

The Famine in South Tipperary – Part Four

By Denis G. Marnane

Introduction

On 30 January 1851, the body of John Comerford, a twelve-year-old boy, was found at the side of a road in Monsea near Nenagh. He had lived at Carrigatoher, a few miles from where he died and the inquest into the death exposed in dramatic and terrible fashion how the black shadow of the Famine reached into the early 1850s, a time when the conventional view would have us understand that the shadow had passed. In her evidence, the boy's mother explained that the family had no land and that her husband had departed to the United States some two years earlier and that she was still waiting for news from him.

"Our usual food is turnips with a little meal mixed", both of which were obtained by charity. She had wanted to stay out of the workhouse and had tried to have her four children admitted by claiming to the Relieving Officer that she was the children's aunt rather than their mother. Her son John had contracted fever the previous autumn and had been put into the Fever Hospital in Nenagh, from where, with his sister, he had been removed to the workhouse. When the children's mother went to the workhouse to inquire about them, she was told that the girl was dead. Shortly before Christmas, the boy was turned out of the workhouse and she was obliged to carry him home, where he remained until the end of January.

Evidence was also given by Daniel Hogan of Hogan's Pass, perhaps the last person to see the boy alive. At around six o'clock in the evening, the boy had called at Hogan's house and asked permission to warm himself, the weather being inclement. According to Hogan, the boy only stayed about fifteen minutes and declared that he was on his way to an aunt at Kilbarron but would stay the night at the house of John Hanrahan, whose wife was his cousin. In Hogan's words: "the deceased was badly clothed and was quite wet and cold and had no covering on his head". The verdict of the coroner's jury was that death was due to exposure to the elements and the boy's destitute state.¹

Apart from the way incidents like this are reminders that the Famine reached beyond 1847, the circumstance of John Comerford's sad and lonely death is of a scale we can comprehend and respond to emotionally. This is all the more important in the context of an objective examination of a disaster in which hundreds of thousands died and of which of necessity one cannot keep emphasising the individual tragedy. The clinical language of the historian and the deployment of statistics should not obscure the central fact that pain and death are individual rather than collective experiences. Whatever about the findings of the coroner's jury with respect to John Comerford's death, its cause was a deal more complicated than bad weather and encompassed a range of decision-makers reaching from the prime minister down to those charged with the administration of the Poor Law.

Early in January 1847, Augustus Stafford O'Brien, whose family owned much land in and around Tipperary town, was a guest at Woburn Abbey, seat of the duke of Bedford, brother of Lord John Russell the prime minister. In one of his many letters to the countess of Dunraven, O'Brien commented that "Everyone now is beginning to believe in the Irish misery. The Duke told me that the Premier cannot sleep at night for it".² Had John Comerford only known this,

perhaps he would have been comforted by the thought that his prime minister lay awake nights contemplating how best to keep him alive. How the decision-making process of politicians and administrators could lead to a twelve-year-old boy lying dead at the side of a road was explored in previous articles in this Journal.³

On 1 October 1828 Thomas Creevey, the Regency wit and scandalmonger, dined with Lord Hutchinson at Knocklofty and entered in his diary his host's claim that "here we are in the heart of the most disaffected part of Ireland".⁴ The quite extraordinary reputation that Tipperary had for violence in the decades prior to the Famine was discussed in the preliminary article of this series.⁵ A question of considerable interest therefore is the degree to which violence and crime were part of the county's response to the Famine. The narrative history of the Famine in South Tipperary, so far published, deals with this topic in passing; but in this article an attempt is made to quantify the amount of crime in the region during the Famine and to compare the type of crime to that which prevailed prior to the failure of the potato.

During the decades prior to the 1840s, the tradition was well established in Tipperary that the way to respond to threats, real or perceived, to people's living standards or economic status, was by individual or collective violence. As the matter was popularly expressed: the best teacher was a blackthorn stick and the best lesson a broken skull. How therefore would the people of the region react when, not just their livelihoods but their very lives, were at risk in the late 1840s?

While John Comerford was a victim with whom we can identify, the Famine also had a profound effect on many landlords, though of course, a threat to living standards, or even ownership of property, is not the same as risk to life itself. Many landlords faced into the Famine with their property already encumbered with debt, the result in many cases of generations of the family living beyond their means. The last straw for many of these was the inability of tenants to pay the rents demanded, added to which was the much-resented burden of paying for the relief of poverty through the poor rate.

One consequence of this was the creation of the Encumbered Estates Court in 1849, which provided a mechanism whereby debt-burdened estates could be sold, thus bringing (it was hoped) an inflow of capital and a more commercial farming economy. Speaking in the House of Lords on 11 June 1849, Lord Glengall spluttered indignantly about this being "a confiscation of their property" and characterised the government's intention as no better than communism.⁶

Glengall's opposition to anything that made it easier for landlords to lose their property was not disinterested. By 1849 a receiver had been appointed, creditors were at the door and the earl was engaged in a legal struggle to hold on to his estates. On 25 October 1850 one of his creditors was literally at the door. Given the extent to which landlords traditionally harried their tenants by writ and bailiff, there was wonderful irony in what happened on that day. For a debt of £1,063, one of the creditors contrived the arrival in Cahir of bailiffs to execute a writ upon the earl's property.

When the bailiffs tried to force their way into Cahir House, they were repulsed by the servants aided by some of the townspeople, who were motivated by concern more for the countess than for her husband. Her reputation for charity was such that it was feared she might abandon the town. The police were subsequently blamed for not protecting the bailiffs. Glengall himself was not at home on the day but the whole episode was a great embarrassment and nicely illustrates the deleterious impact of the Famine on the fortunes of many landed families.⁷ This often ignored aspect of the topic is discussed further in this article.

Prior to the Famine the following townlands, in different parts of South Tipperary, appeared to have little if anything in common: Alleen Hogan in Donohill, Ballingearry West in Cahir,

Killaghy in Kilvemnon and Inishlounaght in the parish of the same name. By the time the census of 1851 was carried out, it was revealed that what these and too many other townlands had in common was massive population loss.

In many instances this huge outflow of people, in some cases townlands losing their entire populations, was more than just an accidental consequence of Famine but was directly related to the financial plight of landlords. As the 1840s gave way to the '50s, many landlords dared to do what they might have wished to do in earlier years but did not for fear of rousing Captain Midnight's wrath, namely, clear their property of pauperised tenants. An examination of crime statistics for the Famine years indicates that starvation and want served to curb the propensity of the Tipperary peasant for violent reaction.

The related topics of the Famine, crime, estate management and population change are brought together in an encounter in 1852 between the British economist Nassau William Senior and a Tipperary land-owner. Senior met the latter while on a tour of Ireland and after hearing much about the "ill-management of Tipperary" and the long tradition of conflict between landlords and tenants, "each pugnacious and each unscrupulous", this landlord, to illustrate his point, told Senior a story. Some time prior to the Famine, he had attended the death-bed of a local "squireen", who with his dying breath gave advice on estate management to the effect that the people would put up with anything from their landlord except, croaked the dying man: "You must not be what is called an improving landlord".

Being such necessitated reducing tenant numbers and the consolidation of farms, and thus fear and loathing were aroused, leading to violent reaction. Senior was told with considerable satisfaction that the Famine had changed things and that management of his informant's estate in Tipperary was now much easier, the number of tenants being reduced from 66 to 22.⁸ As an influential English clergyman wrote in 1848: "The land must be cleared ... agriculture requires room". He went on to claim that what was happening in Ireland was part of a divine plan: "Providence has marked the potato to be unfit for the staple food of man". "Are these visitations [of blight]", he asked, "dictated by chance alone?"⁹ Perhaps such notions allowed John Comerford's family some comfort.

Crime

In 1852 a select committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the disturbed condition of Armagh, Monaghan and Louth.¹⁰ In a reversal of the established pattern, Tipperary was cited as an example of a county where agrarian crime was declining, and statistics were quoted that seemed to support this contention about Tipperary. In that county between 1845 and 1851 agrarian crime fell from 311 to 134 incidents, and the aggregate of all crime in the county also fell very substantially when the two years are compared. However, this picture is less impressive when the number of murders is looked at: 20 in 1845 and a still bloody 15 in 1851.

