THE HISTORY OF KILMAINHAM AND INCHICORE

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Introduction

Inchicore and Kilmainham are two of Dublin's most historic districts, and feature in many prominent episodes in Irish history. We're indebted to Michael O'Flanagan of Emmet Road for supplying much of the historical and heritage information that follows...

Inchicore is bounded on its western side by the Grand Canal, an 18th century mode of transport, as well as the Luas, Dublin's 21st century tram system which opened in 2004.

To the north between Inchicore and Phoenix Park is the Irish National War Memorial Gardens, which was built to commemorate those Irish soldiers who died in World War I.

Inchicore Railway Works is the headquarters for mechanical engineering and rolling stock maintenance for Irish Rail. Established in 1844, it is the largest engineering complex of its kind in Ireland with a site area of 73 acres (295,000 m²).

Near Inchicore is Kilmainham Jail, the scene of the execution of many Irish Republican Army leaders captured after the Easter Rising in 1916.

Inchicore was the hometown of Timothy Coughlin, one of the three anti-Treaty members of the IRA who in 1927 assassinated Kevin O'Higgins.

St. Michael's National School was previously known as Richmond Barracks, and it was to this site that prisoners were initially taken after the surrender in 1916.

Inchicore is home to two Roman Catholic churches: the Church of Mary Immaculate (built by the Oblates), and St. Michael's. It is also home to two community centres; St Michael's and BERA.

Behind the Oblates' Church is a full size replica of the Grotto of Lourdes, which was opened in 1930. The grotto is 50 feet high, 130 feet wide and 40 feet deep, and is built of reinforced concrete. Pilgrims...
visit the shrine all the year, but it becomes particularly busy for the Novena to Our Lady of Lourdes (February 2 - February 11). The grotto houses the famous Inchicore Crib.

Goldenbridge Cemetery, where former President of the Executive Council W. T. Cosgrave is buried, was the first Catholic cemetery built in Dublin after Catholic Emancipation.

Famous Inchicoreans:

The list includes:
Thomas Kinsella, poet
Jim Mitchell, politician
Michael Hartnett, Limerick-born poet who lived in the area for many years

The Oblates and Inchicore:

Saint Eugene De Mazenod was born in Aix-en-Provence in the south of France on August 1, 1782. He entered the seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris, and he was ordained a priest in Amiens on December 21, 1811.

On February 17th 1826, Pope Leo XII gave approval to De Mazenod’s new Congregation, the "Oblates of Mary Immaculate". Five years later, he was appointed to the See of Marseilles as its Bishop. At the same time his followers ventured into Switzerland, England, Ireland.

In 1854 Eugene de Mazenod was invited by several Irish bishops to establish an Oblate mission in Ireland. Subsequently, while Oblate Father Robert Cooke was in Dublin giving a mission, he came in contact with Archbishop Cullen and was asked to look at the possibility of the Oblate order ministering to the spiritual needs of the people of Kilmainham.

The Oblates came to Dublin in 1856 and bought a farm close to the Railway Works in Inchicore. Eugene de Mazenod himself came to Inchicore in 1857. He celebrated Mass in a small wooden church on this site. Many of the workers at the Railway works had helped build this first church and it served the community until 1876.

Some of the land originally bought by the Oblates was sold to the then Dublin Corporation on the condition that it be used to provide housing for local people. The proceeds of the sale helped fund the building of the new church. This new church was opened in 1878 although not fully completed due to a lack of funds.

The new church was consecrated in 1903 and the towers and transept completed in 1930. The high altar in the church was made by Padraig Pearse’s father.

Also part of the Oblate presence in Inchicore is the primary school, Scoil Mhuire gan Smal which was established in 1857 in some of the farm buildings and in which some Oblate Brothers taught.

In 1864, plans by clerical and civic leaders were made to build a new school on the site for the area with an Oblate superior acting as manager. This school served the community for 70 years and the existing school was opened in 1939 as a Catholic co-educational schools which caters for approximately 260 pupils from infants to 6th class.

The parish also has a social hall which was built on the site of the old original wooden church. This became a centre for entertainment and social activity in Inchicore and was redeveloped with the assistance of FAS in 1997.

The Oblate House of Retreat was offering retreats to lay people by 1863 and at various times during its history was a seminary and also became a place of asylum for those clerics fleeing religious persecution in France.

Perhaps what most people know about the parish apart from the striking towers are the crib and Grotto.
The Crib was built in 1856 and large wax figures were ordered from Paris. The original site was in the old wooden church but this was destroyed by fire in 1948. Again local people were to the fore as they had been in the early days of the original church and volunteers helped restore the crib in its present site at the back of the Grotto.

The Grotto was established in Inchicore after Father William Ring led a pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1883. The first torch lit procession was attended by 3000 people in 1927 and the following year work began on constructing the present grotto which was an exact replica of the Lourdes grotto.

Again, men from the Railway Works helped and the work was finished in 1930. Later that year, the grotto was blessed by Archbishop Byrne of Dublin at which 100,000 people were present. A Rosary Square was added and plans are currently underway to refurbish the Grotto and build a new Rosary Way.

There is a sports hall in the grounds which was opened in 2002 to replace one destroyed by fire in 1997. The original hall had been built in 1971 and catered for basketball and other sports and served to encourage young women in the area to participate in social activities. Currently it also houses FAS offices and LINKS and Turas programs which offer support and help to recovering drug addicts.

HISTORY OF ST. MICHAEL’S PARISH

St. Michael's Church is really unique. It was built as the garrison church of Richmond Barracks early in the 19th century. When the barracks closed it was reopened and blessed by Archbishop Byrne on April 26th 1926 and the first Catholic Mass was said. Fifty years later, Rev. Fr. Pascall Dillon, the newly appointed Oblate Provincial, celebrated Mass on 26th April 1976, to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of that occasion. On the 14th March, 1933, St. Michael's became a Parish Church and the Rev. Fr. James Doyle was appointed the first Parish Priest. He was later elevated to Canon Doyle and he dedicated 23 years of his life to improving the church and building the parish. In 1927, he was responsible for making plans for the right hand extension to the building. By his efforts, and the generous response of the parishioners, this work was completed in the early 1930s. The extension was badly needed to accommodate the huge increase of people coming to live in the newly built Bulfen Estate In 1939 St. Michael's Church consisted of two wooden altars, railings and pulpit, and a mortuary porch. There were four porches with double doors on either side which was rather unusual, providing easy access and exit for the large volume of soldiers in Richmond Barracks when it was a garrison church. Likewise for such a small church, there are five gate entrances. In the 1940s Rev. Fr. Michael Clarke was a wonderful influence. He was extremely interested in the senior choir, and was choirmaster, until he was transferred to Christ the King Church in Cabra. He was responsible for having the windows replaced by the very beautiful stained glass windows over both altars, designed in the workshops of the late Harry Clarke. He also had the organ installed, and the marble railings erected to match the two lovely altars Canon Doyle had designed to replace the wooden ones. The beautiful Statue of Our Lady in pregnancy is most unusual, and Canon Doyle was very proud of all the improvements to St. Michael's through the years, which naturally also gave great pleasure to the parishioners. Another feature which often frightened visitors to the Church was the Statue Of St. Michael in the north porch driving a spear into the devil. The devil was depicted as black and the statue was removed in the 1970s when it was regarded as not politically correct. The aisles of the church were widened in the late 1960s by Rev. Fr. Kealy, P.P. by rearranging the seats. He was also responsible for introducing the Church's Parish Planned Giving Family Offering. In 1972 the Oblates came to St. Michael's, and brought a whole new image to it. Rev. Fr. Aidan O'Connor, O.M.L., was first P.P. from '72 to '78, and was very popular, until he retired to Limerick. Then Rev. Fr. James Nolan became P.P. He is remembered with deep affection and appreciation for his dedication and constant efforts, and his dreams were fulfilled as time passed. He was thirteen years in St. Michael's, a most unusual period of time for an Oblate Father. He was responsible for the formation of the two folk choirs, junior and senior. He was always full of fresh ideas: e.g. 'Faith Friends' and 'Prayer and Bereavement Groups' can all be credited to him. He had a video made of St. Michael's and of all the enthusiastic people in the groups, who participated in fulfilling his ideas for the parish. The video was much appreciated and it was in great demand by other parishes who were eager to form similar groups. On the 13th March, 1983, St. Michael's celebrated its golden jubilee as a parish. Archbishop Dermot Ryan celebrated Mass on the new altar, accompanied by the clergy A the church, and other Oblate Superiors. The renovation of the Church had just been completed. This task was undertaken by Rev. Fr. James Nolan, Fr. Jimmy as all knew him. It was a
Saint Maighneann

Saint Maighneann lived in the first half of the 7th Century. His father Áed died in 606AD. His mother was a sister of St. Senchill, Abbot of the area now known Co. Offlay. Maighnean had three brothers, Liberín, Cobthach and Toa. He was Abbot of Kilmainham or Cill Maighneann, from which the area draws its name, and he is described on several occasions as Bishop Maighneann. All our information about Maighneann derives from the “vernacular” and it was only written down in Irish by Uilliam Mac An Leaga circa 1480. However the accounts are so specific and detailed that they are inherently credible. St. Maighneann was a contemporary of St. Maelruain of Tallaght, St. Finnian of Strangford Lough and St. Dublitir of Finglas all of whom he visited. He also went with St. Finnchu to the Aran Islands. St. Maighneann had a following of twenty seven monks at Kilmainham and they travelled with him on his various pilgrimages throughout the country. On one occasion Maighneann is said to have preached to “Dermot, King of Ireland.” Maighneann was described as being renowned from “Shannon to Howth as a tower of piety.” However St. Maelruain regarded St. Maighneann as lazy because he woulk oath to engage in manual labour. St. Maighneann went to Tallaght to make his confession. Maighneann like many other Irish Saints made a prophecy as follows; “A time should come where there should be daughters flippant and tart, devoid of obedience to their mothers: when they of low estate should make much murmuring, and seniors lackreverent cherishing; where there should be impious laymen andprelates both, perverted wicked judges, disrespect to elders; soillbarren of fruits, weather deranged and intemperate seasons; womengiven up to witchcraft, churches unfrequented, deceitful hearts andperfidy on the increase; a time when God’s commandments should beviolated and Doomsday’s token occur every year.” St. Maelruain is recorded as complimenting St. Maighneann and praising the perennial fire which he kept alight at Kilmainham as follows; “To thy successors’ see great prerogatives shall belong, and in Ireland thy fire shall be the third on which privilege shall be conferred, i.e. The fire of the elder of Lianan of Kivarra, the lively and perennial fire of Innismurray and Maighneann’s fire in Kilmainham.” The monks of Kilmainham lived on a highly fertile ridge with good grazing for cattle. The two rivers adjacent to the settlement, the Camac and the Liffey provided ample opportunities for fishing, fish being a staple of the Irish monastic diet. Besides the compliment of twenty seven monks the settlement would have had tenant farmers and other lay people in residence. Maighneann’s monastery or Cill would not have been a large structure judging by other surviving ruins from that era. It was more likely to have been a small stone-built church with a stone clad roof circled by a scattering of wooden huts. Maighneann’s exact date of birth and death are not known but it is established that the monastery still existed in 780 AD when Lergus Ua Fidhchain died at Kilmainham. There are also records which show that a school existed in Kilmainham in the 7th and 8th centuries. (from Kilmainham and Inchicore Local Dictionary of Biography)

Jim Mitchell:

Jim Mitchell was born and raised in Inchicore. He was a much respected politician who served in the cabinets of Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald (1981-82; 1982-87).
He was deputy leader of the Fine Gael party from 2001 until 2002.

Jim Mitchell began his political involvement at the age of 11 when he supported Sean MacBride, leader of the radical republican Clann na Poblachta in the 1957 general election.

He joined Fine Gael in 1967, becoming that party's candidate in a by-election in 1970. He sought a party nomination to run in the 1973 Irish general election. However he agreed not to contest the seat to allow Declan Costello, a senior figure in his party and son of former Taoiseach John A. Costello, to be elected. Costello went on to serve as Attorney-General in the 1973-1977 National Coalition of Fine Gael and Labour.

Mitchell was elected to Dublin Corporation in 1974. In 1976, aged 29, he became the youngest ever Lord Mayor of Dublin. He was an unsuccessful candidate for Dáil Éireann in the 1973 general election in Dublin South West and lost again in the 1976 by-election in the same constituency, to Labour's Brendan Halligan.

In the 1977 general election he was elected to the 21st Dáil for the new constituency of Dublin Ballyfermot. With the party's loss of power in 1977, the new leader, Garret FitzGerald appointed Mitchell to the Party's Front Bench as spokesman on Labour.

In 1981, following a dramatic increase in party support, Garret FitzGerald on his appointment as Taoiseach caused some surprise by excluding some of the older conservative ex-ministers from his cabinet. Instead young liberals like Mitchell were appointed, with Mitchell receiving the high profile post of Minister for Justice, taking responsibility for policing, criminal and civil law reform, penal justice, etc. The Fine Gael-Labour government collapsed in January 1982, but regained power in December of that year. Mitchell again was included in a FitzGerald cabinet, as Minister for Transport.

Mitchell, who was seen as to the left of Fine Gael was however out of favour with John Bruton when he became Fine Gael leader in 1990. When Bruton formed the Rainbow Coalition in December 1994 Mitchell was not appointed to any cabinet post.


In 2001, Bruton was deposed as Fine Gael leader, and replaced by Michael Noonan. Mitchell served as his deputy from 2001 to 2002.

Mitchell also chaired the key Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee. The Committee's work under Mitchell's chairmanship was widely praised for its inquiry into allegations of corruption and widescale tax evasion in the banking sector.

Though regarded in politics as one of Fine Gael's "survivors", who held onto his seat amid major boundary changes, constituency changes and by attracting working class votes in a party whose appeal was primarily middle class, Mitchell lost his seat in the June 2002 general election when he failed to be elected in Dublin Central. That election witnessed a large scale collapse in the Fine Gael vote, with the party dropping from 54 to 31 seats in Dáil Éireann.

Jim had earlier had a liver transplant in an attempt to beat a rare form of cancer which had cost the lives of a number of his siblings. Though the operation was successful, the cancer returned. Though he appeared to be making a recovery, Jim Mitchell ultimately died of the disease on 2nd December 2002.

His former constituency colleague and rival, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, described Jim Mitchell as having made an "outstanding contribution to Irish politics."

William Partridge
William Partridge was born in Sligo in 1874, the son of an English protestant father and an Irish catholic mother. His father had left England in the 1860s and come to Ireland to work as a train driver. When he was sixteen, Partridge followed his father into the railway and began his apprenticeship as a fitter at the railway “running shed” in Sligo. In 1892 he transferred to the Broadstone railway workshops in Dublin. It was there that he first became involved in the trade union movement. He joined the No. 2 branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and was promoted to branch auditor and became a member of the ASE's Dublin central committee. In 1899, Partridge moved to The Great Southern and Western Railway Works (later C.I.E. Works) at Inchicore. He was employed initially as a journeyman fitter and later as an overseer. He continued to organise on behalf of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. The ASE had established a branch in Inchicore in 1894 which met in the Workman's Club on Emmet Road. Throughout his time in Inchicore Partridge was active in local affairs and was highly regarded by all sections of the community. At that time in Inchicore Richmond Barracks was a garrison fort for British soldiers and there was significant support for the empire in the area. As an Irish nationalist as well as a socialist Partridge was anxious to promote Irish culture and the Irish language. Partridge was fully supportive of the opening of a Gaelic League branch in Inchicore, Partridge was also an accomplished poet and had many of his poems published in newspapers and periodicals of the time. In 1904, Partridge was elected to Dublin City Council. As a public representative he fought for better housing and health facilities for the working people. He was successful in getting workers' houses built near the Oblate Church in Inchicore in an area commonly referred to as “the bungalow.”. Partridge sought to have Council meetings held in the evenings so that working people could play a bigger part in local government. While serving his time as a city councillor, Partridge was still employed at Inchicore Works. However, the railway company objected to Partridge's absences from work to attend City Hall and he was forced to resign his seat on Dublin Corporation in 1906. Partridge continued to work for the G.S. & W.R. at Inchicore until 1912. In that year he publicly attacked the policy of religious discrimination and nepotism which openly operated at the works. He was ordered by the Railway Company to retract his accusations. When he refused to withdraw them he was dismissed after thirteen years service with the Company. In response Partridge wrote a pamphlet entitled "My Crime" in which he reiterated his accusations of sectarianism and nepotism against the company. He attacked the way in which men with less experience and lower qualifications were promoted over their catholic fellow workers and also the disparity between Irish workers' wages and those of workers imported from Britain.. In "My. Crime", Partridge denied that he had advocated the promotion of Catholics over non Catholics and declared that he was against any form of sectarianism. "Fair play demands that service and ability alone be made the only test of promotion in the factory or on the road .The religion of the candidate should in no way influence his selection. I have not the slightest objection to the promotion of men professing a religious belief different to the belief I hold, providing they otherwise merit the recognition. Workingmen have their natural duties and obligations. They must protect their health and preserve their lives in order to rear their children and educate and provide for those children. The factory should not become to such men a factory making human derelicts or the finished corpse. " Also in 1912 Partridge was again selected to run for a corporation seat. He warned his former colleagues at Inchicore Works not to publicly show their support for him in case they would be penalised by the railway company. The election campaign proved to be a very bitter fight and Partridge lost by just 23 votes. In 1913 Jim Larkin appointed Partridge as manager of the Emmet Hall, Inchicore. This was the headquarters of the Inchicore branch of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union. Partridge organised I.T.G.W.U. meetings and activities in the Hall and he worked hard to increase the membership of the trade union movement in the area. In addition to his work for the I.T.G.W.U., Partridge continued to act as Dublin District Secretary for the ASE. In 1913, he went forward again for a council seat and this time he was successful. Once elected, He devoted his energy to highlighting issues such as public health and housing. From 1913 onwards, Partridge travelled extensively around Ireland organising the activities of the I.T.G.W.U. During the 1913 lockout he went to Britain to gather support for the locked out workers. He was twice arrested for making speeches in support of the Dublin workers. After the failure of the General Strike in 1913, Partridge was instrumental in the setting up of the Irish Citizen Army. He was elected vice president of that organisation. In Holy Week of 1916, James Connolly sent him to Tralee to oversee the unloading of arms from the German arms ship, the "Aud". After the interception of the "Aud" and the arrest of Roger Casement, Partridge returned to Dublin in time for the Rising. During the Rising he fought in the College of Surgeons alongside Countess Markievicz. After the Rising, He was arrested and sent to Lewes Prison in Britain. He was held there until April, 1917. Partridge's health deteriorated while in prison, and he died three months after his release in July, 1917 at the age of 45. (Source; William Partridge by Hugh Geraghty Curlew Books 2003)
Peadar Doyle

Peadar Doyle was born in Inchicore where he lived all his life. He first worked as a fitter in Guinness’s brewery and after that became a foreman at the great Southern and Western Railway works at Inchicore. He later became a printer and was closely associated with Dollards Printing Company. He was proud of his native city, deeply interested in its arts and crafts, its buildings, its history and the welfare of all its citizens. He first came into public life as a member of the Dublin Corporation in 1918, and he served continuously on that body until failing health in 1955 forced on him a most unwelcome restriction of public activities. He was a zealous representative and an excellent chairman. For three years he was Lord Mayor of Dublin and for many years Chairman of the Dublin Board of Assistance. He was also a Governor of Dr. Steevens' Hospital and a member of the Boards of the Meath Hospital and the old Cork Street Fever Hospital. For many years, also, he was Chairman of the Visiting Committee to Mountjoy Prison. Peadar Doyle had unbroken membership of Dáil Éireann for 33 years. He was elected to Dail Éireann twelve times and he represented Kilmainham and Inchicore throughout that time. He married Kathleen Coleman. Peadar Doyle was a skilled craftsman, a trade unionist and a splendid example of the eager and enthusiastic men who found their way into the Gaelic League, the Sinn Féin organisation and, finally, the Irish Volunteers. He fought in the South Dublin Union under Eamonn Ceannt in the Rising of 1916, and, like Ceannt, he was sentenced to death. He survived that death sentence only to meet with the poignant loss of one of his sons, Sean who was killed by the Black and Tans during the War of Independence in 1920. Sean’s funeral procession which proceeded down Emmet Road was one of the largest funeral's ever witnessed in Inchicore. Great as was the disturbing influence of the times on Peadar who was moulded to craftsmanship, culture and the domestic and civic arts rather than to contention and strife he was, nevertheless, able, in the crucial years of the struggle for freedom and in the formative years of the State, to put all his energies at the service of his country, which he continued to serve in a selfless manner right up to the time of his death. Peadar Doyle was a man who never flinched from his duty. He was a builder anxious always to construct rather than to tear down. He had his own strongly-held views, but he was ever tolerant, friendly and understanding to others. He survived all the upsets and differences of 40 years of Irish public life without uttering a harsh word. In later years he was known to champion the rights of the railway workers and he was behind the building of the community hall on Mourne road in Drimnagh which became a national venue for amateur theatre at a time of great privation in the country. At the time of his death he was Chief Whip of the Fine Gael Party and had been, for many years, Chief Whip to the Cumann na nGaedheal Governments. He died on the 4th of August 1956.

Joe Carr

Joseph Benedict "Joe" Carr was born in Inchicore on 22nd February 1922. He was a son of George and Margaret Mary Waters the fifth of their seven children. At 10 days old, he was adopted by Mary’s sister, Kathleen, and her husband, James Carr, who were childless and had recently returned home from India. The Carrs had just been appointed steward and stewardess of the Portmarnock Golf Club, allowing young Joe to play golf from a very early age. Carr won his first major tournament, the East of Ireland Amateur, at the age of 19 in 1941, which started one of Ireland's greatest golfing careers. He went on to win twelve East of Ireland titles, twelve West of Ireland titles, six Irish Amateur Close Championships, four Irish Amateur Opens, and three South of Ireland titles. Carr won The Amateur Championship three times, in 1953, 1958, and 1960, and was runner-up in 1968. He won his first British Amateur at Hoylake in 1953, when he defeated America's E. Harvie Ward Jr. by two holes in the 36-hole final, he thought he would bag the title again and again over the next few years. Instead, further triumphs proved elusive. By the end of 1957, he was desperate. The 1958 championship was one he felt he had to win in that it was being held at St. Andrews. Before the end of '57, he studied the Old Course with a view of analysing precisely what it would take to win an Amateur over those rumpled fairways. What he learned was that he would need to drive well, to putt well - and to be in full control with the 8 and 9 irons. Eight months before the championship, Carr embarked on a daily routine that began at first light with a run along the sea-front while his regular caddie, Andy Doherty, lined up balls on the range at Sutton Golf Club. The early-morning practice stint was devoted solely to driving. After working during the day at his clothing business, he would devote the evenings to the irons, his session under makeshift floodlights being followed by night-time putting on the family carpet. Before he took the boat to Scotland, he told his wife, Dorothy, with whom he would win nine
Irish mixed foursomes championships, that he would come back with the title. 'No one else has done the work I have done,' he promised her. 'They can't beat me.' He was right. Up until that week, there had never been more than 286 entrants for the Amateur. At St. Andrews, there were 488, none of whom troubled Carr. Ultimately, he defeated Alan Thirwell by 3 and 2 in the final. The work he did for that week continued to pay dividends for three years. In 1959, he came within the proverbial whisker of winning the Dunlop Masters at Portmarnock from the professionals. He was a semi-finalist at the U.S. Amateur in 1961, and was low amateur at The Open Championship in both 1956 and 1958 (and finished 8th overall in 1960). In 1967, he became the first Irishman to play in the Masters Tournament (making the cut). Carr received the Bob Jones Award in 1961, the USGA's highest honour, which is given for "distinguished sportsmanship in golf". He was the first non-American to win the award. Internationally, Carr represented Ireland in numerous amateur golfing events. He was a member of a record eleven Walker Cup teams from 1947 to 1967, including non-playing captain in 1965 and playing captain in 1967, amassing a record of 5-14-1. After several years of playing against the United States’ top-ranked players, he was moved down in the order for the 1967 event -- only to be paired against Jack Nicklaus (who won the match). He played and captained on multiple Eisenhower Trophy teams, and represented Ireland in the Home Internationals every year from 1947 to 1969. In the book Breaking 80, which chronicled the life of Joe Carr there's a story of the time when the player was asked to play a round of golf with the US president, Dwight D Eisenhower, at Portmarnock Golf Club with the stipulation: that a golf cart be furnished for the president because of his heart condition. At that time, as Joe put it, "there wasn't a single golf cart in all of Ireland". So, just as he had done in extricating himself from tricky spots in numerous championships throughout an honour-laden career, Carr used his ingenuity, and an open-top Rolls Royce was borrowed from a friend and used for the visiting dignitary to fulfil his ambition of playing a game with one of the game's true stars. The story, though, demonstrates how well respected Carr was. Carr retired from competitive golf in 1971, after his son Roddy played for the winning Great Britain & Ireland Walker Cup team. In 1991, Carr was named Captain of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, the first Irishman to hold the post. In July 2007, Carr was elected to the World Golf Hall of Fame, and was inducted in November 2007. He died on 3rd June 2004 aged 82, in Dublin's Mater Private Hospital after a short illness.

John Bully Egan

John Bully Egan was Chairman of Kilmainham at the end of the eighteenth century. Not only was he a judge and a barrister, but as chairman of Kilmainham he was in fact in control of local government in County Dublin. He was also a member of the Irish House of Commons and he famously voted against the act of Union. Bully Egan, as, from his size and his swagger, he was universally denominated, gained his wealth and numerous legal briefs as a result of the patronage of his friend and patron Lord Avonmore. Avonmore was a highly placed judge and politician who was first called to the Bar in 1764. He sat in the Irish House of Commons as member successively for the boroughs of Donegal and Carrickfergus became Attorney-General for Ireland in 1782 and was elevated to Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer in 1783. John Bully Egan was an immense-sized man, as brawny, and almost as black, as a coal-porter. In an election for the borough of Tallaght, Egan was an unsuccessful candidate. He however, appealed the decision, and the appeal came before a committee of the House of Commons. In the heat of a very warm summer, Egan was struggling through the crowd, his hankerchief in one hand, his wig in the other, and his whole countenance hot and sweating, when he met John Philpot Curran--"I'm sorry for you, my dear fellow," said Curran. "Sorry! why so, Jack-why so? - I'm perfectly at my ease!" "Alas, Egan! 'tis but too visible to every one that you're losing tallow (Tallaght) fast," Egan lived in Santry in a delightful Georgian bungalow known as Kiarcross where he entertained many of the leading figures of his day including some of the prominent figures of The United Irishmen. During a temporary dispute between Lord Avonmore and John Philpot Curran, Egan, either wishing to court the favour of Avonmore, or supposing that Curran meant to be offensive, denounced the judge's imaginary quarrel so bitterly that a duel between the barristers was the consequence. They met at Bully's Acre whereupon Egan complained that the disparity in their sizes gave his antagonist a manifest advantage "I might as well fire at a razor's edge as at him," said Egan, and he may hit me as easily as a turf-stack," "I'll tell you what, Mr Egan," replied Curran, his pistol in his hand, I wish to take no advantage of you whatever - let my size be chalked out upon your side, and I am quite content that every shot which hits outside that mark should count for nothing." It is obvious that these contests were not very deadly and although the combatants fired at one another, the shots were too aimless to produce any injury. In all Egan fought fourteen duels and it is thought that this is how the graveyard at Kilmainham got the title “Bully’s Acre” Egan was then a circuit barrister making a good living. After a dispute with Henry Grattan, there was not a waiter in any town on his circuit whose first question to the
passenger on his entrance to the hotel was not invariably, “Sir, would your honour dine; you can have any fish your honour pleases, perhaps your honour would prefer an Egan.” “An Egan, what's an Egan?” “It is a black soul (sole) fried.” The result of all this was, that wherever poor Egan went, he was associated with the idea of a black sole. Few men can encounter successfully continual ridicule; his business, gradually declined; the death of his friend the Chief Baron in 1805 gave it the finishing blow; and, when he died in 1810 his entire stock in trade consisted of three shillings found upon his chimney-piece! However, he left a memory behind him which men more fortunate in life might envy. With talents far above mediocrity, a good heart and a high spirit, he passed through the world beloved by his friends, and his last political act must command the respect even of his enemies. He was, as we have seen, far from independence. Almost his only wealth was the chairmanship of Kilmainham. He was in Parliament when Ireland was joined to England and he was threatened with ministerial displeasure if he opposed the act of Union and offered the post of Baron of the Exchequer with £3,500 per year if he would support the measure. As the debate proceeded, Egan was perceived writhing with some insuppressible emotion; at length, unable longer to contain himself, he sprang from the benches, gave an impassioned speech against the proposal and sat down indignantly exclaiming, Ireland! - Ireland for ever! and damn Kilmainham!” Had others acted with his honourable bluntness, the act would never have passed. A poetry broadsheet published after his death said “Let no man arraign him, That knows, to save the Ireland, he damned Kilmainham” Egan was also a member of The Monks of The Screw, (ie. corkscrew) a club similar to The Hellfire Club. The Monks of the Screw, met every Saturday, during the law term, in a large house in Kevin's Street, the property of Lord Tracton. The furniture and regulations of their festive apartment were completely monkish, and they owed both their title and their foundation to an original society, formed near Newmarket by Lord Avonnaore. Among the members of the society were Flood, Grattan, Curran, Father O’Leary, Lord Charlemont, Judges Day, Chamberlaine, Bowes Daly, George Ogle and Lord Avonmore. John Philpot Curran was installed as Grand Prior of the order, and deputed to compose the charter song which went as follows; When Saint Patrick our order created, And called us the Monks of the Screw, Good rules he revealed to our Abbot, To guide us in what we should do. But first he replenished his fountain With liquor the best in the sky, And he swore by the word of his saintship, That fountain should never run dry, My children, be chaste till you're tempted, While sober, be wise and discreet, And humble your bodies with fasting, Whene'er you've got nothing to eat. Then be not a glass in the convent, Except on a festival found and this rule to enforce, I ordain it, A festival all the year round! (from Kilmainham and Inchicore Local Dictionary of Biography)

John Aspinall.

John Aspinall was born in 1852. He arrived in Ireland in 1875 at the age of 23 from his former post in Crewe to take up the post of assistant chief engineer at the Great Southern and Western Railway Works at Inchicore. He was promptly installed in the manager’s house in the Inchicore Works which his young wife re-named “Mount Vernon.” Within two years of his arrival the workforce in the railway works had swelled to 1,200 including 80 apprentices. Aspinall became chief engineer in 1882. He was a hugely innovative engineer designing several new engines and perfecting and patenting the vacuum brake 1878. (otherwise know as the deadman’s brake). Aspinall had a progressive attitude to employer–employee relations and it was thanks to his foresight that a proper dining room and reading room were established at the railway works. It was during his stewardship that the first Inchicore Gala was held in 1879 to which 2000 people came to enjoy a day of sports, entertainment and public exhibitions. Besides designing new engines Aspinall oversaw the establishment of a larger wagon shop which eventually was turning out four new railway wagons every week. Within three years the works were turning out faster engines for the mail trains particularly the Cork Mail Train. In 1885 the Prince and Princess of Wales made a special journey to Cork on the mail train accompanied by John Aspinall. The “Daily News” of April 17th 1885 reported that “ The special train in which the Royal party are travelling consists of seven carriages, with engine and tender, all of which have been built at the works of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company at Inchicore, Dublin from the designs of Mr. John AF Aspinall, the locomotive engineer.” In 1886 John Aspinall left Inchicore when he was appointed Chief Mechanical Engineer at the works of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway

Royal Hospital:

The Royal Hospital Kilmainham is a mile and a half west of the city centre and at the time of its construction the site was contiguous with the Phoenix Park. The hospital was built in 1684 by Sir
William Robinson, official State Surveyor General for James Butler, 1st Duke of Ormonde and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to King Charles II, as a home for retired soldiers and continued in that use for over 250 years.

Based on Les Invalides in Paris, the building consists of four unbroken ranges enclosing a courtyard. It is similar to Les Invalides in its purpose, the adoption of a closed courtyard plan with arcaded walks corresponding to passages on the floors above. Two years after the building was started Wren began to build a similar Hospital at Chelsea.

Of course the site of The Royal Hospital at Kilmainham had a previous significant history. It was the site of St. Mhaighneann’s Church in the 7th century. Brian Boru assembled his army at Kilmainham prior to the Battle of Clontarf. Later this was the same site where the Strongbow built a monastery for Knights Templars in 1174 after the Norman invasion.

The monastery/hospital was used as a seat of power for the English Government in Ireland for 300 hundred years. The Priors of Kilmainham often held the highest civil offices in the “Kingdom.” Parliaments were often held in the “Castle” of Kilmainham. In 1309 The Knights Templar were suppressed by the Pope, The King of France and the King of England. All of their very valuable properties throughout Ireland were given to The Knights Hospitallers.

The Knights Hospitaller then transferred their head-quarters from Wexford to Kilmainham. The Priors of Kilmainham continued to command significant civil power and were relied upon by the Kings and Queens of England to maintain their control in Ireland up until the reign of Henry VIII.

The most famous Prior of Kilmainham was Roger Outlaw. He became prior of Kilmainham in 1316. In 1317 Outlaw was granted the fee-farm of Chapelizod. Which was then added to the lands of the monastery. Also in 1317 Outlaw convened a Parliament at Kilmainham at which he secured the release of Richard De Burgo, Earl of Ulster who had been imprisoned by the Mayor and Commons of Dublin on suspicion of aiding the Scottish invasion of Ireland by Robert de Bruce.

In 1318 Outlaw was made Lord Treasurer of Ireland where upon he bound himself and his successors to pay £300 a year to the Archbishop of Dublin to exercise Episcopal jurisdiction in Rathmore and neighbouring churches.

Also in 1318 King Edward recognising the success of Outlaw’s organisational skills and the charitable work of the monastery granted that all deoudands accruing to Ireland for the ensuing year should be paid towards the support of the poor flocking to Kilmainham.

In 1326 Outlaw granted Nickolas de Rosse a pension of twenty shillings of silver for defending the monastery in courts. Also in the same year he gave accommodation to William De Wideworth in Dublin near Bothe street (later Fishamble Street). Outlaw played an important part in securing peace between many various factions in Ireland. A vicious civil war broke out among the Norman barons with the Fitzgeralds, the Butlers and the Berminghams on one side and the De Burgs and the Le Poers on the other.

The native Irish took the opportunity to engage in attacks on both sides as their common enemies. Their activity compelled the barons to feel that they were engaged in a work of self-extirmination.

Roger Outlaw addressed himself with creditable zeal to establish peace among them and the native chieftains having gained no advantages of a permanent character from their constant struggles offered to submit themselves to the government and Outlaw thus prevailed.

Outlaw petitioned the King to have the whole body of English law applied to Ireland. An offer of eight thousand marks was offered but the English administration rejected the offer in the belief that the condition in Ireland was in too great a state of ferment and commotion. The Irish chieftains were most
anxious to secure the protection of the common law but the English invaders wanted the freedom to annex the property of the native Irish.

Outlaw had to contend with newly created Earls of Desmond, Ormonde, Ulster, Meath, Kildare, Leix, Kilkenny, Wexford and Carlow as well as the native Irish chieftains the O’Neills, the McCartans, O’Moore’s, O’Dempseys, O’Connors, O’Tooles, the McMurrroughs and the O’Riellys. Outlaw travelled to London on two occasions in 1323 and again in 1331 to report to the King on the state of things in Ireland. In 1331 he assisted the king’s finances with a loan of £200.

In 1331 the King again affirmed the possessions of Kilmainham under Roger Outlaw. The King also bestowed the church of Ballyogarry on Kilmainham. In 1333 Outlaw bestowed a pension of £40 on William Kardleby in recognition of goods and services provided to Kilmainham. In 1334 Outlaw granted John Joyce Chaplin, the church of St. Michael in Wexford with all the profits therefrom for life at an annual rent of four marks of silver, all taxes and burdens to be duly paid.

In 1335 Outlaw gave a pension of 13 shillings and 4 pence to Adam de Kingston and he granted the church of Ballyogarry to Bartleby Clake in lieu of a pension of £40. He also granted to Hammond de Lee the post of park-keeper of Kilmainham with a daily allowance of a white loaf, a household loaf, a flagon of best ale, a dish of meat from the kitchen and a half a mark of silver annually for the purchase of shoes. Outlaw gave numerous similar pensions to various persons connected with the monastery and to persons outside of it.

In 1338 the King rewarded Roger Outlaw for his long service and loans of money with custody of the manor at the Salmon Leap in Leixlip. In 1341 Roger Outlaw, still Prior, Chancellor and Lord Justice of Ireland died at Any (Knockainy Co. Limerick) “a prudent and upright man who by his care and the special favour and licence of the king, had procured many lands, churches and rents for order of the Knights Hospitallers.”

The next most important Prior of Kilmainham was John Rawson. Rawson was born in Yorkshire in England in 1470. He joined the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in 1497. He was appointed prior of Kilmainham 1511. In 1517 he was elevated to the position of Treasurer of Ireland.

Rawson’s tenure at Kilmainham coincided with the reign of Henry VIII. In September 1529 Prior Rawson became part of Henry VIII’s special and secret Council of Three Ministers. In addition to the Prior of Kilmainham, the Council included the Chancellor and Archbishop of Dublin, John Alen and the Chief Justice, Patrick Bermingham.

The final phase in the history of the Irish Hospitallers at Kilmainham took place amid the political upheaval of the Kildare rebellion and the subsequent programme of political and ecclesiastical reform introduced by Henry VIII’s chief minister Thomas Cromwell.

Throughout this period the fate of Kilmainham and the Irish priory was placed in the hands of John Rawson. Rawson was one of the few ministers to remain loyal to the crown during the Kildare rebellion. In fact, the castle at Kilmainham came under attack from the forces of Silken Thomas in 1532.

From the crown inquisitions taken at Kilmainham's dissolution, reference is made to "a barn with stone walls the roof of which Thomas Fitzgerald, rebel and traitor, about six years ago burned and destroyed with all the grain there". Events in Ireland were affected by the political crisis in England arising from Henry VIII's divorce In 1536, a Bill for the "suppression of certain monasteries" was put before parliament.

This was the beginning of a campaign of dissolution that would not end until 1540. The final casualty would be Kilmainham. The early targets of the royal commissioners were the smaller monasteries in outlying areas. However, Sir William Brabazon, the undertreasurer, as early as autumn 1536, recognised the potential value of the wealthier Dublin monasteries, including Kilmainham. Brabazon's reason for not pressing for its immediate suppression was that he thought it would be better to wait until the death of the ageing Prior Rawson.

Brabazon again suggested in 1537 that the closure of the bigger monasteries with a yearly revenue of
2,000 marks would go towards the support of the army. Included in the proposal was the suggestion that the Knights Hospitallers' land should be confiscated. John Alen suggested that Rawson should retire to an estate he held in England.

However Rawson was reluctant to do so. Kilmainham was the last monastery to be surrendered. It was surrendered on the 12th November 1540 "by Sir John Rawson, Knight, the Prior, with the consent of his confreres". He was awarded a crown pension of 500 marks.

The Brabazons gained some of the lands associated with the Hospital and continue to benefit from those grants even to the present day. The construction of the modern hospital was recognised even in its day as significant bulwark for the English administration in Ireland.

Many of the viceroys and commanders-in-chief operated from the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. General Lake who defeated the Rebellion of 1798 was head-quartered at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. Robert Emmet who led the Rebellion of 1803 was particularly concerned to cut-off access to the city by troops stationed at the Royal Hospital.

The Artillery Barracks at Islandbridge was contiguous with the lands of the Royal Hospital prior to the advent of the railway. Bully's Acre which is part of the grounds of the Royal Hospital was the most popular cemetery in Dublin prior to 1832.

General Michael O'Brien Dilkes was given command of The Royal Hospital Kilmainham by Queen Anne in 1755.

About the year 1760 General Dilkes, attempted to convert the famous Bully's Acre burial ground, into a botanic garden for the Royal Hospital, and in order to carry out this act of desecration he caused the graves to be levelled, spread a thick covering of lime over the entire surface, and enclosed the place with a high wall.

The working men of the Liberties, however, exasperated at this indignity to their ancestors and relatives interred there, collected in a body one night, levelled the wall. It fell before them like a house of cards, and the place once more became a common-land.

General Dilkes's life was threatened: an attack upon the Hospital itself was made, headed by the Liberty Boys. They burst in the western gate, which the sentry had sought to close, and in the attempt he was seriously wounded.

General Dilkes called together the more active of the pensioners, who, fully armed, marched down the Elm Walk. A battle between missiles and muskets continued for some time; but the mob were opposed to men who were trained soldiers. The leaders of the rioters fell dead, many were wounded, and the Liberty Boys beat a retreat.

It was deemed wise, however, to abandon the plan of enclosing "Bully's Acre." As the only free burial place for the poor, it thereafter continued to be used until the cholera epidemic of 1832, when 3,200 interments having taken place in six months, the Government, apprehensive of pestilence finally closed it.

The northern side of the Royal Hospital contains the dining hall and chapel and is marked by the clocktower and spire. The chapel is expressed externally by the large stained glass window as seen in the illustration above which breaks through the main cornice of the building. The ranges are two storeys in height with a further dormer storey.

Even at the time of its construction it was felt to be an important and impressive building with one commentator of the time suggesting that the hospital and the university (Trinity College) exchange buildings. The placing end to end of the chapel and great hall is ceremonial. The hall is placed centrally on the north range with the arcade being broken to accommodate it. The tower is positioned outside of the main structure breaking through the roof of the pedimented entrance to the great hall. It has three stages, the base, an octagonal stage and the spire which has handles much like those that James Gibbs placed at St Martin-in-the-fields in London in 1722-26. Here Robinson was doing it as early as 1701.
The interiors of the building are largely destroyed by the building's conversion into an art gallery but the interiors of the chapel and main hall are still intact.

For a time the quadrangle was used for storage of old statuary of British monarchs that were removed from public spaces in Dublin after independence.

A statue of Queen Victoria that came from the front of Leinster House, was stored here for many years before being sold to the city of Victoria in Australia.

To the north of the building lie the recently restored formal gardens. The Tudor Gothic gateway at the end of the formal avenue leading to the Royal Hospital was designed by Francis Johnston, one of the leading architects of the day.

This gateway originally stood beside the river Liffey at Bloody Bridge (now Rory O'More Bridge), but had to be moved after the arrival of the railway in 1844 increased traffic congestion (obviously not new to Dublin).

He had placed his personal coat of arms above the arch, concealed by a piece of wood painted to match the stone, his idea being that his arms would be revealed to future generations after the wood became rotten.

However, his little trick was uncovered when the gateway was taken down for removal. The coat of arms present on the gateway is that of the Royal Hospital.

Following the creation of the Irish Free State the Royal Hospital was considered as a potential home for Oireachtas Eireann, the Irish national parliament. Eventually it was decided to keep parliament in its temporary home in Leinster House.

The Hospital remained the home of a dwindling number of soldiers, before being variously used by the Garda Siochana (the Irish police force) and as a storage location for property belonging to the National Museum of Ireland.

The Royal Hospital in Kilmainham was finally restored by the Irish Government in 1984 (its 300th anniversary) and controversially opened as the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA).

Some people working in heritage organisations criticised the decision to demolish the eighteenth century barrack rooms in one section of the quadrangle to create open spaces for the IMMA.

A new foyer and bookshop area was constructed within the external fabric of the old building and this contains a magnificent glass and steel staircase.

Every year on the National Day of Commemoration - the Sunday nearest July 11th - the anniversary of the Truce that ended the Anglo-Irish War - the President of Ireland, in the presence of members of the Government of Ireland, members of Dáil Éireann and of Seanad Éireann, the Council of State, the Defence Forces, the Judiciary and the Diplomatic Corps, lays a wreath in the courtyard in memory of all Irishmen and Irishwomen who have died in past wars and on service with the United Nations.

Kilmainham Gaol:

Kilmainham Gaol located on Inchicore road is now a museum. The gaol has been run as a visitors’ attraction since the mid-1980s by the Office of Public Works.

Kilmainham Gaol has played an important part in Irish history, as many leaders of Irish rebellions were imprisoned and some were executed in the gaol.

In recent years the gaol has been used as a film-set for several movies including “In The Name Of The Father.”

When it was first built in 1796, Kilmainham Gaol was called the 'New Gaol' to distinguish it from the
Kilmainham Gaol was abandoned as a gaol in 1924, by the government of the new Irish Free State. It was closed, locked and essentially left to rot by a population later years served first as Taoiseach and subsequently President of Ireland. After his release the prison restored and Child which survives in the east wing. The chapel were the wedding took place has also been during her 3 month imprisonment she painted pictures on her cell walls, including one of the Madonna herself became a prisoner in Kilmainham in February morning Joseph Plunkett was shot by a firing squad. Grace lived until 1955 and never remarried. Grace was baptised in April 1916 and the couple were due to marry when the rising occurred. When she learned that her fiancé was to be executed, she persuaded the authorities to allow the wedding to ahead in the prison. Thus on May 3rd 1916 the two were married in the small prison chapel. The next Joseph Plunkett and Grace Gifford. Grace was born a protestant but was baptised in April 1916 and the couple were due to marry when the rising occurred. When she learned that her fiancé was to be executed, she persuaded the authorities to allow the wedding to ahead in the prison. Thus on May 3rd 1916 the two were married in the small prison chapel. The next morning Joseph Plunkett was shot by a firing squad. Grace lived until 1955 and never remarried. Grace herself became a prisoner in Kilmainham in February 1923, during the Civil War. She was an artist and during her 3 month imprisonment she painted pictures on her cell walls, including one of the Madonna and Child which survives in the east wing. The chapel were the wedding took place has also been restored. The last prisoner held in Kilmainham was anti-treaty IRA leader Eamonn De Valera who in later years served first as Taoiseach and subsequently President of Ireland. After his release the prison was closed, locked and essentially left to rot by a population who hated even the mention of its name. Kilmainham Gaol was abandoned as a gaol in 1924, by the government of the new Irish Free State. It
wasn’t until the 1960s that efforts began to preserve it and open it again to the public. It opened in time for the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising and is now one of the most popular tourist destinations in Dublin. Following lengthy restoration, it now houses a museum on the history of Irish nationalism and offers guided tours of the building. An art gallery on the top floor exhibits paintings, sculptures and jewelry of prisoners incarcerated in jails all over Ireland.

