Mr. Bridget Fitzgerald, a convalescing patient, prepared a meal in two sittings for the community of approximately eight people at Limerick Convent and boarding school on Wednesday 3 July 1895. The dinner consisted of a beef and mutton-flavoured soup, with young green-leaved celery. The meat was removed from the soup and served separately with cabbage boiled with a tablespoon of bread soda. For dessert, there was choice of either strawberries or stewed gooseberries, from their own garden, with homemade custard.

The cook ate a bowl of the dessert herself before serving it to all but two of the nuns in attendance. The two that did not partake were the Rev Mother, who was an invalid and had separate meals made for her, and her attendant Sister Anastasia.

During the night, each nun, with the exception of the two previously mentioned and the entire number of boarders, grew sick. Sister Xavier, the Assistant Superiors, waited until morning before she dispatched a note for Dr. Michael Joseph Maloney, the physician to the institution, as she had hoped that the symptoms would abate during the night. The doctor arrived very shortly after receiving the news, finding all the patients in a prostrate condition and suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea.

He diagnosed as best he could the cause of the malady, but was unable to arrive at any other conclusion other than the previous day their food must have contained some form of irritant poison, most likely from the custard.

Bridget Fitzgerald began preparing the custard the night before, when the cook took a skimmed milk left over from the Monday night and boiled it. She then added sugar and corn flour, boiling it once more before leaving the mixture to cool. After that, ten egg yolks were beaten and prepared for the tris. In this particular batch of eggs, one had a reddish brown colour, but no smell. While another egg, which was completely stale, was discarded in the fire.

Fitzgerald then poured the eggs into the milk, which she heated slightly, to the temperature of warm tea. The mixture was placed in an earthenware bowl and put in a cold cupboard for the night. On the Wednesday morning, the cook had noticed that the custard had become quite thin, to the consistency of cream, but she continued to serve it over the strawberries and gooseberries. After which she whipped the 10 egg whites from the custard preparation with a pound of sugar and spread this on top of the fruit and custard.

The condition of a few of the Sisters was extremely serious and nearly every member of the medical faculty in the city was requisitioned to deal with the extraordinary state of affairs prevailing at the convent. Dr. Holmes, Dr. Graham, Dr. Humphries, Dr. Shaaban and Dr. Haron were in constant attendance to the patients. The doctors tried many treatments including issuing courses of bread to the patients as a stimulant. The Rev. Dr. Edward Thomas O'Dwyer,
Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick, and the local clergy were also diligent in their attendance and sympathy towards the sufferers. By Thursday, the majority of the patients had begun to recover, though a few were still in a perilous state. For example, twenty-eight-year-old Sister Margaret (Margaret Caffrey) warranted special attention, but to no avail as sadly her symptoms grew increasingly worse and she passed away on Friday evening. The death of another sister, Mother Mary (Mary Billet), a native of France, aged 50, soon followed early on Monday morning. The inquest that began on Saturday to investigate the first death was postponed to include the second. As part of the inquest, samples of the meal were sent to Dr. Charles Cameron, Professor of Chemistry and Hygiene at the Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin, for analysis.

On the Friday, he received a portion of the corn flour, bread soda and sugar, which were the only items of the meal remaining. He also received samples of vomit and feces from one of the infected patients. None of the items examined contained any form of poison. On hearing of the circumstances surrounding the preparation of the meal, he smelt something surmised that its consistency remained thin. He had a custard made in a manner similar to the method described and found that his batch also remained thin, due to his supposed to the albumen of the egg not having coagulated by heat. When he heated a second batch near to boiling point he found that on cooling it became quite thick.

It was his opinion after his experiments that one of the eggs used in the preparation had been contaminated and with the contact being undercooked and left overnight in the warmth caused bacteria to form in the custard, triggering the death of the convent's baby and causing infection with pneumonitis poisoning (food poisoning). Dr. Cameron went on to report this case of food poisoning in the British Medical Journal at the end of July that same year.

Thirteen days after the meal a third patient, Josephine O'Flynn, succumbed to the same poison. Josephine was an 18-year-old boarding student from Watercourse Road Cork. She had at first recovered slightly, but then suffered a severe relapse. Bishop O'Dwyer telegraphed her father, Edward O'Flynn, a builder, who travelled up from Cork the day before her death to be with her. Josephine was buried in St. Finbarr's Cemetery in Cork on the 11 July 1895, next to her sister who died in 1881; sadly, her brother also died young in 1896. Of the fourteen O'Flynn children, only nine survived to adulthood.

The fourth and final victim of this terrible episode was that of forty-three-year-old Sister Mary Claire (Bridget Murray), who passed away 14 days after the meal, having contracted pneumonia in her weakened state. The inquest into all four fatalities concurred with Dr. Cameron's theory, and recorded accidental poisoning as the cause of death for the first three victims, while Sister Mary Claire was recorded as food poisoning and pneumonitis. No one was deemed responsible and no prosecutions were made.

Not everyone agreed with the diagnosis of food poisoning. In a lengthy letter, published on 2 August 1895 in the Limerick Leader, David Clohessy gave his theory that the illness was caused by a massive hysteria on the part of the women living in the convent. He stated: 'Suppose that a sensitive person - a lady - while she is eating strawberries or similar pleasant dessert is told that she has taken a worm into her stomach, she will instantly stop eating, and in a minute she vomits freely. How is this still the case when she has swallowed no worm? The answer is that mental impression caused it, or in other words that the worrying principle was in the brain.' Thus, he implies that almost all the women in the convent and school were of a delicate nature and their symptoms, self-induced.

Despite Clohessy's reservations, this case was listed in the British Medical Journal as one of the first medically-recorded cases where the culprit was deemed to be a stale egg.