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ASPECTS OF CAHERSIVEEN
TOWN AND PARISH,
1811-1867.

by

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FOR MY FAMILY

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INTRODUCTION

My thesis is on the town of Cahersiveen and its surrounding parish. The official spelling of the town is Cahersiveen, which means the Fort of little Sathbh, but many variants of its spelling can be found among the sources. My main concern is on the town in the nineteenth century, when it grew from being a collection of mud houses to become the capital of the Barony of Iveragh in a short time. The main question is why did Cahersiveen emerge as the only urban centre in such a rural place, and why was it allowed to do so in such an unplanned manner. The first half of my work will concentrate on the development and growth of the town, as well as looking at events that were taking place in the parish and barony as a whole.

Due to the content of this work being localised it is difficult to get primary sources from the period that have survived or are not conflicting. This is partly due to the lack of local history recorded in the nineteenth century with oral accounts not being totally reliable. However in the first chapter of this work I have used primary sources which account for the initial development of the town from 1815 to 1839. This secluded part of south Kerry was the centre of much national and international focus. Firstly, the area received numerous visitors, mostly English, who recorded their findings and often compared this rural Irish life to English life. However, they were not natives and sometimes misunderstood the way of life they encountered. I will look at what was written by these people, such as Rev Thomas Radcliff, Reid and Lewis. It is these accounts by individual travellers to the region that give a first hand view of this period through the publicised letters and narratives of what they each

experienced. A further valuable description of life in early nineteenth century Iveragh is a report done by Alexander Nimmo on the bogs of Iveragh. I have looked at this along with a comparison by Nimmo in 1824 of how the area had developed so rapidly in a decade which was published in an article by Sean O Luing in the *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical society*. Russell McMorran's interpretation of this in *The Kerry Magazine* is also very informative. I have also used the original manuscripts in the possession of Trinity College along with the intensive account of the estate by Robert B McCarthy showing the management of the college lands.

Also the information available in reports initiated by the British government is very worthwhile as these give one a more official insight into procedures of nineteenth century Iveragh. These reports include the *House of Lords select committee on disturbances in Ireland in 1824*, the *Poor Enquiry of 1835*, as well as the census from 1821 and 1881.

One of the most important dates in history associated with the area is 6 August 1775 when a man, who was later to succeed in attaining Catholic Emancipation for Ireland, was born at Carhan, just outside the town of Cahersiveen. This individual was Daniel O'Connell who came from a local wealthy family, and who was then educated in France. He became a national hero as the 'Liberator', but despite his national and international success, he lacked local acclaim. Daniel was a middleman in the Iveragh estate which was the property of Trinity College, Dublin. I have

looked at the *Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell* edited by both W.J. Fitzpatrick in 1888 and by Maurice O'Connell in 1972, along with some more recent biographies of O'Connell. One of the books which looks at O'Connell in relation to his native area and his contribution to it is *Daniel O'Connell: Nine centenary essays* edited by Michael Tierney.

The second chapter of my thesis will concentrate on the years prior to the famine, the event itself and the post famine years. For this I have looked at the Cahersiveen Union and how it established a workhouse and fever hospital. Unfortunately no minute books, registers or rate books of the Cahersiveen Union have survived. However I have used the British Parliamentary papers in relation to the famine in Ireland which contains some of the correspondence between the Poor Law Commission and the temporary inspector of the Cahersiveen union, Lieut-Col Clarke.

The workhouses of Ireland: the fate of Ireland's poor by John O'Connor gives a background to the workhouse system in Ireland with precise dates and figures as well as getting some local insight into the famine from *The Annals of the congregation of St Joseph's presentation convent Cahersiveen*.

Just two years after Trinity regained full control over their estate the town saw the Fenian Rising of 1867, which again put Cahersiveen at the front of international focus, with some of the rebels deported to Australia, never to return to Ireland again. The events of 1867 and its repercussions for those involved are in chapter three but

most of this is based on oral history supported with contemporary newspaper accounts as well as articles published at later dates. Many writers of the events that took place in Ireland in 1867 neglect to mention the Fenian rising that took place in south Kerry on 12-3 February and of its importance in prompting the government to change legislation for the country. None of the Fenians ever wrote an account of their involvement in the rising. The only account by a Fenian of the 1867 rising in south Kerry comes from John Devoy, in his book *Recollections of an Irish rebel: A personal narrative* which gives an account of the event from the information he received from the four Fenian sons and daughter of Head Constable Connell of the Cahersiveen constabulary. 'The Iveragh Fenians in oral tradition' is Sean O'Suilleabhain's account of the rising and as the title suggests is a collection of folklore based on the material collected by the folklore commissioners. I have looked at the work of Brother Peadar Lynch who did a lot of research into the Fenian rising in and around the time of the centenary celebrations. The main item published in 1967 by him was *Fir 1867* as well as numerous articles in newspapers. I have also gained access to some of his private papers which contain information which he did not get to publish.

After the rising was over tensions shifted in the area from political to local religious grievances. This can be seen in connection with the building of the Daniel O'Connell Memorial Church, under the supervision of Canon Brosnan, who rallied the support of his parishioners together in opposition to Trinity College. However I

conclude my work with the Fenian rising and its aftermath of arrests, trials and transportation of some of the insurgents.

My main objective is to look at the development of the Cahersiveen area between the years 1811 and 1867 focusing on all levels of society. I am incorporating the estate owners, local influential families as well as looking at life for the poor peasants of the region as they faced many difficulties. I will be concentrating on the growth of the capital of the Iveragh estate, and why there were conflicting and contradictory reports on the success, or lack of it, in the region by numerous people, and why did such an unsatisfactory geographical location facilitate the emergence of the town. I will ask was the often biased portrayal of Cahersiveen due to the fact that it produced one of Ireland's better known politicians of the nineteenth century. Could the town have developed even more so if this son, Daniel O'Connell, had adopted a different policy for the area? Also I will ask whether or not he neglected his native area and tenants in his rise to success.

I am going to tell the history of the Iveragh Fenians looking at their family and social backgrounds prior to the rising. I follow their progress as well as look at the consequences and aftermath of the rising for some of these men. Also I am going to ask why did it take outside initiative from Alexander Nimmo and later Trinity College to take the initial steps to create and improve the town.

The following is a map outlining the town of Cahersiveen in 1851. It was compiled by John O'Shea in 1960 and was published in the *Christian Brothers, St. Mary's Cahersiveen, Souvenir record*.

FURTHER ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations listed in 'Rules for Contributors to *Irish Historical Studies*' in *Irish Historical Studies*, supplement i (Jan. 1968),p.81-124 are utilised without comment. A few others may be noted.

P.E.I. *Reports from Commissioners. Poor Enquiry Ireland, 1835. vol 33.*

Census *Census of Ireland, Province of Munster, County of Kerry.*

K.C.L. Kerry County Library.

Br Peadar Brother Peadar Lynch, Private Collection of Papers.

Cork Exam. *Cork Examiner.*

Even.Echo *Evening Echo.*

H & C *The Police Gazette or Hue and Cry.*

Tralee Chron. Tralee Chronicle.

Kerry Mag. The Kerry Magazine.

C.B. Souv. Rec. Christian Brothers, *St Mary's Cahersiveen Souvenir Record*
(1960).

Jn. Kerry Arch. Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical society.

*I.E.E. Reports of commissioners, Irish Education enquiry 1826 appendix
to second report, no 22, section 24 (1826)*

*Papers Union Work. Papers relating to proceedings for the relief of the distress, a
state of the unions and workhouses in Ireland, fourth series*

CHAPTER ONE

THE INITIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN

The history of the development of Cahersiveen begins in 1597 when Trinity College Dublin got the Iveragh estate in County Kerry as part of a royal grant.¹ Prior to this the land was the property of the earl of Desmond. The estate comprised of 8,808 acres stretching west from Killorglin and incorporating the parishes of Glenbegh, Killinane, Cahir, Killemlagh, Dromod, Prior and Valentia. Although it appeared a large estate it was nevertheless situated in a remote district with most of the land being mountain or bogland and not suitable for intensive agriculture.

Prior to the era that I shall be looking at in relation to the estate, Iveragh was in joint tenancy of the Stoughton and Gun families during the eighteenth century. It is not immediately clear why these two leading north Kerry Protestant families should have an interest in one of the remoter parts of the county. One theory for this by R.B. McCarthy is that due to the penal laws imposed on Catholics, an indigenous wealthy Roman Catholic family, such as the O'Connells, encouraged their Protestant counterparts to take the college lease. These Protestant landlords then sublet it to the O'Connells, thus making a profit on the rent for themselves.² According to M.F. Cusack in her book *The Liberator his Life and Times*, which was published just twenty five years after the death of Daniel O'Connell, his opinion was '...that no

¹ Robert B. MacCarthy, *The Trinity College Estates 1800-1923: Corporate Management In An Age Of Reform* (Dublin, 1992), p.1.

² MacCarthy, p.183.

landed estates could have remained in the possession of Catholics, only that individual Protestants were found a great deal honest than the laws'.³

In order to fully understand the management of an estate such as Iveragh one must ask who were the middlemen and what did they do? The middlemen were the direct tenants of the landlord who sublet their lands to a large number of tenants, but due to numerous middlemen the land was dearer and the tenantry poorer. Thomas Campbell Foster in his analysis of the Irish middlemen found that as a result of the system 'The land is thus taken out of the management of the landlord, and the middlemen, having no permanent interest in it, covers it with a pauper tenantry'.⁴ An example of middlemen on the Iveragh estate at the beginning of the nineteenth century was the O'Connells of Derrynane. The majority of middlemen set about improving the urban centres on their properties but this did not happen on the O'Connell property. 'Alas the town of Cahirciveen founded by the middleman on the college estate of Iveragh exhibited quite the opposite characteristics...'⁵

By the end of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century the O'Connells interest in the lease was expanding. The O'Connells had land interest in and around Cahersiveen from the twelfth century when the family homestead was at Ballycarbery castle.⁶ They fled from this to Derrynane after it was bombarded by Cromwell but still maintained their land there. This continued land holding enabled

³ M.F. Cusack, *The Liberator: His Life and Times* (Kenmare Publications, 1872), p.23.

⁴ Thomas Campbell Foster, *Letters on the condition of the people of Ireland* (London, 1846), p.389.

⁵ MacCarthy, p.8.

them to acquire an interest in the Trinity estate when the opportunity arose. From 1810 to the termination of the lease in 1865 the O'Connells held a considerable proportion of the lease. By 1844 the O'Connells controlled 73% of the estate, with the Blennerhassetts and the successive knights of Kerry holding 16% and 11% of the lease respectively.⁷

Even as far back as 1809 Blennerhassett was unreliable in his payment of rent to the college. It was the continuation of this unreliability that eventually led to the end of the middleman system in the Iveragh estate after 1865. Blennerhassett gave his interest in the lease in 1858 to Pierce Butler of Cahersiveen, which had a total valuation of £1,079.15s.0d in 1853.⁸ When the lease ended in 1865 Trinity College Dublin took back direct management of their estate. This was due to the inability of the Blennerhassetts to raise the necessary funds to pay the college fines, so much so, that by 1855 the cost of the renewal of the lease had risen to £3,390.⁹ The O'Connells and the knight of Kerry wanted the college to continue their interest as a dual partnership as opposed to the previous three fold alliance. The college would not allow this so the lease ended. Even with Blennerhassett's interest in the estate taken over by Butler this was still not enough for O'Connell and the knight to be granted permission, by Trinity College, to take out perpetuities under the 1851 act.¹⁰ However, I suspect that Trinity College Dublin only used this opportunity to regain

⁶ Mary Godfrey, 'Sinsear Donail I Chonail' (1938) Uncompleted thesis for M.A. at University College Dublin.

⁷ Foster, p.182.

⁸ T.C.D., MS p/23/1573, valuation land in Cahersiveen parish was £105.0.0, with land valuation in the town amounting to £25.0.0 and the value of house in the town being £949.15.0.

⁹ Foster, p.183.

control of Iveragh as it had not prospered as much as they had expected under the middlemen system.

