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**National University of Ireland  
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**Dundalk 1900-1960: an oral history**

by

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## Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>		<b>i</b>
<b>List of tables</b>		<b>iii</b>
<b>List of figures</b>		<b>iv</b>
<b>List of abbreviations</b>		<b>v</b>
<b>Chapter I</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter II</b>	<b>Housing, living conditions and education 1900-45</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Chapter III</b>	<b>Work and leisure, 1900-45</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Chapter IV</b>	<b>War and politics, 1900-45</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Chapter V</b>	<b>A time of change, 1945-60</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Chapter VI</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>		<b>218</b>
<b>Appendices</b>		<b>231</b>

## Summary

The period 1900-1960 witnessed changes in the economic, industrial, political, social, technological and everyday life of Ireland of unprecedented scale and accelerated pace. From the agriculturally-based economy of the 1900s the country was embracing industrialisation by 1960.<sup>1</sup> Dundalk was the leading provincial industrial town in Ireland over that period. This thesis sets out examines the effect successive British and Irish government economic and social policies had on the population of the town. It looks at population trends, industry, work, living conditions, class structure, education, housing, family, community and interdenominational relationships and the influence of the Roman Catholic clergy on their congregation. It also examines, at urban, county and national levels, the political and military upheavals from 1916 through to World War II, when the domination of Civil War politics began to wane.

Advances in technology, from horse to bicycle to motor car, broadened the scope of social interaction. Radio, cinema and later television brought outside influences into a class conscious, inward-looking, isolated society. As a consequence of partition in 1922 Dundalk became a 'border town' separated but never isolated from outside/British influences. So by the 1950s cultural norms were being challenged as exposure to 'the social forms of advanced capitalist consumer societies [were] raising Irish expectations and creating demand for a new economic order'.<sup>2</sup> Neither of the above phenomenon were isolated and change in one area altered the relationship of each to the next. Thus, it can be seen that the principal aim is to comprise a 'total history' or 'micro history' of Dundalk between 1900-1960.

As the thesis is primarily concerned with people, oral history methodology has been employed to integrate the recollections of those who lived through the period with conventional written sources. A secondary function of the study is an evaluation of oral evidence as a historical source.

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<sup>1</sup> Lyons, FSL *Ireland since the famine* (Glasgow, 1986), pp. 69 and 629.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, Terence *Ireland: a social and cultural history 1922-1985* (London, 1985), p. 225.

## Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>		<b>i</b>
<b>List of tables</b>		<b>iii</b>
<b>List of figures</b>		<b>iv</b>
<b>List of abbreviations</b>		<b>v</b>
<b>Chapter I</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter II</b>	<b>Housing, living conditions and education 1900-45</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Chapter III</b>	<b>Work and leisure, 1900-45</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Chapter IV</b>	<b>War and politics, 1900-45</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Chapter V</b>	<b>A time of change, 1945-60</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Chapter VI</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>		<b>218</b>
<b>Appendices</b>		<b>231</b>

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on that day the author little realised the duration of the journey he was about to embark on, nor the substantial personal rewards that were to result from it. If any credit accrues from this work much of it must go to Professor Comerford's sound judgement, faith and willingness to extend an educational opportunity to mature students. For this I am deeply grateful. Other members of staff to be singled out for mention include Dr Mary Ann Lyons who supervised the MA portion of this thesis and Dr Jacinta Prunty who took over the reins and guided the project, and the author, to its completion as a doctoral thesis. Without her assistance, encouragement and coffee when the going got tough this thesis would have remained simply an idea and no more. Her energy, enthusiasm and dedication to the project, and her pupil, deserves the highest praise. Dr Raymond Gillespie's wit and charm soothed many a crisis; his assistance with oral evidence in early Irish society is gratefully acknowledged. Likewise the author would like to extend his thanks to the library staff at NUI Maynooth, Victor Lang and the late Peter Young at the Irish Military Archives for their assistance in the research for the project. Special thanks must also go to my fellow post-graduate students for their frank comments and continued encouragement.

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### List of Tables

		Page
Table 1.1	Political affiliations of members elected to municipal authorities in county Louth in 1899.	47
Table 1.2	Population trends in neighbouring towns 1891-1901.	48
Table 1.3	Population trends in county Louth and neighbouring counties 1891-1901.	49
Table 2.1	Changes in urban population of county Louth 1901-46	56
Table 2.2	Houses built by DUDC, 1900-41	72
Table 3.1	Occupational statistics for Dundalk, 1901-61	90
Table 3.2	Accumulated yearly salaries for Protestant and Catholic staff on the GNR	96
Table 3.3	Wages on the GNR, 1910-43	102
Table 3.4	Imports to, employment in, and Irish production of footwear 1914-45	116
Table 3.5	The size of firms in the Irish footwear industry, October 1935 (classified according to number employed)	120
Table 4.1	Members of Dundalk Urban District Council, 1898-1918	135
Table 4.2	Simultaneous membership of Dundalk urban and Louth county councils	140
Table 5.1	Party affiliations of Dundalk members of LCC, 1945-60	178
Table 5.2	Distribution of seats on DUDC, 1942-60	179
Table 5.3	Share of party votes in county Louth for Dáil elections 1944-61	179
Table 5.4	Houses built by Dundalk UDC, 1947-58	195
Table 5.4	Improvement in sanitation, 1946-61.	196

**List of Figures**

		page
Figure 1.1	Location of Dundalk, County Louth	44
Figure 1.2	Dundalk c. 1860	46
Figure 2.1	Some of the areas condemned as insanitary by the DUDC, 1900-45	59
Figure 2.2	Schools and churches, Dundalk	78
Figure 3.1	Location of GNR Works, Dundalk, c. 1930s	92
Figure 3.2	Part of the GNR rail network, c. 1925	94
Figure 4.1	Map of county Louth electoral districts, 1899	139
Figure 5.1	Housing schemes built in Dundalk, 1900-60	197

## Abbreviations

AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
ASE	Amalgamated Society of Engineers
CBS	Christian Brothers School
CIE	Coras Iompair Éireann (Irish railway authority)
CnaP	Clann na Poblachta
CnaT	Clan na Talmhan
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CRV	Commercial Road Vehicles
DEW	Dundalk Engineering Works
DLS	De La Salle
DUDC	Dundalk Urban District Council
FF	Fianna Fáil
FG	Fine Gael
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GHQ	General Headquarters
GNR	Great Northern Railway
GNRB	Great Northern Railway Board
I	Independent
I/FG	Independents supportive of Fine Gael
IFC	Irish Folklore Commission
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
L	Labour
LCC	Louth County Council
LDF	Local Defence Force
LSF	Local Security Force
NSA	National Sound Archives (UK)
OIP	Official Independence Party
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
RP	Ratepayers
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SSO	Sun Sanitary Officer
TD	Member elected to the Dáil
UCD	University College Dublin
UFTM	Ulster Folk and Transport Museum
UIP	United Ireland Party
UTA	Ulster Transport Authority
YMCA	Young Men's Catholic Association

## Chapter I

### Introduction

Oral tradition tends to be overlooked by professional historians, yet it can often fill gaps left open by the written sources. It can make the past live in a sparkling and arresting fashion.

Cardinal Tomás Ó'Fiaich<sup>1</sup>

#### Thesis aims

The period 1900-1960 witnessed changes in the economic, industrial, political, social, technological and everyday life of Ireland of unprecedented scale and accelerated pace. From the agriculturally-based economy of the 1900s the country was embracing industrialisation by 1960.<sup>2</sup> Successive British and Irish government economic policies favoured agriculture and rural values over industry and urban living up to 1932.<sup>3</sup> Fianna Fáil's protectionist policies (1932-38) partially countered this trend leading to population increases in industrial centres.<sup>4</sup> This in turn led to a greater emphasis on social policies such as housing and sanitation which improved the living conditions of the majority population. Advances in technology, from horse to bicycle to motor car, broadened the scope of social interaction. Radio, cinema and later television brought outside influences into a class-conscious, inward-looking, isolated society. Thus, by the 1950s cultural norms were being challenged as exposure to 'the social forms of advanced capitalist consumer societies [were] raising Irish expectations and creating demand for a new economic order'.<sup>5</sup> None of the above phenomena were isolated; change in one area altered the relationship of each to the next. This thesis sets out to examine that interrelationship as it affected the community of Dundalk, by integrating the recollections of those who lived through the period with conventional written sources.

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<sup>1</sup> Ógra Dúin Dealgan Teamwork Project, *Dundalk, a tradition in industry* (Dundalk, 1986), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lyons, FSL, *Ireland since the famine* (Glasgow, 1986), pp. 69, 629.

<sup>3</sup> Hoppen, Theodore, *Ireland since 1800: conflict and conformity* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1999), p. 242.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, Terence, *Ireland: a social and cultural history 1922-1985* (London, 1985), p. 211.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

The principal aim therefore is to create an inclusive or ‘micro history’ of Dundalk between 1900-1960. Such an ambitious approach was validated by two French historians, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, founders of the *Annales School* as early as 1929.<sup>6</sup> A similar approach was adopted by Fernand Braudel in *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II* (1949). His attempt ‘to reverse the increasing fragmentation of history’ into specific specialities is still celebrated by commentators.<sup>7</sup> Despite the ever-deepening division and subdivision into specialised thematic studies in history, the concepts of the *Annales* school continue to be influential, particularly in local history, since the 1960s onwards.<sup>8</sup>

In this thesis, an inclusive, rather than selective or specialised stance is taken towards the research and writing of history. What are sometimes seen as the separate branches of economic, political, military, social, industrial, religious and educational history are taken in combination rather than isolation, an approach that brings its own challenges but also rich advantages. In this study, the majority population, not the local luminaries, are placed centre stage, and their concerns and life-experiences addressed. In each case the aim is to move at least a little beyond the confines of a single perspective. Added dimensions are given to buildings by looking at the daily human interaction that took place therein rather than merely their design, date of construction, builders and architects. Streets, parks and other open areas in the town are treated as places where people shopped, traded and met, to pursue recreational activities. They are not merely lines on a planning map.

Central to this investigation is the use of oral history methodology. While the principal focus is on the construction of an ‘inclusive’ history of this industrial town, this thesis also aims to assess the value of oral evidence in the writing of urban history. As the study is based on a series of personal experiences of history it provides insights which for

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<sup>6</sup> Black, Jeremy and Macrailld, Donald, M., *Studying history* (London, 1997), p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

specific themes are seldom present in conventional sources.<sup>9</sup> This is particularly true for domestic life, experiences in the work place, intimate personal relationships, and personal belief systems and values. Thus, the study may also help to identify topics and questions that warrant further investigation by means of both oral and conventional historical sources.

### **Thesis structure**

The structure of the thesis is largely determined by the nature of the oral evidence. From the very beginning of the research it became apparent that vast changes in employment, living standards, class structure, education, politics and most particularly attitudes to all of these had occurred in Dundalk between 1900-1960. Thus, these became the main topics of the study. The interdependence or 'cause and effect' of change presented serious problems with regard to thematic organisation. For example, religion and class-consciousness could have been treated as separate topics, yet, the oral evidence suggested that both were intertwined with politics, leisure, industry and work, which in turn affected education, standard of living and housing. The solution adopted was to explore the issues of class structure and religious difference as they affected the primary themes under discussion in each chapter.

Much of the content in chapter I is to a large extent predetermined, comprising the thesis aims, structure and sources consulted. As the main focus is on oral sources, a synopsis of oral historiography and methodology are included to help the reader assess the presented evidence. The section on Dundalk's morphology establishes a base-level in 1900 against which further changes occurred. This is also partly the function of chapter II which deals with housing, population growth and education, which again are closely interlinked.

As the national struggle and partition impacted on industry in Dundalk it seemed appropriate to consider industry (chapter II) before war and politics (chapter III). The oral evidence again dictated that work and wages should be discussed before leisure pursuits,

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<sup>9</sup> Ashton, Paul, *On the record: a practical guide to oral history* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Sydney, 1944), p. 2.

as financial means and social status often influenced how one might spend the non-working hours. War and politics in Ireland up to 1945 were inextricably intertwined, and are considered jointly in chapter IV, culminating in the ‘Emergency’.

Whilst working with the recorded oral evidence, it became apparent that most of the interviewees singled out the post-Emergency period when change became manifest. Thus, the division into pre- and post-war sections was an obvious choice (chapter V). Here the themes introduced in the previous chapters are reconsidered over the fifteen years up to 1960, and a fuller assessment of their interrelationship becomes possible.

In the concluding chapter particular attention is paid to the oral sources in order to evaluate their validity and usefulness in conducting an urban history research project. As already noted, this thesis aims to move beyond what are sometimes seen as the specialist subjects of political, military, economic, church and social history. In the concluding chapter the value of oral history to such distinct though allied fields of study is assessed. Lastly oral history is considered not as another separate historical discipline but as a tool that can be utilised to great effect in historical research generally.

### **The history of oral history**

There is a general belief that oral history is ‘new’, originating in the mid twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Whilst the current terminology dates from this period, Paul Thompson, an authority on the ‘history of oral history’, maintains that the use of oral evidence by historians is:

as old as history itself. It was the *first* kind of history. And it is only quite recently that the skill in handling oral evidence has ceased to be one of the marks of the great historian.<sup>11</sup>

Oral history practitioners from around the world claim association to practically every form of historical inquiry involving oral evidence. Henige states that ‘those who

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<sup>10</sup> Thompson, Paul, *The voice of the past: oral history* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Oxford, 2000), p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25; for full coverage of past usage and modern developments in the use of oral sources see pp. 24-81. See also Henige, David, *Oral historiography* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London and New York, 1985), pp. 7-13.

would accept the outlines of the fall of Troy as recounted in the *Iliad* would probably consider Homer to have been the first known oral historian'.<sup>12</sup> The American historian Donald A. Ritchie dates the beginning of oral history to 3,000 years ago, when scribes of the Zhou dynasty in China collected oral evidence 'for the use of court historians'.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, most text-books on historiography acknowledge the wide use of oral evidence in the writing of history from China, the Middle East, Greece, Rome and throughout Europe up to the late nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

The hiatus occurred with the founding of the 'German school' of scientific history by Lepold von Ranke (1798-1886). Ranke maintained that contemporary documents were the most reliable form of historical evidence and all other less objective sources should be excluded.<sup>15</sup> This helped transform history into an academic discipline based on the rigorous use of documentary evidence. The nineteenth century also saw the emergence of a recognised history curriculum and the establishment of chairs of history at key universities throughout Britain, including Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>16</sup> Historical training was predominantly based on the use of documentary sources. Nevertheless, it was only after World War II 'that the research doctorate became the standard method of entry into the historical profession'.<sup>17</sup> Political history continued to be the focus of mainstream British history until the 1960s.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Thompson and others agreed that only over a period of about 200 years did historians fail to use oral evidence. Or more to the point when its use fell out of favour, as the renowned nineteenth century historian Macaulay viewed 'reminiscences, oral traditions, and folk tales as essential sources of equal merit to written sources'. And Morley's *Life of William Ewart Gladstone* relied heavily on conversations

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<sup>12</sup> Henige, *Oral historiography*, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ritchie, *Doing oral history* (New York, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Black and Macraill, *Studying history*, pp. 26-9.

<sup>15</sup> Ritchie, *Doing oral history*, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Black and Macraill, *Studying history*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>17</sup> Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 57.

<sup>18</sup> Black and Macraill, *Studying history*, p. 79.

with Gladstone's friends and colleagues.<sup>19</sup>

The resurgence of interest and the focus of inquiry in oral history varied from country to country. These developments are already chronicled in most oral history text books.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the intention is to briefly outline developments outside Ireland (primarily in Britain, and in the USA), and then to focus on Ireland, which has not yet received sufficient academic attention.

### **Oral history in Britain**

Oral historians in Britain see their work as a continuance of traditional practice rather than a break with conventional historical methodology. Paul Thompson (an acknowledged world expert on the origins of oral history) and Robert Perks (curator of the oral history archive in the British library) have mounted a considerable defence of their position. They, amongst others, point to census returns from 1801 onwards and the published reports of Royal Commissions as oral sources. Also included are studies from social historians such as Engels, *Condition of the working class in England* (1844); Charles Booth's *Life and labour of the people of London* (1889-1903); Henry Mayhew's studies of London (1851); and Rowntree's study of poverty in York (1901). All of these studies were derived from oral testimony and set a precedence for objectivity and impartiality in the analysis of oral sources.<sup>21</sup> From labour history Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *The co-operative movement in Britain* (1891) and *History of trade unionism* (1894) are also cited because of their use of systematic interviewing methods. So too is the call of a leading British economic historian J.H. Clapham in 1906 for the collection of the memoirs of businessmen in the belief that 'with them die some of the most valuable records of nineteenth-century history'.<sup>22</sup> A. Hutt's *The condition of the working class in*

<sup>19</sup> Perks, Robert, *Oral history: talking about the past* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1995), p. 8; see also Thompson, *The voice of the past*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>20</sup> Perks, *Oral history: talking about the past*, pp. 8-9; see also Thompson, *The voice of the past*, pp. 34-35 and Henige, *Oral historiography*, pp. 7-13.

<sup>21</sup> Henige, *Oral historiography*, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

*Britain* (1933) and the Pilgrim Trust's *Men without work* (1938), are also noted for their use of personal testimonies in the investigation of the link between poverty and unemployment in the inter-war years. Both of these studies helped change academic attitudes towards social research in Britain.

Much of the academic emphasis in oral history in Britain was directed towards the 'ordinary' person or 'history from below' as it is sometimes termed. It has been suggested that this was perhaps due to the growing interest in social history and sociology fostered by the new universities of the 1960s.<sup>23</sup> In any event, the growing interest and the collecting of personal life histories was only made possible with the introduction of new cassette recording equipment. This enabled oral information to be amassed and made permanent cheaply and efficiently.

One of the first pioneers to avail of these new developments was Paul Thompson, of Essex University. As a socialist, Thompson was committed to a history of working class people with particular emphasis on their words and experiences.<sup>24</sup> His enthusiasm for the medium is perhaps best summed up in his much acclaimed publication *The Edwardians*:

My personal discovery of the extraordinary potential of talking to older people about their own experience - which later became known as oral history - arose from the early research for this book. It quickly developed into the first national oral history interview study in Britain: still the largest project of its kind carried out in Europe.<sup>25</sup>

Based on a sociological approach, Thompson and Thea Vigne selected a quota sample of about 500 people from throughout Britain born between 1872 and 1906. The sample was designed to reflect the geographical and social conditions pertaining in Edwardian Britain. These were then interviewed and the resultant computerised survey 'Family Life and Work Experience before 1918' provided the oral evidence for

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<sup>23</sup> Perks, *Talking about the past*, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Perks, Robert and Thompson, Alistair, (eds.) *The oral history reader* (London and New York, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Thompson, Paul, *The Edwardians; the remaking of British society* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London & New York, 1992), p. xviii.

Thompson's ground-breaking publication in 1978. Using oral and conventional sources, he examined subjects such as money, country and town, childhood, men and women, adulthood and old age, class structure, skilled, semiskilled and unskilled work, and many more. Moreover, the tapes now form part of the University's oral archive and numerous other works have stemmed from them. These include *For better, for worse* (John Gills), *A life apart* (Standish Meham), *Work, society and politics* (Patrick Joyce) and *Skill and the English working class* (Charles More) plus other works from Thompson's own hand.<sup>26</sup>

### **Journals and societies**

In 1969 Thompson was instrumental in the creation of the *Oral History Journal* which led to the formation of the 'British Oral History Society' in 1973. This bi-annual publication covers every aspect of the subject from past and current studies to developments and criticisms within the field from both UK-based and international researchers.<sup>27</sup> 1978 saw the publication of *Oral history: a voice from the past* which was to become the standard text-book on approach, methodology and analysis of oral evidence for many years.<sup>28</sup> The following year Thompson organised the first international conference on oral history which was held in Essex. One of the lasting contributions of this meeting was the publication of the *International Journal of Oral History* (first issue 1980) and a series of collaborative international oral history anthologies.<sup>29</sup>

By the 1980s hundreds of oral history groups and projects had sprung up throughout Britain. In an attempt to alleviate unemployment, many of these schemes received government funding.<sup>30</sup> Changes in policy and reductions in government spending resulted in the present day situation where, with the exception of those associated with academic institutions, their survival seems particularly perilous. Nonetheless, interest in the potential of oral history continues to grow from within, without and in conjunction with academia.

<sup>26</sup> Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 101.

<sup>27</sup> Caunce, Stephen, *Oral history and the local historian* (London & New York, 1994), p. 202.

<sup>28</sup> Perks and Thompson, *The oral history reader*, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Caunce, *Oral history and the local historian*, p. 2.

A good example of the latter is the 'History workshop' movement which began in Ruskin College, Oxford in the 1960s.<sup>31</sup> Socialist in outlook, its aim was twofold. Firstly, to collect and preserve the experiences and memories of working class people in relation to work, locality, family and politics. And secondly, to give political credence to labour politics lest they be forgotten and replaced by a nationally-approved version of events.<sup>32</sup> In the *History Workshop Journal*, articles by academic and non-academic historians reflect such views but they also take on board new developments and approaches to the subject. As such the movement is sometimes seen as an 'alternative historical apparatus'.<sup>33</sup>

Rural social history was the subject of George Ewart Evans's *Ask the fellows who cut the hay* 1956 which again was concerned with the life experiences of 'ordinary' working people.<sup>34</sup> This attraction to matters concerning everyday life was fostered by popular radio and television programmes of the period which used personal reminiscences as their source. A typical example was the 1971 radio program *The long march of Everyman*. Derived from a series of 800 interviews conducted throughout Britain, the tapes served as a foundation for the BBC Sound Archives.<sup>35</sup>

### **Oral history and local history**

Whilst great strides have been made in our understanding of and methodological approach to oral history, the British experience suggests that with the exception of Thompson's study of the Edwardians, most research areas are primarily local in nature. Current thinking tends to reinforce this approach, based on the idea that restriction to a given locality allows for finer cross-checking between individual testimonies and other local sources. By such means a fairly reliable picture of personal and communal history can be achieved.<sup>36</sup> Stephen Caunce states that 'oral evidence from ordinary people is an

<sup>31</sup> Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 210.

<sup>32</sup> Tosh, John, *The pursuit of history* (London and New York, 1984), pp. 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> Perks and Thompson, *The oral history reader*, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Tosh, *The pursuit of history*, p. 176.

essential part of understanding our total history, not a nostalgic fringe activity'. Therefore, he advocates the use of oral testimony in local studies. His text book *Oral history and the local historian* gives comprehensive coverage on methods, themes, equipment, and comparison of oral and conventional sources for the local historian.<sup>37</sup>

Most historians who have experienced oral sources have adopted a positive attitude towards them. From her interviews with the elderly of Barrow and Lancaster, Elizabeth Roberts has produced many fine publications on family structures and relationships, neighbourhood life, leisure time, housing conditions, diet, and working conditions in that area.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, her recordings now form part of the archives of Lancaster University. Whilst she stresses the importance of consulting and incorporating traditional sources in all studies, she maintains that oral evidence 'can provide a mass of information which is not present in the official data'. Raphael Samuel (a founder member of the *History Workshop and Journal*) suggests, that with oral sources 'the historian can draw up fresh maps, in which people are as prominent as places'.<sup>39</sup>

#### **The 'amateur' historian**

Oral history, like local history, is by no means the preserve of the academic historian. Many undertakings by interested 'amateurs', as individuals and as groups, have resulted in the creation of a network of local oral history groups throughout Britain which have produced many fine works.<sup>40</sup> Their sheer volume precludes full coverage. Apart from those already mentioned, those most often referred to in text books include Kirklees Libraries and Art Service; the Red House Museum, near Leeds; Bradford Heritage Recording Unit and the East London peoples' *Autobiography of Hackney*. In Britain, over the past number of years, many books, pamphlets and articles using oral testimony have

<sup>37</sup> Caunce, *Oral history and the local historian*, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Roberts, Elizabeth, *Working-class Barrow and Lancaster, 1890-1930* (Lancaster, 1976); 'Learning and living: socialisation outside school' in *Oral History*, 3 (1975); 'Working class women in the north-west' in *Oral History*, 5 (1977); 'Oral History and the local historian' in *Local History*, xiii (1979), p. 415.

<sup>39</sup> Samuel, Raphael, 'Local history and oral history' in *History Workshop*, i (1976).

<sup>40</sup> Caunce, *Oral history and the local historian*, p. 215.

been published. Coupled with this oral history was introduced to the British school curriculum in the early 1990s. Other advancements were the establishment of the *National Life Story Collection* and the creation of the post of curator of oral history at the British Library. Additionally, oral history archives have been established throughout Britain including the universities of Edinburgh, Lancaster and Essex to name but a few. Both the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth and the London School of Economics have established specialist oral history archives. Together, these developments have accorded academic acceptance and an institutional base to oral history in Britain.<sup>41</sup>

In 1995 there were seven national and thirty-eight regional oral archives in Britain.<sup>42</sup> The principal repository for oral history in Britain is the *National Sound Archives* (NSA). Over forty major collections are housed there ranging from interviews with 'key twentieth-century figures like Winston Churchill, Ramsy McDonnell and Harold Wilson' to topics concerning, AIDS, prostitution and changes in birth control.<sup>43</sup> The NSA is also actively involved in fieldwork and a major addition to the collection is the *Millennium Memory Bank* project. In conjunction with the forty local radio stations associated with the BBC, 6,000 interviews were conducted with people of all ages and from all walks of life throughout 1999. This snapshot of life in Britain at the turn of the millennium is one of the largest oral history projects ever undertaken and will undoubtedly prove invaluable to researchers for centuries to come.<sup>44</sup>

### **Feminist history**

The 1960s also saw a rise in history viewed from the female prospective. Up until then, most of the written sources, activists claimed, were compiled from the male viewpoint. It is therefore, hardly surprising that those interested in feminist history embraced the oral history movement as a means of uncovering a past which had been

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<sup>41</sup> Perks, *Talking about the past*, pp. 42-44.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42-44.

<sup>43</sup> The British Library National Sound Archive: oral history, <http://www.bl.uk/> (4 November, 2000).

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

'hidden from history'. Another objective was to challenge historical interpretations based on documentation with a male bias.<sup>45</sup>

Many topics ranging from courtship and marriage, morals, relationships between partners and offspring, family finance, women in the workplace, women in rural society, and working mothers have been explored through oral history in Britain and elsewhere. The onset of more liberal attitudes towards women in the aftermath of the Second World War is examined in *What did you do in the war, mum?* This work examines the range of new opportunities and experiences presented to women, in the first, but more specifically the second world wars, and explains how they coped with them.<sup>46</sup> A similar undertaking from America is Sherna Berger Gluck's *Rosie the riveter: women, the war, and social change* (1987).<sup>47</sup>

### **Feminist contribution to methodology**

Apart from the practical insights gleaned from feminist history their contribution to the general debate on interpretation, methodology and analysis of oral testimony has been immense. Perhaps the most comprehensive work in this area is *Women's words*, co-edited by Sherna Berger Gluck (California State University) and Daphne Patai (University of Massachusetts). This compilation of thirteen multi-disciplinary papers addresses the theoretical, methodological, and practical problems associated with oral history as a tool for feminist scholarship.<sup>48</sup> Similarly Lusia Passerni's *Work ideology and consensus under Italian fascism* examines how memory can be influenced by dominant histories, thus requiring greater critical interpretation.<sup>49</sup> The latter, together with the relationship between subject and interviewer, the ethical predicaments this presents, and the theoretical

<sup>45</sup> Black and Macrauld, *Studying history*, pp. 140-1 and Perks and Thompson, *The oral history reader*, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Age Exchange, <http://www.age-exchange.org.uk/>

<sup>47</sup> Gluck, R.B., *Rosie the Riveter: Women, the war, and social change* (Boston, 1987).

<sup>48</sup> Gluck, R.B., and Patai, D., *Women's words: the feminist practice of oral history* (New York & London, 1991).

<sup>49</sup> Passerni, Lusia, 'Work ideology and consensus under Italian fascism' in *History Workshop*, no. 8 (1979), pp. 84-92.

dilemmas posed by post-structuralist and post-modernist approaches to language and representation is also explored by Joan Sangster (Trent University, Ontario) in *Telling our stories*.<sup>50</sup> Such concerns are not restricted to feminist oral history but are to the fore-front of current debate on oral history generally.

### **Early world-wide developments**

The noted American historian Donald A. Ritchie (USA Senate office) dates the beginnings of oral history to the appearance of personal interviews in American newspapers in 1859. A particular emphasis of early research in the USA was the indigenous Indian population. In the 1890s the US Bureau of Ethnography sent researchers into the field to collect the songs and stories of 'Ethnic Americans' on wax cylinders.<sup>51</sup> Paul Radin conducted an oral history project amongst native Americans in order to obtain an 'insider' view of their culture and tradition in *Crashing thunder* 1926. Sociologists, anthropologists and psychiatrists from Yale University jointly sponsored a similar undertaking in 1942. And Canadian nomadic Indians were the focus of Ruth Lande's study in *The Ojibwa woman* (1938) which resulted in a rare collection of women's life histories.<sup>52</sup>

During the 'depression' of the 1930s President Roosevelt set up the 'Federal Writers Project'. This brought together historians, sociologists and anthropologists to interview and make permanent the life stories of the disadvantaged and others in American society.<sup>53</sup> Especially interesting were the interviews conducted with former slaves. Decades later, 'when historians finally accepted them, these records helped to alter fundamentally the historical interpretation of American slavery'.<sup>54</sup> Thus, like Britain, the main emphasis in early oral history projects in North America was in areas where records were deemed to be scant or unrepresentative of the peoples under study. In 1929 a similar

<sup>50</sup> Sangster, Joan, 'Telling our stories' in *Women's History Review*, 3 no. 1 (1994), pp.5-28.

<sup>51</sup> Ritchie, *Doing oral history*, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 64.

<sup>53</sup> Perks, *Talking about the past*, p. 8.

<sup>54</sup> Ritchie, *Doing oral history*, p.3.

interdisciplinary approach to all historical sources was proposed by the French historians, Marc Bloch, a medievalist, and Lucien Febver, an expert on the sixteenth century. In their first issue of the internationally influential *Journal Annales d'Histoire Sociale et Économique* they concede that whilst the social sciences were primarily concerned with contemporary issues they nonetheless pointed the way to questions all historians should ask from their sources.<sup>55</sup>

However, the revival of the modern oral history movement in America began with political history. Allan Nevins (Columbia University) is credited with inventing the terminology 'oral history' for his project to record the recollections of prominent white men in American life in 1948.<sup>56</sup> An additional advancement was the formation the American Oral History Association also in 1948. Nevin's research was privately financed and was the first academic oral history study carried out in the USA. Up until the 1970s the emphasis remained on the elite and the Columbia programme 'was "oral history" in America'.<sup>57</sup> However, two best-selling books by Alex Haley *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) and *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976) helped to popularise oral and family history there. In *Roots*, Haley traced his family lineage to a small African village called Alberda. Whilst certain academics criticised the accuracy of some of his evidence, others pointed to the positive influence it had in presenting aspects of historical research to a world-wide audience. It also served as a reminder that recording oral history tapped into 'a vast, rich reservoir of oral traditions sustained through family, community and national memory'.<sup>58</sup> Both publications also highlighted the potential of oral sources to recover the history of 'ordinary' Americans, especially amongst the ethnic population.<sup>59</sup> An upsurge of activity in Indian, black history and folklore was evident from the 1970s, and in the 1980s

<sup>55</sup> Tosh, *The pursuit of history*, p.79.

<sup>56</sup> Ashton, Paul, *On the record: a practical guide to oral history* (Sydney, 1994), p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 65.

<sup>58</sup> Tosh, *The pursuit of history*, pp.185-186; and the *Oral history journal*, 1, no. 4 (1973), p. 57.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.1 and 6.

this extended into new fields like women's history.<sup>60</sup>

The Columbia University archive is reputed to be the world's largest oral history collection comprising 7,000 testimonies amounting to 700,000 pages of transcript. A co-founder of the *International Journal of Oral History*, Ron Grele, is the present head of department. Much of the current research remains focused on 'the great and the good' and ongoing projects include oral histories of Columbia University, the Carnegie Corporation and Japanese Americans living on the East Coast during World War II. Three biographical interviews with influential American citizens are also in train and six have recently been completed.<sup>61</sup> Apart from Colombia, over twenty American universities including Berkley, Baylor and the Smithsonian Institution, have oral history archives and are actively involved in collecting and teaching oral history.<sup>62</sup> Additionally there are over twenty other major oral archives in the US, not counting the numerous local and specialised collections. One such archive is the Institute of American Indian Studies which houses 5,200 recorded interviews.<sup>63</sup> The John F. Kennedy library began its oral history project with people associated with the late president in 1964 and now contains 1,100 interviews.<sup>64</sup> In addition oral history has been central to American military history since 1945:

Since World War II oral history has become an increasingly critical adjunct to the more traditional sources of historical documentation. Army historians, in preparing the official histories of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, conducted extensive interviews to uncover the personal insights often lacking in written documentary sources. For the same reasons, present-day historians have recently turned their microphones towards American soldiers participating in military operations throughout the world. These historians have also discovered that the details of planning and execution of military activities are increasingly hammered out by action officers through telephonic or radio communications. This informal process has resulted in less information committed to paper or into permanent electronic databases, again emphasising the importance of supplementing the written record

<sup>60</sup> Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 65.

<sup>61</sup> Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, New York, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/libraries/indiv/oral/summer.html> (4 November 2000).

<sup>62</sup> H-Oralhist, discussion group, <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~oralhist/> (4 November 2000).

<sup>63</sup> South Dakota Oral History Center/Institute of American Indian Studies, <http://www.usd.edu/iaais/> (4 November 2000).

<sup>64</sup> John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Centre, <http://www.cs.umb.edu/~serl/ifk/oralhis.htm> (4 November, 2000).

with oral interviews... And increasing numbers of scholars, both official and unofficial, are taking advantage of the Army's existing oral history collection or using interview techniques to round out their research and create a more complete story.<sup>65</sup>

The Canadian oral history movement (formed in 1974) publishes its own journal *Oral History Review*, but is also incorporated with the American *Oral History Association*. In 1971 the combined membership amounted to 1,200 people who had collected 100,000 recorded hours of interviews amounting to over a million pages of transcript. A more recent survey revealed some 1,800 collections in 350 repositories in Canada alone.<sup>66</sup> At least sixteen of these have links to academic institutions.<sup>67</sup> Australia is another area where oral history has blossomed and the National Library of Australia lists 458 repositories of oral history throughout the five territorial regions.<sup>68</sup> The archive of the Australian War Museum alone holds 5,000 sound recordings and two million feet of film relating to military history and there are at least three separate centres dedicated to Aboriginal culture.<sup>69</sup> In addition the International Oral History Association was formed in 1996:

to provide a forum for oral historians around the world, in order to foster international communication and co-operation and a better understanding of the nature and value of oral history.<sup>70</sup>

One of the main communication methods employed by the association is the World Wide Web.

### **Oral history on the Internet**

There are literally thousands of individual to institutional sites on the Internet pertaining to oral history. The quality and the range of subjects covered varies considerably. The International Oral History Association lists seventy key sites, most of which have institutional associations. Apart from those already mentioned, international Web sites can be traced to the countries of Argentina, Brazil, China, Hawaii, Israel, Italy,

<sup>65</sup>Everatt, Stephen, 'Oral history techniques and procedures' issued by the *Centre of Military History, United States Army, Washington DC*, <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/oral.htm> (4 November 2000).

<sup>66</sup>Thompson, Paul, *The voice of the past*, p. 66.

<sup>67</sup>Canadian Oral History Association, <http://www.ualberta.ca/~fmillar/coha.htm> (4 November 2000).

<sup>68</sup>The National Library of Australia, <http://www.nal.gov.au/index.html> (4 November 2000).

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>International Oral History Association, <http://www.bcn.es.tjussana/ioha> (4 November 2000).

Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Singapore and Spain.<sup>71</sup> Other areas where oral historians are active at an institutional level are the Cayman Islands, Malaysia, Malta, Russia, Trinidad, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to the multitude of international oral history internet sites, a free Web page *H-oralhis* operates 'to provide an interactive forum for individuals interested in using oral history'. Subscribers come from a variety of backgrounds including public historians, students, local historians, and university faculty members. A key focus of the group is in:

methods of teaching oral history to graduate and undergraduate students in diverse settings'. Regular updates provide up-to-the minute features on dialogues in the discipline, publish syllabi, outlines, handouts, bibliographies, tables of contents of journals, guides to term papers, listings of new sources, library catalogues and archives, and reports on new software, databases and CD-ROM's.<sup>73</sup>

The home page of the International History Association will also soon become interactive.<sup>74</sup>

### **Oral history in Northern Ireland**

In Northern Ireland an Oral History Society, based in Queen's University Belfast, was disbanded about twelve years ago (1986).<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, many of the original members are still involved in the collection of oral evidence. Two of them, Linda Ballard and Clifford Harkness, are now full-time staff members of the *Ulster Folk and Transport Museum* (UFTM) and a third member of the staff there, Tony Buckley is the regional representative of the Oral History Society in Britain.<sup>76</sup>

The UFTM is very much involved in the collection of oral history. It offers six courses a year on the collecting of oral history and anyone seeking state funding for such projects must first complete one their courses. They also have a loan scheme whereby

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> The British Library National Sound Archive Oral History Collection, <http://www.bl.uk/> (4 November 2000).

<sup>73</sup> H-Oralhist, discussion group, <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~oralhist/> (4 November 2000).

<sup>74</sup> International Oral History Association.

<sup>75</sup> Notes of interviews with Linda Ballard, Peter Carson and Tony Buckley of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, 29 October 2000.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

individuals or groups may borrow tape recorders, microphones or any special equipment that may be required. In return the original tapes are returned to and stored in the archive. It is estimated that this adds approximately 150 tapes a year to the 4,000 already produced by the staff over the years. The museum is also home to the BBC Northern Ireland archive, which contains 16,000 indexed and catalogued audio presentations (tapes) together with about 350,000 still and moving images. All are currently available to those wishing to use them.

The staff in the UMFT were originally members of the Northern Ireland Oral History Society and are still committed to oral history. Tony Buckley is currently studying the Sham Fight between King William and King James which takes place annually in the village of Scarva, county Down. Linda Ballard has just completed a project on Rathlin Island which will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Folklife*. But the largest project currently under way at the UMFT is *Living Linen*. Up until the 1950s linen was one of Ulster's major industries and to date 170 oral history tapes have been recorded featuring leading senior industrialists in the province. Dr. Kathleen Rankin started the project but the second phase, which will concentrate on middle management, is under the care of Jonathan Hamill who is attached to the Department of Irish Studies at Queen's University Belfast. This phase of the study began in 1999 and is expected to last a further three years. Another ongoing major project is an oral history of Enniskillen being carried out under the auspices of the Fermanagh County Museum in Enniskillen. This was begun by Joan Duffy who compiled sixty-five recordings before her untimely death.<sup>77</sup>

Smaller projects include Jonathan Bell's work on the Irish language in County Donegal and Margaret Geelan's research on the Northern Ireland peace movement of the early 1970s *Women together for peace*. School days are the subject of a study by Heather McGuiken and David Hinds is collecting the reminiscences of travelling people.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>77</sup> Buckley, Tony, 'Recent report on current oral history projects in Northern Ireland' in the possession of the author (to be published shortly).

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

of particular relevance is the view expressed by both Buckley and Ballard that a true history of the present troubles in Northern Ireland can only be achieved by using oral history methodology.<sup>79</sup>

### Oral history in the Republic of Ireland

Although international interest in collecting oral history has flourished over the past half-century, it is only quite recently that historians in the Republic of Ireland have warmed to its potential. However, if one accepts the broader definition of oral history as being ‘any oral evidence pertaining to history’ then Irish historians have as long a tradition as their international counterparts. In Ireland we have ‘the oldest and largest collection of vernacular literature in Western Europe’.<sup>80</sup> Accepted primary historical sources such as the early monastic chronicles, the *Annals*, the Parliamentary Blue Books, the Devon Commission, the 1641 depositions and travel accounts of Arthur Young are all heavily reliant on oral testimony.<sup>81</sup> Irish bardic poetry and genealogies were continually recited down to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when they were written down.<sup>82</sup> A noted seventeenth century Irish historian Jeffery Keating listed the value of historical sources in the order of oral tradition, old books and antique remains.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, up to the seventeenth century much of the population of Ireland shared a common culture which was largely preserved through oral tradition. With the emergence of an elitist society and an increase in literacy in the post-Famine period writing began to take precedence over orality even amongst the Gaelic community.<sup>84</sup>

The Gaelic revival witnessed an attempt to recover the old tradition<sup>85</sup> and William

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> O’Sullivan, Seán, ‘The work of the Irish folklore commission’, in *Oral history*, 2, no. 2 (1974), p.9.

<sup>81</sup> McGimpsey, Christopher W., ‘The ignorant historian’ in *Ulster Local Studies*, 7, no. 2 (1982), p. 8.

<sup>82</sup> Gillespie, Raymond, author’s notes of conversation on 2 November 2000.

<sup>83</sup> Céitinn, Seathrún, *Keating’s history of Ireland* (Dublin, 1904), see also, Céitinn, Seathrún, *Díonbhrollach Fórais feasa ar Éirinn, or, Vindication of the sources of Irish history: being the introduction to his “groundwork of knowledge of Ireland”* (Dublin, 1898).

Kildare-Store Dinneen, P.S. (ed.), 4 vols, *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, vol. 2 (London, 1908), p. 325.

<sup>84</sup> Gillespie, notes of conversation.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

Wilde began collecting popular Irish superstitions whilst his wife, Speranza, wrote two books on ancient cures, curses and legends.<sup>86</sup> John Millington Synge used a substantial amount of oral literature and tradition in his books on the Aran Islands and his travels in Wicklow and West Kerry. Both Lady Gregory and Yeats produced collections of folk tales. But perhaps the most extensive work in this area came from Douglas Hyde who published numerous books of prose tales and songs from Connaught.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, mainstream history in the Republic of Ireland tended towards documentary sources well into the 1990s. Exceptions were in the field of political rather than social history.

In the 1960s Tim Pat Coogan conducted 200 interviews with republicans throughout Ireland during the research for his book *The IRA*. In the absence of sufficient primary sources Maurice Manning 'happily' interviewed many of the leading political figures of the 1930s for his study of the *Blueshirts* in the 1970s.<sup>88</sup> And Mike Cronin used oral history methodology as part of a similar study *The blueshirts and Irish politics* in 1997.<sup>89</sup>

Aside from the limited use of oral sources (until recently) in the Republic of Ireland, it is worthy of note that the modern movement's method of electronically recording interviews began here in 1926.<sup>90</sup> This predated the work of Allen Nevins in America by twenty years and Paul Thompson's in Britain by more than thirty years. Moreover, it also preceded Roosevelt's *Federal Writers' Project* of the 1930s which is credited as being the first-ever large scale collection of 'ordinary' life histories.<sup>91</sup>

The impetus for collecting oral evidence came from the field of folklore. In 1926 two Scandinavian scholars Carl Wilhelm Sydor and Reidr Christiansin together with Professor Delargy (UCD) founded the Folklore of Ireland Society. The Irish government set up a body called The Irish Folklore Institute in 1930 with minimal state aid which in

<sup>86</sup> Victorian women writers , <http://www.indiana.edu/~letrs/www/>

<sup>87</sup> O'Sullivan, 'The work of the Irish Folklore Commission' in *Oral history*, 2, no. 2 (1974), p.9.

<sup>88</sup> Cronin, Mike, *The blueshirts and Irish politics* (Dublin, 1997), p. 111.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108-111.

<sup>90</sup> O'Sullivan, 'The Irish Folklore Commission', p. 10.

<sup>91</sup> Perks, *Talking about the past*, p. 9.

1935 became the Irish Folklore Commission (IFC).<sup>92</sup> Although the IFC was housed at University College Dublin (UCD) it was under the control of the state Department of Education. This was transferred to UCD in 1971 when the IFC was subsumed into the Department of Irish Folklore of the college.<sup>93</sup>

The Department of Irish Folklore has over 10,000 recordings on tape and disk and the library contains over 40,000 books on Irish and international oral literature.<sup>94</sup> There is still a huge interest in the material as over 1,200 visitors, from at home and abroad, availed of the facilities in 1999 alone, including many academics.<sup>95</sup> Critics of the archive suggest that it has three main defects. Firstly that the emphasis is on folklore rather than history. Secondly the content is primarily rural in orientation. And lastly that it is dated and difficult to use. However, a member of staff there, Ríonach Uí Ógáin, maintains that folklore and oral history are inseparable.<sup>96</sup> She also points out that in addition to collecting folklore, a life history of each informant was also conducted. Thus, the collection includes 'a huge amount of historical information' ranging from the famine, the 1798 rebellion, Daniel O'Connell and the 1916-1922 period from areas throughout the country. Aspects of social, family, community history and everyday life and beliefs were integral to the overall project and can also be retrieved from the archive.<sup>97</sup> The rural orientation is an accepted fact<sup>98</sup> but it must be remembered that when the project was conceived the population of Ireland was predominantly rural. That the archive is dated and difficult to access is legitimate comment as in 1971 Sean O'Sullivan stated:

We have only been able to put on to card references about a quarter of our huge collection. I calculate that it will take six full-time collectors twenty years to catalogue in detail all of this material.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> O'Sullivan, 'The Irish Folklore Commission', p. 10.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>94</sup> Conversation with Ríonach Uí Ógáin of Department of Irish Folklore, UCD on 29 October, 2000.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Uí Ógáin, Ríonach, *Immortal Dan: Dan O'Connell* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 2-3.

<sup>97</sup> Conversation with Ríonach Uí Ógáin.

<sup>98</sup> O'Sullivan, 'The Irish Folklore Commission', p. 15.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

For non-native speakers (like the author) the greatest obstacle to accessing the archive is that about 70% of the material is recorded in the Irish language.<sup>100</sup> The formalization of the language is quite a recent phenomenon so differences in dialect (notably Ulster) will also present difficulties even to scholars with Leaving Certificate honours level Irish. This undoubtedly poses problems for visiting scholars, and also for many Irish historians who, rightly or wrongly, are not familiar or sufficiently confident with sources in the state's first official language. It is not inconceivable that the material could be translated, in conjunction with an upgrading of the archive catalogue, in order to make it available to a wider public. This will require both commitment, which does not seem to be lacking amongst the staff in the department of Irish Folklore at UCD, and finance, which does. Ríonach Uí Ógáin readily admitted that 'a lot more could be done' if more staff were available.<sup>101</sup>

Several publications have arisen from the archive including Liam Kennedy's *Profane images in the Irish popular consciousness*. Some of the articles in *Revolution Ireland 1917-1923*, a Trinity History Workshop publication edited by Fitzpatrick, uses oral evidence from the archive and in interview form, particularly those by Peter Hart and Joost Augusteijn.<sup>102</sup> The most recent publications emanating from the archive is Ríonach Uí Ógáin's *The immortal Dan: Dan O'Connell* (1999) and a recent work on the Famine.

In an attempt to redress the rural bias in the collecting of oral evidence and the social bias in the writing of history, Professor Séamus O'Catháin (UCD) launched the *Dublin folklore project* in the early 1980s by dispatching students to collect the recollections of elderly city residents. A few years later a similar approach was adopted when *the North Inner City folklore project* was initiated.<sup>103</sup> To date they have conducted approximately 500 interviews incorporating oral history methodology.<sup>104</sup> Although the

<sup>100</sup> Conversation with Ríonach Uí Ógáin.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> McGimpsey, 'The ignorant historian', p. 9, footnote 20.

<sup>103</sup> Kearns, Kevin, *Dublin street life and lore* (Dublin, 1996), p. 25.

<sup>104</sup> Ferriter, Diarmaid, 'Oral archives in Ireland: a preliminary report, November 1997' in *Irish economic and social history*, no. 25 (1998), p. 95.

project was initially conceived as archival in nature it has led to seven publications relating to life between the river Liffey and the Royal Canal over the past hundred years or so. These publications feature the recollections of casual labourers, cattlemen, dockers, and shipping crews from a time when employment was plentiful through the changing economic circumstances brought about by the modernisation of the docks. Other extracts deal with the female perspective on issues such as the role of domestic labour, changing relationship between the sexes, generational differences between mothers and daughters. More recent social aspects such as drugs, prison life and welfare dependency are elucidated by younger interviewees and memories of 'the rare ould times' are interspersed with stories of poverty and oppression which quickly dispel any perception of cosy nostalgia. Nonetheless, accounts of dancing, street games, 'hooleys', cinema going and general entertainment are included. Aside from everyday life, specific thematic issues are also catered for such as the movement for national independence, the 1913 lock-out and the bombing of the North Strand in 1941. The group also organises exhibitions, bringing together the whole community in celebration of their common past.<sup>105</sup> In a recent conversation with Mick Rushe, one-time director of the project, he suggested that although many of the personnel involved in the project were academically qualified, with the exception of UCD, there was a distinct anti-academic bias towards it.<sup>106</sup> Aside from the capital, there appears to have been only three similar projects undertaken in the Republic of Ireland in recent years, in Navan, Drogheda and Dundalk.

Apart from the IFC and UFTM the largest collection of recorded material in the Republic of Ireland is housed in the Irish Traditional Music Archive in Dublin. This archive is mostly of Irish traditional music recordings, and interviews with Irish traditional musicians. The national broadcaster Radio Telefís Éireann has a vast collection of video and audio material 'though much of the earlier [audio] material dating from 1926-47 has

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<sup>105</sup> MacGuinness, Des, 'Getting to the heart of the matter: the North Inner City Folklore Project' in *Saothar*, 20 (1995), pp. 97-98.

<sup>106</sup> Conversation with Mick Rushe, 24 February 1998.

been lost'.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, the scripted nature of all radio interviews prior to 1950 ensured they lacked the spontaneity usually associated with oral history. The author's enquiries so far suggest that access to the RTE archive is adjudicated on application and, as it is a commercial venture, incurs an unspecified charge.<sup>108</sup>

The recent *Irish Economic and Social History Society* survey of Irish oral archives reveals how sadly lacking oral history sources are in the Republic of Ireland. From being one of the first countries to collect and archive oral evidence in 1926, we are now at least forty years behind international trends of historical inquiry. 'And there still seems to be a reluctance to view oral archival material as [an] essential and valuable primary source'.<sup>109</sup> Recently a team of volunteers led by Maura Cronin, in Mary Immaculate College (University of Limerick), commenced an oral history project among former creamery workers in the north Munster region; in this case state funding (a Heritage Council grant) has allowed the purchase of recording equipment, but nothing more.<sup>110</sup>

Most of the recent major oral history publications focusing on Ireland (thus far) were the conceptions and deliberations of visiting scholars involved in the social sciences. The Canadian anthropologists Marilyn Silverman and P.H. Gulliver included oral evidence and 'participant observation' in their social history of Thomastown, County Kilkenny (1840-1983).<sup>111</sup> The US cultural geographer Kevin Kearns, presented vignettes of Dublin's tenement heritage, vanishing trades, and street life.<sup>112</sup> Munck and Rolston's *Belfast in the thirties* (Belfast, 1987), and Brewer's *The Royal Irish Constabulary* (Belfast, 1990) are among an array of oral history publications from Northern Ireland. Visiting news media personalities have also published books on Irish political/military

<sup>107</sup> Ferriter, 'Oral archives in Ireland', p. 92.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>109</sup> Ferriter, 'Oral archives in Ireland', p. 95.

<sup>110</sup> In conversation with J. Prunty and Maura Cronin, 17 November, 2000.

<sup>111</sup> Silverman, Marilyn and Gulliver, P.H., *In the valley of the Nore, a social history of Thomastown, county Kilkenny, 1840-1983* (Dublin, 1986).

<sup>112</sup> For example, Kearns, Kevin C., *Dublin tenement life, an oral history* (Dublin, 1994); *Dublin street life and lore, an oral history* (Dublin, 1991); *Dublin's vanishing craftsmen* (Belfast, 1984); *Stonybatter: Dublin's inner urban village* (Dublin, 1989).

history containing large tracts of oral evidence. Griffith and O'Grady's *Curious journey: an oral history of Ireland's unfinished revolution* (Cork 1998) is based on interviews with seven participants of the 1916 rising and subsequent civil war. And Toby Harnden's *Bandit country: the IRA in south Armagh* (London 1999) includes interviews with serving and retired members of the Northern Ireland security forces and IRA personnel in the Armagh/ Crossmaglen area.

During their research for their landmark study, *In the Valley of the Nore: a social history of Thomastown 1840-1983* (1986) Silverman and Gulliver discovered that in trying to determine Thomastown's past using conventional historical sources 'either very little or "nothing ever happened" there'.<sup>113</sup> In other words, when viewed in the accepted outline of Irish historical events, from the famine of 1845-49 through the land wars, Parnell, the war of independence and the civil war, Thomastown, and indeed County Kilkenny, were seldom or rarely mentioned. Thus, they concluded that Thomastown's past differed greatly from the accepted Irish norm and 'never experienced all or even any of the events that later became part of Irish history'.<sup>114</sup> By combining oral history methodology and a more detailed study of documents they were able to draw up a fuller picture of Thomastown's past. This suggests that greater emphasis should be placed on the study of local history in order to determine regional and local similarities and disparities. Such an approach is also proposed by Michael Hopkins in his book on the Irish civil war where he readily concedes that 'his own work on the regions is necessarily incomplete, and there is a need for detailed local studies'.<sup>115</sup> The recent boom in local history has led to an increased interest in oral history, and there have been welcome advances in the formal support of local history in some institutions; NUI Maynooth, for example, has pioneered an MA in Local History and maintains an extensive and active publications record in the field.<sup>116</sup> However,

<sup>113</sup> Silverman and Gulliver, *Approaching the past*, p. 6.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>115</sup> Hopkins, Michael, *Green against green: the Irish civil war* (Dublin, 1988), p. xii.

<sup>116</sup> Attention should be drawn to a research project currently underway by the Department of Modern History, NUI Maynooth (September 2000-February 2001), with funding from the Centre for Cross Border Studies, Armagh, on the extent of cross-border collaboration among local history societies, and on the role of the universities in supporting local history through the provision of training and higher education.

local history in general is still poorly supported at university level; oral history similarly lacks both institutional and state support in the Republic of Ireland.

This study of Dundalk 1900-1960 is the first comprehensive oral history investigation of a provincial southern Irish town. It gives voice to women, factory-workers, shopkeepers and the myriad of 'ordinary' people who helped shape our history and country.

Thankfully attitudes to oral sources in Ireland are changing. A landmark in this development was the decision of the *Irish Economic and Social History Society* to devote their annual conference in 1999 exclusively to oral history. At this conference a representative from the Irish Military Archives announced the existence of a hitherto undeclared oral history project dating back to the 1930s. This was conducted by a military tribunal over a fifteen-year period involving 1,800 participants of the War of Independence (1919-21). Each individual was circulated with a questionnaire and all of this material is now indexed, catalogued and will soon be available to historians. It is worthy of note that the quota sample is over 3½ times greater than Thompson's project of the 1960s. Nevertheless, the focus of the military archives project is extremely narrow.

Internationally the future prospects for oral history seem bright. The emphasis of historical inquiry and presentation of history is changing and in the world of multimedia historians have to be aware that the means of presenting information is no longer restricted to just book form. If we take for example, the current crop of TV histories, which are heavily reliant on personal testimonies for their content, it is self-evident that the focus is no longer on the political and social luminaries. Recent screenings like *Churchill's Secret Army* included interviews with pilots who flew agents into occupied countries and people who were involved in the everyday business of espionage. *Colditz* employed a similar format with escapees, prison guards and others involved with the camp. And the *Dambusters* utilised the recollections of pilots who flew the missions and people involved in the making and testing of the bombs. RTE I recently offered the *Nation Builders*, a programme where the influences on architectural design for the new schools, churches and

hospitals from the 1930s-90s is discussed within the social and political climate of the period, alongside interviews with those who were responsible for them. Such programmes succeed in bringing oral history content and methodology to a popular audience. Other means of presentation such as the Internet and CD ROM allow people to access information in their own homes and offer a further opportunity to expand the audience numbers. Despite recent advances, there are still occasional outbursts in regard to the reliability of oral evidence.

### **Oral history debates**

The resurgence of interest in oral history after World War II is directly linked to the development of the portable tape-recorder which simplified the collecting of oral evidence and made it permanent. Whilst oral historians became excited with the new methodology<sup>117</sup> the historical profession was more sceptical.<sup>118</sup> This led to intense debate as to the reliability of memory and the impartiality and selectivity of oral evidence. The response of the oral history movement was an attack on conventional sources. These enthusiasts argued that available documentary sources reflected the views, preoccupations, apprehensions and aspirations, some might even argue the self-justification, of the upper echelons of society.<sup>119</sup> Thus, as they did not reflect the history of the majority of the population, it was claimed that conventional sources were as biased and selective as oral sources. With regard to memory, opponents of oral history pointed to psychological case studies which questioned the accuracy of eyewitness testimony and the memory process, which stores information in long term memory. Whilst at first glance this new information would seem to negate the use of oral testimony, this need not necessarily be the case. Perhaps it would be prudent to note that such studies are also new and as yet the memory process is not completely understood. There is also the question that many of the critiques

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<sup>117</sup> Bornat, Joanna, 'Oral history as a social movement' in *Oral history*, 17, no. 2 (1989) reprinted in Perks and Thompson, *The oral history reader*, pp. 191-205.

<sup>118</sup> Grele, Ronald J., 'Movement without aim: methodological and theoretical problems in oral history', extracted from 'Envelopes of sound: the art of oral history' (Chicago, 1985) in Perks and Alistair, *The oral history reader*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>119</sup> Bornat, 'Oral history as a social movement', p. 191.

levelled at oral sources, derived from these studies, could be applied in equal measure to accepted written sources.<sup>120</sup> Perhaps the most telling insight into this problem is that most, if not all, experiments relating to memory are conducted under clinical conditions, a 'controlled' experimental situation which is hardly comparable to one's experiences of life. Moreover, while the exactness of human memory must be considered by the historian, the primary concern must surely be a more comprehensive understanding of the past. Most historians who have used oral testimony attest to the insights it can provide which are just not present in conventional sources. With this in mind let us consider how memory affects our field of study.

### **Memory**

According to Thompson there appears to be general agreement that the act of remembering requires three things: perception, interest and willingness. In other words to retain a memory one must understand what is occurring, be interested enough to process this information into long-term memory and be willing to recall that memory in the future. For a minute, after an occurrence, we retain something akin to photographic memory. Thence it is processed into long term memory and recall begins to deteriorate. However, after about six months the basic memory remains fairly stable. Although the retelling may vary from time to time the basic content remains the same thereafter.<sup>121</sup>

Whilst the ageing process is also detrimental to memory retention, Thompson's analysis would suggest that it has more to do with the type of information the memory handles than with the progress of time. Up to the age of four years very little is remembered. From four to eleven years is a time of transition where the ability for rote learning is at its highest, and many have 'a kind of photographic memory'. Thereafter, especially from the age of thirty years onwards, there is a 'progressive decline in the immediate memory'. Thompson stresses the fact that 'this process affects all adults, and not just the elderly'. In other words, the memories of older people, provided they are in good health, should be as reliable as that of younger adults. In later life, or as the result of

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<sup>120</sup> Thompson, Paul, 'Problems of method in oral history' in *Oral history journal*, 1, no. 4 (1972), pp. 4-5.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p 6.

some traumatic experience, one reaches the stage of 'life review' where there is a greater willingness to remember and 'bias at this stage is less of a problem'.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, as 'life review' is the primary area of enquiry for the oral historian, the methodology, with regard to memory, is soundly based.

During the interviewing undertaken for this research two practical illustrations of this theory emerged. The first concerns a ninety-seven year old retired barber and amateur comedian Joe Marron.<sup>123</sup> Time and again Joe displayed remarkable mental agility in recalling his own lines, and those of other participants, from shows in which he had performed seventy-odd years ago (see appendix F, pp. 258-9). Similarly, Sarah O'Callaghan, a ninety-three year old lady, recited her, and other players', lines from a school production of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* eighty years earlier.<sup>124</sup>

### **Flashbulb memory**

More recent physiological studies on memory singled out areas of special relevance to oral historians. The first of these concerns 'flashbulb memories' classified as unusually vivid recollections of an event that was very surprising, emotionally arousing and important. Up to the mid 1980s some researchers believed that a special chemical mechanism ingrained flashbulb memories into long term memory.<sup>125</sup> In 1992 the reliability of the process was challenged on the basis of a clinical experiment conducted on the morning after the *Challenger* space shuttle explosion. A questionnaire was issued to 106 students who were also asked to describe in their own words how they heard the news. Forty-four of the original number filled out a questionnaire covering an accumulated total of 220 points as to place, time, informant and people present when they heard the news. Their answers were then checked against their morning-after questionnaire. Only 31% were correct, 27% partly right and 42% were completely wrong.<sup>126</sup> Whilst the results

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.12-13.

<sup>123</sup> Marron, Joe (1899-1997), interview recorded December 1996.

<sup>124</sup> O'Callaghan, Sarah (1904-1998), interview recorded January 1997.

<sup>125</sup> Brown, R. and Kulik, J., 'Flashbulb memories' in *Cognition*, no. 5 (1977), pp. 73-99.

<sup>126</sup> Neisser, U. and Harsch, N., 'False recollections of hearing the news about the Challenger' in *Affect and accuracy in recall: studies of flashbulb memories* (New York, 1992), pp. 9-31.

appear damning for the special significance of flashbulb memory, questions also arise as to the reliability of the experiment. Firstly only 41% of the original quota sample was re-examined which is hardly representative. Secondly, did the event on which the experiment was based meet the criteria of the definition of flashbulb memory in all cases? Although the incident was surprising, emotionally arousing and important, it was hardly comparable to personal experience of the sudden death of a loved one, violent action to an individual or the emotional experience of first love. Thus, one is not comparing like with like. Lastly, for the oral historian the fact that such an experiment was conducted acknowledges the existence of a special kind of recall. One of the many such incidents witnessed by the author involved a lady of humble background describing her first sight of a formal garden in the company of her boyfriend. In recalling the incident she seemed transformed to the young girl she once was:

I had a wee red racing bike and on a Sunday evening we went up to Bellingham Castle. We were looking through the gates and this gentleman came down, he had a stick he was lame, and he says "you're admiring the castle would you like a walk round it". We walked all round Bellingham Castle I'll never forget it. It was dreamland it was wonderful. I remember coming out and I had flowers I can nearly smell the flowers.<sup>127</sup>

### **Autobiographical memory**

Autobiographical memory is of profound importance to oral history. A noted American psychologist E.F. Loftus quoted the testimony of John Dean, the former counsel to US president Richard Nixon during the Watergate hearings in 1973 as an example of the unreliability of autobiographical memory. Dean made an impressive witness when questioned about his conversations with Nixon and his senior staff about the cover-up that eventually led to the president's resignation. Yet, when his testimony was compared to the 'Nixon tapes', inaccuracies were discernible on specifics of time and dates. 'Nevertheless, the tapes did show that the gist of what he said was accurate'.<sup>128</sup> Thus, if the tapes had not turned up the major content of the historical record provided by Dean was accurate. Moreover whatever contradictions did exist were not uncovered by means of conventional

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<sup>127</sup> Moran, Molly, born 1915, interview recorded April 1997.

<sup>128</sup> Loftus, E.F., *Eyewitness testimony* (Harvard, 1979), p. 250.

sources, but by Nixon's own recordings or oral evidence. Undated and incorrectly dated documents are nothing new to the historian using conventional sources nor are differing accounts of a shared experience. Both oral and conventional sources are subject to the vagaries of memory. But whereas oral evidence can be clarified by re-contacting an interviewee, written sources remain the same.

