

Chapter 28: Cork county home

Introduction

- 28.1 Cork union workhouse was built in 1840-41 on a twelve-acre site at Skahabeg North Townland, now Douglas Road. The workhouse was based on the standard design of the Poor Law Commissioners' architect, George Wilkinson, and had accommodation for 2,600 'inmates'. The main accommodation block had the master's quarters at the centre with male and female wings to each side. At the rear, a bakehouse and washhouse were connected via a central dining hall and chapel to an infirmary and 'idiots wards'. The premises were subsequently extended with the addition of a fever hospital and a school.¹ In 1870, the Cork board of guardians invited the Sisters of Mercy at St Mary's of the Isle, Sharman Crawford Street, to take charge of the workhouse hospital.² The Sisters of Mercy had already established a 'House of Mercy' for homeless women and orphans in the city.³ As well as nursing the sick poor, the Sisters were also tasked with teaching workhouse children and caring for unmarried mothers and their children. The board of guardians administered the Cork union workhouse and oversaw admissions of the eligible groups including unmarried mothers and their children. Maternity services were available, and the 'Union' played a central role in the provision of institutional care of single expectant women, and unmarried mothers and their children, for over a century as the Cork union workhouse, then renamed the Cork County Home and District Hospital and subsequently named St Finbarr's Hospital.

Sources

- 28.2 The following are the main sources for this chapter. A full description is given in Part 5: Archives.

Combined Indoor Relief Registers, Cork County Home and District Hospital, 1921-60

- 28.3 The Cork City and County Archive holds a largely intact collection of Combined Indoor Relief Registers relating to the Cork Union Workhouse/Cork County Home and District Hospital/St Finbarr's Hospital for the period January 1921 to March 1960. All admissions to Cork County Home and District Hospital were recorded in

¹ Peter Higginbotham, Cork Union Workhouse. <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Cork/>

² Sister M. Emmanuel Browne, *A tale of two hospitals: St Finbarr's Hospital-Regional Hospital*, (D&A O'Leary, Cork, 1989).

³ Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. <http://sistersofmercy.ie/cork-city/>

the Combined Indoor Registers. Medical cases, maternity cases, children admitted for boarding out, the elderly and all classes of destitute poor were recorded chronologically in the registers. Each admission was assigned a unique register number. Personal details recorded in the registers included name; date of admission; age; gender; marital status; residence prior to admission; occupation; religion; reason for admission; name of spouse; admitted by; date of discharge and number of days in the institution. The recording of patient details appears to have been strictly observed by the gate porter and administrators at the home. However, discharge dates of women who entered the institution as single expectant women were frequently left blank. This made it difficult to establish how long most single expectant women and single mothers spent in the institution. A separate section on each page recorded discharges and deaths which occurred in the institution. As no register number was recorded against those discharged, or those who died in the institution, it was not always possible to establish if those details related to women and children under the Commission's remit. Children admitted to the institution were classified by age and designated 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate'.

- 28.4 Registers relating to the years 1921-23 make up part of the collection of Cork Union workhouse indoor relief registers 1840-1925. This collection is on microfilm which proved to be a difficult medium for the purposes of identifying and extracting information relating to the admission of single expectant women and associated children.
- 28.5 The combined indoor relief registers for Cork county home and district hospital cover the years 1925-57. This collection has survived in its original form and consists of 55 ledgers. The indoor relief register relating to 1959-60 is part of a 2009 accession from St Finbarr's Hospital (formerly Cork county home).
- 28.6 The combined indoor relief registers are 400-page ledgers. They recorded 30 admissions on each page and approximately 12,000 admissions per ledger. The Commission examined 60 ledgers, covering the period 1921-60. Over 720,000 admissions to Cork county home, recorded in the period under review, were scrutinised. The Commission identified 13,283 admissions as maternity cases: 10,965 married women and 2,318 single women.

