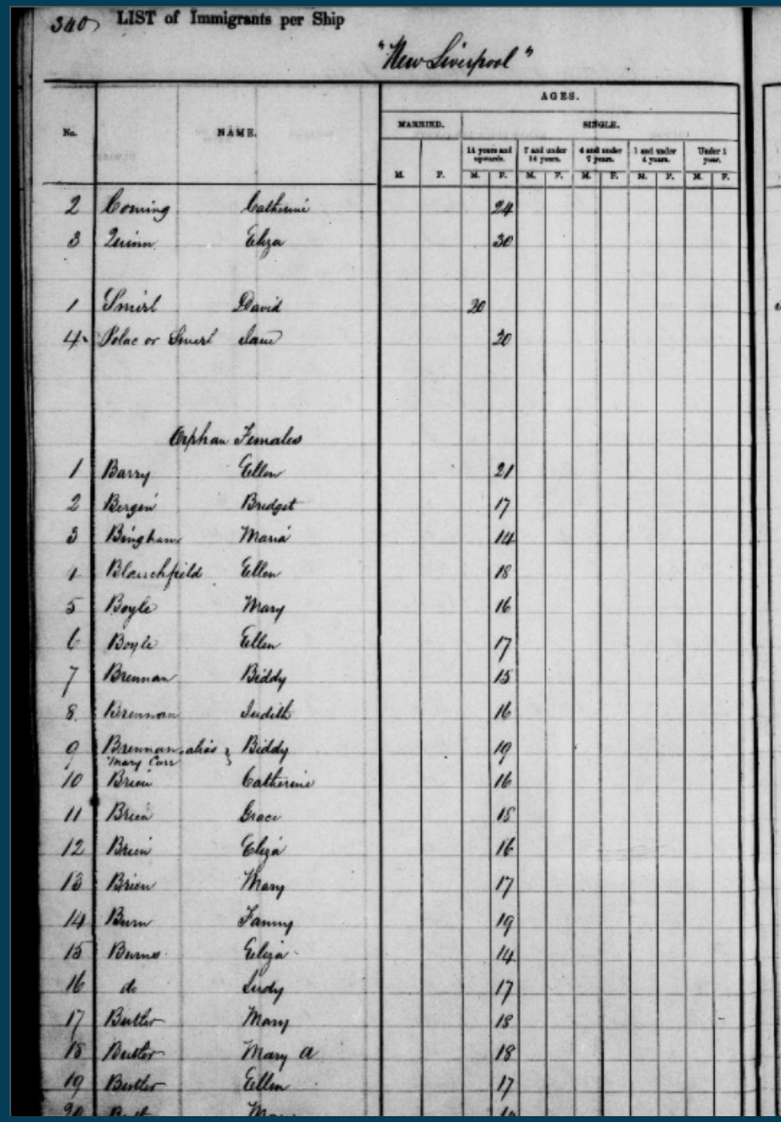
Gorey Union's Earl Grey Famine Orphans

The Workhouse Orphan Migration Scheme

1848 - 1850 (THE EARL GREY SCHEME)

Over a two year period, 4,114 girls from Ireland migrated to Australia, arriving in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide.

All occupants of workhouses, their passage was paid for by the local workhouse Union workhouse and the Colonial Land & Emigration Commission.



340 LIST of Immigrants per Ship "New Liverpool"

No.	NAME.		AGES. MARRIED. M.	F.	SINGLE. 14 years and upwards. M.	F.	7 and under 14 years. M.	F.	4 and under 7 years. M.	F.	1 and under 4 years. M.	F.	Under 1 year. M.	F.
2	Corning	Catherine				24								
3	Quinn	Eliza				30								
1	Smirl	David			30									
4	Solac or Smirl	Jane				20								
	Orphan Females													
1	Barry	Ellen				21								
2	Bergin	Bridget				17								
3	Bingham	Maria				14								
1	Blanchfield	Ellen				18								
5	Boyle	Mary				16								
6	Boyle	Ellen				17								
7	Brennan	Biddy				15								
8	Brennan	Judith				16								
9	Brennan alias Mary Carr	Biddy				19								
10	Brew	Catherine				16								
11	Brew	Grace				18								
12	Brew	Eliza				16								
13	Brew	Mary				17								
14	Burn	Fanny				19								
15	Burns	Eliza				14								
16	do	Judy				17								
17	Butler	Mary				18								
18	Butler	Mary a				18								
19	Butler	Ellen				17								

Image : Handwritten ledger from New Liverpool ship, detailing the list of passengers, 9 August, 1849.
New South Wales Government State Archives and Records.

