

SOME NOTES ON EARLY CO-OPERATION IN CO. LIMERICK

The first two co-operative dairies in Ireland were in Co. Limerick.

Dromcollogher was established in 1889 with the help of the Co-operative Wholesale Society from England who had various depots nearby.

Ballyhahill was established in 1891 with the help of Thomas Spring-Rice K.P., **Lord Monteagle** of Brandon, who lived nearby at Mount Trenchard, Foynes.

Lord Monteagle was an early associate of the Hon. Horace Plunkett. Plunkett and his associates had targetted the Golden Vale in the mission to establish farmer co-operatives. Apathy and suspicion marked their efforts. The following is a selected extract from field worker R.A. Anderson's account of an event in **Rathkeale** :

Once when I thought that I had planted a creamery within the precincts of the town of Rathkeale, my co-operative applecart was upset by a local solicitor, who ... gravely informed me that our programme would not suit Rathkeale. " Rathkeale " said he pompously " is a nationalist town - nationalist to the backbone - and every pound of butter made in this creamery must be made on nationalist principles, or it shan't be made at all." This sentiment was applauded loudly and the proceedings terminated.

In July 1891 a conference of the 13 dairy societies then established was held in **Newcastle West**. The conference was reported in the **Freemans Journal** on the 9th July 1891 with an editorial warning to the Co-operative Movement not to bypass the Irish middleman. Plunkett's reply that this indeed was the Co-operatives intention, to market their own butter themselves, was printed in the edition of the 13th July 1891.

In 1893 16 co-op creameries came together to form the **Irish Co-operative Agency Society Ltd.** with headquarters in **Limerick** to market Irish butter on the English market. The Agency established its English headquarters in **Manchester** to compete against the **CWS**. At the turn of the century it was the major exporter of Irish butter. In 1971 it changed its name to **Irish Co-operative Society Ltd.** and now manufactures packaging under the style of **Europaks Corrugated Cases** at **Galvone Industrial Park, Limerick City**.

By 1894 there were 33 co-operative creameries. Of these 16 or half were in Co. Limerick :

Altavilla, Ardagh, Ardpatrik, Athea,

Ballyhahill, Bulgaden, Castlemahon, Clouncagh,

Dromcollogher, Feenagh, Glenwilliam, Granagh,

Glin, Grange, Newcastle West, Shanagolden

On the 18th April 1894 during the RDS Spring Show the inaugural meeting of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society took place in the Antient Concert Rooms in Great Brunswick St., Dublin. Lord Monteagle sent the following message :

43 Emperors Gate
London S.W.

I regret very much that I am unavoidably prevented from attending. Having been associated with Mr. Plunkett from the outset in the Co-operative Dairy Movement, I have watched with ever growing confidence and with never ceasing wonder not only the success of the enterprise commercially, but the social and educational effect this new departure has had upon the farmers by teaching them the benefits at once of self reliance and mutual aid - of business principles and scientific methods. The development of the co-operative principle where it is already at work and the extension of this "new departure" into other districts and other branches of agricultural industry, which are the objects of the new society, seem to me fraught with greater promise for the country than any other enterprise I see afoot, and I heartily promise every assistance in my power.

Yours, Monteagle.

Lord Monteagle became a member of the first committee of the Irish Agricultural Society. On Plunkett's resignation as President of the IAOS in 1900 Lord Monteagle became President. He served as President until 1905 and was the first of many Limerick men to serve on the council of the IAOS later ICOS. Their contribution is recorded in the centennial book of ICOS Fruits of a Century published in 1994.

Limerick women also contributed to the early development of co-operatives, locally and nationally. In the early 1900s Alice and Mary Spring-Rice, sister and daughter respectively of Lord Monteagle, organised and managed poultry societies in Co. Limerick notably at Rathkeale, Shanagolden and Foynes. They were contributors to the Irish Homestead, magazine of the co-operative movement and members of the United Irishwomen a co-operative for the improvement of living conditions through home enterprise (In 1935 the organisation changed its name to the Irish Countrywomen's Association). The poultry societies prospered as separate co-operatives up to 1924 when they amalgamated with the principal agricultural co-operatives. At the time Mary Spring Rice co-operator and nationalist gun runner lay dying from tuberculosis in Foynes. However the seed they had sown in the area was to grow into the leading and most progressive poultry enterprise in the country from the 50s to the 80s, Castlemahon Co-op.

