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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.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard E. Reid".

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.

I would also like to extend special thanks for their interest and help to Professor Patrick O'Farrell, Dr. David Fitzpatrick and Professor Eric Richards. Many years ago Professor O'Farrell steered me away from the study of Irish nationalism in Australia towards the basic question of "who were the Irish immigrants"? This study of a segment of Irish emigration to Australia is the result. Dr. Fitzpatrick has given me generously of his time and unrivalled knowledge of Irish emigration. Professor Richards showed that necessary scepticism towards my wilder generalisations which forced me to probe as deeply as I was able into the meaning of the relevant archival sources.

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Until fairly recently this often involved treating them as part of a

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<sup>1</sup> C. Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants: the Adaption of English and Scottish Immigrants in Nineteenth-century America*, London, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive overview of this literature in relation to Irish emigration to America see Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America*, Oxford, 1985 and D.N. Doyle, "The Regional Bibliography of Irish America: A Review and an Addendum", *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol.23, No.91, May 1983. Two writers who have looked more closely at the emigration process in relation to the journey to mid-nineteenth century America are Oliver MacDonagh and Terry Coleman: O. MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth, 1800-1860: The Passenger Acts and their Enforcement*, London, 1961, T. Coleman, *Passage to America: a History of Emigrants from Ireland to America in the Mid-nineteenth Century*, London, 1972. MacDonagh deals mainly with the theme of the encroachment of government legislation on the right of shippers to determine the standards for fare paying passengers and Coleman concentrates on the experiences of emigrants on the journey, at the ports and on arrival.

<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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”.<sup>9</sup> 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 Waldersee’s *Catholic Society in New South Wales, 1788-1860*, Sydney, 1974. Waldersee acknowledges that the description “Catholic” and “Irish” were almost synonymous during that period.

5 P. Hamilton, “No Irish need Apply: Prejudice as a factor in immigration policy in New South Wales and Victoria, 1840-1870”, Ph.D., University of New South Wales, 1979; A. Martin, “Some Thoughts on the Immigration Theme”, *Australia* 1888, Bulletin No. 6, November 1980, p.11.

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.

7 O. MacDonagh, “The Irish in Australia: A General View”, in *Ireland and Irish-Australia: Studies in Cultural and Political History*, London, 1986.

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.<sup>10</sup> 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”.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> In Sydney between 1838 and 1870 the assisted were 77% of all immigrants.<sup>14</sup> 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,

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p.162.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p.160.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> R. Schlomowitz 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup> 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

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<sup>15</sup> For a detailed description of the N.S.W. immigration records see bibliography, Contemporary Sources: Official.

<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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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<sup>17</sup> *Vocalist*, arrived 9 October 1856, Immigration Board's Lists, hereafter IBL/NSW, Archives Office of New South Wales, 4/4964.

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

<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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

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<sup>20</sup> P. O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, Sydney, 1987, p.85.

<sup>21</sup> C. McConville, *op.cit.*, pp.35-36; O’Farrell, *op.cit.*, p.65; D. Fitzpatrick, “Irish Immigrants in Australia: Patterns of Settlement and Paths of Mobility”, *Australia 1888*, Bulletin No.2, August 1979, p.50.

<sup>22</sup> 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 Magheraghohill, 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".<sup>23</sup> 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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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> Moreover

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<sup>24</sup> Fitzpatrick, *op.cit.*, p.49.

<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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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one third of the size it had been in 1801 while in Australia "these proportions were preserved, like the fly in amber, down to 1914 and perhaps even longer".

<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

Widow Godfrey and her family's journey began at Shanagolden, 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.<sup>4</sup> 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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<sup>1</sup> 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).

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

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

<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For a full description of these early schemes see R.B. Madgwick, *Immigration into Eastern Australia*, second edition, Sydney, 1969.

<sup>6</sup> 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*.<sup>7</sup> Ten months later they were joined by brother John, an assisted immigrant on the *Araminta*.<sup>8</sup> 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 ...<sup>9</sup>

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".<sup>10</sup> 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 ...<sup>11</sup>

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

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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.

<sup>7</sup> *Telegraph*, arrived 18 September 1853, IBL/NSW, 4/4936.

<sup>8</sup> *Araminta*, arrived 29 July 1854, IBL/NSW, 4/4938.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

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

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

to Australia had been achieved by a combination of government assistance and family gold.<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup> 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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<sup>12</sup> Edmund, John, Maryanne and Bessy Browne, Beechworth, Victoria, to their brother Pat Browne, Clonoulty, County Tipperary, 28 August 1857, Browne letters.

<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>15</sup> 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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<sup>14</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration, 1801–1921*, Dundalk, 1984, p.11.

<sup>15</sup> See below Chapter 4, pp.100-104.

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Irish assisted intake in the 1850s.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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 tout 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 flashly 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 roguery 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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<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> [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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly he lodged a nomination for Margaret Reilly (his wife's maiden name) and four children on the 18 November 1847.<sup>21</sup> 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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<sup>18</sup> For a fuller account of the orphan immigration see below Chapter ? 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.

<sup>19</sup> *Earl Grey*, convict ship, arrived Sydney 21 November 1833, Irish Indent X641, AONSW.

<sup>20</sup> For a fuller account of the wives and families of convicts scheme see below Chapter ? 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.

<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> [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”.<sup>25</sup> On arrival in Sydney Edmund described himself as an agricultural labourer and his wife as a farm servant.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> When they had a large surplus of applicants the Commissioners

<sup>22</sup> For a fuller account of this scheme see below Chapter ? For a brief description of the scheme see Margaret Kiddle, *op.cit.*, pp.110/112.

<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, contributions table for 1849.

<sup>26</sup> Sarah, arrived 10 December 1849, IBL/NSW, 4/4913.

<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

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".<sup>29</sup> 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".<sup>30</sup> Many of the marginal annotations on the Sydney shipping lists deal with the uncovering of such deceptions on arrival. One Clonoulty family who seem to have been able to manipulate the system to their advantage were the Stapletons who arrived on the *Emperor* in 1851.<sup>31</sup>

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.<sup>32</sup> 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 Clonoulty in January 1819.<sup>33</sup> The Clonoulty register also records the baptism of his brother, Daniel, in September 1816.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> The internal family evidence points to this being Daniel, the

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<sup>28</sup> Madgwick, *op.cit.*, p.105.

<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Emperor*, arrived 6 June 1851, IBL/NSW, 4/4920.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Marginal annotation by Immigration Board, Mary Stapleton.

<sup>33</sup> Parish register, Roman Catholic parish of Clonoulty, County Tipperary, typescript indexed version, p.634, Mid West Regional Archives, Limerick, County Limerick.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.633.

<sup>35</sup> *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.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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.

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

<sup>37</sup> *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.

<sup>38</sup> Immigrant's entitlement certificate, Robert Stapleton, *Comet*, arrived 3 December 1841, 4/4865, AONSW.

<sup>39</sup> 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".<sup>40</sup> The Board was instantly suspicious of Margaret Reilly of Golden parish, County Tipperary who arrived on the *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.<sup>41</sup>

Margaret's nephew, James Cunningham of Golden with his wife and five children, was also on the *Lord Stanley* and this deception possibly enabled him to bring out his dependant aunt who may have been living with the family.<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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

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<sup>40</sup> 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.

<sup>41</sup> *Lord Stanley*, arrived 27 August 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4790.

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

<sup>43</sup> Comparative Table showing the Regulations etc. ..., *op.cit.*, Contributions table for 1851.

Browne reduced her age by three years from 30 to 27.<sup>44</sup> Judging from the behaviour of the Clonoulty 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.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup>

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 *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.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> Mary Irwin aged 45 of Newport, County Tipperary, on the *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.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *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, Clonoulty, p.32.

<sup>45</sup> Nomination, Bryan Kearney for Patrick Kearney, 12 December 1853, IDJ/NSW, 4/4576: *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, Clonoulty, p.143.

<sup>46</sup> Remittance regulations, N.S.W. *Government Gazette*, 7 January 1852.

<sup>47</sup> *Kate*, arrived 13 October 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4918.

<sup>48</sup> These deceptions having been uncovered by the Board the whole family was listed together on the *Kate* and neither Matthew nor Ellen Inglis was recorded as having applied to the Commissioners using a false name.

<sup>49</sup> *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.<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup>

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

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<sup>50</sup> *Blundell*, arrived 5 May, 1853, IBL/NSW, 4/4790. The emigrants came mainly from Shanagolden near Foynes.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

much Lord Monteagle had paid for him.<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup> 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 *John Knox* in 1850 may have been just such a family. The Sullivans consisted of Jeremiah Sullivan, wife Grace, Eliza, five and John three.<sup>54</sup> In Clonoulty Jeremiah had rented a cabin and seven acres of land in the townland of Srahavarella on the Hawarden Estate.<sup>55</sup> As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 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.<sup>56</sup>

Some emigrants were the recipients of personal or institutional charity. From the Widow Murphy, who arrived on the *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.<sup>57</sup> Mr Arthur Hill Reid of Gorheen Lodge, Dublin helped Mary Burke of Dublin City to obtain a passage on the *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

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52 *Ibid.*

53 For an account of the activities of consolidating landlords and emigration see Oliver MacDonagh, "Irish Emigration to the United States of America and to the British Colonies during the Great Famine", in Edwards R.D. and Williams T.D. (eds), *The Great Famine*, Dublin, 1956, pp.332/340, and David Fitzpatrick, "Emigration, 1801-1870", in W.E. Vaughan (ed), *A New History of Ireland*, Vol.5. Ireland Under the Union, 1801-1870, Oxford, 1989, pp. 591/597.

54 *John Knox*, arrived 29 April 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4917.

55 General Valuation, Clonoulty, *op.cit.*, p.37.

56 Fitzpatrick, "Emigration", *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.

57 *SEA*, arrived 29 September 1849, IBL/NSW, 4/4913.

in order that “Mr Reid could certify with honesty that she was a servant”.<sup>58</sup> Reid also appears to have paid her passage contribution. Much sadder was the case of Mary Jones on the *Oriental* in 1850.<sup>59</sup> 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.<sup>60</sup>

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”.<sup>61</sup> 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

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<sup>58</sup> *Thomas Arbuthnot*, arrived 17 January 1849, IBL/NSW, 4/4914.

<sup>59</sup> *Oriental*, arrived 17 April 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4918.

<sup>60</sup> Office minute, 3 May 1850, Report on the Journal of the Surgeon Superintendent of the *Oriental* (Mr Joseph Burgon) — arrived in Sydney, 17th April, 1850, IC/NSW, 9/6194.

<sup>61</sup> *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".<sup>62</sup> 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.<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup> 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".<sup>65</sup>

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.<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup> They did point out however that they had exacted from Sophie a payment of £21 which was in excess of the

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, John Knox.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, John Knox.

<sup>64</sup> *Victoria*, arrived 2 September 1849, IBL/NSW, 4/4915.

<sup>65</sup> CLEC to Colonial Office, 7 March 1850, Papers Relative to Emigration — New South Wales, pp.88/89, *BPP*, Vol.50, 1851.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, Copy of Despatch, Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, 11 October 1849, p.5.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, Governor's despatch, 11 October 1849.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, CLEC to Colonial Office, 7 March 1850.



normal contribution for a domestic servant of £17.<sup>69</sup> 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”.<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup> 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. [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. [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. [Figure 1.11]

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Stephen Walcott, Secretary CLEC, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 15 February 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6207.

<sup>71</sup> *Matoaka*, arrived 17 May 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4952.

<sup>72</sup> 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.<sup>73</sup> In 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".<sup>74</sup> 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.<sup>75</sup> Employers would then progressively deduct the passage money from the immigrant's wages. Clonoulty 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.<sup>76</sup> 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.<sup>77</sup> 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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<sup>73</sup> Select Committee on Immigration, Report, pp.1/2, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1852, Vol.2.

<sup>74</sup> Governor of N.S.W to Colonial Office, 5 February 1853, Papers Relative to Immigration, p.15, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1854, Vol.2.

<sup>75</sup> 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.

<sup>76</sup> 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.

<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup> The reasons for this failure will be discussed fully in Chapter 3.

### C. 1864: The Remittance Regulations

In 1864 all of the Clonoulty 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.<sup>80</sup>

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?

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> An Act to amend the Assisted Immigrant Act, 30 November 1854, 18 Victoria No.29, *The Public General Statutes of New South Wales*, Sydney, 1862, p.2873: An Act to Repeal the Assisted Immigrant Act and the Land and Deposit Regulations, 18 December 1855, 19 Victoria No.35, *ibid.*, pp.3014/3015.

<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup>

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.<sup>82</sup> 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.<sup>83</sup> 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<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup>

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

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<sup>81</sup> Evidence of Commissioner T.W.C. Murdoch, House of Lords select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, Third Report, p.296., *BPP*, 1849, Vol.11.

<sup>82</sup> Evidence of Commissioner T.W.C Murdoch, House of Lord's Select Committee on the Operation of the Irish Poor Law, p.973, *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, *op.cit.*, p.298.

<sup>83</sup> 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, *BPP*, 1852/53, Vol.58.

<sup>84</sup> Returns of the Names of all Persons etc. ..., p.5, *BPP*, 1857, Vol.28.

<sup>85</sup> 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.<sup>86</sup>

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.<sup>87</sup> 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].<sup>88</sup> 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:

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<sup>86</sup> See below Chapter 7 for a full description of the activities of the Donegal Relief Committee.

<sup>87</sup> 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).

<sup>88</sup> *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 ...<sup>89</sup>

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.<sup>90</sup>

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.<sup>91</sup> 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.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> For an analysis of Monteagle, his world view, place among the Limerick gentry and involvement in Australian emigration see David Fitzpatrick, "Thomas Spring Rice and the Peopling of Australia", *The Old Limerick Journal*, No. 23, special Australian edition, Spring, 1988, pp.39/49.

<sup>91</sup> *Araminta*, arrived 29 July 1854, IBL/NSW, 4/4938.

<sup>92</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 ...<sup>2</sup>

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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<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the Atlantic passage see Terry Coleman, *Passage to America*, London, 1972, and Oliver MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth, 1800–1860*, London, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> Report, House of Commons Select Committee on the Passenger Acts, p.2, *BPP*, 1851, Vol.19.

state on land during that era ".<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> Emigrants were now asked for the required financial contribution upon receipt of which they were sent their Embarkation Order.<sup>5</sup> Even Remittance emigrants had to make a basic minimum payment in the U.K. towards the cost of bedding and utensils for the voyage.<sup>6</sup> The Embarkation Order also listed the clothing stock which each emigrant had to have and without which they would be refused embarkation.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> Remittance emigrants had, at all times between 1848 and 1870, to pay the fare all the way to the

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<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance*, Melbourne, 1966, p.161.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> CLEC Regulations, January 1857.

<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> 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”.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> By 1856 the official estimate for clothing this same number of children had fallen to £4.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup> Moreover in addition to the clothing they were to provide towels and a good

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<sup>9</sup> 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”.

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

<sup>11</sup> Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on Immigration, p.33, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1852, Vol.2.

<sup>12</sup> Remittance Regulations, 1854, Clause 8.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> Immigration Remittances, 1848, Clause 7.

<sup>15</sup> Immigration Remittances, 1856, Appendix to N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report for 1856/57, p.16.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, Clause 12.

<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

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.<sup>20</sup> Virtually all of the 434 emigrants from the parish of Clonoulty, 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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 of 27 orphan females from Clonmel Union Workhouse

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<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> Embarkation Order, Michael Casey, 9 May 1864, IC/NSW, 9/6238.

<sup>20</sup> Oliver MacDonagh, "The Irish Famine Emigration to the United States", *Perspectives in American History*, Vol.10, 1976, p.397.

<sup>21</sup> Information supplied by Mrs Kitty Barry, Clonoulty, County Tipperary.

<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> Initially they went by “car” from Clonmel to Thurles 30 miles away by road to the north.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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/-<sup>28</sup> 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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<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> T.P. O’Neill, “Bianconi and his Cars”, in K. Nowlan (ed), *Travel and Transport in Ireland*, Dublin, 1973, p.88.

<sup>26</sup> Clonmel Union, Board of Guardians’ Minute Books, 7 April 1849.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

paid £6 contribution under the general regulations, [Figure 2.1. No 8. *Joseph Somes*] while the Mungavins from Doorra, 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".<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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

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

<sup>30</sup> 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".

<sup>31</sup> Evidence of John Besnard, First Report, Select Committee House of Lords on Colonization from Ireland, p.175, *BPP*, 1847/48, Vol.17.

this way.<sup>32</sup>

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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> 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”.<sup>35</sup> Also in 1864 Patrick Hogan nominated three Hogans from Lorrha, 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”.<sup>36</sup>

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.<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup>

On the *Ebba Brahe* in 1855 [Figure 2.3] only two families were given any

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<sup>32</sup> *Joseph Somes*, arrived 1 February 1852, IBL/NSW, 4/4925: *David McIver*, arrived 9 April 1852, IBL/NSW, 4/4923.

<sup>33</sup> IDJ/NSW, 4/4576–4/4587, *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> 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.

<sup>36</sup> 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.

<sup>37</sup> Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848–1870. Immigration deposits, 1848–1857. See note 34.

<sup>38</sup> *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.<sup>39</sup> Mary Rooney's husband, Lawrence, who had preceded her to the colony, sent the family £10; again perhaps just sufficient for their needs.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

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.<sup>43</sup> 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

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Both drawings in *Illustrated London News* — The priest's blessing, 10 May 1851: Emigrants on the quay at Cork, 10 May 1851.

<sup>42</sup> 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.

<sup>43</sup> 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”.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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”.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> 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

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<sup>44</sup> A.M. O’Sullivan, quoted by Ciaren O’Keefe, *The History of Glenveagh*, Dublin, 1986, p.26.

<sup>45</sup> Information on Lecknacoo supplied by Mrs May McClintock, Letterkenny, County Donegal.

<sup>46</sup> O’Keefe, *op.cit.*, p.26.

<sup>47</sup> Ships *Sapphire*, *Caribou* and *Lady Elma Bruce*, all arrived Sydney in 1859, IBL/NSW, 4/4979 and 4/4980.

<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup> 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 ...<sup>51</sup>

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

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<sup>49</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, "Emigrant Attitudes and Behaviour as a Source for Irish History", in *Historical Studies*, No. 10, G.A. Hayes-McCoy (ed), Dublin, 1976, p.111.

<sup>50</sup> Information on family tree supplied by Fife family, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.

<sup>51</sup> 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 Croud 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 Farewell Farewell My Children.<sup>52</sup>

## 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.<sup>53</sup> The shipping companies knew them as "deckers" — those whose only covering on the crossing was the sky.<sup>54</sup> 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".<sup>55</sup> On her way to join the *Araminta* at Liverpool in 1854 Bridget Normile of Derry, County Clare was seasick on the Dublin/Liverpool boat.<sup>56</sup> Brother Michael, who stoically claimed that he "did not feel no more than if I was on my bead at home", purchased Bridget a bed for 3/-.<sup>57</sup> 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

<sup>52</sup> William Fife to Nixon and Faithy Fife, 18 January 1860, Fife letters.

<sup>53</sup> House of Lords Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, 1848/49, *op.cit.*: Captain Denham's Report on Passenger Accommodation on Board of Irish Steamers, *BPP*, 1849, Vol.51: House of Commons Select Committee on the Passengers' Act, *BPP*, 1851, Vol.19: House of Commons Select Committee on Emigrant Ships, *BPP*, 1854, Vol.13.

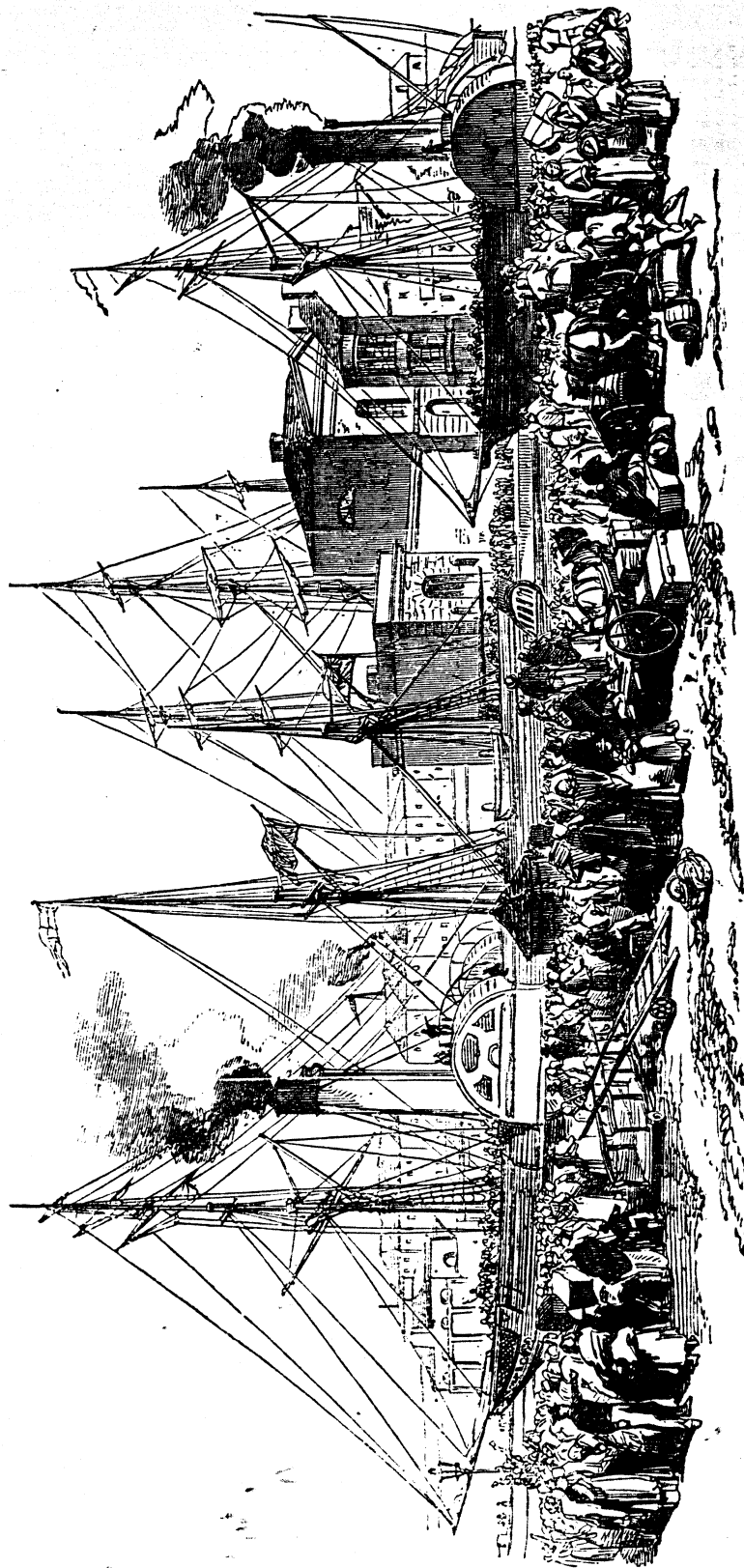
<sup>54</sup> H.S. Irvine, "Some Aspects of Passenger Traffic between Britain and Ireland", *The Journal of Transport History*, Vol.4, No.4, 1960, p.231.

<sup>55</sup> Unpublished article, in typescript, p.2, presumably by Surgeon Strutt of the *Thomas Arbuthnot*, with Strutt's diary, Ms.8345, La Trobe Library, Melbourne. *Thomas Arbuthnot*, arrived 3 February 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4919.

<sup>56</sup> 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.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

" Departure of the NIMROD and ATHLONE Steamers, with Emigrants on Board, For Liverpool ". Illustrated London News , 10 May 185  
p.387.



DEPARTURE OF THE "NIMROD" AND "ATHLONE" STEAMERS, WITH EMIGRANTS ON BOARD, FOR LIVERPOOL.

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.<sup>58</sup> 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.<sup>59</sup>

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.<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup> In 1848 John Besnard of Cork was not

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<sup>58</sup> 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, *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.

<sup>59</sup> Select Committee on Emigrant Ships, *op.cit.*, pp.92-93.

<sup>60</sup> Evidence of John Besnard, Lords Committee Colonization from Ireland, First Report. *op.cit.*, p.179.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.180.

convinced that this supervision necessarily guaranteed the emigrants these conditions.<sup>62</sup> 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”.<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup>

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.<sup>65</sup>

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.<sup>66</sup>

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”.<sup>67</sup> 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

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<sup>62</sup> Evidence of John Besnard, House of Commons Select Committee on Emigrant Ships, *op.cit.*, p.103.

<sup>63</sup> Evidence of John Besnard, Lords Committee on Colonization from Ireland, First Report, *op.cit.*, p.180.

<sup>64</sup> 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.

<sup>65</sup> Evidence of John Besnard, House of Commons Select Committee Emigrant Ships, 1854, *op.cit.*, p.93.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

establishment of one of their depots at Cork.<sup>68</sup> 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".<sup>69</sup> 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".<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup> 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".<sup>73</sup> 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

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<sup>68</sup> CLEC to Colonial Office, 26 July 1854, Colonial Office/Emigration Original Correspondence, hereafter CO/EMOC, CO.384/92.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> CLEC to Colonial Office, 11 September 1855, CO/EMOC, CO.384/94.

<sup>72</sup> Evidence of John Besnard, Commons Select Committee Emigrant Ships, 1854, *op.cit.*, p.92.

<sup>73</sup> *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).<sup>74</sup> 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.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> Regulations forbidding alcohol tried to ensure that they would not embark in a worse state than that in which they had arrived.<sup>77</sup> 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 *Shackamaxon* in 1863, was “dismissed from the Depot for riotous and disorderly behaviour”.<sup>78</sup> 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-embarkation 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.<sup>79</sup> 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

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<sup>74</sup> 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.

<sup>75</sup> 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.

<sup>76</sup> Tender documents, Board and Lodging of Emigrants in Depots, p.13, *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”.

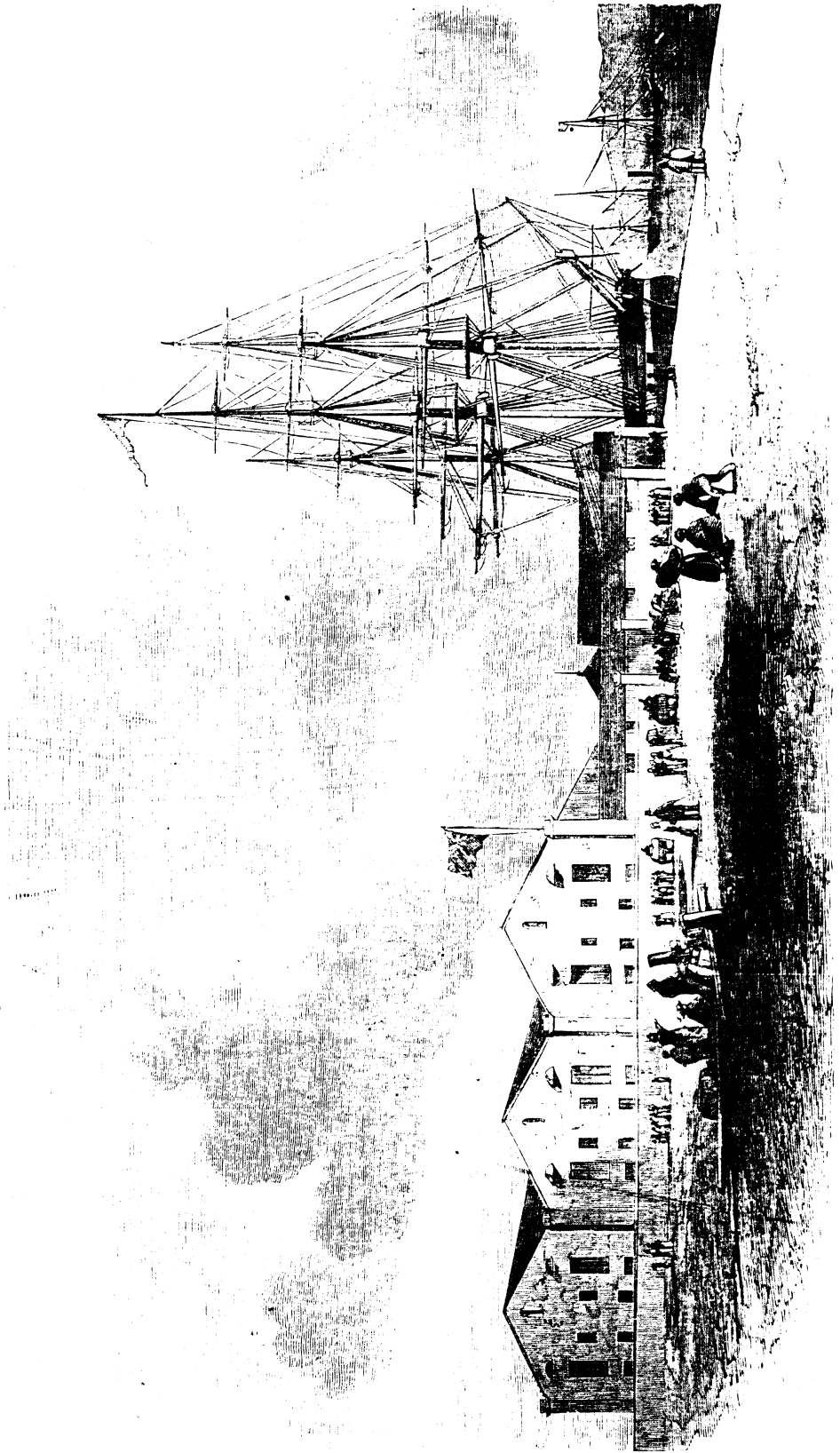
<sup>77</sup> Calder, “Jottings ...”, *op.cit.*, p.16.

<sup>78</sup> Form sent by CLEC to N.S.W. Immigration Agent indicating why Thomas Marland was unable to emigrate, no date, IC/NSW, 9/6238.

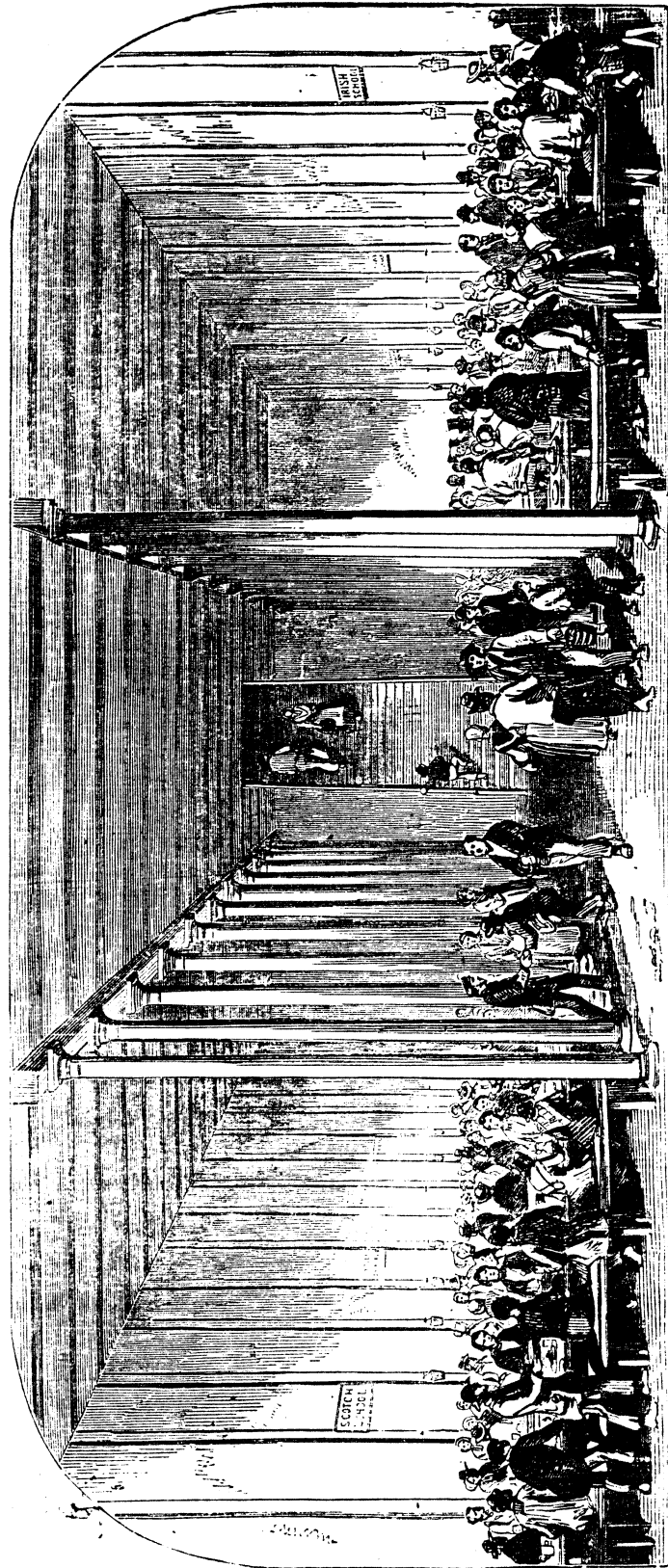
<sup>79</sup> Calder, “Jottings..”, *op.cit.*, p.14.

" Depot At Birkenhead, For the Reception of Government Emigrants to Australia; with a Vessel Alongside the Wharf Preparing for the Voyage ". Illustrated London News , 10 July 1852, p.520.

EMIGRATION DEPOT AT BIRKENHEAD.



DEPOT AT BIRKENHEAD, FOR THE RECEPTION OF GOVERNMENT EMIGRANTS TO AUSTRALIA; WITH A VESSEL ALONGSIDE THE WHARF PREPARING FOR THE VOYAGE.



GOVERNMENT EMIGRANTS' MESS-ROOM



Birkenhead, found himself short a pair of trousers and two pairs of stockings.<sup>80</sup> He was sent into the town to make up the deficit at a cost of 7/- to himself.<sup>81</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup>

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.<sup>83</sup> 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.<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup> 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.<sup>86</sup>

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

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<sup>80</sup> John Browne, Birkenhead Depot, to his brother Patrick Browne, County Tipperary, 29 April 1854, Browne letters, Rev. Brien Maher, Bungendore, N.S.W.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Calder, "Jottings ...", *op.cit.*, p.16.

<sup>83</sup> *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.

<sup>84</sup> 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.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup> 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 comerades, 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.<sup>88</sup>

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.<sup>89</sup> 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.<sup>90</sup>

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".<sup>91</sup> Others enlivened the scene with "jigs" danced to the "inspiring strains of some amateur fiddler or flutist".<sup>92</sup>

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.<sup>93</sup> 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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<sup>87</sup> Emigration Depot at Birkenhead, drawing, *Illustrated London News*, 10 July 1852, p.520.

<sup>88</sup> Bridget and Michael Normile to Michael Normile, 28 April 1854, Normile letters.

<sup>89</sup> Calder, "Jottings ...", *op.cit.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

cap in hand begging for assistance to take him back to the wife he has deserted".<sup>94</sup> 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".<sup>95</sup> 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.<sup>96</sup>

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.<sup>97</sup>

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.<sup>98</sup> At Plymouth the Irish Catholics encountered the well intentioned Protestant evangelical fervour of the

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>98</sup> 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.<sup>99</sup> 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".<sup>100</sup> 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".<sup>101</sup> Prominent among them was John O'Meara, a clerk from Tipperary, who was the "most intellectual and best educated of the party".<sup>102</sup> 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.<sup>103</sup> 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".<sup>104</sup> Where the Catholics were less amenable to Childs' message they reverted in his eyes to the level of "Irish Papists of the lowest grade".<sup>105</sup> In 1853 Childs was appointed official Emigrant Chaplain at Plymouth by the Commissioners.<sup>106</sup>

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.<sup>107</sup> Browne also claimed to have received complaints from the

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<sup>99</sup> KATE, arrived 13 October 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4918.

<sup>100</sup> *The Emigrants Penny Magazine*, Plymouth, Vol.1, No.4, August 1850, p.91. Copies of this publication are held by the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.1, No.5, September 1850, p.117.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.2, No.9, June 1851, p.19.

<sup>106</sup> 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.

<sup>107</sup> 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”.<sup>108</sup> 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.<sup>109</sup> This room had been set up by the Church for general emigrant recreation and contained nothing more sinister than “newspapers and journals”.<sup>110</sup> 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.<sup>111</sup> Browne accepted the post and by 1854 was saying Mass on emigrant ships before departure.<sup>112</sup>

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”.<sup>113</sup> 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

CO.201/470.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Reverend Welch, Church of England Emigrants’ Chaplain, Birkenhead Depot, to Colonial Office, 26 May 1853, CO/EMOC, CO.384/90.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>112</sup> Return of the Names of all Persons etc. ..., p.5., *op.cit.* Canon Browne’s official stipend was paid from October 1853.

<sup>113</sup> *Penny Magazine, op.cit.*, Vol.1, No.8, December 1850, p.184.

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 teamed 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.<sup>114</sup> Secondly 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.<sup>115</sup> 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

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<sup>114</sup> *Matoaka*, arrived 17 May 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4952.

<sup>115</sup> 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.<sup>116</sup> 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".<sup>117</sup> 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.<sup>118</sup> 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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<sup>116</sup> 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.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Penny Magazine*, *op.cit.*, Vol.1, No.2, June 1850, p.44.

Protestant fellow voyagers.<sup>119</sup>

Eliza Fife, a Methodist, travelled with 3 Protestant companions from County Fermanagh to Sydney on the *Africana* in 1866.<sup>120</sup> 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.<sup>121</sup>

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 *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.<sup>122</sup> 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 *Africana* reveal how the Commissioners ran their ships and the nature of the problems encountered on this and other voyages.<sup>123</sup>

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

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Africana*, arrived 15 March 1866, IBL/NSW, 4/4991.

<sup>121</sup> William Fife, County Fermanagh, to Faithy Fife, N.S.W., 10 December 1865, Fife letters.

<sup>122</sup> 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.

<sup>123</sup> *Africana*, ASR/NSW, 3 May 1866, 4/4624, and Immigration Board's Enquiry, *Africana*, 6 April 1866, 4/4703. AONSW.



ship “well adapted” for carrying emigrants.<sup>124</sup> 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.<sup>125</sup> 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”.<sup>126</sup> [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.<sup>127</sup>

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.<sup>128</sup> None of these vessels was deemed unsuitable for the emigrant trade. Nevertheless the general fittings were still carefully

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<sup>124</sup> *Africana*, ASR/NSW.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Himalaya*, ASR/NSW, 18 July 1855, 4/4623.

<sup>127</sup> *Golden Era*, ASR/NSW, 17 August 1855, 4/4623.

<sup>128</sup> 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/NSW, 18 May 1864, 4/4624.

examined and attention drawn to such things as the inadequacy and bad location of the water closets.<sup>129</sup> [Figure 2.15. 1864, No.9]

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

The *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.<sup>133</sup> 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.<sup>134</sup> 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 *Sapphire* lost £1,000 in 1859 and those of the *Sir Robert Sale* £500 in 1864.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> *Sirocco*, second voyage 1864, ASR/NSW, 11 November 1864, 4/4624.

<sup>130</sup> William Fife to Faithy Fife, 10 December 1865: “... Eliza she says the ship is a very uncomfortable place a hard Bed ...”.

<sup>131</sup> Return of Bedding, *Coldstream*, Ship’s Papers, 9/6283, AONSW.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Africana*, ASR/NSW, 3 May 1866.

<sup>134</sup> Charter Party, *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 ...”.

<sup>135</sup> For enquiry into and report on *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 *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.<sup>136</sup> [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".<sup>137</sup> Complaints by the emigrants led to a full Board enquiry which found the Surgeon careless and inattentive to the point of "inhumanity".<sup>138</sup> 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.<sup>139</sup>

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.<sup>140</sup> 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.<sup>141</sup> 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.<sup>142</sup> 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".<sup>143</sup> A reduction in the incidence of diarrhoea and dysentery among the emigrants in the early

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<sup>136</sup> *Mangerton*, ASR/NSW, 19 September 1855, 4/4623, 1855: *Sir Robert Sale*, ASR/NSW, 1 December 1864, ASR/NSW, 4/4624.

<sup>137</sup> *Himalaya*, Immigration Board's Inquiry Report in ASR/NSW, 16 July 1855, 4/4623.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> 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.

<sup>141</sup> Baker's Instructions, CLEC printed circular, 1854, N.S.W. Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, 4/3263, AONSW.

<sup>142</sup> CLEC to Secretary of Lands, N.S.W., 12 June 1862, Ship's Papers, *Ocean Empress*, 9/6282, AONSW.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, Surgeon's report on working of Normanby apparatus, 2 October 1862.

1860s was attributed by Agent Wise to the superiority of this distilled water to the normal cask water.<sup>144</sup> 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.<sup>145</sup>

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 *Africana* struck them as ill and debilitated and their impression was that a “great laxity of discipline” had prevailed on the voyage.<sup>146</sup> 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.<sup>147</sup> A Board enquiry on the *Africana* found Surgeon O’Donnell inefficient in both his medical supervision and general discipline in respect of the single females.<sup>148</sup> 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.<sup>149</sup>

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”.<sup>150</sup> 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 *Bermondsay* in 1855 was credited with medical skill but lacked “decision”, both ship and emigrants being in a “filthy state”.<sup>151</sup> [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

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<sup>144</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, p.2, combined report for 1860, 1861 and 1862.

<sup>145</sup> Charter Party, *Sapphire*, 3 January 1859, Ship’s Papers, 9/6278, AONSW.

<sup>146</sup> *Africana*, Immigration Board’s enquiry, 6 April 1866.

<sup>147</sup> 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’Shannassy, *Votes and Proceedings*, Legislative Council, Victoria, 1852.

<sup>148</sup> *Africana*, Immigration Board’s enquiry, 6 April 1866.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> 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.

<sup>151</sup> *Bermondsay*, ASR/NSW, 13 June 1855, 4/4623, AONSW.

permanent employment.<sup>152</sup> 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.<sup>153</sup> 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.<sup>154</sup> Of the eight for whom records are available, six had already made six or more voyages with the Commissioners.<sup>155</sup>

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”.<sup>156</sup> 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.<sup>157</sup> 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”.<sup>158</sup> 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:<sup>159</sup>

... 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.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1860, 1861 and 1862, *op.cit.*, pp.5-6.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> 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.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, Ships’ Papers, 1864.

<sup>156</sup> Surgeon Strutt’s diary, p.65, 7 December 1849, Ms.8345, La Trobe Library, Melbourne.

<sup>157</sup> Instructions for Surgeons etc. ..., p.23.

<sup>158</sup> Strutt diary, p.67, 3 January 1850.

<sup>159</sup> For description of “Black 47” see Coleman, *op.cit.*, Chapter 9, “1847, The Plague Year”. pp.157/190.

<sup>160</sup> 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".<sup>161</sup> 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 *Africana* was one of the Commissioners' permanent matrons who, like the Surgeon, was entitled to a gratuity, free return passage and re-employment.<sup>162</sup> 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.<sup>163</sup>

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 *Sapphire* in 1859 was an exclusively Irish ship, 98% of the emigrants being Gaelic speakers from Gweedore and Cloughaneely in north-west Donegal.<sup>164</sup> As Matron the Commissioners selected from among the remaining passengers, Mrs Bleakley, a married middle-aged Protestant from County Tyrone.<sup>165</sup> 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.<sup>166</sup> Grace was reported to have "performed well".<sup>167</sup> A similar situation arose on the *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".<sup>168</sup>

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,

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<sup>161</sup> Charter Party, *Sapphire*, 3 January 1859, Clause 27.

<sup>162</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1860, 1861 and 1862, p.6. For CLEC Matron's Instructions, 1860, see *Annie Wilson*, Ship's Papers, 9/6281, AONSW.

<sup>163</sup> *Africana*, Immigration Board's Enquiry, 6 April 1866.

<sup>164</sup> *Sapphire*, arrived 24 May 1859, IBL/NSW, 4/4980.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, Entry for Mrs Bleakley.

<sup>166</sup> Report on the Immigrants, Surgeon Davies, 24 May 1859, *Sapphire*, Ship's Papers, 9/6278, AONSW.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Wacousta*, ASR/NSW, 10 January 1855, 4/4623.

would gain in experience from making a number of voyages.<sup>169</sup> 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 *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”.<sup>170</sup> 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.<sup>171</sup> 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 *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”.<sup>172</sup>

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 *Wacousta* in 1855.<sup>173</sup> 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

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<sup>169</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1860, 1861 and 1862, p.6.

<sup>170</sup> Statement of Catherine Grady an immigrant per *Sandringham*, Ship’s Papers, 9/6284, AONSW.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Surgeon Greenup’s comments on report of schoolmaster, J.F.H. Jones, May 17 1850, IC/NSW, 9/6194.

<sup>173</sup> *Wacousta*, ASR/NSW, 10 January 1855.

domestic service ... than has hitherto been the case with girls of their description".<sup>174</sup> Their prospects were good and Browne had received 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.<sup>175</sup> 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.<sup>176</sup> 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.<sup>177</sup> 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.<sup>178</sup> 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%. A

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *Africana*, ASR/NSW, 3 May 1866.

<sup>176</sup> 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.

<sup>177</sup> *Africana*, ASR/NSW, 3 May 1866.

<sup>178</sup> 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.<sup>179</sup> [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.<sup>180</sup> 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.<sup>181</sup>

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 Shlomowitz who conclude that these emigrants were the first European seaboard population “whose adult mortality rate at sea was reduced to that on land”.<sup>182</sup> Even in the years of relatively high mortality between 1836 and 1853 the adult assisted emigrants had a death rate just under half that

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<sup>179</sup> 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, *BPP*, 1870, Vol.17.

<sup>180</sup> Evidence of Port Health Officer, A. Savage R.N., Select Committee on Immigration, 1852, p.40, *op.cit.*

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> John McDonald and Ralph Shlomowitz, “Mortality on Emigrant Voyages to Australia in the 19th Century”, *Explorations in Economic History*, No.27, 1990, p.86.

of New York emigrants.<sup>183</sup> 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.<sup>184</sup> 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.<sup>185</sup> 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.<sup>186</sup>

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

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* Table p.96.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, *op.cit.*, p.49

the Matron, Mrs Charlotte Wale, of calling them “Dirty Irish”.<sup>187</sup> 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”.<sup>188</sup> Mrs Murphy also testified to Mrs Wale’s kindness.<sup>189</sup> 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.<sup>190</sup> Officially the Commissioners ruled that everyone was entitled to “worship God according to their own consciences”, and this principle was upheld by the Surgeons.<sup>191</sup> 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”.<sup>192</sup> 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”.<sup>193</sup> 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,

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<sup>187</sup> On a sheet of paper, no heading, but clearly notes of evidence for Immigration Board’s Enquiry, *Ocean Empress*, Ship’s Papers, 9/6284.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> There are many references to this separation. For an example see Surgeon Strutt’s dairy, p.63, 11 November 1849.

<sup>191</sup> Matron’s diary, *David McIver*, 5 September 1858, Ship’s Papers, 9/6277, AONSW.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

selfishness, or a desire to make those around them uncomfortable.<sup>194</sup>

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 lave 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 appeard 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.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Surgeon Strutt, typescript article, *op.cit.*, pp.3/4.

<sup>195</sup> William Fife to Faithy and Nixon Fife, 18 January 1860, Fife letters.

### 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of R.E. Garnham, House of Commons Select Committee on Passengers’ Act, pp.334/335, *BPP*, 1851, Vol.19.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> *Thomas Arbuthnot*, arrived 3 February 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4919.

<sup>5</sup> Strutt diary, p.70, 4 February 1850.

to investigate complaints laid by the immigrants.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> In 1852 Browne himself had witnessed the resultant lift in immigrant morale when this was permitted on the *Kate*, half of whose immigrants were Irish:

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.71, 6 May 1850.

<sup>7</sup> 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, AONSW.

<sup>8</sup> Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on the Quarantine Laws, p.23, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1853, Vol.2.

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.<sup>9</sup>

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 *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.<sup>10</sup> 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".<sup>11</sup>

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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> For those on board the diet was to be improved by the issue of fresh meat and vegetables.<sup>14</sup> The instructions issued by both the Commissioners and the local authorities informed the Surgeon that his responsibilities ceased only when the last immigrant disembarked.<sup>15</sup> 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".<sup>16</sup> 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

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Surgeon Holman, Spring Cove, to Immigration Agent, 9 September 1864, *Wanata*, Ship's Papers, 9/6285.

<sup>11</sup> See Agent's Ships Reports, 1862-1866, 4/4624, AONSW.

<sup>12</sup> Charter Party, 1847, p.15, Clause 14, CLEC to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 3 November 1847, miscellaneous papers and letters relating to immigration, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1848.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Clause 15.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Clause 9.

<sup>15</sup> Surgeon's arrival instructions, printed circular from N.S.W. Immigration Department, Clause 8, *Persia*, Ship's Papers, 9/6283.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

board.<sup>17</sup> In particular no employer was allowed to have any contact with the ship until the advertised time for hiring.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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”.<sup>21</sup> The Surgeon reported this in person to the Immigration Office and was issued with a form authorising Patrick’s admission to the Sydney Infirmary.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup> They were to be sent to the old Female Factory at Parramatta where a special room was set aside for them.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Clause 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Revd. Dr Ross, 23 November 1849, CLMP/NSW, 4/4637.

<sup>20</sup> Notice on Free Emigration to Australia, January 1848, CLEC Circulars 1817/1851, CO/EMOC, CO.384/87.

<sup>21</sup> 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.

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

<sup>23</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Parramatta, 22 May 1849, CLMP/NSW, 4/4635.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> Julia had arrived on the *Neptune* on 18 February 1852 clearly pregnant but with a number of months to go before the child was due.<sup>27</sup> 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”.<sup>28</sup>

Families in distress were also offered assistance. On 20 May 1850 the Fennelly family from Mullinahone, County Tipperary arrived on the *Thetis*.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

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”.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> 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 *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.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Medical Superintendent, Lunatic Invalid Establishment, Parramatta to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 13 September 1852, IC/NSW, 9/6197.

<sup>27</sup> *Neptune*, arrived 18 February 1852, IBL/NSW, 4/4925.

<sup>28</sup> Female Servant's Agreement, Julia Ballinger, with Medical Superintendent, Parramatta to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 13 September 1852, IC/NSW, 9/6197.

<sup>29</sup> *Thetis*, arrived 20 May 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4919.

<sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on Retrenchment in the Public Expenditure, p.62, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, 1858, Vol.3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Strutt diary, p.71, 8 February 1850.

Women immigrants being hired at the Female Immigrant Depot, Hyde Park, Sydney in 1870. Town and Country Journal , Sydney, 19 Jul 1870.



