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South Tipperary on the eve of the Great Famine

By Denis G. Marnane

1. – Introduction

In March 1846 the Clonmel correspondent of *The Tipperary Vindicator* reported that, having travelled through the region, he was at a loss for words to describe “the utter want and destitution of thousands of the labouring population”. “Many families”, he went on to write, “are literally without the means of existence”.¹ The scale of what was happening meant that even the most articulate journalism was unable to encompass it.

On Monday, 20 April, 1846 some 200 men employed by Cashel Relief Committee in removing a hill on a road to the east of the town gathered in an upper room in Cashel Town Hall. Such was their panic to be paid that in the crush the floor gave way and, apart from the many who were injured, two men were killed.² In the context of mass tragedy the individual dilemma is usually overlooked. Contemporary accounts of this incident do not narrate the dire consequences visited on the families of the dead and injured, the sole source of their survival removed.

In December 1846 in Cashel Workhouse about 35 boys were confined to bed with ulcerated legs, due in large part to the fact that their schoolroom and other places in the workhouse had been indiscriminately covered with fresh lime.³ This brief report from the Cashel Union’s medical officer is today easily read in the minutes held at the County Library in Thurles. Such a report, cold in language and brisk in intention, makes it all too easy not even to think about the fear and pain of the child – injured once by the cold embrace of the workhouse itself and then lacerated a second time by the burning resulting from official carelessness.

Some of the most important recent studies of the Famine have concentrated on quantitative analysis, rigorous intellectual exercises that allow us to know more about the causes, impact and effects of the Famine. However, there is no formula that will allow the suffering to be measured.

Sometime between 1 and 2 p.m. on Saturday 10 March 1849 an elderly widow named Mary Brien was murdered in her cabin at Kilfeacle.⁴ The crime was committed by a neighbour John Ryan (Jack), the motive being the small quantity of oaten meal that the woman had in her possession, and which was later recovered from Ryan’s house.* It was this crime that the Cashel antiquary John Davis White remembered when, a half century later, he came to write his memoirs.⁵

One of the things that promoted the survival of such memories was the fact that ballads were composed, and White was a collector of such commentaries. Unfortunately, the state of historical studies was such fifty years ago that the centenary of the Famine was allowed pass without much effort to recover and record the local experience of the disaster.⁶ But then perhaps we should not be surprised because even to this day the Famine allows no easy understanding or comfortable consensus.

One of the more recent surveys of the Famine, published in 1986, aroused a measure of criticism because of what was perceived as the writer’s dispassionate analysis and her

*See penultimate par. of article by Edward Delaney in this issue of this Journal. – Editor.



mitigation of the British response.⁷ In contrast, one of the most recent comprehensive surveys, that of the American historian James S. Donnelly Jr., was much more ready to assign blame.⁸

One of the earliest works to see the Famine in stark black and white terms was John Mitchel's *Jail Journal*, first published in America in 1854. When Mitchel wrote that "in four years, British policy ... would succeed in killing fully two millions, and forcing nearly another million to flee the country", he provided a powerful weapon in the propaganda war against British rule in Ireland.⁹ In terms of popular perception this point of view still exerts a powerful influence, not least because it seems to render unnecessary the difficult task of uncovering the economic and social framework of pre-Famine Ireland, which might reveal that there was a measure of internal responsibility.

When Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa published his *Recollections* in his New York newspaper between 1896 and 1898, he fully subscribed to the Mitchel view of the Famine and was a good deal more vehement about it. One of his chapter titles has the merit of directness – "How England Starved Ireland". O'Donovan was born in 1831 and so was old enough to have direct and powerful memories of the disaster. Due weight must be given to the point of view of those who lived through the late 1840s.

However, today's reader must surely balk when, following an account of how the grain crops were seized for rent, O'Donovan wrote: "The people died of starvation by thousands. The English press and the English people rejoiced that the Irish were at last conquered; that God at last was fighting strongly at the side of the English".¹⁰ A thing does not have to be true to be powerful. It was hardly an accident that the genocide argument was especially influential among Irish-Americans.

While Mitchel and O'Donovan Rossa arrived at their view of the Famine from memory and experience, Karl Marx looking at the situation from an economic perspective similarly blamed British rule in Ireland, though a statement such as: "The potato blight resulted from the exhaustion of the soil, it was a product of English rule", casts doubt on his understanding of Irish agriculture. In this same speech, delivered in London in 1867, Marx put forward the idea that another result of the Famine was that the Irish population had deteriorated physically. "There has been an absolute increase in the number of lame, blind, deaf and dumb, and insane in the decreasing population."¹¹ Not surprisingly, this was one line of argument not taken up by the Mitchel-O'Donovan Rossa school of historical exegesis.

The *bête noire* of those who espoused belief in British culpability regarding the Famine was Charles Edward Trevelyan, assistant secretary to the Treasury and the official responsible for both guiding and implementing government policy during the late 1840s. When Cecil Woodham-Smith published her account of the Famine in 1962, Trevelyan was the dominant personality. Her book *The Great Hunger* is still in print and has been very influential. In telling her story the author did two things that very much colour popular ideas about the Famine. By concentrating on those parts of the country where the impact of the blight was greatest, the impression was given that what held good for the south-west of the country applied to the rest of the island.

Secondly, she appeared to subscribe to the bleak nationalist theory of government conspiracy. At the very end of her account she wrote: "The British Government has been accused, and not only by the Irish, of wishing to exterminate the Irish people, as Cromwell wished to 'extirpate' them, and as Hitler wished to exterminate the Jews".¹² There could hardly be a more vehement condemnation of Trevelyan and his political masters than one implicitly linking them with Cromwell and Hitler.

Trevelyan was not a sympathetic figure and, so far as Irish people are concerned, he did

himself no favours by writing a self-serving account of what he called the "Irish Crisis" which was published early in 1848. Adopting an Olympian attitude that revealed the paradox at the heart of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, he wrote that posterity would ascribe to the Famine the beginning of a "salutary revolution" in the habits of a nation, and that in time it would be recognised that the Supreme Being had "educed permanent good out of transient evil".¹³

Woodham-Smith's view of Trevelyan was accepted and given even wider currency in Robert Kee's television history of Ireland and the associated book. One voice that was raised in Trevelyan's defence was that of Austin Bourke, the Irish expert on the potato blight, who emphasised that Trevelyan was but a civil servant and that the villain (if there had to be a villain) was his political master Lord John Russell, who became Prime Minister in June 1846, replacing the more sympathetic Robert Peel.¹⁴

The explanation of any complicated phenomenon is rendered more digestible, though not necessarily more accurate, by concentrating on personalities. Trevelyan is often seen as a Coriolanus-like character, full of disdain for the poor and contemptuous of their demands for food: "They said they were an-hungry; sighed forth proverbs, that hunger broke stone walls, that dogs must eat, that meat was made for mouths, that the gods sent not corn for the rich men only". Keeping Trevelyan company in viewing Irish misery with a large measure of detachment and utilitarian certainty was George Nicholls, the man responsible for the introduction of the Poor Law to Ireland. In 1856 Nicholls wrote his *History of the Irish Poor Law*, which was basically a chronological account of the administrative response to Irish poverty. Towards the end of his account he quotes a letter from himself in 1853 to Lord John Russell in which he discusses the changes in Ireland since he had previously visited it in 1842.

The tone of clinical detachment and professional righteousness cannot but be disturbing to an Irish reader. "In the interim [1842-53] the country has suffered from famine and pestilence, and the Poor Law has been subjected to a most severe trial".¹⁵ Nicholls continued in self-congratulatory vein about what he regarded as the success of the Poor Law machinery in dealing with post-Famine poverty in Ireland. The fact that hundreds of thousands of people had died was more a matter of administrative convenience than of national catastrophe. It was a bit like emphasising that the fire alarms had worked following a conflagration that had consumed an entire family.

L.M. Cullen wrote that "the Famine was less a national disaster than a social and regional one".¹⁶ This statement does not minimize the importance of the Famine; rather it makes the important point that the experience of the Famine differed from one part of the country to another. The experience of the Famine in South Tipperary has not previously been subject to detailed analysis. Such an analysis requires more than the kind of anecdotal evidence, examples of which are given at the beginning of this article.

Tone is also a matter of some difficulty. Illustrations given above show the extremes of hysterical partisanship on the one hand and clinical detachment on the other. A middle ground is, perhaps, a kind of sympathetic detachment, whereby the social and economic factors underpinning the region are examined, thereby allowing some understanding of the particular impact of the Famine on one region of the country, namely, South Tipperary.

This article on South Tipperary in the years before 1845 will be followed in 1996 by a detailed discussion of the Famine in the region, and the series will conclude in 1997 with an article outlining the impact of the disaster on population, land ownership and the rural economy. In a review of Mary E. Daly's *The Famine in Ireland* Joel Mokyr wrote that "the logic of spending half of a book on the Famine discussing pre-Famine demography, economic development and



social conditions is compelling".¹⁷ The following article therefore sets out to do just that for South Tipperary.

Any discussion of the pre-Famine period, whether encompassing the entire country or one particular region, will depend a great deal on three great compendiums of government sponsored information, the 1836 *Inquiry into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland*, the mass of information gathered during the 1841 *Census* and the work of the *Commissioners of inquiry into the state of the law and practice in relation to the occupation of land in Ireland*, the Devon Commission, which reported in 1845.

2. – The View from Outside

In 1813 the Rev. James Hall, while on a tour through Ireland, travelled from Carrick-on-Suir to Clonmel. Just as today's traveller to exotic climes would consider such things as water purification tablets and insect repellent as essential items of luggage, so the Rev. Hall was appropriately equipped.¹⁸

"As I was now approaching to what are called the wilds of Ireland, I began to look out for my cross bars of steel, a thing that can be carried in the pocket and which costing four or five shillings only may be screwed on the inside of a room door so as to prevent any person from coming to rob or disturb one in the night."

Hall, like all the other visitors to Tipperary during the pre-Famine period, had heard the stories; it was a dangerous place.

In 1831 a character called Grey together with his son and daughter also visited Carrick and Clonmel. The former town was described as "one of the most disloyal, turbulent places in the south of Ireland". As their carriage was surrounded by a mob of beggars, the son described the scene: "There is something in the countenances of the people here, particularly lawless and ferocious. How many idle people there are standing about, all seemingly able-bodied men and capable of great exertion. In such idleness, there must be mischief". To which the father replied: "Carrick is, I understand, one of the most lawless places in Tipperary, a county famous for its turbulent disposition".

Having moved on to Clonmel, where an election campaign was in progress, the pair were a little happier, finding their surroundings more civilized. In the words of the father: "the appearance of the Carrick men seemed to fit them for any deed of blood but the Clonmel people had a less ferocious aspect".¹⁹

Henry David Inglis was a traveller through Ireland whose account published a year later in 1835 (the year of his death) was destined to become very widely known and reach a fifth edition by 1838. He was born in Edinburgh, was widely travelled and had a much more open mind than the authors quoted above.²⁰ As he travelled from Cashel to Tipperary he passed through Golden, "which is reputed to be one of the most disturbed spots in Ireland; and here have been perpetrated some of those inhuman acts, at which humanity shudders"²¹

Among the crimes connected with that area and mentioned by Inglis was the murder of the Rev. Irwin Whitty, the incumbent of that parish, who was killed in January 1832 during the Tithe War.²² The reaction of Inglis to this question of violence was measured:²³

"That there is much exaggeration, no one who travels through Ireland, and inquires upon the spot, can doubt: but that frightful examples of ferocity, hatred and revenge have occurred, and do occasionally occur, is but too certain: and, from every respectable quarter, I heard but one opinion as to the necessity of a Coercion Bill. Almost every outrage and murder that has disgraced Ireland,



has arisen out of one of two causes – either competition for land or tithes; and until means be found for reducing the former ... it will be in the power of any restless, wrongheaded or interested man to agitate Ireland.”

The concept of “outside” is not just geographical. It was also a matter of attitude. Ireland’s problems did not remain untreated because of lack of government inquiries. Unfortunately, while the patient was much poked and prodded and many wise heads nodded over a variety of possible nostrums, the question of diagnosis and treatment remained problematic. Most of those “experts” who gave their opinions to government inquiries were “outsiders” in the sense that they saw things differently from the mass of the population. The gut-reaction to agrarian violence, for example, was to suppress it rather than deal with its causes.

In 1839 one such inquiry, a select committee of the House of Lords on the subject of crime and outrage in Ireland, reported its findings. George Warburton, who had been a leading constabulary official, declared that “Tipperary and Limerick are the two counties in Ireland where the peasantry are the worst disposed and most difficult to manage”.²⁴ Another witness, also involved in the business of law and order, attested to the skill of the Tipperaryman in throwing stones: “With a stone of two-and-a-half pounds weight, a Tipperary peasant will strike an object with as much precision at ten yards distance as the generality of persons would strike an object with a pistol ball at that distance”.²⁵

In the opinion of the Crown Prosecutor for Tipperary there were basically two causes for this level of outrage. On the one hand there was the violence visited by the lower orders on each other in the form of riots and faction fights – in other words natural disposition, exacerbated by a fondness for alcohol. On the other hand there was violence used as a method of regulating the land market.²⁶

Witnesses like these men, whose daily work brought them into close contact with the consequences of violence, found it very difficult to see beyond the symptoms of violence to its causes. Such a vision of course would have raised uncomfortable questions about the basis on which society was ordered. Analysis was for the most part facile. It was a bit like ascribing cannibalism to vitamin deficiency.

Probably the best known of the pre-Famine visitors to Ireland were Mr and Mrs S.C. Hall, who toured Tipperary just a few years before the Famine. Their lengthy account of the county includes its history, folklore, commercial activity and (in a manner that now appears stagey) a benign if condescending account of its people. Their account of the county does not emphasise its reputation for violence and they very much stressed that violence was not related to questions of religion but rather was connected with land. Their view of the Tipperary countryside was both naive and unintentionally ironic in the context of the disaster to come. They wrote about the clearing of estates of their tenants as being consigned to history, unaware that massive clearances were less than a decade away.

The Halls confidently declared that “the landlords who must be characterised as bad landlords are now very limited in number”, and delivered the standard line that most problems had been due to middlemen, those who held large amounts of land on lease and exploited both the land and the sub-tenants to whom they rented it. However, even though middlemen were a dying breed, the consequences of their system, too many men in competition for too little land, still blighted the countryside. In common with other “outside” views of the region, the Halls had difficulty seeing through the violent excesses of the system to the system itself.²⁷

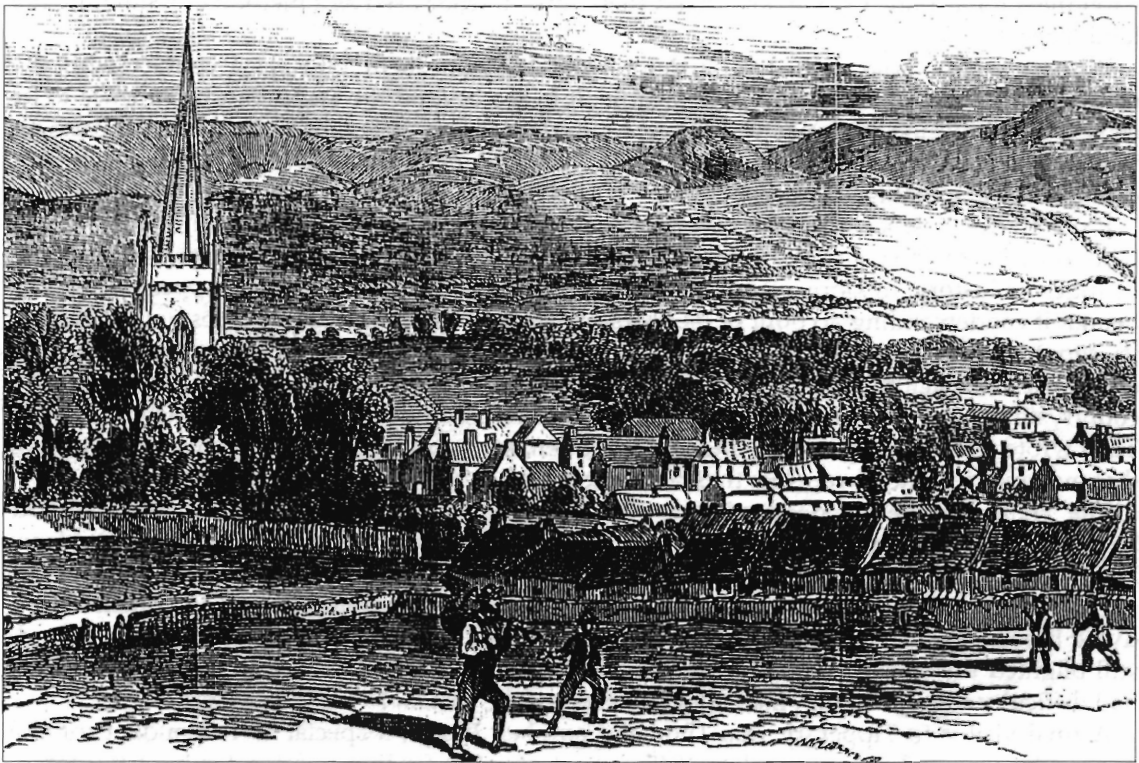
A final visitor to Tipperary was Thomas Campbell Foster, a special correspondent for *The Times* who was in Tipperary in late 1845 as part of a fact-finding mission for his newspaper. Foster opened his report from Thurles on 27 October: “The county of Tipperary has long



possessed the notoriety of being a focus of outrage and disorder - of embodying in itself, in an aggravated form, all the strange anomaly of evils which mark this country generally". He continued: "You have here the richest land and the most extreme poverty ... They shoot one another in the struggle to possess a patch of land, and leave neglected and waste thousands of acres which would amply repay their labour and capital".²⁸

In seeking the causes of this situation Foster quite rightly begins at the upper rank of society, the landlords, and proceeds to paint a picture of the condition of things straight out of *Castle Rackrent*, showing what was and continued to be a familiar theme, English impatience with the feckless ways of Irish landlords. "Is it to be wondered at that such a system should bear sad fruits?" These "fruits" were the debts and incumbrances on Irish estates. "The best tenants who will live in comfort are compelled to emigrate and the most ignorant and unenterprising tenants remain, without knowledge or means to improve the land, and strive by endurance and poor potato diet to squeeze out the rent".²⁹

Foster's analysis continued by emphasising that any desire on the part of "reforming" landlords to modernise their estates came up against the violent conspiracy organised by those determined to maintain the status quo. By way of illustration Foster, probably unfortunately, chose John Carden of Barnane, a man whose career demonstrated more the eccentric fringe of landlordism rather than the intelligent centre.³⁰ However, while many commentators like Foster expressed pity at the living conditions of the mass of the Irish people, the absolute core belief that ensured that sentiment never translated into remedial action was the sanctity of property rights. "The horrid distress of the people drives them to commit these atrocities, but they will bear no extenuation".