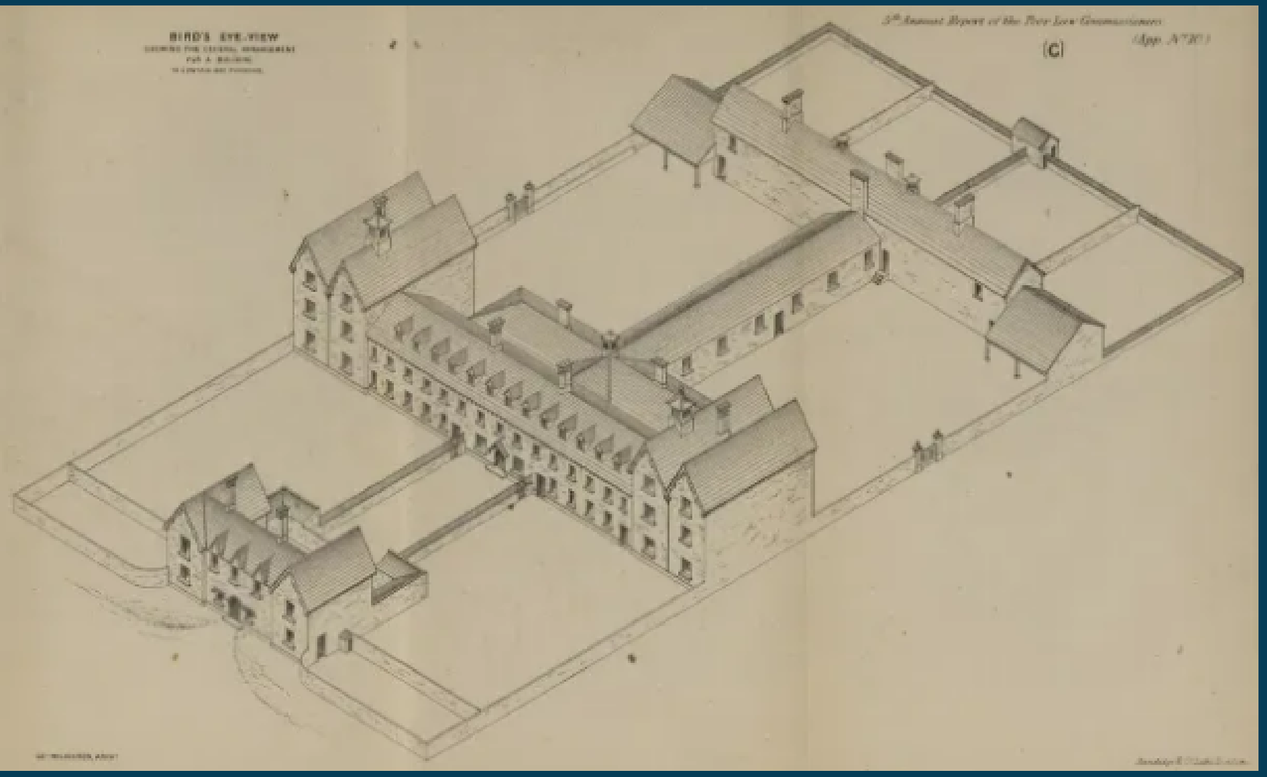
Twenty one of the girls were from Gorey Union...this is part of their story.

'The Workhouse was the most feared and hated institution ever established in Ireland”

John O'Connor 'The Workhouses of Ireland: The fate of Ireland‘s poor'

Image : 'Birdseye View' - Sketch of Workhouse layout - UCD Cultural Heritage Collections

The Workhouse



Designed to deter, the workhouse was the very last option for the destitute in Ireland.

On entry, families were separated, personal clothes swapped for a uniform, and all personal decisions taken away. What to eat, when to sleep, work, or rest - all dictated by the Master and Board of Governors.

