

The Great Famine 1845-1852

Attymass Parish

Patrick Flannelly 1946

Comisiún Béaloidéasa Éireann

16 JAN 1946

The Great Famine 1845 - 1852.

Baineann an reolas seo le ceannrúar Ailín Uí Néill
Comdara Muiseo Bórdnaisce Gallen.
Paróiste Ailín Uí Néill

Do scrúdas síos an reolas seo ar an 16 Eanáir 1946.
ó béal-aíris na sean-Dáine
a gComhcheann síos gearmeán seo.

clinn na Sgríobhóir Pádraic Ó Flannagáin
Seola S. Ailín Uí Néill
béal na sean-Dáine,
Co. Muineo

Cover of the original manuscript

Introductory Letter:

Attymass National School
Ballina
Co. Mayo
12.1.1946

Dear Sean

At long last I have pleasure in enclosing my effort to record what is left of Famine traditions in this district. Indeed every time I take up this work, my deep regrets are renewed that so many of the old people have passed away and with them passed out the great traditions of the past. I got much of this material from Thomas O'Flynn, nephew of the P.P. of Attymass in the Famine years, about six years ago when I was collecting material for a history of the Parish. In the six years I found that the poor mans memory failed badly and I could get little additional material now. The same applies to John Melody, now about 80, son of the contractor I have mentioned, "Sack 'em up". He was of little help now.

Thanks ever so much for your kind letter received some time ago. I hope you enjoyed a very happy holiday and that you are now in the very best of form.

Tadig O'Leary was not in Dublin this past year. They are all in the best of form and Mrs O'Leary is standing up very well to her years. Mrs. Flannelly wants me to thank you most sincerely for your kind congratulations on her mother's victory in New York.

She certainly did very well. We have the car on the road again and may say that is a blessing. We suffered on bicycles and on a trap over the four miles to school. But there were others worse off, so we need not complain. I'm afraid we will sink into a state of inactivity now.

With all good wishes for a happy and prosperous 1946 and wishing you every blessing.

Sincerely yours

Patrick Flannelly

The Great Famine in Attymass

1.

(a) Density of population in the early Forties:

Local tradition says that there was a population at least four times the present one. Very few of the ruined houses of that time are to be seen for the district is still a congested one and the land has been cleared of old ruins, and the small gardens usually to be found round a house have been let into one field. Tradition says that whole villages existed when there is not a trace of a homestead now but some place names still survive to bear tradition out e.g., "Baile an Tobair" and "Loch lár á Bhaile", "Sean Bhaile". (Later a new village sprung up about a ½ mile away - "Ballure" baile úr) "Sean tSráid", baile úr.

(b) Standard of comfort of the general body.

The people were not too badly off. They tilled about 3/4 of the land which of course was not a lot in a very congested area but they managed to live and had the reputation of being big strong men. They had few cattle or sheep as they had little place to keep them. Most families owned a cow and calf only and those near the mountain had a few sheep each. As many as could possibly manage it also, kept a couple of sheep in addition to the cow and calf. The land supported the household for they lived on potatoes and now and again had oatmeal cakes and butter and milk. There is no tradition regarding fowl. The corn was sold to pay the rent and taxes. Flax was sown, a few quarts by each farmer, out of which they made their linens, and wool provided the heavier clothing which was also made locally.

(c) Main sources of food supply etc.

This has been filled in under (b) above but in addition rabbits and hares were caught, wild fowl trapped and the rivers and lakes supplied some fish. Poaching was rife.

(d) Social conditions.

Extensive use was made of credits. The district had its "gombeen" man who charged 4/- for the loan of £1.00 for a year. The loans were taken out when the seed was sown as there were then scarcely any potatoes left, and repayment was made in November. Certain days of the week were appointed for the loaning of money and again for repayment. Only quite recently the direct descendant of the most notorious gombeen man in the district died and left a fortune of over £30,000. Even though he retired from business (as a merchant) some years ago, he continued the gombeen business in a small way to his death. Those were Catholics. Two families of Protestant gombeen men disappeared about 60 years ago.

