of the Constitution, all of whose English emigrants were hired in one day.127 But between 26 and 31 May the “well selected”, in Browne’s words, English from the Asiatic and the Victory were not taken up proportionately any faster than the Irish.128 [Figure 3.6] Quite simply there were, at times, too many servants chasing too few employers.

Irish families recruited under the Act also encountered the same initial reluctance of employers to hire them. The Wacousta arrived on 4 January 1855 with 200 Irish.129 Among these 74 were in families and four were childless couples. Fifty one, still without work towards the end of the “lay days”, were sent to the Parramatta depot where they remained unemployed for periods ranging from 7 to 82 days. There is no doubt that the Act was responsible for their problems. When, in September 1855, Browne called on the Depot Superintendent for a report on the numbers who had spent more than two days without work in the depot since 1 January 1854, this was shown not to have been the experience of any family before July when the first ships under the Act arrived.130 The length of time spent there varied but 79% of families were gone within a month. [Figure 3.7] Nevertheless Browne described this waiting for work as something which had never occurred under the previous system. Moreover it was costing as much in immigrant maintenance at the depot as the government was collecting in cash and promissory notes.131

127 Ibid., Evidence of Captain Browne, Select Committee on Immigration Department, 1855, p.3.
128 N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1855, p.5.
129 Wacousta, arrived 2 January 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4957.
130 Return of Immigrants not Invalids that remained more than two days in the Depot from 1st January 1854 to 30th June 1855, with covering letter, Depot Superintendent, Parramatta, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 10 September 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6208.
131 Evidence of Captain Browne, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, 1855, p.2.
How quickly the Irish at Parramatta obtained work depended on their relative attractiveness to employers. Of those on the Wacousta the two childless couples, the Crows and the Reillys, were hired in seven and ten days respectively.\textsuperscript{132} Next to go were grown up children prepared to hire independently of the family such as Catherine, 28, Mary, 21 and Margaret, 18, daughters of Maurice Condon of Cork. Mary and Margaret spent nine days at Parramatta and Catherine, who was there for 15 days, would probably have hired sooner had she not been ill.\textsuperscript{133} Maurice Condon found an employer in 19 days.\textsuperscript{134} By 5 March, two months after they had arrived in N.S.W., 22 of these people were still in the depot. They had been joined there by numerous other Irish families off 3 ships which arrived within days of each other in January, the Ebba Brahe, the Queen of England and the Rajastan.\textsuperscript{135}

As the depot filled with unemployed immigrants restlessness and frustration grew. On 11 February Browne received an urgent request from David Forbes, Parramatta Police Magistrate and Depot Superintendent, to come to Parramatta by the next steamer.\textsuperscript{136} Two groups of immigrants had absconded and a scuffle had broken out between the gatekeeper and James Sturgeon of County Armagh. Forbes had appointed a gatekeeper from among the immigrants when he discovered that inmates were contemplating leaving to avoid paying their fares. Warrants were issued for 13 absconders, five of whom were Irish.\textsuperscript{137} Three were quickly caught and, along with Sturgeon, faced trial at the Petty Sessions where the absconders were given two days in the cells.\textsuperscript{138} Sturgeon was fined £1. Forbes told the Bench that he had found the whole depot in a “state of insubordination”.\textsuperscript{139} After his visit Browne reported that, court proceedings having made examples of the troublemakers, the immigrants now appeared to be “penitent and willing

\textsuperscript{132} Return of Immigrants not Invalids etc. ... in the Depot from 1st January 1855 to 30th June 1855.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Ebba Brahe, arrived 6 January 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4947; Queen of England, arrived 9 January 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4954; Rajastan, arrived 11 January 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4954.
\textsuperscript{136} Depot Superintendent, Parramatta, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 11 February 1855, CSC/NSW, 4/3265.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Sydney Morning Herald, 15 February 1855, Emigration Depot in a State of Insubordination — Court of Petty Sessions.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
to conform". But he remarked later that he had had to "keep the Depot more like a prison than an Immigrants’ Barracks".