As those both politically and professionally in charge of the police know very well (and indeed demonstrate each year), crime statistics are wonderfully susceptible to creative interpretation. However, what follows is a more factual analysis of the figures for Tipperary and Munster generally between 1845 and 1852.

Perhaps the most basic figures to examine are the numbers of persons committed to jail for trial – what one writer has described as "an explicit quantitative measure of social tension and unrest in Ireland".¹¹ Over the eight years 1845-1852 the ranking of Cork and Tipperary in first and second place never changed; nor did Waterford's place as the lowest ranking county, with

the exception of 1852, when by a small margin Clare was the county in Munster with the lowest number of committals.¹² Each year over the period in question Limerick was in third position, except in 1847 when Kerry pushed it to fourth place.

TABLE 1

Number of committals to jail for trial, Co. Tipperary 1845-52, and Tipperary's percentage over the average number of committals for the counties of Munster

Year	Number of committals (Tipperary)	% over average for province
1845	1,508	60%
1846	1,565	41%
1847	2,372	19%
1848	3,363	32%
1849	4,170	36%
1850	3,202	42%
1851	2,470	45%
1852	1,711	51%

With regard to the number of committals for Tipperary, the figures peaked in 1849, when, as will be discussed below, there was a proliferation of a particular type of crime, a widespread and popular response to landlords' efforts to seize crops in lieu of unpaid rents and poor rates. Thereafter the figures continued to fall, reaching triple figures in 1854, the 1860 figure of 205 committals standing in sharp contrast to the situation in 1849. This simply reflected the great economic improvement of the 1850s. Writing in 1858 and noting the changes in Ireland, Thomas Miller declared: "No country has ever made such rapid progress and in so short a period".¹³

Given that Cork's population in 1841 was nearly double that of Tipperary, the latter county's pre-eminent position in the annals of Munster lawlessness seems clear during the period in question. The fact that committals in Tipperary in 1845 were so far ahead of the average for the province is not surprising when the figures for the other counties, even Cork, are examined.

By 1847, it was not so much that Tipperary's situation had changed as that desperation had pushed up the figures for the other counties. Not just in Tipperary but everywhere, 1849 saw the condition of things at their worst. The aggregate national figure for committals to jail in that year was just short of 42,000, Tipperary contributing 10% of that figure. By 1852, the situation in Munster was returning to what passed for normal.

TABLE 2

Number of committals to jail, each Munster county, 1845, 1847, 1849, 1852

County	1845	1847	1849	1852
Tipperary	1,508	2,372	4,170	1,711
Cork	1,595	4,912	5,089	2,074
Kerry	740	1,485	2,706	870
Limerick	811	1,357	2,894	1,068
Clare	536	919	2,320	529
Waterford	466	907	1,228	546

One other matter worth looking at with reference to the Tipperary figures is their breakdown between the two ridings. It has to be remembered, of course, that committal to jail for trial for whatever crime had to be preceded by detection and arrest, matters that depended on a range of indeterminate circumstances, not the least being the skill and vigour with which magistrates and police could break through deeply ingrained peasant codes of silence and non-co-operation.

This was especially the case with reference to more serious crimes. In April 1847, for example, James Scully had to resort to writing to the local press offering a reward of £50 for information about an attack by six men with their faces blackened on his steward who was lodging at a house on his estate. The man was beaten and ordered to leave the area, something his employer thought it better he complied with.

Scully was reduced to the plaintive cry that while property had its duties it also had its rights.¹⁴ In keeping, perhaps, with South Tipperary's larger population, that region had the greater number of committals, except during the crisis years, 1847, '48 and '49, when (probably in response to North Tipperary's inferior resources) there were significantly more committals, especially in 1848 (1,907 against the South's 1,456) and in 1849 (2,282 against 1,888).

Having looked at the pattern of committals to jail for trial, the obvious question is what crimes had all of these people been charged with and what was the impact of the Famine on the established pattern of lawlessness? The annual presentation of these statistics broke the figures down into six categories.

TABLE 3

Categories of criminal activity with respect to committals to jail for trial

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| 1. | Offences against the person with violence. |
| 2. | Offences against property with violence. |
| 3. | Offences against property without violence. |
| 4. | Malicious offences against property. |
| 5. | Forgery and offences against the currency. |
| 6. | All other offences. |

James W. Hurst, who examined these figures for the county as a whole, found that category two crimes were relatively uncommon. In South Tipperary, for example, in 1845 such crimes formed less than 5% of the total. Also uncommon were class four crimes, representing just over 1% of committals in South Tipperary in 1845. Most of these offences were attacks on houses, likely arising from agrarian tensions. Category five crimes do not enter the picture. Out of 843 committals in South Tipperary in 1845, only three were in this category.

This leaves three remaining categories (1, 3, 6), which together accounted for nearly 94% of the committals in South Tipperary in 1845. In that year over half were category six, virtually all being breaches of the peace. Most of the category three crimes were simple larcenies. Over half of category one crimes were assaults, many of which would not have had an agrarian basis, being prompted more by alcohol. The detailed figures for crime in South Tipperary in these three categories are as follows.

TABLE 4

Category One, Three and Six crimes in South Tipperary, 1845-52
(Figures in parenthesis give the percentage of total committals)

Year	Category One	Category Three	Category Six
1845	138 (16)	208 (25)	445 (53)
1846	130 (16)	239 (29)	353 (43)
1847	130 (11)	508 (43)	394 (34)
1848	118 (8)	719 (49)	478 (33)
1849	134 (7)	950 (50)	600 (32)
1850	93 (5)	1,092 (60)	483 (27)
1851	70 (5)	820 (58)	291 (20)
1852	70 (6)	648 (61)	181 (17)

The most obvious point about these figures is the dramatic increase in category three crimes in response to the appalling demands of the Famine. James Hurst made the point that in the 1830s (these detailed statistics are only available from 1831), category one crimes, violence against the person, constituted the larger share of criminal activity. By the late 1840s this had very much declined, category three crime becoming dominant.

His analysis of these changes makes sense. Prior to the Famine, much of the crime stemmed from individual and more often, collective, action by desperate people trying to maintain their standard of living at a time when competition for access to land was intense. These crimes of social protest, such as administering unlawful oaths, assaults and all too often murder, did not cease during the Famine but far more committals to jail for trial were now for crimes arising from a need to survive – especially (as indicated above), category three crimes: theft of property, mainly of course, food.

As discussed in an earlier article in this series, 1846 was notable for riots over and theft of food, especially from storage areas and while food was in transit. Speaking at the Quarter Sessions in Cashel in July 1846, the judge declared that the “rights of property” could not “be invaded with impunity by every person who may be in want”, and so nine individuals involved in attacks on food stores in Tipperary and Fethard were given periods of imprisonment with hard labour.

Another individual from near Clogheen who had a previous conviction was sentenced to seven years’ transportation.¹⁵ Later that year (in October), a further sixteen individuals, convicted of similar crimes, began their journey to Botany Bay.¹⁶ These men had been convicted by the Summer Assizes, at which 113 people were tried, 88 of whom were involved in the food riots earlier in the year.¹⁷

Commenting on the large increase nationally in category three crimes (in South Tipperary up from 29% to 43% of total committals in 1846 and 1847 respectively), the government report for 1847 declared that these “offences [were] most frequently committed under pressure of severe privation”. Category one committals for crimes of violence remained at the same number (130) in 1847 as the previous year and when it is taken into account that this was a smaller percentage of overall committals, it might have appeared that these most serious of all crimes were posing less of a threat.

However, there appears to have been an increase in attempted and actual murders, as distinct from assaults. As a Tipperary land agent wrote in a letter to the local press: “In the

annals of crime in Tipperary, we believe that there never was a period in which human life is so little regarded as at the moment".¹⁸ The irony of this, which seemed to escape the writer, was that disregard for human life much more affected the poor than a few landlords or their agents.

The comment quoted above was mainly inspired by the murder of William Roe of Rockwell in early October.¹⁹ The circumstances of this, an aggrieved tenant and a landlord determined to manage his property his way, had much more to do with pre-Famine patterns of behaviour but eviction from land in 1847 was very likely a sentence of death. The authorities took fright and early the following year set up a Special Commission, which sat in Clonmel and dealt with, among others, the individual charged with Roe's murder.²⁰

The landlord murder, a month after that of Roe, which aroused great alarm among the Establishment, was that of Major Denis Mahon of Strokestown in Roscommon. Nationally, the number of prison committals for murder went from 92 in 1845, to 117 in 1847 and to 195 in 1848. Public alarm at this was reflected in the proportionate increase in death sentences over the same period: 14% in 1845, 21% in 1847 and 31% in 1848.