Shopkeepers gave credits in the same way and repayment was made in November or before Christmas. The custom has survived in the seeds and manures business still and even when some farmers can pay cash, they put off settling their accounts until November and lose cash discounts by doing so.

Wages were small 6d. to 10d. per day and long hours were worked.

2. **How the blight first appeared:**

Tradition says it came from France in a thick fog and fell for three nights - some say one night. The year was extremely wet, so much so that there was little turf. In spite of this there was a fine crop of stalks and prospects were good. Following the fog black spots appeared on the leaves of the stalks which gave out an unwholesome peculiar smell and in a short time the stems were also affected and the fields had a blackened appearance. The whole district was affected but it appears there must have been some patches fairly safe as the townspeople came by night and pulled the stalks and took away with them whatever potatoes adhered to the roots.

The crop was dug and what was considered safe was put in pits but when the pits were opened again the potatoes had either rotted entirely or were running water. In some cases the pits were seen to sag as the potatoes inside rotted. No attempts were made to counteract the blight as people did not even know what it was. Its effect on the crop was the same for each of the famine years.

3. Famine conditions in the district:

Conditions were terrible as few had any money. In one case a man drowned himself rather than suffer the hunger pains any longer. It is related of one family that someone called on them to find the children dead and the parents lying on the floor, nibbling grain from a sheaf of oats which lay between them and both unable to rise when the visitor entered.

The "black fever" followed. This appeared in black spots which gradually covered the body. Lips became bloodless. Death followed in the home if they were not removed to the workhouse hospital and there seems to be no tradition that anyone contracting the disease survived. One old person here says that cattle also contracted the disease. It was dreaded more than the actual hunger and when persons were found dead in the fields or along the roads, their own kith and kin often denied knowing them.

Most of the dead were buried in the fields or along the roads. There is no tradition of a pit being used. The difficulty was to get men to carry the corpse to a graveyard but many were buried in the two local graveyards situated about twelve miles apart. The distance then was long, there were few carts and roads were few and terribly bad. But there was a near way to Bonnifinglas graveyard from Attymass and tradition says that every few yards of the way contain a grave, for the corpse was buried along the way when the bearers became too weak to travel farther. There is a gap on the way leading from the main road, called "Cearna na gCorp" from the fact that the bearer or bearers rested there with their burdens before taking the near way which was rugged and forbidding.

One man Márta Fada whom I knew well and who died about twenty two years ago, having reached almost his hundredth year, was reputed to have carried a corpse from his own townland, alone, to Kilgarvan graveyard about seven miles away. Márta could not get anyone to help him.

In some cases when the relatives were a little better off than the majority, they aimed at burying their dead "decently" and hired the local cart which was on contract to the auxiliary workhouse in Ardnaree to carry the sick there, and they got or hired a coffin with a hinged bottom and used this to convey the corpse to the graveyard. The same coffin served a similar purpose again and again.

Here it may be well to give an account of the contract given by the "Powers that be" in charge of the Auxiliary Workhouse to a local who had the only horse and cart in the immediate neighbourhood. He was paid at so much per head to convey the sick to the workhouse. The patient was put in a sack, feet first, and the sack was tied closely around the neck and labelled.

Up to seven or eight patients were laid out in the body of the cart which then set off on its cogglesome journey to the workhouse. Few ever returned. But the cart did not return empty for the bottomless coffins were ready, tenanted, and the driver proceeded to the graveyard at Bonnifinglas and the corpses were deposited in the same grave. The relatives were not even notified of the deaths. The corpse was sewn in white cloth when a coffin was not used.

On other occasions the driver conveyed the weekly allowance of Indian meal to the house of the Parish Priest, Fr. Michael O'Flynn, next door neighbour of the cart owner when the recipients would assemble to receive their allowance from the Priest. This was the "Committee Male" [Meal] given out by the relief Committee in Ballina, all composed of the Ascendancy class. (More of this under No. 6).