Given these problems Browne advised the Governor to repeal the Act. Initially, in April 1855, it was amended allowing immigrants to give their own bonds to repay the fare. This enabled the Immigration Department partially to revert to the old system of hiring out whereby if an immigrant refused an offer of fair wages they could be struck off rations. At Parramatta immigrants were required to be in attendance for hiring; if not, they faced prosecution for trying to evade payment. Even so in July Browne claimed that there was still a disinclination on the part of the public to hire large families, "chiefly Irish". The Irish, claimed Browne, showed a like disinclination to seek employment "so long as they can get anything out of the Government". Browne may have had in mind families like the Dwyers from County Tipperary, who, with six children, spent three weeks at Parramatta in June. However with the introduction of personal bonds waiting times for employment at Parramatta generally declined. By June median waiting time at the depot was ten days and none of those who arrived in that month faced a stay such as that of Michael and Bridget Halloran and their four children from Cloony, County Clare. With no offer of a job for 142 days after entering the depot on 16 November 1854 he was allowed to leave after signing his personal bond for the fare.

Requiring immigrants to give their own bonds was considered by Browne to be almost the same as repealing the Act. Few of these he felt would ever be collected and he continued to recommend complete repeal. On 31 December he wrote to the Depot Superintendents at Parramatta and Maitland announcing the Act’s abolition. They were now to ensure that "immigrants hire at once for reasonable wages or be at once removed from the Depot".

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140 N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 19 February 1855, CSC/NSW, 4/3265.
141 N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 25 April 1855, CLCS/NSW, 4/4618.
142 Evidence of Captain Browne, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, p.2.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
145 Return of Immigrants not Invalids etc. ... in the depot from 1st January 1854 to 30th June 1855.
146 Ibid.
147 Evidence of Captain Browne, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, 1855, p.2.
148 N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Depot Superintendents, 31 December 1855. Copies of letters sent to Depot Superintendents, 4/4632, AONSW.
c. The Remittance Immigrants, 1860–1870

The arrival experience of the remittance immigrants is easily described: they either left quickly to join their friends and relatives or were hired within a couple of days from the ship or the Barracks. Between 1860 and 1869 95% of families and 90% of the single males left the ship “on their own account”. [Figure 3.8] The single females showed a greater inclination to use the facilities of the Immigration Department to find work, 26% of them hiring out from the Barracks. This pattern varied little throughout the 1860s: in 1864 3% more females hired from Hyde Park, while 4% fewer families and 1% fewer single males hired from the ship. [Figure 3.9] This is the general picture of dispersal. The survival of many wage agreements and Surgeons’ lists for the 1860s allows us to examine the behaviour of individual immigrants in more detail.

The *Ocean Empress*, 286 of whose 341 immigrants were Irish, came up from from the North Head Quarantine Station to Sydney Cove on Saturday afternoon 23 January 1864.\(^{149}\) At 5.30 p.m. 126 single females left the ship for the Barracks. As soon as they had been inspected there by the Board on Monday morning January 25, 50 of them left to join friends.\(^{150}\) 25 more were similarly disposed of over the next few days. No dispersal lists for girls who did not hire out, such as those compiled on the ship relating to families and single men, were kept at the Barracks. Consequently the initial colonial destinations of these women can only be guessed at. Some clue is provided in that column of the ship’s list where a colonial relative or relatives were recorded. Of the 68 Irish who left without hiring 36 had relatives in the country and 32 in the city; one had a relative whose address was unknown.\(^{151}\) Those with country connections did not necessarily join them. Mary McEvady hired from the Barracks rather than accompany her two brothers to join their brother Thomas in Scone; likewise Elizabeth Mackee preferred employment in Sydney to accompanying her brother to Kiama to join their cousin. [Figure 3.10] Some families even split up; Bridget Galvin went as a general servant to John Dwyer of Surry Hills, while her father and 2 brothers journeyed to Morpeth to her uncle. [Figure 3.10] What is clear however is that most Irish single female immigrants of the 1860s quickly

\(^{149}\) *Ocean Empress*, Ship’s Papers, 9/6284.