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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> However, in late August, faced by the imminent arrival of the *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”.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup>

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 *Lady Elma Bruce*.<sup>38</sup> 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

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<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 27 January 1848, CLCS/NSW, 4/4610.

<sup>36</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 31 August 1848.

<sup>37</sup> 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.

<sup>38</sup> 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".<sup>39</sup>

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.<sup>40</sup>

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".<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

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".<sup>43</sup> 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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<sup>39</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1848, Section 48, "Protection Provided for Unmarried Females", p.7.

<sup>40</sup> 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.

<sup>41</sup> 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.

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

<sup>43</sup> 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".<sup>44</sup> 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".<sup>45</sup> In explanation Browne mentioned that the Surgeon of the ship on which Margaret arrived, the *Lady Elgin*, had been seriously ill and that consequently the immigrants had been in a "filthy condition".<sup>46</sup> Even a "compulsory cleaning" carried out at the Barracks had not been entirely satisfactory.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> The girls should not be allowed to enter service until "not only their linen but also their persons are in a cleanly state".<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup>

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.<sup>52</sup> The Catholics were attended to on a voluntary basis by the parish priest of St Mary's and the Sisters of Mercy.<sup>53</sup> Surgeon Strutt left a colourful description of the impact of the Sisters on a group of high spirited Irish

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4 4 Alexander Moore to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 23 September 1854, IC/NSW, 9/6206.

4 5 *Ibid.*

4 6 *Ibid.*, Agent Browne's draft reply to Moore.

4 7 *Ibid.*, Browne's draft reply.

4 8 N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 29 December 1854.

4 9 *Ibid.*

5 0 *Ibid.*, N.S.W. Colonial Secretary's marginal annotation.

5 1 N.S.W. Colonial Secretary's marginal annotation on Colonial Architect to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 23 February 1855, CSC/NSW, 4/4382.

5 2 Agent's report on the Immigration Barracks, 22 July 1853, Correspondence Relative to Immigration, pp.3/4, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1853, Vol.2.

5 3 *Ibid.*

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.<sup>54</sup>

His girls rushed to greet him claiming that they had prayed enough.<sup>55</sup>

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.<sup>56</sup> They also showed a reluctance to return which had been "detrimental to the discipline of the establishment".<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> 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.<sup>59</sup>

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.<sup>60</sup> 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".<sup>61</sup> Indeed in the printed regulations framed by Browne the Matron was forbidden to "afford the protection of the Institution to

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<sup>54</sup> Strutt diary, p.71, 12 February 1850.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, p.5, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1855, Vol.2.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

any servants out of place".<sup>62</sup> 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.<sup>63</sup> In 11 of these cases employment had been lost through illness and the girls placed at government expense in the Sydney Infirmary.<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup>

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".<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup> Wise replied that once engaged servants could not simply be sent back to the Barracks for reasons such as those given by Mrs Jenkins.<sup>68</sup> 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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<sup>62</sup> Instructions to the Matron of the Institution at Hyde Park Barracks, Clause 19, Agent's Report on the Immigration Barracks, 22 July 1853.

<sup>63</sup> 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.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Jane Taylor, Maitland, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 13 September 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6208.

<sup>67</sup> Mrs Jenkins to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Thursday morning, no date, IC/NSW, 9/6238.

<sup>68</sup> *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.<sup>69</sup> 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.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Surgeon's arrival instructions, Clause 4.

<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup>

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.<sup>73</sup> 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”.<sup>74</sup> 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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<sup>71</sup> 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.

<sup>72</sup> Evidence of Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, 1855, p.3.

<sup>73</sup> 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.

<sup>74</sup> 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.<sup>75</sup>

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.<sup>76</sup>

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.<sup>77</sup> 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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<sup>75</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Maitland, 13 April 1848, CLMP/NSW, 4/4635.

<sup>76</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Depot Superintendent, Bathurst, 13 February 1849, CLMP/NSW, 4/4636.

<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup> Indeed colonial sponsors had to undertake to pay for the subsistence of their nominees from 10 days after the arrival of the ship.<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup>

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.<sup>81</sup>

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

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<sup>78</sup> 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”.

<sup>79</sup> Immigration Remittances, 18 September 1856, Clause 12, Appendix to N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1856/1857, p.16.

<sup>80</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1863, p.7.

<sup>81</sup> Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, G.F. Wise, Select Committee on Immigration, p.4, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1870, Vol.1.

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.<sup>82</sup>

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 deficulty in wending your way this farr ...<sup>83</sup>

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.<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup>

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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<sup>82</sup> Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on Retrenchment in the Public Expenditure, 1858, p.63.

<sup>83</sup> Bernard McGrath, Braidwood, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 5 October 1863, IC/NSW, 9/6237.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *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.<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup> Reid then sent it to an agent, Mr Prescott, who took her from the Barracks and put her aboard the Wollongong steamer.<sup>88</sup>

## 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.<sup>89</sup> 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.<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup> They were now split into two groups — the Tully family along with Elizabeth Dowd were sent on to Goulburn while the Halls, the Reynoldses, the Egans,

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<sup>86</sup> Patrick Cahalan, Jembaicumbane(?), to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 21 June 1862, *Persia*, Ship's Papers, 9/6283.

<sup>87</sup> John Reid, Albion Park, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 19 November 1862, IC/NSW, 9/6235.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* Agent Wise's annotation.

<sup>89</sup> List of Immigrants from the Ship *John Bright* forwarded to Parramatta by the Government, 1 June 1849, IC/NSW, 9/6192.

<sup>90</sup> *John Bright*, Agent's Ship Report, 8 June 1849, CLCS/NSW, 4/4611.

<sup>91</sup> 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.<sup>92</sup> 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.<sup>93</sup> In 1849 one group bound for Goulburn faced a lack of food owing to the incompetence of the draymen.<sup>94</sup> 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.<sup>95</sup> 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".<sup>96</sup> 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.<sup>97</sup>

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.<sup>98</sup> 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".<sup>99</sup> 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

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<sup>92</sup> Bathurst Depot, Return for the week ended 30 June 1849, IC/NSW, 9/6192.

<sup>93</sup> 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.

<sup>94</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, Camden correspondent, 28 July 1849.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Parramatta, 28 July 1849, CLMP/NSW, 4/4637.

<sup>98</sup> Strutt diary, pp.73/76, 19 to 2 March 1850.

<sup>99</sup> 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".<sup>100</sup> 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 ...<sup>101</sup>

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.<sup>102</sup> 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.<sup>103</sup> Goulburn, a town of 1,000 people, Strutt found a "a dull, quiet place" and the immigrant depot "indifferent".<sup>104</sup>

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".<sup>105</sup> 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".<sup>106</sup> 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".<sup>107</sup>

#### 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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<sup>100</sup> Strutt diary, p.74, 21 February 1850.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.74/75, 22 February 1850.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75, 25 February 1850.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75, 22 February 1850.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.76, 26 February 1850.

<sup>105</sup> *Goulburn Herald*, 14 April 1849.

<sup>106</sup> *Goulburn Herald*, Advertisement for Goulburn Immigrant Depot, 21 October 1848.

<sup>107</sup> Goulburn Depot, Return for week ended 18 May 1850, IC/NSW, 9/6196.

1852.<sup>108</sup> [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.<sup>109</sup> 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.<sup>110</sup> 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*.<sup>111</sup> 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

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<sup>108</sup> *Araminta*, arrived 29 July 1854, IBL/NSW, 4/4938.

<sup>109</sup> Report, Select Committee on Immigration, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1852, Vol.2.

<sup>110</sup> An Act to amend the Assisted Immigrant Act, 30 November 1854, 18 Victoria No.29, *The Public General Statutes of New South Wales*, Sydney, 1862, p.2873: An Act to Repeal the Assisted Immigrant Act and the Land and Deposit Regulations, 18 December 1855, 19 Victoria No.35, *ibid.*, pp.3014/3015.

<sup>111</sup> *Sabrina*, arrived 10 July 1854, IBL/NSW, 4/4940: *Plantagenet*, arrived 28 July 1854, IBL/NSW, 4/4940: *Araminta*, arrived 29 July 1854, IBL/NSW, 4/4938. N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 27 October 1854, Immigration — Working of Present System, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1855, Vol.2, pp.446/447.



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.<sup>112</sup> 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.<sup>113</sup> In explanation, the Commissioners argued that trained English servants would not consider emigrating under such indentures but that this had not deterred Irish applicants.<sup>114</sup> More scathingly, Browne described them as “poor ignorant creatures [who] ... sign without asking any questions, and do not know what they are coming to”.<sup>115</sup>

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 *Colombia*, the *China* and the *Caroline* brought 381 Irish girls to Sydney, 344 (91%) of whom were recruited under the Act.<sup>116</sup> When the hiring of 108 girls off the *Caroline* took place on October 23 only 11 found employment.<sup>117</sup> 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.<sup>118</sup> 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.<sup>119</sup> He stressed the urgency of altering a system “distasteful to the majority of the community in

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, Immigration — Working of Present System.

<sup>113</sup> Evidence of Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on Immigration Department, 1855, p.3.

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

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>116</sup> *Colombia*, arrived 13 October 1854, *China*, arrived 2 September 1854, *Caroline*, arrived 13 October 1854, all IBL/NSW, 4/4938.

<sup>117</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 27 October 1854: Immigration — Working of Present System.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

N.S.W.”<sup>120</sup> 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*.<sup>121</sup> 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.<sup>122</sup> 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.<sup>123</sup>

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.<sup>124</sup>

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.<sup>125</sup> 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.<sup>126</sup> Even on vessels with smaller numbers the Irish were often the majority. Such

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Isabella Acres to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 9 March 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6207.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> William O’Brien to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 19 January 1855, CSC/NSW, 4/3266.

<sup>124</sup> Ellen Russell to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 10 April 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6208.

<sup>125</sup> 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.

<sup>126</sup> *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.<sup>127</sup> 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.<sup>128</sup> [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.<sup>129</sup> 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.<sup>130</sup> 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.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, Evidence of Captain Browne, Select Committee on Immigration Department, 1855, p.3.

<sup>128</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1855, p.5.

<sup>129</sup> *Wacousta*, arrived 2 January 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4957.

<sup>130</sup> 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.

<sup>131</sup> 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.<sup>132</sup> 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.<sup>133</sup> Maurice Condon found an employer in 19 days.<sup>134</sup> 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*.<sup>135</sup>

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.<sup>136</sup> 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.<sup>137</sup> Three were quickly caught and, along with Sturgeon, faced trial at the Petty Sessions where the absconders were given two days in the cells.<sup>138</sup> Sturgeon was fined £1. Forbes told the Bench that he had found the whole depot in a "state of insubordination".<sup>139</sup> After his visit Browne reported that, court proceedings having made examples of the troublemakers, the immigrants now appeared to be "penitent and willing

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<sup>132</sup> Return of Immigrants not Invalids etc. ... in the Depot from 1st January 1854 to 30th June 1855.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *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.

<sup>136</sup> Depot Superintendent, Parramatta, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 11 February 1855, CSC/NSW, 4/3265.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 February 1855, Emigration Depot in a State of Insubordination — Court of Petty Sessions.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

to conform".<sup>140</sup> But he remarked later that he had had to "keep the Depot more like a prison than an Immigrants' Barracks".<sup>141</sup>

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.<sup>142</sup> 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".<sup>143</sup> The Irish, claimed Browne, showed a like disinclination to seek employment "so long as they can get anything out of the Government".<sup>144</sup> Browne may have had in mind families like the Dwyers from County Tipperary, who, with six children, spent three weeks at Parramatta in June.<sup>145</sup> 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.<sup>146</sup>

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.<sup>147</sup> 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".<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 19 February 1855, CSC/NSW, 4/3265.

<sup>141</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 25 April 1855, CLCS/NSW, 4/4618.

<sup>142</sup> Evidence of Captain Browne, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, p.2.

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

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Return of Immigrants not Invalids etc. ... in the depot from 1st January 1854 to 30th June 1855.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Evidence of Captain Browne, Select Committee on the Immigration Department, 1855, p.2.

<sup>148</sup> 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.<sup>149</sup> 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.<sup>150</sup> 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.<sup>151</sup> 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

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<sup>149</sup> *Ocean Empress*, Ship’s Papers, 9/6284.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, *Ocean Empress*, Surgeon’s Report of the disposal of the Immigrants by the Ship Ocean Empress, who have left the Ship without entering into formal engagements.

<sup>151</sup> *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.<sup>152</sup>

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".<sup>153</sup>

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.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> 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.

<sup>153</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Rev. Thomas Wilson, Kiama, 21 March 1864, CLMP/NSW, 4/4651.

<sup>154</sup> 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.<sup>155</sup> 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”.<sup>156</sup> 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”.<sup>157</sup> 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.<sup>158</sup>

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 *Ocean Empress* and at 12 noon interviewed the families and the single men.<sup>159</sup> 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.<sup>160</sup> 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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<sup>155</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Rev. Wilson, 21 March 1864.

<sup>156</sup> Evidence of Registry Office keeper, W.B. Haigh, Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes etc. ..., p.112.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, Evidence of Registry Office Keeper, Marion Pawsey, p.115.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, Evidence of Marion Pawsey, p.117.

<sup>159</sup> *Ocean Empress*, Ship’s Papers, 9/6284.

<sup>160</sup> Evidence of J.C. Glue, Select Committee on the Working Classes etc. ..., p.106.



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.<sup>161</sup> 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.<sup>162</sup> 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.<sup>163</sup> 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.<sup>164</sup> 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.<sup>165</sup> 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

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<sup>161</sup> *Ocean Empress*, Surgeon's Report of the disposal etc. ...

<sup>162</sup> Hiring agreement, Kieran Daly, 9 May 1864, *Queen of the East*, Ship's Papers, 9/6284.

<sup>163</sup> Evidence of J.C. Glue, Select Committee on the Working Classes etc. ..., p.107.

<sup>164</sup> Hiring agreements, John Brown, John Ferry, James McFadden, Neil Murray, James Sweeny, all signed 14 April 1864, *Montrose*, Ship's Papers, 9/6284.

<sup>165</sup> 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.<sup>166</sup> 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”.<sup>167</sup> They must be “well accustomed to farm work and making of drains” as their “principal work will be draining”.<sup>168</sup> Colley must have communicated further with Glue as four Donegal men were sent to him on the Kiama steamer.<sup>169</sup>

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.<sup>170</sup> Glue sent him two Donegal men as ploughmen and general labourers.<sup>171</sup> 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.<sup>172</sup>

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

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<sup>166</sup> J.C. Glue to R. Fitzgerald, 3 June 1862, *Abyssinian*, Ship’s Papers, 9/6281. Hiring agreements, John Boner, Cornelius Kair, Bryan McGarry, Alexander Neely, no date, *Abyssinian*, Ship’s Papers.

<sup>167</sup> William Colley, Kiama, to J.C. Glue, 31 May 1862, *Abyssinian*, Ship’s Papers.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, Hiring agreements, Patrick Connaghan, Teague Gallagher, John Gallagher, James Murray, all signed 3 June 1862.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, Revd.Pennycook, Braidwood, to J.C. Glue, 26 May 1862.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, Hiring agreements, Dennis Brogan and John Gallagher, signed 3 June 1862.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, Oldbury to J.C. Glue, 8 April 1862.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, Hugh Colley, Kiama, to J.C. Glue, 26 May 1862.

from County Antrim.<sup>174</sup> 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.<sup>175</sup>

Glue however felt free to send him Robert Rankin from Letterkenny, County Donegal. Rankin was an adherent of the Church of Ireland.<sup>176</sup>

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".<sup>177</sup> 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.<sup>178</sup> 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.<sup>179</sup>

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.<sup>180</sup> 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.<sup>181</sup> 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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<sup>174</sup> 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.

<sup>175</sup> R. Bell, Dempsey Island, to J.C. Glue, 25 May 1862, *Abyssinian*, Ship's Papers.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, Hiring agreement, Robert Rankin, signed 4 June 1862.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, F.P. McCabe, Russell Vale, Wollongong, to J.C. Glue, 31 March 1862.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, McCabe to Glue.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, Hiring agreements, Patrick Browne, Hugh Cassidy, Dennis Gallagher, all signed 3 June 1862.

<sup>180</sup> Acting Auditor General to Acting Colonial Secretary, 5 April 1855, CSC/NSW, 4/327.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

price".<sup>182</sup> Should word reach home that emigrants were being buried in pauper coffins this might "militate against the introduction of respectable immigrants".<sup>183</sup> 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.<sup>184</sup>

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.<sup>185</sup> 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.<sup>186</sup> 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.<sup>187</sup>

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

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<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, annotation of Acting Colonial Secretary.

<sup>185</sup> For a general account of the work of Caroline Chisholm see Margaret Kiddle, *Caroline Chisholm*, Melbourne, 1950.

<sup>186</sup> Kiddle, *op.cit.*, p.38.

<sup>187</sup> Evidence of Caroline Chisholm, House of Lords Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, p.413, *BPP*, 1847, Vol.6.

cases.<sup>188</sup> 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.<sup>189</sup> Governor Fitzroy's attention was drawn to Mrs Chisholm's remarks on the inadequacy of reception arrangements in Sydney for single females.<sup>190</sup> 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.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p.424.

<sup>189</sup> 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".

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> 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.

## Chapter 4

### The General Characteristics of Irish Assisted Emigrants to Sydney, 1848–1870

No other Irish emigrants during the 19th century were as systematically reported upon as the assisted emigrants arriving in the Australian colonies. From the 1830s to the cessation of government emigration to Queensland in the 1890s the colonial Immigration Agents produced annual reports, supported by detailed statistical tables, showing the general characteristics of all assisted immigrants arriving from the United Kingdom. For N.S.W. the Agent's reports provided a continuous account of the colony's yearly immigration from the 1830s to the 1880s.<sup>1</sup> These reports provide a general picture of the Irish immigrants, both on their own and in relation to the English and Scots: their numbers, sexes, ages, literacy, occupations, religious denominations and counties of origin. However, when the reports are analysed in conjunction with the more extensive personal details supplied by each immigrant to the Immigration Board in Sydney more complex and interesting patterns appear: wide disparities in the numbers arriving from different counties and from areas within these counties, significant differences in sex ratio between counties, variations in the proportion of families in the emigrant flow over time and from certain areas, change and diversity in literacy rates and much else.

#### The Regional Origins of the Irish Assisted Immigrants

Emigration officials rarely commented on where the assisted Irish came from within the island. When they did they showed an awareness of that movement's intensely regional character. In 1849 Emigration Commissioner Murdoch defended the Commissioners' failure to select enough Irish for the colonies at the height of the Famine. This cessation in recruitment had been necessary because the area from which most applications came was temporarily "in a disturbed state".<sup>2</sup> He was referring to the short-lived 1848 rebellion, the centre of which was the county of Tipperary in the province of Munster. More disparagingly, in 1855 N.S.W. Immigration Agent, Captain H.H. Browne, criticised the Commissioners for sending too many young servant girls from Clare, Galway and Tipperary, "people from the Southern Counties of Ireland".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For full list of N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Reports, 1848–1870, see bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of Emigration Commissioner, T.W.C. Murdoch, to House of Lord's Select Committee on the Operation of the Irish Poor Law, pp.974-975, *BPP*, 1849, Vol.16.

<sup>3</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1855, pp.2-3.

The statistics confirm that Munster dominated the emigration to Sydney. [Figure 4.1] During the first wave of assisted immigration culminating in the “bounty emigration” of the early 1840s the emigration rates from Munster and Ulster were equal. Thereafter for the rest of the century Munster had nearly double Ulster’s rate and was always well ahead of both Leinster and Connacht. The main surprise in these figures is the western province of Connacht. Although it sent just over half Leinster’s number of emigrants from 1860 its emigration rate was greater than that of the eastern province. But the most noticeable aspect of the Irish/NSW emigration was the persistence of these provincial disparities in the intensity of the emigration to Sydney during the fifty years of the assisted passage.

County figures not only confirm Munster’s pre-eminence but also reveal the most intense concentration of emigration to N.S.W. from any part of Ireland. [Figure 4.2 and Map<sup>4</sup> 1] Of the country’s 32 counties the adjacent Munster counties of Clare and Tipperary supplied just short of one Irish immigrant in every three arriving in Sydney between 1848 and 1870. Clare alone sent double the number of the third highest county, Limerick. With 67% of all the province’s emigrants the Tipperary/Clare sub-region overshadowed the whole Munster, indeed the whole Irish emigration, to Sydney. Not surprisingly emigration rates in these two counties were well ahead of any other county and Clare’s rate alone was nearly double that of Fermanagh, the county with the third highest rate. Even more remarkable is that half of all the emigrants came from just five neighbouring counties—Tipperary, Clare, Limerick and Cork in Munster and Galway in Connacht. [Figure 4.2. No 1-2/4/12/16]

The next most significant group of counties associated with N.S.W. seems overshadowed by this overwhelming Munster/Connacht cluster. These were the contiguous southern and western Ulster counties of Fermanagh, Cavan, Donegal, Tyrone and Armagh. They supplied just over 20% of the emigrants and had emigration rates nearly double those of a whole swathe of midlands and western counties. [Figure 4.2. No.3/7-10] Outside these two county groups, with the exception of Kilkenny and Kings County in the centre of the island and Wicklow in the east, the intensity of the Sydney emigration fell away sharply. In Munster the emigrants from Kerry in the far south and Waterford on the east coast made little difference to the overall Munster figure. The weakness of the Sydney link was also evident moving north-west from County Longford in Leinster into the Connacht Counties of Roscommon, Leitrim, Sligo and finally to Mayo on the Atlantic coast. From this large area of Connacht just 1,588 emigrants went to Sydney, 3.7% of the total. [Map<sup>4</sup> 1]

Provincial boundaries impose a certain artificiality on the Irish/N.S.W. emigration map. This is clear from a consideration of the intensity of emigration within counties. For



statistical purposes Galway emigrants have to be considered as coming from Connacht but the origins of these emigrants within the county show that this movement was in effect a spill-over of the Munster emigration from Clare and Tipperary. The south Galway baronies of Kiltartan and Leitrim, bordering on these two counties, had the highest emigration rates in Galway. [Figure 4.3 and Map 2] With the exception of the barony of Dunmore in the central north to the north-west or north-east within Galway emigration rates fell away markedly. From Ballynahinch, Ross and Moycullen, Galway's three large western baronies containing 18% of its 1851 population, came only 4% of its Sydney emigrants. By contrast Kiltartan on Galway Bay, bordering the Clare baronies of Burren and Inchiquin, contributed 21%. In Kiltartan the coastal parish of Kinvarra sent a steady stream of people to Sydney. Just along the coast from Kinvarra is the County Clare parish of Ballyvaughan, the heart of the Sydney emigration in the barony of Burren. Despite their administrative separation by both a provincial and a county border, Kinvarra and Ballyvaughan were the centre of a localised movement to N.S.W. from the coastal strip and immediate hinterland of the south-eastern portion of Galway Bay.

The Sydney emigration from Ireland's south-west was not simply a county or provincial phenomenon. This movement was concentrated within a region lying to the south and west of the midlands town of Tullamore in County Offaly (Kings County). The boundaries of this area were encompassed by a line running from Tullamore south to the Tipperary town of Clonmel, south-west to Cork City, north-west to Loop Head on the edge of the Shannon estuary, north-east to Tuam in Galway and finally back east to Tullamore. Within this region lay 24 of the 33 Irish baronies with emigration rates to N.S.W. of 10 per thousand or greater. [Figure 4.3: starred baronies and Map 2] East of the Tullamore/Clonmel line there were only a small number of widely separated baronies with strong Sydney links—the three baronies of north-east Kilkenny, Ballinacor North in Wicklow, Moyfenrath in Meath and Fartullagh in Westmeath. Of these the most isolated was Ballinacor North in central Wicklow. Despite having the highest rate of any barony in the whole of the province of Leinster Ballinacor was surrounded by an area of weak association with Sydney. [Figure 4.3 and Map 2]

Apart from the barony of Roscommon in eastern Connacht all the remaining baronies of significance were in Ulster. [Figure 4.3 and Map 2] The highest emigration rates in the province were experienced in an area stretching north from mid-Fermanagh to south-west Tyrone taking in the baronies of Tirkennedy, Lurg, Tirhugh, Omagh West and Omagh East. Outside this area in both counties rates fell away sharply, especially in Tyrone. The Fermanagh emigration was exceptionally localised. Of the 1,107 Fermanagh emigrants so far identified with a particular barony 74% came from the baronies of Lurg and Tirkennedy lying to the east and north-west of Enniskillen. Here too, as in the

baronies of south Galway and north Clare, county boundaries did not mark the limit of the attraction to Sydney. This ran on from parishes like Drumkeeran and Magheraculmoney in Lurg into the neighbouring parish of Dromore in the Tyrone barony of Omagh West.

No other area of Ulster matched this cluster of baronies in Tyrone, Fermanagh and Donegal. The emigration from Cavan and Armagh, the only other Ulster counties with high emigration rates, was spread fairly evenly across both counties. [Figure 4.3 and Map 2] One other area which arrests attention within Ulster is the far north-western Ulster barony of Kilmacrenan in Donegal. With 16 emigrants per thousand Kilmacrenan had the second highest Sydney emigration rate in the whole of Ulster.

Not only was the N.S.W. emigration marked by these regional concentrations but they were also fairly stable over time. [Figure 4.4] Among the eight counties with the highest rates in the 1850s and 1860s, five—Clare, Tipperary, Fermanagh, Limerick and Cavan—stayed in the top eight throughout the century. These rates also reflect something of the rise and fall of interest in emigrating to N.S.W. In Kilkenny for example, the Sydney emigration was very much a phenomenon of the 1850s. The most dramatic increase in the rate of emigration to N.S.W. between 1841 and 1860 was in Donegal. After 1855 Donegal provided the only major new source of Sydney emigrants and the 1859 proportion of Donegal's total emigration highlights the county's sudden, spectacular rise in both absolute and relative significance for N.S.W. [Figure 4.5 Col 13] Seventeen percent of the county's emigrants left between 1848 and 1858 but 38% in 1859, a year in which 31% of all the N.S.W. emigrants were from Donegal. Closer examination shows that 60% of all 1848–70 Donegal emigrants came to Sydney in just three years—1859, 1861 and 1864. This unique emigration pattern resulted from the work of the N.S.W. Donegal Relief Committee of 1858 whose activities will be described in Chapter 7.

While Donegal was the only county to experience such a sudden upsurge in numbers other counties also experienced variations in the intensity of emigration to Sydney. By 1856 just over half the Irish assisted had arrived in Sydney. [Figure 4.5 Col 1] Key counties such as Tipperary, Clare and Galway experienced a pattern of departures for N.S.W. close to the national average over the whole period. [Figure 4.5 Cols 2-3/8] Another important Munster county, Cork, would have been close to the average departure rate were it not for 1854 when it sent an unusually high 12% of all its emigrants. [Figure 4.5 Col 4] The Emigration Commissioners were responsible for this leap in Cork's contribution when they despatched a whole shipload of inmates from the Cork Union

Workhouse in an attempt to meet the colony's demand for female servants.<sup>4</sup> Mayo, a county with few emigrants, sent 50% of them in just three years—1850, 1855 and 1864. [Figure 4.5 Col 10] The increase in 1855 can be accounted for by the general rise in recruitment by the Commissioners which affected virtually every county but the higher numbers from Mayo in 1850 and 1864 resulted from recruitment under special emigration schemes. In 1850 Mayo provided a large number of workhouse girls to the orphan emigration of 1848–1850 and in 1864 the Donegal Relief Committee's agent ran out of willing recruits in Donegal and made up his numbers from Westport in Mayo.<sup>5</sup> His efforts there involved only a small group of 17 but this was sufficient to bring about a major increase in that year's proportion of total Mayo emigration.

Aberrant departure rates in more significant counties represented different local responses to the two main emigration schemes—selection by the Commissioners or nomination in the colony. In Kilkenny the Commissioners were very successful in recruiting emigrants in the mid-1850s. The three years 1853–1855 accounted for 40% of the county's total and of these only 100, 16%, were nominated by colonial residents. Sixty-two per cent of all Kilkenny's emigrants had left for Sydney by 1856. [Figure 4.5 Col 7] This contrasted sharply with Ulster counties like Fermanagh and Tyrone both of which had low departure rates in the first half of the 1850s. A greater proportion of the Tyrone and Fermanagh emigrants left in the 1860s when all the N.S.W. emigrants were colonial nominees. [Figure 4.5 Cols 11-12]

Only 2% of all emigrants from Ireland between 1852 and 1870 received an assisted passage to N.S.W. Not surprisingly, given their high emigration rates, Clare, Fermanagh and Tipperary sent a significantly greater share of their emigrants to Sydney than any of the other counties. [Figure 4.6] Only in Wicklow was Sydney a more attractive destination than is suggested by the county emigration rate. More of Wicklow's emigrants chose N.S.W. compared with counties with much higher rates such as Limerick. But whatever the contribution of other provinces it is the emigration from the rural south-west, from Munster, which has left the best known mark on the Australian historical landscape. Of the 20 Irish diggers killed or wounded in the Eureka rebellion at Ballarat in 1854 11 were from Munster. Prominent among them were seven men from County Clare.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Emigration Commissioners to Colonial Office, 7 July 1855, Correspondence Relating to the Australian Colonies, pp.31-32, *BPP*, 1857, Vol.10.

<sup>5</sup> For Mayo orphan numbers see Chapter 6, Figure 1. For recruitment by the Donegal Relief Committee's agent in Mayo see Chapter 7, p.209.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Lalor, "To the Colonists of Victoria", *Argus*, Melbourne, 10 April 1855, in Bill Wannan, *The Irish in Australia*, London, 1965, pp.117-118.

### The Sex Ratio of the Irish Assisted Immigrants

Supplying labour to the employers of N.S.W. was never regarded by the Emigration Commissioners as the only, even the main, purpose of assisted emigration. They shared, as they saw it, with the colonial authorities the responsibility for creating a balanced social framework in Australia and nothing was regarded as more important in achieving this than ensuring a proper ratio between the sexes.<sup>7</sup> Two processes worked against the natural development of male/female parity in N.S.W; up to 1840 men formed the overwhelming majority of those arriving as convicts and, once the gold rushes began in the early 1850s, men dominated the flood of free, unassisted emigration. It was the Commissioners' efforts to ensure a proper balance in the Sydney emigration under their control that explains one of its main features—the over-representation of Irish women among the female assisted immigrants between 1848 and 1870. [Figure 4.7]

Irish free emigration to the colonies has been strongly associated with the image of the young, single Irish female.<sup>8</sup> But the yearly changes in the proportions of male and female arrivals indicates a more complex emigration pattern than is suggested by the overall statistical preponderance of Irish women. [Figure 4.8] Again the explanation lies in the operation of the two main emigration schemes—selection by the Commissioners and nomination in the colony. Up to the end of 1856 only 35% of the emigrants were males and in only two years between 1848 and 1856, in 1851 and 1856, was there anything like parity between male and female arrivals. [Figure 4.8] Over the next 14 years the situation changed dramatically. Sixty per cent of all the assisted men who came to the colony did so from 1857 to 1870. During this period virtual parity was achieved; 52% of the immigrants were male and 48% female. [Figure 4.8] Quite simply after 1856, when the Commissioners scaled down their recruitment activity in Ireland and obtaining an assisted passage was in the hands of the Irish themselves through nomination in the colony, a natural balance asserted itself.

The relative ease with which men could obtain a passage to Sydney under the remittance regulations after the mid-1850s was fully appreciated by the colonial Irish. In 1856 Bessy Browne in Melbourne paid for her younger brother, Edward, to come to Victoria as little local assistance was being offered to males.<sup>9</sup> When Edward arrived in

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<sup>7</sup> Emigration of single women, 8th Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners (hereafter CLEC) , p.8, *BPP*, 1847–48, Vol.26; N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1865–66, p.7; Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, Despatch No.118, 8 July 1851, Colonial Office/N.S.W. Original Correspondence, CO.201/441.

<sup>8</sup> Chris McConville, *Croppies, Celts and Catholics*, Melbourne, 1987, p.34.

<sup>9</sup> Maryanne and Bessy Browne to their brothers Patrick and Edward and their sister Bridget Browne, 18 November 1856, Browne letters, Father Brien Maher, Bungendore, N.S.W.

1857 he was carrying money from friends in Ireland who wished to be nominated for a passage in Australia.<sup>10</sup> Edward found this to be more expensive in Victoria, where the regulations required twice as large a deposit for men as for women.<sup>11</sup> He wrote that he would look into the possibility of having them nominated by friends in Sydney where there were fewer obstacles to male emigration.<sup>12</sup>

The overall imbalance between the sexes was not uniform throughout Ireland. In Leinster 61% were females while Ulster was almost in balance. Munster, 56% of whose emigrants were females, reflected the national figure. [Figure 4.9 Col 1] At county level disparities ranged from virtual equality in the three northern counties of Tyrone, Fermanagh and Derry to a situation where over two-thirds of Dublin's emigrants were female. However in every county females predominated up to 1856 and, in all but four counties in Ulster, this reached a figure of 60% or more. [Figure 4.9 Col 2]

Although the creation of this pre-1856 imbalance was deliberate policy on the part of the Commissioners it was felt more in Ireland than any other part of the U.K. Among the English assisted emigrants there was actually a surplus of males.<sup>13</sup> Here the Commissioners claimed, probably correctly, that they were never able to induce enough single English female servants to emigrate when their wages were virtually the same as in the colonies.<sup>14</sup> In order to satisfy the colonial demand for female servants, and their own determination to redress any tendency for the emigration to become even slightly male-dominated, the Commissioners made up their female numbers from Ireland. There, they claimed, they never experienced any difficulties in attracting enough Irish women to fill their quotas. This so called "recourse to Ireland" was often unpopular in the colony but without it, the Commissioners argued, they would never have been able to compensate

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<sup>10</sup> Edmund, John, Maryanne and Bessy Browne to Patrick Browne, 28 August 1857, Browne letters.

<sup>11</sup> The Victorian deposit rates were: males aged 12 to 29—£4 to £6; aged 30 to 40—£6 to £8: females, 12 to 29—£2 to £3; aged 30 to 40—£3 to £4: Immigration Remittances, Victoria, 1 August 1856, NSW/IC, 9/6298. In N.S.W. there was a flat rate of £4 for both sexes aged between 12 and 40: see Chapter 8, Figure 1.

<sup>12</sup> Edmund Browne and others to Patrick Browne, 28 August 1857, Browne letters.

<sup>13</sup> 51% of all English assisted immigrants between 1848 and 1855 were men: Yearly table, Return showing the Ages of the Assisted Immigrants from the United Kingdom who arrived during the Year ..., N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Reports, 1848–1855.

<sup>14</sup> Emigration Commissioners to the Colonial Secretaries of New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria, 5 November 1855, Emigration Commissioners/Letters to Emigration Agents, Colonial Secretaries, etc., CO.386/128: "... the difference of their wages here and in Australia is not sufficient to constitute a temptation to encounter the discomforts of a long sea voyage, and the uncertainties and the breach of family ties attending a removal to Colonial life".

for the 2:1 surplus in favour of males in the unassisted emigration or to hold down the male excess evident in the N.S.W. census of 1856.<sup>15</sup>

While official policies explain the general over-recruitment of Irish women they do not account for the large excess of women from some counties. Over 70% of all emigrants from Mayo, Longford or Kerry, counties of minor significance in the overall emigration, were women. The explanation here lies in the years during which this surplus occurred. Mayo, for example, contributed 85 women in 1850 and only one in 1851. In fact 1850 accounted for 22% of all Mayo women who received an assisted passage between 1848 and 1870. Likewise 22% of all Kerry women to reach Sydney did so in 1850. In Longford this concentration was even more pronounced: 53% of that county's 1848-70 female total arrived in two years, 1849 and 1850. These were the years when the Commissioners satisfied Sydney's demand for female labour through the Irish workhouse orphan emigration scheme and every Irish Poor Law Union was given the opportunity to contribute a quota of girls.<sup>16</sup> Overall between 1848 and the end of 1850 females outnumbered males by two to one in the Sydney emigration.

Between 1853 and the end of 1855 the balance again swung heavily in favour of females. [Figure 4.8] After the end of the orphan scheme the Commissioners sent out fairly equal numbers of men and women but in 1852 the news of the Australian gold discoveries and the type of emigration which ensued made them quickly alter their policy:

Up to the end of 1852, it was found sufficient to maintain the equality of the sexes because even in New South Wales where a disparity had been caused by transportation it was principally among the older classes and was gradually disappearing ... But after 1852 when the gold discoveries gave birth to an unassisted Immigration the great bulk of which was male, we thought it our duty so to adjust our selections as to counteract as far as possible this undesirable result.<sup>17</sup>

The result was the largest single excess of Irish women ever to reach the colony, the intake of 1853. [Figure 4.8] Females from Clare and Tipperary made up 31% of the 1853 female intake. In these counties the Commissioners' virtual exclusion of single men in this gold rush atmosphere produced a huge excess of females; in 1853 males made up 25% of the emigrants from Tipperary and only 18% of those from Clare.

A final significant excess of female emigrants occurred during the implementation of the Assisted Immigrant Act in 1854 and 1855. In late 1853, at the request of the

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<sup>15</sup> 15th Report of the CLEC, 1855, p.20, *BPP*, 1854-55, Vol 17: 17th Report of the CLEC, 1857, p.26, *BPP*, 1847, Vol.16.

<sup>16</sup> For the numbers sent from each county see Chapter 7, Figure 1.

<sup>17</sup> Emigration Commissioners to Colonial Office, 12 September 1855, Emigration Commissioners/Entry Books of Correspondence, CO.386/72.

N.S.W. government, the Commissioners began recruiting under the regulations of this Act which required emigrants to bond themselves to repay their fares.<sup>18</sup> The Commissioners claimed that this was not acceptable to most female domestics in England and they stepped up recruitment in Ireland.<sup>19</sup> Again the Munster “Australian” heartland of Clare, Tipperary, Limerick and Cork helped the Commissioners meet their requirements by providing 52% of all females in 1854 and 47% in 1855.

These years also saw a rise in the number, if not the proportion, of males among the assisted Irish. There was a 67% increase on 1852–53 and almost as many men arrived in the three years 1854 to 1856 as in the whole six years from 1848 to 1853. Males were not excluded under the Assisted Immigrant Act but they found it almost as difficult as in earlier years to gain a passage from the Commissioners. In 1855 only 121, 21%, of the single male emigrants went out under the Act.<sup>20</sup> All the rest were colonial nominees, an indication that the Irish in the colony had begun to use the remittance regulations to create their own balance in the selection process. By contrast, virtually all the single women applied to the Commissioners, not always because there was nobody in the colony to nominate them, but because the £1 emigrant contribution required was considerably less than the £5 necessary for nomination in the colony.

By contrast the second half of the 1850s and the 1860s were years of significant assisted Irish male emigration to N.S.W. [Figure 4.8] Admittedly males never reached Sydney in quite such overwhelming numbers as females during the years of selection by the Commissioners. Nevertheless Irish men were now arriving in the colony in virtually equal, sometimes even greater, numbers than Irish women. That never occurred between 1848 and 1855. Without this period of balancing up by the N.S.W. Irish community through the use of the remittance regulations the whole mid-19th century emigration to Sydney would have been dominated by the women of Clare, Tipperary, Limerick, Cork and Kilkenny.

### **The Age and Family Structure of the Irish Assisted Emigrants**

“Emigration”, according to Fitzpatrick, “was a young man’s—and a young woman’s—game”.<sup>21</sup> This was certainly true of the mid-century Irish immigrants at the port of

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<sup>18</sup> 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, Supplement, N.S.W. *Government Gazette*, 4 January 1852.

<sup>19</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 5 March 1855, Immigration: Working of the Present System, N.S.W. Legislative Council, *Votes and Proceedings*, 1855, Vol.2, p.446.

<sup>20</sup> Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848–1870.

<sup>21</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration, 1801–1921*, Dundalk, 1984, p.8.

Sydney. The great majority, 71%, were young adults aged from 15 to 29. [Figure 4.10] There was little provincial deviation from this figure, an outer limit being set by Connacht with 76% of its emigrants in this age group. [Figure 4.10] There were however quite significant differences between men and women within this broad category. Women came to the colony at a younger age than the men, 29% of them arriving as late teenagers or young adults aged between 15 and 19. The men, in general, were older; 33% were over 24 as against 24% of the women. [Figure 4.10] Neither age distribution was representative of the Irish population as a whole. At the census of 1851 and 1861 the 15-29 age group were 22% and 23% of the population respectively; between 1848 and 1870 they formed 71% of the N.S.W. emigrants. Irish children were under-represented among the assisted Irish by about 45% while adults 44 years and over were a rare sight on any government ship. [Figure 4.10]

How did their ages compare with all Irish emigrants between 1852 and 1870? Both groups were dominated by the 15 to 29 year olds but the Australian emigrants were more tightly concentrated in this age range. [Figure 4.11] Male emigrants shared a similar age pattern but it was among the females that an interesting disparity emerged. Nine per cent more women went to Sydney in the 15-19 age range as Irish female emigrants as a whole. [Figure 4.11] Here the general Irish tendency for women to emigrate earlier than males was strengthened by the addition between 1848 and 1850 of 2,220 workhouse orphan girls. This produced a situation during those years where 51% of all assisted females were between 15 and 19 years of age. [Figure 4.12] Children under 15 were just as much a feature among the Sydney bound Irish as any other group but older emigrants, those aged 30 and above, made up only 12% of the assisted compared with 23% of all Irish emigrants. This difference was accentuated among those aged 40 and over. The age-related financial contributions, payable both when selected by the Commissioners and under the colonial remittance regulations, would have held down the number of older emigrants.<sup>22</sup> In the 1860s nomination in N.S.W. for males between 40 and 50 cost £9 and £12 for anyone older than 50.<sup>23</sup>

Only once between 1848 and 1870 did emigrant ages vary markedly from this pattern. The orphan scheme had a dramatic effect on the 1848-1851 figures. [Figure 4.12] Female emigration from all four provinces was dominated by these young girls who provided up to 43% of Munster's total and a staggering 73% of Connacht's. The

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<sup>22</sup> Under the Commissioners' general regulations the lowest contribution demanded for the 40 to 50 age group was £5 between 1851 and the introduction of the Assisted Immigrant Act in 1854. Under this latter Act those under 45 paid £1, those between 45 and 50 £5 and those over 50 £11.

<sup>23</sup> For colonial deposits for older emigrants under the remittance regulations see Chapter 8, Figure 1.



impact the orphans made on the emigrant age profile was felt in virtually every county; they were clearly in evidence in Tipperary's statistics and overwhelming so in those of the Connacht counties of Mayo, Sligo and Roscommon. [Figure 4.13 No.1-2] Surprisingly the figures for both Clare and Fermanagh, counties with high emigration rates to Sydney, were little affected by the orphans. In neither county was the overall proportion within the 15-19 age group unusually high from 1848 to 1851. [Figure 4.13 No.3-4] Indeed Clare girls were more inclined to leave in this age range in the 1860s than in the late 1840s and early 1850s. After the end of the scheme in 1850 female age distribution remained fairly stable. [Figure 4.14]

This bunching of the Irish in the young adult age categories set them apart from other assisted emigrants. [Figure 4.15] In the 14-21 age group they formed 61% of all arrivals. [Figure 4.16] Again this resulted from the over-representation of young Irish females; 55% of all assisted females were Irish but among 14-21 year olds this rose to 68%. [Figure 4.16] This situation was temporarily reversed by the Commissioners between 1856 and 1859. Stung by colonial complaints that they were relying too much on Ireland, they increased their recruiting activities in England and lowered the required single female emigrant contribution to ten shillings.<sup>24</sup> In 1857-58 they were able to induce 3,762 English women to emigrate and left colonial nomination to take care of the Irish quota. For those two years only one female immigrant in three was Irish. [Figure 4.17]

The strength of the adult figures among the Irish suggests that a feature of their emigration was the relative absence of families. Certainly they brought fewer young children with them than other U.K. immigrants. Of the English and Scots 29% were under 14; the comparable Irish figure was 14%. [Figure 4.15] There was little change in these national proportions even in the 1860s when the Irish dominated the Sydney immigration. In no four-year period from 1848 to 1870 did the overall percentage of children among the English and Scots fall below 25% while for the Irish it was only 9% from 1860 to 1863 and 10% from 1864 to 1870.

Unfortunately the N.S.W. Immigration Agent published no statistics on families. Consequently it can only be inferred from the relative number of young children that families were more in evidence among the English and Scots. However a reconstruction of Irish family groups from the shipping lists indicates that more of them came to the colony in this way than is apparent from comparisons of age groupings. Hidden by the

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<sup>24</sup> 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.

basic colonial age statistics were the young adults who travelled within a family unit. Typical of families with older children were the Condons who arrived under the Assisted Immigrant Act in January 1855 from Mitchelstown, County Cork. Maurice and Mary Condon, both aged 49, were accompanied by seven children of whom five were older than 14.<sup>25</sup> During 1855 1,050 Irish arrived as part of a family unit; 30% of them were over 14. If family is taken to include those who travelled as couples without children, widows or widowers with accompanying children, or married women and children with a husband already in the colony then the family share of the Irish emigration was a sizeable 39%. [Figure 4.18] Indeed at the height of the N.S.W. emigration, 1852 to 1855, 49% of the Irish arrived in such groups.

This extensive family emigration of the mid-1850s was due to the Commissioners' efforts after 1851 to attract families, even those with considerable numbers of children. Large families, it was thought, were less likely to leave N.S.W. for the Victorian goldfields. Emigrant contribution rates were dropped and the Assisted Immigrant Act, under whose provisions the Commissioners began recruiting in mid-1853, allowed heads of families up to the age of 45 to obtain a passage for £1.<sup>26</sup> Unlike the previous general regulations, which had required much larger sums from families, this £1 now covered a man's wife and all his family under 14.<sup>27</sup> The Act made a considerable impact on male age distribution from 1852 to 1855 when 47% of all male arrivals were either over 30 or under 14. Most of the older men were family heads. [Figure 4.19]

Within Ireland Ulster people were the most likely to emigrate in family groups. [Figure 4.20] Indeed family emigration was a feature of all the northern counties with the exception of Donegal and Cavan. [Figure 4.21 No.17/23] Donegal's low figure was the result of the unique manner in which significant emigration to Sydney began in that county. In 1859, Scott Durbin, the N.S.W. Donegal Relief Committee's agent, commenced selecting emigrants in Donegal's north-western barony of Kilmacrenan. Although he did not reject families, he concentrated his recruiting on the unmarried.<sup>28</sup> Before 1859 the extent of family emigration from Donegal had been similar to that from other Ulster counties and from 1852 to 1855 64% of the county's emigrants travelled in family groups. Indeed these four years witnessed the greatest degree of Ulster family

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<sup>25</sup> *Wacousta*, arrived 4 January 1855, 4/4957, AONSW.

<sup>26</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1852, pp.1-2: An Act to regulate the Indenting of Assisted Immigrants and Others etc., *op.cit.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Scott Durbin, Agent for the Donegal Relief Committee of Sydney to the Committee, 13 December 1858, reprinted in *Freeman's Journal*, Sydney, 19 February 1859.

emigration to Sydney with eight out of nine northern counties recording more Sydney emigrants leaving within families than as single men and women.

After 1855 Irish family emigration gradually fell away. From 1864 to 1870 families were only 28% of the Irish total. [Figure 4.18] The financial requirements of the remittance regulations, the main scheme under which the Irish reached Sydney after 1856, were a considerable disincentive to family emigration. In 1855 the Henry family from Kilrea, County Derry paid only £1 to the Commissioners to emigrate under the Assisted Immigrant Act.<sup>29</sup> The family consisted of John Henry, aged 31, his wife, aged 28 and five children ranging in age from 13 to 4. To nominate a similar family in N.S.W. would have required £18 in 1857 and £25 in 1862.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Religious Denominations of the Irish Assisted Immigrants**

Dr. John Dunmore Lang's famous attack on what he saw as the excessively Irish and Roman Catholic nature of assisted immigration is generally associated with the 1840s, especially the years 1839 to 1841. His first assault on the potentially baleful influence of Irish Roman Catholics came in his 1841 pamphlet—*The Question of Questions, or is this Colony to be transformed into a Province of the Popedom?*<sup>31</sup> Less well known is his application of this evocative phraseology 34 years later to the period 1857 to 1867. In *The Fatal Mistake*, written in 1875, Lang praised the immigration systems of Queensland and New Zealand in the 1860s.<sup>32</sup> These colonies had offered land grants to immigrants and so encouraged out the right type of small British capitalist. By contrast N.S.W. was receiving, once again, the wrong sort of immigrant:

... a semi pauper class ... chiefly Roman Catholics, of the humbler classes, from Ireland, they came out also to subject us and our institutions to the domination of certain ultramontane zealots, whose chief object is to transform our noble colony into a mere province of the Popedom.<sup>33</sup>

One need not share Lang's prejudices in order to understand the origins of his apprehensions. Australian historians once stressed the supposedly homogeneous nature of 19th century Australian society because its population was overwhelmingly drawn from the unified political state of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. However that kingdom was rarely, especially before the Great Famine of 1845 to 1850,

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<sup>29</sup> *Samuel Boddington*, arrived 17 February 1855, 4/4955, AONSW.

<sup>30</sup> For deposits required in N.S.W. under the remittance regulations see Chapter 8, Figure 1.

<sup>31</sup> Rev. John Dunmore Lang, *The Question of Questions or is this Colony to be transformed into a Province of the Popedom?*, Sydney, 1841.

<sup>32</sup> Rev. John Dunmore Lang, *The Fatal Mistake*, Sydney, 1875.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.

perceived by contemporaries as a cultural entity. Within the United Kingdom its large Irish, Catholic and Gaelic component was segregated on an outlying island. In N.S.W., by contrast, the Catholic Irish were everywhere. By 1861 in country, town, and city they formed anywhere from 15% to 48% of the population.<sup>34</sup> Rightly or wrongly they were seen by many Scots Presbyterians like Lang and English liberal politicians like Henry Parkes as the major threat to the development in Australia of a liberal progressive society on the British Protestant model.<sup>35</sup> Moreover this was a Catholic challenge begun and sustained, as both men were well aware, by assisted emigration from Ireland. Between 1848 and 1870 of the 104,705 assisted immigrants landed in N.S.W. at either Sydney or Moreton Bay 38% were Roman Catholics. [Figure 4.22.1 Col 2] Ninety six per cent of these Catholics were Irish. [Figure 4.22.1 Col 2]

Most Irish Catholics came from the province of Munster. [Figure 4.23 Col 3] Given the county origins of these immigrants, many congregations in the colony must have seemed like the counties of Tipperary, Clare, Limerick, and Cork at prayer. Nevertheless each church would also have had a leavening of worshippers from every county in the island. [Figure 4.24] In general Catholics were drawn from each province in reasonable proportion to their denominational strength. [Figure 4.23 Col 2] However, with the exception of one or two counties, as one moved north and east of Munster and Connacht the Catholic proportion of the total emigration gradually declined. [Figure 4.24 B/C/D/E] Less than 50% of the Ulster emigrants were Catholics. [Figure 4.23 Col 1] Indeed Ulster Catholics would have been significantly under-represented among Ulster emigrants had it not been for the high proportion of Catholic emigrants from Donegal. [Figure 4.24 B/18] Before the work of the Donegal Relief Committee began in 1858 Donegal emigration was mainly composed of Protestants from east Donegal. Without this post-1858 emigration from the Catholic north-west of the county, Ulster assisted emigration would have been predominantly non-Catholic. Even in Cavan, where Catholics were 80.5% of the population, they made up only 62.1% of the N.S.W. emigrants. [Figure 4.24 D/26]

Unlike the Catholics, N.S.W. Protestant assisted immigrants were not so dominated by one ethnic group. Certainly the great majority of the Anglicans were from England but Irish Anglicans would not have been a rarity at Church of England services

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<sup>34</sup> James Waldersee, *Catholic Society in New South Wales, 1788–1861*, Sydney, 1974, Table 27, p.284.