CREAMERIES

Collagher	1889
Patrick	1890
Lynahill	1890
Castlemahon	1890
Drumagh	1890
Shanagolden	1890
Ardagh	1891
Athea	1891
Dulgaden	1891
Clonacagh	1891
Feenagh	1891
Glen William	1891
Glin	1891
Grange	1891
Newcastlewest	1891
Altavilla	1894
Kilmeedy	1896
Ballynagarde	1898
Carnahalla	1900
Croan & Banogue	1901
Black Abbey	1901
Greybridge	1901
Kilfinane	1901
Kilfinny	1901
Bilboa	1902
Cappamore	1902
Clarina	1902
Crough	1902
Croughmorka	1902
Dromkeen	1902
Effin	1902
Lisnackilla	1902
Oola	1902
Navanna	1902
Barfield	1902
Toher	1902
Ballinlohane	1903
Cahernorry	1903
Herbertstown	1903
Killinagarraff	1903
Murroe	1903
Garryduff	1904
Kantohar	1904
Monagea	1904
Fohenagh	1905
Kildimo	1905
Abington	1908
Hospital	1908
Kilteoly	1908
Knocklong	1908
Rathkeale	1908
Abbeysale	1909
Annacotty	1909
Devon Road	1909
Meenaheela Bridge	1909
Mount Collins	1910
Tournafulla	1910
Puckawn	1910
Athlaca	1911
Ballinavreena	1911
Ballyagran	1911
Colmencwell	1911

Greybridge	1911
Turraree	1911
Bruree	1912
Drombanna	1912
Kilmallock	1912
Bellville, Deal	
Bridge and	
Castlemation	1913
Bruff	1914
Carrickkerry	1914
Cratloe	1914
Ballygoughlan	1914
Kildimo	1914
Garryspillane	1918
Brackyle	1920
Cahirconlish	1920
Askeaton	1927
Limerick Co-Op.	1965

STORES

Adare	1897
Shanagolden & Foynes	1901
Feale	1903
Rathkeale	1903
Doon	1909
Kilcolman	1910
Killeedy	1913
Knockarny	1913
Limerick & Clare	
Farmers	1913
Meenahala Bridge	1913
Pallaskerry Implement	1914
Ballybohey Implement	1915
Ballinagrane	1917
Knocklong	1917
Meenus Implement	1917
Ballynahill Implement	1918
Adare	1919
Knockaderry	1919
Foynes	1920
Upper Connells	1920

BANKS

Ballinlohane	1903
Galbally	1903
Ballynahill	1904
Foynes	1904
Glin (Fluke)	1925
Turnaree	1925
Annacotty	1926
Athea	1926
Feale Bridge	1926
Mount Collins	1926
Shanagolden	1926
Tournafulla	1926

LIMERICK

FARMING

Beal an Atha	1920
Coathru Ard	1920
Kerry	1920

TURF (1933-35)

Cappamore	
O'Callaghans Mills	

POULTRY

Shanagolden & Foynes	1901
Feale	1903
Rath Keale	1903

MISCELLANEOUS

I.C.A.S.I.	1893
Killmallock Farmers	1910
Killmallock Agric. & Ind.	1912
Kinlough Co-Op. Friendly	1913
Effin Milling	1917
Foynes Tillage Soc.	1917
Killeedy Milling	1918
Irish Co-Op Agency Soc.	1932
Limerick Pig Dev. Co-Op.	1963
Limerick Co-Op. Creameries	1965
Co-Op. Agricultural Purchases Ltd.	1966
Golden Vale Co-Op. Marke	1956