\(^{151}\) *Ocean Empress*, arrived 18 January 1864, IBL/NSW, 4/4987.
disappeared into the Irish community. There, according to Sydney employment agent, John Glue, jobs had already been arranged for them.\textsuperscript{152}

Given the colonial network of relatives and friends what made girls hire from the Barracks at all? Just over a quarter of the female arrivals who went into the Barracks between 1860 and 1869 found employment from that institution. [Figure 3.8] Many of these women, perhaps 40%, may have had only tenuous links with their sponsors despite their nomination in the colony. Eleven of the 27 Irish who hired from the Ocean Empress had no relatives in N.S.W. Another six had relatives whose addresses they did not know and one had a brother in Melbourne. For these girls finding a job on arrival was their only option. [Figure 3.10]

The girls on the Ocean Empress certainly preferred work in the city or adjacent suburbs. [Figure 3.11] Only three went into the country; one to the Cook’s River region south of Sydney, one to Jamberoo near Kiama and one to the Lachlan River. Mary Kinnealy was the only girl willing to enter service in what might be called the interior of the colony. [Figure 3.10] This pattern is thoroughly typical of single female hiring from the Barracks during 1864: 63% went to the inner city, 28% to the suburbs and only 9% to the country. [Figure 3.11] Even these country employees rarely took positions outside the immediate Sydney rural area. Country employers and employment agencies did write to the Immigration Agent requesting servants but the answer was always the same — “it is no part of the duty of this Department to engage servants for applicants”.\textsuperscript{153}

Indeed throughout the 1860s despite the offer of higher wages few unattached Irish immigrant girls were persuaded to take employment too far from Sydney. Of the 11 girls on the Ocean Empress with no colonial relatives only one, Catherine Strong, became a general servant outside the Sydney region. [Figure 3.10] For accepting a post in Jamberoo she obtained wages of £20/16/- per year placing her in the top 2% of wage earners who hired from the Barracks. [Figure 3.12] Few Irish general servants and general house servants in the city got more than £18; most received £15 or £16. [Figure 3.12 Nos 1-3] The highest single wage offered to any Irish general servant was for a position in the country at Bathurst. For going there Ellen Murray from the Sirocco received £26.\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{152} Evidence of Registry Office Keeper, J.C. Glue, Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of the Metropolis, p.107, Votes and Proceedings, N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, 1859/60, Vol.4.

\textsuperscript{153} N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Rev. Thomas Wilson, Kiama, 21 March 1864, CLMP/NSW, 4/4651.

\textsuperscript{154} Female Servant’s Agreement, 26 October 1864, Ellen Murray, Sirocco, second voyage, Ship’s Papers, 9/6285.
When Reverend Thomas Wilson of Kiama wrote to Agent Wise in 1864 asking that a servant be engaged for him at the Barracks Wise suggested that he use a commercial Sydney employment agency to act on his behalf.\textsuperscript{155} Even that would probably not have been enough to induce an Irish girl to leave the city. William Haigh of Haigh and Brown, Commission and Labour Agents, found the Irish disinclined to leave the city as they were so “fond of dress, of change, of Sydney life”.\textsuperscript{156} Mrs Marian Pawsey, who from 1846 ran one of Sydney’s largest employment agencies, found it difficult “to get servants of any description to engage for the country”.\textsuperscript{157} Girls claimed that bush life was too dull and indeed, as Mrs Pawsey told the N.S.W. Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Class in 1860, “the country” was not far away in the estimation of recently arrived immigrants:

In speaking of the country, is it within your knowledge that many girls consider 3 or 4 miles out of town as the country?

They do; they consider Waverley, Balmain, the North Shore, as the country.

They draw a distinction between those places and the heart of Sydney?

They do.\textsuperscript{158}

On Monday 25 January 1864 as soon as they had finished with the single females at the Barracks, the Immigration Board went on board the \textit{Ocean Empress} and at 12 noon interviewed the families and the single men.\textsuperscript{159} By 2 p.m. they were free to leave. Of the 19 Irish families only one, the Lamans stayed on the ship and hired out on the advertised hiring day, 27 January. [Figure 3.13] All the rest dispersed to friends and relatives in the city and distant parts of the colony. Altogether, 46% of Irish families in 1864 went to rural destinations, a strikingly different pattern from the overwhelmingly urban preferences of the single women. [Figure 3.3] City employment agents testified to a general reluctance by country employers to hire large families from the city as they had to pay considerably more for their journey as well as taking on, as they saw it, too many dependants.\textsuperscript{160} Thus, having relatives already in the bush allowed Irish family men to obtain entry into the rural labour market. Of all the immigrants the families made least use of the shipboard hiring facilities, which suggests that most of them had something