A drawing of Tipperary town in 1848 from *The Illustrated London News*.

Citing Lord Hawarden as an example of a landlord who had "ejected many tenants" and produced "great misery among them", Foster condemned the resulting attacks on the agent John Stewart, but not the right of Hawarden to dispose of his property as he pleased.³¹ This belief in the absolute right of the landlord over his property was widespread and not just a Tory fixation. In an editorial in his newspaper in 1827, John Hackett, a man committed to the great popular causes of the day such as Catholic Emancipation and Repeal, thundered about the "most erroneous opinion amongst the peasantry" that a landlord's rights over his property were not "absolute".³²

Before arriving in Tipperary many of the pre-Famine visitors must have experienced a delicious frisson of terror at their own temerity in exploring a place with such a reputation for violence. However, once in Tipperary, evidence of violence was for the most part hearsay. What produced the strongest impact on visitor after visitor was the evidence of poverty which they saw with their eyes. John Gough, who toured Ireland in 1813, 1814 and 1816, publishing his account in 1817, was particularly struck by the absence of "good houses" in the county and went on to comment that "the general condition of the labouring people ... is certainly very wretched".³³ Gough's prescription for Ireland's ills was more rather than less of Britain's rule, in that he blamed the government for keeping the people "totally ignorant of the blessings of our glorious constitution, the beauty of which is carefully hid from their eyes".

Thomas Reid arrived in Clonmel from Waterford in 1822 and was struck by the contrast between the fertile countryside and the sheer volume of beggars, especially women and children, whom he encountered on the road. In Carrick-on-Suir, as his carriage was surrounded by "some of the most miserable objects I ever beheld", he was horrified to see one woman with a dead child in her arms, whom she said had died of want.³⁴ (An account by a traveller, this time set in Cahir and dated exactly twenty years later, is very similar to Reid's story of the mother and dead child. However, in the second account the child, near death, is helped by a local apothecary. The mother in this case had walked from Dungarvan and was trying to get to Tipperary town. There is no indication that the account was not true.³⁵)

The autumn of 1821 was particularly wet and much of the potato crop had been destroyed, resulting in considerable distress the following year. Reports to the government from all over the county gave a grim picture. For example, it was noted that there was great distress among the poor in Clonmel from lack of employment, which would have allowed them buy food.³⁶ From the same period as Reid's visit, the countess of Glengall in her evidence before a select committee on the condition of the labouring poor explained how the gentry were so used to seeing the condition of the poor that it no longer shocked them.

"They see people naked and with nothing in the world but a blanket to sleep on, without a bed to lie on and they are not aware that it is not the usual and proper way for them to exist."³⁷ This point about the lack of clothing was confirmed by Reid. He described seeing "several people labouring in the fields without so much covering as a shirt; a tattered garment fastened round the loins, and covering in shreds only about half the thigh, serves for all".³⁸

Baptist W. Noel toured the midland counties of Ireland during the summer of 1836. He arrived in Tipperary town from Limerick and, after describing the "good" crops of potatoes and wheat and the grass lands that needed draining, which he observed on his journey, his attention turned to the housing conditions of the poor:³⁹

"Mud cabins, too, of the worst description, and some hovels built of sods cut from the neighbouring bog, with rushes or any thing else piled on the top for a roof, shock the eye. Children and pigs, where there is a pig, come together out of these dismal dens; and in some there seemed to us, as we passed, neither turf-stack nor furniture, nor any thing above absolute destitution."



Having come from England, Noel inevitably made comparisons, describing for example, the Galtees as much more beautiful than the Malvern Hills; but the contrast between the housing conditions and lives of the people was very much to Tipperary's disadvantage. The picture he painted of life at the foot of the Malvern Hills is undoubtedly idealised ("orchards, meadows, and smiling cottages, the abode of plenty and of peace"), but contrasted starkly with "the town of Tipperary [which] has a weary length of mud suburb" which when he passed through "had poured its contents into the main street".

The irony implicit in these descriptions always seemed to escape discussion. After all, the Malvern Hills and the Galtees were in the same United Kingdom; so why should the living conditions of the people be so different? It was easier, perhaps, not to discuss why the promises and expectations expressed at the time of the Act of Union, what one enthusiastic unionist at the time described as "the credit and capital now pent up in Great Britain [descending] like water to a level and [diffusing] themselves equally over both kingdoms", came to nothing.⁴⁰

In Tipperary town Noel was amazed by the crowd, perhaps 100 men, "many of them ragged", who stood about, having no employment.⁴¹ Henry Inglis, who visited Tipperary town two years before Noel, while finding the place "rather flourishing" and "a good little town", also commented on the lack of employment for the labouring class and like Noel was struck by the wretched cabins along the roads leading to the town.⁴² A particular feature of these cabins was the heaps of manure piled outside each door, these being essential for the cultivation of potato crops and therefore, whatever about the aesthetic factor, a matter literally of life and death.⁴³

A visitor who was in two minds regarding whom to blame for this poverty and unemployment was John Keegan, a young man who in 1840 was employed by the Ordnance Survey. On the one hand he blamed landlords for taking advantage of the great competition for land, "knowing the people must have it, however exorbitant the rent may be". On the other hand Keegan wrote that "the people themselves are greatly to blame in some respects and contribute to their own poverty" by their inefficient agricultural practices. He criticized their attitude to crop rotation, their incessant "oats and potatoes and potatoes and oats", together with their inadequate and old-fashioned ploughing technique.⁴⁴

Not unnaturally, those who visited Tipperary in the decades before the Famine and wrote about their experiences were impressionistic and influenced by the background and values they brought with them. Some, indeed, took the safe course and concentrated on the antiquities of the county. An historical discourse on the Rock of Cashel was always a safe topic. However, in general these accounts agreed on the twin evils of poverty and violence. On the question of cause there was a spread of opinion; and the historian has to look elsewhere for answers.

3. – Towns and Business

In 1837 the Drummond Commission, in its second report regarding an Irish railway network, commented on a seeming paradox: that while the country was making "a visible and steady progress" in many areas of economic activity, the largest part of the population, the labourers, "derive no proportionate benefit from the growing prosperity around them". In fact, if anything, their position was getting worse.⁴⁵ The situation with regard to the poor is discussed below. However, after the emphasis on violence and poverty recounted above from outsiders' accounts, it is important to explain that in South Tipperary during the years before the Famine there was a degree of prosperity.



Henry Inglis, like visitors to Ireland before and since, made his way to Cashel to see the Rock and commented that the town was far from being in a flourishing condition.⁴⁶ In the mid 1830s the main commercial traffic consisted of carts taking culm to Limerick and returning with timber, iron, English coal and salt. During the corn season (the barony of Middlethird was a notable tillage area), there was very considerable traffic through Cashel from Thurles and Clonmel.⁴⁷

One reason why Cashel, in the words of the Commissioners of Municipal Corporations, who reported in 1835, was “by no means thriving or prosperous”, was the corrupt nature of the corporation, at that period in the hands of the Pennefather family, who milked the 3,624 acres belonging to the corporation for their own benefit rather than that of the town or its people. The town lacked a proper water supply; the streets were not lighted and were dirty and in need of repair. Properly ordered, the corporation could have afforded to remedy these deficiencies.⁴⁸

The basic piece of legislation to allow for the provision of such limited services to towns as “lighting, cleansing and watching” was the act of 1828 (9 Geo. IV, c.82). This in part had been adopted by Clonmel in 1828, in Tipperary in 1834, in Carrick in 1836 – but in Cashel and Fethard not until 1840.⁴⁹ In Cashel the act was adopted only with reference to paving and cleansing.

The corporations or commissioners of these towns were empowered to levy a rate on all property with more than £5 yearly value to pay for these services.⁵⁰ If the number of houses in each town valued at £20 and more is expressed as a proportion of the total number of rated houses in the town, some idea will be gained of the relative prosperity of these towns.

TABLE 1
Percentage of rated houses in each town valued at £20 plus⁵¹

Town	Percentage
Clonmel	39
Carrick	34
Tipperary	29
Cashel	23
Fethard	17

The available evidence for all these towns makes it clear that even in Clonmel, the most prosperous of the region’s urban centres, there was a very large surplus population – that is, surplus in that there was a growing disparity between the numbers looking for employment and the work available. Taking a very broad look at the sweep of economic history, the agricultural emphasis through most of the eighteenth century was on pasture, as indeed it was (and is) after the Famine. However, from the late eighteenth century through to the Famine, the primary agricultural activity in South Tipperary was tillage which, thanks to increased prices, received a powerful boost during the long years of the war with France which ended in 1815. From this point on, while still dominant, the position of tillage was less secure.⁵²

Regarding Tipperary town in the mid 1830s, the corn trade was divided between Clonmel and Limerick, while the bulk of the trade in oats was to Limerick. There was also a very extensive butter trade which began in May; but the town had not yet developed the very busy butter market which, with Cork, it dominated in the later nineteenth century.⁵³ The manufacture of cotton, which once existed in the town, was by that period long gone.⁵⁴



In the 1820s an association was formed among the neighbouring gentry for the purpose of promoting the growing of flax, but this also failed to prosper.⁵⁵ Evidence for the kind of local balance between tillage and pasture, with the emphasis still on the former, may be seen in the case of Leonard Keating of Garranlea in the parish of Knockgraffon. He farmed in excess of 700 Irish acres, most of which was tillage; but he had about 200 Irish acres of dairy land and in 1825 he kept 90 cows, selling his butter in Clonmel and Waterford, not in Tipperary town.⁵⁶

When John Binns visited Cahir in the mid 1830s he noted that the extensive flour mills situated on the river gave an air of importance to the town. Nevertheless the people were poor and the labourers not fully employed, except at harvest and potato time.⁵⁷ Because the Suir was not navigable, the flour was carted to Clonmel and from there shipped to Waterford for England.⁵⁸ The Halls also noted the “prosperity” of the town and attributed it to the Quakers who had settled there.⁵⁹ Richard Grubb had settled in Cahir in the 1830s.⁶⁰

Unlike other Tipperary towns, Cahir was dominated by a single landlord, Richard Butler, second earl of Glengall (1794-1858), who had succeeded his father in 1819. Glengall had very decided views about everything. The authorities in Dublin Castle, for example, were in constant receipt of his advice. In the early 1840s he complained at length about the numbers of paupers flooding into Cahir, while at the same time his policy towards his own estate contributed in no little way towards this. Much of his land had been leased to middlemen by one of his predecessors and was coming back under the earl’s control by the early 1840s.

Finding much of this land swamped with a pauperised sub-tenantry, they were ejected and many moved into the towns, including Cahir. No amount of milling would have provided employment for this number of people. Glengall’s marriage in 1834 to an English mercantile heiress allowed him to begin improvements to the town which provided a certain amount of employment. One of the people employed by him in this work was the Clonmel-born architect William Tinsley.

In 1841 Glengall was reminding himself on paper that he should “never build houses for labourers or poor people, they never pay and the less poor you encourage the better”. On the other hand, he was willing to provide building leases with strict conditions to some of the leading merchants in the town. In 1845 he noted that the improvements to the town were “marvellous” and expressed some wonder at the amount of money there appeared to be in the town.⁶¹ However, as with everything else in the country, Glengall’s plans were hugely affected by the Famine.

In the smaller settlements of Fethard, Mullinahone and Killenaule, there were quite sizeable populations – 3,915, 1,306 and 1,786 persons respectively in 1841.⁶² With regard to the trade in and around the latter two of these places, the Drummond Commission had the following to say: the corn sold in the market at Killenaule was carried by jobbers to Clonmel; butter was not sold there and all the butter in that part of Tipperary was taken for sale to Mullinahone, where jobbers bought it for Carrick and Waterford; the coal of the district was bought at the pits by dealers, who for the most part sold it in the neighbouring towns to other dealers, who then carried it away for sale in other places. This account noted that one of the effects of this traffic was to render the cross-roads of the district nearly impossible for any vehicles but the carrier’s carts.⁶³

As was the case in Cashel, Fethard derived little benefit from its corporation. A report of the mid 1830s stated that of the 699 families in the borough 297 were chiefly employed in agriculture, 265 in trade and commerce. The remaining 137 families presumably lived on their wits. The report drew the obvious conclusion that there was little employment for the poorer classes.⁶⁴ From a report of the General Board of Health in 1821 the situation in the town was



described by the local Church of Ireland clergyman, who wrote that there was very little indoor employment as there was no manufacturing in the district, and with so many men lacking regular employment, women could only supplement family income at harvest and by gathering potatoes.⁶⁵

One powerful indicator of the run-down nature of these three settlement centres was the very low proportion of better quality housing. The 1841 Census divided housing into four classes, the fourth class being mud cabins of one room, the third class dwellings of mud but with two to four rooms and windows, the second class houses of five to nine rooms and the first class being the remaining best houses.

TABLE 2
Percentage of 1st and 2nd class houses in urban centres of South Tipperary⁶⁶

Town	1st and 2nd Class Houses
Clonmel	68
Carrick	60
Cahir	48
Clogheen	43
Cashel	36
Tipperary	33.5
Mullinahone	33
Killenaule	31
Fethard	26

The fact that Clonmel heads this list is to be expected, given the economic dominance of the town. Tipperary town's poor showing is unexpected and relates to the lack of enterprises such as milling, the fact that the town had not yet developed as an important centre in the butter trade, the rather casual estate management by the Smith-Barry family (something that changed later in the century when there was a resident agent) and also the very large number of fourth class houses – much higher than in any other town in the region, and which crowded the approaches to the town centre. (The question of poverty is discussed below under that heading.)

Clogheen in 1841 had a population of just over 2,000 and its location between the Galtees and the Knockmealdowns meant that it was rather isolated in the barony of Iffa and Offa West that, apart from Kilnamanagh Lower, was the least urbanised in the south county. To the west of Clogheen was the even more isolated settlement of Ballyporeen and to the east the small settlement of Ardfinnan. Only Cahir in this barony developed to any degree.

Nevertheless Clogheen was the centre of a flourishing milling business developed by the Grubbs. According to one source some 80,000 barrels of wheat were annually made into flour and exported through Clonmel. Clogheen, being the centre of the large O'Callaghan estate, benefited from their investment. According to the Drummond Commission nearly all the corn sold in Clogheen was carried to neighbouring mills and to Clonmel by its producers. With the exception of coal, which was brought from Youghal, the remaining heavy traffic was with Clonmel and Cork.⁶⁷

All accounts of Clonmel in the years before the Famine emphasise its prosperity. For many people the personification of this enterprising spirit was Charles Bianconi, a man who seemed as important a part of the visitor's itinerary as the Rock of Cashel.⁶⁸ An earlier visitor to the



town, Richard Lalor Shiel, was hugely impressed with the enterprise of David Malcomson, whose mill Shiel visited in 1828. "[It] is I believe, the finest in Ireland . . . Here half the harvest of the adjoining counties, as well as of Tipperary, is powdered under the huge mill stones that I saw wheeling with incalculable rapidity".

Malcomson also had a large cotton factory, which in 1833 employed about 200 persons. These enterprises and others, together with the town's banking system, are all described in Canon Burke's *History of Clonmel*.⁶⁹ According to figures given there, during the decade following 1826 the annual average quantity of wheat that flowed through the town was 189,000 barrels, with smaller quantities of barley and oats.

An official report from 1835 stressed the prosperity of the town and its importance in the provisions trade.⁷⁰ In the autumn of 1834 the famous English radical William Cobbett visited the town and wrote in a public letter the following description:⁷¹

"From Kilkenny, I came to Clonmel, the capital of the county of Tipperary, which is deemed one of the finest in Ireland.... At the town of Clonmel, I went to see one of the places where they kill and salt hogs to send to England. In **this one town** [sic], they kill every year, for this purpose, about sixty thousand hogs, weighing from eight score to twenty score. Every ounce of this meat is sent out of Ireland, while the poor half-naked creatures, who raise it with such care, are compelled to live on the lumpers, which are such bad potatoes that the hogs will not thrive on them There are about eighty thousand firkins of butter and perhaps, a hundred thousand quarters of wheat and more of oats, sent away out of this one town; while those who raise it all by their labour live upon lumpers."

Henry Inglis, who visited Clonmel around the same period as Cobbett, was similarly struck by the number of pigs killed, 50,000 annually being the figure he gives. Inglis indicated that there had been a reduction in this trade due to changes in taste in England, together with factors relating to taxation and transport. Of the three great trades for which Clonmel was famous, namely corn, bacon and butter, Inglis thought the last two somewhat in decline.⁷² This level of trade undoubtedly made some men rich and provided a measure of employment.