- 28.7 It was reasonably straightforward to link a new-born infant with a married woman in the registers. Other than emergency cases, married women entered the institution two to three days before the birth of a child. As a result, both mother and child appear in the registers at a short interval. As most married women admitted to Cork county home gave birth there, it was easy to make an association between married women and their infants. Married women were always recorded with the prefix 'Mrs'.
- 28.8 Conversely, because of the negative familial and social mores associated with single motherhood and the abandonment of familial and social support networks, most single expectant women were left with little option but to seek admission to the county home at an early stage of pregnancy. In many cases this resulted in a stay of up to six months in the institution before the birth of a child. Consequently, the admission of a single woman, and the subsequent birth of her child, may not be recorded in the same register and a trawl of two or more separate registers was often necessary to make an association between a single woman and her child.
- 28.9 In the earlier registers, particularly those relating to the 1920s and early 1930s, particulars of individual admissions were not comprehensively recorded and the column where the 'debility' or reason for admission should have been recorded were usually blank. Furthermore, administrators at Cork county home made no conscious effort to identify women as 'unmarried mothers' in the registers. While all women admitted to the home are recorded as being 'married' or 'single' there is little to indicate that they were maternity cases. However, all married women were recorded with the prefix 'Mrs'. In the case of single women, forename and surname were recorded. In some instances, a handwritten (and sometimes barely legible) note which reads 'Child in 12345' indicated where a woman's child was entered in the register. This facilitated efforts to link single women and their children, although this still required a search of two, or more, registers.
- 28.10 The registers had a section where admissions of 'illegitimate' children were recorded. A running total of 'illegitimate' children appeared at the bottom of each page. However, as this running total included older 'illegitimate' children admitted as surgical or medical cases, it could not be relied on to identify infants born to single women in the institution. Births which occurred in the institution were recorded systematically and in some detail and entries relating to new-born infants were recorded as being either 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate'. In some instances, a

handwritten entry 'Mother in 12345' may appear next to the name of a new-born infant, which assisted the task of linking a single woman and her child. In cases where the register number of the mother was not noted with a new-born, a trawl of the register index revealed a match.

- 28.11 This methodology successfully identified most single women who gave birth in Cork county home during the period under review. However, from the early 1930s, many expectant single women were transferred to extern institutions, most notably to Bessborough, and gave birth there. In cases where expectant single women were admitted to the county home and subsequently transferred to Bessborough, the county home registers give no indication that such admissions were in fact 'maternity cases'. However, associated historical records, such as the County Home Matrons' Journals, South Cork Board of Public Assistance Minutes, South Cork Board of Public Assistance files and the South Cork Board of Public Assistance Managers' Orders proved to be invaluable keys in unlocking further information relating to single expectant mothers not readily discernible from the county home registers alone.

Other records

- 28.12 Apart from the institutional registers, the Cork City and County Archive holds a substantial collection of historical documentation relating to the Cork Union Workhouse/Cork County Home/ St Finbarr's Hospital. The collection comprises over 600 individual bound volumes and relate in the main to the day to day running and staffing of the institution. The surviving records are not concerned solely with the institutional care of single expectant women, or single mothers and their children, but references to them can be identified across the disparate files which make up this collection. Files which were of most relevance to the Commission are as follows:

Cork County Home, Matrons' Journals, Jan 1927 - March 1945

- 28.13 The available Matrons' Journals recorded correspondence between the matron of Cork county home and the secretary of the South Cork Board of Health and Public Assistance. The journals also recorded details about the discharge of patients from Cork county home to extern institutions and hospitals, including Bessborough, along with their unique county home register number. This allowed for the identification of single women who were transferred to Bessborough before giving birth.

South Cork Board of Public Assistance Minutes, 1924-42 (28 volumes)

- 28.14 These files recorded details of all patients discharged from Cork county home to extern institutions including Bessborough. It was possible to locate all named women transferred to Bessborough in the years 1924-42 in the county home registers and to identify them as single expectant women. This enabled the confirmation of information relating to single women and their children already gleaned from the county home registers and revealed information relating to hitherto unidentified expectant single women transferred from the county home to Bessborough in the period 1924-42.

Cork Board of Public Assistance, Managers' Orders, 1942-69 (16 volumes)

- 28.15 The Cork Board of Public Assistance Managers' Orders recorded the Board's activities in minute detail. Boxes six to twelve (files 19-36) relate to the South Cork district. These records facilitated identification of single expectant women transferred between Cork county home and Bessborough in the period 1942-60. Patients transferred to extern institutions, including Bessborough, were recorded with their associated county home register number. The Managers' Orders also enabled the confirmation of information relating to single women and their children already gleaned from the county home registers and revealed information relating to hitherto unidentified expectant single women transferred from the county home to Bessborough in the period 1942-60.

South Cork Board of Public Assistance files, 1922-60 (158 boxes)

- 28.16 This collection contains the original admission tickets given by the matron of Cork county home to single expectant women on their transfer from Cork county home to Bessborough. The admission tickets recorded the names of the women and their dates of transfer. This facilitated their identification in the indoor registers.
- 28.17 These auxiliary collections facilitated the identification of 380 expectant single women who would have been difficult, if not impossible, to locate through the county home registers alone.

Records of deaths Cork County Home and Hospital 1931-40

- 28.18 This is the only surviving death register relating to Cork county home. It facilitated the Commission's efforts to identify infant and child deaths which occurred in the institution in the years 1931-40. This register also recorded if the South Cork Board of Assistance allotted a shroud, coffin or burial plot to deceased patients.

