

CHURCH & STATE and THE BETHANY HOME



Supplement to *HISTORY IRELAND*, Vol 18, No 5, September-October 2010, by NIALL MEEHAN

Bethany Home, Orwell Road, Rathgar. 1932-44 Matron, Lily Pilgrim (left), with Assistant Matron, Miss Harrison.

Table 1

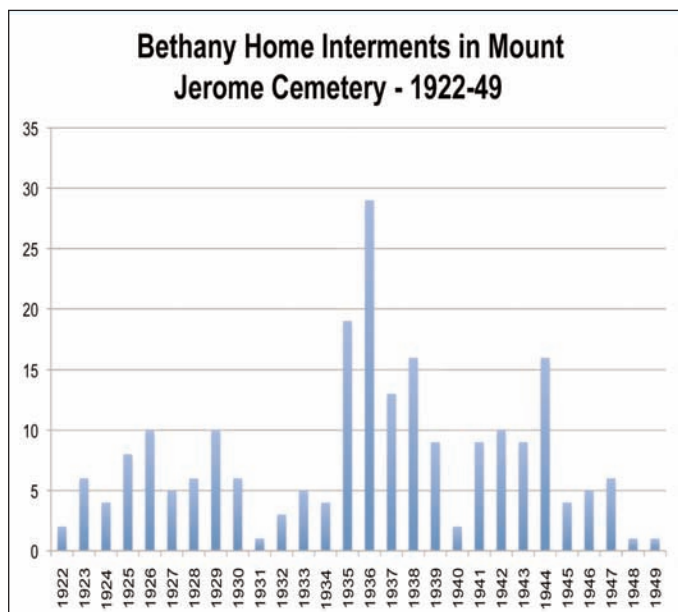


Table 2

1936 Bethany Home deaths compared with Mount Jerome burial register

Date	Matron's Report*	Cemetery	Cumulative Difference
Jan 1936	1	1	=
Feb 1936	1	1	=
Mar 1936	2	1	- 1
Apr 1936	2	5	+2
May 1936 * *	-	5	(na)
Jun 1936	5	2	+4
Aug 1936	1	1	+4
Sep 1936	1	7	+10
Oct 1936	5	3	+8
Nov 1936	2	2	+8
Dec 1936	1	1	+8
Totals	21	29	+ 8

Source: Compiled from Bethany Home Managing Committee Minutes, Register of Burials, Mount Jerome Cemetery
 * To Managing Committee that met 2nd Friday each Month
 ** No Managing Committee meeting, May, July

On 26 May 2010 surviving former residents of the evangelical Protestant Bethany Home for unmarried mothers and their children assembled in Dublin's Mount Jerome Cemetery. On a patch of bare earth they marked the deaths of 40 children who did not make it, 33 at that spot in unmarked common graves. The children died between March 1935 and December 1936.

Subsequent research has revealed a total of 219 dead children for the period 1922-49. 54 died from convulsions, 41 from heart failure and 26 from marasmus, a form of malnutrition (see **Tables 1 & 3**). In addition, the original 1935-36 figure of 40 deaths has increased to 48. Another 38 died Between 1937-39. Therefore, 86, or well over one third of Bethany's 219 child deaths in the 28 years between 1922-1949, occurred in one five-

year period, during 1935-39 (see Table 1). In addition, nearly two thirds, 132, died in the ten-year period, 1935-44.

1936 witnessed the highest mortality with 29 deaths, of whom six were buried the day they died. Therein lies an anomaly. That is eight more than reported internally to Bethany's Managing Committee (see **Table 2**).

There are more graves elsewhere. For example, Bethany's Managing Committee minutes for December 1949 mention two deaths, but just one is recorded in Mount Jerome's burial register that year. The list of 219 excludes also, to take a different example, the unknown final resting place of an 18-month nursed-out infant scalded to death in July 1934 in Newbliss, Co. Monaghan (see report, page 2). Perhaps some died in hospital (though **Table 3** indicates that seriously ill children died in Bethany).

Bethany's Managing Committee did not address the fact that 1935 and 1936 witnessed the highest infant mortality in the Home's history. Instead, at a September 1936 committee meeting at which a first highly critical Maternity Act inspection report was noted, the Committee discussed 'spiritual blessings among the girls during the last three months... Miss Walker gave some details. It was decided to record thanks to God for this encouragement in the work of the Home'.

Surviving former residents feel they are the forgotten few in the largely media driven story of southern Ireland's marginalisation of unwed mothers and their children. Given its dominance in the South, the story tends to be more about the Catholic Church than about victims who were not all Catholic. This emphasis, understandable to a degree, feeds an information deficit addressed here.

RELIGION FROM HOME

Bethany opened in 1921 in Blackhall Place, Dublin. It moved to Rathgar, in 1934, where it closed in 1972. It incorporated the Prison Gate and Midnight Missions and their work in admitting female ex-criminals and prostitutes. Convicted Protestant females and young people were detained also in the Bethany Home. Bethany's Managing Committee included clergy who were associated with the Church of Ireland's Society of Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics (ICM-RC - see page 8), their wives and other lay evangelicals. Management Committee meetings began and ended with prayer. From February 1935 Managing Committee members were required to sign a 'Doctrinal Pledge' proclaiming, among other things, 'the utter depravity of human nature... and the eternal punishment of the wicked'. Contact with Roman Catholics was directed towards conversion, but otherwise prohibited. In December 1926 a

Nurse Ellis was sacked after resisting pressure to break off her engagement to 'a Roman Catholic man'. At the same time the Managing Committee turned down an offer from a Catholic agency, the St Patrick's Guild, to swap their Protestants for Bethany's Catholic unmarried mothers.¹ When Bethany said it was 'nondenominational' that, in part, is what was meant. Nursing staff were, in addition, required to be evangelical missionaries - see 1957 *IT* ad below. Internally, it was simply 'the Mission'.

The ethos animating those who ran Bethany is confirmed in Miss Lily Pilgrim's important short memoir, *Far above Rubies* (c. 1956). Pilgrim, who died in 1978, was a Bethany nurse between 1927-28. She then spent four years in the Dublin Medical Mission, which combined religious instruction with medical services for the poor. Pilgrim returned as Matron in May 1932, before retiring due to arthritis in 1944. She then joined Bethany's Managing Committee until December 1955.

Pilgrim's portrayal Hester Ann, 'Hettie', Walker, Bethany's Residential Secretary from 1924-55, noted that before this the 'born again' Miss Walker was an itinerant evangelical preacher, in which capacity she was acquainted with evangelical clergy. Under Walker's auspices, 'the Gospel was proclaimed to all'. She, 'cared not for man's empty praise or approval' and ended letters with 'yours longing for His Appearing'. Walker expected, 'that the Lord would come before she [was] called



Hester Ann 'Hettie' Walker
Bethany Residential Secretary

CHILD FATALLY SCALDED IN GRUEL.
In the County Hospital, Castleblayney, Dr. Daly, Coroner, sitting without a jury, inquired into the circumstances of the death of an infant, David Morgan, Drumhirk, Newbliss. Mrs. M. J. Nesbitt, farmer's wife, deposed that she acted as nurse-mother to the child, who came to her from the Bethany Home, Dublin. The boy was aged 18 months, healthy, and she treated it as one of her own. On Friday evening she took a pot of boiling oatmeal gruel off the fire and left it in the room, and when preparing the calves feed she heard the baby crying and saw him sitting in the boiling pot. She snatched him out immediately, washed him and had him conveyed to the hospital that night.
Surgeon J. M'Ardle, R.M.S., County Hospital, said the injuries would be consistent with falling into boiling gruel. Death was due to toxæmia following burns.
A verdict in accordance with the medical evidence was returned, and Mrs. Nesbitt was exonerated from all blame.