However, much employment was irregular and, of course, the provisions market was subject to the vagaries of weather and prices. Early in 1836, for example, there was something of a sustained campaign in the town against the employment of what were called "strangers", men from outside the town who were competing with locals for employment.⁷³ With employment in constant short supply in both town and country, this animosity to "strangers" (sometimes literally deadly) was a feature of the period.

Information on the working of the provisions trade, specifically the butter business, was provided to a government inquiry in 1826. A Clonmel merchant named Matthew Turner explained how he had been in business in Clonmel since 1821; before that he had been seven years in Waterford. He exported butter to London, Liverpool and various other places in Britain. "The farmers bring their butter to market in the height of the season, July, August and September, in the middle of the night and deposit it in the cool of the morning in the butter weigh-house." The butter, which was inspected by nine o'clock, was produced by the smaller farmers near to towns and by larger farmers with 20 to 80 cows who farmed at some distance.

With regard to the corn trade, Turner described how persons were employed to go into the countryside and purchase corn "on the road". In the colourful words of the time, these individuals were known as "sky farmers" or "pluckers". Turner thought it important that such enterprise be kept out of the butter trade. The witness was also an extensive bacon merchant.⁷⁴ In the buying and selling of pigs during the fairs in the town, there was scope for enterprise similar to that of the "pluckers".



Men called "blockers", who were good judges of pigs, bought animals on very short-term credit and then almost immediately resold them to pig jobbers, thereby allowing them to pay the person from whom the pigs had been purchased in the first place and, of course, pocket a profit with no capital outlay. On a bad day there was a risk that the "blocker" could be left with his livestock; then the original owner had no choice but to take back his animals. There was also a system whereby pigs when purchased could be left in the yard of a pub on payment of three pence "yard-money" per pig.⁷⁵

No other town in South Tipperary presented a greater picture of decline on the eve of the Famine than Carrick-on-Suir. At the close of the previous century one-fifth of the population was employed in weaving and related activities. The population at the beginning of the nineteenth century was as much as 11,000 persons; a century later, it was about half that. In the words of a recent writer: "After 1815 Carrick languished. The ending of the war, the subsequent loss of military orders, the continuing influx of English textiles and the intensifying poverty of large portions of society undermined the demand for Irish textiles and brought the final collapse of a one time prosperous industry".⁷⁶

A survey of the parish in 1816 charted the decline. In the words of a local doctor:⁷⁷

"The diseases to which the inhabitants of Carrick-on-Suir and its immediate vicinity are chiefly subject originate in a great measure from the decay of manufactures in this once flourishing town; the necessary consequence of which is, poverty among the class of people who were formerly employed in the cloth business, and its usual concomitant amongst the poorer inhabitants of this country, a want of due attention to cleanliness, which is so very necessary for the preservation of health. The population of this town being very great, the poorer classes are necessarily much crowded together in their small habitations; whenever therefore a fever occurs ... it must in a little time acquire a great degree of malignancy."

With regard to the matter of overcrowding, an extreme example from 1799 was one house with 26 people, comprising six different families and one individual who was a lodger with one of the families. All the employed men were labourers.⁷⁸

Outside of towns and apart from agriculture, there were very limited employment opportunities of a reasonably permanent nature. Road construction by its nature provided short-term employment and was at the mercy of an unfortunate combination of landlord parsimony and corruption. One source of employment was mining. The Slieveardagh Collieries, for example, employed between 200 and 300 men in the mid 1830s.⁷⁹ In 1845 this coal field was described as extending about twenty miles in length from Freshford to near Cashel, with the towns of Killenaule and New Birmingham at its centre.⁸⁰ The various workings of this coalfield were exploited by the Mining Company of Ireland which began operations in the district in 1825, mining at Coolquill, Mardyke and a few other places of lesser importance.⁸¹

Early in 1828 the management of Mardyke Colliery complained that output was lower than expected "which is attributed solely to extraordinary conduct on the part of the workmen who have not proceeded in their work with that degree of steady industry upon which the [Company] relied". This was followed by the ominous statement that "means have been adopted to remedy this evil". These "means" merely made matters worse, and in September of that year a worker's combination went on strike (an action viewed at the period as a deeply subversive act) on the issues of pay and who should be employed at the mine.

This latter issue was yet another manifestation of opposition to "strangers", widespread in town and country and a necessary reaction to the shortage of employment. The wages offered to miners (regarded more as labourers than miners) was between a shilling (5p.) and one and six pence



(7.5p) per day. This may be (and, of course, was by the Mining Company) compared to the shilling per day that was paid to agricultural labourers at harvest time, work which was temporary. With government help the worker's combination was crushed; by the following year the Company reported its satisfaction and declared that ten additional houses for workmen had been built.

However, the Company's satisfaction was short-lived and by the end of 1829 outrages were again being committed to prevent workers from other parts of the country settling in the area. The Company noted that Slieveardagh was the only area of their operations where they faced this problem. By 1834 the Company, while making a profit (over £1,000), was still complaining about the success of combinations to exclude "strangers" and remarked sourly that the problem could be overcome if the local authorities acted with the same vigour that had been displayed against workers' combinations in the coal districts in England.

By that year 48 houses had been constructed for agents and workmen. By 1828 profits had doubled, thanks to increased demand for coal and the fact that the land owner of Coolquill (Palliser) had reduced his charges to the Company, which had been agreed in 1824. By 1840 profit on the Slieveardagh operation was around £3,600. By the end of 1843 the Company had built up large stocks of coal and consequently cut back on production but did not lay off workers, operating instead a four-day week.

Incidentally, the Company began tests for copper at l-Hollyford around 1837; these came to nothing. Mining there was eventually begun by a different company in 1845, just in time to insulate that community from the ravages of the Famine.⁸²

On the very eve of the Famine, the Mining Company of Ireland was looking to the future with confidence in its Slieveardagh operations, New coalfields were to be opened at Earlshill and Ballyphilip, on the property of Ambrose Going, and the Company regarded the expansion of the railway system and the improved agriculture from burning lime as indicators of increasing prosperity.

4. – Land

In November 1843 the government of Sir Robert Peel set up a royal commission under the chairmanship of the earl of Devon, with instructions to carry out a wide-ranging investigation of Irish land tenure. Given the attitude of the government and the composition of the commission, little by way of radical change was expected or delivered. Devon himself was an English landlord with an estate in Limerick, and Daniel O'Connell for example was very critical of the Tory sympathies of the commission, describing it memorably as a "board of foxes deliberating gravely over a flock of geese".⁸³

The commission reported in February 1845 and not surprisingly produced a whisper rather than a bellow, with tentative recommendations about such matters as tenant right and compensation for improvements. However, the commission gathered a huge amount of information. Evidence was collected in more than 90 towns and at sittings in London and 1,078 witnesses gave evidence, representing a cross-section of opinion. Hardly surprisingly, those at the bottom end of the socio-economic scale were under-represented.⁸⁴ In South Tipperary evidence was heard late in 1844, in such places as Clonmel, Tipperary, Clogheen and Cashel. The background of these witnesses was as follows: landlords – 11, agents – 13; farmers – 12, and others 8.

No other actor in the drama of land had such consistently bad notices in the decades before the Famine as the middleman. In 1816 Richard Willcocks, chief magistrate of the barony of Middlethird (from Holycross in the north to New Inn in the south and from Cashel in the west



to Drangan in the east), in a report to Robert Peel, then Irish Chief Secretary, described the system:⁸⁵

“The land in Tipperary generally is not let directly by the landlord to the cottier, but most certainly through the intervention of the middlemen and in many cases heretofore the middlemen had a greater income out of the land than the head landlord. The middleman will take a piece of land from 100 to 200 acres, and will job this out to cottiers at more than double the rent which he pays himself, but I think this grievous system of high setting practised by the middlemen is now likely to be crushed or put down, for there is now large arrears of rent due to them by the cottiers, which I believe they are not able nor do they intend to pay. The land therefore will fall back upon the middleman, and he must make a new setting at a fair price.”

Willcocks in this report was specifically referring to Middlethird; some twenty years later evidence to the Poor Inquiry suggested that about a quarter of the barony was under middlemen. The evidence also indicated that there were very few instances where the number of interests between the proprietor or holder of the head interest and the occupier exceeded three, though one witness claimed he knew of a case where there were five.⁸⁶ The point about these interests was that they fed parasitically off the labour of the occupier.

“Tenants who took lands at low or moderate rents on long leases in the 1780s were to benefit substantially from the sustained demand and favourable prices for agricultural produce during the period 1790-1815”.⁸⁷ An example of this was the townland of Lismalin in the parish of the same name in Slieveardagh. This townland of 554.5 acres was part of the estate of the earl of Carrick, and in 1787 it was leased to the Hamerton family for a period of three lives at an annual rent of £318.

In 1851, when the estate was sold in the Incumbered Estates Court, two of the lives were still living. An idea of what the land was actually worth was its valuation in 1850, £464.⁸⁸ In 1841 this townland had 22 houses and the aggregate rent was probably a good deal more than the £318 paid by Hamerton.

Henry Inglis, in his account of his visit to Tipperary in 1834, remarked that “a great part” of the estate of the earl of Glengall was in the hands of middlemen and that therefore the earl did not receive anything like the full financial benefit of his property.⁸⁹ On 17 January 1845 the 51-year-old earl gave evidence before the Devon Commission in his best curmudgeonly style. In his younger day the earl had been something of a playboy, being part of the “fast set” in London; but, as his private writings and public utterances made clear, his reactionary politics were at one with his sour personality.

Both aspects of his character had a great deal to do with his mounting financial difficulties.⁹⁰ During his younger days in London the earl fancied himself as something of a playwright. He also became the object of attack by some of London’s literary hacks. For example, a mock obituary was published in 1826, on the supposed death of the earl. After claiming that, of all things, his mother was a notorious smuggler, the attack proposed the following epitaph:

For Dick’s accomplishments were such,
He’s left a fame that never dies,
And having lied in life so much,
No wonder ‘tis in Death he lies.

Not surprisingly the perpetrator of such an attack ended up in court but certainly to the surprise of the judge, was found not guilty.⁹¹

In his evidence before the Devon Commission, Glengall explained how between 1777 and 1787 his ancestor James, Lord Cahir (1711-88) leased “great portions” of the estate on leases of



61 years. As was usual in such agreements, subletting was forbidden and lessees were to build good houses on their farms. "It is almost needless to state that there is scarcely an instance of a house being built by the lessee of the slightest value; and every lessee has sublet generally to a great extent." The land was exhausted and there was no evidence of improvement.

During the war with France (up to 1815) these tenants received "enormous" rents, wheat then being 15 pence and 17.5 pence a stone. By 1845, according to Glengall, the price had fallen to around four pence a stone. Faced with such a downturn, many of these middlemen allowed their lands to be packed with a pauper population, or in some cases had entirely given up their interests.

In order to support these claims, the earl provided the Commission with a written statement detailing the tenurial history of particular townlands.

Ballingeary: 406 Irish acres; rent 80p. Irish per acre; lease 61 years, just expired. The ground is totally worn out with a very considerable pauper population on it. Nothing can be worse than its general state. The land may be worth £1.50 per acre, if it were in fair order. This farm was let to Robert Keating, who sublet the whole of it.

Garnavilla, Clocully and Neddins: 995 Irish acres; rent 80p. per acre; let in 1781 for 71 years. The land of Clocully and Neddins is of most superior quality. Garnavilla very good. The son of the late lessee is ruined. The affairs in chancery. The lands are sublet from £4 to £2 per acre. A dwelling-house has been built, which is in very bad repair and must be rebuilt at the expiration of the lease. There are three or four good tenants on the lands; but with these exceptions, the usual evils of subletting mark this fine lot of land. Lessee was bound not to sublet.

Kilcommon: 174 Irish acres; rent £1 Irish per acre; lease 61 years; let in 1787. Excellent land. Worth £2 per acre. This farm is not so much sublet, being divided amongst the family. Their houses are very bad indeed and they are poor and slovenly. Politics and whiskey have been their bane, like the generality of the other tenants on this estate, who hold large tracts of fine land at low rents. There are no improvements on this farm, nor indeed on any of the farms thus circumstanced.

While there is a good deal of information available regarding the Glengall estate in the immediate aftermath of the Famine, this unfortunately is not the case regarding the period for which the earl gave his evidence. With regard to the leases mentioned above which were unexpired when the earl gave his evidence, the Famine was one solution to Glengall's problems.

When questioned about the state of affairs of which the above are examples, Glengall explained how in his father's time an attempt was made to enforce the stipulations against subletting but that no jury would comply because many of the jurors were themselves middlemen. Glengall's written submission to the Commissioners makes clear his sense of outrage at the change from the 1780s when leases were given for what in most cases were very large grazing farms, to the situation when these leases expired and the land was found to be filled with an "entirely new" (and in most cases pauperised) population.

In 1843, for example, a lease taken out in 1782 expired. It was for 281 Irish acres in Kilcoran at a rent of just under 70p. an acre. Glengall did not know what the sub-rents amounted to, but the land when recovered by the estate "was completely deluged with paupers and the lessee himself did not hold above 16 acres. He was totally ruined and the son was in possession of the 16 acres". When the estate recovered the land one tenant, "a most notorious ruffian", was evicted and his house "thrown down". The land was squared as much as possible into farms of 15 to 20 acres and with regard to the fate of the surplus population, the earl professed not to know (or obviously care). "They must act as labourers for the rest of the country".⁹²

Other witnesses before the Devon Commission echoed Glengall's prejudice regarding middlemen. "I think that middlemen are dropping off very fast in this country and I find no



loss of it." This opinion by a land agent based near Clonmel also declared that generally he was satisfied to leave in place those subtenants whom he found when a lease expired.⁹³ Lord Lismore's agent, Edwin Taylor of Clogheen, was emphatic that there were no improvements under middlemen but that in any case, as a class, they were almost extinct.⁹⁴

Edward Dalton from Ballygriffin near Tipperary held three large grazing farms, a total of about 500 Irish acres, and declared that middlemen were always worse for occupiers. As Dalton worked his grazing farms himself, he could adopt a holier-than-thou attitude.⁹⁵ From the same part of the county another witness bemoaned that there were still many middlemen and that their tenants were badly off.⁹⁶ This declaration about middlemen in Clanwilliam was at variance with evidence from other parts of South Tipperary, and was confirmed by a tenant from the parish of Corroge.⁹⁷ On the other hand the P.P. of Clonoulty opined that middlemen were disappearing every day and that there was much consolidation in the parish.⁹⁸

Subdivision and consolidation were the two pressures being brought to bear on the land system and from contrary directions in the period before the Famine. The former was driven by population increase and the fact that access to land was a matter of life or death, whereas the latter was motivated by ideas of more modern and profitable estate management. The secretary to the Devon Commission J.P. Kennedy admitted the "contradictory character" of the evidence on consolidation presented to the Commission and allowed that this was due to the very contentious issue of the degree of accompanying evictions.⁹⁹

An example of the kind of tensions engendered may be seen in the townland of Lisfunshion, an area of 722 statute acres, in the parish of Templetenny and the barony of Iffa and Offa West. This small property was held on a lease for lives renewable dated 1718 from the Kingston estate by the Walcott family, who were absentees.¹⁰⁰ In August 1823 one of the tenants in Lisfunshion wrote to Walcott just as the leases on the estate (41 years in this tenant's case) were due to expire. The tenant asked for a renewal and, as Walcott's agent had recently died, offered to collect the rents at no charge.

The game being played became clearer when the tenant went on to acknowledge that he was aware that his own sub-tenants, whom he dismissed as "cottiers", were in touch with Walcott, obviously hoping to deal directly with him. The tenant Bryan Phelan (a member of this family held 20 acres in the townland in 1852¹⁰¹) implied that by dealing with him, the landlord would not lose out in the context of "the utmost value of the lands". The landlord in his reply a week later reserved his position, but made it clear that as the property was about to come under his control again, theoretically he would favour "old" tenants, all other things being equal; but he would make no promises to tenants or sub-tenants.

The sting in the missive was the statement that "if the property is to be divided I do not see why I should not have the advantage".¹⁰² From later evidence it would appear that shorter term leases were made which expired in 1839, at which time Edwin Taylor of Clogheen, the Lismore agent, was acting for the property and wrote to inquire if new leases should be given or if the tenants should be tenants at will. He warned that the new Poor Law might affect the situation and that Walcott should wait and see.¹⁰³

On the evidence of many of the visitors to West Tipperary one of the best regulated estates was that of Lord Stanley at Ballykisteen.¹⁰⁴ The resident agent was Captain Thomas Bolton, who ran the estate since 1832. When he first came leases were given, but he was resolutely against them because they encouraged what was to be his greatest difficulty, namely preventing the subdivision of farms.¹⁰⁵ In general the evidence from South Tipperary, especially with regard to consolidation, was (as the commission secretary described it above) contradictory.