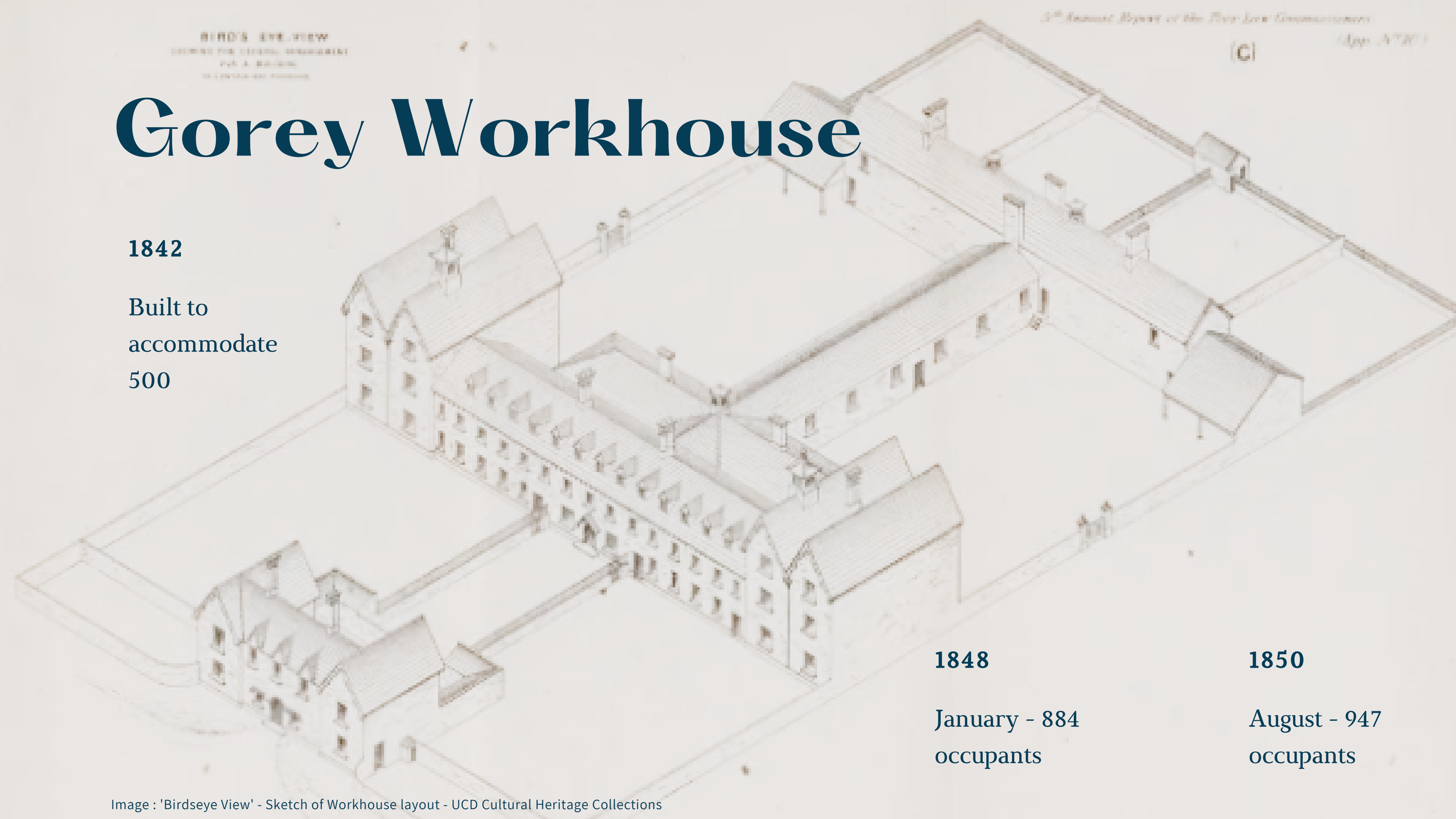
Image : 'Birdseye View' - Sketch of Workhouse layout - UCD Cultural Heritage Collections

Famine in County Wexford

The county did not experience the ravages of famine to the same degree as Munster and the west of Ireland. However the impact on the cottier and labourer class was devastating.

Their hardship can be measured by the numbers resorting to the assistance of the four Workhouses in the county.

Gorey Workhouse



1842

Built to accommodate 500

1848

January - 884 occupants

1850

August - 947 occupants

Image : 'Birdseye View' - Sketch of Workhouse layout - UCD Cultural Heritage Collections

A day in the workhouse

7am Prayers and inspection

8am Breakfast (stirabout, a weak porridge)