Old Kilmainham Gaol

Old Kilmainham Gaol was in old Kilmainham at the end of Watery Lane now called Brookfield Road opposite the pub now called Carrigan’s. This is a very ancient area marked on many maps going back to the mid 1600s. The following is an account of the sale of the Old Kilmainham Gaol.

Sale of Old Kilmainham Gaol
Statutes Passed in the Parliaments Held in Ireland: 1786-1788

VII. And whereas the present gaol of the county of Dublin is situated in a low unhealthy place, and is in every respect insufficient to contain and keep securely the number of persons that are frequently committed thereto, on which account the grand jury of the county have presented the sum of nine hundred fifty-three pounds sixteen shillings and two pence, to be levied upon the county, and applied towards erecting a new and commodious gaol after a plan by them approved, the estimate thereof amounting to the sum of seven thousand seven hundred and thirty-seven pounds twelve shillings and ten pence; and as that part of the common of Kilmainham in the lordship or manor of Kilmainham in the said county of Dublin, and known by the name of Gallows-hill, is deemed the most airy and convenient site for a county gaol, and as sir Nicholas Láwless, baronet, to whom the Lordship of manor of Kilmainham now appertains, has generously proposed to permit a new gaol for the said county to be there erected: be it enacted the authority aforesaid, That it shall be lawful for the grand jury of the said county, by presentment at any of the four terms, to authorize and appoint any person or persons whom they shall think proper, to accept from the said sir Nicholas Láwless, his heirs or assigns, an effectual conveyance or assurance to such person or persons, his or their heirs for ever, of such part and so much of the said common of Kilmainham called Gallows-hill, as such grand jury by such presentment express to be necessary or convenient for purpose of erecting and building thereon such county gaol, and making convenient and necessary approaches, yards and offices thereto, subject to and under the yearly rent of one pound sterling, payable unto the said sir Nicholas Láwless, his heirs and assigns for ever; and that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said sir Nicholas Láwless, baronet, his heirs or assigns, by deed indented, and to be enrolled within six months after the execution thereof, to make such effectual conveyance or assurance of the said premisses to such person or persons, his and their heirs for ever, at and under such yearly rent as aforesaid, upon trust, and to the intent and purpose, that on the premises so to be conveyed and assured, there may be erected, built, and made, such county gaol, with convenient and necessary approaches, offices, and yards thereto.

VIII. Provided, That no land to be so conveyed or assured to such person or persons as aforesaid, shall make or be reputed to make such person or persons, as aforesaid his or their heirs or assigns, or any person or persons under him, them, or any of them, claiming or deriving as freeholder, or freeholders, to any intent or purpose of law whatsoever.

IX. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That from and after the execution of such conveyance by the said sir Nicholas Láwless, his heirs or his assigns, the said annual rent of one pound sterling shall be levied upon the county of Dublin, by presentment of the grand jury of the said county at Easter term in every year, and be paid to the said sir Nicholas Láwless, baronet, his heirs or assigns.

X. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that after the said new gaol shall be so erected, it shall be for the grand jury of the said county at any Easter may be or Michaelmas term, with the consent of the court of the King’s Bench, to present the old gaol of Kilmainham, and the ground upon which it stands, to be sold by public cant, and the money arising from such sale to be paid into the Bank of Ireland for the use of the county, or to present the said gaol to be a Marshalsea, work-house, or house of correction for the said county; and it shall be lawful for the grand jury, at any Easter or Michaelmas term, to present one main or pipe of the bore of three inches to be laid in the most convenient line to convey water from the Grand Canal to the said intended new gaol, and accordingly at all times to convey water through the same, and to present at each Easter term, a sum not exceeding twenty pounds to be raised upon the county at large, and paid as a rent to the company of undertakers of the Grand Canal for the use of the water to be so conveyed, if they shall demand the same; but it
shall not be lawful to lay any such main or pipe into the said Canal without the consent of the said company of undertakers; provided, that if the sum to be agreed upon as a compensation shall not be so presented, it shall be lawful for the said company of undertakers of the Grand Canal to prevent the said water from being taken for the use of the said gaol, so long as such compensation shall remain unpresented by the grand jury or grand juries of the said county, or if it shall appear to the grand jury of the said county, that any other water can be more conveniently conveyed through pipes or by a water course, to supply the fixed intended gaol upon more reasonable or equal terms, then, and in that case, it shall be lawful for the grand jury to present at each Easter term the sum that they may agree for to be raised upon the county at large, and paid to the proprietor or proprietors of any such water for the use of such water, and to present at any Easter or Michaelmas term, such pipes to be laid or water course to be made to convey such water to the intended new gaol, and to raise the amount of the expence of laying such pipes, or making such water course upon the county at large.

ORIGINS OF THE GRAND CANAL

The Commissioners for the Inland Navigation of Ireland were established 1751 in the reign of King George II. However work did not begin on the Grand Canal until 1756 with much wrangling over land acquisition and the best direction to take. It was intended to connect Dublin with the Shannon but different landowners vied with each other to have the canal pass through their land which would increase the value of their land and make transport to and from Dublin easier for them. (For example Lord Cloncurry, who had extensive lands in Inchicore also held the demesne of Lyons near Ardclough in north County Kildare. At a time when canal passenger boats travelled at 3mph. Lyons was the nearest overnight stop to Dublin on the Grand Canal.) Most of the work on The Grand Canal was carried out during the reign of King George III who became King in 1760. On the 5th of April 1773 Earl Harcourt, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland laid the foundation stone of the 1st Lock at Kilmarnham. About 30 of the Directors of the “Company of The Undertakers of the Grand Canal were present. That same evening they entertained the Lord Lieutenant and 100 guests at the Rotunda in Dublin. The main line of the canal is 82 miles long with 43 locks, five of which are double locks. The main line crosses Leinster from Ringsend in Dublin City to the River Shannon. The Barrow line runs south from Lowtown, County Kildare to join the River Barrow in Athy. There are several branches off the Grand Canal leading to Naas/Corbally, to Mountmellick, Co. Laois, to Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath, and to Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. The Canal first opened to traffic from Sallins 1779. The first passenger boat service to Robertstown was in 1784. Work on the circular line to Portabello in Dublin City only finished 1790. On December 31st, 1759, Arthur Guinness purchased a four acre site at St. James's Gate in the city of Dublin for the purpose of brewing beer. The construction of the Grand Canal was a godsend to Arthur Guinness and his brewing company. He used the canal to transport his beer and to transport the raw materials to his brewery. He even used the waters of the Grand Canal for brewing purposes. Canal transport at the time was much cheaper and much more reliable than road transport. It could carry heavier and bigger loads in the eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries. THIS INDENTURE AND CONTRACT between the Directors General of Inland Navigation and the Grand Canal Company. THIS Indenture, made the 25th day of March in the year of our Lord 1806, and in the 46th year of the reign of his present Majesty King George the Third, and so forth: between the Right honourable Sackville Hamilton, the Honourable Hans Blackwood, Francis Trench, Robert Rutledge, and Michael Burke, esquires, Directors of all Works relating to Inland Navigation in Ireland, appointed under and by virtue of a certain Act of Parliament passed in the 40th year of the reign of his said present Majesty, intitled " An Act for granting to his Majesty the sum of Five hundred thousand Pounds for promoting "Inland Navigation in Ireland," and for the other purposes therein mentioned, and for authorizing " the raising of the said sum by Loan," of the one part; and the Company of Undertakers of the Grand Canal, incorporated by virtue of an Act of Parliament also passed in Ireland in the 11th and 12th years of the reign of his said Majesty, intitled " An Act for enabling " certain Persons to carry on and complete the Grand Canal," of the other part. Whereas the said Company have presented to the said Directors a proposal for improving, making, completing, maintaining and preserving in a permanent and workmanlike manner (but without trackways) the Navigation of that part of the river Shannon situate between the northern extremity of Lough Derg and the northern extremity of the canal at or near Athlone, as described in and by the plans thereof laid before the said Directors by the said Company, for and upon certain considerations, terms and conditions therein and hereinafter mentioned. And whereas the said Company have by their said proposal required such aid, grant and
conveyance as hereinafter mentioned and contained, and for the purpose of obtaining the same have in
due form of law laid before the said Directors a description of the line of the said Navigation and the
land through which the same is intended to be carried, and a schedule of the tolls and duties intended to
be taken on the said Navigation, and have annexed to the said proposal an estimate of the expense of
the said undertaking, which proposal, schedule of tolls and duties, and estimate, have been approved of
by the said Directors, and the same have also been submitted to the consideration of his Exceuceny
Philip, Earl of Hardwicke, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and the Right honourable John Foster, the
Right honourable Maurice Fitzgerald, the Right honourable Sir Lawrence Parsons, bart., and the Right
honourable Lodge, Lord Baron Frankfort, four of the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty's Treasury,
and approved of by them respectively. And whereas the said Company have observed and complied
with all other the regulations and conditions in the said first above in part recited Act of Parliament
prescribed to be done and performed in such case. And whereas upon the consideration of the premises
it is thought expedient to grant and allow, and the said Directors have agreed to grant and allow to the
said Company of Undertakers of the Grand Canal, and their successors, out of the said sum of
500,000/., a sum of money not exceeding in the whole the sum of 54,634/. 18s. 7d. towards
completing the said Navigation and the works thereunto belonging, upon the terms and conditions, and
to be laid out and expended in the manner hereinafter specified. Now this Indenture witnesseth, that the
said Directors in pursuance of their said agreement, and in consideration of the covenants and
agreements hereinafter mentioned and contained on the part and behalf of the said Company of
Undertakers of the Grand Canal, and their successors, to be done and performed, in pursuance of the
powers vested in them by the said first above-mentioned Act of Parliament, do by these presents, for
themselves and their successors, covenant, promise, grant and agree to and with the said Company and
their successors in the manner following, that is to say, that a sum not exceeding the sum of 54,634/.18s.
id. shall be granted and allowed out of the said sum of 500,000/. to the said Company and their
successors, to be advanced in the manner and subject to the provisos and conditions hereinafter
mentioned, to be laid out by the said Company and their successors for the several purposes and in the
manner by the said Company hereinafter in that behalf covenanted and agreed upon, that is to say, a
sum not exceeding 1,000 L to reimburse the said Company the expenses they may have been at or been
put to in procuring to be made soundings and surveys of the river, and plans for the perfection and
improvement of the navigation thereof, and of proposed inland canals parallel to the said river and
communicating therewith, copies whereof respectively shall be first delivered to the Directors General,
unless they have been already furnished therewith; a further sum of 39,634/. 18s. 7d., being the
amount of the original estimate for completing the said Navigation, and two-thirds of such sum as the
expense of completing me said Navigation in the manner hereinafter particularly specified shall exceed
the said sum of 39,634/. 18s. 7d. 9 agree to and with the said Company and their successors, that after the
said Company and their successors shall have laid out and expended in the manner above mentioned
the sum of 39,634/. 18s. yd., such further sum shall from time be paid to the said Company and their
successors as shall, taken together, be equal to two-thirds of such sums as the said Company and their
successors shall prove to the satisfaction of the said Directors and their successors, they, the said
Company and their successors, shall have actually and bond Jide laid out and expended on the said
works over and above the said sum of 39,634 /., 18 s. 7 d., provided such sums so to be paid for such
exceedings shall not amount in the whole to more than the sum of 14,000/.; it being the true intent and
meaning of these presents that the said Company and their successors shall not in any event be entitled
to receive more than the sum of 53,634/. 18 s. 7 d., exclusive of the aforesaid allowance for soundings,
plans; and that one-fourth part of the sum of 39,634/. 18 a. 7 d., that is to say, the sum of
9,908/. 145. 7d., shall not be paid or payable to the said Company and their successors until all the
works along the whole line as well the northern extremity of Lough Dergh aforesaid, and the northern
extremity of the canal at or near Athlone, shall have been fully and completely finished to the
satisfaction of the said Directors and their successors, according to the true intent and meaning of these
presents. And the said Directors, for themselves and their successors, do further covenant, promise and
agree to and with the said Company and their successors, that so soon as the said Company and their
successors shall have well and faithfully executed and finished the said Navigation, and the works
thereunto belonging, hereby agreed to be done and executed by the said Company, and the said
Company and their successors shall have well and faithfully accounted to the satisfaction of the said
Directors, and also before the Commissioners of Accounts, if required by them so to do, for the
expenditure of all sums which have been paid or advanced to the said Company or their successors,
that then the said sum of 9,908/. 145. 7d., agreed as aforesaid to be retained till the execution and
completion of the said Navigation and works, shall be paid to the said Company and their successors.
And it is hereby covenanted, declared and agreed upon, by and between the several parties to these
premises, that in each and every case in which it shall be necessary for the said Company and their
successors to prove and ascertain the sum or sums expended by them in the progress of the said works, or of any part of them, to entitle them to the payments or advances aforesaid, in pursuance of the agreements in these presents contained, the same shall be proved and ascertained by the respective oaths of the principal engineer of the said Company and their successors, for the time being employed in the work on which such sum or sums has or have been expended, and of the treasurer or pay-clip of the said Company, for the time being, and also a certificate in writing, signed by the chairman or deputy-chairman of the said Company, for the time being, annexed to the accounts of such expenditure, that the several sums in said account mentioned have been fairly expended by the said Company on the said works as in saM accounts stated: and that it shall be lawful for the said Company and their successors to include in such accounts the reasonable salaries and expenses of the engineers, superintendents, overseers, accountants and pay-clers employed by the said Company in carrying on such works respectively: provided also, that it shall not be necessary for the said Company or their successors to prove that the precise sum specified in the estimates returned to the said Directors shall have been expended on the particular article to which it is affixed in the said estimates, in case every such sum demanded or accounted for shall have been expended on some part of the works described in the said estimates. And this Indenture further witnesseth, that the said Company of Undertakers for the Grand Canal, for and in consideration of the premises, and of the several sums hereinbefore agreed to be advanced to them in the manner and on the terms hereinbefore stated, Do by these presents, for themselves and their successors, covenant, promise and agree to and with the said Directors and their successors, in manner following, that is to say, that they the said Company and their successors shall and will at their own proper costs and charges, without any other or further aid than the sums to be paid or advanced to them as hereinbefore mentioned, on or before the first day of November which shall be in the year of our Lord 1808, in a good, permanent and workmanlike manner, complete and finish the Navigation of that part of the river Shannon situate between the northern extremity of Lough Derg and the northern extremity of the canal at or near Athlone (but without trackways), including all such canals of communication between the several parts of the said river within the said space as have been 9 already begun, or shall be found necessary to make the Navigation from the aforesaid extremity of Lough Derg, to the said extremity of the canal at or near Athlone perfect and complete, according and agreeably to the several plans thereof heretofore laid before the said Directors by the said Company, and hereunto annexed, in such manner that there shall be at all seasons of the year 6 feet and 6 inches depth of water at least in all parts of the said Navigation, save and except, over the cills of locks and stop-gates; and that there shall be at all seasons of the year 6 feet depth of water at the least over the cills of locks and stop-gates; and that the navigable channel of said river, in all places where the Navigation shall be continued in the bed of said river, and also each and every canal of communication from one part of said river to another, shall be of the breadth of 24 feet at least at the bottom, and of the breadth of 44 feet at the least at the surface of the navigable water; and that each and every lock on the said Navigation shall be at the least 80 feet long and 16 feet wide in the clear, and of such height as to have at the least 6 feet depth of navigable water on the cills of the gates: And farther, that they the said Company and their successors shall and will, on or before the said first day of November 1808, make, erect and finish in a like good, permanent, substantial and workmanlike manner, such bridges, harbours and wharfs as are described in and by the said plans hereunto annexed, at or as near as conveniently may be to the places pointed out by the said plans, that is to say, one harbour or wharf at or near Banagher; two harbours or wharfs respectively at or near the bridge of Portumna; one harbour or wharf at or near Shannon bridge; and one other harbour or wharf at or near Athlone; and also such accommodation-bridges over the inland canals or cuts which are now proposed to be executed, according to the plans hereunto annexed and described therein respectively; and such other accommodation-bridges as the said Directors and their successors shall think necessary, not exceeding one at the distance of every half mile, over such further or other inland canals or cuts (if any) as may be found requisite for perfecting or improving the said Navigation: And that the said Company and their successors shall and will lay out and expend the full sum of 4,000 /., mentioned in their estimate, laid out on stores, but that the sum of 500 / part of the said sum of 4,000 / proposed for harbours and wharfs, or in building and erecting the said bridges, harbours and wharfs, and in making other permanent improvements in the Navigation of the said river, by cutting off angFes or bends therein, and deepening the channels between islands; and that no part thereof shall be laid out on stores, but that the sum of 500 / part of the said sum of 4,000 / proposed for stores shall be added to the sum of 2,911 /; 10s. 7 d. proposed for harbours, and shall be applied and laid out to and on the extending and enlarging the said harbours and wharfs, or in building and erecting a new harbour or wharf, at the option of the said Directors and their successors: And further, that the entire Navigation of the said river, from the said extremity of Lough Derg to said extremity of the canal at Athlone, and all necessary canals, and also a 11 harbours and wharfs, and other works thereunto
communication or communications with the said river extend to prevent or exclude any person or persons whatsoever from making a navigable advantage to the projectors or undertakers of such canal or canals. And it is hereby

Navigation of the said river, at such part or parts of the said river as shall be most convenient and shall be hereafter projected on the

shall and will from time to time use all reasonable expedition and; diligence in completing all such

interrupted for the purpose of making necessary repairs in the said Navigation or. any of the works

breadth of water as hereinbefore particularly mentioned, at the least, at a

require, so as that the said Navi~. gation shall in all parts thereof have such navigable depth and

and all other works heretofore built, erected or made, or hereafter to be built, erected or made in the

every part thereof, and each and every one of the locks, bridges,

and all other works heretofore built, erected and set up, iu a firm, permanent and substantial

successors shall and will at their own proper costs and charges, and without any further or other aid

authorized or empowered by the said Directors or their successors to view, inspect and examine the

same or any part thereof, in order that they may report the state of the said works to the said Directors

and their successors. And it is further covenanted and agreed by these presents, that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Company and their successors, with the approbation of the said Directors and

their successors, to vary and deviate in such manner as they may find necessary or think fit from the

plans hereunto annexed: provided nevertheless that the scale and dimensions of the said Navigation, or

of the locks or bridges to be constructed thereon, shall not be diminished by such deviation or variation

from the said plans, and that the number of bridges, harbours and wharfs appearing thereby to be

necessary, and to be intended to be erected, shall not be lessened ; and that no further sum than the

several sums above mentioned shall be demanded by the said Company or their successors, for the

execution of the said works, for or by reason of any variation or deviation from the said plans or

otherwise: and provided also that no variation or deviation from the said plans shall be made until the

several requisites prescribed in and by the said first above-recited Act of Parliament shall have been strictly complied with: and further, that none of the inland canals or cuts described in the said plans

shall be omitted, or any new ones added, without the previous consent in writing of the said Directors

or their successors, signed by at least three of the Directors for the time being, for that purpose first had and obtained. And the said Company do for themselves and their successors further covenant and

agree, to and with the said Directors and their successors, that they the said Company and their

successors shall and will at their own proper costs and charges, and without any further or other aid

from the aaid Directors or their successors, erect and set up, in a firm, permanent and substantial

manner, no good and substantial beacons, at the least, through the whole extent of the said Navigation,

the same to be placed in such positions as the principal engineer of the said Company, for the time

being to be employed in superintending the execution of the said works, shall deem the most useful and advantageous positions to point out the navigable channel, and especially in those parts of the river

where the banks are subject to be overflowed in the winter or rainy seasons. And the said Company do

for themselves and their successors, covenant, promise and agree, to and with the said Directors and

their successors, that they the said Company and their successors shall and will from time to time, and

at all times for ever hereafter, well and sufficiently preserve, maintain and keep the said Navigation and
every part thereof, and each and every one of the locks, bridges, harbours, wharfe, quays and beacons, and all other works heretofore built, erected or made, or hereafter to be built, erected or made in the

said Navigation, or any part thereof or adjoining thereto, in good and sufficient order, repair and condition, and from time to time will rebuild and renew the same or any of them as occasion may require, so as that the said Navi--. gation shall in all parts thereof have such navigable depth and breadth of water as hereinbefore particularly mentioned, at the least, at all times and seasons of the year, far ever thereafter, except at such times as the said Navigation may happen to be necessarily interrupted for the purpose of making necessary repairs in the said Navigation or. any of the works

thereof, or by shoals occasioned by floods in the river; and that the said Company and their successors

shall and will from time to time use all reasonable expedition and; diligence in completing all such

repairs as may be necessary in the said Navigation, and in removing all shoals or other obstructions

caused by floods or other causes in> the said Navigation; and that the said Company and their

successors shall and will at all times hereafter permit the junction of any new canal or canals which

shall be hereafter projected on the Connaught or western side of the said river Shannon, with the said

Navigation of the said river, at such part or parts of the said river as shall be most convenient and advantageous to the projectors or undertakers of such canal or canals. And it is hereby declared and agreed by and between the several parties, that nothing herein contained shall extend or be construed to extend to prevent or exclude any person or persons whatsoever from making a navigable communication or communications with the said river Shannon, by the river called the Lower or Little
Brusna; or to prevent or preclude any person or persons who are now by law entitled to make any navigable communication or communications otherwise with the said river Shannon, on the eastern or left bank thereof, to make, use and enjoy at his or their own free will and pleasure such navigable communication, or communications; or to prevent or preclude any person or persons who now or at any time hereafter shall be owner or owners, occupier or occupiers of any land or lands, tenement or tenements, immediately or next adjoining to the said river Shannon, on either side thereof, or to any part of the said Navigation, or of any land or lands, tenement or tenements, not more than one mile distant from the bank of the said river Shannon, on either side, or from any part of the Navigation, at his her or their own free will and pleasure, to navigate his her and their boat or boats, lighter or lighters, or other vessel or vessels, carrying or conveying therein any goods, articles, matters or things, the produce of his her or their said land or lands, or manufactured in his her or their tenement or tenements, or any other goods, articles, matters or things, intended to be used or consumed in or upon his her or their said land or lands, tenement or tenements, or in the improving or repairing of the same respectively, free and discharged of and from all manner of toll, rate, duty, imposition, charge or demand, for or on account of navigating, carrying or conveying the same, or any part thereof; provided nevertheless, that nothing herein contained shall exempt or exonerate, or be taken or construed to exempt or exonerate, from any of the tolls, rates, duties or charges hereinafter mentioned, any boat, lighter or vessel which shall pass through any lock on the said Navigation, or the goods, articles, matters or things carried in such boat, lighter or vessel which shall so pass through any lock, or be conveyed or conveyed by land from one end of the lock to the other and put on board any other lighter or vessel for purpose of the same being carried further upon the said Navigation so as to avoid the payment of said tolls, rates, duties or charges, although such boat, lighter or vessel, or such goods, articles, matters or things, belong to the owner or occupier of such lands or tenements as above mentioned; it being the true intent and meaning of these presents, and of the parties hereto, that in case any boat, lighter or vessel belonging to the owner or occupier of such lands or tenements as above mentioned, or whereby any goods, articles, matters or things belonging to him shall be carried or conveyed, shall pass through any lock on the said Navigation, or the goods, articles, matters or things carried in such boat, lighter or vessel which shall so pass through any lock, or be carried or conveyed by land from one end of the lock to the other and put on board any other lighter or vessel for the purpose of the same being carried further upon the said Navigation so as to avoid the payment of said tolls, rates, duties or charges, then and in any of such cases every such boat, lighter or other vessel, and the goods, articles, and other matters and things to be carried or conveyed thereby, shall be liable to and chargeable with the payment of the like tolls, rates, duties and charges per ton per mile, as other goods, articles, matters or things of the like nature belonging to other persons shall then be liable to or chargeable with respectively as hereinafter mentioned; the amount thereof to be computed on the whole distance such goods, articles, matters or things belonging to the owner or occupier of such lands or tenements as last before mentioned, shall be carried between the place of lading or embarking the same in any such boat, lighter or other vessel, and the place where the same shall be disembarked or landed, anything in these presents contained to the contrary in anywise notwithstanding. And it is further agreed by and between the parties to these presents that nothing herein contained shall preclude or prevent, or be construed to preclude or prevent the said Company and their successors from demanding, levying or recovering of or from the owner or owners of any boat, lighter or vessel, or the person or persons navigating the same, such charges, fines or penalties as the said Company or their successors are by any law, by-law or order now in force, or shall by any law, bye-law or order hereafter to be lawfully made, be entitled to demand, recover or levy from such owner or owners, person or persons, for or on account of such boat, lighter or vessel, obstructing the said Navigation, or for or on account of the person or persons navigating such boat, lighter or vessel damaging or injuring the said Navigation, or any part thereof, or any of the works thereunto belonging, or in any manner misbehaving or misconducing himself or themselves as owner or navigator of such boat, lighter or vessel, or mismanaging the same. And the said Company do further for themselves and their successors covenant, promise and agree, to and with the said Directors and their successors, that all and every person or persons paying the tolls, rates and duties hereinafter mentioned, and obeying and conforming to the rules, orders and by-laws at present in force, or hereafter to be lawfully ordained by the said Company or their successors, and not contrary to the tenor and true intent of these presents, for regulating the conduct of persons navigating on the said Navigation, and the draft of water of vessels to be navigated thereon, shall have full and free liberty to navigate their boats, lighters and other vessels upwards and downwards on the said Navigation, from the northern extremity of Lough Derg aforesaid to the northern extremity of the canal at or near Athlone, or any part thereof, at their own free will and pleasure, without any hindrance, molestation or interruption of the said Company or their successors, or their servants or workmen, at all seasonable times and hours, that is to say, from one hour before
sunrise to one hour after sunset in each and every day, save and except at such time or times as the said Navigation shall be interrupted for the purpose of making any repairs or improvements thereof, or of any of the works thereunto belonging, or removing any obstructions thereout: And further, that they the said Company or their successors shall not and will not by any bye-law or order, or otherwise, limit the draft of water of vessels to be navigated on the said Navigation to less than five feet six inches: And further, that they the said Company and their successors shall and will at their own proper costs and charges, at all times hereafter, keep, retain, pay and employ a sufficient number of able and skilful lock-keepers, assistants and other servants stationed at or near each and every lock and other place where such assistance can be required, for the purpose of opening and shutting at all seasonable times and hours, that is to say, from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset, the flood-gates, and raising and lowering the sluices of the said locks, and of giving to all persons navigating on any part of the said Navigation all necessary aid and assistance in passing into, through and out of each and every of the said locks, without taking or receiving any fee or reward whatsoever, under any pretext whatsoever, from the person or persons requiring such aid or assistance, other than the tolls, rates, duties and charges hereinafter particularly set forth: And further, that they the said Company or their successors shall not directly or indirectly take or demand, levy or receive, any toll, rate, duty or charge whatsoever for or on account of any boat, lighter or other vessel navigating on the said Navigation or any part thereof, or for or on account of any goods, articles or other things carried or conveyed thereon, until the said Company or their successors shall have well and sufficiently completed and finished the said Navigation, and all works thereunto belonging, according to the true intent and meaning of these presents, and until a boat laden with 40 tons weight at the least, and drawing in some part thereof at least five feet nine inches water, shall have been navigated and passed along the whole line from one end of the said Navigation to the other, in the month of June or July, at the option of the said Directors or their successors; but that until the said Navigation and works thereon shall be completed and finished, and such boat as aforesaid, laden as aforesaid, shall have passed along the whole line as aforesaid, all boats, lighters and other vessels shall be at liberty to pass and navigate on all parts of the river Shannon without paying any toll, charge or duty, provided they do not interfere with the progress of the works carrying on by said Company: and that from and after the time when the said Navigation, and all works thereunto belonging, shall be completed and finished as aforesaid, and such boat so laden as aforesaid shall have passed and be navigated through the whole line of the said Navigation as aforesaid, the said Company and their successors shall not and will not directly or indirectly, nor shall any of the officers or servants of the said Company or their successors, or any other person or persons on their behalf, or with their knowledge, privity or consent, directly or indirectly claim, ask, demand, sue for, impose, levy, take or receive any greater toll or tolls, rate or rates, duty or duties, than those hereinafter mentioned; nor shall or will they or any of them claim, ask, demand, sue for, impose, levy, take or receive any other sum or sums of money, or any other thing whatsoever, by way of fee, perquisite, douceur or reward, or on any pretence whatsoever, for or on account of any boat or boats, lighter or lighters, or other vessel or vessels, which shall be navigated on the said Navigation or any part thereof, or for or on account of any goods, wares, merchandizes or other commodities whatsoever, with which any boat, lighter or other vessel shall be laden, save as hereinafter mentioned; that is to say, a toll not exceeding one halfpenny per mile for each ton of corn, meal, malt, flour or potatoes, carried upon the said Navigation upwards or downwards; a toll not exceeding one halfpenny per mile for each ton of coals carried upwards or downwards on said Navigation, provided that such toll for or in respect of the carriage of coals on the said Navigation or any part thereof shall not exceed in the whole 1 s. &amp;#1095; d. per ton for any distance the same may be carried on the said Navigation; a toll not exceeding one halfpenny per mile for each ton of turf or manure earned upwards or downwards on the said Navigation, provided that such toll for or in respect of the carriage of turf or manure on the said Navigation or any part thereof shall not exceed in the whole 6 d. per ton for any distance the same may be carried on the said Navigation; a toll not exceeding one penny per mile for each ton of slates to be carried either upwards or downwards upon the said Navigation, provided the entire of the said toll to be received for or in respect of the carriage of slates on the said Navigation or any part thereof shall not exceed in the whole 2 s. per ton for any distance the same may be carried on the said Navigation; a toll not exceeding 1 d. per all other goods, wares, merchandizes and commodities of what nature or kind soever, to be carried either upwards or downwards upon the said Navigation; and a toll not exceeding 1 d. per mile for every passenger carried on the said Navigation; provided that nothing herein contained shall extend to the imposing or levying any toll, rate or duty upon (as passengers) the persons necessarily employed in the navigating lighters, boats or vessels, or the custody and care of the goods therein. And in order to determine and ascertain the points and boundaries within which, and the distance for which such tolls, rates and duties as aforesaid may be charged and demanded by the said Company and their successors, they the said Company do for themselves and their successors.
covenant, promise and agree to and with the aid Directors and their successors, that they the said Company or their successors shall and will, before they shall ask, demand or receive any such toll, rate or duty, erect and fix, at the proper costs and charges of the said Company and their successors, strong, sufficient and permanent land-marks in such places as shall be approved of by the engineer of the said Directors and their successors for the time being, at each end of the said Navigation, that is to say, at the northern extremity of Lough Derg, being about one mile, be the same more or less, to the southward of the bridge of Portumna, and at the northern extremity of the canal at or near Athone, being about one mile more or less to the northward of the bridge of Athlone; and shall and will also erect and fix on the banks of the said canals of communication, and (if permitted by the owners or occupiers of the adjoining lands respectively) throughout the whole line of said Navigation, and within the said land-marks, regular mile-stones, at the distance of one Irish statute mile the one from the other, the first mile-stone to be placed at the distance of one Irish statute mile from one of said land-marks. And the said Company do further for themselves and their successors covenant, promise and agree, to and with the said Directors and their successors, that they the said Company and their successors shall and will permit and suffer all and every person or persons paying the tolls, rates and duties aforesaid, and the wharfage hereinafter mentioned, and obeying and conforming to the rules, laws and orders now in force, or hereafter to be lawfully made or ordained by the said Company or their successors, not being contrary to the tenor and true intent of this agreement, for regulating the conduct of persons using the wharfs or quays belonging to the said Company on the said Navigation, at all proper and seasonable hours and times, at their own tree will 4. and pleasure, to load and unload all boats, lighters and other vessels, at all or any of the wharfs or quays belonging to the said Company and their successors on the said Navigation, and to moor and fasten the said boats, lighters and other vessels at and against the said wharfs or quays as occasion shall require, and to lay and deposit in and upon the said wharfs or quays all goods, wares, merchandizes and commodities, of what nature or kind soever, which shall be landed from any boat, lighter or other vessel, or be deemed and intended to be shipped in any such boat, lighter, or other vessel, upon the said Navigation, and to take, draw and carry away such goods, wares, merchandizes and commodities, and if occasion shall require, to bring horses, carts and cars in and upon the said wharfs or quays for the purpose of taking, drawing and carrying away the same, without any hindrance, molestation or interruption of the said Company or their successors, or their servants or workmen: and that they the said Company and their successors shall not and will not, directly or indirectly, nor shall any of the officers or servants of the said Company or their successors, or any other person or persons on their behalf, or with their knowledge, privity or consent, directly or indirectly, claim, demand, exact, take or receive any sum of money or other thing whatsoever, by way of fee, perquisite or reward, on any pretence whatsoever, for any goods, wares, merchandizes, commodities, articles, matters or things, which shall be landed or deposited in or upon any wharf or quay belonging to the said Navigation, besides or greater than the tolls, rates, duties or charges for wharfage hereinafter particularly mentioned; and shall not and will not, directly or indirectly, claim, demand, exact, take or receive any toll, rate or duty for wharfage whatsoever, for any goods, wares, merchandizes, commodities, articles, matters or things (except turf or manure), which shall be landed or deposited in or upon any such wharf or quay, and which shall not remain thereon for the full space of 48 hours; and shall not claim, demand, exact, take or receive any greater or higher toll, rate, or duty for wharfage, for or on account of any goods, wares, merchandizes, commodities, articles, matters or things (except turf and manure), which, shall be landed or deposited on any of the said wharfs or quays, and shall remain thereon above 48 hours, than the sum of id. per ton per day for each and every day after the expiration of such 48 hours, during any part whereof the same shall remain upon any such wharf or quay; nor any greater or higher toll, rate or duty for wharfage, for or on account of any turf or manure which shall be landed or deposited in or upon any such wharf or quay, than the sum of a d. per ton for or in respect of the same being landed and deposited thereon, and the further sum of 2 d. per ton per day for each and every day after the first day, during any part whereof the same shall remain on such wharf or quay: and that they the said Company and their successors shall and will from time to time, and at all times hereafter, at the request of the said Directors and their successors, make do and execute any such other or further act or acts, deed or deeds, thing or things, for the corroborating and strengthening of these presents, and for the further and better securing and enforcing the full and due performance of all and every covenant and covenants hereinafter contained, on the part and behalf of the said Company and their successors to be done and performed, as the said Directors and their successors, or their counsel learned in the law, shall reasonably advise and require. And this Indenture further witnesseth, that the said Directors, for themselves and their successors, have granted, bargained, sold, assigned, transferred and made over, and by these presents do grant, bargain, sell, assign, transfer and make over unto the said Company, the said Navigation and every part thereof, and all works thereon, and all the lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises heretofore made use of
or occupied in or for making the said Navigation, or to the said Navigation or any part thereof belonging or appertaining, or taken or reputed so to be, and as such now vested in the said Directors or their successors; and all the estate, right, title, interest, property, claim and demand whatsoever, either at law or in equity, of them the said Directors, in and to the same and every part thereof, together with all the rights, privileges, powers and authorities for the making and completing the said Navigation or any part thereof, or in any manner relating thereto, which now are vested in the said Directors or their successors; to hold the same and every part thereof to the said Company and their successors for ever, in as full and ample manner as the same are now vested in the said Directors or their successors: And also, that the said Directors for themselves and their successors have granted, conveyed, assigned, made over and assured, and by these presents (as far as in them the said Directors lieth and they lawfully may) do grant, convey, assign, make over and assure unto the said Company and their successors, the aforesaid tolls, rates, duties and charges hereinbefore particularly mentioned, and to the amount respectively in that behalf hereinbefore set forth, together with all such rights, powers and authorities to claim, ask, demand, sue for, impose, levy, take and receive the same, as are now vested in the said Directors, and which they may lawfully grant, convey, assign or make over; to have and to hold the said tolls, rates, duties and charges, together with all such rights, powers and authorities as aforesaid relating thereto, to the said Company and their successors for ever. And the said Directors do hereby for themselves and their successors covenant and agree, to and with the said Company and their successors, that they the said Directors and their successors shall and will at all times hereafter permit and suffer the said Company and their successors, as often as occasion shall require, to sue either at law or in equity in the name of the said Directors and their successors, but at the proper costs and expenses and risk of the said Company and their successors, (the said Company and their successors first indemnifying the said Directors and their successors for all costs, losses and charges to be made for or on account of the same), for the recovery of all or any part of the said Navigation, works, lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises, tolls, rates, duties and charges; and shall and will at the reasonable request of the said Company and their successors, at the proper costs and charges nevertheless of the said Company and their successors, do and execute such deed or deeds, warrant or warrants, or other thing or things which the counsel learned in the law of the said Directors or their successors shall at any time reasonably advise as necessary to authorize and empower the said Company or their successors so to do: And further, that they the said Directors and their successors shall and will at all times for ever hereafter well and sufficiently indemnify and save harmless the said Company and their successors, and their lands, tenements, goods and chattels, of, from and against all and all manner of claims, demands, suits and actions which any person or persons has or have, or may claim to be due to him, her or them, or previous to the 1st day of May 1804, for salary or salaries, wages, hire or reward, as keeper or keepers of the locks or other works heretofore erected or made in or upon the said Navigation, or for or in respect of the preserving, keeping or taking care of the said Navigation or any part thereof, or the lands, tenements or property thereunto belonging, or otherwise as servant or servants, person or persons, employed by the said Directors in and about the said Navigation, lands, tenements or property. And the said Company for themselves and their successors do hereby covenant and agree with the said Directors and their successors, to return to the said Directors and their successors once in every year, if required, accounts of the trade and tolls collected upon the said navigation, to be stated as accurately as the materials in their power will admit. Provided always, and it is hereby covenanted declared and agreed, that nothing in these presents contained shall charge or in any wise affect or encumber, or shall be deemed, taken or construed to charge, effect or encumber the person or persons, or the estates real or personal, of them the said Sackville Hamilton, Hans Blackwood, Francis Trench, Robert Rutledge and Michael Bourke, or any of them, or any of their heirs, executors or administrators; they the said Sackville Hamilton, Hans Blackwood, Francis Trench, Robert Rutledge and Michael Bourke, being made parties to these presents only as Directors under and by virtue of the first above in part recited Act of Parliament, and in execution of the said office as Directors, and not otherwise.—In witness whereof each of them the said Sackville Hamilton, Hans Blackwood, Francis Trench, Robert Rutledge and Michael Bourke, as such Directors as aforesaid, have hereunto set their hands and seals; and the said Company of Undertakers of the Grand Canal have caused their common seal to be affixed to these presents, consisting of 14 skins, the day and year first above written. S. Hamilton, (L.S.) Robert Rutledge, (L.S.) Michael Bourke, (L.S.) Signed, sealed and delivered in presence of William Gregory, P. Reynolds. Witness, Daniel Bagot, (L.S.) (True Copy.) Navigation Office, 1 W. Seareight, See":

ORIGINS OF THE RAILWAY IN INCHICORE

Taken from The Second Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the manner in which
Railway Communications can be most advantageously promoted in Ireland
Printed by W. Clowes and Sons Duke Street, Stamford Street London 1838.

TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY,

WE, the undersigned Commissioners, appointed by his late Majesty, under Letters Patent, bearing date the 20th day of October, 1836, to inquire into the manner in which Railway Communications can be most advantageously promoted in Ireland, and re-appointed by your Majesty, under date the 4th day of November, 1837, humbly beg to submit to your Majesty this our Second and Final Report.

MAIN TRUNK LINE.

It appeared exceedingly desirable that the general terminus, or rather point of departure of the Main Trunk Line of Railway for the south and south-western districts of Ireland, should be advanced as far as possible into the city of Dublin; and I therefore strongly recommended to your Commission, and you were pleased to approve, that the general terminating station should be fixed at Barrack-bridge, at the west end of the quays bounding the south shores of the river Liffey. Barrack-bridge is only 1 mile from the General Post Office in Sackville-street, and is approached from the first contemplated station at Island-bridge Road, entirely through open and unimproved land, without disturbing a single building; and an additional mile of Railway into Dublin is thus attained at a comparatively minor cost. A further, though prospective advantage attends the terminus at Barrack-bridge, viz., that the Railways at each extremity of the city may be hereafter connected, in the manner explained in a Report I have already laid before the Commissioners; and, though such an extension through Dublin may form no part of the Report or recommendation of your Commission, it may not be altogether unworthy of consideration, that such a Railway connexion may, at some future time and favourable occasion, be made at a moderate expense, and with great facility. In the commencement of these surveys, although the mode of entering Dublin had not been decided upon, it was necessary to forward the engraving of the plans and sections; and the road near Sallins being found to be 17 miles from the outskirts of Dublin, at Island-bridge Road, and the road from Celbridge to Newcastle, about 11 miles from the same point, the mileage was regulated forward accordingly. After your Commission had decided which line into Dublin should be adopted, the zero of the mileage, as measured back from Sallins, was found to fall upon or near the avenue to Inchicore House, three miles from the General Post Office; and throughout this Report and the annexed Plans and Sections, this point will be considered as the commencement of the distances, while the space from Inchicore Avenue to Barrack-bridge, one and three quarter mile, will be designated as the ENTRANCE INTO DUBLIN, and treated as a separate subdivision of the Main Trunk Line. The General Station being fixed at Barrack-bridge, the course from thence, as approved by the Commissioners, is along the valley of the Liffey, first crossing the King's-bridge Road and the Military Road below the Royal Hospital, next going over Island-bridge Road, close above the Artillery Barracks, and thence direct to Inchicore Avenue. The estimates for this subdivision are considerable, from the value of property, and the extent of earth-work and masonry, the bed of the Railway being prepared for four lines of road. The level of the station at Barrack-bridge is rather elevated, being 43 feet above the high-water datum, and about 30 feet over the street, and the mound averaging nearly this latter height all the way to the Island-bridge Road. In execution it may be advisable, on several accounts, besides the saving of expense, to lower this elevation. From Barrack-bridge to the Artillery Barracks, I have estimated to construct the Railway within retaining walls, filling in with earth, and forming the bridges, &c., for four lines, precisely as was done on the Dublin and Kingstown Railway, but laying at first only two tracks: this filling may be done either by common carts bringing rubbish from the city and parts adjacent, or by the excavated material being brought from the cuttings westward, by locomotive engines, when the works there are advanced. After passing through the whole length of Inchicore demesne, the turnpike-road is crossed, and the Railway keeps parallel thereto, at little more than 100 yards distance, to near Palmerston, when it re-crosses the road and enters the enclosures of Palmerston House, and, skirting the rising grounds which overhang the right bank of the Liffey, pervades several other demesnes, Hermitage being the last, and once more crosses the turnpike-road to Lucan, at the entrance of the avenue leading to Woodville. After passing the ravines near Esker, a remarkably fine line is obtained, almost on the surface of the country for many miles, approaching near Leixlip, then over Celbridge Commons, and thence, nearly direct to Whitechurch and the vicinity of Sallins, with very favourable gradients.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

In the early 1800's Inchicore was an area of fields and pastures. The Cow and Calf Inn was on land owned by Lord Cloncurry. Nearby was the Cow and Calf farm, which stretched along Grattan Crescent and lower Tyrconnell Road. An Act of Parliament to establish a railway was passed in 1844. Thus began the Great Southern and Western Railway Company, later C.I.E. at Inchicore. The newly formed Railroad Company acquired a seventy-three acre site locally. Here the Railroad began, but due to the
Great Famine it was not completed until October 1849. The expansion of the railway works created a need for houses in the area. The Railroad Company built houses for their workers, beginning with North and South Terrace and Inchicore Square. Later other terraces were built. A school was also a necessity and with the construction of the Inchicore National Schools or Model Schools came the demise of the Cow and Calf Inn, as it was on this very site, on land belonging to the Railroad Company, and with their financial assistance, that the school was built in 1853. John Aspinall was born in 1825. He arrived in Ireland in 1875 at the age of 23 from his former post in Crewe to take up the post of assistant chief engineer at the Great Southern and Western Railway Works at Inchicore. He was promptly installed in the manager’s house in the Inchicore Works which his young wife re-named “Mount Vernon.” Within two years of his arrival the workforce in the railway works had swelled to 1,200 including 80 apprentices. Aspinall became chief engineer in 1882. He was a hugely innovative engineer designing several new engines and perfecting and patenting the vacuum brake 1878. Aspinall had a progressive attitude to employer—employee relations and it was thanks to his foresight that a proper dining room and reading room were established at the railway works. It was during his stewardship that the first Inchicore Gala was held in 1879 to which 2000 people came to enjoy a day of sports, entertainment and public exhibitions. Besides designing new engines Aspinall oversaw the establishment of a larger wagon shop which eventually was turning out four new railway wagons every week. Within three years the works were turning out faster engines for the mail trains particularly the Cork Mail Train. In 1885 the Prince and Princess of Wales made a special journey to Cork on the mail train accompanied by John Aspinall. The “Daily News” of April 17th 1885 reported that “ The special train in which the Royal party are travelling consists of seven carriages, with engine and tender, all of which have been built at the works of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company at Inchicore, Dublin from the designs of Mr. John AF Aspinall, the locomotive engineer.” In 1886 John Aspinall left Inchicore when he was appointed Chief Mechanical Engineer at the works of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. Oliver Bulleid was born Devon in 1882. He arrived in Ireland in 1949 to take up a post as consultant mechanical engineer at CIE’s Railways Works in Inchicore. He had previously been employed by The Southern Railways in England where he had designed a number of important locomotive engines most notably the Austerity Class. Bulleid was a brilliant but controversial engineer and was viewed as slightly eccentric by his colleagues and contemporaries. No sooner had he arrived in Ireland than he went on Radio Eireann to suggest that all the workers in the railway should be granted vegetable plots. He also requested that a crucifix be placed on the footplate of every locomotive, an idea that was strongly resisted by the crews even at a time when more and more Catholics were being employed as drivers. At a time when diesel engines were being introduced both in Britain and Ireland, Bulleid was dedicated to extending the life of the steam engine. Nevertheless, he was appointed Chief Mechanical Engineer in 1951. His great experiment was to try and develop an efficient turf-burning steam engine. This was despite the fact that tests in Inchicore as far back as the 1870’s had established that the produce of Ireland’s bogs was totally inefficient as a fuel for steam engines. Indeed throughout the second world war from 1939 to 1945 the railway was forced to use this inefficient fuel because of the impossibility of importing British coal. The result was disastrous in terms of constant delays and breakdowns of engines. However Bulleid was determined to give turf another chance. He devised a scheme whereby the tender was converted to provide turbine-blowers to blow the turf in milled form across a specially constructed worm to the front fire plate where steam jets were fitted to blow the turf across the fire. After months and months of experimenting the first test engine called the 365 was ready for trial. Bulleid invited the Minister for Transport and Power, Mister Erskine Childers to ride on the footplate even though the engine had not even been given a trial run. To everybody’s surprise the engine performed perfectly and the Minister was conveyed safely to Sallins and back. The engine subsequently ran on several trials on the main line to Cork and Portarlington and the crews were pleasantly surprised by the smooth and almost silent running of the engine. Bulleid had broken with all previous locomotive tradition by putting his steam traction motors on the axles. It was a real first in locomotive design. Bulleid also had a great success in producing light-weight rolling stock built of a special laminate process of his own design. However the higher bureaucracy within CIE at that time had been converted to the adoption of diesel engines believing them to be more reliable. Bulleid worked on at Inchicore until 1958 when retired at the age of 76. He retired to his native Devon where he lived out the rest of his life. (Source; The Works, Celebrating 150 years Gregg Ryan 1998)
St. Jude's at a special ordination service held by the reverend Archbishop Plunket on January 6th 1899.