Conditions in the 1920s

28.19 In the period 1920-22 various changes to poor law arrangements were implemented (see Chapter 1). In Cork, Séamus Lankford of the Cork board of guardians advocated separate institutions for the various categories of ‘inmates’ living in the Cork workhouse. However, in 1921 the general mixed workhouse system remained as the primary form of poor relief.⁴ On taking up his role as Senior Vice-Guardian in 1921, Mr Lankford reported:

The first issue which commissioners had to deal with was the appalling dirt throughout the workhouse. The male and female infirm wards were in an indescribably filthy condition...A meal being served in the female ward was served to inmates squatting on the floor...the bakery was in a filthy condition...blankets were rat and moth-eaten and had to be destroyed...bed linen was difficult to keep clean due to an antiquated laundry system...kitchens, bathrooms and toilets were in a state of disrepair...the mortality rate among young children was very high...and a floating population of undesirables had made the workhouse their home.⁵

28.20 In 1921, the matron of the Cork workhouse made an urgent appeal to Mr Lankford to provide alternative accommodation for unmarried women and their children outside of the workhouse setting. This led to the establishment of Bessborough mother and baby home - see Chapter 18. The indoor registers of the Cork Union workhouse show that, of the 76 single mothers living in the workhouse during 1922, 11 opted to, or were eligible for, transfer to Bessborough.

28.21 In April 1924, the Cork County Scheme for the reorganisation of poor law institutions was given statutory recognition under Section 3 of the *Local Government (Temporary Provisions) Act 1923* by the *County Scheme Order, Cork No. 1, 1924*.⁶ Under this scheme, all poor law unions in the city and county were grouped into three districts: North Cork, South Cork and West Cork districts. Each district was administered by a board of health or a board of public assistance. In North Cork, the workhouse at Mallow was designated as the county home and the Fermoy workhouse was designated as a county hospital.⁷ In West Cork, the Clonakilty workhouse became the county home and Skibbereen became a county

⁴ See, Virginia Crossman, *Poverty and the Poor Law in Ireland, 1850-1914*, (Liverpool University Press, 2013)

⁵ Siobhan Lankford, *The hope and the sadness: Personal recollections of troubled times in Ireland*, (Tower Books, Cork, 1980)

⁶ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1924/sro/927/made/en/print>

⁷ Fermoy was subsequently sometimes described as a ‘county home’.

hospital. The South Cork district had a board of public assistance which was responsible for the Cork union workhouse. This was renamed the Cork county home and district hospital. In later years it was given the name St Finbarr's.

28.22 In 1927, the Commission on the Relief of the Sick and Destitute Poor reported that Cork county home had a good maternity department with separate accommodation for married and unmarried women but stated that the classification of patients living in the institution 'leaves much to be desired'. The commission reported that 23 unmarried mothers and 55 children were living among 'lunatics, imbeciles and idiots' in the home. The commission also noted that, in March 1926, 1,020 single mothers, 1,000 'illegitimate' children and 500 'illegitimate' infants were living under 'workhouse conditions' in county homes throughout the country. The Cork county scheme did not envisage that unmarried women and their children would continue to be accommodated in Cork county home. It was to be for 'aged and infirm persons, chronic invalids, idiots and epileptics'. The attached district hospital would treat medical, surgical and maternity cases and those suffering infectious and contagious diseases. It was envisaged that single expectant women would be admitted to Cork county home to avail of maternity services only and then transfer to what the county scheme described as the 'auxiliary home' at Bessborough⁸ with their babies. A report on county homes by the Department of Health in 1951 acknowledged that the county schemes made insufficient provision 'for classes such as unmarried mothers and children' and that county homes had continued to be occupied by 'a miscellaneous population for which no special provision had been made'.⁹ In the period 1922-60, many single women refused to transfer to Bessborough following the birth of their baby and many more were ineligible for admission to Bessborough because they were on their second or subsequent pregnancy. In 1950, an inter-departmental committee, set up to examine the use of county homes, established that on 31 March 1950, 450 unmarried mothers and 829 children were living in county homes throughout the country.¹⁰ Cork county home played a significant role in the provision of institutional care for single expectant women, and unmarried women with more than one child, until the early 1960s.

⁸ Bessborough was not an auxiliary home in the sense that Pelletstown and Tuam were. It was not directly under the control of the board of public assistance.

⁹ Department of Health, *White paper on the reconstruction of county homes and improved care of the aged and other classes at present in county homes*, (Stationery Office, Dublin, 1951), 7.

¹⁰ Dept of Health, *White paper on the reconstruction of county homes*, 9.