The contractor received the nickname of "Sack-em-up" from the fact of putting the patients in the sacks.

Tombstones were not erected as it was difficult to find men with sufficient strength to make the graves. Sometimes a large stone or flag was placed at the head and foot of the grave to mark it out. This practice still continues in the absence of a tombstone.

There are no memories of famine graves in the local graveyards or outside of them. Bodies actually lay unburied by hedges for rats soon devoured the flesh and only the skeleton remained. There is one instance of a family, being found dead, with their skeletons only remaining and the efforts of the neighbours failed to frighten away the rats which were feeding on the flesh.

Livestock was not plentiful as I have said but they were depleted during the famine through disease, and being used for food, and by robbery. Cattle were not fed on anything but grass prior to the famine; hence, the scarcity of potatoes did not affect them. Indeed there was no hay saved here and for winter fodder, straw was used (oaten straw). Even down to fifty years ago, straw was the only fodder given to cattle, except in rare cases when hay was provided.

4.

There appears to be no tradition of families now living here which cannot trace their ancestors back to pre-famine times. On the other hand, many families disappeared altogether and with them many family names which would not be regarded as foreign to the district eg., Cróinín, Jones, Wills, Hamilton, Siomons, Strogon, Collins, Fogarty. There are others whose names are not in certain townlands though common there in pre-famine days.

In some townlands about half the families emigrated or at least what was left of them. Many others were wiped out completely owing to hunger and disease. "The Parliamentary Gazetteer" of 1834 gives the number of houses in the parish as 644, a total population of 3,512 and 253 pupils on the rolls of three hedge schools. Now there are 330 families, less than 1,000 people and approximately 200 children on the rolls of four National Schools. In 1834 there were 769 families in Bonniconlon Parish where there are only about 400 now.

There is no tradition of emigration to England. Many families sailed from Killala on the Famine Ships to the U.S.A. and settled principally in Scranton, a coalmining city in Pens. There is a tradition that some went to Canada but there is some doubt about this.

Orphans of the famine were taken to the workhouses. There is no tradition of their being taken care of by relatives for the reason that these had nothing to give them.

Some local families were unaffected by the famine or at least they managed to live. These mostly composed the agents of the landlords - bailiffs, bog-rangers, wood rangers, gamekeepers, herds, etc. Not only did they manage to live but they got large tracts of land adjoining their own, when holdings were forsaken by those who emigrated.

There were two such families, neighbours of my grandfather - Morrisons and Durkans. The Durkan farm was later divided between members of the family and these all still in possession. The Morrisons farm was divided between two members of the family, a son and daughter.

The land given to the farmer was sold some years ago, part going to the Land Commission for the relief of congests and the other part was purchased by a descendant of Durkan who was a bailiff in famine days. In this land is a lake called Loch Lar a'bhaile and there is a tradition that a village surrounded the lake in pre-famine times. Except for a few small enclosed patches, resembling gardens, not a trace of human habitation remains.

The land in which the lake is called "Múinfhéat" on one side of it, and "Sean Sráid" on the other. The former is rough, growing rannach for the greater part, and the latter is good land.

About twenty five years ago, a peculiar thing occurred near the lake. As the owner of the land was taking a walk to inspect his cattle, a great pile of stones collected from tillage down the years (a leacht) disappeared into the earth and although the cairn itself was about 6' or 7' (6 or 7 feet) high its top was still about eight feet below the level of the surrounding land after its subsidence. The explanation probably is that there was a subterranean passage there made by the villagers of the Loch to hide goods in, in the bad times, a hut may have been cut into the rising ground over the lake and roofed almost level with the ground on top, or some human habitation may have existed there that became covered with grass down the years until stones were heaped upon it, picked from the soil during tillage operations. There is no fort in the vicinity which would give rise to a subterranean chamber usually connected with such.

A local landlord has a farm of about 200 acres and practically half of this was in the possession of several tenants before the famine. A good deal of this is still in small fields, some not bigger than the usual "cabbage garden". I remember when parts so occupied with such gardens were given gratis as conacre to tenants in order to have the fences cleared.