Overall ongoing debates within the oral history movement have led to world-wide internal discussion on topics such as methodology, ethics, meaning, interpretation and the interrelationship of interviewer and interviewee. Thirty-two papers dealing with oral history methodology drawn from contributors in various countries were compiled in *The oral history reader* (1998) edited by Robert Perks and Alister Thompson. By the early 1990s an internationally agreed methodological approach had been formulated leaving oral history on a sound methodological footing.

### **Thesis methodology**

A current dictionary interpretation of oral history is 'the audio or video recording of structured conversations with individuals on matters of a historical nature'. However, many oral historians (including this author) adopt a much broader definition which takes into account any historical information derived from oral sources. In other words, any oral evidence pertaining to history recorded by hand, mechanical or electronic means, is classed as oral history.

### **The selection of interviewees**

Although most oral history text-books emphasise the importance of personal ingenuity in selecting interviewees, theoretical models fall into two main camps. The first of these is based on random quota sampling and the second on the 'referral' or 'snowball' principal.

At its simplest, the principal behind random quota sampling is that a quota is arrived at based on a variety of factors, such as population, age, geographical distribution, social status, income, and profession. A mathematical model is then used to select the names of people to be interviewed from a prepared list. These individuals are then

circulated with a prepared set of questions. This method is perhaps more suited for large-scale surveys where one wants to determine particular trends or variables. Whilst this process is probably considered a much more scientific approach, and thus less likely to distortion, for the oral historian it creates a whole series of difficulties:

1. The model requires a current list of living members of an older generation. It also requires statistical information, covering a span of years, as to status, income etc., on each individual eligible for random selection. As it is highly unlikely that such data is readily available it would have to be painstakingly compiled.
2. Even if such information were available, how scientifically representative are these survivors of their own generation given causes of death can often relate to the chosen variables. (work, class, lifestyle)?
3. Given the random nature of selection it is not possible to choose the most interesting respondents to interview and unwilling or inarticulate respondents might skew the results.
4. If set questions are used it restricts the flexibility in conducting interviews.
5. Such an approach requires resources and manpower somewhat beyond the reaches of one individual.

For these and other reasons many oral historians prefer the 'snowball' or referral approach<sup>129</sup> which is the method adopted by this author. Preparatory readings of contemporary newspapers, journals and historical studies on Dundalk were carried out. A short-list of potential interviewees was drawn up of individuals who had experience or knowledge of the various aspects of life in Dundalk between 1900-1960. Life history interviews were conducted during which the names of other prospective interviewees arose. These names were added to the initial list and the process took on a momentum of its own.

While lacking the abstract scientific nature of the random quota method, this process overcomes most of the problems associated with it. For the historian it differs very little from the process of selecting conventional sources for consideration in a study. Firstly, the mere survival of documentation in itself is not random. For example someone,

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<sup>129</sup> Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 151.

somewhere, at sometime, has decided what material will survive and what will be destroyed. Secondly all historians select particular documents to elucidate specific matters relating to their topic. So, random selectivity is not an option for the historian using conventional sources. Thus, between oral and conventional sources there is very little difference in the method of selecting material for use in a historical study.

### **Interviewing**

The most vital element in oral history is the interview and the most important person is the interviewee. In line with current oral history methodology all of the interviewees selected for this study were made aware of its objectives and how necessary each person's contribution was to the overall plan. They were also advised of their legal and ethical rights to restrict access to parts or all of the interview, or to choose anonymity if they so desired. In addition, clearance forms were signed by both parties.<sup>130</sup> Due attention was given to current understanding of the interrelationship between interviewer and interviewee<sup>131</sup> and the 'open-ended' and 'direct' methods employed in asking questions.<sup>132</sup> No definitive questionnaire was used but in order to structure each interview a set of guidelines was drawn up covering:

1. Date of birth. Place of birth and reason for relocation if this occurred.
2. Memories of parents and grandparents. Place of origin, employment and other factors.
3. Early childhood memories and relationships within the family.
4. Schooldays, school curriculum, attitudes of teachers and friends.
5. Relationships with parents, religious, and people in authority in general.
6. Whether they held a part-time job while at school
7. Relationships across the religious divide during and after schooldays.
8. Expectations and ambitions.
9. Work experience with emphasis on attitudes and practices in the workplace
10. Leisure hours, with whom and how these were spent.
11. Memories and perceptions of major events in Irish history.

<sup>130</sup> *Principles and standards of the Oral History Association*, reproduced in Ritchie, Donald, *Doing oral history* (New York, 1995), pp. 207-9.

<sup>131</sup> Chanfrault-Duchet, Marie-Francoise, 'Narrative and socio-symbolic analysis' in Berger Gluck, Sherna and Pati, Daphne (eds.), *Women's words: the feminist practice of oral history* (New York and London, 1991), p. 89.

<sup>132</sup> Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 228.

12. Political allegiances.
13. Membership of clubs and sports organisations
14. Medical matters.
15. Changes in social welfare.
16. Changes in modes of transport.
17. The advent of technology, movies, radio and TV.
18. Marriage and family.
19. Their expectations for their own families.
20. Where family members are now located, employment status and relationships.

However, it must be emphasised that as this author believes that the information gleaned from an interview takes precedence over the structuring of that interview, these guidelines were applied in a liberal fashion. All of the respondents were allowed to complete their train of thought with minimum interruption and the guidelines were drawn upon merely to steer the interview, from time to time.

### **The creation of the archive**

The work-hours involved in the formation of an oral archive are astounding. For example, to fully transcribe a first draft of the average three-hour oral history interview can take up to three full working days.<sup>133</sup> Conducting the interview, correcting the first draft, indexing and cataloguing demand a further two days. Thus, to fully process each session requires a full working week. For the sixty interviews so far completed by the author this would take fifteen months. Restrictions on time and finance precluded the complete processing of the extensive sound archive created for this thesis. Nevertheless, about 10% of the archive has been fully transcribed and a summary of each recording was completed. All of the tapes have been labelled and stored in alphabetical order in appropriate cases for easy access and a preliminary catalogue has been set up in a computer data-base. A sample tape, with transcript, is included as appendix F. The ultimate aim is to complete the transcription of all material and to create a cross-referenced catalogue using dedicated archival computer software. The foundations of an excellent oral history archive are now extant. In addition, it is reasonably easy to use, and

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<sup>133</sup> Ritchie, *Doing oral history*, p. 42.

is available to researchers by appointment with the author, pending its relocation to a more suitable repository (as discussed in chapter VI).

The function of the oral historian is twofold: to conduct research and to generate archival material. It has long been the practice of historians to use personal letters, memoirs, journals and diaries to ascertain the human elements of history which are seldom revealed in official records. These sources are relatively scarce. Recent developments in technology pose an even greater threat for the future to the detriment, or at least severe impediment, of the historical researcher. The history of 'ordinary' folk has to a large extent been transmitted down through the generations orally by way of everyday interaction, at family gatherings or over cosy fireside chats. This practice has been somewhat replaced by TV and other forms of home entertainment. Thus, without oral archives we are in danger of losing much valuable information for future generations.

#### **Using the evidence**

Dundalk was the foremost industrial town in southern Ireland from 1900 to the mid 1980s. In 1900 Dundalk was an anglicised town, garrisoned by British troops. Business, manufacturing and local administration was dominated by denominational and class differences. Protestant influence was most evident in the workshops of the Great Northern Railway Company (GNR) which placed Dundalk at the forefront of the then-dominant world technology, steam. In 1900 the GNR works employed approximately 500 men, rising to a peak of 1,400 by 1954.<sup>134</sup> The loss of 'the Works' in 1958 led to a failed government attempt to maintain the town's tradition in heavy industry. However, employment in the GNR helped maintain population stability in Dundalk whilst rural towns throughout the country were in decline due to emigration. Conventional sources will be utilised to plot the fortunes of the 'Works' whilst the oral evidence will highlight working conditions, inter-denominational and worker-management relationships, family dependence, and other multifarious matters relating to 'the Works'.

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<sup>134</sup> McQuillan, Jack, *The railway town: the story of the Great Northern Railway works and Dundalk* (Dundalk, 1993), p. 168.

Population growth in Dundalk exacerbated a housing crisis inherited from the previous century. Despite the upheavals of war and politics, the Dundalk Urban District Council's (DUDC) contribution to the alleviation of the crisis by the 1960s was considerable.<sup>135</sup> Quantitative and qualitative analysis in the provision of new dwellings, the upgrading of the existing housing stock and the redevelopment of insanitary areas of Dundalk also form part of the study. Re-housing led to the uprooting of long established communities which had both positive and negative effects on community morale. For those who lived in 'condemned' areas, their house was their home and the oral evidence takes the reader into these homes to mingle with the family and the local community. Topics such as domestic violence, sleeping accommodation, cooking, lighting and sanitation are given consideration in this thesis.

In addition to the railway works, the Dundalk distillery and the tobacco manufacturers P.J. Carrolls were operating successfully in town prior to Irish independence. Partition caused the closure of the distillery whilst political policies and the adoption of developing technological, managerial and marketing expertise accounted for the expansion of Carrolls. In the 1930s government-imposed tariffs and restricted import controls benefited the town greatly in the form of new industries, most particularly the footwear sector. Soon Dundalk became the centre for boot and shoe manufacture in Ireland. At its peak this gave employment to 2,000 people. The oral and written sources will trace this development with special emphasis on the changing social attitudes to factory workers and people employed in manufacturing industry.

During the early decades of the twentieth century in Ireland politics and violence were often inseparable. This thesis examines this reality in a local context. In 1916 the Dundalk Volunteers were allocated a pivotal role in the plans for the 'Easter' rising and oral evidence from local activists and observers highlight the resulting debacle. It also points out how demarcation lines between republicans and official upholders of law and

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<sup>135</sup> O'Sullivan, Harold, *A history of local government in county Louth, from earliest times to the present time* (Dundalk, 2000), p. 187.

order were often blurred. During the national trauma of the period, the town and military barracks were taken by 'Irregulars' and re-occupied by Free State troops in 1922. The oral sources examine the attitudes and role of 'ordinary people' at that time. Topics under consideration include popular IRA support, concealment and transport of weapons, and fraternisation with the RIC, Auxiliaries and Black and Tans. Other areas of research include attitudes to World War I, the escape network for 'men on the run', and the effects of the civil war on families and friends who ended up on opposing sides. In 1922 partition separated Dundalk from its natural hinterland of south Armagh. The effects of this change on the community, and the response of customs officials to smuggling at a family level, will also be investigated.

The 'Emergency' presented a whole new set of problems. Members of the Local Defence Force (LDF) prepared to offer the first line of defence to the then-perceived threat of British invasion. The camaraderie developed during this period did much to diminish the divisions of civil war politics. Rationing led to skulduggery on the part of some local traders. All of these happenings impacted on a better-educated post civil war generation which by 1945 was seeking greater equality, and political policies more responsive to their needs. This impetus for change and its effects is woven throughout the text as is the issue of religious and class disparity.

### **Presenting the evidence**

One of the attributes of oral history is the emotional content of the evidence. In terms of presentation, one is faced with two stark choices: to edit out or to preserve. As one of the aims of this thesis is to assess the historical value of oral evidence, in this instance the author decided to preserve as faithfully as possible all aspects of the oral testimony. Thus, it will be observed that throughout the text certain passages are humorous in content whereas others are distressful. This is not a deliberate ploy in order to entertain but an attempt to convey the added emotional energies of the spoken word. Herein lies one of the greatest difficulties for the oral historian. Pronunciation, dialect,

voice modulation, hesitations and repeats which are the hallmark of the spoken word do not transfer well to written narrative. In extreme cases direct transcription of an oral passage renders it completely incomprehensible. Thus, a degree of editing is needed to transform the spoken word into an acceptable literal narrative form. Punctuation is added, repetitions are deleted, words and passages are discarded, highlighted and/or taken out of sequence in order to conform to the reader's expectations. At the same time not only the verbal but the emotional content must be preserved. Therefore in some instances lengthy direct quotations will be encountered where the author believed that further editing would distort or diminish the value of the evidence. The thesis is also heavily reliant on personal testimony in order to present the interviewee's view of their history rather than the author's.

The human inclination to sanitise, embellish or telescope events in the process of recalling them is a major challenge to the oral historian. During one interview a lady continuously referred to incidents involving the 'Tans' long after they had departed the country. Thus, under the strictest terms her evidence would be considered inadmissible. However, more direct questioning revealed that she and her immediate acquaintances depicted all law enforcement agencies as 'Tans' for many years after Irish independence. Rather than negate the evidence this information, together with other references, allowed the author to interpret it from an anti-treaty standpoint and evaluate it against 'neutral' and 'pro-treaty' viewpoints expressed by other interviewees.

The influence of collective memory on individual interpretations of history is always problematical when assessing oral evidence. In severe cases this can lead to the creation of myth, the anathema of many historians. Nevertheless, it is widely acknowledged that myth is an historical force of immense power which can often circumvent truth, as witnessed in the recent troubles in Northern Ireland.<sup>136</sup> Thus, the myths that people live by are as important to the historian as the underlying facts that help to create them. Oral history can help to uncover myths but the creation of myth is not

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<sup>136</sup> Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 162.

restricted to oral evidence. Neither is the question of sanitising or embellishing history; similar problems of historical interpretation are encountered with conventional sources. However, one advantage of oral evidence is that, unlike written sources, anomalies can be rechecked with an interviewee. Moreover, more than words are communicated during an interview. Careful attention to body language and verbal articulation can provide additional clues as to the authenticity and sincerity of oral evidence.

Finally, a major point of contention among historians and indeed the wider scholarly community with regard to oral history is that it cannot be verified. In this instance most of the information contained in this work has been crosschecked with other oral evidence, with conventional sources, or with both. In any event judgement calls must be made and some risks have been taken where corroboration was impossible. This was particularly true for domestic violence, a subject where all the interviewees were not so candid. In this case the passage quoted has been edited to preserve the anonymity of the respondent because she and her family are still living in Dundalk. Likewise some donors have specifically requested that their names be withheld. The author's judgement in these cases complies with accepted ethical standards for oral history.<sup>137</sup>

In order to facilitate the inclusion of copious direct quotations statistical information has been reduced to graphic format wherever possible for easier assimilation. Liberal use of maps has also been employed to convey a sense of time and place, and to help situate real people and events in real places.

### **Primary sources**

The bulk of the oral content is derived from sixty interviews (amounting to approximately 180 hours) recorded between 1996-2000. Ages range from sixty to one hundred years at the time of interview. The occupations of respondents include businessmen and women; labourers; tradesmen; factory workers; full-time homemakers; a teacher, a priest and an assortment of other workers. Married, widowed and single

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<sup>137</sup> 'Principals and standards of the Oral History Association' in Ritchie, *Doing oral history*, pp. 207-9.

persons are included. Due to the predominance of males in the paid workforce over the time period of the study, the gender balance is slightly uneven at just under two to one favouring males. Over 6% of the interviews were conducted with Protestants; this (coincidentally) is also the figure given for the Protestant population of county Louth in 1901. Other oral sources include the author's notes of conversations with individuals when the use of a tape recorder was either inappropriate or impossible, and follow-up talks with previous interviewees. Accounts of individual local participation in the events of 1916-1922 were obtained mostly from hand-written accounts in the Harold O'Sullivan file in the Irish Military Archives, Cathal Brugha barracks or in the personal possession of Eddie Filgate, Louth village, and Frank Aiken junior, Ardee. Copies of all these privately-held or otherwise dispersed sources are now held by the author, where they are made available to other researchers. It is planned to incorporate these papers, in conjunction with the oral history collection, into a larger professionally-managed Dundalk archive in the care of the local authority or other suitable public body. As is often the case with oral historians, the author was made aware of this material during the interview process. Indeed it was rather surprising to discover the range and variety of conventional historical sources in private hands. Some of the more interesting finds included:

1. The Glasgow branch of Sinn Féin minute books 1911-1914.
2. The Dundalk branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers' minute books 1893 -1931.
3. A bound copy of reports by the resident electrical engineer to the Electricity Department of the Dundalk Urban District Council, 1911-1919.
4. The board of directors of Macardle, Moore Brewery minute book 1915-1930, together with a selection of day books concerning the everyday operations of the company.
5. An unpublished manuscript on the history of P.J. Carrolls.
6. Various photographs, postcards and personal letters relating to local and national figures and events.

Additional oral sources were letters, eyewitness accounts and reports of interviews printed in local and national newspapers. The 'Captured' files in the Military Archives and the 'Dublin Castle' papers relating to Dundalk proved useful for corroborating and correctly dating the oral evidence. They also provided additional insights relating to political and military events over the period. Other primary sources included government publications such as the committee on industrial organisations *Report on the leather footwear industry* (Dublin, 1962), the county Louth census returns from 1901 to 1961 and Ordnance Survey and municipal maps, which assist in locating places, events and personalities.

### Literature review

Dundalk has been the subject of a series of focused or specialist historical studies which occasionally touch on social issues. However, no social history of the town of Dundalk between 1900-60 has yet been undertaken. One of the principal historical documentary sources for Dundalk is the *Tempest Annual*. First published in 1861, each issue contains a street directory naming the principal occupant of each house; a comprehensive business directory listing the directors of each company; a record of elected representatives and local administrators together with committee members of religious organisations, schools, sports clubs and charities. The *Tempest Annuals* also contain articles of historical interest and a compilation of the local happenings on an annual basis. Thus, the information is both primary and secondary in nature. The *County Louth Archaeological and Historical Journal* is also issued yearly and its scholarly essays date from 1904. National and local newspapers and specialist journals dealing with specific themes of the study have also been consulted.

There is extensive literature on the history of the town. *Dundalk a military history*<sup>138</sup> deals with politics and military matters from earliest times to the mid 1980s. More recently one of the co-authors Harold O'Sullivan published *A history of local*

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<sup>138</sup> Gavin, Joseph and O'Sullivan, Harold, *Dundalk a military history* (Dundalk, 1987).

*government in county Louth from earliest times to the present time*.<sup>139</sup> Whilst dealing primarily with local administration and infrastructure this also analyses the effects of political change on Dundalk through to the year 2000. The development, growth and importance of the GNR to Dundalk up to 1958 is chronicled in *The railway town: the story of the Great Northern Railway works and Dundalk*.<sup>140</sup> And an unpublished MA thesis 'The response of central and local government to the crises in the railway engineering industry in Dundalk'<sup>141</sup> traces the demise of heavy industry in Dundalk. Vignettes of Dundalk's other industries are presented in *Dundalk: A tradition in industry*.<sup>142</sup> Fuller coverage of the introduction and expansion of the footwear industry in Dundalk can be found in *The footwear industry in Ireland 1922-1987*<sup>143</sup>, whilst an unpublished manuscript 'The history of Carrolls'<sup>144</sup> provides similar insights for the tobacco industry. Matters relating to the Roman Catholic clergy and parish of Dundalk are examined in *St. Patrick's Dundalk: an anniversary account*.<sup>145</sup>

There is a vast range of text books and 'how to do' handbooks on oral history now available, ranging from basic, introductory texts such as Robert Perks, *Oral history: talking about the past* (1995), to more in-depth explanations as in David Henige's, *Oral historiography* (1985) and Paul Thompson's, *The voice of the past: oral history* (2000), now in its third edition. More thought-provoking and sophisticated discussions on the validity and value of oral evidence, memory, empowerment of minority groups through oral history, ethical issues, interviewing techniques, transcription and archiving and diverging analytical approaches to oral history tapes have been compiled in book form. A typical example is Perk's and Thompson's *Oral history reader* (1998). However, various

<sup>139</sup> O'Sullivan, *Local government in county Louth*.

<sup>140</sup> McQuillan, *The railway town*.

<sup>141</sup> McDonnell, Patrick, 'The response of central and local government to the crises in the railway engineering industry in Dundalk' (Unpublished MA thesis, NUI Maynooth, 1992).

<sup>142</sup> Ógra Dun Dealgan, *A tradition in industry*.

<sup>143</sup> Press, John, *The footwear industry in Ireland 1922-1987*, (Dublin, 1989).

<sup>144</sup> Keenan, O. J., unpublished manuscript, 'The history of Carrolls' (in possession of Michéal McCartan, Dundalk).

<sup>145</sup> Murtagh, Fr. Michael CC., *St. Patrick's Dundalk: an anniversary account* (Dundalk, 1997).

publications of this type from the US, Australia and the UK have been consulted, as listed in the bibliography. So too have publications on historiography and oral history methodology, while back issues of the *British oral history journal* continue to be an important reference. Articles dealing with specific areas of the study from rail transport, economics, housing, military history, politics, from Irish and international history and social science periodicals have also been consulted.

### **Introducing Dundalk, 1900**

The town of Dundalk is situated on the north-east coast of Ireland about 52 miles equi-distant between the cities of Dublin and Belfast. Drogheda lies 22 miles to the south of Dundalk and within a radius of fifteen miles are found the towns of Castleblaney, Carrickmacross, Carlingford and Newry. It is the administrative centre of Ireland's smallest county, Louth, in the province of Leinster (see figure 1.1).

A popular local publication in 1901 described Dundalk as:

a prosperous maritime assize town, and municipal borough, in the parish and barony of its name. It is seated on the south side of Castletown river, near the shore of a fine bay, to which it gives its name, in a valley surrounded by rich enclosures, backed by a bold outline of mountains, particularly to the east and north. The river is crossed by a three-arched bridge, erected in 1822.<sup>146</sup>

In 1900 the civil parish of Dundalk was divided into two sections, rural and urban, and had a total area of 6,332 acres.<sup>147</sup> The present day urban district encompasses an area of approximately 6,100 acres (2,469 hectares) incorporating eighteen townlands and part of a nineteenth.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1900, p. 35.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>148</sup> Gosling, Paul, *From Dún Delca to Dundalk; the topography and archaeology of a medieval frontier town AD c.1187-1700* (Dundalk, 1993), p. 237.



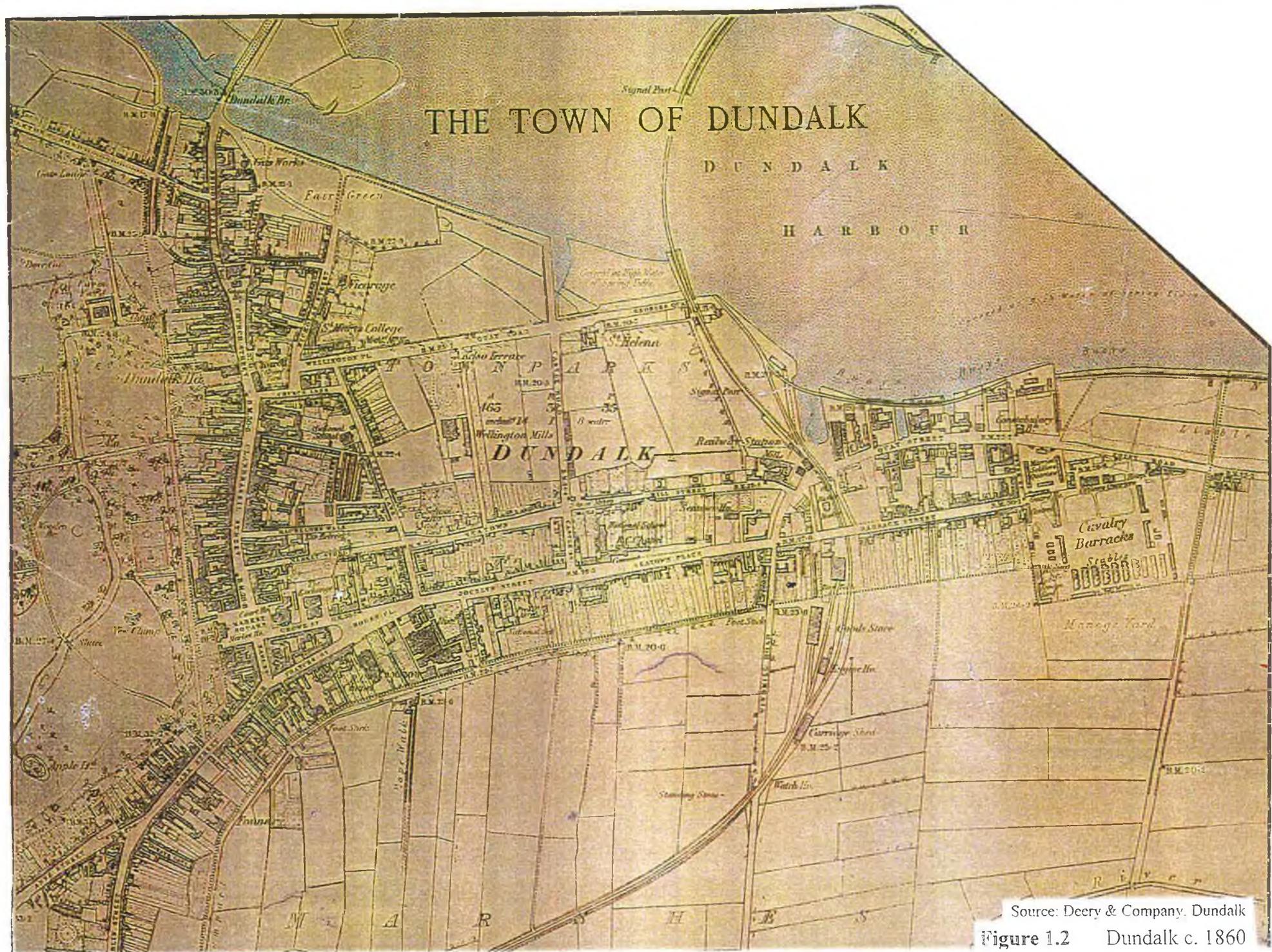
Figure 1.1 Location of Dundalk, County Louth

In 1900 the hub of the town was the Market-square where a general market was held on Mondays, and a pork market on Wednesdays. This was bounded on its eastern perimeter by the classical Courthouse, its front elevation modelled on the temple of Theseus, at Athens. Here the assizes and county and borough courts were held. On the opposite side of the square was the market house, which once housed the old assembly rooms. Bisecting these was the main highway between Dublin and Belfast, along whose route ran the principal business thoroughfare. To the south, the road led to Earl Street, Park Street, Dublin Street into Hill Street and on towards Dublin. To the north it progressed through Clanbrassil Street, Church Street and Bridge Street continuing over the river towards Belfast (see figure 1.2). The meandering pattern of the main streets was determined by a ridge of high ground on which they were originally constructed and the gravelled surface was often a cause of complaint by traders with dust in dry weather and mud when it rained.

Backing onto the buildings, on the west side of the main thoroughfare, was an extensive demesne the property of the Earl of Roden. It would appear that the Roden estate also laid claim to the western portion of the square as in 1900, to the dismay of the townspeople and the urban council, they erected a number of temporary dwellings on it.<sup>149</sup> The overall effect of this vast tract of parkland in private ownership restricted development to the eastern and southern portions of the borough. The northern area, being the oldest, was already fully developed in previous centuries. However, there was a tract of reclaimed land there, part of which (the Fair Green) was utilised for holding fairs on the third Wednesday monthly, and a general fair on the 17 May. A further portion comprised the town park. Leading from the bridge a road ran parallel to Bridge Street towards the lower end of Church Street where Saint Nicholas's Roman Catholic church was located. This building, in turn, was fronted by the old linen hall. Further along Church Street stood the Protestant church of Saint Nicholas, an ancient structure, with an 'ivy mantled tower housing a clock with four dials surmounted by a well-proportioned copper-sheathed spire'.<sup>150</sup> Behind this stood the church and college of the Marist Fathers.

<sup>149</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 19 January 1901, p.4.

<sup>150</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1900, p. 35.



Source: Deery & Company, Dundalk  
Figure 1.2 Dundalk c. 1860

To the rear of the court house, on a road heading east from the square, was the Exchange Buildings which contained the town hall, 'Free Public Library' and reading room, spacious public hall, and other offices. A short distance further along stood the imposing stone structure of St. Patrick's Roman Catholic church, modelled on King's College Chapel, Cambridge. Situated along the same thoroughfare were the Presbyterian and Methodist churches. This road continued on towards the quays where coal depots and other storage warehouses were sited. In the same area was a monastery and the church of the Redemptorist order (see figure 2.2, p. 78).

On the southern outskirts of town stood the district gaol and the county infirmary in an open area known as the Crescent. In close proximity were the Roman Catholic church of Saint Malachy's, the railway station and the locomotive works of the Great Northern Railway Company.

### Urban administration

In 1899 public administration was the responsibility of the eighteen member Dundalk Urban District Council (DUDC). This body was elected under the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898 and replaced the Grand Jury. Although both bodies were predominantly nationalist, Labour representation in 1899 was over 44% whereas under the Grand Jury system they had none (see table 1.1). The political intricacies from this period onwards are covered in chapter IV.

Urban Districts in County Louth	Members Elected 1899										Members of Previous Body									
	Labour				Unionists	Neutrals	Nationalist					Labour	Unionists	Neutrals	Nationalist					
	Nationalist	Extremist	Unionist	Total			Dillonites	Redmondites	Healyites	Total	Grand Total				Dillonites	Redmondites	Healyites	Total	Grand Total	
Ardee	3			3	1		4	1		5	9		1			8			8	9
Drogheda		3		3	2		8	11		19	24		2			12	10		22	24
Dundalk	5	2	1		1	2		6	1	7	18			3		12	3	13	18	18

Source: Dublin Castle Papers CO 904/184, p. 83.

Table 1.1 Political affiliations of members elected to municipal authorities in county Louth in 1899.

The progressive nature of earlier local administrations in Dundalk is evidenced by the fact that piped water and main sewers were in place throughout the town. A private company under contract to the DUDC furnished public gas lighting. Plans had been drawn up to convert the street lighting to electricity and to install a tram system which would link Dundalk to the nearby seaside village of Blackrock. Public housing and the clearance of insanitary areas were also on the agenda of the DUDC and a scheme of fifty-nine houses was under consideration in 1899.

### Population

The official census returns for 1891 and 1901 recorded a decrease of nearly a quarter of a million, or over five per cent, of the entire population of Ireland. This decrease affected not only rural districts, but the majority of towns and cities as well. Notable exceptions were Dublin, which, because of the extension of the municipal boundary, had considerably increased its population to 290,000, or by 16%. Belfast made tremendous strides from 273,000 in 1891 to 348,876 in 1901 (28%). Derry added 20% to its population in the decade. The figures for Dundalk and its principal neighbours are tabulated in table 1.2.

Town	1891	1901	+/-	% +/-
Dundalk	12,449	13,067	+ 681	+ 5
Drogheda	13,108	12,765	- 343	- 3
Newry	12,961	12,587	- 374	- 3

Source: Census returns 1891 and 1901.

**Table 1.2** Population trends in neighbouring towns 1891-1901.

From table 1.2, it appears that Dundalk has progressed considerably, while its northern and southern neighbours had somewhat receded. However, the figures scarcely seem to account for the ten years of progress in Dundalk's population. A number of houses had been built outside the municipal boundaries; and the garrison in barracks, when the census was taken, was a good deal less than usual. Therefore, the real increase in the

population of Dundalk was probably much more than the 5% disclosed by the above figures.<sup>151</sup> Table 1.3 displays similar trends in the surrounding counties.

County	1891	1901	Decrease	%
Louth	71,914	65,741	6,713	-9
Armagh	137,877	125,238	12,639	-9
Monaghan	86,206	74,505	11,901	-14
Meath	76,111	67,463	9,648	-13
Cavan	111,917	97,368	14,549	-13

Source: Census returns 1891 and 1901.

**Table 1.3** Population trends in county Louth and neighbouring counties 1891-1901.

Thus, while the population of urban and rural areas in Louth and the surrounding counties was on the wane, Dundalk was showing considerable growth. The predominant pull factor was employment and although this was often influenced by external economic factors this trend was continued throughout the period of study.

### **Business and industry**

The *Tempest Annual* for 1900 lists the principal manufacturing concerns as linen, mineral waters, pinafores and aprons, metal castings, steam engines, lattice bridges, &c., salt, soap, candles, leather and tobacco. Additionally, there was an extensive distillery, flour mills, shipbuilding, three large brick works, two breweries, and two iron works. By the mid 1960s many of these industries had all but disappeared. Some others then in their infancy expanded while other new enterprises were established.

Communications were vital to the town's commercial well-being. In this regard Dundalk was strategically well placed. Being on the east coast, the steam-ships of the Dundalk and Newry Steam-Packet Company regularly conveyed passengers, cattle, and merchandise between Dundalk and the ports of Glasgow and Liverpool. Concurrently, a daily steamer service to and from Holyhead was operated by the London and North-Western railway company which linked all of that company's stations in England with Greenore harbour, in Carlingford Lough. This was in turn connected to the rest of Ireland via Dundalk through the rail network of the GNR (see figure 3.2, p. 94).

<sup>151</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 25 June 1901, p. 4.

Principal imports listed for the period were coal, timber, iron, flour, Indian corn, tobacco, stationary, soap, oil, tallow, groceries, woollen goods, and ironmongery. Exports were generally agricultural produce oats, barley, wheat, grass seeds, hay, butter, flour, meal, cattle, sheep, pigs, bricks, timber, whiskey, ales, porter, poultry and eggs.<sup>152</sup>

In 1900 Dundalk was a place of exceptional industrial stability in comparison to most centres of population in the twenty-six southern counties of Ireland. Despite the upheavals of two world wars, a rebellion and a civil war, Dundalk maintained a pattern of growth unprecedented for a provincial Irish town between 1900-1960. By 1960 the everyday lives of the population had changed beyond recognition from that of 1900. This thesis sets out to chronicle that change primarily through the eyes of 'ordinary' people who lived through and experienced these vast upheavals.

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<sup>152</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1900, p. 35.

## Chapter II

### Housing, Living Conditions and Education

But there again we're inclined to compare life today with life then; we didn't know then what we were going to have now. What we had we were very satisfied with.

Thomas O'Quigley<sup>1</sup>

The issues of housing, domestic life and education covered in this chapter are usually treated as separate areas of historical inquiry. In the main the focus on 'slum' housing stays within the bounds of the physical conditions and the number of persons living in condemned areas; local and central government policies, and individual initiatives adopted to tackle the problem, with details of the quantity, type and cost of new houses provided. However, the oral evidence suggests that how and where one lived was a much more complex matter than can possibly be revealed by the type of quantitative and political analysis usually adopted for such studies. That is not to imply that such methodologies are faulty or invalid. Indeed identifying the mechanics of change, the scale of development, and the political forces in operation are all essential to the task of understanding the past. But government policies and legislation were designed and implemented by people for people. Thus, the impact of change on individuals and on the overall community is of particular relevance in trying to determine our history. Whilst officials rightfully considered houses in insanitary areas to be 'unfit for human habitation', the oral evidence demonstrates that to the tenants these places were 'home', and full of human vitality. Despite the cramped conditions, or perhaps because of them, the community spirit in these small clusters of houses was vibrant. A fine sense of neighbourliness existed and many were contented with their lot.<sup>2</sup> As the insanitary areas were closed the people were re-housed in purpose-built council houses on planned estates. Whilst resettlement improved the overall standard of living it also helped to diminish community spirit as will be seen in chapter V.

<sup>1</sup> O'Quigley, Thomas (1924-1997), interview recorded May 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Charity, Louise, born 1911, interview recorded April 1998; Moran, Molly, born 1915, interview recorded April 1997; Flynn, Maureen, born 1914, interview recorded January 1997.

As in the rest of urban Ireland, and indeed throughout Europe, the initial impetus for change revolved around public health, overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and moral degeneration.<sup>3</sup> Up until the early 1930s the provision of working class dwellings in Dundalk was by and large left to the private sector. Thus, the determining factor in family accommodation was income. Many families lived in rented single roomed dwellings, some of which were in dark, drab lanes, usually associated with poverty. Nevertheless, for those on slightly higher incomes, who could afford the higher rent for better living quarters, their everyday existence was quite similar. Apart from additional sleeping quarters and an outdoor tap (in place of the communal water pump), they too cooked on an open fire, as did the majority of their poorer neighbours. Lighting was by gas, oil or candle and sanitary facilities usually comprised an outdoor dry closet. The private sector was unwilling or unable to improve housing standards, resulting in government intervention to alleviate the housing situation. By the early 1940s vast improvements in housing and lifestyle had occurred

Running hand in hand with the rehousing drive was an ambitious attempt to improve educational provision and quality for the majority of the population.<sup>4</sup> Primary school enrolment was usually tied in to a particular 'catchment' area and to the religious denomination of the family, but there were also other factors at play influencing a parent's choice of school. In this research it was notable that the interviewees who had attended the Christian Brothers' schools (CBS) were more inclined towards the Irish language and cultural movement than those who attended other schools. In addition, due to influence within the Fianna Fáil party, the headmaster of the CBS could place students in the civil service, the Irish army or other key government institutions. Thus, where one lived could have an effect on one's chances in life. Income was also a determining factor in regard to secondary and third level education. This was particularly true for large families who in

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<sup>3</sup> Prunty, J., *Dublin Slums 1800-1925, a study in urban geography* (Dublin, 1998, 2000.) p. 1, also *Dundalk Democrat*, 25 June 1901, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Coolahan, John, *Irish education: history and structure* (Dublin, 1981), pp.33-36

addition to fees were burdened with:

ancillary expenses for schoolbooks, school attire and transport and the loss of the earning power of teenagers.<sup>5</sup>

Although attending different schools and religious services, in most areas of town Protestants, Roman Catholics and in one case a Jewish family lived harmoniously as neighbours. This also will be reflected in the oral presentations.

Similar housing and educational schemes were instigated throughout Ireland and Britain in the early decades of the twentieth century. In this study, statistical evidence and maps will be utilised to track the particular experience of Dundalk from 1900-1945 under these headings. But the primary object of this chapter is to go beyond statistics to explore the lived environment, at household and local court/street level, and the relationships therein. Slum clearance and house building programs over the period are outlined, with particular regard to effects on the local community. Individual school experiences are intimately connected to home and local community, and so form part of this exploration. In this respect oral history is a much more subtle tool for highlighting the finer gradations in housing and education provisions, and the slight but crucial distinctions between social classes.

### **Sanitation**

Prior to 1913 domestic refuse including human waste accumulated in 'middens' or dry pits in the back yards of most premises in Dundalk; these were emptied periodically by casual labour.<sup>6</sup> Unhealthy conditions prevailed throughout the town as the health inspector's report of 1901 clearly shows:

I inspected the passage common to Nos. 26 and 27 Park street. It is in a filthy state the surface is uneven and covered with pools of water. The drain in Mr Gorman's yard is obstructed. I believe the obstruction exists in the gateway, through which the sewer runs, and I recommend the opening of the sewer and removal of the obstruction... My attention has been called by Mr Curran to the passage at the rear of the houses on the south side of Vincent avenue... it is in a

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>6</sup> O'Mahony, Canice, *Eighty years of rubbish* (Dundalk, 1994), p. 1.

very filthy state, strewn over with old tins, broken bottles and decaying vegetable matter, and I recommend that the owner be called on to cleanse it and remove all filth... [In a] premises in Hill street occupied by Arthur O'Neill; the yard is filthy, and there is a large accumulation of manure at the rear there is also a pool of liquid manure near the manure heap which is highly dangerous... I have had a patient (Owen Morris) suffering from fever removed from his residence, Seatown Gardens, to the union fever hospital [at Soldiers' Point].<sup>7</sup>

Contagious disease paid no respect to class or wealth and the sanitary conditions of some of the more prominent citizens were sometimes little better than in the rest of town. A case in point is that of the works manager on the Great Northern Railway:

A case of diphtheria has occurred in the family of Mr Charles Clifford, Mounthamilton house. The patient has been isolated and is in the charge of a trained nurse. The carpets, bedding, etc., have been disinfected. The case has arisen from the effluvia from a defective cesspool, which is on my recommendation being cleansed, disinfected and filled in. The railway company have arranged to construct a new one in accordance with my wishes.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, a clear case of class distinction is discernible in the treatment of these two patients. Whereas the poorer man was isolated in the fever hospital the patient in the Clifford household was allowed to be cared for at home. Allegations of favouritism were also levelled at the medical inspector, Dr. Sellars:

Dr. Sellars reported a case of disease arising from a cesspool, but he did not order those at rear of houses in Anne street to be closed. Inspector Curran said he reported these several times to Dr Sellars, but the doctor reported to the council that they were not dangerous to health. Mr Gordon (councillor): There are complaints of them. They could easily be connected [to the main sewers], and if it was a poor man he would be made do it.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these accusations it would appear that the medical inspector was quite successful in containing the spread of disease. In the last quarter of 1900 the average death rate from contagious diseases in the 23 principal towns in Ireland was 1.8 per 1,000 of the population:

the rate varying from 0.3 in Dundalk and Wexford to 8.6 in Carrickfergus. Dundalk (except in Wexford which is equal) has thus the lowest average rate of deaths from contagious diseases in Ireland... This happy result is to be attributed to our good water supply and drainage system,

<sup>7</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 9 February 1901, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

and in no small measure to our medical officer of health whose promptitude in dealing with infectious cases of disease is beyond all praise.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless the problem of fever persisted and in June there was 'something very like an epidemic of diphtheria [which was] not confined to any particular part of the town.' In all of these cases the sewerage facilities were considered adequate but 'in several of the cases of diphtheria there were manure heaps close to the dwellings and that was a fruitful source of diphtheria'.<sup>11</sup> The patients had to be isolated in their homes as the fever hospital was fully occupied. Thereafter the urban council instigated a regular refuse collection service for their own tenants and ratepayers with a valuation of £6 or over. 'In addition a quarterly cleansing of the dry-pits or privies was provided for houses without sanitary facilities'. In cases where premises had no rear entrance the contents had to be carried through the house to the nearby street for disposal.<sup>12</sup> Such practices were not restricted to Dundalk<sup>13</sup> and by 1908 local, national and international experts had linked the spread of tuberculosis and other contagious diseases to insanitary housing.<sup>14</sup>

Despite Dundalk's good standing on a national level, outbreaks of diphtheria were still being recorded with a particularly bad epidemic occurring between 1910-11. Several deaths from diphtheria and scarlatina were reported in September 1910 in houses that were considered to be well built and in a satisfactory sanitary condition.<sup>15</sup> By February 1911, 98 cases of diphtheria had been recorded 12 of which proved fatal. A report by Dr O'Brien of the Local Government Board who had visited Dundalk in January revealed that the outbreak was particularly prevalent in two areas of town. Surprisingly enough no cases were reported in the lanes and courts. The report came down heavily on the sanitary authority who Dr O'Brien believed had 'not been active enough in carrying out the

<sup>10</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 9 February 1901, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 11 June 1901, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> O'Mahony, *Eighty years of rubbish*, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Prunty, *Dublin slums 1800-1925*, pp. 285-6.

<sup>14</sup> Newsh, Arthur, MacDougall J. Patten, and Stafford, T.J., 'Report on the Washington international tuberculosis congress of 1908' in *The women's national health association of Ireland* (London 1908), p. 4. Also Prunty, *Dublin slums 1800-1925*, p. 168.

<sup>15</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 4 September 1910, p. 4.

recommendations of their medical officers'. Not a single case had been taken under the Public Health Acts in 1910 or for a long time previously. Dr O'Brien further added that:

I formed an unfavourable opinion of the SSO [sub sanitary officer] for the urban district. I think that the council should see to it that he is more attentive and energetic in the discharge of his duties.<sup>16</sup>

However, during a discussion following the reading of the report the council chairman J.P. McCourt defended the serving officers. He pointed out that although reported cases had come before the council and they in turn had served notices on offenders, no further action was taken. 'The report, he considered, cast more reflection on the commissioners than on the officials'.<sup>17</sup> By July 1912 it was reported that over 200 cases had been reported and the sanitary authorities had acted on 160 of them

### Population changes 1901-46

The three main centres of population in county Louth were (and are) Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee. From 1871-1900 the population in the county had fallen by 22% whereas Dundalk recorded an increase of 12½%. Drogheda's growth was 4% (no figures are available for Ardee). Table 2.1 gives a breakdown of the population in each town from 1901-46. Thus, it will be seen that between 1901-26 the population of the county dropped by almost 5%, Drogheda remained fairly static and Ardee's fell by 8%. On the other hand the population of Dundalk increased by 7%.

	County	+/-	% +/-	Dundalk	+/-	% +/-	Drogheda	+/-	% +/-	Ardee	+/-	% +/-
1901	65,829			13,067			12,760			1,883		
1911	63,402	-2,427	-3.7	13,128	61	0.5	12,501	-260	-2.0	1,773	-110	-5.8
1926	62,739	-663	-1.0	13,996	869	6.6	12,716	216	-1.7	1,729	-44	-2.5
1936	64,294	1,555	2.5	14,686	690	4.9	14,494	1,778	13.0	2,383	654	37.8
1946	66,194	1,900	3.0	18,562	3,876	26.4	15,715	1,221	8.4	2,346	-37	-1.6
Total increase over 45 years		368			5,495			2,955			613	
% Increase			0.6%			42.1%			23.2%			35.4%

Source: *Tempest Annuals* 1902-1948.

**Table 2.1** Changes in the urban population of county Louth 1901- 46.

<sup>16</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 4 February 1911, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 4 September 1910, p. 13.

Although by no means spectacular, the growth in Dundalk is in marked contrast to the demographics of the country's 'smaller towns [which] actually declined in numbers'.<sup>18</sup> After 1926 the population of the county began to recover. By 1946 Louth recorded a slight increase of 0.6%, and Drogheda registered a gradual growth of 23% above the 1901 figure. In Ardee there was a sharp rise in the population of almost 38% between 1926-36. This is accounted for by the patients and staff of the Mental Hospital (opened in 1934)<sup>19</sup> bringing the population to 35.4% above that of 1901. The 26% rise in the population of Dundalk recorded between 1936-46 was partly due to an extension of the town boundary in 1945, which accounted for 15% of that rise.<sup>20</sup> However, with an overall increase of 42.1% since 1901, Dundalk registered the greatest population increase within county Louth up to 1946. Coupled with this growth was the continued existence of insanitary areas within the town which created a housing crisis, a challenge to the DUDC which held statutory responsibility for the implementation of public health legislation. Before examining the building programmes utilised to overcome the difficulties it might be prudent to investigate life in insanitary areas as recorded in the oral evidence.

### **Housing conditions in 'condemned areas'**

Born in 1915, Molly Moran was one of a family of five boys and six girls who, together with her parents, lived in Ladywell Terrace on the Dublin Road (figure 2.1):

There was only the loft and a room downstairs. There was three or four in a bed. Well two at the top and one at the bottom in my bed. Then there was the two eldest in another bed. You see it was a way of life and that was that. Sure there would be many a kick during the night in bed, and out of it. We had an old aunt from Corcreka came in. She wanted to stay in our house for a night or two. Do you know what me mother did, took her up a couple of big things of straw and two or three old blankets over it and she slept like a log, on the wooden floor. God when I think of it. But there was always plenty of room.

There was an outside toilet. It was a dry closet and I had to scrub the seat of that every Saturday morning. An old pit, a dunghill, out the back. It would be cleaned out, and then me

<sup>18</sup> Lyons, F.S.L., *Ireland since the famine*, tenth impression (Glasgow, 1986) p. 101.

<sup>19</sup> O'Sullivan, Harold, *A history of local government in County Louth; from earliest times to the present time* (Dundalk, 2000) p. 85.

<sup>20</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 21 April 1945, p. 3

father used to buy lime, or something, and all the stuff was taken out of that pit [and put] down on the garden. I saw baths all right but we were never introduced to them. A big, big enamel basin me mother had.

There was at least four people in the terrace kept pigs. Matthews, a few doors from us, they had a pig sty and four or five pigs in it, and the grunting and the screams and the yells of them. You'd be stifled. It was great. But sure what am I talking about? It's Ladywell centre now. I'm glad I'm not there now. I'd prefer the old house as it was.<sup>21</sup>

The primitive living conditions described by Molly Moran were widespread and enduring; Ladywell Terrace was occupied up to its demolition in 1966. Although, to date no contemporary eyewitness evidence of living conditions in such areas is available as early as 1900, oral testimonies dating from the 1930s provide substantial evidence for the scale of the housing crisis and the immediate difficulties that the residents faced:

I remember five or six houses wee small houses with no back door on them. There was only one toilet at the bottom for the whole row and one line for their washing at the side. Everyone had their own day for washing and for using this line.<sup>22</sup>

This area was adjacent to Church Street, at its junction with Bridge Street and was under consideration for development by the DUDC in 1901:

The condition under which a considerable proportion of the labouring classes live cannot be regarded as satisfactory... the council should still further seek a remedy for the improvement of the large number of unhealthy areas that exist in the town. A number of these unhealthy areas are situated in the very centre of the town, viz.-McKevitt's Court, Kelly's Court, Park's Court, Shields Yard, Feehan's Yard, Wood's Court, Wrighton's Lane, Defender's Lane. The majority, if not all, of the houses in these courtways have no back yard accommodation whatsoever. The result is that organic and vegetable refuse matter is deposited at the very doors, and is cast in front of the houses. Some of the laneways end in a *Cul-de-sac*, and the dwelling rooms as a rule are very small, ill ventilated, and in many instances over-crowded, and with no proper separation of the sexes, several of these courtways are approached by an archway which is obviously very objectionable, and prevents through ventilation, as well as forming a place for the committal of nuisances. Other insanitary areas are Sandhole, Grey's lane, Isle of Wight, Hill street.<sup>23</sup> (figure 2.1)

<sup>21</sup> Moran, Molly, born 1915, interview recorded April 1997.

<sup>22</sup> Bolger, Fronnie, born 1920, interview recorded June 1997.

<sup>23</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 25 June 1901, p.4.

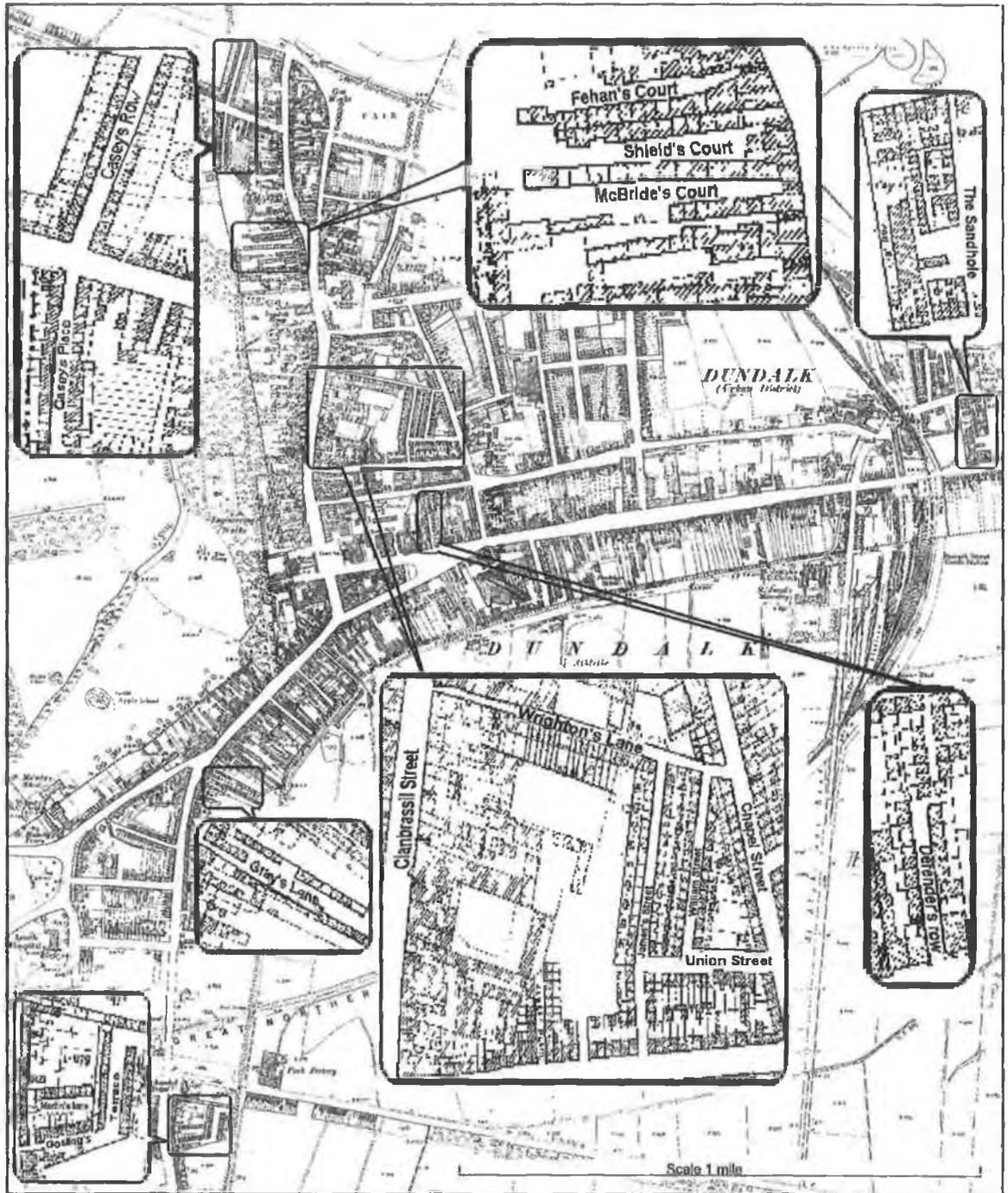


Figure 2.1 Some of the areas condemned as insanitary by DUDC from 1900-1945 Source: DUDC records

In close proximity was another neighbourhood destined for regeneration, Casey's Place, known colloquially as 'Featherbed Lane'. Louise Charity was born there in 1911. Her father was an itinerant butcher who sold his wares at the local market, on the street (on non-market days) and to regular customers at weekends. Originally their home consisted of one room with a sleeping loft but had been partitioned off to create a bedroom for the parents. This child had thirteen siblings: the seven girls slept on mattresses spread in the cramped loft (with bare slates overhead) whilst the boys made do with a settle-bed and improvised bedding on the earthen floor of the main room. Family cooking was done on an open fire and an oil lamp suspended on a pulley from the roof, which could be raised or lowered for ignition, provided lighting. This was seen as a status symbol in a street where houses were usually lit by candle. A pump in the roadway supplied water for the street of about thirty houses arranged in two terraces bisected by a gravelled road.

In addition to the family, Louise explains: 'We had fourteen pigs, a horse and a cow in the back yard and a hay barn and everything came in through the house'.<sup>24</sup> Her father butchered animals over an open drain in the yard and the residue was flushed with rainwater accumulated in a barrel. The same drain was also used as a toilet. Despite such conditions, or perhaps because of them, neighbours co-operated with each other.

### **Community life in condemned areas**

The most comprehensive account in the oral archive of street life was furnished by Louise Charity, already introduced, who lived in Casey's Place from her birth in 1911 until her family was re-housed in 1936. Thus, it is proposed to take Casey's Place or 'Featherbed Lane' as an individual case study supplemented with evidence from other parts of town:

The way it was in the street me mother fed half the street because we always had plenty... there would be [domestic] rows. But the neighbours never fought with one and other. You were

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<sup>24</sup> Charity, Louise, born 1911, interview recorded April 1998.

short you came in to our house and took what you wanted; you didn't ask you just took it, and [if] we were short we went in to the woman next door and we took it.<sup>25</sup>

A corroborative account, with an interesting variation, was given by Maureen Flynn. Her father was an urban councillor and landlord of a house-lane Goslings Terrace (see figure 2.1, p.59) not dissimilar to Featherbed Lane:

People would lend a shilling and they'd get it back with a spoon of sugar or something. Nobody would be hungry. They'd be over to our house no matter what they needed. If someone was out of work or sick one would help the other. Everybody would just muck in.<sup>26</sup>

The oldest respondent to contribute to the archive recalls similar practices:

At that time if there was trouble in the first house there was trouble in every house. Everyone was willing to help the neighbours. If they were stuck for money or anything like that they'd pony around and they'd help out. Very good and kind there's no doubt about it. Much more superior to what's going now. They were more helpful and more charitable.<sup>27</sup>

In the event of a bereavement or similar crisis, a dance would be organised in a local pub and a collection would be taken up for the widow, to cover funeral expenses. Given the widespread level of impoverishment further help was impractical.<sup>28</sup>

You'd wonder how on earth people did long ago when there was no social security. Long ago if a woman's husband died she had no widow's pension she had nothing, she had to go out to work. If she couldn't get work her people had to keep her and it was terrible. I'd say people, they really knew they could do nothing. It's not that they wouldn't have the wish to do it but they didn't have the where-with.<sup>29</sup>

For other working-class families life was little different. Molly Moran's father was employed as a labourer on the Great Northern Railway (GNR) and family finance was always a consideration:

I remember we had a big dresser and me father would come in on a Friday night, he might have a bottle or two, in Goslings,<sup>30</sup> and me mother would look at the wee pay bag she [would have] only a few bob in the bag. He probably spent it. Wages were very small. I mean when

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Flynn, Maureen, born 1914, interview recorded January 1997. See also Marron, Joe, (1899-1998), interview recorded December 1996 and Moran, Molly, born 1915, interview recorded April 1997.

<sup>27</sup> Marron (interview).

<sup>28</sup> Charity, Louise, interview.

<sup>29</sup> O'Callaghan, Sarah (1904-1998), interview recorded January 1997.

<sup>30</sup> At that time Goslings was the local grocery and pub combined.

you had to keep a battalion under control pay for this and pay for that. But apart from that they were good old days.<sup>31</sup>

In order to supplement the family income Mrs. Moran took in washing, which could bring in an additional 2/6 or 3/- a week, and children were expected to contribute towards their keep.<sup>32</sup> In Molly's case this took the form of housework for a Protestant family called McKee who lived in a substantial house in Stapleton Place (see figure 2.2, p.79). She reported for work at 8.30a.m. each morning and her duties included washing dishes and running errands, before going to school. With some trepidation she remembers 'going in [to class] at five-past-ten and got slapped on me hand, after me doing a hard day's work'. After school she resumed her duties in McKee's until 5.30p.m. and was paid about two shillings or two-and-sixpence a week. 'Sure it was great to have it to say "Mammy there's me wages". I'd get two-pence or three-pence out of it. I was rich'.<sup>33</sup>

When times were hard we'd get a couple of cans and go up the country and gather blackberries and go down to Seatown and sell them, that was a good help. You just lived according to your means but nobody died with the hunger. When people were out of work (before dole) they might go down to the Dispensary and they'd get four shillings. But with that you could work wonders. Clothes [were] bought at jumble sales. Mother could never really walk down town and buy this and that. They were hard times but we were never out in the cold or never wanted.<sup>34</sup>

Farm work was resorted to by many of these urban dwellers and 'married women used to go out and thin turnips and pull mangles and tie hay and all that. I never had to do that but a good many women in Featherbed Lane had to'.<sup>35</sup>

The close coexistence of perceived wealth and poverty is a recurring theme. Most of these congested areas were adjacent to more prosperous ones whose residents displayed a paternal attitude to their neighbours. Nevertheless, it would be remiss to ignore the role of the 'family grocer' within the community. As in the Gosling case (cited

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<sup>31</sup> Moran, Molly, born 1915, interview recorded April 1997.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Charity, Louise, interview.

above), another branch of the family was praised for their willingness to extend credit for food during strikes. It was stated that on occasions, they were never reimbursed, 'once gone soon forgotten'.<sup>36</sup> Another interviewee recalls his father talking about the 1930s rail strike when railway men, of good credit standing, got their groceries on credit until they resumed employment.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, there are many examples quoted of 'the book' system whereby goods purchased were recorded in a ledger and paid for on payday. Thus, it would appear that cases of temporary hardship were generally met from within the immediate community. 'Charity from the people that was all'<sup>38</sup>. At a time when credit facilities were not available to 'ordinary' people, the pawnshop was one means of borrowing money. Tony McDonnell's father operated such a business:

All I can remember about the [business], as a young fella growing up, was there was two sections in the shop. There was the front section where you sold ordinary clothes and boots and what have you. Then there was the back section which was called the pledges. When a man would finish [on] Sunday with his good suit, he wouldn't want it until the following Sunday. But he might need money for food or drink. He'd come up with his suit or his bicycle or a piece of furniture or his tool kit, I seen all that kind of stuff, and he'd pledge it for a week or a month or whatever. He'd get so much from me father on it and he paid that back plus a very small commission to redeem it.

A particular trying time for this man's father was during the rail strike of the 1930s:

Now he [the father] was a registered moneylender and it was something you had to have a bond for. You couldn't just open a pawn broking business you had to apply to the courts for a license. I think it was 1934, there was a big railway strike in Dundalk. Things were bad in the town and here's a railway strike and nobody was getting any wages at all, and they were on their uppers and hungry. But anyway, he told me this, they came to him in their hundreds with everything they could lay their hands on to pawn to get money to live. He was a very soft man. He was foolishly soft. He saw nobody stuck. He lent money out on stuff, nearly a cardboard box, in order that they could have food on the table. And a big percentage of them never paid him back. In later years, I might mention a name of somebody who had made it in the world, and he'd say, "that wouldn't be anything to the Johnny so and so's from Happy Valley". What he was saying to me was, [they] didn't ever, ever pay him back.

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<sup>36</sup> Clark, Michael, author's notes on follow up conversation to interview recorded June 1999.

<sup>37</sup> O'Quigley, Thomas (1924-1997), interview recorded May 1997.

<sup>38</sup> O'Callaghan, Sarah (1904-1998), interview recorded January 1997.

However in later years lady luck enabled the pawnbroker to redeem his sense of honour:

Now you know the value of money in 1934, [my father] lost £4,000 in one year. Figure that out in today's value? That was money he never got back £4,000. It put him to the wall. In the 1950s he won money in the Sweep. The horse was third, and he sold a half share because he needed the money. The first thing he did, when he got the money, was headed out to pay off anybody he owed money to even though they were statute barred for 20 years. He insisted on doing it. Nearly all he got he give it away again. But as he said to me afterwards "clear conscience happy man now". There was a lot of those sort of people around. They're not around any more. I don't think I'd have had his moral courage, I'd have availed of whatever legal loop-holes there were. I wouldn't like to see somebody, as a result of what I owed them, going down the tubes. But he was going to people to say that he owed them and they didn't even remember that he owed them. Cleared it all, paid his way the ould header.<sup>39</sup>

Although the pawning of clothes was a regular occurrence at times it led to a minor crisis:

Me father used to take me brothers to the races of a Sunday. He used always have a suit for the boys. There was no wardrobes or nothing that time and on Monday morning the suits were rolled up in brown paper and hung on the wall. And me mother used to roll up a whole lot of old newspapers in brown paper and hang them on the wall and she'd take the suits up to the pawn. Many's a time I had to go up to the pawn and get a shilling or two shillings on the suits. She'd take them out on a Friday when she'd get a few shillings because he was taking them away to the races. He never took the girls, the girls was at the back of the book that time. I remember he took them [racing] one Monday and me mother hadn't got the money for the rent. But she rolled up all the newspapers (like I told you) and she come with us to the pawn and she said, "you needn't open them there the suits", and he give her the ten-shillings or whatever it was. The boys were away to the races with the clothes on them. That's the kind of life that they used to live. They were very poor, but anyone in the town will tell you if me father and mother had'a stayed off the drink they would have owned Bridge street they worked that hard.<sup>40</sup>

When people did have spare cash they would often leave it with local shopkeepers for safekeeping rather than use a bank:

Me father used to have a long brown bag and he'd put the money into it and leave it in Dillons's or he'd leave it in Josie O'Hanlon's. Jamie was in America and he used to send a pound every week to me father, it went to me mother. He would always say never send a begging letter because the Devlins was all up in the world. Me father died. And he [always] said when I die you'll not have to worry to bury me. There's as much money as will bury me in Josie O'Hanlon's. and in Mickie Dillons's that will bury me. When the boys went [they] said there was no money there. [A local undertaker] buried me father. They said they had no

<sup>39</sup> McDonnell, Tony (1929-1998), interview recorded March 1997; also Charity, Louise, interview.