The Women 1922-60

- 28.23 From the available records, the Commission established that, in the years 1922-60, 13,283 women were admitted to Cork county home as maternity cases. Of these, 10,965 were married women and 2,318 were unmarried women. Of the 2,318 single expectant women, 2,241 appear to be first time pregnancies; 64 were recorded as second pregnancies; ten as third pregnancies; two as fourth pregnancies and one woman was recorded as being on her fifth pregnancy.
- 28.24 In the period 1922-30, the number of single women who entered the home as maternity cases was twice that of married women. The number of married women availing of maternity services in the institution increased from 60 in 1930 to 1,084 in 1960. This mirrored a general trend in Cork city which saw the number of institutional maternity cases/institutional births rise from 40% in 1944 to 66% in 1954.¹¹ Conversely, the number of single women availing of maternity services in the institution decreased from a high of 98 in 1926 to an average of 14 in the years 1957 to 1960.
- 28.25 In his report for 1954, Dr J C Saunders, the medical officer of health, stated that available bed accommodation in the city's maternity hospitals 'had not kept pace with the demands made upon it'.¹² A discussion document on a suggested mother and child services scheme in Cork in the 1950s noted that, owing to the shortage of maternity beds in the city, hospital confinements were restricted to 'difficult' pregnancies and where home conditions were unsuitable for confinement.¹³ Increased and sustained demand for institutional maternity care, particularly in the post-war period, may have influenced administrators at Cork county home to prioritise the admission of married women over single women. In the 1950s, the Department of Health was trying to 'raise the status' of county homes as institutions catering for the elderly and the chronic sick, so it put greater emphasis on its existing policy of removing unmarried mothers from county homes. The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary had also agreed to admit single women on their second or subsequent pregnancy to Bessborough at this time (see Chapter 18). It appears that in the 1950s there was a concerted effort by local and central health authorities to discontinue the practice of accommodating

¹¹ J.C. Saunders, *County Borough of Cork: Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the year 1954*, (Cork, 1955).

¹² *ibid*

¹³ NAI, Department of Health file: HLTH/M/33/9

unmarried mothers in county homes for periods longer than that typically associated with the provision of maternity services.

28.26 Admissions of single expectant women to Cork county home were at their highest in the years 1922-33 and peaked in 1926 when 98 women were admitted. An average of 75 single expectant women were admitted annually in this period. There is a notable decrease in admissions in 1934. This followed the opening of the maternity hospital in Bessborough and suggests that more single expectant women sought admission to Bessborough rather than Cork county home at that juncture. Admissions of single expectant women to Cork county home began to increase from 1944 and remained high until 1948. One of the reasons for this was the increase in the number of children born to single women in the war years 1939-45. The General Register Office (GRO) recorded that 1,878 children were born to single women in 1938. By 1945 this figure had increased to 2,626.¹⁴ This increase was accompanied by increased demand for institutional care for single women and their children. The other major factor which may have influenced more single expectant women to seek admission to Cork county home in the mid-1940s was the overcrowding experienced in Bessborough, Sean Ross and Castlepollard. Admissions of single expectant women to the county home began to decrease again from 1949. This downward trend continued throughout the 1950s. In 1958 a new maternity hospital opened on site and the institution was renamed St Finbarr's Hospital. While single expectant women continued to be admitted to the institution in the 1960s and later, they availed of maternity services only and were discharged a few days after giving birth.

Age on admission

28.27 Analysis of available records shows that the age of single expectant women admitted to Cork county home ranged from 14 to 50 years: the average age on admission was 24 years. Single women aged between 18 and 29 years accounted for 81% of admissions while 5% were 17 years or younger. The remaining 14% were women aged between 30 and 50 years.

Occupations

28.28 Of the 2,318 single women admitted to Cork county home, 98% were recorded as a domestic servant, factory hand or other unskilled worker; a small number are

¹⁴ Annual reports of the Registrar General of marriages, births and deaths in Ireland 1938-45.

recorded as a barmaid, shop assistant, nurse, millworker, typist and photographer. Thirty women (4%) stated that they were widowed and four are recoded as orphans.

Address prior to admission

- 28.29 Of the 2,318 single women admitted to Cork county home, over 92% gave their address prior to admission as Cork city or county. 7.5% of women were admitted from Bessborough, 2.7% from the Braemar Home for Protestant Girls and 1.5% were admitted from a Good Shepherd Convent.¹⁵ 1.5% were of 'no fixed abode'.