Anglo Celt 21 July 1934

Table 3
MOUNT JEROME 1922-49
CAUSE OF DEATH - BETHANY CHILDREN

Convulsions	54
Heart Failure	41
Marasmus	26
Still Birth	19
Delicacy	13
Premature	7
Pneumonia	7
Bronchitis	5
Meningitis	4
Whooping Cough	3
Other	25
Not indicated	15
Total	219

EVANGELICAL Missionary-minded Nurse required urgently for Mother and Baby Home; permanent if possible, but temporary considered. Write: Matron, Bethany Home, Orwell road, Rathgar, Dublin. Phone No. 905478. 34H22C

Irish Times 20 June 1957

placed at nurse about two weeks ago by the Bethany Home with [redacted], Glenbrook, Newbliss.
This baby appeared to me to be in a very low condition. It was dirty and neglected and sore and inflamed from a filthy napkin which cannot have been changed for a very long time.
As I knew the baby was suffering I had the Dispensary Doctor telephoned to to ask him to call to see the child.
The foster mother [redacted], who has had nurse children under the Children Act 1908-34 before, knows the law well failed to register this child. The Board of Assistance should be asked to deal drastically with this woman and to prosecute.

Top left, Report of 1934 inquest into death of nursed out Bethany child. Above, Monaghan Maternity Act inspector's report extract, January 1939

MINISTER ASKED TO INQUIRE
BOARD CRITICISMS OF DUBLIN HOME

At Rathdown Board of Assistance yesterday the question of the reception of children at the Bethany Home, Orwell road, was mentioned by Mrs. P. J. Mulvey, who said that a child had been taken from the Home by the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society. The child at the time was very ill, and was admitted to Loughlinstown Hospital. From there the child was sent to St. Kevin's, Dublin Union, where he was at present. She wished to know if this child had become a charge on the rates, and that a qualified nurse be sent to inspect conditions at the Bethany Home. They were all aware of the object of this institution from the religious point of view.

Mr. W. Rollins said that the Board should send its own supervisory officer to inspect the institution, and should bring a representative of the Home before this Board to discover where the children came from, and why they should be thrown on the rates.

The Chairman said this thing was becoming an epidemic. The best thing to do would be to report the whole matter to the Local Government Department, and have an inquiry into the matter.

This was agreed to.

Irish Times 24 August 1939



A GROUP taken before yesterday's annual meeting at the Bethany Home, Orwell road, Rathgar. Included are: Mr. G. McDonald, Miss J. W. Densmore, Miss H. Walker, Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Bewley, Miss Pilgrim (Matron), Miss Harrison (Assistant Matron) and Nurse Carr.

Irish Times, 27 February 1937

away' in 1955. She then had 'her longing – her eyes have seen the King in his beauty'.²

Pilgrim wrote, 'not only mothers, but members of their families were often influenced by letter and visit, and the call was always given clearly and plainly'. Such devotion was on a par with that of Roman Catholic counterparts, based on belief in the essential goodness of Bethany's services. The absence of state welfare provision, in a sea of poverty and destitution, reinforced religiously based charity that shaped attitudes and services.

Occasional denials that Bethany was engaged in proselytism were unconvincing. At the 1933 Annual Meeting it was stated, 'There were many who looked upon it as proselytising work... whereas, the fact was the great aim, and the only aim... was to bring sinners back to Christ'. Indeed, according to Pilgrim, some Roman Catholics 'became new creatures in Christ Jesus'. It was alleged externally that those converting in this manner paid less than others toward their accommodation and the babies they left behind.³

Conflicting priorities, religious and material, appear to have caused some of the home's difficulties. A desire to save more souls accompanied inadequate provision for the bodies they inhabited. Redoubled activity during the mid to late 1930s appears to have increased mortality. It came into conflict with initial state regulation and with one Roman Catholic organisation in particular. It should be pointed out that in 1936 money was particularly tight. The home reported a residual shortfall of £1,000, due to the purchase of new premises in 1934 in Orwell Road, Rathgar, owned by Managing Committee member, Joseph Walker. He demanded a price of £3,000, though the building was independently valued at £2,000. Since Bethany's Blackhall Place building was subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order, the Committee had 'no alternative premises' and agreed to Walker's demand.⁴

STATE INTERVENTION

Managing Committee minutes for September 1936 note a first inspection under the 1934 Maternity Act. It found, 'the bedrooms were overcrowded and the medical staff inadequate'. A discussion followed, continued in October, at which it was suggested that Bethany might attempt to exempt itself from Maternity Act provisions. It was agreed, however, to limit the number of residents, to employ qualified staff and to dismiss an unqualified worker. It was resolved simultaneously to 'make enquiry re the laundry driers'. Miss Pilgrim makes reference to a mother attempting to dry her baby's clothes 'next her own

body', when 'airing facilities were not good'.

Negative Maternity Act reports on Bethany children nursed out in Co. Monaghan appeared in January 1939. Externally driven tensions then came to a head. The Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland - Anti-Proselytising (CPRSI), that was founded in 1913, spent 1939 physically removing to hospital Bethany children they alleged were sick and neglected (see *IT* report, page 2).⁵ The children suffered serious medical conditions and the publicised removals occurred in the context of mortality increases. Records from St Ultan's and the Coombe hospitals indicate that the children suffered a range of conditions including purulent conjunctivitis, rickets, scalding and whooping cough.

The Department of Local Government and Public Health was pressurised to act, but did so in a manner that suppressed health concerns and elevated religious issues.

In January 1939 the Deputy Chief Medical Adviser, W Sterling Berry, signing as 'W.S.B.', reported Bethany 'much improved since my last inspection'. He reversed findings of neglect against Bethany nurse mothers in Monaghan. One was defended, who had been recommended by a departmental inspector for prosecution for neglecting and failing to register a sick child - see report extract, page 2. Despite this defence of the nurse mother's performance, WSB conceded she 'will not be employed by Bethany again'. The nurse mother came from Newbliss in Monaghan. So did David Morgan, the Bethany infant scalded to death in 1934 - see *Anglo Celt* report, page 2.

The following October 1939, WSB returned and rationalised increased sickness and mortality with, "it is well recognised that a large number of illegitimate children are delicate... from their birth and if removed from constant medical supervision and nursing attention often quickly deteriorate". WSB then steered the discussion firmly toward religious tensions.

In a 'Confidential, for Department's own use' memo, the adviser recorded, 'I am meeting the Bethany Committee... to get them to consent to put an end to this most objectionable [proselytising] feature of their work'. In an appended note he reported that a resolution passed at a special meeting on 27 October 1939 in the inspector's presence, 'should satisfy any Roman Catholics concerned by Bethany's proselytising activities'. Indeed, the CPRSI reported in 1942 that proselytism in Dublin was in its 'final phase'.⁶ After Bethany closed, in 1974 Bethany's former secretary, Matthew Taylor, swore in an affidavit that Bethany 'agreed' with the CPRSI in 1938 to deliver RC babies to the latter. While a working relationship may have

Bethany children for export

Isaac 'Bunny' Doone, informed me that on coming of age Fegan boys were transported to farms in Canada. The practice ended in September 1940 when a German U-Boat destroyed the *SS City of Benares*, killing 73 of 90 children on board. This misfortune saved Doone from a similar fate. Doone had been sent by Bethany to Fegan's in April 1931. Another former Bethany infant, Ernest Kelly, sent to England alongside Doone, was killed on an RAF raid over Germany in 1944, aged 19. His personal effects were sent to Fegan's rather than to Doone, his best friend and the closest thing to a relative either boy had. Given a choice in 1946 between Fegan farm work and British Army conscription, Doone opted for the latter. He later became a psychiatric nurse and in recent years traced his roots.

In 2004 Dubliner Noel Kiernan, became aware that his mother had a child out of wedlock prior to marrying his father, and that he had a half-brother. That year a dying relative passed on to Noel a letter from Bunny Doone's daughter, sent without reply some years earlier to the Doone family in Ireland. Noel then made contact with his long lost relation.

Margaret Comiskey was informed by PACT (formerly the Protestant Adoption Society, which currently holds Bethany records) in 2010 that her late husband, Vincent, was baptised a Protestant in Bethany in March 1930, then 'discharged to London' to the Salvation Army. Yet that organisation has no record of receiving him. They suggested to Mrs Comiskey that 'individual Salvationists' may have taken Vincent. He was evidently retrieved by his mother, re-baptised a Roman Catholic and returned to Ireland in 1931, to the CPRSI. He was then fostered for some years before being sent to Artane reformatory aged 9. Though troubled by his treatment and the gaps in his personal history, Vincent Comiskey attained a fulfilling family and professional life as a driver attached to UCD's Grounds Department. With information from PACT and from Cunamh, successor to the CPRSI, Mrs Comiskey is today filling in the gaps in her husband's early life.