There are still the remains of a few houses. One place is called Baile Thuas. About a half a mile away there was another village in which a poet lived. There is no tradition that people were evicted from those villages but the explanation is that the families emigrated to America or died out. The present landlord's grandfather purchased the estate in the courts - as one of the encumbered estates in pre-famine days.

Gombeen men also held their ground in the bad times - as well they could. Wills and Hamilton were Protestants who carried on the business but they are gone and their land has been divided among congests.

Millers were supposed to be best off in the period. They held $\frac{1}{4}$ of the grain they received for distribution to beggars. There were five grinding mills in the parish, four in one town land which has yet the reputation of being best off in '46, '47. The upper class had one ambition in those days viz. to marry the miller's daughter, as she had a good fortune.

5.

Evictions during the famine were many. In one townland, Kilgellia, 14 of the 24 families were evicted the same day - O'Donnell's, Conlons, Reynold's, Melody's, Tolan's, Warde's,

Hennigan's, Ginty's, Gallagher's, Loftus etc. The landlord was Moore, related to the great Maurice Moore and George Moore who passed away in recent times.

The Knox Gores laid waste a large tract of the parish along the Moy and places are pointed out where entire villages once stood. Practically all this land has come back to the adjoining tenants through the Land Commission.

The Knox Gores and McGloins (a small estate to which I have referred) were the only resident landlords. The McGloins (Irwins in famine times) were charitable, carried out no evictions and fed and clothed the poor as far as their own slender means allowed. The (Perry) Knox Gores on the other hand were rich, had a huge estate and spared nobody.

There were thirteen estates in the parish but eleven were administered by Agents who did not even reside in the parish but their absence did not benefit the tenants. On the contrary, their subagents, bailiffs etc., were cruel, though Catholic and of the people themselves. One bailiff took the roof off his brother's house, although the latter and his wife and family were inside and refused to quit.

There were no merchants in the parish, but in the town of Ballina many were forced to close their premises due to loss of trade. They became very poor and resorted to begging in the country. Others took to robbery as a means of living and added greater hardship to the poverty stricken country folk.

Merchants who continued in business were those with considerable means. They purchased corn and meal and gave out "gombeen". There is no tradition that the town merchants gave alms to country people or indeed that they were ever approached for such. On the contrary, the rush for relief was from the town to the country.

Millers were rich and charitable. They held for distribution to beggars, $\frac{1}{4}$ of the grain brought to them for grinding. There is an account of one, nevertheless, who refused to give alms to a widow and her seven children. The customers at the mill compelled him to do so but the bread made evidently came too late, for the family was found dead in a deserted house a few days later, and the rats had eaten their flesh. (There was another case of a man who gave a can of meal for a can of gold but in a short time he died of hunger and the rats ate his flesh.)

Going back to the subject of evictions, there is a story of a Wallace family evicted in Kilgellia. The family emigrated to America and several years later, one son who was only in on learning, returned to find that another family occupied the house. He asked for lodgings which were refused. Going away from the house, he met a son of the parents who had refused him shelter. This son, on learning his story, insisted on his returning as one of the family. He did so but lived only three months and was buried in the local graveyard.

Individual homeless persons wandered about as beggars and these were very numerous.

The local "poor houses" were in Ballina - the workhouse and an auxiliary which was opened in Ardnaree. The latter served this part of the country and conditions there were terrible. The building was put up in connection with the flax industry, for what particular purpose I cannot find out, for the growers of flax and these included practically every farmer, big and small, "bogged" their own crop, scutched it, beetled and cloved it, hackled it twice, spun it and sent it to the weaver and afterwards the cloth was made into bed-linen and body linen. Any yarn left over was sold in the market.

The sick were taken to this "poorhouse" and few it seems returned. I have already referred to the contract given to a man from the parish to convey the sick in his cart to this place. There

was no hospital in the district and I cannot find out who attended to the sick. There was no question of a doctor visiting the patients in their homes.