Admission Pathways

- 28.30 Single expectant women, and unmarried women accompanied by a child, who sought admission to Cork county home were required to get an admission ticket from the South Cork Board of Public Assistance or one of its agents. Most women secured an admission ticket from local dispensary medical officers (doctors) who most probably confirmed their pregnancy. The admission ticket ensured that the South Cork board would assume responsibility for the maintenance of a woman and her child in the county home. However, it is clear that the matron frequently admitted single expectant women who presented without an admission ticket as she considered that 'to refuse them shelter in their plight would be a grave responsibility'. The matron told the board that one in four single expectant women admitted to the home were from outside the South Cork district and were asked to make a contribution to the cost of their maintenance.

- 28.31 Women who sought admission to the home without an admission ticket were usually from outside the South Cork public assistance district and their maintenance was the responsibility of the North and West Cork health boards or local authorities in their home counties. However, boards of health responsible for these women frequently refused to accept responsibility for their maintenance in Cork county home. The secretary of the South Cork board stated:

That, as it is the experience of the South Cork Board in their dealings with other Boards that liability for maintenance and treatment at the Cork County Home and Hospital is repudiated on the slightest pretext or the merest technicality, the loss in all such cases has to be borne by the ratepayers of South Cork.

¹⁵ Either an industrial school or a Magdalen laundry, most likely the latter.

- 28.32 The South Cork board decided that if this continued, it would terminate its agreements with other boards of health/public assistance and that the county home would be reserved exclusively for 'bona fide' residents of the South Cork district. In order to get around this, many single expectant women from outside the South Cork district, who most probably travelled to Cork for reasons of anonymity, took up temporary residence in lodging houses and hostels in Cork city and secured admission tickets with a city address. Some Cork city addresses associated with the admission of single expectant women appear in the indoor registers with some regularity.
- 28.33 In March 1930, the Mother Superior at Bessborough asked the board's permission to admit single expectant women directly to the mother and baby home rather than going through Cork county home. The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary had opened a maternity ward in Bessborough at that time. The board agreed to admit women from the South Cork district directly to Bessborough on production of an admission ticket secured from the board or one of its agents, but insisted that women from other counties and the other Cork districts were to be admitted to the county home in the usual manner. When the matron of the county home queried this decision the board instructed her to transfer all 'first offenders' to Bessborough regardless of which district they were admitted from. However, most single expectant women admitted to Cork county home did not opt to transfer to Bessborough. In the period 1922-60, 340 women (one in seven) transferred from Cork county home to Bessborough. Although the overwhelming majority of women admitted to Cork county home in this period were first pregnancies, and eligible for admission to Bessborough, the majority chose not to transfer there.
- 28.34 When the new Bessborough maternity hospital opened in 1933, the number of single expectant women seeking admission to Cork county home decreased and the number of women admitted from outside the South Cork district became less of a concern to the board of public assistance. However, from 1939 admissions from outside the South Cork district began to increase. The matron of the county home wrote to the South Cork board with her dilemma:
- I take this opportunity of putting before the Board the difficulties with which I am confronted from time to time, in dealing with the admission of expectant mothers from outside the South Cork area. To admit them, with the probability that they may - mother and child - become a tax on this Board is a serious matter, but to refuse admission to these girls, who are often desperate

and open to grave temptation, is a responsibility I am unwilling to take. Girls in difficulty such as this will naturally endeavour to get away from home, and unless given shelter in Homes such as this, will be forced to seek help in undesirable quarters. As shielding the girl's reputation and helping to restore her self-respect are of primary importance, these objects will not be achieved if the girl's position is exposed through making application to her own Board for cost of maintenance in Bessboro' Home or here.

28.35 The board stated that it recognised the matron's position. Although it did not direct her to refuse admission to single expectant women from outside the South Cork district, it did not agree to bear the cost of maintaining them. The board resolved to contact the secretaries of boards of health in the districts from which the women came to ask them to take responsibility for their maintenance. The South Cork board stated that it did not object to protecting women and their children for a few months but sought to obviate the prospect of assuming liability for boarding out their children for 15 years.

28.36 In 1942, a single expectant woman from North Cork was admitted to Cork county home as an emergency case. The South Cork board contacted the North Cork board which stated that it would not accept responsibility for the woman as her admission to the county home had not been recommended by the medical officer of the North Cork board. Similarly, the Limerick board of health refused to accept responsibility for the maintenance of a woman from Kilmallock as there was no agreement between the Limerick board and Cork county home under the county scheme. The secretary of the South Cork board told members that a grave responsibility rested on them in connection with these and similar cases. He stated:

If they discharged the woman and her child, a tragedy might result or the child might fall into the hands of proselytisers, who were always on the lookout for such victims. If the Board refused such cases admission in the first instance, the expectant mother may have recourse to a variety of alternatives that may have evil social consequences.