Under the O'Connell, Blennerhassett and knight of Kerry agreement the college had effectively been absentee landlords, with these three main direct tenants acting as middlemen. This brought many advantages for Trinity but it also has its problems. Like many other landlords during the nineteenth century Trinity College used the middleman system which was very beneficial to them as it eliminated the day to day duties and responsibilities of running an estate. It meant an additional source of finance for the operation of the college in Dublin without the headache of collecting the rent from numerous tenants, dealing with evictions or trying to keep account of all affairs relating to the estate.

Although there were numerous layers of middlemen the college was only concerned with their direct lessees, who were part of the 'beneficial leasing'¹¹ system. This relieved the college authorities of estate management as the middlemen were in effect a part of the 'unofficial' college administration. 'It was an obvious policy of the college to favour friendly middlemen accustomed to country life, and ready to undertake the trouble of managing a large native tenantry'.¹²

Religious tension can be seen in the Iveragh estate when Sir Rowland Blennerhassett

¹⁰ Ibid., p.183.

¹¹ Foster, p.3.

¹² J.P. Mahaffy, *An Epoch Of Irish History* (London:1903), p.171.

was created first Baronet in 1809. The O'Connells felt that this title should be for their family, but that the Blennerhassetts were favoured because they were members of the Established church unlike the Catholic O'Connells. Their displeasure can be seen in a letter from James O'Connell to his brother Daniel in the year following the acquisition by the Blennerhassetts of the title of baronet.

*If anything this old fox did could surprise me it would be his having the impudence to deny a payment so lately made and which I am convinced is regularly entered in his rent books-heretofore he often acted honestly (because he thought it was the best policy) but now that he has arrived at the rank of Baronet-I suppose he thinks it unnecessary to any longer.*¹³

In order to see the development of Cahersiveen in the nineteenth century one must remember that it was in the possession of Trinity College Dublin as part of their estate since 1597. When Alexander Nimmo, the Scottish engineer sent by the bog commission arrived in Iveragh in 1811, he was appalled at the poverty and underdevelopment of the estate. He was sent to the area as a 'bog engineer' to undertake a survey of the bogs of Iveragh for the House of Commons, to report on 'the practicability of draining and cultivating the bogs in the Barony of Iveragh',¹⁴ which took from 1811 to 1814. He found that the main road into the neighbourhood was in a bad condition and not fit to let carriages pass through it. He described the

¹³ MacCarthy, p182.

¹⁴ Alexander Nimmo, 'The report of Mr Alexander Nimmo, on the bogs in the Barony of Iveragh', *The fourth report of the commissioners appointed to enquire into the nature and extent of the several bogs in Ireland, and the practicability of draining and cultivating them.* (London, 1814), p.27.

estate at the beginning of the nineteenth century showing the poor progress in the area which he attributed to ‘the rocky nature of Iveragh’,¹⁵ as well as laying out plans to improve the area. The majority of his report was comprised of the state of the bogs of the barony as well as his ambitious plans to have a navigable canal from the Inny river towards Valentia harbour, with the object of this canal being ‘the transportation of manure from the sea-shore to the great bogs of the interior, which will be done at one fourth of the expense now incurred, even when wages are so low and for less than one-half of the expense that would be incurred with the best roads and wheel carriages’, at a cost of £3,464.8s.11d.¹⁶

As well as the plans for the bogs of the estate Nimmo also designed many road and bridge plans. One of these was the building of a bridge from the mainland at Renard to Valentia Island. However this ambitious plan never came about but one which did, and which was the most important, not only to the town of Cahersiveen but to the whole estate, was the building of a main road into the centre of the area. He felt that this road would contribute a lot to the progress of the area and would aid in the transportation of agricultural produce. ‘The chief produce of the country is butter and it is entirely carried out on horseback; each horse carries 2 or 3 firkins...and is attended by a driver to the city of Cork, which by this road is distant 75 Irish miles from the middle of Iveragh. The road by Drung may be so improved as to be a good and level carriageway’.¹⁷

¹⁵ Russell McMorrán, ‘Alexander Nimmo in Kerry’, in *Kerry Mag.* no 6 (Tralee, 1995), p.37.

¹⁶ Nimmo, p.52-55.

¹⁷ Nimmo, p.30.

Like many of Nimmo's plans that were executed a new road was built into the heart of Iveragh between 1820 and 1822 financed 'by means of a government loan to the Kerry grand jury which was to be repaid by instalments.'¹⁸ Nimmo described the state of Iveragh as he found it in 1811, but decided that this negative portrayal of the area could be altered if the correct decisions were made. His opinion of the underdevelopment of this domain was due to the lack of communication with the world outside of the Barony, a problem which could be solved with a new and improved infrastructure.

From the year 1824 Nimmo gives us an account of Cahersiveen and how it had progressed since the completion of the main road into the town. It was a far cry from the days when he first visited the little village in which 'there was hardly a plough, car, or carriage of any kind...there was not a decent public-house, and I think only one house slated and plastered in the village of Caherseveen; the rest, a few scattered thatched cabins; the nearest post-office thirty miles distant'.¹⁹ It was now the rapidly growing capital of the whole estate due to its new communication line which could now boast of

twenty respectable two storey houses, slated and plastered, with good sash windows...A respectable shop with cloth, hardware and groceries; a comfortable inn with six bedrooms and six horse stables; a post office, bridewell, new chapel; a quay which is covered with limestone, brought on return freight for slates, this barony

¹⁸ Sean O Luing, 'Richard Griffith and the roads of Kerry', in *Jn. Kerry Arch.*, no5 p.107.

*having no limestone in itself; a salt work; two stores preparing for purchasing oats, and a considerable traffic in linen and yarn. There are perhaps forty cars and carts, and a resident gentleman's coach; and it is remarkable, that all this is the result of the individual enterprise of the inhabitants...*²⁰

Even though Nimmo attributes the development of the region in the 1820's to local enterprise and initiative, it was brought about by his planning and building of the road. However despite the work of this Scottish engineer who saved the area from being totally isolated from the rest of the country, he is rarely credited with this.

In the Rev Thomas Radcliff 's *Report on the Agriculture and Livestock of the County of Kerry* of 1814 he points out that 'Mr Nimmo, a most intelligent and able engineer...has marked out some roads in convenient directions with every attention to economy, and to proper levels'.²¹ This is one of the few reports that record and praise Mr Alexander Nimmo and account him with the beginning of a new era in Iveragh and more especially in the town of Cahersiveen.

It was not only due to Nimmo's new roadway into Iveragh that prompted the development of the town of Cahersiveen, but also the town grew due to a nation-wide upward population trend. From 1793 to 1815 there was an increase in the

¹⁹ Ibid., p.113.

²⁰ McMorran, p.39.

²¹ Rev. Thomas Radcliff, *Report of the Agriculture and Livestock of The County of Kerry* (Dublin, 1814), p.53-54.

population of Ireland ²²which resulted in extra competition for land. Thus it could be argued that this surplus population from a farming background helped in the growth of Cahersiveen. In Kerry alone from 1821 to 1831 the population of the county grew by 21.7%.²³

Despite this positive image of Cahersiveen and its surrounding environs by both Nimmo and Radcliff a more credible account can be obtained from the writings of James O'Connell, who was a brother of Daniel, and also a landlord familiar with local problems. It is from the correspondence of both James and Daniel that one sees the financial state of Daniel's affairs which on 1 March 1817 Daniel was in debt of £18,699.²⁴ James undertook the management of his brother's lands voluntarily which was to the benefit of Daniel who somewhat took advantage of his brother's generosity. James collected the rents and dealt with the daily affairs of the lands despite the fear that if his uncle 'Hunting Cap' came to know of this practise he would have been disinherited.²⁵ James tried to counteract Daniel's neglect for his tenants and realised that the poverty and inability of the tenants to pay rent was Daniel's fault. 'You are yourself to blame in not having devoted a few hours once a year when you came to Iveragh to look into your affairs.'²⁶ He, James, found it almost impossible to collect rents from his tenants due to the economic depression in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, as well as a growth of agrarian secret

²² MacCarthy, p.8.

²³ W.E. Vaughan and A.J. Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics-Population, 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1975), p.9.

²⁴ Maurice O'Connell, *The Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell* vol 11 (Shannon, 1972), p.135.

²⁵ Interview with Professor Maurice O'Connell.

²⁶ O'Connell, vol 11, p.299.

societies. By 1822 when it appeared on the surface that the area was making progress, James O'Connell had the local insight to predict that it would be a slow and almost impossible task to collect rents 'as every peasant in the Barony of Iveragh is a white boy, and as such is determined neither to pay rent, tithes nor taxes'.²⁷ According to the report made by Mr Butler to the Poor Enquiry of 1835 he referred to the White boy disturbances of 1822 as being a minor incident and as a result of outside influences which disappeared as quickly as they had arisen.²⁸

It was not just local insight that saw the gloomy situation of the area as it was also noted by Thomas Reid, a traveller to the town in the same year as James O'Connell's dismal view of the estate. Reid travelled throughout Ireland during 1822 and saw the distress that was apparent in the whole country. He was astonished by the distress of the locals of Cahersiveen so much so that they dug the potato for food as soon as the bulb was formed. He was approached during his stay in the town by numerous residents who went to him to voice their anger and complaints in relation to the distribution of charitable relief sent by a London committee.²⁹ He also found that 'poverty and nakedness apply equally to, land and people...' with many trying to '...subsist on herbs and weeds'.³⁰ It was hardly surprising that forty-eight affidavits for the Cahir parish alone were made by individuals who had neither received their fair share or none of the charity.³¹

²⁷ MacCarthy, p.185.

²⁸ *P.E.I.*, (1836), p.62.

²⁹ Reid does not inform us from which London Committee this relief for the Cahersiveen people was sent from.

³⁰ Thomas Reid, *Travels in Ireland in the year 1822* (London, 1823), p.277.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.280.

Reid also gives an account not just of the poverty, but of the religious and social aspects of the town life he encountered. He counted seven members of the Established church in the church in comparison to the large crowd of Catholics of which only about one third could fit into the chapel. This little Catholic chapel, which Reid referred to was the penal church, was coming to the end of its usage in 1822 as a place of worship as a larger church was in the process of being built in a more central part of the town to accommodate the ever growing population. It has often been wondered why this church came into existence eliminating the need for a mass rock during the penal times, with the most probable answer being that it was under the patronage of the local Catholic landlords, the O'Connells.³²

Reid also witnessed the major social event of Cahersiveen and its surrounding community. This was the fair day held in the town which according to Reid did not pass off peacefully. However despite Reid's account of the town not all outsiders could see the underlying poverty of the town as they only saw a growing capital of a rural region. This lack of understanding can be seen in the report by the *House of Lords select committee on disturbances in Ireland in 1824*, in which they state that 'there is one road which has been completed in the county of Kerry, leading from Killorglin to Valentia Island; there considerable improvements have taken place in the building of houses, particularly in the village of Cahersiveen'.³³

³² Ann O'Sullivan, 'An 18th Century Church, Cahersiveen', in *Acard news* no3 (Cahersiveen, 1990).

³³ *House of Lords Select Committee on Disturbances in Ireland in 1824* (1824), p.64-65.

Little is recorded of the town history in the late 1820's except that of references by the landlords in relation to the problem of trying to collect rents from their tenants in addition to figures from the census which can give one an account of what progress was being made. By 1821 the town of Cahersiveen had a population of 205 whilst the rural part of Cahir parish had 3,742 inhabitants. However no signs of poverty can be seen at this early stage in the town as 72 persons were employed with another 113 going to school leaving only 20 inhabitants unemployed which could account for the elderly.³⁴ The town had 37 families living in 36 houses with a pretty equal ratio of men to women with 101 male and 104 female residences.³⁵ In the course of the following ten years these figures had risen dramatically. The town showed a population rise of 481% rising the population to 1,192 with the number in the remainder of the parish rising by 19.2% to 4,461. There were now 216 families in the town occupying 183 houses with a further 33 houses under construction at the time of the census. ³⁶In the three years following the census the population of Cahersiveen grew. The population of Caher parish as a whole had risen by 409 persons according to the 1834 commissioners of public instruction report. This report shows a fall in the number of members of the Established church in Caher parish from 125 in 1831 to 113 in 1834.³⁷ The following page contains a graph which shows the population figures from 1821 to 1881 for the town and parish of Caher. From the graph it appears that the population of Cahersiveen town grew during the famine years, but this was only due to a movement of people from the

³⁴ *Census*, 1821.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1821.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1831.