6. Local food supply during the famine years:

1. Potatoes: Good portions of the potatoes were boiled and made into "cally" or eaten whole. Partly rotten ones were scraped on a scraper so as to make pulp and this was converted into "boxty". The pulp was placed in a cloth and squeezed as dry as possible. This was then flattened out and baked on a tongs on the red coals or placed on the warm hearthstone. When one side was baked, the cake was turned.

The making of "boxty" continued down to, say, 40 years ago and was generally made of the partly rotten or frosted potatoes about the time of lifting the crop in October and November. The scraper was a necessary utensil in every house and took its place on a frame or a nail in the kitchen wall with saucepans, pans etc.

Potatoes were also roasted and this was the food for outdoor workers such as turfcutters and savers, potato diggers and harvesters. On the bog, a great fire was made and the potatoes were roasted then for the dinner and lunch. A few potatoes roasted in this way were called a "cast"; milk was used with the potatoes. Harvesters and potato diggers had their meals on the field in like manner.

2. Grain: Wheat was not grown in large quantities in this parish and when grown, the grain was sold and the straw used for thatch. It appears that the straw was considered more valuable than the grain for it lasted much longer than oaten straw as thatch and it was for the purpose of getting the straw, more than for the value of the grain, that wheat was grown. It was said that wheat made the soil poor.

Oats was the main grain crop and it provided food for man and beast and of course paid the rent, taxes and the gombeen man.

Oatmeal cakes were made in this way. A leaf of cabbage was placed on coals of fire, the oatmeal cake consisting of oatmeal and milk or oatmeal and water, was placed on the leaf. Then another cabbage leaf was placed on top and coals were laid over this. The juice of the cabbage leaf penetrated the cake and made it more palatable. Cabbage was grown especially for this purpose and there is a story told of a charitable lady who lived in Killala who had a large plot of cabbage. People came from far and near for leaves and at last there came two poor old women and the charitable lady found that all the cabbage was gone. She was very disappointed and told the women to come again next day. On looking out her window, the following morning, she was amazed to see a full plot of cabbage, with leafs as plentiful as possible and each "as large as a two stone pot".

Oatmeal cakes were the mainstay of the population here in the years following the famine for they took them to bogs, to fairs and markets and when work was provided in England, the migratory workers set out from this district, on foot, for Drogheda, with a bundle of oatmeal cakes wrapped in a red handkerchief and this was their only food until they reached the farm on which they were to work in England. The fare on the boat was 6/- and they worked for 10d. Per day.

I know a man who, had he lived, would now be well over 110 years. He used buy horses for export to England and take them on foot from here to Drogheda, then accompany them across the sea and again take them to their destination on the other side and he never bought any food on the way - the oatmeal cakes from home were his food. That was about 80 or 90 years ago.

The straw of the oat crop was fed to cattle, donkeys and horses, used as mattresses for the beds, straddles, and for thatch. Clothes in the famine days became shabby owing to the scarcity of sheep and the sale of yarn, and straw was used to tie about the body to cover holes in garments.

Straw was also used for ropes.

Rye: some rye was grown on light soils unfit to grow any other grain. It was used for bread and the straw was considered better than oat straw as thatch.

Barley: I could not find out anything about this but since "poteen" was made there must have been barley as it was from this it was manufactured.

3. Animal products: rabbits, hares and wild fowl were caught by those having rights to hunt. The flesh was used and their soup, mixed with Indian meal, was considered excellent.

Bull calves sold at a half a crown and were not kept. They were slaughtered for food. Sheep provided most of the meat used and sheep stealing was common. Pigs were reared on a small scale and disappeared altogether when the potatoes failed. Goats were plentiful on the mountains and were practically wiped out for food during the famine.

4. Vegetables: Cabbage was the principal vegetable and as well as being used in the ordinary way, was also used in the baking of oatmeal cakes as I have described. Cabbage juice was regarded an excellent food and provided a substitute for milk when used with potatoes, oatmeal cakes and boxty. Cabbage and fat were boiled in a pot and the juice got in this way.