The report in February 1848, that killing and stealing of sheep was very widespread in the Glen of Aherlow, was typical of the kind of crime induced by Famine.²¹ Because of the political disturbances of 1848, no agricultural statistics were collected in Tipperary for that year, but figures relating to sheep numbers in the PLU of Tipperary in 1847 show nearly 15,000 of the animals in that region.²² The use of mountain pasture for the grazing of these animals must have presented the easiest and most tempting target for the hungry of the region.

The "clear-up" rate of such crimes was not very good. For example, at the Cashel Quarter Sessions in July 1848, there were just four cases of sheep stealing involving nine persons and a similar number of cow thefts for which six individuals were charged and tried. In total there were 94 cases involving 171 defendants. There is no surprise in the fact that more than one-third of the cases involving 31% of the defendants concerned simple larceny. (Animal thefts were treated separately.)

The second most common offence was rioting, which involved 29% of those charged. The remaining 14 categories of offences, with the exception of ten instances of individuals having unregistered arms, involved single figures. Apart from various lesser sentences, 19 persons were transported.²³ Nationally, it was noted as an increasing problem that there was a lack of prison accommodation. Convictions under the Vagrancy Act more than doubled to some 50,000, and around 60% of these spent periods in jail. This, on the part of some magistrates, was an exercise in charity. In jail one was at least fed. In January 1848 there were 375 prisoners in Clonmel Jail, and a few weeks later this had increased to 534 persons.²⁴

During the latter stages of the Famine years, disturbance in the Tipperary countryside very much centred on the consequence of people's inability and in some cases, unwillingness, to pay their poor rate. As discussed in earlier articles, PLUs were under enormous pressure to cope with a rising tide of poverty and desperation. Local relief had to be paid for from local resources and the job of poor rate collector became increasingly difficult and dangerous.

John Dalton was one of the collectors for Tipperary PLU and got a bench warrant to prise £4.20 from Redmond Brien of Rossadrehid in the Glen of Aherlow. As Brien had moved his stock off his land, it could not be seized and so Dalton put three "Keepers" to guard the corn crop until it could be harvested and sold towards the outstanding amount. From subsequent evidence, a battle of wits ensued between Dalton and Brien, with the latter in October 1848 taking desperate measures. Early on Sunday morning, 8 October, a gang of six or seven men, their faces blackened, went after the keepers, who fled and sought shelter in the home of

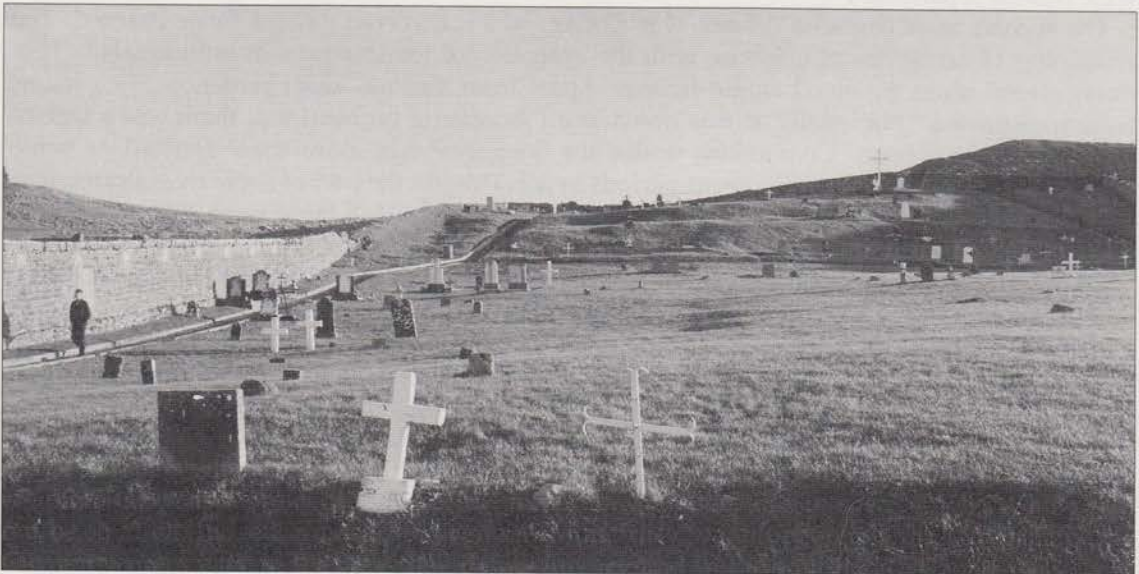
Patrick Cashin of Curraghavokey. In spite of begging for mercy and promising to quit their jobs as keepers, the three men were brutally murdered.²⁵

This crime at the close of 1848 was a dramatic prelude to the concerted campaign a year later as attempts were made to seize crops from defaulting tenants in lieu of both rent and poor rates. In September 1849 120 extra police were dispatched from Dublin to Clonmel, from where they spread out into the countryside in a usually futile attempt to prevent farmers removing their crops.²⁶

Pro-government newspapers over-reacted and described what was happening in terms of some kind of giant conspiracy against the established economic order. (This could be seen as a kind of selective blindness as the established economic order was already undergoing severe strain from Famine, population loss and in 1849 the Encumbered Estates Court.) Tipperary district was described as "much excited", and by mid-September the removal of crops had become an epidemic. On 12 September, as bailiffs tried to seize a corn crop at Ballymore in Clonoulty, they were confronted by an angry crowd throwing stones and one of the bailiffs was killed.²⁷

Because seizures could not be made on Sundays, one newspaper (*Clonmel Chronicle*) noted sourly: "The Sabbath is devoted in this locality to the peasants carrying away by force corn and such other stock as may prove available for the discharging of rent and poor rate". Included among the landlords who were thus affected were some of the most prominent names: Hawarden, Smith-Barry, Normanton and Percival. This report continued with a description of normal Sunday peace being broken as country roads were chock-a-block with carts removing corn to places of safety, where bailiffs could not legally get their hands on it.

From the perspective of the authorities, the situation was made worse by the fact that even well-off farmers were involved. The fact that poor rate was increasing as PLUs tried to cope with more and more demands on the system of poor relief served to make the vicious circle spin faster: the higher poor rate that was demanded encouraged the strategy of avoidance



St. John's cemetery in The Hills outside Tipperary town, opened in August 1847 as a famine graveyard. – Copyright Frank Burgess.

described above, and the more this was done successfully, the deeper in debt PLUs fell and the higher poor rate that had to be set; and so on. The degree to which established order felt under attack is caught in the following somewhat hysterical lament. "Probably since the present century commenced, there has been no such year as the present for the Tipperary landlords".²⁸

The usual rate of payment for keepers seems to have been two shillings per day, and given the level of communal animosity towards them they earned their money. Facing even greater risks were bailiffs who had to execute court orders against crops and livestock owned by defaulters. For example, when a bailiff accompanied by six "mindes" seized three cows from Thomas Hogan of Ballynure and tried to remove them, shots were exchanged and the bailiff lost an eye and part of his nose.²⁹

In late October in Kilcash two bailiffs were attacked by a crowd of around 100 women who used sods, stones and sticks as weapons. Legal documents were taken and contemptuously burned. Only the arrival of a force of police saved these agents of the law from losing more than their dignity.³⁰ A few weeks later, a less confrontational strategy was very successful when, under cover of night, a party of men simply locked three keepers into their lodgings and made off with the cattle and crops which had been under seizure from Charles Byron for rent owed to Thomas Cooke of Cordangan near Tipperary town. According to Griffith's Valuation, Byron had a comfortable farm of 38 acres.³¹

From the point of view of tenants, it may be imagined that, having survived the Famine, many of them were determined that financial collapse would not succeed where rotten potatoes had failed. Also, it must be assumed that there was a degree of opportunism. In a general climate of non-compliance with financial obligations, even those who could pay must have been tempted to see if they could get away with not paying. This campaign late in 1849 resulted from and contributed to a sense of dislocation in the fabric of things as population loss and landlord debt forced new perspectives on the part of both landlords and tenants.