Work -
Labouring for men
Domestic or nursing work for women

Dinner of potatoes and milk

8pm Bed

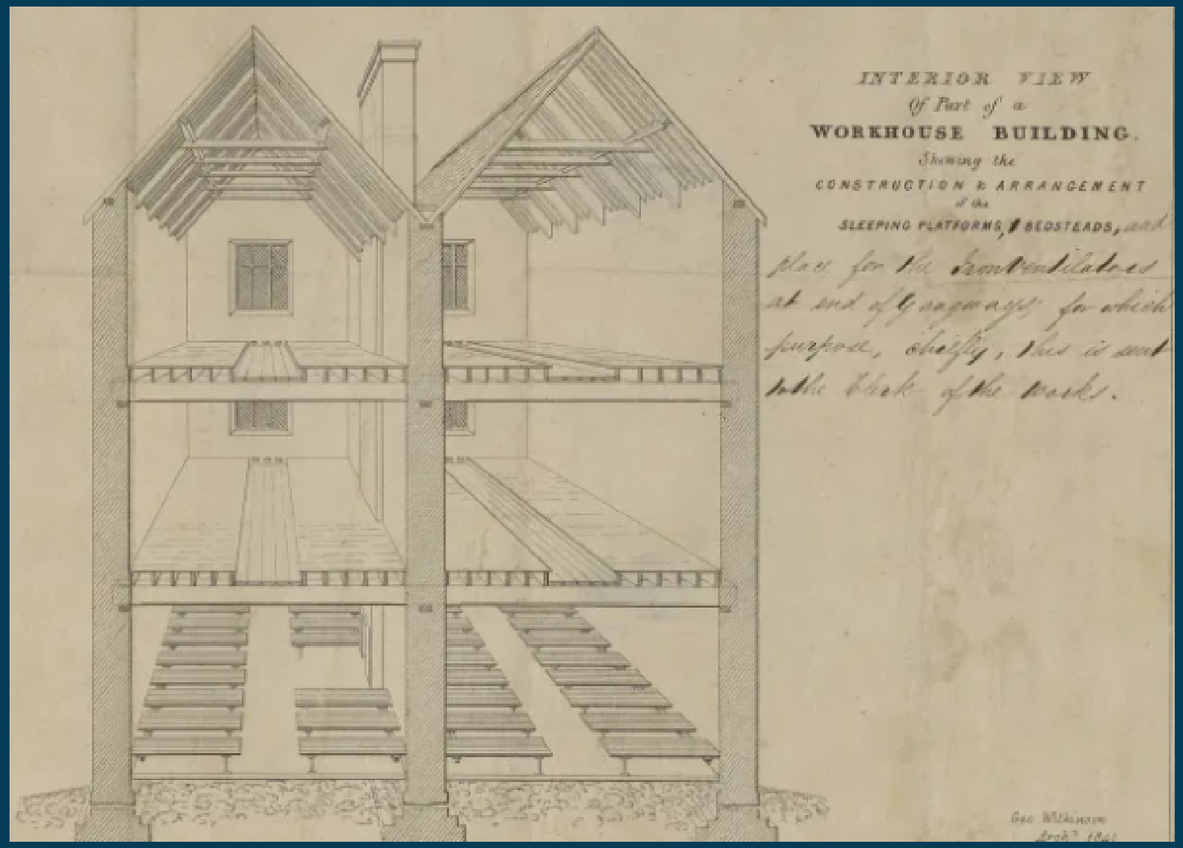


Image : "Interior view of part of a workhouse building shewing the construction & arrangement of the sleeping platform, bedsteads," UCD Cultural Heritage Collections

Why Female Orphan Assisted Migration?

Girls were perceived as a burden on the ratepayer. Their migration would:

- Alleviate workhouse overcrowding

- Provide a new labour force of domestic servants

- Adjust the gender balance in the colonies

The female population of New South Wales increased from

33% in **1846** to **43%** in **1850**

The cost of Migration

The average cost to keep an occupant in Gorey workhouse in 1850 1s. 3d. (1 shilling and 3 pence) per week.

The Board of Guardians paid up to £5 per orphan for their clothes & transport as far as Plymouth.

The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission (CLEC) paid the remainder of the costs, using funds from land sales in Australia

The selection process

Girls were selected for the scheme and assessed by the Workhouse Board of Guardians, then the regional Poor Law Inspector. A final assessment was undertaken by the Emigration Officer, Lieutenant Henry.

Each girl was vaccinated against small pox, checked for good health, morals and ability to work.

Background image : excerpt of Gorey Union Workhouse Minutes. Wexford County Archives