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\textsuperscript{155} N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Rev. Wilson, 21 March 1864.
\textsuperscript{156} Evidence of Registry Office keeper, W.B. Haigh, Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes etc. ..., p.112.
\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Ibid.}, Evidence of Registry Office Keeper, Marion Pawsey, p.115.
\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Ibid.}, Evidence of Marion Pawsey, p.117.
\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Ocean Empress}, Ship’s Papers, 9/6284.
\textsuperscript{160} Evidence of J.C. Glue, Select Committee on the Working Classes etc. ..., p.106.
\end{flushleft}
definite on offer in the colony before they made the decision to uproot and emigrate. [Figures 8 and 9] Six of the families on the Ocean Empress, all nominated from Donegal by Adam Boyd of Broughton Creek near Kiama, left at once to join him there.\textsuperscript{161} The entries in the Surgeon’s dispersal list relating to such families convey a sense of purposeful arrival rather than of striking out into the unknown in N.S.W.

The hiring pattern of the families and the single men suggests that there was not much aversion to going into the country. 64% of the single men accepted rural work. [Figure 3.14] Probably because of this wages were little different between city and country; a garden labourer in town received just as much as a shepherd in the interior. Thus Richard Stack off the Queen of the East received £30, board and lodging and a six months engagement in suburban Petersham, while his shipmate, Kieran Daly went to New England as a shepherd for 12 months with rations.\textsuperscript{162} According to employment agent John Glue, Irishmen had a particular aversion to shepherding and, like most men in the colony, turned to it as a last resort.\textsuperscript{163} Kieran was the only one to accept such a position from the ship during 1864. Skills of course commanded good wages and both the two Irish blacksmiths and the one Irish carpenter to hire out both received over £40 per year. [Figure 3.15] Casual labouring at a daily rate, while insecure, paid the best wages of all. Five Donegal men from the Montrose were engaged for the road works in the Blue Mountains at 6/- a day, a yearly rate of £109.\textsuperscript{164} With such wages they could certainly justify their decision to leave Donegal where, in 1860, the top wage was 15/- a week during harvest time.\textsuperscript{165} In general as soon as they arrived in the colony these men encountered an employment market radically different from Ireland: work was available all year as well as rations or board and lodging, conditions rarely encountered at home.

In the 1860s a novel feature of the hiring days on the ship was the presence of the employment agents, men such as John Glue. Glue advertised himself as hiring immigrants “on board ship” and his signature appears on many wage agreements. [Document 3.11] On 3 and 4 June 1862 he went on board the Abyssinian with a number of requests from country employers in the Illawarra and Braidwood regions. Some of these were straightforward; others revealed personal attitudes towards hiring recently

\textsuperscript{161} Ocean Empress, Surgeon’s Report of the disposal etc. ...

\textsuperscript{162} Hiring agreement, Kieran Daly, 9 May 1864, Queen of the East, Ship’s Papers, 9/6284.

\textsuperscript{163} Evidence of J.C. Glue, Select Committee on the Working Classes etc. ..., p.107.

\textsuperscript{164} Hiring agreements, John Brown, John Ferry, James McFadden, Neil Murray, James Sweeny, all signed 14 April 1864, Montrose, Ship’s Papers, 9/6284.

\textsuperscript{165} Return of the Average Rate of Weekly Earnings of Agricultural Labourers in Ireland for the last six months previous to the 1st day of January 1861, furnished from each County, and in so far as the same can be readily ascertained. Donegal, p.3, BPP, 1862, Vol.60.
arrived immigrants or Irishmen. His first commission was one he had carried out often—
engaging men for one of the colony’s largest landowners and squatters, the Honourable
Robert Fitzgerald, M.L.C. With Glue as his agent Fitzgerald employed dozens of
Irishmen in the 1860s to work mainly as farm labourers on his properties near Sydney
and in the interior. From the *Abyssinian* he had asked Glue for two “young and strong”
immigrants; he was sent 4 young Donegal men, all as farm servants and ploughmen, who
had agreed to serve on any of his stations or properties in N.S.W.166 As few men hired
from the ship there would have been some competition among the agents for them and
those who, like William Colley of Kiama, were in need of workers kept their eyes on the
morning papers for announcements of the arrival of government vessels. He wrote to
Glue three days before the official hiring days for two labouring men from the “Emigrant
Ship now in harbour”.167 They must be “well accustomed to farm work and making of
drains” as their “principal work will be draining”.168 Colley must have communicated
further with Glue as four Donegal men were sent to him on the Kiama steamer.169