28.37 It is clear from the surviving records that the matron of the county home regularly contacted families of single women from outside the South Cork district once they had given birth. It appears that women were much more likely to disclose details about their families and home life in the post-natal period. While the matron

successfully convinced some families to take women and their babies back to the family home, in most cases, she reported that ‘there is not much likelihood that their family and friends will claim them’.

Single women ‘absconding’ from Cork County Home 1922-60

28.38 In the years 1922-60 several women ‘absconded’ from Cork county home. The term ‘absconded’ was applied to women who left the county home without their babies and without arranging for their future care. These cases appear to have been of more concern to the board of public assistance and the DLGPH than the matron of the home. In May 1930, a woman ‘absconded’ from the county home leaving her three-week old baby behind. The board asked the matron what steps she was taking to locate the woman. The matron informed them that the Gardaí had established that the woman was living with her sister in England and asked if they wished to proceed further. The board directed that no further action should be taken in the matter. The DLGPH directed the board to identify the putative father in order to try to recoup the cost of their maintenance in the county home. In 1932, two women ‘absconded’ leaving their children aged 18 and 22 months respectively unaccompanied in the county home. One woman was returned to the home by her father and the other was never heard of again. In May 1938, four women left for mass and did not return. The Gardaí were notified of the ‘child desertion’. Although the matron was obliged to notify absconders to the Gardaí it appears that they did not pursue such women with any real vigour. They took the view that abandoned babies were ‘kept in safety’ in the county home and that they had no power to act in these cases. The matron advised the board that there was ‘little difficulty passing out of Cork County Home unnoticed’ and that there was nothing she could do if a woman decided to leave the institution without her baby. In 1938, the board’s solicitor indicated that legal proceedings could be taken against ‘absconded’ women under Section 12 of the *Children Act 1908* (see Chapter 1) and advised that he would take a test case. He told the board that he had previously tried to have proceedings instituted against an absconder under the *Vagrancy Act*,¹⁶ but the Gardaí considered vagrancy to be a matter for the board and outside their remit. Reports of ‘absconders’ appear throughout the Board of Assistance records during the period under review. It is unclear whether there were any successful prosecutions for child abandonment.

¹⁶ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1847/act/84/enacted/en/print.html>

Violence in the home

28.39 Overcrowding in the Cork mental hospital in the 1920s meant that many people with psychiatric illnesses were living in Cork county home. In the 1930s the board of assistance discussed the transfer of psychiatric patients from the Cork mental hospital to Cork county home because it was cheaper to maintain them in the latter institution. It is not clear if this proposal was ever put into practice. In 1933, the matron complained to the board of assistance that the Gardaí routinely admitted people who were excessively drunk to the county home and that the practice ‘had the effect of disturbing the ordinary patients occupying the same wards’.¹⁷ Court cases relating to assaults in Cork county home and other criminal proceedings where the defendant was living in Cork county home were frequently recorded in local newspapers from the 1920s to the 1950s. Reports of drunk and disorderly ‘inmates’ were common and women living in the home were regular victims of physical assault. On one occasion, a woman smashed 38 windows in the institution and physically assaulted another woman. Another was admitted drunk and assaulted a woman. Many attempted suicides were reported - ‘inmates’ cut, or attempted to cut, their own throats open in front of other residents. Others threw themselves from open windows. In one incident, a male inmate killed an elderly male resident and a member of staff by repeatedly hitting them both with an iron drawn from a fire.

Living conditions

28.40 In 1931, the board of assistance instructed the local authority veterinary inspector, Dr Cussen, to inspect the meat being supplied to Cork county home. Dr Cussen reported that the contractor was supplying poor quality meat - some of which was so bad he ordered its destruction in a furnace. Dr Cussen reported that the contractor had tendered a price at which he could not supply the quality of meat required and stated that the contractor ‘was not a public philanthropist, and never was’.¹⁸

28.41 In 1934, local authority analysts reported that a sample of milk supplied to Cork county home was ‘not of the nature, substance and quality of ordinary milk by reason of its being deficient in milk solids’. The analysts concluded that the milk supplied to the institution had been diluted by the addition of 18% water. The

¹⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 27 July 1933.

¹⁸ *Irish Examiner*, 12 November 1931.

board undertook to publicly name and prosecute the supplier.¹⁹ The board frequently advertised, inviting tenders for the supply of beef, mutton, tripe, drisheen, fowl, chickens, milk, butter, eggs, flour, oatmeal, potatoes, yeast, fish, salt, golden syrup and alkali.