In Gorey, 40 girls were initially selected

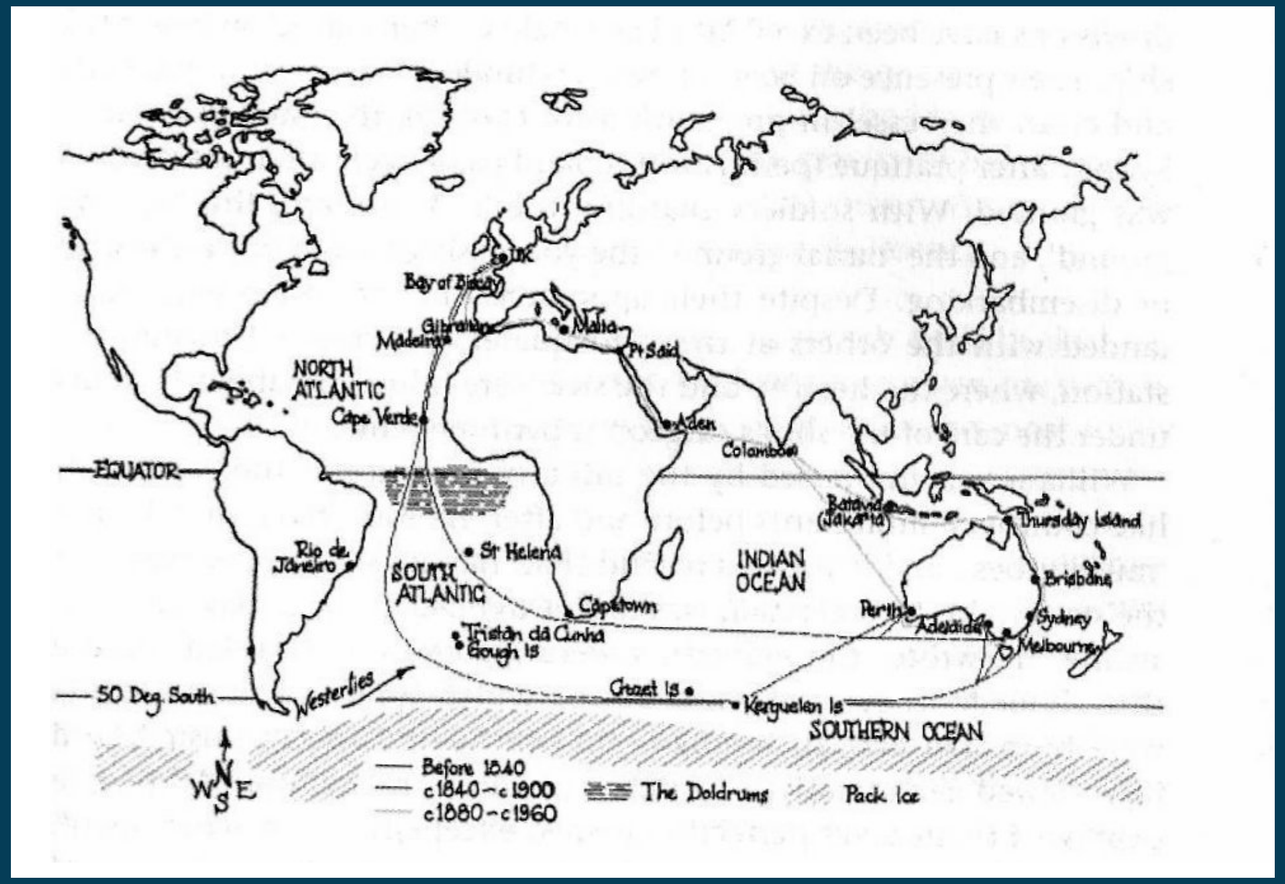


Image : Routes taken by ships from Britain to Australia ‘before 1840 to 1960'. Trevor McClaughlin.

21 left Ireland for Australia

The wooden chest

Image : A wooden travelling chest with a keyhole and two large hinges. 'Margaret Hurley's wooden chest'. Sydney Living Museums on loan from Rose-Marie Perry. (c) Jamie North

Each girl was provided with items specified by the Commissioners.

'A wooden chest, with a lock, in which to keep their belongings

If Catholic, a bible, if Protestant, a prayerbook.

Six shifts, two flannel petticoats, six pair stockings, two pair shoes, two gowns one of which must be made of some warm material.'

Bonnets were also included as were sewing materials including threads.

Aged just 14, Celia Edwards received two pairs of shoes prior to her departure, possibly her first footwear.

Children (those under 15) traditionally went barefoot.

'New Liverpool'

Fifteen girls left Gorey Union workhouse on 17 April 1849.

From Dublin Port, a steam packet took them to Plymouth in south west England.
They set sail on the 'New Liverpool' with 186 other girls from around the country.

After 15 weeks at sea, they arrived in Port Phillip, New South Wales on 9 August 1849.

Image : Sketch of passengers titled 'Emigrant Ship Between Decks', from the Illustrated London News, 17 August 1850.
State Library of NSW

Gorey's 'New Liverpool' girls 1849

Eliza Brien	**Grace Brien**	**Mary Canavan**	**Mary Carley**	**Jane Coleburne**
15, Castletown	18, Gorey	15, Gorey	18, Bolachreen	16, Gorey
Susan Cooper	**Ann Doyle**	**Eliza Doyle**	**Celia Edwards**	**Sarah Hanlon**
15, Wexford	16, Gorey	16, Gorey	14, Gorey	19, Gorey
Mary Hanlon	**Mary Quinn**	**Mary Ryan**	**Margaret Sullivan**	**Ann Walsh**
15, Gorey	15, Gorey	18, Ballycanew	15, Gorey	18, Gorey

Image : 'Birdseye View' - Sketch of Workhouse layout - UCD Cultural Heritage Collections

Other Wexford girls on the 'New Liverpool'

Enniscorthy Union

Mary Brien, 17
Fanny Burn (Byrne), 19
Ellen Curran, 16
Catherine Curry, 18
Alice Donnell (Donnelly), 17
Mary Doyle, 15
Hanna Fitzgerald, 17
Judith Flood, 15
Mary Flood, 17
Eliza Hickey, 18
Maria Kelly, 18
Mary Kelly, 18
Ann (Anne) Kenny, 19
Johanna Kenny, 17
Ellen Kenny, 16
Maria (Merianne) Leary, 18
Catherine Mahon (Mahony), 15
Eliza Murphy, 17
Mary Murphy, 16
Ellen Quirk, 18
Mary Quirk, 16
Catherine Redmond, 19
Margaret Sullivan, 18
Alice Sweeny, 15

New Ross Union

Catherine Doyle, 15
Jane Dunne, 18
Catherine Grady, 17
Mary Griffin, 20
Margaret Murphy, 18
Margaret Neil, 18
Margaret Price, 17
Ellen Rice, 18
Mary Rice, 20

'Tippoo Saib'

Six girls left Gorey Union workhouse in late March, 1850.