³⁷ *Commissioners of Public Instruction Reports* (1835), p.163.

surrounding rural areas into the urban centre and into the workhouse. The population of the town grew from 1,492 in 1841 to 1,862 in 1851, which excludes the 1,293 people who were resident in the workhouse in 1851.³⁸

It is in the early 1830's before the next important visitor to the town notes the state of what he experienced. This man was Henry Inglis who in 1834 felt that O'Connell's town was beginning to improve, but that in his opinion it would never flourish due to its disadvantaged geographical location. 'I was now in O'Connell country: Here was the property of Daniel O'Connell Esq. or the Liberator, as the people called him...and he is only an extensive middleman'.³⁹ Furthermore he pointed out that the tenants were paying extremely high rents which would prevent the place ever improving. He found that the people were industrious and 'saw in many of their cabins, beautiful examples of industry-every member of a family occupied in doing something useful', as well as being extremely intelligent, who replied to his questions with such '...answers that would have done credit to persons of any education'.⁴⁰ However all of this was to no avail as poverty prevailed.

The high standard of education that Inglis found amongst the people was a very positive portrayal of the area. As can be seen from the Irish education enquiry of 1826, education was a big part of life in Iveragh, with a total of twenty nine schools in the peninsula of which all the schoolmistress/masters were Roman Catholic.

³⁸ *Census*, 1841-51.

³⁹ Inglis, p.235.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.239.

There were six schools in the Cahersiveen parish alone located at the Cross of Kilpeaken, Litter, Mount Luke, Kimego and two located in the town of Cahersiveen. Both of these town schools were held in the comfort of the market house in comparison to some of the other parish schools where pupils were taught in mud cabins. The enquiry also tells us the amount of pupils in attendance at these schools, but the figures for the Cahir parish are conflicting, as there was both a separate Catholic and Protestant return. The Protestant return accounted for 143 pupils in attendance between both schools in the town with 250 in the rural schools, giving a total of 393 pupils for the Cahersiveen parish. However the Catholic return doesn't give a breakdown of the individual schools and just gives a total of 421 pupils for the parish which is accounting for 28 more pupils than the Protestant return.⁴¹ The difference in wages in all the schools in the barony varied with the lowest being £5 10s for the master at Kimego with James Burke of Valentia getting £60 per annum.⁴²

A year prior to Inglis's visit a traveller en route to Derrynane via Cahersiveen, Fr McDonnell, gave his account of what he found in the Liberator's native town. 'Cahersiveen is the select abode of the genius of destitution...the only redeeming features of the place are that it abounds with the name of O'Connell and that O'Connell castle, but that, too, in ruins'.⁴³ Unlike Inglis, Father McDonnell could not see any positive signs in Cahersiveen. However, on a later reflection, after it was pointed out to the priest that he had been unfair in his analysis of what he had

⁴¹ *I.E.E.*, p.1038.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.1038-41.

⁴³ Rev. Padraig O Suilleabhain, O.F.M., 'Father McDonnell's visit to Derrynane in 1833', in *Jn. Kerry Arch.*, no6 (Naas, 1973), p.146.

observed he confessed that his views had been overly critical due to fatigue and weariness after a long journey.

Inglis noted the difference between the wretched life styles of the tenants in and around Cahersiveen in comparison to their island counterparts on Valentia. This could also be a comparison of Landlords in the estate and how they each dealt with their tenants differently. The knight of Kerry, a landlord in Valentia, was respected by his tenants for all that he did for them, whereas Inglis found that 'O'Connells' less popular in his own country than he is elsewhere'.⁴⁴ As far back as 1814 Radcliff had reported how the knight of Kerry, who resided on the island, had begun to improve the dwellings and lifestyles of his tenants. Not only did the knight provide relief in the bad harvest year of 1822, but he also provided employment in the slate quarries. The poor enquiry of 1835 showed the success of Valentia which was attributed to the enterpreneuring knight. The ambition of this landlord is reflected in the tenants as they constantly tried to improve their lifestyles. 'The workmen in the slate quarries in Valentia, who have nearly constant employment, have the strongest desire to get land. Some of them even keep servant boys to work on their land when they are in the quarries'.⁴⁵

The Island was developing so well those six years prior to Inglis' visit the knight had proposed to seek independence for the Island as a separate county and not to be burdened by the problems of the mainland. The knight hoped to achieve this from

⁴⁴ Inglis, p.235.

his position as an MP in Westminster, with the arguments that Valentia was superior in land and development and that it would function better as a separate administrative entity for the future, with it being a link up for transatlantic ships as well as the proposed Dublin to Kerry railway to end at Valentia harbour.⁴⁶ There was great speculation about what would be the end result of Valentia Harbour becoming the main port of the British Isles in transatlantic business. It was believed that completion of this plan would have the following result. ‘...Ireland will be placed immediately in the current of intercourse ebbing and flowing between the New World and the Old. It will share largely in the profits of commercial speculation between the two hemispheres. It will render Ireland a path for Europeans and Americans to traverse’.⁴⁷

From the 1830’s there is an abundance of information on Cahersiveen town and parish. For the most part these reports are by people unfamiliar with the region and its people which therefore can’t be seen as an accurate account of the local community. These reports include the Poor Enquiry of Ireland in 1835.

This poor enquiry is a report by the appointed commissioners who recorded what they saw and compared this to the systems in operation in England, Scotland and Wales. They also interviewed many landlords, the majority of these being from outside the locality of where they owned land and thus did not reflect accurately the

⁴⁵ *P.E.I.*, p.62.

⁴⁶ *Chute’s Western Herald*, Monday 1 December 1828.

⁴⁷ ‘Valencia harbour’, Joly Collection. (from photocopy)

reality of the hardships of their tenantry about whom the report was meant to give an authentic account of.

The Barony of Iveragh had many similarities with other baronies but it also had an unique element. Firstly, it was the property of Trinity College Dublin who had it leased out to middlemen. Not only this, but these middlemen were the college's unofficial management team, who allowed subletting to continue unheeded in the college lands. This was one of the main problems causing poverty in the region as well as the extremely high rents. Two of the commissioners, W.J. Gisborne, Esq., and T.N. Vaughan Esq., found that 'the small tenants pay the highest rents, and, in general, try to support their families on a piece of ground too small to yield them a good sustenance'.⁴⁸

Mr Mahony, a landlord resident at Castlequin overlooking the town of Cahersiveen, explained to the commissioners that due to the competition for land amongst the people that rent is raised and the land given to the highest bidder. His opinion was that this system was the downfall of the tenantry as rent for small plots of land was excessive, but that the methods of farming did not help the situation of the people in trying to make a comfortable living from the land. 'I think high rents a reason for the poverty of farmers. I should account for it by their own bad farming and by their holdings being so small'.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Poor Enquiry 1835*, p.62.

The issue of subdivision was a major one in Iveragh as it was carried out on a constant basis. Landlords saw subdivision as a disastrous way forward, but that the prevention of this practise only caused further problems. Many sons of tenant farmers would not marry if subdivision wasn't allowed as then they would have no plot of land for themselves to farm or build a house on for their new wife and future family. As a result of this many unmarried sons just continued to live at home.⁵⁰

Also in the report those who gave evidence to it i.e. the landlords, could not understand the attachment of the people to their land and locality. Many landlords tried to relocate some of their tenants on other parts of their property, but to no avail as they would not move from their plot of land where they were born and bred. It was also noted that a landlord's former tenant would remain close to his original birthplace with the possibility of emigration not even being considered, as they had such a strong attachment to their native areas. 'I think they would rather remain at home in wretchedness than go to a fair prospect of a better provision elsewhere'.⁵¹

Mr James O'Connell, gave his account of the tenants and land on the O'Connell's properties. He defended the middleman system and also their policy of subdivision. 'I also know the difficulty of preventing the farms being subdivided among the sons

⁴⁹ *P.E.I.*, p.62..

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.62.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.62.

and daughters as they marry; and if I gave a farmer a lease I should have no hope of inserting a clause so strictly gaurded that I could not be loaded'.⁵²

The O'Connells never had clauses in a lease with their tenants regarding the methods of farming to be undertaken or of the lessee making improvements to his rented property. The O'Connells should have a better insight to the needs of their tenantry as they were native landlords who lived in the same community as their tenants. However they let subletting and a lack of improvements to their tenants land go unnoticed and felt that tenants would be worse off if they were stricter because they realised that 'want of capital among the tenants', due to high rents; 'the smallness of their holdings', as a result of unchecked subdivision were 'the circumstances which prevent such clauses from being inserted'.⁵³

A problem common to all landlords was that of fishermen. Many lessee farmers were also fishermen thus neglecting their land. This made them unsuitable tenants in the eyes of the landlords as they spent much of the summer and autumn at the fishing industry, instead of looking after the land. However the close proximity of some tenants to the seashore was very beneficial to the land as they had a constant supply of manure from the seaweed and sand. 'When at a distance from the sea, they[sic] use less manure. When near the sea, they manure equally well'.⁵⁴ This was also

⁵² *P.E.I.*, p.179..

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.179.

⁵⁴ *P.E.I.*, p.110.

Alexander Nimmo's view in 1811 when he hoped that manure would be equally available to all farms in the Iveragh estate via his proposed canal.

Mr Butler, a landlord in the Barony, who in 1858 gained the Blennerhassett lands leased from Trinity College, gave some negative views on the tenantry of the area. He felt that they complained more than necessary and that their poverty and despair was not as bad as it seemed. 'I think the general disposition is to appear to their landlord as poor and as miserable as they can. There seems no ambition to have their houses in better order than their neighbours; but they have a strong desire to be smart in their dress on Sundays and fair-days'.⁵⁵

Mr Butler and another of the lessees of Trinity, the O'Connells, had very different views in relation to the best method of farming the land. Butler favoured the system of larger farms with less tenants as the best way to get the maximum yield from the land whereas the O'Connell's policy prevailed in their support for a lot of small tenant farmers using less advanced agricultural methods.⁵⁶ However failure to abide by the lease made by tenants of the O'Connells resulted in punishment. 'The penalty for failing to abide by clauses is generally forfeiture of the lease or a double rent'.⁵⁷ The only positive conclusion by the commissioners of the Poor Enquiry was that the situation of the tenants had improved. 'All persons, however, agree that there is a great improvement among farmers in the last dozen years'.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.63.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.110.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.111.

⁵⁸ *P.E.I.*, p.395.

Although 1834 seemed to be a relatively good year for the Iveragh estate according to both Inglis and the Poor Enquiry, Daniel O’Connell had a different view of events in that same year. This was to be seen in March of that year when the area saw an outbreak of Asiatic cholera. O’Connell provided relief for the sick and wrote to John Primrose, his agent, at the beginning of March with orders to provide relief for the people who were affected. ‘My Dear John-As far as I am concerned, spare no expense that can possibility alleviate the sufferings of the people.’⁵⁹ However no account of the ‘rampant’ spread of the disease is mentioned by any others in that year. John J. Horgan who gives an account of this incident reflected that the situation had become so bad due to ‘continuous neglect, ignorance and oppression’.⁶⁰

Daniel O’Connell was born at Carhan on 6 August 1775 just outside Cahersiveen, which was only a group of mud houses and a far cry from the town that was to spring up there during his lifetime. O’Connell was born into a wealthy Catholic extended family ‘where Irish was a language commonly used by the Catholic gentry, and where the Catholic manner of life was still largely Gaelic in tone’.⁶¹ The seat of the O’Connells was situated at Derrynane with his uncle Muiris a’ Chaipin (hunting cap)⁶² the head of the family who reared and educated Daniel. The family had earned their living from smuggling goods to and from the continent, mainly France and Spain as well as being local landlords. Their business was ‘what the law called

⁵⁹ Daniel O’Connell, ‘Letter to John Primrose’, in *Correspondence of Daniel O’Connell* ed., W.J. Fitzpatrick F.S.A. vol i (London, 1888), p.12.

⁶⁰ John J. Horgan, ‘O’Connell-The Man’, in *Daniel O’Connell: Nine Centenary Essays* ed., Michael Tierney (Dublin, 1949), p.272.