A witness from near Clonmel, a land agent and farmer, deprecated the rate of subdivision



but declared that no landlord was successful at preventing it. The problem about there being "a cabin in every corner" was that the only solution was clearance, a remedy most landlords baulked at, not least because of the county's reputation for violence. Certainly, it was this witness's practice to leave sub-tenants in place when middlemen's leases expired.¹⁰⁶

Another land agent from Carrick-on-Suir also declared how there was little attempt at consolidating farms.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, a landlord who lived in Tipperary town declared that there was a good deal of consolidation and that compensation was paid.¹⁰⁸ A very large farmer from near Clogheen declared that subdivision had gone so far that it could hardly go any further.¹⁰⁹ The P.P. of Clonoulty indicated that in his parish there was much consolidation, though in this case, such an opinion was by way of a poke in the eye for Lord Hawarden and his agent. (See below.)¹¹⁰

An estate where there was some consolidation was that of Baron Pennefather in Knockgraffon, where according to a number of witnesses there was a degree of consolidation. According to the agent for the property before Pennefather got it, many of the farms were from 5 to 10 acres, whereas now they were from 15 to 20 acres. Tenants were removed as the opportunity arose and compensated, in some cases being allowed to aid their emigration. According to another witness this estate was an example of how a landlord could clear his estate and get away with it, if it was done "cautiously and considerately".¹¹¹

With regard to this very difficult question of clearing tenants from an estate, no other property in South Tipperary was more controversial than the 15,000-acres estate of Lord Hawarden, centred on Dundrum. The estate came to national attention with the publication of a series of letters in the *Nation* early in 1843.¹¹² The writer of these letters was a curate in Knockavilla and he made a comprehensive attack on the land system as it operated on the Hawarden estate, claiming that some 200 families or about 1,300 persons had been cleared from 3,000 acres of the property. In 1843 the landlord of the Dundrum estate was Cornwallis Maude, third viscount Hawarden, who had succeeded his brother to the estate in 1807.

According to Fr Patrick O'Brien Davern, at the time the third earl inherited the estate the demesne was 400 acres; but by the early 1840s it was around 2,500 acres, which of course meant clearing the tenants. Davern also claimed that tenants were rackrented, rents being from one-third in excess of Poor Law Valuation to double.

Hawarden's rent charged on reclaimed marginal land was compared unfavourably with rent levels on better land in Clanwilliam. To widen his field of fire Davern also accused Hawarden of exploiting his labourers by, for example, only paying them between five and eight pence per day and charging £10 per acre for conacre. Given that the writer was a priest and that the Maude family had a reputation for muscular protestantism, the landlord was accused of actively working against catholic interests.

A number of witnesses referred to this estate in their evidence before the Devon Commission, thereby causing Hawarden's agent John Stewart to deal at length with his administration of the property. Edward Dalton of Ballygriffin described how dispossessed people flocked to Cashel and Golden and that financial compensation was useless because such was the competition for land, that once it was lost, it was all but impossible to regain it, so status was reduced to that of labourer.¹¹³ Hugh Brady Bradshaw of Philipstown described Hawarden's property as much improved and spoke for those landlords who would have liked to be interventionist but were scared of the consequences (to themselves, not their tenants). "In general the landed proprietors of the country think it a great deal safer and better for them if they can come to any kind of terms with the tenant in possession than run the risk of dispossessing him."¹¹⁴

Michael Doheny of Cashel on the other hand was very critical of the management of the



Hawarden estate. As chairman of Cashel Board of Guardians he was concerned about dispossessed tenants becoming a charge on the poor rate. He echoed Davern's charge about high rent and contributed a piece of gossip to the effect that Stewart's uncle (a predecessor as agent) was in the habit of riding about the locality with two local boys, one in front and the other behind him on his horse, in order to deter shots being fired at him.¹¹⁵

TABLE 3
Conflicting accounts of clearances on Hawarden estate¹¹⁶

I Davern's Account:

Townland	No. of Families	No. of Persons
Gortussa Upr.	28	194
Anacarty & Maudmount	27	184
Ballintemple	23	166
Garryduff	12	86
Rossmore	9	66
Attybrick	8	48
Carrigeen	7	44
Coolacussane	27	202

Plus c.60 other families, location unspecified.

II Stewart's Account: Ejectments 1823-42

Year	No. of Families	Year	No. of Families
1823	3	1833	0
1824	1	1834	0
1825	1	1835	4
1826	3	1836	9
1827	9	1837	1
1828	0	1838	2
1829	0	1839	5
1830	0	1840	10
1831	10	1841	0
1832	0	1842	0

Plus: Families changed to other holdings but still tenants	22
Subtenants of middlemen and never held directly from Hawarden	21

John Stewart gave very detailed evidence to the Commission.¹¹⁷ He had become agent in 1822 and did his best to give the impression that, while there had been some consolidation, its extent and consequences were exaggerated. He denied Davern's claim about the amount of land added to the demesne and the level of tenant dislocation caused. Nineteen families, he claimed, were removed from the estate from land taken into Hawarden's own hands and, he added, some compensation was paid. This payment was for tenant's crops and did not admit entitlement in law. On the charges made that there had been unrest on the estate, Stewart was economical with the truth, denying threats to himself.¹¹⁸



One of the witnesses before the Commission who was most vigorous in his complaints about the management of the estate was the P.P. of Clonoulty, Fr John Mackey.¹¹⁹ Hawarden controlled over 60% of this civil parish and much of the controversy between Mackey and Stewart centred on the fate of a tenant from the townland of Clone who had been evicted, largely it appeared because of what was regarded as Mackey's interference on his behalf. With Mackey using his pulpit to imprecate Hawarden and Stewart, it seemed that the unfortunate tenant had to be sacrificed to demonstrate who ran the estate.

The management of this estate in the decades before the Famine has left a powerful residue of resentment in the local folk memory.¹²⁰ The combination of the Maude family's interventionist style of estate management which stretched back to the time of the 3rd viscount's uncle (a man admired by Arthur Young when he visited the area in the 1770s), and their equally interventionist attitude to religion on their property, ensured that unlike many other landlord families, the Maudes would not be forgotten. Stewart's evidence before the Commission regarding the extent of the demesne was somewhat unclear, but his claim that Hawarden himself farmed nearly 3,000 acres of the estate (including an unspecified amount of woodland) was calculated to cause great resentment at a time when there was such competition for land.

At a period when many landlords did not reinvest in their estates, Stewart's figures showing an expenditure of over £75,000 during the years when he was in charge demonstrated landlord determination to manage his property. By way of contrast, in 1838 when one of James Scully's middleman tenants defaulted on his rent for land in Mantlehill, Scully did not use the opportunity to clear the 50 families or around 300 persons on the property but reinstated them.¹²¹ From the tenants' perspective, this made Scully a "good landlord" in contrast to Hawarden, who was a "bad landlord".

TABLE 4
Investment in the Hawarden Estate, 1822-43¹²²

Buildings	£13,715
Land improvements, drainage, fencing etc.	10,749
Farm labour	23,289
Forestry	4,794
Gardens	2,439
Charities	2,082
Compensation to former tenants – cash payments	2,651
Compensation to former tenants – rents forgiven	2,136

In respect of the amount of land kept by Hawarden in his own hands, he was not typical of the region's landlords; but it will not do to view the clumsy and difficult process of consolidation as some kind of plot by "them" against "us". The truth is that subdivision of land was deleterious to Irish agriculture, on which the prosperity of the country depended. Hawarden was something of an exception. Many of his peers were deterred from following his example through apathy and fear of violence. Emigration was, of course, one solution; but as one witness before the Commission explained: "As long as an Irishman can get a foot of ground here, he will not emigrate".¹²³

About 1834 the agent of the Stanley estate cleared nearly 300 persons from 80 acres, hired a ship and arranged for money to be paid to them on their arrival in Quebec. In his evidence



before the Commission this agent made the point that he did not think that the same could be done now as there was a different feeling about emigration.¹²⁴ The Pennefather estate in Knockgraffon was another property from which tenants had been assisted to emigrate to North America, using money paid as compensation for being cleared.¹²⁵ In such cases it was the more enterprising tenants who left. One of the consequences of consolidation was the fact that for all the later condemnation of the process farmers benefited most.

If individual tenants wished to emigrate they were helped by the sale of good-will, a procedure about which there has been a good deal of confusion. In essence this was a mechanism whereby an outgoing tenant was paid a sum of money by the incoming tenant to compensate him for such things as improvements made, the right to enjoy peaceful possession, or in some cases to acknowledge the benefit of holding a farm from what was locally recognised as a "good landlord". The point about this mechanism was that it was not sanctioned by law and different landlords regarded it variously. It was also known as the "Ulster Custom" or tenant-right.¹²⁶

Denis Mulcahy, a farmer from Redmondstown near Clonmel, told the Commission that the practice was very common: "When a man is broken, he gets another to step in and pay the landlord and give himself something to boot". Landlords allowed this because they got their rent arrears, and in any case there was nothing they could do about it.¹²⁷ Another substantial tenant farmer and magistrate from near Cahir explained that the practice was of late very extensive and that in some cases the money was used for emigration.

However, one difficulty arose when the incoming tenant was a "stranger". While the outgoing tenant may have been satisfied, his neighbours often were not as there was a feeling in a townland that the land there was for locals.¹²⁸ On the other hand the Glengall agent John Chaytor was emphatic that such a practice was neither prevalent nor recognised on the estate.¹²⁹ In contrast, Edwin Taylor, agent to the Lismore estate centred on Clogheen (and other estates), appeared to be much more relaxed about the sale of good-will. While stressing that tenants had no legal rights in the matter, he allowed that he had no objection if the incoming tenant was of good character. He told the Commission that he knew cases where three to four years' rent was paid for good-will.

This, of course, was one of the greatest objections to the practice. In situations where there was very great competition, incoming tenants could pay well over the odds and find themselves in possession, but with their capital exhausted. The spectacle of an Irish farmer with his commercial good sense paralysed at the prospect of a few more acres is not a new one. Taylor said that he tried to ensure that a new tenant was from an adjacent farm and in this way promote consolidation.¹³⁰

The chairman of Carrick-on-Suir Board of Guardians declared that there was very little sale of good-will and "where there is a good landlord, it cannot take place".¹³¹ A farmer from near New Bermingham, when asked about the practice, replied that he did not "know of anything of the kind".¹³² Two witnesses, referring to the area around Tipperary town, thought that the practice was widespread, though not recognised by landlords.

Competition was such that the outgoing tenant could expect to get very nearly the fee simple value of the land or, as one witness put the matter: "Men will give anything to get into a farm". This was especially true if there was a "good" landlord or if there was a lease.¹³³ Finally, according to the parish priest of Clonoulty, it was not the practice except where a tenant was "broken down", in which case it was a way of getting a few pounds and for the landlord to recover his arrears.¹³⁴ This whole question of tenant-right was to be a key issue in the decades of land agitation that followed the Famine.



Just as the evidence before the Commission regarding the sale of good-will indicated a variety of practice and attitude, the question of farm size similarly lacked precision.

TABLE 5
Evidence about farm size in South Tipperary from the Devon Commission¹³⁵

Witness	Location	Evidence
John Keeffe	c. Clonmel	6-10 acres the smallest viable farm
Patrick Walsh	c. Clogheen	most common tillage farm, 30-50 acres
W.J. Fennell	c. Cahir	average size, tillage farm, 8-9 acres
J. Chaytor	c. Cahir	average size, tillage farm, 15-25 acres
Edwin Taylor	c. Clogheen	average size farm, 13 acres
Edward Dalton	c. Tipperary	general size of farms, 20-30 acres
H.B. Bradshaw	c. Tipperary	middle-size farm, 30-40 acres
Thomas Bolton	c. Tipperary Ballykisteen	small farms, under 20 acres
Fr J. Mackey	Clonoulty	generally 25-30 acres; many large grazing farms; 10 acres for a man to be comfortable
Avery Jordan	Knockgraffon	farms 15-20 acres, very comfortable
W. O'Flynn	Glengoole	tillage farms generally 10-30 acres
W. O'Donnell	Carrick	small farms, 6-20 acres.

Individual and subjective evidence was therefore variable. Can a more objective picture of farm-size in South Tipperary be given? Comprehensive agricultural statistics date from 1847 and already show the impact of the Famine and thus are hardly a reliable guide to the pre-Famine economy. Evidence with regard to farm size was gathered as part of the 1841 Census; but, as Austin Bourke pointed out, it was not clear for many parts of the country whether the Irish or statute acre was being used.¹³⁶

However, it was the case that in Tipperary the most usual unit was the Irish acre; 1 Irish acre was 1.62 statute acres. Witnesses before the Devon Commission very likely meant the Irish acre when referring to the situation in Tipperary and probably those who returned the information for the 1841 Census did likewise. Also, with regard to the 1841 figures, there was confusion about the role of waste land in the computation of farm size. Finally, the 1841 information omitted holdings under one acre.

TABLE 6
Farm size in pre-Famine Munster, by county¹³⁷
(All figures expressed in percentages)

County	1-5 acres	5-15 acres	15-30 acres	Above 30 acres
Clare	43	45	8	4
Cork	30	35	23	12
Kerry	34	42	16	8
Limerick	34.5	34.5	19	12
Tipperary	39	38	14	9
Waterford	30	28	20	22



For the province as a whole, the percentage of small and medium farms under 15 acres was 73%, but for Tipperary the figure was 77. In fact only Clare at 88% was higher. "That a vast number of the farms were too small to provide a living, nobody doubted".¹³⁸ The Devon Commission considered the matter and concluded that 10½ acres was a minimum to support a family of five individuals where the level of farming expertise was poor. If the occupier was intelligent and had every other advantage, then 6¼ acres would suffice.¹³⁹ These were statute acres; but whether Irish or statute, a significant number of tenants in Tipperary were inevitably going to face disaster should the potato, the prop which supported the whole agricultural edifice, fail.

Competition for land inevitably affected rent levels. A tenant from Clonmel explained to the Devon Commission how his uncle held a large farm on the Butler Lowe estate and was the third generation of his family to do so; but the farm went to another tenant who offered more money. The witness agreed that there was an ongoing tension between the desire for land and the fear of violent local reaction, based on sympathy for the outgoing tenant. "All the land in the world should be of no value to me if I got a bit of lead".¹⁴⁰

There was general agreement among witnesses on the matter of rent levels in South Tipperary. A land agent and farmer who professed familiarity with the district for ten miles about Clonmel said that near the town rent varied from £2.50 to £5 an Irish acre and from £1.50 to £2 farther away from Clonmel. From land at £2 an Irish acre an output of eight to ten barrels of wheat might be expected (20 stones to one barrel). Rents were about one-third higher than the P.L.V.¹⁴¹

Another witness from near Clogheen indicated that for average good land the rent was £1.50 to £2 an Irish acre. Unlike the example quoted above with regard to the Butler Lowe estate, farms on the Glengall estate at any rate were not open to competition, but existing tenants were given priority.¹⁴² A witness from near Cahir thought that there was "excessive competition". "It is quite wonderful", he said and cited the example of eleven acres of very light poor land, where the tenant at will was offered and accepted around £75 for his interest.¹⁴³

Glengall's agent told the Commission that rent for good land was from £1.75 to £2 an Irish acre, and agreed with the Clonmel witness above that rents were about one-third higher than the P.L.V. John Chaytor also confirmed the widely expressed idea that rents for small farms were higher than for larger ones. Apart from rent, tenants also had to pay poor rate and county cess.¹⁴⁴ The former very much varied from one electoral division to another and the latter was a charge laid by the Grand Jury to pay for very limited local services. As explained by the agent to the Lismore estate, the proportion of poor rate to rent was 1 to 17 and county cess to rent about 1 to 8.¹⁴⁵

After 1843 occupiers of land rated at less than £4 p.a. were exempted from paying poor rate and the burden fell totally on the owner; otherwise payment was divided equally between occupier and owner.¹⁴⁶ However, a witness from Tipperary town, a landlord and magistrate, told the Commission that "vast numbers" of tenants in the district were never allowed for their poor rates as landlords refused to settle the matter until their rent was fully cleared up, which with the practice of a 'hanging gale' meant never.¹⁴⁷

This same witness delivered the not unexpected cry that landlords were too heavily taxed, especially in the context of the accumulated weight of family debts and charges.¹⁴⁸ During the years of the Famine, increased poor rates and decreased rents were for many such landlords the final blow. For example, arrears of rent amounting to nearly £17,000 on the Glengall estate in September 1843 had more than doubled four years later.¹⁴⁹ However, the issue of poverty was not a matter of landlords living beyond their means but much more a matter of a huge part of the population finding the means to live.



5. – Poverty

Very likely some fat and contented Roman landlord sat in the shadow of Vesuvius in 76 A.D. with no thought about the disaster that would happen three years later. So the chairman of the Carrick Board of Guardians, in his evidence to the Devon Commission in October 1844, painted a picture of rural and urban poverty stunning in its complacency. “They have a pig at the door; and it is astonishing how comfortably they get on; they are happy if they have a good coat to go to prayers in, and plenty of potatoes to eat.”

This witness also explained how labourers were crowded together in certain houses in the town, while in the countryside they perhaps held cabins and a half-acre of ground for which each paid £3 p.a. The wages usually paid to agricultural labourers were eightpence in winter and tenpence in summer (old money); but as the witness confessed, this would not support them or their families. The practice of the witness was to provide quarter-ground or conacre, for which he charged £10 an acre, manured and prepared for potatoes. This yielded from 20 to 30 barrels of potatoes to the quarter acre (21 stones to the barrel) and at threepence a stone, this was worth £7.50 for the quarter-acre. With quarter-ground or conacre, therefore, the labourer and his family could survive on potatoes, something hardly possible on daily wages of eight or tenpence.¹⁴⁰ For very many people, survival was all about access to conacre.

The voice of the dispossessed was generally silent. It was certainly not heard among those who gave evidence before the Devon Commission with regard to South Tipperary. All the more important therefore was the evidence of Michael Sullivan, a Cork labourer who at harvest time went to Limerick and Tipperary in search of work. He held a house and an acre of ground from a farmer, for which he paid £1 and £2, respectively. Each year he held a different acre and was responsible himself for manuring it. When this farmer employed him, which was irregularly, he was paid sixpence a day and fed. When he went in search of work during harvest he could earn between £1 and £1.50.