From Dublin Port they joined a steamer at the North Wall, arriving in Plymouth 2 days later.

The 'Tippoo Saib' sailed from Plymouth on 8 April 1850, arriving in Sydney on 30 July that year.

Image : Ship in full sail titled 'Emigrants arriving, Sydney Harbour,' N.S.W., 1853, Thomas Picken. National Library of Australia

'Tipoo Saib' girls 1850

Mary Burnes (Byrne)

16, Gorey

Ann Byrne

18, Camolin

Alice 'Ally' Murphy

16, Camolin

Johanna Redmond

18, Monamolin

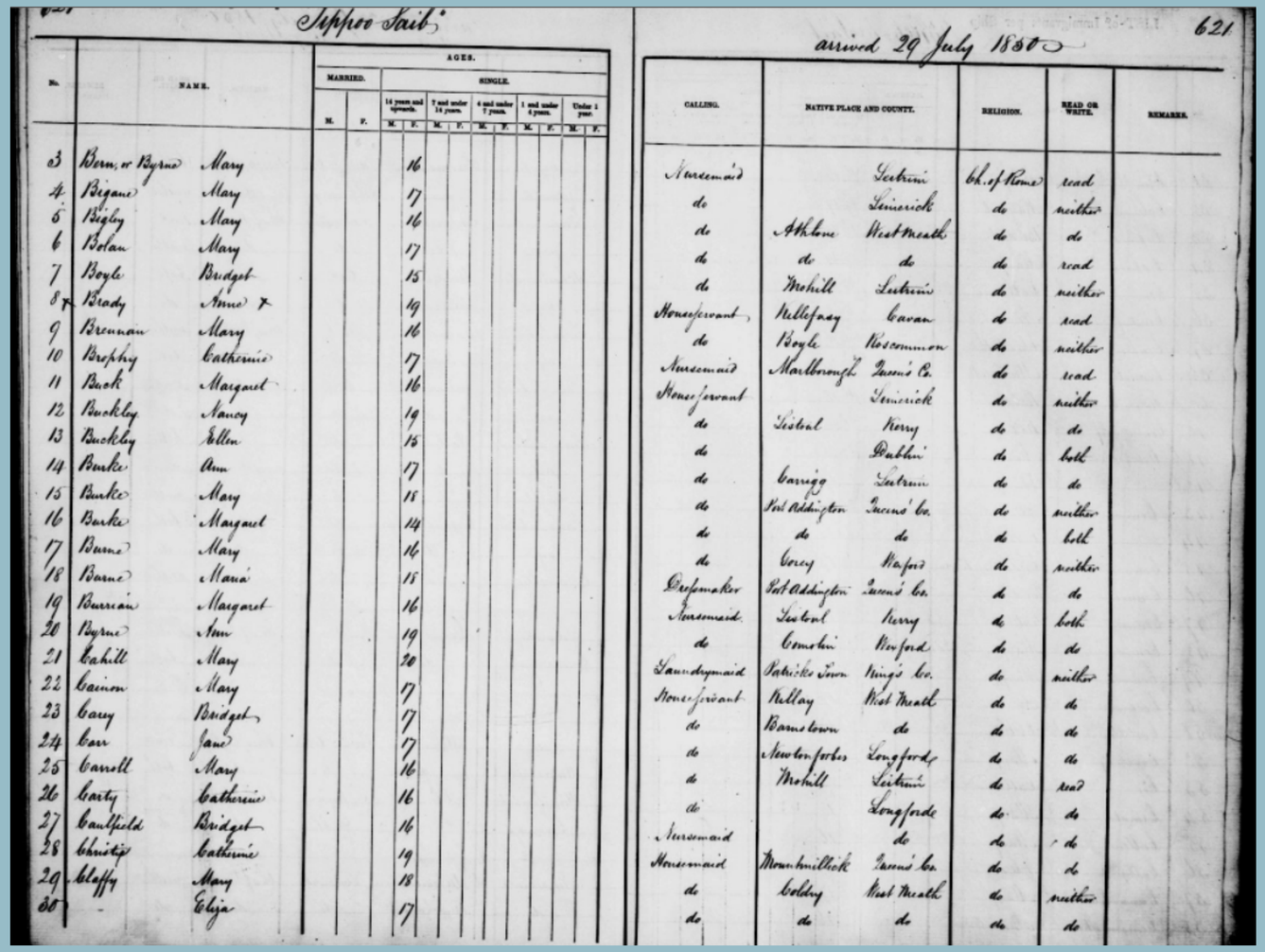
Ann Sullivan

18, Rathdrum

Catherine Wall*

18, Kilpipe

*Workhouse to be ascertained, might be Shilllelagh



Tippoo Saib

arrived 29 July 1850

621

No.	NAME.		AGES. MARRIED. M.	MARRIED. F.	SINGLE. 14 years and upwards. M.	SINGLE. 14 years and upwards. F.	SINGLE. 7 and under 14 years. M.	SINGLE. 7 and under 14 years. F.	SINGLE. 1 and under 7 years. M.	SINGLE. 1 and under 7 years. F.	SINGLE. Under 1 year. M.	SINGLE. Under 1 year. F.	CALLING.	NATIVE PLACE AND COUNTY.		RELIGION.	READ OR WRITE.	REMARKS.
3	Burn, or Byrne	Mary				16							Nurse maid		Leitrim	RC of Rome	read	
4	Bigane	Mary				17							do		Limerick	do	neither	
5	Bigby	Mary				16							do	Athlone	West Meath	do	do	
6	Bolan	Mary				17							do	do	do	do	read	
7	Boyle	Bridget				15							do	Mohill	Leitrim	do	neither	
8	Brady	Anne				19							House servant	Killefaney	Cavan	do	read	
9	Brennan	Mary				16							do	Boyle	Roscommon	do	neither	
10	Brophy	Catherine				17							Nurse maid	Marlborough	Queen's Co.	do	read	
11	Buck	Margaret				16							House servant		Limerick	do	neither	
12	Buckley	Nancy				19							do	Listoal	Kerry	do	do	
13	Buckley	Ellen				15							do		Dublin	do	both	
14	Burke	Ann				17							do	Carrigg	Leitrim	do	do	
15	Burke	Mary				15							do	Port Addington	Queen's Co.	do	neither	
16	Burke	Margaret				14							do	do	do	do	both	
17	Burns	Mary				16							do	Gorey	Wexford	do	neither	
18	Barns	Maria				15							Dressmaker	Port Addington	Queen's Co.	do	do	
19	Burrian	Margaret				16							Nurse maid	Leitrim	Kerry	do	both	
20	Byrne	Ann				19							do	Camolin	Wexford	do	do	
21	Cahill	Mary				20							Laundry maid	Patricks Town	Kings Co.	do	neither	
22	Cainon	Mary				17							House servant	Killay	West Meath	do	do	
23	Cary	Bridget				17							do	Barnestown	do	do	do	
24	Carr	Jane				17							do	Newtonforbes	Longford	do	do	
25	Carroll	Mary				16							do	Mohill	Leitrim	do	read	
26	Carty	Catherine				16							do		Longford	do	do	
27	Caulfield	Bridget				16							Nurse maid		do	do	do	