Rev. GD Nash became vicar of St. Jude’s Parish on the death of Rev. Thomas Mills in 1900. He had been ordained in the evening service. On 27th January, 1900 a Thanksgiving Service was held, and at this festival three brothers all clergymen were present and they many applications from parishioners who in cases of urgency require to see the vicar that the Secretary be instructed to ask the Vestry ordered that he be paid no further salary from that date. The sexton was then given the job of bellringer and his wife was appointed a bellringer at 9d. per service. However, at the next meeting of the Select Vestry there were so many complaints about the bellringer being intoxicated while on duty that the Vestry ordered that he be paid no further salary from that date. The sexton was then given the job of bellringer and his wife was appointed to show people to their seats before service. Several papers and church magazines of the time refer to Rev. Mills powerful and inspiring sermons which could last anything up to an hour. The parishioners of St. Jude's were less than happy with this because a note of 2nd May, 1887 in the Select Vestry minutes, records "The committee are of the opinion that services of shorter duration would tend to increase the congregation and that if practicable, it would be advisable for the vicar to arrange for a more frequent change of preachers". In that same year the Chapel of Ease was sold to the local Catholic community for the sum of £131. 12. 0. This money was later to be used in the erection of a parochial hall. At this time St. Judes was heated up to this with four stoves with horizontal flues which entirely failed to warm the church and were the occasion of much smoke, dust and general discomfort. In 1890, Rev. Mills commissioned Mr. Grundy of London to install a new heating apparatus at a cost of £80 which would guarantee a considerable saving in the consumption of fuel and would amply heat the church with cleanliness and comfort. At this time, St. Jude's did not have any rectory and the Rev. Mills lived fourteen miles away in Dalkey, and travelled back and forward in a horse and carriage. Vestry notes in January, 1893, record that "It was resolved that in consequence of the many applications from parishioners who in cases of urgency require to see the vicar that the Secretary be instructed to ask the Rev. T. Mills for his private address". In 1895 Rev. Mills opened a subscription list for the building a parish hall. In 1899 St. Judes was first church in Ireland in which a public Harvest Thanksgiving Service was held, and at this festival three brothers all clergymen were present and officiated, all of them graduates of Trinity College, Dublin. They were the Rev. Lewis Mills, LL.D., a rector of the Diocese of Armagh, preaching in the morning; the Rev. Samuel Mills, M.A., Rector of St. Mary's, Droylsden, Manchester, in the afternoon, and the Rev. Thomas Mills, M.A., M.R.I.A., at the evening service. On 27th January, 1900, in his 75th year Rev. Thomas Mills died. Many tributes were paid to this great Irishman from all over the country and from every denomination. Rev. GD Nash became vicar of St. Jude's Parish on the death of Rev. Thomas Mills in 1900. He had been ordained in St. Judes at a special ordination service held by the reverend Archbishop Plunket on January 6th 1899.
He immediately set about having St. Jude's re-admitted to the Diocesan financial plan from which it had been excluded during Rev. Mills' tenure. They were then £527. 2. 1. in arrears but agreed to pay this back by instalments at an interest of 4%. The council also granted the parish two free shares reducing the Assessment payable by the Parish to £96 per annum. The Councils also made a special grant of £36 from the Diocesan Poor Parishes Fund. On 29th May, 1900, Mr. Nash received a letter from two nieces of the Rev. Mills informing him that they proposed to remove the church organ as it was part of the estate of their late uncle. They pointed out that a brass plate dated 1892 was affixed to the organ stating "This organ was built on the order and as the sole property of the Vicar of the parish by Brown & Son, Organ Builders, Dublin 1892". The Vestry immediately looked into the matter and found that "The organ was built about 1865 and placed in the church where it has been since having been enlarged, subsequently it was found to be secured by firmly bolts in the church wall and the organ builder states "is a fixture and would not stand by itself were it removed from its present position". There was also evidence that at the opening of the church, money was contributed by the congregation towards the erection of the organ and it was believed that an old organ in the parish prior to 1865 was accepted by the organ builder as part payment of the new organ. There was evidence also of subscriptions being received subsequently for "the improvement of the organ", the tuning and insurance of which have been paid by the select vestry since its erection. The matter was then referred to the Church Representative Body who found that the organ was church property and could not be moved. They referred to Mr. Mills letter in which he resigned all claims on the parish. Mr. Nash, who was a resident of Lucan, had for 3 years from 1900 lived in Beaconsville. The lease became vacant on a house adjoining St. Jude's called "Fairfield" in 1903 and Mr. Nash urged the vestry to buy it as a glebe, and under his influence managed to purchase it for approximately £650, a loan being obtained from the Board of Works. An extension was then built by Messrs. G. W. Scott for £475 and together with legal fees the house finally cost £1,162. On Wednesday, 16th November, 1904 a social and musical evening was arranged in the Parochial Hall to offer congratulations to the Vicar on the occasion of his marriage and to welcome his bride. Mrs. Nash was then presented with a gold bangle and Limerick lace. During the Vicar Nash's tenure the Archbishop dedicated a memorial window in the northern transept of the church "To the glory of God and in memory of the late Rev. Thomas Mills who was Vicar of this Parish for forty years". A Floral Fete and Fancy Fair was held during the month of July, 1904, and lasted for five days and was characterised by a very small attendance and poor return for the vast amount of labour expended on it by Mr. Nash. Different causes were assigned for this, but no doubt it was in a large measure due to the fact that besides two Gymkhana, this was the third Bazaar held within a short time. However the proceeds were sufficient to wipe out the old debt due on the Assessment. After their meeting on the 12th December, the select vestry received an official announcement from the Rev. Mr. Nash, regretting that owing to his wife's health, he was reluctantly obliged to move to a more favourable climate and had, therefore, tendered to the Archbishop his resignation of the incumbency. In six years, Mr. Nash had put St. Jude's on a proper financial footing, had erected a parochial hall, completely renovated the church, acquired a glebe, had the parish re-admitted to the Diocesan scheme and liquidated the large debt which that involved. The Reverend McVittie Taylor was appointed rector of St. Judes in 1906. He was a graduate of Trinity College and ministered successively as Curate of Clonaulty, Co. Tipperary 1891-93; Queenstown, Co. Cork 1893-96; Taney, Co. Dublin 1896-99 and as Rector of Mountmellick 1899-1900. In 1906 he was appointed Rector of St. Jude's. At a meeting in March, 1907, in the Parochial Hall, to launch the first free-will offering scheme, Sir Frederick Falknor proposed the following resolution: "That every resident in the parish should consider it his duty and his privilege to take his part, according to his ability "as God prospered him" in supporting the work of the parish". He said that the history of St. Jude's went back to the days of Strongbow, and reminded his hearers that they were standing on ground associated with a religious order of the older days, for the order of the Knights Templars was founded there by Strongbow, and the Friar of the Order had his place in what was now the Royal Hospital. The duty of the parishioners was to maintain their historic church. A memorial service was held on 20th May, 1910, after the death of King Edward VII and as was the custom, a resolution expressing the deep sorrow of the vestry was forwarded to both Queen Alexandra and King George V. That year Kilmalmin Jail was also closed and the Chaplaincy abolished with a loss of £40 a year to the Rev. McVittie Taylor. It has always been a disappointment the number of people who attend the General Vestry meetings but away back in 1911 it was recorded with regret that only 14 attended. In 1914 and after an illness of only two weeks, the Rev. McVittie Taylor died very suddenly on 24th May. This came as a great shock to the Parish as he had been greatly admired and respected in the locality. At a memorial service the special preacher, Rev. J. Carson of St. Mark's said that all who knew the Rev. McVittie Taylor loved him. He was a man of the purest character. A marked feature of his character was that he was always ready to place the best possible construction on the motives of his friends. He
was a noble man of God. Rev. Richard Gibbon Proctor, B.D., curate-assistant of St. Mary's, was appointed rector of St. Jude's in June, 1914. He was a graduate of Trinity College. In 1902 he was appointed Curate of New Ross, Co. Wexford, and in 1904 Curate of Cloyne where he remained until 1906. In that year he came to St. Mary's, Dublin, where he remained until 1914 when he was appointed assistant of St. Jude's. This year saw the outbreak of the Great War, the barracks at Inchicore were crowded with soldiers and St. Jude's Vestry opened the Parochial Hall as a recreation hall for the troops. The building was used as a reading room, concerts were always being organised and by March, 1915, 3,400 teas had been served. The entire offertories from the Thursday evening services of January and February were given over for comforts to the troops on active service. Later in the year it was agreed to give all the Thursday evening collections towards a fund for the troops. A new heating apparatus was installed in the church by Messrs. Musgrave & Co., in September, 1915, for £94. 10. 0. An improvement was also made to the lighting in the church, new inverted incandescent mantles being installed in the chancel during October, 1916. That month the organ, was given an overhaul and was found to have 1,284 pipes and 25 stops. At the Easter Vestry of 1917, five members of the previous vestry were reported absent as they were on active service, they were unanimously elected as a tribute of respect and esteem from the General Vestry; the remaining 7 were elected by vote. The vestry members on service were, Captain Norman Palmer, Second Lieutenant Arthur George Atock, Corporal Thompson McNutt's care with the help of a curate assistant. Each church would manage its own affairs with the Rector presiding at separate Select Vestry meetings in each parish. St. Jude's and St. Lawrence's each to pay 50% of the incumbent's stipend and as the Rectory was in Kilmainham, St. Jude's to contribute 75% of the cost of the running of the Glebe and St. Lawrence's 25%. Canon H. J. Macready-Bryan was invited to conduct a mission in January, 1945. In a circular to St. Jude's parishioners the previous October he stated that "the world is seething
with unrest.” During the month of January, 1953, St. Jude's Church was closed for decoration and re-opened with a special service on 22nd February at which the Archbishop preached a special sermon. The Vestry of 1953 purchased a pair of silver and of pair of EPNS vases as a memorial to the late Miss Croker who for many years had been a member of the Vestry. That same year an attempt was made by vandals to burn the parochial hall. The fire did not take hold and only a small part of the floor was burned. A presentation of an alms dish in memory of their parents was presented in 1954 by the Rev. W. C. G. Proctor, his brother and sister. The Rev. W. C. G. Proctor's father was a former Rector of the parish. By 1956 the heating system in the church had worn out and a set of gas fires were installed at intervals around the walls by the Gas Co., on the instructions of the Vestry. The Protestant Showman's Guild of Ireland appointed St. Jude's as their official church in 1958 where an annual service would be held by the Rev. A. T. McNutt, their chaplain. A most successful mission was held for one week in March, 1958, with the Rev. Gray Stack as Missioner. The total number of Communicants for the week was 368 while the total aggregate attendance at the evening services was 2,140. The mission concluded with a parish Communion on Sunday, 16th March, which was followed by a breakfast in the Parochial Hall when about 80 parishioners attended. An electric motor to pull the bell was installed in 1960 in memory of Miss G. Seberry. Among more recent gifts may be included the Nave carpet presented by Mrs. Frazer in memory of her parents. Other valuable gifts include service books, curtains and hymn numbers, also a carpet for the vestry. The Reverend A.T. McNutt remained as rector of St. Judes until it was sold by the Dublin Diocese in the 1980's and was demolished by Desmond Guinness and removed to Straffan in Co. Kildare where its timbers and stained glass were used to decorate a steam- traction museum. All that remains of St. Judes is its melancholy spire. (Source; Kilmainham and Inchicore Local Dictionary of Biography)

HISTORY OF THE INCHICORE/BALLYFERMOT CO-OP

The Truth About the Inchicore/Ballyfermot Co-op The author of this article, MR. JOSEPH DEASY, was chairman of the management committee of the Inchicore-Ballyfermot Co-operative Society. He was prominent in the Labour movement of Dublin for many years. Between 1945-50 he was a Labour Councillor on the Dublin Corporation. In the 1948 Dail election he contested SW Dublin as a Labour candidate polling a good vote (Reprinted from "Irish Workers' Voice" for Nov-Dec, 1952.)

The Truth About the Inchicore/Ballyfermot Co-op Since the latter part of September, Ballyfermot and Inchicore has witnessed one of the most scandalous and unscrupulous campaigns ever waged against a people's movement. I refer to the onslaught against the Inchicore-Ballyfermot Co-operative Society, Dublin. This Society was founded in 1946 and was based on the democratic principles of all co-operative movements. It was legally registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts early in 1947. It was then, as now, non-political and non-sectarian and included among its members and committee persons of different political and religious beliefs. After a short time in existence the Society purchased a small shop in Inchicore. During two trading years of this shop's history dividends were distributed on the usual co-op basis, the amount purchased by each member. In 1951, through hard work and initiative, the allocation of one of the rented shops in Ballyfermot was secured from the Housing Committee of the Dublin Corporation. The membership had in the meantime increased considerably and reached a figure approaching 400 paid-up members and 300 partially paid-up. This Ballyfermot shop is a splendid, first-class grocery and provision stores. By careful and conscientious management it was well on the high road to success and promised to be a real asset to the people of the area. Then, after 12 months of such progress, reactionary forces, led, unfortunately, by the clergy, launched a campaign to wreck the Society. The first blow was the disruption of a public open-air meeting, the sole purpose of which was the propagation of the co-operative idea. The attempted justification for this disruption was that some members of the Society's management committee were associated with the Irish Workers’ League. It has never been explained why such a dangerous and inflammable means of starting the attack was resorted to. If exception was taken to certain committee members there were surely more just and mannerly means of indicating it. So outrageous was the tactic that even one of the three members of the management committee, who later played a treacherous part in the attack, expressed his indignation at the procedure. As chairman of that public meeting I adopted the only attitude which could be correct. I declared that the Co-op was non-sectarian and non-political and consequently refused to discuss the political beliefs of myself or any member of my committee. This attitude was, some days later, the subject of a poisonous leaflet distributed in the area. Though printed, it did not bear the name of a printer. Up to this point the attack had not adversely affected business, which, on the contrary, had somewhat increased. However, there were indications that powerful forces in the area threatened the very existence of the Society. At this stage we were led to believe that the clergy were prepared to withdraw their objections to the Society if
the IWL members resigned their official positions. In spite of the injustice involved and of the years of toil and effort we had contributed to the Society, myself and the few other League members offered to resign. To the astonishment of the management committee, it was then learned that the resignation of League members was not enough. The objective had now become nothing less than the ruthless destruction of the Society. Another blow was then delivered. Denunciations were issued from the pulpits of the churches in Inchicore and Ballyfermot. By now three members of the management committee had been prevailed upon to resign. The remaining members decided that an early general meeting was necessary at which the problems besetting the Society could be openly and frankly discussed, and a new committee elected. After some very significant failures to secure a satisfactory hall in the area, a members' meeting was convened in a trade union hall in the city. It had been expected that those who were attacking the Society would welcome the holding of a members' meeting, at which they could either state their case or, if not members themselves, have it put forward for them. Instead, the area was widely canvassed and members were told they should not attend the general meeting. In spite of the boycott, a good number of members did attend. However, there can be little doubt that many members were influenced to stay away from the meeting. A really hypocritical feature of the affair was the actual presence of some of the inspired leaders of the boycott. From this meeting a new committee was elected, which excluded members of the IWL who declined nomination in order to remove all justification for the introduction of red herrings by those threatening the Society. In spite of these efforts to render the constitution of the management committee acceptable to the clergy, the attack continued and the new committee was also denounced from the pulpits. As earlier indicated, this campaign produced a goody crop of lies, slanders, and half-truths. Newspapers like the "Sunday Express", "Sunday Independent", "Sunday Press" and "Catholic Standard" enlisted in the cause of the great smear. The latter paper indulged in the grossest and vilest distortion. The principal lie was the presentation of the Co-operative Society as a "Communist plot", a "cover" for other activities. Not a scrap of evidence was produced to support this slander. The mere presence of IWL members on the management committee was considered sufficient reason for broadcasting this poison. May I once more repudiate this vicious falsehood. As a matter of fact, I, with others, was associated with the Co-op long before my membership of the IWL, which was not formed for years afterwards. We became members of the management committee because at a certain time the Co-op needed workers urgently and critically who were prepared to sacrifice much time and energy to build and stabilise its future. We, among others, answered that need with only one object - the success of the Co-op. Our efforts and sincerity in this connection have been acknowledged on all sides, including ALL members of the former committee. Another part of the smear technique has been the attempt to present the sale of papers in Ballyfermot as having a sinister connection with the Co-op. The fact is papers like the "IRISH WORKERS' VOICE" are sold all over Dublin and to argue that the inclusion of Ballyfermot involves the Co-op is sheer falsehood. At the time of writing the issue is unresolved. Nevertheless, the truth of the above account is beyond challenge or contradiction. Finally, it should be understood that such an anti-progressive campaign is an attack not only against the Co-op, but against the most elementary rights of workers to form their own organisations. It is a warning to all trade unionists who take their rights for granted. Not alone does co-operation suffer, but so also does democracy - and religion itself. The only forces to gain will be the vested interests in Ballyfermot and elsewhere.

A History of Richmond Barracks

At a time when an invasion by France seemed probable, determined efforts were made to upgrade the military strongholds in Ireland. As part of this procedure a range of Martello towers were erected strategically around the Irish coastline and in Dublin as many as ten of the dilapidated army sites were replaced by two new barracks; a cavalry barracks at Portobello and an infantry barracks at Golden Bridge. Work began on both projects in 1810, during the Lord Lieutenancy of the Duke of Richmond. By 1814, the barracks at Golden Bridge was ready to receive troops and in the ensuing years almost every British regiment spent time here; the usual schedule for a change in regiments was every year with two main regiments occupying the barracks during that time. Often there were many more regiments represented during the year, though these consisted of detachments and depot units. The barracks was intended to hold approximately 1600 soldiers. When more than that number was to be accommodated use was made of the Phoenix Park and the Curragh, the latter being also a training centre, for musketry practice etc.

Following Wellington's victory at Waterloo in 1815, a relative peace followed for the next forty years; relative peace, for while foreign forces were curtailed there was always home grown unrest with recurrent attacks by such groups as the Whiteboys. Peacetime for soldiers meant unemployment; many
regiments reduced and the militia disbanded. This was partly responsible for a period of economic recession. In 1832, there was a cholera epidemic to add to the typhus which regularly visited soldiers, and then, from 1845, the famine. In the years immediately before and during the great famine there were more troops here than at any other time. The reason for this was twofold; O’Connell’s repeal movement was attracting such huge numbers that the Government was quite rightly apprehensive; also, the authorities needed military force to ensure that produce intended for shipping would reach its destination; food markets were being stormed and bread deliveries intercepted by starving people. Local folklore has it that in 1866, the Fenian leader John Devoy daringly entered Richmond Barracks dressed as a British soldier in order to make contact with other Fenians who had infiltrated the ranks of the 60th and 61st Rifles. This is untrue, although part of the Fenian plan of Rebellion did involve a mutiny and takeover of the barracks. During the Boer War, at the end of the 19th century, the barracks was a hive of activity with four battalions of the Argyll and Sutherland regiment stationed here. Lord Roberts personally inspected the troops and as each battalion left for Kingsbridge station hundreds of local people turned out as early as 5 a.m. to cheer them on their way. When they got to the station hundreds more were waiting for them there from all parts of Dublin. That morning, in October 1899, two trains specially commissioned for the occasion carried the force of 1,100 troops to Queenstown (Cobh), where they set sail for the Cape.

Richmond Barracks was for most of its history an infantry barracks, but two changes occurred in the last century. From 1907, it became a sub depot for the Royal Irish Constabulary, whose head quarters was in the Phoenix Park. Then, from 1910, depots of the 11th, 4th, 8th and 13th Hussars, or light cavalry, were accommodated there. At the time of the First World War three significant personages were at Richmond Barracks. The first of these was the unfortunate private Thomas Highgate of the West Kent Regiment. He was shipped to France with his regiment, and shortly after, he became the first soldier of the war to be shot for desertion. In 2006, he was among the 306 soldiers, including 26 Irishmen, to be pardoned. In 1914, Captain (Lord) Dunsany, the famous playwright and author of over 500 tales of science fiction was posted here. His plays ran simultaneously in London, Paris, Moscow and New York and he was a leading light in the “golden age” renaissance of Irish literature. He was also the mentor of Lance Corporal Francis Ledwidge, a poet and fellow soldier in the 5th Bn. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Ledwidge had voted against the Redmond proposal, perhaps on principal, because it was being suggested that it would ensure Home Rule: “Home Rule is as far of now as ever,” he told them. However, he joined up, believing that as a nation aspiring to have its independence we should play our own part against an enemy “common to our civilization,” and not have others do it for us.

The 1916 Easter Rising was, of course, the single most important feature in the long history of Richmond Barracks. All those arrested were taken here, including the leaders who were held in the gymnasium prior to the court martial; a fact which would guarantee its notoriety. As the executions relentlessly continued, and with growing unease in the British Parliament, Prime Minister Asquith visited the Barracks on the 12th May 1916, to bring matters to a close. The barracks changed hands in December 1922, following the War of Independence and the departure of the three regiments stationed here, the King’s Own, the Welch Regiment and the Shropshire Regiment, who were replaced by the Free State Army. It was renamed Kehoe Barracks after Col-Comdt. Tom Kehoe, one of Michael Collins’ “Twelve Apostles” or assassination squad, who died from injuries sustained from a land mine at Macroom, in September 1922.

In 1924, Kehoe Barracks was given over to Dublin Corporation for housing, with emphasis more on economics than suitability. President Cosgrave expressed the opinion that the particular scheme had been put forward by experts in the matter of housing. He understood it would be possible to accommodate a large number of families at a price which was more closely approximate to an economic experiment of the kind than anything else he had seen. The ill-conceived scheme, which had degenerated into a slum was replaced in 1969 by St. Michael’s Estate, soon renamed, at street level, “St. Michael’s Mistake.” This too, was designed with economics in mind and followed a similar course to its predecessor. The area is due (overdue) for a major redevelopment.

(from A History of Richmond Barracks by Liam O'Meara)

History of the Little Sisters of the Poor at Kilmainham

THE Little Sisters of the Poor were founded in France in the nineteenth century by Jeanne Jugan. Jeanne became the servant and companion of a Miss Le Coq, who lived in the Rue du Centre Saint-Servan, and shared her life of piety and good works. On her deathbed, Miss Le Coq, bequeathed her furniture to Jeanne, who had already managed to save six hundred francs. Jeanne then joined together with another retired aged domestic servant Franchise Aubert. Together they rented two rooms, with a
garret above, in a house near the church, the ground-floor being occupied by other lodgers. They reached their lodging by a winding stair, with a rope for baluster, and at the end of the second room a steep ladder led to the garret, which was entered by raising a trap-door. Franchise had a small income left her by a priest whom she had served as housekeeper; and now she worked at home, spinning wool, while Jeanne went out as a sick nurse. Jointly these two pious women devoted themselves to all kinds of good works. Their work was yet in a rudimentary state, but at Michaelmas, 1841, its development accelerated. During the following summer a house was rented for 100 francs a year, close to Port Solidor and near the church. Later a lady in easy circumstances and of generous disposition, Miss Doyen, approved of the under taking and offered to be security. Now there was in a quiet street, not far from the church, an old convent which was for sale. The parish priest encouraged his curate, who became the official head of the work in the parish, affixed his signature to the deed as security. The property was bought for 20,000 francs, and the deed was made out on February 27th, 1842. On May 29th Jeanne, Marie, Madeleine, and Miss Doyen assembled in the house of the good lady, under the presidency of the curate. A Superior was to be named, and a rule drawn up. Jeanne was unanimously elected. Her faith and her good heart gave her a true understanding of the aged poor. She was the first Little Sister of the Poor, and her modest dwelling was the first home of the incipient Little Family. As she had received from above the ability to understand the poor and forlorn, so she received from the same the intelligence for the alms-collection; and the spirit of charity with which she was endowed made her discover its providential resources. Born at Cancale, October 28th, 1792, she received the first old person at Saint-Servan, an old woman, at the beginning of the winter of 1839. On May 29th, 1842, aged fifty years, she was elected by her companions first Superior of this new religious family. On December 23rd, 1843, she was divested of her charge on account of the inconsistency between the exercise of her charge and the necessary absence or begging. She extended her quest for alms, obtained the Montyon prize, and succeeded in establishing the second home for old people in February, 1846, in the town of Rennes. Under the shelter of her age and of her reputation, the nascent congregation was enabled to develop and organize itself for the good of the Sisters of the Poor and of society. From 1852, having retired to the mother-house, she led a humble and retired life, effacing herself before her former companions. She was Sister of the General Council from the month of December, 1853, to the month of June, 1878. The town of Saint-Servan honoured her memory by naming (1866) Rue Jeanne Jugan, the street here the home for the old people is situated in the town. She died at La Tour Saint-Joseph, on August 29th, 1879, at the age of eighty-six years. Meanwhile the congregation spread all over the continent and to Britain. The order was introduced into Ireland in 1868. Bishop O'Brien, of Waterford, was impressed by the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and a foundation was decided upon in that town. The congregation for its future development and recruitment desired to have establishments in Ireland, seeing that the Irish element was widely spread in all countries where English is spoken, and that this nation has deserved well of the Church for its constancy in the faith. The good Mother Saint-Joseph had the honour of making this first foundation in a house hired in Adelphi Terrace, at the annual rent of £50, and she there installed Sister Honoria, who was named Superior, together with a few Sisters. The house was very convenient for its purpose although empty, but the Bishop came and blessed the new establishment, provided the altar and the necessary ornaments for the worship of God. A lady who lived near provided meals and necessities for the first days; visits and gifts came in great numbers, and the household increased. At Waterford the first stage of the foundation was secured. In 1881, the work of the order was begun in Dublin, the capital of Ireland. They began in a hired house in the Coombe and two years later they bought a field planted with cabbage, in Kilmainham without fence or hedge, on the roadside. It was a question of building, but money was wanted. On December 6th, 1883, an ecclesiastic presented himself; his violet band showed him to be a Canon, his old-fashioned gaiters and his large well-worn cloak showed his great age and small fortune. "I bring you," he said to the Little Sisters, two parcels of clothes. I do not know if they will be useful to you. Different things are inside coats, linen, gloves, ties, etc. "Everything will certainly be of use to us," said the Little Sister, although the sight of the little parcel did not give them any desire to open it. The priest asked to see the Superior. "Tell her a priest wants to speak to her, but do not press her; I can wait very well until your prayers are finished" (for it was during the office of Vespers). A short time after the good Mother and the Sister-Assistant arrived. He asked if she was really the Superior, then her name, and the name of the Sister-Assistant, and he repeated those names; he enumerated the objects which he brought, and he wished them to open the parcel which he unfolded piece by piece, saying: "I fear this will be of no use; if anything does not seem useful, tell me, and I shall take it away with me. Look at this waistcoat; how it is worn! you can do nothing with it." They replied: "We will mend them; all will be useful." His manner seemed very strange. At last they ended his questions by saying with cheerfulness: No, you will carry away nothing;" and they closed the parcel. The unknown priest appeared satisfied. He then put some
questions as to the building-place price, and what they had in hand. They explained that the part to build would cost £5,000, and how they had in prospect some hundreds of pounds. He passed from one subject to another, questioned on the number of old people, conditions of admission, means of existence; he repeated the same questions two or three times. At last they proposed he should visit the home. In the men’s room he was recognized by one old man, who said: "That is the Reverend Canon P."

Amongst the women several called him by his name, gathered round him, and reminded him of their young days when he was already a priest at the cathedral. In the kitchen he appeared greatly interested in the regime of the old people; he found them happy. After two hours had passed by, he went towards the door, after having renewed his questions concerning the building and the funds. The following day, when they were serving the dinner for the old people, the Canon reappeared. He was better dressed. He asked by name for the good Mother and the Little Sister-Assistant. They both entered. He seemed quite happy, and asked them to repeat their names, and the information of the previous day. At last he said to them with a thoughtful look: "I will give you some money. Will you be satisfied if I give you £100?"

Oh, Father, it is Saint Joseph who sends you." "Well," said the venerable old man with emotion, "I will give you, wherewith to build your house, £5,000." Their eyes were full of tears. The two Little Sisters fell on their knees. "Thanks be to God!" The priest prostrated himself also, and with a loud voice cried out: "Te Deum laudamus." The three voices joined in reciting the hymn, which expressed so deeply the keen sentiments of the gratitude of the soul. Arrived at the words, "In te domine speravi," the good old priest raised his eyes with an ineffable expression. He repeated three times that verse, and then said in English: "In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust, and I shall never be confounded." He stood up and said, "You are happy to receive it, I to give it. This money is in the bank: will you come there?" The two Little Sisters took their mantles and with the good old Canon entered the carriage which was waiting for him at the door. The carriage stopped. "My lawyer lives here." The Sisters were shown into the office. "Sir, these are the ladies to whom I want to transmit £5,000." Then he filled in the cheque in the name of the Superior and gave it to her. They went then to the bank, which was quite near; the lawyer prepared a receipt; in a few minutes all was arranged. Thus began St. Patrick’s Home for the aged in Kilmainham. Alderman Joseph Michael Meade who was born in 1839 the son of Michael Meade Justice of Peace of St. Michael’s Mount Merrion and Great Brunswick Street built St. Patrick’s Home for the aged run by The Little Sisters of The Poor at Kilmainham and it was opened 1883.

The foundation stone for Chapel at the rere of St. Patrick’s home was laid with great ceremony on Sunday 2nd October 1887 in the presence of a large assembly of the clergy and laity of Dublin. His grace the Most Rev. Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin laid the foundation stone. The whole edifice had a fantastic view of the Dublin mountains. The Chapel stood at right angles to the Home. The nave of the chapel was 90 feet by 31 feet with the sanctuary 25 feet by 22 feet. The height from the floor to the apex of the coiling chapel was 90 feet by 31 feet with the sanctuary 25 feet by 22 feet. The height from the floor to the apex of the coiling was 36 feet. The building was Gothic in style. The walls were of granite faced with broken ashlar and dressings of limestone. The work was carried out by Joseph Meade under the direction of architect William H. Byrne who also designed the main building. Among those present were Lady Mayoress Lady Dorothy Neville, Mrs Wm. Byrne, Mrs Murphy, Mrs Meade, Mrs Moran, Them Rt. Honourable Ormsby Gore, Aid-de-Camp to the Lord Lieutenant; Very Rev. D. Gerald Molly DD; Rev. W. Delaney S.J. Rector of University College, Aldermam Meade JP; very Rev. Canon Daniel PP; George Perry, TC; R.T. bermingham TC; Rev. W. Walters SM; James McDonnell TC; J. Butterfly P.L.G Thomas F. O’Connell Solicitor. On 14th April, during her visit to Dublin in 1900, Queen Victoria gave a bequest of £25 to the Little Sisters of the Poor and as she passed by St. Patrick’s Home in Kilmainham the nuns and inmates alike waved hankerchiefs out of the windows of the building in a wild a joyous greeting to the Queen as she passed by. According to the 1911 census there were 294 persons in St. Patrick’s Home for the aged at Kilmainham. The nuns included were Mother Superior Anna Hendrick Belgium; Sister Margaret Fox,Limerick; Sister Mary Penbury, Louth; Sister Mary Cox, Ardagh; Sister Mary Jones, Limerick; Sister Margaret McArdle, Louth; Sister Ann Walsh, Cork; Sister Leoni Dupont, Belgium; Sister Anna Durand, French; Sister Jeanann Le Grice, French; Sister Mari Bormet, French; Sister Mary Hubh, England; Sister Margaret Delbrasion, France; Sister Luie Peyr, France, Sister Mari Travant, France; Sister Alice Hughes Portarlington; Sister Elizabeth Sherlock, England; Sister Maisie Gloppe, France; Sister Ealaile Brousse, France; Sister Mari Kensoh, France; Sister Madeline Adam, Germany; Sister Margaret O’Donnell, Donegal; Sister Louise Formeoug, Belgium. On Friday 7th July 1939 the Chief of Staff of the Irish Army cut the ribbon on the birthday cake for the Little Sisters at Kilmainham with a Gold-hilted ceremonial sword to mark the 100th year of their existence. In 1994 the Little Sisters of the Poor sold the property at Kilmainham to Bovale Developments for £1.8 Million. In 1995 Bovale sold the building as 31 one and two bedroom apartments for prices ranging from £44,000 each. By 2002 these same apartments were changing hands for £380,000 each. (With assistance from Arsene Le Roy 1906)
Goldenbridge and The Sisters of Mercy

The foundress of this new order of The Sisters of Mercy was a Miss, or (as it is now usual to call her) Mrs. Katherine McAuley, an Irish lady, who finding herself left in middle life without pressing domestic duties, and the owner of a large fortune, resolved to devote both time and money to the service of the poor. She had no thought of being a nun, but intended to pass a retired life with a few ladies who had gathered round her. She purchased ground in Lower Baggot Street, on the south side of Dublin, and desired an architect to build a house for her. Some large rooms fit for teaching poor children, and a chapel, was the order she gave him; but without intending it he built a convent, and without intending it Katherine McAuley and her friends were training themselves as religious by their life of self-denial and devotion. When she saw what the designs of Providence were, she meekly submitted; and at fifty-two years of age went to serve a year's novitiate in the Presentation convent in George's Hill. There her cell can still be seen, the tiny room in which no doubt many secret victories were won, and many fervent prayers breathed for the anxious future before her, by the humble, patient novice. In 1831 the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy was founded; in 1841 it was approved by the Holy See, and in that same year Mrs. McAuley died, leaving fourteen houses of her institute in existence. The most remarkable features of this order have been its extreme popularity and its marvellous spread. New orders generally grow slowly at first, and have hard frosts and keen winds to contend against. Not so the Sisters of Mercy: like the Sisters of St. Vincent in France they caught the genius of their native country, and have been and are likely to remain the favourite among Irish orders. Before their foundress died they spread into England; now they possess in England and Scotland together forty houses; they have gone to Australia\(^4\) New Zealand, California, and America, while in Ireland their convents are like a network over the land; almost every town of importance possesses one of their communities, and a large portion of the education of Irish children is in their hands. Dr. Forbes, in his 'Memorandums in Ireland,' speaks of the 'noble Sisters of Mercy so widely spread over Ireland, and so constantly to be found where good is to be done.' He adds that, 'As in all Catholic countries so in Ireland, Sisters of Charity or Mercy are found, educating the young, nursing the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, harbouring the homeless, imparting religion to improve the good and to restore the bad, and all with that utter self- abnegation and self-devotion, and with that earnestness, tenderness, and patience which can only spring from the profoundest conviction that in so labouring they are fulfilling God's will as revealed to man.' The difference between the Irish Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of Mercy consists chiefly in their form of government. The Sisters of Charity are governed by a superioress-general, subject to an ecclesiastical superior, the bishop of the diocese in which the mother house is situated. They have but one general novitiate in which all novices must be trained, and any Sister may be sent to or from any house of the order as the superioress- general may wish. With the Sisters of Mercy each house is independent 'of the others, is governed by its own superioress, subject to the bishop of the diocese, and receives and trains its own novices. No Sister can be sent from one convent to another without her own consent and that of her bishop. When it is desired to make a new foundation of Sisters of Mercy, one of the existing convents is prayed to send out a filiation, i.e. to give up two or more of its Sisters to found the new community; and it is hoped and believed that they in their turn will receive novices and grow into a large community; like a swarm of bees they go forth from the parent house and find honey for themselves. Sisters of Mercy can also found branch houses which are dependent on and supplied from one community, and this is frequently done in large towns or in different parts of one diocese. There is much to be said in favour of both these forms of government, both are equally sanctioned by the church, and both have their advantages and drawbacks. But it is curious to observe that in France the tendency to the centralised form of government is strong, and by far the most popular; all their modern orders have, without exception, adopted it; while in Ireland, the form of government of the Sisters of Mercy is undoubtedly the favourite and most popular, and best suits the wants of the country. The convent in Baggot Street is an extensive building, but with a very plain exterior. Within, much pains have been spent on decorations of a strictly conventual character. The cloisters and convent chapel are beautiful; there are immense poor schools in the rear of the building, a large House of Mercy, and a home for pupil teachers. The three main objects for which Mrs. McAuley designed her order were the care of poor schools, the visitation of the poor, and the charge of a House of Mercy, and to these three works whenever practicable the Sisters are bound by rule to attend. The House of Mercy is meant as a temporary refuge for respectable girls and women out of employment. It is chiefly filled by servants out of place, and has
often proved a most valuable place of refuge for those in danger. The inmates are taught to labour for their own support, either at needle or laundry work, and the Sisters try to get situations for them. It is not intended that they should remain any length of time in the house, but only till they can find employment. In addition to these three works of charity the Sisters may undertake any other, either under their own roof or in branch houses. The Sisters of Mercy in Dublin being the largest and most important house of the order, have five branch houses, the three principal among which I visited, and will now speak of. The Charitable Infirmary, Jervis Street, is one of the oldest hospitals in Dublin. It was founded in the year 1728 by a small band of medical men; it began on a very small scale in Cook Street, but was soon moved to Inns Quay where it became considerably enlarged, and occupied the site of an old Dominican priory. After sixty years it was driven from its place to give room to the ‘Four Courts,’ the most beautiful public building that Dublin possesses. The Infirmary took refuge in Jervis Street, and was accommodated in a large house, the property of Lord Charlemont. In 1792 a charter for this hospital was granted by government, and the managers were incorporated as the ‘Guardians and Governors of the Charitable Infirmary, Jervis Street.’ Upon the present board there are no medical men. The building has a plain brick exterior. It contains a reception room, board room, lecture room, and six wards, capable of containing seventy patients. This hospital was, until about thirteen years ago, served by the usual class of hospital nurses, under charge of a matron. The medical men were by no means satisfied with their mode of service. The patients were neglected, the hospital was extremely dirty, and it was resolved that the Sisters of Mercy should be asked to undertake the nursing; and the request was made and granted. A certain number of Sisters were sent from the convent in Baggot Street, and a few small and inconvenient rooms, but well separated from the rest of the hospital, were allotted to them, and the Sisters began their work. In a very short time cleanliness and order reigned throughout the place—the patients were made comfortable, and the doctors found that their orders were carried out. Stimulants now went down the patients’ throats instead of those of their nurses, and all that careful nursing could do to alleviate suffering was performed. Jervis Street Hospital is chiefly used for accidents, and other surgical cases, and there are few under medical treatment. The house is not well suited for an hospital—the top wards being far too low and not very capable of sufficient ventilation. I understand it is the intention of the governors to build a new hospital shortly. The Sisters are able to do much for the souls of their patients, taking care to instruct the ignorant—to teach them to suffer patiently and to turn their thoughts to the God they have forgotten in their time of health. More than once a wedding has taken place, in the little chapel, between those whom sickness had led to repent of the past and desire to lead a Christian life for the future. The second branch of the Sisters of Mercy is at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, the chief Catholic hospital of Dublin, and one which bids fair to become equal in importance to any in Europe. The idea of its creation originated with the Sisters of Mercy, who, not contented with being ready to devote their labour to its care contributed £10,000, towards its expenses. They then undertook the arduous task of begging, and obtained from the public £17,000. With this sum a portion of the hospital was built and furnished. The Sisters of Mercy took possession of it in 1861, and receive about a hundred patients. In Dr. Bristowe’s report to government on the hospitals of the United Kingdom, the following mention is made:—"The Mater Misericordiae Hospital, founded in the year 1861 by the Sisters of Mercy, and as yet incomplete, lies to the north of Dublin, on the confines of the town; it occupies an elevated site, and is surrounded by large open spaces. On the score of salubrity, the site seems wholly unobjectionable.” “The hospital, when complete, will form a quadrangular building, and will hold, we believe, about 500 beds. At present the anterior portion only is in existence. This is a handsome symmetrical three-floored building, presenting on each floor a corridor at the back, extending from end to end, with wards and other rooms opening out of it in front, and with staircase, operating rooms, and offices (forming a compact block), extending from its central part backwards.” “The hospital is kept scrupulously clean, and its ventilation, and indeed all its internal arrangements, seem admirable. Patients are admitted without any recommendation other than the fitness of the case for admission, and all classes of disease are eligible, except infectious fevers. This hospital promises, in our opinion, to be, when complete, one of the finest hospitals in Europe. It is built on the corridor plan; but the distribution of corridors, and wards, and beds, is such as entirely to neutralise any ill effects that could possibly flow from the adoption of this plan, while all the advantages that spacious, cheerful, well-ventilated corridors afford, are thoroughly secured.” (Report to Government on the Hospitals of the United Kingdom. By J. S. Bristowe, M.D.)

During the year 1866, 1,100 patients passed through the wards of this hospital, and 3,491 were treated as out patients. In the autumn of that same year Dublin was visited by the terrible scourge of cholera. The hospital instantly opened its doors to the victims, a certain number of wards were set apart for them, and 206 patients were received and well cared for. At all hours of the day and night the Sisters and medical men were ready to take them in, and the tenderest and most vigilant care was bestowed on them. It fell to the task of one Sister to compose the limbs and shroud the bodies of more than one
hundred victims of this terrible disease. In common with the other hospitals of which I have been writing, immense spiritual good is wrought within these walls. Kind and gentle words make a great impression on the careless; the example of self-devotion they see before their eyes tends to strengthen it. If they are murmuring under their poverty and sickness, they see those born to comfort and luxury giving up all—imprisoning themselves within hospital walls—to wait on them; and advice from such a quarter is more appreciated. Few Catholics leave the hospital without having approached the sacraments. No distinction of creed is made in this hospital, and Protestants are as tenderly cared for as the rest, and freely allowed any ministration of their religion. ‘Whether the postulant be Catholic or Protestant, Mahometan or Jew, he is God’s work, made in his Creator’s image; and the gate opens to him freely, without a question as to his religious faith. He is not asked to violate his conscience that he may receive relief. He is not required to purchase his life at the price of his apostacy. The name of charity is not desecrated by association with sectarian intolerance. It is not made a bait to corrupt or a sword to persecute wretches broken down by disease to incapacity of resistance, and powerless to help themselves. This is a pleasing contrast to another hospital which, though standing in a Catholic country like Ireland, denies admission to any priest within its walls even to visit the dying, and has more than once turned out a patient in his last extremity because he would not die without the consolations of his faith. In a city where such fearful bigotry can exist an hospital like the Mater Misericordiae is doubly needed. The hospital has no grant from the State or permanent income from any other source. It is dependent entirely on public benevolence for support. During the past year a sum of 3,818l. was voluntarily bestowed, and every shilling received has gone directly to the relief of the patients. The Sisters of Mercy are no charge whatever on the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, being supported out of the funds of their own community. Of the 3,818l. received last year, 1,851l. was realised by a bazaar. One thousand pounds has been lodged towards the creation of a fund for the completion of the unfinished wing of the building. Nine years ago that wing was erected to the height of twenty-one feet, but the work was necessarily stopped for want of funds. The hospital being now out of debt, efforts are being made to complete this wing. In it ‘a fever ward, which is much needed, will be supplied, and it is hoped that by (Speech of Eight Hon. Judge O’Hagan. E) the addition of more than two hundred beds the hospital will be enabled to accommodate three hundred patients.’ The Mater Misericordiae and also St. Vincent’s Hospital have been founded upon the medieval system. They are the property of a religious order, which is alone responsible for their management, and to whom alms for their support are committed. In modern times hospitals have fallen under the management of ‘committees’ and ‘boards of directors,’ or ‘governors.’ The Sisters of Mercy, feeling the magnitude and importance of their undertaking, and considering the large sum of public money committed to their keeping, have resolved to amalgamate the two systems. They have, therefore, called to their aid a committee or council of the leading Catholic gentlemen of Dublin, to whom the accounts of the hospital are thrown open, and whose advice and co-operation are gratefully received. It is from their first annual report that the above quotations are taken, and the council further add: ‘Annexed to this report is a statement of the receipts and expenditures for the past twelve months. We cannot conclude without expressing our admiration of the good order and cleanliness of the hospital. The admirable manner in which it is kept, and the clear and accurate system of accounts have given us the greatest satisfaction, and reflect the highest credit on the Sisters of Mercy.’ When we reflect that so large a portion of the funds was contributed by the Sisters of Mercy themselves, and that the expenses even of their own support are not charged upon the funds, we must confess that this challenge of public inspection and criticism is the very opposite of that narrowness of spirit with which religious are, and often unjustly, accused.