In such circumstances he had to support himself, his wife and five children, the oldest of whom was twelve. His wife kept hens and earned a few shillings from selling the eggs. He kept a pig which was housed with the family, “in some part of the house, in a corner”. Because he had to throw up a new cabin each year, he saw no point in building a pig-sty. The family lived on dry potatoes as there was no milk available. “I would think myself middling happy if I could give the five children [milk].”¹⁵¹

The official response to Irish poverty was not unlike that of a type of person very recognisable in our own time – overweight and very aware of each excess lb. but lacking the will to do anything about it. In April 1816 Richard Willcocks, chief magistrate of the barony of Middlethird, an individual in whom the government placed a considerable trust, replied to official queries regarding conditions in his district.¹⁵²

Labourers were paid in two ways. Some had a cabin and from a half-acre to an acre of ground for which they paid from two to four guineas p.a. This was paid for by working for the farmer whose land it was, at daily rates variously sixpence, eightpence or tenpence, depending on the amount paid for the cabin and land. Also taken out in labour was the grass of a cow from the employer, which was worth from two to four guineas p.a. Such labourers also got potato ground at a fair price.

The other class of labourers held no land and were more numerous and depended on their labour being hired, for which they were paid from eightpence to tenpence a day. At harvest time, however, much higher daily wages were paid, as much as two shillings and sixpence. Local labourers were in competition at such times with labourers from neighbouring counties,



such as the likes of Michael Sullivan mentioned above. In general Willcocks was sanguine about the condition of the labouring classes: “[They] are fairly dealt with, and taking all circumstances into view, they have no reason to complain of their state or condition; they are in general well clothed and their food plenty and wholesome”.

In contrast, Willcocks thought the condition of the poorest and lowest order of farmers to be “very pitiable”, particularly those who had taken land within the previous six or eight years. Here he was talking about farmers with from 10 to 40 acres, for which they paid rent ranging from £2 to £4 an acre, depending on the quality of the land. “From the present prices for the produce of land it is impossible that those rents can be paid”. He painted a picture of such farmers struggling under unremitting financial pressures and having no means to improve their farms.

“Upon the whole, taking into view the last six or eight years, I think the petty farmer has now a right to complain, for although he got high prices for the last five or six years, it is well known that lands carried an equal rise in rent, and it is equally well known that the prices of the present day will not pay half the rent which the farmer is bound to pay by the lease’s conclusion; either prices would have to improve or rents would have to be lowered before matters improved for such farmers”. In spite of such bleak economic conditions, Willcocks noted that “there is an immense population in this part of the country”, and with land the only means of employment, “the tenants would give any price for land sooner than be without it”.

The most comprehensive source of information about the living conditions of the poor in pre-Famine Ireland are the reports and appendices of the 1836 Poor Inquiry.¹⁵³ This gathered a great deal of evidence for South Tipperary, with a particular emphasis on the barony of Middlethird. Needless to say, this evidence did not come directly from the poor but was mediated through the great and the good, landlords and clergy – both catholic and protestant.

With regard to wages, the situation was broadly as outlined above. The fact that there was a surplus of labourers depressed wages, and it was noted that the usual daily rate had decreased by twopence (all such figures are in old money) over the previous decade. An average good situation was where a labourer might work 250 days a year at eightpence a day, giving him an income of £8.33 p.a. If such a labourer had a wife and three or four young children, to survive he had to have access to conacre. Such a family could consume three stone of potatoes per day, which if purchased could cost in the region of ninepence, which worked out at nearly £14 p.a. – that is, if they were available, and they were not in any kind of quality during July and August.

Labourers, therefore, unless they were in full-time employment with a farmer, in which case they were generally fed, had to grow their own potatoes. Where a labourer had a cabin, potato garden and perhaps milk from an employer, this was reckoned to be worth between one-third and one-half of his wages. It was generally agreed by those who gave information to the Inquiry that there was very little employment for women and children, except perhaps at harvest when wages were around sixpence a day. Where the wife kept a few hens, “The tobacco and candles eat up the eggs and fowl” was the way one informant expressively put the matter. Tobacco at, perhaps, sixpence per week could be the major expenditure, and for six months of the year candles costing threepence per week also counted.¹⁵⁴

It is very much the case that the socio-economic box in which a person sees himself may be different from the box into which other people place him. Similarly, drawing a sharp line between a certain kind of cottier and a certain kind of small farmer is not always possible. The Devon Commission divided labourers into three classes: unmarried farm servants (always known as boys or girls, whatever their age) who resided with their employers; cottiers who held their cabins and small plots of ground from farmers whom they paid by their labour, their



rent being calculated at the lowest rate of wages payable in the district, and finally those who were essentially landless and at the bottom of society and depended on conacre for their survival.¹⁵⁵

However, according to one of the Scullys giving evidence in 1836 about Middlethird, a man holding five to ten acres was called a cottier.¹⁵⁶ Another witness, a landlord from Cordangan near Tipperary town, indicated that a cottier held from two to seven acres and was quite different from a mere cabin holder.¹⁵⁷ The point here was that the line between cottier and small farmer was difficult to draw.

One of the questions put to the informants in 1836 was about the number of labourers in various parishes and the degree to which they were employed. Most informants were clergymen.

TABLE 7
Labourers and their employment, various parishes, 1836¹⁵⁸

Parish	No. of labourers	No. in constant employment
Shronell	100-500	very few
Templeneiry	400-500	c. 50
Tipperary	600-800	c. 200
Carrick	3000	50
Clonmel	1500-2000	c. two-thirds
Cahir	650	150
Templetenny	4000	150
Clonoulty	600	260
Fethard	300	100
Kilcooly	1000	500

While this information is subjective, most of the informants were parish priests who might be thought to have a good idea of the social problems in their parishes. The figures for Tipperary and Carrick, for example, reflect the perception that Carrick, in line with the evidence cited above, had a huge volume of poverty when compared with Tipperary, though for an urban area, the number in constant employment seems remarkably low. (To compare the populations of the two towns in 1841, that of Carrick was 11,049 and of Tipperary, 7,370).

With regard to Carrick, the 1831 Census declared that between 800 and 900 labourers were employed in the parish in both agricultural and non-agricultural work.¹⁵⁹ One witness declined to give figures regarding his district, the parish of Tubbrid, saying that he found it impossible to distinguish between labourers and farmers because so many worked at both. The most optimistic statement was that of Ambrose Going of Ballingarry, who said that because of the coal mines there was no shortage of employment in his district.

For those landless labourers who lacked even the limited security of employment by a farmer in return for a cabin and potato ground, their first priority was a roof over their heads. The P.P. of Tipperary told the Poor Inquiry that cabins without land cost £2 p.a. Joseph Cooke of Cordangan gave the figures of £2-3 in the town and £1-1.50 in the country. From the evidence regarding other parts of South Tipperary, the annual rent for a cabin was around £1-2, the rent being dearer in towns than in the countryside.¹⁶⁰

With reference to Tipperary town, James Roe M.P. of Roesborough said that there were some cabins in the town with up to five families – as many as 43 persons under one miserable roof. An



R.M. in Cashel told the Inquiry that "in the town and particularly in the suburbs, families are huddled together in the same cabin without furniture, bedding or scarcely covering for their nakedness; they all sleep together indiscriminately, male and female on dirty straw heaped in a corner on the earthen floor. In the country however, they are not reduced to this destitution."¹⁶¹

During the 1839 trial arising from the murder of Cooper and Wayland one of the witnesses indicated in passing that she shared a bed with her three first cousins, two of whom were male.¹⁶² The following is a description of a typical labourer's cabin:¹⁶³

"The cabin is generally built of mud, sixteen or twenty feet long by ten feet wide, covered with thatch. In the country, they generally have a rude bedstead, straw and a blanket or blankets for one bed, which suffices for the whole family, an iron pot, a small table, a large box and two or three chairs with hay-rope bottoms form the usual furniture of a common labourer's cabin".

A priest who gave evidence before an earlier inquiry in 1825 stated that early marriage was common among the poor, as he put it – "to have a companion in their difficulties".¹⁶⁴ Another priest in his evidence to the 1836 Inquiry agreed that the most destitute were prone to marry young. He explained by way of example:¹⁶⁵

"A lad about twenty, who had nothing in the world, came to be married. I remonstrated with him, on account of his poverty, but he said that he only got £3 a year and that he had to spend all that in washing and mending clothes and so he would get a wife to do these things for him; he could not be poorer and when he had children he would be no worse off".

This anecdotal evidence is not unusual for the decades before the Famine; but it does not accord with the statistical evidence from the 1841 Census. According to this source for Tipperary county, just two males and 16 females were married at under 17 years of age and in the 17-25 age-range, 2,715 men were married but 36,553 men were not, and 7,290 women were married against 34,283 who were not.¹⁶⁶ To quote a recent writer on the matter: "Comparison with other European countries shows that Ireland's propensity to marry before the Famine was not exceptionally high."¹⁶⁷

For a vast number of people access to land in order to grow potatoes was the central fact in their lives. Implied in the explanation of the young man quoted above is access to potatoes with which to feed himself and a possible family, though with an income of £3 p.a., as things stood he would not have been able to afford conacre. Austin Bourke has calculated that on the eve of the Famine 3.3 million people lived exclusively on the potato, and that for another 4.7 million it was the most important part of their diet. He calculated that in rural Ireland the average individual consumption of potatoes per annum was around 2,300 lbs.

This compares with a consumption of 440 lbs per person per annum in the Irish Republic in 1950. In general, potatoes provided adequate nutrition, though it has to be emphasised that the potato type in widespread use on the eve of the Famine, the Lumper, was about the poorest variety available and deteriorated sooner, and the new crop was ready for human consumption later than most other varieties.¹⁶⁸

Vincent Scully of Mantlehill near Kilfeacle in his evidence before the Devon Commission provided information about conacre from the perspective of those for whom it was a very considerable source of profit. He described a field of 22 Irish acres in Kilfeacle, land which had not been tilled for 70 years and how it was known that such land was of "prodigious productiveness" when first "turned up" for potatoes. Such land was particularly sought by potato-jobbers, men who had the capital to speculate on growing potatoes. This evidence by Vincent Scully was in the context of his defence of his brother's record as a landlord. James Scully was murdered in Kilfeacle in 1842.



The witness therefore went to some lengths to give the impression that his brother was doing his tenants a great favour by opening up this field to conacre. "The people of a district are always anxious that old pasture land should be turned up to afford an additional supply of potatoes and tillage to the neighbourhood." James Scully set the field in April 1841 at £14 an Irish acre, and according to his brother a higher price could have been sought. (In fact, this price would appear to be at the higher, perhaps even highest, end of the local price range – see below.)

Notice was given of the day on which the settings were to be made and not surprisingly there was very great competition. Terms were strict: half the money to be paid in advance, all potatoes to be removed to headlands before 10 December 1841 to enable the preparation of the land for ensuing crops, and the remainder of the money to be paid by 1 April 1842 or before the potatoes were removed from the field. The 22 acres were set in 55 different lots from one acre to five roods, and all but 3.75 acres went to potato-jobbers.

This 3.75 acre lot was divided between Scully's cousin, his doctor, his ploughman and his blacksmith. The summer of 1841 was wet, but what the crop lacked in quantity it made up in price in the spring of 1842. Vincent Scully quoted the experience of his cousin who had taken one acre of the field. It produced 100 barrels of potatoes (21 stones per barrel), which were worth around eight shillings per barrel in the spring of 1842, or £40. Allowing for labour costs, a very nice profit indeed.¹⁶⁹

There was an enormous difference between the rent charged for land for normal agricultural use and land for conacre. The phenomenon whereby the poor pay more for less is not new.

TABLE 8
Rent levels and conacre costs (various parishes) 1836¹⁷⁰
(Irish acre)

Rented land		Conacre land	
Parish	Rent (£)	Parish	Cost (£)
Cordangan	2.50	Shronell	8-10
Carrick	3.00	Tipperary	6-12
Cahir	2.00	Carrick	8-14
Gaile	1.25	Cahir	8-10
Cashel	1.50-2.00	Cashel	8-10
Fennor	1.25	Ballysheehan	6-10

The economics of conacre were not complicated. Based on the figures above, a farmer in the Cahir area who rented land for around £2 an acre could make up to £10 for letting just one acre of conacre. As was clear from the Scully example, an acre was generally divided among a number of these subtenants, thereby of course making for possible friction between farmer and subtenants and between subtenants.

A number of witnesses before the Devon Commission spoke about conacre. A large farmer from near Clonmel explained that the practice whereby farmers demanded payment in advance caused a good deal of hardship to the labouring class. Excessive rents, up to £12 an acre, were charged.¹⁷¹ A witness from near Clogheen also mentioned the practice whereby payment in advance was demanded and remarked that it had become the system over the previous seven or eight years.¹⁷²

Edward Dalton of Ballygriffin near Tipperary explained how he “let out” a “good deal” of conacre, charging from £8 to £10 an acre, though in his case it was a way of paying his labourers, their hire being valued at eightpence per day, “the highest wages in the neighbourhood”. Where top price was charged for conacre, the land in question was fully prepared with manure.

Virtually all visitors to the region during this period noted the manure heaps kept outside labourer’s cabins. With class four dwellings it was not uncommon that floors were sunk into the ground to make unnecessary the raising of high cabin walls, but one consequence of this was the flow of liquid run-off from the manure into the cabins.¹⁷³ As Dalton commented about these labourers: “The pig is their principal look out.”¹⁷⁴ “A doorway half blocked up by the dungheap is a sure sign of comparative wealth.”¹⁷⁵ An efficient relationship existed between the labourer’s pig and his potatoes; the latter fed the former, while the manure from the former was fertiliser for the latter.

There was general agreement among the witnesses before the Devon Commission that conditions for labourers were getting worse.¹⁷⁶ They are “little better than the brute beasts for want of employment” was the way one witness expressed the matter.¹⁷⁷ Another witness, agent to several large estates, said how “it is only wonderful how they have patience to live as they are at all”. For a hovel they had to pay from 20 to 30 shillings, and for potato-ground manured around £10.¹⁷⁸

Michael Doheny described the condition of the poor in Cashel.¹⁷⁹ As many as ten families lived in some houses, and in his capacity as a member of the Board of Health he had visited one house in which 76 people lived who had not a blanket between them. Rent was from one to threepence per week and their principal means of support was theft, visiting the surrounding farms to see what they could get in the way of food. When work was available wages were tenpence a day without food or sixpence with food. With potatoes then selling for fourpence a stone, a man could spend a shilling a day to feed his family.

The 1836 Inquiry paid particular attention to the barony of Middlethird, in which Cashel is the principal town. About two-thirds of the barony was devoted to tillage. A usual rotation of crops was potatoes on manured land, followed by wheat, oats and then potatoes, a rotation which could be repeated three or four times on the best land. On land that was less good the ground was left as pasture for six or eight years following perhaps two crop rotations.

Tillage farms from 50 to 100 acres provided constant employment for around five men, with another fifteen employed during the few weeks of harvest. Regarding the emphasis on tillage or pasture, it depended on prices, and the trend was thought to be in favour of pasture. This was not to the advantage of labourers. For example, on a grazing farm of around 80 acres no more than two men would be employed.¹⁸⁰

There is a scene towards the end of one of Kickham’s novels when the eponymous heroine Sally Cavanagh, having been forced to the workhouse, is separated from her children. This scene conveys, as it was meant to, a great deal of the horror of the Poor Law system, which was intended by the state as a flimsy safety net between dire poverty and death.

“‘The youngest little boy, sir,’ exclaimed Sally Cavanagh, as she clasped her treasure to her bosom – as if she could hide it there – and looked imploringly into the face of the poor-house official.

But it was no use; she should comply with the rules.

The children following the official into a long corridor. Before the door closed behind them they turned around to take a last look at their mother, and as they did so their little hearts died within them. Surely something horrible is going to happen to them. For their mother stretches out her hands towards them with a look of despair, as if she saw a bottomless pit yawn and swallow them up before her eyes.”



Before long all her children are dead and Sally goes mad with grief.

The question of government intervention to relieve Irish poverty was a matter of ongoing debate in the decades before the Famine. A typical expression of official attitude was the declaration in 1819 by William Gregory, Under Secretary for Ireland, that “the government are not on all occasions to be the first resort when any pressure occurs.”¹⁸¹ When in 1822 there was a threat of Famine, the government was prepared to spend some £400,000, not in the provision of public works.¹⁸²

By the late 1820s, with Irish poverty increasing and (what was worse) being exported to England with increasing numbers of Irish labourers emigrating there, the matter of a compulsory Poor Law being introduced into Ireland became a live issue. Economists were fearful that such a law, given the scale of Ireland’s problems and the nature of the Irish character, would be more than the country could afford. Their particular difficulty was with the able-bodied poor, whom it was thought would abuse any such system. A leading opponent of such caution and advocate of Poor Laws for Ireland was James Doyle, bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, who argued that by helping the poor, society could only benefit.¹⁸³

In 1833 a Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland was appointed with Richard Whately, Church of Ireland archbishop of Dublin, as chairman. A massive amount of information was collected and much reference has been made to it above. Three reports were published between 1835 and 1836, the most important point being the rejection of extending the new English Poor Law to Ireland. This had been passed in 1834 and established a system whereby relief of paupers could only be given through the network of workhouses to be spread throughout Britain.