As the 1840s turned into the '50s, the landlord contribution to this adjustment was to do that which had often been contemplated prior to the Famine but not actually carried through, namely, the clearance of pauperized tenants from their property. In spite of the several acts of violence committed during the struggle over the harvest of 1849, Category One crimes as outlined in Table 4 reveal that Famine had dampened the fire of the "Tipperary option", violence.

Estate Management

One of the largest estates in Tipperary, some 19,000 acres, was that of the Massy-Dawsons, whose seat was at Ballynacourty in the Glen of Aherlow. The bulk of the estate was in the same area, the parish of Clonbeg, but there were also pockets of property elsewhere, including some 300 acres in Toomevara in North Tipperary. In 1845 on the eve of the Famine this estate was in the hands of the Rev John Massy-Dawson (1804-50), rector of Abinger in Surrey. He had inherited the property on the death of his unmarried brother in 1837.

In May 1845 Massy-Dawson paid his first visit to his holdings in North Tipperary, arriving at a time when there was some trouble over a tenant who had been evicted in Toomevara. A warning notice had been posted on the pier of the chapel, forecasting dire consequences to anyone who took the land in question. The landlord's visit encouraged hope of a resolution, and the local newspaper suggested that the agent was at fault for allowing the accumulation of arrears. The landlord, on the other hand, was kind and, as if to confirm this, the arrears in question were forgiven and the tenant, a widow, was reinstated.³²

Apart from this episode illustrating the not uncommon illusion that agents were nasty in proportion to their employer's distance from the scene and that, if only the latter knew what was happening, all would be put right, the key point about Toomevara was that it was the scene of the most notorious episode in landlord-tenant relations during the Famine.

Several Irish MPs, speaking in the House of Commons on 1 June 1849, cited the large-scale clearance of hundreds of people, in effect the virtual demolition of the village of Toomevara. The episode was also high-lighted in the English press.³³ Landlords like the Massy-Dawsons, with their thousands of acres, may have appeared well-off but reality was often otherwise. In Massy-Dawson's case, much of their land was very marginal, so that its aggregate valuation was only about one-third of its acreage, £6,331.

In 1837, when John Massy-Dawson took over the estate, he noted on his accounts for that year that "debts to strangers and my brothers and sisters besides annuities" came to over £48,000. That same year outgoings on the estate included around £3,000 spent meeting obligations to various relatives. Management of the estate, payment of workers and the agent came to over £1,000. To meet all this, income was around £5,700 (excluding Toomevara, which was managed more locally).³⁴ These figures do not include payments to the landlord, which in 1842, for example, amounted to £1,150 paid in seven instalments to his bankers, Coutts.³⁵

By 1846 income had fallen, amounting to £4,771 (including £330 from Toomevara), but outgoings came to £5,061.³⁶ By 1849 income was down to around £2,000.³⁷ When in May 1846 Massy-Dawson contributed £12 to the local Relief Committee, the P.P. felt obliged to write to the local press criticising this lack of generosity. In the good days, Toomevara produced an income for the estate of around £1,100 p.a., so that the P.P. undoubtedly felt justified in his complaint. However, as mentioned above, cash received had fallen to about one-third of this in 1846.³⁸ John Massy-Dawson died towards the end of 1850 and the estate, inherited by his brother, recovered from the difficult years of the Famine and remained in the family for the rest of the century.

Another large estate was that of the Earl of Glengall; but this by the end of the Famine seemed poised on the edge of destruction. The property of over 28,000 acres should have produced a rental of around £16,000 p.a., more than enough, one would have thought, to allow the earl not just a comfortable but a sybaritic lifestyle.

However, due to the policy of his ancestor of granting long leases, a good deal of the estate was out of the earl's control until these leases began to expire in the decade or so before the Famine. Much to Glengall's displeasure, he found his property "subdivided and loaded with paupers; not a house stands worth a farthing". In the years before the Famine Glengall had invested in developing his town of Cahir and noted in 1845 that the improvements were "truly marvellous". During this period the earl had a much more direct input to the management of his property, both town and country, being determined that it would not again pass out of his control through leasing.

"1846 and '47 I spent in Ireland," he wrote in his diary, "but the dreadful famine of these two years caused much misery to all and great personal misfortune to me". Then in April 1848 this Journal appears to come to an end with an apocalyptic reference to the revolutionary fervour of that year and the following *cri de coeur*: "The first four months of this year have placed my affairs in great peril ... all improvements on the property are stopped".³⁹

Glengall was referring to the fact that a receiver was appointed, though he probably derived some comfort from the choice of Richard Pennefather, who was his brother-in-law. His most pressing creditors wanted someone else appointed.⁴⁰ The property had incumbrances of nearly £200,000, the main debt being a mortgage of £60,000 with heavy interest payments, raised from

a Mr Goldsmid. Also, while Glengall's wife brought £100,000 on her marriage in 1834, as part of the settlement, Glengall had to provide for £1,200 as a jointure and £20,000 for his children, other than his heir, after his death. (The earl's father-in-law William Mellish made a fortune from navy contracts.)⁴¹

As was usually the case, the Famine was not so much the cause as the occasion of financial collapse, though in this case, while some land was sold in the Encumbered Estates Court, the situation was salvaged, not least thanks to the countess's money. By the end of 1847 rent arrears on the estate had accumulated to in excess of £34,000, rent payments having fallen, so that in 1848-49, they were around £10,000, and of this income some 35% went in interest payments.⁴²

A legacy of the once vast Butler holdings in the county was the scattered property of the second Marquess of Ormonde, who succeeded his father in 1838 and died in 1854. This estate comprised nearly 16,000 acres in Tipperary and over 12,000 in Kilkenny. In South Tipperary the main concentration of land was the 3,753 acres of Kilcash parish. The estate also included townlands in the civil parishes of Carrick, Garrangibbon, Templetney, Kilvemnon and around Donaskeagh in Rathlynin; in all some nine thousand acres in South Tipperary. The Ormonde estate records do not allow for extraction of the South Tipperary property, so that the following Table includes land in Lower Ormond as well as Kilcash and other lands in the south-east of the county. However, the Table makes clear the accumulation of arrears in 1839-49.

TABLE 5
Rental 1839-49, Ormonde 'Kilcash' Estate⁴³

	1 Year's Rent Due	Plus Arrears	Rent Paid	Arrears
	£	£	£	£
1839	5,375	5,721	4,665	956
1840	5,394	6,351	4,414	1,937
1841	5,398	7,335	4,542	2,794
1842	5,587	8,364	4,544	4,432
1843	5,592	9,404	4,971	4,432
1844	5,592	10,013	5,173	4,839
1845	5,592	10,363	5,099	5,264
1846	5,681	10,965	4,514	6,451
1847	5,681	11,951	5,054	6,897
1848	5,689	12,585	3,266	9,319
1849	5,622	10,904	5,485	5,419

What is striking about this Table is just how much rent continued to be paid, even during the most difficult years. Of course, the accumulation of arrears, something well under way prior to the mid-1840s, created an obstacle over which tenants would never jump and so, following the very poor rent payment of 1848 (the lowest in the Table), the combined rent due and arrears for 1849 should have been nearly £15,000. But the estate, by remitting nearly a third of this sum, as it were lowered the obstacle. A result of this was that arrears facing into 1850 were only slightly worse than at the beginning of the Famine. Looked at another way: what was actually paid in 1839 amounted to 87% of that year's rental, but by 1848, this had sunk to 57%, soaring back to 98% the following year.

Before looking at the interaction between landlords and their tenants during the Famine, the

financial situation on another Tipperary estate is briefly examined. The Cole-Bowens, based in County Cork, had around 5,000 acres in North Tipperary. (Comprehensive financial records for Tipperary estates, north or south, are scarce.) Taking the Tipperary and Cork property together, one scholar has noted that Cole-Bowen managed to collect 81% of the rents due from 1848 to 1853. However, over this period in Tipperary his actual rental declined as some farms were unlet due to eviction and emigration. The 144 tenants in 1848 had fallen to 111 by 1853.⁴⁴ As with other estates, substantial arrears had to be written-off in the late 1840s. For example, at the close of 1849, arrears amounted to £2,451; but by the end of the following year they amounted to £123.⁴⁵

In 1849 the government published a comprehensive return, based on PLUs, giving the number and valuation of estates. The official responsible for this mammoth task was Thomas Larcom, then Commissioner of Public Works. In May of that year he explained some of the difficulties in gathering (from clerks of the PLUs) and collating this mass of information. He admitted to some confusion as to what constituted ownership of an estate; theoretically, the holder of a lease for lives renewable was not the proprietor in fee.