Speaking of this hospital, Judge O’Hagan adds: ‘The contribution of the Sisters of Mercy was very great indeed. And this they offered that they might open for themselves a new field of labour—made terrible by mephitic vapours and the groans of tortured men—and bringing them into fearful contact with pestilence and death. And, since the hospital was established, they have been its only nurses. They have ministered, with their own hands, to its suffering inmates—repelled by no form of disease, however loathsome, and declining no office, however mean, so that they might mitigate a pang or speed a soul more peacefully to heaven! And all this they have done gratuitously, not merely receiving no stipend for their services, but maintaining themselves from their own resources, and not taxing even for their food the funds of the hospital in which they toil unceasingly to the extent of a single farthing. Surely this is admirable, and not less admirable too the rule by which they open their doors, at all times and under all circumstances, to every human being who needs their help, without let or hindrance. Suffering is the sole condition of its own relief. It requires no passport from wealth or rank. It is subjected to no cold and jealous scrutiny. There is no fear that a human creature shall perish at the door, whilst those within deliberate on the propriety of his admission.’ The Cardinal Archbishop of Dublin, speaking of the Mater Misericordiae, said: ‘I recollect that when it was proposed to commence this hospital there was a difference of opinion about the merits of the plan according to which it is now
partially erected. Some said that the proposed building would be too expensive, that it would be too grand for the poor, and that it would be better to erect an humble and less ornamental structure, which would be more in harmony with the miserable normal condition of our poor. Having been consulted on the question, I declared in favour of the present plan. We have palaces for guilt—we have palaces for force—we have palaces for legalized want, in which what is called pauperism is dealt with according to the principles of an unfeeling political economy. Why, then, should we not have at least one palace for the poor, in which poverty would be relieved in a true spirit of charity and according to the dictates of the Gospel? Such palaces are met with under the name of Alberghi or Ospizi de Poveri, in Naples and Genoa, Rome and Paris. Why should not Dublin show its respect for true poverty by imitating the good example given by other cities? The Sisters of Mercy, acting according to the spirit of their institute, determined to adopt the plan best calculated to elevate and enable poverty, and they have been most successful in erecting an hospital which does credit to their good taste, and is a great ornament to the city.' In the conception and progress of this great work there presided a guiding spirit—one of those rare characters from whom 'great' actions may be expected—and it is her principle, which was here strenuously carried out, that those who labour for God's glory should strain every effort to let their work equal, even if it cannot excel, the deeds of those who toil for an earthly reward.

The third branch house of the Sisters of Mercy in Dublin is connected with one of the most important institutions in Ireland—the Prison Refuge at Golden Bridge. It was in Ireland that the problem how to reform our female criminals was first solved, and it is mainly owing to the Sisters of Mercy that the solution was accomplished. The reformation of a female prisoner has long been acknowledged to be a harder task than that of a male—indeed, many have deemed it impossible. She has sinned more against the instincts of her better nature, the consequences of her crime have had a more hardening effect upon her, but, above all, the absence of hope has a fatal effect on her character. And this despair is really not much to be wondered at. If a poor woman endure her sentence patiently, and keep the prison rules, she goes out at the end of her imprisonment with very little prospect for the future, save that of fresh dishonesty. What is to become of her? She has no character. Who will employ a discharged prisoner? The sharp witticism of Dr. Whately, that he who employed a convict servant would soon have no spoons left in the house but himself, is an article of faith to the vast majority of people, and nobody feels himself bound to risk losing his plate, or his other household gods. For men there are a dozen modes of hard, rough-out-door employment to which they can turn; but take away from a woman domestic service, charing, and laundry work, and there is nothing left to her but wretched needlework, at which even respectable women can hardly earn their bread. It must seem almost like a mockery to speak to a poor prisoner of the mercy of God, when the mercy of her fellow-creatures is so sternly withheld. For many years past the Sisters of Mercy have been permitted to visit the female prisoners at Mountjoy Prison, the principal and strongest prison in Ireland, and one which is now too familiar to us, from its association with the Fenian prisoners. Here the Sisters exercise a most beneficial influence over the miserable inmates. They instruct them together in class, and it is a rule that no prison official shall be present. Yet this class often consists of wild, desperate women, with great physical strength and easily-roused passions. The matron of Mountjoy described to us once how standing in a prisoner's cell, with an immense bunch of keys in her hand, she suddenly perceived that the woman was about to spring upon her, in which case the keys would have been sent with all their force against her head. Just in time the matron, a strong, vigorous woman, knocked her assailant down, and thus saved her own life. Among such as these the Sisters move fearlessly, and have never had to suffer. Even the wild din of tongues issuing from those kept all day, and many a day, in enforced silence, is hushed by the uplifted finger or the gentle tones of a Sister of Mercy. Great good was therefore to be expected from placing these women for the concluding part of their sentence in a refuge under the sole care of these Sisters. The proposition was made to the superioress in April 1856, and in a few days only she was ready to begin the work. Before passing to the Refuge, I must say a word about Mountjoy Prison, although I do not wish to reckon it among the 'Irish homes' that I have visited. It stands at the north of Dublin, in an open, airy situation. It is a prison for men and women, the two compartments being of course entirely distinct. The head matron of the female prison is a person of very superior attainments. A lady by birth and education, she does not content herself with merely doing her duty, but throws all the powers of her mind and heart into the work. She evidently desires the real reformation of the prisoners, and gives her cordial co-operation to the efforts of the Sisters of Mercy. Her subordinates are carefully chosen, and are influenced by the excellent qualities of their superior. It is a dismal occupation to take a walk through Mountjoy; the long white corridors and walls unrelied by a patch of colour; narrow iron staircases running here and there to upper stories and galleries; long rows of cells, with closely locked doors, and a little window in the middle through which the matron can peep, or the prisoner make any necessary want known. Pacing up and down a corridor containing a number of those cells, is a matron dressed in black, whose countenance and manner show you she is firm,
resolute, patient, and prepared for emergencies. Here she must stay an allotted number of hours, till her watch is over, and she is relieved by another officer. The next class of prisoners are allowed the luxury of having their cell door open, and thus seeing all that passes, in the occasional passage of a matron, or some other official; yet this slight break in the dread monotony of solitary confinement is valued, and looked on as a reward. We went to the school where prisoners attend in detachments for one hour per day. This is one of their greatest enjoyments, and its deprivation, therefore, is used as a punishment for certain offences. It was curious to see women of every age, even to the grey-haired, standing in classes with spelling-books, like so many children, many of them able to learn but little, but eager and interested in the employment, which broke the monotony of their days, and gave them some new ideas. Women in the advanced classes of prison life work in a common room, then pass to the laundry, and other employments in the prison. Through all these stages they must pass, and behave well in each before they can enter the Refuge; it is intended strictly as a reward for good conduct, and the hope of getting there, the hope for the future, is the star that rises on the dark night of their despair and recklessness, and leads them on to exertion. The Sisters in their visits to the prison, are able to learn the character of the women, and this is an immense help to them in the management of the Refuge. I visited the chapels of the prison, both Catholic and Protestant. The male prisoners are on one side, the female on the other. There are three chapels in Mountjoy, Catholic, Established Church, and Presbyterian, and each has its chaplain. The Catholics are so numerous as to require the services of two priests. We need hardly say that the Catholics in Mount-joy and all Irish prisons are in an overwhelming majority over the Protestants; yet for the small minority ample religious provision is made, while in England for the large masses of Catholic prisoners, because they happen to profess a faith different from that of the State religion, in many prisons very little or no religious provision is made. The most affecting sight in Mountjoy was the infant school. There are collected together the poor little creatures whose mothers are in jail. Some were sleeping in their cots, others toddling about the floor, others a little older learning their letters. They were clean and nicely cared for, and looked happy enough; many of them very pretty, and all with the innocent baby faces which appeal to every heart. Poor little beings, what a strange fate is theirs! there for a brief space sheltered from the storm, but soon to go out and make experience of life in its roughest, bitterest aspect. How soon from many of them the innocence of childhood will be snatched! Perhaps raging in some of the cells above, or in the ‘punishment cells,’ tearing about like wild beasts, were the mothers of some of them, to whom their future training would be committed. I know not how any one could look at these rosy, smiling faces, without shedding tears; it is at least a merciful arrangement which permits their being cared for during these few years, and taught holy lessons which may linger as fragments in the memories of some.

Nothing strikes a visitor to Golden Bridge Refuge more than the un-prison life look of the place. It is a striking contrast to the great formidable-looking military barrack opposite to it. A wooden gate leads into the domain, and on each side of the gate is a building, that on the right a disused Protestant church, on the left the schools; for the Sisters add on to their prison work schools for the poor children in the neighbourhood. Golden Bridge is a little way out of Dublin, on the Inchicore Road, but it lies in the midst of a large and poor population. The house is by no means suited for the purpose, and immense pains, contrivance, and perseverance were needed to enable the Sisters to receive prisoners there at all—out-houses, lofts, and sheds have been converted into dormitories and work rooms, while money has been collected, and large, fine laundries built. But what cannot be done by the right person in the right place? and fortunately for the prisoners the order of the Sisters of Mercy possessed among its members one whose qualities of head and heart rendered her pre-eminently suited for the undertaking. I cannot speak of Mother Mary Magdalene, or Mrs. Kirwan (as she is generally called), as I would, because she is still among us, and to those who have done, and are doing great deeds, praise sounds like an impertinence; it is sufficient to say that she has made the Refuge what it is—a success; she has ‘redeemed multitudes of women, and redeemed them permanently to virtue, society, and God.’ She has touched ‘seared consciences, and softened flinty hearts.’

Hundreds of women who would have spent their time in Mountjoy Prison in a state of chronic rebellion and passion, engendered by despair, and gone out worse than they came in, more ready to sin against society and to break the laws of God, have struggled through their prison life, done well at the Refuge, and are now earning their bread respectfully, the past forgiven and forgotten. And through these latter are rare, there have been more consoling cases still where the repentance has been of that depth and fervour which reminds us forcibly of the great pattern of penitents, to whom much was forgiven because of her great love and contrition. Many of the prisoners are not fallen women, and one of them who had unhappily lost her good name, although indeed she had been more ‘sinned against than sinning,’ wept with many and bitter tears over her lost innocence, humbling herself in spirit infinitely below her companions. ‘Ah! Rev. mother, if I were but like the others!’ she would say, and thankfully accepted the hardship of her lot as a deserved and salutary penance. A girl, whom we will call Mary, was left an orphan at twelve years of age with a
little brother. They had an aunt who offered to take the girl provided she deserted her brother. This she refused, and the two children wandered about the country all but starving. At last they stole some trifling thing and were sent to prison for a short time, but long enough for the tide of evil to flow over them. They came out much worse than when they went in. Mary lost her innocence, and was again and again committed for theft; at last she fortunately received a sentence for seven years, and after spending nearly four in prison came to the Refuge. There she learnt to sorrow truly for the past, and her conduct was so satisfactory that the Sisters placed her in service in Dublin, in the house of one of those charitable ladies who are willing to help on the good work by giving these poor creatures a trial. Here she remained two years, and at their close received an offer of marriage from a respectable bricklayer well able to keep her; but she would not accept him till Mother Magdalen had seen him and approved of the match. This being done, all seemed going well, when one day Mary appeared before the Mother flushed and agitated. 'I want you, ma'am, to tell Dennis everything about me; I could not deceive him; I could not marry him unless he knows all, and I don't know how he will take it.' Mary went out and in came Dennis, not at all over-pleased to find there was any hitch in his love affairs. 'What do you know of Mary?' said the superiress.—'Everything that is good, ma'am,' answered Dennis warmly; 'what have you to say against her?'—'Nothing,' replied the nun; 'and what she has now bid me do raises her in my estimation, but she wishes you to know that she was once a convict at Golden Bridge.'—'I know that, ma'am,' said he with much feeling; 'the housemaid at Mrs. found it out and told it to me, thinking to turn me from Mary, but I have never spoken to her since, I thought it was so mean; and as for Mary, I think more highly of her than ever.' They were married, and at a year's end Mary died in giving birth to her first child. Almost her last thought of earth was to see again the loved face of the nun who had indeed been a true friend and mother to her. Dennis came afterwards to Mother Magdalen weeping bitterly over his loss. 'Oh, ma'am,' said he, 'she was a wife for a prince, beautiful and so gentle; all the people in the house we lodged in respected her, though she spoke to no one but me. After our marriage she could not rest till she had told me the history of her life, but I never cast a thought on it after.' Another girl in her early youth had been betrayed and deserted; she wandered about with her baby begging; falling into the hands of an abandoned woman she was persuaded to desert her baby, and take to theft and evil courses. She allowed the tempter to take the baby from her arms, and then she followed her bad counsel; but a perpetual remorse haunted her, and she strove to drown it in reckless sin. She came to the Refuge; repentance began to do its work, and her sorrow was deep and overwhelming. She behaved very well, and on leaving was respectfully placed in America. Friends, home, honest earnings, a good name were again hers; but still she heard that feeble wail, still she felt the last pressure of that little burden on her bosom, and though she went thankfully, patiently about her work, she said there would be a shadow over her to the end of her days. Strange and romantic indeed are many and many of the histories which have come to the ears of the Sisters in this Refuge; these lives have often been tragedies acted in secret, and would outdo the plot of any sensational novel. Placing out the prisoners when they leave is the chief care of the nuns; it is the completion of their work, without which all the previous labour would be wasted; and it is not easy. A prisoner who had done well during her prison term has earned money which makes her a prize for the moment to her 'pals' and former evil companions. A girl who had been convicted of sheep stealing and committed to prison in Cork, there made acquaintance with two bad women, and on her being sent to Mountjoy, made a bargain with her friends to call for her as soon as her sentence should have expired. When sent to the Refuge she was found to be deceitful and cunning, and little hope was entertained of her reformation. But a change passed over her, and she came to Mother Magdalen to tell her story, and asked to be saved from her prison acquaintance. She was sent to America, where she was found to have respectable friends; and when at the appointed time the two women came faithfully to fulfil their pledge (for when did Satan ever forget his appointments?) it was with no little jubilation of heart that the Sisters told them she whom they sought was gone away. The enquirers seemed greatly astonished at the news. In America this girl did well, and wrote grateful letters. Against dangers such as she was exposed to the nuns have to guard many, and they have to provide employment for their charges suited to their characters and capabilities. Many emigrate, and as the Sisters of Mercy have convents in most of the colonies, they are sent to these by the Sisters from the Refuge, and thus find friends and helpers in a strange land. Mother Magdalen's influence over the prisoners is unbounded: a result not so much to be wondered at, because she is one of those beings on whom the gift of influence has been bestowed; and the intellectual and the refined cannot resist its spell. And all the powers of a mind fitted to shine pre-eminently in the most accomplished circles are exerted to win the confidence and direct aright the character of these poor outcasts. One of them was sent to service at a great distance from Dublin; she behaved very well and remained a quarter; at its end her wages were paid, and she was allowed a day's holiday. She took a return ticket for Dublin, and presented herself at the convent. She had exactly one hour to spare before she had to return to the station, and the price of the ticket had swallowed up nearly
all her earnings; but she was quite contented, having accomplished the object of her journey, which was, she said to Mother Magdalen, 'to have a good look at you, ma'am;' and when remonstrated with by the Mother for spending her money on so transient a pleasure when she might have done other things with it, bought a useful book for instance, replied, 'And sure ma'am, I mean to do it again.' After all was it so very transient? If there are 'sermons in stones' what lessons may not be read from the faces of those we reverence—lessons which may linger in the memory and aid us in the hour of trial. For a long time the two employments of the prisoners were washing and needlework, but Mrs. Kirwan constantly regretted that she was not able to vary these. Some women are not suited or strong enough for laundry work; and then the long monotony of 'stitch, stitch, stitch' is very trying and very hard for them, and tends to keep up that dwelling on self, and reverting to the past, which it is the aim of the Sisters to prevent. In the course of 1866, Mrs. Kirwan ventured on a little experiment, and is attempting the weaving of lindsey. No manufactories of this fabric exist in Ireland, all lindsey, as well as most other articles of wear, is imported; and the people who blame the Irish for not exerting themselves, would be the last to purchase home made goods. Mrs. Kirwan's experiment is a very courageous one, for it cannot be made without much expense. A manufactury had to be fitted up, looms purchased, and weavers engaged for a certain time to teach the art. When I visited the Refuge several looms were in operation, worked by the prisoners, and various bales of lindsey manufactured by them were ready for inspection; it seemed very well made, and as good as what would be seen in a London shop. If this experiment should succeed, it will not have to trust entirely to the mercy of the public, for the Dublin Sisters of Mercy, with their five branch houses, and the various institutions under their charge, are consumers of a great deal of lindsey, which might be supplied from their own looms. At all events the employment has had an excellent effect on the women; the work interests them and they labour away with good will. Passing through the laundries we saw two pretty little children whose mothers were among the prisoners. When a prisoner with a child is sent to the Refuge, the child comes also, and the mother can see it at the intervals of her work, and this must have a humanising and softening effect on the poor creatures. It must be remembered that the whole cost of this Refuge is by no means defrayed by the Government; it allows only five shillings per week for each convict. Out of this and the small profit arising from the prisoners' labour, every expense has to be met. The erection of the laundries cost a large sum: the Sisters borrowed it at the usual rate of interest, and have to pay off the principal. All this anxiety, responsibility, and burden falls on them, in addition to the heavy cares of the Refuge itself. There is an erroneous idea in Ireland that institutions under Government do not need further help—on the contrary they often need it more than others, for it would be a grievous thing if the help that Government offers had to be refused for lack of the necessary funds to meet it. After the Golden Bridge Refuge was in operation, a Protestant one was opened which contains about a dozen prisoners. The Government extend the same help to it as to the Catholic, and in this respect there is no cause for complaint; and as far as the Refuges are concerned, all creeds are treated by Government with perfect justice and fairness. Before leaving the Refuge I visited the schools, divided from it by a long strip of grass land. Several hundred children attend this school, and as the population around is extremely poor, an industrial school is added to the literary ones. The Protestant church on the other side is an absurd object, being utterly- empty and disused; there would be no difficulty in the Sisters purchasing it, except that by law a building belonging to the Established Church must remain as it is, whether there be a congregation or not, and when it is not of the slightest use to any mortal (by Frances Margaret Taylor – 1867).

The Sisters of Mercy At Goldenbridge in Modern Times

A Mercy sister has been 'demonised', Provincial tells Commission Friday, March 18th, 2005 A provincial leader from the Sisters of Mercy has defended the abuse charges laid in a television documentary against a sister who managed an industrial school in the 1940s. Sr Helena O'Donoghue, provincial leader of the south central province of the Sisters of Mercy congregation, told the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse on Tuesday (15th March) that Sr Xaviera Lally of the Goldenbridge industrial school in Dublin, had been "demonised and vilified over the past decade. Serious allegations were accepted in the public domain as fact, she said. The nun’s denials that children in the industrial school were "abused in a horrific way” had been "almost completely ignored", she said. Sr Helene O'Donoghue was heckled as she quoted from Department of Education Inspection Reports, by a number of former inmates of the Goldenbridge school, while members of “Let our Voices Emerge”, a group supporting religious of integrity who are innocent of abuse heckled the former Goldenbridge Inmates. Official reports from the Department of Health were greeted with catcalls of lies and whitewash. Evidence in the form of photographs of the children playing in the
swimming pool at the holiday house, dancing classes, Christmas parties and pantomimes seemed to be remembered by very few, said Florence Horseman Hogan from LOVE, who was present at the hearing. Sr O'Donoghue noted that, despite Garda investigation of complaints made after the broadcast of the Dear Daughter programme on Goldenbridge in 1996, no criminal charges were brought. She said that she had no personal knowledge of the school and was relying on written records and the testimonies of third parties. The allegations of child abuse in Dear Daughter "was a source of deep shock to us", she said, and led to the congregation's first apology in February 1996, for pain and hurt suffered. The congregation apologised again in May 2004. She accepted that abuses did take place, but denied the most serious of the allegations, especially those made against Sr Xaveria. "I reiterate those apologies. There were many aspects of Goldenbridge we deeply regret, but there were some serious, extraordinary allegations, especially as regards Sr Xaveria, which we do not, we cannot accept as correct - allegations of extreme physical punishment, starvation, malnourishment, or any child dead due to mistreatment," she said. 185 children were at Goldenbridge school at any one time, from the with a staff ratio of one to every 30 children twenty four hours a day. There was no training in childcare and a lack of state funding. There was an emphasis on conformity and wide use of corporal punishment. Sr O'Donoghue deeply regretted in particular the use of such punishment on children with bed-wetting problems. She recalled there had been a small number of sex-abuse complaints, one in particular against a groundsman who was complained of by one of the girls in 1962. Sr Xaviera reported the man to the Gardaí, and he was prosecuted and dismissed from his job. Before the broadcast of Dear Daughter the Mercy Sisters employed a childcare expert to look at complaints who found them "broadly credible". It had also found that the regime (at Goldenbridge) was inadequate and did not meet the basic needs of the children. In answer to a request for an opportunity to rebut Sr O'Donoghue’s evidence, Commission Chairman Mr Justice Sean Ryan said Ms Buckley and 30 former residents of Goldenbridge would be allowed to give evidence during the private hearings which begin on Friday 18th March and will continue to 27th April.

THE RYAN REPORT

The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse was established on 23 May, 2000, pursuant to the "Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Act 2000" under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice Sean Ryan and given three primary functions: to hear evidence of abuse from persons who allege they suffered abuse in childhood, in institutions, during the period from 1940 or earlier, to the present day; to conduct an inquiry into abuse of children in institutions during that period and, where satisfied that abuse occurred, to determine the causes, nature, circumstances and extent of such abuse; and to prepare and publish reports on the results of the inquiry and on its recommendations in relation to dealing with the effects of such abuse.

Chapter 7 of the Ryan Report St Vincent’s Industrial School, Goldenbridge ('Goldenbridge'), 1880–1983 Goldenbridge was the subject of television and radio programmes and of a great deal of media coverage generally. Experiences of ex-residents of Goldenbridge featured in a number of publications, and some ex-residents were prominent in the campaign for redress. The programme ‘Dear Daughter’ was a dramatised documentary that featured this Institution, and Goldenbridge was also referred to in the television series ‘States of Fear’. The screening of the third and last programme of that series provoked a huge public reaction and was followed by the Taoiseach’s apology. Measures were announced that included the establishment of this Commission. Public meetings that were intended to generate support for the campaign for recognition and redress provided occasions for former residents to come together and share experiences. The Sisters of Mercy expressed concern at the possibility that people were being influenced by what was said at these meetings. The Investigation Committee held both public and private hearings in respect of Goldenbridge. Sr Helena O'Donoghue, Provincial Leader of the South Central Province, gave evidence to the Committee in a public session on 15th March 2005. Her evidence was based on a detailed Opening Statement submitted in advance of the hearing. Evidence was heard from witnesses in private hearings from 18th March until 28th April 2005. A total of 40 complainants gave evidence at this time. A further four former residents gave evidence, at the request of the Sisters of Mercy, to provide positive accounts of their experiences of growing up in Goldenbridge. All complainants who wished to give evidence did so; in addition, four respondents and two expert witnesses gave evidence. The Committee had heard evidence from three complainants and two respondents in March 2002. In the third stage of the inquiry into Goldenbridge (Phase III), a public hearing was convened on 15th May 2006 at the Herbert Park Hotel, Ballsbridge, and Sr Helena O'Donoghue once again gave evidence on behalf of the Congregation. This session focused on issues that arose as a result of the private hearings and the documentary material produced to the Committee. Documentation was furnished as part of the discovery process from a number of
School and the care of the children were left to two lay teachers as the convent would not have known the children in the Industrial School. The day concern had no recollection of any other nun in the Community being involved in the running of the Institution delegated to one nun, Sr Pietrina, who was elderly and diabetic when Sr Alida was appointed. Sr Alida had no recollection of any other nun in the Community being involved in the running of the Institution other than Sr Pietrina. She said that, apart from visiting the Industrial School to watch films or concerts, there was no contact between the Industrial School and the convent, and the nuns in the convent would not have known the children in the Industrial School. The day-to-day operation of the School and the care of the children were left to two lay teachers, Ms Dempsey and Ms Kearney. After
classes, these teachers supervised the children and put them to bed. They were assisted by four care workers, one in the kitchen, one in the laundry and two generally in the house. In the evening, Sr Pietrina returned to the convent, and the two lay teachers looked after the children until the next day. There were 150 children in Goldenbridge at that time. Before Sr Bianca was appointed to Goldenbridge, Sr Vincenza of Carysfort had appointed Sr Divina as Resident Manager in the early 1940s, which prompted the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education to protest. He wrote: I am desired by the Minister for Education to call your attention to the fact that the new Resident Manager whom you have appointed in St. Vincent’s Industrial School, Goldenbridge, is 79 years of age. The Minister feels that the management of an Industrial School would constitute a very heavy burden and responsibility on a lady of this advanced age. The supervision of the feeding, clothing, education and health of about 150 children, together with the keeping of the many accounts, records etc., which are required and, in addition, the fulfilment of her duties as Reverend Mother of the community would, in the Minister’s opinion, constitute a heavy burden on a much younger and more active person. The Minister would accordingly be glad if you would reconsider this appointment with a view to appointing a much younger Sister who has had experience of children and on whom the complex duties of management would not be so burdensome. Sr Vincenza replied immediately to the Assistant Secretary: In reply to your letter of 29th September regarding the appointment of an aged Sister as Manager of Golden Bridge Industrial School, I have this day appointed as Manager one of the Staff – Sr. Bianca – to that position. When appointing the Manager on the 12th September I sent an extra Sister to the Ind. School, who holds very high qualifications and certificates for Domestic Economy, Cookery, Needlework and Household Knowledge, to help with the management with the household work and management of the children, so that Sr. Bianca could be free to devote some time to the duties that the Manager would have to undertake. The appointment made today leaves Mother Pia free to devote herself to the Community in Golden Bridge Convent. That, however, was not the end of the matter; the Department immediately replied, seeking clarification: Please state whether it is your intention to authorise Sister Bianca to exercise all the powers, functions and duties of the Managers in accordance with the provisions of the Children Acts, 1908 to 1941. The Department of Education wanted to ensure that the actual day-to-day running of the Institution would be in the hands of a young, energetic, qualified Sister. Sr Bianca was appointed as Sister-in-Charge of the Industrial School in the early 1940s, and was appointed Resident Manager the following year. At the same time Sr Alida, who was a young newly professed Sister, in her mid-20s, was appointed as her assistant. Sr Bianca continued as Resident Manager until the mid-1950s. According to Sr Alida, when Sr Bianca took over she was a very powerful personality, controlling person. She went to her major Superior in Carysfort and said she would take the running of the school ... provided she got the handling of the finance’. Sr Alida said that this gave her ‘great ease of conscience’ because it meant that nobody could ever question that the money given to the Industrial School was spent by the convent in any other way. She explained: there were lots of allegations at that time made, rightly or wrongly, that school money went to the convent. That was the system. Sr Bianca ended that system and the money was – she had the cheque book, Pietrina never had a cheque book, and paid the bills. Sr Alida maintained that only a person as powerful as Sr Bianca could have succeeded in having this change made to the management structure of Goldenbridge. She said that, before Sr Bianca’s intervention, the money came into the convent to the Superior and was lodged to the bank: I know we used to say that it wasn’t all totally honestly done, I have absolutely nothing to say about that. I am not saying that. What I am saying was that the person running the school, Sr. Pietrina, would have said to me one day, and she was a long time in the school, “all the money I ever handled while I was in the School was the money for the dripping” Sr Alida described Sr Bianca as a woman with a forceful personality: I am saying it now with gratitude in my heart to her, she was a very controlling person, she could achieve things that I would never have done. I would have started in Goldenbridge if I were in her shoes doing a very different thing. I would have started looking for money to buy knickers and vests for the children. She saw the bigger facilities. They matched her personality. She got the walk-in fridge, she got two big steamers, the hotels wouldn’t have them at that time, the kind she got. She had massive immediate improvements in the School, massive. She didn’t see the need for changing the blankets or changing their homemade knickers. The School wouldn’t have advanced as much as they did only for the power she had. Sr Alida spoke at length about the changes that Sr Bianca introduced into Goldenbridge Industrial School immediately upon her appointment. In many ways, these changes speak more of the regime that existed before Sr Bianca’s appointment than anything else. They point to a management which had been so poor and so negligent that the children could not possibly have received even a minimum standard of care. The two areas which Sr Bianca tackled immediately were (i) the medical care of the children, and (ii) the standard of education. The issue of the medical care in Goldenbridge is dealt with later. As will be shown, the condition of the children was so bad that the School had to be closed down for two
weeks whilst the problems of scabies and ringworm were tackled. Bedding had to be removed and disinfected by Dublin Corporation, and all the children’s clothing had to be boil-washed. Sr Alida vividly described the problem tackled by Sr Bianca which had reached crisis proportions at the time of her appointment. The Institution had been allowed to deteriorate into an appalling condition and Sr Bianca tackled these problems energetically. Similarly, the provision of education was extraordinarily poor at that time. Sr Bianca had to get basic equipment for the schoolroom. There were only two untrained lay teachers, and they were there in the dual capacity of carers and teachers. Sr Alida said: ... I never asked and I have no idea how they taught the 150 children of a school going age or how schooling was managed, but there was a programme for industrial school girls over 13 years of age. Everyday, five days a week, they had domestic training, cooking, laundry and dressmaking after 12.30, after the lunch hour. Sr Alida described a lack of any facilities in the classroom. Only two of the four classrooms in Goldenbridge appeared to be in use. This led her to believe that no other Sister from the convent was actively engaged in teaching in Goldenbridge in the years prior to her arrival with Sr Bianca. She confirmed that Sr Pietrina did not teach. For the first few weeks of her time in Goldenbridge, the efforts of both Sr Alida and Sr Bianca were concentrated on the children’s health and dealing with the medical conditions that they found there. Once these medical problems had been brought under control, schooling was resumed. Sr Bianca ordered playground equipment from England at this time, including a number of swings and a merry-go-round and a drinking fountain for the playground. Sr Alida went on to describe the extremely primitive conditions in the Industrial School generally. It appeared that the only washing machines were so old and ineffective that they were not used, and all the washing for the 150 children was done by hand. She said the machines were eventually re-serviced and brought into use, but that they were always ineffective and it took a long time to wash the clothes. The cooking facilities in the kitchen were also primitive, and Sr Bianca acquired two large steamers that she used to prepare vast quantities of food. Conditions were difficult on other levels: it was very difficult to heat the Institution, and very difficult to get basic provisions for the children; all the clothing was handmade on the premises by the older children under the supervision of a lay worker. Sr Alida said that the older girls did all the domestic chores in the house. When Sr Bianca left Goldenbridge in June 1954, Sr Laurella took over as Resident Manager, although Sr Alida, who arrived in Goldenbridge on the same day as Sr Bianca, was the effective Manager of the Industrial School from 1954 until she left in 1963. The first former resident who gave evidence had been in Goldenbridge from 1949, and the Committee has relied on oral testimony to establish conditions after that time. Very little documentary evidence is in existence for conditions in the 1930s and 1940s. The Department of Education Medical Inspector, Dr Anna McCabe, inspected the premises and from time to time made suggestions regarding the care of the children. Her first two inspections were significant, because they coincided with the appalling conditions described by Sr Alida. The first was in 1939 and the second was in 1941. Nothing in these reports would indicate the level of neglect encountered by Sr Alida. At some time in the early 1950s or even the late 1940s, Sr Alida was approached by a businessman who suggested that the Institution could become involved in making rosary beads. Thus, the bead-making industry in Goldenbridge was introduced into the daily routine of the pupils, and it continued until the mid-1960s. In the early 1950s, Sr Bianca made the decision to acquire a holiday home for Goldenbridge in Rathdrum, County Wicklow. In 1954, a large house was bought for £3,000. According to Sr Alida, the money earned from the bead-making contributed £1,000 of this purchase price. According to the Opening Statement: ... it enabled everyone to have a summer holiday away from the institution. All children would spend some time in the summer at the holiday house and those who could not go home for a holiday spent the entire summer holidays there. Although some former residents did not enjoy going to Rathdrum during the holidays, for most of them it represented a welcome respite from school and, in particular, from bead-making. Ms Kearney, a teacher in the Institution, gave evidence that, prior to the purchase of the house in Rathdrum, children went on holidays to other Sisters of Mercy homes that were in the countryside or beside the sea. To spend £3,000 on a house that was only used for a few weeks every year, at a time when food and clothing and basic educational equipment were lacking, does not appear to be the most appropriate allocation of scarce resources. In 1954, when Sr Alida took over the management of the Industrial School, Sr Venetia joined her as a full-time assistant. She was a qualified primary teacher. Ms Dempsey and Ms Kearney were still the two lay teachers in Goldenbridge at that time, and there was also a small number of other lay staff employed by the Institution. In addition to the lay staff and the two Sisters, the running of Goldenbridge was also entrusted to the care of what were known as ‘care workers’. These care workers were girls who had grown up in Goldenbridge and were unable to get work outside the Institution. The template for the day-to-day running of the Institution had been established by Sr Bianca. Sr Alida said that she continued the methods and systems introduced by Sr Bianca although she did, as might be expected, make some improvements along the way. Sr Alida left Goldenbridge in
Shortly after the airing of ‘Dear Daughter’, Sr Alida was interviewed on the current affairs programme, that Goldenbridge was once again the subject of intense media coverage and speculation. The following couple of years, particularly about Goldenbridge Industrial School, continued to appear sporadically in newspapers for two years, and the story was picked up by most of the national media. Stories about institutional abuse, and in particular for her father, which she undertook in her 30s, that brought Christine Buckley to the Gay Byrne show, but during the interview she was asked about her experience of growing up in Goldenbridge as a grim institution in the 1940s, when children were seriously neglected and when inadequate staffing deprived them of proper care. 150 children were left in the care of two unqualified teachers and an ill, elderly Sister. The person with statutory responsibility, the Resident Manager, took no active part in running the Institution. Defects in the management of the School were not observed by official inspectors. The allegations of abuse in Goldenbridge first entered the public domain with the broadcast by RTE Radio 1 of an interview with an ex-resident, Ms Christine Buckley, on the Gay Byrne morning radio show. This was broadcast on 8th November 1992. It was the quest for her parents, and in particular for her father, which she undertook in her 30s, that brought Christine Buckley to the Gay Byrne show, but during the interview she was asked about her experience of growing up in Goldenbridge in Dublin. She described abuses that she and others suffered while resident there. Immediately, phone calls came in to RTE from women and men who had had similar experiences and who wished to extend their good wishes and sympathy to her. Meetings were set up with ex-residents, and the story was picked up by most of the national media. Stories about institutional abuse, and in particular about Goldenbridge Industrial School, continued to appear sporadically in newspapers for the following couple of years, but it was not until 1996, when the ‘Dear Daughter’ programme was broadcast, that Goldenbridge was once again the subject of intense media coverage and speculation.