Turnips were grown and used as a vegetable and for juice in the same way as cabbage. "Boxty" was also made of grated turnips and they were used raw.

Capógs and nettles were boiled and mixed with Indian meal while boiling and provided food. "Bráiste" (bráisg) grew plentifully in the corn and even the poor from the towns used to raid the corn fields to pull it for boiling with Indian meal for food. Other weeds were also used and grass was boiled and mixed with Indian meal and used like the nettles etc. Down to recent times, all those, except bráisg, were used in the same way as pig-feeding in the summer months when potatoes were scarce. There is a weed locally called "Fuarán" which was also used in the same way.

Mangels were used in the same way as turnips.

5. Products of lakes and rivers: salmon was poached and pikes and trout were also used. All this was done stealthily to avoid trouble with the agents of the landlords who claimed these products as their own. Carrageen and seaweed (shlowh) delisk and cockles were also used. These were boiled in milk.

6. Food said to have been provided miraculously. The only instance I could get was that already given concerning the cabbage plot in Killala.

Relief Committee:

The only Relief Committee for the district was in Ballina. Indian meal was used for the first time in 1847 as human food and was made available to the Committee from Government Sources. A Mr. Fenton was chairman and he was assisted by a committee composed of members of the Ascendancy. The Parish Priests here and in the neighbouring parish of Bonniclon appeared before the Committee to plead the cause of their respective

parishioners. The P.P. of Bonniconlon was Fr. Egan, who soon lost patience with the committee and the chairman referred to him as "Bully Egan from the Gap". The Gap is that through which the main road passes over the Ox Mountains between Mayo and Sligo from Ballina to Tubbercurry. Fr. Egan replied that he was "Bully Egan in the Gap" and by the nick name "Bully Egan" he was afterwards called.

Fr. Michael O'Flynn was P.P. of Attymass and his nephew and niece still live in the house then occupied by him. The nephew is about 90 years of age and from him a good deal of information has been gleaned. But his memory is failing.

Fr. O'Flynn, more diplomatic than his fellow churchman from Bonniconlon, bided his time in patience until he found an opportunity for his question, "Gentlemen what are you going to do for poor Attymass". He struck such an appealing note that he secured a generous weekly allowance of Indian meal for the parish. This was put up in three hundred-weight sacks and conveyed weekly by the contractor Melody ("Sack-em-up") in his cart to Fr. O'Flynn's home in Carrick.

Here the parishioners gathered on the appointed day for the distribution of the meal and took with them bags or vessels for their weekly allowance. Very often all the members of the same household arrived each to claim his or her own share for one would not trust the other, so great was the temptation to steal even the brother's or sister's share or even the child's. Fr. O'Flynn assisted at the distribution while other members of his household served porridge from a large pot, always kept boiling, to feed the multitude awaiting their allowance of meal. An outhouse in the farmyard of Mr. Thomas O'Flynn (nephew of Fr. O'Flynn) still carries the chimney erected in '47 by waiting stone-masons for the purpose of providing the fire to prepare the porridge.

Fr. O'Flynn died on 19th October 1855 at the age of 62 years. It may be remarked here that to carry a 3 cwt. weight sack over a rough hilly avenue, a distance of 100 yards from the cart to the home of Fr. O'Flynn was no mean feat at any time. But what must it be in the famine.

There are no accounts of soup kitchens, souperism or proselytism and although two hedge schools in the parish were taken over by the Baptist Society and were in operation from 1824 to about 1831, there is no tradition that the Society made use of its position for the purpose of proselytism. National schools existed in the parish from 1846 onwards.

Attempts to obtain food:

People from the towns raided the corn fields to pull bráisce to cook in the way I have described and they also pulled up potato stalks and took away the potatoes adhering to the same. This was a great loss to farmers. Others went into potato fields in the spring when the crop was set and with sticks in which a long nail was driven, they picked up the "slits" or sets and carried them off for food.

Cabbage was stolen - also turnips. The stealing of corn was quite common.