Some employers saw new immigrants as more tractable and less demanding than
men used to local conditions. Reverend Mr Pennycook of Braidwood was in constant
contact with Glue for good ploughmen and general labourers as he found local labour too
high priced.170 Glue sent him two Donegal men as ploughmen and general labourers.171
However other letters to Glue reveal some prejudice against Irish labour. Mr Oldbury,
needing a “good milkman” to whom he was willing to pay top wages of £35 as well as
rations and a cottage, wrote:

He must be a thoroughly efficient milkman. Hire an Englishman if you can.172

A similar request came from Hugh Colley of Kiama who wanted an “English farm
servant who can milch [sic] and generally make himself useful”.173 There is some irony
in this request as Colley himself had arrived as a “bounty” immigrant in the early 1840s

166 J.C. Glue to R. Fitzgerald, 3 June 1862, *Abyssinian*, Ship’s Papers, 9/6281. Hiring agreements,
   signed 3 June 1862.
172 *Ibid.*, Oldbury to J.C. Glue, 8 April 1862.
from County Antrim. Glue was not able to despatch anyone from the Abyssinian to meet either Colley’s or Oldbury’s needs. Mr Bell of Newcastle might also have seemed unwilling to hire Irishmen from the way he phrased his request for a garden labourer:

Must be able to use the spade and hoe — no Catholic.

Glue however felt free to send him Robert Rankin from Letterkenny, County Donegal. Rankin was an adherent of the Church of Ireland.

Men hired by Glue did not always give satisfaction. From his Russell Vale property in Wollongong F.P. McCabe wrote complaining of “the gardener Edmonds” who did only a day’s work and, at the end of it, stated that he had not hired to work himself, but to “look at other men working”. As the Abyssinian was expected he asked Glue for five men; a “working gardener not a gentleman”, three labourers “to milk and make themselves generally useful”, and a boy four feet six inches as a livery servant and to serve at table. His first and last requests were impossible to realise from the Abyssinian but Glue found him Patrick Browne, Dennis Gallagher and Hugh Cassidy, all from north west Donegal, as labourers. Nothing was said on their hiring agreements about their ability to milk.

Not all of the official measures outlined above to help government immigrants in the 1850s and 1860s originated in the zeal and humanitarian interest of colonial officials. One strange provision which demonstrates this related to the funeral expenses of immigrants who died soon after arrival. In 1855 the Audit Office wrote to the Colonial Secretary querying the cost of coffins for immigrants buried at government expense. The contract price of a pauper coffin from Funeral Directors, Hill and Co., was 35/- but a recent bill from the company for immigrant coffins was more than this. The Auditor first requested an explanation from Agent Browne who informed him that, when Sir George Gipps had been Governor [1838–1846], it had been decided to bury newly arrived immigrants in a “better description of coffin than that furnished by contract

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174 Hugh Colley, emigrant’s entitlement certificate, Herald, arrived 9 February 1845, Wage agreements and entitlement certificates of persons on bounty ships, 1844/45, 4/4902, AONSW.
175 R. Bell, Dempsey Island, to J.C. Glue, 25 May 1862, Abyssinian, Ship’s Papers.
176 Ibid., Hiring agreement, Robert Rankin, signed 4 June 1862.
177 Ibid., F.P. McCabe, Russell Vale, Wollongong, to J.C. Glue, 31 March 1862.
178 Ibid., McCabe to Glue.
179 Ibid., Hiring agreements, Patrick Browne, Hugh Cassidy, Dennis Gallagher, all signed 3 June 1862.
180 Acting Auditor General to Acting Colonial Secretary, 5 April 1855, CSC/NSW, 4/327.
181 Ibid.
price”. 182 Should word reach home that emigrants were being buried in pauper coffins, this might “militate against the introduction of respectable immigrants”. 183 When the matter was put to the Colonial Secretary he decided to continue a practice which, he recollected, had been started on the recommendation of the “Emigrants Friend” — Caroline Chisholm. 184