28	Christie	Catherine				19							House maid	Mountmellick	Queen's Co.	do	do	
29	Claffy	Mary				18							do	Coldry	West Meath	do	neither	
30	-	Eliza				17							do	do	do	do	do	

Image : Hand written ledger from 'Tippoo Saib' ship, detailing the list of passengers arriving 29 July 1850. New South Wales Government State Archives and Records

Life on board

Meals

Compared to 2 sparse meals a day in the workhouse, the girls had half a pound of meat daily as well as peas, rice, preserved potatoes, tea, coffee, sugar and butter.

Work and Education

Quarters were kept clean, clothing repaired, knitting and sewing skills improved.

Reading classes were provided.

Australia

On arrival, the girls were housed in Immigration Depots until indentures were arranged for them.

Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney housed hundreds of new arrivals.

Image : painting of Hyde Park Barracks, a red brick, three storey building behind a tall wall.
State Library New South Wales.

The Hiring Room

Indentures were agreed with wages on a sliding scale according to age.

14 year olds received £7 per annum

Age 15 - £8 p.a.

Age 16 - £9 p.a.

Age 17 upward - £10 p.a.

Image : Drawing of Hiring Room with girls seated at the edge of the room while well dressed ladies stand in groups, interviewing other girls.
'Hiring immigrants at the depot, Hyde Park', Australian Town and Country Journal, 19 July 1879. State Library of NSW

Work

Their contemporaries in the workhouse were not paid for work carried out and so, the salaries received, along with bed and board, provided an opportunity for independence.

However, compared to domestic servants in Ireland and Australia, the girls earned considerably less.

Provided both parties to the agreement were happy, the employment was permanent.

Either party could apply to break the contract if terms were not met.

Contracts included the employer's responsibility to the employee, including payment of health care, and attendance at weekly church services. Bed and board was included.

Girls were not contracted to single men or to inn keepers

Life in Australia

Of the 21 girls from Gorey, research to date tells us 9 were married, all within a short time of arrival :

Grace Brien married Edmund Towns in 1850

Mary Canavan married Emmanuel Serong in 1851, and Norman McDonald in 1861. She had 7 children.

Susan Cooper married Thomas Melbourne in 1852; they had 9 children.

Eliza Doyle married William Smith in 1852; they had 7 children

Celia Edwards married John Baxter in 1854; she had 1 child.