Shortly after the airing of ‘Dear Daughter’, Sr Alida was interviewed on the current affairs programme,
Prime Time. In the course of that interview, she admitted that she had been harsh at times, but denied that children were abused in the horrific way described in many of the headlines. According to Sr Helena O’Donoghue, ‘This denial would appear to have been almost completely ignored in the public domain and it would appear that judgment had been given’. Shortly before the ‘Dear Daughter’ programme was broadcast on RTE, the Sisters of Mercy commissioned a professional childcare expert to write a report to assess the allegations which were being made by former residents in Goldenbridge. The Crowley Report offered little comfort to the Sisters who had commissioned it. Mr Crowley interviewed both Sr Alida and Sr Venetia. In his report he stated: Sr. Venetia confirmed that the general atmosphere was excessively and consistently cruel even relative to standards of the time. She confirmed that fear of and actual physical beatings and verbal abuse was a matter of routine and that the general account of children, for example, waiting on the landings was accurate. Wetting was defined as a crime and, therefore, punishable through humiliation and physical beatings. Sr. Venetia confirmed the allegations in relation to the tumble dryer and drinking from the toilet cistern. She also confirmed the bead making and that failure to obey rules were normally punishable by physical beatings. He said of Sr Alida: She was trained by Sr Bianca, whom she describes as a very large powerful woman with a harsh aggressive and unpredictable personality. On reflection Sr Alida perceives the policies and practices of the 50s and 60s as being based on ignorance and failing to understand or care appropriately for the children. In conclusion, Mr Crowley stated: The unsafe world of Goldenbridge developed a very particular culture which could not meet the needs of children. Very powerless people had enormous and immediate power over troubled and troublesome children. The abuse of the power and powerlessness was almost inevitable. Almost any kind of abusive incidents could have occurred. The ‘Dear Daughter’ programme contained a number of very serious allegations against Goldenbridge and the Sisters of Mercy, and most of these are dealt with in the sections following on physical and emotional abuse. After the ‘Dear Daughter’ programme was broadcast, newspaper coverage of the allegations was intensive and almost exclusively condemnatory of the Sisters of Mercy and Sr Alida. Headlines such as ‘Unmerciful Nun’s Tale’, ‘Hell on Earth for the Sin of Being Born’, and ‘Nightmarish Abuse by Sisters of Mercy’ appeared in newspapers. Former residents gave interviews on local and national radio, and allegations were recounted without any effective challenge. Following the broadcast of the ‘Dear Daughter’ programme, a Garda investigation was undertaken, to establish whether criminal charges could be brought. There were no prosecutions, but the Garda files have been made available to this Inquiry. On 1st July 2004, Sr Breege O’Neill, Leader of the Congregation, gave evidence to the Investigation Committee held in public on behalf of the Sisters of Mercy dealing with the emergence of allegations of child abuse in the Sisters of Mercy institutions. She spoke of the great hurt felt by the Community at the allegations that were being made, and also spoke of the enormous sacrifice made by Sisters throughout the years in aiding the poor and needy in this country. She asked that a proper and balanced investigation should take place into this whole matter. On 15th March 2005, Sr Helena O’Donoghue made an Opening Statement at the public Phase I hearing in relation to Goldenbridge. Whilst she admitted that there was undoubtedly a regime that, by today’s standards, would be described as harsh and severe, the Sisters were not satisfied that it was an abusive regime or that children were wilfully neglected whilst in their care. The Sisters of Mercy would not accept that the regime was cruel, abusive or neglectful. Whilst they admit that corporal punishment was the accepted means of imposing discipline, they say it was not done in an excessively harsh or extreme manner. They say that the extraordinary dedication and sacrifice of the Sisters, in caring for the poorest and most needy children in Dublin, must be taken into account when assessing the value of the work done in Goldenbridge. In particular, the Congregation does not accept the statements of Sr Venetia or Sr Alida, as quoted by Mr Crowley, as being accurate or fair. The complainants, on the other hand, state that the regime that they were subjected to was cruel, abusive and neglectful. They say that it left them ill-equipped to deal with life when they left the Institution, and that the damage inflicted on them, either negligently or deliberately, has scarred them in every aspect of their lives. Complainants acknowledged the physical provision made for them by the Sisters of Mercy, but it is their evidence that the abuse, degradation and neglect that they suffered far outweighed whatever benefits they might have received by virtue of having been resident in Goldenbridge. Most complaints about physical abuse related to the administration of corporal punishment: there were allegations that it was excessive, pervasive, often undeserved, and even capricious, with the result that, in Goldenbridge, corporal punishment became the norm, and the children lived in a climate of fear. The Sisters of Mercy deny these allegations and, while they accept corporal punishment was used, submit that its use was normal by the standards of the day. The Rules and Regulations for the Certified Industrial Schools in Ireland imposed limits on the use of corporal punishment. These limits were very restrictive for girls under 15 years, and even more so for older girls. The issue of discipline was dealt with in Regulation 12: DISCIPLINE: The Manager or his
Deputy shall be authorised to punish the Children detained in the School in case of misconduct. All serious misconduct, and the Punishments inflicted for it, shall be entered in a book to be kept for that purpose, which shall be laid before the Inspector when he visits. The Manager must, however, remember that the more closely the School is modelled on a principle of judicious family government the more salutary will be its discipline, and the fewer occasions will arise for resort to punishment. Regulation 13 stated that the punishments should consist of: Forfeiture of rewards and privileges, or degradation from rank, previously attained by good conduct. Moderate childish punishment with the hand. Chastisement with the cane, strap, or birch. The Regulation continued: Referring to, personal chastisement may be inflicted by the Manager, or, in his presence, by an Officer specially authorised by him, and in no case may it be inflicted upon girls over 15 years of age. In the case of girls under 15, it shall not be inflicted except in cases of urgent necessity, each of which must be at once fully reported to the Inspector. Caning on the hand is forbidden. No punishment not mentioned above shall be inflicted. In addition, the Department of Education issued circulars and guidelines to Industrial School Managers, indicating that corporal punishment must always be kept within the bounds set down by the Regulations and must never be used excessively. Circular 11/1946 stated: Corporal punishment should be resorted to only where other forms of punishment have been found unsuccessful as a means of correction. It should be administered only for grave transgressions, and in no circumstances for mere failure at school lessons or industrial training. The Circular went on to state that punishment should be confined to slapping on the hand with a light cane or strap, and that this should only be administered by the Resident Manager or by a member of staff specifically authorised by him. It added that ‘any form of corporal punishment not in accordance with the terms of this circular is strictly prohibited.’ The Sisters of Mercy say that the general prevalence of corporal punishment in schools during this period is a factor which should be taken into account when determining whether corporal punishment was excessive or abusive. The regulations quoted above were drawn up at a time when corporal punishment was even more prevalent and yet the authorities recognised the need to make rules to protect children in care. The regulations required that a punishment book be maintained and ‘laid before the inspector when he visits.’ The Investigation Committee has seen no evidence of any punishment book in Goldenbridge. There is no reference to it in any of the documentation furnished to the Investigation Committee, nor is any reference made to it by the Department of Education inspector who visited Goldenbridge on regular occasions. The evidence heard by the Investigation Committee broadly grouped the complaints about physical punishment under three headings. They were: Formal beatings, where the children who had been singled out for punishment were lined up and beaten with a stick. This usually took place late at night, on a landing outside the nuns’ rooms or cells. Beatings given for specific ‘offences’ such as bed-wetting, or failure to work fast enough at making rosary beads. These also were usually administered on the landing. Informal beatings, where lay staff and nuns administered corporal punishment on the spot for trivial reasons or even for no reason. The formal beatings were administered with an implement that Sr Alida called ‘a slapper’ and the girls called a stick. Several witnesses gave a description of it. One witness, who was in Goldenbridge in the 1950s and early 1960s, told the Committee that it was a stick that a carpenter had made for Sr Alida. She described it as a flat stick, rounded off at the end, and varnished. Another complainant described the stick used by Sr Alida in some detail: The stick, in my opinion, was about a foot and a half long, about that length (indicating), it had rounding sort of ends, it was about an inch and a half thick and the width of it was about two inches. It was dark brown in colour … It often reminds me of what I perceived to see as a hurl now with rounding ends but a bit thicker. Sr Alida also gave a detailed description of it: I used a slapper. I have never used a cane, there was never a cane used in the School in my time, neither was there a leather strap. The slapper I had, there was only one in the house and I don’t think anybody else used it except myself, it was made of polished wood and it was about 15 inches long. It was rolled at the end and was about half an inch thick in the middle, maybe less. I calculated that it never marked or cut anybody but I would agree that it hurt because I got it on the knuckles myself, when if a child pulled her hand away it came down on my hands; so I know what it was like. I wish I’d never had to use it or I wish I was never in that situation with any child, but that’s the situation I was in. She added that she never saw anybody else use her slapper except for Sr Venetia. She said, ‘Lay people could give a clout with their hand but that would be the most that I would see them doing’. She said that no lay person ever beat the children, as far as she knew, but left it for her to do. Sr Alida was inconsistent in her recollection of beating children on the landing. Initially, she recalled children being left on the landing for punishment, although not in relation to bed-wetting or bead-making. Later, when questioned by counsel for some complainants, she said that this was more a feature of Sr Bianca’s time, and that she had no real memory of that being a feature of her time there. She said that, although she could remember chastising a child on the landing, it was not on a regular basis. Many complainants spoke of the ordeal of being sent to the landing outside the nuns’ rooms for punishment. The system
was initiated by Sr Bianca, and was also a feature of life during Sr Alida’s time. Children who had done something that the staff deemed to be wrong were told they were to be punished that evening. They had to line up on the landing at bedtime, after they had changed into their nightclothes, and wait to be beaten. The landing was cold and dark. A witness described the location: ... where we used to have to wait was off Sacred Heart dormitory and there was steps down and there was a big gap and there was a statue. The nuns used to sleep in kind of an alcove off the landing and the nun would come up and hit us, hit me. Many complainants told the Committee how they stood sometimes for hours in the cold with bare feet. They were not permitted to sit down. Some of them described this waiting as worse than the beating itself. One complainant in Goldenbridge from 1950s to the early 1960s said that, after Sr Alida became Resident Manager: ... she took over and you were put on the landing when you wet the bed or when you did anything else bold, but mainly for wetting the bed. I was all the time one of those people. She would leave you on the landing until she was ready to come up and smack you, and you could be there for a long time. She explained: To me, I think we waited two or three hours sometimes. We were just there, it really got late and we were falling asleep, and pushing one another when we heard her coming. You heard her coming eventually, but it wasn’t only an hour or a half an hour, she would never come too soon it was always like you were there for ever, it seemed like forever ... it wasn’t in her office, we were hit on the landing, smacked on the landing ... just her stick, the one she had everywhere with her. She just used to just bash you, just literally turn you around and wallop you. Sometimes she would hold out your hand, it depended. Another complainant from the 1950s recalled being punished on the landing quite a few times, although she did not know why she was there. She said Sr Alida would sometimes smack them on the landing, but sometimes forget about them and leave them standing there for a very long time. She said she was frightened of the landing. When cross-examined on the issue, she insisted that she was, on occasion, left all night on the landing. She said that Sr Alida would find her when she got up early the next morning and then sent her to bed, but that would be at about 6.00am. Another witness from the 1950s told a similar story of waiting for hours for Sr Alida to come to bed. It was cold and dark, and they were not permitted to sit down. When she came up, she would not question them on what they had done wrong. She would proceed to punish with a stick, which she kept on a ledge on the landing. She would hit them on the hands and buttocks, usually 10 to 12 times. Sometimes, she used her hand rather than the stick. If it was very late when she came up to bed, she would tell them she would see them in the morning. The next day, she would beat them in front of her class. Waiting on the landing in anticipation of the punishment was, according to this complainant, worse than the actual beatings. A complainant from the 1950s and early 1960s said that she was very frequently sent to wait on the landing. She said that she could not recall specific reasons. She added: They seemed to be very very menial things, like maybe you stole a slice of bread or you ate out of the rabbit’s cage or you drank water out of the toilet ... There wouldn’t have been anything, except my dress tore one time and that was another thing that I remembered. There could be up to six or seven girls waiting on the landing when she was there, and she said that the bigger girls would push the smaller ones in front of them. She could not explain why: Why would anyone push someone in front, we knew we were going to be beaten anyway. Who wants to be beaten first? We would do that. Then she would, in rotation, she would beat us all. When asked what she disliked most about waiting on the landing, she replied it was the fear and the cold. She said that they knew when Sr Alida was coming because they would hear a knock on a hatch at the bottom of the stairs, and someone opening it to give her water for her hot water bottle: We would hear her. As soon as we heard the knock on the hatch we knew that was coming. We would all jump up and push the smaller ones in front of us. She described how they tried to cope with the cold while waiting: We would be down on our hunkers trying to keep ourselves warm with our nightdress and try to rub our hands together so that they would get warm so that the slaps wouldn’t – for some reason we thought the slaps wouldn’t hurt if our hands were warm. A witness from the 1950s and 1960s used to wet the bed, and so was sent to the landing from a very early age. She said: When you wet the bed you had to wait on the landing. I don’t know how many times I waited on the landing, I don’t know whether it was every night or once a week or twice a week. You were hit for wetting the bed. I was a very young child, it might have been 10 minutes, to me it seemed like hours. I don’t know the length of time I waited on the landing. You did get hit and you used to have to protect yourself. She continued: I was scared. You had to stand still, it was a very boring place to be. I just can’t – I think the older ones – I probably did the same when I got older, the older ones pushed us to the front so the person that was hitting us her anger would be gone by the time she got to the bigger people ... I remember being shoved up to the top to get hit. This explanation for pushing the younger children to the front, so that it was they who took the hardest hits, was put forward by another witness from the 1960s. She described the line of girls on the landing: You would be weak, terrified, anxious, shivering and shaking, and trying not to lean against the wall ... because you would be afraid, you weren’t supposed to do that, you weren’t
supposed to rest, it was punishment. You wouldn’t sit down. You wouldn’t risk falling asleep. There you stood. She continued: When you knew for sure she was arriving, there would be pushing and shoving about who was going first. Honest to God this is terrible, there would be younger children than you and you would be pushing them to get them to take the beating first. You didn’t want to be the one to get the first of the strength. I am sorry, it was horrible, you had to do what you had to do. The screaming of children, the screaming of children will stay with me for the rest of my life about Goldenbridge. I still hear it, I still haven’t recovered from that. Children crying and screaming, it was just endless, it never never stopped for years in that place. Girls were affected by what was happening to others; Whatever way they were going to be treated was no concern of mine but it did personally affect me ... I watched a [girl] sit on that landing on many occasions waiting for her beatings and I heard her screams and her shouting. One witness, from the 1960s, described the distress she felt at seeing others being beaten: The fact that I had to witness all those beatings, I had to stand there, they would be in my group, for example, and they were beaten. I would see them being slapped. There was a cross on the wall with INRI on the wall above the crucifix. I don’t know how I learned to do this, but I would look at INRI and make up words, so that I wasn’t there, so that I didn’t soak up what was going on ... We were helpless people and the helpless ones were the ones that were not bright. I met one or two of them in the survivors’ meetings in London and I stopped going to the survivors’ meetings because it was too traumatic for me. The anguish of those to be punished was increased by long periods of anticipation and by witnessing other girls’ suffering. The landing became associated with fear. This system of punishment was cruel and abusive and it contravened regulations. Bed-wetting was a problem in Goldenbridge, as it was in other residential institutions. It was not confined to industrial schools, nor has it ceased to be a problem in residential homes for children. Children wet beds at night for a variety of reasons. It was probably more common in industrial schools because of the particular circumstances of the children sent there: they had to endure the stresses and strains associated with separation from their families and the anxieties of institutional life. The problem usually disappeared as children matured, but it left behind feelings of anxiety and resentment. The practical problems were formidable. Bedclothes were made of materials such as calico and wool that were difficult to wash and dry quickly. Laundry facilities that might have been stretched in normal circumstances had to handle an increased volume of soiled bed linen. It has to be acknowledged, therefore, that bed-wetting constituted a major challenge to the facilities in an industrial school. During Sr Alida’s time, a child who wet her bed in Goldenbridge had to sleep in a particular dormitory where all the bed-wetters were gathered. In this dormitory, children were woken up at night and taken out to the toilet. Their bedding was inspected daily. Children who wet the bed had to take their sheets to be inspected, and they were punished, usually by being beaten. Bed-wetters had their consumption of water restricted in an attempt to reduce the likelihood of an accident at night. Girls were thirsty as a result, and sought sources of water. This included drinking out of cisterns of toilets located near the dormitories. Some gave evidence that children drank out of the pan of the toilet. The attempt to prevent the intake of fluid proved to be largely unsuccessful. Bed-wetting was not considered to be a difficulty that children occasionally experienced, but was instead seen as a failure of discipline. In a report by Dr Moira Maguire and Professor Seamus O Cinneide, entitled ‘Report for Newtownforbes Module’, submitted by the Sisters of Mercy in respect of Newtownforbes Industrial School, the authors refer to medical knowledge that was available in the 1930s. The two references used by the authors show that bed-wetting was recognised as a psychological problem as far back as the 1930s, with major causes being unhappiness and nervous strain. Treating the problem with harshness exacerbated it, according to the British texts: In these cases ... the only cure is the removal of the cause of unhappiness – that is, not by treating the physical symptoms but by treating the child psychologically. Success, not failure, should always be stressed. The Irish article recognised the lack of child guidance practice in Ireland, but advised that children who wet the bed should be encouraged with rewards rather than punished. In Goldenbridge, bed-wetting was viewed as a punishable offence. The method of punishment and the place of the punishments varied. One witness recalled the punishment that was inflicted on her by Sr Bianca for wetting the bed: When I wet the bed which was nearly every night, she would bring you into this room, it’s called the linen room, it was a high room and a narrow room. She just proceeded to put me on the floor on my stomach, she put her left knee on my back, this was the punishment I was getting by the way for wetting the bed, and a big girl, just a big girl ... again, to me she was about 15 or 16 ... she had to hold my legs down, pull down my pants and Mother Bianca pulled up my top and proceeded to smack me really hard for a while on the bum. Sr Bianca used a stick, and the witness recalled she was punished in this manner two or three times a week. When she first arrived in Goldenbridge, in the early 1950s, that was the regime. She said that, when Sr Alida took over the running of the School in the mid-1950s, bed-wetters were sent to the landing to await their punishment. The witness also pointed out that children who were bed-wetters were not allowed to have a drink after
4 o’clock in the afternoon. Another witness who was resident in the 1950s recalled the punishment she was given for wetting the bed. She was lined up in St Patrick’s classroom, along with other bed-wetters, and slapped on the hand by Sr Alida. She also recalled her hair being pulled and her face being pushed into the wet sheets. A complainant who persistently wet the bed recalled being beaten every morning. She also described the humiliation of sometimes having to parade her wet sheet in front of everyone. Then there were other times I remember there was a recreation hall and those of us who had wet the bed on some occasions we had to go into the front hall and stand there and people were coming in and out. On other occasions we had to go into the recreation hall, again with the wet sheets, and the other children were encouraged to walk around and jeer us. They would call us wet-the-beds. One complainant said that, after Sr Alida became Manager: She took over and you were put on the landing when you wet the bed or when you did anything else bold but mainly for wetting the bed. I was all the time one of those people. She would leave you on the landing until she was ready to come up and smack you, and you could be there for a long time. One witness, who was resident in the School in the 1960s and who regularly wet the bed until she was 14, stated that she was sent to the landing to await punishment and that she would be punished in the yard. I was afraid to go to the toilet and that’s why I wet the bed. I think when I look back I thought it was every night I was hit, I don’t know how many times a week I was hit but I was hit for bed-wetting ... if it was discovered after a certain time you got hit down in the yard that was off the rec, you got hit there. I was either on the landing or in the rec, as we called it. She stated that the beds of children who wet the bed were checked during the night time by one of the older girls and, if the bed was wet, the child would be woken up and put standing on the landing. Another witness remembered: I can remember praying every night that I wouldn’t wet the bed because I knew that the next morning I would be severely beaten, reprimanded and I remember feeling very cold and standing naked and just the shame, just the absolute shame of it. A complainant who continued to suffer from nocturnal enuresis for some years after she left the School recalled being beaten by Sr Alida in the classroom. She was also beaten on the landing and she continued to be punished for bed-wetting until she left Goldenbridge at the age of 16. A woman described how, in the 1960s, her younger siblings were hit by the lay staff for wetting the bed. As the eldest child, she could not bear to hear them being slapped, because she ‘felt every slap they got’. As a result, she took preventive measures: I found it very difficult because they were chastised in the mornings if they wet the beds. I couldn’t bear that so I ended up waking up during the night and crawling under the beds up to the top beds to take the dry sheets off the other kids and bring them down to ... take the wet sheets off and just throw the dry sheets beside my brothers. This complainant was approximately 10 years old when she was resorting to such measures to defend her siblings from being punished. For a child of such tender years, it was a very stressful experience for her. She told the Committee, ‘I didn’t get much sleep in the early days in the good few years while they wet the bed. I never really slept that well’. A male witness who was resident in Goldenbridge in the 1970s recalled being beaten on one occasion for wetting the bed. He had tried to conceal the wet sheets, but a nun came into the dormitory and discovered them and ‘she did kind of batter me’. This nun then threw him and the sheets into a bath. He conceded that this was not a regular event. The worst aspect of this incident was the humiliation and fear of wetting the bed: ‘just the whole humiliation of the whole lot’. Even to this day, he said he had a fear of wetting the bed: ‘I would still have that fear. I would wake up during the night just in case because sometimes you would feel like I was going to the toilet’. Bed-wetting was an indication of emotional disturbance, yet the Sisters of Mercy used punishment relentlessly as a policy to deal with it, rather than analysing the reasons for the problem. The Sisters of Mercy acknowledge that it was not dealt with appropriately. They stated in their Opening Statement: Unfortunately, one of the methods of trying to deal with the problem in the earlier part of the period under review was to try to jolt the child out of the habit by punishment. They also conceded that older girls were punished for bed-wetting. They said that two of the tactics used with the younger children was to deprive them of fluids in the lat evening and waking them during the night to take them to the toilet. They acknowledged that the children who wet the bed would have suffered humiliation by ‘the very reason of having to bring soiled sheets to the laundry basket’. Furthermore, they apologised for any hurt and pain caused by them in response to the issue of bed-wetting: We further particularly regret the use of any form of punishment, including corporal punishment, in respect of children who suffered from a bedwetting problem. At the time it was thought that punishment would provide a deterrent in the erroneous belief that the child was able to control his or her bedwetting. In retrospect, we recognize that punishment for bedwetting must have been particularly traumatic, and that children who suffered from bedwetting, and punishment for bedwetting, had a particularly difficult time. In their written Submissions, too, they accepted that corporal punishment and shaming tactics, such as making children parade their wet sheets in front of the other children, were used, but that it was likely from the evidence heard that such practices ceased after a certain point. Sr Alida stated that bed-wetting was a huge problem during her early days in
Goldenbridge. She asserted that they tried every possible means to counteract this problem, including waking children at 2am to go to the toilet. She stated that each child who had a persistent bed-wetting problem was sent to Dr. Steevens’ Hospital for investigation. She also recalled that she received medical advice, around 1954, to cease the practice of waking children during the night. Sr Alida denied beating any child for bed-wetting: "... For bed-wetting, I cannot account. I cannot account for bed-wetting. I didn’t beat for bed-wetting. I beat for lots of other things. She added that none of the lay staff had authority to deal with the problem of bed-wetting amongst the children and, in particular, they were not permitted to punish the children. [The staff] had never any authority to punish children for bed-wetting that I know of, I never gave it to anybody. I don’t remember myself taking anybody in the line, beating them for bed-wetting ... I have no recollection of ever having children on the landing for bed-wetting. However, under cross-examination she conceded that she had in fact slapped children for bed-wetting. When asked whether she accepted that she had slapped children for bed-wetting, she responded, 'I suppose I have to. I slapped a lot more than I am happy to be thinking of these days'. She continued to deny that she lined up bed-wetters in St Patrick’s classroom for punishment, or that children were made to parade with their wet sheets. Corporal punishment was used as punishment for bed-wetting long after the 1950s, contrary to what was asserted by Sr Alida and the Congregation. Witnesses who were in Goldenbridge in the 1960s, and even the 1970s, gave evidence of being beaten for wetting the bed at night. The methods of dealing with bed-wetting proved to be wholly unsuccessful, but they were continued over many years and under different Managers. If the management had sought to create conditions in which it was probable that children would wet their beds, the steps adopted could scarcely have been chosen with more effect. They set up a cycle of behaviour by the children and by the authorities which, instead of tending to eradicate the problem, actually exacerbated it. The combination of measures resulted in more extensive bed-wetting and for longer periods in the child’s life than would otherwise have been the case. The pattern of identification, exposure, segregation, differential treatment, embarrassment and humiliation was completed by punishment when the predictable and almost inevitable result came about. Witnesses spoke of other ways in which corporal punishment was administered unfairly and undeservedly. They claimed it was used so commonly that it was impossible to avoid it. One witness, who was in Goldenbridge in the 1940s from seven years of age, told the Committee: I would stand there and when you hear the noise and the shouting, the roaring and the screaming, then what did I used to do I used to stand there with urine running down my legs with the fear of knowing that whatever you were going to do, whatever you were going to say ... you couldn’t say anything, if you looked at them you got clattered. If you looked away you got clattered. If you put your head down you got clattered. So what could you do? I used to try and disappear into the ether ... You knew that you could never get away from the cruelty. You couldn’t escape and take yourself off. Many witnesses testified that there was no way that they could avoid being slapped, whether for behaviour regarded as seriously wrong or for something trivial, or indeed for no apparent reason. When punishment was administered, there was no necessary correlation between the seriousness of the infraction and the severity of the beating. There was no body of rules governing the occasions or the circumstances in which punishment would be administered. There was no punishment book. Records were not kept as to the punishments imposed. Staff were not instructed as to what was permissible. The absence of any obligation to record punishment meant that the infliction of punishment was, in practice, unregulated. There is general acceptance that punishment happened too often and too severely and in an unrecorded and unregulated manner. The absence of rules meant that the children did not know how to avoid punishment. Without a clear system in place to make punishment predictable and avoidable, the children lived in fear, and those in authority became indifferent to good order and discipline in themselves. The adults were given so much autonomy that they alone decided whether to give punishment or not, and they alone decided what warranted it. They decided how much punishment was given and in what manner it was administered. It should have been the case that the Manager, or somebody deputed on her behalf for that purpose, administer the punishment and then record it. The actuality was different. The nun in charge of the girls or her assistant regularly and frequently administered punishment with a stick. The respondent evidence was that it was confined to slapping on the hands and then in moderate quantity. There was, however, a preponderance of persuasive evidence to the contrary, that slapping was not confined in that way. Instead, it could happen that a child would be struck on the hand or arm, or indeed on the legs or some other part of the body. Children were sometimes punished by being locked into a room, described as the furnace, and one witness described a particularly terrifying experience when she had offended one of the care workers and found herself locked in. She could not remember how long she was there, but screamed all the time. Care assistants also punished the children. These workers had grown up in Goldenbridge and knew no other method of coping with children. They were barely more than children themselves, and their moral responsibility for what they were doing was slight by comparison.
with others in higher positions in the ladder of authority. A former teacher, now of advanced years, gave compelling evidence of the environment generally and the state of the children in Goldenbridge during her years. On the issue of punishment, she said that she used a ruler for most of her time in preference to a leather strap, which she had been given at the beginning of her career but which she had rejected when she accidentally discovered how painful it was. When she was asked whether she used the flat of the ruler or the edge of it, as some witnesses had testified, she candidly acknowledged that sometimes she used the edge, when children had particularly annoyed her. Many complainants gave evidence of living in a perpetual state of fear in Goldenbridge. Children were punished for trivial misdemeanours. A complainant who spent the 1950s in Goldenbridge recalled that ‘the beatings were constant’. This witness gave evidence of one occasion when she was the only child on the landing waiting for punishment. Sr Alida took her into her cell and called Sr Venetia to join them. The complainant was told to take off her nightdress, and she was then beaten by both nuns. Sr Venetia used her hand, but Sr Alida beat her with the stick across the buttocks and on the hands. She said it was a more severe punishment than usual and that she did not know what she had done to merit it. A further complainant, who was resident in Goldenbridge from 1954 until 1966, recalled being punished by Sr Alida: ‘If you were walking say down the thing, she would say, “what are you doing here?”’ And she would lash out at you. ‘You dirty article’, she would just give you a lash out. Like being on the wet-the-bed line. I was always so frightened of her. When I used to see her I used to shiver inside. A complainant, who spent the 1960s in Goldenbridge, remembered Sr Alida as being particularly severe; Sr Alida was extremely cruel. She beat children, she had us standing on landings where she beat us. She beat us down in St. Patrick’s for having wet sheets. We were beaten in the yard for having wet sheets, for wetting the bed. You couldn’t pass her, you were just terrified passing her. The swish of her. You would see her coming. A complainant, who spent a number of years in Goldenbridge, gave evidence of the fear induced by Sr Venetia: There was one person you were frightened to look at with her blue eyes and her pale skin ... She had a dreadful habit, I don’t know why she did it, you had to stand in a half circle with you. She would come behind you, her presence, as she passed, you always thought you were going to get a whack on the legs. She had a dreadful habit of (indicating) “who can I smell?” We all knew we smelt. Is she going to pick us? This complainant recalled being punished on a regular basis by Sr Venetia. She said that Sr Venetia would beat children for wetting the bed, and she also recalled being beaten by her on the legs during Irish Dancing classes, for not raising her legs high enough: Sr Venetia had a way that you had to stand a distance from her. She never got close to you. She stood so far and you stood and your hands at all times had to be out straight ... If you bent your elbows she would come close to you then and she would just whack those elbows. In the end, you just held your arms out. Sometimes you would just think to yourself “when is she going to stop?” She had this way of looking at you, I don’t know. She seemed to get redder and redder as somebody who was hitting you, whereas she was quite a pale person any other time. She seemed to get into this frenzied type look. She was a very cruel woman. Another resident from the mid-1950s until the mid-1960s, recalled a high level of physical abuse in Goldenbridge. On a regular basis, she was slapped with a cane, even as a very small child. She later said: Physical abuse was part and parcel of everyday life in Goldenbridge. Sr Venetia would have many, many times abused me physically and verbally. It didn’t have to be for anything specific. It could be your laces weren’t tied or it could be your hair was untidy. It could be that she didn’t like the look of you that particular day. A complainant who was in Goldenbridge for 10 years from the mid-1960s stated that her initial memories of Goldenbridge were of hitting, taunting and name-calling, and that she was constantly in front of Sr Venetia, who slapped her with a hand brush for minor misdemeanours. She recalled being beaten on one occasion because she had a button missing from her nightdress. This complainant asserted that Sr Venetia called her names, either that she was dirty or that she was ‘man mad’. On one occasion, this complainant, who was only seven years of age at the time, suffered from diarrhoea during the night. She had an accident on her way to the bathroom, and the next morning, when questioned, she denied being responsible. Nevertheless, she was sent to Sr Venetia and was identified as the culprit. Sr Venetia slapped her with the hand brush, and she was slapped by everybody who had any dealings with the situation at all, including the lay workers on the dormitory. One witness from the 1950s and 1960s said that occasionally you would get a smack across the face from Sr Venetia when she checked the rosary beads in the evening, but on the whole she did not have any complaint about Sr Venetia. She later said: She never actually hurt me. I am here for myself. She never actually hurt me ... she would slap but she wasn’t cruel. What I mean by a slap, I never saw her giving anybody a hiding. She contrasted Sr Venetia to some of the lay workers who were there, whom she described as very cruel. This complainant, as with so many other complainants, was able to make the distinction between the corporal punishment administered by Sr Venetia and that administered by the lay care workers and by Sr Alida. Sr Venetia was not perceived as being unfair, cruel or brutal. She was singled out as having
taken action when complaints by the girls were made to her about the treatment meted out to one of the younger children by the lay workers. Another unusual complaint was that children were put into the large, industrial-sized tumble dryers. Complainants named lay staff, other children and, in one instance, Sr Alida as being responsible. The dryer was not turned on when the children were put into it, but they found it a very frightening experience. One complainant recalled being put into the tumble dryer by some of the older girls: There was a dryer on the right-hand side, quite a rounded looking thing, not like what you would see a dryer today and it was quite a lot off the floor. One of them picked me up and put me in there and they shut the door. I can see one of their faces now looking in that. In the Crowley Report, Sr Venetia confirmed the allegations in respect of the tumble dryer. Sr Alida acknowledged to Mr Crowley about being confronted by a parent for threatening to place her daughter in the tumble dryer. In evidence, she said that a person had come to her to tell her that her child was afraid of the tumble dryer and advised her about it. The Investigation Committee heard a number of allegations against lay workers who were employed in the Institution. There were three different categories of lay worker in Goldenbridge. There were four teachers in the internal primary school, two of whom were nuns, together with two lay teachers. The second category of lay worker was the staff who looked after kitchens and dormitories and who were, to a very large extent, the people at the centre of childcare in Goldenbridge. These lay workers were responsible for the day-to-day running of the Institution, but were of course subject to the authority of the Resident Manager and her Assistant Sister at the time. Their task was mainly to assist with the supervision of the children before and after school hours. They worked in shifts, two on and two off. The lay staff were not trained in any aspects of childcare. In the third category were former pupils who were retained as helpers, at the expiry of their detention orders at the age of 16. Sr Alida stated that there were only three former pupils towards the end of her tenure in Goldenbridge who were retained as helpers, although this number was greater in the earlier years. She said; There were two or three girls who had no motivation to leave, had difficulty of their own; one was severely handicapped mentally and incapable of making her own way in the world; the other had a very serious speech defect and I cannot put down exactly, obesity I suppose I would say for the third, which we tried to get treated and it didn’t change. They would be the only three past pupils that were working in the school that I can remember in my time. Sr Alida’s description of the former pupils who were retained to look after the other children and work in the Industrial School would suggest they were entirely unsuitable to work with children. One complainant, who was in Goldenbridge between from the early 1950s to the late 1960s, spoke at length about the care workers who were there. She described many of them as very cruel. She described one incident where she was being administered cod liver oil by a care worker, and when it was her turn she said, ‘Thank you, Ms Rafter’, with a smile on her face. She said that this infuriated the care worker, who dragged her into a linen room, threw her on a table and took off her underpants. She hit her from head to toe with a hard brush, and then put a nappy on her. She said that, on another occasion, she was beaten for making a comment while she was watching television. She ran away as a result of this, but was brought back. She told Sr Venetia that she had run away because she was sick of being hit. She said she doesn’t believe her complaint had any impact on Sr Venetia, but that, on a subsequent occasion, one of the smaller children had come up to her and her friends with no clothes on and full of bruises. When they asked her what was wrong, she said that Ms Rafter had hit her because she had worn her knickers in bed. This complainant and her friends went to Sr Venetia and said that they would go to the Evening Press or the Herald if the beatings didn’t stop and ‘all those kind of, what we classed as carers now, they were gone in two weeks. They were cruel’. This complainant named four care workers, who were all removed very shortly after the complaints had been made to Sr Venetia. This complainant said that Goldenbridge did improve after that had occurred, although it still was not a nice place. Another complainant, who was in Goldenbridge between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s, said that one carer, who looked after the babies, stood out in her mind as being very kind to the children. She said that she was one of the inmates of the Institution who had been kept on and given a job there. Another former resident, who remained in the School to work as a carer, stood out in her memory: she described her as a product of the system. She often woke the children up in the morning, and she would sometimes lift a mattress and throw it onto the floor with the child on it. This complainant said that Ms Thornton was ‘a very very aggressive woman’. This complainant had a certain amount of compassion and understanding for Ms Thornton, and said: ‘She never knew any different, she grew up in the system. When I think now in retrospect I kind of feel sorry for her’. This witness recalls another staff member, who was a woman of very, very low intellect, who used to put her hands up the children’s skirts if they were carrying anything into the kitchen or washing dishes. Again, the complainant had compassion and understanding and did not blame this person. She talked about a third incident, where a minder threw her into a swimming pool when they were on holidays in Rathdrum. She said that this minder used to treat her badly if there was a nun around to witness it, ‘She done that to get attention from the nun that
was present during any of this, that the violence followed. Nothing short of an orgy of violence. The complainant said that the nuns were across the other side of the room or if you winked or blinked or anything there was this orgy of not move and I mean move or display any body language. If you looked and caught you.