Indeed much of what was standard practice in the handling of newly arrived assisted immigrants between 1848 and 1870 had been pioneered by Mrs Chisholm in the earlier, private, “bounty” immigration years from 1838 to 1845. 185 At that time there was little official provision for immigrant assistance beyond the contract with the shippers to provide food and lodging on board during the “lay days”. Faced with what she saw as a desperate need for immigrant welfare Caroline Chisholm had opened a home to protect unemployed immigrant women. 186 This home was eventually made available to families as well. As there was a constant demand for servants in the country districts she established a system of country depots for dispersing any immigrant to places where they could find employment. She objected strongly to the current form of shipboard hiring which she felt totally favoured Sydney employers at the expense of the country. Moreover new arrivals were usually ignorant of colonial wages and practices and needed the advice of an impartial government official before deciding to accept an offer of employment:

There must be a recognised Agent of Government, a disinterested Person, whose Advice they can take, and whose personal Knowledge of the Interior may be of Benefit to them. 187

To help those immigrants whom she despatched to her depots in the interior she drew up a form of wages agreement and personally stood as witness to many such agreements. Each immigrant, she felt, on entering colonial employment should have the benefit of a properly drawn up and certified wages agreement. She also fought for the right of recently arrived immigrants to instant admission to hospital at government expense and recalled times when a delay of up to seven days had been experienced even in urgent

182 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid., annotation of Acting Colonial Secretary.
185 For a general account of the work of Caroline Chisholm see Margaret Kiddle, Caroline Chisholm, Melbourne, 1950.
186 Kiddle, op.cit., p.38.
187 Evidence of Caroline Chisholm, House of Lords Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, p.413, BPP, 1847, Vol.6.
cases. These she had admitted and paid for herself. This brief account of her work comes from her evidence to the 1847 Lords’ Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland which reached the colony in a Colonial Office despatch later that year. Governor Fitzroy’s attention was drawn to Mrs Chisholm’s remarks on the inadequacy of reception arrangements in Sydney for single females. The clearest testimony to her work however was the provision made for immigrant welfare by Agents Merewether, Browne and Wise in their administration of the N.S.W. Immigration Department between 1848 and 1870.

As the above account shows dealing with immigrants at Sydney was a fairly humdrum, everyday matter. It lacked the sense of drama and event associated with the Irish arriving at New York described above by Garnham. Drama however mattered little to emigrants whose principal concern was to avoid exploitation, travel safely, be treated fairly and obtain reasonable employment on arrival. These too were the objectives of the Emigration Commissioners and the N.S.W. Immigration Department right through the 1850s and 1860s. It is tempting, but misleading, to ignore the importance of these first few days of an immigrant’s experience filled as they were with mundane problems of onward travel or looking for work. Dramatic voyages full of ethnic conflict, the prejudices of colonial society relating to Irish Catholics, and the subsequent influences of immigrants on the cultural and political landscape of their new home have been more the stuff of both popular and serious appraisal of the coming of the Irish to Australia. To the immigrants themselves however how they were treated by officials from the outset of their journey, on the ship and at the port of arrival was of far greater importance. In his first report as Immigration Agent in 1849 Francis Merewether sensed the significance of the practical help and protection available to immigrants in N.S.W. After reading the official accounts of the facilities for immigrants at other major destinations and conversing with Surgeons and Masters involved in the assisted emigrant traffic to other colonies he concluded:

in no port in Her Majesty’s Colonial Dominions, to which an extensive Immigration is conducted, is more regard paid to the Immigrants’ welfare or more active exertions made for its promotion, than in the Port of Sydney.

188 Ibid., p.424.

189 N.S.W. Colonial Secretary to Immigration Board, 17 January 1848, Copies of letters sent re immigration, 4/3708, AONSW. The Board was asked to comment on Mrs Chisholm’s evidence and to put forward suggestions “for preventing single women from being exposed to any hardship or danger which can possibly be avoided by the Government on their arrival in New South Wales”.

190 Ibid.

191 Section 51, N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1848, p.8.
While facilities at other immigrant ports undoubtedly improved during the 1850s and 1860s, at Sydney the Irish found that Merewether’s proud boast was lived up to by members of his Department.