Sarah Hanlon married George Clarke; they had 4 children

Bridget Kelly married Richard Carew Sullivan in 1850; they had 10 children - she died in childbirth

Mary Quinn married Richard Filer in 1850; they had 'several' children

Johanna Redmond married John Downs in 1851, and Benjamin Taylor in 1858; she had 8 children.

Image : Sketch of arriving passengers landing at the Queen's Wharf, Melbourne; a busy port scene with steamships and sailing ships in background.
State Library Victoria

For 5 of the New Liverpool girls their arrival in Melbourne did not signify the end of their travels by sea.

They travelled on the steamer 'Raven' to Portland, a small coastal settlement approximately 400km west of Melbourne.

From there, they were indentured to various businesses in Port Fairy, 75km east of Portland.

Mary Canavan, employed by Joseph Silver
£8, 12 months

Ann Doyle, employed by Robert Smith
£10, 12 months

Eliza Doyle, employed by Robert Smith
£10, 12 months

Celia Edwards, employed by W. Thompson
£6, 12 months

Eliza Brien, employed by W. Thompson
£6, 12 months

Image : Street plan of Port Fairy and township of Belfast

Johanna Redmond, Monamolin

Records for the girls on the 'Tippoo Saib' are sparse with the exception of Johanna.

Arriving in Sydney aged 16, she couldn’t read or write although the workhouse minutes record her skills as ‘read, knit, sew & wash’ Noted as a Dairymaid, on arrival her name was amended to 'Redman'.

On 22 December 1851 she married John Downs - they had 'at least' 3 children.

In 1858, on 24 September, she married Benjamin Taylor; a further 5 children were born.

In 1869 Johanna, aged 37, was jailed for vagrancy, her husband's whereabouts unknown.

Their 3 sons were sent to Diamantina Orphanage; the whereabouts of their daughters was unknown.
Her first 3 children are not recorded.

Those left behind

Further research is required to identify those left behind and the lives they led. There are few clues as to why they didn't make the final selection.

The workhouse minute books name numerous girls as potential participants in the scheme - however these young women were not found in the Australian records.

The Registers of Admissions and Registers of Discharges detailing the arrivals and departures of workhouse residents for the four County Wexford workhouses have not survived. Burial records are not available.

Their names are :

Mary Alfred
Anne Brien
Eliza Brislawn
Mary Byrne [1]
Mary Byrne [2]
Annie Clarke
Mary Donnelly
Sarah Donovan
Mary Fitzgerald
Ellen Howlett
Biddy Kelly
Mary Kelly
Mary Kinsella
Eliza Kirwan
Mary Kirwan
Mary McCarthy
Margaret Moore
Margaret Mulligan
Sarah Mulligan
Ann Murphy
Kathy Neil
Mary Neil
Margaret Noctor
Mary Noctor
Rose Sweeney
Mary Thornton
Catherine Wallace

20 Ships Sailed to Australia between 1848 and 1850 arriving in Sydney, Adelaide, and Port Philip (Melbourne)

Earl Grey departed 3 June 1848 - arrived Sydney 6 October 1848
Roman Emperor departed 27 July 1848 - arrived Adelaide 23 October 1848
Lady Kennaway departed 11 September 1848- arrived Port Philip 6 December 1848
Inchinnan departed 4 November 1848 - arrived Sydney 13 February 1849
Digby departed 16 December 1848 - arrived Sydney 4 April 1849
Pemberton departed 29 January 1849 - arrived Port Philip 14 May 1849
Inconstant departed 15 February 1849 - arrived Adelaide 7 June 1849
Lady Peel departed 14 March 1849 - arrived Sydney 3 July 1849
New Liverpool departed 25 April 1849 - arrived Port Philip 9 August 1849
Elgin departed 31 May 1849 - arrived Adelaide 10 September 1849
William & Mary departed 25 July 1849 - arrived Sydney 21 November 1849
Lismoyne departed 22 August 1849 - arrived Sydney 29 November 1849
Diadem departed 13 October 1849 Port Philip - arrived 10 January 1850
Panama departed 6 October 1849 Sydney - arrived 12 January 1850
Thomas Arbuthnot departed 28 October 1849 - arrived Sydney 3 February 1850
Derwent departed 9 November 1849 - arrived Port Philip 25 February 1850
Eliza Caroline departed 31 December 1849 - arrived Port Philip 31 March 1850
John Knox departed 6 December 1849 - arrived Sydney 29 April 1850
Maria departed 7 March 1850 - arrived Sydney 29 June 1850
Tippoo Saib departed 8 April 1850 - arrived Sydney 30 July 1850

Sources

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Wexford County Archives. WX/BG 94/1/6 -11 Gorey Poor Law Union minute books.

This digital exhibition was researched and compiled by Rosemary Hayes, BA (Hons) Culture & Heritage Studies, while on placement at Wexford County Archives for a Masters in Public History and Cultural Heritage at the University of Limerick.

This research took place between February and May, 2021.