Tom McClean was Bethany's most famous Bethany to Fegan export in 1947. The former British Parachute Regiment and SAS soldier was the first man to row the Atlantic, slipping into Blacksod Bay Co Mayo on 27 July 1969. In 1985 McClean intervened in the ow-

nership dispute over Rockall island between Ireland, Iceland and the UK. He occupied the otherwise uninhabited wind and sea-swept rock for 40 days. He planted a Union Jack to 'claim[...] Rockall for England when I was Irish!' (17, 12 Feb 2010). McClean was sent to Fegan's in 1947 by Bethany Matron, Katherine Glover, after suffering inappropriate fostering in Co Wicklow, an experience shared with Doone and Kelly. McClean (1983) was informed his parents died in a fire, which was untrue. After prompting by his children, McClean traced his roots in recent years and discovered the truth. He retained fond memories of Katherine Glover, his 'Auntie Kay', who for some reason, in what appears to be an exception, kept in touch with McClean.

More common perhaps was the fate of children reflected in Lily Pilgrim's observation: 'She afterwards went to Dr Barnardo's in London. I often have wondered what her future was like'. The question is one that might be put to Barnardo's today, as records should exist. However, Fegan records indicate that their Bethany boys were sent by individual nursing staff, rather than by Bethany itself, suggesting awareness that the practice was irregular if not illegal.

developed later, Taylor's observations were inaccurate. However, it was not the CPRSI that forced Bethany home to change its admissions policy. The Irish state did. This was confirmed in January 1940, when Miss Walker contended that the October 1939 resolution excluding Roman Catholics was passed due to 'persistent, unfriendly... requirements of public officials' and a threat of exclusion from payments under the 1939 Public Assistance Act. This arose in a case in which the High Court declared Bethany Home 'sectarian'. The Court reversed a ruling making Bethany the beneficiary of a defunct Protestant Women's Shelter. Its charter stipulated that residents should not be subject to religious instruction or test.⁷

After years of unsuccessful application Bethany finally gained Public Assistance Act recognition in 1948, at which point the mortality and sickness rate appeared to taper off permanently. The statement of recognition noted pointedly, 'for assistance, in the Bethany Home... of persons eligible for public assistance who are members of the Church of Ireland'.

Was this an example of a Catholic state dictating to Protestants? It appears not. Neither WSB nor Alice Litster (an inspector, who monitored Bethany's path toward state recognition) were Roman Catholics. The state they worked for was more concerned with evenly regulating sectarian provision than with its material content. This aspect of southern Irish society is under-researched and results sometimes in a reluctance to integrate Protestant experience into the societal narrative. To illustrate the phenomenon, we must venture abroad.

BABIES FOR EXPORT

Bethany Home did not advertise a significant aspect of its work.

HOMES FOR BOYS

MR. FEGAN'S HOMES, Incorpd.

Founded 1870.

Stony Stratford : Goudhurst : Toronto
Protestant, Evangelical, Undenominational.
Established to receive destitute and orphan
boys, to educate and train in farm work for
migration to Canada.

Communications to the Treasurer, Mr.
FEGAN'S Homes, 64, Horseferry Road,
Westminster, S.W.1.

The Times (Lon) 8 January 1932

Children were transferred to like-minded institutions in England: the Salvation Army, Fegan's Homes for Boys and Barnardo's - see *Bethany children for export*, above. Each in turn sent children 'overseas' to provide 'the benefits of servitude' to the colonies under the 1922 Empire Settlement Act.⁸ Fegan's 'Protestant, Evangelical, undenominational' home advertised openly that it 'receive[d] destitute and orphan boys to educate and train in farm work for migration to Canada' - see *Times* ad., left. Barnardo's deportation of 30,000 by 1931, of a then 100,000 total, was considered 'a most important piece of Empire building' - see *Times* report, page 5.

Transplantation meant sustaining a child 'at half the annual cost... in England', said the self-styled 'Dr' Barnardo.⁹ The Salvation Army (SA) pointed to a party of departing children as 'a saving of at least £20,000 to the tax-payers'. Canada was criticised simultaneously for barring under 14s, whereas Australia, 'is keeping her doors wide open... taking every reasonable precaution to "build imperially" by selecting children coming from a clean, healthy

CHILDREN AS SETTLERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES;

Sir,—Sir Granville Ryrie, in his appeal in the columns of *The Times* on behalf of the Fairbridge Farm School in Western Australia, points out that the party of children now sailing represents a saving of at least £20,000 to the tax-payers and ratepayers of this country. The High Commissioner for Australia, Sir Granville Ryrie, could not well point out that Boards of Guardians here are legally prevented from contributing one penny towards the maintenance of "unwanted" children so transferred, but I think the fact should be widely known and the authorities pressed to alter the law. Voluntary societies, like the Child Emigration Society, Barnardo's Homes, the Salvation Army and others, are continually confronted with the financial handicap when appeals are made to them to transplant children from overcrowded areas or from the influence of undesirable parents or relations, although the situation has been eased recently, since, under the Empire Settlement Act of 1922, contributions up to 50 per cent. of the approved costs may be made by the British Government.

In another connexion, it is interesting to note that while Canada's doors have, to all intents and purposes, been closed for over three years to the entry of children under 14 years of age, it is particularly refreshing to find Australia is keeping her doors wide open, and, at the same time, is, of course, taking every reasonable precaution to "build imperially" by selecting children coming from a clean, healthy British stock.

Yours truly,

DAVID C. LAMB, Commissioner.
 The Salvation Army Migration House,
 E.C.4, April 20.

The Times (Lon) 23 April 1928

British stock' - see *Times* letter, page 4.

In total 130,000 were sent, a process that concluded when Barnardo's flew 'the last nine children... to Australia in 1967'.¹⁰ The Australian government found, apart from exploitation and physical ill-treatment of child migrants, that systematic sexual abuse and brutalisation took place, mainly in Christian Brother's Homes. The *Irish Times* reported on this in 2001, but without noting that most of these children arrived as part of the UK Catholic Church's contribution to empire building. Who else was involved: the British and commonwealth governments and their social services, the Church of England, Methodists and Presbyterians, alongside the trail-blazing Barnardo's, the Fairbridge Society, the Quarriers and others. Their contribution was reported somewhat elliptically: 'many of the institutions that took part in the child migrant scheme (Barnardo's, for example)... for the most part treated children well', compared to 'the Christian Brothers of Ireland'.¹¹

This latter 'of Ireland' reference and the Irish origin of many of the Brothers, including the exceptionally brutal former RIC constable, Br Paul Keaney (OBE), made the story both sensational and parochial. This was particularly so in the context of then contemporary exposes of brutality and abuse within the Irish industrial school system that was under religious control. In this context the Roman Catholic Church was in the frame, since the last Protestant run industrial school closed in 1917.

But, what then happened to southern Irish Protestants in trouble? In 1937 the Cussen report '*into the Reformatory and Industrial School System*' stated that courts dispersed Protestant offenders among Protestant clergy, who were expected to deal with matters privately. This was repeated in the 1970 Kennedy Report on the same subject, and again in the 2009 Ryan Commission report into institutional child abuse. This long held and officially promoted belief appears now to be incorrect.

According to a 3 August 2010 letter to me from the Secretary to the Minister for Justice, in 1945 the then Minister designated Bethany Home as a place of detention for female Protestant children and young persons. It functioned as a reformatory. I have since enquired where Protestant males were sent. I also asked if the Minister for Education, who controls access to the redress scheme for victims of institutional abuse, from which Bethany residents are excluded, had been informed.