<sup>40</sup> Charity, Louise, interview.

money but they'd sell what they had which would pay for the burying. We had a cow, a horse and fourteen pigs in the yard. When they took them out to the pork market they weren't getting enough of money so they didn't sell. [The undertaker] sent down to tell us the market was over and had the boys the money he wanted it. So Pa Kirk bought the cow and the horse and the pigs went up to the pork factory to pay for the burial. Me brother stopped writing [from America] and me mother was wondering why. Sissy, the eldest of them, she had great education, and she wrote away to the Devlins to know was Jamie sick or what was wrong with him he wasn't writing. They went to him to know and he said it's all right it's a slip of the mind. So he wrote back to Sissy and he said, I always told you not to send a begging letter and I didn't think that for me father you should give [an undertaker] the privilege of writing for the burial money. He wrote to Jamie for the money to bury me father and he was after getting the money off us. That was the trickery if you had a shilling and they found out you had it. Me brother never put pen to paper after that till he died. He died before me mother and she had a hard time after that. There was no pensions nor nothing like that.<sup>41</sup>

Another episode from the 1940s relates how:

During the war we were allowed two ounces [of] tea, on the rations, and our grocer was putting hay-seed in the bags. He sold us hayseed dyed. He was taken up for it. It was bad enough paying for two ounces [of] tea but when you got two ounces a hayseed. And then they were cutting the butter and making a hole in it and putting margarine in the centre of it to make it weigh a pound.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to difficulties of every day survival, domestic violence was often a part of life usually related to the abuse of alcohol. In the following eyewitness account, on ethical grounds, names have been withheld and text edited to prevent identification:

Me mother and father would be always fighting when they were drunk. He'd come in drunk and they'd start a row and she'd lift the [knife] and she'd say hit me hit me. And he'd be that drunk he would hit her. Dr. O'Hagan, was the doctor that time, and he'd come in, she'd be lying on the bed or she'd be carried out to the house next door, and he'd stitch her and he'd say "now come on summons him you have a good case now". And she'd say "not at all I fell on the pot". She'd never tell and he'd never tell. We'd all have to stand out on the street when they'd be fighting. For the seven weeks of Lent him and her would never touch it [drink] and we'd have the happiest home in the street and we'd have everything we wanted.

An over-fondness for drink would often impinge on the children's welfare:

Me father could never trust her with money and he'd give her 2/6 for every meal. He'd take in the spuds and turnips and he'd get the bacon and the tea and sugar and she would sell it when she'd get him out. That's why there'd be no grub. As soon as she'd get the half-crown she'd go

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., (names edited on ethical grounds).

<sup>42</sup> Hanratty, Margaret (1916-1997), interview recorded May 1997.

away and drink it. She had only to buy the bread and that but she'd never buy it she'd spend it on drink. Oh! that went on in other houses. That went on in every house in them wee lanes, but not as bad as our house. There would have been a fair amount of rows and fights but always private, you know that kind of a way. They couldn't get money quick enough for the drink.

Deception and pilfering were part of the struggle to acquire drink:

Me mother would sit up at night and she'd wait for my father to go to bed, and when me father would go to bed, she'd go down to his trousers and take a pound note. She didn't know the difference of a one-pound and a five-pound note and she'd take whatever she got her hands on. She'd go to a neighbour's child and give her the pound, as she thought. She [the child] would go and get a pint for me mother and a half-one for her own mother and she'd take me mother back the change of a pound. And then when me father would miss it, he'd know it was a five-pound note, and he'd be killing her and she'd swear she didn't. But one day she found out about the extra money being robbed. She was above in Johnny Brannigan's [bar/grocery], he used to sell tea and sugar and drink and he came back up to her and he handed all this change to her. And she said, "go away out of that I only give you a pound-note" no said he "you give me a twenty-pound note". "Oh Jesus", says she, "I'll be killed tonight, gimmy it back". He give it back and she says "now I can't pay you until I get back and get the money". She went back home and she rolled up the twenty-pound note and she stuck it in behind the chest of drawers in the bedroom. He came home bulling, she was sitting sewing, and the house was pulled down. "You took it". "I didn't, I swear I didn't take it" and she says "where did you count the money". And he says "I counted it on the bed". Well come down and they pulled the bed out and everything and he pulled the chest of drawers out and he lifted it [the money]. And she killed him then, there was war then, for him accusing her. He give her a pound and she went back up to Brannigans and paid him what she owed him but she drunk the rest.<sup>43</sup>

Louise recalls, from her early childhood (about 1917) that:

nobody ever walked down the street drunk. They'd always be steady but they'd be drunk. They'd get into the house drunk, but they were gentlemen when they would be out on the street but when they'd get home they'd be murdering [each] other'.<sup>44</sup>

Whilst one would expect that conduct of that kind would seriously affect the offspring in such homes the suggestion has been made that it was so common that:

the children never bothered for they seen too much of it. All the childer wanted was out to play and let them fight it out among themselves. When you'd go home they'd be in bed and there was no more about it.<sup>45</sup>

For the parents it was a case of:

<sup>43</sup> Interview (name withheld on ethical grounds, see chapter I).

<sup>44</sup> Charity, Louise, interview.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

that was our fault, that was nothing to do with the guards. People wasn't that way built to have guards or nothing. They lived quite happy the way they were living. But there was no guards, and no other men would look at another man's wife at that time.<sup>46</sup>

Occasionally the local priest would try to help but it was usually pointless.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the harshness, life was not always so dire. Impromptu parties would occur where a three-quart can or a tin bucket of beer would be fetched from the pub. All the neighbours would retire to a given house and have a drink, a chat and a singsong. During the summer a neighbour, who had a gramophone, would take it out to the yard and the inhabitants would listen to music and dance whilst the children looked on.<sup>48</sup> At a time when commercial entertainment was beyond the reach of most working-class children, 'the youngsters of Featherbed lane would gather in Dullaghan's house'. As there was only one child (a girl) in the Dullaghan family the house was not prone to overcrowding and the 'boys and girls would go there at night for a craic, a song and a joke'.<sup>49</sup>

All of the respondents maintained that despite dire living conditions community spirit was very high, and people 'were all kind of united together and all quite happy'.<sup>50</sup> Louise Charity contends that 'they had no education and they lived from day to day and it was a very happy life'.<sup>51</sup> The validity of this claim is open to debate; however voice modulation, hesitations, emphases, repetition and other hidden clues in the oral interviews insist that the researcher consider the claim with some sensitivity.

The evidence presented relates to one specific area of Dundalk – Featherbed lane - but from newspaper accounts and unrecorded conversations with other interviewees it appears to be generally accurate for other deprived parts of town. It would be remiss to suggest that these were everyday occurrences or that every family shared such experiences. There is also ample off-tape evidence of the abuse of alcohol in other than disadvantaged homes.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., also Marron, Joe (1899-1998), interview recorded December 1996.

<sup>48</sup> Charity, Louise, interview.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

### **Interdenominational relationships**

A considerable amount of information has been collected in regard to religious difference. What emerges is that at everyday level interdenominational assistance was common and individual religious belief was hardly ever an issue. Indeed, on two separate occasions the interviewer was queried for his persistence in pursuing the subject. Both Protestant and Catholic interviewees attest to mutual co-operation and religious tolerance:

Oh me mother had a great friend, Taylors, in Hill street. Mr. Taylor worked on the railway with me father. They were grand people. She was just very good to me mother. In this town really, there were a lot of Protestant people but there was never a crooked word. I did ask [Mrs. Taylor if] anybody would be allowed to go in and visit or walk round the Green Church. She said certainly, by all means any time it was open. But I never had the courage to do that. You need a wee bit of companionship I suppose.<sup>52</sup>

Annie Begley recalls her experiences with one of the three Jewish families living in Broughton Street:

They were called Watchman. I know there was two girls. Their mother was dead when I heard of them first. I can't remember if there was a son, but I have a feeling there was. One or two of my own family, when they were living in Broughton Street, would go in on a Saturday morning, their Sabbath, and do the fire for them. Since there was five boys [in her own family] there was always one or two of them available and they would get a shilling a week for doing the fire. If the boys weren't available I'd go down and I'd do it. I never noticed any particular difference. The people were extremely nice I never even heard them spoken of in the house that it would raise any curiosity in you even as a youngster. To everyone in the house they were just ordinary people who had a different Sabbath. I'll tell you what we did think, that they were really very religious people because you were always told keep holy the Sabbath day, and they did. They never did anything, no type a work or anything whereas, in the other religions well there was lots a things been done. Like they didn't even seemingly cook or anything for themselves on Saturday which was more than you could say for the majority of houses on Sunday.<sup>53</sup>

Of the five people interviewed from that locality, Annie was the sole person who had direct contact with a Jewish family, though only through domestic service. Nonetheless the remainder concur with her assessment that there was no animosity between the Catholic majority or either the Jewish or Protestant residents of the street.

<sup>52</sup> Moran, Molly, born 1915, interview recorded April 1997.

<sup>53</sup> Annie Begley (1913-1997), interview recorded June 1997.

Within the Catholic faith there were certain taboos, one of which was entering a Protestant church. Louise Charity had a Catholic friend who married a Protestant. On the demise of this lady's husband some of her Catholic acquaintances attended the funeral service in the Protestant church. 'When they went into confession and told the priest, he wouldn't give them absolution. They had to [get] somebody to write to the Pope to get absolution for going into the church'.<sup>54</sup> For one Protestant lady this practice was baffling:

I remember when older cousins of mine were married. The Catholics had to stand outside our church because they weren't allowed in to service in our churches. I thought that was ridiculous. We were never told not to go in to a Catholic church, we were always told to do what our conscience told us. We were allowed to please ourselves.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, inter-religious marriage was frowned upon by the Catholic hierarchy:

I had a sister married to a Protestant and she had to go and live three weeks in England before she could get married. She went down to the Cardinal here at the time, and the rule was you didn't marry a Protestant and that was it. Fr. Stokes was here at the time and I knew him well because he used run in and out to the office for me to type things for him. I was very great with him. So I said to her we'll go up To Fr. Stokes. Well he sat up on a throne, a big high chair, and he talked down his nose to us. She still went to the Cardinal but there was no way that she'd get married here. She had to go and live three weeks in England and get married there and come home. The funniest thing, she had nine children and every one of them were Catholics. Funny thing, a grandson of her's is in Maynooth and he's the only boy out of all the families that's going to be a priest. And there you are. It was terrible. I'll tell you what, there was too much emphasis on hell in school that time. You were terrified of anything that you did. If you go to hell that's it. There was a girl called Susan McArdle and she was a clerk on the railway. She got married to a Protestant. She was excommunicated, that's a fact. I think it was taken for granted. Of course I think you had to get married in a Protestant Church.<sup>56</sup>

Of the two people interviewed who had experience of mixed marriages within their families, both had relatives who entered religious life a few generations after the original marriage, whereas, amongst the remainder, who married within their denominational group, there was only one. Despite the smallness of the survey numbers, this finding is nonetheless worthy of further investigation. As already suggested the role of the priest was much more than spiritual in nature, and in the years before professional counselling

<sup>54</sup> Charity, Louise, interview; also O'Callaghan, Sarah, (interview).

<sup>55</sup> McDowell, Ethel, interview recorded February 1999.

<sup>56</sup> O'Callaghan, Sarah, interview.

her often undertook this function. For our earliest example we are reliant on Joe Marron:

I carried more three quarts of stout into the gas house to the stokers. Because in my school days I palled with a lad called Pete O'Callaghan his father was a stoker in the gas works and we used to go round with his tea in the evening and we'd have to go either round to Nealy McShane's or to Joe Myre's up here for a three-quart can of stout. It would cost sixpence. The three-quart can was the favourite vessel for going to a pub. As a matter of fact one time we were stopped going into the gas house [by] this priest, I can't mention his name now. But we were stopped going into the gas house with the three-quart can, and they knew what we were at. So in any case the priest said, "what have you got in that"? "Three quarts of stout", says I. "Who are they for"? So we mentioned the boys names anyway and one particular person, he was very hot, and he wanted to take a pledge he says. "Throw out Mickey so and so's quart out of that can". "I can't father". "Why"? "It's on the bottom," says I.<sup>57</sup>

There is little doubt that Joe's last remark is a witty appendage. However, the main substance of the episode seems credible given the natural narrative flow from boy messenger to clerical intervention. Coupled with this Joe had two children devoted to religious life and on his own admission, having worked and socialised with clerics all his life, he held them in very high regard. Perhaps the close affinity accounts for the levity but there was a pressing need to improve conditions for 'ordinary' people.

### **Housing 1900-1945**

The general layout of the urban core of Dundalk in 1900, as seen in chapter I, is still extant. The original streetscape and traces of older dwellings, from a thatched house to lofty town mansions, prevail. The most notable metamorphosis was in slum clearance and the provision of suitable housing for the working-classes. As in the rest of urban Ireland and the UK, the initial impetus for change revolved around public health, overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and 'moral degeneration'.<sup>58</sup> As already noted, Dundalk (together with Wexford) had 'the lowest average rate of deaths from contagious diseases in Ireland for the last quarter' of 1900.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Marron, Joe, interview.

<sup>58</sup> Prunty, J., *Dublin slums 1800-1925*, p. 1; also *Dundalk Democrat*, 25 June 1901, p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 25 June 1901.

Between 1900 and 1945 the local authority provided 1,071 working class houses in Dundalk (see table 2.2). Obvious gaps appear in the timing of these. The first eighty-three were completed in 1903 then building lapsed for ten years. In the two years from 1913-14, 103 dwellings were erected, whereas the following two years saw only seven. During World War I, the war of Independence and the Civil War in Ireland building again ceased, to be resumed after Independence. The rate of progress was slow between 1922-33, when only 61 houses were completed. However, in the following eight years (1934-1941) 817 homes were constructed in Dundalk (see table 2.2).

Prior to 1922 land for the housing schemes was obtained under lease from Lord Roden in three separate parts of town. In 1926 the DUDC exhibited great foresight in purchasing the Roden Demesne, to the west of the town centre, which sustained much of the development up to 1941. In conjunction with the building programme, refurbishment of unsanitary areas was undertaken. By 1904 two areas, McKevitt's and Wood's court (off Clanbrassil Street) had been closed. Judging from newspaper coverage of the period the general assumption of the populace was that these new houses would be granted to those dispossessed from the condemned areas. However, this was not to be the case, resulting in great acrimony as witnessed in the letters page of the most popular local newspaper the *Dundalk Democrat*:

Something in the nature of a scandal is being perpetrated in the letting of the houses on the Seatown site... The houses are supposed to be for (a) those of the Middle and Seatown Wards by reason of the condemnation of their dwellings or (b) if not applied for by those of the people who are at present living in unsanitary houses or areas.

The complainant maintained that whilst applications from within the wards and from people from other unsanitary areas exceeded availability, people living in acceptable accommodation from outside the area were being given preference.

Scheme	YEAR ERECTED	Houses Supplied	Sold		Rented
			Original	New Owner	
St. Bridget's Terrace	1903	28	26	0	2
St. Patrick's Terrace	1903	31	29	1	1
Cuchullan Terrace	1903	24	16	7	1
Parnell Park	1913	63	13	46	4
Emer Terrace	1914	40	12	25	3
Moira Terrace	1915	6	3	2	1
Thomas Street	1922	27	26	0	1
Philip Street	1927	12			
Dublin Street	1933	12	8	4	0
Market Street	1933	10			3
Oliver Plunkett Park	1934	46	3	41	2
McSwiney Street	1934	70	9	60	1
Mulholland Avenue	1934	27	20	7	0
O'Hanlon Park	1935	108	11	53	44
St. Gerard's Square	1935	16	3	12	1
Mary Street North	1935	8	8	0	0
Mary Street North	1935	4	0	0	4
Patrick Street	1936	25	8	16	1
St. Nicholas Avenue	1936	116	6	58	52
Alphonsus Villas	1936	48	2	46	0
The Laurels	1937	60	3	57	0
Patrick Street North	1937	3			
St. Joseph's Park	1937	23	1	19	3
Hughe's Park	1937	34	6	19	9
St. Clements Park	1938	42	1	32	9
Hyde Park	1938	56	1	46	9
St. Malachy's Villas	1939	36	3	33	0
La Salle Terrace	1940	11	2	7	2
Fr. Murray Park	1941	84	3	48	13
<b>Total</b>		<b>1071</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>65</b>

Source: figures supplied by DUDC.

**Table 2.2** Houses built by DUDC 1900-1941.

In one case it was alleged that one person got a house after living in town for only a month. Also:

Men with families were refused although living in unsanitary dwellings, and young men without family or relative are being admitted. And... tradesmen were being refused simply because they were tradesmen although... tradesmen in Dundalk are little, if anything, better off than labourers as regards wages... at the same time houses were given to people who although they were not tradesmen, neither were they labourers, and their income, in some cases a permanent one, was much better than the majority of men working at different trades in town.<sup>60</sup>

The principal difficulty in this first phase of clearance was the financial cost of providing new houses that had to be subsidised from the town rates. There would appear to have been general consensus that the insanitary areas of town should be cleared and that the DUDC should re-house those dispossessed. 'Some people think that the new houses should have been kept for the people from the condemned courts... who now pay 1s or 1s 6d for a more or less unsanitary shelter'<sup>61</sup> With council rents set at 2s 9d, one and a half to twice the level paid for the condemned dwellings, these residents could not afford them. This led the editor of the *Democrat*, who was himself a councillor, to ponder:

What is to become of the closed-out denizens of the locality we know not. The UDC should have built affordable dwellings 'far less well equipped' that could be let at 1/6 or 2/- a week'... It is not the very poor that the council have housed up to the present; but it is the very poor that they are dispossessing.<sup>62</sup>

When this matter was raised in the council chamber it led to a heated debate. One councillor moved that McKevitt's and Wood's courts be closed within a fortnight however he was advised against throwing 'poor people out on the street'. His unrelenting reply was that there were:

lots of vacant houses all over town and they have got plenty of notice. It is a disgrace to hear the work that is carried on down there at night. The police are constantly being called into one or other of these courts and it should be put a stop to.

<sup>60</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 26 July 1902, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 16 August 1902, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

A suggestion that tenants in the courts unwilling to vacate their houses because they could not afford the higher rents for council or other houses prompted the quip, 'They could if they drank less porter'.<sup>63</sup>

Objection was also raised on the grounds that the general body of ratepayers would pay for a privilege necessarily limited to the few. When, in 1904, the DUCD applied for a loan of £5,000 from the Local Government Board (LGB) for the erection of a further 34 houses they were refused. The grounds cited were an insufficient water supply in town and that of the 83 houses, built under the 1899-1902 schemes, only 20 were allotted to those from condemned areas, including the 65 houses in the courts already closed. Additionally, 50 to 55 houses suitable for working-class families were vacant in the town. The council was eventually granted £2,000 by the LGB, but as this would only provide 10 to 12 houses the scheme was postponed.<sup>64</sup>

Apart from the cost factor, the whole concept of the local authority's role in providing housing was questioned. In 1902 it was estimated that there were at least 2,000 working-class families in Dundalk. To provide housing for all of them, at the rate of building then prevalent, would take 150 years. Furthermore, within 50 years those already provided with housing would need attention. Nor was it easy to see how 'under any law, except one which would devote a large amount of government funds to the purpose, such an idea could ever be realised'.<sup>65</sup> In such circumstances the capitalist or house-lord was seen as 'indispensable to the provision of housing'.<sup>66</sup> With council intervention in the provision of housing, speculative building, which provide badly-needed employment, had ceased.

Other alternatives propounded were the extension of the co-op building societies and an amendment of the law that enabled town tenants to become owners of their

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<sup>63</sup> *Dundalk Democrat* 27 Sept. 1902, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> *Dundalk Democrat* 2 April 1904, p. 4.

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

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

holdings by means of loans from the treasury on recommendation of the local authority.

Further evidence of resistance to the concept can be gleaned from an editorial comment in the *Democrat* which suggested that closing of the courts caused:

the undesirable population [to] overflowed and destroyed the decency of places hitherto occupied by respectable working people... but we trust that the cure of the old evil may not prove worse than the disease by infecting hitherto decent neighbourhoods with the contagion of dirt squalor, drunkenness, profanity and even worse evils.

The author, T.F. McGahon, who was himself a councillor, maintained that overcrowding was worse than before. Where once 'a family occupied a two-roomed house in a filthy stuffy court, two, three and four families squat into a tenement but little bigger'.<sup>67</sup>

The passing of the Clancy Act of 1908, 'provided for the erection of houses in Irish towns on much more favourable [terms] as regards loans than formerly'.<sup>68</sup> Under the Act only interest was paid for the first two years, the term of repayment was longer and interest was set a little lower.<sup>69</sup> Thus housing could be supplied which would be self-financing. However, little progress was made in either slum clearance or the provision of affordable workers' dwellings in Dundalk until at least a decade after Independence. Only thirty-nine additional houses were added to the Council's housing stock from 1922-33 in comparison to 107 between 1911-16. This was probably due to government perceptions that the 'Free State could not afford to build for the very poor'<sup>70</sup> and very limited funding was available to solve the problem.

Attitudes changed dramatically in the early 1930s. Subsidies at twice the 1920s level<sup>71</sup> allowed the DUDC to redevelop the insanitary areas of town and provide new dwellings for those dispossessed. This was in line with the national trend where 28,740 urban dwellings were erected by Irish municipalities between 1932-42<sup>72</sup> of which Dundalk

<sup>67</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 27 February 1904, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 18 May 1912, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Fraser, Murray, *John Bull's other homes: state housing and British policy in Ireland, 1883-1922* (Liverpool, 1996), p. 89; *Dundalk Democrat*, 18 May 1912, p. 13.

<sup>70</sup> *Irish Times*, 15 January 1924; 26 February 1924; 25 March 1924.

<sup>71</sup> Fraser, *John Bull's other homes*, p. 283.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283.

provided 839 (see table 2.2, p.72). The DUDC also donated land and provided support to the 'Dundalk premier public utility society' for the erection of sixty private houses in the early 1930s. Although originally intended for working class families, the applicants included a teacher, a garda sergeant and a business manager.<sup>73</sup> Apart from the general improvement in living conditions there was also some advancement in education.

### Education 1900-60

With the exception of the attempted revival of Irish culture and language, from the early 1922, educational policies in the country changed little between 1900 and the early 1960s.<sup>74</sup> So, the intention is to deal with education over one rather than two periods. However, some changes did occur. At primary level compulsory attendance on all schooldays for children between the ages of six and fourteen improved regular attendance nationally from 75% in 1908 to 81% by 1963.<sup>75</sup> Prior to that:

Well you went to school when you went to school and if you didn't go to school you didn't go to school, they didn't care. There was Mr. Campbell, he was the cruelty man, and he used to follow the children that wouldn't go to school. But sure we used to hide on him. Then Guard Bracken took over but he'd torture you. He'd follow you no matter where you were. Sister Aloysius she used to call us the 'Featherbed Lane Bulgarians'. Castletown Road they were all grand people and they were always kept in the school. I never learned very much because you were always running messages for them going to shops making the poor mouth. Sister Babs sent us up to see if you could give her a couple of pencils and that kind of thing.<sup>76</sup>

Second level teacher qualifications were improved by the Intermediate Education Act of 1914 which stipulated that a person had to have a university degree and a higher diploma in education to be admitted to the 'Register of Secondary School Teachers'.<sup>77</sup> Prior to that 'the quality of much of the teaching was highly suspect'.<sup>78</sup> The Intermediate Education (Amended) Act of 1924 replaced the payment of grants based on results obtained in public examinations with a capitation grant for every registered qualified

<sup>73</sup> McManus, Ruth, 'The Dundalk premier utility society' in *Irish geography*, 31 no. 2 (1998), p. 81.

<sup>74</sup> Brown, Terence, *Ireland, a social and cultural history 1922-1985* (London, 1985) p. 248

<sup>75</sup> Lyons, F.S.L., *Ireland since the famine* (Glasgow 1973) pp. 86, 648.

<sup>76</sup> Charity, Louise, interview.

<sup>77</sup> Hanbidge, A.A., 'Education in Dundalk in the last fifty years' in *Tempest Annual* (Dundalk, 1959) p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Lyons, F.S.L. *Ireland since the famine* (Glasgow 1973) p. 93.

secondary pupil. The state, in addition to paying the major part of a secondary teacher's salary, set a minimum requirement of 'registered' teachers in relation to the number of pupils in each school. Thus, by 1964 80% of the 5,000 state aided secondary teachers were 'registered' which was a 'striking improvement over 1914'.<sup>79</sup> In addition the number of pupils attending secondary school rose by 335% between 1924-1961, more than half of the increase recorded between 1950-61.<sup>80</sup>

In Dundalk as in the rest of Ireland education was conducted along sectarian lines which suited both Protestant and Catholic clergy alike.<sup>81</sup> Six Catholic, three Protestant and three private schools were established throughout Dundalk by 1902<sup>82</sup> (figure 2.2). Although great advances had been achieved in school buildings before the turn of the century, in the early 1900s educational resources were still over-stretched:

I came round from Broughton Street daily, to go to the De La Salle's school in Castletown Road. Before they built the big school in 1926 we were where the girls are now, on the top [floor]. Sometimes we would be taken out on the landing for the lessons because the school was a bit crowded. In those days we had a piece of slate with a frame on it and a piece of slate just like a pencil. That's what you wrote on the slate with and you could rub it out.<sup>83</sup>

Even in the 1920s there were still difficulties in some schools:

I remember when I was five and a half in me bare feet, and it lashing, on a Monday and we were taught the alphabet A.B.C.D standing in the little [outside] toilet. God when I think of it. But sure there was nothing in the Friary, in the infants school.<sup>84</sup>

A point of note is that quite a few of the female interviewees commented on the everyday dress code within the religious teaching orders:

The nuns was all in their uniforms that time. There was a big stiff front, you could hear it rattling a mile away and the same across their head all you could see was the nose and their eyes. And long skirts and big leather belts and beads the size of your fist hanging on the leather belt. They must have been weighed down summer and winter.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 649.

<sup>80</sup> Coolahan, *Irish education: history and structure*, p. 79.

<sup>81</sup> Hoppen, Theodore, *Ireland since 1800 conflict and conformity* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London and New York, 1999), p. 170.

<sup>82</sup> Hanbidge, 'Education in Dundalk in the last fifty years', pp. 2-6.

<sup>83</sup> Marron, Joe (1899-1998), interview recorded December 1996.

<sup>84</sup> Moran, Molly, born 1915, interview recorded April 1997.

<sup>85</sup> Hanratty, Margaret (1916-1997), interview recorded May 1997.

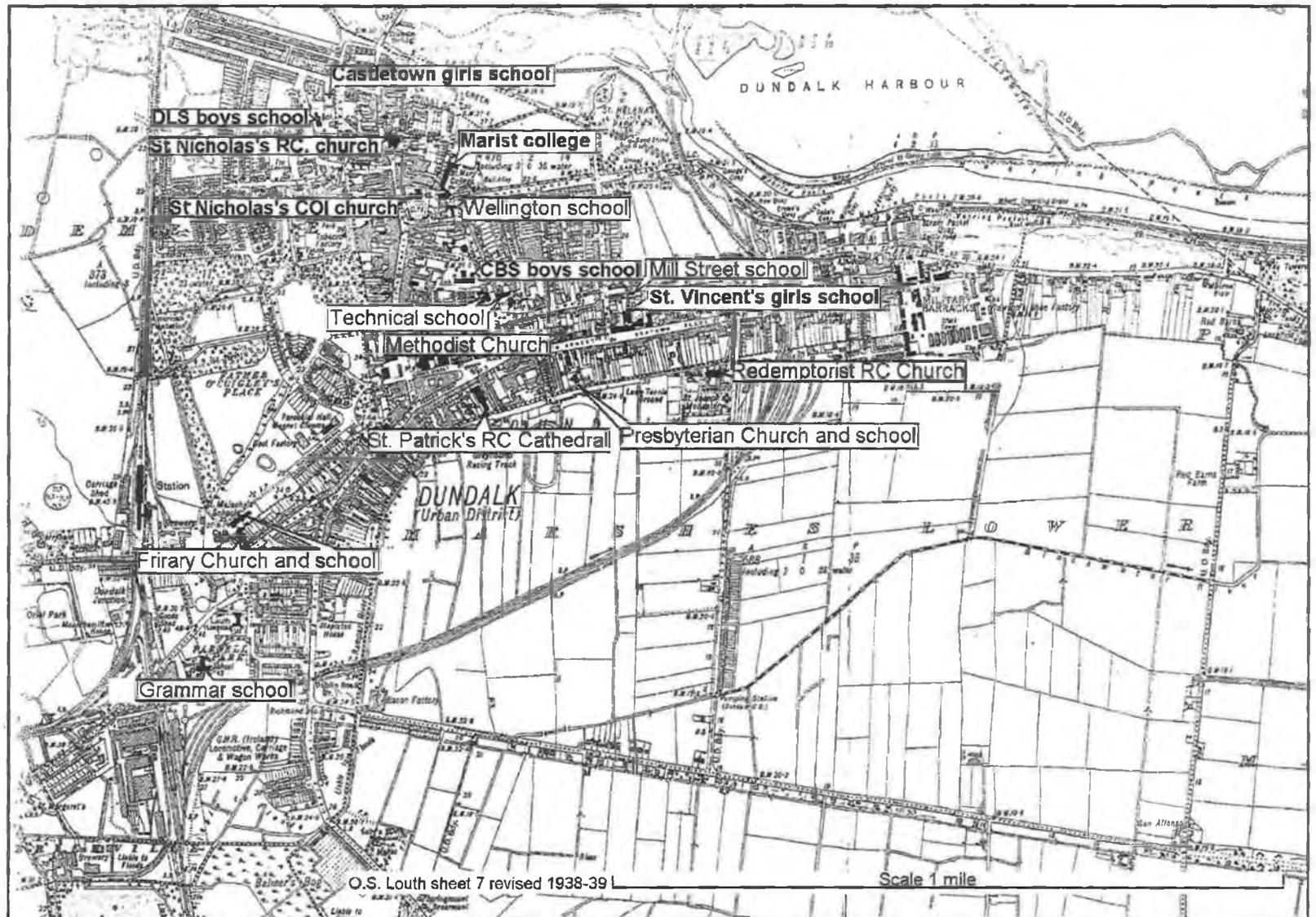


Figure 2.2 Schools and Churches

The Mercy nuns in Mill Street also came in for comment relating to early 1930s:

I went to school when I was only four. If you were able to walk or talk you were recruited because they were getting their capitation fee for each child they got in. Oh! the conditions in the school at that time were real primitive. There was a nun there, Mother Patrick, and talking about hygiene she'd come down to us and she'd have a pot of jam and a spoon. It didn't matter what disease you'd have it was the one spoon went round everybody.<sup>86</sup>

Most of the boys from Mill Street school progressed to the CBS after a few years and:

the conditions there weren't much better. There was three or four classes in the old chapel school. That's gone now. Then they had some classes in Saint Patrick's Hall and a few over beside the science room. They only built the present primary school in the 1940s.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, it would appear that every Catholic school in town was bursting at the seams. One teacher who came to the De La Salle in 1933 spent his first year teaching in the cloakroom. 'I started off with 108 infants. I only had them for about a fortnight the change of classes came and then they were down to fifty'.<sup>88</sup> The overcrowding was eased when the school was extended in 1933-4 and 1949 and similar extensions were carried out in the other Catholic schools and a new CBS primary school was built in 1939.<sup>89</sup>

In comparison, the Dún Dealgan, or Presbyterian, school in Jocelyn street (figure 2.2, p.78) usually maintained a pupil to teacher ratio of 40:1 or less. During the nineteenth century the school catered for all denominations and one of its pupils was the Rev. Nicholas Callan who was later Professor of Natural Philosophy at Maynooth from 1826 until 1864. A new school building was opened in 1893 and by this time the 103 pupils were all Protestant. However, 23 Jewish children from 13 families are recorded on the attendance rolls up to 1915.<sup>90</sup> This figure increased to 164 in 1911 but had declined to 115 in 1918. By 1925 it was further reduced to 65 and by the mid 1930s 'about sixty or seventy pupils were divided between junior and senior with one teacher for each level'.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>86</sup> O'Quigley, Thomas (1924-1997), interview recorded May 1997.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Interview (name withheld on request, see chapter I).

<sup>89</sup> *Tempest annual* (Dundalk, 1959), pp. 41-2.

<sup>90</sup> Gray, Allen, *Dún Dealgan national school 1891-199* (Dundalk, 1991), pp. 5-9.

<sup>91</sup> Gray, Allen, born 1923, interview recorded May 2000.

### School discipline

Practically all of the interviewees were caned at some time. Reaction to, and opinions of its use and validity, varied considerably but broadly speaking these fell into two camps: those who suggested it did them no harm and they probably deserved it anyway, and those on whom it seemed to have a lasting effect. The majority opinion was held by the former, whilst the latter all suffered some form of disadvantage:

I was five year old when my mother died. I was in the Mill street school along with my sister. I was with a one called Sister Margaret Mary and she was... I don't want to talk about her she's dead, but she was hard, very hard, you were terrified of her. The fear was in you going in in the morning and she had a cane she'd come down like that bang! on your hands. You daren't go down to talk to her, she'd have you arrested. And then my parents were dead I only wish, no I'll never forget it. Well then, thank God when I left school I was happy. That was the happiest day of my life when I left school. And you'd work at anything.<sup>92</sup>

Bridget's difficulties were with a specific individual and not the order as a whole.

However, corporal punishment was not the sole preserve of the teacher:

I used to be battered up by the boys because I was the son of a British soldier. Me uncle, who was an ex-army man and a boxer, happened to look over the wall one day and he saw them. We had three months holidays, because the teachers were away learning Irish, and he taught me how to box. When I went back to school and they tried to hammer me up I gave the biggest fella one clout and knocked him completely out and that ended them ever touching me again.<sup>93</sup>

This young man's mother was dead and he was raised by his granny. His early education was also somewhat inadequate:

Well me granny was a retired school teacher and she asked me to write out a letter that she'd dictate to me. I had to ask her how to spell every second word. Says she you're long enough at that school I'm taking you from it. So the next day she took me down to the Technical school, that was 1929. There was a man by the name of Davis and she explained to him that I knew bugger-all. So he said he'd take an interest in me and he did. The teachers were very nice and they used to say, you're doing great. The headmaster sent for me one day to the office. I was very nervous going in but he gave me a cup of tea and a lovely biscuit. "The teachers tell me you're doing very well", says he, "I'd like if you would come to the night school as well as the day school because, you want to try to make up for lost time, your education was very bad, but you can't come at night with the same name". Well I was registered there as Ronald in the day

<sup>92</sup> Bellew, Bidget, born 1904, interview recorded June 1997.

<sup>93</sup> Roslyn, Ronnie (1914-1999), interview recorded June 1997.

time and Leo at night. I went to the technical school night and day for three years.<sup>94</sup>

In later years he was asked to act as secretary at a Pioneer meeting in his old school. When one of his former teachers witnessed the improvement in his writing he invited him to the master's house for tea and said:

Ronnie when you left Castletown school you couldn't do that. "Do what"? You couldn't write like that, your writing's beautiful and your spelling is excellent and your phrasing is excellent how did you manage all that? Well I'll tell you I went to a school where they didn't slap, night and day for three years and he got as red as a beetroot when I told him that.<sup>95</sup>

Whilst acknowledging that the above is not suited to overall generalisations it is apparent that in this instance the primary education system failed. It is unlikely that a definitive explanation can be found for this failure but certain possibilities present themselves. Firstly, Ronnie's admission that 'granny had an awful job with me, I was as wild as a March hare'. However, it was 'granny' who saw to it that he did receive an education and he applied himself diligently to the task. Another possibility is overcrowding and an under-resourced educational system unable to allocate sufficient time to cater for such children. If such be the case, then Ronnie was apparently one of the lucky ones in having an ex-school teacher as a guardian. Which begs the unanswerable question, what about the others? However, his own analysis suggests that the difference in attitude between opposing teaching methods had a profound influence on him and is, perhaps, the explanation that should be accepted. This is reiterated by a Protestant lady who, after five years attending the Grammar school was sent to Alexandra College (Dublin) as a boarder:

The discipline was great in Alex, nobody ever lifted a finger to me in my life or to anybody I knew. Their word was enough and you never ever give them cheek. When something was said it was said and there was no way you'd go against it.<sup>96</sup>

However, the only teacher interviewed maintained that he got 'more complaints from parents about children that weren't doing their work than complaints about them being punished for not doing their work'. He also suggested that:

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> McDowell, Ethel, interview recorded February 1999

the youngster would be ashamed to say that they got six slaps. You wouldn't get them unless you deserved it. That was the general outlook then. But we were looked upon as being very lenient in the DLS compared to some other schools. Saint La Salle always maintained, with Saint Augustine, that you'd catch more flies with a spoon full of honey than you will with a spoon full of vinegar. But I'd be inclined to agree that the older teachers were brought up to be far stricter than they should have been.<sup>97</sup>

But if times were hard for pupils they were also difficult for teachers.

### **School inspectors**

Before the foundation of the Free State the inspector was most likely to be Protestant which placed a degree of strain on Catholic school teachers:

They had an altar in my class with Our Lady in it. When this English inspector used to be coming I was asked to go up and close the doors of the altar. The minute he went out I was asked up again to open it. The Blessed Virgin wasn't exposed when he was there.<sup>98</sup>

However, such inconvenience was slight compared to post independence:

School inspectors up until recently were hated usually looked upon as spies. A teacher could be efficient or highly efficient. If he was highly efficient he was paid a higher rate and some inspectors would very seldom award highly efficient marks and others would lower you from highly efficient down to efficient. If they lowered you from efficient it would mean you couldn't teach at all. There was a young inspector came here in the Dundalk area and he lowered marks to several. Two very prominent men here in Dundalk called to the hotel to him one night and caught him by the throat and told him that they had a way of dealing with the Black and Tans and they could also deal with him. He afterwards went to Donegal. Two or three teachers called to the hotel one time and asked him to come outside and they bundled him into a car took him out three or four mile and threw him into a bog hole. A lot of teachers knew how to play up to them. If they thought he was interested in music English literature they'd have a few books thrown around the school to play up to them.<sup>99</sup>

Undoubtedly, these procedures produced a degree of insecurity for teachers who were 'exploited, underpaid and undervalued by church and state alike'.<sup>100</sup> However, for those who could afford it there was an alternative fee-paying college run by the Marist Fathers:

I started my school days when I was four to five years of age in the convent of Mercy and from there I went to St. Mary's college [figure 2.2, p.78]. I stayed there till I was thirteen and was

<sup>97</sup> Name withheld on request

<sup>98</sup> Hanratty, Margaret (1916-1997), interview recorded May 1997.

<sup>99</sup> Name withheld on request.

<sup>100</sup> Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800, conflict and conformity*, p. 272.

sent to Clongowes Wood in county Kildare [as a boarder] and I was there for four years.<sup>101</sup>

This interviewee's father managed a large coal merchants and the names of his school pals included some of the more prominent local Catholic families. Thus, progress beyond primary education would appear to have been the parental goal amongst this class.

### **Second and third level education**

Whilst from amongst the Protestant interviewees there emerges a discernible ethos of education for education's sake, amongst the Catholic population there was a two-tiered educational system. One lady responded to a query about her second level education, 'secondary school! not a dog's chance, you must be joking'. She also suggested that three girls from business families who did progress to second level were considered to be 'the biggest dunces in the school'.<sup>102</sup> Speaking of 1914, the oldest respondent replied to the same question; 'you would if you got leave to do it, but you had to leave school to earn a few shillings for them that reared you'.<sup>103</sup> Thus, the need to earn money, rather than the cost of fees for higher education, was the reason most often advanced for not availing of educational opportunities particularly in the CBS. 'An awful lot of young fellows wanted to leave school at fourteen and jobs were easy got in the boot factories around 1938-40'.<sup>104</sup> Those who did attend secondary school seldom progressed beyond intermediate certificate level:

I was at secondary school and I remember telling Brother Kennedy that I was leaving to serve me time. He says to me "tell your mother I want to see her". She went up the next day and he says, "if it's a case of the fees forget about them he can stay here without fees". If they thought you wanted to learn you could have come from Rice's Lane or Mount Avenue it was all the same to them. But if you didn't want to learn they wouldn't allow you to hold back the rest of the class. Brother Kennedy guaranteed my mother that he would get me into the cadets if I stayed on. To get into the cadets you would need to have money at your back with the officers' mess. I was told about it. It wouldn't do going in there depending on what you'd get by way of salary. I never regretted it but if you stayed on in the CBS you were guaranteed teaching, the

<sup>101</sup> Williams, Dennis, born 1929, interview recorded January 1997.

<sup>102</sup> Moran, Molly, born 1915, interview recorded April 1997.

<sup>103</sup> Marron, Joe (1899-1998), interview recorded December 1996. All of Joe's children received secondary education and two of them progressed to university.

<sup>104</sup> O'Quigley, Thomas (1924-1997), interview recorded May 1997.

cadets, civil service, bank, all the good jobs. Every fellow who would do the Leaving would get a good job and Brother Kennedy saw to it. He was a great friend of de Valera and that's why there was an awful lot of lads went into the cadets, from Major General McKeown to Colonel McNamee. More cadets came out of the CBS here than any other school in the country. And an awful lot of lads who had top jobs in the civil service came from the school.<sup>105</sup>

Expectations for third level education were also very slim:

There wouldn't be all that many going on to university. But a few of them did do well. For instance there was the two O'Hare brothers. They were geniuses. There's one of them a professor now out in some university in America and Danny is the Chancellor or whatever of Dublin [City] University and their father was an ordinary working man in Rawsons shoe factory, Nick O'Hare. But the [Christian] brothers had no time for anyone who wanted to doss.<sup>106</sup>

Education was a decision which often involved grandparents:

I remember being in the secondary in the Christian Brothers and I remember [my grandfather] trying to advise my father what to do with me. There was seven boys and one girl in the family and nearly every one of them went to third level education. I was the exception because me father said I was just mediocre in school. He was foreman in the smithy [GNR] and he said you're coming in to me but you stay at school until a vacancy comes up. You did what you were told that time there was no even conversation about it. When the compulsion was off I just got to love school. I could see all me brothers going for third level and that was a big sacrifice for parents at that time. Afterwards I did the GCE by correspondence just to say I completed it.<sup>107</sup>

By the early 1930s Brother Kennedy was headmaster of the CBS and:

he'd made up his mind that he was [to] mould the future great Irish men that the country needed after the birth of the new state. Every class was taught through the medium of Irish. Latin and even science through Irish. Sure some of the technical terms weren't even invented in Irish. They were doing what they thought was right. I never regretted that period.<sup>108</sup>

The ethos of the Catholic schools was also geared towards Gaelic games and foreign (English) games were discouraged. However, the student who attended Clongowes Wood was introduced to rugby, cricket and tennis, games frowned upon by the GAA. The expectations of his fellow classmates were to progress to university education and then to

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> McQuillan, Jack, born 1925, interview recorded May 1997.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

the upper echelons of the civil service, the professions or business.<sup>109</sup> Ironically, whilst the majority of school attendees were inculcated with Gaelic culture the potential leaders of Irish society were being encouraged to excel in 'British' sports. A point of note is that all of the interviewees who attended the CBS became involved in the Irish cultural movement and most of them undertook further studies whilst in employment.

Amongst the Catholic population of Dundalk there was a perception that Protestants were wealthy and could, if they wished, afford a better standard of education:

A lot of people would think that Protestants had plenty of money. I don't know why? They hadn't, there were a lot of poor Protestants. They weren't all toffee-nosed either or up in the air. There were quite a few working class Protestants on the GNR.<sup>110</sup>

In one case a youth from a prominent Protestant family secured fourth place in the Trinity entrance examination of 1940 but 'did not go to college because there was not enough money'.<sup>111</sup> For the working classes, intellectual ability opened doors but if the family was reliant on the extra income or could not afford to support a student the threshold remained uncrossed. Neither was hereditary social status, or religious persuasion, a guarantee of third level education. The chance to avail of higher education was primarily tied to money, a situation which was to persist until 'the government appointed a commission to investigate the conditions of Irish education' in 1962.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, compulsory attendance helped to improve educational standards above their 1900 level and students who displayed commitment and ability could improve themselves which, as will be seen in chapter V, was to have an impact after 1945.

### Conclusion

The Dundalk of the early 1940s had altered considerably in four decades. Despite the increased population most families were reasonably housed and great improvements were made in the water supply and sanitation. The old sleeping lofts had virtually

<sup>109</sup> Williams, Dennis, interview

<sup>110</sup> McDowell, Ethel, interview.

<sup>111</sup> Gray, Allen, interview.

<sup>112</sup> Brown, Terence, *Ireland a social and cultural history 1922-1985* (London, 1985), p. 249.

disappeared and separate bedrooms for male and female children and for parents was the norm. By then the majority of homes also had electric light and gas or solid fuel appliances for cooking. Most of the unsanitary areas had been cleared. Roads had been surfaced and electric street lighting had been installed in 1912.<sup>113</sup> Although after World War II new standards in housing emerged, which will be dealt with in chapter V, the local authority had made great strides in improving the everyday lives of the majority of the population. Despite the initial objection from ratepayers the UDC had forged ahead and utilised every opportunity to acquire land and provide better facilities for Dundalk's residents.

In education one has only to read between the lines of the oral evidence to glimpse the enormous strain the system was under. That children should have to beg pencils from shopkeepers is a sadder reflection on government policy than on the nuns concerned. The two-tiered educational system had more to do with the prevailing class system than the teachers' efforts. Discipline was harsh but was carried out with the tacit consent of the community. 'I have often spoken to fellows of my vintage with the exception of one, none of them condemned the CBS who is the favourite target now.'<sup>114</sup> Departmental discipline was also harsh on teachers subject to regular scrutiny by the inspectorate. Small wonder that every means was utilised to get results when your livelihood depended on it. The educational system was 'geared to producing people for industry'<sup>115</sup> which was often frowned on by the middle and higher classes (see chapter III). Inherited class structures still prevailed after the formation of the Free State. For those in the lowest stratum, whose finances were precariously balanced at the best of times, grocers, pawnbrokers, immediate neighbours and family were all relied upon in time of crisis. The paternal attitudes of the 'better off' helped foster an appearance of unity which was largely sham. The 'post civil war' generation began to realise that living, housing and educational standards were

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<sup>113</sup> Reports presented by the resident electrical engineer to the Dundalk Urban District Council electricity department, 1911-19, p. 42.

<sup>114</sup> McQuillan, Jack, interview.

<sup>115</sup> Casey, Sean, born 1935, interview recorded March 1997.

directly related to earning capacity, thrift, sobriety, foresight, sacrifice, hard work and not the old Protestant/Ascendancy model as once advocated:

People in the town are very proud of the fact that they've made a great success of their lives and look back on their roots with great pride at what their mothers and fathers did for them.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> McQuillan, Jack, interview.

## Chapter III

### Work and Leisure 1900-45

In those days we had any gods amount of employment. We had two breweries, a big distillery, Carrolls tobacco factory [and] the railway works which employed a lot of people (hundreds). And then we had big employment for girls in the linen factory in Mary Street. We had wonderful employment and we certainly enjoyed life to the hilt.

Joe Marron<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The industries mentioned above were the largest employers in Dundalk in 1900. In addition there were three brick works, three mineral water manufacturers, a mill and two iron works together with various jobs in the service sector. This was the age of steam and horse transport, gas, oil or candlelight and all of Ireland was under British rule. Only some of these industries adapted to the vast technological and political changes which occurred over the period. By 1945 some of the older concerns had closed, some had flourished, and new ones (notably footwear) were established. This chapter sets out to ascertain the fortunes of four of Dundalk's leading industries: the Great Northern Railway (GNR), the Dundalk distillery, P.J. Carrolls, and footwear manufacturing. A combination of oral evidence and conventional sources will be utilised to examine how these companies coped with change and how this affected the community. Occupation often denoted social status which in turn was a determining factor in leisure activities. However, advances in technology created new forms of home and mass entertainment (radio and cinema) which brought international influences into what was basically a closed society. The bicycle, bus and later the motor car increased personal independence which helped to broaden geographical and personal horizons. All of these factors had a liberalising effect on people who by 1945 were agitating for greater equality. Thus, occupation and leisure activities were closely linked, the extent of which will also be examined. National politics and international influences also affected Dundalk's industrial base but these will be considered

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<sup>1</sup> Marron, Joe, (1899-1997), interview recorded December 1996.

only where they impinge directly on events. But perhaps before beginning, a brief analysis of the changing work patterns in Dundalk between 1900-45 is appropriate.

In the absence of reliable information for the period the data presented in table 3.1 is extracted from the five census returns from 1901 to 1946. Because of variations in the categories utilised in each census it is not possible to make exact comparisons. However, for the purpose of this analysis care has been taken to match job descriptions and categorise each group in line with the formula adopted in the 1926 census. The principal obstacles encountered in this approach arise under the headings 'clerks' and 'others employed' (table 3.1).

In the 1901 and 1911 returns there is no clear distinction between 'officers' and 'clerks' in class I (government and local administration) and these have been included under 'public administration' (table 3.1). The large disparity between the figures under 'others employed' is largely accounted for by the numbers of undefined labourers in 1901 and 1911 when compared with the 1926 returns. Undoubtedly, this will distort direct comparisons between the two early samplings and those of later years. However, given the absence of any more reliable data source, it is the best that can be achieved to gauge employment patterns over the forty-five year span. In order to set a backdrop for an examination of the data it seems appropriate to give a brief account of the main industries in Dundalk during the period of study. As the largest single employer the Great Northern Railway (GNR) is paramount amongst these.

### **Railway Employment**

The Great Northern Railway (GNR) came into existence between 1875-6 with the amalgamation of four separate enterprises: the Dublin and Drogheda Railway, the Dublin and Belfast Junction Companies, the Ulster and the Irish North Western Railways.<sup>2</sup> With 517 miles of rail track, 114 engines, 200 carriages and 2,894 wagons,<sup>3</sup> a centralised

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, Maureen, 'The railways of Dundalk' in *Tempest's Annual 1975-76*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> McQuillan, Jack, *The railway town; the story of the Great Northern Railway works and Dundalk* (Dundalk, 1993), p. 21.

Year	PRODUCERS							PERSONAL SERVICES					NON PRODUCTIVE			Total Population
	Agricultural	Others	Total	Transport	Commerce	Public Administrator	Professional	Domestic servants	Others	Clerks	Others Employed	Total Employed	Over 15	Under 15	Over 65	
<b>1901</b>																
Male	78	1277	<b>1355</b>	466	555	571	213	61	121	128	913	<b>5738</b>	2236	2074	271	6644
Female	7	491	<b>498</b>	4	169	8	116	646	164	15	23	<b>2141</b>	4793	1927	335	6432
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>1768</b>	<b>1853</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>724</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>707</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>6026</b>	<b>7029</b>	<b>4001</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>13076</b>
<b>1911</b>																
Male	76	1198		507	500	510	209	50	101	155	1024	<b>4330</b>	2439	1996	298	6773
Female	1	514		3	120	9	120	462	76	25	14	<b>1344</b>	5011	1967	410	6355
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>1712</b>	<b>1789</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>1038</b>	<b>5674</b>	<b>7450</b>			<b>13128</b>
<b>1926</b>																
Male	76	1636		666	588	438	165	12	139	201	457	<b>4378</b>	983	1724		7085
Female	9	458		5	220	13	129	422	228	129	34	<b>1647</b>	3510	1754		6911
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>2094</b>	<b>2179</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>6025</b>	<b>4493</b>	<b>3478</b>		<b>13996</b>
<b>1936</b>																
Male	94	1773	<b>1867</b>	863	508	138	105	9	161	214	825	<b>4596</b>	712	1978		7386
Female	9	803	<b>812</b>	7	207	24	132	368	567	160	185	<b>2154</b>	3277	1967		7399
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>2576</b>	<b>2679</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>1010</b>	<b>6750</b>	<b>3989</b>	<b>3945</b>		<b>14785</b>
<b>1946</b>																
Male	216	2173	<b>2389</b>	670	557	202	205	8	192	268	1086	<b>5577</b>		2754	509	<b>8840</b>
Female	18	1012	<b>1030</b>		280	41	168	373	171	257	217	<b>2537</b>	3719	2420		<b>9353</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>3185</b>	<b>3419</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>1303</b>	<b>8114</b>	<b>3719</b>	<b>5174</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>18193</b>
<b>1951</b>																
Male	188	2485	<b>2673</b>	697	820	161	230	11	134	283	757	<b>5766</b>	989	3061		9816
Female	18	1119	<b>1137</b>	26	360	26	163	383	75	318	131	<b>2619</b>	2713	4530		9862
<b>Total</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>3604</b>	<b>3810</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>1180</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>888</b>	<b>8385</b>	<b>3702</b>	<b>7591</b>		<b>19678</b>
<b>1961</b>																
Male	215	2758	<b>2973</b>	630	750	413	419	0	20	372	169	<b>5746</b>	710	3315	581	<b>10352</b>
Female	26	1258	<b>1284</b>	16	330	5	249	275	13	448	150	<b>2770</b>	4868	3124	114	<b>10876</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>4016</b>	<b>4257</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>1080</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>8516</b>	<b>5578</b>	<b>6439</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>21228</b>
Source	Census of Ireland, province of Leinster 1901 and 1911, table XXI.							Census of Ireland, occupations, 1926 and 1936, vol. VI, table 9.								
	Census of Ireland, occupations, 1946, 1951 and 1961, vol. VI, tables 8a and 8b.															

Table 3.1 Occupational statistics for Dundalk 1901-1961.

maintenance facility was a pre-requisite for the new venture. At the instigation of Lord Roden's agent William Robson JP, Dundalk was chosen as the site for their workshops. The advantages stressed were firstly, its location at mid-point between Dublin and Belfast. Secondly, the harbour facilities afforded easy importation of raw materials. Thirdly, two of the constituent companies of the GNR already had depots in Dundalk. Lastly, the town had a tradition of excellence in engineering stretching back 150 years. Thus, the necessary skills were to be found locally to man the operation.<sup>4</sup>

Work began on a twenty-one acre site, acquired from Lord Roden and others,<sup>5</sup> to the south-west of town in 1880 (see figure 3.1) The following year the 'Works', as it was known locally, commenced operation.<sup>6</sup> For the next seventy-eight years Dundalk's industrial prosperity was irrevocably linked to the oscillating fortunes of the GNR and the 'Works' until the company's demise in 1958.

### **Finance**

Between 1900 and 1913 the company was the 'only railway in Ireland that was flourishing'.<sup>7</sup> Thereafter, a decline set in and the share value fell from a high of £180 (for £100 ordinary stock) in 1913 to 1/9 by 1938.<sup>8</sup> The Sinn Féin boycott of 'Ulster' merchandise, and the decision to partition the country created obstacles for a company whose 543 miles of rail-track now spanned two distinct self-governing regions. 59% of the network was in the six counties of Northern Ireland, and 41% in the seven counties of Éire (serving mostly agricultural districts). The line traversed the border at fifteen locations and, between Clones and Cavan, it meandered between the two states six times (see figure 3.2, p. 94).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Conveyances of 18 June, 1880 and 29 July, 1881; Chancery Division, Earl of Roden to GNR

<sup>6</sup> *The Irish Builder*, 23, 5 April 1881, p. 116.

<sup>7</sup> McQuillan, *Railway town*, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66 & 117.

<sup>9</sup> O'Meara, J, 'The GNR (I) crisis, (1938)', in the *Journal of the Railway Record Society*, 18, no. 123 (1994), p. 344.

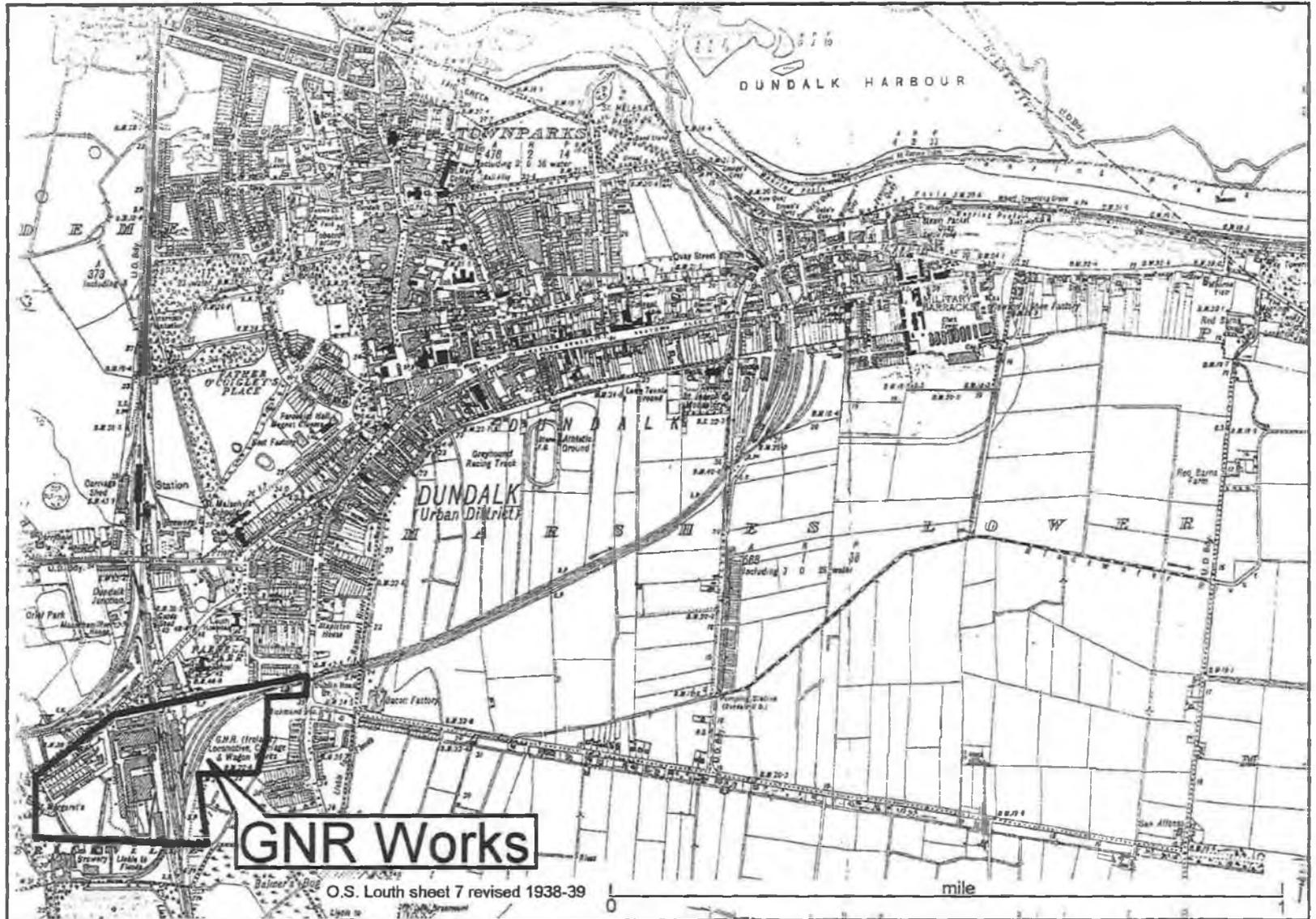


Figure 3.1 Location of GNR Works, Dundalk, c. 1930s

As tariffs were introduced customs examinations at these crossings caused delays resulting in declining passenger numbers. From 1925 the 'economic war' further exasperated the situation. Because of its cross-border links the GNR was excluded from the consolidation of the Free State rail network into the Great Southern Railway, instigated by the Railways Act of 1924.<sup>10</sup> Between 1925 and 1937 train receipts for freight traffic had dropped by 58%. The transportation and distribution of coal and coke was largely to blame for this decline, caused by coal merchants and hawkers drawing their supplies by road from the ports of Dundalk, Newry and Belfast.<sup>11</sup> Concurrently, passenger numbers fell by 35% as affordable mass-produced automobiles facilitated individual travel and buses began competing for group passengers.<sup>12</sup> Despite economic cutbacks and diversification into road transport (permitted under the Road Transport Act of 1927), by 1938 the GNR was in severe financial difficulties.<sup>13</sup> However, shortages of motor fuel propelled traffic back to the railways following the outbreak of war in 1939. As the 'Works' was reliant on the maintenance of rolling-stock this fluctuation in traffic had its effect on employment there and contributed to overall prosperity in Dundalk.

### **The Railway 'Works'**

In the early 1900s the 'Works' employed 500 men,<sup>14</sup> including men transferred from depots in Dublin and Belfast. Many were skilled craftsmen and most were family breadwinners. The pre-eminent trades were as fitters, turners, boilermakers and blacksmiths with lesser numbers employed as brass moulders, tinsmiths, coppersmiths, and whitesmiths. Carpenters, coachbuilders, cabinetmakers, painters and electricians were also employed together with a large contingent of semi and unskilled labourers. By 1913 this figure had doubled.

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<sup>10</sup> Patterson, Edward, H. *The Great Northern Railway Ireland* (Hull, 1962), p. 66.

<sup>11</sup> O'Meara, GNR crisis, p. 344.

<sup>12</sup> Patterson, *Great Northern Railway*, p. 67.

<sup>13</sup> O'Meara, GNR crisis, p. 344.

<sup>14</sup> McQuillan, *Railway town*, pp. 38, 67 and 97.



Due to the difficulties of the 1920s the workforce was reduced to 800 (by 1925), a figure which remained static until the outbreak of World War II. The oral evidence suggests that not all of these workers came from within the urban area:

We used to call it [the Greenore train] the openair train because [everybody] got off at Quay Street. But the workmen coming from Cooley wouldn't get off the engine driver would let them all off in the works. They weren't supposed to do that but?<sup>15</sup>

In the early 1930s at least ¼ of the workforce may have been drawn from Dundalk's hinterland and they often bestowed favours on their town-based superiors:

I'd say 25% of them would be from the country. The country fellows would take in bags of spuds and turkeys to the foremen. I knew a Catholic foreman who could sell turkeys at Christmas time he was getting that many and he wouldn't know how to rear a turkey.<sup>16</sup>

The allegation suggests that a system of petty graft operated at shop-floor level. However, this is trivial in comparison to the general condemnation levelled at the GNR.

### **Working Relationships**

The greatest criticism levelled at the GNR was religious discrimination in job allocation. In 1903 a local newspaper highlighted the huge imbalance in annual salaries for posts of clerk and higher grades. These were £44,509 per annum to Protestants, against £7,880 to Catholics.<sup>17</sup> Out of sixty-eight officials and clerks based in Dundalk only twenty-three were Catholic (table 3.2) and from a staff of 154, at the Dublin head office in Amiens Street, only four Catholics were employed.<sup>18</sup> Calls were made to introduce competitive examinations to fill GNR vacancies as in other Irish railways companies. However, when sectarian employment practices were raised at a GNR shareholders' meeting on 12 August 1903, the chairman, Sir William Bart, stated that the company had already adopted a competitive examination system open to all and they:

knew nothing whatever of distinction in politics or religion with regard to those they employed. And if any grievance was brought forward and supported by proof the Board would be only too well pleased to have the most careful investigation made into the matter.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Roslyn, Ronald (1914-1999), interview recorded June 1997.

<sup>16</sup> O'Quigley, Thomas (1924-1997), interview recorded May 1997.

<sup>17</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 21 March 1903, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> *McQuillan Railway town*, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 15 August 1903, pp. 4-5.