Whately’s argument was that, while in England fear of the workhouse might act as an incentive to the poor to find work, in Ireland the problem was that work was not available to the mass of the poor. “The difficulty in Ireland is not to make the able-bodied look for employment, but to find it profitably for the many who seek it . . . we see that the labouring class are eager for work, that work there is not for them, and that they are therefore, and not from any fault of their own, in permanent want”. Instead of the workhouse system the Commissioners proposed a broad based strategy of economic improvement, assisted emigration and various social welfare measures such as state supported institutions for the sick and orphaned.¹⁸⁴

Interventionism such as Whately proposed was not what the Whig government wanted to hear. The Prime Minister Lord John Russell wrapped the work of Whately and his colleagues in praise even as he was consigning it to the attic to gather dust alongside all the other unwanted official reports.¹⁸⁵ To use a not inappropriate analogy from Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, if Whately was the well-intentioned Mr Brownlow, then the next figure in the drama of the introduction of the Poor Law, George Nicholls, was Mr Bumble the righteous and officious servant of the system.

Nicholls was one of the three Poor Law Commissioners in charge of the English system and totally committed to the workhouse idea. He arrived in Ireland (sent by the government) around September 1836 and was able to issue his first report on 15 November. Well might Whately write to a friend on 2 October, referring to Nicholls’s tour of investigation: “They bring with them ready-made theories and plans and then declare that everything they have seen and heard in Ireland had confirmed their convictions.”¹⁸⁶ Sure enough, in his report of 15 November, Nicholls painted a picture of Ireland as a country where poverty and filth were consequences of the national character. The Irish peasant was lazy and, because he was lazy, he would sooner beg than work.

Nicholls therefore recommended that the workhouse system would act as “a test of destitution”; that no relief should be given except in the workhouse; that there would be no

right to relief “even to the destitute poor”; that no individual of a family would be admitted to a workhouse unless the entire family entered; that unions would be formed, at the centre of which would be the workhouse with a board of guardians elected by the ratepayers with votes proportionate to property; that payment of the poor rate should be divided equally between owners and occupiers of property; and that all workhouses should adhere to a common scale of diet and system of regulation so that the poor would not prefer one workhouse to another.

The possibility of widespread famine was considered, but dismissed as a “contingency beyond the powers of a poor-law to provide for”. This last is probably the most fateful phrase in Nicholls’s entire report.¹⁸⁷ The doctrinaire approach of Nicholls and not the more thoughtful recommendations of Whately become the basis of the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 1838 (1 & 2 Vict. c. 56) which became law on 31 July 1838.

Not surprisingly Nicholls was put in charge of implementing the new law and took up his post in Dublin in September 1838, where he remained until November 1842. Appointed to help Nicholls were four assistant-commissioners, all of whom were English. Each of these was assigned a district and given the help of a number of Irish assistants. The assistant-commissioner with responsibility for South Tipperary was W.H.T. Hawley, one of whose first tasks was to call public meetings in those market towns where it was hoped to build workhouses and explain to the people what was involved and allay fears with regard to cost.

Initial reaction at such meetings was favourable. For example, at a public meeting in the courthouse in Tipperary town on 5 January 1839, attended by the gentry, merchants and ratepayers, with James Scully of Bank Place as chairman, voluntary subscriptions were offered to pay for relief until the workhouse was built.¹⁸⁸ Pressure to get the system in place was increased by the fact that the spring and summer of 1839 were extraordinarily wet, causing loss to the wheat crop of 25% and to the potato crop of 50%.¹⁸⁹

Broadly speaking, three things had to be done and done as quickly as possible: build the workhouses, prepare the mechanism for raising the poor-rate and put boards of guardians in place. Below is the statistical information regarding the Poor Law Unions covering South Tipperary.

TABLE 9
The Poor Law Unions of South Tipperary¹⁹⁰

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Carrick	13	25,191	16,394	90,016	500	5/2/1839	7,144	8/7/1842
Cashel	17	156,137	62,154	129,457	700	1/2/1840	7,630	28/1/1842
Clogheen	12	117,421	43,932	60,993	500	4/10/1839	7,142	29/6/1842
Clonmel	10	46,935	29,692	89,200	600	28/3/1840	2,921	1/1/1841
Tipperary	20	124,535	55,068	148,134	700	12/8/1839	8,291	3/7/1841

Headings:

- 1 Poor Law Unions
- 2 Number of Electoral Divisions in Union
- 3 Number of acres of Union in South Tipperary
- 4 Population in 1841 of part of Union in South Tipperary
- 5 Valuation (£) of entire Union
- 6 Number of persons for whom the workhouse was built
- 7 Date when contract signed for building of workhouse
- 8 Cost (£) of workhouse
- 9 Date of admission of first paupers to workhouse



The basic unit on which Unions were constructed was the townland; these were grouped into electoral divisions which returned the guardians who constituted the elected portion of the board. Unions transcended county boundaries so that with regard to the Unions above, only three of the electoral divisions in Carrick Union were in Tipperary (the remainder were in Kilkenny and Waterford); all of the electoral divisions of Cashel Union were in Tipperary; with regard to Clogheen Union, all but one of the divisions were in Tipperary; four of the Clonmel Union electoral divisions were in Waterford and finally, sixteen of the divisions of Tipperary Union were in that county. Looked at from the point of view of population, of the five Unions referred to above, 74% of their combined populations was in South Tipperary. Three Unions – Cashel, Clogheen and Tipperary – accounted for 74% of the area of South Tipperary.¹⁹¹

A basic principle of the Poor Law system was that local property would pay for local poverty. The first report from Nicholls to the government stated: “One of the first duties to which a board of guardians is required to attend was the valuation of the property within the union for the purpose of its being rated to the relief of the poor”.¹⁹² It was acknowledged that this would be difficult and very full instructions were issued. The act itself had stated that “every rate is to be a poundage rate, made upon an estimate of the net annual value of the several hereditaments”. This concept of “net annual value” was based on the rent at which, “one year with another”, the property might reasonably be let, allowing that the tenant paid all expenses and taxes with the exception of tithes.

Where the annual value of the property was less than £20, the rate-payer was entitled to one vote at the election of guardians, and this scale went up to six votes for property worth in excess of £200. To further weight the scale in favour of property, where the occupier was also the owner the number of votes was doubled.¹⁹³ Not surprisingly, collecting poor-rate from the poor was more trouble than it was worth, and in 1843 occupiers of property rated at less than £4 p.a. were exempted from the poor rate, their portion of the rates being made the responsibility of the owners.¹⁹⁴

With regard to the number of so-called “tenements” valued at under £5 in the various Unions of South Tipperary, the volume of poverty very much relates to the general impression of levels of prosperity in various parts of the region. Clogheen, for example, had the highest percentage.

TABLE 10

Percentage of tenements under £5 valuation in the Unions of South Tipperary¹⁹⁵

Poor Law Union	Percentage of tenements under £5 valuation
Carrick	55
Cashel	56
Clogheen	66
Clonmel	40
Tipperary	47

From the beginning various interests were dissatisfied with the Poor Law Valuation. An essential point of the whole system was that the cost of maintaining a region’s paupers in the workhouse was not spread evenly over the Union, but the poor rate in each electoral division was levied according to the proportion of paupers in the workhouse who had previously been resident in that district. Where families had moved to towns from the countryside and then from these towns to various workhouses, there was ready ground for dispute about where the financial burden should fall.¹⁹⁶



In Clonmel, for example, a number of guardians (including their chairman John Bagwell) protested against the entire valuation, declaring that it was too heavy on the town and too light on the countryside.¹⁹⁷ In Tipperary the first meeting of the guardians took place on 16 March 1839 and just over two months later they appointed a valuer. Thomas Bolton, agent to the Stanley estate and an elected guardian, thought that the valuation in general was about 25% below what a fair landlord would let his land for. A similar opinion was expressed by a number of guardians of the Clonmel and Cashel Unions.

Interestingly, Bolton opined that this did not apply to the PLV of the Stanley estate (Ballykisteen), because he had made it his business to be present when the valuation was carried out. This was confirmed by James Heany, vice-chairman of the Cashel Union, who was a tenant of the Stanley estate and whose rent was 10% over PLV.¹⁹⁸ Where there was disagreement over valuation, an appeal mechanism came into play. For example, in the Clonmel Union in 1841, the Malcolmson Brothers had the valuation on their mills reduced from £750 to £413 and similarly Joseph Grubb had the valuation on his mills reduced from £270 to £150.¹⁹⁹

An example of the rating system at work may be seen from Cashel Union, the guardians of which struck a rate in September 1842 to cover the expenses of the Union for six months. The average number of paupers in the workhouse during the previous half year was 600 and the cost of keeping each pauper was two shillings and fourpence per week. For twenty-seven weeks, this came to £1,890; added to this was £262 for salaries, £335 which was part repayment of a government loan, and with another £200 the cost of running the workhouse for a half year came to £2,687. The amount to be raised, assuming the full poor rate was collected, was just over £3,033.

TABLE 11
Poor Rate Cashel Union, September 1842²⁰⁰

Electoral Division	Net Annual Value (£)	Rate in £	Amount of Rate (£)
Cashel	22,746.20	¼	1,421.65
Ballysheehan	7,389.75	5d.	153.95
Ardmayle	4,620.45	2½d.	48.13
Gaile	3,513.70	2½d.	36.60
Magorban	6,166.20	2½d.	64.23
Knockgraffon	11,343.00	2½d.	118.15
Tullamain	5,896.90	5d.	122.83
Fethard	12,709.45	5d.	264.75
Peppardstown	7,970.60	2½d.	83.00
Drangan	5,649.50	2½d.	58.85
Cloneen	4,887.95	2½d.	50.90
Kiltinan	6,726.20	2½d.	70.05
Clonoulty	6,450.40	5d.	134.37
Clogher	5,116.70	2½d.	53.30
Kilpatrick	8,833.55	5d.	184.00
Graystown	5,343.55	2½d.	55.65
Killenaule	5,418.45	5d.	112.87

About 47% of the poor rate was to be raised in the electoral division of Cashel. A further 32% was to come from the six divisions rated at fivepence in the £. As mentioned above, the poor rate was set on the basis of the number of paupers chargeable to each division. Not



surprisingly, there was a very high correlation between the seven higher rated divisions and the divisions where the highest percentage of tenements were valued at under £5 – for example, in Cashel, about 60%, Fethard 67% and Killenaule 66%. In contrast, the figure for Knockgraffon was 43%.²⁰¹ As will be discussed in the second article in this series, the rate in the £ increased enormously during the Famine. (For example, in Cashel Union during 1847-48 the rate struck was between 1/8 to 5/10 in the £, depending on the division.)

Boards of guardians were composed of both elected and appointed members, the latter being intended to make sure that democracy did not push property from its pre-eminence. In some Unions especially, the early elections to the boards of Guardians took on much of the colour and bite of local party politics. For example, the election for the Clonmel Union led to an inquiry before the House of Lords in the spring of 1841, spearheaded by the earl of Glengall and the duke of Wellington. At issue was the role of the returning officer, a well-known Repealer who was the nephew of the catholic archbishop of Cashel.

Glengall appears to have been particularly busy during these elections, trying to stem the tide of O'Connellite influence, especially as neither the voting qualification nor the qualification for membership of the board of guardians was particularly high. Early in 1839, speaking to a crowd in Clogheen, Glengall asked that 13 catholics and five protestants be elected. The parish priest of Cahir did not accept this point of view and accused Glengall of trying to advance the interests of "obnoxious individuals".²⁰² A few weeks later this same priest, Fr Michael Tobin, wrote to Daniel O'Connell to complain about Glengall's reprisals against those of his tenants who refused to vote as instructed. In the electoral division of Cahir (Union of Clogheen), "three honest patriotic catholics" were returned instead of the "three rank Tories" promoted by Glengall. According to Tobin, the earl demanded prompt payment of his spring gale and heaped legal costs on his tenants.²⁰³

It was certainly the case that Glengall felt very aggrieved and two years later was still smarting, confiding to his diary: "The conduct of the Roman Catholic tenant has been most scandalous to me during the last ten years and has given me a lesson never to be forgotten by me or my heirs".²⁰⁴ Given the importance attached to property, it was inevitable that the large landowners within a Union expected to exercise a large degree of control over the Union.

With regard to the workhouses, their architect was George Wilkinson who had designed workhouses in Wales. "The style of building is intended to be of the cheapest description, compatible with durability; and effect is aimed at by harmony of proportion and simplicity of arrangement, all mere decoration being studiously excluded."²⁰⁵ Late in 1843 officials were dispatched to see at first-hand the condition of various workhouses.²⁰⁶ Regarding the building in Carrick, there were complaints about the site as there were problems regarding water supply and drainage. "The architecture of the exterior is very plain and does not claim to rank with any style."

Some of the alternative sites were examined by the officials but were found to have problems. There had been five tenders for the building of the workhouse and the lowest, that of Thomas Anthony, had been accepted. The building itself was declared to be average, but with substantial parts of it well executed. The site of 6.75 acres had cost £174.45 per acre, which was about the most expensive in South Tipperary. The Cashel site of 6.75 acres had cost £161.85 per acre, while the Clogheen site of six acres cost £97.15 per acre. The reason why the cost of Clonmel workhouse was so much lower than others in the region (see Table 9) was the use of an existing "House of Industry". A subsequent building was not erected until the early 1850s.²⁰⁷

The official attitude regarding the relief of poverty in Ireland was that the poor must not be molycoddled. The problem was, however, that circumstances were so bad for so many people that it proved difficult for officialdom to create a regime that was actually worse than that endured in

real life. The basic idea behind the diet of workhouse inmates was that it should not be better than they were used to. However, the one area where it was better was in its regularity.

When in 1840 one of the officials of the Poor Law examined the diet of the poor, he noted their reliance on the "lumper" potato which was "of a very inferior and of a watery nature". In dairying areas buttermilk was sometimes used, but when the supply of this failed water was the only liquid used. Sometimes to add extra flavour to the potatoes, a herring was added to the pot. Failing this, potatoes were cooked in a mixture of lard, salt and water, typical of workhouse diet was that in Tipperary.

TABLE 12
Tipperary Workhouse Diet, 1840²⁰⁸

	Men	Women
Breakfast	4s lbs. potatoes & 2 pints of milk	3s lbs. potatoes & 1s pints milk
Dinner	The same	The same
Supper	Supper is not always taken	Supper not always taken

6. – Crime

One of the county coroners in the 1830s was George Bradshaw, who lived at Pegsborough outside Tipperary town and whose district centred on the baronies of Clanwilliam and Kilnamanagh. Between 1 January 1832 and 14 March 1836 he was responsible for 122 inquests. In nearly 50% of these cases death had resulted from a violent attack. The official return does not state the reasons for these attacks but a number of factors are clear: given that in many cases more than one person was involved in the attack, there was a high degree of conspiracy; guns appeared to be widely available and there were many head injuries. The first inquest noted in the return was on the Rev Irwin Whitty of Golden, whose murder has earlier been mentioned.

Some other examples were:

John Green of Kilpatrick, who early in 1832 died from the effects of a wound from one of a party of five men;

Edmund Clifford of Donohill, who died from gun-shot wounds inflicted by one of a party of four men on Sunday evening, 1 July 1832;

John Connors, also shot dead in the same attack;

William Russell of Clonbeg, who died of head injuries on 8 January 1833, possibly inflicted by his two brothers;

John Shannahan of Cappaghwhite who died on the last day of 1833 from injuries inflicted on him ten days earlier by (among others), Thomas Stapleton and his two sons Patrick and Thomas; and lastly,

William Carew of Clonbeg, who died on 10 September 1834 of injuries inflicted by members of the Moroney and Noonan families.²⁰⁹

From the evidence of this source, taking just three parishes – Clonbeg, Soloheadmore and Golden – the instances of violent death were for Clonbeg, two in 1832, and one in each of the three following years; for Soloheadmore, one in 1832 and four instances in 1834 and for Golden, two in 1832 and one in 1834. In only one of these instances – Golden in 1834 – was there specific reference to a faction fight and in this case, together with six other of these deaths, the assailants were named during the inquests.



It is not at all clear that this level of violence derived from problems over land. Access to land was undoubtedly a factor, but in a landscape which in 1841 had about three and a half times as many people as now (county figures), where state law was regarded as alien by the mass of the people, where there was a tradition of taking direct action by violent conspiracy since the 1760s, where threats to the economic status quo (such as moves from tillage to pasture) could be a matter of survival, and where the moral authority of the catholic church was weaker than it became later in the century, violent crime was a common means of redress.²¹⁰ Lee perhaps had a point when he wrote: "It is tempting to speculate that Tipperary's frontier-type history over the centuries had bred a peculiarly casual attitude towards human life."²¹¹

References to violence in Tipperary were inevitable when the region was discussed.²¹² It was not surprising therefore that the state's response in the form of a professional police force had its first outing in Tipperary. This was in Middlethird (around Cashel) in 1814 and was the creation of the Chief Secretary, Robert Peel.²¹³ Then as now the success of a police force can be measured by its conviction rate, and in this context the new force can be measured by its conviction rate, and in this context the new force had very limited success. In the Tipperary county assizes of 1814, 1815 and 1816 the average percentage conviction rate was just over 17.

Special Commissions in 1815-16 constituted to cope with particular outbreaks of violence had more success (which was why they were used), with a rate of just over 43%.²¹⁴ For crimes such as murder, especially when the victim was an establishment figure, successful prosecution and conviction as often as not depended on the local code of silence being broken, either through one of the conspirators turning against his fellows to save his own neck (literally) or in response to the reward money, which in the case of the 1838 murders of Cooper and Wayland amounted to nearly £4,000, of which around £3,000 was paid.²¹⁵ Given that (as indicated earlier) the average wage to a labourer for a day's work was tenpence, this was an extraordinary amount of money.