⁶¹ Gerard Murphy, ‘The Gaelic Background’, ed., Michael Tierney, p.2.

smuggling, but what those engaged in it called free trade...' with Daniel's father, Morgan O'Connell, who owned a shop in Cahersiveen receiving '...many a cargo of French laces, wines and silks, which were sold at an immense profit, in the south and west of Ireland, and enabled him rapidly to accumulate a large fortune'.⁶³ As well as the illegal trade the O'Connells were also involved in legitimate trade with Europe. Many of the Tenants sold their goods to their landlords, the O'Connells, for export with this practise dating to Daniel's grandmother's time. She was an exceptional business woman, poetess and mother of twenty-two children of which thirteen lived.⁶⁴

The actual location of Daniel's birthplace has often been disputed, even before his death. The story goes that he was born in the parish of Whitechurch in Co. Cork , his mother being a native of there and that it was whilst on a visit to her home parish that Daniel was born. However, the Rev Mat Horgan p.p. of Whitechurch regarded this story as a total 'fabrication' of the truth in a letter to the *Cork Examiner* in 1844. He tells how Daniel was born at his home in Cahersiveen where his grandmother and many others were present to witness his birth. 'All this was described in the poem by Maire Duv, (Daniel's grandmother) who also expressed her delight at the birth of her grandson'.⁶⁵

⁶² Godfrey, 'Sinsear Donail I Chonail'. Muiris was nicknamed 'Hunting Cap' because he constantly wore a cap and not a hat, like his peers, because one was taxed for wearing a hat.

⁶³ Cusack, p.18.

⁶⁴ Godfrey, 'Sinsear Donail I Chonail'.

⁶⁵ Rev. Mat Horgan P.P., 'Celebrations at Carhan', *Letter to Cork Examiner*, 12 August 1844.

Although there is an abundance of material written about Daniel O'Connell, the majority of this is in relation to his political career and rarely ever mentions his continued link with Iveragh where he was a middleman there for Trinity College. This lack of information about his tenants and locality can possibly be a reflection of his absence from the area for long periods of time thus distancing himself from the people and problems of the area.

During the 1820's, O'Connell began to work towards achieving Catholic Emancipation. However this was the man who had turned his back on Catholicism for the best part of ten years.⁶⁶ He succeeded in gaining Catholic Emancipation in 1829 despite unending opposition from numerous groups including Dublin Corporation. Not only did he triumph against the corporation in his success at getting emancipation, but in 1841 he became the first Catholic Lord Mayor of Dublin since Terence McDermott in 1689.⁶⁷

Due to the demands of his political career O'Connell often forgot his obligations to his tenantry. He employed his cousin John Primrose as his agent in Cahersiveen to run things for him. Daniel O'Connell could be compared to many landlords of the time with their carelessness and poor management of their properties. It would be expected that O'Connell would do all he could to alleviate the sufferings of the peasantry, due to his high profile image as being 'King of the Beggars'. However

⁶⁶ Professor Maurice O'Connell, 'Speech at Unveiling Ceremony of Daniel O'Connell Monument' (Caharn, Cahersiveen, 1996).

⁶⁷ 'County Kerry and The Lord Mayors of Dublin', *Letter to Mr. Christy O'Connell from the Archivist, Dublin Corporation*, 24 June 1988.

this was not the case as he neglected the grass-roots of his native place. ‘...O’Connell was no exception, allowing sub-division to proceed unchecked and doing little to educate or improve the condition of his tenants’.⁶⁸

In 1837 Samuel Lewis gave an account of Caher parish and of its town in his *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*. He credits Nimmo briefly in the construction of the main approach road into Cahersiveen. He also gives an account of Daniel O’Connell, Esq., ‘who holds the greater portion of a large estate in this parish under the Provost and Fellows of Trinity College, Dublin, besides a large tract of his own estate’.⁶⁹ Lewis also describes the successful development of Cahersiveen.

*In 1815 there were only five houses in the entire village, but within the last ten years it has rapidly increased, and consists of one principal street stretching along the main road, and of two smaller streets branching from it at right angles, one of which leads down to the quay, and the other to the upper road or old village of Caher, which consists only of mud cabins. The houses on the new road are neatly built and roofed with slate; the town has a lively and cheerful appearance; the approaches are all by good roads kept in excellent order, and great improvements have been made in the neighbourhood.*⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Horgan, p.272.

⁶⁹ Lewis, *Topog. dict. Ire.* vol 1, p.237.

⁷⁰ Lewis, p.239.

The year following Lewis's account of Ireland Lady Chatterton went on a tour of the South of Ireland. She gave us a new view into the way things were perceived. She was amazed at the beauty of the area, but found that the quality of life of the peasants in Cahersiveen very depressing. She was one of the few travellers to the Iveragh area who appreciated its beauty of this rugged remote estate. 'All was fragrant and beautiful, till we approached the habitations of man, and then, alas! All was apparent wretchedness and filth'.⁷¹

This is all a general overview of the Cahersiveen area from 1815 to 1839. It portrays the initial growth of the town, looks at the different perspectives by various visitors to the locality and what life was like for the people of a nineteenth century rural community, on the outset of development.

⁷¹ Lady Chatterton, *Rambles in the South of Ireland* (London, 1838)

CHAPTER TWO
PRE AND POST FAMINE YEARS

Two years after Lady Chatterton passed by the birth place of Daniel O’Connell the building of a new bridge was completed there. This new bridge gave the traveller a clearer view of the O’Connell house which was already in ruins.⁷² Near the bridge was located some mills which milled the produce of the farmers in the area. These mills were situated on the river and operated when the tide was high and flowed to the site via the river Fertha.⁷³

The census commission of 1841 found that the inhabitants of Cahersiveen town and parish were living in a very low standard of accommodation. The following table shows the classification of the houses in the rural and urban parts of the parish.

Classification of Inhabited Houses

Caher parish:	1st class	2nd class	3rd class	4th class	Total
Rural portion:	4(.5%)	22(2.5%)	194(23%)	634(74%)	854
Town:	16(7.4%)	132(13.5%)	38(17.7%)	29(13.5%)	215 ⁷⁴

⁷² ‘Bridge to past at Carhan’, *Kerry’s Eye*, June 27th-July 3rd 1991.

⁷³ *Kerry’s Eye*, 29 April 1993.

⁷⁴ *Census*, 1841.

The total number of houses in the rural portion amounted to 854 which housed 874 families, and amounted to 4,823 people, an average of 5.67 persons per house. However most of these houses were only poor cabins with 634 of these houses only having one room with no windows. In relation to the town 1,492 persons lived in 215 dwellings which was an average of 6.9 persons per house.⁷⁵

The Ordnance survey memorandum of 1842 gives a good description of the townland of Cahersiveen as it entered the decade of the great famine. This survey collected its information from a resident of the town, Michael Casey. He described some of the town's buildings, such as the police station, bridewell, dispensary and the convent which was founded in 1840 and educated up to 300 females.⁷⁶ The first Presentation nuns to Cahersiveen arrived on 20 October 1840 from the Dingle monastery by carriage and comprised of Sisters Ignatius Johnson and Superioress Mary Joseph O'Mahony, a sister of Kean O'Mahony Esq and a cousin of Daniel O'Connell and a third nun.⁷⁷ However, when O'Connell visited the convent on 9 November 1840 it was catering for numbers greater than its capacity with 458 pupils on its role.⁷⁸ According to the Ordnance survey the convent was founded by the local parish priest, Rev Edward Fitzgerald, with subscriptions for the project coming from the Bishop of Kerry, David Moriarty, James and Daniel O'Connell and another local landlord, Kean O'Mahony. However, other than this survey the parish priest is never

⁷⁵ *Census*, 1841

⁷⁶ *Ordnance Survey Memorandum*, 1842.

⁷⁷ *The Annals of the congregation of St Joseph's presentation convent, Cahersiveen*, 1840

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1840.

again credited with founding the convent. Instead according to local folklore it was the initiative of Daniel O'Connell to establish and fully fund the convent. This shows the later growth by the locals in a sense of pride in their hero which tended to veer from the truth towards exaggeration. The commissioners' report on the endowed schools of Ireland in 1858 stated that General O'Connell gave a sum of money for the only endowed school in Iveragh. 'The interest of £500, the amount bequeathed, was applied to schools up to 1843, when the principal sum was expended for the benefit of the Cahirciveen convent. Trust stated to have been for charitable purposes generally'.⁷⁹

The Ordnance survey also records the type of employment engaged in by the residents of the town.

*The town has 18 shoemakers, having 29 apprentices and journeymen; 19 publicans; 5 bakers; 7 weavers; 3 hatters, having 6 apprentices and journeymen; 5 nailers,...6 smiths,...7tailors,...8 carpenters,...4 boat builders,...2 wheel wrights,...2 cartmakers,...5 coopers,...3 painters and glaziers; 4 slatters,...8 butchers; 30 shopkeepers; 3 stonecutters; 5 masons,...2 tinmen and one dyer.*⁸⁰

This is most informative as it sheds a light on the socio-economic situation of the people. It shows the varied lifestyles of the townsfolk as well as showing how the town was progressing with all these services required by the customers in and

⁷⁹ Commission Report. *Endowed School, Ireland*. vol iv 1858 (transcript at K.C.C.)

around the town. The survey also tells us that thirteen fair days were held annually so that the farmers could sell their livestock and agricultural produce. One gets a picture of not just the town but also of the Caher townland. This information was supplied by John O'Connell who gave the following account. 'The townland of Cahirciveen is the property of Trinity College, Dublin, and is let to Daniel O'Connell MP, whose agent is John Primrose, Hillgrove. It is sublet to sixteen tenants at will (exclusive of house holders in the town) at a yearly rent of two hundred pounds...'⁸¹ John O'Connell also illustrates that farming was the main activity, but stresses that turf (peat) was a scarce commodity needed for the heating of houses and cooking.

The same survey for the townland of Bahaghs, just 3 miles outside of Cahersiveen, but which was in the parish of Killinane reports a plentiful supply of turf. Even though these townlands were relatively close to each other they had little in common except for the most common family name of the locality, Keating, prevailing in both. This townland of Bahaghs became the location of the Cahersiveen union workhouse.

The workhouse was converted from Charles O'Connell's former residence, Behoss House, in the early 1840's and declared fit to accommodate the destitute poor on 19 August 1844. The workhouse cost a total of £8,850 -£7,500 for buildings and £1,350 for fittings etc.- and was built on a six acre site with it receiving its first admissions on 17 October 1846.⁸² It was originally meant to cater for only 400 inmates and in a

⁸⁰ *Ordnance survey memorandum*, 1842.

⁸¹ *Ordnance survey memorandum*, 1842.

⁸² John O'Connor, *The workhouses of Ireland: the fate of Ireland's poor* (Dublin, 1995), p.240.

statement showing the amount of workhouse accommodation available on 1 May 1847 the guardians had agreed that a further addition to the workhouse was needed.⁸³ Lieut-Col Clarke, temporary Inspector to the Cahersiveen union also saw the need for more room to be allocated for the inmates. He arrived in the area on 31 October 1847 and found the workhouse in a clean but ‘lamentable state of deficiency of every requisite. Paupers three or four in a bed...not having been changed since the house was opened.’⁸⁴ He called on the poor law commissioners to allow permission to cater for 700 to receive indoor relief. He felt that this would be possible by converting the Temperance hall into a house for 150 pauper children, with fifty persons in the fever hospital and increasing the workhouse accommodation to 500.⁸⁵

As well as the issue of poor accommodation Clarke also began to criticise the board of guardians as they seemed to have a different agenda to him. They did not insist on the poor rate being collected and he, Clarke, found that they had admitted thirty children into the workhouse without their parents. This practise was against the provisions made in the Irish poor relief act and if it did occur it was the responsibility of the parents to join the inmate in the workhouse. The reason for this practise was that it would ‘enable the father to support the remainder of the family on his inadequate wages.’⁸⁶ A second major discrepancy that Clarke noted was that many illegitimate children were resident in the workhouse whose fathers were well known. However, Clarke was informed by the poor law commissioners ‘that the

⁸³ Ibid., p.234.

⁸⁴ *Papers Union Work.*, (London, 1847), p.191.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.194.