Irish born Thomas Barnardo sees boys off to Canada

There appears to be little research into this subject. Enquiring into the fate of Protestant children in more depth in recent years may have been considered a deflection from focussing on allegations of abuse in Roman Catholic run institutions. Due to the large numbers involved in the latter, and to the regulated character of the reformatory system, abundant evidence has emerged. An attempt to convince a rearguard of Roman Catholic sceptics may have played a part in regarding enquiry into Protestant experience a distraction. A belief that institutional Catholicism retarded the modernisation of Irish attitudes, and consequently of Irish society, was also a residual factor promoting concentration on Irish Catholicism.

However, the consequence is that, whether the treatment

WORK OF DR. BARNARDO'S HOMES

LORD LLOYD ON EMPIRE BUILDING

At the May meeting of Dr. Barnardo's Homes at the Central Hall, Westminster, yesterday, Lord Lloyd referred to the emigration work of the homes as "a most important piece of Empire building."

Our Empire was something more than an aggregation of different peoples in different parts of the world. We were the guardians of a different type of civilization. There was no other type of civilization which corresponded to the kind of things we tried to stand for. Dr. Barnardo's had sent oversea 30,000 of their children, who were well trained, and, what was more important than anything, of good character. They had taken their part in the life of the Dominions and had forged links with the Mother Country which not even politicians could break, and which were destined to last longer even than the name of Dr. Barnardo.

The Times (Lon) 8 May 1931

An Irish Mortality tale

Some Church of Ireland clergy appeared to monitor and to attempt quite close control of their flock.

On 11 November 1948, the Revd TPS Wood brought Frances Roycroft of Ballintogher, Co Sligo, and her 8-day-old daughter, Sheila, to Dublin. There they met ICM-RC Superintendent Revd WLM Giff, who placed Sheila in *The Fold*, an ICM-RC orphanage. Miss Roycroft was asked to contribute 10/- per week for maintenance, but did not do so. In January 1949 she married James Bright, who lived with two sons from a previous marriage.

In June Revd Giff removed Sheila from *The Fold*. Accompanied by Mrs Giff, the trio arrived at Frances Bright's door. Giff pressurised Mrs Bright into taking back her daughter, allegedly by threatening to have her arrested. It appeared that Mr Bright in particular, who denied being the father, did not want Sheila.

The Revd Giff later justified his behaviour, explaining 'something of

importance to [my] community'. He said, 'Here you had a child whose mother and father were married. Their home was her home and why bring up the child as illegitimate'. In her recently published *The Society for Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics, 1849-1950* (2010: 151), Miriam Moffitt observed that the ICM-RC decided at that time to remove Protestant children from *The Fold* so as to concentrate on its *raison d'etre*, converting Romanists, including orphans. That may also have been a factor.

Be that as it may, the Rev Giff's observations were delivered in court after Gardai 'found on the land a newly dug grave and in it the body of a female infant'.

Frances Bright was charged with murder. She said the baby died when it fell from her arms and that she buried Sheila with the connivance of her husband, who then alerted the Guards. The State pathologist testified that death resulted from 'several violent impacts to the head - at least five. The injuries could not have been sustained by a

fall'. Mr Bright's role in the death of Sheila was speculated upon.

The all male jury retired and returned after five minutes to find Frances Bright not guilty. They may have taken note of the prosecuting council's observation that they 'would not be human if they had not in the last two days speculated at some length on the conduct of persons, other than the accused, who were engaged in this sad story'. There may also have been a determination all round not to treat baby killing as murder in a society in which absolute rules were in fact double standards, and not even to punish it as manslaughter in this instance, the sentence for which was often committal to the Bethany Home (II, 17, 24, 25 Nov 1949).

One year later the Revd Giff addressed an ICM-RC Missionary Convention's 'Irish Night' in Belfast. He spoke of rurally based Irish Protestants 'living a cat-and-dog-life', suffering 'the perfect... Church of Rome technique' (17, 23 Sep 1950).

Nothing was said about his own technique.

meted out to problematic Protestants is or is not comparable with that suffered by mistreated Catholics, actual Protestant experience tends to be relegated to the status of an unclassifiable curiosity. Or, it is used sometimes as a positive comparator, for example in regarding Barnardo's children extracted from their British homeland and transported many thousands of miles to Australia as being 'for the most part treated... well'.¹² Many of the children were told their alive parents were dead (their parents, vice versa). They suffered documented privations as well as physical, sexual and psychological abuses. The suggestion that they were well-treated, even in comparison, appears misleading given then contemporary accounts, and simply inaccurate in relation to evidence published subsequently.¹³

Margaret Humphreys, a Nottingham, England, social worker pioneered investigation of the schemes. She is most responsible for exposing their origin and effects. Today, she heads the Child Migrants Trust (CMT) support organisation. It grew from her

enquiries and reunites parents, children and siblings. Bean and Melville's *Lost Children of the Empire*, based on her research and published alongside a Granada television documentary of the same name, appeared in 1989. Humphreys' own best selling *Empty Cradles* appeared in 1994. Irish media appeared uninterested in the child migration schemes when the information first appeared. I can find no reference to Humphreys' work in southern Irish media, despite the Irish origin

of some children. Irish media coverage of abuse in Christian Brothers' institutions in Australia was based on a later Australian parliamentary enquiry that was in turn related to Humphreys' research.

Humphreys faced initial reluctance to confront the full reality of what she discovered. The BBC had difficulty depicting it. She criticised the BBC in 1993 for delaying for a year and then censoring *The Leaving of Liverpool*, an Australian made mini-series on child migration. The Head of the BBC explained why they had cut out factually based footage of large Barnardo's and Fairbridge Society signs welcoming child migrants to Australia: 'they were no longer associated with this kind of work'. Humphreys thought the BBC cut 'could well have left British viewers with the impression that it was only the Catholic Church which played a major role in child migration'. She wondered, 'Would the BBC edit *Schindler's List* on the basis that the German Army is no longer involved in the persecution of Jews'.¹⁴ Humphreys' even handed criticism of all involved in the schemes, irrespective of denomination, may have been considered confusing by those concerned primarily about Roman Catholic abuse in Ireland.

In 2010, British Prime Minister Gordon Browne apologised for Britain's role in stealing children from their families, disrupting their identity and facilitating abuse and exploitation. He paid special tribute to Humphreys and to the CMT, which the British government pledged to continue funding. It was formally the equivalent of Taoiseach Bertie Ahern's apology in 1999 for the Republic of Ireland's role in failing to detect or rectify abuses in the Irish industrial school system. The British apology was not reported in southern newspapers. However, in a letter criticising the Irish government, the *Justice for the Magdalenes* organisation made reference to it. Magdalene women, like Bethany survivors, are excluded from the Irish government's redress scheme.¹⁵

In Ireland, Mrs Smyly's Homes (that was associated with the ICM-RC), sent children directly to Canada, but ceased in 1919 when its home there was acquired by the state. However, 45 more children were sent from Smyly Homes through Fegan's between 1920-36. Two were sent post war. Seven Bethany

ANNUAL RELIGIOUS MEETINGS.

SYNOD WEEK, MAY 13th - 17th, 1935.

TO-DAY (TUESDAY), MAY 14th.

HIBERNIAN BIBLE SOCIETY.
12 till 6—Sale of Work, 42 Dawson street, Egg Market. Luncheons 1 p.m. till 2.30. Tea from 3 p.m. 3 p.m.—Opening Ceremony. John Garvey, Esq.,

JEW'S SOCIETY.
4.15, Tea. 5 p.m.—Annual Meeting, C.M.S. Hall, Molesworth street. Chairman—The Rt. Rev. the Bishop of Killaloe. Rev. H. C. Carpenter (Warsaw). Mr. B. Rosenthal (Belfast).

IRISH CHURCH MISSIONS.
4.30 p.m.—Annual Meeting, Townsend street. Chairman—Rev. R. Bird. Speakers—Rev. R. J. Benson, Rev. T. Brine, Rev. T. C. Hammond.

CHURCH OF IRELAND TEMPERANCE SOCIETY.
7.30 p.m.—Annual Meeting, The Gregg Hall, Dawson street. Chairman—The Most Rev. the Bishop of Meath. Rev. R. J. Benson, Vicar St. Nathaniels, Liverpool. Rev. T. C. Hammond.