Sheep stealing prevailed and continued long after the worst famine years. Farmers on the mountain-sides suffered most. Robbers frequented caves and lived there on plunder. Many of these caves, connected with forts, are still pointed out as the haunt of robbers in those days.

Darby Dempsey (Diarmuid Mór of Coolcarney) was the most notorious robber of famine times. He was born in Ballycong and was so strong that he used carry six hundred weight of "slits" (potato sets) out of the field together with a bucket and scíbin (the stick for making the holes to receive the sets). He went to reside with relations in Byhalla near the Ox Mountains and got into the habit of sheep stealing. He was joined by a man called Mulderrig who later

gave up his evil ways as the revenue men were on their track. Darby stole, not only for himself and his friends, but to assist the very poor.

At one time Darby was on the mountains near Crossmolina. He saw the river Deel Rise (as it does still quite suddenly) and he saved the life of a man and his family. These passed to the town one day and while they were away the river rose so high that the road was inundated to a depth of several feet. The man and his family were returning in a trap and got into deep water. But Darby, who watched the scene from his mountain hide-out, came to the rescue. He stooped under the trap and raised it and the passengers on his back and brought them safely out of the water although he was up to his neck in water. The man compensated him in money and Dempsey returned to Byhalla but was soon at his old tricks again. He died in the famine years and although he hid his money before he passed away, it was found by his relations who managed to escape the ravages of the Famine afterwards.

A cattle stealing was rare for the reason that they were so few here and perhaps not worth stealing.

Man traps were set in potato fields etc. A hole about 8 feet deep and two feet wide was dug, filled with water and concealed with brambles and grass etc. People lay in wait and when the robber fell into the trap, he was pounced upon and beaten to death with sticks. In some cases, the trap held the water and the robber drowned.

The prevalence of robbery in the Famine years is given as a reason why tiny windows were used in the old houses. Man traps were set outside windows also. There is no account of warning notices.

The generosity of certain individuals to the needy is already dealt with.

A ship load of potatoes reached Killala and people from this district travelled there, about 16 miles, but received only one stone each.

7. Relief - Schemes:

New roads were begun. The principal one was to connect Foxford with Bonniclon, running at the foot of the Ox Mountains. Several hundred men were employed here in gruelling labour as the ground was covered with huge boulders. They received from 2d. to 4d. per day or a quart of Indian meal. They usually took the latter as food was not available in any large quantity for cash.

It is related that from about mid-day the pot was hung on the fire and kept replenished with water, awaiting the return of the workman and his parcel of meal. This was put in the pot and a thin porridge was made to feed the starving family. Some was left for the breakfast of the workman. He also rolled up some of it in a handkerchief as his food for the day. Many died on the job and on the journey to and from the work. The gangers are spoken of for their harsh methods only.

The road was started about midway and was never finished and never used for the purpose for which it was intended, if indeed it was meant to serve any purpose but that of a wild scheme to give some casual relief to the starving population. Sand and stones were carried in baskets as there were no carts at work.

Another road was constructed along Ballymore Lake and would have proved a useful one if completed. It remains to be seen to this day but was never used. In later years the P.P. made an effort to have it completed but one tenant barred the way and the project fell through. These roads came to be called "The Meal Roads".

A drain was commenced in the townland of Ardrass to connect Ballymore Lake with Loch Dubh in Ardrass and in this way form an easy outlet for the water in Ballymore Lake. The drain was made half way and then it was discovered that the water in Loch Dubh was higher than that in Ballymore and work ceased. The drain is still there, about ten feet wide and is referred to as "The Canal".

Killala was the metropolis of those parts in Famine times and still bears evidence of its great trade as a port. Huge derelict stores still stand there gaunt and gaping as proof of Killala's great past. But a relief scheme was begun 1845 to clear the sand bar which lay across the mouth of the Moy between Bartragh Island and the mainland on the far side from Killala. The sand was cleared at the rate of 6d. per day per man and ships have sailed to Ballina Quay since then on to about one mile from Ballina town. Ballina sprang into fame as one of the principal seaports in the West. Killala's day of glory passed away.