⁸⁶ *Papers Union Work.*, p.192.

mothers and not the fathers of illegitimate children were liable by law for the maintenance of such children.⁸⁷

Despite the call to increase the workhouse accommodation to 500 during the famine it often held more, so much so that *The Dublin Almanac and General register of Ireland, Thom's Official Directory 1850* account for 1,240 inmates. The workhouse along with the nine auxiliary workhouses could accommodate up to 2,258 people.⁸⁸ These auxiliary workhouses were situated around the estate with one in Cahersiveen town and another at Castlequin.⁸⁹

It was at the beginning of 1846 that Iveragh began to feel the first effects of the famine. This can be seen from a report made by Dr James Barry at the Cahersiveen fever hospital on 12 February 1846.⁹⁰ He attributed the increase in fever and diarrhoea to bad quality potatoes. In August of the same year in a reply from the clerk of Cahersiveen union to the Poor Law Commissioners it was stated that the potato disease has appeared in all the electoral divisions of the union and had affected nearly the entire crop.⁹¹ The Fever hospital in Cahersiveen was a group of sheds which was to cater for one hundred patients.⁹² On 25 April 1849 the poor law inspector of the Cahersiveen union, Col William August Clarke, reported to a select

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.193.

⁸⁸ *Irish Almanac and Official Directory* 1851.

⁸⁹ Richard Griffith, *General Valuation of rateable property in Ireland, County of Kerry, Barony of Iveragh* (Dublin, 1852)

⁹⁰ Sean Cronin, 'The famine in Iveragh: as witnesses saw it', in *Kerry men 1881-1981* (New York, 1981), p.52.

⁹¹ O'Connor, p.231.

committee of the House of Lords on the condition of the people in the union area. As a result of this the British Relief Association gave Clarke funds to feed the 3,600 children in the national schools of the union.⁹³ The convent was vital to the area during the famine years as the nuns fed the hungry with soup. During 1847 the school had to discontinue with school business temporarily due to the pressure on the sisters to both educate and feed the people ‘...in the midst of wretchedness and starvation exceeded only by the horrors of Skull and Skibbereen.’⁹⁴

All this shows how bad Iveragh was faring during the famine years. It is often accepted that south Kerry did not suffer as severely from the famine as much as is portrayed due to the close proximity to the coast with its abundant supply of fresh fish. However, the people of the area did not rely on the fish stocks as much as they could have, mainly due to lack of expertise and outdated methods in relation to catching fish. Mr Keane Mahony in giving evidence before the land commission noted the unusual technique used by people. ‘They went to a great expense in preparing nets and waited till the fish came to them instead of following the fish. They waited in the harbour till the fish approached...’⁹⁵

⁹² Ibid., p.240.

⁹³ Cronin, p.52.

⁹⁴ Annals of Presentation convent, 1853.

⁹⁵ Thomas Campbell Foster, *Letters on the condition of the people of Ireland* (London, 1846), p.392.

As the harvests got worse and the people poorer and hungrier they lobbied Daniel O'Connell to take some action. Their grievances were that the government store for Iveragh was located in Dingle which was as good as not having any; also the presentments which were made on 18 September 1846 were slow to materialise and provide work for local labourers. It was due to these hardships that Daniel O'Connell wrote on behalf of his tenants to the Chief Secretary of Ireland, in the hope that he would rectify these problems, thus preventing any further anger emanating from the locals. It appears from O'Connell's letter to the chief secretary that he only took this action before the people took matters into their own hands. 'I respectfully implore of you to have this matter attended to-a group of the people have come to me this very day pressing these matters. I contented them for the present by telling them that I should write to the government this very day'.⁹⁶

It was little episodes such as this that created critics of O'Connell, with his most severe critic being the *Times* correspondent, Foster. Thomas Campbell Foster came to Ireland in November 1845 and wrote descriptions of the land, landlords and their tenants showing the social and man-made problems associated with the country. He gave his accounts and explanations of these to a mainly English readership via his book *Letters on the condition of the people of Ireland*.

⁹⁶ Fitzpatrick, p.355-6.

Maurice O'Connell, son of Daniel, assumed that the *Times* reporter had an ulterior motive in visiting Ireland. He believed that Foster did not just want to show the poor conditions of the people even before the famine began to really affect the population, and that his main purpose was to show the 'Liberator' as a hypocrite who exploited the tenants on his lands. Maurice felt that this picture portrayed to the rest of the world was unfair due to Foster's lack of the native language as well as being alien to the locality and its ways. Aside from this Foster was still horrified by the destitution of the estate. However, Sean Cronin in his article 'The famine in Iveragh: As witnesses saw it', does not accept Maurice O'Connell's reasons as sufficient to discredit Foster because 'the poverty of the place was evident enough, whatever the language'.⁹⁷

In relation to the barony of Iveragh he, Foster, outlined the system of landownership there with its numerous layers of middlemen. He attributed the high rent paid by the tenants to the different layers of middlemen in existence there. He felt that the extreme rents being sought for small plots of land due to continuing subdivision was the root of the poverty of the people. 'The subdivision, however, amongst the tenants, especially near the sea-shore, has gone on to such an extent that most of them have not more than a cow's grass a piece to live upon. This will give a clue to their poverty....and the rent is from 2l to 4l for this cow's grass'.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Cronin, p.50.

⁹⁸ Foster, p.390.

The following extract from the letters of Foster is what sparked off a response from Daniel O'Connell who felt that this was an incorrect and unfair analysis. 'The wretched-looking town of Cahirciveen, with its dirty, unpaved streets, and old hat mended windows, reminds me of another subject. The property of this town is rented to Mr O'Connell, who, as a middleman, sublets it to its present tenants and exacts a profit rent out of it'.⁹⁹

Daniel O'Connell contradicted all of these allegations and in Conciliation Hall denied that he was even a middleman. The truth was somewhat different as he was a middle man who, as alleged by Foster, was exacting three times the amount of rent from his sub-tenants that he was paying to the head landlords, Trinity College.¹⁰⁰ Foster also noted that any person who applied to subdivide on the 'Liberator's' lands was allowed to do so causing even further problems. He, Foster, found this middleman to be the most neglectful landlord in all of Ireland. The defence of O'Connell for the appalling state of his lands and more over the town lies in a statement revealing what he had achieved for the area. However these improvements only seem to be a gesture to keep tensions and grievances from the tenants at bay. '...He (O'Connell) enters into a statement about convent-building, priest-paying, fever hospitals, butter markets, not exacting any rent for a church yard, the excellence of the inn there, and a vast deal more, all ending in self laudation'.¹⁰¹ However O'Connell could not afford to spend much money on the welfare of his

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.390.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.395.

¹⁰¹ Foster, p.459.

tenants as ‘he was habitually short of capital for agricultural investment; hospitable and careless about money, he also had to meet very large political expenses’.¹⁰²

Prior to his improvements in the town O’Connell had in fact tried to relocate the town from its present location and planned to rebuild it on a site about a mile east of there. Evidence of this can be seen in letters to his land agent, John Primrose Jr. of Hillgrove, Cahersiveen. He instructed Primrose not to lease any of the lands at Carhen Lower as this was the intended site for the town.¹⁰³ Even as early as 1825 O’Connell was contemplating moving the town and in a letter to Primrose informed him that he was going to consult with his brother James on the matter.¹⁰⁴ The reason given for this endeavour and the real reason in the movement of the town were quite different. O’Connell argued that a newly planned town in a better geographical location would greatly improve its appearance and economic growth. He set about building a church there which was never roofed nor used for mass as a new one was also built in Cahersiveen town.¹⁰⁵ After this attempt to relocate the town failed he built a school near the site of the church in 1833 which was under the National Board. This was located at ‘Carhan Lower to the east of Cahirciveen (but not actually on college land) as part of an abortive plan to remove the town to that locality from off the college property.’¹⁰⁶ However, the town was built on Trinity College land with the rent of the residences going to the college. O’Connell wanted

¹⁰² Angus Macintyre, *The Liberator: Daniel O’Connell and the Irish party 1830-1847* (London, 1965),p.293n.

¹⁰³ O’Connell, vol iii p.380.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p.184.

¹⁰⁵ John O Donovan, *Ordnance survey name books, County Kerry* (1841),p.319.

¹⁰⁶ McCarthy, 319.

the town on his own lands at Carhan so that he could retain all the rents for himself. He began this project by establishing a school on the proposed new site as well as laying the foundations of a church there. The church nor the new town never materialised, but instead the town continued to grow even further on its original location.

In summing up the labourers on the estate of Daniel O'Connell Foster referred to them as 'badly housed, badly fed, badly clothed, and badly paid,-and the only food of his tenantry is the potato'.¹⁰⁷ Another visitor to the region during the Famine years was William Bennett who stayed in Cahersiveen on the 8-9 April 1847. He did not find this town particularly interesting with many of the occupiers of the Daniel O'Connell estate being nothing more than squatters. However he attributed the situation not to O'Connell but rather to the system and felt that 'they would be much worse off without him'.¹⁰⁸

However, the Famine years did not just see the death of many Irish peasants but also the death of O'Connell who died in 1847 as poor as the peasants. Daniel O'Connell came into possession of his uncle's wealth in 1825 when Muiris a' chaipin died at the age of ninety-nine. Daniel did not benefit from all of his uncle's fortune as the £54,000 accumulated was divided amongst three other nephews of the deceased with Daniel only gaining the land interest.¹⁰⁹ Even though he had still inherited a fortune

¹⁰⁷ Foster, p.545.

¹⁰⁸ William Bennett, *Narrative of a recent journey of six weeks in Ireland* (Dublin, 1847), p.122.

¹⁰⁹ Godfrey.

from both his Uncle and father upon their deaths, and also had permanent loans from the courts, in addition to the rent from his estate he died whilst deep in debt.¹¹⁰ The death of O'Connell affected people not only on a national level but also on a local one. His death caused distress for the nuns in Cahersiveen where he was a patron of the convent there. On Monday, 25 August 1851 the sub-sheriff, John McCarthy, along with two other officials from Trinity College, Dublin called to the convent to get possession of the premises. The rent for the convent had been paid by O'Connell up till the time of his death but following this his son, Maurice had neglected this. However the matter was solved with the intervention of the Bishop of the Diocese who paid the arrears. He appointed Kean O'Mahony as an agent for the convent to ensure that the seventy five pence annual rent be paid on time.¹¹¹

The town and surrounding area of Cahersiveen recovered quickly after the famine and a report from the *Tralee Chronicle* shows that the locality were putting the bad years of the Famine behind it and beginning to prepare for a week of festivities in August of 1852. There was great enthusiasm as the first races on the new race course at Carhan would be held in conjunction with boat races on the river Fertha, both magnets for tourists into the town.¹¹² It was not just the post Famine era that saw a growth in local initiative because in 1846 the foundations for a foot bridge were laid down so as to connect the town with the area across the river Fertha known as 'Over the Water'. This was done despite much opposition from some locals. The bridge,

¹¹⁰ Valerie McK. Bary, 'Derrynane Abbey', *Kerry Mag.* no2 (Tralee, 1990), p.7.

¹¹¹ *Annals of presentation convent*, 1851.

¹¹² *Tralee Chron.*, Saturday, 17 April 1852.

called Barry's bridge after a local doctor, was officially opened on Palm Sunday, 1 April 1847, which in the opinion of the writer of the presentation Annals was 'the principal means under providence of saving hundreds from dying of want, as in the absence of the bridge they could not possibly this year be getting persons to ferry them across gratis.'¹¹³

The people of the area began to be more enterprising after the Famine and in the early 1850's an English company along with local landlords Charles O'Connell and Kean O'Mahony built the Slievagh machine, four miles outside Cahersiveen. This structure was used as a 'manufactory for converting turf into a material called solidified peat'.¹¹⁴ Even though this plant was a commercial success it was destroyed in a fire and never rebuilt. It was tenants of the area, who got free turf due to turbary rights, which set it ablaze because after the first season of operation they saw their bog disappearing quickly. One story is how the locals bribed the night watchman with half a bottle of whiskey before setting the plant on fire.¹¹⁵

1853-54 saw the Presentation sisters of the town appealing for funding from the local community which was beginning to prosper now that the worst of the famine years was over. The convent school not only educated the local children, but it also set up industrial employment which prevented some from having to resort to the workhouse or to emigrate. There were up to forty girls employed at knitting and

¹¹³ *Annals of presentation convent*, 1847.