<sup>35</sup> For a full elaboration of Parkes' views on Irish Roman Catholic immigration and the need to restrict it see *Irish Immigration: Speech by Henry Parkes, M.P.: Delivered in the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, on the Second Reading of a "Bill to authorise and regulate Assisted Immigration"*, October 14th, 1869, Sydney, 1869, Ferguson Collection No. F13784, National Library of Australia.

in the colony. [Figure 4.22.1 Col 2] Anglicans made up 16% of all N.S.W./Irish emigrants and 84.3% of them came from Ulster and Leinster. [Figure 4.22.2 Col 1 and Figure 25 Col 4] But Ulster was the core of this emigration with two out of every three Irish Anglicans being from that province. [Figure 4.25 Col 4] In Ulster one county stands out; Fermanagh in the south-west provided a quarter of all the Ulster Anglicans. Only 38.4% of Fermanagh's population were Anglicans but they made up 61.6% of the county's N.S.W. emigrants. [Figure 4.26] In all Ulster counties, with the exception of Donegal, Anglicans were considerably over-represented among the emigrants. [Figure 4.26]

These assisted Ulster Anglicans, along with a smaller number of their co-religionists from the other provinces, raise the question of the meaning of the term "Anglo-Irish" in Australia's immigration history. O'Farrell draws a distinction between the "Anglo-Irish" and the "Ulster Protestants". The former he sees as the better educated, and usually better off, settlers from the southern provinces drawn from the minor gentry and professional classes.<sup>36</sup> Between 1848 and 1870 Sydney attracted 2,107 assisted Anglicans from Leinster, Munster and Connacht.<sup>37</sup> These people were neither professionals nor members of the gentry. Most Irish Anglicans descended from 16th and 17th English immigrant stock and many of them settled in large numbers along the religious and ethnic divide in counties Tyrone, Fermanagh and Donegal where they became farmers of a kind barely distinguishable from their indigenous Catholic neighbours. In later years some sank to the level of cottiers and landless labourers. Significant numbers of these less socially elevated Anglicans also settled in the other provinces mainly in rural Leinster and parts of Munster. Bruce Elliott has identified and analysed the emigration of just this sort of less well off Anglican from north Tipperary to Canada in the pre-Famine decades of the 19th century.<sup>38</sup> Only further research can determine the exact socio-economic status of these poorer Irish Anglican assisted immigrants; but given their ancestral and denominational background it is hard to see what else to call them but "Anglo-Irish".

Ulster Protestantism is usually linked with the Presbyterianism of the Scotch-Irish. Ulster Presbyterianism however was the most under-represented of Ireland's three major religions in the Sydney emigration. Presbyterians made up 9% of the Irish population in 1861 but only 3% of the N.S.W. assisted emigrants. [Figure 4.22/2 Col 1] Not surprisingly the Presbyterians were overwhelmingly from Ulster and mainly from the

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<sup>36</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, Sydney, 1987, p.94.

<sup>37</sup> Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848-1870.

<sup>38</sup> Bruce Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach*, Belfast, 1988.

Presbyterian strongholds of north-east and central Ulster—the counties of Antrim, Down, and Derry. [Figure 4.25 Col 6] It was not Presbyterian emigration which allowed Ulster's particular brand of Irish anti-Catholicism to take root in the colony. The Orange Order in N.S.W. found its initial strength in the Ulster Anglicans, large numbers of whom settled in the Illawarra district south of Sydney.<sup>39</sup> There the Orange Lodges, a feature of south coast Anglicanism, were fed by a steady stream of assisted immigrants from Fermanagh and Tyrone. In his opposition to Irish Catholic immigration the Scots Presbyterian, Dr Lang, would have had no stronger supporters than these Ulster Anglicans. Ironically they were themselves the beneficiaries of the same emigration system which had allowed the Catholic religion to establish itself in strength in N.S.W.

### The Level of Literacy Among the Irish Assisted Immigrants

Illiteracy accompanied by relative stupidity were the common attributes of the assisted Irish as perceived by colonial society. Bridget, the untutored domestic, and, to a lesser extent, “thick” Mick, her equally unlettered brother, were common targets of Sydney and Melbourne cartoonists throughout the latter half of the century.<sup>40</sup> O’Farrell sees the very “fact” of being assisted and Irish as sufficient for contemporaries to assume an inability to read and write.<sup>41</sup> It was with obvious delight that he discovered that only eight out of 38 Irish assisted males, who arrived at Port Fairy, Victoria in 1857 on the *Chance*, were illiterate:

The contemptuous stereotype of the “thick Mick” does not apply: the fact that Ireland exported agricultural labourers is not a reflection on the quality of Australia’s Irish migrant intake; it is a comment on the condition of Ireland’s economy.<sup>42</sup>

All assisted immigrants arriving at Sydney were asked by the Immigration Board if they could read and write, read only or do neither. How truthful were their responses to this question? In 1864 only 9% of both male and female Irish immigrants, who were hired out with the assistance of the Immigration Office, overstated their ability to write. Although they told the Immigration Board they could write they signed their wage agreement with a mark not a signature. [Figure 4.27] Curiously 7% of the females,

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<sup>39</sup> O’Farrell, *op.cit.*, pp.101-102.

<sup>40</sup> Such cartoons were very much a feature of the *Melbourne Punch* throughout the 1870s. The following is a fairly typical example of a dialogue between an Irish servant and her mistress entitled “Confusion of Ideas”:

Old Lady: “Shocking news in the paper again this morning, another poor fellow committed suicide”.

Bridget: “Gracious ’m, how dreadful! I hope they’ll hang him!”

<sup>41</sup> O’Farrell, *op.cit.*, p.126.

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

women who claimed only the ability to read, later signed their agreements. In 1861 the Irish Census Commissioners were curious about the number of people, especially women, who claimed only to be able to read. Reading ability, they felt, must have been acquired at school where pupils would also have been taught to write. In explanation the Commissioners thought that the large number of Irish who said they could only read included many early writers who were never again asked, or needed, to use this skill.<sup>43</sup> Consequently the ability to write had deserted them.<sup>44</sup> What remained with many of them, as the Sydney female wage agreements suggest, was the ability to sign their name. Despite any slight imperfections in the data the immigrants' statements regarding their literacy were probably reasonably accurate as for the great majority literacy was not a prerequisite for employment or, except perhaps in the early years for males, for a passage.

The majority of the Irish assisted immigrants were basically literate. Among those over four 70% could read, a fact which certainly invalidated the general colonial assumption that the Irish lacked basic education. [Figure 4.28] Admittedly among English and Scots over four only 15% were illiterate compared with 30% of the Irish. Just how literate an immigrant was depended on when he or she arrived. Illiteracy among the Irish declined by 8% between 1848–51 and 1864–70 and the possibility of a recently arrived immigrant from Ireland being able to write increased from 43% to 59% [Figure 4.29] Interestingly both Irish and British immigrants showed a decline in literacy between the years 1848-51 and 1852-55. This may have been the result of the Commissioners ceasing to use any selection process based on literacy after the early 1850s. Passage application forms for 1848 and 1849 contained a question on literacy and local selecting agents were asked to check the accuracy of an applicant's response.<sup>45</sup> This question was dropped from forms for passages under the Assisted Immigrant Act in 1854 and never appeared again on any form for applicants in the U.K. Those sponsored under the remittance regulations were never questioned regarding literacy except on arrival in the colony.

The degree of literacy among the Irish themselves varied greatly. Both sex and county of origin gave some indication of relative literacy. Overall males were 7% more literate than females although at county level the difference ranged from 12% in Donegal to 1% in favour of males in Down. In two counties—Kings and Kildare—males and

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<sup>43</sup> Report on Ages and Education, p.30, 1861 Census of Ireland, *BPP*, 1863, Vol 56.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Instructions to Agents for the Selection of Emigrants, 1 June 1846, Section 5, in Despatch, Emigration Commissioners to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, Immigration, p.8, N.S.W. Legislative Council, *Votes and Proceedings*, 1848.

females were equally literate and in five counties—Armagh, Wicklow, Antrim Wexford and Dublin—females were actually more literate. [Figure 4.30 Females-19-20/25-26/29-31. Males-6/10-11/13/17/19-20] Again generally males and females from counties in the east and north were better educated than those from counties in the south and west. [Map 3] However there were a number of exceptions to this fairly broad categorisation; Waterford in the south-east had the highest male and the second highest female illiteracy rate. Similarly, while nearly half of the Mayo females were illiterate males from that county were only slightly less literate than emigrant males in general. [Figure 4.30] These county figures may also conceal wide differences in literacy between parishes. The emigrants from the parish of Clonoulty in central Tipperary were considerably better educated than those from Tullaghobegley in north-west Donegal. [Figure 4.31] Judging from these emigrants Clonoulty's female population was well along the road to literacy while those in Tullaghobegley had barely begun.

Literacy was also closely linked to an immigrant's religion. The Church of Ireland males and females had illiteracy rates considerably below those of the Catholics in each province and every county. [Figure 4.32] Indeed these Irish Anglicans were just as literate as immigrants from Great Britain. [Figure 4.28 and 4.32] Even among these Protestants there were regional differences; those from the southern provinces of Leinster, Munster and Connacht were more literate than those from Ulster and indeed more literate than the British immigrants. [Figure 4.28 and 4.32]. At the other end of the scale Catholic females recorded the highest illiteracy rates of all the emigrants. Although they were not the most illiterate over one in three of the women from the core emigrant counties of Clare, Tipperary, Cork, Limerick and Galway could neither read nor write. [Figure 4.32] The image of the ignorant, uneducated Irish immigrant probably found most of its substance in the comparatively illiterate state of hundreds of these Munster and Connacht Catholic females of the 1850s who obtained their first colonial employment in the homes of the middle and lower middle classes.

A final pointer to an immigrant's literacy was occupation. O'Farrell's contention, that the Irish agricultural labourers were far from illiterate, is borne out by the Sydney statistics. Among the two largest male occupational groups forming 78% of all male immigrants—the farm labourers and labourers—only 25% were illiterate. Indeed 63% could both read and write. [Figure 4.33] Irish skilled tradesmen, as one might expect, showed extremely low levels of illiteracy. [Figure 4.33] As with the men a woman's ability to read and write was closely linked to her occupation. All the schoolmistresses and governesses could both read and write and only 10 of the 257 dressmakers were unable to read. [Figure 4.34] However, as has already been suggested, the colonial encounter with Irish illiteracy took place in middle class homes where the chances of



having to hire an illiterate Irish Catholic servant were greatest. The occupations of the great majority of Irish immigrant women related to domestic service and over 50% of these women, while able to read, could not write. Among the large numbers of farm servants, house servants, domestic servants, general servants and the like almost one woman in three was illiterate. [Figure 4.34]

How literate were the assisted Irish compared with the home population? Overall illiteracy in Ireland declined by 14% between 1851 and 1871 by which year one third of the population, 33%, were illiterate. The chances that a given individual was literate was closely related to their age. In 1851 for example males generally were 9% more likely to be illiterate than males aged between 16 and 25. Moreover during the twenty years of the mid-19th century, the period of most intense emigration to N.S.W., there was a rapid improvement in literacy throughout Ireland. Forty two per cent of the male and 50% of the female 11 to 15 year olds were unable to read in 1841; by 1861 this had declined to 26% and 27% respectively. The N.S.W. emigrants emerged from from a country where increasing numbers of children and young adults were achieving basic literacy.

In broad terms the emigrants were more literate than the Irish population. Males emigrating between 1848 and 1855 were the group most in advance of the home population. Over the 1850s the gap narrowed and by the 1860s Irish males were only 4% less literate than the emigrants. Where the male emigrants were most clearly superior was in their ability to write as well as read. [Figure 4.35] The difference between emigrant and non-emigrant females was also fairly pronounced in the early 1850s. This showed itself most strongly in the read only category. By the 1860s, although the female emigrants were still slightly more literate than other Irish females, the differences between them, in all categories, were now small. [Figure 4.35]

The majority of the emigrants however were young adults between 16 and 35 and the great majority of them were even more tightly concentrated in the 16 to 25 age range. In 1851 these age groups had the lowest illiteracy rates in Ireland although in 1861 they were overtaken by the 11 to 15 year olds. These emigrant 16 to 35 year olds were more literate than those of the same age in the home population at the 1861 census. [Figure 4.36 Ireland] This emigrant superiority was evident in all but four counties for males and in all but eight counties for females. Both male and female emigrants from Ulster were slightly less literate than the province in general. [Figure 4.36/starred cases] Most of these cases can be explained by the aberrant nature of the emigration from the counties concerned. The number of Ulster illiterates was greatly increased by the large number of Donegal emigrants who were selected by the Donegal Relief Committee in 1858, 1861, 1862 and 1864. Most of these people were from Tullaghobegley, one of the most illiterate parishes in Ireland. [Figures 37 and 31] If Tullaghobegley is ignored then the Ulster

illiteracy rate for the 16-25 age group reverts to 14% for males and 18% for females. In Leinster and Connacht the figures for 16-25 year old females in Carlow, Westmeath, Queens County and Leitrim were heavily influenced by the relative illiteracy, compared with other female emigrants, of the workhouse orphans of 1848 to 1850. The orphans, all aged 16-19, made up just over 30% of all female emigrants from those counties. Except in these special cases the colonists of N.S.W. had few grounds for any assumption that to be Irish was to be illiterate.

### **The Occupations of the Irish Assisted Immigrants**

Of all the various aspects of the assisted Irish their occupational structure was the most predictable. Eighty nine per cent of occupied males claimed to have worked in agriculture while 95% of the females stated they had been employed in some form of domestic service. [Figure 4.38.2] These were precisely the main occupational categories which qualified an emigrant for an assisted passage under the various regulations issued between 1847 and 1863. The Irish were a vital element in meeting colonial demand for agricultural and domestic labour; 53% of the male agricultural workers and 69% of the female domestics were recruited from Ireland. [Figure 4.38.1] To those colonists who depended on recently arrived labour it must at times have seemed as if an Irish employee was all they could ever obtain from the local immigration authorities. For rural labourers this was certainly true of the 1860s but less so in the 1850s when there were more Englishmen and Scotsmen than Irishmen available for hire. Irish women however dominated the market for domestic servants. Only between 1856 and 1858, when their share of female immigration fell to 40%, were Irish women less than 50% of all female domestic servants. [Figure 4.39]

These broad categories were themselves dominated by a handful of occupations. Just short of 90% of all the immigrants were encompassed by 20 job descriptions and five occupations—farm labourer, labourer, farm servant, house servant and general servant—accounted for 66%. [Figure 4.40] Of these 20 occupations only four were unrelated to rural labouring or household service. Despite this labouring and serving bias in the statistics the occupations of the assisted Irish as stated to the Immigration Board covered a wide range of skills. Numbers of Irish bakers, stonemasons, plasterers, carpenters and blacksmiths did manage to obtain an assisted passage to Sydney. In general these men could command high wages in the colony. Along with assisted teachers and policemen here was at least the nucleus of a skilled and reasonably educated leadership among the Irish working classes of N.S.W. [Figure 4.41] Irish women, with the exception of needlewomen and dressmakers, possessed few skills outside of domestic

and farm service. Indeed taken together dressmakers and needlewomen were the largest group of relatively skilled Irish workers to come to the colony. [Figure 4.41]

This occupational structure reflected the agricultural nature of mid-19th century Ireland. Only Dublin, with its service industries, and Belfast, with its linen factories and nascent shipyards, provided any contrast to the predominantly rural character of the Irish workplace. According to the Census of 1851 70% of Irish males were employed "Ministering to Food" as either producers, manufacturers or traders. Among the male emigrants 49.4% had an instantly recognisable rural labouring occupation but this increases to 85.6% if those calling themselves simply "labourers" are included. [Figure 4.41 Summary; Male/Food Producers; Miscellaneous/Labourer] The Census Commissioners placed "labourers" in a "miscellaneous" category and regarded them as distinct from those who laboured on the land. Irish males emigrating to Sydney from the mid-1850s, when the majority were colonial nominees, were more inclined to call themselves "labourer" rather than agricultural labourer. [Figure 4.42] The remittance regulations of 1857 opened the assisted passage to all members of the working classes, and rural labourers lost their previously preferred status under the old general regulations. Virtually all these Irish "labourers" of the post-1856 period came from rural parishes and their work experience, such as it was, would have differed little from "farm" or "agricultural" labourers. Apart from the census category "Ministering to Food" only that dealing with "Justice" accounted for a slightly disproportionate number of male emigrants. This was caused by the expansion of the colonial police in the 1850s and 1860s which relied heavily on emigrants from the Irish constabulary. [Figure 4.41 Justice]

It is more difficult to relate the occupations of women immigrants to the categories of the Irish census. Only 22.3% gave occupations such as farm servant which linked them clearly to their overwhelmingly rural origins. [Figure 4.41 and Food/Producers] Most women gave a number of occupations to the Sydney authorities for which there was no precise equivalent in the Irish census. For example there was no sign in the 1851 Tipperary census of a housemaid, housekeeper or cook yet 272 Tipperary housemaids, 118 Tipperary housekeepers and 30 Tipperary cooks made their appearance before the Immigration Board in Sydney between 1848 and 1870. For such women the Irish Census Commissioners had only one possible classification—"Servant (domestic)".<sup>46</sup> Allocating all the emigrant domestic service occupations to this classification produces the extraordinary situation where 72.4% of the Sydney arrivals appear to have been drawn

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<sup>46</sup> Table of Occupations, all Ireland, General Report, 1851 Census of Ireland, pp.634-636, *BPP*, 1856, Vol 31.

from a census category covering only 30.4% of occupied women in Ireland in 1851. [Figure 4.41, Miscellaneous]

As Fitzpatrick argues these immigrant job descriptions were more an indication of a woman's hopes for the future than an accurate account of her previous employment history in Ireland.<sup>47</sup> Their relative youth—29% were aged between 15 and 19—suggests that few of these girls had had any real experience of domestic service outside the family home. Many of them emigrated because of limited employment and marriage opportunities in rural Ireland. When they arrived at Sydney it was not surprising that they described themselves in the manner most likely to lead to a good position. In this context it is revealing to follow the use by Irish female immigrants of a job description which probably closely matched their Irish work experience, but was less acceptable to a middle class employer at Sydney—farm servant.

3,325 Irish female farm servants came to the colony between 1848 and 1870. Before 1858 the Immigration Agent hid this occupation away in his annual report under the general heading of "domestic servant". From 1858 onwards female occupations were described in more detail and 456 Irish farm servants, 31.6% of all Irish females in the Agent's general domestic servant category, arrived in 1858 and 1859. [Figure 4.43] Over the next eight years the Irish farm servant gradually disappeared from the reports; from 1860 to 1863 14.3% so described themselves and they were a mere 3% of arrivals from 1864 to 1870. Over the same 13 years, 1858 to 1870, there was a corresponding leap in the proportion of those calling themselves housemaids and house servants from 46.6% to 85% of all domestic servants. [Figure 4.43] Clearly house servants were in demand, farm servants were not.

The extant emigrant occupational statistics for Ireland also suggest that N.S.W. assisted females adapted their job descriptions to suit colonial requirements. Irish domestic servants with secure employment were as disinclined to emigrate as servants in England; only 13.5% of all 1851–1855 Irish female emigrants were domestic servants. This was significantly less than their 30.4% share of all occupied females in Ireland in 1851. [Figure 4.44 Cols 5-6] Farm servants were much more emigration prone; although only 20.3% of all occupied females they formed 79.4% of the emigrants. [Figure 4.44 Cols 5-6] The reality of the Irish female labour market was that many young women had no specific year round employment and this was evident in the 47% of female emigrants over 15 who provided the port authorities with no occupation. It is unlikely that the Sydney Irish departed from this national pattern to the extent that only 23.3% were farm

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<sup>47</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration, op.cit.*, p.8.

servants and 72.5% domestics. The assisted passage required that they should be mainly domestic servants and that was how they described themselves to the Immigration Board. But like many young Irish women of the 1850s they were undoubtedly emigrating from a small farm rural environment in search of their first full time, paid situation.

Was there such an individual as the “typical” Irish assisted immigrant? Bernard Bailyn has written of the problems created for the student of immigration once his subjects—the immigrants—stop being gross statistics and can suddenly be viewed up close:

At first we view things from afar, and find clear and gross configurations ... Then we learn more and more; and at special times and by special developments ... we suddenly come up close ... and see a world in detail that is very different from what we imagined from afar.<sup>48</sup>

Looking at the Sydney assisted immigrants through the detailed medium of the Immigration Board’s lists makes the observer aware of innumerable small Irish worlds in motion—individuals, families and groups caught at the moment of transition between home and the colony. From the mass of detail collected about them new “clear and gross configurations” can be created which move us further away from any simple concept of the “typical” immigrant. Undoubtedly all of them were united by a common origin—mid-19th century Ireland—but they also reflected the diversity of that society. There is no one phrase to sum up a body of people who contained within their number literate Catholic carpenters from Dublin, young Presbyterian orphans from a Belfast workhouse and Anglican farming families from Kings County. To come up close to the shipping records is to see a picture of this emigration in which certain dominant strands—the movement of labourers and young, underemployed women from Clare and Tipperary—are offset by smaller themes—literate Anglicans from the southern provinces or skilled tradesmen from all over Ireland.

This account has concentrated on providing a basic description of the characteristics of mid-century Irish emigrants to N.S.W. But new questions have emerged which will require more detailed examination: the origin of the intense regionality of the N.S.W. emigration within counties and parishes, the quality of emigrant literacy, the significance for colonial religious practice of the importation of large numbers of Munster Catholics and Ulster Anglicans, the response of Ulster families to the Assisted Immigrant Act and so on. However these new “gross configurations” do provide a profile of a distinctive body of immigrants who, given their numbers, were to form the demographic and cultural base of the Irish community in N.S.W. in the second half of the 19th century.

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<sup>48</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America*, New York, 1988, p.48.

## Chapter 5

### “I Met With Adam Chidle”: Emigration from Clonoulty, County Tipperary to New South Wales 1848-1870

On the 28 August 1857 Edward Browne of Hurdle Flat, Beechworth wrote a letter to his brother Patrick Browne living on the Browne family farm in the townland of Clonoulty Hill, parish of Clonoulty, County Tipperary.<sup>1</sup> If, recently arrived in the colony, he felt any homesickness it was not a sentiment he conveyed to Pat; it would indeed have been surprising had he done so, for, as walked through the Flat, he saw many familiar faces:

I met with Adam Chidle Patrick Callon Thomas Kearny Edmond Reilly and two of his Brothers all in good health and Phillip Murphy he has a citation in Beechworth.<sup>2</sup>

Nearly a third of his letter contained information about Clonoulty people who had made the long trip to Australia before him. As Edward knew, he was writing for an audience beyond his own immediate family, an audience thirsty for the latest news of their emigrant sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. Within six weeks of his arrival in the colony he could tell Mrs Murphy of Ballagh that he had met her three brothers, Thomas, William and Michael, all of whom were doing well, that the Finn family were living near Sydney at a place called “Cabbletown”, that Widow Kennedy could set her mind at ease about her two sons, both of whom were “here in good health and doing well” and much more.<sup>3</sup> From Edward anxious families in Clonoulty would learn something about 30 of their relatives, a figure which suggests that a firm emigrant pathway existed between this Tipperary parish and Australia.

Of all the parishes of 19th century Ireland it is the possible link between Clonoulty, County Tipperary and Australia that has surfaced in the historical literature [Map 5.1]. It is a link however, not with the transient camps of the Victorian goldfields, but with the pastoral district surrounding the small town of Boorowa in New South Wales, 200 miles south-west of Sydney. Waldersee has shown the particularly strong Irish Catholic element after 1820 in the expanding population of the south-west stretching from Campbelltown down the Port Phillip road and out into the squatting districts of the

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Browne, Hurdle Flat, to Patrick Browne, Clonoulty, County Tipperary, 28 August 1857, Browne letters, Father Brien Maher, Bungendore, N.S.W.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Lachlan and the Riverina.<sup>4</sup> In describing this movement he was struck by the “transfer of souls from Clonoulty, County Tipperary to the banks of the Boorowa River”, a process he saw as having its origin in the success experienced by ex-convict Edward “Ned” Ryan in establishing a squatting empire reputedly as big as Ireland itself.<sup>5</sup> Transported from Clonoulty, together with his cousin Roger Corcoran in 1816, he encouraged kith and kin to join him at Galong near Boorowa. Eventually the area became, in the words of that staunch opponent of Irish Catholic immigration to New South Wales, Reverend John Dunmore Lang, “a paradise of the Ryans”.<sup>6</sup>

The graveyard at Galong is full of Ned’s Ryan relatives referred to for identification as “Finn” Ryans, “Barry” Ryans and “Nagle” Ryans.<sup>7</sup> These people were, according to Waldersee, of a “rather higher order than the ignorant labouring classes”.<sup>8</sup> O’Farrell, on the other hand, describes much of this Irish settlement in the area as characterised by Ned Ryan’s “patriarchal persuasion of many labourers from Tipperary to join him”.<sup>9</sup> Tipperary was a most important source of assisted emigrants to New South Wales but how significant was the parish of Clonoulty in this movement? Given these contrasting impressions of the social origins of Clonoulty emigrants arriving in New South Wales, what sort of people were leaving there for Sydney between 1848 and 1870? Why indeed were they leaving the parish at all during those years?

### **The Significance of Clonoulty as a N.S.W. Emigrant Parish**

The Immigration Board’s lists record the arrival of approximately 434 emigrants from the Roman Catholic parish of Clonoulty in Sydney between 1848 and 1870. Thus 5.9% of the 7,255 County Tipperary assisted immigrants during this period were from there.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> James Waldersee, *Catholic Society in New South Wales, 1788–1861*, Sydney, 1974, Chapter 5, “The Pattern of Catholic Settlement in New South Wales”, pp.123-159.

<sup>5</sup> Waldersee, *op.cit.*, pp.177-178, and Patrick O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, Sydney, 1987, p.123.

<sup>6</sup> Rev.John Dunmore Lang, quoted by Waldersee, *op.cit.*, p.120.

<sup>7</sup> Max Barrett, *King of Galong Castle: The Story of Ned Ryan, 1786-1871*, Burwood, second edition, 1985, pp.147-151. Personal visit to Galong cemetery, 1990.

<sup>8</sup> Waldersee, *op.cit.*, p.178.

<sup>9</sup> O’Farrell, *op.cit.*, pp.123-124.

<sup>10</sup> Immigration Board’s Lists, Sydney, 1848–1870, hereafter IBL/NSW, 4/904–4/4995, and Agent’s Lists, 1860–1862, 4/4796, Archives Office of N.S.W., hereafter AONSW. The total immigrant figure for County Tipperary is from the Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848–1870. Not all the Clonoulty immigrants gave the name of the parish to the Board on arrival. Some gave townland names, some older names for the parish such as Rossmore. Between 1860 and 1862 inclusive the Board’s Lists are missing but the Agent’s lists survive. From these lists and the records of the remittance scheme for those three years it has been possible to find the Clonoulty immigrants who arrived at that time. However the figure of 434 is, at the time of writing, a good estimate. There are probably a few more Clonoulty arrivals between 1848 and 1870 on the lists who have so far escaped detection.

This figure represents the greatest intensity of emigration from any region of Tipperary featured on the Board's lists, a proposition sustained by a consideration of the distribution of Tipperary emigrants within the county. From the places of origin on the lists 4,756 (65.5%) emigrants have so far been definitely identified with one of the county's 12 baronial divisions. Much greater research time, such as that devoted to identifying the Clonoulty emigrants, would allow for most Tipperary emigrants to be placed within their barony and parish. The result would be a more accurate picture of the distribution of the emigrants within the county. But even the outline of emigrant distribution based on the 65.5% so far allocated to a barony reveals marked variations in the regional intensity of emigration to New South Wales. [Figure 5.1]

Emigration to Sydney was weakest in the south and east of the county. [Map 5.2] The baronies of Slievardagh in the east and Iffa and Offa East and Iffa and Offa West in the south, with just under 30% of Tipperary's 1851 population contributed between them only 7.2% of the Sydney emigrants. [Figure 5.1] Moving north-west from this region into Middlethird the attraction of the colony increased. However the centre of the Australian emigration was in the heart of the county: in Eliogarty in the central north, Clanwilliam in the centre and Owey and Arra in the central west. But the barony with the highest emigration rate of all was the central barony of Kilnamanagh Lower. This barony, containing just 2.8% of Tipperary's 1851 population, contributed 6.0% of the Sydney emigrants. What stands out is Kilnamanagh's N.S.W. emigration rate — 37.8 per thousand, almost ten points higher than its nearest rival, Owey and Arra. Forty five percent of the area of this barony was taken up by the Roman Catholic Parish of Clonoulty and all of the 434 emigrants so far positively identified as coming from that barony came from Clonoulty.

The strength of this Clonoulty/Australian link is more evident when compared with two other Tipperary parishes which sent large numbers of emigrants to Sydney — Thurles in Eliogarty and Tipperary in Clanwilliam. At the centre of both of these was the town of the same name although the parish, in each case, extended out into the surrounding rural area. So far 363 N.S.W. emigrants have been identified as coming from Tipperary parish and 359 from Thurles, accounting for approximately 10% of the N.S.W. total.<sup>11</sup> These parishes had a significant share of the N.S.W. emigration and in any general account of that movement would require investigation. However Clonoulty's pre-eminence as an Australian parish is clear from this three parish comparison; its N.S.W. emigration rate was 143% greater than Thurles' and 206% greater than Tipperary's. Put another way, allowing for those who left before Census night in 1851,

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<sup>11</sup> Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848–1870.



one in every 11 people living in the parish in 1851 sailed through Sydney Heads during the next 18 years as assisted immigrants. All told they accounted for 30% of the parish's population decline between 1851 and 1871, an astonishing figure when it is remembered that these were the years of the Victorian "gold rush" and that other colonies, such as South Australia, were also importing large numbers of Irish assisted immigrants, many of them from Tipperary.<sup>12</sup> It is inconceivable that Clonoulty did not send a share to these sister colonies.

In laboriously statistical terms, this only proves what Edward Browne already knew when he wrote home from the "diggings" in 1857. Residents of Clonoulty waited as eagerly for letters from Beechworth and Bendigo as from Boston and Baltimore.

### Clonoulty: The Years of Decline, 1841–1871

Until fairly recently students of Irish 19th century emigration have tended to take a nationwide view of that process, concentrating their analysis on the millions or hundreds of thousands and attempting to grasp the outlines of the phenomenon as a whole.<sup>13</sup> Consequently much is known about the general context of the movement as it developed before, during and after the "Great Famine" of 1845 to 1849: how many were leaving, from what parts of Ireland, from what sort of socio-economic background, their general destinations and something of their fate at journey's end. The emigrants themselves however, apart from those few chosen to exemplify a pattern or illustrate a trend, often remain so many statistical abstractions. Irish men, women and families made their decision to leave not in the context of Ireland, or Munster or indeed Tipperary but as residents of small rural environments such as parishes and townlands. Those impersonal socio-economic forces making for emigration and change in 19th century Ireland may now be visible to historians as national and international forces but they were felt and acted upon at the time by individuals at a local level. Before trying to describe who the

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<sup>12</sup> Anne Stock, "Assisted Migration during the Fifties, with Special Reference to Victoria", BA.Hons Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1958, Table 5, Native Places of Assisted Immigrants. Of the 20,570 Irish who arrived in Victoria as assisted immigrants between 1850 and 1856 20%, 4,179, were from Tipperary. I am grateful to Dr David Fitzpatrick, Trinity College, Dublin, for this reference.

<sup>13</sup> There is no general bibliographical source for works on Irish emigration/immigration but see the footnotes and bibliography to Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus*, New York, 1985. One recent study which breaks this mould is Bruce Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas — A New Approach*, Belfast, 1988. Elliott has studied in detail the emigration and subsequent internal migration of 775 protestant families from north Tipperary to lower Canada between 1816 and the immediate post Famine period. In his foreword to Elliott's work Professor D. Akenson says of Irish emigration/immigration studies to North America: "What is surprising is that almost all of the historical literature, both as pertains to Canada and the United States, is devoted to discussing emigration from the old World and immigration into the New as an abstract process or an aggregate phenomenon".

Clonoulty emigrants were we need to know what was happening in the world they inhabited — the parish of Clonoulty.

To those in Clonoulty who lived through the 50 years bounded by the Census of 1821 and 1871 the most striking aspect of the parish's experience would have been the rise and decline of its population. [Figure 5.3] Surprisingly it failed to share the county and national growth rate of the 1820s only to experience, in the 1830s, a rate almost twice the national average and three percentage points above that of the county. 1841 marked its demographic apogee, with an officially recorded population of 6,932, although this figure probably increased up to the first years of Famine in 1845 and 1846. That catastrophe bit deeply as by 1851 over one-third of Clonoulty's 1841 population had disappeared compared with a quarter for the county and a fifth nationally. The 1850s and 1860s were decades of further decline until by 1871 the parish contained only 46% of its 1841 population. The rate at which this had occurred since 1851 now fell below that for Tipperary although both parish and county lost almost twice the national average. [Figure 5.3] Other changes, gradual before the Famine and fairly sudden both during and after it, accompanied this loss of population and an appropriate place to begin a description of these is the year 1841.

Nolan places Clonoulty in the mid-range of Tipperary population density at 30 to 39 people per 100 acres in 1841.<sup>14</sup> [Figure 5.4] Individual townlands within the parish recorded much higher densities. Clonoulty was divided into 54 townlands ranging in size from Glenough Lower's 2,354 acres of mostly mountain to the 46 acres of Westonslot and for easier analysis and description these townlands have been arranged into six groups based on a townland's population loss over the 30 years between 1841 and 1871. Group One, containing five townlands, actually gained population while all the rest suffered losses of from seven to 100%. [Figure 5.5] In Clonoulty therefore there was a close relationship between population density and subsequent decline; both Groups Five and Six recorded losses of between 61% and 100% and densities well above the parish average. However this vantage point still only provides the general outline of population density and loss; a finer focus reveals a more complex pattern.

To enter the parish in 1841 at the townland of Lisbook was to encounter 125 people on 80 acres, a density of 156 per 100 acres. This was the highest in the parish and as high as any in the county. [Figure 5.6 No.33] Moving west from Lisbook through the adjacent townlands of Gatterstown, Woodford, Piercetown, to the combined townlands of Ballagh/Kilmore, a distance of barely two and a half miles, density figures

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<sup>14</sup> William Nolan, "Patterns of Living in Tipperary", in William Nolan (ed), *Tipperary: History and Society*, Dublin, 1985, p.312.

were 7, 6, 52 and 129 respectively. [Figure 5.6 Nos.54/45/35] Eleven townlands scattered throughout Clonoulty had densities of 60, placing them in Nolan's top population density band for Tipperary as a whole. [Figure 5.6 Nos.18/29/31-33/35/38-39/42/46/48 and Figure 4] In fact living in these townlands was 28% of Clonoulty's population, 1,954 people, concentrated into 12% of its land space, a density of 84 people per 100 acres.

As famine followed by emigration produced the 54% population loss suffered by the parish after 1845, the intensity of this decline varied between the townland groups. [Figure 5.7] In Clonoulty, as in the county and the country, the Famine years before the Census of April 1851 witnessed the bulk of this loss; within five and a half years 2,409 people, 35% of the 1841 population, an average of 438 per year had vanished. Over the next 20 years this rate fell from an average of 91 per year in the 1850s to 40 per year in the 1860s. Again attention is arrested by Group Five which sustained the same high loss rate both during and after the catastrophe. Group Six townlands also experienced a staggering 84% Famine loss but this fell away to a comparatively low 19% thereafter. By 1851 the total numbers in Group Six were small and the more moderate loss of the 1850s and 1860s suggests that in these townlands a fairly sustainable population level had been achieved after the enormous impact of the Famine itself.

If focus is shifted to individual townlands then a quite bewildering set of figures appears, many of them defying easy explanation. [Figure 5.8] Coolanga Upper, for example, showed an astonishing capacity to grow by 112% during the Famine decade only to equal the average parish figure of a 29% decline from 1851 to 1871. [Figure 5.8 No.1] Once again the numbers were small and peculiar local factors must have operated to produce such a divergent statistic. More predictably, most of the townlands with population densities in excess of 60 per 100 acres had population loss rates higher, often considerably higher, than the parish average. [Figure 5.8 Nos.29/32-33/35/38/42/45] Clonoulty Churchquarter, on the other hand, despite its high population density, was comparatively lightly affected by the Famine and shed population at a moderate rate thereafter. [Figure 5.8 No.18] The case of Lisbook was quite peculiar. [Figure 5.8 No.33] Here was the parish's highest population density yet over the Famine decade its population grew by 2%. Lisbook's large population loss occurred in the subsequent two decades. Even in Group Five, all of whose townlands sustained massive loss over the 1841-1871 period, the intervening years saw some strange swings in population; Knockaderry initially increased by 27% only to fall by 66% overall, while Corbally shed virtually its whole population during the Famine. [Figure 5.8 Nos.37-38] A full explanation of Clonoulty's population history during this period of crisis and change is well outside the scope of this study but it is important to present these figures as the

complex micro demographic pattern from which the N.S.W. emigrants emerged and in which, as will be seen, it is possible to locate some of them as individuals.

Population statistics are only indicators of crisis and decline; they do not reveal what sort of community was being affected and in what ways. The people of pre-Famine Clonoulty would have been less concerned with such abstractions as population densities than with clothing, feeding, and housing themselves and to achieve this required access to resources notably land, houses and employment. By these indicators in the mid-1840s most of Clonoulty's people were living in comparative poverty.

As the Census Commissioners of 1851 argued, "The houses of a country are an index to the condition of its inhabitants".<sup>15</sup> By their standards conditions for just under half of Clonoulty's 1841 population were grim; they classified 45% of the houses in the civil parishes of Clonoulty and Clogher in the lowest class, Class 4, "mud cabins having only one room".<sup>16</sup> [Figure 5.9] The inhabitants of these could be called the extreme poor. Looking at Tipperary as a whole Jones Hughes uses a wider definition of poverty; those living in houses valued by the Griffith valuers at under £1 he classifies as the "poor".<sup>17</sup> [Figure 5.10] Using this definition almost two thirds of the people of Clonoulty were "poor". Clonoulty, and especially the Clogher portion of the parish, had over 65% of all its houses valued at under £1. Applying Jones Hughes' scheme to our townland groups reveals the relative concentrations of the "Houses of the Poor" within the parish. [Figure 5.11] Although no part of Clonoulty had less than 55% of its houses in the poverty category once again the notable concentrations are observable in the higher population loss Groups — Four, Five and Six.

It is the changes, both absolute and relative, between the Census house classifications for 1841, 1851 and 1861 that indicate clearly which sections of the community were most affected by the Famine and subsequent emigration. In 1841 virtually half of Clonoulty's people lived in a Class 4 house. Between 1841 and 1861 the Class 4 houses, and their inhabitants, melted away; 71% vanished during the Famine and by 1861 there were but 71 of them left, 14% of the housing stock of the parish. [Figure 5.9] But these figures also show that, while the Famine devastated the Class 4 house dwellers, the 1850s saw a marked decline in the numbers of Class 3 houses, — "a better description of cottage, still built of mud, but varying from two to four rooms and windows".<sup>18</sup> After the Famine people from these less poverty stricken surroundings were

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<sup>15</sup> Census of Ireland, 1851, General Report, p.8, *BPP*, 1856, Vol 31.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Nolan, "Patterns of Living ...", in Nolan (ed), *op.cit.*, p.354.

<sup>18</sup> Census of Ireland, 1851, General Report, *op.cit.*, p.23.

showing a greater willingness to leave. The housing figures however, throw no light on emigration from the wealthier sections of Clonoulty. The number of Class 2 houses increased both absolutely and relatively between 1841 and 1861.

If decent housing was a rarity in pre-Famine Clonoulty access to land was also a difficulty. The problems facing a growing rural population in gaining access to land in pre-Famine Ireland have received much attention from historians, particularly the agrarian violence attendant upon the struggle for land by the poor.<sup>19</sup> In much of Ireland between 1820 and 1845 this struggle was exacerbated by two simultaneous processes; the desire of many landowners to make their estates profitable by rescuing them from leaseholding middlemen and to consolidate smallholdings into viable economic units, and that of the leasehold farmers to respond to dramatic changes in agricultural prices which, since the end of the Napoleonic Wars had favoured cattle and sheep raising rather than labour intensive tillage.<sup>20</sup> What the landlord wanted was an estate parcelled out in economically sized farms, whose lessees would be capable of sustaining a regular and substantial rent. To pay this rent farmers naturally wanted to take advantage of those markets in which they could make the greatest returns and this suggested a switch from crops to grazing.<sup>21</sup> Consequently they increasingly restricted the amount of land sublet to the poorer sections of the community for mere subsistence farming. What were the results of these processes in Clonoulty?

Clonoulty's landholding structure, as it evolved in the 1830s and 1840s, can be seen in the Griffith Valuation of 1848.<sup>22</sup> For the majority of parishes in Ireland this valuation, which named by townland every lessor of land down to the level of small rateable garden plots under one acre, was conducted and printed in the 1850s and 1860s. The valuation commenced in Tipperary in early 1846. The valuers began their work in Clonoulty in the spring of 1848 and were finished by 23 October. They would have been aware, given the sights which surrounded them in Famine ridden Tipperary, that they were valuing a society about to collapse. Clonoulty's collapse occurred somewhere

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<sup>19</sup> See in general Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly (eds), *Irish Peasants, Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914*, Wisconsin, 1983.

<sup>20</sup> For a full analysis of these processes at work in pre-Famine County Cork see J.S. Donnelly Jr., *The Land and people of Nineteenth Century Cork*, Dublin, 1975, Chapter 1, "The Rural Economy", pp.9-72.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Valuation of Tenements* [Griffith's Valuation], Union of Cashel: Parish of Clonoulty, pp.20-37, Parish of Clogher, pp.9-21, Dublin, 1850, hereafter Griffith/Clonoulty 1848 or Griffith/Clogher 1848.

between the valuation of spring and summer 1848 and Census night 1851.<sup>23</sup> In 1848 the valuers recorded the existence of 914 houses; in 1851 the Census enumerators found 668, a 27% drop in just under three years. One house must have evoked the valuers' pity, that of James Fogarty in Ballagh townland, valued at 3/- in a parish where 27% of the houses were in the lowest valuation category of 5/-.<sup>24</sup>

The valuation revealed that smallholders were the largest group among the Clonoulty tenantry. [Figure 5.12] While the parish mean farm size was 23 acres the median was a mere 10 acres; in other words the parish was a stronghold of "cottier" farmers and, further down the economic scale, of landless labourers and "conacre" men.<sup>25</sup> In Ireland generally MacDonagh defines these cottiers as "penniless entrepreneurs" who rented small farms on a yearly basis from the larger farmers hoping to make enough from the sale of their crop to pay the rent.<sup>26</sup> In central Tipperary in the mid-1830s a cottier was anyone holding from five to ten acres. This distinguished them from those at the very bottom of the social heap — "a labourer, who holds less or no land".<sup>27</sup> Tipperary witnesses to the 1836 Royal Commission on the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland testified to the strong desire on the part of labourers and landless men to become "cottiers".<sup>28</sup> The most "cottiered" parts of Clonoulty were the townlands of Groups Four, Five and Six where the median holding size was six, seven and six acres respectively. Moreover these were the Groups with the highest 1841–1871 depopulation rates and where 69% of Clonoulty's people lived.

At individual townland level a grimmer pattern was evident [Figure 5.13] Thirteen townlands possessed a median holding size of 4 acres or below; in three of these the median was one acre and in two less than one. [Figure 5.13 Nos.4/7-8/18/22/24/30/33/35-38/52] Some of these townlands, such as Fana, were small and had few holdings. [Figure 5.13 No. 4] Of all the townlands in Clonoulty Cappamurragh, with only five holdings, displayed the greatest divergence between mean and median farm

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<sup>23</sup> Returns relating to the Field Valuation in the County of Tipperary, *BPP*, 1851, Vol.50, pp.920-921. This return shows that the valuers began their work in Clonoulty in spring 1848 and finished in autumn of the same year.

<sup>24</sup> Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, p.23.

<sup>25</sup> For the different contemporary definitions of the terms "cottier" and "conacre" see Michael Beames, "Cottiers and Conacre in pre-Famine Ireland", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol.2, No.3, April 1975, pp.352-354.

<sup>26</sup> Oliver MacDonagh, "The Irish famine emigration to the United States", *Perspectives in American History*, Vol.10, 1976, p.361.

<sup>27</sup> Appendix to First Report of Commissioners for Inquiring into the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, hereafter Poor Law Enquiry, Appendix D, p.681, Cottier Tenants, examination of witnesses in the Barony of Middlethird, County Tipperary, *BPP*, 1836, Vol.31.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

size, 77 acres to less than one acre. All the smallholders here were landless labourers renting small plots from the head landlord and local magistrate, John Greene.<sup>29</sup> Greene farmed 258 acres of Cappaghmurragh himself and had a house valued at £24, a valuation surpassed by only one other house in Clonoulty, that of Edmund Murphy of Ballymore.<sup>30</sup> The “gentry” status of both these men was acknowledged by the valuers; in the printed valuation the abbreviation “Esq” was appended to each of their names.<sup>31</sup> Greene’s tenants may have been moderately lucky: their presence in this townland in close proximity to his farm suggests they may have been his permanent labour force. No such relationship existed in the townlands of Ballagh and Kilmore enclosing the parish’s only “official” town — Ballagh. Here the landlord, the absentee Colonel Alexander Percival, while retaining direct control of his property, had nonetheless permitted over two-thirds of these townlands to be rented out to cottiers and conacre labourers.<sup>32</sup> The result was a mean holding size of eight acres and a median of one. [Figure 5.13 No.35]

One part of the parish where small tenants had been experiencing the policies of a landlord determined to construct viable economic holdings since the mid-1820s was the Hawarden estate. The estate was run from Dundrum House, one of the largest “gentry” seats in Tipperary, in neighbouring Knockavilla parish.<sup>33</sup> In Clonoulty the Hawarden lands, 6,121 acres, accounted for 31% of the parish. Viscount Hawarden, an absentee before the Famine, took an active interest in his Tipperary property and in 1822 appointed as his agent at Dundrum, John Stewart, derisively referred to locally as the “Scotchman”.<sup>34</sup> Judging by his subsequent actions, he had instructions to reform the estate. Stewart set out to divest those portions of the property, which the tenants held directly from Hawarden, of their cottiers and landless labourers. Where middlemen held a lease over a townland, as in the case of Clone, he simply bided his time till the lease fell vacant and then incorporated the lands under direct estate control.<sup>35</sup> [Figure 5.13 No.50] When Clone fell into his hands in July 1843 the existing tenants were promptly evicted,

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<sup>29</sup> Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, p.25.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.23-24 and 34-35.

<sup>33</sup> Nolan, “Patterns of Living ...”, in Nolan (ed), *op.cit.*, p.319. At £88 Dundrum House had the second highest valuation of any “big house” in Tipperary. Its demense estate was the largest in the county.

<sup>34</sup> Evidence of Father John Mackey, Parish Priest of Clonoulty, Commissioners of Inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect of the Occupation of Land in Ireland, known as the Devon Commission, hereafter Devon Commission, Part 3, p.287, *BPP*, 1845, Vol.21.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, Evidence of Father Mackey.

an event which explains its 100% population loss between 1841 and 1851.<sup>36</sup> [Figure 5.8. No.50] When questioned by the Devon Commission in 1844, Stewart defended his management practices against the accusation that the estate was heartlessly clearing its tenants. He produced lists to show that every tenant, who had been obliged to quit his or her holding since 1822, had been fully compensated for this; in reality what the lists showed was the fairly constant pressure which the poor of the estate must have felt themselves under to leave.<sup>37</sup>

One measure of Stewart's success before the Famine was the difference between landholding size and house values on the estate compared with the rest of the parish. [Figure 5.14] While the cottiers continued to hold their own, those renting less than five acres and living in the lowest house category, those valued at 5/- or less, were losing out under Stewart's management. By 1848 there were proportionately far more medium sized tenancies of 15 acres or greater on the estate than in the rest of the parish. [Figure 5.14] Stewart's success in reducing the numbers of smallholders was also evident from the closer relationship between the estate's mean and median landholding size — 27 acres to 23 acres — than the parish's 23 to 10. [Figure 5.15] Although in 1848 many smallholders were still on his rent books, particularly in the townlands of Drum, Gortnagranna, Srahavarella, and Gorteenamona, they were fighting a losing battle for survival on the Hawarden Estate. [Figure 5.15 No.9-10/12/14]

This struggle for land among the landless labourers was common throughout pre-Famine Ireland. These men depended on obtaining two necessities to keep themselves and their families alive year by year; conacre and casual agricultural employment. The point at which a man slipped from the ranks of the cottiers into this underclass is difficult to determine; in the neighbouring Barony of Middlethird those renting less than five acres per year were not considered cottiers.<sup>38</sup> Rather they rented a small piece of ground or conacre from a farmer, who often manured and prepared the ground.<sup>39</sup> The resultant crop, tended by the conacre labourer, was often held against the rent and these tenants gambled on being able to obtain work for wages to meet their families' needs.<sup>40</sup> In Clonoulty in 1836 the Parish Priest, Father Maloney, reported that 600 men were in this

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, Evidence of John Stewart, pp.833-836.

<sup>38</sup> Poor Law Enquiry, Appendix D, evidence of Mr Scully, p.81, *BPP*, 1836, Vol.31.