Irish Times 14 May 1935



Former Bethany residents Derek Leinster, Patrick Anderson McQuoid and Noleen Belton at Mount Jerome memorial meeting at unmarked graves of 40 Bethany children who died in 1935-36. That figure has now increased to 48. In the background, retired Archdeacon, Revd Gordon Linney and former Letterfrack resident, now Dublin City Cllr, Mannix Flynn

children have so far been accounted for as being sent to Fegan's. Fegan's also took children from Miss Carr's Home, Dublin, and from the Dublin Medical Mission.¹⁶ The number sent to Barnardo's is currently unknown (see, *Bethany children for export*, page 4).

THE IRISH STATE AND EXPORTING CHILDREN

But what of the Irish government? Was it aware that Bethany children were removed from the state? It was but appeared to do nothing. In 1940 a Department of Health and Local Government inspector of boarded-out children, Alice Litster, noted that Miss Walker advertised children 'in English Protestant newspapers'. An orphanage replied and received an eight-month old child on production of 'a letter of recommendation from a clergyman'. However, police in St Albans 'informed the local NSPCC of conditions in the... home. As a result, Miss Walker was induced to remove the child'. No record has emerged of official attempts to curtail these cross border movements of children. However, such episodes may have affected attitudes toward Bethany's unsuccessful applications for public assistance between 1939-48. Managing Committee minutes and archival documents reveal Litster playing a decisive role in assessing Bethany in the mid to late 1940s.

During the 1950s Bethany joined others in sending children to the US for adoption, a scheme facilitated by the Irish

CHURCH NOTICES

IRISH CHURCH MISSIONS
TOWNSEND STREET

THE CHILDREN'S MEETING
TO-MORROW (WEDNESDAY),
9th MAY, 1951.
will be held in
THE MISSION CHURCH
At 11 a.m.
Chairman: REV. W. D. SYKES, M.A.
Special Singsing by the Children.

PUBLIC MEETING
TO-MORROW (WEDNESDAY),
9th MAY, 1951.
At 8 p.m.
Chairman:
REV. W. J. SMALLHORNE, B.A.
(Rector of St. Kevin's, Dublin).
Speakers: REV. G. G. THOMPSON, B.A.
MISS MONICA FARRELL,
REV. W. D. SYKES, M.A.

TO-DAY (TUESDAY)
MAY 8th

CHURCH OF IRELAND
JEWS' SOCIETY
4 p.m. TEA 6d.
4.30 p.m. ANNUAL MEETING
In Dawson Hall, 42 Dawson street
Chairman: THE BISHOP OF KILMORE,
REV. F. G. PAYNE (Athlone).
8 p.m. YOUTH RALLY
At St. Kevin's Parochial Hall,
REV. F. G. PAYNE.

Irish Times, 8 May 1951

BETHANY HOME

The annual meeting of the Bethany Home, Orwell road, Rathgar, Dublin, will be held in the home next Wednesday, beginning at 4 p.m. The Rev. W. J. Small-horne will preside. The home is for the rescue of women and girls in distress.

Irish Times, 18 April 1955

The Bethany Home, Orwell road, Rathgar, received numerous gifts on October 18, when their annual gift day was held. Prayer meetings were held, Canon Parkinson Hill presiding in the afternoon and Mr. Warke in the evening. Mr. George Godden officiated in the morning. During the day the Matron of the Home and Miss Walker gave short talks to those present.

From Irish Times annual Bethany Home report 26 Oct 1940

government. In *Banished Babies* (1997), a book dwelling mainly on the Roman Catholic experience, Mike Milotte mentioned 'a racist sub-text' to Irish children's popularity: they were guaranteed 'white'. Milotte described Catholic contortions over giving babies to US divorcees. Not so Bethany, which rejected a Mr & Mrs Watt in March 1952: 'We [do] not give babies to persons who have been divorced'.¹⁷ Bethany's standards of appraisal were in other ways lax. In 1951 a potential adoptive US couple who donated heavily, but who Bethany was informed by a relative were unsuitable, were given a child they had pre-selected after a cursory examination.¹⁸ Many former residents, such as the pioneering Derek Leinster who wrote about it in *Hannah's Shame* (2005), talk of gross neglect and abuse by manifestly unsuitable adoptive and/or foster parents in northern and southern Ireland, as well as subsequently blighted lives. The absence of adoption legislation before 1952 permitted unsatisfactory ad hoc arrangements in which

children suffered. Evangelical criteria layered on top quite possibly made it worse again.

CRIMINALISING CHILDBIRTH

Among Bethany's 'sinners' were 'the poor prostitute class' and women convicted of crimes from petty theft to infanticide, in addition to its unmarried mothers and their children - see *An Irish Mortality Tale*, page 5. Pilgrim wrote in the mid 1950s, 'Prison cases may still be admitted for terms arranged by the court'. In 1965 the *Irish Times* annual report of Bethany's annual meeting noted one inmate on prison remand, the last known public reference.¹⁹ Lindsey Earner-Byrne's *Mother and Child* and Jim Smith's *Ireland's Magdalene Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment* (both 2007) refer to the effective criminalisation of childbirth out of wedlock. Bethany home's combined intake was a clear expression of this moral outlook, part of a church-state alliance that set out to condition and to control the poor generally and women in particular. The activity links Bethany to the Roman Catholic Magdalene laundries researched by Smith in particular. The Irish government refuses to include Magdalene women and Bethany residents in its scheme of redress.

The attempt to circumscribe female sexuality was captured by Pilgrim, who wrote, 'Never think that all our inmates were rough or low class... We have had some of the most refined and cultured girls - typists, teachers, nurses, and even a Minister's wife and a missionary'. The Irish state facilitated, promoted and eventually regulated the institutions that emerged from this religious mindset, using them to assemble a health, education and welfare system that is confused and inadequate. The Roman Catholic Church, given its 95% demographic weight, was dominant, but Protestant institutions participated willingly. It can be observed in this context that Irish Protestant and Roman Catholic social attitudes evolved broadly in tandem. Bethany's closure in 1972 was a response to increasingly liberal attitudes, the invention of the contraceptive pill and Britain's 1967 Abortion Act. Single parenthood was no longer shameful.

CHURCH OF IRELAND AND THE BETHANY HOME

If the Irish government disclaims responsibility for what happened in Bethany Home, so too does the Church of Ireland. It stated in May 2010 that Bethany Home was 'run by an independent board of trustees drawn from the Protestant community at large'.²⁰ In fact Bethany's Managing Committee ran the home. Managing Committee minutes refer rarely to trustee involvement. Contact with some was lost, while others died unnoticed and unreplaced.

Bethany Home gained Episcopal endorsement at its inception. The Archbishop of Dublin opened it in 1922 and passed on monies donated through him, in one case to be invested in his name and that of the treasurer. Many of Bethany's Church of Ireland clergy were superintendents, or presided at meetings, of the Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics (ICM-RC). TC Hammond was a Managing Committee member from 1922-1935, ICM-RC Superintendent from 1919-35 and a leading Dublin Orange Order member. Hammond departed in February 1936 to run Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia. According to Muriel Porter's research on Anglican fundamentalism, Hammond achieved 'iconic status' by defeating Sydney's more liberal Anglicans.²¹ After Hammond, other ICM-RC associated clerics joined the Managing Committee, the Revd Parkinson Hill from Zion Parish and Revd Smallhorne from St Kevin's. The latter also became a Trustee in 1958.²² ICM-RC superintendents, Revd WLM Giff and Revd RJ Coates, were also later associated with the home (see, *An Irish mortality tale*, page 5, *The ICM and the Orange Order*, page 8).

Admittance to the Bethany home was generally through

The ICM and the Orange Order

The Orange Order's 1920s association with the ICM-RC and the Bethany Home was augmented in the 1960s through then Dublin Superintendent, the Revd R J Coates. Revd Coates presided at the 1965 Bethany Home annual meeting (*IT*, 27 Apr 1965). In 1964 he participated with Dublin and Wicklow lodges in that year's July 12th Battle of the Boyne celebrations. In the Orange Order service in St Patrick's Newry in 1964 the Revd Coates was the 'special preacher'. He said, 'the Orange Order is an order of high ideals' and asserted that the Republic, after '40 years of total control by the Roman Catholic Church', 'was worse off than even in the days of the famine' (*IT*, 9 May 1964.).