While Larcom expressed a preference for Griffith's Valuation as the basis for the survey, parts of the country were not yet covered by this, so that he had to rely on the poor law valuation. This had been carried out when the poor law system was set up, and strong reservations, then and now, have been expressed about it.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the information does allow some comparison between the PLUs of South Tipperary.

As mentioned in earlier articles, PLUs did not fit neatly into county boundaries so that figures regarding Cashel, Clonmel, Clogheen and Tipperary PLUs take in parts of other counties.

TABLE 6
Estates, holdings and valuation, selected PLUs⁴⁸

PLU	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cashel	167	6316	35%	82p	592	24
Clonmel*	107	2500	27%	£1.02p	842	23
Clogheen	88	4757	27%	50p	1434	54
Tipperary	252	7479	29%	80p	729	30

*(Information was not returned on about 30% of the valuation of this PLU.)

1 = Number of estates in the PLU.

2 = Number of holdings in the PLU.

3 = Percentage of land under crops.

4 = Average PLU per acre.

5 = Average number of acres per estate in PLU.

6 = Average number of holdings per estate in PLU.

From this Table, Clogheen PLU, with the lowest valued land, had the largest estates on average. Sixteen or 18% of the estates were in excess of £1,000 valuation. Comparable figures for the other PLUs are: Clonmel 17%, Tipperary 14% and Cashel 9%. At the other end of the scale, there was a proliferation of smaller properties. Even in Clogheen there were 60 estates valued at £500 and under. In Cashel PLU the comparable number of estates was 179, in Clonmel PLU 63 and in Tipperary 167.

There is little specific information about many of these smaller estates, but for many proprietors the Famine, especially its final stages, was the end-game in a losing campaign. In April 1846 a special correspondent for the *Freeman's Journal* visited the county and on inquiring in Ardmayle: "Are landlords making any effort to help people?", was told by a local gentleman farmer, "None whatever". This informant did, however, allow that Mr Bianconi, who had recently acquired an estate locally, was an exception.⁴⁹ In November of that year, Bianconi was reported as offering a 25% rent reduction to most of his tenants.⁵⁰ The local press during this early period of the crisis made much of the very few acts of landlord understanding.⁵¹

Much more typical was the reaction of a very large land-owner such as the earl of Portarlington, who found his affairs so compromised that all he could offer were easy words. In October 1846 he visited his Tipperary property and held a formal meeting and dinner with his leading tenants from both north and south of the county. This was held in Borrisoleigh and there is some irony in the fact that the earl was accompanied by his Irish agent John Sadleir, the man whose bank collapse a decade later was to cause so much misery.

Many of the speakers at the banquet could not lavish enough praise on Sadleir. However, Portarlington, while acknowledging the state of the country, declared: "I am only sorry that the peculiar circumstances, under which my estates are now for the present placed, must prevent me from doing all I would wish".⁵² Henry Dawson-Damer succeeded his uncle as 3rd earl of Portarlington at the beginning of 1846. A year later he circularized his tenants with advice about growing potatoes and a warning directed against middlemen.⁵³ Portarlington not only inherited a huge amount of land but also a mountain of debt.

The creation of the Encumbered Estates Court allowed the creditors demand that lands be sold. Portarlington opposed this, but in circumstances where no interest on the debt had been paid for several years, the Court ordered large amounts of the property to be sold. The rental was about £33,000 p.a., but debts amounted to an extraordinary £700,000, so that just meeting interest payments on this would absorb most of the rental.⁵⁴ In such circumstances generosity towards tenants was not a priority.

As the crisis deepened, landlords became increasingly resentful of the incubus of impoverished tenants, who, unable to pay their rents, cost money on two fronts: rents either not paid or delayed and the poor rate which had to be paid, especially where PLV was very low, in which case landlords had to pay the entire poor rate. In September 1846 the English MP Ralph Bernal Osborne, who lived at Newtown Anner near Clonmel (his wife's family estate), wrote a public letter to his party leader and prime minister Lord Russell, declaring: "You have no right to tax the landlord for the support of another man's pauper tenants".⁵⁵ While not typical of his reactionary Tipperary colleagues, being for example opposed to the Pavlovian use of coercion laws and in favour of disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, he fulminated against the Poor Law, describing it as "legalised communism".⁵⁶

In March 1847 Bernal Osborne circularized his tenants (the estate was under 1,000 acres in Tipperary and nearly 6,000 acres in Waterford) to the effect that they should sow green crops in place of potatoes, and offered to supply turnip seed to all tenants holding between 5 and 25 acres, to be paid for when the crop was grown. To tenants holding in excess of 25 acres he offered the possibility of leases. His policy towards tenants holding less than five acres was essentially to be rid of them, using carrots rather than sticks. He would allow them do deals with adjacent solvent tenants and offered, in certain cases, to assist emigration to Canada or the United States.⁵⁷

His biographer implied that a large number of tenants used this policy and that their landlord's recompense was an occasional message telling him how they were doing in their

new homes.⁵⁸ In the autumn of 1847 however, there was a row played out in the local press, involving the landlord, his agent and reports (which they contradicted), to the effect that around fifty individuals were being evicted from the estate.⁵⁹ A recent study of the Famine in Waterford noted that townlands controlled by this landlord suffered population losses in 1841-51 of 69%, 65%, 65% and 59% respectively.⁶⁰

As James S. Donnelly Jr. noted in a recent study of the Famine: "Landlord hostility to the poor law system during the famine was thoroughly understandable".⁶¹ They were responsible for all the poor rate of holdings valued £4 or less and for half on holdings valued more than £4. There was some point in the query of a critic of the system, looking at Ireland from the perspective of 1850. "If all are to be supported", he asked, "who are to be the supporters?"⁶²

One answer to this question was increasingly heard during the latter years of the Famine, namely mass eviction or to use the more anodyne term, clearance. This, however, was but a partial solution to landlord problems. Getting rid of pauperised tenants immediately reduced a landlord's poor rate and in the longer term freed up land to create larger farms. This was, of course, good news for those farmers who benefited, but evicted tenants during these years were a huge drain on the resources of the poor law system which responded (as seen in the examples of the PLUs of South Tipperary) by increasing the poor rate to what were regarded as intolerable levels. Ralph Bernal Osborne's biographer claimed that £1,000 in poor rate was paid in 1848.⁶³

Better-off farmers also found that having to pay their share of this burden caused financial complications. An example is the plea of a North Tipperary farmer, written in July 1847 to his landlord's agent.⁶⁴

I am in receipt of a note from Mr Leahy clerk Thurles calling on me to pay rent and [I] assure you Sir that at present it is out of my power to make a remittance, having the Poor Rate to pay and County Tax, two shillings and eleven pence per acre and as I and my son and neighbours have not a morsel to eat but as we buy it is impossible that we can pay until the harvest comes in and then most cheerfully I will pay rent as usual.

Eviction as a solution to a range of landlord-tenant problems did not, of course, depend on famine as a trigger. It was a mechanism selectively deployed prior to the Famine, though there was always a consciousness of the possibility of a violent response. For example, in January 1844 one of the agents for the Ormonde estate wrote to one of the estate employees, inquiring "what you mean to do with the Donaskeagh tenants?" Various Hickeys, two of whom were widows, were mentioned, as was Val (*sic*) Farrell, "who is a consummate rogue" and also several others. "None of them have come in since the Cashel Collections except Cornelius Hickey who has at length sent me £16. He says he gave you £8.50 in December 1841 but we have not any [record of] it."

The intention of the agent was the recovery of rent, eviction being but a final option. The agent knew that whatever action was taken it was liable to be dangerous, telling the recipient of his letter: "I don't wish you to run any risks in going there and will allow you your expenses and any protection you may require. It is an unpleasant business but it is necessary and if you don't like to undertake it, say so at once and I will appoint another man."⁶⁵

There were three principal ways of recovering rent: distraint, action for rent as a debt and ejectment. With reference to the first of these, it appears to have been popular in Tipperary, though by an act of 1846 it was no longer permitted to distraint growing crops. One obvious problem with distraint was the reluctance of neighbours to purchase distrained property, which rather negated the purpose of the exercise.