<sup>39</sup> Poor Law Enquiry, Appendix F, Con-acre/Quarter or Score Ground, p.27, *BPP*, 1836, Vol.33.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*



category of conacre labourer, the land sometimes being given to them in lieu of wages.<sup>41</sup> Of these 600 only 260 could find permanent year-round work and, given the rapid population increase which Maloney observed to be occurring throughout the parish, he foresaw only increasing distress for such parishioners.<sup>42</sup> By 1844 however, the Parish Priest, Father Mackey, felt the labourers' situation was becoming even more desperate as local farmers showed a "disposition to turn every acre of land that is fit for grazing into grass".<sup>43</sup> This, Mackey asserted, was being done on the "saving principle", the farmer's desire to save money on labour costs, a saving which could only result in further restriction of employment in an already well over-supplied labour market.<sup>44</sup> About to experience five years of famine cottiers, labourers and, to a lesser extent, small farmers looked back on three decades of decreasing opportunity for their way of life in Clonoulty.

As the Famine passed so to did a rural Ireland dominated numerically by cottiers, labourers and their dependants. Clonoulty mirrored the trend. Where at the 1848 valuation, 61% of its holdings, had been less than 15 acres, the first valuation revision in the late-1850s revealed a statistical somersault in relation to landholding structure. Sixty four per cent of holdings were now over 15 acres.<sup>45</sup> [Figure 5.16] The under five acre holdings, the plots of the conacre labourers, showed a marked decline. Right across the parish many landlords took the opportunity created by death and emigration to reform their properties, a process exemplified by the changes in Clonyross (Percival). [Figure 5.6 No.46] Before the Famine this townland's 446 acres had been in the hands of a middleman, who continued in possession until some time in the late-1850s. Under his management 37 separate holdings had been allowed, 26 of them under 15 acres.<sup>46</sup> The Famine took its toll with 92 of its 270 people and eight of its 38 houses disappearing.<sup>47</sup> But more radical change came when the lease fell vacant and the landlord, Colonel

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<sup>41</sup> Supplement to Appendix D, parish questionnaire, Parish of Clonoulty and Clogher, question 24, Father Maloney, p.242, *BPP*, 1836, Vol.33.

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

<sup>43</sup> Evidence of Father Mackey, Devon Commission, *op.cit.*, p.285.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Manuscript valuation revisions, c.1859, hereafter Revision/Clonoulty 1859 or Revision/Clogher 1859, Civil Parishes of Clonoulty, Clogher and Holycross, 1859, Land Valuation Office, Ely Place, Dublin. 1858 figures for Tipperary and Ireland from Agricultural Statistics for the Year 1858, all Ireland, p.40 (Roman numerals), Tipperary South Riding, PP.61/62, *BPP*, 1860, Vol.66.

<sup>46</sup> Griffith/Clogher 1848, p.12 shows John Vincent as the immediate lessor in Clonyross (Percival). Revision/Clogher 1859, p.6-8, shows the townland in the hands of Philip Percival.

<sup>47</sup> All population and housing figures for Clonoulty 1841 to 1871 are from Census of Ireland, 1871, *BPP*, 1873, Vol.72, County of Tipperary, Parish of Clonoulty, pp.752-753, Parish of Clogher, p.752, Parish of Holycross, p.697, hereafter Tipperary/Census 1871. This census published retrospective tables by townland and parish back to 1841.

Percival regained control.<sup>48</sup> However it came about, either by landlord persuasion or personal decision to leave, Percival managed to reduce the number of holdings to 13, only two of which were under 15 acres and the majority over 30.<sup>49</sup> Where in 1851 there had been 30 houses and 178 people, by 1861 there were only 11 houses and 80 people.<sup>50</sup>

On the Hawarden Estate starvation and want accelerated the process of clearance and consolidation pursued by Stewart. During the Famine the rest of the parish lost 26% of its people and 24% of its houses; the estate's rate of decline was a third as much again in each case. [Figure 5.17] MacDonagh's analysis of the Famine emigration suggests that in general during the years of actual crop failure, 1845 to 1848, the very poorest sections of Irish society, lacking the means to leave, starved at home.<sup>51</sup> On the estate however cash compensation for quitting a holding was a well established policy and this may have made all the difference in allowing its pauper tenants to head for the emigrant boat. In 1848 Gorteenamona remained a stronghold of cottiers and conacre labourers; by 1859 its 35 holdings had been reduced to 6 and its mean holding size increased from six to 39 acres. [Figure 5.15 No.14] The first three years of famine must have produced great hardship among the smallholders of Gorteenamona but the failure of the 1848 potato crop may have caused them to feel that enough was enough. Perhaps at this point they became willing to accept any compensation on offer from Stewart for "going away" and headed for the ports. No evidence exists to suggest that this is indeed what happened but where the Griffith valuers had rated 30 houses in the summer of 1848 the Census enumerators recorded 10 in April 1851.<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps the best way to grasp the full extent of the changes which had swept, and continued to sweep, across this Tipperary parish over the 20 years from 1841, is to traverse, from the vantage point of the 1861 Census, those same townlands with which this survey began — Lisbook, Woodford, Gatterstown, Piercetown and Ballagh/Kilmore.

By 1861 Lisbook had lost 33% of its 1841 population, a comparatively low figure for what had been the parish's most densely peopled townland in 1841. Just as surprisingly, between the valuation of 1848 and the revaluation of the late-1850s, its mean holding size remained at two acres while the mean housing value actually fell from

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<sup>48</sup> Revision/Clogher 1859, pp.6-8.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Tipperary/Census 1871.

<sup>51</sup> MacDonagh, *op.cit.*, p.423.

<sup>52</sup> Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, pp.33-34; Tipperary/Census 1871.

14/- to 9/-. However those same problems which had existed for the conacre men of the pre-Famine years did not lessen in the 1850s and somewhere between the revaluation and the 1861 Census Lisbook lost five of its 19 houses. By 1871 it had declined to the point where it almost qualified for inclusion in townland Group Five, having lost 59% of its population from 1841 to 187. By 1861 it was in the middle of an emigration whose intensity was exclusively post Famine.

Woodford and Gatterstown had changed little as both townlands had been, and remained, under the control of Edmund Murphy "Esq" of Woodford House.<sup>53</sup> Murphy rarely let to cottier or conacre tenants, and between 1848 and 1859 the only poor occupiers on these lands, cottier Patrick Keefe and the Widow Ryall, disappeared from the valuation records.<sup>54</sup> In 1861 within the boundaries of the 358 acres of these townlands were 13 people and two houses — Murphy's "gentleman's seat" in Woodford and a small farmhouse on his lands of Gatterstown where he had installed a caretaker tenant.<sup>55</sup> By 1871 even this family had gone and between Lisbook and Piercetown, apart from Murphy's house was uninhabited farmland.

Piercetown, Ballagh and Kilmore were all in the estate of Colonel Percival and together comprised 818 acres. Here had been one of the largest concentrations of the parish's pre-Famine population, a density of 103 people per 100 acres, and an area where the "poor" of Clonoulty had been able to obtain small plots of land and build a house. Many of these houses had been in Clonoulty's only "town", Ballagh. Between 1821 and 1841 Ballagh met the criteria of the Census Commissioners for classification as a "town": less flatteringly Nolan calls it a "transit cluster".<sup>56</sup> Nolan has identified nine such clusters in pre-Famine Tipperary associated with "turnpikes, crossroads or similar central locations".<sup>57</sup> Ballagh had been a magnet for the landless of Clonoulty as few holdings in the surrounding townlands can be traced for the occupiers of its 56 houses in 1848. Famine clearance was heavy in these townlands as 40% of their 1841 population of 850 had vanished by 1851, a process which continued to 1861 by which year a further 15% had gone.<sup>58</sup> The 1859 revaluation showed that most of the area's conacre and cottier holdings had been consolidated into larger farms and at its centre was an appropriate

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<sup>53</sup> Revision/Clogher 1858, pp.13 and 28.

<sup>54</sup> Griffith/Clogher 1848, p.14.

<sup>55</sup> Tipperary/Census 1871; Revision/Clogher 1859, p.13.

<sup>56</sup> Nolan, "Patterns of living ...", in Nolan (ed), *op.cit.*, pp.309-310.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Tipperary/Census 1871.

monument to a devastated population — the ruins of Ballagh “town”. In 1851 the Census Commissioners declared;

The town of Ballagh does not now contain 20 houses; its present population has therefore merged in that of the townlands of Ballagh and Kilmore, in which it is situated.<sup>59</sup>

By 1861 Ballagh and the parish were well into those two post-Famine decades which saw one in 11 of their 1851 population take the “assisted passage” for Sydney. Where had they come from in the parish and which socio-economic strata were prominent in this emigration stream?

### **The Clonoulty/N.S.W. Emigrants 1848–1870**

On landing in Victoria in 1857 Edward Browne had not gone to the Ovens “diggings” by chance; three of his brothers and sisters, John, Maryanne and Eliza had all preceded him there not, as in his case, via Melbourne, but as assisted emigrants to Sydney.<sup>60</sup> Ultimately of the ten children of Edward Browne and Betty Ryan of Clonoulty Hill, born between 1817 and 1835, only Patrick survived in Ireland to inherit the family farm.<sup>61</sup> It was to Patrick that the three extant letters written by the colonial Brownes in the 1850s were addressed. Part of the purpose of such letters was to convey news to people beyond the family of their friends and relatives and the Brownes referred to 47 other Clonoulty emigrants in this correspondence, making it a rich source for investigating the nature of the Australian emigration from the parish.<sup>62</sup> So far the focus of this analysis has been on the parish of Clonoulty, providing the necessary context for the emigrants. Now it will be on the emigrants themselves, linking them with their townlands of origin and examining their pre-emigration situation within the parish. This analysis reveals both the social structure of the N.S.W. emigration and its relation to those forces reshaping mid-19th century Clonoulty.

The background of those cited in the Browne letters hints at the social diversity of the Australian emigration; it ranged from landless labourer, conacre labourer, cottier, and

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<sup>59</sup> Census of Ireland, 1851, County of Tipperary South Riding, Parish of Clonoulty, Note Y, p.323, *BPP*, 1852/53, Vol.91.

<sup>60</sup> Maryanne and Bessy Browne were on the *Telegraph*, arrived 18 September 1853, IBL/NSW, 4/4936 and John Browne was on the *Araminta*, arrived 29 July 1854, IBL/NSW, 4/4938.

<sup>61</sup> Parish register, Roman Catholic Parish of Clonoulty, pp.32-33, Bishop’s Palace, Thurles, County Tipperary and Mid West Regional Archives, Limerick. Revision/Clonoulty 1859, p.26, shows Patrick Browne in possession of the family farm.

<sup>62</sup> There are three relevant Browne letters, all written in the 1850s: John Browne to Patrick Browne, 29 April 1854; John, Maryanne and Bessy Browne to Patrick Browne, 18 November 1856; Edward Browne to Patrick Browne, 28 August 1857, Browne letters, Revd.Brien Maher, Bungendore, N.S.W.

small farmer through to strong farmer. Predictably, the one level of society missing from these letters was the "gentry". The Brownes themselves came from a strong farmer background, the family farm in 1855 consisting of 82 acres of top valued land, one guinea an acre, in Clonoulty Hill.<sup>63</sup> Similarly placed families mentioned in the letters were the Maloneys of Clonoulty Curragh and the Finns of Srahavarella.<sup>64</sup> The Finns paid their own way to Sydney.<sup>65</sup> From a level below this came Mary Gleeson of Clogher, whose father Roger fell into the small farmer class, renting 25 acres and living in a house worth £1/10/-.<sup>66</sup> Mary married John Ryan in the colony, whose widowed sister, Mary Kennedy, was Roger Gleeson's sister-in-law; Edward asked Patrick to let "Widow Kennedy know that her two sons are here in good health".<sup>67</sup> Both the Kennedys went to N.S.W. as assisted emigrants.<sup>68</sup> The Kennedys were conacre labourers living on one acre in Clogher in a house valued at 10/-.<sup>69</sup> Few Clonoulty families involved in the emigration to N.S.W. were poorer than the Murphys of Ballagh. Bridget Murphy arrived in Sydney in January 1856.<sup>70</sup> Bridget's mother was Mary Stapleton, four of whose brothers had taken an assisted passage to Sydney between 1841 and 1851. Edward sent her news of three of them:

let Mrs Murphy of Ballagh no that I had the plesure of meeting three of her Brothers here Thomas William and Michael and are in good health.<sup>71</sup>

No landholding was recorded in the valuation records for Bridget's father, Edmund Murphy, in either 1848 or 1859. In 1859 he rented a house rated at 10/- in what remained of Ballagh town.<sup>72</sup> Presumably he, his wife and eight children born between 1835 and

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<sup>63</sup> Revision/Clonoulty 1859, p.26.

<sup>64</sup> The Maloneys were mentioned in John Browne to Patrick Browne, 18 November 1856. The Maloneys held 37 acres of land and had a house worth £8, Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, pp.26,27 and 37. The Finns are mentioned in Edward Browne to Patrick Browne, 28 August 1857. For information of the Finns of Campbelltown I am indebted to Father Brien Maher, Bungendore, N.S.W. For the Finn baptisms see Clonoulty parish register, p.655 and 239. For the Finn farm of 48 acres see Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, p.37.

<sup>65</sup> Information from Father Maher.

<sup>66</sup> Edward Browne to Patrick Browne, 28 August 1857; Mary Gleeson baptism, Clonoulty parish register, p.258; Roger Gleeson's farm, Griffith/Clogher 1848, p.9.

<sup>67</sup> Edward Browne to Patrick Browne, 28 August 1857.

<sup>68</sup> Both Kennedys were on the *Maitland*, arrived 22 April 1856, IBL/NSW, 4/4962.

<sup>69</sup> Griffith/Clogher 1848, p.10.

<sup>70</sup> BEE, arrived 6 January 1856, IBL/NSW, 4/4958.

<sup>71</sup> Edward Browne to Patrick Browne, 28 August 1857.

<sup>72</sup> Revision/Clonoulty 1859, p.32.

1854, lived here on what he could earn as a labourer.<sup>73</sup> How typical were these people of the 434 Clonoulty emigrants who came to Sydney between 1848 and 1870?

a. The Clonoulty/N.S.W. Emigrants: An Overview

Four hundred of the 434 Clonoulty emigrants, 92%, can be traced in the parish's baptismal register. Using the register the emigrants' families have been reconstituted and assigned to their townlands of residence before emigration. Thirty-six of the parish's townlands were involved in this emigration but emigration rates varied between townland Groups and even more between townlands. [Figure 5.18] Seventy-nine per cent came from the two Groups where the 1841–1871 loss rate was between 41% and 80% but the most noticeable concentration of emigrants, 56%, was in Group Five. In fact observed from townland level there was a group of contiguous townlands running from Cloneyharp and Clogher in the north-east in a straight line south-west through Corbally, Clonoulty Hill, Clonoulty Churchquarter, Clonoulty Curragh and Srahavarella to Ballagh/Kilmore and Piercetown from which came 250, 63%, of the emigrants. [Map 5.3 and Figure 18] All of these townlands had population densities well above, and often, as in the case of Ballagh/Kilmore, considerably above the parish mean of 35. [Figure 5.6] Here indeed was the N.S.W. emigrant heartland of Clonoulty. Even within this emigrant core two areas stand out, Srahavarella and the combined townlands of Ballagh/Kilmore which enclosed Ballagh "town". Srahavarella lay in the Hawarden Estate but, with the exception of Coolanga Upper, contained the only real concentration of emigrants from that property. Altogether 103 emigrants, 26%, came off the estate and can be examined in relation to the particular changes occurring there described above. Again Ballagh/Kilmore was, as we have seen, at the collapsing centre of the parish during the famine years. Because these two sub areas of the parish formed the socio-economic context for nearly half, 47%, of those 400 Clonoulty emigrants traced back to a specific townland they will be analysed separately.

The comparative wealth or poverty of the emigrants can be assessed in relation to their standard of housing and access to land. Using Jones Hughes' definition of the "poor" as those living in a house valued below £1, the emigrants would seem to have emerged from a background thoroughly typical of the parish as a whole. [Figure 5.19] Where 64% of the parish could be considered as "poor", this applied to 66% of the emigrants, hardly a significant variation. [Figure 5.19] However even among the "poor" there were degrees of poverty. This was evident from the Griffith valuers use of a fifteen, a 10/- and a 5/- valuation. The vast majority of the valuations under £1 were placed in one

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<sup>73</sup> Murphy baptisms, Clonoulty parish register, pp.448-453.

of these three categories although there are instances of intermediate values and even, as in the case of poor Fogarty of Ballagh, one of 3/-. Fogarty was part of the N.S.W. story as one of his three sons, Malachi, took an assisted passage to Sydney in 1863.<sup>74</sup> No Clonoulty emigrant, for whom a roof can be found in the valuation, can have had a more miserable one than Malachi Fogarty.

Fifty-six per cent of the N.S.W. emigrants came from houses valued at 10/- or less. [Figure 5.20] It is difficult to equate the Census Commissioners' house classifications to the 1848 valuation. However, by applying the Clonoulty 1841 Census proportions of each of the Commissioners' four house types to the 1848 valuation, then houses valued at 10/- and under equate roughly with Class 4, 11/- to approximately £1/15/- with Class 3, £1/16/- to approximately £6 with Class 2 and above that figure with Class 1. On this basis the largest single group of Clonoulty emigrants, 56%, lived in the most wretched kind of housing in Tipperary, the Class 4 house. [Figure 5.20] Given that the Commissioners' classification was intended to be a national standard, these houses would have been little better than similar housing in western counties, such as Mayo, often used as the index against which to measure 19th century Irish poverty.

Not all who obtained a free passage to N.S.W. from Clonoulty were from such an impoverished environment. Few houses in the parish had a valuation in excess of the £6 which would have placed it in the Census Commissioners Class 1 category. One such house belonged to Timothy Maloney of Clonoulty Curragh. Maloney was a medium sized farmer, holding 15 acres in the Curragh and 22 in neighbouring Srahavarella.<sup>75</sup> His house was valued at £8, clearly, to quote the Commissioners, a house of an even better description than a "good farm house". Giving his age as 60, Timothy received an assisted passage to Sydney in 1860 having been nominated by his son, John, who with four of his sisters, had arrived in 1853.<sup>76</sup> One can only speculate at what made him emigrate; his wife had died some time between 1853 and 1860 and two more sons accompanied him in 1860. Perhaps of his family of 11 none remained behind in Ireland to see him into old age. Whatever his motives, assisted emigration from this kind of background was exceptional.

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<sup>74</sup> Fairlie, arrived 29 April 1863, IBL/NSW, 4/4982.

<sup>75</sup> For Maloney details see Note 64.

<sup>76</sup> Ellenborough, arrived 12 October 1853, IBL/NSW, 4/4931. Tudor, arrived 17 August 1860, IBL/NSW, 4/4981.

When Timothy left even a house of this value, situated next to the Catholic church, suffered a similar fate to the cabins of the “poor” — it was thrown down.<sup>77</sup> The valuers were not called upon to record their feelings as they observed the slow, silent haemorrhaging of Clonoulty in the wake of the Famine. However, the phrases they used to describe vacant or decaying properties provide an apt metaphor for the results — “ruins”, “dwelling down” or “waste of houses”.<sup>78</sup>

More typical of the better class of emigrant, thought by Waldersee to have gathered round the Ryans of Galong, were those from Class 2 houses, valued between £1/16/- and £6 — a “good farm-house”. Eleven of the emigrant houses were of this type, although if the required value for a 2nd Class house is raised to £2, possibly a more realistic figure, then only four emigrant families would qualify. Among such emigrants were the Meagher family of Ballagh/Kilmore living in 1850 in a house valued at £3/12/-, the Mahers of Ballycamus in one valued at £2/14/- and indeed the Brownes, whose father’s house was valued at £2/15/-.<sup>79</sup>

In this context it is worth drawing attention to one family in particular — the family of Michael Ryan and Marry Barry of Coolanga Upper. In 1853 Mary, a widow, took nine of her children to Sydney on the *Malvina Vidal* and from there on to Boorowa.<sup>80</sup> Her destination in the colony is no surprise as she was Edward “Ned” Ryan’s sister-in-law and the “King of Galong Castle”, as he was known, may have offered assistance to his brother’s widow and children. This family became known locally as the “Barry” Ryans, a title necessary to distinguish them from the numerous Ryans round Boorowa.<sup>81</sup> When “Ned” Ryan’s daughter, Anastasia, died in 1900 the mantle of this Ryan dynasty fell upon his niece, the assisted emigrant Anastasia “Barry” Ryan from Coolanga Upper. She ran Galong until it was handed over to the Redemptorist Order at her death in 1914.<sup>82</sup> Anastasia was buried next to her brother, Lawrence, in Galong Cemetery and above them both were erected two of the largest monuments of this kind in the N.S.W. bush, a pair of angels sculptured by Rusconi of Gundagai from Anastasia’s own designs.<sup>83</sup> Identified on their tombstones as “Natives of Coolange, County Tipperary”,

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<sup>77</sup> Revision/Clonoulty 1859, p.23. The entry beside the Maloney house in the valuation revision states: “Dwelling and stone offices down”.

<sup>78</sup> Revision/Clonoulty and Clogher 1859, passim.

<sup>79</sup> Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, pp.35 and 28.

<sup>80</sup> *Malvina Vidal*, arrived 20 June 1853, IBL/NSW, 4/4934.

<sup>81</sup> Barrett, *op.cit.*, pp.174-175.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p.145 and 148.



both of them were born in a cabin assessed by the objective eye of the Griffith valuers as worth 10/- a year in rates.<sup>84</sup> This was hardly the kind of environment Waldersee had in mind when he described these Ryan immigrants, the relatives of “Ned”, as of “a rather higher order than the ignorant labouring classes”.<sup>85</sup> The “Barry” Ryans were a few gradations down the social scale from other assisted emigrants like the Brownes or Maloneys.

Their houses therefore were an indication that, despite a leavening of the better off, the Clonoulty emigrants were mainly from the lower and the lowest ranks of the parish. Moreover most of them came from townlands where holdings were among the smallest in Clonoulty. In these townlands both mean and median holding size was below that for the parish in general; 19 acres mean to a median of six acres compared to the parish’s 23 acres to ten acres. [Figure 5.21/Totals] Forty-one percent, 164 emigrants, came from townlands where the median size of holding was three acres or less. [Figure 5.21 Nos. 2-3/10/13/15/20/22-26] This suggests that many in the emigrant stream to Sydney came from a cottier or conacre labourer background.

An examination of those holdings associated with the emigrants confirms this impression. Where 40% of parish holdings were of the conacre labourer type, the corresponding figure for the emigrants was 54%. [Figure 5.22] If a category “no land” is added to these landholding statistics, that is to say emigrants for whom a house but no landholding can be found, then an even more depressing conclusion can be drawn. The emigrants came from that section of Clonoulty society which was losing the struggle for access to land. While 47% of the parish relied on either conacre or totally on their own labour, 72% of emigrant families were in this situation. Writing home to Clonoulty from Sydney, Melbourne and the “diggings”, the Brownes would have known that their news of relatives and friends would find its way from comfortable kitchens like that of Timothy Maloney to the mud floored, one roomed cabin of Widow Murphy’s Class 4 house.

b. “Cottiered and subdivided to a ruinous extent”: Some N.S.W. emigrants from the Hawarden Estate

Of all those pressures — land hunger, lack of employment, wretched housing and reforming landlords — which were bearing down on the smallholding and conacre families of pre-Famine Clonoulty, none created as much visible disturbance as Stewart’s consolidating policy on the Hawarden lands. Stewart gave evidence to the Devon Commission in 1844, not from any desire to put forward radical or reforming ideas, but

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<sup>84</sup> Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, p.28.

<sup>85</sup> Waldersee, *op.cit.*, pp.177-178.

to defend himself and his management policies from the attack upon them by Father Mackey of Clonoulty.<sup>86</sup> Mackey's allegations were simple; consolidation of farms on the estate was a heartless process which had brought about great suffering and hardship among the tenants.<sup>87</sup> The substance and accuracy of these claims cannot be investigated here but, as was shown earlier, when refuting them Stewart produced lists of tenants who had been virtually forced to surrender their cabins and holdings for various sums in compensation. What Stewart sought to remedy, as he saw it, was that system of cottier and conacre farming which, owing to its primitive agricultural methods and economic precariousness, had damaged the estate. According to him the estate townland which exemplified the "ruinous system" of "cottering" was Srahavarella.<sup>88</sup> This townland had the highest emigration rate to N.S.W. in Clonoulty. [Figure 5.18 No.42]

Stewart's control over Srahavarella began in 1837 when the middleman's lease fell vacant.<sup>89</sup> He found Srahavarella "cottiered and subdivided to a ruinous extent ... with upwards of forty tenants upon it, the greater portion being in a state of abject poverty".<sup>90</sup> By May of 1841 he had reduced this figure from 40 to 26, largely by encouraging the very poorest tenants, those with only a small garden and a cabin, to accept a token sum of money and leave.<sup>91</sup> These were not the cottiers, as only one, John English, held more than an acre of land and as English was able to sell his "interest" to another he received no money from Stewart.<sup>92</sup> What would have been plain to the remaining tenants however, was that they could expect fairly constant pressure from Stewart to vacate what he considered uneconomic holdings. Such disruption may have made some consider the possibility of emigration. The John English who sold his interest in his five acres in 1838 may have been given a block of land on another part of the estate in the nearby parish of Annacarty. A John English arrived in Sydney in 1855 with his wife and family of five, stating that his first two children were born in Clonoulty.<sup>93</sup> The parish register confirms this, showing them to have been baptised from Srahavarella in 1837 and 1839.<sup>94</sup> It is a

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<sup>86</sup> Evidence of John Stewart, Devon Commission, *op.cit.*, pp.825-836.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, Evidence of Father Mackey, p.287.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, Evidence of John Stewart, p.830.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.833, List of tenants of Srahavarella and other townlands on the Hawarden estate given compensation for quitting their land.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, List of tenants etc.

<sup>93</sup> *Matoaka*, arrived 17 May 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4952.

<sup>94</sup> English baptisms, Clonoulty parish register, p.223.

reasonable assumption that the two John Englishs were one and the same. Having been pushed out once by a landlord such a family could be considered emigration prone.

Stewart's next objective, the elimination of the cottiers, was achieved during the Famine. Between the valuations of 1848 and 1859 the number of holdings in Srahavarella fell from 27 to ten and median farm size rose from eight to 22 acres.<sup>95</sup> Yet again it was the Famine which saw the sharpest decline in Srahavarella; house numbers dropped from 23 to 12 and the population by a similar 50% from approximately 202 in 1848 to 101 in 1851.<sup>96</sup> By 1861 a further 29% of the 1851 population had disappeared.<sup>97</sup> Two poor families who survived the hunger, but left for N.S.W. before 1859, were the Dwyers and the Sullivans. Malachi Dwyer and Jeremiah Sullivan were both smallholders in Srahavarella in 1848; Malachi had four acres and a house valued at 5/- and Jeremiah seven acres and a 15/- house.<sup>98</sup> Both would have known they had no future on the estate.

But Stewart's policies may have created a general atmosphere of uncertainty on the estate. Not only the landless and the cottiers were leaving for N.S.W. Thomas Byrne was the largest of Hawarden's tenants in Srahavarella with 61 acres of highly valued land and a "good farm house".<sup>99</sup> In 1851 he took his whole family to N.S.W. Before the 1859 valuation the Finns, who had held 50 acres, also left to settle in the Campbelltown area near Sydney.<sup>100</sup> Other factors, especially the burden of high poor rates during the Famine, were inducing better-off farmers to leave so the decisions of these families may have been less directly influenced by the estate as those of the poor of Srahavarella. That the latter were given every encouragement to go is beyond doubt.

c. "I met with Adam Chidle" : The N.S.W. Emigrants and the collapse of Ballagh, 1848-1870

Ballagh "town" was the end of the road in pre-Famine Clonoulty. Near the centre of Ballagh in 1848 stood the house of William Treacy described by Stewart as a "day labourer".<sup>101</sup> Treacy had received money from the Hawarden estate to build this house, being one of those tenants evicted from Clone in 1843.<sup>102</sup> Clonoulty's pre-Famine

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<sup>95</sup> Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, p.37; Revision/Clonoulty 1859, pp.37-39.

<sup>96</sup> Tipperary/Census 1871.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Sullivan family, *John Knox*, arrived 29 April 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4917; Dwyer family, *Matoaka*, arrived 17 May 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4952; Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, p.37.

<sup>99</sup> Clonoulty/Griffith 1848, p.37.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Evidence of John Stewart, Devon Commission, *op.cit.*, p.828.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

landless congregated in Ballagh; of the 107 houses in the “town” and surrounding townlands of Ballagh and Kilmore 43, 40%, had no land attached to them. Thirty-seven of these landless households were in the “town” of Ballagh itself, 66% of all Ballagh households. Indeed of all the landless households in Clonoulty 60% were to be found in Ballagh and its townlands. The way in which this area drew in the landless and marginal population of Clonoulty can be seen in the Census figures. These show the sponge-like nature of Ballagh’s relationship to the parish; an extraordinary growth in the 1820s was followed by a steep decline in the 1840s, only to be followed by an equally dramatic growth up to the 1848 valuation. [Figure 5.23] This final spurt up to 1848 was against the parish trend, where houses and their inhabitants were already disappearing with the onset of the Famine. [Figure 5.9] Some, who had lost house and land in other townlands, were able to erect a temporary cabin at one or other end of Ballagh’s two cross streets just before the catastrophe which engulfed Ballagh and Clonoulty between the summer of 1848 and the Census of 1851.<sup>103</sup>

With an event like the “Great Famine” it is easy to resort to adjectival excess to describe the despair which must have gripped the poor of Ballagh/Kilmore. As Whelan says of Ireland as a whole during this crisis; “these deceptively simple figures bankrupt the imagination as to the degree of human anguish contained in them”.<sup>104</sup> For Ballagh “town” the figures are clear enough; where 56 houses had stood in 1848 there were 15 in 1859. [Figure 5.24] The poor simply fled after the failure of the 1848 crop. For those who survived, and by definition this includes all the N.S.W. emigrants, the immediate landscape had altered for ever. Gone were approximately 70% of the population from the “town” and close to 50% from the townlands of Ballagh and Kilmore.<sup>105</sup> It is not surprising that those who stayed, surrounded by empty and ruined cabins, showed a high propensity to emigrate in the 1850s. Between 1851 and 1871 the population of Ballagh/Kilmore declined by 139 and of these just under half went as assisted emigrants to Sydney.<sup>106</sup> [Figure 5.21 No.23] These emigrants left from the parish’s most shattered environment.

The N.S.W. emigrants were typical of this area of the parish; 67% lived in houses valued at less than £1. [Figure 5.25] Again most were to be found in the poorest houses valued at 10/- or less. Thirty three per cent of them, like many in Ballagh/Kilmore, were

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<sup>103</sup> Another name for Ballagh at this time was Ballagh Cross.

<sup>104</sup> Kevin Whelan, “The Famine and Post-Famine Adjustment”, p.157, in William Nolan (ed), *The Shaping of Modern Ireland: The Geographical Perspective*, Dublin, 1986.

<sup>105</sup> Tipperary/Census 1871.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

landless and those who did have access to land, with the exception of two households, were cottiers and conacre labourers. [Figure 5.26] There is little that can be said about these people which is not in some way an indication of their material poverty and if the Clonoulty emigrants in general were poor then these Ballagh emigrants were extremely poor.

Just as the departure of farmers like the Byrnes from Srahavarella indicated a lack of confidence in the future on the Hawarden estate, so too did the emigration of some individuals and families from Ballagh. In 1848 Ballagh boasted two blacksmiths; after Edmund Dwyer took his family to Boorowa in 1861 there were none.<sup>107</sup> He stayed on in the 1850s, a decade when trade must have been getting gradually slower. His falling income is suggested by the family's move between 1848 and 1855 from a house valued at 15/- to a cabin of the lowest type at 5/-.<sup>108</sup> With a family of seven to provide for he must have regarded the prospects in Clonoulty as dismal. Patrick Maloney, the teacher at the National School in Ballagh townland, would have felt the effects of the depopulation of Ballagh/Kilmore in his own schoolroom. He left in 1850 for Goulburn, N.S.W. during the years when Famine emigration from the parish was at its peak.<sup>109</sup>

The emigration of men like Edmund Dwyer and Patrick Maloney was symptomatic of diminishing opportunities in post Famine Clonoulty. Cottiers and conacre labourers had existed in this sort of economic situation for decades. Now it was being felt by previously more prosperous sections of the population. One man to feel the contraction of the 1850s was John Chidle. Chidle had been Ballagh "town's" most prominent citizen and was, within the small rural world of Clonoulty, its most visible entrepreneur. In the "town" itself he rented out 21 small cabins, most of them in the lower valuation categories of 10/- and 5/-. [Figure 5.24 Notes] Edmund Dwyer rented his blacksmith's forge from Chidle.<sup>110</sup> Four more dwellings of a similar nature were located in Ballagh townland and he was also the landlord of Patrick Maloney's schoolhouse.<sup>111</sup> Scattered throughout the townlands near Ballagh "town" he rented about 35 acres of land from the head landlord.<sup>112</sup> The dispersed nature of these holdings suggests that he may have been renting them out in conacre to the landless of Ballagh, as all of them were in easy walking distance of the "town". Conacre renting would have been a profitable business in a parish

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<sup>107</sup> *Queen Bee*, arrived 31 March 1861, Agent's List, 4/4796.

<sup>108</sup> Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, p.24; Revision/Clonoulty 1859, p.4.

<sup>109</sup> *Elizabeth*, arrived 16 April 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4916.

<sup>110</sup> Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, p.24.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.23, 26, 33, 35, and 36.

where it let at as much as £10 per acre in 1836.<sup>113</sup> It can only have fetched more in the decade before the Famine as the population and demand for land increased. However apart from the suggestive distribution of these holdings there is no proof that Chidle speculated in conacre land. That he did so in building supplies is clear from his renting of a limestone quarry and kiln in Ballagh itself.<sup>114</sup> Among the residents of pre-Famine Ballagh everyone would have known, perhaps even have had dealings with, John Chidle. His house, valued at £7, would have been an opulent sight in these impoverished surroundings.<sup>115</sup>

Whelan contends that the Famine barely impinged on the strong farmer and shopkeeper class.<sup>116</sup> In comparison with what happened to the cottiers and labourers there is no arguing this point. However John Chidle was hard hit; by the 1859 revaluation only two of his 21 houses in the town were still occupied.<sup>117</sup> In 1859, Ballagh's new landlord, Philip Percival, deprived him of his limestone quarry and kiln. A valuer's annotation — "free for tenants' use April 1859" — indicated how Chidle had profited from this quarry in the past.<sup>118</sup> All John's entrepreneurial efforts were probably directed at providing for his large family; between 1819 and 1847 he fathered 14 children, six with Nelly Ryan, his first wife and eight with Ellen Devereaux, his second.<sup>119</sup> In the light of Chidle's declining fortunes in the 1850s it comes as no surprise that, as Edward Browne in 1857 walked down the mud streets of the Ovens "diggings", he reported back to Clonoulty, "... I met with Adam Chidle".<sup>120</sup> Adam and his brother James, two of John's sons, arrived in Sydney as assisted emigrants in July 1855.<sup>121</sup> No Chidle baptisms appear in the Clonoulty register for the second half of the 19th century. John himself died in 1868 and the name has vanished from Clonoulty.<sup>122</sup>

This survey of Clonoulty and its N.S.W. assisted emigrants has limited itself to positioning the emigrants within the socio-economic framework of the parish. Both the

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<sup>113</sup> Poor Law Enquiry, *op.cit.*, Supplement to Appendix F, parish questionnaire, p.242, Parish of Clonoulty and Clogher, Parish Priest Father P.Molony.

<sup>114</sup> Griffith/Clonoulty 1848, p.24.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.

<sup>116</sup> Whelan "The Famine and post-Famine Adjustment", in Nolan (ed), *op.cit.*, p.157.

<sup>117</sup> Revision/Clonoulty 1859, pp.4-6 and 31-32.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>119</sup> Chidle baptisms, Clonoulty parish register, p.73.

<sup>120</sup> Edward Browne to Patrick Browne, 28 August 1857.

<sup>121</sup> *Gloriana*, arrived 27 July 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4949.

<sup>122</sup> Gravestone inscription, John Chidle, Clonoulty Roman Catholic cemetery, personal visit.

contextual and individual evidence shows that these emigrants were poor and, more often than not, extremely poor. What is unexpected was that government assistance was reaching the better off, sometimes considerably better off, sections of the parish. In a sense therefore both Waldersee and O'Farrell are correct; the emigrants were composed of both "common labourers" and those of a rather higher order than the "ignorant labouring classes". But if the case of the "Barry" Ryans is any guide, then "Ned" Ryan's relatives were not in any material sense far above these "labouring classes". All told this particular emigrant stream was diverse enough to be described by a partial inversion of those famous words of that opponent of Irish Catholic immigration, Dr. John Dunmore Lang. Where Lang found that Boorowa contained "a veritable slice of the County of Tipperary", emigrating to Sydney between 1848 and 1870 was a "veritable slice" of the parish of Clonoulty.

## Chapter 6

### **“The Removal of Mendacity from One Soil to Another”; Destitute Irish who Received an Assisted Passage to N.S.W., 1848–1850**

During the worst years of the Great Famine (1846–1850) there was comparatively little Irish emigration to Sydney. After the ending of the old “bounty” system in 1844 recruitment by the Emigration Commissioners began again at the height of the catastrophe in mid-1847.<sup>1</sup> At this time the Commissioners emphasised that colonial funds were held by them in trust to select suitable applicants to meet colonial labour requirements not to relieve distress in any part of the U.K.<sup>2</sup> Their work in Ireland during the Famine made little impact on Irish distress; between 1848 and 1850 only 6,568 Irish received an assisted passage to Sydney out of a U.K. total of 16,259.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the Commissioners’ views the Famine years saw the arrival in Sydney of the largest number of destitute, or near destitute Irish, to receive an assisted passage between 1848 and 1870. These immigrants, approximately 2,799 in number, 43% of the Irish total between 1848 and 1850, all embarked under special schemes and would have been considered ineligible under the Commissioners’ normal selection criteria.<sup>4</sup> These were the young female orphans from Irish workhouses, the wives and families of emancipated and ticket-of-leave convicts and the children of former “bounty” emigrants whose parents had left them behind on emigrating. As they formed such a large proportion of Irish arrivals at this period, and because each scheme was short term, specialised and separate from the Commissioners’ normal processes of application and selection, this emigration deserves analysis as a distinctive aspect of the whole assisted movement to Sydney between 1848 and 1870.

#### **1. “The Removal of Mendacity from One Soil to Another”: The Irish Workhouse Orphan Immigrants, 1848–1850**

The basic story of the orphan emigration is well known.<sup>5</sup> What is of interest here is

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<sup>1</sup> R.B. Madgwick, *Immigration into Eastern Australia, 1788–1851*, second edition, Sydney, 1969, p.193.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of Emigration Commissioner T.W.C. Murdoch, House of Lord’s Select Committee on the Operation of the Irish Poor Law, p.975, *BPP*, 1849, Vol.16.

<sup>3</sup> For totals 1848 to 1850 inclusive see Chapter 1, Figure 4.

<sup>4</sup> Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848–1870.

<sup>5</sup> For a full account dealing with the Irish end of the scheme see Joseph Robins, *The Lost Children: A*



how the situation, selection and experiences of these girls set them apart from the mainstream of Irish assisted emigration to N.S.W. Altogether eleven ships brought 2,220 Irish female orphans from workhouses and other charitable institutions to Sydney between October 1848 and July 1850. The great majority, 2,197, were selected from Union Workhouses in every county in Ireland, with the sole exception of County Louth, and the remaining 23 came from the Foundling Hospitals of Dublin and Cork. [Figure 6.1] Recruitment instructions from the Emigration Commissioners to the Workhouse authorities stipulated that no girl younger than 14 or older than 18 be selected and that “the nearest to 18” be given preference.<sup>6</sup> The ages given by the girls on arrival suggest that the selection criteria were closely adhered to: 72% were in the 16-18 age groups and only 19% were aged 14 or 15. [Figure 6.2] Three main benefits were claimed for this workhouse recruitment: firstly the Commissioners were able to keep up a constant supply of single female labour in a situation where few trained English and Scottish servants applied to emigrate, secondly it helped balance the predominance of males in the colonial population and lastly it provided some relief to the hard pressed Irish Unions overwhelmed by the victims of famine.

All the evidence suggests that these girls were the most destitute group of Irish ever to receive an assisted passage to N.S.W. McClaughlin’s work linking them with entries in workhouse registers shows their absolute poverty.<sup>7</sup> A number of girls on the *Earl Grey*, the first orphan ship to reach Sydney, can be traced in the registers of five Poor Law Unions in the northern counties. The level of information in these registers varies from simple personal details — name, age, religion, address — to brief, but chilling, descriptions of an individual’s condition on entry. Elizabeth Just, aged 16 of Annaghmore, County Armagh was admitted to Armagh Workhouse on April 10 1847, starving and “thinly clothed”.<sup>8</sup> She left on September 6, was readmitted in a similar state in early November and finally left to join the *Earl Grey* on May 24, 1848.<sup>9</sup> The Armagh register also documents the final year of the family life of the Littlewood family of Richhill. Mary Littlewood and her children — Mary, 15, Thomas, 13, John, 11, and Ann Eliza, 9 — described variously as “thinly clothed”, “ragged”, “dirty”, “destitute” and

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*Study of Charity Children in Ireland, 1700–1900*, Dublin, 1980, Chapter 8, “Orphan Emigration to Australia”, pp.197-221.

<sup>6</sup> Emigration of Orphans from Workhouses in Ireland, Circular No.58, Irish Poor Law Commissioners to Poor Law Inspectors, 7 March 1848, enclosing memorandum from Emigration Commissioners, Clause 1, *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, Ireland, Dublin, 1848, p.152.

<sup>7</sup> Trevor McClaughlin, “Barefoot and Pregnant? Female Orphans from Irish Workhouses to Australia, 1848–1850”, *Familia: Ulster Genealogical Review*, Vol.2, No.3, 1987, pp.31-37.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34.

<sup>9</sup> *Earl Grey*, arrived 6 October 1848, IBL/NSW, 4/905.

“hungry” were in and out of the workhouse several times between 1846 and 1848. The family breadwinner, Samuel Littlewood, a weaver, died in February 1847 and the mother, Mary, in March 1848.<sup>10</sup> Daughter Mary, aged 15, finally left the institution in May 1848 on her way to Sydney.<sup>11</sup> Her story of family disintegration, hunger and destitution would have been no different to girls from workhouses throughout Ireland who were selected as orphan emigrants.

What set these girls apart from ordinary assisted emigrants was the selection process itself and, for those chosen, the provision of free clothing and travel to the embarkation port. For most Irish emigrants their first real meeting with the Commissioners’ staff was at the English depot; before that they were simply names on application forms and embarkation lists. By contrast the orphan girls went through a lengthy sifting procedure in Ireland. After volunteering for emigration they had to be approved in turn by the Workhouse authorities, the regional Poor Law inspector and finally by the Commissioners’ Irish representative, the Emigration Agent of the port of Dublin, Lieutenant Henry. Bridget Gearon’s progress from the Clonmel Union Workhouse to the Australian emigrant ship lasted for over a year. Bridget was one of 18 Clonmel volunteers considered eligible under the age restrictions imposed by the Commissioners.<sup>12</sup> At 16 she was perhaps considered too young to go with the first batch who left during 1848, but some time in late March 1849 she was inspected and approved for passage by Lieutenant Henry.<sup>13</sup> As part of their agreement with the Emigration Commissioners the Clonmel Guardians now provided all of Bridget’s pre-emigration expenses; she was given a full outfit of new clothing for the voyage, a sea chest, a Douay Bible and her fare to Dublin and on to Plymouth.<sup>14</sup>

How carefully were the girls chosen in the harassed famine atmosphere of an Irish workhouse? Because their character was later severely criticised on arrival in Sydney extremely detailed accounts exist of the selection of the Belfast Union girls who went on the first orphan ship in 1848, the *Earl Grey*. Doctor William Magee, who sat on a sub-committee of the Belfast Guardians to select the girls, gave a full account of the procedure adopted.<sup>15</sup> After a list of eligibles was submitted to the committee by the Master of the

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<sup>10</sup> McClaughlin, *op.cit.*, p.35.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Clonmel Union, County Tipperary, Board of Guardians’ Minute Books, 11 March 1848, p.57 and 18 April 1849, p.257, in typed extracts from the Minutes, Clonmel Union, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 April 1849, p.256; 12 May, 1849, p.321.

<sup>15</sup> Evidence of William Magee M.D., annex in report of Poor Law Inspector Otway to Irish Poor Law

Workhouse the girls were assembled in the dining hall in front of the committee and the local Poor Law inspector, Edward Senior. Senior was particularly concerned that this first group to leave for the colony should be a credit to the Belfast Union and reflect well on the Poor Law administration of the northern workhouses.<sup>16</sup> Consequently he claimed to have rejected anyone who could not at least read.<sup>17</sup> Magee remembered this as embracing also the ability to write and thought Senior “unnecessarily strict upon that head”.<sup>18</sup> Of the 47 Belfast girls on the *Earl Grey* 33, 70%, claimed to be able to read.<sup>19</sup> This was about average in a town where 85% of the female population aged 16 to 25 claimed to be able to read in 1851.<sup>20</sup> Those who appeared to be physically weak were also rejected and others struck off after examination by the doctor. Yet more sifting and examining followed before the arrival of Lieutenant Henry so that the girls seen by him were definitely considered to be the pick of the Belfast Workhouse:

... the females, previously submitted for my consideration in a list of candidates for emigration, were then formally brought before me, in the dining hall ... each female was then called before me by name, one by one, and I enquired as to the age of each person, whether or not she had lost her parents, as to her being capable of reading or writing, her previous occupation, and respecting her character and conduct.<sup>21</sup>

Henry further insisted that testimonials be sought from previous employers or respectable people who knew them and on a second visit to Belfast he personally inspected each reference.<sup>22</sup> More girls were rejected even at this late stage. It is doubtful that these rigorous and time consuming methods were uniformly adopted in workhouses in the far south and west of Ireland. There officials and Guardians had to deal daily with hundreds of sick and starving. But even if only part of the Belfast system was in operation this would have constituted far closer local scrutiny than any other category of applicant from Ireland for an assisted passage was ever subjected to.

On arrival in the colony the girls were treated as a special class of immigrant. To supervise them a Sydney Orphan Immigration Committee was set up composed of the

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Commissioners, 14 June 1849, in Despatch No.151, Earl Grey to Governor Fitzroy, 5 October 1849, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1850, Vol.2, p.53.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Earl Grey*, arrived Sydney 6 October 1848.

<sup>20</sup> Census of Ireland, 1861, Tables of Age and Education, Town of Belfast, Census of Ireland, 1851, *BPP*, 1856, Vol.29, p.113.

<sup>21</sup> Evidence of Lieutenant Henry, Poor Law Inspector Otway's report, *op.cit.*, p.51.

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

Immigration Agent, the Port Health Officer, the Water Police Magistrate, representatives of each religious denomination and prominent politicians and officials such as Charles Nicholson, Speaker of the Legislative Council.<sup>23</sup> The Committee had wide powers relating to employment, wages, discipline and general moral guardianship over the orphans until they reached the age of 18.<sup>24</sup> Symbolising this was a formal legal indenture drawn up between the Committee and each individual employer, indentures which could only be cancelled by the Committee or a local magistrate.<sup>25</sup> If a girl had her indentures cancelled she remained legally under the guardianship and care of the Committee. The actual hiring agreements signed by the girls themselves also specified the much wider responsibility employers were expected to adopt towards them. When Daniel Tierney of Princes Street, Sydney, took on 17 year old Johanna Gaggin of Lorrha, County Tipperary off the *Tippoo Sahib* in July 1850 he agreed, in addition to her normal wages and board, "to provide her with medical attention and medicines, to attend to her morals", to teach her her duties and to allow her to attend Divine Service.<sup>26</sup> Even a girl's wages were not legally hers but were held in trust by the Committee. She received them "at their discretion" and with regard to future conduct.<sup>27</sup>

Given the size and composition of the Committee general day-to-day administration devolved upon the Immigration Agent between 1848 and 1851, Francis Merewether. On arrival he either placed the girls in Hyde Park Barracks and indentured them from there or sent them into the country. [Figure 6.3] Sending them into the country involved the provision of adequate protection along the way and some care was taken in the selection of escorts.<sup>28</sup> Applicants for these positions, like ex Sergeant Nolan of the 53rd Regiment and his wife, were required to produce references of their suitability for this work and their appointment was approved, not just by Merewether, but by the whole Committee.<sup>29</sup> At the country centres the girls were put under the supervision of the local Bench of

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<sup>23</sup> For members of the Orphan Committee see, Select Committee on Irish Female Immigrants, hereafter *SC Irish Females*, pp.37/43, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, 1858/59, Vol.2.

<sup>24</sup> Evidence of F.L.S. Merewether M.L.C., *SC Irish Females*, pp.37-43.

<sup>25</sup> Appendix B and Appendix C — Extract form Minutes of Proceedings [Orphan Immigration Committee] on the 23rd February, *SC Irish Females*, pp.57-58.

<sup>26</sup> Servant's Agreement, Johanna Gaggin with Daniel Tierney, no date, on display in Old Commissariat Store Museum, Brisbane, Queensland.

<sup>27</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Maitland, 23 May 1850, Copies of letters sent to miscellaneous persons re migration to N.S.W., hereafter *CLMP/NSW*, 4/4638, AONSW.

<sup>28</sup> Application of Patrick Nolan for employment of himself as a Guardian and his wife as a Matron in the Immigration Department, 20 June 1849 N.S.W. Immigration Correspondence, hereafter *IC/NSW*, 9/6192, AONSW.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Magistrates who were given detailed instructions regarding their special responsibilities towards the orphans. The precautions taken with a group sent to Wollongong from the *Panama* in 1850 were typical of the system. Firstly Merewether demanded that the disused Mounted Police Barracks be cleaned and the windows glazed to allow the building to act as a temporary depot.<sup>30</sup> Furniture, mess and cooking utensils were sent ahead of the party to the Chief Constable to equip the depot and the girls themselves escorted to Wollongong by the schoolmaster and matron from the *Panama*.<sup>31</sup> Two JPs were requested to be present at the indenturing and the involvement of local clergymen was also strongly recommended.<sup>32</sup> Clergy, it was felt, were the best judges of a potential employer's character. The magistrates were asked to supervise the depot closely and Merewether considered it a "good idea" to station a constable nearby at all times.<sup>33</sup> However the magistrate's discretion did not extend to wages.<sup>34</sup> These had been determined on a set scale by the Committee taking into account the girls' inexperience and their apprentice status as servants.