Coates did not indicate whether this afforded the ICM-RC the opportunity of a second coming, as it was the Famine and its aftermath that gave the organisation its initial impetus in 1846. As Moffitt (2006: 32) pointed out, 'It perceived the Irish famine of 1845-47 not only as an opportunity to convert the Romanists of Ireland but also as a judgment from God on Irish Roman Catholics for having stubbornly clung to their religion: "The truth of the Scriptures was verified in the groans of the dying, and their walls for the dead", which the ICM saw as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy'. The founder, English millenarian clergyman Alexander Dallas, explained, 'It is a war of extermination; and so it ought to be, for the contest is between truth and error'. How to stop the contagion: 'the best method is to carry the war into the enemy's country' (in *ibid*).

At a Belfast ICM meeting in 1950, Revd Giff praised Norman Porter, Organising Secretary of the National Union of Protestants, for helping 'in this involved work of ours' (*IT*, 16 Sep 1950). The Treasurer of this body, who later took it over, was the then relatively obscure Revd Ian Paisley, founder of the breakaway Free Presbyterian Church. Though critical of Church of Ireland 'apostasy', Paisley was supportive of the ICM, publicly praising Hammond and Paisley's 'personal friend', 1940-43 ICM superintendent, Revd Tom Horan - see photo caption, bottom-right.

ICM evangelists seemed to use the opportunity afforded by crossing the Irish border to vent feelings suppressed and controverted south of it. When details inadvertently emerged it led to indignation from co-religionists incapable of recognising the depths to which they had allegedly sunk, who also disassociated themselves from the ICM's association of Protestantism with unionism. In 1966 a Protestant correspondent in the *Irish Times* declared himself, 'sick and tired of the Norman Porters and Ian Paisleys speaking politically in the name of Protestantism. Religion has nothing whatever to do with political affiliation. I... am proud that my grandfather (a Protestant) devoted 40 years of his life to attain [Irish] independence' (*IT*, 2 May 1966).

In addition to the ICM in the North proclaiming the persecution of Southern Protestants, in the South the ICM, 'urged the Protestants of Dublin not to believe all the tales they heard of ill-treatment of northern Catholics in Ulster.' In fact, said the Dean of Belfast at an ICM meeting in Dublin in May 1939, 'the golden land in Ireland for Roman Catholics today was Ulster' (*IT*, 13 May 1939).

The Orange Order reported in 2000 (*IT*, 25 Mar) that it held 'a church service each October in the Irish Church Missions at Bachelor's Walk'. The ICM, that dropped its title reference 'to the Roman Catholics' in 2002, was linked on

the internet home page of the Dublin and Wicklow Lodge of the Orange Order in 2010 (accessed 30 Jan 2010). A photograph of TC Hammond, 'Cork's forgotten son', is depicted with, 'If Ireland was a Protestant nation then TC Hammond would be as well known in Cork as [War of Independence leader] Michael Collins or [former Taoiseach] Jack Lynch'. In turn, the ICM advertised that it held an annual TC Hammond lecture (*ibid*). The inaugural lecture was publicised in 'Church of Ireland Notes' in the *Irish Times* (4 Jun 1985). The ICM also features in the charitable work of the Orange Order in Northern Ireland.

The ICM was once mainstream. In 1929, 'two archbishops and ten bishops' were 'among the vice-Presidents of the Society' (*IT*, 21 Feb 1930). Today, the ICM is marginal. In 2010 the ICM website stated that the ICM opposed 'theologically liberal Anglicans [and] their unscriptural agenda of women bishops and gay clergy'. The Church of Ireland is alleged to be 'a Protestant church without a Protestant message... Liberal Protestantism has nothing to offer Irish society' (www.icm-online.ie). However, a weekly Church of Ireland service is still held in Immanuel Church, formerly the Mission Church, at the Dublin ICM headquarters (*IT*, 8 Oct 1988, 18 Jul 2009).

In effect, the organisation has been left behind by modernisation. This branch of Irish Protestantism mirrors in its contemporary stance, voices within the Roman Catholic Church opposing secular change in Irish society. In its political and moral outlook the ICM offers a variation on some Roman Catholic attitudes. But the links are obscured by doctrinal inhibitions the ICM sought at all times to promote.

During the 1930s to 1950s period, the ICM and the Catholic Church were decidedly anti-Communist. The ICM did not allow a consensus on communism to obscure its own anti-Catholicism. In 1949 the Revd Giff joined an anti-communist cause célèbre in support of the imprisoned Roman Catholic Cardinal Mindszenty of Hungary. Giff put out a statement expressing 'as Protestants... heartfelt sympathy'. This magnanimity was quickly subsumed, however, by reference to the 'tradition of dem-



Rev TC Hammond, 1919-35 Superintendent ICM-RC and member of Bethany Managing Committee, 1922-35, in ward of unidentified children's home.

ocracy' being 'the gift of Protestantism developed in Britain over 400 years'. Furthermore, 'persecution in Central Europe was no new phase... In the 1930s the Roman Catholic Church made a concordat with the Nazi government'. Solidarity turned then to sour grapes, 'most of the Lutheran clergy refused to accept Hitler's terms and many were sent to concentration camps. It was a pity that, at that time, no protests were sent from this country, such as had been the case of Cardinal Mindszenty' (*IT*, 5 Jan 1949). Such approaches placed the ICM on the political periphery.

Somewhat ruefully, but accurately, the ICM commented on stirrings of revolt against church domination during the 1940s: 'This does not signify any turning to the Gospel. It may be that labour politics and a rationalistic communism have weakened priest rule' (Hughes, 1948: 10.). Indeed, left wing and liberal ideas, augmented by republican activists, women and young people who found Irish society stultifying, did begin to win through during the 1960s.

However, current ICM distance from predominant Irish Anglican sentiments should not obscure a once closer relationship. In any case, the structural connection remains.



Rev TC Hammond (front, 2nd left) at ICM-RC gathering during 1934 Church of Ireland Synod. As ICM-RC low church influence retreated in the CofI, its ideas were promoted by opponents of the CofI's ecumenical outlook in the 1960s. In 1966, Free Presbyterian leader, the Rev Ian Paisley, referred to 'Canon T.C. Hammond, that great preacher and Protestant protagonist'. He continued, 'How sad it is that we have not the people in the Church of Ireland we used to have. I think tonight of my warm personal friend in the person of the Rev Tom Horan of the Irish Church Missions'. Horan is standing, left (<http://www.ianpaisley.org/revivalist/1986/Rev-86feb.htm> - accessed, 3 Mar 2010).

referral by a network of Church of Ireland clergy, who received by return a request for a financial contribution. In 1957 three children were admitted 'at the request of the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Society'.²³ In his 2003 memoir a Church of Ireland rector referred to 'Bethany Home [as] a Church of Ireland home for unmarried girls'. He was in a position to know. The Reverend Kevin Dalton lived there with his mother during 1932-3.²⁴ The CofI absolves itself today from a connection with the Bethany Home due to the absence of a property relation. While the comparison is inexact, it may be asserted that the Bethany Home functioned on a basis similar to Roman Catholic congregations whose property is owned by the latter. Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists and Plymouth Brethren became more involved in managing the Bethany Home during the 1960s. This indicates that the Church of Ireland might share rather than avoid consideration of some responsibility for the Bethany Home.

STATE RESPONSIBILITY

The fundamental responsibility is that of the state. It failed to demonstrate any particular interest in the death and neglect of children in a home it inspected, to which its courts sent women and children they convicted. The state misused its own Maternity Act inspection regime, wanting merely a level sectarian playing field. It achieved that. The state then delayed providing resources throughout the 1940s. Had it been otherwise lives might have been spared and life experiences much improved. Broadly, the state used religiously run institutions to effectively achieve a cheaply run, privately run, and discretionary welfare, education and health system, whose effects are still with us. During the 1940s the Department of Finance was content to point to the formidable figure of RC Dublin Archbishop, John Charles McQuaid, the vigilant anti-communist, as an excuse for not spending money on needed public welfare reform. There were other religious voices from that dominant tradition uttering few objections to the state entering the so-called private sphere. These were not useful and so were ignored.²⁵ Like Protestant experience, it became incidental to the story of southern Irish society that passed from social control through religious ideology to that of the market. There is continuity, non-interference in the private sphere, not that of the facade of the family, but of the economy.