Captain Wright was harbour master and sailed his schooner to Ballina, by Killala and Moyne Abbey that is on the western side of the Moy, and brought back the same schooner on the eastern side, thus being the first to sail a vessel on the new channel.

I can get no account of how those schemes were financed. People welcomed the schemes as a means of livelihood. There were no "gentle folk" here to be relieved.

8. The local clergy as I have stated made every effort to obtain generous allowances of Indian meal, each for his own parish. They assisted in the distribution of the meal and as we have seen, the distribution in Attymass parish took place at the parish house. The clergy also travelled through the parish, tending the sick, administering the Sacraments and endeavouring to raise the spirit of the people.

Many farmers continued to sow potatoes, year after year, that is the poreens which were little use as food but which were free from "blight". The local clergy urged the people to discontinue the growing of the crop, still, many kept up the experiment and finally met with success. It is said that the priest asked those people for some potatoes and was refused. In one case it is said that one man, not heeding the advice of the clergy, yet not wishing to gamble a great deal, set a bucketful of "slits" and poreens and had a wonderful crop. Even the poreens produced large size potatoes. From that onwards, people took courage and began to set more and more.

There is no account of any local agitation, and there is no account of the attitude of the local clergy to the landlords, for the reason, I suppose, that none except one charitable Catholic Landlord resided here. The other I have mentioned did not actually live in the parish but across the Moy in Bacho. Neither is there any account of the attitude of the clergy to the export of grain.

9. There is no account of any local agitation, riots or the use of military or police except in tracking down robbers. There were no local leaders.

10. There is no account of the political hopes of the people.

Additional Information.

Food: Mangels were used raw or boiled, and mangel juice was also used to mix with oatmeal in making cakes. The hearth oaten cake was called caca ceallaig.

Blood was drawn from cattle and boiled and used for food. Cattle became weak owing to this operation which was performed too frequently, and finally many of them died.

Onions were boiled with grass, capógs, fuarán and other weeds, even leaves of trees. Watercress was much used. More was thought of a jar of meal than of a jar of gold.

Burial of the dead: The corpse was frequently wrapped with straw ropes and buried in this way without a coffin. Corpses were sometimes carried to the graveyard on donkey's backs. It is said that a woman was placed in the dead house in Ballina workhouse but was found alive after five days there.

Clothes: Bed clothes were torn up and used as clothing.

Men wore short knee breeches, long tailed coats, high hats, white linen shirts, long stockings, and nailed boots. Women wore a cloak and a white linen head cloth.

Bishops and Priests: A great number died and they were called the Martyr Priests for they contracted disease in carrying out their sacred duties.

Miscellaneous Notes.

During the famine, a man was reputed to have fallen dead at the door of his cabin with a parcel of meal in his hand for which he had travelled five miles.

A woman and child were found on the roadside. The woman was dead and had the trace of grass or green food about her mouth. The child was alive.

Even here it was said that Scibbereen was one of the worst places that suffered in the Famine. There the dead were buried in two big pits.

The Mr Fenton referred to as Chairman of the Relief Committee in Ballina and who called Fr. Egan, "Bully Egan from the Gap" received the retort from Fr. Egan - Aren't you "Soap the Rope" for he used to hang people in his own yard. A few years before he died, he became so violent that he was locked up in his own cellar and food was thrown to him through iron bars. He ate his own shoulders before he died.

The children of one family used to go around stealing woman's shoes.

A man saw a crow with a potato in her mouth and he followed her long way in the hope of getting it.

The boats on which the men went to England were made of three planks covered with canvas and the journey across the sea often took six weeks in calm weather.

People came to the Ballycong grinding mill here from as far away as Belmullet (47 miles). There was a pressing mill and tucking mill also on the river at Ballycong.

Robbers attacked a ship that came to Killala with food for relief purposes but they were driven off.

There were no fairs held and neighbours bought and sold amongst themselves.