The Committee took its duty as the girls' guardian and protector seriously. As no Committee member knew Thomas Purchase, timber merchant of Parramatta, who applied for an orphan servant, Merewether requested the local Police Magistrate to find out if Purchase was married and could be considered a "suitable" person for an apprentice.<sup>35</sup> In particular the Committee did not wish the girls to be seen by the lonely bachelors of the bush as instant partners. When the Bathurst magistrates requested guidance on this point Merewether informed them that orphans should not be married direct from the depot:

... girls should at first go into service where they will of course have opportunities of forming matrimonial connections based upon previous acquaintance with their husband.<sup>36</sup>

Outside Sydney the local magistrate's judgment was accepted in most cases regarding marriage. When Merewether heard that Theresa Bell wanted to marry

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<sup>30</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Bench of Magistrates, Wollongong, 18 January 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

<sup>31</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Bench of Magistrates, Wollongong, 16 January 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

<sup>32</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Bench of Magistrates, Wollongong, 25 January 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

<sup>33</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Bench of Magistrates, 16 January 1850.

<sup>34</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Bench of Magistrates, Wollongong, 25 April 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

<sup>35</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Parramatta, 26 October 1848, CLMP/NSW, 4/4635.

<sup>36</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Bench of Magistrates, Wollongong, 6 February 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

shipwright John Lewis of Manning River she had already been away from her master, George Rowley, for two months. The local priest, Father O'Reilly, refused to marry a girl still under indentures so Merewether authorised local magistrate Colonel Grey to cancel the indentures and permit the marriage if he saw it as "desirable".<sup>37</sup> However when a girl reached 18 it was made clear to her that she was on her own. The Bathurst magistrates were dissatisfied with Bridget Hammond's conduct and Merewether informed them that, as she was now 18, she should be made to hire out on any terms she could get and told that she would not "again be received into the Depot or provided for by Government".<sup>38</sup>

In serious cases of ill usage or moral danger a girl's interests were often pursued with vigour. In February 1850 Merewether received a signed statement from Margaret Devlin declaring she had been seduced by William Small, the son of her late employer at the Clarence River.<sup>39</sup> Margaret became pregnant and Small was approached to make provision for the child. Eventually Merewether received payment in full for Margaret's confinement but in May 1851 Small was still refusing to sign a bond drawn up by the Crown Solicitor obliging him to pay maintenance of 3/6d. per week until the child was 13.<sup>40</sup> The Committee demanded that he either sign the bond or pay six months in advance on a regular basis to the Commissioner of Crown Lands at the Clarence.<sup>41</sup> No further reference to this case can be found in Immigration Department records. Similarly the Police Magistrate at Wollombi drew the Committee's attention to the situation of Mary Allingham claiming the need "to protect that unfortunate female from being led into scenes of immorality and vice at Mangrove Creek, the present place of residence of Mr John Drysdale [her employer]".<sup>42</sup> Merewether instructed the Brisbane Water magistrates to cancel her indentures and give her police protection.<sup>43</sup>

Disciplining an orphan was normally a matter for individual employers. Where it became the concern of the Committee was in the period between arrival and hiring and

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<sup>37</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Lieut. Col. Grey, Police Magistrate, Port Macquarie, 14 June 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

<sup>38</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Bathurst, 19 April 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

<sup>39</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Commissioner of Crown Lands, Clarence River, 20 February 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

<sup>40</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Clarence River, 4 November 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

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

<sup>42</sup> Police Magistrate, Wollombi, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 3 September 1849, 4/5699, AONSW.

<sup>43</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Bench of Magistrates, Brisbane Water, 15 September 1849, CLMP/NSW, 4/4637.

when employers declared they could no longer cope with a girl and asked for her indentures to be cancelled. What happened to Mary Smith shows how such cases could be dealt with. Mary was accused by her mistress, Anne Cordeaux of Campbelltown, of "bad conduct and disobedience" and ordered returned to the Parramatta Depot by the police.<sup>44</sup> The Depot Superintendent was instructed that, if the case against Mary was proved and her indentures were cancelled, she should be subjected to the "stoppage of [the] usual allowance of tea and sugar" while she waited in the depot to be rehired.<sup>45</sup> During the orphan immigration 82 girls were put on reduced rations at Hyde Park Barracks.<sup>46</sup> This figure closely matches the 69 girls who had their indentures cancelled with detriment at the Water Police Court in Sydney between March 1849 and May 1851.<sup>47</sup> All of them were punished by either a loss of wages or sending away from Sydney or both. Most would have spent some time back at the Barracks subject to stoppages of tea and sugar. Although there are 254 officially recorded cases of the cancelling of indentures, deprivation of small luxuries was only applied in what were regarded as extreme cases of wilful disobedience.<sup>48</sup>

Banishment from Sydney had a twofold purpose; it was a punishment calculated to make a girl feel the error of her ways and to remove her from the temptations and bad influences of the city. In August 1849 Mary Daniels from the *Earl Grey* was returned to Hyde Park for "disobedience of orders and wilful destruction of her master's property".<sup>49</sup> She was soon in more trouble as Matron Capps reported her for going absent for the rest of the morning after attending chapel. She concluded that Mary had formed "some improper connection" and recommended "sending this girl from Sydney as soon as possible".<sup>50</sup> Despatching a girl to the country could also be used to prevent her keeping what the Committee judged to be bad company. Although there is no record of her indentures being cancelled, Merewether had Elizabeth Leer sent to Moreton Bay "in

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<sup>44</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Parramatta, 14 September 1849, CLMP/NSW, 4/4637.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Return of the number of Orphan Females receiving support in the Public Establishment at Hyde Park Barracks, who, since the formation of the Establishment in October 1848, have been punished for misbehaviour by authority of one or more of the persons who had the control or inspection of the same, 12 June 1851, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1851, Vol.2. No pagination in the copy in the National Library of Australia.

<sup>47</sup> Appendix J, Return of Orphan Female Apprentices whose Indentures were cancelled by the Court of Petty Sessions at the Water Police Office, *SC Irish Females*, pp.65-72.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65.

<sup>50</sup> Matron's Report, Mary Daniels, in Hyde Park Barracks Daily Report, 12 August 1849, IC/NSW, 9/6193.

order to separate her from a person with whom it is desirable that she should have no connection".<sup>51</sup>

An exceptional form of punishment condoned by the Committee took place in a room at Hyde park referred to by the Matron as the "penitentiary".<sup>52</sup> Those whose indentures were cancelled for misbehaviour were placed in a separate room, 100 feet long by 20 feet wide, and under the supervision of a police sergeant and his wife made to pick oakum.<sup>53</sup> Merewether argued that this was practically the only type of work they could do, as few of them, he asserted, were capable of needlework.<sup>54</sup> They should not be allowed to sit in idleness while waiting to be rehired.<sup>55</sup> His punishment return of 1851 shows that up to mid-June of that year only 55 girls had been subjected to a regime of oakum picking in a separate room combined with stoppage of tea and sugar.<sup>56</sup> Underlying this treatment was an almost workhouse like philosophy as described by Merewether in his reply to questioning about the "penitentiary" from the 1858 Select Committee on Irish Female Immigration:

But it might have been that picking oakum was not an amusement in which they particularly delighted? The object was not to afford them agreeable employment, rather the contrary.

A disagreeable employment? An employment if possible less acceptable than the work which they would have to do in service, so that no inducement might be offered to them to seek a release from their engagements in order to return to the Barracks.<sup>57</sup>

This was exceptional treatment and reflected perhaps Merewether's frustration with a small handful of difficult girls. However after their initial indenturing it is likely that no more than about 10% of the orphans again came under official notice for bad behaviour.

Unfortunately for the reputation of the orphans it was just such exceptional cases which kept them in the forefront of public attention. The quality of immigrants being selected by the Commissioners was a topic of constant editorial comment in the late 1840s and early 1850s as N.S.W. evolved from convict colony to self-governing status. When

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<sup>51</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Police Magistrate, Moreton Bay, 10 December 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

<sup>52</sup> Evidence of Mrs Capps, formerly Matron of Hyde Park Barracks, *SC Irish Females*, pp.30-34.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Evidence of F.L.S. Merewether, p.38.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>56</sup> Return of the number of Orphan Females receiving support in the Public Establishment at Hyde Park Barracks etc. ..., 12 June 1851.

<sup>57</sup> Evidence of F.L.S. Merewether, *SC Irish Females*, p.38.



the very first ship in this experimental workhouse emigration, the *Earl Grey*, brought to Sydney a large group of girls described by Surgeon Douglas on arrival as having been “barefoot beggars” and “professed public women”, orphan immigration was at once attacked as an Imperial attempt to treat the colony, yet again, as a dumping ground for Britain’s unwanted population.<sup>58</sup> Where once this had been convicts now it was paupers of questionable morality. The *Earl Grey* case created an enormous public outcry and resulted in a thorough investigation by the Poor Law authorities in Ireland as to how these girls had been selected.<sup>59</sup> Their report did little to lessen the sense of outrage in the colony and the scheme was seen as pernicious from the start.

But even before the arrival of the *Earl Grey* the idea of orphan “pauper” immigration was being condemned. The editor of the *Goulburn Herald* set the tone of this criticism by categorising all workhouse inmates as infected by habits of “idleness and sloth” and so totally unfit for the “active operations of a new colony”.<sup>60</sup> Not only was this the “removal of mendacity from one soil to another” but, given the country from which the orphans were to be exclusively drawn, Dr Lang’s old fear of the “Tipperarification” of N.S.W. was about to be realised.<sup>61</sup> Not surprisingly from the furore created by the *Earl Grey* to the termination of the scheme in mid-1850 the orphans were rarely off the pages of the colonial newspapers.

Where the girls were most newsworthy and visible was in their regular appearances in the lower courts. As the Committee had not the legal power to cancel indentures a hearing in front of a magistrate was required. Captain H.H. Browne, the Sydney Water Police Magistrate, set aside Fridays at the request of the Committee to hear the girls’ cases and so prevent them from having to wait around the central Police Court.<sup>62</sup> Girls, having been returned to the Barracks by their employers, were brought to Browne’s Court at Cadman’s Cottage in Sydney Cove by an Immigration Department official and, if Browne was busy, placed in the Female Watch House until the case could proceed.<sup>63</sup> During

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<sup>58</sup> Report of the Orphan Immigration Committee respecting the Female Orphans who arrived on the *Earl Grey*, extract from the Minutes of the Committee, 6 December 1848, in papers headed, New South Wales/Immigration — laid upon the Council table by the Colonial Secretary by Command of His Excellency the Governor and ordered by the Council to be printed, 13th June, 1850, pp.35-36, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1850, Vol.2.

<sup>59</sup> Report of Irish Poor Law Commissioners to Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 14 July 1849, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1850, Vol.2, pp.45-47.

<sup>60</sup> *Goulburn Herald*, 23 September 1848, Editorial.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Evidence of Captain H.H. Browne, Select Committee on the Water Police Department, p.20, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1852, Vol.1.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

1848 and 1849 Browne, no supporter of orphan immigration, claimed that he was hearing as many as 17 or 18 cases a week.<sup>64</sup> He may also have been disinclined to give much weight to the girls' own evidence against their employers. On 3 May 1850 Browne was observed dealing with six cases by the Surgeon of one the orphan ships, Doctor Strutt of the *Thomas Arbuthnot*. No Surgeon received more praise in the colony for his ability to handle the adolescent Irish orphans in a friendly but firm manner. Listening to Browne Strutt concluded that "the tone of the magistrate was against all the girls".<sup>65</sup>

It was a tone echoed in press reports of the proceedings. The *Sydney Morning Herald* carried regular short synopses of orphan cases often accompanied by brief but critical comment about the girls in general. When Judy Carney had her indentures cancelled by the Parramatta Bench for refusing to do her work she was observed two hours later "walking through the town smartly dressed, and apparently in good spirits at having received £2 or £3 balance in wages".<sup>66</sup> Judy had been ordered returned to Barracks but her employer had, contrary to regulations, given her her wages rather than pass them to the Committee.<sup>67</sup> The *Herald* accompanied this description of a saucy servant by an admonition to the Emigration Commissioners on the inadvisability of allowing servants such as Judy to receive any wages where they had been dismissed for refusing to work.<sup>68</sup> Displays of sullen impudence were also much in evidence in *Herald* reports. At Parramatta Frances Ternan was accused by Mrs Kennedy of not being prepared to stand at the wash tub without patent leather shoes, of beating and ill using her children and of showing her five shilling pieces she claimed to have obtained from "single men".<sup>69</sup> Observing Frances in court the *Herald* reporter was in no doubt as to her guilt:

The girl's behaviour before the Bench clearly indicated her character.<sup>70</sup>

In early 1850 the *Herald*, in a general comment on the frequent appearance of orphans in the courts, felt there was now a "well founded prejudice against employing these girls" and that orphan immigration had become not only a "total failure" but also "a positive grievance".<sup>71</sup> The *Goulburn Herald* summed the whole scheme up as simply the "removal of mendacity from one soil to another" while its Sydney counterpart, with equal

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Diary of Surgeon Strutt, 3 May 1850, p.92, Ms.8345, La Trobe Library, Melbourne.

<sup>66</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 December 1849.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 January 1850.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1850.

contempt, felt that Sydney had become no more than “a self supporting colonial branch of the Unions of Ballinasloe and Loughray [sic]”.<sup>72</sup>

Apart from the predictable anti-Irish tinge to the growing press opposition to the girls, figures for the availability of new immigrant servants indicate that by 1850 an orphan was often all that was available. Their share of single female servants for hire from the Barracks went from 21% in 1848 to 68% in 1850. [Figure 6.4] While the Commissioners may have been able to guarantee a continuous supply of servants only by increasing reliance on Irish workhouse recruitment this also meant that increasingly the main kind of servant available in Sydney was a young, untrained Irish orphan. This fact, combined with the constant sniping at the girls in the press, produced an atmosphere of instant colonial condemnation of each and every arrival. Not long after the *Panama* brought another 157 girls in January 1850 the *Goulburn Herald* repeated its earlier condemnation of a system which daily produced newspapers teeming with “accounts of the misconduct of these poor orphans”.<sup>73</sup> Ironically it was in this district of N.S.W. during March 1850 that the scheme was to find its greatest acceptance and, while the *Goulburn Herald* never softened its editorial opinion, it did report the altered state of local feeling about the girls. The story of this change of heart is the story of one orphan ship — the *Thomas Arbuthnot*.

The *Thomas Arbuthnot* reached Sydney on 3 February 1850 with 193 orphans drawn mainly from Unions in the western and southwestern counties of Galway, Clare and Kerry.<sup>74</sup> From their first inspections the colonial authorities sensed a certain style about this ship, attributable they felt to the exceptional competence of the Surgeon, Charles Edward Strutt. The Emigration Commissioners must have felt heartened to receive the comments of the N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, Deas Thomson. Never had he seen this ship’s equal as regards “the healthy, cleanly and orderly state of the Emigrants”.<sup>75</sup> This was undoubtedly due, not just to the excellent regulations of the Commissioners, but to the “skill, attention and discretion which characterised the proceedings of the Surgeon Superintendent, Mr Strutt”.<sup>76</sup> Even the Captain praised both Strutt and the girls in his report to London:

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*; *Goulburn Herald*, 23 September 1848.

<sup>73</sup> *Goulburn Herald*, 26 January 1850.

<sup>74</sup> *Thomas Arbuthnot*, arrived 3 February 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4919.

<sup>75</sup> N.S.W. Colonial Secretary to Emigration Commissioners, 8 February 1850, Colonial Secretary/Copies of letters sent to the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, 4/3713, AONSW.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

The Orphan Girls behaved remarkably well indeed, in fact I could not have believed without Experience that Girls taken from the Meanest Peasantry in Ireland, would be so obedient, tidy and Cleanly, they have arrived in the best of order, The Doctor is just fitted for this Service, a very good Man indeed when known.<sup>77</sup>

The Commissioners, despite the usual dry, unemotional style of their accompanying letter, undoubtedly took great delight in forwarding these comments to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.<sup>78</sup>

This universal praise of Strutt's ability was important. It convinced Merewether that he had found the man capable of taking the largest single consignment of orphans yet despatched from Sydney into the country — 105 girls to the Yass region. Merewether was also conscious of the growing objections to orphan servants in the city and that more were probably on their way to the colony. In fact on 18 March, when the Committee learnt that the *John Knox* with 276 more girls was due within weeks, they requested the Governor to discontinue orphan immigration "for the present".<sup>79</sup> It was never revived.

Strutt had no difficulty in getting volunteers to accompany him to Yass. At Hyde Park Barracks the girls crowded around him and, in a testimony to his popularity among them, "130 at once expressed their wish to go to any place that I might be going to".<sup>80</sup> Before his departure for Parramatta with the group on February 18 he met Mr Whitty, a prominent settler in the Tumut River area near Gundagai, who advised him to press on there if all the girls were not hired at Yass.<sup>81</sup> A hundred girls could easily be disposed of there according to Whitty.

This was not the initial reaction at Yass. The local correspondent of the *Goulburn Herald* expressed horror at the approaching "inundation" of this small bush community by "the class designated Orphans", all bar one of whom were Roman Catholics.<sup>82</sup> Yass simply could not absorb them. As far as he knew the only demand for female "helps" was at three public houses but that he had heard that, in order to "preserve immaculate the

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<sup>77</sup> Extract from Captain G.H. Heaton's letter to his employers, with William Phillips, owner of the *Thomas Arbuthnot*, to Colonial Secretary, London, 30 May 1850, Colonial Office/N.S.W. Original Correspondence, hereafter CO/NSWOC, CO.210/438.

<sup>78</sup> Colonial Office to Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 23 July 1850, Colonial Office/Entry Books of Correspondence, CO.385/24.

<sup>79</sup> Minute of the Orphan Immigration Committee recommending the discontinuance for the present of the Emigration of Female Orphans from the Workhouses in Ireland dated 18th March 1850, with Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, Despatch No.77, 22 May 1850, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/428.

<sup>80</sup> Strutt diary, 11 February 1850, p.73.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 February 1850, p.72.

<sup>82</sup> *Goulburn Herald*, Yass correspondent, 2 March 1850.

morals of these females”, they could not be assigned to such places.<sup>83</sup> Contrary to the opinion of that “monster faction — More Labour”, pauperism and destitution were on the increase in the country and should lead to an instant” retrenchment in our requirements upon the starving population of Great Britain”.<sup>84</sup> As Yass awaited this advancing deluge of pauperism the *Goulburn Herald* on 26 February was watching Strutt’s cavalcade of 15 drays “with freights of those useless beings, the orphan girls from the Irish parishes “pass down Auburn Street through the centre of the town. A stop should be put at once to the immigration of this “useless” and “mischievous” class.<sup>85</sup> In a final damning sentence the girls were variously dismissed as “depraved”, “stupid” and “fit for nothing”.<sup>86</sup> If these two gentlemen were typical of local opinion then Strutt faced a hard time in Yass.

On 1 March the party camped three miles from Yass at Mr Hamilton Hume’s house.<sup>87</sup> Here the girls “got to their boxes to make themselves smart for entering Yass”.<sup>88</sup> On Saturday morning, 2 March, “between 8 and 9 o’clock the town of Yass presented an unusually animated appearance” as the drays made their way through the town to the temporary immigrant depot set up in the old Mounted Police barracks.<sup>89</sup> Compared with the description of the girls at Goulburn, and with his own previous outburst against pauper “inundation”, the Yass correspondent now wrote of the “orderly, cleanly and healthy appearance of the young women” which elicited “universal encomiums”.<sup>90</sup> This was the first time Yass had seen the girls en masse and it challenged assumptions contained in the derogatory colonial title “Irish orphan”. Their conduct at church next day was considered “unexceptional” and by Sunday afternoon a large crowd, especially the local bachelors, had gathered on the river bank opposite the depot to “feast their eyes on the dear creatures as they promenaded, danced or gambolled arm in arm on the recreation green before the depot”.<sup>91</sup> Whatever apprehensions Yass had had before the girls’ arrival they appeared to be dissipating in the reality of their presence.

Strutt now spent the next month indenturing the girls. Sixty were hired in Yass and the surrounding pastoral areas and, taking up Whitty’s suggestion, he took 45 to

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, Irish Orphans.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Strutt diary, 1 March 1850, p.76.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 February 1850, p.76.

<sup>90</sup> *Goulburn Herald*, 9 March 1850, Arrival of the Irish Orphans.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

Gundagai.<sup>92</sup> From there they were hired by settlers from as far away as Albury and Wagga Wagga and by residents of the neighbouring town of Tumut. Great care was taken to ensure they were placed with suitable families and Strutt took two girls away from Mrs Warton and Mrs Digby of Yass in order to “place them with more Christian people”.<sup>93</sup> After they had all been hired, and before leaving for Sydney, Strutt rode round the district paying a last visit to each of the girls.<sup>94</sup> His concern for them and the care he took in placing them was not lost on the local community. At the Yass Courthouse on April 17 he was presented “with an address expressing the general satisfaction my girls had given in Yass and neighbourhood”. This document, signed by the magistrates, clergymen and many prominent male settlers in the area, 47 signatories in all, was published in the *Goulburn Herald*.<sup>95</sup> What gave Strutt even greater satisfaction was the volte face of the *Herald*'s Yass correspondent. The girls, all “Irish and Roman Catholic”, and their Surgeon Superintendent, “an Englishman and a Protestant”, were now praised and regret expressed that any reflections should have been made on the “capabilities of these young women”.<sup>96</sup> However much other orphans may have given trouble elsewhere “in this township and district they are highly appreciated and respected”.<sup>97</sup>

Merewether was in no doubt as to Strutt's achievement. For over 18 months the orphans, and the whole style of this emigration, had been under constant attack in the colonial press. However nothing of the success of the girls at Yass made its way on to the pages of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and, by the time Strutt arrived back in Sydney towards the end of April, the Governor's despatch asking for the cessation of Irish orphan emigration was already on its way to London. Despite this decision Merewether emphasised to Strutt that his work had not been “thrown away”.<sup>98</sup> The girls from the *Thomas Arbuthnot* having “acquired a good character during the passage” as a result of his efforts were now giving satisfaction in all quarters.<sup>99</sup> But Strutt's great achievement was to have managed to overcome the general prejudice against the girls in the country, a prejudice created by the press and which “you had to encounter in some of the districts

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<sup>92</sup> Strutt diary, 18 March 1850, p.79.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 16 April 1850, p.90.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.90-91.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 April 1850, p.90; *Goulburn Herald*, 20 April 1850.

<sup>96</sup> *Goulburn Herald*, 30 March 1850, The Female Orphans.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Surgeon Strutt, 6 May 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

through which you passed".<sup>100</sup>

It is easy to dwell on the negative aspects of the orphan emigration. The problems which the authorities had in dealing with a small, difficult minority among the girls are well documented, the *Earl Grey* case especially. These, and the stories emanating from the procession of girls through the courts, have coloured accounts of the orphans ever since. At the level of emigration policy however the scheme was a failure. As colonial condemnation gathered force throughout 1849 and early 1850 what increasingly came under attack was the idea of basing emigration to a free colony, even in part, on the perceived failures of the home country. In rejecting the orphans the colonists were rejecting large scale recruitment from the workhouse under any circumstances. When in 1854 the Commissioners sent one shipload of women, most of them experienced servants who quickly obtained good positions in Sydney, from the Cork Union colonial reaction was instantaneous — no matter what the quality of the emigrants the workhouse was not to be resorted to for their selection.

If the *Earl Grey* is to be allowed so much prominence in the historical record so too should the *Thomas Arbuthnot*. The way in which that voyage and the dispersal of the girls was managed showed the possibilities of the scheme in the hands of competent and caring officials. Handled in that manner it might have been possible for the Commissioners to have kept up a carefully selected emigration of Irish workhouse females. However in trying to meet colonial demands for large numbers of domestic servants they sent N.S.W emigrants from a source with which it was all too easy for the colonists to find fault.

**“That Famine is Pressing Each Day More Heavily Upon them”: The Wives and Families of the Convicts, 1848–1852**

Sligo was one the counties in Ireland worst hit by the Great Famine of 1845 to 1850. One Sligo woman who sought an unusual solution to the near starvation of herself and her family was Anne Sharkett of the parish of Kilfree. On 1 February 1847 she sent a petition to Sir George Grey, the Home Secretary in London, outlining her desperate situation:

... her own utmost endeavours are inadequate to maintain her three orphan children...she humbly represents that her children are helpless and desolate ... that Famine is pressing each day more heavily upon them, that time as it progresses seems to grow darker ...<sup>101</sup>

A number of local priests, magistrates and farmers signed their names to Anne's

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Petition of Anne Sharkett to Secretary of State for the Home Department, 1 February 1847, Convict Reference File 1847/S6, State Paper Office, Dublin, hereafter SPO, Ireland.

petition, one even adding, as if anyone doubted her, "it is really true".<sup>102</sup> Why write to the British Home Secretary, who had no responsibility for famine relief in Ireland? Anne thought Sir George would be able to help her as he was the British minister in charge of convict transportation to Australia. Her husband, James, who had been transported to Sydney, now had his conditional pardon which Anne implored Grey to have turned into an absolute pardon. This would allow him to return legally to Kilfree where he could support his family.<sup>103</sup> Only the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland could grant her petition so on 18 March it was sent to the Chief Secretary's office in Dublin Castle.

As the Castle authorities did not seem to have any transportation records a local policeman was asked to visit Anne to discover the details of her husband's case. Constable Patterson of the Ballymote Barracks reported to Dublin that Anne Sharkett was indeed "of indigent circumstances", that her 15 year old son laboured on the public works and that her daughter, although married, was dependent on her mother.<sup>104</sup> James Sharkett had been transported in March 1829 for abduction. On 30 April, the particulars having been laid before him, the Lord Lieutenant decided that he could not interfere on behalf of either Anne or James Sharkett.<sup>105</sup>

As Anne's petition passed round within the bureaucracy nobody, either in London or in Dublin, told her that another course of action was open to her — have James Sharkett apply to the Governor of N.S.W. for a free passage for his family. As a time expired convict of good conduct he was entitled to this. Just a fortnight before Anne's petition reached the Home Office Sir George Grey and the Colonial Secretary, Earl Grey, had decided to revive the practice of sending out the wives and families of emancipists, upon application from the colony through the Governor.

Caroline Chisholm has usually been given the credit for the revival of this policy. She arrived in London from N.S.W. in mid-1846 and from late November began trying to persuade Earl Grey, Sir George Grey and the Emigration Commissioners to send out the convict families.<sup>106</sup> She went to the Colonial Office at an opportune moment for the realisation of her plans. The government was proposing to re-introduce a form of transportation to N.S.W. which included sending the families of these new convicts provided they paid half the fare. An outline of this scheme was sent to Earl Grey from the

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Constable Patterson, Ballymote, County Sligo to Captain Lawson, County Inspector of Police, Sligo, 31 March 1847, CRF 1847/S6, SPO.

<sup>105</sup> Annotation on Patterson to Lawson, 30 April.

<sup>106</sup> Margaret Kiddle, *Caroline Chisholm*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1950, pp.107-110.



Home Office on 5 November 1846 and, on 31 December, Grey decided to extend the plan to the families of earlier transportees.<sup>107</sup> There was to be one important difference between the two sets of convicts; those already in the colony would have their families out free except for the normal charges applicable to all colonial assisted emigrants of equipping themselves with an approved chest of sea clothing and finding their way to the U.K. embarkation port.

In allowing the families to go Earl Grey claimed he had only just heard of the cancellation of the previous policy. It had been terminated, he felt, for very inadequate reasons. Families had been sent out in small groups on female convict ships and, when transportation to Sydney ceased in 1840, the Home office had simply stopped the practice for lack of money.<sup>108</sup> No funds were asked for or allocated to provide passages for these families in private ships. In explaining his decision Grey made no reference to discussions with Mrs Chisholm; for him the issue was a matter of Imperial policy:

This country, having thought it proper for its own convenience to send out great numbers of convicts to Australia, ought justly to be called on to pay for the cost of any measure for mitigating the moral evils thus inflicted on those colonies and among those measures there is none more needed than sending out the wives and families of the convicts.<sup>109</sup>

But however Grey phrased it there is little doubt that it was Caroline Chisholm who had provided him with personal, first hand accounts of the grim effects of transportation on divided families.

Two and a half years elapsed between Grey's decision and the embarkation at Plymouth of the first families under the government scheme. Well before that in April and July 1847 Mrs Chisholm obtained passages for a small number of families, mostly Irish, on two female transports going to Tasmania — the *Asia* and the *Waverly*. From Hobart they were to go on to Sydney by colonial steamer. These emigrants went through no U.K. selection procedure of any kind. All that was required of them was to be on the list which Mrs Chisholm had drawn up in the colony after her meetings with the convict husbands.<sup>110</sup> A Colonial Office proposal that the list be looked over by Sir George Gipps, just back in England from his term as Governor of N.S.W., came to nothing as

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<sup>107</sup> Memo of Earl Grey on paper from the Emigration Commissioners relating to costs of sending out families of convicts, 31 December 1846, Colonial Office, London, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/370.

<sup>108</sup> Grey memo, 31 December 1846.

<sup>109</sup> Grey memo, 31 December 1846.

<sup>110</sup> The *Asia* list is with Caroline Chisholm to Home Office, London, 12 March 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/387. The *Waverly* list is with Caroline Chisholm to Chief Secretary's Office, Dublin, 2 July 1847, Free Settlers Papers, FS 1847/4 (hereafter FSP), SPO.

he died before it reached him.<sup>111</sup>

Most of these families were very poor. For those who came over from Ireland to join the *Asia* Mrs Chisholm persuaded Irish cross channel steamer owners to give them a free passage.<sup>112</sup> When they reached London she found many so poorly dressed that she personally begged local businessmen to clothe them adequately for the voyage.<sup>113</sup> Some had either insufficient warning of the departure of the ship or were too ill to proceed. In 1848 Father Owen Feeny of Riverstown parish, County Sligo, wrote to tell John Tighe of Wollongong, N.S.W., why his wife and daughters, all on Mrs Chisholm's list, had failed to embark in either the *Asia* or the *Waverly*:

I recollect the time Mrs Chisholme's letters arrived for her to go as far as London and to get a free passage from that to Sydney, the notice then was quite too short for her to be prepared, and in London time enough for the day appointed she wrote to acquaint Mrs Chisholme of the fact, and afterwards there came a second letter from that lady ordering them to go to Dublin and take shipping in the *Waverly*, in which she had procured a passage for them. But it so happened that your poor wife and all the family were then in the Fever some of them recovering slowly and others only in the commencement of it I wrote to Mrs Chisholme stating their circumstances and since then no other offer has been made to them.<sup>114</sup>

Compared with the families who went later under the government scheme those on the *Asia* and the *Waverly* were lucky. Within seven months of Mrs Chisholm's approach to Earl Grey they had escaped from famine to Australia, at government expense, and with a minimum amount of official scrutiny.

One regulation, applied to Mrs Chisholm's families, showed how the Colonial Office might define the term convict family. A number of young men over 14, who had accompanied their mothers from Ireland to join the *Asia*, were refused a passage at the dockside in London. Under the old system the sons of convicts over 14 had not been allowed to travel on female transports and this regulation was enforced on the *Asia*. The Home Office contacted the Emigration Commissioners to see if they could send the young men out as ordinary assisted emigrants.<sup>115</sup> This situation caused an outburst from the Colonial Office's Permanent Under Secretary, James Stephen. A convict family, he argued, was one consisting of a wife and her dependant children being sent out for the

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<sup>111</sup> Mary Hoban, *Fifty-One Pieces of Wedding Cake: A Biography of Caroline Chisholm*, Kilmore, Lowden Publishing Company, 1973, p.191.

<sup>112</sup> Caroline Chisholm to Home Office, 12 March 1847.

<sup>113</sup> Hoban, *op.cit.*, p.192.

<sup>114</sup> Father Owen Feeny, Riverstown, County Sligo to John Tighe, Wollongong, N.S.W., 18 August 1848, IC/NSW, 9/6191.

<sup>115</sup> Memo of James Stephen on Emigration Commissioners to Colonial Office, 9 April 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/389.

sake of the family and the colony, not the convict.<sup>116</sup> To include adult male children, who would simply set up for themselves on arrival, seemed to Stephen “like giving a direct premium to this family as a reward for the criminality of its head”. It was simply “a perversion of the meaning of the word Family ... to understand it to include **Adult men**”.<sup>117</sup>

Stephen’s reaction was the first sign that anyone at the Colonial Office in mid-1847 was concerned about selection criteria for the proposed convict family emigration. For the moment the matter rested with the new Governor of N.S.W., Sir Charles Fitzroy, to whom a despatch had been sent in March 1847 informing him that the former practice of sending out families was to be renewed. He was requested to recommend “proper objects for that indulgence”.<sup>118</sup> Nothing was to be heard from Fitzroy until March 1848. In the meantime letters from convict families in Ireland forced the Colonial Office to keep thinking about who was a “proper object” for a free passage.

In August 1847 Anne Dorneen petitioned Earl Grey from Rathdrum Workhouse in Wicklow.<sup>119</sup> As she and her family, six sons and one daughter, had been reduced to the level of “paupers” since her husband’s transportation, she begged a passage to Sydney. In reply the Colonial Office set out the two basic requirements for this “indulgence”; her husband must apply to and be recommended by the Governor of N.S.W. and he must give evidence of being able to support his family.<sup>120</sup> The Colonial Office officials were a lot less helpful to Anne than to Ellen Coffee of Sligo Town who addressed a similar petition to the Colonial Secretary in September 1847.<sup>121</sup> Perhaps they had disliked Anne’s indignant remark about her husband’s exile being the result of “false accusation”, not crime.<sup>122</sup> Ellen simply admitted that husband Thomas had been sent out for assault in 1835 and that he was now employed on “the Plains of Maneroo”.<sup>123</sup> He had written home suggesting she approach the government for a passage for herself and his daughter. Certainly she appeared to be a deserving “object” of official largesse having “struggled”

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<sup>116</sup> Stephen memo, 9 April 1847.

<sup>117</sup> Stephen memo, 9 April 1847.

<sup>118</sup> Despatch No.113, Colonial Office to Governor N.S.W., 24 March 1847, Colonial Office/Entry Books of Correspondence (hereafter CO/EBC), CO.202/51.

<sup>119</sup> Petition of Anne Dorneen, Rathdrum Workhouse, County Wicklow to B. Hawes, Parliamentary Under Secretary for the Colonies, 16 August 1847 CO/NSWOC, CO.201/390.

<sup>120</sup> Colonial Office to Anne Dorneen, 21 August 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/390.

<sup>121</sup> Petition of Ellen Coffee, Sligo Town, County Sligo to Earl Grey, Colonial Secretary, no date but received at Colonial Office 27 October 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/390.

<sup>122</sup> Petition Anne Dorneen, 6 August 1847.

<sup>123</sup> Petition Ellen Coffee, 27 October 1847.

for 12 years to earn a “subsistence”. However as in her present “abject state” she had no hope of joining Thomas, she requested a passage that she might “spend the remainder of her days with her husband”.<sup>124</sup> Ellen’s tone moved Grey to reply that he was writing to Governor Fitzroy on her behalf asking that enquiries be made as to Thomas Coffee’s conduct and character.<sup>125</sup> No offer of a passage was made but the implication was that a favourable report from N.S.W. would see her on her way to Sydney. However this process was not a quick solution to Ellen’s predicament; she was told not to write again as a reply from the colony would take at least 12 months.<sup>126</sup>

The Colonial Office also saw an applicant’s poverty as critical to their eligibility. Anne Dorneen and Ellen Coffee were both clearly poor. Catherine Agnew of Portglenone, County Antrim found herself rejected for appearing too affluent. The Agnews were offered a place by Mrs Chisholm on the *Asia* but were unable to accept.<sup>127</sup> Then Catherine had approached the Commissioners, possibly for an ordinary assisted passage, but was refused. Finally she petitioned Earl Grey in November 1847 for the passage she had previously turned down as a convict’s wife.<sup>128</sup> Her mistake now was to describe her husband’s position in the colony in glowing terms; he had been there for ten years, was doing well and, as evidence of the trust placed in him by his employer, had been allowed to take his wool clip worth £1,114 to Sydney.<sup>129</sup> Grey personally minuted this petition to the effect that he would not offer her a second passage because, by her own account, her husband was in a good job and “can pay”.<sup>130</sup> Officially she was told free passages were reserved for those who lacked funds and her husband was doing too well to qualify.<sup>131</sup> Grey could not have looked too closely at Mrs Chisholm’s lists or he would have seen that Henry Tilson, who wanted his wife and daughter out from County Cavan, “had £319 in the Bank”.<sup>132</sup> Catherine Agnew sent in another petition. When previously she had described her husband as doing well she had only meant that he had shown himself a trustworthy employee.<sup>133</sup> He did not have the money to bring her and

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Colonial Office to Ellen Coffee, 30 October 1847, CO/EBC, CO.202/53.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Petition of Anne Agnew, Ballyscullion, near Portglenone, County Antrim to Earl Grey, 2 November 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO. 210/390.

<sup>128</sup> Petition Anne Agnew, 2 November 1847.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Memo by Grey on Petition of Anne Agnew, 2 November 1847.

<sup>131</sup> Colonial Office to Anne Agnew, 2 December 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/390.

<sup>132</sup> Caroline Chisholm’s *Asia* list, 12 March 1847.

<sup>133</sup> 2nd Petition Anne Agnew to Earl Grey, 9 December 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/390.

their three sons to Sydney. Just before Christmas 1847 Grey again refused her a passage.<sup>134</sup>

Governor Fitzroy received Earl Grey's instructions to resume taking applications from emancipists for their families in August 1847. He approved of the measure as, since his assumption of the governorship, he had received many petitions from the men themselves. Supported by the local magistrates Michael Smith wrote to him from Cooma in June 1847.<sup>135</sup> Smith had heard that ordinary assisted emigration to the colony was to be resumed and wondered if his family could have a passage from Ireland as he was in no position to bring them himself being but a "labouring man".<sup>136</sup> Without such help he despaired of ever being "reunited to them".<sup>137</sup> Magistrate Henry O'Brien of Yass, writing on behalf of his servant, John Brown, suggested to Fitzroy that bringing these families out was a matter of equity given the proposed renewal of assisted emigration.<sup>138</sup> When the situation in Ireland in mid-1847 was taken into account compassion too might move governments to action. Brown's family had written to him expressing a wish to escape from a country where "they are suffering from extreme want".<sup>139</sup>

Such appeals prompted Fitzroy to investigate the whole issue. He found that the despatch from the Colonial Secretary, Lord Stanley, to Governor Gipps terminating the scheme in December 1842 had seemed to Gipps "so peremptory as to preclude any remonstrance against it".<sup>140</sup> The argument at the time, that the measure should cease because the colony was no longer receiving convicts, seemed to Fitzroy to take no account of those still under sentence and in September 1846 he begged Earl Grey to rescind a regulation which bore "hard upon this unfortunate class".<sup>141</sup> This was not just a matter of compassion but of reformation also. Since it had become impossible to get their families out many men had become less easy to discipline and demoralised. Aware of the pent up demand Fitzroy was thus predisposed to pursue Grey's revival of the policy with

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<sup>134</sup> Colonial Office to Anne Agnew, 21 December 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/390.

<sup>135</sup> Michael Smith, Cooma to Colonial Secretary, Sydney, no date but accompanying character reference dated 7 June 1847, enclosed in Despatch No.140, Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, 10 July 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/383.

<sup>136</sup> Michael Smith to Colonial Secretary, 7 June 1847.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Henry O'Brien, Douro, Yass to Colonial Secretary, Sydney, 19 June 1847, enclosed in Despatch No.139, Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, 9 July 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/383.

<sup>139</sup> Henry O'Brien to Colonial Secretary, 19 June 1847.

<sup>140</sup> Governor of N.S.W to Colonial Office, Despatch No.13, 1 September 1846, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/368.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

vigour.

Fitzroy's new regulations appeared in the *Government Gazette* on August 27 1847.<sup>142</sup> All convicts, who had obtained a Ticket of Leave or higher form of liberty could apply for their families to the Principal Superintendent of Convicts in Sydney. The recommendation of "two respectable persons" known to the government was required certifying to the convict's good conduct and capability of supporting his family. Final approval rested with the Governor. Those whose applications under the previous regulations of May 1833 had been approved, sent home but never complied with, were asked to make fresh applications.<sup>143</sup> Typical of these frustrated applicants was Timothy Hickey of Maitland. Hickey had written frequently to his wife in Cashel, County Tipperary asking her and their seven children to come out.<sup>144</sup> Nobody could have informed him of the ending of the regulation in 1842 for in November 1845 he wrote home saying that Governor Gipps had approved his application but, having heard nothing since, he wondered if his papers were lying overlooked at the Colonial Office.<sup>145</sup> Hickey's case shows just how peremptory Lord Stanley's termination of the scheme had been — the government had failed to honour applications which were on their way when the decision was taken.

The scheme worked simply enough. On January 11 1849, Phillip McCaghy, labourer, of Phillip Street, Sydney, filled in and signed the form entitled appropriately Application for Wife and Family.<sup>146</sup> After supplying the names and addresses, both of his family and local referees in Ireland, McCaghy had the local Catholic curate, Father McKenny testify to his being "well conducted" and that he could support his family. The application now went to J. McLean, the Principal Superintendent of Convicts who checked the records for McCaghy's ship of arrival, date and place of trial and sentence. Any colonial offence recorded against him was also noted but, significantly, not the nature of his original crime. McLean recommended McCaghy's application so it went to the Governor for final approval.<sup>147</sup> From there McCaghy's name was added to one of the regular lists of recommendations sent in despatches to the Colonial Office between

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<sup>142</sup> Notice headed, Families of Convicts, N.S.W., *Government Gazette*, 27 August 1847, p.903.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p.904.

<sup>144</sup> Information from Hickey contained in Henry Massey, R.M., Rosanna, Cashel, County Tipperary to Colonial Office, 8 June 1846, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/373.

<sup>145</sup> Henry Massey to Colonial Office, 8 June 1846.

<sup>146</sup> Philip McCaghy, Application for Wife and Family, 11 January 1849, Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, Letters from Principal Superintendent of Convicts, 1849, 4/2844.

<sup>147</sup> McCaghy application, 11 January 1849.

October 1847 and November 1851.<sup>148</sup> The way in which these applications were processed indicates that the colonial administration regarded an applicant, once approved and on a list, as virtually assured of having their families out.

Where either McLean or Fitzroy were in doubt they referred the application to London rather than reject it out of hand locally. Both felt unable to recommend Catherine Hanafin's request for her two illegitimate sons, Pat and Thomas Sullivan, but forwarded it as a special case.<sup>149</sup> Catherine felt she was being deprived of the indulgence because she had not declared herself as a married woman on arrival. However the children's father had died two years before her transportation and her "feeling as a mother" was now inducing her to try to bring them "to this country from a country where I suppose they are starving at the present time".<sup>150</sup> The Colonial Office response was predictable. Stephen felt she must definitely be refused for the only reason for giving these two youths a passage rather than any other "two young Irishmen, would be that their mother has committed a crime and had previously had two illegitimate children".<sup>151</sup> Women like Catherine Hanafin did not fit Stephen's picture of a proper object for free passage.

Twenty-three application lists were sent to London, two of which have not survived. Preliminary investigation of them shows that the Irish emancipists dominated the scheme from first to last. Of approximately 998 individuals sent for 845, 85%, resided in Ireland. [Figure 6.1] Although the numbers involved are small it is revealing that Munster, the province of Ireland with the strongest 19th century free emigrant association with Sydney, generated 43% of all the applications well ahead of Leinster with 23%. Moreover County Tipperary, which accounted for 16% of all Irish assisted immigrants to N.S.W. between 1848 and 1870, accounted for 14% of the convict family applications. This was double Cork's 7%, the next highest county.

Fitzroy's first lists were greeted with cold censure and mild alarm. Even before a single list had been seen by either Earl Grey or his staff they reacted negatively to the Governor's regulations of August 1847. In deciding to revive the scheme Grey had not thought about who should or should not receive a passage. Now, with the lists about to arrive on his desk, he attempted to define eligibility, seeing it as something to be decided in each individual case.<sup>152</sup> It was his understanding of the previous practice that this

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<sup>148</sup> The Despatches in which the lists were included, and the date each was sent to the Colonial Office from Sydney, is at footnote 1, Figure 1.

<sup>149</sup> Catherine Hanafin's application enclosed in Despatch No. 222, Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, 2 November 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/385.

<sup>150</sup> Hanafin application, 2 November 1847.

<sup>151</sup> James Stephen, memo on Hanafin application, 2 November 1847.

<sup>152</sup> Despatch No.160, Colonial Office to Governor of N.S.W., 13 September 1848, CO/EBC,

“boon” had not been granted on application but only as a reward for peculiarly good conduct. The mere avoidance of misconduct was not sufficient grounds for a passage. Men who had been a considerable time at liberty should help themselves; with the opportunity to earn and save they should not be looking to government to bring out their families. As the first lists arrived over the next months Grey became increasingly concerned at the mounting numbers promised a passage by Fitzroy. Finally in mid-September 1848 he sent a disapproving despatch to N.S.W. instructing Fitzroy to suspend the new regulations. Grey felt the Governor’s generous interpretation of his instructions had allowed too many men to expect their families out.<sup>153</sup> Disappointment could now be the only result as the government would not be able to grant passages in so indiscriminate a manner.<sup>154</sup> This was not a revival of the old practice as Grey understood it and Fitzroy was put on notice to explain himself.

If the Colonial Office were not going to allow the Governor’s selections who was to go? Grey found the lists lacked essential details. Fitzroy thought selection had been his responsibility so his lists had included little about the convicts themselves beyond their ship and date of arrival. No information had been sent about what Grey saw as a determining factor in deciding who should be entitled to their family — the length of time a convict had been in the colony and able to earn for himself. All the lists were now sent to the Home Office with a request for this information and, as the great majority of the cases were Irish, this involved sending them to Dublin. Whatever the results of these investigations might be in May 1848 Grey obviously thought the number to be sent should be small. He told the Home Office that those who had gone out in 1840 or later might qualify.<sup>155</sup> This would involve no more than about ten families. With these protracted delays one begins to appreciate the good fortune of Mrs Chisholm’s emigrants. Her concern had been simply to reunite the families as soon as possible.

While the Colonial Office tried to make up its mind whom to send Grey’s restrictive thinking became the basis of official response to enquiries about a free passage. In May 1848 Mary Meehan of Roscrea, County Tipperary, wrote enquiring to whom should she write about an order for a free passage which, her husband had informed her, was on its way home.<sup>156</sup> A weary memo on Mary’s letter suggested that as these enquiries were

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CO.202/54.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Colonial Office to Home Office, 17 May 1848, CO/EBC, CO.202/55.

<sup>156</sup> Mary Meehan, Roscrea, County Tipperary to Colonial Office, 24 May 1848, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/409.



becoming very frequent perhaps a lithograph reply should be prepared to deal with them.<sup>157</sup> Emigration Commissioner T.F. Elliot responded to this by stating that, as families of men sent before 1840 would probably not be sent, any proposed lithograph would have to make that clear.<sup>158</sup> Mary Meehan, who had mentioned that her husband was sent out in 1839 for 7 years, was told she would probably not receive a passage.<sup>159</sup> Colonial Office officials referred to Mary as “this poor woman”; she had after all been ineligible for a passage by just one year. Less sympathy was wasted on the clear cut case of Mary Kehoe of Clough, near Baltinglass, County Wicklow. She had also heard from her husband that an order had gone home for them and that they would soon hear from the government. Was this true, she asked?<sup>160</sup> She wrote again saying that her husband’s master, who had actually spoken to the Governor, had told him that there was “nothing to prevent you getting a free passage”.<sup>161</sup> Grey and Elliot were in no doubt she should be prevented. Mary was informed that her husband, who went out in 1828, had been free for 13 years giving him “sufficient opportunity of acquiring by his industry the means of paying for your passage to N.S.W. should he feel so inclined”.<sup>162</sup> Like Anne Dorneen before her, Mary Kehoe did not appear deserving enough in her letters, painting her husband as the victim of a harsh judicial system which had transported him for “a rash act” committed under the influence of alcohol and bad company.<sup>163</sup> Such an attitude did not help their case at the Colonial Office.

While the Colonial Office tried to come to a final decision many of the families in Ireland were in a desperate situation. In 1847 Caroline Chisholm had written to John Tighe of Wollongong, N.S.W., to expect his family on the *Asia* and, when they failed to embark on either that ship or the *Waverly*, he must have felt considerably alarmed.<sup>164</sup> John had been one of those men disappointed by the termination of the family scheme in 1842. His application had gone in as soon as he had obtained his Certificate of Freedom in March 1841 but, like Timothy Hickey’s application, it would have got no further than the Colonial Office.<sup>165</sup> When the family failed to arrive in the *Waverly* John wrote home

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<sup>157</sup> Memo on Mary Meehan to Colonial Office, 24 May 1848.

<sup>158</sup> Memo T.F. Elliot on Mary Meehan to Colonial Office, 24 May 1848.

<sup>159</sup> Colonial Office to Mary Meehan, 5 June 1848, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/409.

<sup>160</sup> Mary Kehoe, Clough, Baltinglass, County Wicklow to Colonial Office, 3 March 1848, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/408.

<sup>161</sup> Mary Kehoe to Colonial Office, 15 May 1848, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/408.

<sup>162</sup> Colonial Office to Mary Kehoe, 6 June 1848, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/408.

<sup>163</sup> Mary Kehoe to Colonial Office, 15 May 1848.

<sup>164</sup> Father Owen Feeny to John Tighe, 18 August 1848.

<sup>165</sup> John Tighe, application for wife and family, in Despatch No. 231, Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial

twice to find out what was happening. Both these letters arrived about March 1848 but it was not till January 1849 that news of the family's destitution reached him. Father Owen Feeny wrote on behalf of his wife, who was illiterate, describing the family's eviction from their cabin at Heapstown and of the illness which had prevented them taking up Mrs Chisholm's second offer:

They have been most desirous [sic] to go as far as you if by any possibility they could accomplish their wishes there is nothing in the world would make them so happy as to get an opportunity of going to you — They are now in very poor circumstances — you have heard of the great poverty and distress in this country — for the last two years but the present year promises to be at least as bad for the poor people as either of the last years — the potato crop is entirely blighted in this district ... if you could send a remittance of some money to your wife it would be indeed greatly wanted — she is very destitute of help.<sup>166</sup>

John went at once to the Wollongong Police Magistrate, Captain Plunkett, who wrote on his behalf to the Immigration Agent in Sydney.<sup>167</sup> Tighe knew nothing of the Governor's new regulations and wished only to send some money home. When he heard of the new policy he put in his application.<sup>168</sup> As he had been transported as far back as 1833 the family stood little chance of being accepted given Colonial Office policy in mid-1848. However by the time John's application reached London Grey had done a complete about turn and had decided that virtually all applicants could have their families out.