<b>Officials on GNR Dundalk. 1903</b>	<b>Protestant</b>	<b>Wages</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>Wages</b>
<b>Locomotive Dept.</b>		<b>£s</b>		<b>£s</b>
Chief Engineer			1	650
Engineer	1	240		
Accountant	1	200		
Foreman			1	90
Inspector	1	90		
Clerks	3	255	4	280
<b>Storekeepers Dept.</b>				
Superintendent	1	250		
Clerks	7	475	1	30
<b>Plant Superintendent's Office</b>				
Superintendent	1	230		
Inspector	2	180		
Clerks	1	25		
<b>Stock Rail Yard</b>				
Manager	1	150		
Clerks	2	145		
Chief Draftsman	1	145		
Clerks			2	90
<b>Railway Inspectors</b>				
Inspector	1	105		
<b>District Engineers</b>				
Engineer	1	550		
Clerks	1	40	2	140
Electoral Engineers	4	725		
Canvassers	1	145	2	290
<b>Permanent Way Inspectors</b>				
Inspector			1	105
Others	6	105	2	105
<b>Totals</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>4055</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1780</b>
<b>Station Masters</b>				
Station Master, Dundalk Junction	1	200		
Station Master, Night	1	100		
Station Master, Assistant	1	90		
Clerks	1	90	6	325
Station Master, Barrack St.	1	130		
Clerks	4	270	1	45
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>370</b>
<b>Overall Totals</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>4935</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2150</b>

Source: *Dundalk Democrat*, 21 March 1903, p. 4.

**Table 3.2** Accumulated yearly salaries for Protestant and Catholic staff on the GNR.

This perplexed the editor of the *Democrat* who could not recall a public announcement on the examination or 'the programme to be followed in preparation for it'.<sup>20</sup> But when the GNR sought parliamentary sanction to extend its operations in Ireland in 1906, they had to adopt competitive examinations as a prerequisite for approval.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, independent examiners would have to set and mark the papers. However, the directors retained the right to allocate marks for manner and deportment and a proviso to allow 'the sons of deserving officials' to be employed at the board's discretion.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the whole system was subverted to retain the status quo for many years to come:

I went into the boiler making in the GNR on the 23 September 1929. There was a man there by the name of McGown. He had a son who was in the First World War with my father. I was with him for three months and then his son got the job and he put me then to be a blacksmith.<sup>23</sup>

McGown was a Protestant seconded to the 'Works' from Belfast in 1903. By 1905 he was promoted to foreman and a year later his 'tyrannical' treatment of subordinates caused a walkout in his department.<sup>24</sup> The strike was brief, but the rapid promotion of McGown, his treatment of workers and the nepotism employed by him typifies perceived Protestant ascendancy in the 'Works'. However, this was not always restricted to the GNR:

Like there was no animosity towards them at all but you just didn't mix and they were all the better class. They were the people who had the money and controlled the town and the big shops like R.Q. O'Neill and Eakens shop they were all Protestants. There was a few Catholics in between but not too many. The Freemason Lodge controlled the railway at the time. When I was on the railway you couldn't get promotion pass foreman, that's where you stopped. That was it and there was nothing you could do about it. Sam Prole was the chief clerk. He controlled who came into the 'Works'. In all fairness to him, I don't know if he was in the Masons or not but he controlled who got in to be an apprentice even.

When I was serving my time I spent a while in the 'Drawing Office'. While I was there, there came a vacancy. The chap that was upstairs in the office went off sick and they rang down, 'would the senior apprentice go up'. Wilson, who was a good Mason, said that there was no need for an apprentice up there at all that they could do all the drawing. My time was cut short and I was told I had to go back to the shop and there was a Protestant taken up. He

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 11 August 1906, p. 4 and 31 November 1906, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 31 November 1906, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Roslyn (interview).

<sup>24</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 14 April 1906, p. 4.

was only there a wee while and up he'd goes. You see that was the way it was controlled. The chap that went off sick never came back so the guy who was up [a Protestant] stayed there.<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless, it would appear that Mr. Prole was not the bigot he was perceived to be, nor prejudice a Protestant preserve as the following two extracts demonstrate:

I was in the office and the late Raymond Watters, who was a union official in later life, was message boy at the time. He gave [Prole] this letter and he opens the letter, reads it and I was amazed when he handed it to me. I read it and it was a complaint from one of our own kin about a workman. Says Prole "what do you think of that". "I don't think much of it". "Neither do I" says he and he tore it up and threw it in the wastepaper basket. "That's where it belongs" says he. This was a letter from a Catholic foreman complaining about a Catholic worker.<sup>26</sup>

I will have to say they were all Protestant but they were all gentlemen. Even Mr. McIntosh, the head man. If it was a Catholic that was there, in my day, he wouldn't have allowed what he closed an eye to. He often went round by the soccer pitch, and saw workers looking across into the football field at the Dundalk team playing. He'd walk past as if you weren't there, and them supposed to be at work. If that was a Catholic I wonder would the Catholic walk on and pass no remarks of him.<sup>27</sup>

At shop floor level nepotism was also quite common amongst Catholics. Four of the five interviewees formerly employed in the GNR had relations who had worked there. In one case the tradition spanned the lifetime of the Works:

Grandfather was a carpenter he worked on GNR when it opened first. He was the first generation to work in the railway and then my father and a couple of my father's brothers followed him. My father [and] another brother became blacksmiths. Then there was another brother served his time to be a boilermaker. So that was the second generation. I served me time to be a blacksmith. I was the third generation that was up till 1958.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, in 1919 the Associate Society of Engineers (ASE) representing the dominant trade of fitters, reached a formal agreement with management whereby 'two out of every three apprentices appointed [were] to be the son's of employees, one of whom [was] to be the son of a fitter.'<sup>29</sup> However, entrance to a trade required a substantial financial outlay:

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<sup>25</sup> O'Quigley (interview).

<sup>26</sup> Roslyn (interview).

<sup>27</sup> Coburn, Jim, born 1922, interview recorded February 1997.

<sup>28</sup> McQuillan, Jack, born 1925, interview recorded December 1996.

<sup>29</sup> *Minutes of the ASE 1912-1930* (incomplete) p. 73, in possession of author.

Fitting was the dearest trade [costing] £30. When you consider that a tradesman had about £2 a week and you paid £30 to get in. My first pay bag was 6/7d, after a year you got a rise of 2s.

These figures relate to 1932 when the top rate of pay for a tradesman on the GNR was under £3/10s a week. Thus, the outlay of £30 amounted to roughly two months of a father's total earnings or 80 times an apprentice's weekly wage. In addition:

it was like school if you wanted to improve yourself. I did four nights a week at the Technical School from 7 to 9 [p.m.] for five years. I did all the 'Fitting', 'Turning', 'Drawing' and Theory exams. But to get on you had to do it. By the same token you could never go above foreman. But then you could serve your time up there and become a tradesman and if you wanted to go somewhere else that was all right. I was the youngest chargehand in the place when the railway closed but I wouldn't expect to get any further.<sup>30</sup>

People without family connections who sought employment often relied on intermediaries:

I'll tell you how a lot of them got in on the upper end round Hill Street, Dublin Street and Ladywell Terrace. Now at the top of Terrace there was a clergyman called Minister Moody. He got them all in. You see the English bosses wouldn't know who they were. But the minister would be living among them and would know 'that fella's decent, this fella's decent'. Out the country they got in through a family called Heartys at Balrobin. There were Sir Lionel Hearty and Lady Hearty and they'd recommend people. [Parents} would go to them, and they'd say "could you get my son in" and they'd say "ah that's a decent woman she's all right" and they'd send a letter and that's how they got the jobs. There was no riff-raff in it.<sup>31</sup>

### **Worker relationships**

'When you got into the railway that time it was like getting into the civil service, it was a job for life'.<sup>32</sup> Such sentiment, and the belief that older tradesmen willingly passed on their skills to the next generation, is long established in the oral tradition of Dundalk.

Yet, one interviewee challenges this presumption:

The tradesmen that time weren't always very co-operative. They always had a feeling of insecurity that young fellows growing up would push them out. It happened meself. You'd be working with a man and there would be a critical sort of a job to be done and he'd send you to the far end of the works for something that you wouldn't want. By the time you'd be back he'd have the job done and you wouldn't see what was done. I worked with a man for twelve years. He was the chargehand and he'd do the marking out. We were working at rails, all these crossovers. He'd get me to hold the tape and he'd be marking it maybe two-feet away. He'd

<sup>30</sup> McQuillan (interview).

<sup>31</sup> Clark, Michael, born 1917, interview recorded February 1999.

<sup>32</sup> O'Quigley (interview).

put his hand over it and mark it so that I wouldn't see the dimension that he was marking the rail at. When he'd go away I had a notebook and I'd write it off for the different angles of crossovers. I had it all written in. But that was the fear in case that I would know as much as he knew. When he was going off on pension I was going off on me holidays on Friday night and he had another week to do. He never said to me "I won't be here when you come back". When I came back every trammel and drawing and any gear there was was gone. He took it all home in the week, thinking that he'd have to be sent for after a while that I wouldn't be able to carry on. Sure I had everything marked in the book meself because you knew what was going to happen. I never had a cross word with him. I did all he asked me to do and that was it. But they all had an awful fear of insecurity.<sup>33</sup>

Two other elements ingrained in tradition were pilfering and 'nixers' (work carried out in the 'Works' free of charge).

They'll always tell you about all the stuff that was taken off the railway and that. But what the fellows would take on the bikes would be nothing compared to what some of the bosses would take out. One time there come a kitchen car in for repairs. The range had to be taken out of it in the course of repairs. Well I saw that going out in a big bag of sawdust as big as a bed. It took about 10 men to lift it on to a cart. He was a foreman. In fact he was an under-manager but it went away and it never came back.

In response to the inquiry as to the religion of this entrepreneur the respondent replied.

'Oh, the Catholics knew how to rob too, they all had a good go at it'.<sup>34</sup>

The Dundalk soccer team originated on the railway. One of its most ardent supporters was a senior official in the Works, Sam Prole. The club acquired a new playing field which needed renovation:

Now you must hand it to Prole there would never be a team only for Prole. That was Casey's field where Oriel Park is now. Prole got all the sleepers and all that was around that. The turnstiles and everything was made in the works.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps payment was made for such services but the oral evidence suggests otherwise. An adage 'made in the railway' still survives in the local vocabulary. Roughly translated this means that an article is soundly constructed and cost nothing:

Well I know a fellow got a half a boat made on the railway one time. He was out round the lake and he found a small boat and the front half of it was in bits. So he had a bit of pull in the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Kearley, Patrick, born 1919, interview recorded June 1997.

railway and a lorry went out and took the boat into the railway. They cut the piece that was broken off and put another piece on to the front instead of it. We used it below at Gyles Quay for years afterwards. It was the greatest death trap of all times. How we weren't all drowned or lost is something I don't know, because it was put together by tradesmen whose trade was not boat building. They were carpenters and good ones. There was some tremendous work came out of that railway. I mean properly, I don't mean it came out of it in the sense that it was nicked out of it. They say it was too, but that's not for me to say.<sup>36</sup>

### **Industrial relations**

Apart from the boilermakers' strike in 1906, there were only two major work stoppages on the GNR between 1900 and 1945. In both of these the company adopted a hard-line attitude. In August 1911 labour unrest was rife throughout Europe. In Britain a rail strike caused food shortages and looting in towns and cities. Troops were called out to restore order resulting in two deaths in Lanely.<sup>37</sup> By September it had spread to Dundalk. On the urgings of Mr. Brown an English official representing the Amalgamated Rail and Signal workers (ARAS) who was calling for a national strike, seventy Dundalk employees of the GNR stopped work. The promised support did not materialise and after a week the dispute petered out. However, the company refused to reinstate thirty-five of the men until clerical and municipal engagement resolved the issue by year's end.

Concurrently, similar stoppages in timber, coal yards and brick works caused severe disruption to trade and commerce within the town. Their concerns were better pay and recognition of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU). Some of these altercations lasted nearly a month.<sup>38</sup>

As can be seen from table 3.3, wage rates in the works increased dramatically during the Great War. By 1925 wages had spiralled but rail traffic had fallen by 25% due to partition and competition from road haulage. In an attempt at rationalisation employee numbers were reduced in the Works and in 1927 the company resolved to cut wages.

<sup>36</sup> McDonnell, Tony, (1929-1998) interview recorded March 1997.

<sup>37</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 26 August 1911, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 11 November 1911, p. 4.

A strike, lasting six weeks, ensued which resulted in a 7/10d weekly decrease for bodymakers.

CRAFT	1910	1914	1920	% +	1931	% -	1937	1939	1943	% +
Fitter	36/-	36/-	84/3	134	68/3	19	71/-	73/3	84/3	16
Wireman	26/-	28/-	84/3	224	68/3	19	71/-	73/3	84/3	16
Carpenter	26/-	24/6	90/-	246	72/9	19	75/6	77/9	88/9	17
Blacksmith		31/-	84/-	170	68/-	19	70/9	72/9	83/9	18
Labourer	16/-		47/-	194	38/7	19	40/3	48/-	59/-	46

Source: collated from figures in McQuillan, pp. 77, 99, 117, 119, 135 and 141.  
Compiled by C. Flynn

**Table 3.3 Wage rates on the GNR 1910-1943.**

Despite further wage reductions and short time working, by 1931 the company's financial state remained perilous. Short-time working arrangements of one week in every three were announced and in August 1932 the 800 Works employees withdrew their labour amidst calls for nationalisation of the railways north and south. The strike lasted three weeks when a settlement was reached of two weeks work in seven.

Within three days of the Works reopening notice was served on clerks, engine drivers and ancillary staff of a 15½% wage cut on 26 August 1932. The matter was set before the Railway Wages Board which recommended an immediate 10% reduction. A strike was called for Christmas Eve but the newly-elected Fianna Fáil government in the Free State offered compensation for loss of earnings to facilitate further arbitration. Whilst this was implemented in Éire, the Northern Ireland government refused to endorse the agreement. Thus, on 31 January 1933, the Free State railway men, in sympathy with their northern colleagues, forfeited their subsidy and the longest, bitterest strike in Dundalk's industrial history began:

I remember the drivers' strike and it went on for nearly three months I think we were working two days a week during the strike. There was a chap the name of Mulligan there a fitter and says he "come out here till I show you this". We left the fitting shop and out. "Did you ever see the like of that before"? says he. "What"? "Look down that line" and the grass was growing high on the railway line. Never saw the like of it before.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Roslyn (interview).

Within two days a GNR official and an assistant guard lost their lives when a train was derailed on the Dublin/Belfast line. Armed troops patrolled the streets of Dundalk and a garda travelled on every bus to counter threats of sabotage. As the stoppage raged on a bus was hijacked in Dublin and an RUC man was killed in Belfast whilst two GNR bus depots were bombed. Altercations with bus drivers were frequent. A garda was injured when a bus was destroyed by a bomb in Anne Street. After three days of talks, called by Seán Lemass, in the tenth week of the strike a settlement was reached. We have seen in chapter II how grocers came to the aid of those out of work yet life was still difficult:

I often heard stories from me father and mother talking, that during that time some of them would go out for walks and the farmers in sympathy would give them turnips or anything like that to help them. The men in the smithy where me father worked were all dying to see this film down in the Oriel [cinema] and they went down and they made a deal and they let them all in on the deal. They thought that was heaven and earth at that time. So it was settled finally and it was always regarded that the workers were losers. But there was an awful lot of bitterness then arose around the whole GNR. Drivers now, they were a very respectable class.<sup>40</sup>

When the strike ended the company's action was decisive and 'drivers were reduced to firemen and firemen reduced to cleaners and all that and there was havoc among the staff. The company showed no mercy at all':<sup>41</sup>

There was reductions all round which meant less money. Not only that, they would be called back at the company's pleasure, and an awful lot of that went on in the Works too. So it created an awful lot of bitterness.<sup>42</sup>

The workers were not eligible for 'dole' as the dispute was deemed unofficial, because the unions had defined it as a 'lock-out'. Additionally, whilst full-time working was resumed, employees with less than ten years service were made redundant.

It was not until 1937 that salaries began to rise again in the GNR. A major shareholder and local businessman, William (Bill) Russell complained of poor pay for 'Works' employees at a shareholders' meeting that year. This resulted in the first wage

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<sup>40</sup> McQuillan (interview).

<sup>41</sup> Roslyn (interview).

<sup>42</sup> McQuillan, (interview).

increase for locomotive workers since 1924 averaging 4% with yearly rises of 3/6 up to 1940.

As mentioned earlier, with the outbreak of World War II, the company's fortunes were rejuvenated. During the 'Emergency' the numbers employed in the Works increased to over 1,000 but salaries were restrained by government order. The unions circumvented this by negotiating a war bonus 'and one Friday night I got a brand new 10s note in me bag, never was used before, and I thought I was a millionaire'.<sup>43</sup> But the war years merely disguised underlying difficulties which remained to be faced after 1945 (see chapter V).

The engineering tradition in Dundalk had been long established before the arrival of the 'Works' in Dundalk. Most of this was based around the 'Dundalk Iron Works'.

### **Dundalk Iron Works (Manisty's)**

The Dundalk Iron Works was founded by Joseph Sheklton in 1788 and was further extended by family members Alexander and James in 1837 and 1858 respectively. In 1871 it was acquired by Frederick Pembleton who, seven years later, sold his interest to Edward Manisty for £7,000.<sup>44</sup>

The new proprietor came to Dundalk by a circuitous route. Born in London in 1844, he was the only one of Sir Henry Manisty QC's four sons who did not follow the legal profession.<sup>45</sup> Although a student of Gray's Inns in 1864 his chosen field was mathematics and he obtained his BA from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in 1866.<sup>46</sup> Thereafter, he was articled to the prestigious civil engineering office of Sir John Fowler.<sup>47</sup> Sir John and his partner Sir Benjamin Baker were responsible for some of the epic design and construction projects of the Victorian era amongst which were the Forth Bridge (Scotland) and the Aswan Dam (Egypt). He remained there for three years and his duties

<sup>43</sup> O'Quigley (interview).

<sup>44</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 15 June 1878, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> O'Mahony, Canice, 'Made in Manisty's' in the *County Louth Archaeological and Historical Journal*, XXIII, no. 3, 1995, pp.318.

<sup>46</sup> Venn, J, J.A, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, 4 (Cambridge, 1888) p.306.

<sup>47</sup> Form B of *The Institution of Civil Engineers*, 10 January 1893.

included design work for the Metropolitan Railway in Cairo. In May 1870 he became an associate member of the Institution of Civil Engineers<sup>48</sup> and was admitted as a full member (MICE) in 1893.<sup>49</sup>

Manisty's initial connection with Ireland began in 1869 with work on the Ballymena to Cushendall railway, which was being built to develop the iron-ore deposits in Antrim. The following year he was employed by the firm of O'Connor and Olley on the creation of a deep water harbour at Greenore and rail link to Dundalk for the London North Western Railway Company (LNWR). A construction accident at Greenore claimed the lives of Olley and Howard Foxall, the resident engineer, and Manisty became partner to O'Connor for the completion of the contract. In 1874 the firm of O'Connor and Manisty obtained a further contract from the LNWR for the construction of the Greenore to Newry railway when the original contractor abandoned it after a year.<sup>50</sup> In 1878 he moved from civil engineering to manufacturing and purchased the Dundalk Iron Works.

Under Manisty's management the company prospered and he secured contracts for the supply of iron roof trusses and bridges to the GNR, and the manufacture of plant for breweries, distilleries, tobacco processing and the flax industry. The firm also undertook repairs to the rolling stock of the Sligo and Leitrim Railways and the dredgers of the Dundalk Harbour Commissioners and the Lough Erne Drainage Commission.<sup>51</sup> They also produced steam engines and agricultural machinery. At the Cork exhibition of 1883 the 4hp and 6hp steam engines with vertical boilers and the reapers, binders and hayrakes designed by Manisty were much praised by the *Freeman's Journal* which, in regard to the latter, stated that 'there was no further need to import such machinery from England.'<sup>52</sup>

In 1881 Henry Manisty was co-founder, with other local entrepreneurs, of the Dundalk Patent Slip Company sited at Soldiers Point. Here they built, but mostly, repaired

<sup>48</sup> Form A of *The Institution of Civil Engineers*, 17 May 1870.

<sup>49</sup> Form B of *The Institution of Civil Engineers*, 3 June 1893.

<sup>50</sup> O'Mahony, 'Made in Manisty's', pp.319.

<sup>51</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 24 January 1906, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 1883.

steam and sailing ships, employing up to 200 men at one time. In 1902 it was purchased by the Dundalk Harbour Commissioners and continued operating until 1933. Another venture was the Demesne Brickworks on Castletown Road which traded until the 1920s.<sup>53</sup>

Manisty's abilities did not go unnoticed in England and he spent several years working away from Dundalk. In 1887 he supervised construction of the Eastham section of the Manchester Ship Canal which was the largest public works undertaking in western Europe at the time. Indeed some of the features such as Mount Manisty's and Manisty's Wharf retain his name to the present day.<sup>54</sup> On completion of the canal in 1894 he returned to Dundalk. At that time Irish railway companies were replacing the wooden bridges on their networks with new cast iron structures. In a bid to secure these contracts he built a new workshop, equipped with the most modern machine tools then available, on a site still known as Manisty's field. Though initially successful, he lost out to cheaper tenders and the undertaking proved unprofitable resulting in closure.<sup>55</sup>

Up until his death in 1913 Manisty continued to work abroad and was a consultant on harbour construction projects in South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Egypt (Alexandria docks). In 1902 he was the main agent during the construction of the Charing Cross, Euston and Hampstead underground and in 1906 was in Buenos Aires advising on construction of their underground.<sup>56</sup> While he was clearly one of the most talented engineers of his time and place, because of his extended travels abroad Manisty was unable to give full attention to the management of the Dundalk foundry, and formed a limited liability company. Many of the workers together with company officials became shareholders thus setting a precedent for employee profit sharing as early as 1902.<sup>57</sup> One of his sons Henry Scott Manisty was assistant engineer at the ironworks in the early 1900s but was killed near Ypres in Flanders in 1917 and the family's working connections with

<sup>53</sup> *The Irish Builder*, 42 (989) 1901, p. 674.

<sup>54</sup> O'Mahony, 'Made in Manisty's', p. 325.

<sup>55</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 18 January 1913, p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Minutes of Proceedings of The Institution of Civil Engineers*, 159 (London, 1913/14) p.374.

<sup>57</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 18 January 1913, p. 4.

the plant died with him.<sup>58</sup> However, the company continued to trade until 1928 when it was liquidated.<sup>59</sup> At its peak the Dundalk Iron Works employed 150 men.<sup>60</sup>

Like the GNR workshops, Manisty's production was geared towards steam technology. The introduction of electrically powered machinery for factory production, and advances in metal fabrication, must have affected profitably thus hastening its demise. Additionally, the numbers employed were low, in comparison with the GNR, and it was not strategically important, so it could not call on government aid to maintain its operation, as did the 'Works'. However, it was not the only long established company to disappear before the 1930s.

### **The Dundalk Distillery**

The Dundalk distillery was first established by James Gillichan and Peter Goodbey on a ten-acre site in Jocelyn Street, which was formerly the bleach greens, in 1799.<sup>61</sup> A few years later two Scotsmen James Reid and Malcolm Brown joined the company which by 1805 traded under the name Reid Brown & Company.<sup>62</sup> In 1812 Brown married Gillichan's daughter and on the death of his partners he gained control of the company which became known as Malcolm Brown & Company. By 1837 it employed 100 men and covered 20 acres. Brown died in 1854 leaving no male issue and the company passed to his nephew John Murray. Murray took as a partner his brother-in-law Robert Haig (London) who together with his son ran the concern until January 1912 when it was purchased by the Scottish Group Distillers Ltd.<sup>63</sup>

Prior to 1912 the distillery had an average intake of 1,200 sacks of grain per day from harvest-time until Christmas. One of the interviewees recalls how 'the carts used to be lined up away down to the turn for Blackrock from the distillery', a distance of nearly

<sup>58</sup> O'Mahony, 'Made in Manisty's', pp.327.

<sup>59</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 26 May 1928, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 21 March 1931, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> *Stratten's Commercial Review* (London, 1892), p. 130.

<sup>62</sup> Magee, Malachy, *1,000 years of Irish whiskey* (Dublin, 1980), p.135.

<sup>63</sup> Townsend, Brian, *The lost distilleries of Ireland* (Glasgow, 1997), pp. 121-3.

half a mile.<sup>64</sup> There was storage capacity for 20,000 barrels of barley and their mills could handle 400 of these over a twenty-four period. Five water-filled refrigerators cooled 10,000 gallons of liquid an hour and the three pot stills could produce 25,000 gallons of whiskey over ten to twelve days. Pot stills were the traditional method of distillation in Ireland; however the plant also housed the largest patent still in Ireland capable of turning out 20,000 gallons of liquor a week.<sup>65</sup> The vat stores had a capacity of 70,000 gallons prior to casking and storage in one of the eleven bonded warehouses where six excise officers monitored the company's stocks.

The new management closed it for a period and when it reopened its output was mainly a branded yeast, called Skylark which was exported to England where it competed favourably with German brands which monopolised the trade at the time. Partition hastened its demise with the resultant loss of 200 jobs.

The loss of employment in Dundalk resulting from the foundation of the Irish Free State was significant. However, the benefits accrued in subsequent decades more than compensated for this. And while it is generally agreed that industrial protectionism was detrimental to the agriculture economy of the country,<sup>66</sup> it was a major contributing factor to industrial growth in Dundalk. A case in point is that of the tobacco industry where a local firm took full advantage of the opportunities.

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<sup>64</sup> McGuire, Johnny, born 1913, interview recorded November 1997.

<sup>65</sup> Ógra Dun Dealgan, *Dundalk; a tradition in industry* (Dundalk, 1986), p. 20.

<sup>66</sup> Johnson, David S., 'The economic history of Ireland between the wars' in the *Irish Economic and Social History Journal*, 1 (1974), p.56. Lee, J.J. *Ireland 1912-1985* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 190.

## P. J. Carroll & Company Limited

‘It started there from small beginnings and blossomed’.<sup>67</sup>

For most of its life, the ownership and operation of the tobacco manufacturing business of P. J. Carrolls was a Dundalk family concern passed from father to son through four generations. The enterprise began in 1824<sup>68</sup> when Patrick James Carroll took over the soap, tobacco and chandling business of James McAlester at Church Street, in which he had been apprenticed.<sup>69</sup> At that time tobacco products were handmade and centred round snuff, roll and pigtail chewing tobacco. By 1850 Patrick employed forty to fifty men and boys and expanded by purchasing the premises next door.<sup>70</sup> Before his death in 1879 he had established markets for Carrolls products throughout Ireland and was exporting to England and Scotland. Patrick James was succeeded by his son Vincent Stannus Carroll who joined the company in 1864 and endeavoured to modernise the business. This led to a family dispute but as Vincent resolved to go to America his father yielded control to him.<sup>71</sup>

The key to Carrolls’ success lay in a willingness to adapt to changing circumstances. Vincent introduced steam power to replace hand production and reduce production costs. Thereafter, plant and machinery were continually updated.<sup>72</sup> When fire engulfed part of the factory in 1909<sup>73</sup> the replacement building was triple the original size and the machinery was again updated.<sup>74</sup> To facilitate the Scottish market a distribution depot was opened in Glasgow in 1906<sup>75</sup> by which time employment figures were estimated at 150 (130 female).<sup>76</sup> Before his death in 1914,<sup>77</sup> Vincent provided for the organisation of

<sup>67</sup> McGuire, Johnny (interview).

<sup>68</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 1 November 1930, p. 6.

<sup>69</sup> Ógra Dun Dealgan, *Tradition in industry*, p. 23.

<sup>70</sup> *The Argus*, 18 June 1933, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> Ógra Dun Dealgan, *Tradition in industry*, p. 23.

<sup>72</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 1 November 1930, p. 6.

<sup>73</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 27 November 1909, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1966, p. 32.

<sup>75</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 1 November 1930, p. 6.

<sup>76</sup> Ógra Dun Dealgan, *Tradition in industry*, p. 25.

<sup>77</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1915.

Carrolls as a private company spearheaded by his three sons. His eldest son James became chairman of the company in 1901, a position he held for almost fifty years.

Coupled with this modernisation and expansion programme was a cleverly orchestrated advertising campaign. In the 1880s a fictional character, Mick McQuaid, from a popular weekly magazine *The Shamrock*, became a household name in Ireland. His creator often depicted him smoking a twist of tobacco and in 1888 Vincent Carroll tapped into this notoriety by calling one of his famous brands 'Mick McQuaid'.<sup>78</sup>

When cigarettes began to gain popularity Carrolls produced their first branded cigarette 'Anti-Combine'. Other brands followed: 'Emerald Gem' in 1906, and 'Carrolls Silk Cut' in 1914. By 1919 the importance of the Scottish market was increasing. The company capitalised on the Dundalk link with Scotland, through the Scottish poet Robert Burns, by adopting the title of the poet's famous piece 'Sweet Afton' as a cigarette brand name. Not twenty yards from the factory gate, the remains of the poet's eldest sister, Mrs. Agnes Galt (1762-1834), lie buried in the graveyard of St. Nicholas's Church.<sup>79</sup> 'Sweet Afton' became a brand leader and remained so for many years thereafter.

Further publicity was gained when during the opening phases of the 'Great War' Carrolls voluntarily dispatched 30,000 Silk Cut cigarettes and thirty pounds of plug tobacco to soldiers of the 28<sup>th</sup> Brigade of Artillery fighting at the front.<sup>80</sup> Shortly thereafter they received a large military order for tobacco produce and were allowed a relaxation of the Factories Act with regard to overtime.<sup>81</sup> This was followed with a similar order for 4 million cigarettes in February 1915<sup>82</sup> and repeat orders throughout the period of the war. However, the benefits were more than just sales as a local soldier reported from the front:

We are getting Carrolls Silk Cut cigarettes out here regularly. I have heard many fellows say that they never smoked better and it's grand to know we have a firm in Dundalk that can supply such a good article I feel delighted when I hear them praised.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1966, p. 31.

<sup>79</sup> Ross, Noel, 'Burns associations with County Louth, in the *County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society Journal*, 23, no. 3, (1995), p. 342.

<sup>80</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 28 November, 1914, p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 19 December 1914, p.5.

<sup>82</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 13 February 1915, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 21 October 1915, p. 4.

Such exposure of their goods to a wider public helped to enhance sales in Britain. On learning of impending tariffs between both countries, Carrolls opened a factory in Liverpool to cater for the British market in 1923.<sup>84</sup> Another development in the early 1920s was the opening of distribution depots in Dublin (1921) and Cork (1923).<sup>85</sup>

'Fiscal autonomy for the Irish Free State in 1923 brought automatic protection for the Irish tobacco industry'.<sup>86</sup> However, leading British firms, such as Imperial Tobacco and Gallaghers, circumvented the legislation and began production in Éire. By 1928 such firms had acquired a virtual monopoly of the tobacco industry employing 1,400 workers to that of 450 in Irish-owned companies.<sup>87</sup> Despite this trend Carrolls acquired another native tobacco concern T. P. & R. Goodbody in 1929 and began producing cigars in Dundalk.<sup>88</sup>

The cigars had to be made not too thin or not too fat because they wouldn't pull. That's the secret in cigar making. There was girls brought down from Dublin, from Goodbodys, to train us how to make the cigars. Well the leaf was beautiful it was like pure silk.<sup>89</sup>

Submissions from domestic tobacco producers to the Fiscal Inquiry Committee in 1923 had sought either proscription of English firms from the home market or curtailment of production by limiting the release of tobacco from bonded warehouses. As the Cumann na nGaedheal government's economic policy was more inclined towards free trade<sup>90</sup> they had to await a Fianna Fáil government in 1933 before receiving some reprieve:

Dev put Carrolls on the map. Gallaghers had a factory in Dublin and when Dev came to power he give the Irish industry a rebate of duty on the leaf of 5d. Gallaghers closed the whole place and threw the workers out on the street and went back to Belfast because they weren't getting it. They weren't an Irish company. That time was the boom time for Carrolls.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Keenan, O. J., unpublished manuscript, 'The history of Carrolls' (in possession of Mícheál McCartan, Dundalk), p. 69.

<sup>85</sup> Ógra Dun Dealgan, *Tradition in industry*, p. 31.

<sup>86</sup> Daly, Mary E., 'An Irish-Ireland for business?: the Control of Manufacturers Acts, 1932 and 1934' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 29, no. 94 (1984), p. 246.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>88</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 1 November 1930, p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Hanratty, Margaret, (1916-1997) interview recorded May 1997.

<sup>90</sup> O'Mahony, David, *The Irish economy: an introductory description* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Cork, 1967), p. 172.

<sup>91</sup> McGuire, Johnny, born 1913, interview recorded November 1997.

In 1933 the company boasted record profits and a year later went public but still maintained a strong family involvement.<sup>92</sup> The following year a factory was opened in Newry to cater for the Ulster market.<sup>93</sup> In 1936 the 'Kerry Blue' brand of cigarettes was introduced; 'Afton Major' came on the market in 1939. The Sweet Afton horse racing competitions were inaugurated in 1929 followed by the Kerry Blue gift scheme, whereby customers could redeem gifts with coupons inserted in the cigarette packages.

### **Working Relations**

In addition to a commitment to technological and advertising adaptation Carrolls was also committed to their workforce. Overall worker/management relationships within the company appear to have been admirable:

I went to work in to P. J. Carrolls at 14½ [1918]. I started with 5/- a week. The bosses were all very good. They were gentlemen as long as you done your work they didn't bother you.<sup>94</sup>

Despite this, ITGWU agitation in 1912 caused fifty girls to strike when they were offered piecework [where pay was linked to output]. The company's stance was that with these incentives workers could earn 50% to 70% more than their wages and under no circumstances would it be less.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, the dispute turned nasty and girls who remained at work were beset on the street by those on strike.<sup>96</sup> The company set up dormitories in the factory for the remaining employees<sup>97</sup> and provided free 'dances, plays and concerts' for the six weeks of the dispute.<sup>98</sup> However, piece-work was soon accepted and within a short few years was seen as advancement:

In the beginning I used to be working on filler. According as I was getting on you'd get promoted. Well then I was at a machine and then from the machine I went to piecework. And there's where I ended me days, piecework. Taking the stalks out of the leaves. It was 3/6 if you done the full amount. I was there for eight years and got married out of it. Because they weren't employing any married people when I left in 1929.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Ógra Dun Dealgan, *Tradition in industry*, p. 25.

<sup>93</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1966, p. 32.

<sup>94</sup> Bellew, Bridget, born 1904, interview recorded June 1996.

<sup>95</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 6 January 1912, p. 4.

<sup>96</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 13 January 1913, p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> McCartan, Micheál, notes of interview, 8 August 2000, p. 1.

<sup>98</sup> Keenan, 'History of Carrolls', note 20, p. 4.

<sup>99</sup> Bellew (interview).

Although the 'marriage ban' was applicable to civil service, local government and health board appointments,<sup>100</sup> it seems unusual that Carrolls should extend it to factory operatives as in Dundalk's fledgling shoe industry this restriction did not exist. The general consensus is that this practice reflected the social norms of the time and even female office employees had to resign at marriage.<sup>101</sup> However, one lady suggested that 'It was common talk [in Carrolls] that the reason you couldn't work once you got married was that a woman had miscarried, because of the tobacco'.<sup>102</sup> One of the management personnel (who declined to be recorded on tape) maintained that raw tobacco leaf was no more dangerous than cabbage leaf<sup>103</sup> and a local GP expressed a similar opinion. Whatever the merits of the argument, when filling vacancies preference was given to local people:

You got in there by just going up and saying who you were. Michael Kearly of Dowdallshill, a cross man too, he interviewed me and give me a little sum. After I done the sum he says your names Margaret Hanratty. I said "yes". Says he, "would you be anything to Johnny Hanratty that works in Doctor McBrides". He knew me father you see. "That's reference enough for me" says he. I was taken in the next day. They were a very religious family [the Carrolls] the whole lot of them. One of them was in the Knights of Columnbanus. I never remember a Protestant being in Carrolls only one man called Albert Huckel. I worked with him a charitable man. But there never was any talk about religion that I can remember. [They employed] all Catholics as far as I'm concerned. Maybe being such a Catholic family they wouldn't be taken in. Maybe that had something to do with it.<sup>104</sup>

A similar opinion was expressed by a prominent local non-Catholic who declined to be interviewed. Indeed, he went even further by suggesting that, while Catholics complained of job discrimination on the GNR, his own community perceived the employment practices at Carrolls in exactly the same light. In any event it would appear that if there was discrimination in Dundalk it was not necessarily restricted to religious belief:

I played golf for nearly 40 years. The Carrolls used to play. There were four brothers they were all golfers [in the] Dundalk Golf Club. One of the Carrolls, Vincent, was a fanatical golfer but he wasn't an active player. He went round the factory and asked the factory workers

<sup>100</sup> Brown, Terence, *Ireland: a social and cultural history 1922-1985* (London, 1985) p. 304.

<sup>101</sup> McCartan (interview) p. 5.

<sup>102</sup> Name withheld on request. Notes of telephone conversation with author, 28 March 2000.

<sup>103</sup> Name withheld on request. Notes of conversation with author, 2 July 2000.

<sup>104</sup> Hanratty, Margaret, (1916-1997) interview recorded May 1997.

would they like to play golf. Of course some of them said they would, so he put their names down and he joined them in the golf club and offered to pay their subs and all. They were put up before the meeting and P L Mcardle (the brewers Mcardle Moore) was the man over the golf club at the time. [He had] the casting vote and rejected them because they were factory workers and Vincent Carroll there and then, he was on the committee at the time, said that if they are rejected because they're factory workers "I'm rejected because I'm a factory worker and I resign". There was consternation, one of the Carrolls reigning from the golf club.<sup>105</sup>

A quick perusal of past club officials listed in the *Tempest Annual* confirms that the membership came from the business and commercial sector. In such circles industry had a low priority. This is 'confirmed by the fact that in January 1935 only 8.5% of total bank advances went to manufacturing, building, railways and transport, compared with 21% to agriculture and 22% to wholesale and retail merchants. The proportion devoted to industry was probably even lower in the 1920s'.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, given the social structures prevailing, it is not surprising that factory hands would not be welcomed as members. What is surprising is that Mcardle, who was also a local Catholic industrialist, sided with his own social class whereas Carroll opted for his workers. This commitment is also evidenced in promotions from within the workforce. Throughout each phase of expansion Dundalk employees were sent to operate the new ventures<sup>107</sup> and advanced vacancies were filled from within the firm.

During the 'Emergency' further expansion was curtailed because of government restrictions on withdrawals of tobacco leaf from the bonded warehouses.<sup>108</sup> This created particular difficulties for Carrolls from 1949 onwards which are examined in chapter V.

Carrolls is a good example of an Irish-owned company which benefited from trade protection. However, as a direct result of that same policy, a new industry emerged in Dundalk which by the late 1930s was of even greater significance.

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<sup>105</sup> McGuire (interview).

<sup>106</sup> Daly, Mary E., 'Government finance for industry' in the Irish Free State: the trade loans (guaranteed) acts', in *Irish Economic and Social History*, XI (1984), p. 91.

<sup>107</sup> Ógra Dun Dealgan, *Tradition in industry*, p. 31.

<sup>108</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1966, p. 32.

### **Boot and shoe manufacturing**

Prior to 1900 the manufacture of boots and shoes in Britain and the United States was moving towards factory production whilst in Ireland they were largely hand crafted by shoemakers to service each community's needs. In face of competition from Europe and tariff barriers in the USA, British manufacturers looked towards Ireland to sell their increasing output. By the turn of the century Ireland was absorbing one third of Britain's footwear exports which accounted for 75% of the Irish market. Five indigenous factories supplied the remainder.<sup>109</sup> In an attempt to develop Irish industry the first Free State government imposed a 15% duty on all imported footwear in 1924. However, most British companies were able to absorb this and compete with rival Irish manufacturers.<sup>110</sup> As late as 1929 British imports accounted for 89% of Irish consumption (table 3.4).<sup>111</sup>

When Fianna Fáil gained office in 1932 the party began to pursue a policy of self-sufficiency.<sup>112</sup> Within two months duty on imported leather footwear rose to 37½% (for adult) and 22½% for non-leather and children's footwear. However, a preferential rate of 25%, for the former, and 15%, for the latter, was set for these imports from Commonwealth countries. By December 1932, due to the land annuities dispute, British goods lost their preferential status and were subject to the full rate which was reduced to 30% (adult) and 20% for non-leather and children's footwear. Additionally, in 1934 preferential status was abolished and all footwear imports became subject to government licence and quota restrictions.<sup>113</sup> These measures had a profound effect on home manufacture and employment as British companies began production in Éire, (see table 3.4). Over the coming decades Dundalk became the 'Footwear Capital' of Ireland.

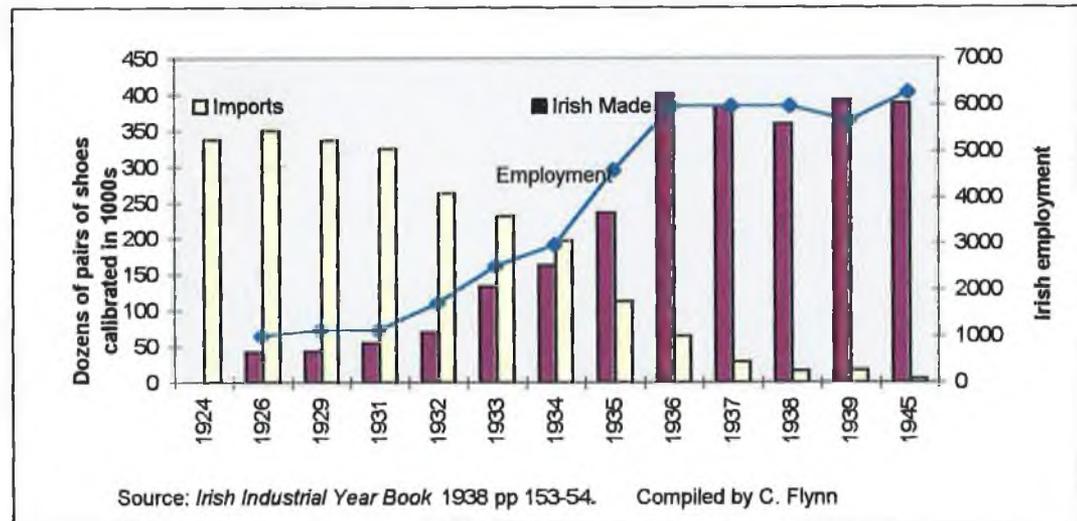
<sup>109</sup> Press, John, *The footwear industry in Ireland 1922-1937* (Dublin, 1989), pp. 17-22.

<sup>110</sup> Daly, 'Irish-Ireland for business' p.248.

<sup>111</sup> Press, John, 'Protectionism and the Irish footwear industry 1932-39' in *Irish Economic History*, XIII, (1986), p. 76.

<sup>112</sup> Johnson, David, 'The economic history of Ireland between the wars', in *Irish Economic and Social History*, i, (1974), p. 56.

<sup>113</sup> 'Committee on industrial organisation', *Report on the leather footwear Industry*, government publication (Dublin, 1962) pp.58-9



**Table 3.4** Imports to, employment in, and Irish production of footwear 1914-45.

The first mechanised shoe factory in Dundalk was started by Thomas Murphy who began trading in Park Street. He later moved to premises in Clanbrassil Street where he built a new factory in 1900. At its peak about fifty people were employed, including some recruited from England, and they produced quality footwear similar to that of Leeds. It ceased manufacturing in 1910.<sup>114</sup> In response to the first tariffs the Celt Boot Company, opened in Dundalk in 1926. However, after just eighteen months the company went into liquidation due to financial difficulties.<sup>115</sup> Like this endeavour most of the Irish factories were initially geared towards the heavy boots sector and they soon began to make an impact. In 1927 one of the English firms supplying the Irish market, John Halliday & Son Ltd. of Bramley, near Leeds, was experiencing trading difficulties due to the tariff.<sup>116</sup> Between prompting from the Irish sales team and the rise of Fianna Fáil in opposition from 1927, with a policy of curtailing foreign imports, Hallidays decided to open a factory in Dundalk. The premises of the recently liquidated Celt Boot Company were purchased and Hallidays became the first British footwear company to locate in Éire.<sup>117</sup> Production began on 1 October with key workers, machinery and trademarks supplied by the Bramley

<sup>114</sup> Ógra Dun Dealgan, *Tradition in industry*, p. 89.

<sup>115</sup> Gray, R. A., 'Footwear manufacture in Dundalk' in *Tempest Annual*, 1965, p. 32.

<sup>116</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 6 January 1912, p. 4.

<sup>117</sup> Press, *The footwear industry in Ireland*, p. 33.

company. The importance of the Irish market can best be judged by the fact that within two years the parent plant ceased production and was eventually closed in 1932.<sup>118</sup>

In an interview with the *Dundalk Democrat* of 3 November, 1928, Mr. Halliday explained that 'it was difficult to obtain properly skilled labour. However, they hoped to improve on their initial recruitment of forty people after the business got off the ground properly'.<sup>119</sup> Within three years this figure had risen to 150. Of these, 130 were natives of Dundalk.<sup>120</sup> By 1931 Fred Halliday stated that 'Trade [was] very good. We formerly had a very big Irish business and we are getting some of it back every day'.<sup>121</sup>

The regulations in the Control of Manufactures Acts of 1932 and 1934 specified that the majority of shareholders in any company established in the Free State after 1 June 1932 had to be Irish. Otherwise, a 'New Manufacture Licence' had to be obtained from the Minister for Industry and Commerce. By manipulating voting stock some British firms had succeeded in retaining control of their Irish operations. Consequently, the amended legislation of 1934 further stipulated that two-thirds of shares with voting rights were to be retained by Irish nationals and 'a majority of the directors (excluding full-time managing directors) were also to be citizens of the Free State'.<sup>122</sup> Most footwear firms opted for licensing which incurred restrictions such as the use of Irish raw-materials where possible. Employment of foreign nationals was prohibited unless the Minister was satisfied that a position could not be filled by an Irish citizen. The location of a new factory could also be dictated, but this was seldom the case with footwear firms. Occasionally, the type of footwear manufactured was also a consideration.

It was under such conditions that the firm of John Rawson & Sons Ltd., which had three factories in Leicester employing about 800 workers, opened an Irish subsidiary in Dundalk on 15 August 1932. A 'New Manufacture Licence' was obtained because their

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

<sup>119</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 3 November 1928, p. 4.

<sup>120</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 10 January 1931, p. 6.

<sup>121</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 10 January 1931, p. 6.

<sup>122</sup> Daly, 'Irish-Ireland for business', p.248.

speciality was light ladies shoes, an item not produced by native firms. However, it would also appear that official assistance was given as the factory was established in the army barracks in buildings leased, for a shilling a week,<sup>123</sup> from the Ministry of Defence. The relevant minister since March of that year, was Frank Aiken, who was also the Fianna Fáil TD for North Louth since 1927.<sup>124</sup> Rawson was also on the board of Hallidays and had experience of both Dundalk and Irish conditions in general.<sup>125</sup> Despite his success Rawson was not a man to stand on ceremony:

I remember when Rawson owned the factory first. Himself and a few people from the factory lived in a room or two in one of them houses where the Gaelic League is. He used to take the secretary to work on the bar of his bicycle and there was hundreds working in Rawsons.<sup>126</sup>

The people referred to were some of the sixty key personnel from the parent company who had come to Dundalk to assist in setting up the plant and training the workforce, as allowed for in the legislation. Amongst these were a brother and sister George and Florie Watkins. Initially Florie was reluctant to emigrate but George persuaded her saying:

You'll only be in Dundalk for three months. So I came and I'm here still [1986]. In the early years in Dundalk there were 400 employed and this grew eventually to 650 people. I was a forewoman in the department in charge of about 150 girls. We worked from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 12 noon. I was about thirty years old when I came to Dundalk and I was paid £2.50 per week. Making shoes was my life and all my family before me were in the shoe-making trade. My mother used to machine nursery shoes at home and I used to help her. I was watching and helping since I was three years old. I always enjoyed my work.<sup>127</sup>

Although some of the interviewees remember their time in Rawsons with nostalgia one of their first employees was more critical:

They were very hard on work. There was a Florie Watkins she was an English forewoman. We put the leather through a machine and thinned it out [skived] for to sew it. Sometimes the knife would run wrong and cut it. You'd have to count [the work] before you put the knife on them and if you were short you were responsible. But somebody doing the same work as me come

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<sup>123</sup> Clarke (interview).

<sup>124</sup> Skemer, Liam, *Politicians by accident* (Dublin, 1946), p. 180.

<sup>125</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 13 August 1932, p. 6.

<sup>126</sup> Clarke (interview).

<sup>127</sup> Ógra Dun Dealgan, *Tradition in industry*, p. 95.

along and took one. I went up to Florie and I said "I didn't spoil that somebody took one that was already skived". She says "leave it there I'll get you one". I was sitting at the bench about twenty minutes after and Florie fired the work at me and hit me on the head, "get that and get it quick" says she. That was the kind of them they'd take no excuse.<sup>128</sup>

On occasions the English workers could be even more petty and vindictive:

Emily Brown worked at the stamping machine and she was very rough. There was a fellow called Charlie R... he was only a worker in the office. Every time he'd come in the door she'd shout "hi! R... shut the fn... door". [He] would turn back and shut the door. But he got the 'White Coat' and we were all in the factory and he says "Emily Brown" and she says "yes", "Get your fn... coat and get out that fn... door". What she used to say to him. He sacked her. That was the way it was. Never was taken back. He was boss then. He was manager.<sup>129</sup>

Worker/management relations were often strained in Rawsons. These next two examples go some way to understanding why:

You worked Christmas Day if it was a workday. But they [management] had a wee room the sandal room and at Christmas they would do that wee room up and have their Christmas dinner in there. Only the Protestants, the staff, the English people even if it was of a Friday they'd all have their dinner in there when we weren't allowed it. They used to go to Stewarts and get two turkeys stuffed and cooked and Melbers would do the ham. I used to go for all of them for them. Backhouses would send down the drink and sweet things, cake When they were in there we were all working outside. You got no such a thing as holidays. They'd nearly make you, want you to work of a Sunday. We worked from Monday till Saturday. I never remember getting holidays out of the factory until I was nearly leaving. Then they started giving holidays and the English people started going home then for Christmas and that. The unions was on that time.

Press maintains that a strike 1933 may have been influenced by sectarian and political considerations. However, the oral evidence suggests that Rawson was so autocratic that 'even his English workers quaked in his presence'.<sup>130</sup> Additionally, after initial training the quality and output of the Irish workers was soon on a par with that of their English mentors. However, when the locals discovered a pay differential, favouring the latter, it led to long-term resentment and industrial unrest. Rawson was anti-union and soon tired of petty industrial squabbles and closed the factory. The workforce had to

<sup>128</sup> Charity, Louise, born 1911, interview recorded April 1998.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> McCann, Hugh, follow up telephone conversation, on 1 May 2000, to recorded interview May 1998.

reapply for their positions and at least 120 former employees lost their jobs.<sup>131</sup> Even in later years, during times of production turmoil, the workers would only co-operate on a personal basis. One Dundalk man, who had secured a managerial position in the company, recalls a typical attitude of 'we'll do it for you Hugh but not for that shower in the office'<sup>132</sup> at such times. Hallidays, on the other hand, was seen in a different light. 'They were more than fair employers I think they were one of the best employers in the town of Dundalk'.<sup>133</sup>

By 1935 the number of footwear manufactures in Éire had grown from five (in 1900) to twenty-three (table 3.5). Of these Rawsons soon became pre-eminent employing 500 workers. Very quickly a range of men's and children's footwear was added their line of high quality ladies' shoes and the workforce increased to 650. This meant that of the two factories employing 500 and over in table 3.5 both were situated in Dundalk.<sup>134</sup>

Less than 20	2
20 - 49	3
50 - 99	2
100-249	9
250-499	5
500 and over	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>
Source Census of industrial Production, 1932-6, table VII. p. 20.	

**Table 3.5** The size of firms in the Irish footwear industry, October 1935 (classified according to number employed).

In 1936 two local men Matt Connolly and John Maguire formed a company called Connolly Shoes Ltd. and began manufacturing footwear in purpose-built premises at Mulholland Avenue, Dundalk.<sup>135</sup> Thus, by 1936 there were approximately 1,200 footwear operatives in Dundalk, a figure equal to or even surpassing all those employed by the GNR.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> O'Callahan, Kevin, born 1927, interview recorded June 1997.

<sup>134</sup> Press, 'Protectionism and the Irish footwear industry', p. 85.

<sup>135</sup> Ógra Dun Dealgan, *Tradition in industry*, p.96.

Despite the reinstatement of a preferential rate of 20% for UK imports under the Finance (Agreement with the United Kingdom) Act, 1938, before the outbreak of World War II there were forty-one footwear factories operating in the Irish Free State employing 5,644 persons.<sup>136</sup> Over 20% of these jobs were in Dundalk. By then the industry was overproducing and redundancies and short-time working were commonplace. However, Hallidays entered into a licensing agreement with the Leeds firm of C. & J. Clark to manufacture their range of quality shoes for the Irish market. Because of falling Irish sales, Bancroft Clark had been trying to negotiate such an agreement with the Irish subsidiary of Padmore & Barnes (Kilkenny) for many years. As this company was already producing fashion shoes of a lesser grade, Clarks were anxious as to the finished quality of goods bearing their brand name. Secondly, the financial cost seemed prohibitive. But the primary danger was the possibility that Clarks' design and technical expertise might eventually get back to Padmore & Barnes parent firm in Northampton. As these issues could not be resolved consultations ceased in 1935.<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, Hallidays was solely an Irish concern making heavy boots. Thus, the risk to trade secrets was minimised and an experienced workforce could be retrained to the necessary skill levels. Concurrently, as an agreed fee was to be paid on every Clarks item produced by Hallidays, the financial burden was shared favouring Clarks. Additionally, Bancroft Clark was on friendly terms with Arthur Halliday, the new chief-executive of John Halliday & Son Ltd. since his uncle's sudden death in 1935. Hence, in adverse trading conditions Hallidays increased their market share from 4½% in 1939 to over 8% in 1944, dropping to nearly 7½% by 1945 and the workforce had grown to 631 by 1946.<sup>138</sup>

Because of the difficulties in securing supplies of raw materials during World War II tariffs were suspended but quotas were retained.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, leather was still

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<sup>136</sup> *Report on the leather footwear industry*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>137</sup> Press, *The footwear industry in Ireland*, p. 22.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>139</sup> *Report on the leather footwear industry*, pp. 59-60.

difficult to obtain and in Hallidays innovation was the order of the day:

The fact of the matter is of course that you could sell anything. I remember wooden soles being made and three strips cut [from] old bicycle tyres put on the bottom of these clogs as they were called at that stage. I also remember flour bags being cut up for the lining of shoes. But you couldn't possibly make enough of them that was the only thing. It was a matter of trying to get the material that was the only restriction. You could sell everything they were waiting on every pair of shoes that came out. It was a boom time [for] the people that worked in the industry.

An element of class distinction against people who worked in the shoe industry is discernible from the interviews:

When I was in secondary school in the Christian Brothers we would have a dance once a month with girls in St. Vincent's. But sure it was a great night and the girls made these wee buns and there would be tea. Then you could have been very bold and leave some of the girls home. But you got to know them. But when I broke ranks and left the school and I'd be coming on [from] work at one-o'clock, and no facilities to wash your hands and [your] face black with polish, I'd meet them girls that I used to dance with coming from school and they'd look the other way and pretend that they didn't see me. And that hurt me then and it still hurts me to think about it, that snob value. And we were the people who were really the economy of the country. I would put it down to, there was a kind of an awakening of the value of education. after the Civil War and in the early days of Finna Fail and the industrialisation of the country. There seemed to be a constant flow of people going into the Civil Service. And to get into the Civil Service, you only heard about it like, you weren't sure if it was the Secret Service or the Civil Service, but it was terribly important.<sup>140</sup>

Indeed snobbery seemed to be all-pervasive throughout the community:

I remember the time in this town where the shop girls who worked in Woolworth's or drapery stores looked down on factory workers. The girls in the factory were earning three times as much as them on piecework. I mean all you had to do was look at how well dressed the people were particularly the women were very fashion conscious. There was some skilled people who could earn even four times the basic fixed rate because of the effort they put in.<sup>141</sup>

Such attitudes were not confined to workers and when the mother of one of the leading families was congratulated on the fortuitous marriage match of her daughter with the proprietor of the leading shoe manufactory in the country she is reputed to have remarked 'She only married a cobbler'.<sup>142</sup> Perhaps these social or class barriers to

<sup>140</sup> McCann, Hugh, interview recorded 2 May 1998.

<sup>141</sup> O'Callahan, Kevin (interview)

<sup>142</sup> O'Callaghan Sarah (1904-1998) interview recorded January 1997.

involvement in industry may be one of the missing factors as to why Irish entrepreneurship did not develop in the twentieth century.<sup>143</sup> Such barriers also often determined one's pastimes.

### Leisure

We have already seen how the GNR was involved in soccer but as early as 1883 the company also provided a recreation hall, billiard room and well-stocked library for their employees.<sup>144</sup> During the 1912 strike Carrolls arranged free entertainment for their workers and in later years organised an amateur variety group within the company. Additionally, in the early 1900s they not only supported a Gaelic football club 'Hearts of Oriel', comprising mostly factory employees, but some family members played on the team alongside their workers.<sup>145</sup> They also provided employees with two hard tennis courts and grounds for other recreational games in 1925.<sup>146</sup> And a golf tournament restricted to company personnel was inaugurated in 1937 which continued into the 1980s.<sup>147</sup> Thus, in at least two of the major centres of employment, work and leisure went hand in hand.

With the exception of Gaelic football, participation in most sports was beyond the reach of even the upper middle classes<sup>148</sup> and walking was a favourite and free recreation:

The Navvy Bank was a wonderful walk of a Sunday morning in them days, tide full in. It was kept by the Harbour Board and you could sit down and eat your dinner off it and the crowd of people that would be on it. In those days there was only the one building, the 'Towers' There is a flat roof on it and the Dundalk orchestra used to be out practising of a Sunday morning. We had a wonderful orchestra in Dundalk you know thirty six instrumentalists. The old Saint Joseph's choir would have a break between Masses. Anyway, maybe the orchestra would be playing 'Maid of Athens' or something that they knew. The tide would be in and they'd sit down at the bank and the voices would be carried across to the Lisdoon Arms with the water. And they'd sing there till it was time for them to go back for their twelve-o'clock Mass. In the middle of all that there was two paddle steamers the Maid of Erin and the Earl of Erin, used to

<sup>143</sup> For an assessment of other factors see Johnson, David S., 'The economic performance of the independent Irish Free State' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, i (1991), pp. 49-61.

<sup>144</sup> McQuillan (interview).

<sup>145</sup> Keenan, 'The history of Carrolls', note 3, p. 20.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, note 10, p. 18.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, note 8, pp. 3-4.

<sup>148</sup> McGahon, O.B. 'Sport in the last half century' in *Tempests Centenary Annual 1959*, p. 47.

ply from Liverpool to Dundalk. There was lamp standards in the river to have lights for the boats coming in the dark. Tom Parks, the lord rest was a marvellous swimmer. Of a Sunday morning whenever there would be a big crowd down the Navy Banks, Tom would be on one of the lamp standards. And when either the [ships] would come abreast of him; they'd stop the paddles. Tom would dive down under and come up the far side.

Then sure when the tide would suit we had a wonderful regatta on a Sunday evening and it was for nothing there was no way of stopping you. You had the free passage to the Navy Banks. You went down walking and you got a great day's entertainment with the music, swimming and the regattas and that. Aah God aah, there was wonderful times on that Navy Banks.<sup>149</sup>

The orchestra was mixed both in religion and gender and open to all who could perform.<sup>150</sup> Apart from sports clubs, choirs and other musical groups amateur dramatics was flourishing. The first local production was by the CYMS in 1900 but:

There was terrible snobbery at the time. My father was a non-drinker and a non-smoker and he worked on the Corporation. He went to join the CYMS and wouldn't be admitted because he was a labouring man working on the Council. That's a fact. I was disgusted when I heard it.<sup>151</sup>

We have already seen how factory workers were excluded from the golf club. Another area of sport where participation was related to status was rugby football and not 'many Catholics played rugby in those days'<sup>152</sup> [1940s]. This was not due to religious discrimination but to underexposure to the game amongst most of the Catholic population, only a few of whom had been playing rugby prior to then.<sup>153</sup> Some middle class students had been introduced to, and developed a love of the sport at prestigious Catholic colleges such as Clongowes Wood (see chapter II). When they returned to Dundalk they became involved with the local rugby club and graduated from the playing field to the committee room:

There was quite a big influx of Protestants but there was never any problem of major proportion. Though I can remember in my term as president moves in the country to play rugby on Sunday. It would be fair I think to say that due to the influence of Protestant members it took a longer time for Dundalk to move to Sunday than possibly many other clubs. [After that] any Protestant influence that may have been there was totally diminished. It was

<sup>149</sup> Marron Joe, (1899-1998) interview recorded December 1996.

<sup>150</sup> Macardle, P.L. 'The Dundalk orchestral society' in *Tempest Annual*, 1924, p. 3.

<sup>151</sup> McGuire (interview).

<sup>152</sup> McDowell, Ethel, born 1931, interview recorded February 1999.

<sup>153</sup> Gray, Alan, born 1923, interview recorded May 2000.

never really a problem except this one item of Protestants not wanting to play on a Sunday.<sup>154</sup>

The Protestant objections were understandably related to observation of the Sabbath. As Catholic influence increased within the club the schools were approached and ‘you got the younger people playing and that led to an explosion’<sup>155</sup> [in the 1960s]. But in some activities the sectarian divisions that did exist were being challenged by individuals:

[we] did achieve some certain bringing together of the communities in the mid fifties. We had a large Catholic Scouting organisation in Dundalk. There was a Baden Powell girl guide group and a scouting association which is non-denominational but was in effect Protestant only. There were about sixty as against six hundred in the Catholic units for a parade being assembled for An Tostal. Being the Dundalk unit leader in charge of all the Catholic Scouting I knew the assistant leader of the organisation personally. I felt strange we were brother scouts that we should be separated. So I went to Eddy Ross he was the assistant leader I “said what about us all marching together as scouts down the Street and show this town that at least one group of people can get together in this An Tostal parade”. His leader was standing beside him and he says “do you know it’s a great idea”. None of my officers had any hesitation so we all went down the town together. It was the first time in my life that somebody on the review platform started to clap and somebody suddenly realised that in Dundalk there was a group of people prepared to work together and they realised the significance of one small breach in this social divide. Unfortunately would you believe I suffered afterwards in a lot of wee ways. I won’t elaborate but it didn’t personally help me but I didn’t mind. I did what I thought was right. I made a point. I suffered a bit for a while but I did win out in the end on the point.<sup>156</sup>

Thus, as can be seen throughout this work, whilst religion was not an issue in everyday interaction, at an organisational level it still mattered. Even amongst children it was seldom a factor:

There was one Protestant boy in the street and he would play with us. The only difference we’d ever see was he’d be spick and span on a Sunday and he’d never be available to go with the gang on a Sunday. He came to me one day and he told me he found a great place where there was tons of these bottles and you could get money for bottles and jam jars. We had to climb this wall and you could get into the derelict office of Manisty’s. There was these steps that went up and to a clock tower. You had to open a trap-door and we went up and the trap-door went down and didn’t the latch go in and we were stuck above. If you shouted you’d be in trouble with the guards for being in. We started to pray, Jamsie said the Our Father and I said the Hail Mary that we’d get help. We broke a piece off the clock and through a gap he fiddled

<sup>154</sup> Williams, Dennis, born 1929, interview recorded January 1997.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Casey, Sean, born 1935, interview recorded March 1997.

about at the latch and we got out. I don't know if it was the 'Our Father' got us out or the 'Hail Mary' but we were very glad we never went back near it.<sup>157</sup>

Respect for authority was not restricted to children:

The big fellows used to play pitch-and-toss which was illegal. We'd be round watching them. One night a postman came through the entry and all the big men ran away. Some of them left a few pence on the ground. There was tremendous fear and maybe respect for the guards.<sup>158</sup>

Indeed, priests, nuns, teachers, doctors and other authoritative figures were all held in awe, none more so than the visiting missionary:

Everyone was terrified to go to the missionaries but they all went. They were telling the young ones don't be going with boys and all the rest and all the young ones going with fellows. And they'd be coming into work and they'd be saying the priest give me a going over and they were doing nothing wrong. I remember a lot of people coming out and saying the priest put badness in their head they heard things that they'd never thought of. That's how innocent we were.<sup>159</sup>

Perhaps in direct opposition to the missionaries' intentions the missions were also a prime time for 'company keeping':

When the Mission would come the boys would stand outside the chapel waiting for the girls to come out and they'd all go up to the Ruckie Hill and when it was the men's week the girls would all go up to the Ruckie Hill and wait for them to come up to them.<sup>160</sup>

The moral welfare of the Catholic youth was a major preoccupation of the clergy. At confraternity meetings in 1900 young women were being warned of the dangers of 'company keeping'.<sup>161</sup> One area of particular concern was dancing. In 1901 Cardinal Logue imposed the sanction of 'greater excommunication' on proprietors, local patrons and visitors involved in Sunday dancing in the nearby seaside village of Blackrock. 'The power of absolving these censures lay only with the Cardinal or the vicars general of the archdiocese'.<sup>162</sup> In the 1930 more practical steps were taken:

There was a place in Chapel Lane called the soldiers' hole. We used to go down there to dance and more times than I have fingers and toes on me the priest would come and put us out,

<sup>157</sup> McCann (interview).