¹¹⁴ *1969-1990 Coming of Age Souvenir*, (Cahersiveen, 1990), p.21.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.21.

embroidery. As well as appealing for financial donations the nuns, through the work done at the industrial school, created a quilt valued at £25, which was raffled with tickets being sold at one shilling each.¹¹⁶ Despite all their efforts the nuns could not protect the people from suffering with an outbreak of cholera in January 1856 resulting ‘in this little town [Cahersiveen] and vicinity carrying off thousands.’¹¹⁷

1858 saw the attempt to lay the first Trans-Atlantic cable which was finally achieved in 1866.¹¹⁸ The Cable went from Trinity bay, Newfoundland to Valentia Island, which was a distance of ‘1,640 nautical miles a length of 2,500 miles of cable was computed as sufficient’.¹¹⁹ Due to the increased activity around the coastline, adding to the already large fishing industry, a life boat station was established at Renard in 1864.¹²⁰

In 1864 Needham did his initial survey of the Iveragh estate for Trinity College.¹²¹ He was appointed the land agent for the estate by the college authorities and suggested that the capital of the estate needed a new hotel, court house and market house. These ideas were undertaken and along with the building of a new quay and store for the Clyde shipping company began to generate employment in the area. This investment in the place was carried out in the post 1865 period and helped the town conceal the fact that it had developed in an unplanned manner. However these

¹¹⁶ Annals of presentation convent , 1853-54.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 1856.

¹¹⁸ Daphne Pochin Mould, *Valentia portrait of an island* (Dublin, 1978), p.55.

¹¹⁹ Mogh Ruith, ‘The Atlantic cable’, *Cath. Bull.* vol iii (Dublin, 1913), p.69.

¹²⁰ Pochin Mould, p.97.

¹²¹ MacCarthy, p.192.

plans by Needham were only short term ones and did not prepare the town and estate for the future. Trinity had good faith in their land agent's ability to improve the whole estate especially its urban centre, but due to his poor leadership skills and lack of enthusiasm they discovered that they had made a wrong choice.

By 1865 the town had control of all the trade within a forty mile radius as it was the only urban centre on the peninsula between Killarney and Sneem, as well as being an attraction for tourists due to its picturesque location. Despite all this improvement it was still 'little better than it was thirty years ago-a dull town that conveys no idea of either activity or prosperity'.¹²²

¹²² Mr and Mrs Hall, *Killarney and the south of Ireland* (London, 1865)

CHAPTER THREE THE FENIANS

When Trinity College, Dublin took back direct control of their Iveragh estate in 1865, a well established group of rebels were established there already. The original national rising was planned for 1865, but due to numerous arrests of the leaders as well as a large amount of informants it had to be postponed. It was rescheduled for 11 February 1867, which turned out to be a total disaster. This was due to the uncoordinated risings which took place in February and March throughout Ireland, which resulted in fear being instilled in the people, especially the gentry and also resulted in some being transported to Australia. It is unclear why the Fenians rebelled because the majority of them came from relatively successful families. None of these men were in dire poverty as most were employed as farmers, carpenters etc. It may have been a sense of trying to move forward at a political and social level because even though financially independent they were still regarded as peasants. Daniel O'Connell had gained the first step in the road to independence for the Irish by gaining Catholic Emancipation, but he was not so successful with repeal of the Act of Union. It was this failure that may have contributed to these men to rebel in 1867 as their status had not altered with his success.

The Fenians of Iveragh rose in arms on Shrove Tuesday, 12 February 1867 but it was not a major military operation. However prior to this much Fenian activity was widespread in the barony. The leader of these men was the mysterious figure of John Joseph O'Connor, better known as J.J. He was born on Valentia Island and whilst

still young had emigrated to America. There he became a colonel with the Federal army during the American Civil War which left him with an obvious limp as a result of a war wound. On his return to Iveragh at the end of 1865 he took up residence in Cahersiveen, where the local police treated him with suspicion, but found no evidence against him even when they raided his lodgings.¹²³

Another figure from the American Civil War to return to the area was Mortimer Moriarty alias Morty O'Shea. He like J.J. had the characteristics common to veterans of the American war. 'They often had full beards and they usually wore large slouch hats and square toed boots'.¹²⁴ Moriarty lived in Direen just outside the town and had regular contact with J.J., and aided him in the recruitment of the Iveragh man.

J.J. began his recruitment of local man during 1866 training and drilling these Fenians by night on Valentia and in other remote areas, to ensure maximum secrecy. However this new activity in the region did not go unnoticed. The Hon Sir Peter Fitzgerald, Knight of Kerry, became suspicious and called a public meeting. The aim of this was to exclude any unlawful or secret society which was seen as a threat to the newly erected Trans-Atlantic cable station on the island. The captain of the Valentia Fenians, O'Driscoll, was spied upon and the police were sent to his father's house to arrest him. He was warned of their approach by a servant-girl in the house, and he luckily escaped capture. He went to America where he was later joined by

¹²³ *Cork Exam.*, Wednesday, 13 February 1867.

¹²⁴ Tadhg O'Se, 'The Revolt Courteous', *C.B. Souv. Rec.* (Cahersiveen, 1960), p.60.

this girl never to return home again.¹²⁵ Many sympathisers of the Fenian movement saved the Fenians from capture by warning them of possible police raids on their homes or training grounds. Dr Barry prevented the arms of the Dromod Fenians being discovered by sending word to their leader, Paddy Daly, that a raid was planned by the Cahersiveen police. The connection between these two men was not a common loyalty to the Fenian movement but due to a friendship which had developed owing to a mutual love for hunting.¹²⁶

Local feeling to the Fenians was mostly loyalty, although some people informed on them whilst some young men who preferred not to be part of this illegal organisation often fled their homes in fear of being forced to join the Fenians. Many locals were loyal to the Fenians not out of sympathy to what they were doing but out of fear of getting their money taken from them in order to support the rebels, and those who were not loyal to the cause were punished. Folklore has kept many of these stories alive such as 'somebody whose ears were cut off in punishment for giving information to the police'.¹²⁷

Finally the day came for the rising, after many months of waiting and deferrals and was set for 11 February 1867. O'Connor and Moriarty met in Cahersiveen on that evening with J.J. giving Captain Moriarty a letter to take to the head of the Killarney Fenians. Moriarty set out the following morning by Bianconi mail car. However

¹²⁵ *Sean O'Conaill's Book. Stories and Traditions from Iveragh.* recorded and edited by Seamus O'Duilearga. Trans. by Maire MacNeill (Dublin, 1981)

¹²⁶ Sean O'Suilleabhain, 'The Iveragh Fenians in oral tradition', in *University Review* vol iv no 3 (Winter 1967), p.217.

unknown to those in Cahersiveen he was captured along with Sheehan and the letter which read...

My Dear Sheehan,

I have the honour of introducing to you Captain Moriarty. He will be of great assistance to you. I have told him all there is to be done, until I get to your place. The private spies are very active this morning, but unless they smell a rat, all will be done without any trouble. Hoping to meet you soon.

I remain sincerely,

*J.J. O'Connor.*¹²⁸

Little did J.J. know that spies had led to both Moriarty and Sheehan's capture already and that the police in Killarney now knew of the planned rising in Iveragh. Not only did the Fenians not know of the events that had taken place in Killarney, but even more damaging was their ignorance of the fact that the whole rising had yet again been postponed.

The men of Cahersiveen began to get ready on the evening of the 12 February. This was also Shrove Tuesday in which the last dance until Saint Patrick's Day was being held in the Reading Room in the town. The dancing master, Thomas Griffin, ended the dance at 7.30 p.m. much to the disappointment of the dancers. He had a more pressing task of joining his comrades who were at this time lining up outside the dance hall. There was a custom in Cahersiveen that on the night of the final dance before Lent all the bachelors were given an imaginary punishment of banishment to

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.217.

the nearby Skellig rock.¹²⁹ That night the young men of Cahersiveen were heading on a different and more dangerous journey. The scene outside on the street was a very emotional and strained one as these men, many of them still quite young prepared to face the unknown, with women crying fearing for the lives of their husbands and sons. They were armed with pikes or guns, many of these guns having been smuggled out of the police barracks in the town by the sergeant's daughter who had given them to her sweetheart, Dinnie Donovan, a blacksmith apprentice.

Initially the Fenians planned to raid and dismantle the cable station, but this had been altered due to the arrival in early February of the navy who had moored the *H.M.S. Gladiator* in Valentia Harbour. Both the Commander of the *Gladiator* and Chief Inspector White of the coastguard were alerted to the possibility of a Fenian attack by Head Constable O'Connell. Even though he was a Protestant he was also a nationalist at heart and this guaranteed that the Fenians would receive no opposition from the Cahersiveen Constabulary, as all his four sons were Fenians and his daughter also a strong sympathiser with them. However Devoy credits her with the smuggling of the rifles out of the barracks and not a Connolly girl as reported by Sean O'Suilleabhain in the folklore based *University Review*.

The Iveragh Fenians did not receive the message in time that the rising had been rescheduled for 5 March. Contrary to this was the account by Chief Inspector Talbot who said that the Cahersiveen rising had not been cancelled by the Fenian leadership

¹²⁸ Br Peadar, 'Na finini I gCiarrai', *Fir 1967*. (1967)

so as to draw on all police and army personnel from all over Ireland and to ensure maximum success in the 5 March rising.¹³⁰ However, J.J. found a coded captured address to him, when they shot down the Constable on route to Killarney, which stated that the rising had indeed been postponed.¹³¹

At 10 p.m. O'Connor and his men, numbering about thirty, set out marching two deep with Killarney as their destination. They crossed the wooden bridge which led to an area across the river from the town called 'Over The water', where they took guns from 'Barry's big House'. They were without the Valentia Fenians, but had amongst them from Cahersiveen town and parish, Thomas Griffin, Jim Fitzgerald who was a relative of the hotel owner in the town, William O'Connell, the son of the police constable, Jim O'Reilly, an assistant in Donoghue's draper shop in the town, as well as many others. They proceeded on to meet 'The Boys Of Foilmore' at the appointed venue, but prior to meeting them they cut the telegraph lines, then known as the magnetic wires, about a quarter of a mile east of Cahersiveen. This would leave the town totally cut off from contact with the outside world whilst they progressed.

Once the Cahersiveen and Foilmore groups were joined they numbered about seventy men and set about raiding Kells Coastguard station at about 1am on Ash Wednesday. Two of the coastguards had gone to Ballinskelligs for the day to

¹²⁹ Local folklore.

¹³⁰ O'SE, p.64.

¹³¹ John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel: A personal narrative* (New York, 1929),p.290.

investigate a wreckage there, so both of their wives stayed in the Boyd residence keeping each other company. A third coastguard, Thomas Pierce, was on duty on the road above the station and upon hearing the approaching march of the Fenians called out “who goes there?”, to which he received the reply “Surrender or your life is taken.”¹³² Pierce dropped his gun and fled as the Fenians pursued him firing shots. He continued running as far as the beach, but the pursuing band of men just followed him as far as the Chief Boatman Dingwall’s house. They did not gain access to Dingwall’s house and did not attempt a forced entry. Instead they raided the watchhouse where they seized a number of rifles, pistols, gun powder and belts. This event led to the well known line ‘And Kells station was taken by the boys of Foilmore’.

They then searched coastguard Boyd’s residence which was the act that led eventually to the arrest of many of the Fenians. However these Fenian men were not violent and did not mean any harm to innocent people such as Mrs Boyd and Mrs O’Brien, whom they reassured of this and accompanied Mrs O’Brien back to her neighbour’s house after they searched her own and had found no arms there. Pierce, thinking that the Fenians had by now moved on, left the beach and began to head to Cahersiveen to inform the police there of what had happened. However he ran into the rear party of Fenians who were travelling at a much slower pace due to being slowed down by Colonel J.J.’s limp. For a second time in that night Pierce’s life was spared by the Fenians.