Two developments precipitated this sudden shift in policy: in the outcome there had been fewer applications than expected and a parliamentary grant in May 1848 proved sufficient to send out all who wished to go. In mid-December 1848 the Colonial Office was still sending newly arrived lists to the Home Office for transportation details "with a view to some selection founded upon the length of time during which they [the convicts] may have been in the colony".<sup>169</sup> Events now moved quickly. By 21 December Grey had the first seven lists covering 752 people in train and two more, involving 104 people, were in hand with the Home Office.<sup>170</sup> Moreover as later lists had come in during the second half of 1848 it had become clear that the numbers were tapering away. The early lists had been swollen by the unfulfilled demand from the previous scheme terminated in

Office, 30 June 1841, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/316.

<sup>166</sup> Father Owen Feeny to John Tighe, 18 August 1848.

<sup>167</sup> Captain P. Plunkett, Wollongong to N.S.W Immigration Agent, 19 January, 1849, IC/NSW, 9/6191.

<sup>168</sup> John Tighe, application for wife and family, Despatch No.242, Governor N.S.W. to Colonial Office, 22 November 1849, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/417.

<sup>169</sup> Colonial Office to Home Office, 13 December 1848, CO/EBC, CO.202/55.

<sup>170</sup> Despatch No.225, Colonial Office to Governor of N.S.W., 21 December 1848, CO/EBC, CO.202/56.

1842, and applications from convicts who had become eligible between 1842 and the publication of the new regulations. Fitzroy was now informed that, thanks to the “liberality” of Parliament, those “poor people” who had had their hopes raised of a passage would not be disappointed.<sup>171</sup> The Commissioners would be instructed to send, as soon as possible, the families of men transported in 1830 and after. If funds allowed all other families would then be sent.<sup>172</sup> Straight after Christmas 1848 the Colonial Office, with some relief, handed the whole project over to the Emigration Commissioners with instructions to contact the families and make all the necessary arrangements.<sup>173</sup> Grey wanted the first 600 embarked by 1 April 1849.<sup>174</sup> When a new, short list arrived in March 1849 a clerk asked whether it, like previous lists, should be sent to the Home Office for transportation dates. Grey however had just heard from the Commissioners that a fair number of families either would not or could not avail of a passage.<sup>175</sup> The list was not sent to the Home Office and all attempts at selection in the U.K. now ceased. Subsequent lists were minuted simply — “Direct the Emigration Commissioners to provide passages for these families”.<sup>176</sup>

Between mid-1849 and mid-1852 the Commissioners provided passages for 635 members of convict families to Sydney, 51% of all who had been sent for. [Figure 6.2] Of these 479, 75% have been identified on shipping lists as Irish. From the few pieces of evidence to have survived about them it is clear that, like Mrs Chisholm’s families, they were mostly very poor. But there was one example of relative affluence among the group. The Tilsons, Margaret, 38, and Jane, 18, from Denn, County Cavan, embarked on the *Panama* in 1849.<sup>177</sup> This was the family of Henry Tilson who, according to Mrs Chisholm’s *Asia* list, had £319 in the bank.

The clearest indication of the destitution of many of these families was their difficulty in getting together the chest of sea clothing required by the Commissioners. This was not a minor matter. The Commissioners refused embarkation to any emigrant who did not produce the basic minimum regarded as necessary for a three month

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171 *Ibid.*

172 *Ibid.*

173 Colonial Office to Emigration Commissioners, 28 December 1848, Emigration Commissioners/Entry Books of Correspondence, CO.385/23.

174 *Ibid.*

175 Memo from clerk and T.F. Elliot on Despatch No.208, Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, 25 September 1848, received 10 March 1849, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/399.

176 Memo on Despatch No. 230, Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, 20 October 1848, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/400.

177 *Panama*, arrived 14 September 1849, IBL/NSW, 4/4912.

voyage.<sup>178</sup> Forty-five people turned down a passage because they could not afford the outfit.<sup>179</sup> Mary Gildea of Westport, County Mayo stated her willingness to go but was unable to clothe herself and the children.<sup>180</sup> Many who did go were clothed from charitable sources. When Bridget Smith of Dunshaughlin, County Meath, was contacted she asked that her husband be told the family could not go without an outfit. In her case the Dunshaughlin Board of Guardians agreed to provide what was required.<sup>181</sup> In the Commissioners' register dealing with this emigration there are numerous references to Irish Boards of Guardians supplying families with an outfit.<sup>182</sup> Sometimes the emigrant was actually an inmate of the workhouse. In March 1849 Eliza Landrigan, described as a "pauper in the house", showed a letter from the Commissioners to the Clonmel Guardians offering her a passage, provided that she had the prescribed clothing. The Guardians saw it as "sound economy" to get Eliza away and relieve the rates of her support.<sup>183</sup> In other cases there is no indication of how clothing was actually obtained. The referees for the Rock family of Elphin, County Roscommon wrote that the mother was dead and the children too destitute to afford the outfit.<sup>184</sup> Nonetheless the Rock children somehow obtained enough clothing to satisfy the Commissioners as they sailed on the *Success* in 1849.<sup>185</sup> There was one suggestion that what was provided was not always adequate. The Surgeon Superintendent of the first ship to sail carrying convict families, the *Panama*, reported that they had been "badly supplied with clothing".<sup>186</sup>

Families faced two other main costs: the fare in Ireland to the port of embarkation and the normal £1 or £2 entrance money for the passage, which the Commissioners demanded of all assisted emigrants. To Elizabeth Crawford of Kilmallock, County Limerick £1 was a lot of money. When she realised she would have to pay it she put her case to the Guardians as a "destitute girl". After an initial refusal they gave her the £1 plus

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<sup>178</sup> For full clothing requirement on emigrant ships despatched by the Emigration Commissioners see circular and application form sent to intending emigrants in Emigration Commissioners to Colonial Office, 10 October 1849, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/423.

<sup>179</sup> See Figure 2. Column 5.

<sup>180</sup> Entry for Mary Gildea, Westport, County Mayo, Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners Register of Convict Families, 1848/1873. p.19, Colonial Office/Emigration, CO.386/154.

<sup>181</sup> Entry for Bridget Smith, Register of Convict Families, p.31.

<sup>182</sup> Register of Convict Families, *passim*.

<sup>183</sup> Clonmel Union, County Tipperary, Board of Guardians' Minute Books, 31 March 1849, p.226.

<sup>184</sup> Entry for Rock family, Register of Convict Families, p.37.

<sup>185</sup> *Success*, arrived Sydney, 18 December 1849, IBL/NSW, 4/4914.

<sup>186</sup> Report on the Immigrants, Surgeon Superintendent Michael Shanley, *Panama*, 14 September 1849, IC/NSW, 9/6194.

her outfit.<sup>187</sup> Julia Noonan of Ballygran, County Cork said she was too poor to afford even the fare to the port of Cork.<sup>188</sup> The Commissioners doubted if she could afford the outfit and decided to inform this “poor woman” at once of the clothing requirement “to allow herself time to prepare or avoid later disappointment”.<sup>189</sup> Despite her poverty internal travel costs did not deter Ellen Doherty. In September 1849 she received an Embarkation Order for the *Anglia*, due to sail from Plymouth in October. With Bridget, 14, and Daniel, 13 she set out to walk to Dublin from Buncrana, County Donegal, a distance of about 250 kilometres.<sup>190</sup> They missed the boat but finally got away on the *St Vincent* in 1851.<sup>191</sup>

For these families the Great Famine was the last in a series of catastrophes which reduced them to extreme poverty. Most had probably been far from affluent before the first of these occurred, that is the transportation of the head of the family. In the aftermath the convict wives were left to fend for themselves and their families for periods ranging from ten to 20 years. Their predicament emerges from that mixture of formal and melodramatic prose typical of the petitions they directed to the Irish authorities. Bridget Collins’ husband had been in N.S.W. nine years when she described to the Lord Lieutenant how, since his departure, she had struggled to support herself. Without the help of friends, she would “be in a most helpless and forlorn situation”.<sup>192</sup> This dependency however was “precarious”, and she begged a free passage.<sup>193</sup> In 1840 Rev. Fr. Hannigan of Ballinasloe, County Galway supported Mary Mannion’s request for a passage, seven years after Patrick Mannion’s exile.<sup>194</sup> She was looking after four children “in a state of destitution within a few miles of my house”.<sup>195</sup> With her husband gone one woman suffered eviction. Thomas Brassil of Sixmilebridge, County Clare went in 1835 and by June 1836 his wife Mary and five children had in her words “been driven

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<sup>187</sup> Elizabeth Crawford, Killmallock, County Limerick to Colonial Office, 16 September 1852, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/460.

<sup>188</sup> Julia Noonan, Ballygran, near Charleville, County Cork to Colonial Office, 21 July 1848, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/409.

<sup>189</sup> Memo by Emigration Commissioners on Julia Noonan to Colonial Office, 21 July 1848.

<sup>190</sup> Emigration Commissioners to Colonial Office, 10 June 1851, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/447.

<sup>191</sup> *St Vincent*, arrived 15 December 1851, IBL/NSW, 4/4921.

<sup>192</sup> Petition of Bridget Collins, Carrick on Shannon, County Roscommon to Lord Lieutenant General and General Governor of Ireland, 20 November 1840, FSP 1840/6, SPO.

<sup>193</sup> Petition of Bridget Collins, 20 November 1840.

<sup>194</sup> Petition of Mary Mannion, Lurgan, Abbeystown, County Galway to His Excellency the Right Honourable Baron Fortescue, Lord Lieutenant General and General Governor of Ireland, no date but accompanying letter from Rev. Fr. Hannigan dated 21 August 1839, FSP 1839/141, SPO.

<sup>195</sup> Rev. Fr. Hannigan, Somerset Glebe, Ballinasloe, County Galway to Lord Lieutenant, 21 August 1839, attached to petition of Mary Mannion.

from a house and a lot of land".<sup>196</sup> They were now "in an exposed state of wretchedness without a house or place and in a famished condition".<sup>197</sup> Between their husbands departure and their own many of these women, like Mary Grehan of Colloony, County Sligo, were only able to support themselves from parish relief. Husband Martin Grehan was transported in 1838; in 1850 the parish priest of Colloony stated that the Grehans now had no "means of support but the provisions of the Poor Relief Act".<sup>198</sup>

Apart from poverty this emigration was characterised by its genuine family nature. Few non-convict Irish families reached 19th century Sydney as the result of nomination for an assisted passage by a husband or wife resident in the colony. Before 1858 the remittance regulations did not permit the sponsoring of such families. These Irish convict wives and their children therefore represent the largest single such group sent out from Ireland to Sydney between 1848 and 1870. [Figure 6.3] The abandonment of all effort by the Colonial Office to determine "proper objects" for a passage resulted in a wider definition of the notion of family by the Commissioners. Stephen Stapleton's reward for the crime of his father-in-law, John Breen, was a free passage to Sydney.<sup>199</sup> John Breen's application had been for his wife and four children but one of them, Margaret, probably unknown to him, was now married to Stephen Stapleton.<sup>200</sup> When contacted the family requested the Commissioners to allow Stephen and John's grandchild, Michael a passage.<sup>201</sup> A family did not now have to fit Stephen's definition of a wife and dependant children; the Commissioners allowed the adult sons and daughters, sometimes accompanied by their own families. A line was drawn however at more indirect relationships. When John Fogarty, transported in 1829, tried to get out his niece, an orphan, the Commissioners referred to Earl Grey for guidance.<sup>202</sup> Family, Grey advised, must be "immediate family" and he would not establish a precedent by sending out Margaret Fogarty.<sup>203</sup> Again one is struck by the luck of Mrs Chisholm's emigrants. Eliza

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<sup>196</sup> Petition of Mary Brassil, near Sixmilebridge, County Clare to His Excellency The Most Noble the Earl Musgrave, Lord Lieutenant General and Governor General of Ireland, 20 June 1836, FSP 1836/4, SPO.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> Accompanying statement by Father Hugh Conway, parish priest of Dromard, 23 January 1850, on Petition of Mary Grehan, Collooney, County Sligo Earl Grey, no date, received in Colonial Office, 31 January 1850, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/437.

<sup>199</sup> *Panama*, arrived 14 September 1849, IBL/NSW, 4/4912.

<sup>200</sup> 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, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/386.

<sup>201</sup> Entry for Breen family, Register of Convict Families, p.26.

<sup>202</sup> Father James Mackey, Clonoulty, County Tipperary to Colonial Office, 24 August 1849, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/425.

<sup>203</sup> Memo by Grey on Father Mackey to Colonial Office, 24 August 1849.

Doherty, described as a “sister-in-law” of convict Francis McCay, got away in the *Waverly* in 1847.<sup>204</sup>

The significance of this small, limited scheme derives from its difference from other forms of Irish assisted emigration to mid-19th century Sydney. First, these passages were financed by the Imperial not the colonial government. This, and the fact that their sponsors were clearly contributing to the local economy, permitted these poor families to slip unnoticed into colonial life. Not so those other Famine emigrants — the young, orphan women from Irish workhouses, who arrived in their hundreds between 1848 and 1850. N.S.W. paid for this scheme and publicly questioned the suitability of so called “pauper” immigration. Second, unlike the official N.S.W. remittance schemes dominated by the Irish in the late 1850s and throughout the 1860s, the convict scheme represented a genuine official attempt to reconstruct broken families. What crime had torn asunder the state provided a limited opportunity to reunite, and the Colonial Office’s initial attempt to restrict this opportunity disappeared once finance was no longer a restraining factor. Under the remittance regulations the colonial government encouraged colonists to sponsor their relatives for primarily economic reasons. They wanted young, preferably single, emigrants who would immediately find work as labourers and domestic servants. By comparison the convict scheme had a clear moral purpose. Last, unlike all other assisted emigrants, the quality and ages of these people were irrelevant to both the Commissioners and the colonial authorities. No comment was made by the Immigration Agent on any aspect of their suitability for the local labour market on arrival.

Whatever general conclusions emerge from this emigration the experiences of these people cannot fail to arouse our sympathy. The case of Mary Mannion was particularly poignant. In 1832 she was left in a small cabin in east Galway to bring up four sons on the exile of her husband.<sup>205</sup> She rejoined him in N.S.W. 26 years later. John Tighe between 1841 and 1853 made four attempts, documented in official records, to bring out his family.<sup>206</sup> They arrived in Sydney in 1858, 25 years after his departure from Sligo, not from Ireland but as steerage passengers on the *Carrington* from New York,

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<sup>204</sup> Caroline Chisholm’s *Waverly* list, 2 July 1847.

<sup>205</sup> *Telegraph*, arrived 3 February 1858, IBL/NSW, 4/4977.

<sup>206</sup> Three of John Tighe’s attempts are cited in footnotes 114, 165, and 168. His final effort can be found in the N.S.W. Immigration Deposits Journals which are the Immigration Department’s record of all deposits made under the various remittance regulations in force between 1848 and 1863. On 5 October 1853 Tighe made a deposit for his wife Margaret and daughter Mary: Immigrant Deposit Journal, 1853/4, 4/4576, AONSW. A letter from the Emigration Commissioners to the Colonial Office about this deposit recommended that the money be returned to Tighe because, “Margaret Tighe and her daughter Mary have gone to the United States and appear to be settled there with Margaret Tighe’s Son in Law”: Emigration Commissioners to Colonial Office, 13 April 1854, Colonial Office/Emigration Commissioners, Entry Books of Correspondence CO.386/72.

U.S.A.<sup>207</sup> Finally what of Anne Sharkett who had wanted, not to emigrate, but to have her husband returned to her in Ireland. Husband James applied for her and his three children in October 1847.<sup>208</sup> Perhaps her situation had improved somewhat from that indigent condition in which Constable Patterson had found her in March 1847. When the Commissioners contacted her in early 1849 she declined their offer to join her husband saying she was too old for a voyage to Australia.<sup>209</sup>

**“We Could only Find Money for One”: Irish Emigrant Children of the Regulations of 26 May 1846, 1848–1851**

Between 1848 and 1870, apart from the convict family scheme, only one other set of regulations aimed deliberately at reuniting broken families — the regulations of 26 May 1846.<sup>210</sup> Like the convict scheme they were the direct result of representations made to the authorities by Caroline Chisholm. During her travels throughout N.S.W. in the mid-1840s she was approached by a number of mainly Irish “bounty” immigrants who told her of how they had had to leave some of their children in Ireland upon emigrating.<sup>211</sup> A typical case was Patrick Daly who arrived in 1839 from County Kildare, bringing two of his children with him but leaving one at home. Daly’s description of how he paid for the two children shows the strategies used by some emigrants to keep the family as united as possible:

Oh! how we were pushed to get out when the money was to be paid; the fact was we could only find money for one. Well, what did we do? There was a poor woman who wanted to get to her husband, a prisoner in New South Wales, and she had one child, so we agrees to take her child as our own, and she goes out as a single woman in the same ship; for this she gives us £1, besides the £1 she gave us to pay for her child, and this saved us from leaving two children at home instead of one, as it paid the agent.<sup>212</sup>

By February 1846 Mrs Chisholm had enough information on this subject to approach the

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<sup>207</sup> N.S.W. Shipping Master’s Office, Passengers Arriving, ship *Carrington* arrived Sydney from New York, U.S.A., 13 January 1858, X98, AONSW. I much indebted to Mr Peter Doyle of Wollongong Family History Society for having found this entry for me. To have searched for the Tighes as unassisted passengers in hundreds of unindexed shipping lists in the 1850s would have been beyond the patience of this researcher. It underlines the important contribution genealogists, as yet not fully recognised, are making to Australia’s immigration history.

<sup>208</sup> Application of James Sharkett for Anne Sharkett and three children, Despatch No.219, Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, 20 October 1847, CO/NSWOC, CO.210/384.

<sup>209</sup> Entry for Sharkett family, Register of Convict Families, p.27.

<sup>210</sup> For copy of regulations of 26 May 1846 see Governor of N.S.W. to Colonial Office, 9 July 1846, CO/NSWOC, CO.201/367.

<sup>211</sup> Margaret Kiddle, *op.cit.*, pp.82-83.

<sup>212</sup> Caroline Chisholm, *Emigration and Transportation Relatively Considered*, London, 1847, Appendix, Statement 11, Pat D..., Kildare, 29 January 1846.



Colonial Secretary in Sydney with a list of parents in a similar position to Daly.<sup>213</sup> She begged the Governor's "humane consideration" for those children who had been left behind and were now, she alleged, "suffering the extreme of want and misery" although their parents in the colony were capable of providing for them in "comfort".<sup>214</sup>

Mrs Chisholm's appeal did not include a specific request for a free passage for these children but it was obvious that this was the solution to their predicament. The Governor, Sir George Gipps, therefore sent her letter and its accompanying list to Francis Merewether for comment. Merewether, although he disapproved of how the "bounty" agents had allowed families to leave children behind, recommended that they be brought out at government expense. Not only would this re-unite the families but the children would be an acquisition to the colony.<sup>215</sup> The Governor agreed and Merewether placed a notice in the *Government Gazette* setting out the conditions under which passages would be offered and calling for applications.<sup>216</sup> These regulations differed in many points from the ordinary remittance regulations. No financial deposit was required as a contribution towards the passage but application could only be made for proven children of "bounty" emigrants who had left the U.K. before 7 January 1842.<sup>217</sup> A £5 promissory note signed by two "persons of credit" had to be lodged with the Immigration Agent as a guarantee that a child on arrival would be taken off the government's hands. Three weeks rations would be provided free but after that the note would be progressively drawn on.<sup>218</sup> Sea clothes were also to be the responsibility of the parents.<sup>219</sup> Although not stated in the notice all applications were, after recommendation by the Immigration Agent, sent to the Governor for final approval. Lists of children were then forwarded to the Emigration Commissioners.

The Commissioners found the children in a variety of personal circumstances. Many of the replies to their enquiries in Ireland revealed the disruption being brought about everywhere by the Famine. Most of their searching was conducted during the worst famine year of all, 1847, when thousands of Irish uprooted themselves and fled to the ports. Along with them went Henry Blake of Milford, County Carlow, who had been

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<sup>213</sup> Caroline Chisholm to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 18 February 1846, N.S.W. Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, 4/2929, AONSW.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 10 March 1846, Copies of letters sent to Colonial Secretary re migration to N.S.W., 4/4610, AONSW.

<sup>216</sup> N.S.W. *Government Gazette*, 29 May 1846, pp.658/659.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

sent for by his parents in N.S.W. The Commissioners were informed that he had left from New Ross in the spring with his grandmother heading for Quebec.<sup>220</sup> Given the huge death rate among those who went to British North America, in what became known as “Black 47”, one wonders if they survived.<sup>221</sup> Others who might have been able to escape to Sydney would never make the trip. Patrick Considine, gaol guard of Ennis, County Clare told the Commissioners that Catherine, daughter of Patrick Considine who had emigrated to N.S.W., had died in mid-1846.<sup>222</sup> Some appeared to be unwilling to leave the relatives or guardians they had lived with since their parents’ departure. For example Kitty Minehan, aged eight, living with Bridget Kief of Knockadereen, Killaloe, County Clare, did not want to go. John Crowe, a local farmer, visited them and gave a grim account of their situation in famine ridden east Clare in July 1847 to the Commissioners:

... I went to Bridget Kief’s house and I ask Kitty Minehan, would she go to her parents; answer no — I caught her by the hand, and said she should; she began to cry ... they are very poor living on 1 lb of meal each of them in the day.<sup>223</sup>

Some relatives saw future personal advantage in holding on to their charges. The parish priest of Roscarberry, County Cork, Jeremiah Moloney, suspected that the grandfather of Margaret Scannell, aged eight, whose parents had emigrated on the *Canton* on 1841, wanted to keep the child with him “in the expectation of getting money from time to time from her father for supporting her”.<sup>224</sup> On the other hand, Dennis McElhill, applied for by his mother, was in excellent health according to the priest at Termonamongan, County Tyrone. He was simply “not desirous of going or joining his parent ... he prefers living with James Steers”.<sup>225</sup>

As with the convict families, finding money for the necessary clothing and the fare to the embarkation port was a struggle for many of these children and their relatives. A circular from the Commissioners emphasised that no “Public Funds” were available to help meet these costs and that failure to do so would result in loss of passage.<sup>226</sup> John

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<sup>220</sup> John Alexander to Emigration Commissioners, 28 June 1847, copies of letters to Emigration Commissioners re children applied for under regulations of 26 May 1846, N.S.W. Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 4/2802.1.

<sup>221</sup> For a full description of “Black 47” see Terry Coleman, *Passage to America*, London, 1974, pp.157-190.

<sup>222</sup> Patrick Considine to Emigration Commissioners, 8 May 1847, copies of letters to Emigration Commissioners re children applied for etc.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, John Crowe to Emigration Commissioners, 2 July 1847.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, Jeremiah Maloney to Emigration Commissioners, 17 May 1847.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, John McCullah to Emigration Commissioners, no date but in same series of letters.

<sup>226</sup> Form of Circular addressed to the Guardians and Referees of the several Children named in Mr Deas

McMahon's son told the Commissioners that he could afford neither the clothing nor the fare to the port.<sup>227</sup> Often relatives, prepared to let a child go, would not do so until they had received funds from the parents. John Levitt told the Commissioners that even if only £1 was required he could not supply it to enable George Cosgrove to join his parents.<sup>228</sup> James Gannon of Mullingar, County Westmeath would not release his grandson, Michael, until he had heard from the boy's father personally and was provided with the "means to clothe him [Michael]".<sup>229</sup> In some cases the local Boards of Guardians came to the rescue. The Clonmel Guardians sanctioned the payment of the fare to Plymouth of Mary and Anastasia Garret, aged 14 and 11.<sup>230</sup> They appear to have been workhouse inmates as a Union official was assigned to take them to Dublin and to deliver them on the steamer into the care of Anne Pylatt, a dressmaker from Cashel going out on the same ship.<sup>231</sup>

However the Commissioners bent their own rules in relation to some of these children. They provided outfits for an unknown number sent out in 1847 on the *Sir Edward Parry*, the only vessel specially chartered for this emigration. No records survive to show how they decided whom to assist. Possibly they made provision only for those who reached Plymouth and were discovered at the pre-embarkation inspections to have insufficient clothing.<sup>232</sup> To send unaccompanied children back to Ireland in the summer of 1847 was something that not even the most rule bound official could contemplate, so a sea chest was provided on the spot but charged to the colonial government. Merewether later approved this expenditure and repayment was not demanded from the parents in N.S.W.<sup>233</sup> These were probably the only assisted emigrants ever to receive such help with non passage costs from the colonial government.

All told this was a small emigration. From the shipping lists only 99 immigrants can definitely be identified as having travelled under the regulations of May 1846.<sup>234</sup> Of these

Thomson's letter to Mr Walcott on Passages of Bounty Children, Enclosure No.4, N.S.W. Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, 1848, 4/2802.1.

<sup>227</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to John McMahon, 7 September 1850, CLMP/NSW, 4/4638.

<sup>228</sup> John Levitt to Emigration Commissioners, 12 May 1847, copies of letters to Emigration Commissioners re children applied for etc.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, William Perry to Emigration Commissioners, 29 June 1847.

<sup>230</sup> Clonmel Union, County Tipperary, Board of Guardians Minute Books, 31 March 1849, p.227.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 31 March 1848, copies of letters sent to Colonial Secretary re migration to N.S.W., 4/4610, AONSW.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848–1870.

86 arrived on the *Sir Edward Parry* in 1848 and 13 others can be found on various ships between 1848 and 1851.<sup>235</sup> In March 1851 Merewether recommended cancelling the regulations, arguing that as the scheme had been in operation since mid-1846 parents had had sufficient time to take advantage of it.<sup>236</sup> Upon its termination the option of sending for their grown up children under the normal remittance regulations was still open to them.<sup>237</sup>

There is a certain arbitrariness in grouping together those who came to Sydney under these three schemes as Famine emigrants. For the convict families and the children the Famine was, in a sense, only an event which now lends poignancy, and at times tragedy, to their story. These two schemes would almost certainly have been put into operation Famine or no Famine as they seemed reasonable to governments as the solution to problems brought about by the nature of previous convict and "bounty" emigrations. In the policy discussions surrounding the framing of both sets of regulations no reference was ever made to the situation in Ireland and no real sense of urgency was shown in dealing with individual cases. The orphan workhouse emigration was different. It was the closest the Commissioners and the Colonial Office ever came between 1848 and 1870 in seeing assisted emigration to Sydney, paid for by colonial funds, as a method of dealing with a particular social problem in Ireland. But whatever the general policies and purposes behind each scheme the result was that about 2,800 destitute and near destitute people were able to escape from famine ridden Ireland by obtaining a free passage to Sydney.

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<sup>235</sup> *Sir Edward Parry*, arrived 17 February 1848, Agent's List, 4/4786.

<sup>236</sup> 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.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter 7

### **“Who Will not Give his Mite in so Good, so Holy, so Blessed a Cause”: The Donegal Relief Committee of N.S.W. and Assisted Emigration from County Donegal to Sydney, 1859–1864**

Before 1859 Sydney was not a popular destination with emigrants from Ireland's most north western and isolated county — Donegal. From 1851 to 1858 N.S.W. accounted for barely one percent of all emigrants from that county. [Figure 7.1] Donegal also made little impact on the figures for Irish assisted immigrants arriving in Sydney; between 1841 and 1858 just two percent, 836 of the 44,228 Irish, came from Donegal. [Figure 7.1] However in 1859 Donegal's share of the immigrants leapt to 31% and the next six years, 1859 to 1864, accounted for 60% of all N.S.W./Donegal immigrants between 1841 and 1870. [Figure 7.1] The effect on total Donegal emigration was no less dramatic. Assisted emigration to Sydney accounted for 34% of all county emigrants in 1859 and 16% of total county emigration between 1859 and 1864. [Figure 7.1]

If the gross emigration figures indicate an interesting and aberrant county pattern an examination of the Sydney shipping lists reveal an even more curious phenomenon. Donegal is divided into eight Baronies and from 1851 to 1858 only seven percent of the small number of Sydney emigrants came from the largest and most northwesterly Barony of Kilmacrenan. [Map 1] The connection with N.S.W., such as it was, centred on the eastern baronies of Tirhugh and Raphoe in parishes bordering on counties Tyrone and Fermanagh. From 1859 on this pattern was almost completely reversed. Between 1859 and 1870 Kilmacrenan accounted for 78% of the greatly increased emigration to N.S.W. Even within Kilmacrenan one large parish dominated this increase, Tullaghobegley on the barony's north west Atlantic coast, known locally as the Gweedore/Cloughaneely region. Of the 789 Donegal arrivals in 1859 80%, 628, were from Tullaghobegley, the largest number of arrivals from any Irish parish in any one year between 1848 and 1870. Subsequent Tullaghobegley arrivals pushed this figure to 888 making this the greatest population movement from any one parish in Ireland to N.S.W. between 1859 and 1870.<sup>1</sup>

The process which brought these people to Sydney began in the village of Dunfanaghy, Donegal on 18 January 1858. On that day eight priests from parishes around Kilmacrenan's Atlantic coast instituted the Gweedore and Cloughaneely Relief

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<sup>1</sup> Irish Immigrant Data Base, 1848–1870.

Fund and called for contributions to help them “relieve the peasants of these districts who are at present undergoing the most indescribable sufferings and privations”.<sup>2</sup> They formed themselves into a committee with power to dispense whatever relief monies became available and to their resolutions attached an Appeal, which they asked all “Provincial and Metropolitan Newspapers favourable to our cause” to publish.<sup>3</sup> The Appeal was long, emotional, full of biblical allusions and well calculated to evoke sympathy in Catholic Ireland both at home and overseas. [Document 7.1] Its gist was simple: the people of Tullaghobegley had been reduced to starvation by the local landlords in their efforts to initiate unjust and unpopular economic changes.

Traditionally, in the absence of landlord interest, local smallholders had enjoyed full grazing rights for their cattle on the extensive wild mountain pasture which extends over most of the parish.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the 1850s however the landlords, determined to exact an economic return from these hitherto under-utilised parts of their estates, began stocking them with sheep as well as employing Scots and English shepherds to tend them. As unlimited rights to these grazing lands were withdrawn local resistance grew leading in 1857 to a series of protest sheep killings.<sup>5</sup> To recompense the landlords a compensatory tax was levied on those parts of the parish where sheep carcasses were discovered.<sup>6</sup> In addition these areas were also made responsible for meeting the cost of bringing in the extra police needed to collect the tax.<sup>7</sup> According to the Appeal “the sum of £3,000” was levied on the “poorest and most miserable district on God’s earth”.<sup>8</sup> The result, the priests alleged, was destitution as the people struggled to meet the tax by selling off clothes and food.<sup>9</sup>

Behind these developments the priests saw an almost genocidal purpose. Their isolated parishioners were Celts of the “pure old race with the pure old faith”.<sup>10</sup> Upon these “Innocents” had descended a latter day Herod in the shape of foreign landlords, sheep, shepherds and policemen. If they were not relieved they would pass into oblivion

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<sup>2</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 29 May 1858, Gweedore and Cloughaneely Relief Fund.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; For text of the Appeal see Document 7.1.

<sup>4</sup> E. Estyn Evans, “Introduction” to facsimile reprint of 1887 edition of Lord George Hill, *Facts from Gweedore*, first published 1846, Belfast, 1971.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Evans, “Introduction”, p.15.

<sup>6</sup> Brendan MacCaimhsi, “North West Donegal after the Famine”, *Donegal Annual*, Vol.9, No.2, 1970, pp.195-196.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Priest’s Appeal, Document 7.1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

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

and their “once happy homes WILL become walks for Scotch and English hoggets”.<sup>11</sup> What was at stake here was not just the hunger and misery of a few peasants but the possible extinction of a race — “this fine old Celtic race is about being crushed aside to make room for Scotch and English sheep”.<sup>12</sup> Thus contributors to the relief fund would demonstrate not only their Christian charity but also their patriotism in helping to preserve this vestige of Catholic Gaeldom. Skilfully the priests appealed to their readers’ sensitivity to those two great historic national grievances — loss of Irish land to foreigners and the threat to the survival of the Catholic religion. These were sentiments likely to evoke a ready response among the overseas Irish, most of whom had direct experience of the Great Famine of the 1840s.

The Appeal reached Sydney in May 1858 and was at once published verbatim in the *Freeman’s Journal*, the colony’s leading Irish Catholic paper.<sup>13</sup> Sydney’s Celtic Association determined to help the Donegal people by assisting them to emigrate to N.S.W. This was seen as a better way to use colonial funds rather than sending money to Ireland which would not alter the long term condition of the people and would end up in landlords’ pockets.<sup>14</sup> In late May a deputation from the Association approached the Colonial Secretary, Charles Cowper, to see if the government had any objection to this idea. Cowper was friendly but refused to commit himself to anything until presented with a definite proposal.<sup>15</sup> To move the matter along a public meeting was called “to consider measures of relief for the destitute and suffering peasantry of Donegal, Ireland”.<sup>16</sup> On 31 May 800 people gathered in the Sydney School of Arts to hear a number of rousing and emotional speeches on the dire condition of the people of far away Tullaghobegley from well known Irish/Australians such as Archdeacon John McEncroe and MPs William Bede Dalley and Daniel Deniehy.<sup>17</sup> Apart from general resolutions of support and sympathy for the Donegal priests and their parishioners the meeting endorsed the setting up of a General Committee to administer a Donegal Relief Fund.<sup>18</sup> In accordance with the main resolution of the meeting this money was to be applied exclusively to the emigration from the distressed districts of Donegal to N.S.W. Such was the enthusiasm of the meeting

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Bold print as in original text.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 29 May 1858.

<sup>14</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 August 1858, Letter from Melbourne Donegal Relief Committee to Sydney Donegal Relief Committee, 2 July 1858.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 June 1858, speech by Jeremiah Moore, Donegal Relief Committee, School of Arts meeting.

<sup>16</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June 1858, Donegal Peasantry, report of School of Arts meeting.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

that £200 was contributed on the spot.<sup>19</sup>

Within a week the Committee had organised itself to collect funds in Sydney and the interior. The Catholic Vicar General, Dr. Gregory, requested local priests to co-operate with the Committee and William Davis, the Committee's secretary, wrote a special appeal to be sent to country districts and towns.<sup>20</sup> The methods employed to collect money in the Yass district were typical of the colony as a whole. Between June 26 and July 10 Davis's appeal appeared in four issues of the *Yass Courier* asking his "Fellow Colonists" to contribute generously to bring the people of Donegal to a country where they would not be subject to the "continual aggression" of landlords.<sup>21</sup> Much of the appeal was based on that of the Donegal priests. Davis had no doubt that many would be moved to contribute after reading the story of the sufferings of the Gweedore/Cloughaneely peasantry — "Who will not give his mite in so good, so holy, so blessed a cause?"<sup>22</sup> A day or two before the appearance of the appeal a meeting in the local Catholic school presided over by the richest landowner in the district, Tipperary-born Edward "Ned" Ryan of Galong, listened to a series of emotive speeches, similar to those at the Sydney meeting, from prominent local Irishmen such as Father Patrick Bermingham and magistrate George Allman.<sup>23</sup> These speeches were reported in full in the *Yass Courier*. A local committee was then appointed to raise subscriptions throughout the district and return them to the committee's honorary treasurer, Thomas Laidlaw. In this way through local meetings, sympathetic newspaper editors and country collectors the Sydney committee was able to rouse the sympathy and tap the charity of remote rural districts. Full contributors' lists were published in the *Yass Courier* and, once the money had been remitted to Sydney, they were published again in the *Freeman's Journal*.<sup>24</sup> The Boorowa committee asked for this to be done not for "mere show" but to acknowledge the contributions from many in the district who were neither Irish nor Catholic.<sup>25</sup>

The subscription lists revealed that the Donegal emigration would be built on innumerable small contributions. At Raymond Terrace in the lower Hunter Valley Father

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 5 June 1858, Donegal Relief Fund.

<sup>21</sup> *Yass Courier*, 19 June, 26 June, 3 July, 10 July 1858, Donegal Relief Fund, Appeal issued by order of the General Committee.

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

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 June 1858, Donegal Relief Fund, Public Meeting.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Subscription lists, 24 July, 28 August, 18 September 1858.

<sup>25</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 1 September 1858, Donegal Relief Fund, letter from Boorowa Committee, 21 August 1858.



Eugene Luckie collected £23/10/- from 156 people.<sup>26</sup> The great majority, 146, gave him 5/- or less.<sup>27</sup> The lower Hunter however was an area of fairly recent large-scale Irish immigration and a typical subscriber from the Hunter towns and rural districts rarely gave more than 5/-. Individual donations from the older more established Irish regions to the south and south west of Sydney were higher, 10/- and £1 appearing more frequently on the lists.<sup>28</sup> As was expected of them the affluent gave generously; £10 came from "Ned" Ryan of Galong and the well known south coast M.P., Daniel Egan, was the largest single contributor with ten guineas.<sup>29</sup> Catholic priests commonly gave between £2 and £5. The most unlikely donation was that of Sydney Presbyterian minister, John Dunmore Lang, an outspoken critic of Irish Catholic immigration. Lang nevertheless sent the committee £1 stating in an accompanying letter his common cause with the "oppressed" people of Donegal who, like the "Presbyterian Celtic population of the Highlands and Islands" of his native Scotland, suffered under the same "execrable system" of landlordism.<sup>30</sup> So unexpected was Lang's contribution that the committee published his letter in full and invited him on to the general committee.<sup>31</sup> But perhaps the most pleasant way of helping bring out someone from Donegal was to purchase a ticket to the lecture/concert on the "Ancient Music of Ireland" given by the committee's treasurer and former N.S.W. Attorney General, John Hubert Plunkett.<sup>32</sup> Here the sufferings of Ireland, and implicitly those of the Donegal peasants, emerged from Plunkett's exposition with musical accompaniment of topics such as "the Persecution of the Bards", "Robert Emmett", "Miss Curran" and "Carolan, the last of the Irish Bards".<sup>33</sup>

Plunkett's lecture was a comparatively oblique method of appealing to the local Irish emigrant community's willingness to identify with the plight of their Donegal compatriots. At most meetings speakers were more direct, expounding at length on the Donegal priests' version of the situation in Donegal and how emigration to Australia would remove the people from local tyranny to freedom. Mindful of the desire for contributions from the non-Irish, speakers were sparing in their allusions to Catholicism and Irishness, choosing to emphasise instead the oppressive nature of the socio-economic

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 July 1858, Donegal Relief Fund, fourth Subscription List, subscriptions received from Raymond Terrace.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Raymond Terrace list.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, see subscriptions received from Cooma/Maneroo, 4 August 1858.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Egan's subscription, 12 June 1858; Ryan's subscription, *Yass Courier*, 24 July 1858.

<sup>30</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 5 June 1858.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 June 1858, Donegal Relief Fund, General Committee members.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 October 1858, Mr Plunkett's Lecture on Irish Music.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

order for those at the bottom of Irish society. This was an approach readily understood by other colonists. Alleged landlord behaviour in Donegal led the editor of the *Maitland Mercury* to question the limits to an individual's absolute power over his own property.<sup>34</sup> While the "steady advancement" of Great Britain showed that civilisation and respect for property rights went hand in hand, recent events, such as the Highland clearances, cast some doubt on that relationship.<sup>35</sup> Where the exercise of an absolute right in property had led to "complete bodies of tenantry" being "driven forth from their ancient homes" some legal restriction on such rights was clearly needed to prevent excess.<sup>36</sup> It was this association in the public mind with eviction which may have roused most sympathy for the Tullaghobegley peasants. A careful reading of the original priests' Appeal however shows that, while hundreds of families were described as suffering extreme want, nowhere were they portrayed as having been ejected from their homes.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps unconsciously, but effectively, this section of the Appeal was interpreted by some as a portrayal of mass eviction. Moreover this reading of the Appeal was placed before the public by Father John McEncroe, regarded by many as the colony's leading champion of the Irish and their right to social and religious justice.

McEncroe was chosen by the Celtic Association to make the opening speech at the initial Sydney meeting and thereafter he took the lead in organising the whole Donegal emigration between 1859 and 1864. It was no surprise that he spoke to a resolution which depicted the "unfortunate Donegal peasants" as simply the "latest victims" of the curse of Irish landlord oppression.<sup>38</sup> Where the Donegal priests had described 800 families as eking out a miserable existence from what they could find on the seashore McEncroe now conjured up that ultimate dread of the Irish tenant farmer — eviction:

He had read many histories of distress and misery in other lands, many of which would make the heart grow cold, but never had he read anything to equal the picture of desolation and misery which had been proved to exist in a portion of the county of Donegal, the most romantic, the most isolated of any in Ireland. (Cheers) There they found no less than 900 hundred families *were turned out of their cabins* to scramble about the rocks and ravines seeking for a shelter, without fire, without even a candle to light them, without food, almost without clothing — in fact they were entirely destitute — they had no power to help themselves — all had been sold from them!<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Maitland Mercury*, 17 June 1858, editorial, Tenant Right.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Document 7.1.

<sup>38</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 2 June 1858, speech of Ven. Archdeacon McEncroe.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 July 1858. My italics.

Such was the connection established between Tullaghobegley and eviction that Father Kenny of Maitland suggested to the committee that they form themselves into a permanent society with some such title as The Evicted Tenantry Assisting Emigration Society.<sup>40</sup> Such a society's very existence, argued Kenny, 10,000 miles away though it was from Ireland, would exercise a restraining influence on landlords.<sup>41</sup> It is impossible to know what sort of idea the average small Irish immigrant contributor formed of the situation in Donegal. But when their spiritual leaders spoke of eviction they could view their "mites" as destined to help evicted tenants, the ultimate victims of injustice in Ireland.

Even as sympathetic colonists subscribed to the fund doubts were raised as to the accuracy of the descriptions of destitution in the priest's Appeal. In a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* the day after the School of Arts meeting one Irishman, William Morris Reade, asked for all sides of the question to be presented from reports in the Irish press.<sup>42</sup> Without going into detail Reade hinted that there was much that was not being placed before potential subscribers. Reade's own monthly letters from home contained no reference to such "tyranny" in Donegal.<sup>43</sup> One signing himself simply "X" quickly obliged by sending in an extract from the *Londonderry Sentinel* of 5 March containing remarks by Judge Pennefeather to the Donegal Grand Jury.<sup>44</sup> Pennefeather both denied the destitution and lectured the smallholders on the pointlessness of protest crimes such as sheep killing.<sup>45</sup> As proof of what he said the judge referred to the recent report of Poor Law Inspector Hamilton, who had been sent to Kilmacrenan by the Poor Law Commissioners in Dublin at the request of the Dunfanaghy Board of Guardians to investigate the priests' claims.<sup>46</sup> Virtually every paragraph of his long report was a complete refutation of the allegations in the original Appeal. With obvious delight, upon publication of "X"'s material, Reade wrote again to the *Herald* thanking "X" for showing the situation as it really was.<sup>47</sup> Colonial sympathy was being stirred up not for the destitute but the disaffected:

If sums of money are collected here, to bring out a body of people who may unfortunately prove to have been disaffected, instead of distressed, you may depended upon it, Sir, it will give a stimulus to sheep stealing, and "doing the

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 June 1858

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

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 June 1858.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, Donegal Assizes, March 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 June 1858.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

Donegal" will be the latest and generally approved dodge amongst the tenants ...<sup>48</sup>

Down the country in mid-June the editor of the *Border Post* in Albury was also inclined to believe the reports from Donegal much exaggerated. Moreover the local tradespeople had had enough of soliciting for good causes.<sup>49</sup> As a collector crossed a shopkeeper's threshold he created an "evanescent hope in the breast of the latter, that a customer has at last appeared".<sup>50</sup> Such illusions were shattered as he was confronted by the subscription list. It was clear the *Post* had little time for Irish causes as readers were treated to London *Punch* stories of the Irish attitude to landlords which allegedly developed during the Famine:

This new phase of national character was duly chronicled in *Punch's* almanac at the time, and the entry was as follows:- "1st January — Landlord shooting begins. 31st December — Landlord shooting ends."<sup>51</sup>

The *Post's* editor soon revealed his real reason for refusing to support the Donegal fund. All through April and May and into June he had lent strong support to the Indian Relief Fund collecting for the victims of the 1858 Indian mutiny.<sup>52</sup> A controversy had arisen over the allocation of this money in India and the Catholic church had withdrawn its support preferring instead to open an alternative Catholic fund.<sup>53</sup> Subscriptions to the original fund in Albury were meagre. As the controversy over the reality of Donegal distress began the *Post* disdainfully referred to those papers in Ireland supporting the Donegal priests as the "Sepoy" press.<sup>54</sup>

Much of this was merely sniping at the need for a relief fund and never grew into an all out attack on the proposed Donegal immigration to the colony. Moreover the *Freeman's Journal* published plenty of material capable of convincing its largely Irish immigrant readership that the priests were to be trusted ahead of judges, Grand Juries, Poor Law Inspectors, police, landlords and their employees. Straight after the appearance of Judge Pennefeather's remarks in the *Herald* the *Freeman's Journal* devoted virtually the whole of its back page to the Kilmacrenan priests' retort to Poor Law Inspector Hamilton's report.<sup>55</sup> The evidence of each of Hamilton's witnesses was challenged and

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<sup>48</sup> *Border Post*, 19 June 1858.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Appeal to the Colonists on behalf of the Indian Relief Fund. The Appeal first appeared on 14 April and ran in virtually every issue of the *Post* in April, May and June 1858.

<sup>53</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 June 1858, letter from Charles Kemp.

<sup>54</sup> *Border Post*, 26 June 1858, The Distress in Donegal.

<sup>55</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 12 June 1858, Donegal Destitution — Address to the People.

declared to be patently biased against the smallholders. None of these people, they argued, was as intimately acquainted with conditions in the remote recesses of this mountainous parish as themselves, the local priests. They singled out the sworn statement of County Inspector of Police, John Anderson, for particular ridicule:

... [he] resides at Letterkenny, a distance of thirty four miles. He only visits Gweedore on a tour of inspection, and is sure not to go off the mail-car road. What does he know about the cabins up in the glens and hollows of the mountains? He knows as little about the peasantry of Gweedore as he knows about the inhabitants of New Zealand.<sup>56</sup>

Father McFadden, and the others who had signed the original Appeal, asked for their account of Tullaghobegley to be believed ahead of men like Anderson. Certainly the Irish in N.S.W. had no difficulty in doing so. The relief committee never gave any indication that willingness to subscribe was dampened by official denials of destitution in Donegal.

In Ireland the issue did not die with the Power Law report. The priests now asked for a parliamentary commission to be sent to Donegal to investigate, confident that examination on the spot would totally vindicate them.<sup>57</sup> At Westminster their cause was taken up by prominent Irish MP, John Francis Maguire.<sup>58</sup> Prompted by Maguire the government agreed not to a commission but to a select committee which, in the words of the Irish Chief Secretary, Lord Naas, might be able to "elicit the truth".<sup>59</sup> As Naas saw it the whole matter had frozen into a situation of claim and counter claim by respectable parties on both sides. However, responsible clerics had launched an appeal and "charitable people in England and Ireland" were contributing to a relief fund. They deserved to know if those to whom their money was going were indeed destitute.<sup>60</sup>

If Naas had hoped finally to clarify the situation he was to be disappointed. The select committee sat for 12 days between 8 June and 2 July 1858.<sup>61</sup> During that time they examined 29 witnesses, half of whom argued for the existence of varying degrees of destitution in Tullaghobegley while the other half as vehemently denied it. Even the published index to the evidence indicated that the end result of the questioning of all these people was little more than a litany of assertion and counter assertion. The index

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 December 1858, *The Destitution in Donegal*.

<sup>58</sup> For details of J.F. Maguire's career see, *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol.12, pp.774-775.

<sup>59</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. 149, 21 Victoria 1858, speech of Lord Naas, p.1535.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Destitution, Gweedore and Cloughaneely, hereafter SC Destitution, *BPP*, 1857-58, Vol.13.

contained five large sections on the material condition of the Tullaghobegley people headed bedding, clothing, the general condition of the people, grazing rights and the eating of seaweed.<sup>62</sup> The sub-headings of the section on bedding were typical of the nature of virtually all the evidence — “Statements as to the Wretched Condition of the Bedding in the District Generally”/“Refutation of these Statements”.<sup>63</sup> None of this evidence taking really had much bearing on the committee’s final report to parliament. [Document 7.2] All the publicity surrounding the original Appeal had forced the government into giving the priests and their supporters a hearing but the committee simply believed the landlords and other official witnesses. Moreover in the report the government had a document which lent the weight of a careful parliamentary enquiry to a complete refutation of the priests’ claims.

Many in Ireland and overseas would have paid less attention to the official report than to a draft report produced by John Francis Maguire, the one Irish nationalist MP on the committee. Maguire’s draft, which was instantly voted down by the other seven members of the committee, was four times the length of the official report.<sup>64</sup> All that had been alleged about the troubles of Tullaghobegley — loss of grazing rights, the inequity of the levy of indiscriminate sheep and police taxes, large rent increases, and the destitution resulting from these — were accepted by Maguire. Had it not been for the priests and their Appeal the situation of the peasants would have remained grim:

Without this seasonal assistance, it is only reasonable to believe that many who are now comfortably clad, and who enjoy the unaccustomed luxury of a clean bed, would still be covered with rags, or lying at night upon miserable lairs of straw, beneath a tattered and filthy rag.<sup>65</sup>

With his account rejected in toto Maguire now concentrated on trying to have aspects of the final report critical of the priests modified or softened. None of his amendments was accepted. Moreover the final amendment proposed by Naas, and voted against only by Maguire, revealed what the government had probably been after all along — the official discrediting of the priests’ allegations of destitution brought about by the actions of the landlords:

In the opinion of Your Committee those statements are not borne out by the evidence before them; and Your Committee have come to the conclusion that those representations are calculated to convey to the public a false and erroneous

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, Index, pp.428, 431, 432, 443, 469.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, Index, p.428.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, Maguire’s draft report, pp.9-11.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, Maguire report, p.11.

impression of the state of the people of the district.<sup>66</sup>

These deliberations at Westminster during July 1858 had no effect on collecting for the relief fund in N.S.W. When the select committee's report reached Sydney in mid October the *Freeman's Journal* published large sections of the evidence verbatim.<sup>67</sup> Most space was given to the to the priests and their supporters but the landlords' case was not neglected. One page out of the six devoted to this material contained the landlords' evidence. In December the *Freeman's Journal* gave a whole page to the Donegal priests' lengthy refutation of the select committee's findings.<sup>68</sup> They condemned the "landlord committee" but praised Maguire who had devoted himself to "the cause of the poor in the Irish wilds with a heartiness, willingness, and even with an anxious solicitude, that excited our esteem and wonder".<sup>69</sup> But their main reason for going into print yet again was to counteract the possible influence of the select committee:

We were anxious to offer this explanation lest any person would be led to believe the report of the landlord committee, and be thus worked on to turn a deaf ear at any future time to similar cries of distress, and lest the report would be not only unfavourable to the distressed Celts of Gweedore but to the cause of suffering humanity in other parts of the world.<sup>70</sup>

The case of the Donegal peasants was now in the hands of the Irish public. Would they rather believe the priests, "who thoroughly know the district", or "four or more landlords" sitting in committee in London?<sup>71</sup> The *Freeman's Journal* had no doubt on that point; the verdict of the people of N.S.W. was already evident in the large sum collected by the relief fund.<sup>72</sup> Moreover Father John Doherty, the Donegal priest seen as the leading trouble maker by the landlords, told the select committee that had it been possible he would willingly have led an emigration from Tullaghobegley rather than battle on for a parliamentary enquiry.<sup>73</sup> By the time his words appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* in December 1858 the first batch of emigrants destined for Sydney as assisted emigrants sponsored by the Donegal Relief Fund had already been selected.