Somebody went and got Sr Venetia, who was told what had happened to her, but as far as she knew when Sr Venetia took over the day-to-day management, this did emerge as a major issue. A witness complained of being badly beaten by Ms Rafter, who was the subject of an earlier complaint to Sr Alida: ‘She was allowed to run riot. She brutalised the children’. She said that these people were not teachers, but were carers and supervised the children. She said that the older inmates in the Institution did all the work like washing, bead making and looking after the children, but these carers supervised all of that. This complainant also spoke about being a personal maid to one of the care staff. She said that she cleaned her room, put on her hot water bottle, made her bed, cleaned her floor, ironed her clothes and generally looked after her. The witnesses who attended Goldenbridge in the late 1950s and 1960s were vocal in their criticism of the care workers who were in the Institution at that time. The main criticism is that these young girls, who had themselves come through Goldenbridge, were unsupervised and uncontrolled by the authorities in Goldenbridge. This does not seem to have been as big a complaint while Sr Alida was the nun in charge of the day-to-day running of the Institution but when Sr Venetia took over the day-to-day management, this did emerge as a major issue. A witness complained of being badly beaten by Ms Rafter, who was the subject of an earlier complaint to Sr Venetia and was finally removed by her in the late 1960s. This complainant also identified Ms Thornton who she said beat a girl in the dining hall, ‘Ms Thornton was violent, she was a very violent person. She was another one that you were frightened to look at’. This complainant again made the point that, at this stage, Goldenbridge was being run and looked after by lay staff and older girls. She said that, although the nuns were there and Sr Venetia was in charge, the real running of the Institution was left to lay staff. Another complainant spoke about her experience in Goldenbridge and was quite frank about the impact her experience had on her own personal development. She said that a lot of the actions taken in Goldenbridge were done deliberately to embarrass and humiliate the children. She said ‘I’ll put it like this, I find a lot of the women who looked after us, including Sr Venetia, I find a lot of them in me. I will do things to embarrass people if I don’t like them. I try not to’. Another complainant singled out Ms Thornton as being particularly cruel. She said that she had a grudge against an awful lot of people. She said that, on one occasion, when she tried to intervene because Ms Thornton was hitting her brother, Ms Thornton twisted her arm and actually broke it. She said that she was too terrified of Ms Thornton to tell Sr Venetia what had happened, and so she told her that she had hurt it in the washing machine. She was afraid that, if she had told on Ms Thornton, her little brother would have been victimised by her. She said that Ms Thornton was particularly cruel to the little boys, and that she told other girls about this, and eventually it got back to Sr Venetia, but she only got beaten and had her head shaved by a member of the lay staff as a result. One complainant who was in Goldenbridge in the 1960s was one of the most condemnatory of the lay staff in Goldenbridge. She described a regime where the unqualified and largely ill-educated lay staff were effectively out of control and administering severe physical punishment. Abuse by lay staff became a major feature of life in Goldenbridge in the 1950s and 1960s and continued until, eventually in 1966, Sr Venetia removed four particularly abusive lay staff members, and conditions improved thereafter. This complainant’s recollection is of one of those staff members who was finally complained about to Sr Venetia, and she describes her as ‘an absolute demon’. She recalls her dragging her off a bed in the dormitory, pulling off her clothes and beating her in front of other girls. She said that she boxed her, kicked her and threw her to the floor. She was left in a very bad state, and that night woke up screaming in her sleep. Somebody went and got Sr Venetia, who was told what had happened to her, but as far as she knew that was the end of the matter. This complainant says that, some time later, another child received a similar beating from Ms Rafter. She said: I was finished, I was shattered, I couldn’t fight any more, I was finished. I just felt utterly hopeless, it was over, I could have died, I didn’t care. She broke my spirit completely and I had plenty of it but she broke it and it has taken me years and years to recover any of it and I still will never get over that woman. This complainant said that this lay staff worker was often in charge of the recreation hall. She said that this was a huge room, and was used for recreation if the weather prevented the children from going outside. She said: We used to go into that room and you would have to sit like this (indicating) your finger on your lip (indicating) and you dare not move and I mean move or display any body language. If you looked and caught your friend’s eye across the other side of the room or if you winked or blinked or anything there was this orgy of violence that followed. Nothing short of an orgy of violence. The complainant said that the nuns were never present during any of this, that they were always in the convent. She said that these lay workers,
that, and getting a slap on the head. That's the way I use
We didn’t have to see that big figure coming down the hall, and if you were running or anything like
of lightness in
relief after Sr Alida left, and stated that the children were happier: I felt personally that there was an air
Venetia, but she would never have
with Sr Alida
was relieved to the extent that I knew Sr Venetia had done some things, but she was still never on a par
management. She did not resort to physical punishment to the sa
Many complainants gave evidence that the atmosphere in the School improved under Sr Venetia’s
Goldenbridge, gave evidence. He was transferred to
Artane when he was nine years old. He stated that,
harassed and was constantly beaten for it in class. This vulnerability
did. She said this was something that happened every day, especially in the wintertime, but she said it
was not just in the recreation hall, it also happened in the dormitories after the nun had gone back to the
burse that went on in the School. Again, this is a complaint that was not seen in the 1940s and 1950s, when
there appeared to be a great deal more control over the School. By the 1960s, undoubtedly the issue of
bullying had arisen. This complainant said that there were a lot of bullies in the School, and that it was
survival of the fittest. She said that this bullying was conducted by members of the staff and that, as a
child, she found that these people did not care. She said that they were doing their job, but that there
was a great deal of punishment. She said that these lay people had a great deal of power and they
inflicted severe beatings. Another complainant who was in Goldenbridge in the early 1960s was a
small boy when admitted. He remembers getting beatings, particularly for bed-wetting. He said: You
had girls in charge. You had nuns, then you had outsiders, you had elder girls put in charge of the
younger ones, they used to give as nearly as much beatings as what the nuns did for certain things.
After being out of there and you think back, these girls were brought up with that sort of treatment and
they portrayed that on younger kids. They were in there for years so that is all they knew, but you were
underneath these people ‘cos they were bigger and stronger and there longer, so you were getting it at
every angle. Sr Alida in her evidence stated that lay staff were not authorised to slap children and that,
as far as she knew, they did not do so. She said that, as far as she was aware, she and Sr Bianca, or later
she and Sr Venetia, were the only persons who administered corporal punishment in the School, and
the lay staff left any problems for them to deal with. She also said that she believed that the two lay
workers who were left in charge while she and Sr Venetia went over to the convent in the evenings had
a difficult task maintaining discipline, and that was why there would be children waiting for her on the
landing. Witnesses complained that children were not all treated alike in Goldenbridge. They were
protected to some extent if they had a relative who visited them regularly. Favouritism was a complaint
made particularly by witnesses who were in Goldenbridge during the 1960s. A complainant, who was
aged nine in the early 1960s, described the difference in the way that children were treated. This
witness and her siblings were placed in care on the death of their mother, and she noticed particularly
how two members of another family were treated so differently that it came as a shock to her to realise
they were sisters. Whereas one girl was favoured as a pet, the other was treated with extreme cruelty
and was often seen waiting on the landing for punishment. Another complainant, objecting to
favouritism, remarked that the very fact that the nuns and lay staff were capable of forming
attachments with certain children demonstrated that they knew how to treat children properly and show
them love and affection: It was wrong there was no need for it, why couldn’t they treat us all like pets,
why not? That’s a choice they exercised. A witness, who was five years old when he was committed to
Goldenbridge, gave evidence. He was transferred to Artane when he was nine years old. He stated that,
before he was committed to institutional care: I was a happy, young little kid and I believe I was turned
into a nervous wreck in these places. He was emotionally upset by the death of his mother and was a
regular bed-wetter. He was left-handed and was constantly beaten for it in class. This vulnerability
made him an obvious target for bullies. He summed up his situation as follows: I remember just
costantly getting beaten. Even in the classroom being nervous, and left handed, you weren’t allowed
to do things left handed, the devil was in you, you were told ... From constant beatings I had a stutter
and I had a turn in my eye as well, and I used to get an awful time off the rest of the kids. The Sisters of
Mercy in their Submission accepted that this complainant’s circumstances made him more vulnerable.
Many complainants gave evidence that the atmosphere in the School improved under Sr Venetia’s
management. She did not resort to physical punishment to the same extent as her predecessor. One
complainant described her relief when Sr Alida left in the early 1960s: I was relieved when she left. I
was relieved to the extent that I knew Sr Venetia had done some things, but she was still never on a par
with Sr Alida, where bullying and beatings and things were concerned ... I got some beatings from Sr
Venetia, but she would never have – let’s face it when somebody is beating you they are not happy and
smiling. She would never have had that harshness in her face or in her voice that Alida had, that
horrible horrible venom that was dished out for me by Sr Alida. Another complainant described the
relief after Sr Alida left, and stated that the children were happier: I felt personally that there was an air
of lightness in the place ... it just seemed that there was something – there was a little bit of fear gone ...
We didn’t have to see that big figure coming down the hall, and if you were running or anything like
that, and getting a slap on the head. That’s the way I used to be afraid, you would see the big black
figure. At the same time, the witness added that Sr Venetia was moody, which could create a tense, uncertain environment: Sometimes I found her alright. I think it depended on her mood. She did punish severely as well. Another difference between the two nuns was that Sr Venetia was verbally cruel and sarcastic, and witnesses spoke about how they were hurt by her comments. One witness recalled how Sr Venetia deliberately ridiculed her because her mother had spent time in a psychiatric hospital. She used the term “cracked like your mother” many, many times. I used to live in fear of her coming into my view because – I was terrified that she would say these words. Sr Alida stated in evidence that, during most of her time in Goldenbridge, there were 150 children and four staff members. In order to maintain discipline, she had to be very controlling. Given the nature of the work and the constraints under which the staff operated, she stated that it was very possible that staff were bad tempered. It was the system that obliged her to use corporal punishment as often as she did. She explained: Today I would hate to think of the things I had to do or the things I did, but in the system as it was I don’t know what resolution there was to it. Maybe it was a too easy situation to get rid of a problem, instead of sitting down to talk or to advise you slapped and that was the end of the problem. She asserted that she never saw anybody else use a slapper except for Sr Venetia. She said, ‘Lay people could give a clout with their hand but that would be the most that I would see them doing’. She said that no lay person ever beat the children, as far as she knew, nor did they have authority to punish the children in any manner. Sr Alida had a clear memory of children being on the landing during Sr Bianca’s time, but she had no real memory of that being a feature of her time there. Although she could remember chastising a child on the landing, it was not on a regular basis. She also said that lay staff did not chastise children but left it for her to deal with. Sr Alida maintained that she and Sr Venetia were the only persons who administered corporal punishment in the School: the lay staff were not authorised to slap children and, as far as she was aware, they did not do so. Ms Garvin, formerly a Sister of Mercy who had worked as an assistant teacher in Goldenbridge from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s, was adamant that, while there was corporal punishment, it was not excessive. Sr Gianna gave evidence to the Investigation Committee. She worked as an assistant in the School from 1960 until she took her final vows as a Sister of Mercy a few years later. She stated that, although Sr Alida used a stick for corporal punishment, it would cause no more than temporary discomfort to a child. She agreed that it could leave bruising on a child’s body, but she said she never witnessed such injuries. Both the above witnesses said that they believed the atmosphere was very good in Goldenbridge and that the children were happy there. Among the discovered documents was a report commissioned by the Sisters of Mercy in 1996 on the conditions of life in Goldenbridge. It was commissioned to prepare the Congregation for the television programme ‘Dear Daughter’ and its aftermath. The ‘Dear Daughter’ programme was shown on RTE in February 1996, and it produced a massive response from the media and the public. Complaints were made to the Gardaí and an investigation followed, but there were no prosecutions. The Congregation was aware that the programme was being planned and that serious allegations would be made about how children had been treated in Goldenbridge. In advance of the screening of the programme, the Congregation decided to find out what it could about conditions in the Institution. One of the first things that it did was to commission a professional childcare expert to give an initial assessment of the allegations, and that inquiry gave rise to the first apology that the Sisters of Mercy issued in February 1996, following the screening of the programme. The preliminary inquiry was undertaken by a senior social worker with the Western Health Board. His brief was to develop an assessment of the allegations being made regarding the care received by children in Goldenbridge in the 1950s and 1960s. Mr Crowley gathered information from the following sources: Transcript of the Gay Byrne interview with Ms Christine Buckley in 1993. A meeting with Mr Louis Lentin, the producer of the programme that was going to shown on RTE. A meeting with a former resident of Goldenbridge. Meeting with Sr Alida. Meeting with Sr Venetia. Report and feedback from Sr Bettina on her interviews with former residents. Mr Crowley approached his task in two ways. Firstly, he sought to establish and clarify the broad nature and patterns of the allegations being made. Secondly, he examined the information and carried out interviews, with a view to forming an independent professional assessment of the general nature of the care provided in Goldenbridge in the context of the allegations. He identified four areas of complaint which were interrelated. They were physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect of children’s basic needs. Mr Crowley compiled a summary of allegations that were made about the regime: A constant pattern of physical abuse. Severe beatings resulting in children being physically marked was the dominant form of discipline. The beatings were carried out by a number of lay staff but most especially by Sr Alida. Beatings were so routine that they were witnessed by and colluded with by all members of staff. Children were deprived of food. Children were kept awake late into the evenings while awaiting physical punishments and were thus deprived of sleep. Children were deprived of heating and warmth. Children were routinely involved in inappropriate physical tasks connected with maintaining the establishment. Some of the severe
Punishments were inflicted in circumstances in which there were sexual and humiliating elements including, for example, public and forceful removal of clothes before physical punishment. Children were not clear as to why they were being beaten. Children lived in constant fear of experiencing and witnessing physical abuse. Routine derogatory references to the children’s background and to their parent’s behaviour. Verbal abuse which combined with other interactions had the effect of reinforcing negative self images and damaging self confidence and feelings of worth. Denial of appropriate recreation. Imposing onerous responsibilities on children who were too young to carry them out, such as taking responsibility for the care of other children. Public humiliation of children suffering from bed-wetting and soiling and making them display wet and soiled sheets publicly to other children. Children were constantly in fear. Children’s emotional needs were neither understood nor responded to. Favouritism. Deprivation was made worse for children when they saw some others being treated as pets and getting better treatment. Children were exposed to sexually abusive experiences by befriending families and employers with whom they were placed. No proper assessment or supervision or aftercare arrangements were made to prevent these abuses. Some care practices reflected insensitivity to adolescent sexuality. Two former residents alleged cases of specific sexual abuse, one by a male member of staff and one by two female members of staff. The total organisation of the children’s daily routine was contrary to their developing needs. There was a failure at all levels to understand or meet their needs. The general climate and regime were excessively harsh and abusive even by the standards of the time. Expectations about children, for example, in relation to the length of time they were expected to concentrate or to stay quiet or to work were not normal. Particular forms of punishment, such as being left alone for hours in the furnace room, were particularly frightening for children who had experienced traumatic separations. Generally, there was an absence of consistent and positive adults to whom supportive attachment could develop. He interviewed Sr Alida and Sr Venetia, and put these allegations to them and noted their responses. The statements made by these two nuns are of real importance in the Inquiry because they come from people who worked in Goldenbridge over a combined period from 1942 until 1972. Mr Crowley formed the impression that Sr Alida was well prepared for the interview, and that she energetically attempted to direct the focus and pace of the discussion. Whilst she regularly stated that she could not remember events, this memory lapse was not consistent across the range of topics covered: it appeared to relate principally to material that was critical of her. She presented as a ‘committed and energetic person, who appeared well defended psychologically’. Mr Crowley found her very controlling in her interaction, ‘but this may be related to her evident need to control her feelings’. Mr Crowley reported as follows on his interview with Sr Alida: Sr Alida described her initiation to Goldenbridge as being told not to talk or take the attitude of Sr Felisa, who had been working with the children in care and had been critical of the service. Sr Alida recalls her early years in religious life as being dominated by fear. On reflection she cannot understand how she accepted so many demands and pressures without protest. She was trained by Sr Bianca, whom she describes as a very large powerful woman with a harsh aggressive and unpredictable personality. On reflection Sr Alida perceived the policies and practices of the 1950s and 1960s as being based on ignorance and failing to understand or care appropriately for the children. The use of former residents as staff was influenced by limited finance and tended to be limited to those who could not survive in aftercare. These were probably the most unsuitable people to care for vulnerable children. Older residents also cared for younger children in a semi formal system. She described much of the care as being “gang care”. Sr Alida identified Ms O’Shea as being one former resident who she understood was physically abusive. Sr Alida, in effect, acknowledged that she continuously shouted and beat children “too much and too long” and used a stick routinely. She tended to go to bed very late and this led to children being kept on the landing. Sr Alida acknowledges being confronted by a parent for threatening to place her daughter in the tumble dryer, she confirmed children’s involvement in activities such as grass cutting with their hands but minimised the impact on children. Hunger and humiliation were acknowledged with regret, when discussed in general terms, however specific allegations tended to be met with long silences and eventual comments such as “It could have happened accidentally”. Sr Alida did not in effect reject the substance of the allegations. Sr Venetia worked in Goldenbridge for many years and became Resident Manager in the 1960s. Mr Crowley conducted a lengthy interview with Sr Venetia. She was in some physical pain and discomfort because of her medical condition during the course of the interview, but she had no obvious difficulties with memory. Mr Crowley observed that the allegations were weighing heavily on Sr Venetia and she presented as resigned to the process of being interviewed. It was evident to Mr Crowley that she wished to be honest and forthright, but this was complicated somewhat by ambivalence and conflicting loyalties. Mr Crowley was satisfied that she made every effort to be honest, but it was clear to him that she had some difficulty in discussing issues such as sexual abuse and, in general, she did not volunteer new information. He said ‘Sr Venetia communicated generally as being a somewhat fearful and
isolated person.’ Mr. Crowley reported: Sr Venetia described the care system and organisational structure as having been established by Sr Bianca who died.... She initially described Sr Bianca as a hard and rigid woman but over the course of the interview it emerged that she viewed Sr Bianca as a paranoid schizophrenic who she considered was grossly insulting to adults and children and who in effect established a reign of terror. Sr Venetia communicated that subsequent managers maintained many of the features of the system as established, without substantial reflection but gradually modified and improved the care arrangements. Sr Venetia confirmed that the general atmosphere was excessively and consistently cruel even relative to standards of the time. She confirmed that fear of and actual physical beatings and verbal abuse was a matter of routine and that the general account of children, for example, waiting on the landings was accurate. Wetting was defined as a crime and, therefore, punishable through humiliation and physical beatings. Sr Venetia confirmed the allegations in relation to the tumble dryer and drinking from the toilet cistern. She also confirmed the bead making and that failure to obey rules was normally punishable by physical beatings. Sr Venetia made particular reference to one member of the lay staff, who was employed by Sr Bianca and subsequently fired. It was very evident that Sr Venetia was very afraid of this staff member and that the children were terrified of this person. Sr Venetia was quite fearful and reluctant in any discussion of sexual abuse. Essentially Sr Venetia confirmed that the essential elements of the allegations were correct and it was clear that she was of the view that almost anything could have occurred in a very unsafe environment. Mr Crowley was guarded in his report. He cautioned that the sample of former pupils from whom he had obtained information was not randomly drawn, and he said that it could be expected that other women might have different experiences in relation to Goldenbridge. He warned that caution would have to be exercised about any particular allegation that arose from early childhood experience, especially in regard to the identity of the perpetrator, and that there was a particular danger of confusion occurring between Sr Bianca and Sr Alida. He made clear that the allegations of the former residents had been listened to without challenge or cross-examination, and that his interviews with the Sisters were structured to maximise participation and effective communication, and that he consciously did not structure inquiries in a manner that might have been experienced as interrogatory or pressurising. He noted that Sr Alida initially requested, but subsequently cancelled, a second interview. He also advised that substantial information would continue to emerge as more former residents were interviewed. But, having set out all these cautions, Mr Crowley was satisfied that it was possible to establish a broad picture of the care practices in Goldenbridge during the period. Mr Crowley ended his report with comments expressed as a ‘Conclusion’, followed by observations headed ‘General Commentary’: Clear and consistent patterns can be identified in the allegations. The various accounts are consistent with each individual recalling personal experiences which reinforce the overall picture. The accounts are accompanied with appropriate feeling and a richness of detail. The accounts of subsequent life stories and relationship issues are consistent with the childhood experiences as described. Those former residents who have been interviewed have been experienced as credible. Some of the care practices may be understood by reference to the harsh historical context. Some actions experienced as abusive may not have had such intent, but were experienced as such due to insensitivity, ignorance and a failure to communicate. Other actions, such as forbidding liquids to bed wetters, may have had unintended consequences, such as children drinking from toilets at night. However, the broad nature and pattern of the allegations, which have in effect been confirmed by the sisters with management responsibility, namely physical and emotional abuse, are clearly accurate descriptions of the experiences of children in Goldenbridge. The care arrangements did not meet children’s basic needs. Children experienced physical and emotional abuse and were almost certainly exposed to sexual abuse. A number of the particular incidents described were violent and sadistic. The entire regime was unsafe and was characterised by a pervasive controlling of children through fear. The children cared for in Goldenbridge had, prior to their reception into care, experienced gross neglect, deprivation and multiple trauma. They were often rejected by their immediate and extended family and by the broader society. They were admitted in large numbers to a service which could not even begin to provide an appropriate level of care. The physical environment was totally unstable and did not facilitate either supervision or privacy. The financial resources were grossly inadequate and determined the availability of personnel and material necessities. The Care System and culture was created by a dominant and dysfunctional personality. The religious sisters who subsequently held management responsibility lived in a tightly controlled and authoritarian world. Questioning was defined as arrogance and led to blaming of the individual. The most extreme example of this was Sr Alida’s account of how her request to be released from teaching to concentrate on care was responded to by a decision to immediately transfer her to Co. Wicklow. No distinction appears to have been made between being a ‘good’ religious and being a ‘good’ childcare worker. The characteristics that were valued appear to have been obedience and dedication. No professional training was available to provide understanding or direction.
to service organisation or therapeutic interventions. Consequently the only available models were adopted with the corporal punishment in school becoming the beatings in the care centre and the daily routine and practices of religious life determining the day to day life of young children. Religious sisters and lay staff operated under constant pressure and clearly worked hard at an impossible task. The unsafe world of Goldenbridge developed a very particular culture which could not meet the needs of children. Very powerless people had enormous and immediate power over troubled and troublesome children. The abuse of the power and powerlessness was almost inevitable. Almost any kind of abusive incidents could have occurred. Mr Crowley’s views and conclusions are not part of the investigation process undertaken by the Committee. The apology issued by the Sisters of Mercy following the ‘Dear Daughter’ programme was issued because Mr Crowley had advised in the way that he did. His report and his conclusions are, therefore, a part of the background to the investigation and to the positions taken by the Sisters of Mercy at different stages. However, the statements made by Sr Venetia and Sr Alida to Mr Crowley are different from the rest of the report because they have direct relevance to the investigation. They are records of the recollections and responses of persons who participated in the running of the Institution over a period of 30 years, and one of whom is now deceased. Mr Crowley completed his report in February 1996 and he stated that it was evident that a comprehensive inquiry by a multi-disciplinary team would be necessary which would be dependent on cooperation from both former residents and staff. The Sisters of Mercy explain in their Opening Statement that such an inquiry was impossible, as at that stage legal proceedings had been instituted by a number of former residents. The Congregation have asked the Investigation Committee to note the limitations of the Crowley report, which they identify as being four-fold: The report was based on interviews with a small number of complainants; with Srs Alida and Venetia; and with Louis Lentin (producer of ‘Dear Daughter’). There was little, if any, questioning of the complainants on the details of complaints. There are no notes, transcripts or tapes of the interviews and there is therefore some difficulty in assessing precisely what was said. ‘For example, Sr Alida explained to the Committee that she had always had problems with the account in the report because she had said’ (emphasis added). [This is factually incorrect. Sr Alida did not allege that she was misquoted by Mr Crowley but did make a comment about the report as a whole: I have to say that......from the very beginning I was quite unhappy with Mr Crowley’s report.] Sr Venetia never had an opportunity to give evidence to the Investigation Committee either in general or specifically in relation to the Crowley Report. The information-gathering exercise was conducted very quickly and the conclusions were intended to be preliminary in nature. The exercise was intended to be a first step in a process, rather than a final conclusion. The Sisters of Mercy note that the issues which were the subject matter of the Crowley Report are precisely those which fall within the Commission’s remit and given the substantial bank of both oral and documentary material which the Investigation Committee has at its disposal they submit that it would be inappropriate for the Investigation Committee to place excessive reliance on the earlier preliminary report. Sr Alida has never challenged the accuracy of the statements attributed to her in the report. Had she done so, it would have been necessary for him to give evidence to the Committee. However, because the accuracy of Mr Crowley’s recording of statements was not an issue, such evidence did not become necessary. The nature and circumstances of the Crowley report must be taken into account. The description of Sr Bianca given by both Sr Venetia and Sr Alida is consistent with accounts given by former residents and with the atmosphere described as pervading the institution during her time as resident manager. The comments quoted by Mr Crowley are also relevant to subsequent conditions about which the sisters spoke to him and tend to corroborate much of the oral testimony. Mr Crowley placed much of the blame for the conditions that pertained in Goldenbridge on ignorance, insensitivity and a failure to communicate. In this regard, it is interesting to look at the lecture entitled ‘Institutional Management’ which was delivered by Sr Bianca in February 1953. This lecture indicates awareness of the special requirements of institutionalised children. The preparation for this lecture was done in consultation with Dr Anna McCabe, who in her Visitation Report of 1953 referred to regular meetings with Sr Bianca to discuss this lecture. Overall, there was a high level of severe corporal punishment in Goldenbridge, resulting in a pervasive climate of fear in the Institution. Beatings on the landing were a particularly cruel feature of the regime. A parallel, unofficial system of punishment permitted every member of staff to use corporal punishment, which was often excessive. Some former residents, who were unsuited for outside employment, were retained as helpers and often administered severe punishment. Children were beaten and humiliated for bed-wetting by both nuns and lay staff. There is no evidence that a punishment book was kept in Goldenbridge, as was required by the regulations, and the absence of this important record should have been noticed and reported by the Department Inspector. A particular feature of Goldenbridge was rosary bead making. Sometime in the mid-1940s, Sr Alida was approached by a businessman with the proposition that she might get the children to make rosary beads in return for payment. She saw this as a wonderful opportunity to acquire much-needed
funds. In addition, she thought that it would keep the children occupied. So began an enterprise that was to continue until the 1960s. After school, at about 3.30pm, the children had something to eat and then went to the beads class. The location was Ms Dempsey’s classroom. The children were required to make decades of the rosary by putting the beads on lengths of wire. After each bead was positioned, the wire had to be looped and cut using pliers, and each bead then had to be attached to the next bead until all 10 beads were completed. The children each had a quota of 60 decades per day and 90 on a Saturday. This meant that, in the two hours of the weekday afternoon allocated for this work, 30 decades an hour had to be made by each child. Not surprisingly, few children reached their quota in the afternoon, and they had to return to the beads class in the evening and remain there until their 60 decades were completed. There is some controversy over the age at which children began to make beads, but it appears that, after they made their First Holy Communion, that is around seven years of age, children were expected to do this work. There were younger children in the room, who helped by picking up beads or by stringing the beads to leave them ready for the older girls to make the decade. Skill and dexterity were required. It would have taken some time to develop expertise. It was also painful, and witnesses described cuts and calluses on their hands as they tried to learn the work. A child starting would be slow at first, and might never acquire the necessary skill to be able to do it quickly. Sometimes, an older girl would help out a younger who was having difficulty in reaching the quota. Similarly, friends might help each other. In this way, the great majority of the children between seven and 16 years were occupied every day from Monday to Friday. For a variety of reasons, some children would not have to do beads, but the vast majority of children between the ages mentioned had to attend for this work. On Saturdays, the quota was 90 decades, and there were, of course, other chores (called charges) to be completed. Sr Alida conceded that it was difficult work;... it wasn’t soft work to be working with the pliers, it was not like needle work, you had to use energy to bend the wire. When Sr Alida first attempted to make a decade of beads that the representative from the bead making company had given her, she admitted it took her an entire Saturday to make one decade. She also conceded that she ‘had so much hardship making them’. But thereafter, she said, it was like knitting. Different types of beads were used, and this made the task of stringing decades more difficult, depending on the type of bead. Horn beads and plastic beads posed no problem, but glass beads tended to break, and the mother of pearl beads were very difficult to string through. Bead making was supervised by one of the care staff or, more likely, by one of the care assistants, and it was often Ms Thornton. A child who had the necessary skill could complete her quota by teatime but not much before that. Others found difficulty in completing their assigned task. The work was inspected by the person in charge and sent back to be redone if it was not found satisfactory for one reason or another. Some beads were easier to work with than others, even for people who were good at the work. If the quota was not reached, the child was in trouble. It might happen that, even after going back to beads work after tea and staying there until perhaps 9pm or 9.30pm (some witnesses said even later), the quota would still not be achieved. In those circumstances, the evidence was that the child would be punished by being beaten. If the work was found unsatisfactory, the result was punishment at the hands of the person in charge of the beads room. It happened occasionally, when a dispatch was due to go to the factory, that some of the children had to stay as late as 10pm to complete an order and ensure that it met the required standard. In the Opening Statement delivered by Sr Helena O’Donoghue, the bead making work was characterised as a pleasant activity to while away the time, which was enjoyed by the children and often done to music from the radio. A picture was painted of a busy workroom, where happy children chatted as they carried out this routine work. It is apparent that this description is based on information from Sr Alida. This description of bead making by Sr Helena was inaccurate. The work was hard. The hours were long. While some girls were well capable of doing the work once they had got used to it, for many others it was difficult to master the dexterity required. There was pressure to achieve the quota and to keep to the required standard of work. The work could fail in a variety of ways, including obvious ones like not having the right number of beads in a decade. Less obvious and more difficult to avoid were errors such as having inconsistent-sized loops of wire joining the beads. The atmosphere was not the pleasant group activity imagined by Sr Helena and remembered by Sr Alida. The essential requirement was of quietly, if not silently, getting on with the work; the children did converse but mostly in whispers, and the radio was turned on only occasionally while this work was being done. The fact that punishment hung over the activity, for failure to achieve either quality or quantity, inevitably affected the atmosphere. The work was relentless, with demanding quotas. This was hard work over long hours during six days a week, for children obliged to do the work with no reference to their capacity to manage it. Sr Venetia in her interview with Mr Crowley confirmed that: the bead making and that failure to obey rules were normally punishable by physical beatings. The money made from bead making was considerable. Sr Alida gave evidence of being able to produce £1,000 to contribute to the sum of £3,000 in the 1950s for the purchase of the holiday house at Rathdrum. The best estimates
as to the earnings are that an income of approximately £50 per week was achieved by this activity. Management saw this work as a practical and useful occupation that kept the girls out of trouble during many hours of the week, when they would otherwise have needed amusement or diversion or other occupation. Instead, it conditioned them to drudgery, with the added threat of being beaten for failure. The authorities lost all sense of importance about bead making. It became a relentless production line. Sr Alida’s enthusiasm became obsession. Occupation became drudgery. The pursuit of extra money by way of profit from the bead making became exploitation. All this was carried out under the threat of being beaten for failure. Over half of the complainants who testified spoke of the hardship associated with stringing decades of beads. From their evidence, it was an activity they clearly did not enjoy and, instead, viewed it as a chore. The daily quota system of each child having to make 60 decades each evening was, according to many of the witnesses, a source of stress and pressure. They said that assembling the beads into decades was hard work, which resulted in calluses, welts and cuts on their hands from the use of the pliers and the steel wire. Some of the complainants recalled that they commenced this activity at the age of seven, after their First Communion. Initially, they were involved in stringing the beads on a wire for the older girls, before progressing to making the decades. One witness recounted her introduction to bead making as follows: The beads class was something that you were introduced to after Communion. In the early stages the younger children would be asked to pick the beads up off the floor or maybe wire, anything that had fallen. You would also be asked to string beads for the older girls. This allowed them to move quickly to reach their quota, which was 60 decades per evening. Some witnesses spoke of the difficulty in reaching their daily quota and being punished for not attaining it. The punishment could take the form of a slap there and then, by whoever was supervising the class, or sometimes they would be sent to the landing to await their punishment. Ms Thornton and Ms O’Shea at different times took charge of supervising the class, and both were considered to be violent individuals. A witness described it as follows: ... you had little pliers and wire and the wire was constantly digging into your skin and you just couldn’t work fast enough to reach the quota every day. We were lined up every night, those who hadn’t reached the quota and beaten. This witness was regularly punished for not reaching her quota, and eventually, when the pressure became too much for her, on one occasion, she resorted to stealing another girl’s beads to avoid another beating. The other girl was punished instead of her. She said:... I had been beaten every night for not making enough ... On one occasion ... I just couldn’t stand it anymore so I stole a handful of beads from the girl across the aisle when she was out of the room. When the nun came round she said, “I did them, I did them, somebody stole them”, the nun wouldn’t believe her, took her to the front of the room and beat her. It has haunted me all my life ... A common complaint referred to by many of the witnesses was the tense atmosphere of the beads room, which was generated by the pressure they were placed under to reach their daily quota. The tension resulted in the work being carried out in silence. A witness described the tense atmosphere as follows: ... There was always somebody ready to shout at you and come down and hit you ... you weren’t really meant to talk to one another, you did of course, you whispered, but it was all the time you were sort of watching your back. Again and again, the witnesses spoke of the silence in the room. One witness said: We all sat down and made our rosary beads. It was work. We weren’t allowed to talk, we didn’t talk. We only talked when she left the room. Whoever, was there in that room, when they left, we talked. When they came back we stopped. We had to work because we had a quota to do, we had so many to do. Another witness said: ... there was a radio in it and PJ O’Connor used to tell a story once a week on a Wednesday. Most times the radio wasn’t on and you had to do it in silence. Two of the witnesses, who came forward at the request of the Sisters of Mercy to give evidence of their time in Goldenbridge, also spoke of the silence and tension in the room. One such witness said: The beads class, I don’t know why I always felt everything was sort of so quiet. I don’t remember really much chat in the beads class. We probably whispered to one another but I don’t remember conversations with anybody ... I think we were too busy, I took all my time to make them anyway, we were so busy making them so I wouldn’t have had that much time to do anything. The second positive witness said that she could get into trouble for talking loudly in beads class but she could talk to the person beside her as long as it was done quietly. Sr Alida described the beads room as ‘a room of relaxation rather than pressure’. She said that there was a radio or record player that was played in the room, and the children sang along and chatted amongst themselves. She did not consider the work difficult, and stated that ‘it didn’t take a lot of stress doing the work’ and she felt that the work was comparable to a knitting class. Sr Alida denied that children were beaten for not reaching their quota and claimed ‘that there was no difficulty in making the quota in the beads class’. She admitted that it was her responsibility to check the quality and quantity of the decades of beads before they were returned to the factory. If the beads were not properly completed, they would be sent back and ‘it was nasty, to get them back to be repaired, very nasty’. This, she said, resulted in her staying up ‘odd nights’ with
children helping her to finish the work to go back to the factory. Sr Alida began the beads class with the permission of the Resident Manager, Sr Bianca. She explained that it was important for the children to have something to do: My chief problem was that the children had nothing in the world to do after they left school in the evening, there was no occupation of any kind. They went to the play hall and they shouted and roared and pulled each other around from 3.30 until 5.45, we were in the convent at that time. Sr Alida also viewed the bead making as a means of generating extra income for the School. At the time when she was approached to assemble decades of rosaries, she said Goldenbridge ‘was subject to considerable financial restraint’, and she saw the bead making as an opportunity to increase their financial income: ... I viewed this offer as an opportunity to increase the income of the home for the benefit of the children. I believed that this could provide us with a source of income to improve the welfare of the children and to provide them with little luxuries which were not available to us at that time. Sr Alida said that the money from the beads was used to pay for Irish dancing classes, old-time dancing, dancing shoes and costumes for the children, sweets, yearly trips to Butlins, and day trips to Portmarnock during the summer. She also said that the children were given pocket money out of the proceeds of the bead money. These were the ‘luxuries’ that were provided by the beads money, and ‘everything that the children had as extras’ came from that money. The bead making became a very profitable enterprise, generating a weekly income of at least £50 for the School. Sr Alida opened a Post Office savings account for the proceeds from the bead making, which she controlled, and Sr Bianca never queried what she did with it. The money made from the beads over a 20-year period was considerable. Sr Alida asserted that the money earned was spent on the children: ... All those things did not come from the allowance the Government paid for the children, it came from the children’s own hands ... the beads bought those things for them. The money from the beads provided one-third of the cost of the purchase of a holiday home for the children in Rathdrum in 1954. The entire cost of the holiday home was £3,000. The Investigation Committee instructed Mazars, Financial Consultants to review the accounts of Goldenbridge. They confirmed the figure of at least £50 per week. Prior to introducing bead making, Sr Alida had a knitting class where girls made their own jumpers. This work was superseded by bead making, although a very small number of bigger girls continued to do knitting. Sr Gianna recalled that Ms Thornton, a former resident of the Institution, often supervised the beads class. Although she was of the view that Ms Thornton was kind to the children, she conceded that she had a bad temper and that she heard her shouting and roaring at the children in the class. Ms Garvin remembered Ms O’Shea, another lay worker and former resident, supervising the beads class. During her time in Goldenbridge from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s, she went to the beads class most days before teatime, where she remembered seeing the girls chatting to each other and that music was playing. She insisted that the atmosphere in the beads room was pleasant, and she never saw a child being beaten in the beads room. There was, however, evidence that Ms O’Shea was violent and irascible. In contrast to the reminiscence of some of the Sisters that the bead making was a pleasurable activity, the Congregation recognised that learning the skill of bead making: ... could have caused fingers to be tender or skin broken initially, and trying to finish a “quota” must at times also have put unfair pressure on some children. We recognise that this activity is remembered with particular bitterness by some former residents and we deeply regret that something which was intended to be helpful was experienced as harmful and unhappy. In its written Submissions, it accepted that it was not an enjoyable activity, as there was a lot of pressure to get the work done: For those who were engaged in the process, the activity was undoubtedly experienced as a compulsory activity which was not enjoyable and had to be, at best, endured. While there was the radio to listen to, talking was muted and the main aim was to get one’s work done. There was clearly a pressure to get the work done; work was on occasion rejected as falling short of standards and there was a requirement to complete a quota. The Congregation stated that the purpose of bead making was twofold: firstly, to provide useful occupation for the children after school; and, secondly, to provide extra funds for ‘pocket money, recreational activities and equipment for the children’. But they recognised that ‘there was too much emphasis on occupation as a means of management and control of the children’. The Commission concluded that bead making became an industrial activity that was pursued obsessively; the work was difficult and uncomfortable and it was painful for children especially those who lacked dexterity and speed. The quota system made the work onerous and pressurised and a source of stress and anxiety. Supervision by lay workers or nuns to ensure quantity and quality on pain of punishment created work conditions that would not have been tolerated in factories. Using the children for this work deprived them of normal childhood recreation that was necessary for emotional, social and psychological development. There is only one documented case of a child having been sexually abused in Goldenbridge. The incident occurred in 1962, when a caretaker in the School was convicted of indecently assaulting a girl. The girl who had been sexually assaulted by the caretaker reported the matter to Sr Alida, who immediately informed the Gardaí. The caretaker was dismissed from his employment and was
subsequently prosecuted and convicted. The Sisters of Mercy confirmed that ‘the only definite knowledge’ they had regarding sexual abuse in Goldenbridge related to the 1962 incident. However, the Investigation Committee heard other complaints against this man. One complainant alleged that she had been raped by him. She alleged that the rape had taken place around 1960, when she was 11 years old, and two years before he was reported to the Gardaí. She said she did not report this incident to anyone in Goldenbridge, as she was afraid of being sent to a reformatory. The alleged incident occurred in a room off a dormitory where he was fixing a sash window and she was sent to assist him. One witness, who did not herself allege abuse by the caretaker, said of him: It was common knowledge that Mr Hurley was at children in the laundry. A small number of other complaints related to sexual interference by older girls on younger girls and by persons to whose care the children were entrusted at weekends. One witness spoke of being abused by a member of a family to whom she was sent out to at the weekend. This family, she felt, was not vettet. She says she was ‘fondled by an outsider’. Another witness also spoke of being abused by a man in a family she was sent out to for a weekend. She did not want to go to this family again and, when she tried to explain to the nun in charge, she ‘boxed the face off her’. Another witness said she was abused by an uncle of a family she was sent to. She alleged that this occurred in the garden of the family’s home. She also referred to an incident of attempted rape by the son of another family she was sent out to in Dublin. She was left alone in the house with him, and he came into her bedroom and threw her on the bed and attempted to rape her. A witness alleged that he was abused by a lay person who slept in the dormitory with the children. He stated: I was made to play with her for what seemed to go on for some time and whilst doing this I was in fear of the nuns catching me and if I was caught being out of bed I would get the strap or I would get a slapping or a beating. This went on for some time. He went on to describe that the nature of the play was sexual. He felt that he could not tell anyone about what was happening to him. A complainant who spent a few months in Goldenbridge in the late 1960s said that older girls had sexually abused him when he was aged eight. He recalled being brought into a room with a bed in it, and there were three women or older girls in the room. He was not certain whether they were older girls or women who worked in the School. I was put sitting on the edge of the bed and the covers were pulled down and one of the girls was exposed. I was told to feel her private parts, then I was told to feel another one of the women or girl’s private parts. My memory is this happened on more than one occasion. The Commission concluded that Sexual abuse was not a significant issue in the investigation of Goldenbridge, but there was an incident in 1962 which was dealt with promptly. Management did not consider the risk of sexual abuse when sending children to foster families. It is instructive to look at the topic of emotional abuse, using a contemporary source outlining the informed opinion at the time. In 1953, Sr Bianca, the Resident Manager of Goldenbridge, delivered a lecture to a conference on childcare management run by the Archbishop of Dublin. She was regarded as somewhat of an expert, having at that stage managed Goldenbridge Industrial School for 11 years. Sr Bianca collaborated with the Department of Education’s Medical Inspector, Dr McCabe, in preparing for the lecture. Her lecture indicated an enlightened and progressive approach to institutional management, in particular she made the following points: Children from underprivileged backgrounds should be met with sympathy and gentleness. Drastic remedies for head lice such as shaving children’s heads should not be necessary particularly when there were remedies on the market at a very reasonable price. Children should be divided into small groups, including at meal times, to promote an intimate family atmosphere: ‘Formal marshalling and regimentation must be avoided’. Whilst there should be an emphasis on domestic training there was no reason why girls should not follow a commercial or other career path if they had the necessary talent. Every child should help with small jobs and chores about the home. They should be encouraged to be creative and arts and crafts teachers employed. Dressing the children uniformly should be discouraged. Children should be allowed a considerable amount of supervised freedom. They should be allowed to go to the local shop and older girls permitted to go into town on the bus to run errands. A large playground and hall was a necessity. A field for sports should be made available. Senior girls should have their own sitting room. Music should be encouraged, both playing instruments and singing as well as listening to music on the radio. Dancing should also be encouraged. Caring for pets was another useful occupation for children. The Manager should possess skill and judgement ‘have a strong personality without being overbearing and dictatorial ... and strictly impartial’. Those charged with the care of such children should have a keen interest in their work and possess the requisite experience and knowledge of psychology. The Sisters of Mercy noted in their Opening Statement that this lecture ‘tells us much of the thinking and practice at Goldenbridge’. The Investigation Committee heard complaints regarding emotional abuse in the evidence from complainants. All of the complainants came to Goldenbridge in harrowing circumstances. Some had lost a parent, and the surviving parent was either not able to cope or was deemed by the State to be unsuitable. Others were abandoned. Some came from desperately poor families, and others were born
out of wedlock to mothers who felt that society left them with no option but to place their child in care. Some of those committed were babies; others had spent a substantial part of their childhood with their families. Most of the children were heartbroken and terrified on entering Goldenbridge. They all shared a vulnerability that made them emotionally needy. Complainants lived in an atmosphere of constant fear of arbitrary punishment for misdemeanours and of being humiliated. Despite always being surrounded by people, many expressed an overwhelming sense of isolation and loneliness. Many of the complainants stated that they are left with deep psychological scars as a result of their time in Goldenbridge. Witnesses’ account of their experiences in Goldenbridge indicate a very high level of emotional abuse in that Institution. One witness spoke of arriving at Goldenbridge as a six-year-old child in the late 1940s after her mother had died of TB. She described the experience as ‘very very harrowing’; she said she was stripped of her clothes and that all her hair was cropped. When asked whether she had understood at the time why her clothes were being taken from her, she replied: No. You weren’t told. You were just used and abused ... you were disposable ... They didn’t give a stuff about what you were, whether you were a child, whether you were breathing, whether you were living, what you were feeling. Nobody bothered about a child. You were just a disposable item. That’s the way it seemed to me. That’s the way I have carried all through my life. I don’t like what I have carried all through my life. It has left me vulnerable, raw and it has affected the whole of my life. She said: I used to scurry around. I used to try to dodge and weave to get away from the beatings, the abuse. You didn’t. You were helpless. Wherever you were you were a helpless victim. You couldn’t get away from them. They used to clatter you, they used to batter you. The names you were called. The stuff you had to go through. The thing was you were always so alone. There was never anybody there for you. Nobody was there this is what I find so hard to tell you. You were lumped together and you were one of a many, many ... When asked to describe what she was fearful of in Goldenbridge she said, ‘what they would do to you. You knew that you could never get away from their cruelty. You couldn’t escape and take yourself off’. She said she used to lie in her bed at night and wished that she didn’t wake up in the morning. She said that she would sob her heart out crying for her mother. Another complainant was eight years of age when she was put into Goldenbridge with her younger sister in the early 1950s. She said that her mother and father had separated and that her father had abandoned the family. She was living with her grandmother when, she believes, the NSPCC made an application to court to have both her and her younger sister committed to Goldenbridge. She said: We weren’t prepared in any way, we weren’t told – we thought it was an outing which was very rare anyway for us ... the next thing we knew my mother and my grandmother were leaving, they were leaving. We didn’t know what was going to happen to us. Of course we were screaming trying to get out through the door with them and the nun just pulled us back. This complainant said that her grandmother used to come on Wednesday afternoons to visit her. Visiting day was Saturday, and her grandmother was not allowed into the School. She said that one of the nuns would come to her and say, ‘Go down to the gate, your grandmother is there’. She said that she went to a remand home in England after she had left Goldenbridge and that the environment there was completely different. She said that the convent was run by a French Order, and their whole attitude towards the children was that they had some value. They were not sadistic in any way and, although the regime there was strict by today’s standard, you were punished for actually doing something wrong. She said that the children were also allowed to play, even though they had chores to do and laundry duties; nevertheless, there was no forced labour: ‘We actually liked the nuns there’. When asked to elaborate on the contrast between the English home and Goldenbridge, this complainant said, ‘the stark contrast was that we were allowed to be children, we didn’t feel that we were despised’. She said that the living conditions and the food were better and that, although corporal punishment was used and administered with a cane, she could count on the fingers on one hand the times it happened to her. One complainant was born to an unmarried mother and lived with her grandmother in Dublin. She said she recalls getting dressed up nicely one day and being brought to a big building from which she was put into a van or a car and taken away screaming to Goldenbridge. She said that her main contact when she went in to Goldenbridge was with her grandmother, who came up every second Sunday or every Sunday to visit her: ‘All I remember was crying, sometimes I was happy to see her and other times I wasn’t because it made me fret, want to go home. Why was I being left here?’ Another complainant, who spent 15 years in Goldenbridge from the mid-1950s, said that she was very affected by being called ugly by the nuns and staff while she was there. She said that she used to keep her head down all the time because she believed that she was so ugly. She spoke of a lack of confidence and very low self-esteem that has dogged her all her life. It had caused problems in her relationships with people over the years. In particular, she said it had impacted on the way she looked after her own children. She treated them the way she had been treated. She has since apologised to her family. She said she now knew that you must always show children love, ‘Lift a child up, give the child love, reassure her that she is so pretty or that he is so pretty. It means so much
in life, showing an individual love’. This complainant was born to an unmarried mother and had little or no contact with her family throughout her life. She found it very difficult to cope with the outside world after leaving Goldenbridge and felt ill-equipped and ill-prepared. Her dislike of the Institution and her sense of unease at her treatment there were clear from a letter she wrote in 1967 to Sr Venetia. In that letter she said, referring to the suggestion that she should return to Goldenbridge because she got into trouble in England: You know what kind of trouble I got into, I believe you wanted to have me back, but I refused to go because I know what I would have to face. I have faced enough with you all there, and you know that I did not like it there. Every time I went out you took a bad impression. Well, Sister, the mothers here try to do all they can to help me, especially the Mother in charge. She cannot help me anymore and I do appreciate all she did. Also, we call them mothers because they treat us as if they were our mothers. This is quite a significant letter. It was written by this complainant to the one person who had been a mother substitute to her for her entire childhood. It is a sad reflection on the relationship she had with her carers in Goldenbridge. This letter was not the result of any media campaign, or any contamination: it is a contemporaneous document written by a very young girl who had just left the Institution. Another witness, who entered Goldenbridge as a small baby and spent 13 years there in the 1950s and 1960s, said that her great problem was fear, even after she left Goldenbridge. She said she always felt very lonely and that she couldn’t really mix and was bullied a lot. One complainant, who was committed to Goldenbridge at one year old in the early 1950s and remained there for 15 years, said: None of us got loved, none of us. When I look back I wonder how I grew up at all. It was the most strangest place for a child to be reared. The nuns were cruel but they didn’t know half of it because they use to be up saying their prayers. The people they had looking after us was horrible people. This complainant noticed an improvement in Goldenbridge towards the end of her time there in the 1960s. Another witness was five years of age when she was admitted into Goldenbridge in the mid-1950s. Her mother developed post-natal depression after the eighth child in the family was born and was admitted to St Brendan’s Hospital. She specifically mentioned emotional abuse as being the biggest hurt that she experienced in Goldenbridge. She spoke of name-calling and jeering, and said that it came from staff members and carers who were past pupils who had been kept on as part of the staff. She said it was very, very abusive, and the comments centred on the fact that her mother had had a mental breakdown and was in a psychiatric hospital. She said that the one person who stood out the most for referring to it a great deal was Sr Venetia. She spoke of practices in Goldenbridge, such as underwear inspections and a lack of any preparation for menstruation, as contributing to the lack of confidence that all the girls experienced. She said that the effect of their institutionalisation had devastated her family. Her three sisters all suffered from serious psychological problems. She was particularly traumatised by the memory of her younger sister, who she claimed was physically abused in Goldenbridge. Another witness spent nine years in Goldenbridge from the mid-1950s in similar circumstances to the previous complainant. Her mother was placed in a mental institution following a breakdown. She said that one of the hardest things about being institutionalised at seven years of age was the sense of isolation. She spoke about being jeered at by Sr Venetia and by workers because of the fact that her mother was in a mental institution. She said that they were all called ‘mad’, especially by Sr Venetia. This had a very deep psychological impact on her. Another witness spoke of the great sadness caused by her mother’s mental breakdown that resulted in the family having to be placed in care. She gave a poignant description of her relationship with her father throughout her time in Goldenbridge. Her father was a timid man who held the nuns who ran the School in great esteem. She said that he constantly hoped that he would be able to take all his children out so that they could be home together. However, she said that she knew intuitively that this would not happen. She also said that she never asked about her mother. She knew that it affected her father to speak about her, and therefore she never mentioned her. She said that he was very uncomfortable and that she felt like his protector. This child developed an extremely severe respiratory condition, which she claims was not properly medicated by the staff in Goldenbridge. She described the atmosphere in Goldenbridge as being grey and barren, and said that she had no possessions of her own when she was there. However, she did not tell her father what was going on in Goldenbridge or that they were being bullied, because he was like a co-dependant. She also protected her younger sister who was a bed-wetter, and used to try and replace her sheet early in the morning before the wet sheet was discovered. She was aware, even while she was in Goldenbridge, that the fact that her father visited her was very important, and she was terrified that anything would happen to him. This complainant has lived in England for a long number of years and said that nobody knows about Goldenbridge, because she has never spoken about it, even to friends that she has known for 25 years. She said that she constantly feels ‘no good’. She said that the journey that she has had to follow to put herself together, and not have a sense of being a marked person in an orphanage with the stigma and abuse, has been a very long one. It has cost her a lot emotionally, physically and mentally. She felt sorry about her father. He may
have known what the children were suffering in Goldenbridge, but could do nothing about it. She said that, if it had been her, she would have been challenging the nuns, but her father was intimidated by them and could not question what was going on. She asked why would a man, who was basically a good man, feel so intimidated in dealing with the nuns in Goldenbridge who were caring for his children. Another complainant spoke about the contrast between Goldenbridge and a care home in England. She left Goldenbridge at 13, and went to live with her mother in England. Her mother was quite abusive and the complainant ran away from home. She ended up in a children’s home in England. She said at first she had thought she had gone back to Goldenbridge again, but she found it a lovely place with lovely people. She said she tasted food that she had never tasted and she remembers how the tables were set. Sometimes she ‘played up’ there, and she would not be given pocket money if she did that, and the people in charge would bring her into the sitting room and talk to her. She said that they were lovely and that she has great admiration for all of them. She recalled that there were sitting rooms in the care home in England. Whereas in Goldenbridge there were no comfortable chairs or sofas, only wooden chairs and tables. She said that the nuns were really not involved in the day-to-day activity in Goldenbridge. When she was there, it was run principally by the lay staff and older girls. She recalled Sr Venetia, who would have been the only nun who did have contact with the Institution, but the other nuns were only seen in church: They used to come down now and again around Christmas to watch a film ... which was the only time you ever saw Venetia laugh. They never acknowledged you. They were there at that side, here we were at this side. You might as well have put a bar there was no way they were ever going to talk to you. Even in the church, there were all these so called holy people, they never acknowledged you. A witness who was in Goldenbridge for nine years in the 1960s described her time there: I mean the first sentence that always comes to me is that it was a reign of terror, it was a terrifying place for any child to be. Speaking for myself I found it utterly terrifying, it was vicious, it was so full of fear, it was so full of tension. It was indescribably terrifying. When she left, she described how she felt: If I start at the beginning, I was completely and utterly depressed, completely unfit to function in the world outside. Within months of leaving Goldenbridge I was in a psychiatric hospital ... I have lived through some of the darkest, darkest, blackest, blackest depressions imaginable. I have lived with shame, absolute abject shame. I felt like a nobody, worthless, a nuisance, a waste of space on the planet, utterly. I hated every adult who walked the planet ... I was bitter, I was angry. I was broken. I tried to be happy if that makes sense, I really did try. I tried to be normal, but you couldn’t be. People would say to you, “Where are you from? I would say, “did I ask you where you came from”. I would say, “No, Mind your own business, don’t ask me”. She said she found this question so difficult to deal with that she often lied. She found filling in application forms, which required parents’ names and occupations and where she was from, to be deeply upsetting and shaming for her. She said that, although Sr Venetia wasn’t anything as bad as Sr Alida, she was very capable of battering children and, in particular, she was verbally very cruel to children: She was very good at calling you names, and Sr Venetia was capable of being very cruel to particular children ... She was very good at humiliation. Ill tell you that, she was very good at that. She spoke of particular girls who suffered humiliation at the hands of Sr Venetia. One particular girl suffered from perspiration, and Sr Venetia used make her strip off to her underclothes every day and wash in front of all her peers. She said that Sr Venetia had particular girls whom she treated as favourites, and they were never beaten and got special treatment from her. Many witnesses complained of the name-calling that they endured during their time in Goldenbridge. They spoke of being called ‘worse than the soldiers who crucified Christ’, or being called ‘filthy’ and ‘dirty’. Other witnesses referred to verbal insults of being called ‘fat and ugly’, being called ‘crackpot and mad’. Other witnesses made reference to the hurt caused by the name-calling and the degradation that accompanied it. For a number of complainants, one of the most difficult memories was the treatment they recalled their siblings receiving while in Goldenbridge. These witnesses suffered greatly, where those siblings went on to have serious psychiatric problems or even where they had subsequently died. They felt that, in some way, they might have been able to help the sibling had they spoken to them more openly about their experiences in Goldenbridge. One witness, who spent seven years in Goldenbridge after the death of her mother, described trying to protect her younger brothers in Goldenbridge. They were bed-wetters, and she was very upset when they were punished for wetting the bed. She couldn’t bear to see them slapped, because she knew that they couldn’t help doing it. Even though she was just a child herself, she could see that beating children for wetting the bed was cruel and unfair. She visited her younger brothers in another industrial school because she believed that, if the authorities knew that somebody from outside the Institution was watching, it would be easier on the boys there. This was an impression she got from Goldenbridge, where she felt that anybody who had a parent or relative in touch with the School got an easier time. She visited her younger brothers in the Industrial School until she was 18. At that stage, her father had returned. Eventually, the family were all reunited and, to this day, are very close. She was nearly 10
years of age when she went into Goldenbridge and she had a clear memory of life before the Institution. She felt that it gave her a bit of a foundation and that she was luckier than children who had no mothers or fathers. She used to fantasise about a real home, and used to tell stories about things that happened on the outside. One of her brothers spoke to the Investigation Committee and confirmed that his sister did protect both him and his other brothers and sisters while they were in Goldenbridge.