¹³² Br Peadar

Having gained some coastguard's rifles as well as a horse for their leader from the nearby stables of Dr Barry, they continued their march. The journey was an eventful one with the first set back coming as they march along by Drung Hill, where they scanned the Dingle Peninsula opposite for fires to signal that the rising in Dingle had begun, but alas no fires were to be seen. Shortly after this disappointment they encountered Constable Duggan of the Killorglin constabulary at Eisc an Chatha, mounted and riding in the direction of Cahersiveen. The Fenians called on him to halt but he attempted to ride pass them, only to be shot at by Conway. The Fenians brought Constable Duggan to a nearby house and sent for Fr Maginn of Glenbeigh and Dr Spotswood. Due to this act of consideration for the injured man by the rebels they were later commended for summondings the doctor and priest, the latter giving his blessing to the Fenians. The dispatches which they found under the saddle of Duggan's horse informed them of the situation throughout the rest of the country, of the panic and extra troops been draughted into Killarney and the actuality that they had risen alone. Their discovery of these documents also contained a list of names of Fenians, 'and the names of a lot that weren't in the Fenians at all...together with news of the arrests in Killarney'.¹³³

This news was bad for O'Connor and his men with his admittance to his confidant Noonan, "We're done".¹³⁴ Nevertheless J.J. O'Connor resumed the march, he riding Duggan's horse with Dr Barry's horse having been returned to him. As they continued their journey they stopped for a short while at the roadside inn of Pat

¹³³ O'Suilleabhain, p.219.

O'Grady where as payment they tendered a promissory note 'to be honoured by the Irish Republic'.¹³⁵ By 7.30 am the Fenians had arrived in Glenbeigh where they had breakfast at the O'Shea's hotel before heading off again.

It is often asked why O'Connor did not decide to call off the expedition and return home to Cahersiveen. They had suffered two setbacks already, that of the absence of the Valentia men, as well as the failure of the Dingle fires which were to signal an all out rebellion. It may be following the raid on the Kells coastguard station and the shooting of the constable that he decided to see it through to the bitter end. He also may have expected some support from some of the East Kerry Fenians, which he though would also be assembling in Killarney at that stage.

They continued their march by-passing the town of Killorglin, so as to avoid the police there, through Beaufort and into Tomies wood, on the western side of Killarney's lower lake, where they spent the night. By this time panic was prevalent in Kerry with most of the local gentry of the county congregating in Killarney for protection from the police, as they feared for their lives as well as the theft of their money and valuables. Rumours and counter-rumours were rife which instilled fear and terror into the people. One account was that up to three hundred Fenians had risen in arms and were going to rob the bank in the town. The police were unsure what to do as they waited anxiously for the arrival of the army. 'It has been proclaimed to the world that in Kerry, after all that has been said of it, gentlemen and

¹³⁴ O'Se, p.270.

gentlewomen must abandon their houses, and all they hold dear, if they hope to save their lives'.¹³⁶

O'Connor realising the futility in proceeding any further dispersed his men and told them to return to their homes. After disbanding they survived on the charity of the local community near Tomies wood, where they hid for a day or two before trying to make their way home to Iveragh, safely through the mountains. Martin Griffin who took part in the rising reflected, at the age of ninety-four, on the generosity of the people who helped them. 'The people were good to us, very good, and gave us freely of their own poor store'.¹³⁷ They were heavy hearted with a sense of failure and closely pursued by both soldiers and police with a price on their leader's head. The Fenians blamed O'Connor for their failure and predicament, but he replied to them by saying 'I'm deeper in it than ye are, and ye can shoot me, if ye wish-I'd rather ye would do so than anyone else'.¹³⁸

There were many out searching all the area from Tomies wood to Cahersiveen, under General Sir Albert Horsford. They did not have much success and it was pointed out that this should not have come as a surprise to them because,

any man who had ever walked a mountain, be he peer or peasant must know the physical impossibility of flushing Fenians out of the tangled forest of Tomies. The fleet footed peasant would have no difficulty in out stripping the British infantry

¹³⁵ *Even. Echo*, Friday, March 17 1967.

¹³⁶ *Tralee Chron.*, 22 February 1867.

¹³⁷ *Even. Echo*, 17 March 1967.

¹³⁸ O'Suilleabhain, p.220-1.

*soldier, struggling like a staggering haystack over the slippery slate formation of the Kerry mountains.*¹³⁹

However John Devoy the Fenian explained the success of the Iveragh Fenians as not just they having a geographical advantage but the fact that Horsford's seventy-third regiment was not comprise of all Scottish soldiers as presumed, as it had up to three hundred Fenian members among its ranks. Even though the Scottish general and his men surrounded the mountain on which O'Connor and all his men were hiding they had all escaped by morning. 'Most of them when creeping out through the extended line, not knowing that they had many friends among the soldiers, thought they were unseen. But the Fenians in plaid trousers and Glengarry caps saw them well enough, and the Scotchmen shut their eyes'.¹⁴⁰

A £500 reward was offered to any person who could give any information that would lead to the arrest of J.J. O'Connor and of the individual Fenian that shot constable Duggan. A promise of a free pardon was also offered to any Fenian who would inform on the location of any of the leaders or of Conway, the man who shot Duggan.¹⁴¹ Conway escaped to America and later returned to Cahersiveen where he was respected by young and old as they marvelled his courage in shooting a peeler.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ *Times*, 20 February 1867.

¹⁴⁰ Devoy, p.191.

¹⁴¹ *H&C.*, Tuesday, 19 February 1867.

¹⁴² Local Folklore.

A description of J.J. O'Connor was published along with that of eighteen others. He was described as being twenty-five years and five foot eleven inches tall, of a stout build with a moustache, whiskers and respectably dressed.¹⁴³ O'Connor a master at disguises once again took on a new role, this time as a priest, and escaped to America where he died a few years later. However not all his men were as lucky with Houlihan from Quay Street being one of the first to be arrested.

On 19 July, just five months after the rising the police captured Cornelius O'Brien, Thomas Griffin, the dancing master from Ballcarbery a townland just outside Cahersiveen, and John Golden from Kells, at Cork Harbour. All three were hoping to escape to America on board the *Propontis*, which they had joined in Liverpool. The 'assizes' began in Tralee on 30 July 1867, but Tom Griffin was not found guilty with Fitzgerald also becoming a free man due to an alibi. However, it was Moriarty, James O'Reilly and John Golden that were sentenced for their part in the Fenian rising, their sentences ranging from five to ten years penal servitude, with John O'Shea from Dromod only getting a year's hard labour.¹⁴⁴ Joseph Noonan was tried in Dublin on 24 July and received a seven years sentence.¹⁴⁵

Noonan was jailed in Kilmainham and offered to give information against 'Captain' Moriarty. The proof of his betrayal prior to the rising can be found in the 'Munster circuit, County of Kerry. The Queen v Joseph Noonan' This document states that

¹⁴³ *H&C.*, Friday, 22 February 1867.

¹⁴⁴ O'Se, p.73.

¹⁴⁵ *P.R.O.* ref H.O. 11/19, p.133. (photocopy)

‘during the previous evening Noonan went to Head Constable Connell and warned him of what was about to take place’.¹⁴⁶ The *Times* correspondent reporting from Cahersiveen a few days after the rising said that ‘the information, I believe, was conveyed verbally by someone who was to share in the enterprise, but who had strong personal reasons for desiring its failure’.¹⁴⁷ This was an accurate account by the reporter because Noonan’s reason for informing was that he was a close personal friend of Constable O’Connell, whose son William worked as a carpenter for Noonan and was also a member of the Fenians. Thus the Cahersiveen Constabulary were not particularly vigilant on the night of the rising.

John Golden’s trial was on 8 August 1867.¹⁴⁸ It was the evidence given by Lizzie Goggin or Elisia O’Brien, wife of one of the absent coastguards on the night that the Fenians had raided Kells station, which resulted in John Golden being found guilty and sentenced to five years penal servitude. She had seen Golden quite clearly in the candle light that night and recognised him as he only lived a mile away from there on his father’s farm at Mountfoley. She later had to leave Kerry after the hostility she incurred following her giving of evidence in the Tralee trial and she was also satirised in song.

Cuirfimid Goggin sa Sceilg,

Cuirfeam ar bord an ri i,

Cuirfeam anonn thar faraige i,

¹⁴⁶ Sean O’Luining ‘Aspects of the Fenian rising in Kerry 1867’, in *Jn. Kerry Arch.* no5 (Kerry, 1972), p.127.

¹⁴⁷ *Times*, 25 February 1867.

¹⁴⁸ *P.R.O* ref H.O. 11/19, p.133 (photocopy)

His mother, one of the 'Hurrig' O'Neill's of Valentia, walked a distance of forty miles to and from Kells to Tralee to be at the trial of her young son. She was heavily pregnant at the time and returning home from the trial gave birth to another son, a few days later on 13 August, whom she named Patrick. He, Golden, was tried and sentenced under the name Goulding and along with 59 other Fenians¹⁵⁰ boarded the *Hougoument*, the last ship of convicts bound for Fremantle, Western Australia which set sail on 10 October 1867.¹⁵¹ He was one of the youngest men on board and only a young carpenter of 19 or 20 when he took part in the rising and on his arrival in Fremantle prison refused to associate with the English criminals claiming to be a political prisoner. For this he was put into solitary confinement for six weeks on a diet of bread and water.¹⁵² Prior to their departure to Australia a warrant was issued on 11 September 1867 for the removal of Mortimer Shea or Moriarty, Joseph Noonan, James O'Reilly and John Golden among others to be transferred from Mountjoy prison, Dublin, to Portland prison.¹⁵³ The following page is a copy of a photo of John Golden 'Goulding' taken whilst he was in prison in Mountjoy. The photo was only accidentally found by Marcus Bourke in an album of Mountjoy prison photos of the 1865-67 period.

¹⁴⁹ O'Suilleabhain, p.219.

¹⁵⁰ Keith Amos, *The Fenians in Australia* (Australia, 1988), p.88. Of the Fenians transported in Sep. 1867, 11 had life sentences, 1 a 20 year sentence, 26 of them had 7-15 years and 22 had 5 years totalling 60 Fenians.

¹⁵¹ *P.R.O.* ref H.O. 11/20, p.59.

¹⁵² Family History.

James O'Reilly and Joseph Noonan gained their free pardon in May 1869. Noonan established himself as a builder and architect, marrying Maria Farrelly on 21 June 1871.¹⁵⁴ He was to remain on in the colony to arrange for the rescue of the unpardoned Fenians. However, he made no attempt to do so despite ample opportunities.¹⁵⁵ James O'Reilly, whose real name was Seamus Raol of Binn Bhan but who's nickname was Major O'Reilly, returned home after serving his time but regretted coming back to his native area.¹⁵⁶ John Golden's 'Queen's pardon' was issued on 24 February 1869, and executed on 14 May. He moved to Gerringong, on the south coast of New South Wales, where he married Ellen Feehan, whose father had employed Golden after his release. He never returned to his native land again but is still remembered in story and song.

He sleeps today where far away,
waves wash Australia's shore,
and ne'er again he'll see the glen,
of lovely sweet Foilmore.¹⁵⁷

The Rev Fr Healy, parish priest of Cahersiveen in a letter to the newspapers following the rising expressed his shocked surprise that any of his parishioners had taken part in the revolt against the authorities, as he had preached loyalty to the crown in all his sermons in the previous twenty years. Fr Healy also found that the

¹⁵³ *P.R.O.* ref 9140 H.O. 1517.

¹⁵⁴ Amos, 187.

¹⁵⁵ Sean O'Luining, *Fremantle mission* (Tralee, 1965), p.53.

¹⁵⁶ O'Suilleabhain, p.222.

¹⁵⁷ From 'The Ballad of Johnny Golden'. It is not clear when this written but possibly for the centenary celebrations of 1967.

rising not only had political implications but also social ones. 'That cursed Fenian outbreak left the farmers in no spirit for match-making in Cahir'.¹⁵⁸ The Bishop of Kerry, Dr Moriarty also denounced the Fenian rising in his sermon at the Cathedral in Killarney on Sunday, 17 February 1867, saying the following. 'But when we look down into the fathomless depth of this infamy of the heads of the Fenians conspiracy, we must acknowledge that eternity is not long enough, nor hell hot enough to punish such miscreants'.¹⁵⁹

It is often wondered at why the Fenian rising came about in 'O'Connell's town' when he, Daniel O'Connell, was the man who professed the attainment of liberty by peaceful means. It may be that the local people of Iveragh saw that the peaceful methods had gained nothing in relation to altering the daily lives of the tenants. Even though they had begun to develop and improve their area and their own lives they were still not recognised as a prospering group of people. O'Connell in their eyes had only helped the development at national level and that it was up to themselves to try and achieve something at local level. It may well have been that many thought it was time for Cahersiveen to turn out a new liberator, he being the gentle and shy, yet capable J.J. O'Connor.