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Bolger, Fronnie, born 1920, interview recorded June 1997.

<sup>160</sup> Charity, Louise, born 1911, interview recorded April 1998.

<sup>161</sup> Murtagh, Michael *St. Patrick's Dundalk; an anniversary account* (Dundalk, 1997), p. 155.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

we'd jump out windows and everything. There was one below at the Quay it would be full of soldiers and sailors and we'd be only in and the priest would come and run us out of it. When you started going out with boys a crowd of girls and boys would meet maybe down the Park. The priest used to follow us and chase us. We weren't doing nothing but it interfered with the courting.<sup>163</sup>

Irish dancing was acceptable and 'if daughters were going to the Gaelic League' the mothers believed they were safe as houses, it had that name'.<sup>164</sup> However, 'young ladies' were cited as one of the main attractions for joining the Gaelic League by most of the male interviewees who were members.

Wedding days for most couples were simple affairs:

We weren't into big weddings or any of that we hadn't the money to be honest. We cycled up to Haggerstown and got married, nearly everybody went up on their bikes to get married. Peter's bike had a puncture and he got on the bar of Jackie's bike. Back down to our house me mother had the tea on. You want to see the currant bread and plain bread that was there.<sup>165</sup>

This was in stark contrast to a 'society wedding' recalled by the same lady:

In Ladywell Terrace, on the far side of us there was Minister Moody and his wife. We used to think they were royalty. Mrs. Moody, lord rest her, she was like a queen, tall stately. But they were lovely, they'd never pass you without bidding you the time of day, or remarking the weather. But in the grounds of the Minister's house they had a lovely tennis court and their friends would all come up and they'd play tennis there. They'd all walk on the far side, not the terrace side. They were lovely people but they were sort of treated like royalty. One of the Moodys got married we knew the wedding was coming off and there'd be about 150 up that morning, from Hill Street and all Ladywell Terrace. They had a big banquet up there. The gate was locked of course. But then the bride and groom and the relations all come down, to the gate and they threw money. They must have thrown two or three hundred pound out. Big pennies. I must have had about thirty shillings in pennies. Sure we were rich that was great.<sup>166</sup>

Several interviewees listed many prominent Catholic families amongst the Moodys' friends. Thus, despite the allusion to inclusiveness it is possible to ascertain a degree of separation between the classes which was not based primarily on sectarian lines. The Moodys and their friends played tennis whereas 'ordinary' children amused themselves with pastimes that involved little or no expense such as hopscotch, top spinning and ball

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<sup>163</sup> Charity, (interview).

<sup>164</sup> O'Quigley (interview).

<sup>165</sup> Moran, Molly, born 1915, interview recorded April 1997.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

games. But perhaps more revealing is the distribution of money to less well off children and the comment ‘They’d all walk on the far side, not the terrace side’. However, it is important to note that no utterance or inference of condemnation can be detected. Thus, it seems likely that although people were aware of the ‘difference’ in circumstances they were quite prepared to accept it. There were of course those who were perceived to have broken such (unwritten) rules:

I remember Owen Norton. He was a foreman in Manisty’s Foundry. He went in to work in an open brone and this wee man called O’Neill, lived in the house at the bottom of Norton’s gate, and he used drive Norton in and he’d have a flower in his button hole and he had a white beard. But you’d think he was a squire to see him going in the pomp at that time and what was he? He was just a foreman in Manasty’s.<sup>167</sup>

Norton’s pretensions to grandeur were criticised by a lady from within the same social strata, although she hardly saw it that way. Whereas, her father was a clerk of works with the DUDC, and would have enjoyed a certain degree of respect in local society, Norton was “only a foreman in a foundry”, a man of industry, yet he lived in a ‘big house’, had a man servant and obviously enjoyed a better standard of living. This awareness of ‘one’s place’ in the pecking order is a constant theme throughout the interviews, though not openly displayed as such. Indeed, social origins as a determining factor in life exceptions were not generally questioned until the 1950s (see chapter V).

### **Conclusion**

In 1900 the fortunes of Dundalk was based on the then-dominant world technology steam. By the mid 1930s this was under pressure from the internal combustion engine (for transport) and from electricity (for powering industry). Nevertheless, (with government aid) the GNR Works survived for another twenty-five years. Because of the Works, population stability was maintained at a time when emigration was devastating provincial towns throughout Ireland. A feature of local political agitation was the accusation levelled at management of religious discrimination in job allocation. Whilst this

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<sup>167</sup> O’Callaghan, Sarah (interview). In fact Norton is listed as a director of Manistys.

was true, the society representing fitters was equally engaged in restrictive practices at shopfloor level in restricting access to the trades for the offspring of their members. Thus, favouritism was not a Protestant prerogative and the oral evidence suggests that although the management were predominantly Protestant they were fair employers. The exception were strikers who were harshly treated but this demonstrates an anti-union rather than a religious bias. The oral evidence also questions the assumption that a job on the GNR was 'a job for life'. Tradesmen felt insecure and were reluctant to pass on skills to a younger generation that had paid a substantial sum for the privilege of learning from them.

Partition created problems for the GNR but it also hastened the demise of the distillery. Almost immediately after the formalisation of the frontier over 400 jobs were lost and employees in other concerns were placed on short time.<sup>168</sup> Yet, the overall effect was positive for the town in the medium to long term. P.J. Carrolls took full advantage of tariff barriers and with a commitment to adopting new technological, managerial and marketing techniques, prospered. This was not only beneficial to Dundalk but to the country's finances through taxes. These were supplemented by foreign earnings as the company increased its export trade begun prior to independence.

Allegations by Catholics of Protestant religious discrimination on the GNR were matched by the Protestant community's assertion of Catholic discrimination in Carrolls. If one accepts the former then one must also accept the latter. Yet, the oral evidence indicates that recruitment in Carrolls was based on familiarity with a prospective employee's family background and some Protestants were employed.

Successive government economic policies after independence brought the footwear industry to Dundalk. By 1945 employment figures matched those of the GNR. The disparity in attitude of Hallidays and Rawsons to their employees is highlighted by the oral evidence. Yet again the focus of complaint was mostly based on religious difference. Nevertheless, as with Carrolls when employees (in both firms) attained recognised

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<sup>168</sup> McQuillan, *Railway town*, p. 80.

qualifications, they were promoted. This indicates that education and know-how were perhaps a bigger factor in obtaining promotion than religious conviction.

As a result of the GNR and the footwear industry there was a substantial Protestant community in Dundalk. The oral evidence demonstrates that whilst Catholics observed the rules set by the hierarchy they did so reluctantly. This was probably due to the fact that everyday interaction with Protestant friends and neighbours was cordial throughout the community. Well-to-do Catholics and Protestants played tennis, golf and rugby together and in working class areas communal difficulties created friendships which bridged the religious divide. Yet a good living Catholic workman was refused admission to the YMCA (a Catholic organisation) because of his occupation. And employees of Carrolls were denied membership of the golf club by a co-religionist because they were 'factory' workers. Thus, between 1900-1945 discrimination in Dundalk was as much based on social standing as religious denomination, perhaps even more so. The oral evidence also demonstrates the role of the minister in promoting the advancement of 'respectable' families; the acceptance by some citizens of the propriety of Irish culture and the interconnection between work, leisure and social status. This class-consciousness permeating every aspect of life in Dundalk is an elusive factor which can best be uncovered through oral history.

## Chapter IV

### War and Politics 1900-45

War is nothing more than the continuation of politics by other means.

Karl Von Clausewitz (1780-1831)<sup>1</sup>

An intermix of political activity and physical aggression would seem to hold true for Ireland between 1900-1945. 'Britain's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity' was a precept much adhered to by various political organisations as suited their own ends and acted out at local level by individuals and groups. Issues of international and national importance such as the Boer war and the 'great war', eventually worked their way down to local level also. This was especially true on the question of conscription in Ireland which was a highly contentious political issue for many influential Irish politicians who had been involved in the armed insurrection of 1916.<sup>2</sup> The Dundalk Volunteers were allocated a pivotal role in the plans for the rising and oral evidence from local activists and observers highlight the debacle it turned out to be. An amalgam of groups with divergent political opinions constituted Sinn Féin who conducted the War of Independence<sup>3</sup> and it was the threat of war during the signing of the treaty that denied them their prime objective, a united Ireland.<sup>4</sup> The partial success of gaining Free State status for twenty-six counties in 1921 split this coalition, resulting in civil war where armed force was used to enforce political objectives. Again oral sources will be utilised to uncover this at local level. When the political faction of Sinn Féin formed the Finna Fáil party and entered Dáil Éireann for the first time they carried concealed weapons. On gaining office in 1932 they in turn utilised physical force, or its implied threat, to maintain political stability.<sup>5</sup> During the 'Emergency' many civilians entered the auxiliary services and were trained in the ways of war. Additionally, elections at national and local level were often influenced by matters relating

<sup>1</sup> Cohen, J.M and M. J., *The penguin dictionary of quotations* (London, 1960), p. 112, no. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Lyons, F. S. L., *Ireland since the famine*, tenth impression (Glasgow, 1986), pp. 248 and 330.

<sup>3</sup> Hopkinson, Michael, *Green against green: the Irish civil war* (Dublin, 1988), pp. 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Macardle, Dorothy, *The Irish republic* (London, 1968), pp. 353-8.

<sup>5</sup> Coogan, Tim Pat, *The IRA* (London, 1970), p. 93.

to the armed struggle. Thus, during the first half of the century war and politics were closely linked.

### **The local government act, 1898**

By 1898 the landlord/tenant issue had 'ceased to be the dominant problem of rural Ireland' and Home Rule had come to the fore.<sup>6</sup> Parnell's National League success in the 1885 Westminster election left the Irish Parliamentary Party holding the balance of power which helped secured Gladstone's commitment to 'Home Rule' Thus, it appeared that constitutional means would succeed in gaining self-government where previously force had failed. With two failed attempts to pass the Home Rule Bill (1886 and 1893) and the fragmentation of the Irish Parliamentary Party the issue subsided until after the 1910 elections when once again the Irish Parliamentary Party held the balance of power.<sup>7</sup> The conservative government of 1886 'were convinced that the Irish Home Rule movement derived much of its strength from social discontent'.<sup>8</sup> Thus, much of their Irish legislation, from the 1887 Land Act onwards, was designed to scuttle the Home Rule issue.<sup>9</sup> But the most profound change came with the introduction of the 1898 Local Government Act.<sup>10</sup>

The Local Government Act was similar to that introduced in England ten years earlier. Elections would be held triennially on a franchise changed from property to household suffrage with the addition of women and peers. Women were excluded from participation in county councils yet, if eligible, were entitled to sit on urban and rural councils and become guardians. Administrative counties were created and presided over by elected county councils who assumed the powers of the grand jury, except those relating to crime.<sup>11</sup> An exception to this was compensation for criminal injuries the responsibility for which was transferred to the county courts whose decision could be

<sup>6</sup> Beckett, J. C., *The making of modern Ireland 1600-1923* (London, 1981), p. 408.

<sup>7</sup> Hoppen, Theodore, K. *Ireland since 1800; conflict and conformity* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London and New York, 1999) p. 142.

<sup>8</sup> Beckett, *The making of modern Ireland*, p. 405.

<sup>9</sup> Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, p. 204.

<sup>10</sup> Beckett, *The making of modern Ireland*, p. 406, and Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, p. 212.

<sup>11</sup> Crossman, Virginia, *Local government in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Belfast, 1994), pp.93-94.

appealed.<sup>12</sup> The counties were then sub-divided into either urban or rural districts.<sup>13</sup> Each district had an elected council designated accordingly. Urban district councils assumed most of the functions of the grand jury and had the power, under supervision, to levy their own rates.<sup>14</sup> They also undertook most of the duties of the guardians, with the exception of poor relief.<sup>15</sup> Ex-officio membership of the board of guardians was abolished and the new boards were wholly elected from within the urban district.<sup>16</sup> Rural councils were empowered in much the same way. However, they were not entitled to impose rates and all expenditure for their district had to be approved by the county council. Thus, to facilitate equality of representation, the chairman of the rural council was given an additional seat on the county council.<sup>17</sup> In rural areas the elections of guardians was terminated and the rural council constituted the board of guardians for their respective districts<sup>18</sup>

Of all the changes instigated, the widening of the franchise was the most profound. By 1900 most urban dwellers were at last enabled to influence how their area was governed on four different fronts. They could elect urban councillors, poor law guardians, county councillors and members of parliament, although women were excluded from the latter.<sup>19</sup> In 1911 the Local Authorities (Ireland) (Qualification of Women) Act removed the bar on women from county and borough councils. By 1918 married women of thirty and over were enfranchised and proportional representation was introduced in Sligo borough. A year later it was enacted generally by the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1919 for local elections only.<sup>20</sup> For Dundalk and county Louth there began a series of changes influenced by war, politics, religion and social standing.

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<sup>12</sup> Muldoon, John and McSweeney George, *A guide to Irish local government* (Dublin, 1898), p. 120.

<sup>13</sup> Roche, Desmond (ed.) *Local government* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Dublin, 1963) p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> Muldoon and McSweeney, *A guide to Irish local government*, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Roche, *Local government in Ireland*, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> Muldoon and McSweeney, *A guide to Irish local government*, p. 139.

<sup>17</sup> Crossman, *Local government in nineteenth-century Ireland*, p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> Roche, *Local government*, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> Muldoon and McSweeney, *A guide to Irish local government*, p. 93.

<sup>20</sup> Roche, *Local government*, p. 45.

### Dundalk Urban District Council

The first Dundalk Urban District Council (DUDC) was elected in January 1899 by an electorate increased from 800 (under the old system) to 3,200.<sup>21</sup> Eighteen seats were distributed between the four electoral districts once used for selecting town commissioners. Eight of the outgoing commissioners were returned, the majority of whom were 'Nationalist' divided between pro and anti-Parnellite camps.<sup>22</sup> One of the two seats taken by the 'House League' went to a Unionist and the remaining eight went to labour representatives (table 4.1, p.135). Much of this success was due to the organisational ability of the 'Labourers' Society' which had been formed in Dundalk in 1871 and had taken an active part in local and national affairs since then.<sup>23</sup> For the first time ever working men could contribute effectively to the government of their town.

The growing independent, Catholic and nationalistic outlook of the population can be gauged from a number of incidents which occurred over the next few years. At a gathering of the Loyalist population to honour the proclamation of King Edward VII, organised by the new high sheriff, Sir A V Foster, at the market square in February 1901 the proceedings were interrupted by a group of young men singing nationalist songs. This was followed by a scathing editorial in the *Dundalk Democrat* attacking the coronation oath<sup>24</sup> Many protests in a similar vein, including those of 'liberal Protestants', ensued.<sup>25</sup> These culminated with a mass gathering of societies, dignitaries, politicians, bandsmen and clergy presided over by the local Catholic administrator. A resolution was passed condemning the oath as 'blasphemous to Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, derogatory to his holy Mother and to the Saints and a wanton and deliberate insult to Catholics'.<sup>26</sup> Thus, nationalism was being clearly identified with Roman Catholicism.

<sup>21</sup> O'Sullivan, Harold, *A history of local government in county Louth from earliest times to the present time* (Dundalk, 2000), p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> Ua Dubhtaigh, Padraic, *The book of Dundalk* (Dundalk, 1946), pp. 78-9.

<sup>24</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 16 February 1901, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 23 February 1901, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Murtagh, Fr. Michael CC., *St. Patrick's Dundalk- anniversary account* (Dundalk, 1997), p. 158.

MIDDLE WARD	NORTH WARD	SOUTH WARD	SEATOWN WARD
1898 N. Byrne Thomas Roe JP James Byrne John Lawless James Carroll J. M. Johnson	Joseph Maxwell James Johnson Thomas Rogers	J Mc Cartan Felix O'Neill James Gosling	James Clark Henry O'Connell Bernard Hamill John P. Hamill C. A. Duffy P. Hanratty
1899 F.S. Morrison JP (HP) Robert Henry MD (L) James Casey (L) Joseph M. Johnson (H) *Thomas Roe John Martin (L)	*Joseph Maxwell Patrick Clarke (L) Stephen Connell (HP)	John Gordon (L) James Dillon (L) Patrick McArdle (L)	Charles A. Duffy (N) *Henry O'Connell *John Hamill (H) Bernard Hamill (H) *Patrick Hanratty John Casey (L)
1902 Edward Donnelly (L) Michael McCoy (HL) James McCourt (HL) *Joseph M. Johnson (H) Joseph Hamill (H) Thos. Dullaghan (L)	Peter Callan Michael Dean Henry Deery	M. Casey *James Gosling (N) *Patrick McArdle (L)	Charles A. Duffy (N) *Henry O'Connell *John Hamill *Bernard Hamill (H) John Norton (H) *John Casey (L)
1905 *Michael McCoy (H) *James McCourt (H) Peter Callan *Joseph M. Johnson (H) *Joseph Hamill (H) John O'Connell (N)	J. P. McGinnity (H) Bernard Finnegan (N) *Henry Deery	P. Hughes (N) *James Gosling (N) P. Kearney	*Henry O'Connell James Johnson Thos. F McGahon (N) *Bernard Hamill (H) M. F. O'Neill (N) S. H. Moynagh (H) J. Norton (H)
1908 *Michael McCoy (H) *James McCourt (H) C. J. McGahon (N) *Joseph M. Johnson (H) *Joseph Hamill (H) *John O'Connell (N)	*J. P. McGinnity (H) *Bernard Finnegan (N) *S. H. Moynagh (H)	*P. Hughes (N) *James Gosling (N) E. Goodman (N)	B. McGuinness (H) Thos. Connick (H) *Thos. F McGahon (N) *Bernard Hamill (H) *M. F. O'Neill (N) *Bernard Hamill (H)
1911 P. Rice *Joseph M. Johnson (H) Patrick Duffy *Michael McCoy (H) P. Toner (N) *Joseph Hamill (H)	P. J. Daly (N) J. Callan (H) P. Deery (N)	*P. Hughes (N) *T. Gosling (N) T O'Rourke (N)	*E. Goodman (N) C. A. Duffy (N) *Thos. F McGahon (N) J. Wynne (N) *J. Norton (N)
1914 *Joseph M. Johnson (H) *Michael McCoy (H) *P. Toner (N) *Joseph Hamill (H) Joseph Reilly T. B. McCourt	*P. Deery (N) *P. J. Daly (N) S. H. Moynagh (H)	T. Murphy *P. Hughes (N) *T O'Rourke (N)	*Bernard Hamill (H) *J. Norton (N) *Thos. F McGahon (N) *C. A. Duffy (N) M. F. O'Neill (N) E. Goodman (N)
1918 *Michael McCoy (H) *P. Toner (N&L) *Joseph Hamill (H) Thos. McKitterick *T. B. McCourt	*P. Deery (NAT) *P. J. Daly (SF) P. Walsh  * denotes outgoing candidate	*P. Hughes (SF) *T. O'Rourke C. J. McGahon	*Bernard Hamill (N-H) *J. Norton (N) *Thos. F McGahon (I-N) John Watters (H) *M. F. O'Neill (N) *E. Goodman (N)

Source: *Dundalk Democrat and Tempest Annual* 1900-1919.

**Table 4.1** Members of Dundalk Urban District Council 1898-1918

When the secretary of the Dundalk Orchestral Society, a prominent Protestant businessman Thomas Craig, applied to the council for the free use of the Town Hall for their concerts; he was refused. The society was given to understand that the 'council [had] already decided to grant the hall free for local purposes pending its renovation'. However, the Chairman proclaimed - 'they make a slight mistake. That was for charitable purposes. The Orchestral Society is not a charitable organisation. I would charge them the full rate. They can well afford it'.<sup>27</sup> Whilst many members of the orchestra came from the business community it embraced all social classes and was completely non-sectarian. At the same meeting the Young Ireland Society requested the council newsroom for their annual St. Patrick's night concert if renovation of the town hall was not completed and the same body agreed. In so doing the council displayed a bias towards Irish cultural aspirations.

Further evidence of Catholic/nationalism partisanship appeared when street names began to change. The first of these was a thoroughfare known as Quay Road or Wellington Place. A petition by Very Rev J. A. Moran, President St. Mary's College, and a number of property owners and residents of the area came before the DUDC seeking to rename it 'St. Mary's Road'. They also wanted to erect a nameplate in Irish and English characters at their own expense. Moving that the change suggested by the memorialists be made Mr Henry said, 'he considered the name a very appropriate one'. The chairman agreed stating 'I hope we will have all the streets in Dundalk named like that before long'.<sup>28</sup>

Proof of the decline in influence of the 'ascendancy class' was witnessed when Lord Louth appeared at the Dundalk petty sessions in June 1901 on charges of assaulting a policeman. Due to a series of accidents on race-days the DUDC had instigated a one-way traffic system in Bridge Street and Linenhall Street. While on his way to the racecourse Lord Louth attempted to circumvent the regulations and was stopped by the policeman who held the head of a horse drawing Louth's carriage. Lord Louth struck him

<sup>27</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 2 and 9 March 1901, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 11 May 1901, p. 3.

with a whip and was subsequently summoned for assault on a constable. Despite his apology in open court he was fined 40/- and 6/6 costs,<sup>29</sup> a humiliation that manifested how far removed the new dispensation was from the grand jury days.

For the next municipal election in 1902 Labour and the House League entered into an alliance.<sup>30</sup> The *Democrat* reported little interest in the election and in the premier ward (middle ward) seats were 'going a begging'.<sup>31</sup> Official Labour lost out heavily retaining only three seats. However, an independent labour candidate, who had been dropped by the House League/Labour coalition retained his seat.<sup>32</sup> Thereafter, the membership of the DUDC comprised mostly businessmen who were elected every three years. During the plebiscite of 1905, 1908, 1911, and 1914 faces changed occasionally but there emerged a nucleus of between nine and twelve 'steady' members of varying shades of nationalism. Most of these did not stand for a particular party or political agenda<sup>33</sup> and their classification in figure 4.1 is merely an attempt to ascertain their political leanings.

Although membership of the urban council imbued a degree of respectability not everyone was enamoured with the conduct of some councillors in daily life:

There was a certain chairman of the Urban Council for a good number of years and he was a very well-to-do man. He had any amount of house property. There was a seat going on the Council and his son was co-opted on the council. The son began to go off the deep end, touching the bottle. [The father] often bought cattle at the fair. We'll say the son was named Joe. This particular day Joe went along to the fair and bought two animals, but he went away and didn't pay the farmer. Of course the farmer [thought] he'd be all right and would see the father the next fair day. In any case next fair day he meets the father- "mister so and so" says he "your son Joe bought two beasts off me last fair day". And this old man says "did he pay you for them". "No", says your man "he didn't". "Isn't he a Town Commissioner can't he do what he likes". I think they're doing that still.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 8 June 1901, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 4 January 1902, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 18 January 1902, p. 4.

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

<sup>33</sup> O'Sullivan, *Local government in county Louth*, p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> Marron, Joe (1899-199811) interview recorded December 1996.

### Louth County Council

The first elections for membership of Louth County Council (LCC), the Rural District Councils (RDC) of Drogheda, Ardee and Dundalk and the poor law guardians for the borough of Drogheda and the Dundalk Urban districts took place in April 1899. Whilst retaining its rights as a Borough, Drogheda was downgraded in status and Dundalk became the 'county town'. The former judicial county of Drogheda was absorbed into that of Louth retaining only the right to appoint a coroner.<sup>35</sup> A provision in the Act allowed for alteration of the Union boundaries where they crossed two or more counties.<sup>36</sup> Thus, portions of the Drogheda urban sanitary district located in county Meath were brought into the administrative county of Louth<sup>37</sup> and the Dundalk Union lost the electoral divisions of Lower Creggan to Castleblaney and Iniskeen to Carrickmacross.<sup>38</sup>

The Urban Districts of Drogheda and Dundalk each returned five members and the remainder of the county was divided into nineteen districts (figure 4.1) each of which returned one<sup>39</sup> (table 4.2, p.140). To these were added the chairmen of the three RDCs and two co-opted members. These were further augmented by three others nominated by the old grand jury for the first three year period only (as specified under the 1898 Act). Thus the new county council comprised thirty-eight members. As can be seen from table 4.2 most of the Dundalk representatives on the county council were also urban councillors during their term of office. This is particularly true of Bernard Hamill who was a retiring town commissioner in 1899 and continued to hold both seats over the ensuing eighteen years. That new faces appeared was mostly due to retirement or the death of sitting members.

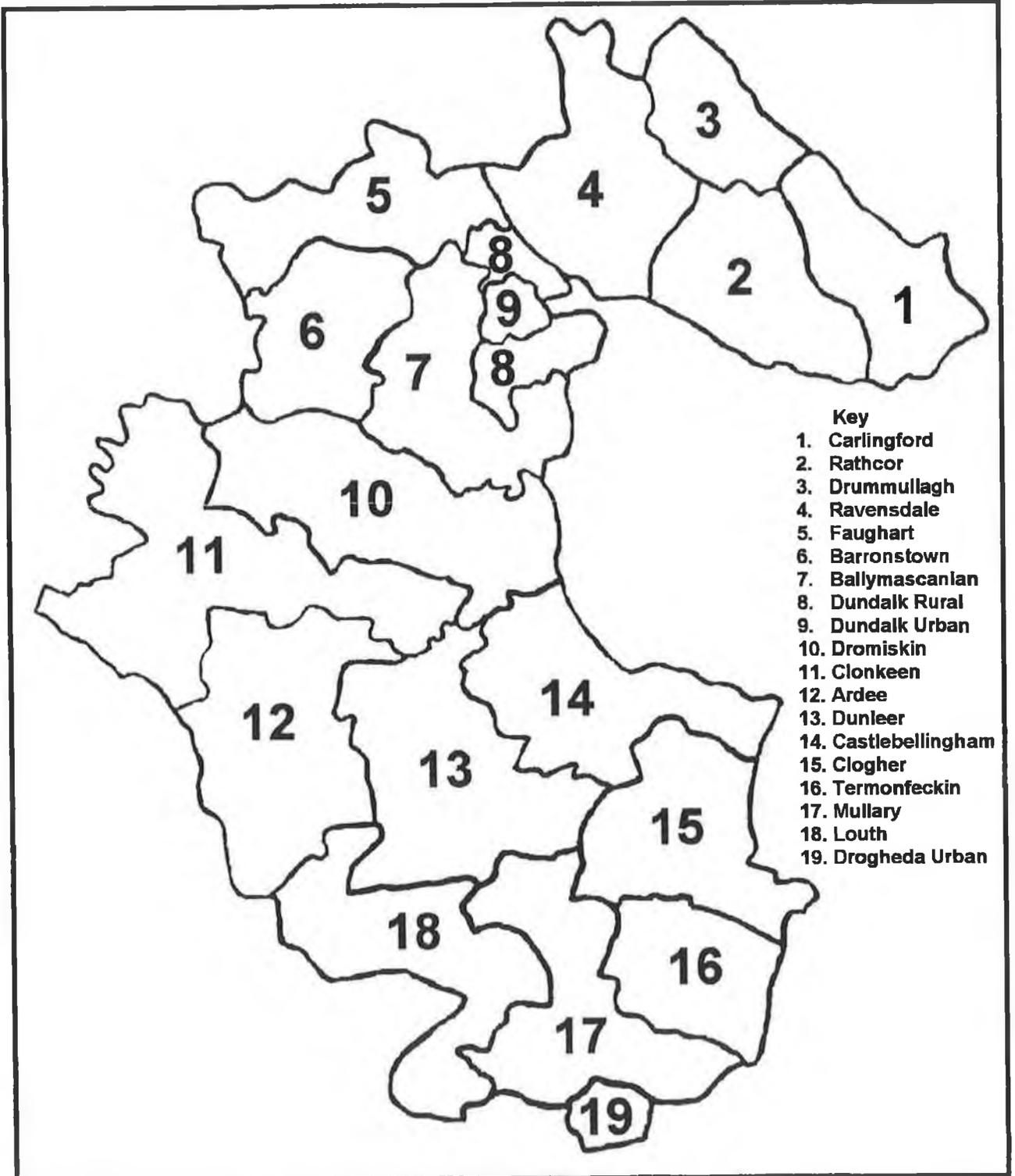
<sup>35</sup> *Centenary memoir of Louth county council*, (Dundalk, 1999) p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Muldoon and McSweeney, *A guide to Irish local government*, p. 177.

<sup>37</sup> O'Sullivan, *Local government in county Louth*, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> *Tempest annual*, 1899, p. 20.

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



**Figure 4.1** County Louth electoral districts 1899

Louth Co. Council	1899	1902	1905	1908	1911	1914	DUDC	1899	1902	1905	1908	1911	1914
DRC Member													
Chales A. Duffy (N)*	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes
DUDC Member													
T. C. Mcardle	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no		no	no	no	no	no	no
Thomas Roe*	yes	died						yes	died				
Bernard Hamill (H)*	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
James Moore (L)	yes	no	no	no	no	no		no	no	no	no	no	no
Joseph Maxwell*	yes	no	no	no	no	no		yes	no	no	no	no	no
Henry O'Connell*		yes	yes	no	no	no		yes	yes	yes	no	no	
Joseph M. Johnson (H)		yes	yes	yes	yes	no			yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Peter Callan		yes	no	died					yes	yes	died		
E. Goodman (N)			yes	yes	yes	yes					yes	yes	yes
J. Wynne				yes	yes	yes						yes	no
Thomas Murphy						yes							yes
T O'Rourke (N)						yes							yes
Faughart													
James McCourt (H)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no		no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Chairman													
Peter Hughes (N)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	died				yes	yes	yes	died
William A. Doran						yes							
Vice Chairman													
Thomas J. Byrne	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no							
William A. Doran					yes	no							
Charles A. Duffy						yes							
DUDC member Member of Dundalk Urban District Council													
DRDC member Member of Dundalk Rural District Council													
(H)	Healy supporter												
(L)	Labour representative												
(N)	Nationalist or Redmond Supporter												
* Denotes outgoing member of old town commissioners													
<b>Occupations</b>													
Chales A. Duffy (N)	Cattle Shipper						<b>Died</b>						
T. C. Mcardle	Brewery Owner						1917						
Thomas Roe	Proprietor <i>Dundalk Democrat</i>						1902						
Bernard Hamill (H)*	Flour Merchant						1931						
James Moore (L)	Brewery Clerk												
Joseph Maxwell	Grocer												
Henry O'Connell	Grocer						1915						
Joseph M. Johnson (H)*	Commission Agent						1926						
Peter Callan	Painting Contractor						1908						
E. Goodman (N)	Cattle Dealer												
J. Wynne	Builder						1928						
Thomas Murphy	Cattle Dealer												
T O'Rourke (N)	?												
James McCourt (H)	Grocer						1923						
Peter Hughes (N)	Grocer						1954						
Sources <i>Dundalk Democrat</i> for relevant years <i>Tempest Annual</i> for relevant years O'Sullivan, Harold. <i>Local Government</i> Bassett, George Henry, <i>Louth County</i> first edition (Dublin 1886) Reprint (Dundalk 1998)													

**Table 4.2** Simultaneous membership of Dundalk Urban and Louth County Councils.

However, in 1911 two urban councillors B. Roddy and John McCann were relieved of public office following court proceedings arising from the 1910 general election.<sup>40</sup> One of the surprising aspects of the election was the absence of Labour representation at county level. Having performed so well in the urban plebiscite they took only one seat in this more influential grouping. In Dundalk four names had been mooted but only two stood and only one, James Moore, was successful. Perhaps this was due to the impending financial burden of lost wages when attending meetings and the cost of unredeemable travel expenses. However, there was also active discouragement on the part of the nationalist organisations believing that they 'would be far more useful for the stricken members of their own class, as poor law guardians, than as members of the gilt-edged county council'.<sup>41</sup> Thus, social status was considered a prerequisite for membership of the council. Like the 1902 urban elections Labour's county seat was lost and the Nationalist/business contingent were in sole control of local affairs until 1918.

An unprecedented feature of the 1899 Act was that women were entitled to stand for election as Guardians and rural councillors. Fr. Bernard Donnellan, administrator of St. Patrick's parish, lobbied various associations in Dundalk to support the candidature of women chosen by the clergy for the board of guardians. After some debate Mrs. Agnes Watters, Miss Anne Lynam and Mrs. Emily Duffy were nominated in Dundalk as were Mrs. Kate Branigan and Miss Mary McKeown in Drogheda. All the Dundalk ladies won seats and Mrs. Kate Branigan was returned unopposed in Drogheda. These became the first women politicians in the county of Louth.<sup>42</sup>

### **General elections**

From 1884 the county was divided into two constituencies for parliamentary elections: North and South Louth. In North Louth, encompassing Dundalk, the Nationalist Party comprised a 'coalition of varying interests, including Parnell's United Irish Party, the

<sup>40</sup> O'Sullivan, *Local government in county Louth*, p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 2 April 1899, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> O'Sullivan, *Local government in county Louth*, p. 32.

AOH, the Roman Catholic clergy and the Trade and Labour Association'.<sup>43</sup> In an effort to curtail personal rivalry parliamentary candidates from outside the constituency were usually nominated. With Gladstone's ultimatum for Parnell's dismissal as a condition to the continuation of his home rule policy, and the Catholic bishops' condemnation of Parnell's political leadership,<sup>44</sup> rifts began to appear. A year later, the pro-and anti-Parnellite rival supporters clashed at the Dundalk railway station. Shortly afterwards a branch of the National Federation, an anti-Parnellite organisation, was formed in town supported by Archbishop Logue and the majority of the diocesan clergy.<sup>45</sup> With their support T.M. Healy was first elected MP for North Louth in 1892 which he continued to represent until 1910.<sup>46</sup> In the first election of that year they nominated a Redmondite candidate Richard Hazelton yet Healy managed to retain his seat by just 99 votes. In the December election Hazelton was victorious by a margin of 488 votes from an electorate of 4,547. A petition was lodged on Healy's behalf and the election was declared void. In the ensuing election in 1911 Mr. Augustine Roche was returned unopposed. Most of the campaigns were punctuated by violent incidents,<sup>47</sup> yet the oral evidence from this period tends to play this down:

There was some good crack in them times you know. This particular time Tim Healy was making his speech. Tim wore a beard and he was stopping over this woman and she got a hold of him by the beard and she shook him by the beard she says to him "I'd vote for the devil before I'd vote for you". "Right mam" he said and the humour broke out on him "if your friend's not on the field will you give me a scratch". [vote]<sup>48</sup>

This woman from Seatown was for Mr. Hazelton. She was ugly and whatever she said nasty up to him he [Healy] said down to her "well the way it is mam your words I may forget but your face I never will". There would be plenty of that sort of thing people shouting up at them, that kind of a slagging match but not fights.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>44</sup> Hoppen, *Conflict and conformity*, p. 132.

<sup>45</sup> Ua Dubhtaigh, *The book of Dundalk*, p. 24.

<sup>46</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 17 November 1917, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Ua Dubhtaigh, *The book of Dundalk*, pp. 26-9.

<sup>48</sup> Marron, Joe (interview).

<sup>49</sup> Hearty, Margaret (1916-1997) interview recorded December, 1997.

With high illiteracy it would appear that the securing of votes was of a highly personalised nature. Whereas the political issues of the day have long faded the humorous aspect of electioneering and the skill of the candidate as an orator are still remembered.

Disputes again arose in the Nationalist organisation of north Louth when the death of sitting MP Augustine Roche precipitated an election in 1916. Peter Hughes (secretary of the local UIP) and P.J. Morgan a Dundalk solicitor expressed interest in the nomination. Hazelton's nephew, P.J. Whitty, also made himself available. Prior to the nomination convention both Hughes and Morgan agreed to withdraw. As the meeting progressed the controversy erupted once again and Hughes was silenced until the convention had made its decision and left the meeting in protest. Within days Hughes became the election agent of Bernard Hamill, a prominent urban councillor, who with the editorial and financial help of a Dublin newspaper proprietor William T. Murphy opposed Whitty. Hamill was supported by the Healyite faction, whereas Whitty had the backing of the national organisation, T.F. McGahon (editor of the *Dundalk Democrat*), and the local Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH). Whitty won by 500 votes and Hughes severed his connections with the party. Herein lay the foundations of the Dundalk branches of the major political parties which were to emerge over the coming decades.

### **War until 1916**

The concept of war was not new to Dundalk because of its geographical location on the Slighe Miodhluachra or Great Northern Road. This route led to the Moyry Pass (a col through the hills of south Armagh) which was 'the most important land route connecting the plains of Leinster with Ulster from prehistoric times'.<sup>50</sup> Thus, in military terms Dundalk had been strategically important throughout the ages. The first permanent military barrack was established at Dundalk in a disused cambric factory located on

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<sup>50</sup> Gosling, Paul, *From Dún Deilca to Dundalk; the topography and archaeology of a medieval frontier town AD c. 1187-1700* (Dundalk, 1993), p. 242.

Parliament Square in 1797<sup>51</sup> which remained in British occupation until 13 April 1922.<sup>52</sup>

Coexisting alongside the regular (British) army was a part-time reserve force 'the Louth militia' renamed the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles in 1880.<sup>53</sup> Recruits received payment for one month's training a year and could be called up for full time duty within the British Isles or voluntary foreign service. A second category of recruit the 'special reservist' could be drafted abroad and received an additional £1 bounty. In December 1899 approximately 500 NCOs and men were posted to Sheffield and attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles. Due to heavy losses in South Africa orders reached Sheffield for replacement troops. The communiqué was specific that Militia men were exempt until all other sources had been exhausted. By mistake 127 'Special Reservists' of the Louth militia were assigned to the contingent bound for South Africa. A further request for the militia as a unit to volunteer for duty on the Cape was received on the 26 January 1900. When news reached Dundalk the media were perplexed commenting:

To those who witnessed the departure of the battalion and who heard the loudly expressed sentiments for Kruger and the Boers in the very face of their officers, this seems incredible. The same men cannot have so soon and so completely altered their sentiments. A few weeks residence in England cannot have had that extraordinary effect on their minds.<sup>54</sup>

A letter from an NCO serving with the militia proved enlightening:

The colonel was around the barrack rooms on Saturday. He told the men that did not want to go to the war to take a pace to the front; the men did not understand him and they stood still; they thought it was the men that would volunteer that were to take the pace. So he telegraphed the War Office that the whole regiment volunteered to the front. I hear on good authority that the offer was refused. I am very glad that the offer was refused, for I would lay down my rifle and refuse to go, no matter what the penalty would be, and several hundred along with me. There was only one company in the regiment that understood him and that was F company.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, Maureen, in *Tempest Annual*, 1941, pp. 52-57.

<sup>52</sup> Gavin, Joseph and O'Donnell, Stephen, *Military barracks Dundalk; a brief history*, (Dundalk, 1999), p. 89.

<sup>53</sup> Hall, Donal, 'The Louth militia mutiny of 1900' in *County Louth Archaeological and Historical Journal*, XXIV(2) (1998), p. 281.

<sup>54</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 3 February 1900, p. 4.

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

F company's refusal to volunteer is recorded in the regimental history which goes on to state that they were later 'persuaded' otherwise.<sup>56</sup> As the controversy gained momentum questions were asked in parliament. On 2 February 1900. Mr. Swift McNeill queried; 'why are not Irish regiments allowed to protect their own country with arms in their hands? Why are they sent away? Mr. W.M. Johnson (Belfast S) interjected; Because they are rebels. Mr. John Dillon (Mayo E) addresses the Speaker; May I ask you whether Irish rebels are good enough to fight behind in the Transvaal?<sup>57</sup> Five days later the remainder of the Louth militia was ordered to proceed to South Africa on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month. In parliament the following day the under-secretary of state for war was asked how volunteers for the Cape were recruited.<sup>58</sup> This agitation brought results and a staff officer was dispatched to Sheffield to re-solicit the Louth militia for voluntary service in South Africa. Of the 414 men paraded, almost half, 176 declined the offer. The mobilisation order was cancelled on the 17 February. By May the remainder were transferred to Cowshop Camp near Aldershot and by October most of the men (accused of letting the side down) returned home. Around the same time 1,100 men of the Inverness militia refused to volunteer unless 'they were given a guarantee that at its successful close they would be given a share in the gold mines'.<sup>59</sup>

The behaviour of the officers in misleading and 'persuading' men to risk their lives for a cause alien to many of them was immoral if not illegal. In such circumstances the conduct of the Louth militia could be deemed laudable. In 1908 local militia units were re-organised into territorial forces and thus could not refuse foreign service. Alone amongst these the Louth Militia was disbanded and passed un-lamented into history.

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<sup>56</sup> Hall, 'Louth militia mutiny', p. 281.

<sup>57</sup> *Hansard*, LXXVIII, 2 February 1900, p. 441.

<sup>58</sup> *Hansard*, LXXVIII, 8 February 1900, p. 910.

<sup>59</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 17 February 1900, p. 4.

## The Volunteers

The establishment of Edward Carson's 'Ulster Volunteer Force in January 1913<sup>60</sup> was reciprocated in the southern counties by the formation of the Irish Volunteers in November.<sup>61</sup> The subsequent arming of the Ulster Volunteers with illegally imported arms in early 1914 was met with a similar response by the Irish Volunteers in July 1914.<sup>62</sup> In Dundalk a corps of the Irish Volunteers was established following a meeting in the town hall attended by members of both branches of the AOH,<sup>63</sup> the Young Ireland Society, Sinn Féin, and other organisations. In June Dr. Hyde and Lord Ashbourne reviewed a contingent of 2,000 volunteers at Castlebellingham who were addressed by Eammon Ceannt, prominent local politicians and the parish administrator Rev. P. Lyons.<sup>64</sup>

The combination of the 'Curragh Mutiny', postponement of Home Rule and Redmond's British army recruitment speech at Woodenbridge in September 1914 caused the Volunteers to split.<sup>65</sup> The majority sided with Redmond but the rump retained the original name and 'soon came under the control of Eoin McNeill as chief of staff'. Many prominent members of the IRB, including Pearse, McDonagh and Plunket, had infiltrated the Volunteers and these remained with the minority grouping.<sup>66</sup>

A similar division occurred in Dundalk and the founder of the local Volunteer corps, Patrick Hughes, who had IRB connections, called a meeting in the town hall to re-assemble the corps. During the proceedings they were attacked by the Redmondite faction and a melee ensued with legs of tables being used as weapons.<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, the group was formed and through time the National Volunteers diminished in strength (110 enlisted in the British army) and the Irish Volunteers grew to about 140 men. It was this core

<sup>60</sup> Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, p. 305.

<sup>61</sup> Coogan, *The IRA*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>62</sup> Beckett, *The making of modern Ireland*, p. 433.

<sup>63</sup> Both branches were established in 1907. The AOH (board of Erin) were influential during the election of Hazelton and were pro-Redmondite. The AOH (Irish American Alliance or Boyle O'Reilly) were pro-Sinn Féin.

<sup>64</sup> Ua Dubhtaigh, *The book of Dundalk*, p. 82.

<sup>65</sup> Coogan, *The IRA*, p. 17.

<sup>66</sup> Hoppen, *Conflict and conformity*, pp. 147-8.

<sup>67</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 14 October 1914, p. 4.

group who later participated in the Easter Rising and the 'Troubles'.<sup>68</sup>

### Easter Week 1916

Around noon on Easter Monday 1916 James Connolly met William O'Brien on the steps of Liberty Hall and whispered: 'We are going out to be slaughtered'. O'Brien asked, 'is there any chance of success? Connolly replied, 'none whatever'.<sup>69</sup> Thus, it would appear that the rising was doomed from its inception.

In March 1916 Dundalk volunteer Patrick Hughes approached Pearse, Clark and McDermott to allocate an experienced organiser to take charge of the Louth brigade which comprised county Louth, south Armagh, south Monaghan and the borders of Meath. Donal O'Hannigan (Dan Hannigan), a volunteer since 1913 who had taken part in the Howth and Kilcoole gun-running events was dispatched to Dundalk just three weeks prior to Easter and assumed overall command.<sup>70</sup> On the Friday night prior to Easter Sunday Hannigan arrange a public meeting to be addressed by Pearse:

The idea was that if all was well for the rising we would have the officers [who] could be trusted to hand [in order] to give them instructions re arrangements etc. The general public was to be informed that Pearse was unavoidably absent.<sup>71</sup>

It was also a ruse to mislead the authorities as to Pearse's whereabouts and the activities of the Volunteers at such a crucial period.<sup>72</sup> The plan for the Louth brigades was that:

All units ,whom we reckoned as about 700 strong, were to assemble at the summit of Tara Hill by 7 p.m. on Sunday evening and I would proclaim the Republic. Then march to Dunboyne and rendezvous with Sean Boylan's men and proceed to Blanchardstown and take over the Flour Mills. Here sections of railway line would be removed and the artillery, which Pearse believed would be sent from Athlone, intercepted. By arrangement, a section of the Dublin Brigade would supply rifles and munitions from the S.S. Aud and we would hold the line open from Blanchardstown to Dublin in the event of the city being evacuated.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Gavin and O'Sullivan, *Dundalk a military history*, p. 78.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Martin, F.X, 'The 1916 rising - a *Coup d'État* or a 'bloody protest' in *Studia Hibernica*, 8, (1968), p. 126.

<sup>70</sup> Undated letter to the chairman, military service pensions board signed by over twenty Dundalk volunteers, O'Sullivan file in Irish military archives.

<sup>71</sup> O'Hannigan, Donal, undated statement, O'Sullivan file in Irish military archives.

<sup>72</sup> McEntee, Seán, *Episode at Easter* (Dublin, 1966), pp. 65-6.

<sup>73</sup> O'Hannigan (statement); see also Martin, *1916 rising*, p. 116.

An auxiliary plan, approved by McDermott, was the liberation of fifty German prisoners from the internment camp at Oldcastle. Earlier a letter in German had been smuggled to a 'prisoner well known to our people in Dublin' by a electrician who was on temporary employment in the camp. A sketch of the internal layout was procured by similar means and the operation was to take place on Easter Sunday night.<sup>74</sup>

The Friday meeting in Dundalk was postponed until the following night and arrangements made for an assembly on Sunday:

We mobilised at 10 am on Easter Sunday at the John Boyle O'Reilly hall in Clanbrassil St., each man carrying two days rations as ordered. Arms consisted of twenty shotguns, three rifles and four revolvers. There were 110 men in the party at the Workhouse Hill.<sup>75</sup>

A volunteer named McCrave carried a 45 pin fire revolver described as:

a small cannon and real old fashioned and where he got the bullets I do not know but he had it fully loaded and the brass pins sticking out all round it like a porcupine.<sup>76</sup>

The column marched to Ardee to meet the local contingent. There, twenty rifles and ammunition were captured from the 'Redmond Volunteers' and distributed amongst the men.<sup>77</sup> Together they proceeded towards Slane and were joined en route by men from Dunleer.<sup>78</sup> Prior to leaving Dundalk a dozen men under Sean McEntee had been chosen:

to assemble with arms at the Gaelic League Rooms [to] seize rifles belonging to the AOH. The job was arranged to take place at 4 p.m. and we were ready to proceed [when] a message arrived announcing the cancellation by McNeill of all manoeuvres.<sup>79</sup>

On receipt of the order, McEntee dispatched messengers to inform Hannigan of the cancellation order. Soon afterwards McEntee followed in a seized motor car. Simultaneously the couriers and McEntee reached Hannigan between Ardee and Slane<sup>80</sup> however:

<sup>74</sup> O'Hannigan (statement).

<sup>75</sup> McGuill, Joe, statement dated 10 June 1943, O'Sullivan file in Irish military archives.

<sup>76</sup> Seal, Seamus, letter dated 5 June 1956, O'Sullivan file in Irish military archives.

<sup>77</sup> O'Hannigan (statement).

<sup>78</sup> Gavin and O'Sullivan, *Dundalk a military history*, p. 82.

<sup>79</sup> Hughes, Patrick, letter to the secretary, 1916 roll of honour committee applying to sign the Dundalk company's 1916 roll of honour, O'Sullivan file, Irish military archives.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

Probably owing to my knowledge of how the position stood at GHQ this order was not accepted as final so the whole column marched on to Slane where we encamped for the night. For some reason two messengers despatched to Dublin did not return at the specified time. As the greater number of our men were workers who had to report for work on Monday morning and if the counter-word was correct they were unable to return in time and probably lose their positions. I was in a dilemma. If I permitted them to return and the order was not genuine how was I to mobilise them again?<sup>81</sup>

One of the messengers was reputed to have headed for Dundalk instead of Dublin and 'was seen the next morning on the street'.<sup>82</sup>

At 3 o'clock on Easter Monday morning in the midst of torrential rain the brigade quit and began their march back to Dundalk. Two RIC sergeants had been tracking the group since the previous day and followed in their wake. When they reached Collon:

there was a shop, a beer shop. We asked the two peelers to rap the door so that our boys could get a refresher or a cup of tea. After some time a decent looking woman looked out the window. She could not make us out but when she saw the two RIC men, she opened the premises. Any of our men who remained at Collon got leave to take one drink only and I was ordered to stand guard at the bar to see that they would not get any more. Then they got some breakfast after that, but the peelers were the boys who drank their belly-full.<sup>83</sup>

Believing the exercise cancelled, most of the Dundalk contingent had been collected by car from Slane on Sunday night. The group was further depleted in Collon when the Dunleer contingent and more of the Dundalk men departed. Tired, rain-soaked and dejected those remaining re-formed and proceeded homeward. About four miles from Dundalk they were overtaken by McEntee with orders 'that I was to carry out my original plans'.<sup>84</sup> By this time the fifty men remaining were deployed to confiscate motor cars from patrons returning from a race meeting. The two sergeants and the occupants of the captured vehicles were taken prisoner but were released later.<sup>85</sup> Earlier the motor convoy had proceeded to Castlebellingham and stopped at about 7 p.m. to re-provision. Whilst

<sup>81</sup> O'Hannigan (statement).

<sup>82</sup> Green, Arthur, statement dated 22 April 1916 (though probably written much later), O'Sullivan file, Irish military archives.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> O'Hannigan (statement).

<sup>85</sup> *Sin Féin rebellion handbook, Easter 1916* (Dublin, 1917), p. 110, in the possession of Edward Filgate, Louth village.

there they were approached by two local RIC men who were taken prisoner as were a third constable, McGee, and an army lieutenant, Robert Dunvill, who arrived on the scene shortly afterwards. They were placed against railings about 120 yards from the police barrack and guns trained on them. Dunvill heard a shot and someone shout and discovered he was wounded. The shout was from constable McGee who was also wounded and died later.

On 9 June 1916 John (Seán) McEntee, Frank Martin, Denis Leahy and James Sally were court martialled in Richmond Barracks in connection with the incident. In evidence a local publican, John Byrne, Castlebellingham, who helped the other RIC men to escape, stated that at the inquest he had named the man (McHugh) who fired the fatal shot. One of the press-ganged chauffeurs, said that; 'there were five rebels in the car sitting behind him, one of them fired at the police. He heard the man say that he got first blood'.<sup>86</sup> Another lady, who got a doctor for McGee, identified the same man as being responsible. All of this evidence was presented at the inquest but the police did not follow it up. Instead the four accused, one of whom (Sally) maintained that he was not even there, were prosecuted.<sup>87</sup> It is generally believed that the bullet which wounded Dunvill exited and fatally injured constable McGee.<sup>88</sup> However, at the trial there was repeated mention of at least two shots being discharged and medical evidence given by Dr. Patrick J. O'Hagan states that constable McGee sustained four bullet wounds which caused his death.<sup>89</sup> McEntee, Martin and Leahy received death sentences commuted to penal servitude for life. Sally got ten years penal servitude with five years' remission.<sup>90</sup>

Prior to the shooting a convoy of cars headed for Slane driven by the chauffeurs:

We were obliged to get off the main road and on going round a bend I noticed that a number of our cars were missing. I sent three men back to investigate, they reported that a large saloon car had overturned in the ditch and that there were five or six dead bodies in the car. I went back myself and found that the dead bodies, which were supposed to be in the car, were the

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, (inquest) 6 May 1916, p. 8, (trial) 10 June 1916, p. 4 and 17 June, p. 6.

<sup>88</sup> Gavin and O'Sullivan, *Dundalk a military history*, p. 83.

<sup>89</sup> *Rebellion handbook*, p. 109.

<sup>90</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 17 June 1916, p. 6.

shadows of stumps of trees from the opposite side of the fence.<sup>91</sup>

The driver of the fifth car from the rear of the convoy 'ran his car into a ditch and cut the rear cars off'.<sup>92</sup> Every effort to clear the road proved impossible and most of the detached group trekked home but McEntee proceeded on to Dublin and five others eventually reached their comrades at Mulhuddart two of whom later departed for Dundalk.<sup>93</sup>

On Tuesday we got in contact with Sean Boylan whose company joined us that night, we occupied Tyrrellstown House and endeavoured to get into communication with Tom Ashe and GHQ. By this time Jim O'Sullivan had evacuated the Cabra area. I believed the only hope was to join up with Tom Ashe who I believed had arms intended for us. On Wednesday I received a message from Ashe to meet the following day. He was unable to keep the appointment and he sent me word to meet him at Dan McAlester house in Donabate on Sunday morning, so accompanied by one of Boylan's men we went to keep the appointment to find Tom and his men had surrendered some hours earlier. On our way back we ran into the 5th Lancers in Swords. That night we evacuated Tyrrelstown House.<sup>94</sup>

One of the messengers sent to Dublin was a sixteen year old lad Peter Clifford:

I arrived in the city that evening and got in touch with a man [at a rebel checkpoint on] Cabra Bridge. He told me there would be a girl going to the GPO in half an hour [and] I went down with her. When I went in James Connolly was sitting at a table writing. I told him Donald Hannigan sent me to see how things were in the city... He told me he did not know Donald or Paddy Hughes and to go back and get [the men] into the city.<sup>95</sup>

Despite being detained by the RIC, getting lost and having to evade British patrols, he made his way back to the group's last-known position. By then they had disbanded and after a circuitous journey lasting days he succeeded in getting home only to be arrested during a general round-up of suspected volunteers one of whom was Arthur Green:

I was not many minutes lying down when the front door was thrown off its hinges by four peelers and six soldiers with guns and pick-hacks. The brutes handcuffed me and ransacked the house. They even dug up some of the back garden. Then they marched me up to the Dundalk courthouse. When we arrived at the Market Square, there was nothing but peelers and soldiers in motor cars, all heavily armed. [There] I saw twenty-five or thirty of my fellow townsmen also. We were kept there for about one hour or so, and then marched up to goal and

<sup>91</sup> O'Hannigan (statement).

<sup>92</sup> Green (statement).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> O'Hannigan (statement).

<sup>95</sup> Clifford, Peter, Sworn statement in the possession of Edward Filgate, Louth village.

lodged in a cell each until Saturday evening. We were medically examined by a doctor Gill and handcuffed again. Under a very strong guard we were led to the GNR station, packed into carriages with soldiers and peelers guarding us, on our journey bound for Richmond Barracks.

On reaching Amiens Street railway station they were greeted by 'military on horseback and on foot inside the station house. You'd imagine they had the Tsar and all his army captured'.<sup>96</sup> The captives were marched to Richmond Barracks and on the following day were interrogated by Scotland Yard detectives. Green and a companion J. Quinn were tried together and the RIC men who had followed the group were called to give evidence against them. 'Poor Quinn admitted to some of the questions, but I contradicted everything. Rotten Wymes tried his best to hang us. As for sergeant Connolly he never opened his mouth'.<sup>97</sup> Quinn was sentenced to three years but was liberated the following year. Within weeks Green was released on to the streets of Dublin with no travel pass and no money. After walking about for some time he was approached by four girls who asked if he had been just set free. 'They then asked me had I my fare. I said no. So they took me almost to Amiens Street station and one of them gave me a 10/- note to pay my fare home'.<sup>98</sup>

The oral evidence would seem to concur with F.X. Martin's assessment that the rising was 'ill-conceived and unrealistic' particularly in the country areas.<sup>99</sup> The obvious failures were McNeill's countermanding order, which undoubtedly depleted the Louth contingent, and the quality and quantity of arms in their possession. However, that Connolly, who had been party to the planning, was unaware of the local leader Hughes but more especially the organiser from HQ Hannigan seems remarkable. Especially so, given the pivotal role allocated to this group in securing an escape route if the rising in Dublin failed and reinforcements should it succeed.<sup>100</sup> The behaviour of the Louth volunteers says much for their courage but highlights a major deficiency in the military training

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<sup>96</sup> Green (statement).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Martin, *1916 rising*, pp. 111 and 117.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

required to oppose the then-strongest army in the world.

Whilst the wounding of lieutenant Dunvill and the death of constable McGee is still portrayed as a regrettable accident, as in the oral transcripts and the statement of McEntee at his trial, the evidence of three neutral witnesses indicates otherwise. However, the behaviour of the authorities in discounting the same accounts with regard to the named individual, the targeting of people who whilst involved did not commit the crime and the severity of penalty is a fair indicator of the justice system in response to political violence prevailing in Ireland at the time. That people in Castlebellingham assisted the remaining RIC men to escape and got medical attention for McGee intimates that the rising was not universally popular. Local press coverage in the aftermath confirms this.<sup>101</sup> In addition when, the Catholic administrator of the parish of Dundalk, Fr. McKeown, spoke to his flock on the matter he told them 'as a nation we have sinned and we have suffered'.<sup>102</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the rising at least twenty-five men from the urban area were arrested and deported to England but were released before the end of the year.<sup>103</sup>

### **The 1918 General Election**

On 13 November 1917 sixty-two Sinn Féin prisoners were transferred from Mountjoy to the Dundalk jail and went on hunger strike. This provided a rallying point for demonstrations which left the town in turmoil.<sup>104</sup> Within ten days they were liberated and amidst 'excitement and enthusiastic scenes' departed for home<sup>105</sup> as preparations were begun for the forthcoming general election. Sinn Féin's policy of autonomy was bitterly ridiculed by the Redmondite faction who controlled the local councils. In December de Valera addressed a meeting in town at which it was stated that the chairman of the LCC had described Sinn Féin as a murder organisation.<sup>106</sup> Permission to fly the tricolour over

<sup>101</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 6 May 1916, p. 4.

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

<sup>103</sup> See Appendix G.

<sup>104</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 17 November 1917, p. 4.

<sup>105</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 24 November 1917, p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 8 December 1917, p. 4.

the town hall was refused by the DUDC as was the use of the premises if the weather should turn inclement.<sup>107</sup> By 1918 drilling and route marches were again commenced and with resistance to conscription, proscription of 'Gaelic organisations' (including Sinn Féin) and internment, attitudes became even more hardened.

For the 1918 elections county Louth had been reduced to a single seat constituency by a boundary review commission and two outside nominees Mr Richard Hazleton (Nationalist) and J.J. O'Kelly (Sinn Féin) contested the seat. O'Kelly was successful in a bitter campaign which often turned violent. On 25 November a nationalist rally in Dundalk was attacked by 200 Sinn Féin supporters wielding hurley sticks.<sup>108</sup> The overwhelming victory of Sinn Féin nationally led to the 'First Dáil' in 1919 which gave legitimacy to the 'War of Independence'.

### **The War of Independence**

After the 1918 election the Sinn Féin movement began raiding houses for arms and explosives. These were countered by the authorities with searches and arrests. In March 1918 Peter Hughes (chairman of the DUDC) and J. Berrills were released from internment in England. On their return they were accorded full honours: a torch light procession, and the singing of the 'Soldier's Song' as they marched through the town, with the tricolour openly displayed on the town hall and on some private houses. De Valera paid a return visit in May and was introduced to a large impromptu meeting as the 'President of the Irish Republic'.

Tension mounted following the first local fatality in the War of Independence. In June 1919 a traveller with P.J. Carrolls, Matthew Murphy, died from a wound received whilst travelling as a passenger in a hired car which failed to stop at a military checkpoint on the Newry road. Although the soldier who fired the shot had aimed at the engine of the car, the bullet ricochet and wounded Murphy who died three days later in hospital.

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 30 November 1918, p. 4.

However, the inquest found that ‘reasonable care had not been taken by the military’. A few days later a soldier was berated and stoned as he walked through town.<sup>109</sup> In July the populace was further goaded by an army unit singing British military songs and shouting abusive remarks about Sinn Féin as they paraded through the streets in celebration of the Versailles Treaty. In response a counter demonstration burned the Union Jack at the Market Square. An IRA raid on Greenore railway station in August 1919 yielded nineteen much-needed rifles. However, it would appear that support for the ‘movement’ was not universal until it impacted at a personal level whilst men were enjoying their traditional Sunday morning walk:

There were very mixed feelings. The better off people didn’t want to know till the Black and Tans came. [They] treated them all equal they were Irish, they were no good and that changed the feeling in town. Now there was a group of men pretty high up, impeccably dressed and in groups twos and threes, they’d all be going for their Sunday morning walk. [This Sunday] republicans had cut down a whole lot of trees to block the road the night before, and when our gentlemen, businessmen, were out on their walk the Black and Tans made them clear the road. That made an awful lot of them republicans.<sup>110</sup>

By mid 1920 the security forces in town, as in the rest of Ireland, were practically besieged.<sup>111</sup> Even a simple task like getting a haircut was worrisome:

I cut their hair. You didn’t want their custom but you had to take it. They wouldn’t allow the gown to cover the revolver sitting on their knee. It would be cocked too. And the play boys waiting for them was sitting with the revolver. I remember a fellow worked along with me nicked one of them with his razor he jumps up of the chair and puts the revolver to his head. I thought he was going to shoot him.<sup>112</sup>

Between February and August 1920 the nearby RIC barracks of Ballytrain, Louth, Blackrock and Forkhill were attacked and burned as was the Inland Revenue building in Dundalk<sup>113</sup> and Carlingford court-house.<sup>114</sup> Also in August the business premises of Craigs was fire-bombed. Ten of the thirteen employees, all of whom lived overhead, managed to

<sup>109</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 7 June 1919, p. 4.

<sup>110</sup> Beagley, Annie (1913-1997) interview recorded October 1997.

<sup>111</sup> Townshend, Charles, *The British campaign in Ireland*, (Oxford, 1975), p.190.

<sup>112</sup> Marron, Joe (1899-1998) interview recorded December 1996.

<sup>113</sup> Bellew, Michael, *Items of activities*, O’Sullivan file, Irish military archives.