Another witness, who had a good experience of family life before being admitted to Goldenbridge at the age of nine following the death of her mother, said that her overall impression of the Institution was of horror and fear. Her father died in 1967, but whilst he was alive he had regular contact with the family. He visited every second Sunday, but he would often arrive after he had been drinking. She recalled how Sr Eleonora21 and one of the lay staff would speak to him in a degrading way. His children would plead and beg him to take them out of Goldenbridge, and his famous saying was ‘keep your chin up ... it’s not what’s on the outside, it’s the inside that counts’. She said the family were very poor. Their mother was a lovely woman. She believed that the fact that their father visited them regularly spared her from a lot of the abuse that the other children were subjected to. One of her great dislikes in Goldenbridge was that some of the girls were treated as favourites and pets. She spoke about being beaten and abused if underwear was dirty, and also spoke of the humiliation of being lined up naked to be painted with a treatment for scabies. She was quite clear that the way in which this treatment was carried out was designed to maximise the humiliation of the children, particularly of older girls. Some of the witnesses at the Goldenbridge hearings were men who had been sent there as young boys. One man spoke of the loss of family contact as a result of being placed in Goldenbridge at two years of age in the early 1960s. He said: Goldenbridge was a tough place as a young little boy. When I think of my own kids and I think that if anybody hurt them I would destroy their lives. That is the only true way I have got of reflecting on what happened to me as a kid growing up. This complainant said that it was only when he had his own children that he realised how harsh his own upbringing had been. They received no individual care and were just herded around. One witness gave a very personal account of a tragedy that occurred during her time in Goldenbridge. She was there for 10 years from the mid-1960s, following the break-up of her parents’ marriage. Within a year of her committal to Goldenbridge, her two older brothers died in an accident. She and two of her sisters were called down to Sr Venetia’s office, where she found two of their uncles, together with a lay teacher. They were told about the deaths and they were given two bull’s eye sweets each. They were then sent back to the recreation room. She said that: I was sent back down to the rest of the children. Nobody took me aside and put their arms around me in any shape or form, as God is my witness that is the truth, that is the truth. Nobody gave me any comfort other than the bit of comfort we tried to give each other as a family. The pain of loss and separation was experienced not only by the children. For many parents, placing their children in care was an act of desperation. Another complainant entered Goldenbridge in the mid-1960s, aged five years of age, with his older sister, following the separation of his mother and father. There were six children at the time, and only the eldest sister accompanied her mother to England after the separation. Initially, his father was trying to look after the remaining five children, but they eventually ended up in court and being committed to Goldenbridge. Originally, he was committed for a 10-year period, but his mother ‘kidnapped’ both him and his sister and brought them back to England. She came originally to bring them on a day out, but then went to collect his two older brothers who were in an industrial school and then travelled across to England with the four of them. The younger sister was left in another institution, because she was too young to be released on a day outing. His mother visited the youngest girl until she was old enough, by which time the courts released her and the family was reunited. A letter which this complainant’s mother wrote in the mid-1960s and sent to the Christian Brothers is relevant: Dear Sir, I would like to inform you that I have now taken my children [X and Y] from your care without your consent. I have also taken [A and B] from Goldenbridge convent. All four are now in England with me. I have phoned [the] Artane School from England to say that I took the children with me. I could not phone Goldenbridge as I do not know their phone number, but I am letting them know by post. Please don’t blame me too much for what I have done in taking this advantage, but I could not see my children unhappy no longer. I have for one year done my best to try to get the children together but everything failed because I respected the law. Now, I have taken it into my own hands and if I am sent to jail I shall do the same again when I come out. The Justice said I could have my children when I get a home for them. He did not say I would have to have my husband’s consent so I did what I could to get the home for them, but I would not consider asking my husband for a letter of consent. If he wants them he can fight for them from me. But he won’t as he has not been to see them only twice since they were committed ... 12 months ago. Yours truly, ...... Sr Alida was asked whether the children were shown love and affection. She stated that there was no doubt that the pre-school children were shown love and affection by her, by staff in charge of the nursery, and by an older girl who would be assigned to keep an eye on them. She argued that the
children of school-going age were not showered with the same level of affection as would be the norm today: Looking back still I would have to say that I never had a feeling that I had a roomful of 150 sad and frightened children. I couldn’t say that from my heart. That doesn’t mean that there could be children very sad unknown to me. I didn’t know what was inside any child’s heart or in their head. We knew nothing at all about most of the families. Any research we did, it didn’t get us very far, their lives family wise was very bleak. I, at the time, wasn’t – didn’t take into consideration what state they were in. As teenagers or as babies. Babies you could compensate, the babies we loved and we hugged and we gave every kind of care to babies. They got the best. Any baby that came to our care, I can only say they got the best. When it came to children from 12 years upwards, I never knew what was inside their hearts or their minds. Sr Gianna stated that she was very aware of the lack of emotional care for the children in Goldenbridge: I would be very conscious of that when children came in from a family that had just lost a mother and how sad they would be. I would be very moved when I would see that because it was awful for them to come into this big school with this big crowd of children and to be just one of a group after being in a family setting. She explained: You would be very conscious of 150 children not having the hug and the love and the care of someone who really loved them closely. You would be very conscious of that. You wouldn’t witness any of that. In our time you didn’t do that, you didn’t come near or hug people. That would have been part of our training as well. In hindsight, I think it was a good thing because I might have been accused of something very different if I had hugged or loved, as you might want to do. She stated that Sr Alidu was also aware of how vulnerable these children were. She recalled one little boy who had lost his mother and was committed to Goldenbridge. Sr Alida asked her to keep an eye on him as she worked in the workroom: I remember him coming up, standing beside me, I was at the machine working, and I just remember him standing there and his little hand coming into mine every so often because he was so shy and sad. Ms Kearney worked as a teacher in Goldenbridge for over 30 years. When she was asked about the atmosphere in Goldenbridge. She responded: Not a happy place, I was glad to get out of it. When you have the children sulking, shouting at each other across the room and shouting at you and calling you all kinds of names it’s very hard to put up with it. It wasn’t a happy atmosphere, no. There were some lovely children in it, that never gave you a bit of trouble, you felt like hugging them but you didn’t, you couldn’t, because the bold ones would take it out of them, “teacher’s pet”. The Sisters of Mercy accepted that institutional life in Goldenbridge had many negative features, which they listed as follows: The large size of the institution and the number of children who lived there gave little prospect of a replication of a family’s love and nurture. The low ratio of staff to children, which for most of the period under review was approximately 1 staff member for every 30 children. The absence of childcare training for Sisters and lay staff. The capitation system of funding, together with the level of funding, led to difficult financial constraints and choices. The regimental nature of institutional life where restriction on freedom of movement operated well beyond school hours and a lack of privacy, particularly in the early years. The emphasis on conformity rather than on creativity and choice. The very limited opportunities for forming personal one to one adult/child relationships. A reliance on corporal punishment as a feature in the maintenance of discipline and good order. A failure to properly understand the level of trauma suffered by each child as a result of being separated from family, sometimes in circumstances where their placement in the institution followed the death of a parent. A failure to properly respond to the individual emotional needs of the children, including how lonely and frightened they must have been in being taken from family and placed in a large institution with children of all ages. A failure to recognise the special emotional and educational needs of children who had come from troubled backgrounds. A failure to keep children informed about their family and family events, such as births marriages and deaths. A failure to assess the individual needs of each child, either on admission or on an ongoing basis. A failure to meet the comprehensive educational needs of children and the very inadequacy of the educational process itself relative to their needs. In its written Submissions, the Congregation seemed to distance itself somewhat from culpability for the emotional deprivation experienced by so many complainants, and stated: Allegations of emotional abuse are difficult to evaluate. Whether there was a general tendency to verbally denigrate and discourage the children is something almost as intangible to assess as the atmosphere in the school … the complainants undoubtedly had very real feelings of emotional neglect. One can see how a large institution failed to supply the emotional needs of the child, even if the carers did not go further and actually insult and denigrate them. The absence of personal love and encouragement would undoubtedly have left the children with a lack of self-regard and feelings of worthlessness … The failure to provide for the emotional well-being of the children in the institution is a major failing on the part of the industrial school. It is perhaps the one that most impacted on the long-term psychological development of the child. A child could probably cope much better with obstacles and handicaps in the institution and, later, out of the institution, provided she felt loved and valued as an individual … But where does the blame for emotional neglect lie? The form of
childcare provided by St Vincent’s industrial school, Goldenbridge was not a personal whim or caprice of Sister Alida or Sister Venetia. It was a large institution embedded in an institutional structure of child-care approved of by the State authorities ... The role of the Sisters actually running the schools needs to be put in its proper context without denying the emotional reality of the children. The Commission concluded that Goldenbridge could have operated a kinder regime, where children were safe and secure, in keeping with the aspirations of the Sisters of Mercy, but it failed to do so. Witnesses described how the conditions in Goldenbridge left them with low self-esteem for the rest of their lives. Children were routinely humiliated and belittled by the nuns and carers who looked after them. Children with parents or relatives who kept in touch received more favorable treatment than those children who did not. Girls left Goldenbridge ill-equipped to deal with the outside world. An extreme example of the culture of humiliation that permeated Goldenbridge can be seen in the practice of underwear inspections. Several allegations were made by complainants to the effect that, when their underwear was changed weekly, their underwear was inspected and they were beaten if there was any mark on it. Two complainants said the soiled underwear was paraded on a pole for everyone to see before they received their fresh laundry. No reference is made to these allegations in the Opening Statement of the Sisters of Mercy. In their Submissions, however, they say that the ‘practice of having to show dirty underwear on a weekly basis is a puzzling one’. They add that: ... it is difficult to see what rational basis there might be for such a practice, except perhaps to check whether older girls might have started their periods, or checking the number on the underwear, or something of that nature. If so, it might have been done on an occasional basis but it would hardly have been a regular event for every girl. A witness spoke of the underwear inspection: We would change our pants once a week. I can see the basket on the corridor, it was a Saturday. Friday night, there would be somebody on the toilet door, but we would go into the toilet, one by one let in and we would wash out pants in the toilet. If we didn’t get the chance, we thought we were going to be too long, we would actually spit on them and put them under our sheet and lie on them ... We knew there was an inspection on the Saturday and that we would have to have them clean. If they weren’t clean we would get beaten across the bare bum. Another witness spoke of having to show her underwear on the day that fresh underwear was distributed to the children. When questioned as to the possible reasons for having to display underwear, she expressed the view that it served to embarrass and humiliate the children. She recalled one particular incident whereby a child’s underwear was paraded for all to see: I do remember one incident in the workroom where there was a pair of panties put on the sweeping brush, the handle of the brush and swung around and everybody have a look at so and so’s pants. One other witness gave details of the underwear-changing ritual: We had to show our underwear every Thursday. It could be in the washroom that’s where I remember it. You had to show your underpants but normally what we did is we devised methods in how to wash our underwear and we used the toilets in the cisterns to wash our clothes. Sometimes the night before we would put them under the beds to dry. When asked what would happen if they displayed them soiled on inspection day, she said ‘Oh you would be beaten, severely beaten’. Another witness spoke of the terrifying ordeal of a nun or a lay teacher or both displaying the children’s underwear on clothes inspection day: There was in the very early days a practice, I don’t know what the correct word, is of a nun or a teacher holding up and making a display of your clothes if they were soiled so we quickly learned that way of overcoming it. Yet another witness spoke about the weekly practice of displaying underwear: We all went up in a single file to show our underwear and we had to have them turned inside out. In the yard. There was a wicker basket when you come out of the yard to the right hand side and that’s where you dropped your underwear. Sr Alida had a pole, it was similar to what you would light candles with in a church, anything that she didn’t like, your underwear was hoisted on this pole. Often she would say “hands up who thinks this is dirty”. This caused considerable distress and humiliation and we could never ever trust each other because if you were anyway close to somebody you wouldn’t put up your hand. If you didn’t put up your hand she would come after you, whoever that was. Another witness spoke of the same ritual: We got one change on a Thursday. We had to produce our underpants to see what condition they were in and if they were soiled we were beaten. It was on a Thursday after school that was the way we were treated. Another witness told about washing her underwear in the toilet cistern in order to avoid the humiliation of displaying soiled underwear on the clothes inspection day: That was because if you woke up in the morning and you had dirty underwear there was nowhere you could get it – you didn’t get clean underwear every day. You got that once a week. What it was if any of them checked to see if it was dirty then they would give you hell ... You would get beaten, smacked and the language would be horrific: “You dirty bitch. You filthy bitch”. You would be called “wet the bed” as well. They used that very regular. ... You would wash the underwear and you would leave it ... we had rubber sheets and you would leave it under there but if you did then the mattress would get marked so what you would do is leave it under the sheet and then the sheet would get – sometimes it might get stained and sometimes it might
not. If it got stained you were accused of wetting the bed. So you got two goes at it. Another witness recalled that the clothes inspection took place in the yard. She felt that the inspection of dirty underwear was like a form of punishment; not every single girl’s underwear was checked; Probably not every single person might have to. I remember I did, I remember when the girls did, but I wouldn’t say she went around every single person; I couldn’t honestly to God say that. One further witness, who had a very good recollection of life in Goldenbridge, also spoke about showing the underwear once a week when the fresh underwear was being distributed: For soiled clothing, every single week because we had to show our underwear once a week to two or three people who had large wicker baskets in front of them. We all stood in line all with our underwear, as we showed them we got hit with a stick. The offensive practice of inspecting underwear was confirmed by many witnesses, including one put forward by the Congregation as a favourable witness. The practice caused extreme embarrassment and humiliation and it was futile and utterly degrading. The ‘Dear Daughter’ programme contained a number of very serious allegations against Goldenbridge and the Sisters of Mercy. The Sisters of Mercy have identified what they describe as four key areas in the ‘Dear Daughter’ programme. They say that these are mistruths that appeared in the programme and subsequently appeared in evidence by complainants who came into the Investigation Committee to speak about their experiences in Goldenbridge. The Sisters have said that the recurrence of a number of these key issues in the statements that were made to the Investigation Committee casts doubt on the validity of the memories of the women and men who testified. The Sisters of Mercy in their Submission identified four key allegations: Scraps – that children were starved and had to fight each other for scraps thrown out to them in the playground each day. Water – that children had to drink from the toilets because there was no drinking water available to them day or night. Numbers – that children were always referred to by number rather than by name. Potties – that babies were mistreated/tied to potties for long periods and frequently suffered from prolapsed rectums as a result. The Sisters submitted that a number of complainants got these particular allegations wrong, and that they got them wrong in precisely the same way. They maintain that it is the ‘commonality of the memory errors that gives the clue to their importance’. In ‘Dear Daughter’, there is a visual image of a colander of scraps being thrown out of a window into a yard and children fighting for the scraps. Eight of the complainants in their witness statements allege that scraps of food were thrown out of a window into the yard, and that the children would scramble and fight each other for these scraps. Eleven complainants made this allegation in oral evidence. They each, in various ways, referred to the poor quality of the food, the fact that they were hungry, and that bread was thrown out of a window at 3 o’clock each day, and the children all scrambled and pushed each other to grab a slice of bread. The Sisters of Mercy have agreed with one description of this aspect of life in Goldenbridge. In her evidence to the Committee, a witness said that at 3.30pm, the children would line up in an orderly queue, a window would be opened in the yard, and bread would be distributed from a colander. She said that, if there was any left after all the children had got a slice, it would be just thrown out into the yard: ‘... they gave you your bread, there was a tray or sometimes there was a big ... colander type of thing and the bread would be in there and they’d give it out to you ... you had to line up. If there was any left and if there was a load of us still there and I would probably be one of them, she would just sometimes throw it out and you would get it. But for your first slice of bread you lined up and you got it ... Instead of queuing up again and everybody would be pushing, she would just throw it and you would grab it. She said the bread would first be handed out, and only at the end of this distribution were the scraps thrown into the yard: ‘No, I can assure you, we lined up first and sometimes there was two people there, actually most of the time there was two people there and they would hand you your bread and you would go and then you would hang around. A broadly similar account was also given by another former resident, who said that she could recall a lay worker handing out lumps of bread from a window overlooking the yard and the children queuing for the bread. She said that, after the big lumps of bread were handed out, ‘and then when it gets smaller, she just throws it out to whoever didn’t get any’. This account is accepted by the Sisters of Mercy, but other witnesses who spoke about this distribution of bread gave a different version. One witness recalled scrambling for scraps that were thrown out of a window in Goldenbridge. Another former resident said that she recalled being hungry all the time and that, during her earlier years in Goldenbridge in the early 1960s, she recalled scraps from the kitchen being thrown out of a window to the children who were playing in the yard: ‘I just remember the window being open in the yard and the scraps coming out and we all digging in to get a bit of bread and cake that was left over’. One witness described the distribution of bread in the following terms: From my memory there was a window in the hall and somebody used to say – word would get around when you’d get scraps ‘cos you would get them maybe once a month. Somebody said “we are getting scraps today”. It could be from what the lay people had, the crusts could be left over and it would be all thrown into a steel bin, a stainless steel bowl. The window would open and – I am seeing it even as myself, I done it as a child, I done it as a
teenager, and that window would open and the bowl of scraps would actually just be thrown out, out the window onto the yard and everybody would scream and charge. You would actually walk on the babies, I am sure I did it myself, it was done on me, and that just went on. Another witness said: But there was a practice of when the teachers had their meals that there would be leftovers and those leftovers would be brought to the yard window and just scattered out the window and we would dive on them. If you managed to get something your day was made. Another witness, when asked whether it was possible that the scraps were thrown only at the end of the distribution of bread, stated: Definitely not ... otherwise I wouldn’t feel so horrified and shamed to have to tell you this. First of all, who was going to create this order of this orderly row of children that were hungry to stand in line to wait for bread, who was supervising this? That didn’t happen. It was a free for all and the strong ones and the ones that were a bit heavy were the ones that were first to the front of the queue. Obviously the weaklings, I wasn’t that weak, but I wasn’t very forceful either, they wouldn’t fare so well. What was thrown would you just have to clamber for it. People would walk on it with their sandals and you would pick it up and eat it. A slightly different version of this story was given by another witness, who said: The window opened and whether it be one of the teachers or the helpers they had this huge big – I have it here, they had this huge big sieve and you would have all the different crumbs and all sorts, you might even get a piece of cake in it. They would open up the window and this would be flung out, you would know it was coming. You would stand waiting on it and there would be a dive for the thing, all these little crumbs. If you got a bit of cake, you – you would even beat up the one that had a bigger piece than you, a slice of bread instead of a bit bread. They would just fling it out the window ... The Sisters of Mercy assert that this allegation is a serious distortion of ‘the practice of bringing out a tray of bread and margarine (or jam) to the children in the yard after school’. Scraps were thrown out of a receptacle into the yard, and children scrambled for them. Whatever the circumstances, this should not have happened and was demeaning for the children. It was alleged that the children in Goldenbridge did not have access to water during the day, and had to resort to drinking water from either the toilet bowl or the cistern. One witness described it as follows: We used to all drink out of the toilets. There was toilets at the end of the yard, we used to go down there. There was no taps, you just flushed the chain and drink the water. When asked whether he recalled a drinking fountain in the yard, he said: No. There used to be a little push handle thing down, that hardly ever worked. I remember it did work, it didn’t always work. I am sure it was there ... We used to ... drink out of the toilets anyway. You followed what the other kids done. Another witness said: In between meals there was no facility for a glass of water, there was nothing, nowhere you could, we didn’t have money to buy anything. There was no machines, no vending in those days. Nothing like that. You would go to the toilets where they had the loose top and you would scoop water up, you would scoop it up in your hand or you would get something like – I don’t know how to describe it. It was like a funnel from the big dryers, there was a little connection, you would get it and you would drink the water from the cistern. I mean, you wouldn’t think whether this is healthy or unhealthy. One witness said: We used to drink water out of the toilets, out of the either the bowl or the cistern depending on how tall you were ... I mean, I see in a statement from Sr Alida she said that a tap was in the yard, I don’t know where it was because I was never allowed have a drink out of it. When asked if she remembered a tap or drinking fountain in the yard, she said: I was there for twelve years and I don’t remember seeing a tap in the yard. I do remember drinking water out of the toilets, out of the cistern, out of the bowl. Another witness said: Because they wouldn’t give you water. You asked for water and you weren’t given it. So obviously to try and survive, you would come out, you would be in the yard and you would go into the toilets in the yard and flush the toilets and drink water from the toilets. That wasn’t just a once-off, that was on a good number of occasions. Another witness, when asked about the existence of a drinking fountain in the yard, said that if there had been a fountain in the yard it must have been broken ‘because we used to drink out literally of the toilet or lift up the cistern, the top of the toilet’. Sr Alida stated there was a drinking fountain in the yard which came from Liverpool and was marked ‘hooligan proof’. It remained in working order until the time she left Goldenbridge. She also stated that children could get water from the kitchen and a small bathroom under the stairs. One explanation for the lack of access to water is in relation to the problem of bed-wetting which, according to Sr Alida, was ‘a huge problem’ that existed in Goldenbridge. Sr Alida said they had sought medical advice, and one of the recommendations was the deprivation of all fluids before bedtime. However, Sr Venetia stated to Mr Crowley that children used to drink from the toilet cistern. In his report he stated: Sr Venetia confirmed the allegations in relation to the tumble dryer and drinking from the toilet cistern. The Sisters of Mercy denied that children were deprived of water as there was a drinking fountain in the yard. They conceded, however, that on foot of medical advice they deprived children who were prone to wetting the bed of water from a certain time in the afternoon. These children may have resorted to covertly drinking from the toilet. They asserted that this is another example of how a practice became distorted
and exaggerated by witnesses. Children drank out of the toilet, which was confirmed by Sr Venetia when speaking to Mr Crowley in 1996. This happened irrespective of whether the fountain in the yard was working. Some children were deprived of water in an effort to cure bed-wetting, and they found water where they could. The calling of children by number is another specific allegation made by complainants. They assert that staff referred to them not by name but by number. This is an allegation which appeared in the ‘Dear Daughter’ programme. It is also an allegation which was made by 11 complainants in their statements to the Commission and in oral evidence. One witness said: The numbers were used when they were giving out the clothes or anything like that that belonged to the children. Anything that you had marked you always had a number on it. You never had a name on it. Another witness also stated that clothes were distributed according to the number of the child. However, under cross-examination, this witness went further and stated that the children were referred to by number. Another witness recalled the day that she entered Goldenbridge and was stripped of her own clothes, washed and given a set of clothes that were ‘hard, rough, horrible’ and was given a number and told ‘never to forget it’. Another witness recalled that, when she entered Goldenbridge, her name was taken away and she was given a number. She said: ‘In Goldenbridge I was a number’. This witness was adamant that she was never called by her name, and that it was always by her number. Even when she was cross-examined about the use of the number for the purpose of clothing, she stated that she was called by her number irrespective of whether clothes were being distributed or not. Again, another witness when questioned about how he was addressed in Goldenbridge said: You were called by your surname or your number. It was mainly your surname. You were never called by your name ... He also confirmed that the numbers were used for the system of laundering clothes. One other witness disagreed with the contention that the numbers were only used for laundry purposes: Some people they knew very well, the ones that were always in trouble, always getting slapped, some of them would be well known. You would be called by your number ... Another witness recounted that she did not recall staff referring to her by her Christian name, but did recall being called by her number. The Sisters of Mercy assert that this was never the case; children were never called by a number. The use of numbers was for the purpose of laundry and distributing children’s clothing. Each item of the child’s clothing was numbered so that, when it was washed and ironed, that same item of clothing could be returned to the appropriate child. Sr Gianna, who worked in the laundry and workroom of Goldenbridge for three years, gave a detailed account of the washing and distribution of the children’s clothing. In evidence, Sr Gianna recounted that the children’s clothing, once it had been washed and ironed, was brought down to the recreation hall for distribution: And the numbers called out then. We had them in the big baskets and then you picked out your three articles or four articles and you called out a number and the child who owned these came forward. She went down and she undressed and you had the senior girls there helping the smaller ones to dress and undress. They would bring up their soiled laundry and put it into the baskets. Another witness stated that she disagreed with certain aspects of the ‘Dear Daughter’ programme. In particular, she disagreed with the suggestion in the programme that children were called by number. She said as follows: Yeah, it wouldn’t be always numbers I have to say, because I wasn’t always called by numbers. Maybe some other people may have felt it that way, but when I heard that I thought, no, that wasn’t me. From the evidence of the complainants, what is clear, apart from the issue of the numbers, is that children were not called by their Christian name. In the main, they appear to have been referred to by their numbers, their surnames, or by nicknames. The use of numbers instead of names was not widespread in Goldenbridge. Numbers were used, however, on occasions such as dealing with laundry. The specific allegation, that babies were strapped to potties for long periods of time and suffered a prolapsed rectum, first emerged in the Gay Byrne radio show in 1992. It was repeated on the ‘Dear Daughter’ programme. A number of complainants made this allegation in their statements of complaint to the Commission. However, in oral evidence it did not feature very largely as an allegation. One witness described it in the following terms: They (babies) were placed on potties, yes. They were strapped down and there were marks on their little bums when they got up. There was one particular child whose back passage used to come down. He was a little boy by the name of .... This complainant further stated when questioned that she herself was aged around eight or nine years when she saw this little boy with what she believed to be a prolapsed rectum. Another witness made reference to the strapping of babies to potties: We used to look after the babies there. There was maybe 50, 60 babies. You used to look after them, you used to have to bath them and change them. You used to stick them on the potties, strapped to potties for hours on end. Other witnesses whose job was to mind the babies made no reference to the practice of strapping babies onto potties. One positive witness stated that the babies ‘were so well looked after’. Several witnesses asserted that they only saw one instance of a prolapsed rectum. One witness described the shock of seeing a child with a prolapsed rectum: In the rec there was toilets down near the stage end and the babies used to be put– the little ones used to be put on the potties. I remember I was sitting more or less facing– there was benches all
around the rec. I was facing these children on the potty. I remember one of them stood up and something was hanging down and it really frightened me. I didn’t understand. To this day it is still imprinted on me. In her general written statement to the Commission, Sr Alida devoted a section to the care of babies in Goldenbridge. She stated: Babies were never left sitting on a potty a long time. There was one baby who suffered from a prolapsed rectum, however this girl had this problem on admission. There was no question of young children looking after our babies and no-one was ever taught to reinsert a baby’s rectum as some complainants describe. Sr Alida said that children were placed on potties when they got up in the morning, after every meal and before they went to bed. She said they would be left for about 12 minutes on each occasion. This represents a total of six occasions per day that children would have been placed on potties, for a total period of 72 minutes at least. This would have been a considerable proportion of the day for toddlers or small children. Many witnesses have described a fairly rigid system regarding toilet training. With a large number of babies to toilet train and with the limited staff available, individual attention was not possible. After a certain age, children were not provided with nappies, and older residents would be required to sluice out soiled sheets and bedding as well as clean excrement off children who had soiled or wet in the night. That said, the general view was that Sr Alida was kind and loving towards the babies and, in her testimony to the Investigation Committee, she said: Babies you could compensate, the babies we loved and we hugged and we gave every kind of care to babies. They got the best. Any baby that came to our care, I can only say they got the best. Sr Alida showed kindness to babies, but caring for large numbers of them with inadequate staff led to a regimented approach in which babies were left sitting on potties for long periods of time. The Commission concluded that each of these allegations highlighted by the ‘Dear Daughter’ programme had a basis in fact. While there were differences in perception as between the Congregation and the complainants, complainants who referred to these elements did not thereby become unreliable witnesses. The General Inspection and Medical Reports of the Department of Education and Science give some indication of the general living conditions of the children. Sr Alida, who had worked in the School for over 20 years, also provided some information on this issue. The first available documentary piece of information is an Inspection Report from the Department’s Medical Inspector, Dr Anna McCabe, in August 1939. She reported four cases of scabies. In a report the following year, she noted two instances of scabies. In March 1941, Dr McCabe carried out a general inspection and found that the School was ‘well kept’ and satisfactory in all areas. There is no General Inspection Report for 1942. When Sr Alida and Sr Bianca arrived in August 1942, they found the children in an appalling condition. The majority of the children were suffering from scabies and ringworm of the scalp. Sr Alida said: They had skin trouble which I never saw before, it was scabies. I’d say 75 percent of the children would have scabies at that time ... they had ringworm of the scalp a number of them ... it would be big abscesses in their hair, that the hair couldn’t be combed. Sr Bianca set about dealing with the situation immediately. She closed the School for two weeks. During this two-week period, the children were bathed and their bodies were covered with an ointment for the treatment of scabies and they were sent to bed. Every three days, the procedure was repeated until the infection was gone. Their clothes were sent to the laundry, and Sr Bianca spent all of her time in the laundry disinfecting the clothes by steam boiling, with the help of those girls who were not infected. After three days, the ointment had soaked into the children’s bodies and killed the infection. Sr Bianca contacted Dublin Corporation, who organised for the children’s bedclothes to be removed and disinfected. Ringworm was more difficult to treat because there were abscesses on the children’s heads. Sr Alida said: They went to Steeven’s Hospital with those. In the hospital, first of all, they were drawing pus and the hair was stuck onto their heads, it was very nasty to describe. I think in Steevens’ Hospital they recommended cutting the hair and you had to take it off bit by bit to get the hair away ... Lotion was then applied to the scalp which killed the hairs and plaster was put on the head in strips, which was then pulled off and when they pulled off the plaster they pulled the roots of the hair out as well. The General Inspection Reports made no reference to these conditions at all. The following year, Dr McCabe recorded that the School was ‘well kept’ and that most areas were ‘satisfactory’, but she criticised the condition of the children, saying they could be ‘cleaner and neater’. The next inspection took place on 27th January 1944 and she commented that the premises were ‘very well kept, clean and tidy’ and most areas were found to be ‘satisfactory’, but she found that the ‘children looked far from being neat and tidy’. She said that their clothes were ‘tattered and untidy’ and their blankets were ‘thin and worn’. The cause of the thinness of the blankets, according to Sr Alida, arose from the process of disinfecting them during the scabies outbreak in 1942. Dr McCabe recommended replacing the blankets and supplying each child with a toothbrush and for the dentist to visit every quarter. She also sought greater supervision of the younger children. In her evidence, Sr Alida said that it took years to replace the blankets and eventually they got seconds from Foxford Manufacturers. In June 1944, there was another outbreak of ringworm in the School. Sr Bianca informed the Department that several
children had contracted ringworm, and she sought an increase in the maintenance allowance to cover the cost of treatment. Dr McCabe’s advice was sought by the Department in relation to the treatment for ringworm, and her response was that the School was expected to cover the cost of medical treatment for children from the grant received. Dr McCabe carried out a General Inspection on 28th June 1944 and she found that the standard of cleanliness and supervision of the children had improved, but she was not completely satisfied with the conditions. All the children had not been supplied with toothbrushes, the dentist had not paid a quarterly visit, and the blankets had not been replaced. The Department made these observations known to the Resident Manager. In the Medical Inspection conducted during the same visit, Dr McCabe noted four children required treatment for ringworm.

Dr McCabe’s General Inspection Reports from 1948 until her retirement in 1963 were, without exception, very positive. Her reports during these years were not very detailed and were, in fact, quite repetitive in content. She frequently stated that the School was ‘well run’ and in some years remarked that it was ‘extremely well run’ or ‘very well conducted’. She also commented in her reports that ‘many improvements had been made and continued to be made’ to the School. The exact nature of these improvements was not detailed in these reports. Throughout this time period, Dr McCabe singled out the Resident Manager for praise.

In her General Inspection Report of January 1959 and 1960, she said ‘Sr Alida an excellent nun ... knows many things about running a good school’. Dr McCabe’s General Inspection Reports of 1963 referred to the fact that ‘Sr Venetia is now Res. Manager and is doing very well being a disciple of Sr Alida she is excellent’. The Medical Reports during this period were glowing, with reference often made to the fact that small children and babies are particularly well cared for. But in her Medical Inspection Report of May 1955, Dr McCabe noted that 11 children were receiving treatment for scabies. The General Inspection Reports after Dr McCabe’s retirement continued to be very favourable about the living conditions in the School.

Dr Charles Lysaght, who carried out a General Inspection of the School on 21st March 1966, commented that it was ‘well run’: the premises were clean and in ‘good repair’ and the accommodation consisted mostly of modern buildings with ‘excellent dormitory accommodation’. Sr Venetia came in for particular praise from Dr Lysaght when he referred to her as being ‘most competent and appears dedicated to the work’. In the 1970s, Graham Granville took over as the Department’s General Inspector. His reports were also very favourable of the living conditions and the premises and accommodation. However, there were only three reports for the entire period of the 1970s, namely 1971, 1976 and 1978 because of staff shortages in the Department of Education.

Mr Granville was concerned about the lack of qualifications of the staff and the change in the type of child that was being admitted. A lot of the children were categorised as disturbed. Proposals for the group home system were advocated, and sanction was given, but these plans were not carried through until the 1980s. The Commission concluded that the severity of the problem tackled by Sr Bianca and Sr Alida disclosed evidence of severe neglect. The work undertaken by these two nuns was heavy and relentless and brought about immediate improvements to the School.

The absence of reference to these problems in the Departmental Medical Reports discloses a weakness of the inspections. The children in Goldenbridge were educated in their own internal national school. There was another national school within the same grounds run by the Sisters of Mercy for the children of the locality. The Cussen Report recommended that, where possible, children should be educated in external national schools. It identified a drop in standards in literary education in internal national schools, and attributed this to the fact that the teachers employed were not well qualified. Cussen also recommended that salaries of teachers in internal national schools attached to industrial schools should be paid by the Department of Education, in the same way as in ordinary national schools. A Department of Education inspection conducted in 1939, for the purposes of considering whether teachers’ salaries in the internal national school should be paid by the State, queried why the children in Goldenbridge did not attend the local national school. The reasons proffered by the Resident Manager was that the local schools were already overcrowded. She was also opposed to the children being transported to other schools, on the basis that she could not be held responsible for them once they left the Industrial School. The Department accepted this explanation and proceeded to certify the internal national school and to pay the teachers’ salaries from 1941. The Department of Education inspection report for March 1935 had noted a very satisfactory educational standard in Goldenbridge, with each school subject rated either ‘very good’ or ‘good on the whole’. The report concluded that the School was ‘good on the whole’ and: Order, discipline and politeness leave nothing to be desired. The tastefully decorated schoolrooms are an education in themselves. Taken class-by-class, progress in subjects is at least satisfactory and in quite a few subjects very satisfactory. It must be added that the average age of the pupils according to classification is high. This is due to (the fact that) many of the pupils when enrolled are very backward. Promotions from year to year are quite regular. The report noted that the internal national school had 140 pupils taught by five full-time and two part-time teachers. Two of the teachers were nuns and three were lay staff. None of the teachers was
formally qualified, although they all had many years of experience. Staffing levels were described as ‘quite adequate’. Within seven years, standards in the school had plummeted. Sr Alida painted a grim picture of conditions in the internal national school. She recalled that, upon her arrival in 1942, there were only two untrained lay teachers responsible for educating 150 children of different ages and abilities. These two teachers were ill-equipped to deal with this workload. The school curriculum was the same as that taught in every national school in the country. The children did not, however, receive homework in the evenings. From the late 1950s, children who showed academic ability were given the opportunity of pursuing post primary education because of a scholarship fund set up by the Archbishop of Dublin. In 1977, Goldenbridge was recognised as a ‘special school’ by the Department of Education. The Sisters of Mercy confirmed in their Opening Statement that homework was not a feature of the internal national school. In addition to the normal national school curriculum, children aged 13 and over participated in a domestic economy training module overseen by the Department of Education. This training took place in the afternoons. The children were also taught physical education, dancing and social skills by teachers employed especially for these purposes. The Sisters of Mercy conceded that: With hindsight it seems likely that many of the children attending the school had particular educational difficulties given their disadvantaged backgrounds and, in some cases, disrupted schooling. Many were undoubtedly in need of what would now be termed remedial education. Until late in the 1960s the fact that some of the children had special educational needs was not recognised. In due course in 1977 the school itself was given “special school” status. In the 1940s and 1950s however, there were no special facilities, teachers or resources to take account of those special needs and it is undoubtedly the case that the method of education provided was inadequate for the needs of many of the children. It is surprising that no programme existed within Goldenbridge itself to identify these children’s needs and to help them. While it is accepted that, at a national level, programmes like these did not exist, the Sisters of Mercy were engaged in providing a specialist service for a very long period of time, and they were the people best placed to identify the needs of the children in the Industrial School and to provide for them. Whilst the Sisters of Mercy may rightly criticise the Department of Education for failing to identify the particular needs of the children in the Institution, they themselves must take some responsibility for failing to take any initiatives in this regard over the very many decades that they were engaged in this work. On the issue of corporal punishment, the Sisters of Mercy suggested that it was no more than would have been in existence in any other national school around the country. Corporal punishment was part of the routine in the Goldenbridge internal school. Allegations of corporal punishment made against both Sisters and lay teachers appear to be correct in many instances. One of the lay teachers who gave evidence to the Committee has admitted, with some regret, that she did use corporal punishment whilst she was a teacher in Goldenbridge. The Congregation stated: The use of corporal punishment in the classroom setting was inevitably non-productive, and has caused indelible memories of being slapped or beaten for no reason. Poor educational achievement and inability to find employment other than in domestic or low grade service was the consequence for many children. The Congregation added that there was little doubt that practices such as correcting left-handedness and wearing dunce’s hats may also have been used. It posed the following question: the question must be asked as to whether this type and level of education was so significantly different to that available to the average Irish child of the time, as to constitute abuse? The Sisters of Mercy do not accept that children were taken out of school to perform chores. They conceded that it may have happened occasionally, with girls over 13 years of age, but it was not an established or widespread practice. The Congregation vehemently denied that the Sisters conspired to help the children pass the Primary Certificate. Sr Alida testified that, when she arrived in Goldenbridge, there was a very poor standard of education in the School. There were only two untrained lay teachers, Ms Kearney and Ms Dempsey, whose duties were not limited to the classroom. Apart from being responsible for the education of the entire school, they also acted as carers to the children and were provided with board and lodgings in the School. Sr Alida stated that she did not know how they managed. Both Sr Alida and Sr Bianca took up teaching positions in the school alongside Ms Kearney and Ms Dempsey, who at this point moved to lodgings outside the School. Sr Bianca had 10 years’ teaching experience behind her, and Sr Alida had none. Sr Alida had hoped to give up teaching and dedicate herself full-time to the care of the 150 children aged between four and 16. However, as she was a qualified teacher and there was a clear shortage of teachers in Goldenbridge, her teaching skills were too valuable to put to one side. Her principal role in the Institution was as a teacher and, even when she took over as Sister in Charge in 1954, she continued to teach full-time until she left. When asked whether she received any training or instruction in relation to how to deal with such large numbers of children, Sr Alida said she had received ‘none whatsoever. I think you had to use your own head’. Only two of the classrooms appeared to be in use, the other two had clearly fallen into disuse, and one even lacked the most basic classroom equipment such as desks and benches. There
was no roll book in use. Sr Bianca set about acquiring equipment for the classrooms in Goldenbridge. She also ordered playground equipment from England, and Sr Alida recalled swings, a merry-go-round and a drinking fountain being installed in the playground. Sr Alida was adamant that she did the best she could to give the children a proper education: I did as good as I could to give the opportunities to children and given the best I could give for them in clothes, food and everything else and education. In between there must be many children who said to me today, "I didn’t get a chance." There is one who does say it, "I didn’t get an education". ... Many of them got into assistant nursing and into children’s nursing. Our standard of education couldn’t be that bad. I am not saying it was first class or high, because the children coming in to us had experience of school before they came. Many came from non-school attendance. Our level — we never had trouble with inspectors about the level of education in our schools. Ms Kearney, who worked as a lay teacher, confirmed that, after finishing her own schooling, she completed a course in domestic economy before commencing her first teaching position in the mid-1930s in Goldenbridge. She shared a classroom with a senior teacher, Ms Dempsey. Neither was formally qualified to teach at that time. Ms Kearney stated that she was very glad to get the job in Goldenbridge: I was always afraid of doing or saying anything wrong, that I would be sacked, that was my one fear. Both teachers used a leather to discipline the children, although Ms Kearney discontinued its use once she discovered how painful it was by mistakenly hitting herself with it. Ms Dempsey taught first and second class, and Ms Kearney taught third and fourth class. She was on duty until 10pm every other day, working in a supervisory capacity, once class was over. The older children helped with the care of the younger children. In 1946, Ms Kearney applied for and was granted provisional recognition as a primary school teacher. This qualified her to teach only in an industrial school. She continued to teach in Goldenbridge until she left. When asked if there were things that she would have spoken about if she didn’t have the fear of being sacked, she said: Sure ... well for one I would have loved to have seen the children with more space. I would have liked to have seen them with warmer clothes on them, because at the time that I went in there first they were very basic. More freedom. ... There were lots of children I would have loved to have hugged and cuddled. They were so lovely, but the bold girls would take it out on them, call them names, teacher’s pet, you know and shout at them and that. Once she became a permanent teacher, Ms Kearney stated that she was no longer fearful of losing her job. At that stage, she no longer lived in the School and was unaware of day-to-day living conditions. She said that she, therefore, had no reason to complain. Ms Kearney stated that she had been of a sunny disposition before starting in Goldenbridge, but that this changed as the years went by. Ms Kearney found her job more difficult after the arrival of Sr Bianca and Sr Alida. She noticed a deterioration in the attitude of the children, who became sullen and defiant. In her view, Goldenbridge was not a happy place, but she did the best she could in the circumstances. A number of complainants spoke about their memory of the education that they received in Goldenbridge and the impact this had on their later life. The main issues which arose during the course of the complainants’ evidence were: the low standard of education. Excessive use of corporal punishment, which lead to an atmosphere of fear in the classroom, which in turn led to an inability to learn effectively. The arbitrary manner in which a few students were chosen to attend the external national school, which opened up the opportunity of progressing to secondary school. Children being taken out of school to perform domestic chores. Low self-esteem and lack of confidence as a result of the low standard of education and often leaving school without any qualifications. Some of the complainants had quite positive memories of their school days in Goldenbridge, and believed that they did come away with a basic primary education for which they were grateful. One complainant, who was in Goldenbridge in the early 1950s, made an interesting comparison between the education she received in Goldenbridge and that which she received at an English school, which she attended immediately after leaving Goldenbridge. She said that in Goldenbridge, although she loved learning, she had not learnt anything in the School. When she was removed by her father from the Institution, aged 11, and brought to England, she attended school and got on very well there, despite her abusive family circumstances. Her description of that period was as follows: It was like a blossoming period. When I went to the school in England I craved education. That was my way of trying to conquer what life had done to me. I went to this little school and when we used to be asked to read and write reading, I used to think to myself “please don’t come to us” because I used to stammer and stutter and I had a thick accent apparently. I am there on this particular one day there was reading going on and I was stammering to myself, “please don’t ask me, please don’t ask me”, the teacher did ask me to read and I got up and the urine was running down my legs again, I always smelt of urine, I stunk of it. I was sitting there and I was waiting for the teacher to clatter me or batter me, but I never saw it. I was only there for a few weeks and I had come on in leaps and bounds ... When I went there I crammed – once I knew that I wasn’t going to get beaten, it was wonderful. Anything I could get to read, I loved it, it was a wonderful period of time ... I managed to scrape through that 11+ ... I have always loved reading and writing and spelling and that
and general knowledge and all that. It was a wonderful period. The Congregation argued that it was a tribute, to some extent, to the teaching she received in the Institution that she was able to pass the 11+ exam within nine months of leaving. The complainant disagreed, and credited her examination success entirely to the schooling she received in England. The contrast that she made between the atmosphere in the classroom in England and in Goldenbridge is significant. Almost all of the complainants who spoke of school in Goldenbridge spoke of a fear of corporal punishment. Another complainant, who was committed to Goldenbridge at the age of seven in the early 1950s and remained there for nine years, recalled regular punishment by the teachers. She stated that she was constantly taken out of school to look after her sister, who was unwell, or to look after babies. As a result, she stated that she was not a good scholar. In the late 1950s, she sat the Primary Certificate and failed. She was registered to repeat the examination, but the record indicates that she was marked absent. One complainant who attended Goldenbridge in the 1950s stated that she left Goldenbridge without being able to write at the age of 14. She recalled: In Sr Alida’s class I know I was very stupid. I didn’t seem to be able to learn. All I know is that I was getting smacked, for being stupid I was getting smacked ... She would put me down in the corner ... but then I was so happy to be in the corner, because when you are in the corner you don’t have to learn. This complainant asserted that she learnt nothing in the classroom because she was in a constant state of fear of being punished, and she recalled regularly feeling nauseous. She described how she learned to tell the time from a toy watch belonging to one of the other children while she was cleaning the dormitories in the morning: I learned the clock under the bed, I learned a watch, how to tell the time. It was wonderful to learn the time because I was so stupid. She did in fact sit her Primary Certificate while she was there, but she failed it. A witness who was committed to Goldenbridge in the 1950s at the age of three and remained until her 16th birthday recalled receiving very little education during her time in Goldenbridge. From the age of nine, she was regularly called out of class in order to carry out domestic chores. After roll call, she said catechism class was held. Once this class was over, a nun would come in and call out seven or eight names. These children then left class to do chores. Whilst she stated that she was not called out every day, it occurred regularly enough to prevent her from obtaining a proper education. Another complainant, who spent 12 years in Goldenbridge from the mid-1950s, recalled being slapped regularly and severely in the classroom by lay teachers. She said that Goldenbridge improved slightly in the 1960s, and a number of children were sent out to do secretarial courses towards the end of their time there. A witness, who was sent to Goldenbridge in the mid-1950s at the age of eight, stated that she received a very poor standard of education. She was regularly called out of class to carry out household chores. Her performance was also affected by a constant sense of fear she felt in class, a fear which remains with her today. She did not sit her Primary Certificate. Another witness, who was committed to Goldenbridge in the early 1960s when she was nine years of age, said she could not read or write when she arrived in Goldenbridge, nor could she read or write when she left. This fact, which disabled her all her life, left her with a strong sense of frustration. In later life, she took advantage of the education fund put in place by the Sisters of Mercy and received lessons from a professional tutor. Whilst she arrived in Goldenbridge with absolutely no education, she did not receive any help or encouragement that might have given her the basics of reading and writing whilst she was there. She was regularly taken out of class to mind young children. She loved minding children and, had she had a choice of careers, she would have chosen to be a children’s nurse. However, her educational disadvantage ruled out such a career. A complainant, who was in Goldenbridge for nine years from the late 1950s, recalled being taught by Ms Dempsey, who had a habit of pulling the children’s cheeks and twisting their ears if they did not know their lessons. She recalled being made to wear a dunce’s hat on occasion. She said that: We had to stand on the chairs as well, hands on our heads, fingers on lips. Sometimes we had to kneel on those wooden chairs as well. This regime continued into the next classes: Ms Kearney on the other hand, you had to keep your elbows in at all times when you were writing. The letters had to be like a proper – what’s the word – sort of slant, rounded and turned ... She had a small stick and your elbows would really be beaten ... After I left Goldenbridge I don’t think I wrote again really until I was in my 40s. From the late 1950s, a few children were sent to the local secondary top, sometimes having already been transferred to the local national school. Bishop Dunne set up a fund for providing post primary education for the children of Goldenbridge. These children were afforded study time in the evening and allowed to forgo some of the usual domestic chores, including bead making. One complainant stated that she attended secondary school because her father paid for her upkeep in Goldenbridge and requested that she do so. She said that only a few of the girls were given the opportunity of advancing their education: There was only a few of us that were allowed to go to secondary school. For example, the girl I mentioned earlier, she was very bright but a punishment for her was that she couldn’t go to secondary. It was very selective. She confirmed that those attending external school did receive some remission of the amount of time they spent bead making. Another
witness started her education in the internal national school. Her father took an interest in her education and that of her sisters. It was at his insistence that they were transferred to the external national school and later to secondary school. She stated that she was considerably behind the rest of the class once she left the internal national school. Added to her difficulties was the fact that she suffered from mild dyslexia. She recalled her father giving her a flashlight to enable her to learn spellings whilst in bed at night. She completed her Intermediate Certificate, but did not proceed to sit the Leaving Certificate examination. A complainant who was in Goldenbridge in the 1960s recalled being taught by Ms Dempsey and Ms Kearney. She conceded that they were good teachers but thought that they were very cruel. She pitied the children who found their classes difficult because they were punished relentlessly. Ms Dempsey would beat children, pull them by the ear and place children in the dunces’ corner for hours as punishment. This complainant did proceed to secondary school, and expressed her gratitude at having been given the opportunity. However, the manner in which the children were chosen was somewhat arbitrary. She recalled that, one day, Sr Venetia came into the classroom, wrote a sum on the blackboard, and told the children to put their hands up when they had completed it. The complainant was the first to complete the sum and, on that basis, she was selected with two others to go to secondary school. She said that this occurred after Christmas and, therefore, she had missed the first term: We went to the secondary school the next day. I hadn’t a breeze ... In no time I realised I knew nothing. I felt quite competent in the national school, in fairness I felt quite competent, but I hadn’t a breeze, not a breeze ... I tried to survive as best I could, I tried to do whatever I could. But unfortunately, as I felt at the time, it was completely in vain because I failed my Inter Cert. Destroyed me. I had worked so hard and it was all for nothing. Sr Alida spoke about the difficulty in choosing children to send to the external secondary school to progress their education:When secondary education became available in the local school I promoted one child once, four in the next set and then – looking back on it now it was difficult because there are people complaining that they weren’t chosen. It was very hard to know who you could pick, who was most entitled to, who would benefit most from it, and you had to try and give the advantage where possible. I did that to the best of my ability and people benefited from it in the ways that others did not. The Sisters of Mercy pointed out that secondary schooling was available to only a minority of Irish children until the late 1960s, and that limited education and limited career opportunities were the order of the day for the average Irish child. The Congregation asserted that complaints from some witnesses that they were not given opportunities to fulfil their full potential illustrated the dangers of viewing the past through modern lenses. The Sisters of Mercy claimed that what was considered adequate at the time may, with hindsight, appear to a particular complainant not only as insufficient but abusive. The Sisters did not address whether they themselves could have made places available in their secondary schools for children who showed academic ability. This was not done prior to Bishop Dunne’s initiative, when children were largely prepared for a life of domestic service only. After 1968, when free education was introduced nationally, more children did get the chance to avail of second level education. The commission concluded: The standard of education in the internal primary school was not as high as in the external school. The use of excessive corporal punishment affected the ability of the children to learn. There is evidence that children between the ages of seven and 13 were taken out of school for domestic duties and some were taken out more frequently than others. There was a lack of educational opportunity in Goldenbridge. The Industrial School was intended to educate and train for future employment, but many of the children were only trained for domestic service. The Sisters of Mercy did not fraudulently assist children to pass their Primary Certificates. Efforts were made in the 1960s to send some girls on to secondary school or into secretarial colleges or nursing. These were the fortunate few, and it would appear that most left the School with no more than a Primary Certificate, and very many did not achieve this standard. Some children arrived in Goldenbridge having fallen behind in their education or having had no education. No real effort was made to address serious disadvantages for children when they arrived, and there was no encouragement given to them to progress. Many complainants gave evidence of the onerous duties imposed on them in Goldenbridge, which they claimed were not appropriate to their age or their physical abilities. The use of domestic work as a form of punishment was also referred to by a number of complainants. On the other hand, the former residents who gave evidence to the Investigation Committee of their positive experiences in Goldenbridge did not feel that the chores they were required to carry out impacted upon them negatively. In their Opening Statement, the Sisters of Mercy described the daily routine: After breakfast every child old enough performed household chores suitable for their age for about half an hour before school, such as cleaning up the dining room, dusting corridors, helping with getting the babies or toddlers dressed and so on. They said that, from 1.30pm, children from the age of 13 attended industrial training classes. Different age groups were assigned to do different chores including cookery, needlework, laundry or housekeeping in rotation. A different routine prevailed at weekends. Saturday was laundry day, and many children
helped the Sisters with sorting and folding laundry. More time was devoted to household chores on Saturday, and the School got a thorough cleaning. In their written Submissions, the Sisters of Mercy accepted the following: the children carried out chores in the morning for about half an hour after their breakfast and before school; the children strung rosary beads from Monday to Friday for several hours after school between 3.30 and 6.00 pm and sometimes later into the evening, if there was pressure to complete a quota. They also worked at beads for several hours on Saturday; the children participated in a general clean up of the school on a Saturday, as well as helping with the laundry; the children participated in an industrial training programme from the age of thirteen. This programme took place in the afternoons after dinner. The Sisters of Mercy submitted that, given the substantial amount of chores, it is not surprising that complainants had general memories of much work and little recreation. They added that it is possible that former residents may not have very precise memories of the age at which they performed certain chores; what jobs were done before school and on Saturdays, and what jobs fell within the remit of the industrial training programme, in which all girls over the age of 13 participated. The Congregation submitted that laundry was a large part of the routine in Goldenbridge, given the number of children. Children of all ages were expected to help. The older children would have been required to do the heavier work. It was suggested by the Congregation during hearings that younger children would have gone along to help the older girls and that it was in fact quite a social occasion. It does not accept that young children were taken out of school to work in the laundry. In support of this, the Congregation pointed out that laundry only took place on two days during the week, one of which was Saturday, when many of the children helped out. The existence of such a practice would have meant that the School relied, rather irrationally, on the labour of small children, when there was a ready supply of older, stronger girls available. The Congregation added that, given the fact that children may have done laundry as part of the domestic training programme as well as laundry on Saturdays, it may be the case that complainants were confused as to when precisely they did laundry. The Sisters of Mercy noted that none of the complainants appeared to remember laundry featuring as part of the industrial training programme at all. They contended that what complainants regarded as an onerous chore was in fact industrial training for their own benefit. The Sisters of Mercy conceded that the School was self-sufficient because of the input of the girls helping around the School, and they made reference to a woman employed to work in the laundry, and a member of staff who helped in the kitchen. They contended that the chores which the children performed were not out of keeping with the standards of the time and could not be labelled abusive. The Congregation was adamant that children as young as seven or eight were not taken out of school to perform chores, but that children over 13 years of age participated in an industrial training program in the afternoons. This programme adopted a three-pronged approach to industrial training: cookery, laundry, and housekeeping duties. This would have entailed a certain amount of domestic work around the Institution. The Congregation stated: At this remove in time, it is probably impossible to say that children over the age of twelve were not, on occasion taken in the afternoon to carry out domestic chores, be it laundry, mending younger children or helping in the kitchen. This may have been more likely with girls who showed little interest or ability at school. Sr Alida said that there was a course in domestic economy training including cooking, sewing and laundry for girls over 13 years of age. They partook in this training in the afternoon, having spent the morning in school. On chores, Sr Alida accepted that: It would be correct to say, and I only recently appreciated it, that all the caring in the house, when I say caring, the chores, the housekeeping jobs, were all done by big girls and remember we would have about 80 girls over 12 in the house ... Chores included washing and dressing the younger children, sweeping and scrubbing the floors, caring for the babies, and working in the kitchen and the laundry. Sr Alida accepted that the chores could be difficult: In my early day the charges were quite difficult in the sense that it was maintaining the floors mainly around the house and dormitory, but particularly in the corridors and the kitchen. They were old tiled floors, black and red tiles, and they were worn with the hundred years of wear. They were horrible to work on. That was one of the biggest chores in the house because there were long corridors on the ground floor, the front door and the hall. The hall was new and modern but the rest was old. She added that, under her management, these corridors were covered with a substance called tapiflex, which made a huge difference to cleaning. Sr Alida accepted that the chores were difficult, ‘except that there were many hands to do it’. Ms Garvin spent 13 years working as a teacher in Goldenbridge. She stated that, when she arrived in the School, there was an extensive domestic training programme in place for the older girls. The household chores performed by these girls formed part of the household management element of this programme. Chores included cleaning, laundry, cookery and sewing. Sr Gianna’s duties involved working in the workroom, mending and sorting clothes or working in the laundry on a Monday or Friday. She never saw children younger than 13 working in the laundry. She stated that the older girls were involved in keeping the School clean. The evidence of the complainants was that they had a number of chores to perform daily, from a very young age, and that these were in addition to the
many hours spent at bead making. A complainant who was in Goldenbridge during the 1950s and early 1960s told of the chores she performed every day. She stated that, after roll call, a number of names were called out and these children were sent to do chores. This happened on a regular basis: All I can remember is washing floors, scrubbing floors, scrubbing dormitories, doing laundry, making rosary beads. It was constant, hardly any education at all. The only thing you were really there for was catechism lessons in the morning. Apart from that you were taken out of school as soon as you got to the age where you could scrub floors, do whatever you had to do. She described the work in the dormitories, each of which had about 30 or 40 beds: We had to lift those, they were heavy metal beds. We used to lift them to one side of the room, and sweep, wash and scrub the rooms ... It would take quite a few hours, because they were big dormitories ... If it wasn’t done properly they would make you do the whole thing again ... there would be eight of us who used to do it together. If the work was not completed satisfactorily, it would have to be redone, and she was sent to the landing to be punished by Sr Alida. She also described working in the laundry as very heavy work. They had big boilers in which to boil sheets. She described the procedure of washing these sheets: you had wooden tongs, which you would pull them from the boiler, into another cooler, which would rinse the sheets, and then put them through wringers and then hang them out. We used to have big baskets with all the sheets into them. The most difficult part of the laundry work was lifting and pulling the sheets from one boiler to another. She had to stand on steps to reach the boiler and was always nervous of falling in. In addition to laundry and cleaning, she also recalled looking after babies. She recalled bathing them, putting them on potties and changing nappies. Although she described what, by any standards, was a heavy burden of chores, her main complaint was not so much about the chores she had to carry out but the manner in which they interfered with her education. One witness described how, when she was nine, she had been required to scrub the cobble-stoned area in the bathroom as punishment for tearing her dress. She had to kneel down on the cobblestones to do this, which was painful. Although this was a chore that the children regularly carried out, she had to do it on her own by way of punishment. She also stated that she was taken out of Sr Venetia’s class to work in the laundry on Mondays and Fridays. She described the large vat-like boilers with very hot water, and using a stick to pull sheets from the boilers and push them through wringers before they were laid out to dry. The main laundry was done in the large industrial laundry attached to the School, but there was a certain amount of washing by hand that had to be done on a daily basis arising out of bed-wetting. One complainant who was in Goldenbridge during the 1960s said that she believed that the fact that her father was a regular visitor to the School saved her and her sister from the hardest physical work in the School. She lived in fear of something happening to her father, which would have left her at the mercy of the nuns: I remember thinking, if anything happens to you we are finished. We would be totally sucked in here because people that had nobody were the ones that did – and the ones with low intelligence, God help them, they were the ones that were given the hardest work. We had big hoovers in those days, big heavy hoovers, washing hallway floors, the corridors. I was terrified that this is what would become of us. We would end up like cleaners for the rest of our lives. It devastated me. One complainant, who was committed to Goldenbridge for four years at the age of five in the early 1960s, stated that he had clear memories of working regularly in the laundry as an alternative to bead making in the afternoons. He recalled an incident, while working in the laundry, in which a boy younger than him caught his arm in a mangle. The complainant was afraid and he ran away. Sometime later, he saw the boy with his injured arm in plaster-of-paris. This complainant stated that he first started working in the laundry approximately one year after he arrived, which would make him six years old. A witness, who was in Goldenbridge during the 1960s, spoke in detail of the chores that were required of the children: I remember sweeping that dormitory, that sounds like nothing, but first you had to pull every bed into the centre of the room, right, lift the bed ... Then lift the bed and shove it back in. I could do it with one hand I became so adept at it and they were heavy. She spoke of other duties: the scrubbing and cleaning of the building. I mean we scrubbed and cleaned that entire building and that was a big building, well it seemed huge to us ... When I went there first they didn’t have heavy, you know, the hoovers? ... They had a reddish floor polish. They had mansion polish, stuff like that. I don’t know is that the same, but there is a very strong smelling kind of petroleum type smell off this oil. We used to put it on the floor and then on our knees polish it. The flooring was made of lino and, in order to polish it, the children would skid across the room on the polishing rag. This made light of the chore and they enjoyed it. The Sisters later acquired large industrial hoovers which the children used to clean the floors. Evidence from a number of complainants was heard of girls being required to clean blocked sewers and toilets. The Sisters of Mercy stated that this work was done by a handyman employed by the School, and that no child would have to be involved in such work. However, complainants have stated that newspaper rather than toilet paper was used, which resulted in toilets becoming blocked regularly, and one or two girls would be singled out for the unpleasant job of unblocking them. The commission concluded that; Older girls
were taken out of class in order to look after younger ones, which was unfair and disruptive to their education. That; Requiring children from a young age to do chores was not in itself abusive, but chores became abusive because they were too onerous and were carried out under the threat of punishment.; The burden of domestic chores and bead making for older girls occupied so many hours that it excluded opportunities for recreation and personal time. Many of the complainants stated that they were constantly hungry in Goldenbridge and that the food was inadequate both in terms of quantity and quality. Documentary evidence The General Inspection Reports of the 1940s criticised the food and diet of the children; in particular, insufficient quantities of milk and butter were given during the war years. The Department of Education had allotted certain rations of milk and butter for children in industrial schools, and these quantities were not adhered to in Goldenbridge. Dr McCabe visited the School in 1943 and, in her report dated 21st July 1943, she found that the ‘diet could be more varied and ample’. Following a further inspection less than six months later, on 21st January 1944, Dr McCabe reported that the children were not receiving adequate supplies of milk and butter rations. Dripping was used as a substitute for butter. This matter was taken up by the Department of Education’s Inspector for Industrial and Reformatory Schools, who wrote to the Resident Manager, Sr Bianca, by letter dated 29th February 1944, calling upon her to remedy the situation. No reply was received and the Inspector wrote again on 17th April 1944. By letter dated 26th April 1944, Sr Bianca responded that Dr McCabe’s suggestions had been put into effect ‘as far as has been found practicable’. She reassured the Inspector that every effort was being made to increase the rations of milk and butter for the children. An Inspector wrote back and indicated that, whilst he was pleased with the steps being taken by the Resident Manager to implement the Medical Inspector’s recommendations, the milk and butter ration increases were, in his view, inadequate. In particular, he stated that each child was to receive one pint of milk per day and six ounces of butter each week. Sr Bianca responded on 4th May 1944 and stated that the rations would be increased as stipulated. Dr McCabe visited the School again in June 1944. Once again, she noted her dissatisfaction at the children’s milk and butter rations, which fell short of the quantities recommended by her: I insist that children should get 1 pint per head per day also their butter ration. Dripping as a substitute cannot be considered. Dr McCabe questioned Sr Bianca regarding the shortfall in rations and was informed that the School could not afford the stipulated amounts of butter and milk per child. The matter was again taken up by the Department of Education’s Inspector in a letter dated 6th July 1944. He reiterated that: It is essential that each child should receive a minimum of one pint of milk per day and I must request you to arrange for this without delay. He insisted that dripping was not an adequate substitute for butter. In September 1944, Sr Bianca informed the Department that each child in the School was getting her ration of butter and one pint of milk per day. In Dr McCabe’s next inspection report of 1st March 1946, she noted that the diet of the children had improved, with the milk and butter rations increased as stipulated. In a medical inspection of the children in February and March 1946, Dr McCabe noted that approximately 100 children had not satisfactorily put on weight since the last visit. The explanation given was that most of these children had influenza. A failure to gain weight was a serious matter and, in other schools where this occurred, was seen as evidence of malnutrition. It would appear that the explanation offered in this case was accepted. Sr Alida explained that, when she first arrived in Goldenbridge in 1942, the food was rationed. She confirmed that dripping was used instead of butter until 1954, when margarine was introduced. A churn of milk was delivered every morning from a local farm, which was sufficient to provide children with cocoa, tea and bottles of milk for the babies. She said that she was unaware of any correspondence from the Department of Education at that time concerning the inadequacies of the milk and butter rations for the children, as Sr Bianca would have dealt with such matters as Resident Manager. Throughout the 1950s, the food and diet of the children was described as ‘very good’ by Dr McCabe. She spoke favourably of the food and diet when she inspected the School on two occasions in 1955. In particular, she stated that the meals ‘were attractive, well cooked and attractively served’. Dr McCabe retired in 1963, and Dr Lysaght inspected Goldenbridge on behalf of the Department in March 1966. He wrote a detailed report in which he noted that the children looked well nourished and healthy. He inspected the main meal of the day, which consisted of soup, milk, mincemeat, vegetables, custard and tinned pears, and he found that the amounts served were ample and well cooked. The School was aware in advance of Dr McCabe’s inspection, and ex-residents recalled that extra food was provided. Dr McCabe did not eat with the children, and based her report on observation of the food served on the day of her inspection. Sr Alida stated that the Department inspectors did not examine or taste the food that was given to the children; I cannot say that I ever saw an inspector with a spoon or anything tasting food, I cannot say I ever saw it. The Inspector from the Department of Education always had her meal in the convent and not with the children in the dining room. The majority of the witnesses who testified to the Committee complained of hunger and inadequate food during their time in Goldenbridge. They spoke of constantly being hungry. The quality and quantity of the food that was provided was the
subject of numerous complaints by the witnesses. They also talked about the difference in the quality of food which the lay staff received compared to the food given to the children; the food provided to the staff was far superior in quality. A witness described the difference: Oh yes. It was different, it was lovely to go in there, you could see what they were eating. They had a press with all kind of goodies in it ... However, one witness stated that the food did improve after 1967, and she received ‘lovely dinners’ after that time. One witness said: ‘I remember being hungry all the time’. Another said: I was always hungry, but then I have always had a good appetite but I never felt full. The only time I felt full if you went out with your family and you got sweets and things like that. Another said she was hungry, and explained: Well, simply because we had so little to eat. I do remember all the girls used to eat, there were plants around a field, there was a hedge and we used to call them bread and butter plants. I remember that. We would eat the leaves off the hedges. Then from 4.30 p.m. when we had supper which consisted of cocoa and bread and butter, that was it then, nothing else until breakfast the next morning. One witness described the food as: ‘basic. It was just bread and water or bread and tea and that was it’. He also complained of not receiving enough food: ... because when the food was put on the table it was grabbed so you were either fortunate or you weren’t. A lot of the time I was unfortunate because I was very small anyway. When asked about whether they ever got treats, another witness said: We did eventually as time went on. There would be a nice cake on the table for Easter or something, yes there was, but that would have been maybe twice a year, maybe Christmas. Yes, there was sometimes some treats. One witness described the effect of lack of food on her, ‘I used to eat compulsively when I came out because I was hungry in Goldenbridge’. As she had younger siblings, she gave her portion of food to them: I used to often give my own food to the kids because they were forever hungry. I actually got a taste for eating wet muck because when I had a pain in my tummy I would eat that and it would take the pain away. Another witness gave a similar account of the lack of food: Oh, the food. Today I have a serious eating disorder and I believe, in my opinion and in the medical opinion it has stemmed from Goldenbridge. The food was pure slop, to be honest. It was like lumpy porridge in the morning and cocoa that was like dishwater, very thin and bad looking. The evening was – it wasn’t porridge, it was bread and porridge. The meal at lunchtime was just like vegetables swimming in water. I don’t recall much meat and I don’t remember ever seeing a chicken. She stated further: The food was very bad, but I noticed that no matter what slop they were giving me, and I use the word slop because to be honest we had no choice, we ate it, we were hungry. I was constantly hungry. Another complained of the constant hunger: Yes, food food food. We dreamed about it. I think, if I recall, I even traded sweets. We were like little animals. We were like little dogs. We traded bits and bits and bits ... I stole. I stole sausages, I remember. Another witness said: There was never enough of it. It was only basics. Twelve slices of bread on the table, pre-buttered. Six at our tables, some tables would be bigger. You got two slices of bread and cocoa, and a cup of cocoa that’s a fact. You would steal from anything, you would eat the crumbs. If you saw trays outside teacher’s thing, if you got into the place at all, you would know that somebody got trays at certain times in the day, you would be dying to get hold of the trays to see if there was anything left over on it. Another witness, who was in the School in the 1960s, painted a picture of the meals in the School; ... in the mornings we either had bread or porridge. Oh, the porridge. I know they had to make it for a lot of people but the lumps, we used to heave trying to eat it. You had to eat it, there was no way you would leave it on the plate. Dreadfully to say, sometimes you tried to flick it on to somebody else’s table, it’s a terrible thing to do but you did do that. I don’t know what we were given for dinner. I know the potatoes were sour, not always sour but sometimes they smelted sour like sour milk. We had cabbage. I don’t know what other vegetable we had because today I do love my food. I remember cabbage with these little tiny black flies that we used to pick out. You still had to eat it. The bread, I don’t know what they did to the bread when you had breakfast time, but it used to have these hard lumps. The food, you had to eat it. There was no way you were ever going to leave it. Another complainant, who spent four years in Goldenbridge from the early 1960s, stated that food served to the staff was very different to that served to the children. The cake crumbs, which the children scavenged, were leftovers from staff: The crumbs – the crumbs and the bit of cakes would come from the teachers, there would be biscuits. It was a known fact that the teachers lived in the lap of luxury. They had proper food, they would have someone cooking, they would be called – they knew their time for tea. So when we would be doing the wash up in the dining room you would try and get into the kitchen into their room to see if you could grab anything off the table ... when they weren’t looking. If you were caught with it in your mouth you would get a clatter. Evidence was also heard, at the suggestion of the Sisters of Mercy, from a number of witnesses who had positive memories of their time in Goldenbridge. One of these witnesses was committed to Goldenbridge in 1947 and remained there for 10 years. She recalled that the standard and quantity of food improved when Sr Alida took over as Sister in Charge. She stated: The food changed. We got extra food. We used to get afters, started giving us bread puddings and jelly and ice-cream and
Inadequacy of the capitation grant as the cause. Having used all possible means to economise in food, Sr Bianca conceded that they could not properly clothe the children, but cited the laziness amongst them. In a further letter of 15th June 1944 to the Department of Education, she replied by letter and stated: We find it increasingly difficult to provide suitable clothing for the children as suggestions, which included improving the cleanliness and tidiness among the children. Sr Bianca and later Sr Alida, when she took over as Sister in Charge, had their meals in the convent. The only meal they supervised in the Industrial School was dinner. Towards the latter stages of her management, Sr Alida recalled buying delph and cutlery in bulk and, by the time she left Goldenbridge, there was no broken tableware in use. She also recalled the kitchen facilities being upgraded with the addition of a gas cooker, toaster and deep fat fryer. She confirmed that there were no set menus during her time in Goldenbridge. Sr Alida stated that from ‘54 onwards the quality of food, cooking equipment, clothing etc., that I did my utmost to give them the best and they got it. In a statement made to the Investigation Committee Sr Alida stated: I believe the children could have eaten more but they certainly did not go hungry. Sr Gianna recalled accompanying Sr Alida to the market to buy trays of apples and oranges. Sr Alida recalled that there was dessert every day after dinner, which consisted of tapioca, corn flour, rice or jelly. The Sisters of Mercy denied that children were starving or malnourished in Goldenbridge. They conceded as a matter of probability that the quality of the food in the School during the 1940s was relatively poor, due to the war years and rationing in society generally. However, they asserted that the food and diet improved considerably during the period under review. The children were served with four meals a day, which were simple and adequate. They submitted that approximately 30 percent of the capitation grant was spent on food. In response to allegations by complainants of constant hunger, they stated that: food was not available between meals and this might have given rise to a sense of being hungry. They also stated that the more extreme allegations concerning inadequate food for the children are not accepted. The Commission found that children were often hungry in Goldenbridge. The food was insufficient and of poor quality. Although improvements were made from time to time, the diet was never more than adequate. The Sisters of Mercy stated that clothing was an area ‘where considerable improvements were made throughout the period under review’. This would appear to be confirmed by the inspection reports from 1952 onwards. Before that, Dr McCabe was critical of the clothing of the children. Following an inspection in 1944, the Department of Education wrote to the Resident Manager requesting her to implement Dr McCabe’s suggestions, which included improving the cleanliness and tidiness among the children. Sr Bianca replied by letter and stated: We find it increasingly difficult to provide suitable clothing for the children and in many cases have to be satisfied with patching their old garments, but every effort is being made to secure personal cleanliness and neatness amongst them. In a further letter of 15th June 1944 to the Department, Sr Bianca conceded that they could not properly clothe the children, but cited the inadequacy of the capitation grant as the cause. Having used all possible means to economise in food.
and clothing we find ourselves totally unable to meet the demands of our creditors. We owe large sums of money for clothing and the present maintenance allowance only suffices to feed the children, leaving no margin for clothing, so that we have no hope of being able to pay our debts on the present grant. On 28th June 1945, Dr McCabe noted that the clothing was ‘fair’ but ‘could be improved’. No further information is provided regarding how the clothes could be improved or the problem with them. The following year on 1st March 1946, she again described the clothes as ‘fair’ but added that they were ‘to be improved now that stocks are more easily obtained’. The Department of Education’s Inspector wrote to Sr Bianca on 22nd March 1946 on foot of Dr McCabe’s inspection, stating: It is observed that the children’s clothing is not as good as it should be and it is hoped that with the supply position becoming easier, steps will be taken to make the necessary improvement in this matter. By 1948, the clothing had improved. Dr McCabe described it as ‘good’. The same description was given following her visits in 1949 and 1951. From 1952 onwards, Dr McCabe reported that the clothes were ‘very good’. In her General Inspection Report of May 1955, she provided more detail on the quality of the clothing, stating: Brightly coloured attractive hand knit jumpers and skirts ... children very well groomed. Dr McCabe did use the term ‘very good’ in her Inspection Reports to describe clothing from 1956. Dr Lysaght, when he took over from Dr McCabe, commented in his report of 21st March 1966 that the clothes were ‘good and sufficient’. From then on until the closure of the School, the clothing of the children was not an issue. Sr Alida in her evidence revealed the nature and quality of the clothing of the children when she first arrived in Goldenbridge: The clothes were all handmade at that time, there wasn’t a single garment that was bought. Skirts were made, nightdresses made and they were very basic altogether, the clothes were ... made from grey flannelette mainly. She confirmed that clothes were handed down from child to child: ... They were passed down along the line. They lasted a long time. The nightdresses were grey flannelette mostly ... and those things had a long life compared with the garments we are wearing today, so there wasn’t much new bought or many new clothes. She acknowledged, however, that the clothing improved gradually from the time when she arrived: the poverty stricken look that was in Goldenbridge when I went there changed gradually, everything changed bit by bit. The clothes improved ... When Sr Alida was asked whether she was aiming to get the children good clothing that wouldn’t mark them out as institutionalised, and whether she dressed the children up nicely on specific occasions, she replied: What we had in the early days was certainly institutional gear. There has been complaints that the children were dressed up for occasions. I will be quite honest that the children were dressed up ... because there were visitors. Sr Gianna, who worked in the School in the early 1960s, had a very positive opinion of the clothing situation, and stated that: My first impression when I came to the School was that the children had just beautiful clothes. I would also remember the Sisters in the convent, the children used to come up on a Sunday for Mass and a lot of the Sisters would make comment about how lovely they looked. They always had lovely white socks up to her knees, in the summer short white socks. They might have black patent shoes. They had lovely pleated skirts and none of them were the same, they were all different types of checks or plaid. They had nice coloured jumpers, different types of jumpers. I would have always seen them as very well clad. Several of the witnesses complained that, when they first arrived in the School, their clothes were taken off them. One witness recalled being given clothes by people who took her out of Goldenbridge on holidays: Once you gave them up for the wash you mightn’t see them again. She specifically remembered that her ‘... confirmation dress was sent over from England. I wore it on my confirmation day, I never saw it again. I can still see it now, it was a red and white dress’. One witness described her distress when she decided not to go to her mother’s funeral due to the nature and quality of her clothing: Immediately I could see that we would stand out. We were looking different to other people. We had these institutional haircuts, up here somewhere, cut like a bowl around your head, and I was going to be dressed what I’d like to call urchin ... Disgusting clothes. That’s not what I wore when I went out at the weekend to be with my father. I wore clothes he bought for me. Another witness stated that, when she attended secretarial college while at Goldenbridge, she felt out of place due to her appearance and clothing:When you went to that place I was about 14 and a half and all these girls coming in, I am not vain, I don’t go by appearances but my clothes were raggy compared to the young women that were going there. This sentiment was echoed by a complainant who remembered how their clothing labelled them: ... we were labelled, we had it here, institution, Goldenbridge ... it was the way we walked, talking about walking. It was the clothes we wore. We tried to be fashionable and were big frumps. Another witness was extremely critical of the changes of clothing and the clothing in general:There was very little changing of clothing, I think I wore – I know when I went in first we wore like what they wear in Dickens’s days, the pinafore. That was left on us for months and months, we didn’t change that. Some witnesses had positive comments to make about the clothes. One such witness remembered wearing nice jumpers and good clothes on Sundays: We had jumpers, we had Sunday jumpers, red jumpers. I am sure they were red. They were good jumpers for when you
are going outside, going with a lady, you had your good clothes on. Another said:... What was very
good every year in the summer Sr Venetia would get all new clothes and they were put away for us... Another witness pointed out that Sr Alida looked after the girls before they left, providing them with new clothes: Say when you were 16 and you left, you always left with new clothes. She made sure you had a new – everything was new and you had a case; but if you left before you were 16 you wouldn’t get as much but once you left at 16 you were rigged out from head to toe. The children in Goldenbridge were conscious of their institutionalised appearance, and this contributed to the feeling of inferiority recalled by so many. However, clothing was adequate and, in particular, efforts were made to provide girls with proper clothes when they left the Institution. Aftercare did not feature prominently in the testimony of witnesses before the Committee. The Sisters appeared to be able to find positions for most of the girls when they left at 16 years of age. Until the mid-1960s, almost all the girls entered domestic service, and this was the only industrial training they received. From the early 1960s, some girls were given the opportunity of attending secretarial college and training as children’s nurses. These girls were also found jobs when they left. Of more concern to witnesses was the lack of any preparation for dealing with the world and, in particular, the lack of any knowledge of relationships with men.