Many of the Fenians were born and grew up in and around the latter years of the famine with their average age being twenty three years of age.¹⁶⁰ All were 'of a

¹⁵⁸ Rev Kiernan O'Shea, 'David Moriarty(1814-77):III politics', in *Jn Kerry Arch.* (Kerry, 1972)

¹⁵⁹ *Tralee Chron.*, 19 February 1867.

¹⁶⁰ Average of Fenian ages available, see Appendix I.

rather respectable class, principally from the district of Cahercivven and Iveragh'.¹⁶¹ They felt that by showing their strength that they would no longer be passive to famines and an unfair administration but become part of the administrative system. However not all of the Fenians were driven by political ideals and an urge to move to a better social class, with John Golden openly admitting that he wanted personal revenge against a local landlord. He felt that by rebelling against what the local landlord, Blennerhassett, stood for that he was in affect rebelling against the landlord. When John was a young boy walking with his dog near the main entrance to the Blennerhassett estate a coach came out the gate. The dog excited by this started barking and Blennerhassett instructed the coachman to shoot the dog.¹⁶²

Although the area of Fenian influence and activity in Kerry was mainly Irish speaking, there is little or no evidence to suggest that Fenianism was promoted by linguistic influences, as Gaelic in the area was used indiscriminately by Fenian members and Government officials as it suited them. According to Garret Fitzgerald's study on the level of Gaelic speaking regions there was only 'a very slight decline' in 'Kerry from Tralee southwards' during the thirty years prior to 1841.¹⁶³ In the post-famine era Gaelic was still spoken by many young people in Kerry, but the percentage of young Gaelic speakers dropped from 94% in the years 1841-1851 to 78% for the years 1861-1871. This shows a growth of English being

¹⁶¹ O' Luing, p.144.

¹⁶² Family History. This story was preserved in oral tradition by both the Irish and Australian sides of John Golden's family and it was not until his descendants regained contact in the early 1940's that it was discovered that both had the same story.

spoken by the inhabitants of the Barony of Iveragh, but most were bilingual with Gaelic being the dominant language in the time of the Fenian rising. The ‘percentage of monoglotism among Irish speakers in the Barony of Iveragh in 1851 was 51%,¹⁶⁴ the years in which most of the Fenians were growing up.

The rising by the Cahersiveen and Foilmore Fenians in February 1867 was not a major military event, but it did leave the government and the gentry unsettled with the rising being discussed both in the Houses’ of Commons and Lords and Gladstone incorrectly claimed that the rising resulted in new legislation. ‘Gladstone was to admit that the Land Bill of 1870, and the Church Disestablishment Bill were the direct result of the Fenian Rising’¹⁶⁵ Thus the rising was not a total failure as it did result in achieving something but this was not what the insurgents sought; they had just wanted total independence for Ireland.

The influx of newspaper reporters into Cahersiveen during and after the rebellion gives one a picture of the town that prompted the Fenians to rebel. The special correspondent of the ‘Times’, Frederick Clifford, gave this account of the town as he saw it on Friday 25 February 1867.

It is well situated at the foot of the mountains and in full view of Valentia River and Harbour, and at a very great distance looks even picturesque. But the charm which the distance lends is broken when you have to pick your way through the dirty

¹⁶³ Garret Fitzgerald, ‘Estimates for Baronies of minimum level of Irish-speaking amongst successive decennial cohorts: 1771-1781 to 1861-1871’, in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* vol 84 (Dublin, 1984), p.128.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.152.

*streets and get a rear view of the miserable dwellings...yet the town has a considerable trade.*¹⁶⁶

This account shows that even though the town was economically improving this benefit did not filter down to the peasants. This poverty is what the *Times* reporter credited as a reason why the young men of the area had joined the Fenians, but he still found, like many others the reason for the beginning of the insurrection at Cahersiveen a mystery. Trinity college were also affected by the rising as only £929.4s.41/2d. was collected in March 1867. The tenants were £912.7s.71/2d. in arrears which meant that the college expected £1841.12s.0d. by the following September.¹⁶⁷ The graph on the next page shows the actual rental received from the year before the Fenian rising as well as the post rising period. This graph is a photocopy from Robert B MacCarthy's *The Trinity College Estates 1800-1923*. However the education of the locals was still a priority in the town with there been three schools in Cahersiveen at the time of the Rising. These included two run by religious orders, the Presentation nuns and the Christian brothers as well as a National school.

The newspapers gave grotesque exaggerations of what happened in relation to the rising, but their account of the widespread panic was accurate. The sensational media reports made this event all the more dramatic by giving distorted accounts in

¹⁶⁵ *Even.Echo*, 13 March 1967.

¹⁶⁶ *Times*, Friday, 25 February 1867.

¹⁶⁷ T.C.D., MS p/23/1720/2

relation to the number of Fenians and in their reluctance to admit that the rebels did not commit any serious acts of violence other than the shooting of Duggan.¹⁶⁸ According to newspaper reports there were a large band of Fenians roaming the countryside with one report saying that 'as to numbers, they were variously set down at from sixty to 1,200 or 1,500'.¹⁶⁹ In response to the rising a large number of soldiers were draughted into Kerry to deal with the situation. These troops mainly began to arrive on the morning of Thursday, 14 February. 'On Wednesday night the commander of the Forces directed that a special train should at once be got in readiness to convey eight hundred troops from Dublin to Killarney...Five hundred left Cork...and about the same hour five hundred more left Fermoy'.¹⁷⁰ All this is an account of what seemed a minor incident in Irish history, but one which is still discussed and debated about to this day.

¹⁶⁸ *The Kerryman*, 2 September 1950. 'Fenianism in Kerry' articles which were largely based on the secret police reports in the state paper department of Dublin castle and which were published for the first time in 1950.

¹⁶⁹ Br Peadar.

CONCLUSION

In concluding this one must highlight that this is only a view of life during the nineteenth century in Cahersiveen and its surrounding parishes. It is not a comprehensive account of every event as I concentrated on the initial growth and development of the town, the famine years and finally the Fenian rising of 1867.

Daniel O'Connell is referred to on numerous occasions as this was his native area but from what I have shown he did not always put this region to the forefront of his priorities. This was due to his national and international affairs as he progressed from being a successful barrister to a highly acclaimed member of parliament, who aided Irish Catholics on their way to political freedom. Thus it can be said that due to his commitments on a national level he overlooked the grassroots of Iveragh who helped finance his expensive electoral campaigns with their rents.

In looking at the famine in relation to south west Kerry one must realise that this was not the first time the region was affected by bad harvests which Reid noted in 1822. The area saw slight improvement in the 1830's but that was all ruined by the Great Famine which was the most extreme period of uncertainty and death that the people had ever experienced.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

The post famine years saw a new spirit in the people as they concentrated not only on developing their area by setting up new enterprises but also by participating in sports and promoting tourism. The main new era for the estate came in 1865 when direct control of the land went back into the hands of Trinity College, after numerous years of unsuccessful administration by middlemen. However this was not carried out as peacefully as the college authorities had hoped with the Fenian rising of February 1867 having begun in the capital of their Iveragh estate.

This rising was prompted by a need to be more independent as a region and a country. However, its military success was limited but it did alter the idea that the tenants were passive to authority.

The area that I have looked at under went many developments in the period researched. It moved from being a collection of mud huts at the outset of the nineteenth century and grew into the capital of a large rural area in fifty years despite frequent reproaches that it would never amount to much.

APPENDIX I

The following is a list of those involved in the Fenian organisation in South Kerry from newspapers of the day, secondary sources and oral folklore. However it is not a full list of all involved as the Fenians left very few accounts of their members and activities, and those accounted for was by oral means. These men were from both the town and parish of Cahersiveen, neighbouring parishes and a few from outside the south Kerry region. This gives as much information as can be found with regards their occupations, ages and where they were from.

Fenian	Occupation/	Age	Location	Other Information
Patrick Connell				Arrested by 1 Mar.
Denis Neill			Killinane	son of a comfortable farmer
Roger and Denis O'Brien: brothers			Killinane	sons of comfortable farmer
John and Thade Quirke: brothers			Killiane	sons of comfortable farmer
Michael Reily	Nailor			
John Gleeson Jnr				
James Keilty				
Jeremiah Courtney				Hid at Carhan after the rising
Martin Griffin				
Paddy Daly				Head of the Dromod Fenians
O'Brien				Brother of Parish priest of Prior
O'Murchadha			Cloghanakeen	
O'Driscoll			Valentia Island	escaped to America
J.J. O'Connor		25/26	Valentia Island	In American civil war
Mortimer Moriarty Alias: Morty O'Shea			Son of John Moriarty & Nora O'Shea of C'iveen	In American civil war. Arrested 12 Feb.
John Golden	Carpenter	19/20	Kells	Arrested 23 July
James Reilly: real name Seamus Raol	a clerk at Mrs O'Donoghue's drapery	22	Bin Bhain, Waterville	Arrested 22 Feb.
Michael Conway		24	Cahersiveen	shot Constable

Jnr				Duggan
John Moran		21	Cahersiveen	Arrested by 30 Apr.
Thomas Griffin	Dancing master		Ballycarbery, Cahersiveen	Arrested 23 July
Patrick Griffin		23	Cahersiveen	
Timothy Connell		26	Cahersiveen	Arrested by 1 Mar. Belongs to Kerry militia
Daniel Griffin		25	Cahersiveen	Arrested 28 May
Jeremiah Cournane		19	Cahersiveen	
Cornelius O'Brien		24		Arrested 23 July
William Connell	Carpenter	22	Cahersiveen town	Son of head constable
Joseph Noonan	Contractor	25	Cork	Arrested 30 Apr. in London
Denis Donovan	Black smith	24	Cahersiveen town	Arrested 2 Mar.
Cremmin				
John Mannix		30	Killarney	Arrested 22 Feb.
John Fogarty	Blacksmith	24	Cahersiveen town	Arrested 30 Apr.
John Houlihan		20	Quay St. C'siveen	Arrested 28 May
Patrick Keating	Blacksmith	23	Cahersiveen town	Arrested by 3 May
Daniel Houlihan		24	Cahersiveen town	
Thade Connell				Arrested. Son af a boatman
Thade Mannix	Labourer			Arrested
James Fitzgerald	Driver of posting car		Cahersiveen	
Michael A Brennan	Cooper			Arrested
John Willis		28		
Patrick Falvey	Labourer			Arrested. Married
John Clifford	Labourer			Arrested
Foley				
Gard				
Jerimiah Sheehan	D			Head of Killarney Fenians
James thompson	Assistant at his uncle's shop			Arrested

All of the above information was compiled from the following sources; Tadhg O'Se, *C.B. Souv. Rec.*; Sean O' Suilleabhain, 'The Iveragh Fenians in Oral Tradition,' in *University Review*; Br Peadar; *H&C*, 19 February 1867; *P.R.O.* ref H.O. 11/19, p.133; *Kerryman* 2 September 1950;.

CHRONOLOGY

The reader unacquainted with the period discussed in relation to this area of Ireland may be assisted in his reading of the text by the following brief chronology of some of the more important events referred to in this work.

- 1597 Trinity College Dublin acquire Iveragh estate.
- 1775 Aug. Birth of Daniel O'Connell.
- 1814 Alexander Nimmo's survey completed.
- 1822 New approach road to Cahersiveen completed.
- 1829 Catholic Emancipation.
- 1834 Inglis reports on Cahersiveen and surrounding area.
- 1838 Poor Relief Act.
- 1841 Daniel O'Connell becomes mayor of Dublin.
- 1844 Dispute over birthplace of O'Connell.
 - Aug. Cahersiveen union workhouse opened.
- 1845 Nov. Foster arrives in area.
- 1846 Oct. Workhouse has first admissions.
- 1847 O'Connell dies.
- 1858 Bulter gains Blennerhassett lease of estate.
- 1865 Trinity take back direct control of Iveragh estate.
- 1867 Feb. Planned national Fenian rising.
 - Mar. Reschulded rising.
 - July Tralee trials begin.
 - Oct. Hougoumont sets sail for Australia.
- 1879 Feb. Queen's pardon issued.

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