Long before the fund grew to a total of £4,882 in September 1858 the committee began making arrangements to offer the option of emigration to the inhabitants of

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<sup>66</sup> Document 7.2, Select Committee's report.

<sup>67</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 21 August, 16 October, 20 October, 23 October, 27 October 1858.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 December 1858, The Destitution in Donegal.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 October 1858.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

Tullaghobegley.<sup>74</sup> In early July, with over £600 collected and the movement clearly gaining momentum, the Colonial Secretary was again approached and a definite proposal put to bring the Donegal people out as assisted emigrants nominated by the committee under the Remittance Regulations of 1857.<sup>75</sup> Normally nominees' names had to be entered in the colony but, with official permission, an agent in the U.K. could select emigrants on behalf of a colonial sponsor and then fill in the requisite forms for transmission to the Emigration Commissioners in London. As their selecting agent the committee appointed Scott Durbin, a recently retrenched police magistrate and Commissioner for Crown Lands. Durbin was well acquainted with the current immigration regulations and throughout April and May 1858 he had been advertising his services as a private immigration agent in the Sydney and rural press.<sup>76</sup> For selecting an emigrant on behalf of a colonial employer he proposed charging £3 and £3 for incidental expenses.<sup>77</sup> In early July, seeing an opportunity to have his abilities recognised in the colony, Durbin approached the committee offering to waive his fees and asking only that his expenses be met.<sup>78</sup> The colonial government approved Durbin's agency on behalf of the committee and the Emigration Commissioners were instructed to offer him every assistance in the U.K. All that remained was for McEncroe to pay the necessary £4 per head at the Immigration Office and by September 1858 he had deposited enough to bring out 950 adults.<sup>79</sup> Durbin landed in England on September 15 and, after presenting his credentials from the N.S.W. government to the Emigration Commissioners, set out on September 29 for Tullaghobegley.<sup>80</sup> What kind of place was now about to supply Sydney with more immigrants than any other single parish in Ireland between 1848 and 1870?

The extreme poverty of this part of Ireland had long been acknowledged both officially and by private observers. The opening assertion of the local National schoolteacher's public petition to the Lord Lieutenant in 1837 had a familiar ring:

That the parishioners of this parish of west Tullaghobegley ... are in the most

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<sup>74</sup> Papers relative to the introduction of Immigrants by Venerable Archdeacon McEncroe, Assisted Immigration, p.10, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1861-62, Vol.1.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Goulburn Herald*, 3 April, 14 April, 21 April, 5 May, 12 May, 19 May 1858.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 April 1858, Private Immigration Agency.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 July 1858.

<sup>79</sup> Immigration Deposit Journal, deposits by McEncroe, 8 July, 7 August, and two deposits on 9 August 1858, 4/4579, AONSW.

<sup>80</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 22 December 1858, Scott Durbin to Donegal Relief Committee, 11 October 1858.



needy, hungry and naked condition of any people that ever came within the precincts of my knowledge although I have travelled a part of nine counties of Ireland, also a part of England and Scotland, together with a part of British America. I have likewise perambulated 2,253 miles through seven of the United States, and never witnessed the tenth part of such hunger, hardships and nakedness.<sup>81</sup>

Two decades later in 1858 the parliamentary select committee, while refusing to concede that the inhabitants were destitute, nevertheless acknowledged that Tullaghobegley had always been a poor parish.<sup>82</sup> Most of the population lived on small farms in the townlands of the narrow coastal strip between the mountains and the ocean. In 1857 the assessors of the general Irish land valuation — the Griffith Valuation — recorded their findings on the productive capacity of these smallholdings.<sup>83</sup> They valued 96% of Tullaghobegley at less than 5/- an acre. The valuation of individual tenancies naturally varied but in 1857 81% of the population were living in townlands with this low valuation. A further 18% lived in areas valued between 5/- to 10/- and only a few worked land at higher valuations. [Figure 7.2] This compared with the County Tipperary parish of Clonoulty, another strong centre of assisted emigration to mid 19th century Sydney, where 56% of the people had their holdings in townlands valued at 16/- or more. Only 7% of Clonoulty's population lived on land valued at 5/- and under. [Figure 7.2] On these figures there was no denying the comparative infertility of Tullaghobegley's basic natural resource.

This poorly valued land was also an indication of Tullaghobegley's wider material and social deprivation. Ninety one percent of the parish's housing stock was valued at 10/- or less per year in rates. Of these small one or two roomed cabins 856, 52% of all Tullaghobegley's houses, were assessed at 5/- or less. Most of these were in the 5/- category but there were a few undoubtedly miserable dwellings valued at two, three and 4/-. [Figure 7.3] In early December 1857, taking particular notice of the housing conditions, Dennis Holland, the editor and proprietor of the Belfast paper, *The Ulsterman*, walked along the road from Derrybeg to Bunbeg in the south west of the parish through the townlands of Ardnagappary and Magheraclogher.<sup>84</sup> Holland was questioned on what he saw by the parliamentary select committee:

You were about to give an example of one house as an exemplification of the

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<sup>81</sup> The Memorial of Patrick M'Kye, in Lord George Hill, *Facts from Gweedore*, London, 1887, p.16, facsimile reprint, Belfast, 1971.

<sup>82</sup> Document 7.2, Select Committee's report.

<sup>83</sup> *General Valuation of Rateable Property*, [Griffith's valuation]; Tullaghobegley, Union of Dunfanaghy, County Donegal, Dublin, 1857.

<sup>84</sup> Evidence of Dennis Holland, SC Destitution, pp.95-96.

others.

This house which I allude to was, I remember, four or five feet below the level of the road; it was a single chamber; there was a little wall of turf made at the end of it: a kind of screen about four or five feet in length; inside that was a little mountain cow. By the fire a man was seated in very ragged clothing: he had no coat on ... the fire was made of damp turf, it smoked very much, and seemed to give out but little heat; there was a deal table, and that was all the furniture I noticed.

Was there a bed?

There was a quantity of some kind of rags tied in a bundle in one corner, which answered as a sort of seat or couch, and, I suppose, was a bed at night ... This was the condition of nearly every one of those cabins which I had seen on the right hand side of the road from Derrybeg to Bunbeg.<sup>85</sup>

These two townlands were typical of those in the coastal strip. Between them they contained 623 people in 108 houses, 94 of which were valued at 10/- or less. The average value of the land was 1/9d. per acre. In the neighbouring townland of Dore there were 60 houses in 1858 39 of which, 65%, were valued at precisely 5/- each. Journalist John Browne of the *Londonderry Journal* testified to the select committee that in his opinion the inhabitants in 26 of the houses in Dore were in great poverty when he visited them in May 1858.<sup>86</sup> Michael McMonagle's holding was typical of those on the list of the poor of Dore which Browne supplied to the select committee: he had a cabin worth 5/- and two acres worth 7/- per acre, slightly better land than that of most smallholders in Tullaghobegley.<sup>87</sup> Again by comparison Clonoulty in Tipperary had a much higher standard of housing as measured by the Griffith valuers. Many of Clonoulty's low valued cabins in the one to 10/- category were probably little better in construction and comfort than those in Tullaghobegley. However more than half of Clonoulty's housing stock, 52%, was valued at over 10/- as opposed to only 9% in Tullaghobegley.<sup>88</sup> [Figure 7.3]

This isolated Donegal parish was also one of the most illiterate in Ireland. In 1841 just over half the Irish people aged five years and upwards could not read; by 1861 this had dropped to 39% of the population. While County Donegal followed the national downward trend, in 1861 the county had only reached the position which the country had achieved by 1841. The 1861 census showed 52% of the county still unable to read. However Donegal as a whole was fairly literate by the standards of its north west coastal region. The parishes of Clondahorky, Raymunterdoney and Tullaghobegley, extending

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, Evidence of John Browne, p.38.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix No.3, Paper delivered in by Mr John Browne, p.413; *Valuation of Tenements*, Gweedore, *op.cit.*, p.80.

<sup>88</sup> For a graphic description of the worst housing in Tullaghobegley see the evidence of Dennis Holland, *SC Destitution*, p.95.

along the northwest coastal strip of the Barony of Kilmacrenan, were 78% illiterate in 1861. [Figure 7.4.1] But in Tullaghobegley itself in 1861, nearly 30 years after the beginning of the national system of education in Ireland, 90% of those above five years of age were still incapable of reading. Indeed since 1841 illiteracy in the parish had declined by a mere 3%. [Figure 7.4.2] In 1861, even amongst those most likely to have benefited from schooling over the previous two decades, the ten to 30 year olds, only 13% could read compared to 62% in that age group in Donegal as a whole. The Irish census Commissioners felt that there was a close connection between poverty and illiteracy — the worse the standard of housing in any given area the higher the illiteracy rate of the people.<sup>89</sup> While there would have been other complex reasons for Tullaghobegley's extremely poor level of basic education, the parish in the 1850s was a good example of the Commissioner's argument.

Despite this poverty population figures suggest that there had been comparatively little permanent overseas emigration from Tullaghobegley before 1859. The three parishes of Donegal's north west coast, Clondahorky, Raymunterdoney and Tullaghobegley, showed a significantly slower population decline compared with both the county and the country from 1841 to 1871. Where Ireland lost over one third of its 1841 population during those 30 years County Donegal lost 26% and its north west coast only 11%. [Figure 5.1] Tullaghobegley however went totally against both the local and national trend. Between 1841 and 1851, the decade of the great national disaster of the Famine, its population loss was a mere 1%. The corresponding loss for Donegal was 14% and for Ireland 20%. Over the next ten years, as the emigration exodus continued throughout Ireland leading to a further fall of 11%, Tullaghobegley actually gained population. During the 30 years of Ireland's major mid-century population decline the number of people living in this remote parish barely altered. [Figure 5.2] What may have sustained this remarkable stability was the yearly resort to seasonal migration to supplement family income. Each year hundreds of young men and women left the parish for temporary employment on the more prosperous farms of east Donegal and Counties Tyrone and Derry. Hundreds more went to Scotland as seasonal harvesters and domestic servants. In late 1858 the Donegal Relief Committee of Sydney's agent, Scott Durbin, was heading into a poor, virtually illiterate part of Ireland where large scale overseas emigration was not well established. Moreover he was about to offer to these people the opportunity to emigrate to N.S.W. and so undertake the longest of all 19th century emigrant journeys.

In Tullaghobegley Durbin claimed there was a great desire to emigrate but not at

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<sup>89</sup> General Report, p.33, Census of Ireland, 1841, *BPP*, 1843, Vol.24: " ...bad house accommodation and defective education seem to accompany each other".

once.<sup>90</sup> On October 4 he met the two priests most prominent in the original Appeal, Fathers Doherty and McFadden, who told him of this eagerness to leave the parish for good.<sup>91</sup> However the situation in Tullaghobegley had improved somewhat over the previous months; the harvest had been good and the results of the Appeal in Britain had allowed food, money and clothing to be distributed to the really needy.<sup>92</sup> The harvest was proceeding during Durbin's visit and few would be willing to leave until agricultural activity virtually ceased with the onset of winter in December.<sup>93</sup> Clearly, poor as they were, this was no longer a population seeking instant escape from extreme destitution. Doherty and McFadden agreed to obtain for Durbin a list of all those who wished to be considered for N.S.W. and he proposed to pay a second visit later in the year to select the emigrants.<sup>94</sup> He was assured that the cost of the required chest of sea clothing under the passage regulations would not be a deterrent to poor applicants. The priests guaranteed to provide all the necessary clothing, probably intending to pay for it from the British relief monies available to them.<sup>95</sup>

After a certain point in late autumn the weather on the north west Atlantic seaboard of Ireland deteriorates rapidly. From then until spring the people of Tullaghobegley had little to do on their holdings and much time was spent indoors. It was in late November 1858 at the beginning of this period that Durbin returned to the area to make his final selections.<sup>96</sup> At the National schools in both Cloughaneely and Gweedore he was mobbed by potential candidates for emigration:

The excitement and anxiety of these poor people to press forward to have their names put down on the list, and to be approved of, was painful to witness, and I was at both places compelled to close the lists earlier than I had intended, being apprehensive that some accident might occur from the pressure of the crowd, owing to the extraordinary desire of both sexes to be nominated.<sup>97</sup>

According to Durbin upwards of three thousand people, virtually a third of the parish, crowded round the school buildings hoping to be selected.<sup>98</sup> When earlier in October Fathers Doherty and McFadden drew up their preliminary lists, people had even

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<sup>90</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 22 December 1858, Durbin to Relief Committee, 11 October 1858.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 1 December 1858, The Destitution in Donegal.

<sup>93</sup> Durbin to Relief Committee, 11 October 1858.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 19 February 1859, Durbin to Relief Committee, 13 December 1858.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

rowed ten miles in heavy seas across Tory Sound from Tory Island to record their interest in going to Australia.<sup>99</sup> Given the large number who were offering themselves Durbin was able to be fairly selective; he chose males likely to make good agricultural servants and females “accustomed to the duties of general domestic servants”.<sup>100</sup> Many women were rejected as unsuited to Sydney’s labour market as they had not been taught the “customary household duties”.<sup>101</sup> Families with too many dependant children were also turned down.<sup>102</sup>

The *Nation* newspaper in Dublin was sure that in Tullaghobegley Durbin was engaged in selecting the genuinely destitute — “the very poorest and most miserable that can be found in this mass of misery”.<sup>103</sup> But even as he began organising the Tullaghobegley emigration doubts were again expressed about the reality of this misery. On October 13, shortly after Durbin’s first visit to Donegal, the *Sydney Morning Herald*’s Irish correspondent, “Hibernicus”, wrote a report on the state of Ireland.<sup>104</sup> An Irishman himself, absent from home in the bush of Australia for seven years, “Hibernicus” found the country much improved; farmers had imbibed the spirit of the age and were suitably “go-ahead”, party spirit was a thing of the past, the country was now connected to the New World of America by a fast steamer service, railways were everywhere and agricultural prices were good.<sup>105</sup> The only black spot among all this progress was Donegal, a county “always excessively poor”, which had not shared in the prosperity of “more getatable counties”.<sup>106</sup> The “alleged distress” of Donegal, reported in the Sydney press, was “humbug”. “Hibernicus” presented a novel version of the problems of the Tullaghobegley tenantry. They had been living an “Isle of Skye like” existence when large sheep farmers had bought them out and, rather than use this money to emigrate, they squandered it and turned on the “intruders” sheep.<sup>107</sup> In a scathing sentence “Hibernicus” dismissed any benefit which N.S.W. might gain by emigration from such a place:

I see an emigration agent from N.S.W. — a Mr Durbin — has the culling of the

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<sup>99</sup> *Dublin Freeman's Journal*, 26 January 1859.

<sup>100</sup> Durbin to Relief Committee, 13 December 1858.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Dublin Freeman's Journal*, 13 December 1858.

<sup>104</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 December 1858.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

county, and I trust the men he sends you will make better shepherds out there, than experience proved them to be at home.<sup>108</sup>

Similar sentiments were voiced by the *Londonderry Sentinel*, considered to be an organ of Donegal landlord opinion. Accounts of alleged Donegal distress in N.S.W. papers such as the *Goulburn Herald* were reprinted in the *Sentinel* to “amuse our readers”, who would be astonished to learn that the people were to be removed to “happy Australia”.<sup>109</sup> The *Sentinel* suggested they take Father Doherty, sometimes referred to disparagingly as “Priest Doherty”, with them. Durbin’s arrival led the *Sentinel* to hope that the “troublesome people” would indeed go and, drawing a parallel between Tullaghobegley emigration and convict transportation, wished a “prosperous” voyage to all who “Leave their country for their country’s good”.<sup>110</sup>

The Sydney *Freeman’s Journal* continued to counteract all these hostile statements with witnesses of its own. “Hibernicus” relied on hearsay, never venturing to Donegal to see things for himself. The Sydney committee produced John Devine, a real Donegal immigrant, to keep before the public the reality of Tullaghobegley’s distress. Devine established his credentials by saying he came from the parish of Raphoe, which was within “seven miles of the distressed districts”.<sup>111</sup> In reality Raphoe, a border parish in relatively prosperous east Donegal, was about 25 miles in a straight line from Tullaghobegley across extremely wild mountainous terrain. By road the distance would have been even further. Devine however produced the necessary statements for the committee; Donegal landlords were excessively oppressive, judges were on intimate terms with these landlords and easily manipulated by them, only a couple of men had yet been properly tried and convicted of sheep killing, and there was undoubted distress in west Donegal. His own parish had given much money to relieve the starving of Tullaghobegley.<sup>112</sup> Devine also added seemingly first hand confirmation to the colonial impression that evictions had occurred leading to widespread misery:

It was estimated that there were over 600 persons houseless — lying behind rocks — and that there were a thousand families without bed or bedding. The very blankets and the drinking vessels, called noggins, were taken from them.<sup>113</sup>

The people were keen to emigrate but so exasperated had the landlords become with their

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Londonderry Sentinel*, 17 September 1858, The Donegal Priests. I am grateful to Mrs May McLintock of Letterkenny, County Donegal, for finding me material from the *Londonderry Sentinel*.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* 8 October 1858, The Gweedore District.

<sup>111</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 7 August 1858.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

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

tenants that none of them would now be prepared to offer an outfit to anyone willing to leave for Australia.<sup>114</sup> The committee thanked Devine for his candour and handed a transcript of his observations to the *Freeman's Journal* for publication. Devine had never actually been to the north west coast but talking to him undoubtedly sustained the committee in their task and the appearance of his remarks in the *Freeman's Journal* would have helped consolidate support for their cause in the Irish community.

The Tullaghobegley emigrants left Donegal in three groups between mid-January and mid-April 1859.<sup>115</sup> Such had been the controversy roused by this whole emigration that the nationalist press, especially the *Nation* in Dublin, gave the event full coverage. In a lead editorial entitled "The Flight from Gweedore" the *Nation* reported the weather to have been in sympathy with the sad departure from Gweedore:

On a cold, gloomy day ... while the wind blew hard and the rain fell heavily, a mournful procession might have been seen taking its way from Gweedore, in the County Donegal. In the crowd there was the agitation of intense grief, and there was sorrow that spoke aloud. Tears mingled with the falling rain, and on the ear came the hoarse and broken sobs of men and the wilder cry of women, with that peculiar FEELING in the tone which thrills the listener ... which tells him that this is not an outward seeming of woe, but that the heart within is wounded.<sup>116</sup>

That day 252 people left the parish bound for the government emigration depot at Liverpool and over the coming months they were followed by another 376. However melodramatic the style of the *Nation's* report the exodus within so short a period of 7% of the parish's 1851 population was undoubtedly traumatic for the families involved. But the *Nation* sympathised less with the exiles — they were bound for a "land of Freedom" — than with those left behind under the old landlords.<sup>117</sup>

There were some aspects of the relief emigration in 1859 which cast doubt on the eagerness of some, in the *Nation's* words, to "bid adieu to the country of their forefathers".<sup>118</sup> In their report on Durbin's activities to the Colonial Secretary in Sydney the Emigration Commissioners complained of the number of those selected who defaulted in Liverpool. The *Sapphire* sailed on 28 January with her full complement of Donegal relief emigrants but the next two ships assigned to Durbin's people, the *Lady Elma Bruce* and the *Caribou*, were short a total of 212 expected Donegal passengers.<sup>119</sup>

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

<sup>115</sup> *Sapphire*, arrived 24 May 1859, IBL/NSW, 4/4980; *Lady Elma Bruce*, arrived 14 July 1859, IBL/NSW, 4/4979; *Caribou*, arrived 4 October 1859, IBL/NSW, 4/4979.

<sup>116</sup> *Nation*, quoted in Dublin *Freeman's Journal*, 11 May 1859, The Flight from Gweedore.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, The Flight from Gweedore.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Emigration Commissioners to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 11 July 1859, IC/NSW, 9/6219.

Consequently they were detained at the last minute while the Commissioners tried to make up this shortfall by quick recourse to ordinary remittance emigrants awaiting a passage.<sup>120</sup> The nominal lists for these two vessels also indicated that Durbin, despite his description of the three thousand who queued for selection in Tullaghobegley, was forced to offer passages well beyond the parish. Of the 808 Donegal relief immigrants who arrived in Sydney in 1859 147, 18%, were not from that area described in the original Appeal to be suffering extreme destitution. [Figure 7.6] The initial enthusiasm to leave showed most clearly on the *Sapphire* and the *Lady Elma Bruce*; 92% of the emigrants on those ships came from Tullaghobegley. On the *Caribou* however 39% were from other parishes in the Barony of Kilmacrenan and even from further afield in Donegal.<sup>121</sup> Clearly the desire to emigrate in Tullaghobegley, while strong, was not quite as widespread as the local priests had claimed.

Another indication of the decline in enthusiasm to emigrate among some of Durbin's early selections was the trade in passage certificates which developed in Donegal. The Liverpool depot authorities detected 11 attempts at impersonation among those who came forward for the *Lady Elma Bruce* and the Commissioners prosecuted those considered to be the three worst offenders.<sup>122</sup> None of this was ever reported in the Sydney press but the *Londonderry Sentinel*, always hostile to the Donegal priests, saw these cases as proof of the larger deception practised on the public concerning the existence of destitution in Tullaghobegley. The three prosecutions were all of family men one of whom had obtained his certificate from a local priest and the other two by purchase. The *Sentinel* was particularly incensed by the case of Edward Corr and family. Corr, a lodging housekeeper in Derry city, miles from Tullaghobegley, had bought his certificate from a girl passing through on her way back to Gweedore.<sup>123</sup> To the *Sentinel* this indicated that the certificate had already passed through a number of hands before it ended up with Corr.<sup>124</sup> The fines imposed on the other two men were paid by a priest at Birkenhead but Corr, to the *Sentinel's* disgust, paid his own:

The man in question [Corr] was prosecuted, convicted and fined £2, or to be imprisoned for one month. The DESTITUTE individual paid the fine out of his own pocket, without recourse to priestly assistance.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> On the *Caribou* there were even some from as far afield as Ballyshannon in south west of the county and Letterkenny in the east: *Caribou*, IBL/NSW, 4/4979.

<sup>122</sup> *Londonderry Sentinel*, 14 May 1859.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*



Among the single women caught with false certificates one had purchased it from a snuff dealer in Derry city and the other from a shopkeeper in Letterkenny, County Donegal. The snuff dealer, the *Sentinal* claimed, was related to one of the Donegal priests.<sup>126</sup>

The *Sentinal* also discovered that Durbin had been obliged to widen his recruiting area well beyond the allegedly destitute region of Gweedore/Cloughaneely. On the *Caribou* there were 67 people from parishes along the road between Dunfanaghy in Raymunterdoney and the county town of Letterkenny, well removed from Tullaghobegley.<sup>127</sup> Two men from Dunfanaghy were described as sons of a large wholesale spirit merchant and the others from this village were seen as leaving from “comfortable circumstances” not “destitute Gweedore”.<sup>128</sup> Admittedly the *Sentinal* was eager to unearth and publish anything which might discredit the priests. However it would have been difficult for the Sydney committee to accept that William Byrne on the *Caribou*, a carpenter from Letterkenny, was really the kind of destitute Donegal emigrant deserving of assistance from the donations of hundreds of poor colonial Irish immigrants.<sup>129</sup> But even this sweep back through the Barony of Kilmacrenan did not supply Durbin with enough emigrants. To fill the *Caribou* he selected from parishes ranging from Ballyshannon in the far south of the county to St Johnstown on the County Derry border in the east. Moreover the *Sentinal* claimed that even in Gweedore it was not the really poor who gained selection but men of moderate affluence such as Anthony O'Donnell of Magheraroarty. O'Donnell, who emigrated with his wife and seven children on the *Caribou*, allegedly sold the tenant right in his holding for £140.<sup>130</sup> The valuation entries relating to O'Donnell showed he rented a cabin rated at 10/- and eight acres of poor land worth 4/- per acre.<sup>131</sup> It is barely credible that such a holding was so productive that an incoming tenant would have given O'Donnell a sum 200 times its annual rateable value. Rather than the *Nation's* most miserable from a “mass of misery”, the *Sentinal* accused Durbin of choosing the better off:

Was not the ostensible object of the Gweedore and Cloughaneely emigration scheme to remove to a happier land the poor creatures who were left destitute through the evictions of harsh landlords? This would have been a good scheme had there been such parties to be removed; it would also have been good had it been proposed to remove the comparatively poor, such as are to be found in every district. But what are the facts? Where are the evicted peasantry who are going to

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Caribou*, IBL/NSW.

<sup>128</sup> *Londonderry Sentinal*, 1 April 1859.

<sup>129</sup> *Caribou*, IBL/NSW.

<sup>130</sup> *Londonderry Sentinal*, 1 April 1859.

<sup>131</sup> *Valuation of Tenements*, Tullaghobegley, p.57.

Australia? ... The parties who are emigrating are in comfortable circumstances. The comparatively poor remain, while those in possession of "rude plenty" ... have been selected and shipped off by the emigration agents.<sup>132</sup>

These articles were the paper's last lunge at the priests and the supposed destitution of Tullaghobegley. Those who read the *Sentinal* really needed no further confirmation that the whole business had been a sham and that those who had contributed to the various relief funds had been duped.

The arrival of the Donegal immigrants in 1859 was not the end of the committee's activities. Defaulters at Liverpool and money collected after McEncroe's three large deposits to the immigration authorities in 1858 left a balance in the fund of over £1,300 in addition to about £500 with the Emigration Commissioners in London. Initially the committee was unsure how to spend the balance and in October 1860 a full committee meeting debated the idea of building a home for out of work Irish immigrant women.<sup>133</sup> McEncroe himself actually proposed and supported the idea, suggesting that it would be of great benefit to the Donegal girls.<sup>134</sup> Such a use of the remaining money was seen by Alderman Gorman to be a breach of a "sacred trust"; donations had been given for a specific purpose, to bring out people from Donegal, and should not be used for anything else.<sup>135</sup> This debate, a year after the arrival of the *Caribou* in 1859, indicated the diminished interest in the whole scheme by the committee once the first large group of Donegal people had reached the colony. However as the meeting refused to sanction the use of the money for any other purpose Durbin was probably asked to proceed again to Donegal to see if there was any new interest in emigrating to N.S.W. No deposit was necessary with the N.S.W. Immigration Agent as the number of defaulters in 1859 had left over £500 in the hands of the Commissioners in the U.K. The result of Durbin's renewed efforts was the arrival of the *Nile* in May 1861 with a further 166 Donegal immigrants.<sup>136</sup> [Figure 7.6] Durbin was able to confine his selections to the Barony of Kilmacrenan and over half the immigrants were from Tullaghobegley.

After the *Nile's* arrival the committee was still left with a sizeable balance of £1,300. However within a few weeks reports began reaching Sydney of a situation in Donegal where there was no question of the destitution of many of the people involved. Between 8 April and 10 April 1861 John Corr J.P. accompanied by 200 police evicted

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<sup>132</sup> *Londonderry Sentinal*, 1 April 1859.

<sup>133</sup> Cutting from *The Sunbeam, Young Men's Christian Journal*, 29 October 1860, File: Donegal Relief Committee, Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Nile*, arrived 4 May 1861, Agent's List, 4/4796.

244 people from their cabins on the Donegal estate of John George Adair at Derryveagh.<sup>137</sup> These were among the most notorious and best publicised evictions in 19th century Ireland. Adair was a successful land speculator who in the late 1850s began to acquire an estate in the mountainous areas of north west Donegal, not so much for profit but because he was “enchanted by the surpassing beauty of the scenery”.<sup>138</sup> The dispute between Adair and his Derryveagh tenants seemed little different from that between the Tullaghobegley smallholders and their landlords. Although Adair was not looking for a significant commercial return from Derryveagh he nevertheless began to restrict the tenants’ virtually unrestricted use of the mountain grazing by introducing his own sheep and Scots shepherds. Tenants found that their stray stock was now impounded and that sharp fines were imposed by Adair for their release. There were a number of violent incidents and in November 1860 James Murray, one of Adair’s shepherds, was murdered. Adair saw Murray’s murder as final proof that there was a tenant conspiracy against him centred on Derryveagh and, arguing that neither he nor his employees were safe surrounded by such a community, proceeded with wholesale evictions. All of this was widely reported in the newspapers and was the front page story in the Sydney *Freeman’s Journal* from mid June to mid July 1861.<sup>139</sup>

The Derryveagh evictees were obvious candidates for assistance from the Donegal relief fund. Permission was obtained from the colonial government to apply part of the balance in the fund to bring out once again under the remittance regulations “emigrants from that part of Ireland who may be in distress”.<sup>140</sup> Durbin was asked to act as the committee’s agent and in late October 1861 he wrote to McEncroe saying he had received permission from the Emigration Commissioners to select 150 emigrants “from the people lately ejected at Glenveagh in the County of Donegal”.<sup>141</sup> A brief notice in the *Freeman’s Journal* on 31 May 1862 announced the arrival of the *Abyssinian* with reputedly 146 “of the unfortunate victims of Derryveagh on board who have come out to this colony under the auspices of the Donegal relief committee”.<sup>142</sup> This was wishful thinking on the part of

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<sup>137</sup> For a full account of the Derryveagh evictions and their significance see William Vaughan, *Sin, Sheep and Scotsmen: John George Adair and the Derryveagh Evictions, 1861*, “The Evictions”, pp.11-14, Belfast, 1983.

<sup>138</sup> Vaughan, *op.cit.*, p.14.

<sup>139</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 15 June to 13 July 1861.

<sup>140</sup> William Davis, Hon Secretary, Donegal Relief Fund to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 20 June 1861, Papers relative to the introduction of Immigrants by the Venerable Archdeacon McEncroe, p.10, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1861-62, Vol.1.

<sup>141</sup> Durbin to McEncroe, 22 September 1861, Select Correspondence Archdeacon McEncroe, Sydney Archdiocesan Archives.

<sup>142</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 31 May 1862.

the committee. Altogether there were approximately 42 immigrants on the *Abyssinian* who were among those evicted in April 1861.<sup>143</sup> There were two ways of identifying these Derryveagh people — either by name or the place of origin they gave when questioned by the Immigration Board. The Board's list showed 24 people whose names and parish match the list of evicted families submitted by the constabulary to the Poor Law authorities at Letterkenny. There were also 29 passengers on the *Abyssinian* for whom only County Donegal was recorded as their place of origin and 15 of these can be associated by name with the constabulary list. A further three immigrants, who are known to have been among the evicted, said they were from Kilmacrenan. Despite their small number these Derryveagh evictees were unique; they were the only immigrants among the 1,236 brought out by the committee who can definitely be identified as having suffered eviction. Moreover they were the only Irish group of this kind, "victims" so to speak of "landlord tyranny", officially assisted to emigrate to N.S.W. from the colonial treasury between 1848 and 1870.

The final operations of the committee were in 1864. Durbin was despatched to Ireland in an effort to use all outstanding funds in selecting emigrants and his brief left suitably vague. When seeking permission for Durbin's mission from the government McEncroe did not even mention Donegal:

As considerable distress prevails in several of the Rural Districts of Ireland the Donegal Relief Committee are anxious to assist persons willing to emigrate to N.S.W. from any of these districts ...<sup>144</sup>

Giving Durbin a free hand to select from whatever area of the country he found people willing to emigrate seems to have been necessary. On the last two ships carrying the committee's immigrants 31% were not even from Donegal. For the *Montrose* Durbin was able to obtain another 73 from Tullaghobegley but to fill the quota and use up the fund's money he then recruited in the Westport region of County Mayo, a district about 160 kilometres from the north Donegal coast. Mayo had few emigrant connections with Sydney but like Donegal was considered one of the poorest counties in Ireland. All 35 of the Donegal committee's last immigrants came on the *Sandringham* from Westport, County Mayo.<sup>145</sup> [Figure 7.6] Clearly the thousands of small contributions from the immigrant Irish of N.S.W. in 1858 had proved more than enough to satisfy the desire of the people of Tullaghobegley to emigrate to Sydney. On 10 August 1864 the committee used these contributions for the last time to make a payment for expenses to Durbin and

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<sup>143</sup> *Abyssinian*, arrived 29 May 1862, Agent's list, 4/4796.

<sup>144</sup> McEncroe to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 27 May 1863, IC/NSW, 9/6238.

<sup>145</sup> *Montrose*, arrived 27 March 1864, IBL/NSW, 4/4986; *Sandringham*, arrived 26 June 1864, IBL/NSW, 4/4987.

closed their account with the Union Bank.<sup>146</sup>

Superficially the cause of Donegal may seem to differ little from other charitable Irish causes for which large sums were collected at different times throughout the 19th century such as the Great Famine of 1845 to 1849 and for famine relief in County Mayo in 1879.<sup>147</sup> But to the colonial Irish the Donegal scheme was more than just a vehicle for enabling hundreds of their poor compatriots to emigrate to a land of plenty. Such emigrants could have been obtained from almost any county in Ireland. By contributing to the Donegal fund subscribers could combine a political statement with national sentiment and practical help to individuals. Politically, to donate was to identify oneself with the smallholders of Donegal against the landlords. Most Irish-Australian immigrants came from a small farm rural environment and would have been familiar with the main Irish political movement of the 1850s — the Irish Tenant League. Although by the late 1850s the League had virtually collapsed its programme of fair treatment and greater security for tenants, who depended for their livelihood on land they did not own, undoubtedly had wide support in rural Ireland. Many of the Irish in N.S.W. still had family at home on small farms not much different in size to the Donegal smallholders. Indeed when the *Maitland Mercury* questioned the absolute right of the landlords to do as they pleased with their property the editor, with an obvious “feel” for the Irish political landscape of his readers, called his piece ‘Tenant Right’.<sup>148</sup> Tullaghobegley was able to send more assisted emigrants to Sydney than any other parish in Ireland because to the Irish in N.S.W. its problems were a microcosm of the problems of Ireland.

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<sup>146</sup> Cutting from *Catholic Times*, 7 March 1878, letter from William Davis, Hon Secretary, Donegal Relief Committee, File: Donegal Relief Committee, Sydney Archdiocesan Archives.

<sup>147</sup> Patrick O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, Sydney, 1987, pp.204 and 221.

<sup>148</sup> *Maitland Mercury*, 17 June 1858, Tenant Right.

## Chapter 8

### “Fair Isle of the West — Land of Affection and Endearing Family Ties” The N.S.W. Remittance Regulations and the Irish, 1848–1870

Bridget Davies, an orphan girl from the Scariff Workhouse in County Clare, arrived in Sydney on the *Thomas Arbuthnot* on 3 February 1850.<sup>1</sup> Bridget began her colonial career as a servant in the Boorowa district near Yass. Although she had left Ireland far behind the demands of family followed her into the interior of N.S.W. In early 1851 Bridget received news of her family from her uncle Matthew Kennedy in County Clare: her cousins had gone to America, sent for by their brother, her uncle Michael had gone to the Cape of Good Hope and her own brothers, especially the youngest, Pat were in “hopes” of joining her in Australia as soon as possible.<sup>2</sup> By implication these “hopes” rested on Bridget. A further letter from Matthew in late 1852 spoke of money being sent to her grandmother from Africa, of the success of Matthew’s sons in America and again emphasised Pat’s desire to leave Ireland:

... your brother Pat is in anxiety to go to you when he read your letter he cried as you did not send for him, if you can send for him do not delay as he will repay you according as he will earn it and if you cannot take him out send him some money untill you can send for him do not leave him where he is ....<sup>3</sup>

Bridget’s response to this continuing family pressure was to nominate Pat for a free passage to Sydney under the government remittance regulations of 7 January 1852.<sup>4</sup> On 13 January 1853 she deposited the £4 required to bring out an agricultural labourer between 14 and 40 at the Immigration Office in Sydney.<sup>5</sup> In December 1853 Patrick arrived in N.S.W. on the *Maidstone*.<sup>6</sup>

This willingness of the Irish to assist those left behind to leave Ireland was well known to the Emigration Commissioners. In 1849 they calculated that three quarters of the cost of the enormous trans-Atlantic movement from Ireland was being “defrayed by

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<sup>1</sup> *Thomas Arbuthnot*, arrived 3 February 1850, IBL/NSW, 4/4919.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Kennedy, County Clare to Bridget Davies, 17 October 1850, letters in possession of Sgt. Colin Graham, Sydney.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Kennedy to Bridget Davies, 7 August 1852.

<sup>4</sup> Immigration Remittances, N.S.W. *Government Gazette*, 7 January 1852.

<sup>5</sup> Nomination Form, Patrick Davies, 13 January 1853, IC/NSW, 9/6198.

<sup>6</sup> *Maidstone*, arrived 11 November 1853.

those who had emigrated in previous years".<sup>7</sup> Thousands of pre-paid passages were being sent home through private shipping houses, especially through those at the main North American emigration port of Liverpool. Given the huge sums of money involved — the Commissioners were aware of £460,000 in 1848 alone — commercial interests had responded quickly to the needs of the American Irish.<sup>8</sup> "A Tipperary Man", who wrote to the *Sydney Freeman's Journal* in February 1852, felt that the "mighty flood of Emigration", caused by the remittances of the Irish Americans, was impossible in N.S.W. Sydney banks, always willing to handle \$100 for the rich, turned away the small sums the poor Irish saved to help a relative emigrate.<sup>9</sup> "Tipperary Man" was not a careful reader of the *Freeman's Journal*; a fortnight before the publication of his complaint the paper had devoted virtually a whole page to the government's remittance regulations of January 1852.<sup>10</sup>

These regulations were the direct result of representations made in 1847 by Caroline Chisholm to Earl Grey, the British Colonial Secretary, on behalf of poorer immigrants in N.S.W. Grey was aware of the prodigious amounts being applied by the Irish Americans to emigration. When he heard from Mrs Chisholm that many small settlers in Australia, especially the Irish, also wished to help their friends and relations, he instructed Governor Fitzroy to devise an official system to assist them.<sup>11</sup> In a lengthy despatch Grey described the practical and moral advantages of emigration remittances: saving money for this purpose encouraged personal industry and economy, while those at home would be encouraged to emigrate by seeing how quickly their formerly penniless relatives and friends were capable of saving enough to send for them.<sup>12</sup> Any official remittance scheme, Grey advised, should operate in two ways. Firstly, settlers should be able to send either the full fare, or a contribution towards it, to the Commissioners. When the remainder of the fare was paid by those at home they would be provided with a passage to Sydney on a government ship. Secondly, there should be a deposit scheme whereby, for a fixed sum, emigrants could be nominated by their relations in N.S.W. and the government would pay the balance of the passage money. Such nominees would have to be eligible for a passage under the Commissioners' general regulations. These principles

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<sup>7</sup> General Report for 1848, 9th Annual Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, p.2, *BPP*, 1849, Vol.22.

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

<sup>9</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 12 February 1852, Remittances Home.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 January 1852, Immigration Remittances.

<sup>11</sup> Colonial Office to Governor of N.S.W, 29 July 1847, Despatch No.196, Colonial Office/Entry Books of Correspondence, CO.202/51.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

were embodied in Fitzroy's first set of remittance regulations gazetted on 22 December 1848.<sup>13</sup>

Over the next 15 years these regulations were altered six times. Each time the main amendment concerned the sum required from a colonial nominator seeking to have the government pay the balance of the fare. [Figure 8.1] This deposit fluctuated according to what the immigration authorities thought poorer colonists could, or should, pay. Thus in August 1853 Immigration Agent Browne proposed raising contributions for the most desirable Class 1 immigrants — agricultural labourers and domestic servants aged 14 to 40 — from £4 to £7.<sup>14</sup> In recommending this large increase Browne cited the huge rise in local wages brought about by the gold rush and increased freight charges being encountered by the Commissioners on the Australian run. These rates fell suddenly in early 1854 and Browne increased the deposit by only £1. [Figure 8.1. 1854/A] In 1856 the lower deposit rates for agricultural labourers and domestic servants were abolished. The same amount was now demanded no matter what a nominee's occupation. A further change in the 1861 regulations encouraged the nomination of single females by setting the sum required at £2 below that for single males. Finally in 1863 deposits were raised for single males to a point little short of half the fare. [Figure 8.1 1856 and 1861]

In 1857 the provision for depositing some proportion of the fare and expecting those at home to pay the rest was dropped from the regulations. Statistics indicate that the Irish preferred sponsoring relatives where the government paid the balance. The average amount deposited per Irish nominee up to and including 1857 was close to the £4 or £5 required for a remittance emigrant between 14 and 40. [Figure 8.1 and Figure 2] Only in 1849, in the case of a mere six nominees, was the average deposit greatly in excess of the sum required for nomination as a government emigrant. [Figure 8.2] These may have been emigrants for whom virtually the whole fare was paid in the colony, leaving them with a small balance to find from their own resources. However, nominators obviously preferred a system where the government paid most of the fare and where their nominees were given priority for a passage over general emigrants selected by the Commissioners in the U.K.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Immigration Remittances, N.S.W. *Government Gazette*, Supplement, 23 December 1848.

<sup>14</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 16 August 1853, Correspondence Relative to Immigration, pp.35-36, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1854, Vol.2.

<sup>15</sup> Immigration Regulations, Clause 8, "... that residents in this Colony may secure a preference for such of their own relatives or friends as may be of the following descriptions and otherwise qualified under the Commissioners' general regulations for free passages, by contributing and remitting, in the manner above provided for, the undermentioned sums viz ...", N.S.W. *Government Gazette*, Supplement, 6 January 1852, p.22.



The procedures involved in nominating an emigrant were straightforward and changed little between 1848 and 1866. [Document 8.1] In Sydney up to 1856 deposits had to be made at the Treasury but from then on the Immigration Office was authorised to accept them. In country districts the Clerks of Petty Sessions handled all nominations and were paid a commission for their services. They were responsible for filling in the relevant documents and forwarding them to the Immigration Agent. If the nominees were approved in Sydney a Passage Certificate was sent to the Clerk to be handed to the depositor who was then responsible for sending it to their nominee in the U.K. [Document 8.2] To apply for the passage the prospective emigrant had to send this Passage Certificate to the Commissioners in London. There a certificate's authenticity was checked against lists of nominees and depositors forwarded every month from the colony. Final allocation to a ship was not made until the Commissioners had satisfied themselves that the stated age and occupation of the emigrant were correct through certification by a local surgeon, and a magistrate or clergymen. [Document 8.3]

In the 1860s four out of every five colonial nominees came to Sydney. Agent Wise calculated that of 21,045 sponsored under the 1861 regulations between June 1861 and November 1867 only 20%, 4,461, did not embark. Each month the Commissioners sent a list of all such cases back to Sydney with a recommendation as to whether the deposit money should be refunded to the nominator. These lists also contained brief reasons why a passage was not taken up. [Figure 8.3] Virtually 60% of those who failed to emigrate either gave no reason to the Commissioners or allowed their Passage Certificate to expire. [Figure 8.2 Cols 2/8] Certificates were valid for 12 months after the date of delivery to the colonial sponsor. From the colonial lists the Commissioners were able to tell who in the U.K. had not acted upon the offer of a passage and not communicated with them. Those who did contact the Commissioners gave many reasons for not emigrating. [Figure 8.3 Col 2] Luke and Anne Ward of Dublin declined their sister Catherine's nomination stating they were "advantageously employed at home".<sup>16</sup> Michael Brennan of Kilkenny got as far as the ship, then refused to embark.<sup>17</sup> The Commissioners charged the colony 15/3d. for maintaining him in the Depot and for his fare back to Ireland.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps the most selfless reason for declining to emigrate came from Daniel Kelly of Knockroe, County Carlow. Brother Thomas in Tenterfield, N.S.W., had paid £5 for his passage and sent another £5 for Daniel to equip himself for the voyage. Daniel

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<sup>16</sup> Emigration Commissioners' list of money to be refunded to depositors, October 1859, 4/4599, AONSW.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1860.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

declared that he would like to emigrate to “that good and plentiful country” but that “my mother crosses me against going”:

... I cannot say against my mother you know the gratitude a Son should be under to his Mother from the raising of your own Children. She would be obliged to go into the Workhouse if I would go from my dear Mother ... She would be destitute of friends or fellows and should be buried in the graveyard. She now obtains the age of 72 years which is the longest any person lives.<sup>19</sup>

In some instances the Commissioners themselves refused passage to a colonial nominee. Sometimes ages had been falsified on the Passage Certificate and local referees had, perhaps out of pity, failed to draw the Commissioners' attention to this deception. Thus Elizabeth Leonard, supposedly 33 according to her nominator, managed to get as far as Dublin before the port Emigration Officer discovered her to be much older. Unable to pay the extra £8 required for her passage she was sent home to Fermanagh.<sup>20</sup> Similarly Margaret Quin of Cork, stated by Maurice Quin in the colony to be only 35, was refused embarkation on the *Sir John Moore* at Liverpool when she was found to be over 50.<sup>21</sup> Mary Carmody's husband in N.S.W. had paid the correct deposit for a nominee over 50 but she was not allowed to proceed at Liverpool being thought too old and infirm to survive the trip.<sup>22</sup> Her fare home to County Clare was paid by the Commissioners. Michael Flanagan was dismissed from the Depot when it was discovered that he was escaping from a maintenance order at Tulla, County Clare, for an illegitimate child.<sup>23</sup>

The Commissioners' refusal of a passage could cause great resentment in the colony. This applied particularly to cases where the nominator failed to deposit the sum required for skilled tradesmen. At Kiama in June 1853 William King paid £4 for William Cook thinking Cook to be an agricultural labourer.<sup>24</sup> Cook was discovered by the Commissioners to be a sawyer and refused a passage. It took until late 1854 before King was able to deposit the extra £2 required for Cook's passage. Agent Browne realised that in such cases the Commissioners were merely trying to protect the colony from fraud. However, when their concern resulted in turning down someone who had changed jobs from farm labourer to “hod carrier or porter in a warehouse” the colonial “labouring classes”, for whom the regulations had been devised, failed to appreciate such “nice

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<sup>19</sup> Daniel Kelly, Knockroe, County Carlow to his brother, Thomas Kelly, Tenterfield, N.S.W., 11 March 1862, attached to nomination form for Daniel Kelly, Bundle 63/496, IC/NSW, 9/6236.

<sup>20</sup> Emigration Commissioners' list of money etc, January 1861.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1862.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, October 1860.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, June 1860.

<sup>24</sup> Clerk of Petty Sessions, Kiama to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 7 September 1854, IC/NSW, 9/6205.

distinctions".<sup>25</sup> What would have alarmed colonial politicians was that they, not the Commissioners, were held responsible for being too strict.<sup>26</sup> The 1856 regulations, the first approved by colonial politicians under responsible government, required the same deposit for all members of the working classes whatever their occupation.

Of greater concern to the authorities were the instances where nominees sold their Passage Certificates. Some of these cases were discovered during pre-embarkation checks and, depending on how sure the port officials were that a deliberate attempt at fraud had occurred, the emigrant was dismissed from the depot and sometimes prosecuted. In 1859 a John Coghlan was refused a passage because the Commissioners were not convinced that it was the same John Coghlan nominated in the colony.<sup>27</sup> They actually caught Michael Griffy at the Depot trying to board the *British Empire* in July 1859 as Patrick Mullins. Griffy decamped but was tried in absentia before the Birkenhead magistrates, and fined £5, and a warrant issued for his arrest.<sup>28</sup>

According to Agent Wise impersonation and trafficking in Passage Certificates was not a serious problem in the 1860s. Despite local allegations that fraud had been common Wise felt that "very few" had arrived under false names.<sup>29</sup> In 1855 one woman who evaded detection in the U.K. only to be discovered in the colony was Johanna Taafe. In Newmarket, County Cork Johanna bought Ellen Murphy's Certificate for £5 as Ellen was blind in one eye and would have been refused embarkation.<sup>30</sup> The Commissioners' clerks seem to have been lax when the Certificate reached London. The papers had clearly been altered to reflect Johanna's age and this figure differed considerably from Ellen Murphy's age on the remittance list sent to London from Sydney. Johanna was not questioned about this discrepancy and she was permitted to sail on payment of an additional £2/17/-.<sup>31</sup> Close questioning by Agent Browne on her arrival caused Johanna to confess her deception. Browne was angered most by the willingness of the local Newmarket priest, Father Bichenor, to certify Johanna as Ellen Murphy even though he knew quite well that she was not.<sup>32</sup> Browne observed drily that this was the second time that Bichenor had

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<sup>25</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1855, pp.10-11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Emigration Commissioner's list of money etc., July 1859.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, November 1858.

<sup>29</sup> Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, George Wise, Select Committee on Immigration, p.6, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, 1870, Vol.1.

<sup>30</sup> Statement of Johanna Taafe an Immigrant per Ship *Eliza*, 28 February 1856, IC/NSW, 9/2609.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

been detected in enabling an emigrant to obtain "a passage to the colony under false Certificates".<sup>33</sup>

More serious, because it pointed to the possible existence of an organised system of selling certificates, was the case of Margaret Lynch. Margaret arrived from Killaloe, County Clare, on the *Racehorse* in 1866 under the name of Bridget McInerney.<sup>34</sup> Agent Wise discovered her impersonation and she confessed that she had purchased a Passage Certificate in her assumed name from the Parish Priest of the neighbouring parish of Broadford, Father Bourke.<sup>35</sup> Margaret had decided to emigrate and had gone to Bourke because "I knew he was in the habit of sending out people to Australia".<sup>36</sup> In January 1866 she paid the priest £4 and was told that when he had a Certificate for her she would be sent for. Bourke never took any personal particulars from Margaret and when his messenger told her a form was ready she asked Bourke to fill it in himself. She was sent a "sailing order" in the name of Bridget McInerney and instructed to assume that name.<sup>37</sup> This was an area of Clare to which many nominations were made in the 1860s and Bourke's name often appeared as a referee on the original nomination form. It is possible that he was organising individual emigration to the colony through a contact in Sydney. Margaret Lynch's case is, however, the only evidence of such possible systematic fraud to be found in the mid-19th century records of the Immigration Department.