Commonly, rent was recovered by the tenant being forced to purchase his seized property. Among some landlords or agents there was an idea that tenants automatically held tough and would not pay rent until distraint or ejectment had been initiated.⁶⁶ On some estates ejectment was the first option. As one Tipperary agent said, just prior to the Famine: "I never recover [rent] in any way but by ejectment. If I find them going to the bad, I eject them".⁶⁷

However, another Tipperary agent explained that he found distraint useless because of the difficulty in getting buyers. His first option was a notice to quit and, if what was owed remained unpaid, he then used civil bill ejectment.⁶⁸ Because of legal complications, periodic notices to quit were served on tenants holding their farms from year to year without leases. Therefore, quite often setting in motion the legal machinery to eject tenants from their holdings did not actually end with tenants on the side of the road.⁶⁹

From the records of the estate of the Earl of Glengall the extent to which distraint was used during the Famine may be seen.

TABLE 7
Actions for distraint, Glengall Estate, 1845-52⁷⁰

Year	Number of Actions	Number Settled
1845	37	27
1846	29	3
1847	20	1
1848	95	18
1849	232	37
1850	190	30
1851	126	0
1852	107	1

From these figures it is clear that, as the Famine impacted more severely, actions for distraint prompted a smaller proportion of affected tenants to settle their obligation to their landlord. The jump in the number of actions from 1848 to 1849 was reflected in the county generally and is discussed above. The records for 1848, for example, note in many cases that there was nothing worth seizing, a situation even more marked the following year with "no effects" inscribed after a succession of tenants' names.

Statistics on eviction were not officially collected until 1849 but for the previous three years figures are available from the courts. The Table below relates to the entire county.

TABLE 8
Ejectment through the courts for County Tipperary 1846-48, together with the cause⁷¹

	1846	1847	1848
Ejectment for non-payment	121	473	633
Ejectment for overholdings	151	485	884
No. of persons served	1,784	4,590	6,513
Notional No. of persons actually evicted	1,338	3,442	4,885

This Table makes reference to ejectment notices being served for two reasons: non-payment of rent, which explains itself, and "overholding" which refers to the practice whereby notices to quit were served virtually automatically on tenants-at-will. The fact that between 1847 and 1848 the number of ejectments for overholding increased so dramatically indicated that landlords were taking advantage of the times to begin to clear their estates of what they regarded as surplus tenants.

As discussed above, not all of those so served were actually evicted. When the eviction statistics for Tipperary between 1849 and 1853 are examined, about 25% of those against whom the eviction process was set in motion were "re-admitted" to their holdings. Therefore, this figure of 75% has been used to compute how many were actually evicted in 1846-48, though it is likely a gross under-estimate in the circumstances of the Famine.

Before looking in some detail at the eviction of tenants in South Tipperary during the closing stages of the Famine, some context is provided by statistics showing that no other county in Ireland was so affected by this process over two decades.

TABLE 9

Actual evictions aggregated 1849-69 for the five most affected counties⁷²

County	No. of Families/Persons		No. of Houses Evicted from/Levelled	
Tipperary	7,475	40,031	9,661	2,702
Mayo	6,625	32,382	8,758	2,703
Galway	5,005	24,107	6,469	2,223
Clare	4,507	22,738	4,962	2,610
Limerick	3,323	17,390	4,054	1,115

Exactly why Tipperary had this unenviable lead is probably complex and certainly unclear, but a key factor likely relates to the reputation for violence in the decades before the Famine, which delayed what economists would term "rationalisation" of estates. These statistics cover a 21 year period, but an essential fact is that 74% of the families evicted in Tipperary lost their homes during the three years 1849, 1850 and 1851.

Table 10 gives the situation regarding evictions in both North and South Ridings and has the virtue that the suffering of each individual eviction can remain hidden amid the welter of figures.

The years 1849 and 1850 were extraordinary ones. To put the scale of what happened into perspective, the eviction of families in the county in 1849 was over 17% of the total for the country and 15% in the following year. The fact that the clearance of these years seem to have left such little mark on popular memory of the Famine in the county is possibly related to a kind of guilt-induced amnesia on the part of those not affected, many of whom benefited from the fact that there was less pressure on land.

The ease with which the dreadful events of these years were forgotten was illustrated by the casual remarks at a meeting of the Tipperary No. 1 Rural District Council in 1901. The chairman, who was from Golden, had occasion to remark about a grove of trees near him called "Burn's Grove" which grew where Burn's house once was, that family being gone some fifty years. The probability that this family were victims of the clearance, made more likely by the fact that they were Scully tenants, received no comment.⁷⁴

TABLE 10
Evictions North and South Tipperary, 1849-53⁷³

Year	No. of Families/Persons		No. of Houses Evicted from/Levelled	
1849	(N.R.)	1,487	8,421	
	(S.R.)	830	4,947	
		<u>2,317</u>	<u>13,368</u>	2,732 1,067
1850	(N.R.)	1,190	6,247	
	(S.R.)	967	5,327	
		<u>2,157</u>	<u>11,574</u>	2,706 846
1851	(N.R.)	473	2,542	
	(S.R.)	557	3,006	
		<u>1,030</u>	<u>5,548</u>	1,397 321
1852	(N.R.)	284	1,478	
	(S.R.)	393	1,897	
		<u>677</u>	<u>3,375</u>	958 266
1853	(N.R.)	175	916	
	(S.R.)	184	911	
		<u>359</u>	<u>1,827</u>	445 98

Writing during the Famine, Thomas Doolan gave expression to a sense of helplessness and paralysis in the face of such horrors as the clearances.⁷⁵

It has often been to me a matter of astonishment, what could possibly have been the subsequent lot of these wretched outcasts or how they were enabled to obtain shelter and subsistence.

The rate of evictions during these years was so high that many of them went unreported in the press, local or national. The trigger for largescale evictions was the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act (10 Vict., c.31) of June 1847, with its notorious Gregory Clause. (William Gregory was MP for Dublin City 1842-47, and later husband of Lady Gregory of Abbey Theatre fame.) This clause, promoted by Irish landlords rather than the government, prevented anyone holding more than a quarter-acre of land from getting poor law relief.

Poorer tenants especially were faced with the dread choice between holding on to their land or getting public relief in circumstances where the former could not feed them and their families, whereas the latter might. In many cases the choice was made for the tenants by their landlords. In a report of April 1848, Arthur Kennedy, a poor law inspector, described how occupiers were too often deluded by the specious promises of agents and bailiffs to "throw down" or "tumble" their own cabins for a "paltry consideration of a few shillings" and an assurance of outdoor relief.⁷⁶

In March 1849, the *Illustrated London News* reported what it called "a further flight of tenants" from the estate of the Earl of Glengall. In the same issue the paper had magisterially declared that "Great Britain cannot continue to throw away her hard-won millions into the bottomless pit of Celtic pauperism".⁷⁷ On the Glengall estate to the end of 1848 no rent was received from 240 tenants. In the context of the estate's financial crisis, this was regarded as an intolerable

situation.⁷⁸ Prior to eviction, landlords were required to serve notice on the relevant relieving officer so that, in theory, the poor-law system could be ready to deal with the consequences. From an official report based on this (of mid-1849), families were evicted from 171 houses on the Glengall estate.⁷⁹

Also, that March the local press made reference to evictions in Clerahan between Clonmel and Cashel.⁸⁰ Not that it was untypical, but a particular problem with a place like this was the nature of its proprietorship. This small civil parish of just over 1,000 acres was held by the diocese of Cashel and at this time was in the hands of the Rev J. W. Grier by virtue of his wife who was a Lockwood of Cashel, a family well placed to benefit from the casual if not profligate dispersal of church assets through advantageous leases.

Grier lived in England, and during the Famine it was noted that he had not visited the place twice in the previous five years, his interests being looked after by his agent John Massy who lived in Tipperary and who descended on Clerahan twice a year to collect rent. It was typical of local press reports that the account of March 1849 suggested that Massy was the landlord.