There is a class as well as a sectarian element to be inquired into that goes beyond Roman Catholic domination of Irish society. Catholic domination was a result of demography and history, but Protestant institutions played their part in parallel. The apparatus of state, appearing to stand aloof but also ensuring that provision did not descend into chaos, could be quite dismissive of conditions in religiously run institutions, while not doing very much about them.

This is illustrated by the bare earth of Mount Jerome Cemetery, under which lies the remains of over 200 destined to be forgotten children, whose religion is less important than their unacknowledged and perhaps preventable deaths. Perhaps it is time someone in authority thought about remembering them and, also, those who are still alive.

Niall Meehan, Journalism & Media Faculty, Griffith College Dublin

NOTES

1. BMCM, 10 Sep, 8 Oct, 11 Nov, 10 Dec 1926.
2. Miss Walker's religious denomination, shared with her brother Ralph, in the 1911 Census is 'Church of Christ, as revealed by His Word, taught by His Spirit'. Another resident was a visiting Methodist, William Quinn, whose profession was described as 'Evangelist'. Miss Walker bequeathed £300 to the home after her death, administered by her nephew, Ralph J. Walker, senior partner in Hayes & Sons, solicitors, who became a major *Irish Times* shareholder along with his brother Philip and George Hetherington in 1954. Ralph Walker was *Irish Times* Chairman from 1959-1973. The Walkers sold their shares to Major Thomas

McDowell in 1974, on the setting up of the *Irish Times Trust*. *IT*, 14 Dec 1954, 28 Jul 1959, 17 Apr 1973, 12 Nov 1980; BMCM, 17 June 1955, 13 Jan, 19 Mar 1956. Hayes and Sons represent the *Irish Times* in court actions. Adrian E Glover, son of 1944-72 Bethany Home Matron, Katherine Glover, was also a partner in Hayes & Sons.

3. *IT*, 16 Feb 1933; *II*, 17 Apr 1939.

4. BMCM, 1 May, 10 Aug 1934; *IT*, 27 Feb 1936. Joseph Walker was also related to the Residential Secretary, Miss Walker. His resignation from the Managing Committee was noted in the minutes on 11 Jan 1935.

5. *II*, *IT*, 24 Aug 1939.

6. In Garrett 2000, p. 331. On 11 February 1955, however, the shoe was on the other foot. Bethany's Managing Committee discussed 'RC adopters of babies of Protestant mothers' and, 'how to prevent Roman Catholics from getting possession of [these] babies'. Subsequently, Mrs Odlum, of Church of Ireland Social Services, assured Bethany that she was 'paying particular attention to this matter in connection with her moral welfare and adoption work' (BMCM, 11 Feb, 11 Mar 1955).

7. *II*, 23 Jan 1940.

8. Bean and Melville, 1990, p. 36.

9. *Ibid*, p. 41, 43.

10. Coldrey 2003, p. 21, CMT.

11. *IT*, 4 Dec 2001.

12. *Ibid*

13. See Hill, 2007, for example.

14. Humphreys, 1995, p. 348.

15. *IT*, 26 Feb 2010.

16. Email, 10 Aug 2010. David Waller, Fegan's.

17. BMCM, 14 Mar, 9 May, 13 Jun 1952.

18. BMCM, 9 Feb, 9 Mar, 13 Apr 1951.

19. *IT*, 29 Apr 1965.

20. *IT*, 21 May 2010.

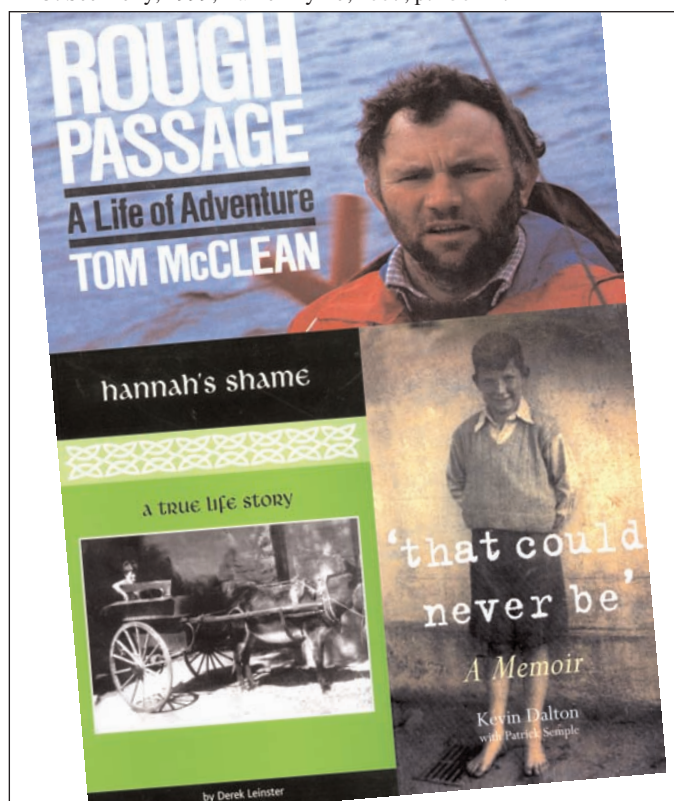
21. Porter, 2007, p. 92.

22. BMCM, 10 Jan 1958. See note 6, above, also.

23. BMCM, 8 Jan 1957.

24. Dalton, 2003, p. 13, 189.

25. See Kelly, 1999; Earner Byrne, 2007, p. 130-44.



Against the odds: books by three Bethany survivors, (Revd) Kevin Dalton, Derek Leinster, Tom McClean.

Thank you to Nicole Byrne for assistance in researching Mount Jerome Cemetery records. Thanks to Gilbert Library staff for unflinching courtesy. Janet Maxwell of the CofI Representative Church Body and RCB Library staff for kindly granting access to Bethany Home Management Committee minutes. Thanks also to David H Godden for a copy of his aunt Lily's memoir and other memorabilia, and to David Waller of Fegan's. I would like also to express gratitude to Alan Massey and his staff for facilitating initial access to Mount Jerome records. Special thanks to former Bethany residents who shared with me sometimes painful memories. Thanks in particular to Derek and to Carol Leinster for unflinching assistance, hospitality, and for persevering for so long against official and personal adversity.

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Visit:

www.BethanySurvivors.Com



Location of initial Bethany 33 graves discovered in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin - see WWW.BETHANYSURVIVORS.COM

In the light of the 2009 Ryan report into child abuse in Catholic-run, state-funded and state-inspected institutions, Niall Meehan reports on similar abuse in a Protestant institution and asks why its victims have not been included in the state's redress scheme.

In a 1950s memoir, 1932–44 Bethany Home matron Miss Lily Pilgrim wrote: 'Never think that all our inmates were rough or low class . . . We have had some of the most refined and cultured girls—typists, teachers, nurses, and even a minister's wife and a missionary.' The home, which operated from 1922 to 1972, was primarily for unmarried mothers and their children. Bethany was part of an Irish culture of containment and control of sexuality in which the hidden shame of its 'girls' or 'inmates' was transformed into sin. Ostensibly secular, Bethany was in fact religious. Internally, it was simply 'the Mission'. Nurses were required to be evangelical missionaries and all meetings began and ended with prayer. From 1935 managing committee members were required to sign a 'doctrinal pledge' proclaiming 'the utter depravity of human nature . . . and the eternal punishment of the wicked'.

Perhaps fittingly, Bethany was also 'a place of detention for female, non-Catholic[s]' under seventeen years and for older women sent by the courts for crimes ranging from petty theft to infanticide. In addition, among Bethany's 'sinners' were 'the poor prostitute class'. Lindsey Earner-Byrne's *Mother and child* and Jim Smith's *Ireland's Magdalene laundries and the nation's architecture of containment* (both 2007) refer to an effective criminalisation of childbirth out of wedlock. Bethany Home was part of this process, which fed into southern Ireland's religiously controlled welfare, detention and education system.