<sup>114</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 17 and 24 April 1920, 13 July 1920, and 14 August 1920.

escape but their colleagues died in the blaze. The neighbouring firm of McGorish's was engulfed. Both buildings were gutted and damage was sustained by an adjoining bank. Simultaneously, a window display in Melville's shop window was fired but the owner managed to quell the fire and save his business. Craig and Melville were Protestant but were apolitical, McGorish was a Catholic. At a meeting of townspeople Mr. J. McGuill (a prominent Sinn Féin businessman) said:

he had been approached by a section of men with a list of houses they intended to burn , and he had threatened them with a gun and told them that if anything of the kind occurred he would deal drastically with them. But for his action, he added, half a dozen Protestant houses would have been burned.<sup>115</sup>

He also added that it was not a reprisal for the pogroms in Belfast. Whilst this is difficult to reconcile it would appear that it was not an officially sanctioned operation.<sup>116</sup> However, Catholic men were put out of business and work if it suited the cause:

Me father took Inglis's bread here, as a sub-agent in 1918 and by 1921 he had four or five men working for him. When the pogrom was on in Belfast the IRA came to our house one night and he had to sign that he wouldn't take in the Protestant bread from Belfast. The bread vans were burned out the next day and he was forced to work as a breadman. My mother was very bitter over it because she was expecting and the baby died. She claimed it was the annoyance of the men coming. She came down out of bed and saw the revolvers on the table. But they were very nice and very gentle about the whole thing. I suppose they had a job to do, but it didn't do us any good. I was talking to a ninety-year old man recently and I wouldn't be surprised if he was one of the four. He could tell me exactly what happened. He didn't seem to have any regrets. He thought it was a great thing.<sup>117</sup>

In April three RIC men were relieved of their pistols. The first raid at Seatown yielded two.<sup>118</sup> A third was seized when a group of men surprised a three-man patrol in Bridge Street but this also resulted in the first IRA fatality, Thomas Mulholland.<sup>119</sup>

These crowd of fellas came running down the lane and the next was the revally of shots. Everyone run up the street. Tommy Mulholland was shot outside Daly's shop and run down

<sup>115</sup> *Irish Independent*, Saturday August 28 1920 page 5.

<sup>116</sup> Gray, Allen, *Critique of Dundalk a military history* for the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society, in the possession of author.

<sup>117</sup> McCann, Hugh, born 1920, interview recorded January 1998.

<sup>118</sup> *The British in Ireland*, 'Police reports 1914-21' CO.904/ 37.2, dated 16 April 1920.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*

the middle of John Street. He fell outside of Henry Brown's house. Lilly Trainor whispered the Act of Contrition into his ear and we were all standing round him.<sup>120</sup>

The officer responsible for the shooting was sergeant Bustard<sup>121</sup> who also ran a small shop to the north of Dundalk; he and his family were ordered to leave town by the IRA:

they were lovely people But I can always remember we were up the whole night watching Bustards getting out of town. He had to go. The family was threatened.<sup>122</sup>

Intimidation of personnel in the security forces and those assisting them was commonplace. Mary McCaffrey, who did washing for the police in Dundalk, received a letter marked 'RIP. Make your peace with God. You are doomed'.<sup>123</sup> An RIC constable, Michael Hogan, was forced to resign whilst home on leave.<sup>124</sup> To enforce the 'Munitions Strike' some railway workers were forced to sign declarations to cease working on troop trains.<sup>125</sup> Train driver Duffy and fireman Kerr were kidnapped after working on a train whose driver had been suspended for so doing.<sup>126</sup> And another train driver had the upper portion of his body tarred for driving troops the previous week.<sup>127</sup>

On 22 August 1920 three members of Fianna Éireann, John Hughes, Jimmy Hughes (Boozer) and Phil Hearty, attacked a military patrol in Jocelyn Street. The operation was completely unplanned. John Hughes and Phil Hearty got ahead of the patrol which consisted of Sergeant Clark, Constable Brennan and two Tans (Isdell and Witherden). 'Boozer, who was behind, shouted "hands up" and the shooting commenced'.<sup>128</sup> Clark escaped injury but Brennan was killed and the other two wounded.<sup>129</sup>

Sergeant Clark recognised me and made this known privately, but did not use this knowledge

<sup>120</sup> Charity, Louise, born 1911, interview recorded April 1998.

<sup>121</sup> *The British in Ireland*, 'Police reports 1914-21' CO.904/37.2, dated 16 April 1920.

<sup>122</sup> Waller, Easter, born 1915, interview recorded May 1997.

<sup>123</sup> *The British in Ireland*, 'Police reports 1914-21' CO.904/ 298, dated 15 April 1920.

<sup>124</sup> *The British in Ireland*, 'Police reports 1914-21' CO.904/ 31.6, dated 29 July 1920.

<sup>125</sup> *The British in Ireland*, 'Police reports 1914-21' CO.904/ 345.11, dated 22 July 1920,

<sup>126</sup> *Dundalk Examiner*, 24 July 1920, p. 4.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Hearty, Phil, Statement dated 2 November 1983, O'Sullivan file, Irish military archives.

The newspaper account says six of seven civilians were involved but Hearty maintains that of the original group who had just left a Fianna Éireann meeting only three took part in the attack.

<sup>129</sup> *Irish Independent*, 23 August 1920, p. 5.

against me when I was arrested and brought to Dundalk Military Barracks.<sup>130</sup>

Hearty's gun had been captured at the railway station some weeks earlier:

Hurley was the station constable and would be coming up from platforms through a long passage to the sliding door where the checker always stood. Exact times were known. With some other members of the Fianna in support [I] went up to the ticket checker and unobtrusively had the doors closed over and said to Hurley "Give me your gun" and Hurley just put his hand on his gun and handed it to [me]. It only took a minute or two.<sup>131</sup>

In retaliation British troops wrecked the Sinn Féin hall in Seatown, and the licensed premises of leading Sinn Féiner John McGuill and that of his son James. The Sinn Féin flag was removed from Seatown Castle, shop windows were smashed and the John Boyle O'Reilly (AOH) hall raided.<sup>132</sup> As attitudes hardened government-approved reprisals began. Initially it took the form of local men (mostly innocent) being forced to repair IRA damage. However, as the IRA campaign escalated in 1921, often involving the death or injury of security forces, the retaliation became more sinister. When Constable Willis Campbell was shot dead on 17 June 1921<sup>133</sup> two young men, Patrick and John Watters, were taken from their beds over the family public-house in Seatown and executed the following night. A third brother (Bernard) made his escape through a rear door and hid under a nearby bridge while the killings took place.<sup>134</sup> The perpetrators were never identified but the operation bore all the hallmarks of a reprisal killing.<sup>135</sup>

When King George V made his appeasement speech at the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament on 22 June 1921 it became apparent that Ireland would be partitioned. The next day Frank Aiken, Commandant of the IRA's 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division since March, launched an attack on a train transporting the 10<sup>th</sup> Hussars to Dublin from the Belfast ceremony at Adavoyle just miles from Dundalk. Three soldiers, a rail worker

<sup>130</sup> Hearty (statement).

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Dundalk Examiner*, 28 August 1920, p. 4.

<sup>133</sup> *The British in Ireland*, 'Police reports 1914-21' CO.904/406, dated 17 June 1921.

<sup>134</sup> Waller, Easter, born 1915, interview recorded May 1997 and O'Callaghan, Sarah (1904-1998) interview recorded January 1997.

<sup>135</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 25 June 1921, p. 4.

and sixty-three horses were killed.<sup>136</sup> The final IRA action of the ‘War of Independence’ in the Dundalk area was the attack on the requisitioned house, cum RIC barracks, at Plaster about a mile from town. Over the two-year period about twenty lives were lost, six of whom were civilians. In addition many men had to leave the area, some never to return:

Jamie was an IRA man and me sister Rosie was Cumann na mBan and the Black and Tans would be always looking for them. But he went away from the quay on the Margaret Lockington or one of them boats into the middle of the ocean in a bacon box and then went on to America. He died out there. Took bad health went on the beer and everything.<sup>137</sup>

It would also appear that help came from the most unexpected quarters as the daughter of a prominent Nationalist urban councillor Thomas Gosling recalls:

The guns were put into safe houses and there was a lot of men on the run who got away. Even though you were against them, we weren’t in favour of the shooting, but definitely we wanted an all Ireland. I do remember one man from Blackrock and he stayed in our house. It was all arranged that the train would stop at the signal cabin and the next day he was put on the train. He used to write from America. How I know so much about it they all came back and got any jobs that was going in the ESB and government offices.<sup>138</sup>

Women also played a significant role particularly in clandestine operations:

Oh! I remember Aiken dressed as a woman. There was an English woman Mrs. Slattery out at Drumintee. She was a fine big woman and she’d come into town with an ass and cart with a chum and butter on it. If there was business to be done in the town he’d dress in her clothes and go round with the milk, passing papers and this kind of thing.<sup>139</sup>

This particular lady remembers waking up one night and seeing her mother, who was in Cumann na mBann, hiding guns under the flagstones of the kitchen floor. She went to town the next day and told some people ‘but word then got to the police barrack’. One of the policemen had known her mother in their younger days. ‘He had a notion of her and he give me mother the tip they were to be raided’. An old man living next door hid the guns in his manure heap. The police raided their home which was also a ‘safe house’ but never found them. Her grandmother was also involved:

My granny, Biddy, lived in Duck Lane. When there’d be anything on me mother would put the skylight up to give her the word and Biddy would come over to help her. It seems there was

<sup>136</sup> Harnden, Toby *Bandit country; the IRA & south Armagh* (London, 1999), p. 96.

<sup>137</sup> Charity, Louise, born 1913, interview recorded April 1998.

<sup>138</sup> Flynn, Maureen, born 1913, interview recorded January 1997 and O’Callaghan, Sarah (interview).

<sup>139</sup> Waller (interview).

papers that no one would take full responsibility for. The policemen were very good to her and called her Ma. But what did she do? She put the papers round her leg under the big black stockings and the big skirt and the red petticoat. As she was coming near the barracks didn't Ma collapse and was taken into the barrack, revived and left home to the door. I was only a kid but I can always remember her coming over and saying to my mother "Maggie don't, ever ask me to do a thing like that again".<sup>140</sup>

However, not all families were so united:

Me father never bothered with politics. He couldn't understand. He had a big barrel of oats for the horse. One time the Tans was coming and the guns was put in the middle of the oats. Me father went to get oats for the horse and when he put in the bucket he hit the guns. He lost the head and went for the guards. Me mother got all the brushes in the street and put them into the oats with the handles up. When the guards came she said "will you have sense sure he's drunk he doesn't know what he's doing". All the women in the street helped put the guns in Elaine Shaw's ass's cart and put bags of chaff over them and she went over the bridge pass the Tans. They never stopped her because she was an old woman. She carried more guns and IRA papers and everything in that cart.<sup>141</sup>

Other women often assumed more responsible and dangerous roles:

One time there was two fellows asking where Minnie Campbell lived. Minnie was the quarter master in the IRA and she was in charge of Castletown grave yard. I took them out and showed them. They says to Minnie "we're out of ammunition, will we be able to get some". Have you the old cartridges because we can fill them again. So I followed them and she took them up the grave yard and there was a vault with three coffins in it. She opens the centre coffin and takes out ammunition and gave it to them that's where she kept it.<sup>142</sup>

Amidst the turmoil the population tried to live a 'normal' life and there were even occasions when the belligerents were able to laugh together at their predicament:

they used to say the rosary outside the jail and the blackguards would come out with hoses and drown them. Myself and McCourt were doing a military sketch at a charity concert in the town hall. He says - my sister has a great job in the jail -What's she doing in the jail - She's working in the hosiery department. And six of the larriers (Tans) were sitting across the front of the stage with the revolver on their knee. But they took it in good heart.<sup>143</sup>

Neither were the security forces completely shunned by the whole population:

[The 'Tans'] used to guard the big bridge and they had a dance hall and all the married women of the lane used to go round and they'd be dancing in the barrack with the soldiers.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Charity (interview).

<sup>142</sup> Roslyn, Ronald (1914-1999) interview recorded June 1997.

<sup>143</sup> Marron, Joe (1899-1998) interview recorded December 1996.

Now this was the start of women going out with other men. We were in it one Easter Sunday night and there was this thing in the window like an Easter egg. Nelly McGahon put it in her pocket. They met Joe McGuill and he says, "what have you". We took an Easter Egg. "Show it to me" he says. He gave them money saying, "go on, don't say you gave it to me it's not an Easter Egg". It was a hand-grenade, but they thought it was an Easter Egg.<sup>144</sup>

With the signing of the truce an uneasy peace settled on Dundalk and its environs and many of the IRA members who had been on the run returned home.<sup>145</sup> By April 1922 all the RIC barracks were evacuated including those of Anne Street and Bridge Street:

I remember all the women in Featherbed Lane running with pots and pans and me mother coming out with a big round pan with two handles on it. The boys didn't care what they took. They took blankets and everything out of the [Bridge Street] barrack that time.<sup>146</sup>

On the 13 April 1922 British troops vacated the army barrack which was then occupied by men of the 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division under General Aiken who was neutral on the treaty.<sup>147</sup> However, two battalions and Brigadier Patrick McKenna, under his command did not concur and attended the anti-treaty general convention on 26 March 1922 at which Liam Lynch was elected Chief of Staff of the 'Irregulars'. The failed joint IRA northern offensive of April-June agreed between Collins and Lynch and commanded by Aiken resulted in the practical annihilation of the IRA in Northern Ireland.<sup>148</sup> Border incursions by British troops and the influx of hundreds of refugees into Dundalk led to retaliatory sectarian killings by the 4<sup>th</sup> Northern. British pressure was brought to bear on the government to dislodge the anti-treaty forces from the Four Courts which they had occupied on 14 April 1922.<sup>149</sup> Bolstered by its successes in the recent general election the attack on the Dublin 'Irregulars' began on the 28 June 1922 and the Civil War commenced.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Charity (interview).

<sup>145</sup> Gavin and O'Sullivan, *Dundalk a military history*, p.100.

<sup>146</sup> Charity (interview).

<sup>147</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 15 April 1922, p. 4.

<sup>148</sup> Hopkinson, Michael, *Green against green; the Irish civil war* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 83-5.

<sup>149</sup> Lee, Joseph, *Ireland 1912-1985 politics and society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 57.

<sup>150</sup> Hoppen, *Conflict and conformity*, p. 189.

## The Civil War

Although dismayed by the violation of the election pact, which he had helped to broker, Aiken still endeavoured to reconcile differences by constitutional means.<sup>151</sup> He wrote to General Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Defence, on 6 July calling for an immediate truce, an all army convention to elect an army council and a recall of third Dáil to form a constitution<sup>152</sup> which Mulcahy refused. At a subsequent meeting he informed Mulcahy that he would not attack Irregulars even if ordered to do so but at the same time he 'would not fight him because that fight would only ruin the country without gaining any ground for the republic'. After the meeting Aiken went to see Liam Lynch in Limerick in an effort to halt the hostilities there but was unsuccessful. On his return orders awaited him to attack the irregulars in his division and to report with his staff to Beggars Bush on 15 July. While discussing the impending conference with his officers arrangements were made for the concealment of arms and munitions in the event of a split with Headquarters. The encounter with Mulcahy proved futile and Aiken returned to Dundalk. He awoke the following morning with 'two Thompsons at my nose' and along with 300 of his men was imprisoned in the local goal.<sup>153</sup> Whilst Aiken was in Limerick Emmet Dalton, director of military operations for the Provisional Government, visited Dundalk and placed General Dan Hogan, commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Northern Division, in charge of the town.<sup>154</sup> Hogan's pro-treaty troops surrounded the town the previous night and two of Aiken's men were killed trying to escape from Anne Street barrack. Aiken gained parole and visited Mulcahy to demand his release and that of his men. Mulcahy questioned their loyalty but agreed to release them if they guaranteed not to attack the government and desist from violent actions but Aiken refused the offer.<sup>155</sup> Agreement had been reached that the officers would

<sup>151</sup> Skener, Liam, *Politicians by accident* (Dublin, 1946), p. 158.

<sup>152</sup> Aiken to Mulcahy, letter dated 6 July 1922 in Mulcahy papers UCD archive P7A/175.

<sup>153</sup> Aiken to officers and men of 4<sup>th</sup> northern division, 17 July 1922 in Mulcahy papers UCD archive P7A/175.

<sup>154</sup> Younger, Carlton, *Ireland's civil war* (London, 1968), p. 375.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

be treated as officers confined to barracks and parole given to Aiken to 'sort out the mess' neither of which transpired.<sup>156</sup> Thus, Aiken's anti-treaty stance was decided. His adjutant John McCoy, who had accompanied Aiken to the Beggars Bush meeting remained in the city and on his return to Dundalk on 16 July found the town under Hogan's command.<sup>157</sup> He immediately regrouped the men still at liberty to prepare for two of the most daring exploits of the 1919-23 period.

### **The 'Hole in the Wall'**

Popularly known as the 'hole in the wall incident', 200 Irregular troops clandestinely entered Dundalk on 27 July 1922. A small group assembled on the Ardee Road and on a prearranged signal from Aiken exploded a mine on an external wall of the jail yard where 100 prisoners were exercising. As the men stormed through the breach and made good their escape street barriers were erected, and government posts attacked.<sup>158</sup> McCoy, who led the operation, was arrested and a number of government troops were killed during a gun battle on the Castleblaney Road.<sup>159</sup> One interviewee maintained that Aiken made for the nearby infirmary; donned the habit of a Mercy nun and escaped.<sup>160</sup> Within days he issued an appeal to the pro-treaty troops to lay down their arms.<sup>161</sup> Meanwhile preparations were in train for re-taking Dundalk.

### **The Capture of Dundalk**

In the early morning of 15 August 1922 Aiken's forces infiltrated Dundalk; some took over the telegraph office as the remainder dispersed to pre-arranged positions:

[At the barrack] there were two parties. About forty men in all. Both were fully aware of the

<sup>156</sup> Aiken to officers and men, P7A/175.

<sup>157</sup> Gavin and O'Sullivan, *Dundalk a military history*, p. 116.

<sup>158</sup> Neeson, Eoin, *The Civil War in Ireland*, (Cork, 1966).

<sup>159</sup> Gavin, *Dundalk a military history*, p. 116.

<sup>160</sup> McDermott, interview recorded June 2000. During an interview, Frank Aiken Junior expressed his father's reluctance to discuss this period of his life and had no particular knowledge of his means of disguise. However, in answer to a query as to why his father grew a moustache he was told 'I grew it as a disguise and took it off as a disguise'. Thus, he believed, the incident described seemed quite credible.

<sup>161</sup> Aiken to members of the IRA serving with the provisional government dated 3 August 1922 in Mulcahy papers (letter five) UCD Archive P7A/175.

barracks routine and military patrols. Tommy Caee of Newry was constantly bringing out information from inside the barrack during the weeks to the 15 August and during the attack on that morning was with the Anti-treaty force (Point Road, gate) commanded by Aiken, himself and accompanied by Todd Andrews. Malachy Quinn was in charge of the other party which was to enter by the main gate. Mines were brought in that morning. Two mines were considered sufficient but a third mine was also taken in case of any contingency. In addition to rifles and revolvers the attacking force had an ample supply of bombs and grenades.<sup>162</sup>

At around 4 p.m. the duty officer, alerted by a sentry, proceeded to cut a wire found outside the main gate and was fired on. Simultaneously mines began exploding. The Point Road gate was demolished but another at the main gate failed. Aiken's group dispersed throughout the barrack, exploding bombs in the officers' quarters, the hospital and the lower floors of A and B blocks causing major damage, death and injury. The garrison was manned by 300 pro-treaty troops. Most of the senior officers were absent and the remainder were rendered helpless by the explosions. Resistance was soon quelled and government casualties were six dead and ten wounded (one of whom died later) against Aiken's thirty wounded and one killed by an accidental explosion at the main gate. Both Bridge Street and Anne Street barracks were taken without opposition and 240 republican prisoners were released from jail and their place taken by government troops.<sup>163</sup>

A bewildered population witnessed a flurry of activity over the coming days. Armed men patrolled the streets as the barrack stores were removed in commandeered transport:

Somebody walked in and said I want a truck. The driver said "I have to see the boss". The man produced a revolver and said "this is the boss". So the lorry was promptly handed over. Word was given that the lorry was in Cooley. My father and the driver went out and as they started the lorry heads appeared over walls to see that the rightful owners were getting it back.<sup>164</sup>

At 6 o'clock on Wednesday 16 August the 'Irregulars' vacated the barrack honouring Aiken's promise to Fr. McKeown that no damage would be done, and

<sup>162</sup> Carroll, Pat, statement taken on Sunday 30 April 1978 at Peter Brennan's house, O'Sullivan file, Irish military archives.

<sup>163</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 19 August 1922, p. 8.

<sup>164</sup> Gray, Alan, born 1923, interview recorded May 2000.

withdrew northward as Free State troops advanced on Dundalk. People were herded into their houses, a petrol truck packed with explosives was placed at the square and snipers were deployed along the expected route of the impending attack.<sup>165</sup>

as the Irregulars were sniping from the Century Tower next door, from Nicholas Haughey's top window and the Distillery we retired to the cellar. We were expecting [troops] in at 10 o'clock. As from that time... we were in an anxious state; dreading that at the first shot from next door they would shell the Century Tower and we might all be killed<sup>166</sup>

Despite protestations from the clergy the car-bomb at the square was detonated before the attack commenced which killed a civilian and caused massive damage to property.<sup>167</sup>

If you only saw Frances Street, Park Street, and Earl Street, anything like it. Every window top and bottom were broken... ceilings down furniture and everything broken... Railway and Brewery men were halted and put into clink until they were identified and it was amusing to see all the wives and mothers going up to get their husbands and sons out of prison.<sup>168</sup>

Sporadic gunfire continued through the night but compassion was also evident:

Melbers were looking out the window watching the people shooting on the middle of Clanbrassil Street. There was a knocking on the front door. They were a little bit scared because they were Protestant. When they opened the door this man was standing there and said I just came to tell you just sit quietly keep your door closed and nothing will happen to you.<sup>169</sup>

By Thursday morning the town was in government hands and relatively peaceful. In the ensuing weeks remaining pockets of resistance were mopped up and with the taking of Greenore, Carlingford and Omeath 'open resistance by Aiken's troops' was ended.<sup>170</sup> However, ambushing of patrols, often resulting in fatality, and sniping continued:

there was always shooting going on most nights. But then you got used to it you'd begin not to pay any heed to it unless it came into your street. You can get used to anything.<sup>171</sup>

Road and railway communications were also disrupted and telegraph lines cut. In the latter stages of the war large houses and mansions were burned throughout north Louth and property belonging to perceived government supporters destroyed. In October

<sup>165</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 19 August 1922, p. 8.

<sup>166</sup> Young, Esmay, letter to her daughter Jeannie O'Mahony, Drogheda dated, 18 August 1922

<sup>167</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 19 August 1922, p. 8.

<sup>168</sup> Young, Esmay (letter).

<sup>169</sup> McDowell, Ethel, born 1931, interview recorded February 1999.

<sup>170</sup> Gavin and O'Sullivan, *Dundalk a military history*, p. 133.

<sup>171</sup> Beagley, Annie (1913-1997) interview recorded June 1997, see appendix E.

a government amnesty was introduced but possession of a weapon became an offence liable to court-martial.<sup>172</sup> January 1923 saw the first of these take place in Dundalk and, to the total dismay of the population, six people were executed that month. Yet 'Irregular' activities continued until 27 April 1923 when Aiken, who had become their chief of staff on the death of Liam Lynch, issued the dump arms order. But the violence continued:

In 1924 the bodies of the six prisoners that were executed were released from the jails and brought to the Labourers Hall for everybody to walk round and review the coffins. There was a very big turn out. The six coffins were put on six trailers with a couple of Clydesdale horses pulling them and there was thousands lining the streets. We seen the Free State soldiers going down to the graveyard. The IRA were there in full force and they weren't supposed to fire a volley over the graves but they did and the Free State Army opened fire to stop them. There was an English man killed and Mrs. McGuire she got a bayonet in the back. She happened to be in the way they were actually shooting and bayoneting anyone that was there. She was known as a Cumann na nBan but not to the army. She took the gun off one of the blokes that was firing over the grave. Dr. Clark was attending all the wounded and he asked her had she anything on her, she had a revolver on her and the doctor took it and put it in his bag. The whole bloody town was very upset about it but what could they do. The clergy were more or less against the IRA. They sort of protested but they were more or less with the Free State.<sup>173</sup>

The incident occurred on Thursday 30 October 1924. The following Sunday a ceremony of reconciliation similar to a consecration service was performed in the graveyard by the Coadjutor Archbishop of Armagh deemed essential to Catholic ritual. Yet, the bitterness of the Civil War lingered on, particularly amongst families:

My Grandfather [was] a supporter of the Nationalist party. His sons Con, joined the British army in 1914, and Jack, joined the Citizen's army in Dublin. Con came home on leave in 1916 and went out with Jack and fought in the 1916 insurrection and went back and finished his service in France. They were active up until 1921. They split over the Civil War, like most families did. Jack joined the Free-State army and Con joined the Irregulars. Both of them held very strong views and barely recognised each other until 1949 when they patched up their differences. I was barely fourteen years of age and I remember it quite well. It was at my grandmother's funeral. Death reconciles most families.<sup>174</sup>

With the cessation of hostilities and the acceptance of the Treaty the focus of the advisories shifted to constitutional means though violence was never far removed.

<sup>172</sup> *Dundalk Democrat* 14 October 1922 p. 4.

<sup>173</sup> McDermott (interview).

<sup>174</sup> Casey, Sean, born 1935, interview recorded March 1997.

### General elections 1921-44

Louth and Meath were amalgamated into a five-seat constituency for the general elections of 1921. In the twenty-six southern counties 124 Sinn Féin candidates who were returned unopposed assembled as the second Dáil Éireann. Amongst these was local delegate Peter Hughes. When the party split over the treaty he was returned as a pro-Treaty candidate in their election victory of 1922 which saw the beginnings of the present-day party political system. In this first general election in the Free State, Labour polled 21.3% of the votes. Their candidate in Louth-Meath, Cathal O'Shannon, singly opposed the Collins/de Valera panel and won the seat with over one-third of the votes, two quotas, and registered the fourth highest poll nationally.<sup>175</sup> However, his success was partially a protest against the 'election pact'<sup>176</sup> and the following year he lost his seat. All but one of the remaining seats went to three Treaty candidates whose side was victorious, formed a government and inaugurated a new constitution which required a plebiscite within a year.

In the hope of wrong-footing the opposition, W.T. Cosgrave called a snap election for August 1923.<sup>177</sup> The franchise was extended to women over 21 years, Dáil seats increased to 153 and, in the redrawing of constituencies, Louth became a three-seater. Two sitting TDs, P. Hughes and James Murphy, were returned for Cumann na nGaedheal, a party formed from the pro-treaty faction of Sinn Féin in March. After the 'Army Mutiny' Hughes was appointed a reluctant Minister of Defence in 1924 and presided over the 'civilianisation of the defence forces'.<sup>178</sup> He was defeated in the 1927 elections by his old adversary James 'The Duker' Coburn (National League) and retired from public life. Murphy retained his seat until 1937 when under the Fine Gael banner, with Coburn as a running mate, he was defeated. The Republican candidate Frank Aiken headed the poll in 1923 and continued to do so in all but one of the eight elections up to 1944. From 1927 he represented the Fianna Fáil party, a breakaway faction of abstentionist Sinn Féin, formed

<sup>175</sup> *Dundalk Democrat* 24 June 1922, p. 5.

<sup>176</sup> *Dundalk Democrat* 24 June 1922, p. 4.

<sup>177</sup> Lee, *Politics and society*, p. 94.

<sup>178</sup> O'Sullivan, *Local government in county*, p. 127.

by de Valera in May 1926.<sup>179</sup> When Fianna Fáil formed a government in 1932, Aiken served as Minister for Defence until 1943 when he transferred to 'Co-ordination of Defensive Measures'.

In the cold light of statistics these elections appear orderly and neat. In reality nothing could be further from the truth:

The IRA were very bitter. This man Jossie Brennan hated my uncle Hughie [who] used to entertain the Black and Tans and did the same for the Free State. He used to give information from the Free State to the Republicans. When the IRA met they'd talk about elections and Jossie Brennan thought Hughie was on the wrong side. The commander of the IRA in the area told him if he touched a hair of Hughie McDermott's head he would kill him.<sup>180</sup>

Personation was widely reported in the local press and the oral evidence corroborates this:

The night before the election the IRA crowd would cover the street in green white and yellow flags. A couple of mollies (Hibernians), who were in the street wouldn't go under them. They used to go out the back way and cross a wee wall to vote in the boys' school. Many's a time when they'd go down their votes were already cast. Our Rosie, Mary Callan and Bridgie McEnany voted in somebody else's name. That's how Frank Aiken and them got in, trickery like that. Even though there was that trouble they never fell out with one and other only at the time of an election. Then when Frank Aiken got in they had a big bonfire in the middle of the street. It would go on all night and there would be drink and everything. It would be their own money. Not the government's or Aiken's. I remember one time the votes was all a counting and they got in. But there was a re-count and Coburn's crowd were after stealing the votes out of [Aiken's] ballot box and Aiken got in again, that's the way they lived.<sup>181</sup>

There was passion in electioneering and sometimes humour:

I remember political meetings in the thirties and fights and rows between Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil supporters and porter bottles flying. The candidate for Fine Gael was James 'Duker' Coburn big nice kindly man he was. He was a stone mason before he was a TD and they would very often end up singing 'A Nation Once Again', but on the periphery of the meeting there would be the hecklers who would be singing, a **MASON** once again. He'd be out you know.<sup>182</sup>

<sup>179</sup> Coakley, John, *Politics in the republic of Ireland* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Dublin, 1993), p. 16.

<sup>180</sup> McDermott (interview).

<sup>181</sup> Charity (interview).

<sup>182</sup> McCann, Hugh, born 1920 interview recorded May 1998.

### The Blueshirts

After the demise of the National League, James Coburn was an independent TD but embraced Fine Gael shortly after its inception in 1933. 'To a large section of society the ascendancy of de Valera to power [in 1932] signalled the victory of the gunmen of the IRA'.<sup>183</sup> As a political power Cumann na nGaedheal was moribund and latched on to General O'Duffy's fascist-inspired 'Blueshirt' movement. These two in coalition with the Centre party formed Fine Gael in 1933 with O'Duffy as its leader.<sup>184</sup> In August 1934 there were 694 members in county Louth<sup>185</sup> who attended Fine Gael political meetings to counter IRA disruption:

I remember being out in the Demesne. It was the first time we ever saw soldiers with steel helmets, rifles and bayonets all sitting in lorries There was this meeting on at the square with lots of people in blue shirts. And there were lots of others on the outside heckling. They would have been Republican; Sinn Féin, Fianna Fáil. But after breaking up they were marching up in fours. There was a line of civic guards each side protecting them from the hecklers and somebody broke through the guards' cordon and they hit a few of them and a riot broke out. We were coming from playing in the Demesne with bows and arrows but we nearly got terrorised and you'd see people with bleeding noses, big men fighting it was awful looking. But there was a superintendent there I think he was from Drogheda and he had a walking stick and he called the guards and he formed them into two lines and he says "batons", and they put the batons up in the air and he said "charge" and they cleared the town in about ten minutes Everybody ran they hit anyone that came in the way it didn't matter you'd see them going down. But that night an awful thing happened. A fellow called McGrory had been a canvasser for the Blueshirts. Some of the so-called heroes of the time put a land mine in his parlour window and it blew the house clean out and his mother was killed. We were going to school the next day and you'd see the house and the cot was hanging out the window it was dreadful. That was a land mark that was an awful thing and the people were terribly shocked over it. A young fellow called McDonald who lived near it, he had an eye blown out. The whole town was shocked <sup>186</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Cronin, Mike, *The blueshirts and Irish politics* (Dublin, 1997), p. 45.

<sup>184</sup> Sinnott, Richard, *Irish voters decide; voting behaviour in elections and referendums since 1918* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 31-2.

<sup>185</sup> Cronin, *Blueshirts and politics*, p. 115.

<sup>186</sup> McCann (interview).

### Local Elections to 1945

The 1920 Local elections were described by the *Dundalk Democrat* as ‘dull and business-like, with no party flags or free fights’.<sup>187</sup> The outcome completely betrays this. Only eight of the fourteen councillors seeking re-election to the DUDC were returned. Sinn Féin emerged as the largest single grouping who, with some Labour and Independent members, gained control of the DUDC holding ten seats against eight of the old Nationalist Party tradition. Prior to the rural district and county council elections in May 1920 these divisions became official in North Louth. Sinn Féin and some ‘advanced nationalist’ Independents formed the ‘Official Independence Party’ whilst twenty-five Home Rule sympathisers stood as the ‘Constitutional Home Rule Party’. The result was disastrous for the latter who won only seven of the twenty-eight seats and Sinn Féin gained control of politics in county Louth.

Three Dundalk men, Charles McAlester (county secretary), Peter Hughes (chairman DUDC) and James McGuill were amongst a core group of six who successfully steered the town and the county through the turbulence of the ‘Troubles’.<sup>188</sup> They had instigated the split with the Local Government Board and recognition of Dáil Éireann by August 1920. With the British decision to deduct malicious damage claims from government grants they creatively manipulated local funds. In April 1921 three rate collectors willingly surrendered cheques to the value of the exact amount of rates (£16,000) to raiders which were cashed and lodged in different accounts in the same banks.<sup>189</sup> By such and similar means a reasonable community service was maintained and the British stranglehold on local government broken. However, with the signing of the treaty in December 1921 local representatives soon discovered that ‘the dead hand of the local government board was as nothing compared with the iron fist of a native

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<sup>186</sup> McCann (interview).

<sup>187</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 17 January 1920, p. 4.

<sup>188</sup> O’Sullivan, *Local government in county Louth*, p. 58.

<sup>189</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 23 April 1921, p. 4.

government'.<sup>190</sup> The Local Government Act of 1925 and successive legislation reduced both the DUDC and LCC to administrative rather than executive bodies.<sup>191</sup>

In the combined urban/county elections of 1925 party affiliations were unstated in Dundalk. But it soon emerged that Sinn Féin had lost out to the Home Rule Party who secured dominance of the DUDC and vice-chairmanship of the county council. Only the south ward was contested in the 1928 DUDC elections resulting in little change in the power structure of either the urban or county councils. The emergence of Fianna Fáil did little to alter this in 1934 or in 1942 when the country was in the midst of the 'Emergency'.

## **World War II**

With the outbreak of war in 1939 Ireland adopted a stance of friendly neutrality towards Britain.<sup>192</sup> On commencement of the IRA's English bombing campaign the Offences Against the State Act 1939 was introduced which was amended in 1940 to provide for internment without trial following the Phoenix Park arms raid. A tenth of the cache was recovered in Dundalk and more across the nearby border. After the Dunkirk evacuation the possibility of invasion loomed and the army was put on a war footing. Additionally, recruitment for a Local Security Force (LSF) was launched in June 1940:

people seemed to join very freely. It was called the LSF first and you were out on patrol to see if any Germans paratroops were dropping, then it became the LDF. We were all called out one night, apparently there was a large contingent of Canadian tanks coming up Newly Hill. I envied the commanding officer Joe Larrisey who had an old IRA 45 revolver. The only gun between ten of us. It must have been a very reliable scare because a brother of mine had joined the eleventh infantry, an Irish-speaking regiment stationed in Gormanstown, and they were all on stand to. Their orders were that Dundalk would fall they were to make a stand at the Boyne but it never materialised thank God. Dundalk would be easily taken and there would have been an awful loss of life. We were poorly equipped but you were prepared to fight. About that time the American and British Ambassadors and de Valera and the Cardinal went through and had a meeting outside town. Whatever happened there was no problems of invasion after that. But every Thursday there came through from Dublin a convoy of empty lorries going into the north

<sup>190</sup> O'Sullivan, *Local government in county Louth*, p. 69.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>192</sup> Duggan, John P., *Neutral Ireland and the third reich* (Dublin, 1989), p. 3.

and they were packed with arms and you'd see them going back through Dundalk and some of them pulling big artillery guns. We got all the guns we wanted, American guns Remmingtons. Everyone of us had fifty rounds of ammunition at home and your gun and your bayonet.<sup>193</sup>

Exercises were organised some of which did not go as planned:

the [boy] scouts became patients for mock air raids that were being practised by the home guard, and the fire fighting service. We were supposed to have been injured and we were put on stretchers and brought to a so-called emergency hospital in the old Plaza Ballroom. The ambulance went away and I remember no more until next morning. It turned out I was asleep all night. Somebody lost the documentation and went for a jar and there was a search party out looking for us all night who eventually found us.<sup>194</sup>

On 24 July 1941 Dundalk suffered a German air attack believed to have been directed at the railway bridge connecting Northern Ireland with the Free State.<sup>195</sup> Nine small bombs were dropped in rural areas close to town and one large one near the docks:

The bomb was unloaded on soft muddy ground between railway track and the Quay proper and created a large hole. Pandemonium reigned in town that night. The Square and all approaches to the Quay were closed. A group of us knew a way around and we were down playing at the bomb hole while security was keeping everybody else out. If it had hit the concrete none of us in Castle Road or the Valley would be alive to tell the tale.<sup>196</sup>

Some windows were broken but there were no injuries sustained from hostilities:

But there was a great spirit of sacrifice. There would be big parades once a year around the town. De Valera would be down and Frank Aiken taking the march past, three or four bands the (local) Marines would be there. They had no boat that was the only thing. They used to steal the show because they had a great uniform all the girls would be admiring them.<sup>197</sup>

In the event of invasion elaborate plans were laid to harass the enemy:

I was made in charge of a combat intelligence. I had a group of men and my area was all out round by Louth Village and Tallanstown. We used to leave communications in houses and pick up stuff. It was like the French underground the idea was if the country was occupied you continued this as a civilian to keep the war going. Sunday morning you'd do that.<sup>198</sup>

As no invasion occurred it might appear that a lot of time and energy was extended needlessly. However, the training brought all sections of the community together in

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<sup>193</sup> McCann (interview).

<sup>194</sup> Casey (interview).

<sup>195</sup> Whitmarsh, Victor *Dundalk in the emergency* (Dundalk, 1980), p. 25.

<sup>196</sup> Casey (interview).

<sup>197</sup> McCann (interview).

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

common cause creating a sense of unity and by war's end:

there wasn't a great nationalist feeling in the country at that stage. I don't think people were concerned with politics except those who had been involved in the troubles. The younger people were only concerned with earning a living or existence if you like.<sup>199</sup>

### Conclusion

The first forty-five years of the twentieth century were a violent time for the population of Dundalk as elsewhere on the island. Much of this was due to the political instability caused by struggle for Irish freedom and the divergent attitudes adopted in the aftermath of the signing of the 'Treaty'. Whilst political activism may only have been a minority concern, its ramifications touched on the lives of the whole community. Practically every interviewee had either information passed on to them through family, or personal experience of violence linked to political ambition. This was particularly true from 1916 through to the 'graveyard' incident of 1924. New leaders emerged from that period most notably Frank Aiken who did much for Dundalk's industry during his political career (chapter III). Other combatants were rewarded with jobs in state and semi-state organisations. Thus, the nepotism of which the previous administration stood accused was replaced with nepotism 'Irish style'. No aspersions are intended, the point being to illustrate that favouritism is a humane condition. The oral evidence demonstrates the role played by 'ordinary' people, especially women, in the struggle for independence. These were largely forgotten by the first Cumman na nGaedheal government which adopted ultra conservative policies.<sup>200</sup> Despite this their following in Dundalk for local and national elections remained high. However, Frank Aiken and James Coburn were consistently returned in national elections, their popularity based more on personality than policies.

Apart from a slight hiatus between 1918-25, conservative influences were prominent on the urban and county councils throughout the period. Nevertheless, considerable progress was made in alleviating the living conditions that the majority population endured in 1900. Thus, despite political differences they worked harmoniously

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<sup>199</sup> O'Callaghan (interview).

<sup>200</sup> Regan, John M., *The Irish counter-revolution 1921-1936* (Dublin, 1999), p. xiv.

for the good of the town and county and their achievement in social housing and other services were significant.

In the 1930s political violence resulting in death, during the 'Blueshirt period' shocked the population. But gradually this gave way to reasonably stable politics which served as an example of how aims could be achieved without recourse to arms. The 'Emergency' saw the first post civil war generation embroiled in their own form of war. The oral evidence has shown that the common bonding that developed during those years did much to heal old wounds. It has also demonstrated that by 1945 the majority of the population were putting the past behind them and directing their thoughts and energy to brighter times ahead.

## Chapter V

### A Time of Change 1945-60

People changed when they got on. I would rather have had the older time they were more homelier and everybody was all one.

Bridget Bellew<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

This was a typical view expressed by many of the interviewees born before 1922. However, the post civil war generation embraced change and in many instances helped to bring it about. The basic political, industrial and community structures of Dundalk in 1945 were little altered from that of the pre-Emergency years. However, by 1960 each underwent transformation. Working hours were cut and wages rose above subsistence level giving rise to consumerism and a degree of self-confidence amongst the majority of the population. This in turn affected politics, social structures and industry. There was no discernible single element directing change except perhaps that people expected more from life. Thus, politics affected industry, industry affected living standards and living standards affected social structures and each advance increased personal expectations. All were interlinked and this chapter sets out to trace that interdependence.

Whilst most of Europe lay ravaged by war Ireland emerged practically unscathed, the policy of neutrality pursued by de Valera confirmed the advantages and rights of political autonomy for the first time. The camaraderie developed during the 'Emergency' had alleviated much of the bitterness of the civil war. Dundalk's industry and commerce had fared well (see chapter IV) and old attitudes were giving way to new. The factories were unionised and workers who were now earning a decent wage began to take cognisance of the social divisions in the community:

I remember at the missions in Dundalk that Saint Patrick's church would be packed. But up on the altar only business people and they used to come in through the sacristy door, solicitors, doctors, big merchants, all the business people of the town, people with money. And the people

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<sup>1</sup> Bellew, Bridget, born 1902, interview recorded March 1997.

who held the canopy when the blessed sacrament would be taken round they were all people from what was then known as the upper echelons. It was two-pence-halfpenny looking down on two-pence. But that was also recognised by the church and no 'ordinary' working man would dare go up on that altar with these people because they'd say it's not his place. So there was class distinction between business people and 'ordinary' people. There was a very big divide between the haves and the have nots because people who worked for business people were extremely poorly paid. People who had to bottle stout, general workers, the yard men and that type as against the lifestyle that you would see of the people who owned the business. You'd recognise it by the fact that they had motorcars at that time or the biggest houses in the town of Dundalk while the other people were very badly paid. So the division was there.<sup>2</sup>

### Local politics 1946-60

That division was also reflected in political representation. Whilst it was deemed acceptable for working men to sit on the urban council, county representation was the preserve of the better-off (chapter IV). The first indication of change came when, as a prank, it was decided to enter a well-known local character, Dixie Roddy, for the prestigious county council elections of June 1945. It was stated that Dixie persuaded his foreman on the railway to give him time off to attend meetings of the old poor law guardians, although never an elected member:

He thought he was. He'd be waiting outside when they would come out and they'd give him bits [of information] that didn't really matter and he'd tell the boys at the railway. If he told something and it appeared in the paper the next week they would believe him.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Roddy stood as an independent candidate in 1942 and polled just fifty-eight votes.<sup>4</sup>

In 1945 an employee of Hallidays, Jim McCobb decided to enlist the help of his fellow workers to get Roddy elected to the county council:

there was a collection made round the clicking room in Hallidays and they bought Dixie a suit, a hard hat, an umbrella and a pair of gloves. The first meeting of the campaign was held outside Hallidays factory on a [horse drawn goods cart called a] dray.<sup>5</sup>

A few local businessmen got involved and the meetings began to attract large crowds:

Three or four days before election day there was a parade from Hallidays all round the town. It

<sup>2</sup> O'Callaghan, Kevin, born 1927, interview recorded June 1997.

<sup>3</sup> McKeown, Hugh, born 1918, interview recorded June 1998.

<sup>4</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 23 June 1945, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> O'Callaghan, Kevin (interview).

ended below at Saint Nicholas chapel. The streets were packed with people. I was on the brake going round with him. Still nobody believed it could happen and if you dropped a pin between Saint Nicholas's chapel and Carrolls factory you would hit someone. I don't think the likes of it was seen in Dundalk before. There was a minister in the Fianna Fáil government at the time was having a meeting at the Market Square there wasn't one at it till the other meeting was over. They were all below at Dixie's meeting. When the election came off Dixie became an elected member as important as the biggest man on the council. But of course they got him to vote their way all the time. Like there was no real control over him.<sup>6</sup>

Roddy was elected on the first count with 1,360 votes which represented an increased of 2,345% on his previous turnout.<sup>7</sup> 'The councillors that were there couldn't believe that anything like this could happen'.<sup>8</sup>

All of Dixie's speeches were scripted along humorous lines with constant reference to the shortages of the 'Emergency' which were still extant. Amongst his election pledges were the importation of a boat load of bananas, a commodity absent from shops since 1940, but these would be of superior quality as they would be straight bananas not like the crooked ones they used to get. And each household would receive three bags of coal and two ounces of tea every week. Dixie's support came mainly from the workers, particularly those in Hallidays shoe factory and it probably did much to enliven a gloomy post-war town but for all its jocularity its inherent message was not lost on the local luminaries:

four years ago Canon Campbell was at my daughter's wedding. I had to say a few words and [Campbell said] I never knew Hugh could make a speech like that. I said "you should know father, you said off the pulpit in St. Patrick's that we should be all excommunicated for what we done" [during the Roddy election]. I suppose it was against all the rules and regulations of the world but it was done. You must realise that there was some big men on the council at that time, to think that Dixie wiped their eye and got in. I was in McDonnells [a large coal importers] at the time and I don't think Mr. McDonnell spoke to me for a fortnight after.<sup>9</sup>

This incident was also a reflection on the growing disquiet amongst workers trying to

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<sup>6</sup> McKeown (interview).

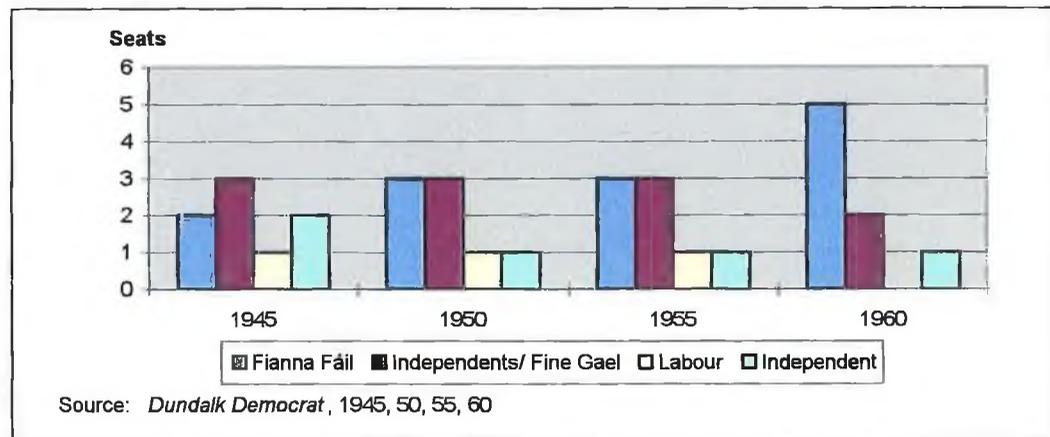
<sup>7</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 23 June 1945, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> McKeown (interview).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, the *Democrat* estimated the crowd at the Roddy election meeting at 5,000 *Dundalk Democrat*, 23 June 1945, p. 2.

cope with a 33% wage increase against a 66% rise in the cost of living.<sup>10</sup> A local grievance was that rationed goods purchased for personal consumption across the nearby border were often seized by customs officials who were suspected of keeping the contraband for themselves. Although the accusations may be groundless that was the view expressed by most of the interviewees and it did create bitterness.

After 1945 much of the razzmatazz disappeared from electioneering particularly in 1955 which was described as 'the deadest election I ever remember'.<sup>11</sup> In Dundalk only Fianna Fáil and Labour contested local elections under the party banner until 1960 when all allegiances were declared. Distribution of Dundalk's eight county seats from 1945-60 can be seen in table 5.1. The remainder were independents disposed towards Fine Gael.



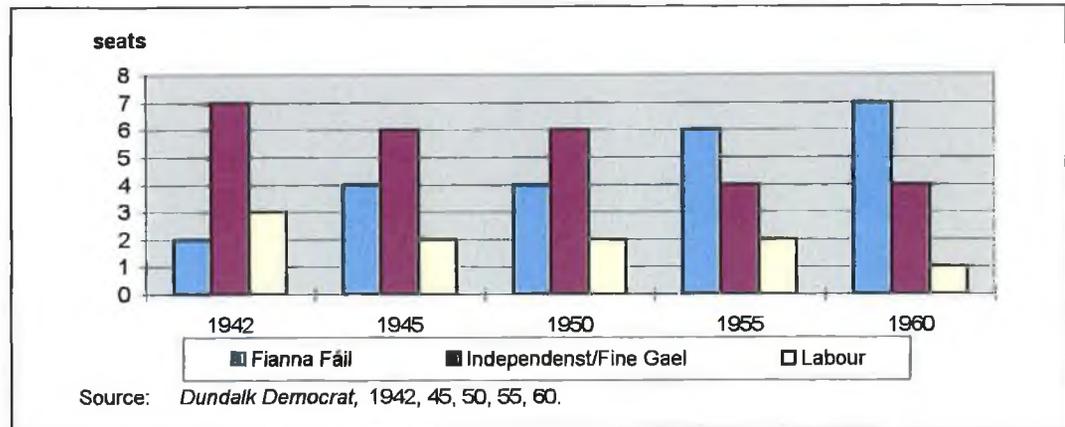
**Table 5.1** Party affiliations of Dundalk members on LCC 1945-60

Throughout the 1950s both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael/Independents each held three of the eight county council seats allocated to Dundalk. A gain of two seats in 1960 helped Fianna Fáil take half of the total county council seats for the first time. The urban authority elections reflect a similar pattern and by 1960 Fianna Fáil had gained a majority of seats on the council once monopolised by Fine Gael sympathisers (table 5.2).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> McCullagh, David, *The makeshift majority: the first inter-party government, 1948-51* (Dublin, 1998), p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 25 June 1955, p. 4.

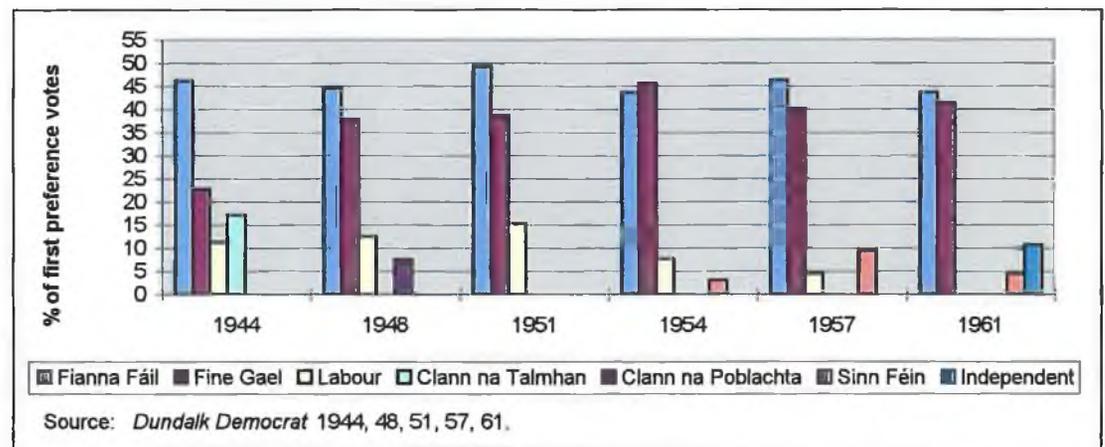
<sup>12</sup> See appendix A.



**Table 5.2** Distribution of seats on DUDC, 1942-60

**National elections**

Two TDs James Coburn (I/FG) and Frank Aiken (FF) were repeatedly returned for county Louth between 1944-61. The remaining third seat vacillated between the three main parties and was a determining factor in the four changes of government over the period. It was one of the eight Fianna Fáil seats lost<sup>13</sup> which put them out of office in 1948 and was their only gain in the 1951 election,<sup>14</sup> which returned them to power in a minority government. Its subsequent loss to Fine Gael contributed to their defeat in 1954. The seat reverted to Fianna Fáil again in 1957 and was held in 1961. Table 5.3 is based on first preference returns in the county for the main parties over the period.



**Table 5.3** Share of party votes in county Louth for Dáil elections 1944-61.

<sup>13</sup> Lee, J.J., *Ireland 1912-1985: politics and society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 298.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.

Fianna Fáil tactics for the 1948 election showed little imagination relying mostly on the reiteration of the 'red scare' and 'Up Dev' to capture votes.<sup>15</sup> However, expectations and attitudes were changing in the country particularly in Dundalk where factory workers assisted in saving the harvest after the disastrous weather of 1947:

I know that a lot of people I spoke to at that period were very annoyed at the treatment they got when they went out. In a lot of cases the farmers took them for granted and treated them as free labour and didn't treat them with the hospitality they deserved. That was the year of the teachers' row with the government and Sean McBride came on the scene with Clann na Poblachta. It was a watershed in Irish politics. We got our first coalition and even though I was only nine year old we could see that there was something happening in the country. We had a change of government for the first time since 1932 and that stuck in my memory.<sup>16</sup>

The new interparty government endeavoured to introduce social change in the shape of Noel Brown's (CnaP) 'Mother and Child Scheme' and Labour's Social Welfare (Insurance) Bill but conservative and self-interested forces won out. Both bills were opposed because they conflicted with Catholic social teaching though the influence of vested (medical) interests is discernible throughout.<sup>17</sup> The debacle hastened the demise of the government but its declaration of Ireland as a Republic and associated public and private housing drive helped transform political debate from civil war affiliations to economic and social policy.<sup>18</sup> The return of Fianna Fáil to power in 1951 and Sean McEntee's budget of 1952, which increased income tax and duty on petrol, butter, tea, fuel and drink, only exacerbated the crisis.<sup>19</sup> In May 1954 three Independents withdrew their support and forced an election which returned a three party coalition government. The defeat of Fianna Fáil led one critic to remark that the result could be taken as:

an indication of the general distrust of the existing political line-up. People today are faced with problems so immediate that what attitude people took up thirty-odd years ago doesn't, and can't, be expected to interest them, a fact which doesn't seem to be appreciated by the elders of any party: the younger Deputies seem to have a much more intimate and practical

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>16</sup> Casey, Sean, born 1935, interview recorded 10 March 1997.

<sup>17</sup> McCullagh, *The makeshift majority*, pp. 193-6. and 230-232.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>19</sup> Savage, Robert, *Seán Lemass* (Dundalk, 1999), p. 19.

knowledge of the 'ordinary' people's needs and difficulties than do the Elder Statesmen.<sup>20</sup>

The problems referred to were those of unemployment and emigration. Yet the new regime stuck rigidly to conservative economic policies of balanced budgets and within two years was defeated. The incoming Fianna Fáil administration of 1957 quickly adopted the policies of Sean Lemass who since 1942 had been advocating a new approach to industry as a means of rectifying unemployment and emigration.<sup>21</sup> With de Valera's election to the presidency and Lemass assuming the office of Taoiseach in 1959 the way was at last cleared to transform Irish life:

[the] aim of most people was to get a trade, get a decent job and settle down possibly. Very few of us had the ambition of owning their own house. I think to own your own house in my generation was nearly the impossible dream. It was only in the late 50s that this became a reality and I think it took Sean Lemass to give us that little kick on to do that.<sup>22</sup>

Because of industrialisation the hardship of the 1950s did not affect Dundalk as badly as other areas until the closure of the GNR works in 1958 and the policy innovations advocated by Lemass had already begun in the Dundalk industries surveyed in chapter III.

### **Industry in the post war years**

As was noted in chapter III the 'Emergency' was a boom time for the footwear industry in Dundalk. With the return of peacetime conditions, the gradual easing of government controls, and an unfilled consumer demand this continued until 1948 when production fell to 1939 levels.<sup>23</sup> However, being a protected industry, by their very nature 'they ceased to grow and simply ticked over to the admitted benefit of their workers and even more so to that of their owners, many of whom were in fact English'.<sup>24</sup>

Whilst this would hold true for Rawsons and possibly Connollys who were experiencing trading difficulties in the late 1940s, Hallidays were no longer a typical Irish

<sup>20</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 22 May 1954, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Savage, *Lemass*, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Casey (interview).

<sup>23</sup> 'Committee on Industrial Organisation', *Report on the Leather Footwear Industry*, (Dublin, 1962), p.62.

<sup>24</sup> Hoppen, Theodore, K., *Ireland since 1800: conflict and conformity* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London and New York, 1999), pp. 243-4.

footwear manufacturer and were beginning to move to a position of market leadership. Preparations for a return to stable trading conditions were begun in 1944 when the Quay Street factory was extended and a year later an additional factory was built for the production of men's footwear. Whereas other firms were copying and adapting foreign designs, Hallidays concentrated on a high quality product. To achieve this they adopted all of the latest technological, production managerial and marketing techniques then available and by 1946 were spending 3% of sales turnover on advertising. In urban areas the public wanted lighter and better-produced shoes and the government, which was facing an upcoming election, relaxed import controls. By early 1948 the market had reached saturation point and whilst other companies stopped expansion Hallidays forged ahead. The opening up of the British trade to Irish shoe manufactures by the Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement of 1948 (amended in 1949) led to an agreement whereby Hallidays would produce Clarks 'Serenity' brand for their British customers. Despite an increased cost of 5%, production was transferred to Dundalk in 1950. To facilitate this Hallidays purchased the factory of Connolly Shoes Ltd. Small quantities were sold to America and Scandinavia which helped enhance their standing as a substantial exporter with the government and the public. By 1952 exports accounted for 29% of their production. The expansions were financed by Clarks who by 1948 held 43% of the ordinary share capital. Despite rising costs in material and wages the firm managed to increase production while at the same time improve quality much of which depended on the calibre of management.<sup>25</sup> As we have seen in chapter III managers were usually recruited from England but after 1945 things began to change. Opportunities arose for local men to improve their position in life as the following account demonstrates:

I was the first in the house to get a secondary education, even at that I only got as far as Inter. I got a job in Hallidays as a cutter and my first job in the factory was sweeping the floor. [after] I was married with two young children I went to the Tech and done the intermediate and advanced City and Guilds in shoe technology. Both Hallidays and subsequently Clarks were very good in recognising anyone who used a bit of initiative. They actually paid the cost of the night school and your books as well but obviously you done it in your own time. At that time I

<sup>25</sup> Press, John, *The footwear industry in Ireland 1922-1987* (Dublin, 1989), p. 109, pp.98-128 also gives

was involved in the trade union movement and was the negotiator for the cutting room on prices with old Miss Kate Halliday, a sister of the managing director Arthur Halliday. It got to the stage that she actually took my word and I was then setting the prices for the cutters without having to refer back to her. So then work-study came into being and I was representing the trade union on work-study. In order to do the work study exams you had to have leaving cert. standard maths and English so I went back and done maths and English and got my work study exam. Work-study was beginning to grow and the company approached me and said, 'we'd like you to come and work for us'. So I consulted Paul Alexander who wanted me to go as a full time union official and told him the company had given me the offer. They're going to give me staff status, which was pensionable and I could further myself. Paul advised me to take the job. I became senior work-study man and then I became work-study manager I subsequently became training manager and then I became personnel manager.<sup>26</sup>

In terms of worker/management relationships such promotions were advantageous:

I had worked with people and I knew who what's termed the shit-house lawyers [agitators] were. If any of these came to me I would know their character inside out and I'd know exactly how to play them. Because a lot of times there is game playing in negotiations. I was appointed by the minister of labour one time to be on the footwear industry training committee. One of the people on the committee with me was a full time union official and I used to go to meetings with him. On the way home we'd go for a couple of pints and we'd discuss the problems he had in the industry. He wasn't doing anything underhand, but we would settle problems there. The following day he'd come down and he'd have to say these men are very angry about this and that, knowing in his heart what I was going to concede. But the people wanted that. That was a very necessary part. If he got it easy they'd think nothing of him.<sup>27</sup>

As with the GNR, allegations of discrimination (sometimes religious) continued to be levelled at the shoe factories after 1945 but perceptions can be deceptive:

If they wanted a foreman they sent to England for him. My own foreman was a captain in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and he was brought over here when there was people quite capable of doing the job on the shop floor. They were brought over because they were English not because they were Protestant but because it was thought that Irish people weren't capable of doing that job. By reason of the fact that England were mainly Church of England people, well the people who came would obviously be Church of England. All the Clarks, the four brothers, came here for a stint of two years. That did change and changed drastically. They were tremendous employers in relation to training. They spent about £30,000 on my training. I had to do a Personnel Managers' and a Training Managers' course in Dublin. Both of them were twelve module courses. You went for three months, came back for a month and away for another. I

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comprehensive coverage of developments in the Irish footwear industry from 1945-60.

<sup>26</sup> O'Callaghan, Kevin (interview).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

stayed in Jury's hotel during that period. There was never any question about it. As Trainee Manager, I had to set up courses for other people and I would say they were the best trained people in the town of Dundalk.<sup>28</sup>

Similar training practices and technical innovations took place in Rawsons before Hallidays but the latter's connection with Clarks in England allowed them to expand more rapidly through exports. By 1958 the management decided to centralise production in one area, the Athletic Grounds, and so began a bitter controversy which still lingers.

### **Industrial impact on local morphology**

The sale of the Athletic Grounds is a striking example of how the opposing forces of Nationalist ideals for Irish society and Lemass's concept for industrialism were resolved. Clarks (England) had taken a major shareholding in Hallidays operation which, by the early 1950s was involved in an expansion programme based on exports. Their factories and warehouses were scattered throughout Dundalk and future plans required the centralisation of production. Their choice of the Athletic Grounds as a site for the construction of new facilities resulted in a standoff between the current activities of the GAA and the future of the shoe industry in Dundalk:

We had a chance of increased export orders which if we didn't strike when the iron was hot we would have lost. The old factory, an amazing old building with all the stairs and little botchity rooms, made profits but was bursting at the seams. We appreciated the fact that people were upset about losing the ground that they were used to playing on, but I also recollect that they'd [GAA] had a chance to have bought it themselves a few years earlier and didn't. They assumed that it would be there forevermore. Things don't pan out that way in life.<sup>29</sup>

One GAA member also expressed wonderment that the GAA failed to buy the field when the opportunity was there:

they had it rented and that was grand. Hallidays decided they'd like the Athletic Grounds please. Now I can't understand that to this day; there must have been ten fields in a row vacant [beside it]. They wanted the Athletic Grounds and of course they got a blank refusal.<sup>30</sup>

The company's response was decisive:

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Gray, Allen, born 1923, interview recorded 13 May 2000.