One inevitable consequence of this system was the proliferation of sub-tenants who, faced with a disaster like the Famine, were left to fend for themselves. By the Spring of 1846 people in Clerahan were said to be starving and it was left up to Clonmel PLU to do something as no public works had been or were going to be organised due to the lack of local leadership. Many of the cabins had no more than a day's supply of food.

An official of the Poor Law who visited the village was shocked by the conditions, many of the sub-tenants paying 40 shillings p.a. for their miserable hovels.⁸¹ Of course, by the late 1840s these rents were no longer being paid. From the point of view of good economy, the Famine-promoted clearance made the property more attractive so that, when the Lockwood interest expired a decade or so later, the property was advertised with the emphasis on its investment potential.⁸²

With some justice the *Nation*, reporting on the state of the country in September 1849, declared: "One might believe there is room enough now, and to spare, for all the inhabitants of Ireland, everywhere in their respective localities, except within the boundary walls of the workhouses". Making his contribution to this process of desolation was another absentee landlord, Robert Hedges Eyre White of Glengarriff in Cork, nephew of the earl of Bantry. His agent had 21 families or 129 individuals removed from the estate which centred on Grangemockler. For several weeks following the evictions in September he allowed the families to remain in outhouses before sending in the bailiffs to deprive them of even this shelter.

Among those evicted were eight members of a Tobin family, a family name with perhaps the deepest roots and longest association with the region.⁸³ Their ancestors had likely survived the upheavals of the Cromwellian period and the darkness that followed. Other evictions mentioned in the local press were 24 families, around ninety individuals from Golden (estate unspecified). 24 families from the Loughloher estate of William Quin in the civil parish of Cahir. On the Donoughmore estate near Clonmel, to the disgust of the nationalist press, it was claimed that the agent refused a rent receipt to a tenant who was short 4d.⁸⁴

While the eviction statistics for Tipperary in 1849 were extraordinary (one in 33 of the county population as it was in 1841) and provide ample evidence of "bad" landlords, the press contained frequent references to "good" landlords. "Good" in this context did not mean that pauperised tenants were not cleared; rather it meant that viable tenants were allowed rent reductions.

"An oasis in this Sahara of misfortune" was the phrase used to describe the Buolick estate of Mark and Edmund Byrne. In October 1849 their agent J.B. Kennedy visited the property and got rid of the handful of middlemen but restored the "rackrented" sub-tenants and cut rents by

a quarter. The facts that the landlord and the agents had Irish surnames prompted a fine piece of invective on the part of one newspaper, noting that they were not "descended from Cromwellian drummers, Highland pipers nor Saxon pantry boys".⁸⁵

Other landlords mentioned as granting rent reductions were the earl of Clare, who besides allowing a "liberal abatement to all tenants" provided employment through a drainage scheme.⁸⁶ Lord Clonmell and Patrick Waldron were reported in May to have allowed a quarter reduction on their rents.⁸⁷

Later that year, landlords such as Charles Bianconi, William Perry, Robert Cooke and Lord Stanley were all reported as having given substantial abatements.⁸⁸ However, a lack of estate records suggests that taking these reports at face-value is problematic. For example, an initial favourable report regarding the Ponsonby Barker estate was denied in a letter from a neighbouring parish priest.⁸⁹

If one is familiar with a particular townland as it is today, and if there is evidence of a clearance of its tenants 150 years ago, then some idea is possible of the terrible change forced on that territory. One case in point is the townland of Drumclieve, 394 acres of good land in the civil parish of Templenoe, near Tipperary town. This townland had been part of the Mathew of Thomastown estate, which James Scully of Kilfeakle (1737-1816) purchased and which at the time of the Famine was in the hands of his grandson Rodolph Scully (1812-76).

In 1841 there were 30 houses and a population of 212 on this townland. At the beginning of 1850 the local and national press described how this townland had been the prosperous setting of happy homes, now "tumbled" so that scarcely a house was left on the land.⁹⁰ From the evidence of the 1851 census, Drumclieve had one house and a population of eight people. According to Griffith's Valuation (also 1851), Scully had 338 acres on hands and there were two other non-residential holdings of 32 and 24 acres respectively. While the outrage of the nationalist press is understandable and shared by many people today, from a purely economic point of view the post-Famine situation was a more rational use of resources.

Another clearance – and one which reveals something of the mechanics of the process – dates from the same period and coincidentally involved another grandson of James Scully. This was Robert Keating of Garranlea near Knockgraffon (1802-93), whose mother was James Scully's daughter Lucy. Keating, who was MP for Waterford County and City from 1847 to 1857, was proprietor of part of the townland of Dromline in the civil parish of Kilfeakle. In February 1850 proper procedure was followed with respect to giving notice to the relieving officer and serving notices on those whom it was intended to evict. However, the proper procedure appears to have gone wrong in the case of one tenant, who claimed he was served "no notice of any kind". Also, the law prohibited eviction two hours before sunset and before sunrise; but the tenant in question claimed that having locked his door, the sheriff's deputy forced his way in "long after sunset". When the tenant complained to the Tipperary poor-law guardians, they refused to take any action, perhaps because the tenant, who had a large family, managed to find employment and thus had the goodness not to be a burden on the poor-rates.⁹¹

Perhaps because of the irregularity alleged in this case, the form ("no. 39") filled in and submitted by the local police to headquarters, has survived. This gives details about the Dromline evictions, carried out on 26 February 1850.

As may be seen in Table 10, while still extraordinary, the number of evictions in 1850 was down on the previous year and would continue to decline. However, judged from the local and national press, the feeling was abroad that rural life and values had suffered such shocks that, in the words of one commentator on the clearances: "[It's] as if the impulses of humanity and the restraints of religion had lost all influence in the land."⁹²

TABLE 11
Dromline Evictions, 26 February 1850

	No. Evicted	No. Re-admitted into Possession	No. actually Evicted
Husbands	12	3	9
Wives	18	3	15
Children	69	11	58
Others	17	4	13
Totals	116	21	95

No. of Houses from which the above were evicted:	18
No. of such Houses Levelled:	1
No. of Police present:	13
Extent in statute acres of the whole of the farms from which the tenants have been evicted:	114
Extent of the largest farm from which ejected:	39
Extent of the smallest farm from which ejected:	1½

In February 1850 the *Nation* reported on a journey taken through parts of south-east Tipperary and painted a picture of what seems like a war-ravaged landscape. Travelling through one valley, looking up, all that was to be seen were crumbling walls and blackened gables – “wrecks of dwellings”. With reference to Carrick-on-Suir, the writer was told by someone he met that up to 600 weavers used to kick a football on the Green, but that the few weavers now left were found not at their looms or on the Green but in the Workhouse.⁹³

The notorious evictions at Toomevara continued to attract attention. Many of those who had been evicted erected huts along the churchyard wall, but in February 1850 Massy-Dawson sent 30 men to remove these and similar shelters elsewhere in the village. A large force of police were on hand to maintain “law and order”.⁹⁴ Around the same time the press reported a huge clearance in Mantlehill near Golden, the property of Vincent Scully (1810-71). One report suggested that some 500 persons were evicted, which is too high a figure.⁹⁵ The two Mantlehill townlands were 845 statute acres and in 1841 had 41 houses with a population of 273. A decade later, this was reduced to three houses and twenty-six people.

A nearby townland, Gorteen, also the property of Vincent Scully, had ten houses and a population of eight in 1841, but by 1851 it was devoid of habitation. In a history of Ireland in the nineteenth century by A.M. Sullivan and published in 1878, a book which became one of the most popular of its type, Scully’s work and the special contribution he made to the process of eviction, are remembered.⁹⁶

Soon indeed, hand-labour became too slow in the work of houselevelling and accordingly, scientific improvement and mechanical ingenuity were called in. To Mr Scully, a Catholic landlord in Tipperary, belongs the credit of inventing a machine for the cheaper and more expeditious unroofing and demolishing of tenants’ homes. I never saw it myself but friends who watched the invention in operation described it to me. It consisted of massive iron levers, hooks and chains, to which horses were yoked. By deftly fixing the hooks and levers at the proper points of the rafters, at one crack of the whip and pull of the horses, the roof was brought away. By some similarly skilful gripping of coign-stones, the housewalls were torn to pieces.