Witnesses spoke of how extremely vulnerable they were on leaving the Institution. Even the circumstance of their leaving was handled in an insensitive way, according to many complainants. For most complainants, the day of discharge was the day immediately prior to their 16th birthday. For many, although they knew this was the case, the actual discharge event appeared to be sudden and unexpected. They spoke about being completely unprepared for this and of receiving very little encouragement or support from Sr Venetia as they left what was, after all, their childhood home. One complainant recalled being terrified when she was told she was leaving Goldenbridge. Another complainant said that every day in Goldenbridge she used to imagine walking through the gates and leaving it. When the day came that she was going home, she was petrified. She recalled being brought into a room in Goldenbridge and being told by Sr Alida that she was going: She gave me a pair of rosary beads and I left terrified, you would never believe ... I went back to my grandmother’s from Goldenbridge. I didn’t know how to speak properly. We spoke our own language, I know that you will find that strange. We were only children, we didn’t grow up. We spoke differently to each other. If you were brought up for nine years in a home you all speak the same, you all speak the same language, I spoke this language. I was terrified of people. I walked, I had a stoop, my shoulders were bent ... I would not look at nobody. I would not look in your eyes, I couldn’t. I was afraid ... I was afraid of everything and everybody ... I didn’t know how to survive out there, this was a new world this was something. She said that she did not feel normal when she left Goldenbridge, that she always felt bad, and she felt people were looking at her. She had no confidence and that, even now at 62 years of age, ‘I will never have confidence because Goldenbridge took everything, everything from me as a child, everything, my childhood, everything’. This complainant said repeatedly that she was stupid and that she looked stupid, and she said that most of the children who left Goldenbridge looked stupid. She said that she was treated as a ‘bastard’ in Goldenbridge. Although girls were placed in jobs when they left Goldenbridge they were isolated and vulnerable in the outside world because they were ill-prepared for it and many had feelings of inferiority. One of the reasons why girls were unprepared was the unworldliness of the nuns. The inadequacy of the preparation should have been addressed by the nuns in order to give the girls as much of a chance as possible in their adult life.

The Commission concluded that: Life in Goldenbridge was full of drudgery. Children went from chores to the classroom to bead making without respite until bead making was discontinued in the mid-1960s. Staffing levels were poor, and children had to do a great deal of domestic chores.

2. Punishment in Goldenbridge was pervasive. Children were beaten for small infringements. It was unpredictable, arbitrary and led to a climate of fear, although after the 1960s it decreased significantly.

3. Goldenbridge was a closed institution with little or no contact with the outside world, and children became institutionalised as a result and suffered in many ways when they left.

4. Girls who were incapable of making their way in the outside world were kept on as carers, despite being wholly unsuitable. They treated children brutally and were able to do so without any control by the Sisters in charge.

5. Activities which need not have been abusive became so when excessive demands were placed on the children and fear of punishment was constant.

6. Some children were treated less harshly because they had relatives to look out for them.

7. There were no internal controls by the Congregation. Much of what was learned about the Christian Brothers’ industrial schools came from their own Visitation Reports but there was no such system in Goldenbridge. The Carysfort Mother House appeared to offer no guidance or supervision whatsoever and even the nuns in the Goldenbridge convent adopted a ‘hands off’ approach.

8. The regime in Goldenbridge, which was flawed from the outset, did not change for 30 years. The Congregation did not learn from its experience.
of childcare. Other Orders, such as the Sisters of Charity, identified the need to rethink the system of large institutions caring for large numbers of children. The Sisters of Mercy have lamented the lack of any childcare training in the State, but organisations entrusted with the care of children could have developed training programmes for their members. The Congregation had the experience of childcare but failed to develop expertise. The regime became kinder and more child-centred in the late 1960s and the number of complainants was small, which suggests that even though Goldenbridge was still a large, crowded institution, better management could have an important bearing on the quality of life of the children. The Sisters in charge during the relevant period were harsh and unfeeling towards the children. Humiliation and degradation were constant occurrences, both from the Sisters and from the lay staff. The children felt that no one cared for them and that they did not matter. Even the members of the Congregation who spoke to the Committee failed to appreciate that Goldenbridge was abusive because of the attitude of the Sisters who ran it. Hard work and dedication were no excuses for a regime that made children feel despised and worthless.

The New Ireland Forum
The New Ireland Forum was set up by the Irish Government in 1983 in the wake of the Hunger Strikes in 1981 and as a result of the growing conflict the North of Ireland which was escalating at that time. Numerous written submissions were received from a wide range of organisations and a number of oral hearing were held in Dublin Castle where high profile delegations were interviewed and subjected to questioning on their submissions. Below is a Question and Answer session with Michael O'Flanagan of Emmet Road, Inchicore. The Chairman was Mr. Cathal O'Eachaigh, Chancellor of University College Galway. Also present were An Taoiseach Garrett Fitzgerald TD and Mr. Charles Haughey TD leader of the opposition.

Thursday 3rd November 1983 The next presentation is by Michael O'Flanagan.

Chairman : Mr. O'Flanagan is a printer by trade and is active in the trade union movement. In 1975, he joined Sinn Fein and for a period was PRO in Dublin for that organisation. He left Sinn Fein in 1982 after its federal policy was dropped from the constitution of that organisation. Today his presentation is on behalf of the Federalism and Peace Movement, an organisation that was formed in May 1983. To put the first series of questions to Mr. O'Flanagan I call on Senator James Dooge on behalf of Fine Gael.

Senator Dooge: Mr. O'Flanagan, you are very welcome here. We thank you for your submission and for forwarding to us the proposals of your movement. You indicate in your submission that you have changed your position radically, you have turned your back on all violence and tolerance of violence and now wish to bring forward a solution that you feel will achieve peace and stability without forcing the desires of the members of one tradition on the members of the other. would you tell the Forum briefly how this change in your thinking came about? what were the factors that influenced you in this significant change of position?

Mr. O'Flanagan: I believe that the operation of section 31 of the Broadcasting Act in the Republic has had an extraordinary effect within the Republican movement. It has frozen out the moderate leaders and allowed the hardline Republicans from the Six Counties to gain total dominance. The leaders of the Republican movement originally and up until the dropping of the federalism policy, as I would see it, were men who were guided by religious, moral or philosophical principles. Unfortunately, we have seen the arrival to power of the Northern Republicans. These people tend to be soaked in bitterness and resentment as a result of the treatment they have been subjected to up there and they are often motivated by a naked desire for revenge. The operation of section 31 has in effect, brought these people to power. The result is that moral, religious and philosophical principles have been pushed into the background and the modern leaders of the movement appear to be operating on a totally pragmatic basis, that is that whatever advances the Republican cause is good and whatever inhibits the advance of the Republican cause is bad. I think morality should be brought back into the struggle. I reject violence and always have done as a means of achieving any particular goal. However, it must be remembered that all individuals and all nations collectively have the right to defend themselves and that includes defence against foreign aggression. That right extends to the Nationalist
people in the Six Counties as well as to the Nationalist people in the Twenty-six Counties.

Senator Dooge: you have put forward a proposal for a new Ulster. You have proposed that in your federal system there should be a return to a nine county province of Ulster. Do you think there is a real feeling of identity, an Ulsterism, that transcends the two communities in the Six Counties and crosses the Border to take in the three counties now in this State?

Mr. O'Flanagan: Since we published our policy I have received communications from people in East Belfast who have welcomed the proposals. I have also received communications from people in East Belfast who did not welcome them. They pointed out that the term "Ulstermen" is a term commonly used by Unionist people and rarely used by Nationalist people. However, this would not seem to be a bar, in my estimation, to Nationalist people assuming an Ulster identity. The people in Donegal, for example, clearly see themselves as Ulster people and ultimately the idea would be for all of the people there to assume a similar identity.

Senator Dooge: To turn from the sense of identity which, of course, any federal system would require to the details of the proposal you put forward, you suggest that in this two-tier structure the federal Government should be concerned with foreign affairs, with defence and with national finance. Would you not think that security would also need to have a federal aspect, not necessarily all matters of security and certainly not local community policing, but do you think that your system could work without security being at the federal level?

Mr. O'Flanagan: We believe that when communities were happy security would not be a great problem. The drive should be towards community-based police forces and that is how people should think. People should ultimately be able to defend themselves and to have control of the forces that they elect to defend them.

Senator Dooge: You have put forward a federal system rather than a confederal system in which, in the main, sovereignty would rest with the four provinces and then be transferred to the federal Government. Your proposal indicates that the power would be at the federal level and then devolved. Would you be prepared to accept, in the interests of agreement, that the power would come from your four sections to the federal Government?

Mr. O'Flanagan: There are definitely two ethnic communities within the country. In fact many people would say there are more. We believe that federal government should be based on the unity and sovereignty of the Irish people as a whole and that the federal identity is something that even the Unionists could aspire to. The suggestion you are making that Dail Uladh could be outside of the federal solution would not appeal to us at all.

Senator Dooge: You propose it should be just a unicameral legislature. Your extended Ulster would contain 40 per cent of the population but it would only contain, on my reckoning, 32.5 per cent of the seats. Does this not involve an under representation of the people you are trying to attract?

Mr. O'Flanagan: All States in a federal system should be considered equal. This is the case in America, in Australia and in other places. Each State is considered to be of equal value in a federal system. That is what keeps them together.

Senator Dooge: Do you think it is essential in a solution, whether it be federal or confederal, that it should be based on four units? Do you think there could be a solution based on the two units that are there at the moment?

Mr. O'Flanagan: I do not think so. The treatment of the west of Ireland has been a deplorable thing within the Republic since independence was secured. I think Government should be devolved to the west of Ireland and to the south of Ireland.

Senator Dooge: You think that if you had a federal system and if the west of Ireland had more control over its policies and its finances it would be better off?

Mr. O'Flanagan: It would be better off. People will say that the federal Parliament would not be ready to
transfer finance to it. That is a tug-of-war that goes on in all federal states but it is overcome successfully.

Senator Dooge: An bhfuil ceist na teanga agus na teanga Gaeilge ina mbac do theacht le chéile an d6 thaobh den phobal sa Tuaisceart?

Mr. O'Flanagan: Ni chitear domsa go bhfuil aon dimheas i measc na Unionists do Ghaeilge. Ni doigh liom go bhfuil an Ghaeilge ina bac idir an di traidisiún.

Chairman: Go raibh mait agat. We now pass to Mr. Eddie McGrady on behalf of the SDLP.

Mr. McGrady: I should like to endorse Senator Dooge's welcome to you. What, in your opinion, has been the effect of the campaign of violence on the aspiration towards Irish unity both in the North of Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland?

Mr O'Flanagan: I think there is a slight diminution of the aspiration among people in the Twenty-six Counties but I think that the resolve of the Nationalist people in the Six Counties has become stronger than ever. As to the progress towards unity itself and the oft-repeated phrase that violence puts off the day of unity, consideration should be given to the opinion that while the violence continues the question is being discussed. When the violence stops the question ceases to be discussed, as was the case for over 50 years.

Mr. McGrady: From what you have said it appears that you believe communities and individuals have the right to exercise violence in their own defence. What right do you think the Provisional IRA have to exercise violence in the North of Ireland without the consent of the people for whom they purport to act?

Mr. O'Flanagan: Each individual has the right to resist aggression from a foreign invader. The fact that the invader has been here for a long time does not interfere with that right. It is easy for people in the Twenty-six Counties to say the problem has been solved and we reject violence but the problem has not been solved for the Nationalist people in the Six Counties and they are being oppressed and they see themselves as being oppressed. They see their identity as being obliterated. They have the right to resist foreign aggression. They never accepted the settlement.

Mr. McGrady: The question I was posing was not whether an individual had the right to defend himself but whether an organisation had the right to arrogate to itself, without any authority, the right to use violence against another section of the community. How do you respond to that?

Mr. O'Flanagan: Up until the hunger strike, when attitudes changed drastically within the Republican movement, I would dispute that there was any direct antagonism within the Republican movement. I would dispute that there was any direct antagonism towards the Protestant or Unionist people as such. The aggression was directed against the British invader.

Mr. McGrady: And all the civilian deaths were simply innocent bystanders?

Mr. O'Flanagan: I will accept that civilian deaths occurred. It was never the policy of the movement at that time. It may be the policy of the republican movement at this time and this is something that appals me.

Mr. McGrady: Your submission says that you resigned from Sinn Fein when they dropped their federalism policy. Could you indicate why that happened? Did you feel that the movement then had ceased to have any consideration for the Protestant and or Unionist people in Northern Ireland at that time?

Mr. O'Flanagan: The Republican position has been that the Unionists and the Protestant people in the Six Counties are entitled to all the rights of every other citizen but their rights do not extend beyond that. There are always individuals within organisations who have motives other than the main motive of the organisation itself. The problem now is that the hard-line leadership have gained control of the Republican movement with the aid of outside forces - section 31 is a good example - and the moderate leadership has been frozen out.
Mr. McGrady: Do you see any provision or concession within the present policy of Sinn Fein to the accommodation of a different opinion within Northern Ireland or within Ireland?

Mr. O'Flanagan: So long as the current leadership of the Republican movement hold sway, i.e., people who are steeped in bitterness and resentment, it is possible that they will disregard the Unionist position.

Mr. McGrady: You have described these leaders as men of bitterness, full of revenge, etc. These are the people who want to take over the leadership of the community that they are purporting to represent. Is that your opinion of the present position?

Mr. O'Flanagan: This is the danger but you must realise that the Nationalist people have also become bitter and resentful and they have shown their support for these men. The bitterness may extend throughout the community. It is a danger that the Forum and all political parties, North and South, must realise might come to fruition.

Mr. McGrady: What prerequisites do you consider necessary in order to achieve the agreement of the Unionist or Protestant community for your propositions?

Mr. O'Flanagan: So long as they wish to remain on the island of Ireland they should give their allegiance to a sovereign parliament, a federal parliament. This would not interfere with their beliefs, their traditions or their rights.

Mr. McGrady: In regard to Dail Uladh, with whatever counties it contained – six to ten and a half you mentioned – you state they would have a majority in any of those projections. Do you consider that majority rule would be a return to what was there pre-Stormont or do you see them having a new vision in that concept?

Mr. O'Flanagan: I see them having a new vision and I consider that the British guarantee to the Unionists is probably one of the most fundamental problems. So long as the British remain in Ireland the problem remains.

Mr. McGrady: What guarantee or series of guarantees would have to be made to the minority in that new division you speak of that would prevent a recurrence of what happened between the twenties and the seventies? What would have changed to make this more workable?

Mr. O'Flanagan: The actual federal arrangements would have a balancing and checking effect on the situation in Dail Uladh, or the Northern parliament. People in the rest of Ireland are entitled at this point to ask whether the Northern Nationalists are being pandered to too much.

Mr. McGrady: Your map shows a considerable number of people who are now citizens of the Republic of Ireland who would be transferred into the new Dail Uladh. What do you think their reactions would be to being put in under what would then be Unionist domination?

Mr. O'Flanagan: Maybe not favourable but in the national interest.

Mr. McGrady: But is that not a problem?

Mr. O'Flanagan: It might pose a problem but there are many problems posed by all solutions. In the national interest many things have to be carried out which are not appealing to individual communities.

Mr. McGrady: Your series of propositions have to be sold in another quarter, to the British Government, assuming that they were acceptable to the people of Ireland. What sort of reasoning would you use to indicate to the British Government that this was a desirable way forward?

Mr. O'Flanagan: First of all, I would have to point out that the British Government have no business being here in the first place. After that I would say that the cost of security to the British Government would be greatly reduced. Indeed, the cost of security in Ireland as a whole would be greatly reduced.
Mr. McGrady: There is not much difference from the British point of view between having a unitary Ireland or a federal Ireland if they are got out. You only mention the time element in the last page of your submission. The question I am posing is: how and when for British withdrawal?

Mr. O'Flanagan: The first move would be for the British Government to declare openly its intention to withdraw from Ireland. As regards the time scale it would not have to be particularly urgent, but it would not want to be too long either. Various television programmes have put about the idea that Ireland will be united within 100 years, so why worry? People took this attitude when the Treaty was signed. The result of this attitude has been violence throughout the decades.

Mr. McGrady: I have been asking you how do you persuade the British because your original premise, before you resigned, was that violence could be the means of persuading the British to withdraw. That is rejected in your paper and in your comments, so what is the method you would use to carry out this persuasion?

Mr. O'Flanagan: This Forum is a good example of one of the methods that can be used, but the Irish people as a whole should show by their voting patterns that this is the way they wish the situation to be resolved. Through international Fora of course as well.

Mr. McGrady: That is a pleasant note to end on.

Chairman: Now we pass to Deputy Frank Prendergast on behalf of the Labour Party.

Deputy Prendergast: I, too, should like to welcome you and to thank you for coming to us. Could you let us have some idea as to what kind of support your organisation or your political philosophy enjoys?

Mr. O'Flanagan: There has already been a submission made to this Forum by Mr. Desmond Fennell who is broadly of the opinion that a federal solution is a desirable one. There has been a submission made to the Forum by Mr. John Robb in similar vein and by Sean McBride. The problem that our organisation finds at this time is that people within the Republican movement who support us decline to join us for one reason and people outside the Republican movement decline to join us for the opposite reason.

Deputy Prendergast: I presume it would be the intention of your organisation to consult the people of Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan in order to set up Dail Uladh as you envisage it. Is there not a lot of unreal expectation in the sense that if they rejected that proposal where then would your organisation stand?

Mr. O'Flanagan: It would be our opinion that we should consult the people of Ireland as to whether this is acceptable and not consult individual counties as to whether they would like to opt in or out of a particular solution. This is one of the reasons we are in the situation we are in.

Deputy Prendergast: But, with great respect, is there not a lack of realism in some of the scenarios you posed? For instance, that the British would go, that three counties would go into a Unionist North and that the Unionists would have a new view, namely, that they would not fight?

Mr. O'Flanagan: I do not think there is any lack of realism. Once the British are removed from Ireland or leave Ireland the situation will be drastically changed and everybody's views of Ireland will alter considerably, probably even on the Nationalist side.

Deputy Prendergast: How would you reply to the suggestion that your proposed names - Dail Uladh, Dail Laighean and so on - would be insensitive and would be a cause of grave offence to the Unionist people?

Mr. O'Flanagan: Simply because they are in the Irish language?

Deputy Prendergast: Yes.
Mr. O'Flanagan: I never felt that the Irish language was a great barrier between the two traditions. Many eminent Irish scholars have been of other persuasions.

Deputy Prendergast: I think you would agree that they were very much in the minority rather than the majority and we have to deal with Realpolitik, the facts of life. We have to address ourselves to the vast bastion of opposition to the concept of a united or a federal Ireland. Is that not the reality of the situation?

Mr. O'Flanagan: I would not think that is the reality.

Deputy Prendergast: You speak about four levels of Government structure. Would you not agree that this would not only be unwieldy but would militate economically against the likelihood of such a proposal being adopted, that it would be a very costly type of structure for the taxpayer?

Mr. O'Flanagan: The cost of it is one thing, but whether it would be unwieldy is another. We believe that the more tiers of Government there are the better the people are protected from possible dictatorships and take-overs from the right or the left.

Deputy Prendergast: You say in your letter requesting an oral submission that many things have happened since the hunger strike at Long Kesh. Could you identify what these things are and how you could see the importance of this Forum?

Mr. O'Flanagan: The Republicans have become more hardline and bitter in their attitude, possibly because they did not get the support they expected from the people in the Twenty-six Counties for the sacrifices that were being made by the hunger strikers.

Deputy Prendergast: Does that not open up the question of your philosophy, while you might be opposed to violence as a principle? Does it not also highlight the fact that violence as a strategy has failed? As the Reverend McDowell has already said, not alone has it failed to diminish the opposition of the Unionists but instead has hardened their stance? It has also undoubtedly alienated or diminished the support of the vast majority of the people in the Twenty-six counties for what would be called the Republican movement in the North.

Mr. O'Flanagan: I do not take your point that it has alienated vast majority of the people in the Twenty-six counties from Republicans in the North. There has been a diminution in amount of support but not a vast diminution in that support.

Deputy Prendergast: Is that not a recognition that violence as a strategy has failed?

Mr. O'Flanagan: This is a myth that is perpetrated. All states come into being through violence, albeit the legitimate violence of the masses of the people, and all states maintain their independence by violence or the threat of violence. That is why the Republic has a standing army. It is a myth to say that violence always fails. The question is: can violence be restricted by moral forces?

Deputy Prendergast: You are speaking on a generalisation. I am confining myself to a particularisation, that in the particular with which we are concerned it has failed so far to achieve anything.

Mr. O'Flanagan: There are people of the opinion that this Forum is sitting today because of the violence in the North.

Deputy Prendergast: You say that the Northern Unionists enjoy only second class citizenship in the United Kingdom. Could you expand on that?

Mr. O'Flanagan: That is correct. Their representation does not entitle them to any great say in the government of the United Kingdom.

Deputy Prendergast: How do you think the Unionist people in the North could be induced to come into the type of overall political arrangement we would all hope for?
Mr. O'Flanagan: If the proposals are acceptable enough, and I believe these proposals are acceptable, they might be induced but, at the end of the day, it is not simply a question of inducing the Unionists into a United Ireland. The fact is that as people living on this island they have a duty to take part and to come in.

Deputy Prendergast: You say that conditions might be brought about that would make it attractive for them. Can I bring you back to a proposal made by Reverend McDowell, namely, that Irish should be taken out of the curriculum of national schools, that it has militated against the interests of some children? Would you see that as being an acceptable pre-condition, among others, for the overall unity or federalisation of the whole country?

Mr. O'Flanagan: That would be a matter for the provincial parliaments. It might be possible for regions to have Irish in and other regions to have it out, just as it might be possible for one of the provincial parliaments to allow for divorce and another not to allow for it.

Deputy Prendergast: You say that all political prisoners should be freed. Surely this would not be acceptable to the Unionists?

Mr. O'Flanagan: What is the life span of any prisoner? It may be unacceptable in the short term but all the prisoners would eventually die and they would not be in prison anyway.

Chairman: Thank You, Deputy Prendergast. Finally, we will have Deputy MacSharry on behalf of Fianna Fail.

Deputy MacSharry: You are welcome, Mr. O'Flanagan. Some of my points have already been touched on. If federalism is to have any point does it not mean effectively re-establishing Protestant control over the Six Counties albeit within an all-Ireland state and would they, under such a system, not expect to have an entirely free hand? Is this not a reason why the Nationalist community have tended to move against the federal solution?

Mr. O'Flanagan: I agree that is a danger. It is a threat that is posed. I believe that our system proposes balances and checks which would militate against such a regime coming into power. I repeat the opinion that as the Unionist population in the Six counties do not have the right to a veto on the ultimate destiny of Ireland neither have the Nationalist population in the Six Counties a veto on the ultimate destiny of Ireland.

Deputy MacSharry: In practical terms is it not unrealistic to expect the Ulster counties inside the Republic to rejoin the rest of Ulster and submit themselves to Protestant majority?

Mr O'Flanagan: I do not think the Ulster counties within the Republic have a veto either.

Deputy MacSharry: on the one hand, you say the attraction of your proposals is devolving power and, on the other hand, you say where certain counties should go and how they should be governed

Mr. O'Flanagan: They still would have power over day-to-day affairs, community policing etc., within their province. The people would have a genuine democratic say in the running of their province but no individual county should have the right to veto the ultimate destiny of Ireland.

Deputy MacSharry: would you accept that federal systems can create great practical difficulties and often conflict with regard to the division of powers and revenues between the federal and the subordinate parliaments?

Mr. O'Flanagan: I would accept that and I think it is one of the prices that has to be paid for genuine democracy.

Deputy MacSharry: Do you believe that Nationalist politicians would have any interest in attending a subordinate Stormont Parliament following the establishment of Irish unity?
Mr. O'Flanagan: There may be reluctance in the present situation to such a development but with British withdrawal from Ireland all present perceptions will be altered.

Chairman: Thank you, Deputy MacSharry, and thank you, Mr. O'Flanagan for sharing your views and those of your colleagues Mr. O'Mahony, of the Federalism and Peace Movement, with us.

The Forum will now adjourn until 2.30 when it will reconvene in private session.