Contrary perhaps to a popular view that executions were widespread during this period, all kinds of local and human feelings were brought to bear to mitigate the undoubted savagery of the letter of the law. Taking national figures for the years 1820 to 1826, of 1,751 persons sentenced to death, 397 were actually executed while 5,095 were transported.²¹⁶ However, in a political context, where in theory Ireland was an integral part of the United Kingdom, the official response to Irish crime was much more comfortable with the idea that there was something incorrigible in the character of an Irishman rather than have to come to terms with the possibility that there might be something fundamentally wrong with the political and economic relations between the two islands.

Containment, therefore, was the chosen response. Apart from the creation of a police force, other factors were brought to bear such as a reform of the local magistrates in the early 1820s. These local worthies were the eyes and ears of Dublin Castle. However, as an examination of their copious correspondence makes clear, some of them were inclined to see and hear what was not there, while others were too caught up in the web of local circumstances to act as agents of government policy. What the government wanted was a magistracy more responsive to its wishes and as part of this reform professional magistrates who were outside the network of local interests were increasingly appointed.

A factor as basic as the development of new roads was an important contribution. In 1809, for example, it was being lamented that much of the population outside of the towns was beyond the reach of "justice".²¹⁷ Thirty years later a stipendiary magistrate was, however, still complaining that the mountainous district around Kilcommon was particularly disturbed. In general the value of the new roads was admitted.²¹⁸



The police were the front line defence against crime, and judging from the figures relating to South Tipperary between 1831 and 1845, when it came to physical conflict with the people, the police came off best. From a total of 32 "affrays", three police were killed and 35 wounded as against five "persons" killed and three wounded. This latter figure of three wounded is a gross underestimate, as such wounded would have been taken from the field of battle to lick their wounds in secret. The first of the three police to be killed was in August 1834 and occurred in "Ballymonty" (presumably a misprint) during an arrest. Eight persons were transported for the offence.

The second murder was in 1834 also and occurred in Whitechurch during an attempt to free a prisoner. A man named Keating was later hanged for the offence. The third murder was in October 1837 in Mullinahone "when on patrol on a fair night, the sub-constable received a blow of a stone, which killed him". No one was charged for the attack. With regard to those killed by the police, in one case the formula of self-defence absolved the policeman responsible; the second incident occurred when the police were quelling a riot at the fair of Cappawhite; the third man was killed in Donaskeigh and was one of a large party who attacked the police and set fire to a house where they were taking refuge in October 1837. Two people were transported and others imprisoned.

The fourth incident took place in Moyglass, when a police patrol came across a party stealing cattle and the final death was in Bansha while police were protecting freeholders during an election.²¹⁹ The nature of the duty on which the police were engaged during these 32 incidents is outlined below.

TABLE 13

Duties on which people engaged in South Tipperary 1831-45 during which affrays occurred²²⁰

On patrol	11	On protection duty	4
At fairs	5	Escorting prisoners	4
Quelling riots	5	Carrying out arrests	3

Because of bad weather and crop failure the early 1820s was a period when there was an upsurge of crime, especially in 1822. The situation in South Tipperary, particularly the barony of Iffa and Offa West, illustrates the conflicting advice received by Dublin Castle from the leading landowners, men on whom the system of law enforcement relied but whose private agendas and personality differences determined successive governments to by-pass them through the creation of a more professional system of law enforcement.

In October 1822 Glengall (then 29 but already reactionary) wrote to the Chief Secretary emphasising the dire state of Iffa and Offa West. He enclosed a long list of recent outrages in the region, mainly attacks by parties of armed men on houses in search of more arms. If the government based its policy on Glengall's attitude, it would have to conclude that it was 1641 all over again. Glengall knew that Lords Donoughmore and Lismore had a different perspective and were opposed to extreme measures being taken. Glengall wanted the barony proclaimed. As he said, he saw no point in adopting half-measures. He emphasised that a majority of the magistrates were on his side.²²¹

A few days later Lismore was in communication with the government, giving an entirely different slant and declaring that the barony did not need to be "put under the scourge of the



Insurrection Act". According to him the trouble in Iffa and Offa West was related to a long-standing feud between two families, the Lonergans and Hennessys, and was centred on the large townland of Gortacullin in the parish of Ballybacon, of which Lismore was proprietor. This land had just fallen out of lease and the upsurge of violence was because of fear on the part of these two families that one would gain advantage over the other. In other words, Lismore saw the matter as a little local difficulty and not as Armageddon.

Just as Glengall had rubbished his fellow lords, Lismore returned the favour and complained that his efforts were being frustrated by Glengall. He concluded his letter by warning against a certain individual being given an important appointment in the police. "I am apprehensive that so much power in the hands of one man might be injurious to the country." The individual in question was, of course, thought to be in Glengall's pocket.²²² Faced with such contradictory information, just one small example relating to a small corner of the country but which can be multiplied many times over, it was not surprising that successive officials in Dublin Castle were both perplexed and impatient.

An indication of what caused the inhabitants of Tipperary to end up in prison may be understood from an official return of 1836.

TABLE 14

Offences for which persons most commonly committed to gaol in Tipperary, Jan 1832-March 1836²²³

Assault	1,358	Manslaughter	130
Riotous assembly	952	Distilling illegally	129
Misdemeanours	796	Forcible possession	112
Larceny	495	Shooting at persons	77
Murder	301	Robbery of arms	74

The most striking point about these figures is the theme of violence. Over 400 individuals were locked up as a result of killing an unspecified number of people. From a different breakdown of figures, it appeared that in 1832 there were 30 homicides; in 1833, 32 cases; in 1834, 40 cases; in 1835, 41 cases and during the first quarter of 1836, 16 homicides. With regard to the offence of assault, all but 100 or so were, according to the figures, devoid of any intention to "murder", "ravish" or "rob" and might therefore be seen as an expression of Irish exuberance – a case of statistics reinforcing the racial stereotype. While its accuracy may be doubted, the police view on these assaults was that overwhelmingly they were not related to the question of land.

The main focus of these crimes was against the person rather than property. As one despairing observer commented in 1834: "The fountain whence flows the great evils that spread over the county of Tipperary is composed of the rank and fetid waters of Faction."²²⁴ During the late 1830s when there was a reforming Liberal government in office with which O'Connell co-operated, Tipperary grandees like Donoughmore and Glengall screamed that law and order in the region was breaking down. This prompted the Under-Secretary Thomas Drummond to point out that if anything the conviction rate for homicides prosecuted was better than it had been. The aggregate of cases between 1834-37 where the juries convicted was 96, against 69 acquittals and two cases where the jury disagreed.²²⁵

Very little violent crime was related to questions of party politics or religion, issues which loom large in any study of the period. The "Orange Riot" which took place in Tipperary town



on 12 July 1827 revealed an intensity of sectarian feeling which was quite exceptional. On that day soldiers of the 34th Regiment stationed in the town provocatively displayed orange lilies, contrary to the orders of their superiors. That evening some soldiers were attacked by an incensed crowd who proceeded to vent their anger against the town's protestant inhabitants, attacking some 25 houses and according to a police report were only dissuaded from attacking the protestant church by the knowledge that the locality would have to bear the cost of repairs. However, the sexton's house was destroyed.²²⁶

It is the case that our knowledge of this lurid landscape comes from official sources. One such detailed source is the official diary kept by William Knaresborough, who was the resident magistrate in Tipperary town from the end of June 1843 to the end of July 1844, when he was transferred to Mitchelstown. Before his tour of duty in Tipperary he was based in Enniskillen. A brief sample of his duties illustrates something of the contours of this landscape. During his first few days in Tipperary he had to take statements relating to some earlier murders. On 28 July with 80 police he attended the fair of Cappawhite. Perhaps due to this show of force, there were no incidents.

On 22 December, on being informed that a serious disturbance was expected at the fair of Kilfeacle and that 500 men were assembled there (members of two factions), he rushed from Tipperary with 40 soldiers and 12 police, his available force. The appearance of the soldiers was enough to disperse the crowd. In late January and early February 184 he investigated two different threatening notices, one posted on the door of an employee of the Liverpool Mining Company at Hollyford and the other given to the steward of Mr Smith-Barry on Lacken Mountain (sic).

On the night of 25 April, the "cabin" of Edmond Looby at Soloheadbeg was burned when it was attacked by an armed party. All Knaresborough could do was to take statements on oath from two witnesses, who had to choose between the cold formality of the official law and the altogether more certain retribution of their own community with its violent sanctions against those who informed.

On 13 May 1844, responding to rumours of a pending riot between some of the inhabitants of the parishes of Cappawhite and Solohead, Knaresborough wrote to the respective parish priests, Daniel Corcoran and Thomas Hewitt, the former of whom assured him that "all should be peace and that no riot should take place."²²⁷ Just over a week later, on 21 May, the R.M. had a busy day. In the morning he committed an individual for trial at Cashel Quarter Sessions for sheep-stealing. Then he attended the fair at Emly where he had several persons arrested for "intoxication and rioting". Later that evening he cleared all the public houses at nine o'clock, a riot having been anticipated. "All being quiet, I returned to my station".

The official diary for 5 July illustrates the variety of crimes and misdemeanours with which Knaresborough had to deal. Michael Ryan was arrested for being a deserter from the 89th Foot, but was shortly afterwards released when the truth of his story about his weak heart was ascertained. On receipt of news that Michael Ryan (Bawn) was dying and wished to see a magistrate, Knaresborough went at once to his residence and took his dying declaration as to the way he received the injury.²²⁸

As may be seen from this very cursory look at one official's work trying to contain what at the time was the greatest volume of crime in the country, no great distinction was made between agrarian and non-agrarian crime. This rather problematic task was left to the compilers of crime statistics. Knaresborough must have suffered something of a shock of adjustment transferring from Fermanagh, where the total number of crimes in 1844 was 81, to Tipperary county where the comparable figure was an astonishing 907.



One of the witnesses before the Devon Commission was the Deputy-Inspector General of the Constabulary in Ireland. Inevitably, he was asked about the prevalence of agrarian violence in Tipperary. Based on the figures he had himself supplied to the commissioners, the incidence of such crimes, while very much higher than in any other county, was still some two and a half times less than "ordinary" crime, but agrarian crime was politically sensitive. It would hardly do if some link was drawn between a high volume of agrarian crime and deficiencies in the land system.

When this witness was asked if the high incidence of such crimes in Tipperary was connected with cause for more violence in that county or if it was related to the character of the people, he kicked to touch and seemed much more at ease discussing the different degrees of violence within the county. He correctly pointed out that over the past years the focus of violence within the county had moved from the south to the north, from Clanwilliam and Middlethird to Owney and Arra and both Ormonds. He preferred not to offer reasons for this pattern.

He was more confident in his declaration that the most usual target was the individual who took a farm from which another had been evicted, and cited as an example the murder of a tenant named Barry who had taken an evicted farm on the estate of Lord Donoughmore. Since the farm had been taken into the landlord's possession there had been no further trouble.²²⁹ Such acts of violence were, according to this witness, most usually committed by the servants or labourers of farmers, and while he conceded the positive effects of the temperance movement generally, it had little impact on violence in Tipperary.²³⁰

This witness had some 17 years' experience in the police and his evidence is remarkable for its lack of insight and, typical of such officials, he seemed much happier delivering a mass of statistics rather than pertinent analysis. The idea that agrarian violence proceeded from the whiskey bottle nicely coincided with racial stereotypes and obviated the need for structural analysis. The secretary to the Devon Commission was rather more accurate when he wrote that "the possession of land, however small its extent, had become the only security for a supply of food; to lose that security, was, in fact, to risk the very existence of the family from which it was taken".²³¹

Allowing that other issues such as wages, employment and conacre were causes of conflict, "the occupation of land seems to have overwhelmed all other concerns in the minds of those embarking on acts of agrarian violence".²³² The same point was made by George Cornewall Lewis, whose account of agrarian violence was first published in 1836. In his *Local Disturbances in Ireland* he wrote that "the main object of the Whiteboy disturbances" was "to keep the actual tenant in undisturbed possession of his holding and to cause it to be transferred at his death to his family". This was done "by preventing and punishing ejection and the taking of land over another's head".²³³ The way in which both the nature and level of crime changed during the Famine years will be discussed in the second article of this series.

The majority of crimes in Tipperary county in 1844 were "offences affecting the public peace", and 45% of outrages in this category were in the nature of threatening notices or letters, most of which were agrarian. The figure for Tipperary was 119 such warnings. Second in this particular league was Roscommon, with 41 such notices. The widespread use of such a warning system was indicative of the deep roots of an alternative code.

The second most important category of crime in Tipperary in 1844 was "offences against the person", with 23 homicides, of which a surprisingly high number (18) were held to be non-agrarian. In the third category, "offences against property", the most common crime, nearly a third of the total, was cattle stealing, closely followed by "incendiary fire", the majority of which were surprisingly tabulated as non-agrarian.



TABLE 15

Outrages reported to the constabulary, County Tipperary, 1844²³⁴

Offences against the person	217 of which 24 were agrarian
Offences against property	213 of which 28 were agrarian
Offences affecting the public peace	473 of which 199 were agrarian

The volume of outrages in Tipperary was much greater than in any other county. The figures for Munster are given below.

TABLE 16

Total of outrages reported to the constabulary, Munster counties, 1844

County	Number of agrarian outrages	Non-agrarian
Clare	50	231
Cork	32	469
Kerry	9	125
Limerick	74	291
Tipperary	253	654
Waterford	17	171

There is a passage in T.C. Foster's report for *The Times*, written in Thurles on 27 October 1845, which has the poignancy of Fr Browne's well-known photographs of the excited *Titanic* passengers at Queenstown in April 1912. The passage reads:²³⁵

"In coming to [Thurles] I had made a circuit of the southern portion of the county, and had the opportunity of seeing the country around Tipperary, Cahir and Cashel. Generally speaking, cultivation is in a very advanced state to what you see it in Connaught. Most of the fields are well squared and fenced and there are many well-built and decent-looking farmhouses. The country often spreads out from the foot of fine ranges of hills into vast tracts of level rich soil of extraordinary fertility, nearly all of which is under cultivation."

Just over a week before Foster wrote this report, the icebergs had been seen; but, of course, there was no way of knowing the extent of the disaster that lay ahead. In its issue of 18 October 1845, the *Tipperary Free Press* commented that potato blight, while bad in Cork, was not as serious in South Tipperary, but nevertheless was worse than thought the previous week.

APPENDIX

The Census of 1841 – the measurement of misery

The census of 1841 was carried out on the night of Sunday 6 June, and in the words of those responsible for its execution, "a census ought to be a social survey, not a bare enumeration". It is impossible for us today to examine the mass of information gathered by this "social survey" and not be influenced by our knowledge of the catastrophe of the Famine, the extent of which is all too clear when the 1841 and 1851 figures are compared.



This Appendix looks at the 1841 census for South Tipperary for what it tells us about the pattern of misery and poverty within the region, and thus covers the sections of the population and areas least able to cope with the Famine when it came.

Housing

The quality of housing was evaluated on the basis of the number of rooms, the number of windows and the materials from which walls and roofs were constructed.

4th class houses – All mud cabins of one room.

3rd class houses – A better description of cottage, two to four rooms and windows, but constructed of mud.

2nd class houses – Good farm houses or, in towns, houses on “small” streets, with five to nine rooms and windows.

1st class houses – Remaining houses, of the best quality.

This classification did not take into account the state of repair of houses. For our purpose, the amount of 4th class housing is what matters.

Housing quality by barony					
Barony	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Total
Clanwilliam	165	983	3752	2600	7500
Iffa & Offa East	437	1999	2227	987	5650
Iffa & Offa West	144	1219	2888	2582	6833
Kilnamanagh Lower	21	286	896	788	1991
Middlethird	188	1381	2934	2392	6895
Slieveardagh	82	1270	2437	1897	5686

When the number of 4th class houses within each barony is expressed as a percentage of the total number of houses in that barony, the not surprising fact is revealed that the barony with the highest average land valuation and with the most highly developed commercial sector has the lowest percentage of 4th class housing.

Barony	4th class houses	Average land valuation per st. acre	Range of valuation by parish
Clanwilliam	35%	88p	41p – £1.30
Iffa & Offa East	17%	98p	41p – £2.07
Iffa & Offa West	38%	62p	25p – 96p
Kilnamanagh Lower	40%	68p	44p – 90p
Middlethird	35%	81p	39p – £1.05
Slieveardagh	33%	62p	42p – 84p

The above figures confirm what even a cursory knowledge of South Tipperary indicates, namely, that Iffa and Offa West was the poorest of the six baronies and while its land valuation per acre was the same as Slieveardagh, no other barony had civil parishes with such low land valuations. For example, Newcastle – 25p per acre; Shanrahan – 28p per acre and Templetenny – 29p per acre. The percentage of 4th class houses in these three parishes was, respectively, Newcastle – 43, Shanrahan – 40 and Templetenny – 40.



A look at the percentage of poorest houses in the various Munster counties is a reminder that poverty is relative and no matter how bad the situation is, it is probably worse elsewhere.

Waterford	38%	Cork	56.7%
Tipperary Co.	42%	Clare	56.8%
Limerick	55%	Kerry	67%

Incidentally, the figure for Kerry was the fourth worst in the country.

With reference to housing, the census made it clear that there were more families than houses; in other words, some families shared a house, and while this may have been reasonable in the better houses, the situation in 4th class houses when this happened is beyond imagination. Of most interest is the fact that this problem was worst with regard to 4th class houses in Iffa and Offa East, the most prosperous barony (a surplus of 18 per cent of families over houses) and was least serious in the poorest barony of Iffa and Offa West (a surplus of 4 per cent). The reason for the situation in Iffa and Offa East was presumably the attraction of employment, or at least its possibility. This problem was at its most acute in towns. For example, in Tipperary town there were 389 4th class houses, but 552 families lived in 4th class houses.