28.42 Members of the board of assistance visited Cork county home in September 1932 and reported that there were no fires lighting in some sections of the home and hospital. The matron explained that not all fires were lit during the summer. The board members then complained about the quality of the tea in the institution which was made and served by a 12 year-old boy. They complained that the boy did not know what quantity of tea and sugar to put in the water and concluded that 'it was not fit for pigs'.²⁰

28.43 In 1938, an unmarried mother living in Cork county home was found lying in bed with a new-born baby lying dead at her feet. The woman had previously been admitted to Cork county home pregnant in 1930. She gave birth there, but the child died soon after. She was admitted to the home again in 1933 and gave birth to another child. Both mother and child had been living in Cork county home for five years. One night she complained of abdominal pains to the nurse on duty. The following morning the nurse discovered the body of an infant in the woman's bed. At the inquest, medical staff told a jury that:

[The woman] was unmarried, was an inmate of the institution for the past five years, and had already given birth to two other babies. Nobody ever suspected that [the woman] was pregnant, for she dressed in such a way that her pregnancy could not be observed. She was mentally deficient.²¹

28.44 A doctor gave evidence that the baby was born alive and fully developed but that there were no marks of violence on the body. He stated that the child had been born around 12 hours before the body was discovered. A pathologist stated that death was due to 'inattention at birth'. The institutional records show that the woman's four-year-old child was boarded out soon after the incident and the woman herself was transferred to a Good Shepherd Convent (a Magdalen laundry).

¹⁹ *Irish Examiner*, 24 October 1934.

²⁰ *Irish Examiner*, 29 September 1932.

²¹ *Evening Echo*, 23 July 1938.

28.45 The board of assistance visiting committee sought to establish how the woman became pregnant while in Cork county home and why she concealed her pregnancy. The DLGPH also dispatched an inspector, Dr Florence Dillon, to investigate the matter. The department concluded that no institutional staff were to blame for the incident and that no corroborative evidence was produced to support the woman's claim that a named individual was responsible for her pregnancy. The board of assistance did not accept the department's findings as 'a satisfactory termination of the case' and that 'responsibility for neglect should be placed on whoever was responsible'. However, it does not appear that any further action was taken. The DLGPH concluded by recommending that:

Unmarried mothers, especially those with marked mental or moral defect should not in future be put to work in any place alone and should, where possible, be directly under the observation of a member of the staff, or failing that, accompanied by a more reliable type of inmate.

28.46 No descriptive accounts of living conditions in Cork county home were found in the institutional or related records. However, a controversy in 1937 did throw some light on the matter. In this instance a married woman sought admission to the home with her three children. A member of the South Cork board remonstrated that this 'respectable lady' was forced to 'consort with women of ill-fame' in the county home and that her children were housed in a nursery 'not fit for a kennel'. These comments were subsequently published in the local press and drew angry responses from several board members. The matron of the county home told the board that she did not appreciate that 'alleged defects' in the institution were broadcast in such a manner without attempting to have them remedied in a more satisfactory way. She stated that, in terms of 'cleanliness and brightness', the nursery in the home compared favourably with any hospital. The matron stated that single women living in the institution were 'greatly pained by the appellation applied to them' and that the married woman in question had expressed her regret that women living in the home had been degraded by the board member who sought to help her and her family. The matron stated that the married woman 'showed no pharisaical spirit during her time in the nursery, nor have any other married women, who, from time to time, are admitted there'. The Board investigated the allegations and concluded that they were unfounded and a 'gross misrepresentation' of conditions in the county home nursery.

28.47 In 1949 an inter-departmental committee was established to examine conditions in county homes. The committee reported that although buildings were generally 'sound and spacious' they were 'lacking in comfort and amenities'. The committee found that county homes were 'cheerless and badly furnished', that wards were large with un-plastered walls, no ceilings, rough floors, poor beds and bedding, with few chairs, lockers, dressing tables or mirrors and that the general atmosphere in the institutions was 'depressing'. The committee reported:

Sanitary and bathing facilities are insufficient and generally rather crude...Supplies of running water, especially hot running water, are frequently insufficient...Central heating is a rarity and the standard of heating resulting from the single open fire in a large room or ward is inadequate, the fire smokes, thus adding to the prevailing gloom. There are no single rooms or cubicles for special cases requiring them on medical grounds and small wards are rare.