<sup>30</sup> McDonnell, Tony (1929-99), interview recorded 10 March 1997.

there were rather inflammatory remarks made. A memorable one was that the Athletic Grounds were the bastion of Gaeldom in the North East. It didn't matter that rugby was played in the same ground on a Saturday. When opposition was building up I got in touch with a solicitor in Drogheda who typed out a contract of an option to buy land. I had a signed cheque in my pocket and within two hours I'd met a Dublin auctioneer at a site near Dublin airport and had an option on about 30 acres of land. If necessary we were going to build a shoe factory there.<sup>31</sup>

A member of Clarks management who perceived the threat to be real had reservations:

they threatened at that stage that if they didn't get the Athletic Grounds they were moving their operations to Dublin. If I or anybody else had been as wise then as I am now it couldn't possibly happen. All the skills were in Dundalk and there's no way they could have built a new factory, recruit a thousand people, train them, and start manufacturing shoes again from scratch. It was a physical impossibility.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps it was for this reason that the company sought out an intermediary:

That of course was blackmail against everybody including myself. Halliday came to me and said, "the place is full of TB half of our people have died of TB and we want to build a new factory and the only place is the Athletic Grounds or we will go to Dublin". I couldn't turn round and say you're a liar, how do I know. They were great employers and looked after people well. Now that was going to throw five hundred people out of damn good jobs and I'm nearly sure they meant it. So anything rather than let people lose jobs in the town of Dundalk where employment was bad enough. So the whole thing came up then about would it be agreed that Hallidays could buy part of the Athletic Grounds and build their new factory there or were we going to let it go to Dublin. At those times the administrator in Dundalk could do an awful lot you could get people in here, you could get up in St. Patrick's and make a speech about it and get people on your side. That may be unfair, but you could get your own way. So whatever weight I did have I laid it on the matter of getting the Athletic Grounds for Hallidays

The Floods were all sound GAA men I remember being with them and they would have been very strong on the Athletic Ground thing but at the same time they worked in Hallidays and their hearts were torn between what they should do and what they shouldn't. Between bullying them and what not I got them round to agreeing to let Hallidays Clarks as it was known then to build their new factory. There was a certain amount of hypocrisy on our side. The Athletic Grounds that time were owned by the Council and it was a grand place. There was sports, dog shows and all kinds of things there. And I have no doubt that nobody were more delighted than the Floods because they were going to be out of a job but as owners or as trustees for Gaelic and that they had to put on the act that they didn't want the Athletic Grounds going to bloody Hallidays but deep down in their hearts they were bloody glad that they did. There was a great deal of controversy about it and bitterness. There was people who said to me it was a disgrace

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<sup>31</sup> Gray (interview).

<sup>32</sup> O'Callaghan, Kevin (interview).

that I should lend myself to this free mason act and so on. You can't be absolutely certain that you're right about anything but your doing you're best and you think that in all the circumstances you'd rather do this than let something else happen.<sup>33</sup>

Political objections were also raised but practicality won out over principles:

our personnel manager George Berrils was an urban councillor. Somebody tackled him on the ground that you've only one factory. George said just this week there was a contract signed for a second factory to be built there and he was able to dampen down the opposition. I think that if one had not been built there the shoe industry might have had a shorter life in Dundalk. There was a lot of employment there for quite a number of years as a result of getting it.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand the GAA's fears seen to have been well founded as 'there was an awful noticeable dropping off in the GAA scene in the town after they lost the Athletic Grounds and went out to Dowdallshill'.<sup>35</sup>

In any event Clarks prospered, reaching peak production in 1972 employing 1,200 people in Dundalk and its environs and 800 in Kilkenny. In the wake of entry to the EEC cheaper imports decimated the shoe industry in Dundalk and at present (2000) only Connolly Shoes remains in production employing 200 people. However, as the saga of the Athletic grounds was unfolding the parent of Dundalk's industrialisation, the GNR, was in crisis.

### **The GNR 1946-58**

As we have seen in chapter III the 'Emergency' halted the decline in the fortunes of the Great Northern Railway but it was only a temporary respite. In 1945 the Free State government consolidated their rail network under CIE with the exception of the sixth portion of the GNR operating in Southern Ireland. In November 1946 the craft unions in CIE secured an 18¼ % increase which was in turn sought by GNR craftsmen which was granted following Labour Court arbitration. Further increases meant that by 1948 the company's wage bill had risen by 142% whilst material, fuel and stores had risen by 162%. The general manager's claim that workers had no regard for the company's ability to meet such claims was countered by the assertion that they were the only company not willing to

<sup>33</sup> Campbell, Fr. Desmond, born 1918, interview recorded 25 October 1999.

<sup>34</sup> Gray (interview).

<sup>35</sup> McDonnell (interview).

do so. And that they had purchased buses and railcars which could have been built at the Works. Also in 1948 the GNR reported a 1¼% loss on a turnover of £3 million (in rail services) against an 15¾% profit on a turnover of £390,000 from road transport. Escalating charges allowed road haulage firms to encroach on business and the company recorded a loss of £68,000 in 1949. In 1950 this increased to £106,000 and the board announced that it had reached the end of its financial resources and would begin closing routes on 21 February. By January 1951 this was amended to total closure of the entire network within five weeks and all employees were given one week's notice.

In 1948 the Northern administration allocated £10 million for the take-over and merging of all road and rail services in the North with the exception of the GNR. The threat of closure came as ministers from both governments were seeking a solution to the difficulties and a temporary rescue package emerged to keep the network open. Both parties agreed to meet any operating deficit and redundancy notices were withdrawn. In June 1951 the unions negotiated a 20% wage increase against a 13.36% rise in the CPI followed by a pay rise of 7½ % in November 1952. By year's end the GNR trading deficit was nearly £2 million. In the interim, talks continued on the future of the company which were suspended pending a general election in the Irish Republic. On resumption, agreement was reached for both governments to purchase the GNR for £4½ million which would be operated by the GNRB comprising five directors from each jurisdiction. Losses were to be shared on a 60/40 basis favouring Éire who would also fund the Works in Dundalk which employed 1,200 people.<sup>36</sup> In Northern Ireland the UTA, whose policy was based on road rather than rail for public transport, assumed responsibility for the GNRB including losses amounting to £4 million by 1956.<sup>37</sup> By September 1957 they pruned uneconomic branch lines in Northern Ireland which precipitated branch closures on cross border lines in the Republic of Ireland. By 1958 almost half of the company's entire

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<sup>36</sup> McDonnell, Patrick, *The response of central and local government to the crises in the railway engineering industry in Dundalk* (Unpublished MA thesis NUI Maynooth, 1992), p. 41. The future of the GNR workshops in Dundalk was central in the inter-government discussions. McDonnell gives full coverage of the political debate pp. 51-7.

<sup>37</sup> Ó'Riain, Mícheál, *On the move; Córas Iompair Éireann 1945-1995* (Dublin, 1995) p. 98.

network ceased operations<sup>38</sup> and the only remaining rail link between North and South was the Dublin/Belfast line.<sup>39</sup> In effect this meant the end of the GNRB and the Works in Dundalk. Despite marches, meetings, protests, tribunals and lobbying by the urban and county councils and the chamber of commerce, a depleted workforce of 960 men with gross earnings of over £10,000 per week received notice on 3 January 1958.<sup>40</sup> CIE assumed responsibility for the GNRB's road and rail traffic in Southern Ireland and all prospects for the 'Works' now rested with a government rescue plan in the form of a new enterprise, the Dundalk Engineering Works (DEW) which re-employed the entire workforce on 11 January.

### **The Dundalk Engineering Works**

The overall plan for the Dundalk Engineering Works suited Lemass's concept of industrial production for export. Over the space of a year, five distinct companies were established under the umbrella company DEW:

1. **Heinkel Cabin Scooters** World-wide rights for the manufacture and sale of a three-wheel 'Bubble' car were obtained from the German aeroplane maker Heinkel.
2. **Dealgan Steel Foundries** was established as the only steel foundry in Ireland to make components for the five companies and replace imports by other Irish firms.
3. **Frank Bonzer and Co.** of Nottingham sold the world rights and plant of their agricultural machinery which was being exported to sixty countries to the DEW.
4. **CRV** assembled and distributed AEC trucks in Ireland and later diversified into producing Sylvan caravans for export.
5. **DEW** was a general engineering firm who initially continued service work for CIE and built rolling stock for export. As the CIE contracts diminished they undertook diverse engineering work for Bórd na Móna.<sup>41</sup>

When the DEW took over from the GNRB on 11 January 1958 all 960 workers were re-employed. However, by September the workforce was reduced to 500<sup>42</sup> who were apprehensive as they 'were going into the unknown'.<sup>43</sup> As the various companies

<sup>38</sup> McQuillan, *The railway town* p. 189.

<sup>39</sup> Ó'Riain, *On the move*, p. 100.

<sup>40</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 4 January 1958, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Ógra Dún Dealgan *Dundalk a tradition in industry* (Dundalk, 1986), pp. 65-7.

<sup>42</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 6 September 1958, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> O'Quigley, Thomas (1924-1997), interview recorded 25 May 1997.

began production employment increased reaching 700<sup>44</sup> in January and 927 by May 1959.<sup>45</sup> The future seemed bright but by December 1960 Heinkel production was suspended 'due to export difficulties'<sup>46</sup> and by 1961 was discontinued.<sup>47</sup> Shortly afterwards Frank Bonzer and the Steel Foundry followed suit. Thus, began twenty-five years of slow decline in Dundalk's engineering tradition.<sup>48</sup>

For a workforce who for eighty years had perceived religious discrimination as a bar to promotion the changeover to Irish/Catholic management made little difference:

Nobody ever knew how they filled the posts, they just appeared and that was it. Some of the workers got charge of departments like estimating or planning. They didn't get to the very top they were inclined to take in people from outside. They knew it all. The locals knew nothing according to the hierarchy like Reynolds and Grace. A. P. Reynolds was put in charge. He had been a big man in the CIE in Dublin. He got in trouble and was mover down here. So he hadn't a great reputation coming. There was one fellow come over from England who was manager of the machine shop. He'd come in every morning with this big briefcase. I was in the office at the time and all the lads were curious what was in this briefcase. There was trouble down the shop and he had to go away down and they knew he'd be down for some time. One of the lads went to his office and opened his briefcase and it was a racing handicap book in the briefcase. He was a great man for dog racing and horse racing. That was the type.<sup>49</sup>

The company was allocated a government sponsored loan of £½ million in 1957 and needed a turnover of £2 million per year to be viable.<sup>50</sup> The opulence displayed by top management did little to unite the workforce in a common effort to achieve this. Neither did government 'jobbery' or the expertise of middle management:

Reynolds used to be chauffeured from Dublin every morning with a chauffeur there polishing the car which seemed very comical for a company that was going broke. There was two English men there and the workers could pull the wool over their eyes like nobody's business. Top management would be picked from somebody known by the government. There's one case comes to mind Michael Collins who was the managing director there at one stage. I found

<sup>44</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 31 January 1959, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 9 May 1959, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 26 November 1960, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> McQuillan, *The railway town*, p. 201.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>49</sup> Quigley (interview).

<sup>50</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 23 November 1957, p. 6.

talking to him that he knew more than the previous two. Because he was an Irish man.<sup>51</sup>

As the whole concept of the plan was to maintain employment for the old GNR staff this necessitated re-training which was sometimes inept:

It was attacked from the wrong end. There was desperate mistakes made everywhere [especially] in the foundry. Edmond Grace was a big man in CIE too and he come down here and he was an accountant by profession. But I remember one night we had a meeting in the Dominican Hall and he was up on the stage showing fellows who were blacksmiths and carpenters how to make steel castings. There was an awful lot of rejects in the making of steel castings with air holes and that kind of thing. It just didn't work out, particularly when the people that was showing them didn't know themselves how to make them. It would have taken men who were experienced, who had worked on the floor and give them any money once they were good men. They would have got that foundry off the ground.

It would be wrong however to place all of the blame for failure on management. Workers too were remiss in their responsibilities which was summed up in a single sentence by one of them. 'Now, there was 1,100 employed but there was about 600 working'.<sup>52</sup> The DEW inherited a workforce who for ten decades had developed work practices more suited to nineteenth century industry and were either unwilling or unable to contemplate change. As late as 1966, when other industries were embracing piecework, time and study and other progressive production techniques work practices in the new company (CRV), who took over from the DEW, remained unaltered:

CRV never changed from the railway time. You went in in the morning and if you could dodge for the rest of the day fair and good. They could take two hours they could take four hours out of a job. There was no clocking on, time didn't matter.<sup>53</sup>

Perhaps government subvention played its part in this lax attitude which impeded profitability but in the tobacco industry which was being hard hit by increasing taxes progress was remarkable.

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<sup>51</sup> McGrath, Hugh, born 1924, interview recorded 9 February 1997.

<sup>52</sup> O'Quigley (interview).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

## **P. J. Carrolls 1945-60**

Carrolls emerged from the war years in good condition though within five years they experience trading difficulties which transformed the company. Average yearly sales fell from a pre-war level of 440 million cigarettes to 370 million during the second World War. With the easing of restrictions they gradual rose to a peak of 730 million by 1949. When these were finally lifted in 1950 sales plummeted to 360 million in early 1951.<sup>54</sup> The main cause was a deterioration in quality resulting from the use of over matured tobacco leaf accumulated during the Emergency. Carrolls had maintained a three year supply at high purchase and shipping costs whereas their competitors operated on about ten months. As fresh crops became available to competitors Carrolls were still using old stock. 'We only have Afton was a common retailers response' to smokers who were still experiencing shortages up to 1950 and the company 'hit a low and could have gone under'.<sup>55</sup> However, its response was positive: a reassessment of production methods, further management training, market analysis, and sophisticated sales and marketing techniques.<sup>56</sup>

### **Expansion**

In 1952 a new business plan was drawn up and an advertising campaign instigated.<sup>57</sup> The following year an industrial consultant was hired to advise on production methods which proved so successful that they were extended to all facets of company operations. Adjoining land to the factory was purchased and extensions undertaken necessitating almost complete re-equipping involving expenditure of £500,000.<sup>58</sup> An advertising budget of £40,000 was approved for the year ending 31 August 1954 by which time sales had recovered to 760 million cigarettes.<sup>59</sup> In 1956 marketing experts were employed and every ploy to expand sales utilised. For example, prior to sports events or

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<sup>54</sup> Keenan, O. J., unpublished manuscript 'The history of Carrolls' (in possession of Mícheál McCartan, Dundalk) p. 54.

<sup>55</sup> McCartan, Mícheál, notes of interview 8 August 2000, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1966, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> Keenan, 'History of Carrolls', pp. 54-5.

<sup>58</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1966, p. 33. See also Keenan, 'History of Carrolls', p. 48, and 63.

<sup>59</sup> Keenan, 'History of Carrolls', p. 60.

'anything that brought a crowd to a city, town or village', pre-paid order forms advising them of the upcoming event were circularised to customers resulting in increased sales.<sup>60</sup>

By 1954 smoking had become a health issue and Carrolls greatest rivals the Imperial Tobacco Company announced the introduction of filter tipped cigarettes. The company embarked on a three year laboratory research programme culminating in their own filter tipped brand Carrolls No 1. This was launched in 1958 and quickly captured over 50% of the Irish market.<sup>61</sup> Since its inception Carrolls was involved in exports (see chapter III) and in 1952 these accounted for 108 million cigarettes valued at £106,000 and a return of £24,000. By 1953 these figures had almost halved and the export sales manager 'packed his bags and headed for the Far East' visiting the Sudan, Aden, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Burma, Kuwait, Malaya, Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia 'to make personal contacts and study possibilities for expansion.'<sup>62</sup> Additionally, in 1960 the company acquired the Irish interests of Carrerars, Rothmans and Murrays which increased home and export sales and gave an international dimension to their operations.<sup>63</sup> In 1952 Carrolls pre-tax profits amounted to £17,000 and by 1961 these were in excess of £400,000, a remarkable achievement in just seven years.

The steps taken in the early 1950s laid the foundations for future progress. By 1964 the new Carroll building on Grand Parade, Dublin was erected and a new purpose built factory on the outskirts of Dundalk went into production in June 1970.<sup>64</sup> Sales and profits continued to soar and by 1972 gross profits amounted to almost £2½ million. At this juncture the company diversified into other industries including printing, medical and pharmaceutical distribution, gas exploration and property development. Combined profits were £3¾ million in 1975.<sup>65</sup> Much of this success was attributed to teamwork.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>61</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1966, p. 33

<sup>62</sup> McCartan, Micheál, notes of interview, p. 6, and Keenan, 'History of Carrolls', p. 60.

<sup>63</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 27 August 1960, p. 7.

<sup>64</sup> Keenan, 'History of Carrolls', Donal S. A. Carroll, pp. 4 - 6.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, Donal S. A. Carroll, pp. 10-13.

## Working relationships

Although conditions of employment were good prior to World War II they improved after 1945 and ‘people mixed [socially] after hours’.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, whilst practically all of the employees were Catholic there was perceivable class distinction:

I joined Carrolls in 1953 they weren’t great pays but they were good employers. There was a benevolent parental attitude and they had playing fields and tennis courts for the workers and they encouraged drama. It started to change from a family business to a more general way of doing things. There was a degree of ‘them and us’ but the staff were always aware that we were dealing with people not mere numbers. By the early 1960s whatever was left of that was swept away when we formed the Carrolls Variety Group. Management and workers were all thrown together and were all involved.<sup>67</sup>

The variety group performed in keenly contested inter-factory competitions to raise funds for charity and this helped to break down class barriers:

One day I had a call from Sadie McComish on the factory floor to get myself and another staff member to write a sketch for an upcoming show. We were studying for exams but we couldn’t say no or they’d say them in the office are stuck up. Sadie said she wasn’t sure what kind of a reception she would get as “there’s a whole lot in the office look down on the workers” and I assured her that didn’t include us. At the rehearsal one lad said it’s a pity office have to be involved and he was eat. It worked both ways. Then when people were transferred to Dublin the staff there wanted to get in on the act. They rehearsed in Dublin and travelled down to Dundalk for final rehearsals and shows. That created a unifying force in the factory.<sup>68</sup>

Whilst outside experts were hired and attained managerial responsibility, promotion from within the firm was favoured as previously (see chapter III). This was particularly true for staff who wished to avail of further education as in Hallidays:

Initially if you passed exams they would pay your fees and if you reached a certain stage they would contribute to the overall cost. I asked Don Carroll for Saturday mornings off to attend lectures and I would work in the time. He told me he would be all for supporting anyone doing a professional qualification even though they might probably lose them through lack of promotional opportunity within the company he was quite happy.<sup>69</sup>

So too were the workers as the only trade dispute was a one day stoppage in 1954.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> McGuire, Johnny, born 1913, interview recorded November 1997.

<sup>67</sup> McCartan (interview), p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Keenan, ‘History of Carrolls’, p. 61.

The introduction of time study and production incentives increased workers' salaries which were supplemented by a generous Christmas bonus which rose from one week's wages in 1939 to two weeks in 1949 and a percentage of earnings in 1959.<sup>71</sup> In addition a non-contributory pension scheme for all male and female employees was introduced in 1959.<sup>72</sup> However, they were not the only beneficiaries of Carrolls success:

I was cashier and just before I left in 1973 the last cheque I wrote for duty was for £3¼ million, it was paid monthly. But after that I had to write another cheque for £4 million to cover the £3¼ million plus £¼ million to keep the factory going for a month.<sup>73</sup>

Although this example is outside the time-frame of the study it illustrates the degree of revenue generated from tobacco products throughout the 1940s-60s:

The position has now been reached here where the tobacco industry alone is set the task of producing a revenue which is greater than that to be obtained from income tax and surtax for the entire country... I do think this is a lot to demand of any one industry.<sup>74</sup>

As the major Irish tobacco producer Carrolls' contribution to the state coffers was one of the largest of any company in the country.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, the company and the Carroll family contributed financially to many facets of Irish sport and cultural life:

They sponsored the Irish Exhibition of Living Art and accumulated over 100 works of modern art by Irish artists which were hung in the offices and on the factory floor. There was also the Irish Open Golf Tournament, the GAA All-Stars, horse and dog racing, the RTE Proms, together with a number of individuals like, Eddie Macken and Paul Darragh from show-jumping, John O'Connor the pianist, and films. Locally they would have supported the Van Dessel Choral Society and the Dundalk Maytime Drama festival. Not all of these were for commercial gain.<sup>76</sup>

The philanthropic and progressive nature of the company influenced other Irish concerns which benefited the country but most particularly Dundalk where the workforce stood at 500 in 1960.<sup>77</sup> The spin-offs to local service industry and the spending potential of so many well remunerated jobs is incalculable and was a welcome boon to a town which was experiencing its own metamorphosis.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>73</sup> Maguire (interview).

<sup>74</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 6 December 1958, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> *Tempest Annual*, 1966, p. 34.

<sup>76</sup> McCartan (interview) pp. 5-6.

<sup>77</sup> *Irish industrial year book* (Dublin, 1960), p. 7.

## Housing

Between 1936-61 the population of the Dundalk urban area increased by almost 34% in comparison to a Dublin figure of 26% and an overall national decline. In 1946 the urban area was extended to over four times its pre-war size which accounted for about 18% of the population growth. The main consideration for enlarging the town, as stated at the boundary inquiry in 1945, was an acute shortage of suitable building land:

In the Demesne, which was acquired in 1921, they had built 580 houses and the last site now being developed would accommodate 160 a total of 740 houses. A recent housing survey had shown that Dundalk's total housing requirements arising from unfit houses overcrowding etc. was 797 less 50 just completed. Suitable sites were available for only 440 within the boundary leaving sites to be found outside it for the remainder; and in addition it was estimated that at least 300 would be built privately.<sup>78</sup>

An extensive house building programme was begun and by May 1960 the council had 'broken the back of the housing problem'. Of the 104 housing applicants forty-eight were waiting for vacancies in existing schemes, only eight had families, five were single, twenty-five were recently married and thirteen were from outside the urban area.<sup>79</sup> A list of developments is provided in table 5.4.

Scheme	Erected	Housed Supplied	Sold		
			Original	New Owner	Rented
Cluain Enda	1947	79	0	77	2
Wolfe Tone Terrace	1949	16	0	0	16
Pearse Park..	1949	112	0	104	8
Assumption Place	1950	6	0	1	5
Lennon/Meila Terrace	1951	34	0	19	15
Boyle O'Reilly Place	1951	24	0	0	24
Fatima	1951	167	0	0	167
St. Ronan's Terrace	1954	26	1	20	5
Pearse Park, Bungalows	1954	6	0	0	6
Camp Street South	1956	18	0	1	17
Marian Park	1958	156	0	0	156
<b>Total</b>		<b>644</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>421</b>

Source: figures supplied by UDC

**Table 5.4** Houses built by Dundalk UDC 1947-58.

<sup>78</sup> Farrelly, Peter, acting town clerk reported in *Dundalk Democrat*, 21 April 1945, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 28 May 1960, p. 6.

By 1961 65% of Dundalk's 4,467 private dwellings had been constructed since 1900 with 22% dating from 1946<sup>81</sup> which incorporated bathrooms:

When they were building Cluain Enda (1947) the council were reluctant to provide bathrooms on the grounds that the tenants would only put coal in the bath. Father Stokes took them on and they had to pay a slightly higher rent to get a bathroom.<sup>82</sup>

However, the practice was not continued and it was only from the Cluain Enda scheme (1947) that a bathroom with hot and cold water became a permanent feature of council houses in town (table 5.5).

Homes with fixed bath	1946	1961
National	15%	33%
Leinster	26%	47%
Dublin	48%	69%
Dundalk	20%	45%

Source: *Census of population of Ireland 1946, XXXVI, housing and social amenities*, pp. 166-7 and 1961, VI, p. 124.

**Table 5.5** Improvement in sanitation, 1946-61.

Although these initiatives were government-inspired, individually and collectively the local council played a significant role:

Buying the Demesne and Cox's field for £32,000 was a major coup for the council. The south end of the field [Cox's] was allocated for private housing and they laid out roads and services and leased off plots to those willing to pay.<sup>83</sup>

When the first sites became available in 1958 there were 'very few inquiries'. Within two years twenty-five applications were received for the eleven plots then available and plans were laid to speed up development and planning for the remaining land.<sup>84</sup> Of the 2,077 dwellings built in Dundalk between 1901-61, a total of 1,715 or 82% were constructed by the local authority.<sup>85</sup> The effects on the landscape can best be judged by comparing figures 5.1 and 1.1(p.44).

<sup>81</sup> Calculated from figures in *Census of population of Ireland 1961; VI, housing and social amenities* (Dublin, 1961), p. 124.

<sup>82</sup> O'Sullivan, Harold, notes from follow-up conversation to interview recorded 15 February 1999.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 6 August 1960, p. 9.

<sup>85</sup> Calculated from figures in *Census of population of Ireland 1961; VI, housing and social amenities* (Dublin, 1961) p. 85, and statistics supplied by DUDC re local authority housing (tables 2. 2, p. 72, and 5. 3, p. 1980).

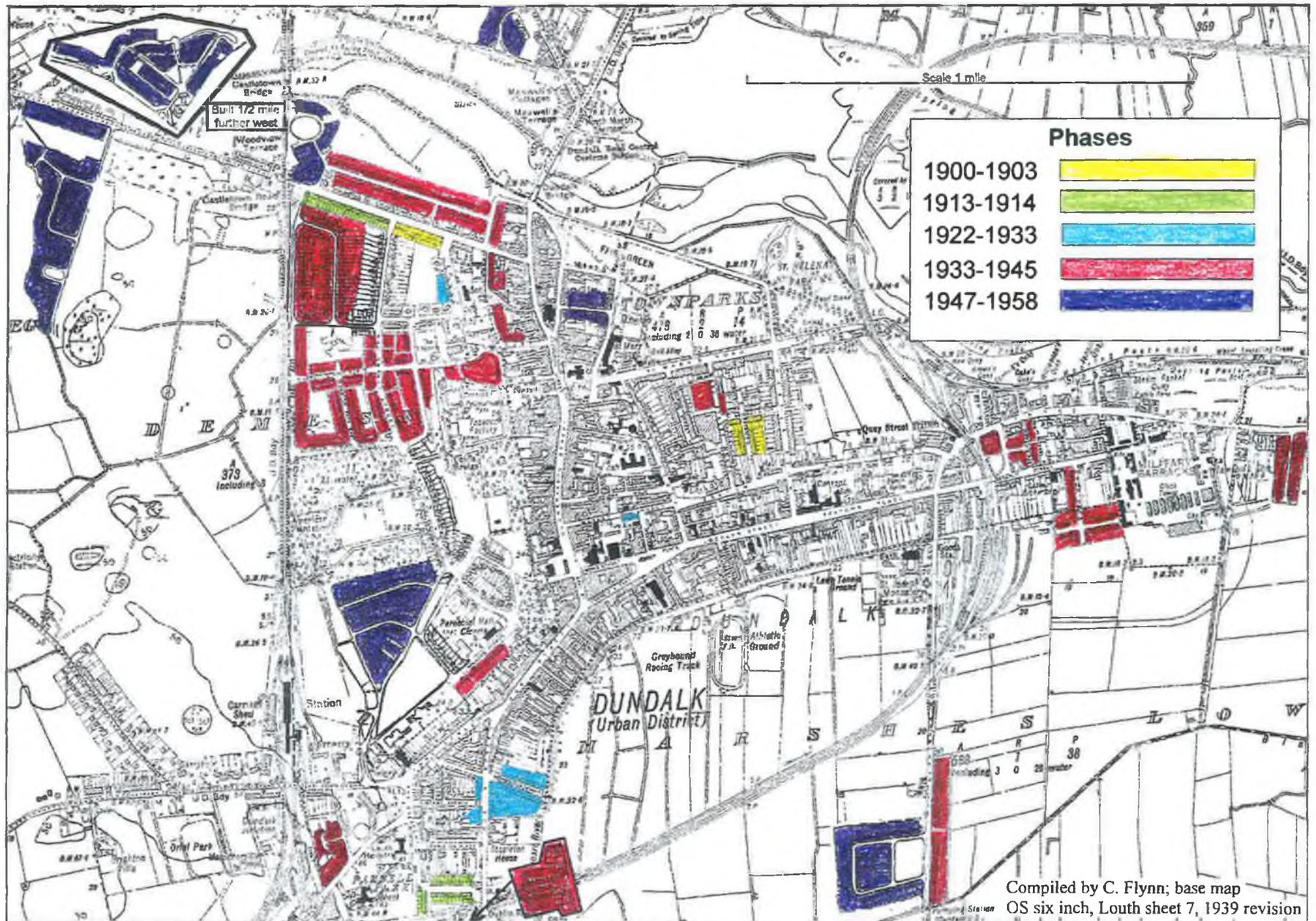


Figure 5.1 Housing schemes built in Dundalk, 1900-1960.

The council also provided loans for private building and house reconstruction under the Small Dwellings Acquisitions Acts.<sup>85</sup> In the older areas of town a number of dry closets still prevailed and the availability of government grants encouraged owner/occupiers to install modern sanitation.<sup>86</sup> By 1961 92% of homes had flush toilets, 82% had internal cold water and 47% had hot water.<sup>87</sup> Although today these statistics would be unacceptable, vast improvements had taken place in just fifteen years and a new standard was set for further improvement. Home ownership was becoming more prevalent as council houses were put on purchase schemes and by 1961 about 31% of the housing stock was privately owned.<sup>88</sup> Even tenants in cheaper rented accommodation were paying more attention to their homes:

When I went to get the houses condemned in Ladywell the officials from the department in Dublin were reluctant to agree because the inside of the houses looked so good. I had to point out, by banging on the walls, that they were covering up damp walls with 'beauty board'. Television was becoming popular and people saw how the inside of other houses looked. There were also DIY programmes on TV so they began to pretty up their own houses.<sup>89</sup>

### **Changing influences**

The arrival of television expanded personal horizons at all levels of society. By virtue of its proximity to Northern Ireland, Dundalk was receiving TV broadcasts in 1956 six years before Irish national television (RTÉ) began transmission.<sup>90</sup> Initially it became more evident in older parts of town where sanitation was poor and by 1957 'nearly all the houses in these areas had TV'.<sup>91</sup> With rents of 2/6 per week these householders were more likely to have a greater disposable income. Within three years it was estimated that there were 2,500 TV sets in Dundalk catering to 10,000 viewers and cinema audiences were

<sup>85</sup> O'Sullivan, *A history of local government in the county of Louth: from earliest times to the present time* (Dundalk, 2000), p. 185.

<sup>86</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 28 May 1960, p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> *Census of Ireland 1961; VI, housing and social amenities*, p. 124.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>89</sup> O'Sullivan (follow-up interview).

<sup>90</sup> Brown, Terence, *Ireland a social and cultural history 1922-85* (Dublin, 1985), p. 244.

<sup>91</sup> O'Sullivan, (follow-up interview).

declining.<sup>92</sup> Council tenants accounted for 40% of these<sup>93</sup> and at a DUDC meeting in September 1960 one of the councillors stated that:

he had been led to understand that people with televisions were not inclined to be looked upon with the same favour as others for medical cards.<sup>94</sup>

Additionally, a son who worked in the family grocery observed that families receiving assistance from the Saint Vincent De Paul Society were deemed ineligible if they had a television set.<sup>95</sup> As with dancing and other evils in the pre-war era, television was perceived as a 'corrupting influence' on social morals:

I was married and my family were grown up at the time when television came along. We didn't have a telly for a long time because I didn't think it was a good thing to have in the house.<sup>96</sup>

This was the stance adopted by the Catholic hierarchy as a more informed population began to 'think for themselves'. Thus, the position where 'the thinking [was] done for them by the only people who were educated i.e. the clergy' was being eroded. The bulwark of censorship was being nullified by television as ordinary people were exposed to what was perceived as 'the full blast of atheistic and materialistic thinking'. Nowhere was this more true than in relation to birth control:

We have a law here which prevents the circulation of literature and it has worked effectively for years, but it cannot censor the television programme, received in thousands of our homes, which discusses the merits and the techniques of birth control. So television is bringing us right up against a new situation which has dangers for us unless we are prepared for them.<sup>97</sup>

However, for some of the older members of the community, who were used to creating their own entertainment, it was a welcome addition:

An aunt of mine and her daughter bought a television and we all went up to watch it in her house. When there came something good on it she would say that's no good and turn it off so she would get rid of us. But then Sid used to drink in Benny McGuire's and the television came down and then I used to have everybody. They could stay as long as they liked.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>92</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 30 January 1960, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 30 April 1960, p. 6

<sup>94</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 26 November 1960, p. 6.

<sup>95</sup> McGahon, Carl, authors notes of conversation 10 August 2000.

<sup>96</sup> O'Mahoney, Mary, born 1918, interview recorded 20 April 1998

<sup>97</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 6 August 1960, p. 98.

<sup>98</sup> Charity, Louise, born 1911, interview recorded April 1998.

As more homes acquired their own TVs the traditional house-party ambience declined:

television killed good neighbourliness you didn't have the same contact you once had. But when the chips were down the neighbours were always there.<sup>99</sup>

However, even before the advent of TV some of the people the well intentioned clergy were endeavouring to protect from 'corrupting influences' were already questioning their motives:

The saddest thing I thought about my education was meeting Tom Farrelly who asked me for a loan of a copy of *Ulysses*. It was banned at the time. I thought it was an awful shame that there was a man who had taught me who never read *Ulysses*. It wasn't going to do him any harm, it hadn't done me any harm. That was the one thing I hated about society. The only thing I liked about the banned list was that from the first day I heard of it I went out of my way to get every banned book I could get and read it. So it influenced my reading. I think it was stupid to have censorship in this country. It just got young people like me interested in doing things they were told not to do. I found that some of the stuff wasn't worth banning, it wasn't even worth reading. But it did broaden my outlook on life and it gave me an insight into the type of people that were running our country politically, socially or culturally, and it learned you to sort the wood from the trees.<sup>100</sup>

Not only was the political system being questioned nor the youth the only inquisitor.

Clerical attitudes which had once been accepted were coming under scrutiny:

Priests from Northern Ireland were considered to be more narrow minded and sectarian than their southern counterparts. On one occasion a priest in his Sunday sermon stated that all Protestants would go to hell and the people got up and walked out of the chapel. He, or one of the other priests, had to apologise the following week.<sup>101</sup>

Despite this ecumenical gesture it is evident that even the local hierarchy were coming to terms with changing circumstances. Nevertheless, there was still a perception of ascendancy domination:

I would refer to them as the Ascendancy class rather than the Protestant class. Even in the 50s I still found quit a bit of the Ascendancy power lingering on in society. It was only in the late 50s that their names on shops began to disappear. Quite a few managers and clerks in the banks had Ascendancy names. At the change of the State in 1921 the civil service were of the Ascendancy class and it would have taken a generation or two for them to work their way out of the system.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> McCartan, (interview) p. 4.

<sup>100</sup> Casey (interview).

<sup>101</sup> O'Sullivan (follow-up interview).

<sup>102</sup> Casey (interview).

In 1952 vestiges of the old ascendancy culture in the allocation of work were still in evidence as at least one job vacancy was filled solely on the basis of religious belief:

Originally my family would have been Protestant but became converted to what we call Christen Brethren we wouldn't take the name of being Protestant. I understand that they would have been regarded as being Protestant. Because when my uncle applied for a job in a Dundalk firm one of the directors from their head office in Belfast asked a Dundalk bank manager, who was also a Protestant, "what is this chap is he one of them or one of us". The man in Dundalk perceived my uncle to have been a Protestant and said that he was one of them and he got the job. He was asked if he had experience of wages and he said yes. But they didn't ask what. He was not by any manner or means a bookkeeper. I said to him "but had you experience of wages"? He said "I got my wages at the end of the week so I had experience of wages".<sup>103</sup>

Likewise, remnants of Civil War politics still lingered but these too were being challenged:

I joined the John Boyle O'Reilly Friendly Benefit Society in 1955 because you had a free doctor. I started to go to meetings and as a very young man I was elected on to a management committee of about ten. I would say I would be about half their age. I started to ask the people where did the organisation come from? how did it start? I discovered that the Society and the AOH Division 566 were all the one at one stage and that a division occurred between the IRA and the pro-treaty people. It was a Catholic organisation and I can remember to this day, the meeting starts, "I open this meeting in the name of Saint Patrick the holy patron saint of Ireland and it should remain open until the business of this day is done. Let peace and harmony and true Christian charity be our guide in our deliberations." So one night at a management meeting I said "do you not think it's about time as an act of true Christian charity that the two organisations should bury their differences and come back as one strong unit"? Well I'm lucky to be alive this day. Even at that time people still couldn't resolve their differences over something that had happened thirty years before.<sup>104</sup>

Both societies were AOH organisations who by that time were divided along party political lines, Division 566 favouring Finn Gael. However, for the majority of the population who had no formal political involvement, republican aspirations seemed to have waned as early as 1945. Perhaps the most telling evidence of this occurred when a local councillor endeavoured to re-name all the principal streets in town along patriotic lines:

Mister Carroll give notice to move at the next meeting that the following changes be made in street names: Clanbrassil Street to Pearse Street, Jocelyn Street to Connolly Street, Roden

<sup>103</sup> Carlis, Raymond, interview 2000.

<sup>104</sup> O'Callaghan, Kevin (interview).

Place to Cathal Bruagh Street, Francis Street to Kevin Barry Street, Douglas Place to Séamus Toal Street, Jocelyn Place to Sean McDermott Place.<sup>105</sup>

A majority of two-thirds was necessary to effect the changes but the issue ‘elicited so little interest amongst the residents of the streets effected that nothing resulted’.<sup>106</sup> Yet, organised pressure could effect change particularly if backed by Gaelic cultural aspirations as emerged following the destruction of the town hall auditorium by fire in 1947.<sup>107</sup>

The town hall was being rebuilt and they decided they would put in a sloping floor and make it into a concert hall. But at that time there was nowhere else to run a céilí and a crowd of us led a delegation to the council to absolutely demand a flat floor so that concerts could be held there but so also could céilís and dances. In hindsight it was the greatest tragedy because now we have no concert hall and that would have been a tremendous concert hall. It’s a beautiful building. We got our way. We got the flat floor. At the time we considered it a great victory but as I say in hindsight it was a tragedy, a shame. But we did it with the best of intentions.<sup>108</sup>

That young men would berate the council is indicative of a growing confidence amongst the upcoming generation whose horizons were being broadened by television, travel and wider social interaction:

I remember one time at the Mansion House in Dublin I was just at a céilí and I was standing looking round and who did I see standing against the wall but de Valera. I walked straight over to him and we had a conversation in Irish. He was just there like an ordinary attendee. He said he used to go to them regularly and enjoyed it and here’s me gobaloon from Dundalk talking to the Taoiseach of the country. I mean I was only twenty one or two years of age at the time.<sup>109</sup>

But as this generation became exposed to American and British influences in popular music and fashion the general interest in ‘things Irish’ began to wane. For them ‘pop stars’ such as Bill Haley, Elvis Presley and the Beatles replaced the iconic figures of politicians, world leaders and prominent churchmen of previous generations. Out of this admix emerged a uniquely Irish form of entertainment ‘The Showband’ a name first coined in Dundalk in 1952.<sup>110</sup> Initially consisting of about eight part-time musicians, professional showbands emerged who travelled the country performing to dance audiences of up to

<sup>105</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 30 June 1945, p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, October 1945, p. 4.

<sup>107</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 27 February 1947, p. 4.

<sup>108</sup> McDonnell (interview).

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Foran, Gerry, authors notes of interview 18 August 2000

2,000 rendering their own versions of popular 'hit tunes' mixed with an element of cabaret. By 1957 individuals like Johnny Flynn (Galway), Johnny Quigley (Derry) and Brendan Boyer (Waterford) became celebrities and developed large followings:

Of course that was the time of the car and we would think nothing of heading off to Navan, Drogheda, Banbridge or even Dublin to a dance. Men and women congregate on different sides of the dance hall and you had to cross the floor to ask for a dance. Sometimes you would be refused. I remember one of my friends asking a girl who worked in the office of the same factory as himself who was refused a dance because he worked on the factory floor. But generally people got to know people from different walks of life and you soon realised that you were all the same. Everyone was as good as the next. Before the showbands there was a feeling that Irish music and musicians were not as good as in England but I remember one night in Blackrock when Adam Faith was booed off the stage because the local band was better than him. So it give you great confidence that Irish people were as good as anyone else.<sup>111</sup>

This generation, some of whom would become employers and leaders from the 1960s onwards, acquired a different set of values than that of their parents. This was particularly evident in long established religious practices. In 1953 attendance at religious confraternities reached its highest recorded level. The appointment of worker priests was being discussed in 1957 and by 1960 there was a slight decrease in the number of people attending Holy Week celebrations. By 1966 a quarter of the people were neglecting regular confession and mission attendances were described as 'disgraceful'.<sup>112</sup>

Since the mid 1950s washing machines, vacuum cleaners, fridges and other domestic appliances were available and with hire-purchase and the advent of the Credit Union these became affordable to 'ordinary' folk. Also in 1952 the first factory employee was admitted to the Dundalk Golf Club, once the preserve of the 'elite'. For the older generation increasing affluence had its downside:

In the old days we divided whatever you got in the street, no such a thing as if you had money, you got it if you had money or not. But it's all different now, I'm only Louise and the rest is all Missus. They came to the Avenue on trucks with settle beds and now they have everything motorcars, televisions and grand houses. They're up in the world. It's all a different world.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>111</sup> McGahon, Carl, author's notes of conversation 10 August 2000

<sup>112</sup> Murtagh, Fr. Michael, *St. Patrick's Dundalk an anniversary account* (Dundalk, 1997) pp. 280, 286 and 302.

<sup>113</sup> Charity (interview).

## Conclusion

It is generally agreed that the 1960s was a time of great industrial, commercial and social change in the Republic of Ireland. Whilst it is true that the change became most tangible during those years, in Dundalk at least the transformation began in the early 1950s. Indeed, political agitation towards change began in 1945 with the election of Dixie Roddy to the LCC which, although of no direct importance, served as a warning to the local luminaries. So what was the impetus? The one single element appears to be a growing confidence and awareness of their self-worth amongst people.

The first and more particularly the second post Civil War generations were no longer swayed by the politics of that era. Having endured the Emergency which had laid to rest most of the old taboos they were expecting some reward. When these were not forthcoming governments fell and the third marginal seat in county Louth was of major national importance in the fall – or survival - of any one government. The Labour party's involvement in the two intermittent coalition governments, particularly the housing drive, heralded the way towards more socially orientated policies which created even greater expectations. The rise of Fianna Fáil to prominence in the Dundalk urban and Louth county councils throughout the 1950s was influenced by their rescue packages for the GNRB/DEW which swayed many of the 1,400 workers and their dependants. The same may also hold true for the general election of 1957 and 1961 which placed greater emphasis on industry.

Of the three Dundalk industries surveyed in this chapter, Hallidays and Carrolls were already involved in exports before the Lemass initiative. Both adopted management and technological advances in the immediate post-war period which led to continued expansion and their educational commitment to employees was exceptional. It has been stated that Protestant/English people received preferential promotional treatment in the footwear industry. In the case cited the rank of captain would surely have been sufficient qualification for a position supervising personnel. As local employees gained recognised

qualifications they too were promoted on that basis alone. Thus the criteria for promotion was not merely religious belief or country of origin but was linked to accreditable experience or educational qualification. Even in the Catholic firm of Carrolls advancement by way of ability or additional education was the norm. In at least one case a Protestant was recruited from Scotland because he was considered the best candidate for the job.<sup>115</sup>

Religious jobbery in the GNR 'Works' has long been the perceived wisdom amongst the community in Dundalk. Yet, when the government assumed control this changed to allegations of political patronage. Whatever the merits of the argument it is clear that the workers were never contented with their bosses and thought they knew better how the company should be run. The resultant lax attitude to profitability, on both sides, did little to ensure its survival. For eighty years the modus operandi of the Works was railways and the encroachment of motor transport undermined its very existence. As one interviewee put it 'it was like an enclosed order dedicated to itself let loose on the real world of competition and was unable to cope'.<sup>116</sup> Unlike Hallidays and Carrolls, the engineering company DEW did not adjust to a changing industrial environment and suffered the consequences.

The regular, dependable earnings generated from these and other factories in Dundalk also helped to alter the social structure of the community. As leisure time and disposable income increased a new confidence was stirring amongst 'ordinary' people giving rise to consumerism. Acquisitions became status symbols which denoted the measure of social success. Workers could not only aspire to but actually achieve home ownership thus creating even greater independence. Television expanded personal horizons and the world was becoming a smaller place. Commercial dance halls became a social melting pot for the upcoming generation and although there was still class discrimination at least they were all in the one pot. Whether the upper and middle classes

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<sup>115</sup> Gray (interview).

<sup>116</sup> McCartan (interview) p. 3.

were aware of these undercurrents was of no consequence. Communally and individually a degree of self-belief was emerging amongst the majority. Thus, the seed for the progress or degeneration of the 1960s and following decades, depending on the point of view, were sown in the mid 1940s to 1960:

things have changed I mean it took a long time for them to change but they have changed. It takes a long time for a country to come of age. We have come of age in a lot of respects.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Casey (interview).

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion

This thesis sets out to examine the interdependence of changes which occurred in Dundalk between 1900-1960 as identified in the oral evidence. Whilst the course of change in each separate area under discussion is reasonably self evident, analysis of the interdependence of each change on the other is more problematical. For example, the 'Troubles' saw the rise to power of new political leaders notably Frank Aiken in Dundalk. Government protectionist policies and Aiken in particular were instrumental in attracting the footwear industry to the town. And the wages generated by these new companies created the confidence amongst workers to subtly challenge the political and social structures operating in Dundalk. What follows is an attempt to pull together the various strands of change over the time period in order to determine their cause and effect.

As stated in chapter V the Dundalk Urban District Council (DUDC) provided 82% of the houses built in Dundalk between 1901-61.<sup>1</sup> These developments affected not only the geography of the town but the community spirit which existed in what were considered by national and local officials to be 'condemned areas'. Yet, despite the poor living conditions, the oral evidence depicts a thriving local community where people were willing to help their neighbours in time of crisis. What was seen as a hovel in official circles was a 'home' to its inhabitants filled with love, caring, struggle and companionship. For them there was no alternative, 'everyone was the same'.<sup>2</sup> This prevailed into the 'hungry thirties' where in one man's view:

Dundalk was a pool of poverty but there was a certain comfort in that. 1935 was the nadir of the depression and I think from that moment on it changed everybody. It changed people's attitudes [which] changed everything else as a result. It was at that moment that everybody

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<sup>1</sup> Calculated from figures in *Census of population of Ireland 1961; Vol. VI, housing and social amenities* (Dublin 1961) p. 85, and statistics supplied by DUDC re local authority housing (table 2.2 and 5.4)

<sup>2</sup> Charity, Louise, born 1911, interview recorded April 1998.

was alienated together, and they knew it. There was a great sort of happiness and I think everybody felt more like comrades and there was great help.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to the 1940s the paternalistic attitude of the 'better-off' helped foster an illusion of an inclusive society which however well intentioned was only surface deep. Much of the vitriol was levelled at Protestant dominance in business, the Great Northern Railway (GNR) and later in the shoe factories. Yet the oral evidence also points to a substantial working class Protestant population in Dundalk. The undue influence of the Masonic order in the allocation of jobs on the GNR is accepted by interviewees from both sides of the religious divide. However, coexisting with the agreement whereby 'the sons of deserving officials' could be employed at the board's discretion<sup>4</sup> was the fitter's arrangement that 'two out of every three apprentices appointed [were] to be the sons of employees, one of whom [was] to be the son of a fitter'.<sup>5</sup> Thus, whilst the position or status within the company might differ, the principle remained the same and the term 'jobs for the boys' could be applied equally to both parties. In addition when the government instigated the rescue package for the GNR works in 1958, political favouritism replaced Masonic influence. The oral evidence also demonstrated that whilst Protestant hegemony did exist in the boot and shoe industry, this was based on education and expertise and not on nationality or religion. Indeed, the footwear companies provided the tutors and finance for factory workers to climb the corporate ladder if they were prepared to work for it.

The oral evidence has shown that within the Catholic church privileges were granted on the basis of class. Membership of the YMCA was restricted on the basis of occupation, as was admission, by a co-religionist, to the Dundalk golf club. Perceived class divisions were also evident between factory operatives and clerical staff in the Catholic firm of P.J. Carrolls who were also accused of religious discrimination by the Protestant community. Representation on the prestigious Louth County Council was also

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<sup>3</sup> Mc Quillen, Jack, born 1925, interview recorded December, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 31 November 1906, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Minutes of the ASE 1912-1930 (incomplete)* p. 73, in possession of author.

seen by fellow Catholics as inappropriate for working class people. Thus, from the early 1900s class distinction was rife throughout the Catholic community. Nevertheless, social inequality was generally portrayed in terms of religious and cultural difference which no doubt suited the political aims. If Protestants were the enemy then those Catholics in power were fighting on the behalf of the 'people'.

When the local authority began addressing overcrowding and insanitary conditions in the early 1900s the dispossessed were not re-housed as intended. Opposition to the house building programme was based on the cost to ratepayers. Additionally, when the families from the closed courts got accommodation in other parts of town they stood accused of lowering the tone, and the value, of these areas by their own fellow Catholics. Yet, when after independence it became politically expedient, both nationally and locally, to support the housing drive, opposition ceased. Under British rule the DUDC constructed an average of 15 houses a year between 1900-1916. The conservative nature of the first Cumman na nGadhael government was reflected when under their leadership this figure fell to 5.5 houses per annum. However, when Fianna Fáil came to power thereafter the number of houses increased dramatically to an average of 117 a year until 1941. Although the council housing of the 1930s was quite basic it was of a standard pertaining throughout the country and was a vast improvement in living conditions for the majority population. Nevertheless whilst communities generally moved en bloc to these new areas, much of the old community spirit was lost. This was further exacerbated by the effects of industrialisation in the form of the shoe factories. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers were afforded the opportunity of earning a reasonable and steady wage. Younger male and female family members could become 'good earners' on leaving school which added greatly to the family income. However, the 'Emergency' (1939-46) intervened.

Despite the rationing and shortages of the war Dundalk's proximity to the border meant that from time to time small family treats were available. The only single link common to all the interviewees is that they all smuggled food for family consumption. The

bitterness engendered by the government's policy of seizing such small quantities of contraband can only truly be judged by listening to the oral evidence:

I think it was disgraceful what they were doing. It's not as though you were defrauding the country of revenue or that. You were just acquiring something that you hadn't got. If it had of been here the people would have bloody well bought it.

In national terms it must be remembered how pivotal the third seat in county Louth was in the formation of governments between 1948-58. The first post 'Civil War' generation which was reaching maturity in the early 1940s were not as imbued with the party politics of their parents. Yet the heavy hand of legislation and law enforcement of a petty nature encroached directly on their most basic necessity, food, which was taken personally. In addition, agents of the law were believed to be acting dishonestly by keeping the seized goods for their own consumption. Thus, it is hardly surprising that fundamental questions about inequality were being asked.

Up to the 1940s local political and social structures were weighted against factory employees and workers in general. The boost of confidence and depletion of 'Civil War' resentments engendered by involvement in the local defence forces during the 'Emergency' did little to redress this. Some of the oral evidence presented portrays just how deeply this was felt. In view of this the election of Dixi Roddy to the LCC in 1945 could be interpreted as more than just a jest as stated in the interviews. The pivotal question is on whom the prank was intended. As Dixi achieved a life-long ambition and became a fully-fledged member of the Louth County Council the joke was hardly on him. However, the reaction of some of the local luminaries suggests that they believed they were being ridiculed. The impetus for and organisation behind Dixi's election campaign came from the shoe factory workers who were not enamoured with society's view of them as second class citizens. In addition to stressing the jocular nature of the incident the oral evidence also makes it clear that the organisers 'knew what they were at'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> McKeown, Hugh, interview recorded June 1998 and O'Callaghan, Kevin, interview recorder May 1997.

That the whole town turned out to take part in the celebration victory is indicative of their approval. Thus, the election of Dixi Roddy could be seen as the first salvo for social equality in Dundalk.

In the post 'Emergency' period housing conditions improved again when hot water and bathrooms became a standard feature in council houses. The availability of improvement grants helped bring the existing housing stock up to an acceptable standard of sanitation. In addition some of the earlier council dwellings were placed on purchase schemes and 'ordinary' working folk became 'people of property' which would have been unthinkable in the early 1900s. From the 1930s onwards the DUDC was generous in making land available for private housing. This was particularly true in the mid 1950s under which some workers could aspire to owning their own purpose-built family home.

Educational standards also improved gradually from 1922 onwards which was consistently mentioned as a major factor in the erosion of class bias. 'The division was there but that was eroded with education and class distinction got smaller where it's non-existent now'.<sup>7</sup> Throughout industry in Dundalk people of 'humble' origin were being promoted by way of educational qualification relating to their specific fields. As both management and factory operatives shared a common background the class divisions grew smaller. Whereas in the early 1900s money was the determining factor in secondary education, by the 1930s the teaching orders were prepared to waiver fees for bright students. Although much remained to be done with regard to equality in education there was at least a recognised path and a secure job awaiting those with ability. The overall effect of these changes was an increase in confidence which was passed on to the next generation.

In the aftermath of the 'Emergency' most workers, particularly those in industry, were receiving a steady, reliable income which in many cases was as good if not better than that enjoyed by their perceived betters. Thus, by the mid 1950s the gap in the

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<sup>7</sup> O'Callaghan, Kevin, (interview)..

standard of living between the small businessman and the factory worker was negligible. Above subsistence wages enabled working-class families to purchase some of the luxuries once the prerogative of this merchant middle class. And as we have seen the whole movement towards television entertainment began in the poorer areas of town. This new media was also starting to impact on the social controls of censorship and the power of the clergy. The first signs of slippage were seen in 1960 when the numbers attending holy week ceremonies decreased. Additionally, adults left Sunday mass in protest over a priest's sermon condemning Protestants to hell and by 1966 attendance at missions was described as 'disgraceful'. And any young man armed with the banned book list could travel the thirteen miles to Newry and shop to his heart's content.

As the second post 'Civil War' generation reached maturity their environment was much altered from that of 1900. Showbusiness personalities replaced the church and political idols of earlier generations. Better educated, grown in confidence, financially independent and freer of spirit they were ready to embrace the new policies of Seán Lemass:

you were made to feel that people in business and who had money were very important to you because maybe when the time came you might be looking for a job and you had to bow and scrape. That's what was behind it. But you don't have to bow and scrape now for a job.

#### **Assessment of oral evidence as a historical source**

Oral history is not a separate branch of historical inquiry but the reintroduction of what Paul Thompson describes as a skill that was once the mark of the great historian.<sup>8</sup> The spoken word has been and is the most widely used form of human communication common to both prince / princess and pauper alike. It is part and parcel of everyday life, so much so that it is sometimes taken for granted. The spoken word conveys not just information, but is charged with emotional power in a way that is simply beyond that of the written word. The very essence of humanity is the ability to experience emotion and

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<sup>8</sup> Thompson, Paul, *The voice of the past: oral history*, third edition (Oxford 2000), p. 25, pp. 24-81 gives full coverage of past usage and modern developments in the use of oral sources. See also Henige, David. *Oral historiography* (second edition) (London and New York 1985), pp. 7-13.

the very essence of history is human interaction. In a 'perfect' world logic and reason would determine such interaction but in the real world emotions ranging from anger to love can very often overrule rational thought. Oral evidence provides the historian with an opportunity to study not just the different facets of human experience but the emotional significance behind them. As with all human projects oral history has its faults. However, the advantages just outlined far outweigh the drawbacks. In addition by negating or ignoring the richest and most common form of human communication, historians place unnecessary restrictions on their ability to fully understand the past.

The range of topics covered in this thesis encompass what are sometimes seen as the separate branches of political, military, business, social, industrial, religious and educational history. It is the author's belief that the insights offered through the oral evidence in each of these fields could not be achieved using conventional sources whilst at the same time the oral sources could not stand alone. Specialisation is an essential element of historical enquiry. However, the evidence presented illustrates how the perceived demarcation lines between these divisions and subdivisions of history are often blurred. For example people who were politically opposed assisted in helping 'men on the run' during the War of Independence; an RIC officer refrained from naming a Volunteer involved in a killing; a second officer warned Republicans of an impending arms raid and Protestants and Catholics did not hold bitter animosity towards each other.

All of the interviewees' life histories contain information relating to the separate fields of historical study. Their lives were not lived in a vacuum. Historical issues which are often singled out for study impacted on each individual and consequently on the community of Dundalk overall. Indeed, the oral evidence shows clearly just how interdependent the sometimes specialist subjects are. In general, studies on housing usually focus on the geographical location and the living conditions in condemned areas; central and local government, or privately-funded initiatives taken to alleviate the problem; and the location, type, quantity and architectural design of new houses provided.<sup>9</sup> However,

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<sup>9</sup> For example, see Ruth McManus, 'The Dundalk Premier Public Utility Society', in *Irish Geography*, 31, no. 2 (1998), pp. 75-87.

the oral evidence poses a fundamental question: when is a building a hovel and when is it a home? Oral history offers the historian the opportunity to go inside the building to meet the people who live there and then decide. It also points out how resettlement led to a decrease in community spirit, which is a branch of social history. Where one lived was largely determined by family income which was directly related to education, employment, family structure and finance. The school attended most often depended on the area of town the pupil resided in. In this respect the oral evidence has shown that boys attending the CBS were more likely to become involved in the Irish language and cultural movement. In addition, the headmaster had influence within Fianna Fáil and could place students in the civil service, the Irish army or other key institutions. This suggests that in studying a place, people or a community a more all-encompassing, interdisciplinary methodology should be employed. An oral history approach provides an immediate entry point to such a study.

Oral history can also provide essential insights for individual fields of historical research. Much attention has been paid in this thesis to the importance of the Great Northern Railway to the town of Dundalk. Although in this case the author has endeavoured to view the history of the GNR from several vantage points it could conceivably be hived off into one or more specialist areas. In economic history the company's assets, cargoes, passenger traffic, profitability, management structures and shareholders could form a substantial study. Further branches of specialisation could be transport history, railway history or engineering history. The quantity and type of trains, carriages and miles of rail track belonging to the GNR are relevant forms of historical inquiry. However, the oral evidence provides examples as to the interaction and tensions between fellow Catholics, Protestant and Catholic, tradesman and apprentice, workers and management which can all have a bearing on the successful operation of any company. McDonnell's study of government initiatives to salvage heavy industry in Dundalk<sup>10</sup> does

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<sup>10</sup> McDonnell, Patrick, *The response of central and local government to the crises in the railway engineering industry in Dundalk* (Unpublished MA thesis NUI Maynooth 1992).

not answer the question as to why they failed. On the other hand, the oral evidence provides examples of pilfering, lax management and work practices, poorly thought out plans, and a general malaise amongst the workforce. These are the elements singled out by those who worked there as the principal cause of that failure; such insights are seldom available in conventional sources.

A few examples of oral evidence relating to the political/military history of Dundalk stress the criss-cross nature of political and military allegiances. People who were politically opposed, united, put their differences aside in order to help 'men on the run' during the War of Independence; an RIC officer protected a Volunteer involved in the killing of one of his comrades. And for reasons of friendship a second officer warned his ex-girlfriend, who was a staunch republican, of an impending arms raid. The oral evidence also makes it abundantly clear that Protestants and Catholics from all walks of life were friendly and courteous towards each other. In these and other areas of historical inquiry oral history is indispensable.

Finally, but perhaps more importantly, how accurate is oral information? The controversy surrounding the sale of the Athletic Grounds to Hallidays shoe factory in 1958 still lingers in Dundalk. Despite the short-lived nature of the footwear industry in town, or perhaps because of it, this incident has already entered the folk tradition of the area. There is no doubt that the intervention of Fr. Campbell was instrumental in securing the deal. Nevertheless, as no correspondence took place between himself and the company no written record exists to prove that his assistance was sought or given. The only written record is in newspaper accounts of the impending crisis and its resolution which allude to the possible relocation of the factory. According to Campbell's account the company threatened to pull out of Dundalk if they could not acquire this particular site. The testimony of Alan Gray states that he arranged an option on a site in Dublin on which, if necessary, the company was going to build a factory. Thus, under the rigours of historical inquiry there is confirmation by two independent sources both of which are oral. The facts

are recorded in impressive detail, as the oral evidence includes the depth of animosity towards Hallidays at that time, the financial and political manoeuvring involved and the long-term consequences for the GAA in Dundalk. But the overriding attraction of oral evidence is, as already stated, its emotional content. Through this, degrees and depth of feeling are revealed in a way not possible with conventional sources.

Thus rather than posing a threat to established means of historical research, oral history has the potential to liberate the historian. Provided oral evidence is subjected to appropriate and rigorous scrutiny, it may take its place alongside more conventional sources. The amount of original and important information unearthed in the course of this research bears witness to its usefulness. The equipment and methodology used are simple and straightforward and the interviewing skills are easily acquired.

This research resulted in the creation of a large oral history collection, as introduced in chapter I; the future location of this valuable but privately-generated resource brings the question of institutional support for oral history sharply into focus. The future placement of this archive has not yet been resolved. Both the Louth County Library and the Louth County Museum have shown interest in the collection in its present state. The new County Louth Archive is perhaps another possible location. However, the main consideration is not where the material will be stored but how it will be used. Oral history is about people and people can be hurt by the misuse of sensitive material contained in interviews. Thus, the oral historian is faced with ethical and indeed legal responsibilities. For example, in this particular collection a legally-binding mandatory time limit has been placed on specific interviews. In others the material can only be used with the permission of the interviewee and in a few instances respondents have opted for anonymity. Given the everyday hustle and bustle of a general public library it is unlikely that these essential considerations could be fully guaranteed and these difficulties will recur for other oral historians.

Despite the continuing development of oral history throughout the world, no dedicated oral history archive has yet been established in the Republic of Ireland.<sup>11</sup> However, this disadvantage could be turned to the benefit of all scholars. Starting out anew affords the opportunity of developing a national archive to the highest international standards, a place where transcription and computer-aided cataloguing could be developed, setting standards to be followed throughout the country. These are questions of finance, which are tied in to question of political control. As has been demonstrated in chapter I, many of the progressive universities and other academic institutions world-wide have already embraced oral history, and are committed to its continued development. That is the challenge that faces the Irish state, local authorities and third level teaching and research institutions in Ireland.

The oral evidence presented in this study of Dundalk 1900-1960 portrays the population of Dundalk in a liberal light where individuals were entitled to hold opposing views but still remain within the greater community. In times of crisis they helped each other. In times of sadness they comforted each other. Throughout all of this they laughed and that is the most poignant message the interviews contain. As the archive is a history that can be heard as well as read it will always remain a living history.

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<sup>11</sup> The UCD folklore collection and the RTE sound archive, and other archives are each in their own ways specialist and limited collections (see chapter I, pp. 21-22 and p. 24)

## Bibliography

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

All conducted by Charles Flynn with some assistance from Tom McCaffery.

Name	Born	Recorded	Occupation
Aiken, Frank	1941	May 2000	Civil engineer
Beagley, Annie	1913	March 1997	Shop girl
Bellew, Bridget	1902	June 1997	Factory worker (shoe)
Bolger, Fronnie	1920	June 1997	Factory worker (shoe)
Campbell, Fr.Desmond	1918	October 1999	Priest
Casey, Sean	1935	March 1997	Barber/photographer/public relations
Charity, Louise	1911	April 1998	Factory worker (shoe)
Clarke, Michael	1917	February 1999	Carpenter
Clarke, Thomas	1923	February 1997	Fireman/Council worker
Coburn, Jim	1922	February 1997	Engine driver
Dixon, Peter	1931	May 1996	Businessman
Filgate, Eddie	1915	January 1999	Civil servant / TD
Flynn, Maureen	1913	January 1997	Businesswoman
Flynn, Stan	1940	May 1996	Farmer
Foran, Gerry	1942	November 2000	Musician
Gardner	1931	August 1998	Factory worker/ housewife
Gardner	1944	August 1998	Shop girl/ housewife
Gibney, Patsy	1921	October 1997	Blacksmith/fitter
Gray, Allan	1923	May 2000	Accountant
Hanratty, Margaret	1916	May 1997	Factory worker (tobacco)
Kearley, Patrick	1919	June 1997	Blacksmith/factory worker (shoe)
Kelly, Owen	1935	September 1997	Slater
Kelly, Tommy	1919	October 1997	Mill worker/boilerman
Kieman, Gerry	1930	October 1997	Railway worker
Marron, Joe	1899	December 1996	Barber/comedian
Martin, Kitty	1927	June 1997	Musician
McCann, Hugh	1920	May 1998	Factory worker/manager
McCartan, Michael	1940	June 2000	Office worker/manager
McDermot	1913	June 2000	Baker
McDonnell, Rose	1958	April 1997	Factory worker
McDonnell, Tony	1929	March 1997	Shopboy/businessman
McDowell, Ethel	1931	February 1999	Farmers wife
McGahon, Carl	1943	August 2000	Businessman
McGee, Ignatius	1916	August 2000	Bricklayer
McGinty, Joe	1919	November 1997	Businessman
McGrath Hugh	1924	February 1997	Bicycle mechanic/store manager (DEW)
McGuire, Johnny	1913	November 1997	Chief clerk (P.J Carrolls)
McKeever, Patrick	1917	February 1997	Labourer
McKeown, Hugh	1918	June 1998	Milkmen
McQuillan, Jack	1925	May 1997	Blacksmith/manager (DEW)
Mooney, Jim	1925	August 1997	School janitor
Moran, Molly	1915	April 1997	Factory worker (shoe)
Morris, Mickey	1921	August 1998	Factory worker (shoe)

<b>Name</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Recorded</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Newell, William	1922	August 1997	Labourer
O,Callaghan, Kevin	1927	May 1997	Factory worker (shoe) manager
O,Callaghan, Sarah	1904	January 1997	Secretary
O,Neill, Pat	1942	March 1997	School teacher
O'Donnell, Turlough	1924	June 1997	Judge
O'Mahony, Canice	1926	March 1998	Town engineer
O'Mahony, Mary	1918	April 1998	Secretary
O'Quigley, Thomas	1924	May 1997	Fitter/estimator
O'Sullivan, Harold	1924	February 1999	Civil servant/historian
Roslyn, Ronnie	1914	June 1997	Blacksmith
Skeafon, Kelly	1952	May 1998	Visitor from the USA
Truesdale, Roy	1941	January 1997	Factory worker/window cleaner
Waller, Ester	1915	May 1997	Factory worker (shoe)
Watters, Leo	1920	May 1997	Shop assistant
White, Kevin	1920	July 1997	Shop assistant
Williams, Denis	1929	January 1997	Coal importer
Carlis, Raymond	1972	June 2000	Commercial traveller

## MANUSCRIPTS AND PAPERS

### ARDEE

#### Aiken, Frank,

Statement of Joe McCoy, re his Volunteer activities 1913-1924.