Illiteracy

Apart from the quality of housing, another indicator of poverty is illiteracy, the level of which was very high. The system of "national" education was just a decade old at the time of the census. The figures below are the percentages of the population in each barony who could neither read nor write. (The figures are somewhat inflated in that they are based on the total population, rather than those over seven years of age.) Again, the figures are considerably worse for Iffa and Offa West than the remainder of South Tipperary, where the figures are very similar.

Clanwilliam	43%	Kilnamanagh Lower	41%
Iffa & Offa East	44%	Middlethird	42%
Iffa & Offa West	56%	Slieveardagh	44%

The census report made the point that bad housing and defective education seem to accompany each other. "But whether the one or the other be cause or effect, there can be little doubt that the removal of either would soon be followed by the amelioration of the other." The levels were worse in the towns, with the exceptions of Clonmel and Clogheen.

Clogheen	54.3%	Cahir	46.8%
Carrick	53.5%	Cashel	45.9%
Fethard	50%	Clonmel	38.8%
Tipperary	46.9%		

With regard to Iffa and Offa West, the half-dozen noble lords who between them owned some 75% of the barony do not emerge with much credit when the condition of its people is examined. These gentlemen were Glengall, Lismore, Kingston, Donoughmore, Waterpark and Mountcashell.



Visitors & Servants

Apart from householders and their families, two other categories of persons were noted by the census – visitors and servants. The former included all who boarded with families, persons in an “unsettled or dependant state”. The census report concluded that “it would be natural to expect that the prosperity of a community would be in inverse ratio to the proportion of this class of persons”. This is not borne out by the situation in South Tipperary, where (as might be expected) the degree of dependency was highest in the more prosperous area.

The second category of servants, the census report declared, was more usually to be found “in those districts which exhibit the highest state of wealth and of house-accommodation and of education”. The fact that in large towns there was an excess of females over males was attributed to the number of female servants. The figures for both visitors and servants on a barony basis, and expressed as a percentage of the total population of each barony, are given below.

Barony	No. of visitors per 100 of barony population	No. of servants per 100 of barony population
Clanwilliam	15.7	8.7
Iffa & Offa East	16.5	9.7
Iffa & Offa West	14.1	7.5
Kilnamanagh Lower	13.6	8.8
Middlethird	16.4	9.1
Slieveardagh	13.4	7.6

The argument might be advanced that while male servants were a matter of economic necessity, female servants were more a reflection of prosperity and status. There was a third more female servants than male in Iffa and Offa East. On the other hand, the highest percentage differential with the balance in favour of male servants (15.6%), was in Iffa and Offa West.

A comparison between Clanwilliam and Middlethird is of interest. Along with Iffa and Offa East (the two baronies with the highest average land valuation per acre), Clanwilliam had an excess of female servants (6.4%), whereas in Middlethird, the excess of male servants was 11 per cent. Both tillage and livestock production was of importance in each of these baronies, but the more labour-intensive tillage was more widespread in Middlethird. This class would be vulnerable should disaster such as famine strike.

Occupations

The 1841 census also classified families according to occupation. The smallest group was those heads of families with professions or capital, which included the more substantial farmers (50 acres plus). A second group was those heads of families involved in the direction of labour and included all but the poorest of farmers. The third group depended on their own labour and had no capital, and included those with less than five acres. This classification according to family means again reveals the special position of Iffa and Offa East, which alone among the baronies had a greater number of heads of families directing labour than depending on their own labour.



Barony	Professional/Capital	Some fixed income/ Direction of labour	No capital/Labour
Clanwilliam	167	3082	5021
Iffa & Offa East	285	3806	3467
Iffa & Offa West	96	2531	4515
Kilnamanagh Lower	21	380	1706
Middlethird	165	3237	4077
Slieveardagh	83	2274	3628

The means of 1178 families were not classified.

The gap between those in the second and third categories was especially large in Kilnamanagh Lower and could be interpreted as justification for Hawarden's efforts (but not his methods) to rationalise his estate. Left to itself, the disposition of wealth within this barony suggests that, when faced with a disaster, those without capital would be particularly exposed with a very constricted sector with means from whom help might be sought.

The gap between these two sectors was also large in Iffa and Offa West and in Clanwilliam. When this latter barony is compared with Middlethird, for example, it was not the case that a lesser proportion of heads of families were involved in trade and business, but Clanwilliam appeared to have a greater proportion of smaller farms.

Density per Barony

Before looking at those parishes most at risk in the event of a disaster, a final set of figures from the 1841 census shows the population density of the various baronies.

Barony	Population per 100 acres
Clanwilliam	45.2
Iffa & Offa East	72.9
Iffa & Offa West	37.3
Kilnamanagh Lower	34.2
Middlethird	40.2
Slieveardagh	40.2

Those civil parishes where the percentage of 4th class houses was above the barony average are identified below. Two other factors are also taken into account, where illiteracy was above the barony average and where the valuation of land was below the barony average. This is based on the perspective of 1841 and gives some idea of those areas most at risk.

This is not, however, to suggest the inevitability of disaster, as no account is taken of human factors. Should disaster strike such a parish, perhaps the landlord(s) would come to the rescue or perhaps the situation would improve, maybe through emigration between 1841 and 1845.



Clanwilliam

(4th class housing 35%; Illiteracy 43%; Average land valuation 88p per acre)

Parish	Housing (%)	Illiteracy (%)	Valuation (£)
Clonbeg	40	47	41p
Clonbulloge	36	52	53p
Clonpet	60	40	93p
Cordangan	56	33	88p
Oughterleague	84	56	64p
Relickmurry	42	44	£1.01
Soloheadbeg	47	37	81p
Toem	40	43	63p

Iffa and Offa East

(4th class housing 17%; Illiteracy 44%; Average land valuation 98p per acre)

Because the percentage of 4th class housing is so low, only spectacular deviations are noted below.

Ballyclerahan	69	45	£1.02
Garrangibbon	34	51	56p
Kilcash	39	52	63p
Kilmurry	33	60	89p
Newchapel	58	42	£1.10

Iffa and Offa West

(4th class housing 38%; illiteracy 56%; Average land valuation 62p per acre)

Ballybacon	59	61	34p
Molough	70	66	89p
Neddans	60	59	90p
Newcastle	43	69	25p
Shanrahan	40	40	28p
Templetenny	40	57	28p
Tullaghorton	58	58	44p

Kilnamanagh Lower

(4th class housing 40%; illiteracy 41%; Average land valuation 44p per acre)

Clogher	66	48	57p
Rathkennan	77	47	90p

Middlethird

(4th class housing 35%; illiteracy 42%; Average land valuation 81p per acre)

Ballysheehan	50	43	75p
Baptistgrange	55	43	£1.05
Colman	51	41	79p
Dogstown	56	49	97p
Kilbragh	65	40	99p
Killeenasteena	68	48	89p
Mora	60	48	81p
Outeragh	79	47	93p
Railstown	72	36	£1.03
Tullamain	68	43	99p



Slieveardagh

(4th class housing 33%; illiteracy 44%; Average land valuation 62p per acre)

Parish	Housing (%)	Illiteracy (%)	Valuation (£)
Cloncen	65	45	74p
Grangemockler	44	58	48p
Isertkieran	48	39	88p

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47. *Drummond Commission*, Appendix B, no. 1, p. 2.
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86. *Poor Inquiry (Ireland)*, Appendix F, H.C., 1836 (38), xxxiii, pp. 191-2.
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88. I.E.C. sale 9 July 1851, estate of earl of Carrick.
89. Inglis, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
90. This will be discussed in the final article in this series, to appear in this Journal in 1997.
91. *The Age*, 19 Feb 1826 & 25 Feb 1827.
92. *Evidence taken before her majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland*, H.C., 1845 (657), xxi, pt iii, pp. 888-90. (*Devon Commission*)
93. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of John Keefe, p. 221.
94. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 250-51.
95. *Devon Comm.*, p. 260.
96. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of H.W. Massy, p. 272.
97. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of W. McCurtin, p. 282.
98. *Devon Comm.*, p. 287.
99. *Devon Digest*, 1, pp. 451-52.
100. Kingston estate rental (O'Brien Rentals, 9/1, N.A.).
101. Griffith's Valuation, Iffa and Offa West, p. 113.
102. B. Phelan to E. Walcott Sympson, 20 Aug 1823 (M 2386, N.A.). Reply, 27 Aug 1823.
103. E. Taylor to Col. Walcott, 31 Oct 1839 (M 2386, N.A.).



104. For example, Binns, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-65; Foster, *op. cit.*, pp. 337-38.
105. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 276, 278.
106. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of J. Keeffe, p. 221.
107. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of John Fitzgerald, p. 411.
108. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of H.W. Massy, p. 272.
109. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of Michael O'Brien, p. 234.
110. *Devon Comm.*, p. 287.
111. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of A. Jordan, pp. 291-92; M. Doheny, p. 209; Edward Pennefather, p. 290.
112. *Nation*, 25 Feb, 11 March, 25 March, 8 April, 22 April 1843.
113. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 261-62.
114. *Devon Comm.*, p. 269.
115. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 297-98.
116. *Nation*, 25 March 1843; *Devon Comm.*, p. 832.
117. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 825-36.
118. For example, S O C 2518/48, 1823 and S O C 2834/39, 1827 (N.A.).
119. 1790-1855 (P.P. Clonoulty 1839-55), native of Thurles.
120. For example, M. MacCárthaigh, *A Tipperary Parish, a history of Knockavilla-Donaskeigh* (Cork, 1986), pp. 181-86.
121. *T.F.P.*, 2 May 1838.
122. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 833-36.
123. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of E. Dalton, p. 264.
124. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of Thomas Bolton, pp. 276-77.
125. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of Fr. J. Mackey, p. 288; A. Jordan, pp. 291-92.
126. *Devon Digest*, 1, pp. 289-91.
127. *Devon Comm.*, p. 224.
128. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of W.J. Fennell, pp. 236-37.
129. *Devon Comm.*, p. 240.
130. *Devon Comm.*, p. 250.
131. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of W. O'Donnell, p. 403.
132. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of W. O'Flynn, p. 311.
133. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of H.W. Massy, p. 272; of E. Dalton, p. 261.
134. *Devon Comm.*, p. 287.
135. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 221, 228, 235, 239, 249, 261, 268, 276, 285-89, 291, 310, 401. Type of acre generally not specified, but probably Irish.
136. A. Bourke, *The agricultural statistics of the 1841 census of Ireland: a critical review* in Hill and O'Gráda, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-80.
137. *Devon Digest*, 1, p. 395; Moky, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
138. T.W. Freeman, *Land and people, c. 1841* in *N.H.I.*, v, p. 254.
139. *Devon Digest*, 1, p. 398.
140. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of T. Prendergast, pp. 212-13.
141. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of J. Keeffe, pp. 219-20.
142. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of M. O'Brien, p. 233.
143. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of W.J. Fennell, p. 236.
144. *Devon Comm.*, p. 240.
145. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of Edwin Taylor, p. 251.
146. Crossman, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-7.
147. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of H.W. Massy, p. 274.
148. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 274-75.
149. Rentals, Glengall estate (Cahir Estate Co. papers, 976/3/2/1 (N.A.)).
150. *Devon Digest*, 1, pp. 493-94.
151. *Devon Digest*, I, pp. 488-90.



152. A. Gregory, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-103; original S O C 177/72, 1816 (N.A.).
153. Specific questions were circulated by the commissioners and dealt with such topics as living conditions and the employment of the poor.
154. *Poor Inquiry*, Appendix D, H.C., 1836 (36), xxxi, pp. 90, 110, 232-51.
155. *Devon Digest*, 1, pp. 474-75.
156. *Poor Inquiry*, xxxi, p. 81.
157. *Poor Inquiry*, xxxi, evidence J. Cooke on Q. 2, pp. 232-51.
158. *Poor Inquiry*, xxxi, Q. 1, pp. 232-51.
159. *Return of the population of the several counties in Ireland, as enumerated in 1831*, H.C., 1833 (254), xxxix, pp. 190-91.
160. *Poor Inquiry*, Appendix E, H.C. 1836 (37), xxxii, Q. 2, pp. 232-53.
161. *Poor Inquiry*, xxxii, Q. 5, pp. 232-53.
162. *T.F.P.*, 16 Jan. 1839.
163. *Poor Inquiry*, xxxii, Q. 3, pp. 232-53.
164. *Second report from the select committee on the state of Ireland and the minutes of evidence*, H.C. 1825 (129), viii, evidence of Fr Thomas Costello, p. 426.
165. *Poor Inquiry*, xxxi, p. 60, evidence of Rev. J. Ryan P.P.
166. W.E. Vaughan and A.J. Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Irish Historical Statistics – population 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), p. 109. Included in the figures for those married are 32 men and 130 women whose spouses had died.
167. Mokyr, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
168. Hill and O'Gráda, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-54.
169. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 898-99; *Devon Digest*, I, p. 519 defines conacre as "a contract by which the use of a small portion of land is sold for one or more crops, but without creating the relation of landlord and tenant between the vendor and vendee, it being rather a licence to occupy than a demise".
170. *Poor Inquiry*, Appendix F, H.C. 1836 (38), xxxiii, Qs 3 and 5, pp. 232-51.
171. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of Denis Mulcahy, p. 225.
172. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of Patrick Walsh, p. 229.
173. J.K. Trimmer, *A brief inquiry into the present state of agriculture in the southern part of Ireland* (London, 1809), pp. 10-11.
174. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 262-63; see also *Poor Inquiry*, xxxiii, pp. 296, 408.
175. Quoted in Hill and O'Gráda, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
176. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 225, 229, 234, 250, 261-63, 282.
177. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of H.B. Bradshaw, p. 270.
178. *Devon Comm.*, evidence of A. Jordan, p. 294.
179. *Devon Comm.*, pp. 299-300.
180. *Poor Inquiry*, xxxiii, pp. 293-96.
181. Quoted in S.A. Royle, *Irish famine relief in the early nineteenth century: the 1822 famine in the Aran Islands in I.E.S.H.*, xi (1984), p. 45.
182. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7.
183. R.D.C. Black, *Economic thought and the Irish question 1817-70* (Cambridge, 1960), pp 90-95.
184. H. Burke, *The People and the Poor Law in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Women's Education Bureau, 1987), pp. 17-37.
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187. Nicholls, *Irish Poor Law*, pp. 160-88 – 1st Report.
188. *T.F.P.*, 9 Jan 1839.
189. G. O'Brien, The establishment of Poor Law Unions in Ireland, 1838-43 in *I.H.S.*, xxiii, 90 (1982), pp. 97-103.
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Returns of parliamentary electors, also of tenements valued under the act 1 & 2 Vic. c. 56 for relief of the poor in Ireland, H.C. 1844 (533), xliii; *Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the execution of the contracts of certain Union Workhouses in Ireland etc.*, H.C., 1845 (170), xxvi; *Second report of the relief commissioners*, H.C., 1847 (819), xvii; *First annual report of the commissioners for administering the laws for relief of the poor in Ireland, with appendices*, H.C., 1847-8 (963), xxxiii, Appendix B; *The census of Ireland for the year 1851*, H.C., 1852-3 (1550, 1551), xci.

191. The impact of the Famine on the Tipperary portion of these Unions will be discussed in T.H.J. 1996.
192. Quoted in Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 244.
193. *Ibid.*, pp. 228-29.
194. *Ibid.*, pp. 290-91.
195. *Return of tenements etc.*, 1844, xliii.
196. G. O'Brien, The new Poor Law in Pre-famine Ireland, in *I.E.S.H.*, xii, (1985), pp. 40-1; *Copies of instructions issued by the Poor Law Commissioners to the valuers in Ireland*. H.C., 1841 (353), xxi.
197. *Reports relating to the valuation for Poor Rate etc.*, H.C., 1841 (305), xxii and appendix (326), xxiii.
198. As above, 2nd appendix (326), 1841, xxiii.
199. *Seventh annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, H.C., 1841 (327), xi, appendix 3, vi.
200. *Returns relating to poor relief Ireland*, H.C., 1843 (275), xlvi, v, p. 105.
201. *Return of tenements etc.*, 1844, xliii, p. 66.
202. O'Brien, *Establishment of Poor Law Unions*, pp. 109-11.
203. Tobin to D. O'Connell, 7 April 1839 (*O'Connell Correspondence*, vi, pp. 230-31).
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206. *Report of the commissioners re contracts*, H.C., 1844 (562), xxx.
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208. *Sixth report of Poor Law Commissioners*; H.C., 1840 (253), xvii, Appendix D, No. 22, p. 244.
209. *A return of inquests held by George Bradshaw from 1 Jan. 1832 to 14 March 1836*, H.C., 1836 (927), xlii, pp. 6-9.
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212. For example, *Report by the Lords Select Committee appointed to inquire into the state of Ireland since the year 1835, in respect of crime and outrage*, H.L., 1839 (486), xi, pt i, p. 109; J.G. Kohl, *Travels in Ireland* (London, 1844), pp. 168, 191; Noel, *op. cit.*, p. 272.
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219. *Returns of persons killed or wounded in affrays with the constabulary force in Ireland*, H.C., 1846 (346), xxxv, pp. 18-21; Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 332-34.
220. Returns as n.219.
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222. Lismore to Goulburn, 4 Nov 1822 (S O C 2356/74, N.A.).
223. *Return of the number of persons committed to the gaol of the county of Tipperary in the years 1832, 1833, 1834, 1835 and to the spring assizes 1836*, H.C., 1836 (226), xlii.
224. T.F.P., 12 March 1834.
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