By April 1850 a note of hysteria was clear in the reporting of one Tipperary newspaper,

writing about the North Riding: two-thirds of the land held by tenant farmers would change hands that year, it declared, and described how "shoals" of ejectment notices would be issued from the Quarter Sessions at Thurles and Nenagh.⁹⁷ Thanks to the survival of the detailed return of evictions in the county for the second quarter of 1850, exactly what happened can be examined. The fact that Tipperary came first in this frightful league is not a surprise. (Mayo came second for this three-months period.)

TABLE 12
Official Return of Evictions, South Tipperary, April-June 1850⁹⁸

Landlord	Number Evicted Families/Persons		Number Re-admitted Families/Persons		Number Houses Evicted/Levelled	
Sir J. Fitzgerald	10	74	1	5	10	9
Ecclesiastical						
Commissioners	5	17	—	—	5	—
Ellen Hackett	5	26	—	—	5	—
Vincent Scully	3	26	1	11	3	2
J. Lindsey	5	33	3	21	4	2
Rev. C. Haith	40	264	38	242	40	—
R. Mansergh	5	37	—	—	5	2
Earl Portarlington	12	68	8	51	12	2
C. W. Wall	1	5	—	—	1	—
P. Waldron	14	108	—	—	13	—
Lord Lismore	24	161	5	47	22	13
W. Perry	9	57	4	21	9	4
T. Ryan	26	137	2	14	26	12
J. Kearney	13	68	1	2	11	8
E. B. Purefoy	5	26	—	—	4	1
Lord Stanley	4	25	3	18	4	—
Clement Sadleir	4	18	—	—	3	2
Thomas Butler	5	16	1	5	4	3
W. P. Burton	44	240	20	154	44	16
H. S. Keating	1	7	—	—	1	1
J. Quinn	2	10	—	—	1	1
J. H. Smith-Barry	3	12	—	—	2	2
J. Laughton	15	85	—	—	15	—
S. Jacob	4	12	—	—	3	—
J. Massy-Dawson	14	90	—	—	14	4
N. Power	1	5	—	—	1	—
Rebecca Hartford	7	44	3	13	7	—
Lord Gough	13	52	5	39	11	4

				North Tipperary	
Total Evicted:	Families 294	Persons 1,733		(Families 465	Persons 2,568
Total Re-admitted:	Families 95	Persons 643		Families 168	Persons 992
Actual Evictions:	Families 199	Persons 1,090		Families 297	Persons 1,594)

Statistics like these inform as to the number of tenants pitched from their homes and the landlords responsible, but do not tell where these tenants, fathers, mothers and children,

sought new lives. Did the evicted swell the mass of the urban poor? From what parts of South Tipperary, and from whose estates, did these people come? Having seen that Tipperary was more injured by evictions than any other county, was the same true with reference to population loss generally? What was the reaction to emigration, on the parts of both those who went and those who stayed? The final article in this series will attempt to answer these questions.

FOOTNOTES

1. NAI, O.P., 27/151, inquiry into death of John Comerford, Nenagh, Jan. 1851. For the Famine in Monsea, see D. Grace, *Portrait of a Parish Monsea and Killodiernan* (Nenagh, 1996), pp. 93-111.
2. A. Stafford O'Brien to Caroline countess of Dunraven, 3 Jan. 1847 (Dunraven Papers, PR00NI, D3196/E/13/6).
3. T.H.J. (1995), pp. 1-53; T.H.J. (1996), pp. 1-42; T.H.J. (1997), pp. 131-150; T.H.J. (1998), pp. 56-75.
4. H. Maxwell (ed.), *The Creevey Papers*, ii (London, 1903), p. 178.
5. T.H.J. (1995), pp. 35-41.
6. *The Times*, 12 June 1849.
7. NAI, O.P., 27/1382, report on events in Cahir, December 1850 (filed under 1851).
8. Nassau William Senior, *Journals, Conversations and Essays relating to Ireland*, ii (London, 1868), pp. 18, 48-50.
9. (Rev. F. W. Robertson), *The Irish Difficulty addressed to his countrymen by an Englishman* (London, 1848), pp. 22, 29.
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11. James W. Hurst, *Disturbed Tipperary; 1831-1860 in Eire-Ireland*, ix, 3 (1974), pp. 44-59.
12. *Returns of committals to jail for trial 1845, 1846* (46), xxxv; *for 1846, 1847* (822), xlvii; *for 1847, 1847-48* (953), lii; *for 1848, 1849* (1067), xlv; *for 1849, 1850* (1271), xlv; *for 1850, 1851* (1386), xlvi; *for 1851, 1852-53* (1556), lxxxi; *for 1852, 1852-53* (1654), lxxxi.
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15. T.V., 8 July 1846.
16. T.V., 21 Oct. 1846.
17. T.F.P., 22 July 1846.
18. T.C., 27 Oct. 1847.
19. M. Beames, *Rural Conflict in Pre-Famine Ireland: Peasant Assassinations in Tipperary, 1837-47*, in *Past and Present* 81 (Nov. 1978), p. 81.
20. T.V., 26, 29 Jan. 1848.
21. T.V., 12 Feb. 1848.
22. *Ag. Returns for 1847, 1847-48* (923, 1000), lvii.
23. T.V., 8 July 1848.
24. T.C., 13 Jan., 25 Feb. 1848.
25. T.V., 11 Oct. 1848; NAI, O.P., 27/99, petition appealing Curraghvoke being levied, Jan. 1849.
26. *Nation*, 15 Sept. 1849.
27. *Dublin Evening Mail*, 17 Sept. 1849.
28. *D.E.M.*, 21 Swpt. 1849; *Illustrated London News*, 22 Sept. 1849.
29. *Nation*, 22 Sept. 1849.
30. *Nation*, 3 Nov. 1849.
31. *Nation*, 17 Nov. 1849.
32. T.V., 7, 10, 17, 24, 28 May 1845.
33. *Limerick Chronicle*, 6 June 1849; *I.L.N.*, 2 June 1849.
34. NAI, Massy-Dawson estate rental 1837-38 (M 4471/12).

35. NAI, Massy-Dawson estate rental 1841 (M 4471/16).
36. NAI, Massy-Dawson estate rental 1846 (M 4471/20).
37. NAI, Massy-Dawson estate rental 1849 (M 4471/22).
38. NAI, Massy-Dawson estate rental 1833-40 (M 4471/1-7); T.V., 13 May 1846.
39. NAI, Cahir estate company, Glengall Diary (976/6/1/5).
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41. T.V., 28 Feb. 1849.
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43. Rental 1839-49, Ormonde estate (MS 23797, NLI).
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47. J. Mokyr, *Why Ireland Starved* (London, 1983), pp. 27-8.
48. Appendix H of *4th Report above* (n. 46).
49. F.J., 29 April 1846.
50. T.V., 11 Nov. 1846.
51. T.C., 1 Nov. 1845; T.V., 3 Dec. 1845; T.F.P., 25 March, 6 May, 21 Oct., 11 Nov. 1846.
52. T.V., 14 Oct. 1846.
53. T.V., 30 Jan. 1847.
54. *Report of inquiry into Encumbered Estates Court*, 1854-5 (1938), xix, p. 101.
55. T.V., 30 Sept. 1846.
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64. Thomas Ryan to Thomas Kelly, 22 July 1847 (O'Byrne MSS, MS 27399, N.L.I.).
65. Henry Lloyd to James Purse, 18 Jan. 1844 (Ormonde MSS letter-book, MS 23808, N.L.I.).
66. *Devon Commission Digest*, ii, pp. 803-8.
67. J. A. Braddell quoted in *Devon Commission Digest*, p. 821.
68. G. Garvey, quoted in *Devon Commission Digest*, p. 822.
69. *Devon Commission Digest*, p. 829.
70. 'Driving Book' 1845-53, Cahir estate company (NAI, 976/3/2/25).
71. *Returns of number of ejectments brought in courts etc. 1846-49*, 1849 (315), xlix.
72. Return showing evictions in Ireland, 1849-69 (NAI, CSORP, 1847/685).
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92. *D.E.P.*, 20 July 1850.
93. *Nation*, 2 Feb. 1850.
94. *Nation*, 3 March 1850.
95. *Nation*, 3 March 1850.
96. Many editions, chapter eleven.
97. *T.V.*, 3 April 1850.
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