The Irish state facilitated, promoted and eventually regulated the institutions that emerged, using them to put together a health, education and welfare system that was confused and inadequate. The Roman Catholic Church, given its 95% demographic weight, was dominant, but

Church and state bear responsibility for the Bethany Home



Protestant institutions like the Bethany Home participated willingly. It can be observed in this context that Irish Protestant and Roman Catholic social attitudes evolved broadly in tandem.

Today, the human consequences of former attitudes are knocking on the door. On 26 May 2010 surviving former child residents of Bethany Home assembled in Dublin's Mount Jerome Cemetery. At a moving ceremony on a patch of bare earth they marked the deaths of 40 children who did not make it, 33 of whom lie buried at that spot in unmarked common graves. Subsequent research now reveals a total of 219 dead children for the period 1922–49. Of these, 54 died from convulsions, 41 from heart failure and 26 from marasmus, a form of malnutrition. Nineteen were stillborn. The year 1936 witnessed the highest number with 29, of whom six were buried the day they died. Therein lies a significant anomaly. That is eight more than the number reported to Bethany's managing committee, which failed to address the increased mortality. There are more elsewhere. For example, in December 1949 Bethany minutes record the deaths of two unnamed children, but that year's Mount Jerome register lists just one. The name and whereabouts of the other child

are still unknown. In addition, some children who died while being nursed out appear to have been buried locally and are not recorded in Bethany's management committee minutes. These children are also unaccounted for at present.

Bethany's former residents, currently denied access to the Irish state's redress scheme for victims of institutional abuse, feel that they are the forgotten few in the media story of southern Ireland's marginalisation of women and children. That story is more about the Catholic Church than about victims of neglect, who were not all Catholic. This information deficit feeds on its own assumptions and is addressed briefly here.

The ethos animating those who ran Bethany is confirmed in Miss Pilgrim's *Far above rubies* (c. 1956). Pilgrim was employed as a nurse in 1927–8, returning as matron in May 1932, before retiring owing to arthritis in 1944. She then joined the managing committee and occasionally helped out. Her portrayal of Hester Ann ('Hettie') Walker, Bethany's 1924–55 residential secretary, noted that 'the Gospel was proclaimed to all'. Pilgrim observed that 'not only mothers but members of their families were often influenced by letter and visit'. Such devotion was based on a

Opposite page: A discarded child's toy in the plot at Mount Jerome Cemetery, Harold's Cross, Dublin, where the unmarked graves of 33 children from Bethany Home—known only by cemetery map numbers A 274/75/76—were traced in May 2010. Since then, over 200 further Bethany children have been traced to similarly unmarked ground in the cemetery. (Niall Carson/PA)

belief in the essential goodness of Bethany's services.

Bethany's managing committee included clergy who were members of the Church of Ireland's Society of Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics (ICMRC), their wives and other lay evangelicals. Contact with Roman Catholics was directed towards conversion but otherwise prohibited. While proclaiming itself 'non-denominational', in December 1926 the Bethany Home sacked Nurse Ellis for becoming engaged to 'a Roman Catholic man'. If Bethany's outlook was in tune with dominant social attitudes, its approach to Roman Catholics was a source of conflict.

Occasional denials of proselytism were unconvincing, such as this from 1933: 'There were many who looked upon it as proselytising work . . . whereas, the fact was the great aim, and the only aim . . . was to bring sinners back to Christ'. Some Roman Catholics reportedly 'became new creatures in Christ Jesus'. It was alleged that conversion reduced required payments from mothers. Tensions came to a head in 1939, when the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland (CPRSI) publicised the removal to hospital of Bethany children whom they said were sick and neglected. Records indicate that the children suffered serious medical conditions and the removals did coincide with mortality increases.

The state was pressurised to act, but did so in a manner that suppressed health needs and elevated religious conflicts. In January 1939 a Maternity Act inspector reported Bethany 'much improved since my last inspection'. The inspector defended a Bethany nurse mother recommended for prosecution for neglecting and failing to register a sick child. The following October the inspector observed:

'It is well recognised that a large number of illegitimate children are delicate . . . from their birth and if removed from constant medical supervision and nursing attention often quickly deteriorate'.

In a 'Confidential, for Department's own use' memo, the inspector steered concerns firmly towards religion:

'I am meeting the Bethany Committee . . . to get them to consent to put an end to this most objectionable [proselytising] feature of their work'.

At that meeting the inspector forced the committee to pass a resolution that, 'should satisfy any Roman Catholics concerned by Bethany's proselytising activities'. Miss Walker later contended that this 27 October 1939 resolution excluding Roman Catholics was passed due to 'persistent, unfriendly . . . requirements of public officials' and a threat of exclusion from payments under 1939 public assistance legislation, an exclusion lasting ten years. She said this when in January 1940 the High Court declared Bethany 'sectarian'. It refused to make Bethany a beneficiary of a defunct Protestant Women's Shelter, whose charter stipulated that applicants should not be subject to religious instruction or test.

Bethany Home did not advertise a significant aspect of its work. Children were transferred to like-minded institutions in England: the Salvation Army, Fegan's Homes for Boys and 'Dr' Barnardo's. Each in turn sent children 'overseas' under the 1922 Empire Settlement Act. Fegan's 'Protestant, evangelical, undenominational' home advertised that it 'receive[d] destitute and orphan boys to educate and train in farm work for migration to Canada'. Barnardo's sending of 30,000 children by 1931 was considered 'a most important piece of Empire-building'. The Salvation Army cited a party of departing children in 1928 as 'a saving of at least £20,000 to the taxpayers'. Canada was criticised for no longer allowing in under-fourteens, whereas Australia

' . . . is keeping her doors wide open . . . taking every reasonable precaution to "build imperially" by selecting children coming from a clean, healthy British stock'.

Barnardo's sent the last group to Australia in 1967. This year British Prime Minister Gordon Browne apologised to survivors of the 150,000 who were transported.

One Bethany child sent to Fegan's, Isaac 'Bunny' Doone, thought himself lucky to have missed the boat. In September 1940 a German U-boat torpedoed the Canada-bound SS *City of Benares*, killing 77 of the 90 evacuated children on board. The practice

of exporting and evacuating children to Canada was suspended. Bethany was still sending children to Fegan's in 1947. It is not known whether such children then helped 'stock' the Empire. Their unknown fate is reflected in Lily Pilgrim's observation on one child, 'sent to Dr Barnardo's in London. I often have wondered what her future was like.'

In 1940 a Department of Health and Local Government inspector noted that Miss Walker advertised children 'in English Protestant newspapers'. An orphanage had responded and received an eight-month-old, on production of 'a letter of recommendation from a clergyman'. Police in St Albans, however, 'informed the local NSPCC of conditions in the . . . home' and she 'was induced to remove the child'.

In the 1950s Bethany joined Catholic institutions in sending guaranteed 'white' children for adoption to the United States. Mike Milotte's *Banished babies* (1997) described Catholic contortions over babies for US divorcees. This was not the case with Bethany: 'We [do] not give babies to persons who have been divorced'. In 1951 a potential adoptive US couple, whom Bethany was informed by a relative were unsuitable, were given a child after a cursory examination.

The Irish state failed to do anything substantive about death, neglect and export of children in a home it inspected and to which its courts sent convicted women and young people. It misused its Maternity Act inspection regime to achieve merely a level sectarian playing field. The state then delayed providing financial resources throughout the 1940s, until recognition under the 1939 Public Assistance Act was achieved in 1948. Had it been otherwise lives might have been spared and life experiences improved. The bare earth of Mount Jerome Cemetery, under which lie the remains of over 200 children whose religion is less important than their unacknowledged and perhaps preventable deaths, is testament to this failure. On the day former residents gathered in Mount Jerome, education minister Mary Coughlin said that she would not add Bethany Home to the government's scheme of redress for those who suffered institutional abuse. **HI**

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An extended version of this article can be found at www.historyireland.com. Further information at www.bethanysurvivors.com.