### DUBLIN

#### Irish Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks

#### Captured papers

Copy of document captured on the arrest of Tom Derrage at 21 Raglan Road on 6 April 1923 re the execution in Dundalk of Volunteers James Melia, Thomas Lennon and Joseph Ferguson attached to Dundalk Battalion. Lot 2/268.

Documents captured on John Gormley, adjutant 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division IRA, at 46 Broughton Street, Dundalk on 22 November 1922. Lot 10/ 2 (a).

Letter from Hugh O'Donnell to Tom Carr GHQ Northern Division re death in Dundalk of Belfast IRA volunteer Hugh O'Donnell, believed to be a spy dated 6 January 1923. Lot 2/117

Letter addressed to Tom Carr O/C Belfast Brigade HQ 4 January 1923. Lot 2/118.

Letter from Irish Republican Army, H/Q 1<sup>st</sup> Southern Division, stamped (in red ink) 2/268 Ógra Na hErin 30 January 1923, re charges against a Dundalk member of the government forces for wounding a prisoner in Kerry dated 4 January 1923. Lot Lot 2/185.

Report from Cumann na mBan re operations in Dundalk signed by Miss McDonald, Camp Street, Dundalk dated 4 January 1923. Document 107.

Report from Cumann na mBan Headquarters, 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division on operations in Dundalk dated 5 January 1923. Document 114.

Portion of letter found on Miss N. O'Shea, committed to Mountjoy on 25 November 1922; report of an IRA ambush of Free State troops at Channonrock (Louth) and a list of County Louth female internees. Document 124 (1).

**Harold O'Sullivan file 1916-1923:**

Department reports, Dublin Command Headquarters, Collins Barracks, 21 September 1923, 4 p.m.; General survey Dublin Command re Dundalk.

Dublin Command Headquarters, Collins Barracks, 24 August 1923, 1:30 a.m.; to GSO 2 reports and statistics General Headquarters, Parkgate, General survey re Dundalk.

Letter from Lionel (Donal) O'Hannigan to Military Service Pensions Board re activities of Louth Brigade Irish Volunteers during 1916 rising (undated).

Letter to Military Service Pensions Board re O'Hannigan signed by over twenty Dundalk volunteers (undated).

Letter from Patrick Hughes to referee Military Pensions Board re O'Hannigan's role in the rising dated 8 June 1936.

Letter from Patrick Hughes to secretary 1916 Roll of Honour committee re permission to be included on same date 18 May 1938.

Letter from P.J. Whitty to Mr. Hall re detention of Samuel Hall in Wakefield prison dated 24 May 1916.

Letter from Seamus Kennedy O/C 1st Battalion Dundalk to (whom it may concern) re role of Michael Bellew between 1918-1922 dated 13 November 1938.

Letter from Séamus Seal to Seán re role in 1916 rising dated 5 June 1956.

List of fatalities in County Louth due to military hostilities between 1916-1922, unsigned (probably O'Sullivan), undated.

List of IRA activities from January 1918 to December 1922, unsigned (probably compiled by Michael Bellew), undated.

List of pro- and anti- treaty casualties incurred by the retaking of Dundalk military barracks by the 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division, unsigned (probably O'Sullivan), undated.

Statement of Arthur Green to Hughie Carney, Dublin Street Dundalk re his role in the 1916 rising dated 22 April 1916 (though probably written much later).

Statement of Joe McGuill on the taking of Dundalk military barracks dated 10 June 1943.

Statement of Pat Carroll taken on Sunday 30 April 1978 at Peter Brennan's house re the capture of Dundalk military barracks on Sunday/Monday, 14/15 August 1922.

Statement of Phil Hearty re his activities as an Irish Volunteer dated 2 November 1983.

Statement of Richie Goss to military tribunal after being sentenced to death (undated).

**1939-1945**

List of LSF personnel available for tree cutting in the Dundalk area (undated).

List of bridge demolition squads in Dundalk area dated 27 July 1941.

List of bridge demolition squads in Dundalk area (revised) dated 21 November 1941.

List (hand-written) of bridge demolition squads in Dundalk area undated.

**Irish Republican Army Divisional Orders.**

Headquarters 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division 6 February 1923.

Headquarters 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division 12 January 1923. No. S/12006/7.

Headquarters 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division 21 January 1923.

Headquarters 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division. Divisional memo no. 2, 21 January 1923.

Headquarters 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division. Divisional memo no. 3, 23 January 1923.

Dublin Command headquarters Collins Barracks, general weekly reports, May-August 1923.

**UCD Archives****Mulcahy Papers:**

Aiken to Mulcahy, letter dated 6 July 1922. P7A/175.

Aiken to officers and men of 4<sup>th</sup> Northern division, 17 July 1922. P7A/175.

Aiken to members of the IRA serving with the provisional government dated 3 August 1922. P7A/175.

**DUNDALK****Flynn, Charles:**

Minute books of the Dundalk Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers:

11 December 1893-19 December 1899.

11 January 1904-27 April 1908.

13 August 1912-18 February 1931.

**Macardle, Moore and Company Limited (Brewery)**

Agents and travellers wages books:

November 1950-February 1956

February 1956-April 1958

Board of directors' minute book from February 1915-September 1930

Cash payments books:

February 1951-August 1953

March 1956-February 1958

Daybooks: 1937, 1940, 1942, 1946, 1947, 1948.

Ledger containing details of licensed houses and property 1892-1930.

Ledger containing details of monthly expenditure from June 1921-June 1934.

Purchase books:

February 1958-November 1958.

March 1953-July 1954.

August 1954-February 1956.

March 1951-February 1953.

Young, Esmay (Dundalk), letter to her daughter Jeannie O'Mahony, in Drogheda dated 18 August 1922.

**Ross, Noel:**

Thirteen undated maps of E company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division (Cooley Area) ambush positions in county Louth. Made in 1921-1922.

Reports presented by the resident electrical engineer to the Dundalk Urban District Council electricity department 1911-1919.

**LONDON**

**Central records office Kew**

**Monthly Intelligence officers' reports:**

Report on Ballyedmond Castle, Carlingford Lough. Seemed to be in connection with landing of arms by German submarine. CO.904/22.

Report on Volunteer Drilling in Dundalk. CO.904/68.

Report on arrest of Volunteer Michael Reynolds at Dunleer who had £80 in his possession. CO.904/105.

Report on the arrest of four men for making speeches at Dundalk and Drogheda. CO.904/120.

Report on Sinn Féiner's meeting in Gaelic League Hall Dundalk. CO.904/125.

Report of Raid on train between Dunleer and Drogheda, soldiers' wages taken. CO.904/ 430.

**Police Reports 1914-1921:**

Two police patrols attacked at Dundalk on 16 April 1920. One leading Sinn Féiner shot dead. CO.904/372.

Letter received by Mr. T.F. Williamson, J.P., warning him to cease referring to Mountjoy prisoners as 'Sinn Féiners'. CO.904/ 68.

Constable Hurley disarmed 30 May 1920. No. 219.

Dundalk post office raided on 1 July 1920. No. 293.

RIC constables' bicycles stolen on 6 July 1920. No. 361

Five signal cabins raided in Dundalk 22 July 1920. No. 3541.

Engine driver refuses to drive troops on 9 July 1920. No. 3276.

**Outrages against police 1914-1921:**

Constable Michael Hogan forced to resign No. 316

Sergeant Clarke, constables Brennan, Isdell and Witherden fired on in Jocelyn Street on 22 August 1920. Brennan killed Isdell and Witherden wounded. No.44.

Special constable Wheatley accidentally wounded in Dundalk on 16 September 1920. No. 121.

Intimidation of Sergeant Reynolds' wife at Blackrock near Dundalk on 10 September 1920. No. 145.

Car stolen from Patrick Callaghan on 11 November 1920. No. 249.

Constable Witherden seriously shot on 11 November. No. 268.

Summary of outrages against police week ending 14 November 1920. No. 242.

Mail raid 26 June 1920. No. 269.

Auxiliaries and RIC patrol surprise 20 men near Drogheda. No. 398.

Two policemen ambushed at Greenore near Dundalk 20 March 1921. No. 265.

Woman who washed for police in Dundalk intimidated on 15 April 1921. No. 298.

Attack on Barrett's house at Plaster near Dundalk on 17 April 1921. No. 308.

Car driver warned against driving policemen on 19 August 1921. No. 57.

Mrs. Reynolds intimidated on 16 September 1920. No. 145.

Five policemen attacked at Greenore near Dundalk on 8 May 1921. Constable Lynch wounded. No. 347.

Three members of Auxiliary fired on at Dundalk on 22 May 1921. No. 377.

Police on protection duty at Plaster near Dundalk fired on 7 July 1921. No. 438.

Constable Campbell shot dead in Dundalk on 17 June 1921. No. 403.

Two shots fired at policemen at Plaster on 19 June 1921. No. 416.

**Suppression of newspapers:**

*Dundalk Examiner* January to March 1916. No. 340S/70007 pp. 187-121.

**Inspector Generals' reports:**

County Louth February 1914.

**Crime reports:**

County Louth January 1914. No. 138-9.

County Louth February 1914. No. 140.

Dublin Divisional instructions for the 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade June 1921. No. WO/35 93 PT 1, pp.1-16.

*Note: These papers were consulted on microfilm in the John Paul II Library, NUI Maynooth: these are in the series (The British in Ireland)*

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### Filgate, Edward:

Sworn statement of Peter Clifford, re his part in 1916 rising.

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Tables XVI, XVIII, XX and XXI, pp. 25-58.

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Tables XVI, XX, XXI and XXII, pp. 27-49.

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pp. 94-119.

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and 6 B, pp. 58-161.

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*Irish Times*, 1900-45

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## Members of the Dundalk Urban District Council 1920-60

**1920**

Byrne, B. (SF)  
 Daly, P.J. (SF)\*  
 Coburn, J. (N&L)\*  
 Gosling, T.J. (Nat)\*  
 Hamill, B. (Nat)\*  
 Cox J.M. (RP.)  
 Deery, P. (Nat)\*  
 Hanratty, J. (SF)\*  
 Tempest, H.G. (RP.)  
 Hughes P. (SF)\*  
 O'Rourke, T.\*  
 McKinley, Joseph (SF)  
 McGahon, T.F. (I)\*  
 O'Hagen, J. (I)\*  
 O'Hagen, P. J.  
 Norton, J. (Nat)  
 Toner, P. (N&L)\*  
 McGuill, James (SF)\*

**1934**

Campbell, Thos. (I)  
 King, Thos. (I)  
 Coburn, J. (UIP)\*  
 Gosling, T.J. (I)\*  
 Flynn, Patk. J. (FF)  
 Brannigan, J. (L)  
 Deery, P. (UIP)\*  
 Kelly, Michael (L)  
 Hughes, Patrick (FF)\*  
 Pepper, Matt  
 Corrigan, John (L)\*  
 O'Byrne, John (R)  
 McGahon, Thos. F.\*  
 O'Hagen, J. (FF)  
 O'Donnell, A. (FF)  
 Toner, P. (R)\*  
 McGee, F. (I)

**1950**

Farrell, J. (FF)  
 Clifford, L. (FF)\*  
 Coburn, Jas.(I)\*  
 Gosling, T.J. (I)\*  
 Cunningham, B. (L)\*  
 Coffey, Mrs. B. (FF)\*  
 Deery, John (I)\*  
 McCourt, John (I)\*  
 McKevitt, P. (FF)\*  
 Watters, R. (L)  
 McEntee, J. (I)  
 McGahon, O. B. (I)\*

L Labour  
 FG Fine Gael  
 SF Sinn Féin

**1925**

Byrne, T.  
 Daly, P. J.\*  
 Coburn, J.\*  
 Gosling, T.\*  
 Hamill, B.\*  
 Hamill, Joseph jun  
 Deery, P.\*  
 Hanratty, J.\*  
 Pepper, Mathew  
 Hughes. P\*  
 O'Rourke, T.\*  
 Kelly, M.  
 McGahon, Thos. F.\*  
 O'Hagen, J.\*  
 Clarke, Jas.  
 Clarke, Peter  
 Toner, P.\*  
 McGuill, Jas.\*

**1942**

Carroll, M. (L)  
 Corrigan, John  
 Coburn, J. (UIP)\*  
 Gosling, T.J. (I)\*  
 Doyle, Jas (L)  
 O'Byrne, John (FF)  
 Deery, P. (UIP)\*  
 McCourt, John (I)  
 Walshe, Patk. (I)  
 O Dubhda, P. (FF)  
 McGee, James T. ((I)  
 McGahon, O. B. (I)

**1955**

Farrell, J. (FF)\*  
 Clifford, L. (FF)\*  
 Coburn, G. (FG)  
 Gosling, T.J. (I)\*  
 Cunningham, B. (L)\*  
 Coffey, Mrs. B. (FF)\*  
 Berrills. G. B (FF)  
 McCourt, John (I)\*  
 McKevitt, P. (FF)\*  
 Watters, R. (L)\*  
 Mullen, M.C. (FF)  
 McGahon, O. B. (I)\*

\* Denotes outgoing candidate  
 FF Fianna Fáil  
 UIP United Ireland Party  
 I Independent

**1928**

Campbell, Thos.  
 Nugent, E.  
 Coburn, J.\*  
 Gosling, T.\*  
 Hamill, B.\*  
 Hamill, Joseph jun\*  
 Deery, P.\*  
 Corrigan, John  
 McCooey, C.  
 Hughes. P\*  
 O'Rourke, T.\*  
 Norton, Gerald  
 McGahon, Thos. F.\*  
 O'Hagen, J.\*  
 O'Hagen, Owen J.  
 Clarke, Patrick  
 Toner, P.\*  
 O'Neill, Mathew

**1945**

Carroll, M. (L)\*  
 Clifford, L. (FF)  
 Coburn, Jas.(I)\*  
 Gosling, T.J. (I)\*  
 Cunningham, B.  
 Coffey, Mrs. B.  
 Deery, John (I)  
 McCourt, John (I)\*  
 McKevitt, P. (FF)  
 O Dubhda, P. (FF)\*  
 Mullen, M.C. (FF)  
 McGahon, O. B. (I)\*

**1960**

Farrell, J. (FF)\*  
 Clifford, L. (FF)\*  
 Coburn, M. (FG)  
 Gosling, T. (FG)\*  
 Grimes. T (L)  
 Coffey, P. (FF)  
 Deery, O. (FG)  
 Berrills. G. B (FF)  
 McKevitt, P. (FF)\*  
 Dixon, W. (FF)  
 Mullen, M.C. (FF)\*  
 McGahon, O. B. (FG)\*

N&L Nationalist and Labour  
 Nat Nationalist  
 RP Ratepayers

**Dundalk Members of the Louth County Council 1899-1960**

**1899**  
 T. C. Mcardle  
 Thomas Roe\*  
 Bernard Hamill (H)\*  
 James Moore (L)  
 Joseph Maxwell\*

**1902**  
 T. C. Mcardle\*  
 Henry O'Connell\*  
 Bernard Hamill (H)\*  
 J. M. Johnson (H)\*  
 Peter Callan

**1905**  
 T. C. Mcardle\*  
 Henry O'Connell\*  
 Bernard Hamill (H)\*  
 J. M. Johnson (H)\*  
 E. Goodman

**1908**  
 T. C. Mcardle\*  
 J. Wynne  
 Bernard Hamill (H)\*  
 J. M. Johnson (H)\*  
 E. Goodman\*

**1911**  
 T. C. Mcardle\*  
 J. Wynne\*  
 Bernard Hamill (I)\*  
 J. M. Johnson (H)\*  
 E. Goodman\*

**1914**  
 J. Wynne\*  
 Bernard Hamill (I)\*  
 T. E. Murphy  
 E. Goodman\*  
 T O'Rourke (N)

**1920**  
 J. Coburn (T&L)  
 Bernard Hamill (I)\*  
 P.J. Daly (OIP)  
 P. J. Hughes (OIP)  
 P. Hughes (OIP)  
 T.F. McGahon (I)  
 J. McGuill (OIP)

**1925**  
 J. Coburn (T&L)\*  
 Bernard Hamill (I)\*  
 P.J. Daly (OIP)\*  
 J. Hughes  
 T. O'Rourke  
 T.F. McGahon (I)\*  
 Mrs. M. Campbell  
 K. O'Reilly

**1928**  
 J. Coburn (T&L)\*  
 Bernard Hamill (I)\*  
 P. McGuinness  
 P. Clarke  
 T. O'Rourke  
 T.F. McGahon (I)\*  
 Mrs. M. Campbell\*  
 P. Deery  
 A. O'Donnell

**1934**  
 J. Coburn (UIP)\*  
 P.J. Flynn (FF)  
 P. McGuinness (UIP)\*  
 J. O'Hagan (FF)  
 V. Coburn (FF)  
 T.F. McGahon (I)\*  
 Mrs. M. Campbell\* (I)  
 P. Deery (UIP)\*  
 A. O'Donnell (FF)

**1942**  
 J. Coburn (I)\*  
 M. Carroll (L)  
 P. McGuinness (I)\*  
 P. Alexander (L)  
 J. O'Haire (FF)  
 O.B. McGahon (I)\*  
 P. Deery (I)\*  
 J. McCourt (I)

**1945**  
 J. Coburn (I)\*  
 M.C. Mullen (FF)  
 P. McGuinness (I)\*  
 Carroll, M. (L)  
 J. O'Haire (FF)\*  
 O.B. McGahon (I)\*  
 Roddy, R. (I)  
 McCourt, J. (I)\*

**1950**  
 J. Coburn (I)\*  
 M.C. Mullen (FF)\*  
 P. McGuinness (I)\*  
 R. Watters (L)  
 J. O'Haire (FF)\*  
 O.B. McGahon (I)\*  
 Mrs. B. Coffey. (FF)  
 McCourt, J. (I)\*

**1955**  
 G. Coburn (FG)  
 M.C. Mullen (FF)\*  
 P. McGuinness (I)\*  
 R. Watters (L)\*  
 G. Berrills (FF)  
 O.B. McGahon (FG)\*  
 Mrs. B. Coffey. (FF)\*  
 McCourt, J. (I)\*

**1960**  
 G. Coburn (FG)\*  
 M.C. Mullen (FF)\*  
 P. McGuinness (I)\*  
 P. Clarke (FF)  
 G. Berrills (FF)\*  
 O.B. McGahon (FG)\*  
 Patk. Coffey (FF)  
 Farrell, J. (FF)

H Healyite, L Labour  
 I Independent, N Nationalist  
 T&L Trade and Labour

\* Denotes outgoing candidate  
 FF Fianna Fáil  
 FG Fine Gael  
 UIP United Ireland Party

OIP Official Independence Party  
 (anti-Home Rule)

## Appendix C

**MPs and TDs elected for county Louth from 1892-1961**

**Note:** *Between 1892-1921, county Louth was a single seat constituency. For the elections of 1921 and 1922, counties Louth and Meath were combined and returned five elected representatives. From 1923 county Louth became a three-seat constituency.*

**1892-1910 T. M. Healy****1910** Richard Hazelton**1911** Augustine Roche**1916** P. J. Whitty**1918** J. J. O'Kelly (SF)**1921** Peter Hughes (SF), J. Murphy (SF), E. Duggan, J.

J.O'Kelly (SF) and J.C. McKenna (SF)

**1922** Peter Hughes (PT), Jas. Murphy (PT), E. Duggan (PT),

J.J.O'Kelly (SF) and Cathal O'Shannon (L).

**1923** F. Aiken (R), J. Murphy (CnG) and P. Hughes (CnG).**1927** F. Aiken (FF), James Coburn (NL) and J. Murphy (CnG).**1932** F. Aiken (FF), James Coburn (NL) and J. Murphy (CnG).**1933** F. Aiken (FF), James Coburn (NL) and J. Murphy (CnG).**1937** F. Aiken (FF), James Coburn (NL) and Lawrence J. Walsh (FF).**1938** F. Aiken (FF), James Coburn (I) and Lawrence J. Walsh (FF).**1943** F. Aiken (FF), James Coburn (FG) and Rodric J. Connolly (L).**1944** F. Aiken (FF), James Coburn (NL) and Lawrence J. Walsh (FF).**1948** F. Aiken (FF), James Coburn (FG) and Rodric J. Connolly (L).**1951** F. Aiken (FF), James Coburn (NL) and Lawrence J. Walsh (FF).**1954** F. Aiken (FF), James Coburn (FG) and S. Donegan (FG).**1957** F. Aiken (FF), James Coburn (FG) and Padraig Falkner (FF).**1961** F. Aiken (FF), Padraig Faulkner (FF) and S. Donegan (FG).

(PT) Pro-treaty (AT) Anti-treaty (NL) National League (FG) Fine Gael

(FF) Fianna Fáil (SF) Sinn Féin

## Appendix D

**Fatalities in the Dundalk area resulting from Irish wars 1916-1923****1916 Insurrection****RIC**

Constable Charles McGee shot at Castlebellingham, 24 April 1916.

**War of Independence****IN CIRCUMSTANCES NOT EXPLAINED**

Henry Murray found shot in Chapel Street, 25 February 1921.

John McGee found shot at Bush, 13 May 1921.

John and Patrick Watters shot in Quay Street, 17 June 1921.

**KILLED BY ACCIDENT**

Matthew Murphy shot by British soldiers at New Inn, 7 June, 1919.

Elizabeth Wilson, Georgina Rice, and Alexander Alderdise , killed in Craig and McGorisk fire, 28 August, 1920.

Frank Gallagher, GNR. train guard Adavoyle ambush, 24 June, 1921.

P. White, killed in explosion Ballymakellet Quarry, 13 April 1922.

**KILLED IN ACTION****IRA Volunteers**

Thomas Mulholland shot in Bridge Street, 16 April, 1920.

**RIC members**

Constable Brennan shot in Jocelyn Street, 22 August, 1920

Constable William Campbell shot at Dowdallshill, 17 June, 1921

Constable F. Hay shot at Greenore, 20 February, 1921.

**British Army**

Sergeant Dounson, Troopers Harper and Helford Adavoyle train ambush, 24 June, 1921.

**1922-1923****IN CIRCUMSTANCES NOT EXPLAINED**

Bernard Gaughran, shot by Government forces in Hill Street, 20 August, 1922.

Hugh O'Donnell, found shot at Fairhill, 31 December, 1922.

John Doyle, found shot at the The Lynns, Annagassan, 29 December, 1922.

Bernard Morris, shot by Government forces in Ballybinaby ambush, failing to stop, 1 April, 1923.

#### **KILLED BY ACCIDENT**

James McEvoy, Earl Street "car bomb", 18 August, 1922.

Sergeant Murray, Military Barracks, 9 September, 1922.

Patrick J. Brannigan, Anne Street Barracks, 14 October, 1922.

Volunteer P. Collins, Military Barracks, 17 October, 1922.

#### **KILLED IN ACTION**

##### **Government Forces**

Sergeant George Lavery, shot in Church Street, 17 July, 1922.

Volunteer McCaffrey, Castletown ambush, 25 July, 1922.

Sergeant McGivney, died of wounds after Castletown ambush, 17 October, 1922.

Commandant Frank Byrne, Volunteers Peter Devlin, F. Duffy, O. Donnelly and J. McGowan, in Anti-Treaty forces' attack on Military Barracks, 14 August, 1922.

Captain Sylvester McAdam, died of wounds received in Anti-Treaty forces attack on Military Barracks, 24 May 1923.

Volunteer Patrick Breen, bomb attack in Church Street, 15 September, 1922.

Volunteer Owen Sherlock, shot at Ardee Road, 23 September, 1922.

Captain J. Boyle and Sergeant Peter Trainor, Rockmarshall ambush, 4 November, 1922.

Volunteer Louis Conaty, Ballykelly ambush, 21 November, 1922.

Volunteer Charles Gyles, shot in Clanbrassil Street, 30 November, 1922.

Sergeant Martin John Daly, Ballybinaby ambush, 1 April, 1923.

##### **Anti-Treaty Forces**

John Campbell and Patrick Quigley, in the taking of Anne Street Barracks by Government forces, 16 July, 1922.

Brigadier Patrick McKenna, in the Anti-Treaty forces attack on the Military Barracks, 14 August, 1922.

John Halpenny, shot by Government forces at Ravensdale, 9 October, 1922.

John P. Quinn, shot at Tallanstown, died of wounds, 24 May, 1923.

#### **EXECUTED**

Thomas McKeown, John McNulty and Thomas Murray, in Dundalk Gaol, 13 January, 1923.

James Melia, Thomas Lennon and Joseph Ferguson, in Dundalk Military Barracks, 22 January, 1923.

## Appendix E: Military events in Dundalk 1919-1922

- 17 May Second attempt to burn Dun Dealgan Museum, and some Committee Members injured.
- 18 May Constable Campbell shot at Dowdallshill. Messrs. John and Patrick Watters, Seatown Place, shot. Ravensdale Castle burned down. All roads north blocked.
- 19 May Mr. George Brown's house, Grange, burned by armed men. Gelignite discovered by Military at Dowdallshill.
- 20 May "Dundalk Examiner" Works sacked.
- 22 May Mr. James Cunningham's, at Mullatee, burned.
- 24 May Attempted wreck of troop train at Adavoyle, four killed.
- 25 May Two army horses shot. Two others commandeered by the Military to replace
- 1922**
- 21 January Released Sinn Fein prisoners return to Dundalk.
- 23 January 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion K.O.Y.L. Infantry leave Dundalk.
- 12 March President Griffith's Election Meeting in Square.
- 24 March Train held up and raided at Adavoyle.
- 27 March Apprehension among Protestants.
- 29 March Departure of the R.I.C. from Dundalk. Train held up at Adavoyle and night trains discontinued.
- 2 April Republican Election Meeting in Square. Motors taken by force to convey people.
- 3 April Belfast goods burned at station and square.
- 4 April Fire at Bridge Street Police Barracks.
- 5 April Many houses raided.
- 6 April Rowing Club Boat-House set on fire.
- 13 April R.F. Artillery leave Military Barracks which were then occupied by Irish detachment.
- 16 April IRA. Church Parade.
- 24 April Peace Strike.
- 1 May Adavoyle train raid.
- 2 May Mountpleasant train raid.
- 3 May Dundalk train raid.
- 4 May North Louth Police raised by voluntary meeting.
- 8 May Local Police come on duty.
- 14 May Armed robbery at Steampacket Quay.
- 20 May Threatening notices posted up.
- 27 May Heavy firing and attacks on Jonesborough Police Barracks.
- 5 June Unemployed Demonstration.
- 16 June Parliamentary Election.

## Appendix E: Military events in Dundalk 1919-1922

- 28 June Messrs. McGuill, Daly and McKenna arrested in Drogheda and escaped again.
- 30 June Messrs. Dick's shop openly robbed. Four Courts, Dublin, stormed and taken by Free State Troops.
- 1 July Railway bridges at Dunleer blown up. Gresham Hotel and surrounding buildings in Dublin in flames, captured by National troops.
- 3 July A week without newspapers or letters. News bulletins on Post Office windows. Twelve robbers of Dick's shop released from gaol by force. Recaptured after a running fight.
- 16 July Free State troops arrived at night and took possession of all barracks and the gaol. One irregular killed, one wounded. 300 Irregulars arrested. Local Police disbanded.
- 17 July "Belfast Telegraphs" again burned at the station. National Troops, shot Sergeant Lavery.
- 22 July Four Dundalk banks raided and £2,500 taken. Train full of prisoners arrived at Dundalk gaol.
- 23 July Two girls accidentally shot near Jonesborough.
- 27 July Great explosion blew hole in goal wall. All windows in Crescent, etc., broken. 105 Irregulars escaped from gaol. A number re-captured afterwards. All roads blocked, National troops ambushed at Castletown and Barracks Street.
- 28 July Greenore occupied by National troops; Irregulars abandoned it.
- 31 July Heavy night firing.
- 4 August £600 returned to the Dundalk Banks.
- 14 August Irregulars re-take Dundalk, much damage to houses near Barracks. Irregulars Brigadier" McKenna blown up by his own men accidentally. Free State Troops made prisoners.
- 15-17 August Tension in Dundalk
- 18 August Free State Troops re-enter Dundalk. Irregulars deliberately explode motor lorry at Park Street corner killing one civilian and damage houses all round Felix Dawe, James Kennedy and B. Moynagh arrested.
- 19 August Cooley Mountains searched by many Free State Troops. Heavy night firing in Dundalk.
- 21 August Messrs. Donnelly, Daly and McGuill arrested. Heavy firing at Greenore.
- 23 August Ten mines removed from Military Barracks. Heavy firing at night.
- 24 August Happy Valley and Bridge Street searched by troops.
- 26 August Exceptionally heavy night sniping and firing.
- 27 August Heavy night firing at Castletown and the Demesne.
- 1 September Ammunition dumps discovered at Bush and elsewhere.
- 2 September Blackrock searched by National (Free State) Troops. Many arrests and

## Appendix E: Military events in Dundalk 1919-1922

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## Appendix E: Military events in Dundalk 1919-1922

- searches in Dundalk.
- 7 September Much firing and bombs at Castletown.
  - 8 September Patrol bombed Church Street.
  - 11 September Bellurgan Point metal railway bridge and all bridge on roads to Cooley blown up by Irregulars.
  - 12 September Barracks and Gaol surrounded by barbed wire entanglements.
  - 13 September Mr. T. Rogers' escaped from hospital.
  - 14 September National Army soldier killed by bomb in Church Street. Five hours' shooting at night. Electric lights cut off.
  - 21 September Fighting at Dungooley and Forkhill.
  - 23 September Two National Army soldiers attacked and one shot dead. Heavy and continued sniping and firing at night.
  - 25 September Windows broken in St. Nicholas Protestant Church.
  - 31 September Heavy firing at the gaol. Bombs thrown at troops at Castletown.
  - 2 October Very heavy firing at night.
  - 3 October Bellurgan railway metal bridge again blown up and also road bridge to Cooley.
  - 5 October Harbour pumping plant fails to work. Man shot in Park Street. Fighting at Omeath, Irregulars repulsed. Road bridges near Dunleer blown up.
  - 8 October Greenore Barracks sniped at.
  - 9 October Much night firing at Dundalk.
  - 17 October Attack on Lancia car on Newry road beaten off. Sergeant. McGiveney killed at Castletown Mount by sniper.
  - 18 October Two soldiers accidentally shot in Barracks.
  - 21 October Explosion in Ardee barracks. Three soldiers injured.
  - 24 October Rows at the Urban Council.
  - 30 October Heavy firing at night. Bombs on Newry Road. Arms dump in hayrick at Knockbridge. Explosives in house at Dungooley.
  - 31 October Civic Guard arrive in Dundalk.
  - 2 November Railway blocked at Dromin. Roads blocked all round Dundalk. Heavy night firing at Gaol and Big Bridge. Typewriter stolen from Messrs. Acheson.
  - 3 November Determined attack on small garrison in Ardee. Mine exploded. Much damage to houses and shops.
  - 4 November Mine ambush at Rockmarshall. Capt. Jas. Boyle, of Greenore, and Sergeant Treanor killed
  - 11 November Dromin station robbed by armed burglars.
  - 12 November Heavy firing in Dundalk, Saturday night, no casualties.
  - 14 November Attempted armed robbery Dunleer Post Office. Mr. Harry Maguire wounded.
  - 15 November Threat to blow up St. Mary's College.

## Appendix E: Military events in Dundalk 1919-1922

- 17 November "Young Lady" arrested and released next day.
- 20 November Second mine ambush at Rockmarshall- no casualties.
- 21 November Many houses searched by troops. Military motor mined and ambushed at Ballykelly Cross. Several wounded - driver died. Heavy shooting at night in Dundalk - grenade thrown in Seatown no casualties.
- 22 November Bomb exploded near gaol - no casualties.
- 23 November Abortive attack on Ardee Barracks.
- 29 November Mr. Peter Woods, Piedmont, arrested.
- 30 November Private Chas. Gyles, murdered in Clanbrassil Street.
- 2 December Fierce but fruitless attack on Ardee Barracks.
- 3 December Attempt to destroy goods train and permanent way on Enniskillen line near Dundalk.
- 6 December Irish Free State begins to exist. Mr. T.M. Healy appointed 1<sup>st</sup> Government General. Arms and ammunition captured at Faughart.
- 7 December Dr. Steen's unoccupied house in Ardee fired into.
- 8 December Mr. Bernard O'Rourke's Mills, Dundalk, elected Senator. Athclare bridge destroyed for 5<sup>th</sup> time.
- 10 December Mr. T. O'Rourke's motor car burned by armed youths at Castlebellingham.
- 15 December Train derailed at Dromin.
- 16 December Train raided and robbed of much goods at Mountpleasant.
- 18 December Four ammunition dumps blown up by troops at Flurrybridge.
- 19 December Trains re-start on Dundalk-Greenore line.
- 20 December Attempted burning of *Democrat* office. Dublin mail train set on fire at Casltebellingham by armed youths - goods train run into it. Complete loss of many Christmas presents, letters, cards, etc. Total damage £40,000.
- 25 December Tennis Club and Pavilion set on fire and destroyed.
- 5 January Attempt to blow up Inniskeen Station.
- 1923
- 7 January Dun Dealgan Museum building again set on fire. Inniskeen Station burned.
- 9 January Dublin-Belfast mail train held up at Mountpleasant and derailed. Three prisoners escaped from Dundalk Gaol.
- 12 January Goods train held up at Mountpleasant.
- 13 January Three Irregulars executed in Dundalk Gaol. First executions in Dundalk since present Gaol was built.
- 14 January Three petrol van drivers missing temporarily.
- 18 January Blackrock postman's mails stolen.
- 29 January Knockbridge post office set on fire; telephone poles cut down at Haggardstown.
- 1 February Dromin signal cabin and office blown up. Attempt to burn Mr. Peter Hughes, T.D., Dundalk

## Appendix E: Military events in Dundalk 1919-1922

- 2 February Clermont House, near Dundalk, burned down.
- 4 February Ballygasson House, Dunleer, burned down. Windows of Protestant Church and Schools, Ravensdale, smashed.
- 5 February Attempted burning of Mr. T.F. McGahon's house, Dundalk.
- 7 February Messrs. McGahon's bungalow at Blackrock blown up.
- 8 February Strikes! Red flag hung from O'Rourke's mill.
- 21 February Louth and Channonrock post office robbed.
- 22 February Blackrock post office robbed.
- 28 February Round up by military in Mid-Louth. Important Irregulars arrested
- 1 March An ammunition dump found at Stephenstown.
- 2 March Knockabbey House burned down, including chapel; two incendiaries captured.
- 3 March Burglary with arms at the Hon. Misses Plunkett's, Ballymascanlan.
- 14 March Viaduct again blown up.
- 31 March Dog Licence money stolen from Castlebellingham postman.
- 1 April Customs Duty between the Irish Free State and England and Northern Ireland. Military activity and searches. Ambush at Ballybinaby. Two soldiers murdered.
- 3 April Bombs thrown at military lorry in St. Mary's Road and Peter Street.
- 4 April Solitary sniper fires again at night.
- 6 April Town Rate Books, completed and checked, seized by gunmen.
- 7 April Dundalk Distillery closes owing to Customs duties.
- 8 April Two railway bridges at Clermot blown up.
- 9 April Poor Rate Books seized by gunmen.
- 16 April Searches, dumps found and arrests this week.
- 30 April Alderman Monaghan of Drogheda appointed Commissioner of Co. Kerry.
- 14 May Robberies in Dublin Road area.
- 16 May 10,000 rounds ammunition discovered at Townrath.
- 19 June Military guard on Big Bridge discontinued.
- 5 August Miss McSwiney speaks at meeting at the Square.
- 10 August President Cosgrove held a meeting in the Square.
- 27 August Election Day. Votes polled 24,506. Quota 6,127. Elected: - Aiken, Frank; Murphy, James; Hughes, Peter.

**Interviewee:-** Tony McDonnell.  
Park Street,  
Dundalk.

**Date of Birth:-** 9 July, 1929.

**Date of Interview:-** March, 1997.

**Interviewer:-** Charlie Flynn.

**SIDE A OF TAPE ONE.**

**Tony you talked earlier about your father, I wonder could you give us any idea; the pawn....pawn broking now has nor or less died out as ah... Could you give us some idea what....**

.....well...

**....that was like.**

He never spoke much about it and.... he....took over from a man called..... He came to Dundalk, as I say, around maybe 1920, and I could be a year earlier or later, I don't know. And there was a man called O'Reilly owned the pawn broking' premises in Park Street and the one down here; and my father worked up here. And then his brother came down and staffed both shops. In the event.....my father bought out O'Reilly and em.... All I can remember as a young...young fellow growing up about the pawn broking' was, there was two sections in the shop. There was the front section where you sold ordinary clothes and boots and what have you; and then there was the back section, which was called pledges. Now money was very scarce. These were bad times in the early 30s in Dundalk.

**Yes.**

And when a man would finish Sunday with his good suit on him, he wouldn't want it until the following Sunday. But he might need money for food or drink; and he'd come up with his suit or his bicycle or a piece of furniture or his tool kit; I've seen all that sort of stuff. And he'd pledge it for a week or a month or whatever, and he'd get so much from my father on it. And he paid that back, plus a very small commission-it was a very small commission-.....

**Yes, I'm aware of that.**

to redeem it, that's what they called redeeming it. [the pledged item].

Now he was a registered money lender, me father was, and it was something you had to eh have a bond for. You couldn't just open a pawn broking' business, you had to apply to the courts for a....for a...a licence (Charlie prompts 'licence'). And I remember Dad saying to me one time, many years later, he had given up the pawn broking' because, in 19...now I'm not sure of this but I think it was 1934, there was a big railway strike in Dundalk. And the railway....I forget how long they were out, somebody will tell you that, I don't remember how much...how long.

Now things were bad in the Town, and here's a railway strike and nobody was getting any wages at all; and they were on their uppers and hungry. And they came in their hundreds to him. Now that time they say there was six hundred. I don't know if it was six hundred people

or six hundred families pulling out of the railways; I think it was six hundred families. You know who were getting a living form it.

**It might even have been higher.**

Well perhaps.

But any way they came, he told me this, they came to them...to him in their hundreds with every thing they could lay their hands on, to pawn it to get money to live. And he was a very soft man, he was...he was a....ah... he was a... a foolishly soft. He saw nobody stuck, he saw nobody down. He lent money out on stuff, nearly a cardboard box, in order that they could have food on their table. And an awful big percentage of them never, never paid him back. And he often said to me in later years, -I might mention a name of Johnny so and so- he says, 'that wouldn't be anything' to Johnny so and so from Happy Valley; I'd say 'yes'; and he'd say 'ah yes, I remember them'. And what he was saying to me was, they were people -I be talking about somebody who had made it in the world- who didn't ever, ever pay him back.

And in 1934, that was the year it was '34. Now you know the value of money in 1934, he lost four thousand pounds in one year; now you figure that out in today's values of money.

**Yeah.**

That was money lent out that he never got back, four thousand pounds in 1934, it put him to the wall.

**Just.. Just to clarify that would you have any, a rough idea of what a tradesman's wages were at that time.**

I wouldn't, but I can tell you when I started in 1945 I was getting five..1946 (Tony corrects himself) I was on five shillings a week; that's old money.

**So you're probably talking about between twelve and sixpence and a pound a week.**

I imagine so.

**So four thousand pounds was a lot of money.**

Well I mean, It's a crazy eh.. eh.. comparison, isn't it.

**Yeah.**

Well that's when he said that now, and he was a.... . And do you know....in..in..in the...'50s ...he won money on the Sweep; he sold ah a ticket and the horse was third and he sold a half share in the ticket - because he needed the money. And the first thing he did when he got the money, was headed off out to pay off anybody he owed money to; even though they were statuted barred for twenty years, some of them. He insisted on doing it; and he cleared nearly all he got he got away again. But as he said to me afterwards, 'clear conscience, happy man now'.

You know, that's....there was a lot of those sort of people around; there not around anymore. I don't think I'd have had his moral courage to...to.... I'd have....I'd have availed of whatever legal loopholes there were. I wouldn't like to see somebody as a result of what I owed them going down the tubes; but he was going to people to say that he owed them and they didn't even remember that he owed them. Cleared it all, paid his way and ah held the head up.

**Interviewee:-** Ethel McDowell  
Heynestown,  
Dundalk.

**Date of Birth:-** 9 July, 1929.

**Date of Interview:-** February, 1999.

**Interviewer:-** Charlie Flynn.

**SIDE A OF TAPE ONE.**

**Well your father and mother would have been some... some**

They did, they did they lived through... When my mother... before she was married... she'd tell... I don't know if I should tell this story or not? Can you blot it out if you feel?

**Yea, yea.**

You mightn't think its appropriate. But she used to tell us a story... The Melbers lived over... Charles Melber was my mothers sister right! And they came to Dundalk first because they were left that shop, Melbers Pork shop, if you remember it. They were left that shop by an old uncle who was originally a German and when the First World War came they ah... the Germans had to all leave. And they, this shop was left to the Melbers. Anyway my mother when she came to work for her sister she lived with them. But when mum was about 18 or 19 it was the time of the troubles and Melbers, they often, they told me this story, that they, their drawing room was over the shop, over Melbers shop. It was a lovely house. It was a beautiful house over the shop. And their drawing room was over the shop. And they were actually looking out the window watching the people shooting on the middle of Clanbrassil Street. And ah... the next thing was they were upstairs and the front door, there was a knocking on the front door. And ah... I don't know who went down to answer the door. Probably my uncle I don't know or my aunt I'm not sure which it was. They were kind of a little bit scary because they were Protestant and then you know, there was always this carry on a bit and ah... but always had the best of relationship, always! to this day there was never anything ever went on in my family we all were one as far as living was concerned. But whoever went down, whether it was my aunt or my uncle they opened the door and this man was standing there and he'd been out on the middle of the road and my aunt tells this story that he stood there and he said I just came to tell you he said, Mr. Melber he said, just sit quietly keep your door closed and nothing will happen to you... and that's what happened. She closed the door, went up stairs and they just sat quietly. She didn't say who it was. But she was just told that just to sit quietly, pass no remarks and noting would happen them.

**This would have been the Civil War time wouldn't it.**

Em. And my mum remembers it too she was just eighteen at the time. .. a bit scary at the time but that's what she was told nothing would happen to them.

**You mentioned there relationships between Protestants and Catholics**

There was always, from I was, as I say I'm 67 years of age now and I never knew anything but the greatest relationship always and ever. With my father he was the best friend of James Deery, McCleans all his best friends were Catholic. And I remember as a... and Johnny Byrne

lived up Mount Avenue he had a, old Johnny Byrne, his son was Peter Byrne. And they had a tobacconist in Clanbrassil Street. And old Johnny Byrne who lived up Mount Avenue and he was a great friend of my fathers. And I remember one time I said to my parents when I was a little girl. I said to them, 'Mum' I said 'why do we never see... because you see I was brought [up] to be; Sunday morning you got up and went to church you did not lie in bed and that was there was no No or Yes about it. And your shoes were cleaned the night before your Sunday cloths were left out. And they were Sunday cloths. There had to be a hat. there had to be a proper outfit and your shoes were cleaned the night before and you went to church every Sunday. But you know I'd be looking round during the church service and I said once to my mother when I was coming home. Mum 'why does Mr. Byrne never go to church'? and the answer I got was, well why would he walk away down; away down the town when he can go the Frirary. She didn't say to me he doesn't go to the same church as us because he was Catholic. We're Church of Ireland! We're Protestant! she didn't say that. Because I never heard the word. Like I never heard when I was growing up the word Catholic and Protestant never we were all one. And when I was a little girl we had help in the house, because mum worked very hard in the shop you know, she was in business so she needed help in the house. And we would be taken out you know, little ones for a walk. We had a great friend Lilly McGuire, who was a great friend and reared me and she was from Castletown. And Lilly, she was there before I was born she brought me up really and there wasn't a church in Dundalk that I wasn't at at Christmas to see all the cribs. So that's the way I was brought up. So I mean I sort of lived with that. I mean I never knew the difference. We were all one.

**Well I would have to say that in most of the people I have talked to so far, who would be predominately Catholic, they said the same thing. But there were occasions ah... when say somebody got married between the two...?**

Oh yes I can come to that too now. I married now in 1955. I married Robin McDowell. Well there was no problem there we were both the same. Not that it.. I would have married him had he not been and still be able to live with myself. But then Robin died 20 years ago at 47, which was very sad. He died of a massive heart-attack. But my two children both are inter-church marriages..... [edit]

**But there was a time**

Oh there was a time. But sure listen Charlie the time... I remember when eh... not so much, not when I was married but when cousins of mine were married who were older than I was that the Catholics had to stand outside our churches because they weren't allowed in. Do you remember that. They weren't allowed in to service in our churches. And I thought that was ridiculous but we always went in.

**From the Protestant angle**

We were never told not to go in to a Catholic church

**Was there ever any pressure on an inter marriage, not to do it or...?**

No, no, never told not to do it. We were always told that. We were always told to do what our conscience told us. We were allowed to please ourselves. Do you know what I mean. Which was kind of... It was a bit sad around that time because really the Protestant community went

## Appendix F: Transcriptions from the oral archive

down a lot. You know they did get smaller in numbers because of that law in the church. That was a pity that that happened you know. Because it sort of it eh... it just made the numbers go down in the Protestant community.

**I did talk to one woman from Drogheda who used to visit Dundalk and she said the one difference in Dundalk is that there were a bigger population of Protestants in Dundalk.**

In Drogheda?

**In Dundalk**

yea, yea

**Would you think that would be?**

A bigger population

**A fairly big population?**

Oh yes, oh there was. There as quite, there was a big... I often heard me father saying like when he was a young fella you know going to church, they would go up into the gallery in the church and the downstairs would be full. You see a lot of the Protestant population moved away. A lot of them moved up into the north moved away during the when the state was formed. But then when you look at it. When you look at it things have changed an awful lot.

**Interviewee:-** Hugh McCann  
Avenue Road,  
Dundalk.

**Date of Birth:-** 8 December, 1920

**Date of Interview:-** December, 1997.

**Interviewer:-** Charlie Flynn.

**SIDE A OF TAPE ONE.**

Me father was a sub-agent for Inglis's bread. He took Inglis's bread here in 1918 he had one van and by 1921 he had four vans. He had four or five men working for him. He built up an immense trade. And he was what they called a sup agent. He bought the bread and he paid them. He used to keep the... the horses were all kept down Fagans yard in Bridge Street. And a couple of fellas there used to look after the horses for him, Peter Hughes, Pete Hughes, he was a great horseman. And Pete might drive for Fagans it was an undertakers before your day. You wouldn't remember it Fagans. But eh... when the pogrom was on in Belfast and Catholics were being burned out the IRA came to our house one night, and I was the baby, and me father had to sign that he wouldn't take in the bread. The bread was the Protestant bread from Belfast and it was tit for tat Catholics were being burned out so there was a big place called Craigs burned up the town there where the A.I.B. bank is now. And they lived in the Towers down in, that was their private house. So the bread vans were burned out the next day, up at Traffic Place. And he was out of work, and he was forced to go then and work as a bread man, he got a job as a breadman. But he was a great businessman he should have never... It was a tragedy what happened like, because eh... I suppose, although we all were well looked after, he was a great provider, we would have been quit big only for what happened, you know. But it was one of the things that he was always very aware of this sectarian thing and he drummed it into all us, like you know, never to have any animosity or bigotry in any way. But eh... yea he used to, I heard my mother used to, she was very bitter over it because she was expecting after I was the baby and the baby died when it was born and she claimed it the annoyance of the men coming for him to sign. She came down out of bed and the revolvers were on the table like, you know, he had to sign this document. But they were very nice and very gentle about the whole thing. I suppose they had a job to do, but it didn't do us any good anyway.

**He probably would have known that they were coming, would he?**

Well he was tipped of that they were coming. I don't know that he knew any of them in particular. But I was talking to one old man recently and I wouldn't be... he reminded me of this incident, he'd be in his 90s and I wouldn't be surprised if he was one of the four that called. Because he could tell me exactly what happened.

**Did he have any regrets at this stage, when he was telling you?**

No he didn't seem to have, he thought I think that it was a great thing you know.

**Interviewee:-** Thomas O'Quigley  
Avenue Road,  
Dundalk.

**Date of Birth:-** 19 November, 1924.

**Date of Interview:-** May, 1997.

**Interviewer:-** Charlie Flynn.

**SIDE A OF TAPE ONE.**

**And what kind of responsibilities would you have in the work?**

Well you'd only be serving your time you'd be working with a tradesman. And eh... and then the tradesmen that time weren't always very cooperative, you know, they always had a feeling of insecurity that young fellows growing up would push them out sort of thing. Now I know of it happening, it happened meself you'd be working with a man and there would be a job to be done, a critical sort of a job to be done and he'd send you to the far end of the works for taps or something that you wouldn't want and by the time you'd be back he'd have the job done and you wouldn't see what was done. You know it was a feeling of, it was that feeling of insecurity with the older men, the fear of the younger fellows coming up were going to oust them out.

**And this was even though there was a general perception that if you had a job on the railway you were there for life?**

True. But the didn't like... Now I worked with a man and I worked with him for 12 years. He was the chargehand and I worked in the shop. Now... he'd do the marking out and we were working at rails. You know, all these crossovers and eh... he'd get me to hold the tape there and he'd be marking it away up here maybe 2 ft and he'd chalk and he'd but his hand over it and mark it so that I wouldn't see the dimension that he was marking the rail at. But sure when he'd go away then, and sure I had a notebook and I'd all the... I'd write it off for the different angles of crossovers I had it all written in. But that was the fear in case that I would know as much as what he knew. And then when he was going off on pension, and now he was kept there till he was 70, and the age was 65 and he was kept till he was 70. But he was going off, I did a week at the holiday period, and I was going off on me holidays on Friday night and he had another week to do. He had another week to do... and he never said to me I won't be here when you come back. And when I came back every trammel and drawing and any gear there was was gone. He took took it all home in the week thinking, this is where I talk about the insecurity, thinking that he'd have to be sent for after a while that I wouldn't be able to carry on. Sure I had everything marked in the book meself. There was no need for... You had to do it because you knew what was going to happen. And as I said he never even said to me I won't see you when you when you come back or when you come back I won't be here. He never even told me. And I never had a cross word with him in the 12 years I did all he asked me to do and that was it. But they all had that, an awful lot of that fear of insecurity. [edit]

**The management came up, came in for**

Well you see that's why they came in for criticism. You see the management were all top, most of them were Protestants and they had no great skills most of them, you know. So you wouldn't expect a whole lot of from them.

**So I gather from what from your saying that they were getting the job because of their religion?**

Oh ah.

**And therefore they didn't have the necessary qualifications do do what they were at?**

No true enough. Like from the very top down. Like I remember they used to do, the boot factory used to send up big wooden blocks that they had for the presses, for cutting out the soles of shoes. They were huge big blocks, they might be about 6 ft long. They were different lengths hardwood. In use in the factory they would be worn down in the centre and they'd send them up to get them skimmed. But there was a whole pile of these down at one of the milling machines and Mackintosh, he was the chief engineer in the railway, but he was taking some visitors round one day, and I heard it meself, and one of the visitors asked him "what are they Mr. Mackintosh"? They are, when a boat comes in at the Quay they put them down between the quay wall and the boat when she's turning. That's all he knew what they were. And you know you wouldn't be able to lift them yourself. Like a man wouldn't be... they were very heavy and they were bolted together with steel straps and that kind of thing. He didn't know what they were, he bluffed, they were put between the boat and the quay wall so that they wouldn't damage the boat. Like that was what he knew.

**Were you with the railway right up to the close?**

Oh ah, and then I started then with the DEW when the DEW was set up.

**But how did you feel about the close of the railway, what was the general feeling around?**

Well... we didn't like to see it closing. You were going into the unknown. And then a crowd came over that time from England and they knew less than what we knew above, they were all boss men. There was different companies set up like the Rotorvator crowd, that was Bonser, and then there was the Heinkel, the Heinkel car and then there was the caravans, they started to make caravans and that. But on the engineering side which I was familiar with there was fellows come over there from England there and I think they were shop boys in England before they came over. And they were coming over to run an engineering works.

**But this was set up by the State itself, was it?**

Yea. And then A. P. Reynolds was put in charge. He had been in the CIE in Dublin. He had been a big man and he was seconded down here with, he was a bit of a hook you know, one way or another. But eh...

**Why do you say that now in particular?**

Its the way he operated. Like he got in trouble in the CIE and then he was moved down here. So he hadn't a great reputation coming. He lived there in North Dublin out around Raheny somewhere A.P. Reynolds. And a lot of these fellows come over now, there was one fellow come over that I knew he was manager of the machine shop and he'd come in every morning

with this big briefcase. I was in the office at the time at the estimating. But he came in and all the lads in the office were curious what was in this briefcase. So there was trouble down the shop and he had to go away down to the shop and they knew he'd be down for some time and one of the lads went down to his office and opened his briefcase and it was a racing handicap book in the briefcase. He was a great man for dog racing and horse racing. A racing handicap book he had. That was the type. Ah no they weren't just, if they were any good they wouldn't have coming over here.

**And did any of the guys that were actually working as tradesmen in the old GNR move up the ladder into management?**

Well, up so far. Like some of them got charge of departments. In charge of estimating, in charge of planning. They didn't get to the very top they were inclined to take in these, the guy coming in knew more than the lad that was. And it would have been better had they left the lad that come up in the place. If they had a give them their head they would have done better. You know these fellows were only adventures coming over. They were only over for awhile and then they were away again.

**I take it that at this stage the Protestant / Catholic thing had disappeared had it?**

Oh yes. By in large.

**Would these guys have degrees in engineering?**

No they hadn't.

**And how did they fill the posts' do you know?**

Nobody ever knew how they filled the posts, they just appeared and that was it. There was a guy named Gresham he didn't know a whole lot but there again you see they come from outside; they knew it all. The locals knew nothing according to the local hierarchy like Reynolds and then Grace. Grace was... he was boss man then under A. P. Reynolds that was Edmond Grace. He was a big man in CIE too. And he come down here and he was an accountant by profession. But I remember one night we had a meeting, we had a foundry above, the steel foundry. We had a meeting above in the Dominican Hall and he was up on the stage. You see it was attacked from the wrong end. Anyway he was up on the stage showing the men how to make castings. Now, an accountant showing men how to make castings. Instead of, if he had a taken over a number of men who worked at actual making castings in England or whatever who knew the job. But these accountants telling men, fellows who were blacksmiths and carpenters how to make steel castings, it didn't. Steel castings, they were very difficult. There was an awful lot of rejects in the making of steel castings with air holes and that kind of thing. It would have taken men who were experienced, actual men who had worked on the floor. And any money, give them any money once they were good men they would have got that foundry off the ground. But actually trying to train men who were carpenters and blacksmiths how to make castings it wasn't on. It just didn't work out, particularly people that was showing them didn't know themselves how to make them.

**There was a friend of mine told me some years ago that they used to make tools, spanners and chisels and stuff like that and the spanners never opened a nut?**

Well do you see the spanners and that... Now chisels were a different thing. If you got the good steel the BB as we used to call it, British best BB steel you could make the chisels no problem. But making spanners you had to have special steel and machines to machine them. They'd make a spanner above all right, the blacksmith would hammer them out of steel but they'd be soft and they wouldn't.

**Well I think this was in the forge in the foundry time they tried to drop forge?**

But there again they hadn't the proper steel, they hadn't the proper machinery for doing the job. Like there was specialised firms in England that knew how to make these things. They had the machines, they had the steel, they knew what steel, they knew what hardness to put into it. You see, steel like that you had to, there was a hardness you had to put into them to keep the jaws from opening out or even breaking for that matter, but they'd open out and then they'd break. it was a specialised thing making steel. There was firms in England specialised in that.

**So there was a lot of mistakes made in the DEW?**

Oh yes, in the foundry there was desperate mistakes made there was mistakes made everywhere. Because the people that come over were adventures, now that's the way I would have looked at them. They were over for to make a fast buck and away again, they all went, not many of them stayed. You got one or two. I knew of one or two good men who did come over but they were old men when they come over and they were near retiring age so they didn't stay too long, they went away back. Well they were uprooted from their own homes and that in England and as soon as the become pension age they went away back.

**Then of course the DEW closed down, did that have a big effect on moral in the town do you think?**

Oh it did ah yes certainly. Like there was a big number of men employed up there. Well the DEW encompassed CRV and the Caravans and the foundry and then the engineering and then there was a big tool room and the Garage. Well the garage was CRV. Then McCullagh bought out the CRV himself in latter years and it went then until Carragher, Ward and Carragher have taken that over now, two locals and their working away up there yet. But CRV it never changed from the railway time you went in in the morning and if you could dodge for the rest of the day fair and good. There was no clocking on there was no... time didn't matter. They could take 2 hours they could take 4 hours out of a job.

**Interviewee:-** Joe Marron  
Bridge Street,  
Dundalk.

**Date of Birth:-** 8 December, 1899

**Date of Interview:-** December, 1996.

**Interviewer:-** Charlie Flynn.

**SIDE A OF TAPE ONE.**

**Now tell me this, do you remember any of the political happenings around the... 1914-1916 that kind of thing?**

Yes I have, I have you Charlie. Well you see there was a crowd of blackguards below in the military barrack, and you might call them blackguards, called the Black and Tans.

**Well that was a bit later than 14 wasn't it that was into the ... ?**

That was eh! after 1916... when we had them and they had a crowd with them there... they used to wear black berets they called themselves the Auxiliaries, they are mostly all Scotch. A terrible crowd a blackguards there's no doubt because they had Alphonus Road, Quay Street, Barrack Street, the Sand Hole, Mill Street Seatown everywhere up along, they had it in hell, say it in your presents. Because they (were) they had two terrific armour cars.... and eh... they were all covered in barbed wire and if you were out late at night, you were held up and you were standing with your arms up over your head... maybe for hours, till they would be ready to fall out of their socket... when you were being questioned, and they wouldn't question you until they got plenty round the car around about. But this particular night I'm questioned... and eh,.., the sergeant came along, after being a long time with me hands up,... What's your name?... 'Joe Marron.', 'were do you live'?... 'Broughton Street',.. 'Where are you coming from this hour of the night'?... 'Park Street picture house', so I was. Well that passed off I was allowed take my arms down, next thing... this fellow What's your name? Halfpenny.... Where are you from?... 'Readypenny',.. do you get it... That was a smart answer... he was thrown into the yoke to be carted off to the jail to spend the night in it. So during all that particular time you might be above in the (in the night) might be above for a night in the jail or you might get out next morning, or you might be kept for a couple of nights. So, some of the friends and relations, when any of the crowd would be kept over for a few nights, they used to go up and kneel down outside the jail and say the rosary, see. The blackguards in the jail would come out with hoses and turn the hoses on them and drown them of a cold frosty winters right while they would be saying the rosary. Well during all this milee anyway, we are doing a big charity concert, myself and Bill McCourt in the Town Hall... during all this... . And at that particular time that song came out.... (Joe singing)

Ma they're making eyes at me, Ma the're awful nice to me.

So in any case we have this concert anyway and eh... they had these two armoured cars, one was Midnight Maggie and the other was the Holy Terror written in red paint along them. So in any case we're doing this big charity concert on the Sunday in the middle of all this milee and trouble. So eh... my friend Bill McCourt, who was my sparring partner stood at six foot six and I was only five foot two... I'd be looking up at him and he'd be looking down at me,

## Appendix F: Transcriptions from the oral archive

great comedy. So... we're doing a sort of military scene and during this particular military scene there was six of the larriers sitting right across the front of the Town Hall stage. Sitting with the revolver on their knee and their hand on it. I cut their hair in Earl street... and they wouldn't allow the gown to cover their knees the revolver had to be sitting (this is a true story, even when they were getting their hair cut) and the play boys waiting for them was sitting with the revolver cocked too. You didn't want their custom but you had to take it, you see. Because one particular evening I remember, a fellow worked along with me and his razor mightn't be too good and when they used to shave round here and around the ears, he jumps up of the chair and he puts the revolver to his head (now this a true story, on the next chair to this)... puts the revolver to his head... 'Get a bloody razor and do that'... the razor wasn't too good you see. You shaved here and then you shaved round the side of the neck. And that's a fact... I thought he was going to shoot him. That's what we went through in those days. But getting back to our charity concert anyway. We're doing a bit of a military scene and my friend is on the stage and he shouts out... you hears the foot approaching on the... on the stage and he shouts 'Halt! who goes there?' and I reply back. 'A friend'... 'Ha!, your a bloody liar...all my friends is in jail'. And that's a true story, that's as true as you're sitting there Charlie. Ah! there was wonderful comedy all right but you were in ... dread... because during this procedure, it was a woodland scene, and he comes out and he says ,This would be a great place for an ambush and the boys sitting down in front of us, the revolver in hand, they took it in good part. But however anyway eh... I come on the stage and he has a look at me and he says 'Did you come down from Beggars Bush? 'No', I says, 'I'm after being thrown out of Bellews of the Bushill' (that was a pub). So he questioned me then he says eh... 'By the way is your sister working'? 'Yes my sister has a great job Where is she working'... 'She's working in the jail'... 'What's she doing in the jail'? 'She's in the hoseary department'.

**This is the hosing down the people?**

Oh! pulled the house down ... pulled the house down. So in any case we go on with a bit of military platter, he questioned me then about militarism he says eh!... 'How would you take a Mills bomb to pieces'? I says, 'pull the pin out of it and drop it'. (pull the pin out of it and drop it). So in any case we pass in any case and we come on and we have a parody and it went ... (about the car Midnight Maggie) and it went.... Joe Singing

Midnight Maggie was oh so speedy and shy,

And all the fellows knew she'd but the wind up you Every single night some poor fellow would fly. Then she'd roll up to him and he would cry oh!

Ma there throwing bombs at me, Ma there pouring out the 303

Ma there almost breaking my heart,

I'm beside her mercy will let someone guide her

Ma she wants to carry me up to the jail you see

Every minuet I get colder, the sergeant has me by the shoulder

Ma goodbye eeee...