One set of allied regulations, abolished in 1855 because of the illegal advantage taken of them by an Irish colonist, were the Land and Deposit Regulations. These regulations, also introduced in 1848, allowed purchasers of government land to have a sum equal to 80% of the purchase price allocated to bringing out immigrants from the U.K.<sup>38</sup> Ordinary remittance emigrants had to be nominated in the colony but land and deposit emigrants could be chosen at home by the land purchaser's agent. Those selected in this way had both to qualify for a passage under the Commissioners' general regulations and pay the normal emigrant contributions. As they were purportedly going out as labour to a specific land purchaser these nominees were probably given precedence over emigrants selected by the Commissioners. Agent Browne discovered that buyers of land were selling their rights to import immigrants to subsidise their purchase and in 1855

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Racehorse*, arrived 22 September 1865, IBL/NSW, 4/4991.

<sup>35</sup> Statement of Margaret Lynch alias Bridget McInerney an Immigrant per Ship *Racehorse*. *Racehorse* Ship's Papers, 9/6287.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Immigration Remittances, N.S.W. *Government Gazette*, 7 January 1850.

he recommended that the regulations be scrapped.<sup>39</sup> What finally convinced Browne that the scheme was being badly abused was the importation from County Fermanagh of a large group of immigrants under these regulations by George Grey of Kiama.

Two purchases of land near Kiama in 1854 entitled Grey to have 35 emigrants selected by his agent in Ireland, Rev. Charles Stack.<sup>40</sup> Browne's suspicions were aroused by some of these emigrants on the *Eliza* in 1855 when none of them acknowledged any personal connection with Grey or expressed any intention of going to work for him. Closer questioning revealed that they had paid £2 to £3 to Stack for being selected and had agreed to pay Grey £13 each.<sup>41</sup> James Moffitt, aged 44, from Drumkeeran, County Fermanagh told Browne he had no intention of being a labourer for Grey.<sup>42</sup> He also had a cheque for £200 with him to purchase a farm at Kiama.<sup>43</sup> As a farmer in Ireland, he had been ineligible under any of the current regulations, so when Stack began advertising in the district that he had government passages for sale Moffitt paid him £13 and agreed to pay Grey another £90.<sup>44</sup> For this he brought his wife and nine children to Australia far more cheaply than if they had had to emigrate on a private ship. Other families in the group admitted to a similar arrangement with Grey. Browne concluded that the regulations were allowing non-labourers to obtain a cheap passage to the colony and at the same time enabling men like Grey to finance their land purchases by privately charging emigrants for the passage.<sup>45</sup> No charge was brought against Grey but the Governor cancelled the land and deposit regulations.<sup>46</sup>

Fraud was of less concern to nominators than obtaining a refund for an unused passage. One case which was settled relatively quickly gives an indication of the time involved. In June 1854 Mary Walker sent to Ireland for George Walker and Arthur Golding.<sup>47</sup> Golding arrived in 1855 but George Walker had married and declined to emigrate. Mary contacted the Immigration Office in October 1855 for a return of the unused £5 deposit for George Walker but in early November Agent Browne informed her

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<sup>39</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 11 October 1855, Copies of letters sent to the Colonial Secretary re migration to N.S.W, 4/4619, AONSW.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Grey deposited £200 on 19 January 1854 and £420 on 8 July 1854.

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

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

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

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> An Act to repeal the Land and Deposit Regulations, 18 December 1855, *The Public General Statutes of N.S.W.*, Sydney, 1862, pp.3014-3015.

<sup>47</sup> Office Copy, Passage Certificate, Arthur Golding, 6 June 1854, IC/NSW, 9/6217.

that no refund was possible till he had heard from London.<sup>48</sup> Mary wrote again in mid-February 1856 and this time offered her depositor's copy of the Passage Certificate as proof of George Walker's failure to emigrate.<sup>49</sup> Although Browne had still not heard from the Commissioners he accepted Mary's word that the Certificate was not going to be used and authorised the refund. She received her £5 in March 1856.<sup>50</sup>

Mary Walker's case had been handled efficiently; Michael O'Leary took over four years to have his money returned. Michael was illiterate and relied on the Clerk of Petty Sessions at Brisbane Water to write to Sydney on his behalf. In July, 1855 Michael informed Agent Browne that as long ago as April 1851 he had deposited £8 in the Treasury for the passage of his son William from Tipperary. Since then, Michael stated;

I have received no communication on the subject and have been looking out from year to year in expectation of the the arrival of my son, but in vain.<sup>51</sup>

He further alleged that the Commissioners had been written to by William but that no reply was received from them and no passage provided.<sup>52</sup> At the Sydney Immigration Office no record could be found of any report by the Commissioners on the O'Leary passage. Even now Browne was only willing to write to London at O'Leary's request and no refund was offered.<sup>53</sup> The Commissioners' reply, received in the colony in May 1856, stated that William O'Leary had twice been offered a passage but had not availed himself of either offer.<sup>54</sup> In the first instance he had lacked the money for an outfit and the second time he had defaulted from the ship. On this second occasion William's name had been included in the ship's manifest indicating to the Commissioners that he had apparently sailed for Sydney. This error was not detected on the arrival of the ship and the deposit entry for William O'Leary was marked as if the passage had indeed been taken up. Five years after he had tried to bring his son to the colony Michael O'Leary received his refund.<sup>55</sup>

Depositors and nominees could also on occasion suffer from the inefficiency of

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<sup>48</sup> Annotation of N.S.W. Immigration Agent on letter from Mary Walker, 31 October 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6217.

<sup>49</sup> Depositor's copy, Passage Certificate, Arthur Golding, 6 June 1854, IC/NSW, 9/6217.

<sup>50</sup> Annotation of N.S.W. Immigration Agent on letter from Mary Walker, 15 February 1856, IC/NSW, 9/6217.

<sup>51</sup> Michael O'Leary, Brisbane Water, to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 19 July 1855, IC/NSW, 9/6209.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, annotation of N.S.W. Immigration Agent.

<sup>54</sup> Emigration Commissioners to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 19 February 1856, IC/NSW, 9/6209.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, annotation of N.S.W. Immigration Agent.

officials and the slow workings of the system. In December 1854 Patrick Walsh paid for the passage of his brother and family from Galway.<sup>56</sup> Upon the Passage Certificate being sent from Sydney the local Clerk of Petty Sessions promised Patrick that he would send it on to Ireland.<sup>57</sup> It was never sent but, on the strength of Patrick's assurance that he had paid the deposit, his brother left his job in the daily expectation of being called to a ship by the Commissioners.<sup>58</sup> While the Commissioners knew of the family's nomination they could not do anything until the Passage Certificate arrived. Eventually a duplicate Certificate was sent but not before the family spent a winter in Ireland with the head of the family unemployed. Even more distressing was the Toner case. Toner had used his local priest, Dean Grant, to make a deposit for him in Bathurst. Dean Grant died and when Toner's nominees did not avail of the passage the Immigration Department would only refund the deposit to the legal representative of Grant's estate.<sup>59</sup> Toner meantime had fallen seriously ill and was in great need of the money. An extensive round of letter writing now began between the late Dean's legal representative in Maitland, the Immigration Agent in Sydney, the Clerk of Petty Sessions in Bathurst and the only one who was trying to help Toner, the local Catholic schoolmaster, Michael McGirr. McGirr wrote Agent Wise a series of letters between June and September 1864 pointing out Toner's poverty and begging for the speedy return of the deposit:

I know you [Wise] are charitably disposed and by expediting the refund of the money you will really perform an act of charity as the poor man is now closely confined to his bed from a painful and dangerous disease.<sup>60</sup>

The money was eventually refunded but not, according to McGirr, before Toner had suffered significant hardship.

Depositors also encountered difficulties with the Commissioners' rule on family size. Under the 1851 general regulations a passage was refused to families with more than three children under ten or two under seven. Long experience, the Commissioners argued, showed that ships with large numbers of young children suffered high rates of sickness and mortality.<sup>61</sup> No extra passage money could compensate for the risks

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<sup>56</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 6 December 1855, Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, 4/3300, AONSW.

<sup>57</sup> Patrick Walsh, West Maitland to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 23 September 1855, Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, 4/3300, AONSW.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Walsh, Galway City to Patrick Walsh, 4 June 1855, with Patrick Walsh to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 23 September 1855.

<sup>59</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to Clerk of Petty Sessions, Bathurst, 21 June 1864, IC/NSW, 9/6239.

<sup>60</sup> Michael McGirr, Bathurst to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 17 June 1864, IC/NSW, 9/6239.

<sup>61</sup> Emigration Commissioners to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 3 February 1855, Emigration Commissioners to Emigration Agents and others, CO.386/128.

involved in accepting such families. Sometimes depositors were unaware of the actual number of children in a family. When he nominated his son Edward and family from County Derry in 1854 John Gwynn appeared to have been out of touch with Edward for some time. He sponsored Edward, his wife aged 28 but "name unknown", three children under 14 and one child under two.<sup>62</sup> The Commissioners found that the children were actually all under eight and refused the family a passage.<sup>63</sup> John Gwynn must have protested against this decision as the Governor's permission was given to have the family brought out and, under protest, the Commissioners complied.<sup>64</sup> Similarly in 1854 when John McGrath nominated his brother and family from Tipperary he listed only three children under ten in the family. There were actually four such children and the Commissioners turned the family down. Like Gwynn, John McGrath fought this decision and obtained the Governor's permission to have the whole family given a passage despite the Commissioners' objections.<sup>65</sup>

Other families must have faced the same problem as Agent Browne drew their situation to the Colonial Secretary's attention in his 1855 report. Colonial depositors could not take into account births at home in the interim between sending off the Passage Certificate and the Commissioners being approached for a passage in the U.K.<sup>66</sup> The N.S.W. authorities did not ask the Commissioners to alter their policy on families but inserted into the 1856 remittance regulations a clause making depositors liable for payment for any additional children in an emigrant family not listed on the original nomination form.<sup>67</sup> The 1856 regulations also specified that no family containing more than three children under ten was eligible for nomination.<sup>68</sup> This requirement was dropped from the 1861 regulations which governed all assisted arrivals in the 1860s. Thus in July 1861 Francis McGrath was able to nominate the Hillarys with five children under ten from County Donegal.<sup>69</sup> The Commissioners made no objection to the Hillarys and similar families in the 1860s. Infant mortality had steadily declined on their Australian

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<sup>62</sup> Nomination of John Gwynn, 5 December 1853, Immigration Deposits Journal, hereafter IDJ/NSW, 4/4576, AONSW.

<sup>63</sup> Emigration Commissioners to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 11 May 1855, Emigration Commissioners to Emigration Agents and others, CO.386/128.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Emigration Commissioners to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 3 February 1855, Emigration Commissioners to Emigration Agents and others, CO.386/128.

<sup>66</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1855, pp.10-11.

<sup>67</sup> Immigration Remittances, Appendix, Clause 10, N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1856-57.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19, Qualifications of Emigrants, Clause 4.

<sup>69</sup> Nomination of Francis McGrath, 29 July 1861, IDJ/NSW, 4/4582.



ships and they were probably more confident that young children would reach Sydney safely.<sup>70</sup>

The Commissioners were more prepared to waive their rule against allowing those under 18 to travel without their parents. Applications for this category of emigrant were frequent enough for a special form to be devised informing depositors of the result of their petition to the Governor for a “relaxation” of the regulations. Permission was rarely refused and the whole procedure showed that, in special circumstances, the government was willing to allow the scheme to be used for purposes beyond its primary aim of importing labour more cheaply than under the Commissioners’ general regulations. Usually these applications involved the recently orphaned siblings in Ireland of previous emigrants. A typical case was that of Ann Lewes who had come to the colony as Ann Gunning from Eyrecourt, County Galway. Ann’s 25 year old sister, Esther, was about to emigrate and unless their younger sister, Mary Ann, aged 12, was allowed to accompany her Mary Ann would “be left without a female relative in Ireland”.<sup>71</sup> Occasionally permission was given for the emigration of a child with no relatives capable of accompanying them. Mary Doyle was allowed to apply for her orphan sister aged 13 from County Wicklow and Agent Browne recommended that she be given a passage.<sup>72</sup> In these cases the Commissioners tried to find someone to act as protector on the journey for a small payment. These were also situations where no objection was raised to nominating an inmate of a workhouse despite the general colonial dislike of emigrants from such institutions. Thus Timothy Cusack was given permission to nominate his brother’s orphan children from the Ballinasloe workhouse in 1853.<sup>73</sup>

Whatever the problems involved the colonial authorities saw the remittance scheme as a valuable method of supporting the immigration fund. A colonial deposit covered roughly a third of total passage costs and the whole scheme was a move away from reliance on local revenue towards a “self-supporting” immigration.<sup>74</sup> The greatest incentive in this direction came in 1852 when the required deposit for labourers and domestics was cut by 50% from £8 to £4. Wages rose dramatically during the gold rushes and the colonial Irish would have been better able to afford the amount required to

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<sup>70</sup> For infant mortality on the Commissioner’s ships from 1855 to 1868 see Chapter 3, Figure 16.

<sup>71</sup> Copy letter, Anne Lewes to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 2 December 1854, with N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 16 January 1855, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 4/3261, AONSW.

<sup>72</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 18 December 1854, Copies of letters sent to the Colonial Secretary, 4/4617, AONSW.

<sup>73</sup> Nomination form, Timothy Cusack, 8 May 1853, IC/NSW, 9/6200.

<sup>74</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1855, p.6.

bring out their friends and relatives. [Figure 8.1. 1852] In 1853 18% of all Irish arrivals were remittance immigrants, a figure which rose to 91% by the end of the decade. By contrast it took to 1859 before English remittance arrivals made up over 50% of the English intake. [Figure 8.4] Consequently, by the mid-1850s the N.S.W Irish community was contributing proportionately far more towards the N.S.W. immigration fund than any other group in the colony. Between 1853 and 1859 14% of the total sum spent by N.S.W. on Irish immigrants came from the pockets of local depositors. The English figure was 4%. In other words, the N.S.W. Irish had contributed a subsidy of £2/1/- towards the importation of each Irish immigrant, whether selected in Ireland or nominated, compared to 11/- for the English.

In the mid-1850s the Irish were usually nominated when there was no other way of bringing them to Sydney. At the height of the gold rush single men found it almost impossible to be selected by the Commissioners who were trying to counter the enormous male imbalance in the unassisted emigration by choosing only single females. Thus Catherine McGrath nominated her three brothers from Tipperary in 1854 but left her sister to the Commissioners' selection process.<sup>75</sup> In fact nomination seems to have been the only way to ensure a passage for a single male between 1853 and 1855. Of the 22 single males who arrived in Sydney from the Tipperary parish of Clonoulty during that period only one had been selected through application to London. [Figure 8.5] This was John Moloney, a grocer's assistant, who was probably selected because he contributed £8 towards his fare and was accompanying his four sisters.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand only five of the 45 Clonoulty single females were colonial nominees and four of these were children going to join their parents. At this time there was little point in sponsoring a single female when she was virtually assured of selection and had to pay only £1 towards her fare.<sup>77</sup>

The general percentage of arrivals under the two main schemes in the 1850s shows that after 1855 the remittance regulations became increasingly popular with the Irish. Indeed between 1848 and 1870 59% of all the Irish assisted immigrants were nominated in N.S.W. But after 1856 there was little choice except this form of emigration if they wished to reach the colony at all. Colonial complaints about the quality of Irish immigrants in 1854 and 1855 led the Commissioners increasingly to leave the Irish to the

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<sup>75</sup> *Kate*, arrived 4 December 1855, IBL/NSW, 4/4951.

<sup>76</sup> *Ellenborough*, arrived 12 October 1853, IBL/NSW, 4/4931.

<sup>77</sup> The payment for a single female under the Commissioners' general regulations in 1853 was £1. Comparative Table showing the Regulations to be observed in the Selection of Immigrants for Free Passages to New South Wales, Immigration, Return to an Address of Mr O'Shannassy, *Votes and Proceedings*, Legislative Council, Victoria, 1852. This £1 contribution remained the same under the Assisted Immigrant Act. See note 72, Chapter 1.

self selecting process of colonial nomination while they continued recruiting large numbers of general emigrants on the mainland.<sup>78</sup> In 1857 62% of Irish arrivals were colonial nominees compared to 6% of the English and by 1859 only 9% of the Irish were being selected by the Commissioners. [Figure 8.4] From 1861 the only assisted passages on offer were those requiring a deposit in the colony. In reality therefore Irish dependence on the assisted passage became, after 1856, Irish dependence on having friends or relatives in N.S.W. prepared to sponsor them. How did they use the regulations?

Perhaps the most unexpected use of the scheme was by the Irish in Ireland. Both Agent Browne in the 1850s and Agent Wise in the 1860s were aware that not all deposits came from money saved for this purpose by local residents. Browne claimed that deposit money was sent to friends in the colony by those in the U.K who would not have received a passage from the Commissioners.<sup>79</sup> During the 1860s Wise was unable to give figures for overseas as opposed to local deposits but felt that "a good deal" of money had come from "Home".<sup>80</sup> Nomination under the regulations was only possible in the colony, and Wise had become aware that many deposits were being made by "agents" in the colony on behalf of people in Ireland.<sup>81</sup>

A typical example of this kind of remittance in reverse, as it were, involved the deposit made for Sarah Logan of County Fermanagh by Nixon Fife in February 1862. Nixon Fife arrived in Sydney from County Fermanagh in 1859.<sup>82</sup> In early 1862 he received a letter from his father, William, enclosing £3 as the deposit money for Sarah Logan, a neighbour of the Fifes' in Fermanagh. William had not been keen to help Sarah but emigration to Australia was all the rage among the inhabitants of north Fermanagh in 1861:

This is over and above all the other trouble I am Giving you, But in Decency I could not avoid it, I put her off two or three times of Sending money to you to pay her passage, as the news of the letters of Australia runs through the Country like wilefire when she heard by Thomas Farmers Sons of Mullaghmor that there was a passage for £3 for Girls and £5 for Boys, she came to me ... I thought you had enough to Do, attending to your own Business without this I send you a Cheque for £3 if you can Get her a passage to Sydney for it, she says it is in Sydney she intends to stop ....<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Emigration Commissioners to Colonial Secretary, 16 February 1858, Colonial Office/N.S.W. Original Correspondence, CO.201/505.

<sup>79</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Report, 1858, p.6.

<sup>80</sup> Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, George Wise, Select Committee on Immigration., p.4, 1870, *op.cit*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Caribou*, arrived 4 October 1859, IBL/NSW, 4/4979.

<sup>83</sup> William Fife, Drumcullion, County Fermanagh, to Nixon Fife, 11 November 1861, Fife letters,

The news that the Australian letters were spreading like “wilefire” round the parishes of north Fermanagh was presumably of the recent remittance regulations of June 1861. [Figure 8.1. 1861] The enthusiasm which greeted these regulations is not hard to understand; assisted immigration had been suspended for one year from mid-1860 and civil war had broken out in the United States. Many with no previous association with N.S.W. would now have begun to consider the possibilities of that colony. But going to Sydney required a colonial sponsor which accounts for Sarah Logan’s pestering of William Fife. Once he had sent the money, William did not wish to be bothered by Sarah and instructed Nixon to address all further correspondence on the matter to her.<sup>84</sup> Despite her enthusiasm for Sydney Sarah Logan did not take up her passage to the colony.

There were probably many individual cases, like that of Sarah Logan, where the emigrant had no personal connection with their colonial sponsor. On a much larger scale, the nominations of James Madden in the 1860s have the appearance of an organised system which involved large amounts of deposit money being sent from Ireland. Madden arrived in Sydney from the parish of O’Briensbridge, County Clare, in 1851. Between September 1862 and May 1865 he sponsored 91 emigrants in his own name mainly from the parish of Broadford in east Clare. [Figure 8.6] Although some of these people had relatives in Australia none of them stated any relationship to Madden on arrival. These nominations were done on 15 different dates from 1862 to 1865 and twice, on the same day — 18 May 1864 and 18 September 1864 — as Madden, two other men, Charles Fox and James Mahoney, deposited large sums of money for emigrants from Broadford. Overall these three men accounted for the importation of 132 Clare immigrants costing £578 in deposits. The spread-out nature of the nomination dates and the numbers being sponsored suggests that someone in Ireland was co-ordinating this emigration and despatching the deposit money to Sydney. This Clare/N.S.W. emigration broker could have been the same man who had sold Margaret Lynch her Passage Certificate in 1866 — the Parish Priest of Broadford, Father John Bourke, the man in the “habit of sending out people to Australia”. Madden, Fox and Mahoney gave Bourke as the local referee for all their nominees and, as the middleman in the whole business, they probably sent the Passage Certificates to him.

Others in Ireland lacking connections in N.S.W entrusted their nomination to emigrants on their way to Sydney. Sarah Griffiths arrived in July 1859 carrying £4 with which to nominate William Reilly from County Cavan.<sup>85</sup> Travelling on the same ship as

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Fife family, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Emigration Commissioners to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 17 March 1859, Emigration

Sarah was Thomas Hennessey Corcoran from Clonoulty, County Tipperary, who went at once to join relatives in Boorowa.<sup>86</sup> In early November 1859, just four months after his arrival, Thomas nominated ten single emigrants from his home parish of Clonoulty at a cost of £40.<sup>87</sup> So soon after his arrival did he make this large deposit that it is likely that he carried the money with him on the journey to Australia. Thomas had been the schoolmaster at the Clonoulty National School situated just beside the local Catholic church in Clonoulty village.<sup>88</sup> As a National schoolteacher he would have been well known to most people in the parish and was someone to whom these young, prospective emigrants could entrust their money.

However, helping close friends and relatives to follow them to N.S.W. was the main way in which the colonial Irish used the remittance scheme. An emigration sustained by the remittances and encouragement of previous emigrants is generally described as chain migration. Bruce Elliott has analysed this phenomenon over the period 1818 to the early 1850s among Protestants from parishes in north Tipperary emigrating to lower Canada.<sup>89</sup> Linking marriage and land records on the Canadian side to records in Tipperary he concluded that this movement was a “classic example of chain migration based upon kinship”.<sup>90</sup> From the emigrants of 1818 news filtered back steadily to other members of the family, and through them to the north Tipperary protestant community, of the prospects and advantages of the new land. For these people once the decision to leave Ireland was made the choice of destination and region of settlement followed the pathway established by their friends and relations.<sup>91</sup> How common was this type of emigration among Irish assisted emigrants to N.S.W.? The Sydney shipping and nomination records contain hundreds of examples of chain migration and the process is clearly visible in the movement to N.S.W. between 1862 and 1878 of the Hinchy family and numbers of their friends and relatives.

Michael Hinchy arrived in Sydney in 1862 from the parish of Clareabbey and Killone not far from Ennis.<sup>92</sup> He came to Australia with five others all nominated from

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Commissioners to Emigration Agents and others, CO.386/130.

<sup>86</sup> *Queen of England*, arrived 8 July 1859, IBL/NSW, 4/4795.

<sup>87</sup> Nominations made by Thomas H. Corcoran, 5 November 1859, IDJ/NSW, 4/4580.

<sup>88</sup> 23rd Report of the Commissioners of National Education, Ireland, Appendix 5, p.220, *BPP*, 1857–58, Vol.20. Thomas H. Corcoran of the Clonoulty National School (Male) was awarded £1 as a premium for good order in his school.

<sup>89</sup> Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas*, Belfast, 1988.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.114.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Abyssinian*, arrived 29 May 1862, Agent's List, 4/4796.

the townland of Killerk in Killone by Patrick O’Gorman of Kiama.<sup>93</sup> The only emigrants among these nominees with a clear relationship to their sponsor were his widowed mother, Ann, and her son, Michael. All these people undoubtedly knew each other in Killone and the Commissioners probably allocated them to the same ship when they perceived that O’Gorman had sponsored them as a group.<sup>94</sup>

Although not related to his sponsor the connection was close enough for Michael Hinchy to accompany Widow Gorman, son Michael and Stephen Hare to Pat Gorman’s farm at Yellow Rock near Kiama.<sup>95</sup> Michael spent his early years in the colony at Yellow Rock where he may have been employed by Gorman as a dairy hand.<sup>96</sup> He might have worked for Gorman as payment for his deposit and nomination. Many remittance emigrants may have arrived in N.S.W. under an agreement to repay the sponsor without whose help they would not have been able to emigrate. In the case of Patrick Davies, outlined above, Patrick was willing to repay his sister the deposit money from his earnings. More certain is that within seven weeks of his arrival Michael Hinchy began a series of nominations which brought 31 people from County Clare to Sydney between 1863 and 1878. [Figure 8.7] Two things united these emigrants: a relationship with their sponsor ranging from close kinship to simple friendship and previous residence in the adjacent parishes of Clareabbey, Killone and Clondagad. Hinchy’s nominees in 1864 and 1865, whose address he gave as Ennis, were undoubtedly also from Clareabbey and Killone as the same referee was provided for each of them — the parish priest of Clarecastle. Clarecastle Catholic parish incorporated the two civil parishes of Killone and Clareabbey. [Figure 8.7]

The most obvious pattern within this chain begun by Michael Hinchy was the gradual emigration between 1862 and 1878 of the whole Hinchy family to N.S.W. In November 1862 he nominated his two younger sisters, Bridget and Nora. Further nominations by Michael followed for brother Patrick in May 1864 and his youngest brother David in 1877. Apart from Catherine and John, who appeared to have died in Ireland, all the children of Dennis and Mary Hinchy (nee O’Keefe) came to N.S.W. [Figure 8.8] For two of them, Mary and Dennis, there is no record of arrival as assisted immigrants but Mary was in Sydney when Pat arrived in 1867 and Dennis’s death

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<sup>93</sup> Nomination of Patrick O’Gorman, 22 August 1861, IDJ/NSW,???

<sup>94</sup> *Abyssinian*, arrived 29 May 1862, Agent’s list, 4/4796.

<sup>95</sup> Dispersal list, *Abyssinian*, Ship’s Papers, 9/6281, AONSW.

<sup>96</sup> “Michael was reported as being a butter maker by trade”; June Tomlinson, “The Hinchy Family History”, unpublished typescript, sent to R. Reid by June Tomlinson, Darwin, NT.

certificate places him in the colony from approximately 1876.<sup>97</sup> Finally Michael also sponsored his elderly parents in 1877. Seeking to avoid the highest passage payments he falsified their ages at nomination as 49 and 48. On arrival Dennis said he was 64 and Mary 61. [Figure 8.8]

Bringing elderly emigrants such as Dennis and Mary Hinchy to Australia was not a primary objective of the remittance scheme. Nobody of that age would have obtained a passage through application to the Commissioners in the 1850s or from the N.S.W. Agent General in the 1870s. But just as economic criteria were not applied to nominations involving orphaned brothers and sisters neither were they applied to aged relatives, and the government saw the small subsidy provided towards their emigration as reasonable. In 1851 the Commissioners drew the Colonial Secretary's attention to the economic uselessness of emigrants over 50 but felt these nominations should not be discouraged:

In the case of persons above 50 the Colony will sometimes under this rule have to pay £1 or £2 for a person wholly useless as a labourer but this slight encouragement may we think be fairly given to those who are sufficiently mindful of an old relative to pay £12 for his passage to the Colony.<sup>98</sup>

On at least two occasions Michael Hinchy appears to have deliberately deceived the immigration authorities as to the real intent of his nominations. The Sydney shipping lists record two separate arrivals for his sisters, Bridget and Nora and his brother Patrick. A Bridget and a Nora Hinchy came in 1863 and 1865 and each time they provided identical family details to the Immigration Board.<sup>99</sup> A Patrick Hinchy appeared on a ship's list in 1865 and 1867 and again both Patricks supplied similar family details.<sup>100</sup> The only evidence to indicate that Michael had intended fraud comes from his choice of venue at which to fill in the relevant forms. His first nomination of Bridget and Nora in 1862 was done by the Kiama Clerk of Petty Sessions. This was the closest courthouse to Yellow Rock. His next nomination of them in November 1863 was done after the arrival of the first Nora and Bridget in August 1863. This took place at Wollongong Courthouse and involved a much longer journey but by going to Wollongong Michael would have avoided any awkward questions from the Clerk at Kiama.<sup>101</sup> [Figure 8.7. Bridget/Nora

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<sup>97</sup> Death Certificate, Dennis Hinchy, Lismore, N.S.W., 9 January 1902, June Tomlinson.

<sup>98</sup> Emigration Commissioners to Colonial Office, 6 June 1851, Emigration Commissioners/Entry Books of Correspondence, CO.386/69.

<sup>99</sup> *Spitfire*, arrived 23 August 1863, IBL/NSW, 4/4985; *Wallasea*, arrived 27 September 1865, IBL/NSW, 4/9990.

<sup>100</sup> *Hornet*, arrived 25 January 1865, IBL/NSW, 4/4989; *Burlington*, arrived 16 February 1867, IBL/NSW, 4/4992.

<sup>101</sup> Nominations of Michael Hinchy, 26 November 1862, Bench of Magistrates, Kiama, record of immigration deposits, 1857-1886, 4/5574, AONSW. Nominations of Michael Hinchy, 20

Hinchy. 1862 63/64.]

What explains Michael's behaviour? The Hinchys were a poor family; in November 1864 Michael returned the Passage Certificates he had sent to Ireland for Bridget and Nora in November 1863 because they had been unable to "provide costs for their outfit".<sup>102</sup> Perhaps the first Passage Certificates were sent home to be sold slightly above their actual deposit price to help finance the emigration of the real Bridget and Nora in 1865. Evidence that it was the real Nora and Bridget who arrived in 1865 comes from Bridget Hinchy's death certificate in 1868. Michael Hinchy registered Bridget's death and his statement that his sister had been in the colony for only three years supports an 1865 arrival.<sup>103</sup> Similarly the first Passage Certificate for Patrick Hinchy could have been sold to someone who impersonated him on arrival. In making the first of these family nominations Michael would have needed to deceive the authorities as he had no way of knowing who might purchase the certificates in Ireland. It is difficult to think of an innocent explanation for these multiple nominations. Had Michael been sending for friends or relatives presumably he would have nominated them under their correct names in the first place.

Moving out from the immediate family circle Michael sponsored his cousins, the Roughans and the Fawls. The first Roughan to arrive was Anne in 1864 and she was followed to Sydney by brother Thomas in 1865 and sister Mary in 1877. Although all three were nominated by Michael Hinchy only Anne declared him to be a cousin. Another cousin, Bridget Fawl, arrived in 1865. The O'Keefe family sponsored by Michael, who came in 1864, did not give him as a relative but they may have been cousins as Michael's mother was an O'Keefe.<sup>104</sup> All of his other nominations expressed no closer connection to Michael than that of "friend". For them he had simply acted as the means to bring them to Sydney. [Figure 8.7]

The second stage in the emigration of Bruce Elliott's Tipperary Protestants involved them in following relatives not just to Canada but to the the same areas of settlement within Canada. Many of those related to Michael Hinchy behaved in this way once in the colony. By 1867 Michael had left Kiama for the Clarence River district on the north coast where, from 1862, land had been for sale under the Free Selection Act. In 1867 in Sydney he married one of his nominees, his cousin Anne Roughan, who had been

November 1863, IDJ/NSW, 4/4585, AONSW.

<sup>102</sup> Michael Hinchy to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 24 November 1864, IC/NSW, 9/6240.

<sup>103</sup> Death Certificate, Bridget Hinchy, South Arm, Clarence River, 29 April 1868, June Tomlinson.

<sup>104</sup> Baptismal entries, family of Dennis Hinchy and Mary O'Keefe, 1837-1861, Killerk, Parish of Clareabbey, Clare Heritage Centre, Corofin, County Clare.



working since her arrival as a servant in Darling Point.<sup>105</sup> On his wedding certificate Michael described himself as a “farmer” from the Clarence River and the couple set up home there.<sup>106</sup>

Michael Hinchy was not the first Clarecastle man into the Shark Creek area of the Clarence. He may have been lured there by Patrick McMahon who paid his own way to the colony in 1862 and made straight for the north coast. In 1863 the same ship which brought Michael Hinchy’s first group of nominees to Sydney also brought Pat McMahon’s wife Catherine, two year old child and sister-in-law, Sarah Mulville.<sup>107</sup> According to Catherine, Pat was living at Clarence River.<sup>108</sup> From that point on a number of Hinchys and their friends and relatives began turning up in the Shark Creek area. In 1876 at the Clarence Patrick Hinchy married Norah Mulville, another of Michael’s nominees and Catherine McMahon’s sister.<sup>109</sup> Like brother Michael, Patrick had selected land and was officially described as a “dairy farmer”.<sup>110</sup> Pat Mulville, brought out by Michael in 1865, may also have settled at the Clarence as the family name is closely associated with the small farming families of the district.<sup>111</sup> When Michael’s parents came in 1878 they settled with him at Shark Creek and both of them died there.<sup>112</sup> Brother Dennis also made his way to the north coast although there is no evidence that he settled at Shark Creek. His death was recorded at Lismore Hospital, not far from the Clarence, in 1902.<sup>113</sup> The three remaining Hinchys — Honora, Mary and David — all settled in Sydney and spent the whole of their lives in N.S.W. in that city.<sup>114</sup> [Figure 8.8]

At Shark Creek the Hinchys were surrounded by other Irish families, some of whom were from County Clare. But in general the Shark Creek Irish community was

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<sup>105</sup> “He [Michael] was a resident of the Clarence River area when he married Anne Roughan on 25 July 1867 at Woollahra, N.S.W.”, June Tomlinson, “Hinchy Family”; James Moloney, *Shark Creek Tales*, no place of publication, no date, ISBN No.0 95934883 2 8, p.4.

<sup>106</sup> June Tomlinson, “Hinchy Family”.

<sup>107</sup> Moloney, *op.cit.*, p.44.

<sup>108</sup> *Spitfire*, arrived 24 August 1863, IBL/NSW, 4/4985.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Marriage certificate, Patrick Hinchy and Honora Mulville, South Arm, Clarence River, 27 August 1876, June Tomlinson.

<sup>111</sup> June Tomlinson, “Hinchy Family”.

<sup>112</sup> Moloney, *op.cit.*, p.26.

<sup>113</sup> *La Hogue*, arrived 21 October 1878, IBL/NSW, 4/5007; Death certificate, Mary Hinchy, Shark Creek, 23 November 1879; Death certificate, Dennis Hinchy Senior, Cross Creek, Clarence River, 19 March 1892, June Tomlinson.

<sup>114</sup> Death certificate, Dennis Hinchy Junior, Lismore, 9 January 1902, June Tomlinson.

drawn from a wide range of counties scattered throughout Ireland with no one county or sub-region disproportionately represented among the settlers. The Shark Creek Pioneer Memorial, unveiled in 1923 and recording the names of those families who had settled at the Creek in the 1860s, included a mixture of immigrants from Clare, Tipperary, Galway, Tyrone, Leitrim, Wicklow, Dublin, Cavan and Limerick.<sup>115</sup>

A region of the colony which more closely resembled Elliott's chain migration pattern was the Kiama district in the southern Illawarra. At Kiama, as among the Tipperary Protestants heading for Canada, dozens of interrelated families from the same region of Ireland settled next to each other and over a 50 year period encouraged other members of the family to come out to them as assisted emigrants. By 1861 Kiama was a very Irish place. Just over a quarter of its population were Irish born compared to 15.6% for N.S.W.<sup>116</sup> Among the 45% of the colony's population born in the U.K the Irish formed 35%; for Kiama the corresponding figures were 49% U.K born of whom 53% were Irish.<sup>117</sup> Between 1857 and 1867 the Irish dominated local immigration from the U.K.; during those years 86% of the 836 nominations at the Kiama courthouse were made to Ireland. [Figure 8.9] Of these Irish nominations 72% involved sending for emigrants from counties in Ulster and 66% of all Kiama Irish nominees lived in the adjacent counties of Fermanagh, Tyrone and Donegal. Even more remarkable was that 40% of all the Irish sent for from Kiama were from one county, Fermanagh. [Figure 8.9] This Ulster concentration was of long standing in the region and persisted to the end of assisted immigration in the 1880s.<sup>118</sup> Typical of the extended emigration pattern of these Ulster/Kiama emigrants was the movement to Kiama of the children and grandchildren of John and Elizabeth Sproule (nee Wallace) of the parish of Dromore, County Tyrone. [Figure 8.10]

The Sproules were preceded to Australia by their uncle, James Wallace, who paid his own way out about 1837.<sup>119</sup> James's mother was an Osborne and this family, prominent among the large farmers of Dromore, already had extensive connections with the Illawarra district.<sup>120</sup> Alick Osborne, a naval surgeon who made many voyages to Sydney in the 1820s and 1830s in charge of convicts, recruited one of the first shiploads

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<sup>115</sup> June Tomlinson, "Hinchy Family".

<sup>116</sup> Information on the Shark Creek Irish settlers from James Moloney, Society of Australian Genealogists, Sydney.

<sup>117</sup> 1861, *Census of New South Wales*, Sydney, 1862, p.14.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p.338.

<sup>119</sup> Bench of Magistrates, Kiama, record of immigration deposits, 1857-1886, 4/5574, AONSW.

<sup>120</sup> Kerrie Alexander, *Pioneer Origins: A Family History*, Kiama, no date, p.54.

of government assisted emigrants in the region round his home parish of Dromore in 1836 and 1837.<sup>121</sup> This may have been the catalyst for young James Wallace not just to emigrate but to make for the Illawarra where the Osborne brothers were already substantial landowners. By 1840 James himself was established on 148 acres in the Jamberoo valley behind Kiama.<sup>122</sup>

Although James Wallace paid his own passage, all his sister's children and grandchildren who subsequently came to N.S.W did so as assisted emigrants. Among them the only one not to be nominated by a relative under the remittance regulations was John Sproule who arrived as a bounty immigrant in 1841. [Figure 8.10] Nineteen years later in 1862 John nominated a number of his nieces and nephews all of whom emigrated and settled round Kiama. One of these emigrants, John Gorrall brought out two of his sisters within a year of his arrival. The first of John Sproule's sisters to arrive was Jane Alexander sponsored by John in 1863. [Figure 8.10] Four of her children — Francis, Annie, Eliza Jane and John — had already been brought out by their uncle. Jane Alexander was accompanied by her husband James and seven more of their children. Finally in 1882, 41 years after his own arrival in the colony, John Sproule sent for his oldest brother Hugh, wife Mary and their two sons.

The attraction of Kiama as an emigrant destination for these Ulster people was a mixture of land and family. In the early 1840s numbers of bounty emigrants from Tyrone and Fermanagh had gone to the Illawarra, almost as soon as they landed in Sydney drawn by the opportunities for employment created by the more affluent Ulster families like the Osbornes. By 1840 Henry Osborne from Dromore, County Tyrone, had built up substantial landholdings in the southern Illawarra and he was in the habit of employing recently arrived Ulster immigrants.<sup>123</sup> In 1843 a large group of Ulster bounty immigrants, brought together by George Grey from Magheraculmoney, County Fermanagh, was able to escape from wage labour and establish themselves as tenant farmers near Kiama.

The group, mainly from parishes in north Fermanagh and all of them related to or

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<sup>121</sup> Henry Lee, "Henry Osborne", K. Johnston and R. Reid (eds), *The Irish Australians*, Sydney and Belfast, 1984, pp.24-25.

<sup>122</sup> For Alick Osborne's career as a naval surgeon see Charles Bateson, *The Convict Ships*, Sydney, 1983. Osborne described his voyage to Australia on the *Adam Lodge* in 1836 with government emigrants selected by him in his evidence to the Select Committee on British Immigration, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1837, pp.61-64. Osborne styled himself "His Majesty's Emigration Agent for Australia, Omagh".

<sup>123</sup> For a description of the three Osborne brothers at this time see diary of Lady Franklin, wife of Governor Franklin of Van Dieman's Land, May 1839, Monday May 13, quoted in K Henderson and T. Henderson, *Early Illawarra: People, Houses, Life*, Canberra, 1983, p.123; Kerrie Alexander, *op.cit.*, p.54.

acquainted with Grey, settled on the Kiama estate of James Robb.<sup>124</sup> Robb allocated each of them a portion of land on what was known as the clearing lease system. Under this agreement the land and all its produce were given rent free for an agreed number of years provided it was cleared and made suitable for farming.<sup>125</sup> This gave many of these Ulstermen a start and by the mid-1850s some were able to begin purchasing land of their own while others continued to lease the land they had cleared.<sup>126</sup> These Fermanagh settlers began using the remittance scheme to send for a wide range of friends and relatives both to help them on their own farms and to give these new arrivals the opportunity to branch out for themselves on the land. [Figure 8.11] George Grey, as we have already seen, was able to fraudulently manipulate the provisions of the land and deposit regulations to bring out emigrants from his home parish intending to settle down at once as farmers not to hire out as labourers. According to Anthony Sheffield, who in 1859 ran a Kiama labour agency, few of these Kiama nominees came with any intention of labouring or taking service in the homes of the middle classes:

... at present the demand for female servants is Very Considerable and it is quite impossible to answer all the applications, the principal reason is, that this District being so fertile and Dairy produce paying so well that numbers of young men have of themselves been induced to take clearing leases and have taken to themselves Wives of those, formerly servants and doing remarkably well, and it therefore leaves this place completely in want of Labour.<sup>127</sup>

The success with which the Irish used the remittance regulations to surround themselves with kith and kin was to a large extent the undoing of the whole system. In the late 1850s Agent Browne praised the Irish for their willingness to use the regulations seeing in this “a feature of their character deserving of the highest commendation”.<sup>128</sup> Unlike the English, they wished not only to reunite themselves with relatives left at home but also to offer them “the means of participating in the advantages of their own altered state”.<sup>129</sup> Such commendation from Browne was not characteristic of his general attitude to the Irish. This praise appeared in his composite report for 1856–57 when Irish remittance and general immigrants were outnumbered two to one by English and Scots selected by the Commissioners. But the alarm was soon raised in the 1860s as the pattern

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<sup>124</sup> Frank McCaffrey, *The McCaffrey Family History*, p.1, pamphlet reprint of series of articles which appeared in the *Kiama Reporter*, no date but written early this century, in possession of R. Reid, Canberra.

<sup>125</sup> Ross Wilson, *Index to the Family Trees*, p.28 “Settlement at Kiama”, no place of publication, no date, sent by R. Wilson to R. Reid in 1984.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Anthony Sheffield to N.S.W. Immigration Agent, 11 April 1859, IC/NSW, 9/6218.

<sup>129</sup> N.S.W. Immigration Agent’s Report, 1856/57, p.5.

of arrivals under a system relying totally on remittances became clear.

In 1864, when the Immigration Agent's reports for 1860 to 1862 were tabled in the Legislative Assembly, the *Sydney Morning Herald* quickly pointed out that five government immigrants out of every seven were now Irish.<sup>130</sup> The family loyalty demonstrated by this immigration was commendable but, as the *Sydney Morning Herald* suggested, this preponderance of one race could "upset the otherwise useful blending of all the races of the United Kingdom".<sup>131</sup> In the Legislative Assembly that old opponent of Irish immigration, Reverend John Dunmore Lang, was more direct — under the current immigration system a wrong was being done to England and Scotland.<sup>132</sup> Backed by Lang, and encouraged by a growing opinion among the working classes that assisted immigrants drove down local wage levels, the government in 1864 took the opportunity provided by declining revenue to suspend temporarily the immigration vote.<sup>133</sup> In 1867 economic recession led to the final cancellation of the regulations.<sup>134</sup> They were not revived until the middle of the 1870s.

Whatever role anti-Irish feeling may have played in the demise of the regulations there is evidence that the scheme had been gradually losing its appeal after 1863. Nominations reached a peak of 5,394 in 1863 then gradually fell away to a mere 867 in 1867.<sup>135</sup> After the temporary failure to allocate funds in 1864 £40,000 was voted in 1865 and 1866.<sup>136</sup> £11,000 of this sum remained unspent at the cancellation of the regulations in December 1867.<sup>137</sup> Agent Wise concluded that by 1867 most of those who wished to come out to join their friends and relations had done so.<sup>138</sup> Just as likely an explanation was resistance in Ireland and the colony to the significant increases in deposits demanded by the May 1863 regulations. At £7 for a single male the deposit now represented nearly half the contract price charged by the shipping companies to bring him to Sydney.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 January 1864, Editorial.

<sup>132</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 March 1864, Editorial.

<sup>133</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 9 March 1864, Editorial.

<sup>134</sup> *The Empire*, 7 March 1864, Editorial.

<sup>135</sup> Evidence of N.S.W. Immigration Agent, George Wise, Select Committee on Immigration, p.2, 1870, *op.cit.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>137</sup> Immigration vote, 1865, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, 1865, Vol.2, p.61; Immigration vote, 1866, *Votes and Proceedings*, N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, 1866, Vol.2, p.57.

<sup>138</sup> Evidence of George Wise, Select Committee on Immigration, p.7, 1870, *op.cit.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>141</sup> The contract price per statute adult charged by the shippers to the Emigration Commissioners in the

When the deposit was added to other costs such as the compulsory clothing for the voyage and fares within the U.K then a Sydney passage must have begun to look a lot less attractive than one to New York. If the nominations of James Madden are taken as a rough guide to the interest in emigrating to N.S.W. in Broadford, County Clare, this interest fell away sharply after 1863. [Figure 8.6] In 1865, with the end of the American Civil War, the demand for Madden's services as a nominator declined still further.

The effects of the remittance system on the overall pattern of Irish immigration to N.S.W. between 1848 and 1870 are fairly clear. First, by allowing nomination in the colony, and then complaining of the numbers of Irish being sent by the Commissioners, N.S.W. placed the selection of its Irish immigrants in the hands of the local Irish community from about the middle of the 1850s. This accounts for the 26% of the Irish who arrived under the remittance scheme in that decade compared with 7% of the English. Second, nomination simply reinforced the regional character of the movement to Sydney which emerged in the bounty emigration of the early 1840s and continued into the 1880s. The persistence of this regional emigration pattern was virtually assured once the Commissioners stopped actively recruiting in Ireland in 1856. Third, the regulations encouraged the movement of complex groupings of interrelated kin and friends, emigrating sometimes over a long period of time, from specific parishes to specific destinations in N.S.W. The emigrants from west Ulster to Kiama were typical of this type of "chain migration" but there were undoubtedly similar movements from other areas yet to be fully uncovered in the data. Finally, despite its problems, the scheme provided the colonial Irish with a safe and well organised mechanism for allowing them to exercise what many saw as their obligation to family and friends. When the regulations of August 1857 were published they were warmly welcomed by the *Freeman's Journal* whose editor had no doubt that, as the choice of future emigrants was now to be left largely to colonial residents, a large portion would be from the "fair Isle of the West — the land of affection and endearing family ties".

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1860s varied from £14/14/6d. in 1861-62-63 to £12/15/6d. in 1865; N.S.W. Immigration Agent's Reports, 1860-69.

## CONCLUSION

Assisted emigration was central to the development of an Irish population in mid-19th century New South Wales; without it the journey to Australia would simply not have been an emigration option for the Irish. Moreover the physical problems confronting the trans-oceanic Irish emigrant of the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s were largely solved for the Australian assisted emigrants by the Emigration Commissioners. The evidence of the journey to and arrival in Sydney shows that, compared to the North Atlantic passage, the experiences of these Irish emigrants were indeed less harsh and less beset by the need to be constantly on their guard against the perils of a strange environment.

The extent, however, to which this relatively well managed transition from homeland to colony helped produce an Irish/Australian community less prone to the hostile anti-British attitudes of the Irish/Americans is more difficult to measure. Certainly when in 1858 the N.S.W. Donegal Relief Committee asked the colonists to open their purses to assist the emigration of the wretched of Tullaghobegley, they carefully aimed their criticism not at the British government but at a system of landlordism which they knew would find little support among either the Irish or most British settlers in New South Wales. In general the long voyage to the colony, while it would at times have made the Irish Catholics aware of those religious and racial elements which divided them from the majority of British emigrants, was soon felt to have been a common experience, something shared by all those who had braved the ocean together as government emigrants. In 1878 *The Sydney Mail* knew its audience when it published an illustrated article on the arrival of the government immigrant ship, *Samuel Plimsoll*. The writer began by acknowledging that he was merely describing "phases incident to Australian colonization which very many of our readers must in their time have experienced".<sup>1</sup>

Socially government emigration brought to New South Wales people from the middle and lower segments of mid-century Irish rural society. More precisely, if the central Tipperary emigrants from Clonoulty were fairly typical of the whole then the majority of the Irish were from the lower rather than the middle rank — the fifth and sixth gradations in the scale — rather than the "petit bourgeois". However, some emigrants from a strong farming background were also to be found on government ships. There is nothing to indicate that the emigrants from the Protestant parishes of Tyrone and Fermanagh, or the Catholic parishes of east Clare and the Shannon lowlands of north

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<sup>1</sup> *The Sydney Mail*, 10 August 1878, p.209.

Limerick, came from economic circumstances vastly different to the Clonoulty people. From these core regions of the Sydney emigration came a steady stream of families and individuals representing the main socioeconomic groups in the Irish countryside — the landless labourers, cottier farmers, small farmers and, occasionally, the big farmers. But among the emigrants, especially up to 1850, there were numbers of extremely poor, often destitute individuals and families; these were the orphan girls, the wives and children of emancipated convicts, and those brought from Tullaghobegley, County Donegal between 1859 and 1864.

Apart from economic considerations what attracted many of the assisted Irish to Sydney was the existence in New South Wales of numerous friends and relatives who had preceded them to the colony. The Irish immigrant community of the 1850s and 1860s was built on the patterns established in the first great wave of assisted immigration of the late 1830s and early 1840s. Thousands of case histories of so called “chain migration”, such as those of families like the Hincheyes from Clare or the Sproules and Alexanders from Tyrone, could be compiled from the Sydney immigration records. This family emigration explains the continuing concentration of the Australian emigration in parts of Munster and south west Ulster from 1848, and particularly after 1855 when nomination in the colony became essential for an assisted passage. Why these areas predominated from the very beginning of the government schemes in the late 1830s will require further investigation.

Given its substantial free emigration connections with New South Wales Clonoulty in County Tipperary merits the title of an “Australian” parish. But what the people of Clonoulty today have chosen to commemorate of their historic link with Australia is a story of exile and defiance of British rule in Tipperary — the levelling of the Ballagh dispensary in 1815 by a band of local men angered that it had been commandeered as a barracks from which to police the surrounding district. For this action “Ned” Ryan, the future “King of Galong Castle” at Boorowa, New South Wales, and 12 of his companions, all transported in 1817, have had their names inscribed on a large, stone memorial in Ballagh village. It was an event full of those romantic and nationalistic ingredients with which many Irish, and many Australians of Irish descent, find it easy to identify. The hundreds who later followed them to Sydney as assisted emigrants have left no trace of their departure although this gradual haemorrhaging of Clonoulty’s population had far deeper implications for the life of the parish and parts of New South Wales than that dramatic incident in 1815. While it was the convicts who first established an Irish presence in New South Wales, it was the assisted emigrants who ensured that the Irish would play a key role in the development of a free colonial society in the second half of the 19th century.



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