28.48 Regarding accommodation provided for unmarried mothers and children in county homes the committee reported that conditions were 'equally unsatisfactory'. The committee stated that the county home environment was 'most unsuitable' for children and that 'nurseries were rough, poorly furnished and lacking in elementary playing facilities'. The committee stated that in some county homes it was not possible to properly segregate children from adult patients and recommended that separate institutions should be established to house unmarried mothers with children younger than the normal boarding out age (2 years). The committee also recommended that local authorities should consider employing unmarried mothers in county homes when their children were boarded out 'so as to aid in their rehabilitation'. However, the committee reported that there was some reluctance on the part of county home authorities to 'get rid' of unmarried mothers as matrons of the homes relied 'almost wholly' on these women to undertake the 'burdensome and menial work' necessary for running 'large institutions' such as county homes. Matrons told the committee that the removal of unmarried women from county homes would make it impossible to run the institutions. The committee reported that unmarried women engaged in 'menial duties' incidental to the running of county homes without pay. They further reported that accommodation for unmarried mothers in county homes were 'the worst furnished and most unattractive in the institutions' and that their treatment while living in county homes led them to develop 'a soured and distrustful attitude to society generally'.

Single mothers employed in Cork county home

28.49 An incident in 1938 is illustrative of the attitudes of the matron of Cork county home and members of the South Cork Board of Public Assistance towards single mothers. In this case, a councillor told the board that five single women, who were former residents of the home and whose children were boarded out, were employed as paid wards maids in the county home. The councillor objected to the fact that 'past inmates' were employed in the home and proposed that the women should contribute to the cost of their children's maintenance. The board agreed to the proposal and stated:

The Board deprecates the practice of recruiting staff of the Cork County Home and Hospital from inmates, particularly the mothers of illegitimate children, as it tends to lower the status and prestige of the Hospital. The Board re-directs that under no circumstances is such practice to be adopted in the future. The Board further directs the Matron to deduct from the salaries payable to such temporary employees the full amount of the boarding out allowance incurred by the Board, i.e. £15.00 per annum from date of boarding out until the age of 9 years, and £16.00 per annum from 9 to 15 years.

28.50 The matron asked the board to reconsider their decision on the basis that the women would see their weekly wage reduce from 15s to 9s, 'for which they would be unwilling to work'. She informed the board that the women would not be expected to contribute to their children's maintenance if they worked outside the institution. In the women's defence, the matron stated:

They are very good girls and though rated as wards maids they carry out important duties. One is employed as a cook in the fever hospital; a second works in the nurses home; a third gives valuable and skilled assistance to nursing staff in the Female Mental Division and the fourth is employed as a maid in the Fever Hospital where she works in an infected atmosphere. Owing to the delicate nature of their position, these girls are naturally averse to having their names published. The probability of being asked to pay was not put to them when they were engaged here.

28.51 Although some councillors agreed with the matron, a motion to reverse the board's decision was not carried. The board did not consider that the women involved were 'indispensable' to the running of the county home and directed the matron to deduct the cost of maintenance from their wages. The board's solicitor informed them that the women involved in the dispute had not agreed to have the cost of

maintenance deducted from their wages when they were first employed and had threatened legal action to recover any deductions. He advised that such action would succeed. The board resolved to terminate the women's employment unless they were prepared to agree in writing to the reduction in wages. In a bid to keep their jobs, two women agreed to accept the conditions laid down by the board. The other two women did not and issued legal proceedings against the board. The latter two women were dismissed from their posts. The board ordered their solicitors to pursue these two women for the cost of their children's maintenance even though they were no longer in employment. The board's solicitor informed them that the women were not in a financial position to bear the cost of their children's maintenance and advised that it would be a waste of money to pursue the matter. The board instructed the matron to monitor the women and to inform the board if they ever became financially secure enough to pay for their children's maintenance. The board also instructed the matron to engage the Garda authorities to trace their whereabouts.

Discharge pathways

- 28.52 Most women either returned to their family home with their children or arranged for their future care through the boarding out system or by making private arrangements with a nurse mother – 340 women transferred to Bessborough.
- 28.53 If a woman was able to return to her family home with her child, her family would write to the secretary of the Board of Assistance stating that they were willing to take their daughter and her child home. The board would then seek a recommendation, generally from a parish priest, to vouch for the family. In addition, the board might also ask one of their assistance officers (see Chapter 1) to inspect the family home to ensure that it was fit for the reception of the mother and child. Once the board was satisfied that the home environment was suitable, it notified the matron of the county home that the mother and her child could be discharged to her family. The Commission is not aware of any legal basis for the board to prevent a mother leaving the institution with her child, but the measures taken may have been due to a concern about the welfare of the child, in particular in the light of some high profile cases of infanticide.
- 28.54 If a woman sought to make private arrangements with a nurse mother to look after her baby, she could do so herself or use an intermediary such as the Catholic Women's Aid Society (CWAS). The CWAS was set up in 1919 by Sister Laurentia

in the Sisters of Mercy convent attached to the Cork union workhouse (Cork county home). Sister Laurentia set up CWAS in response to a number of high profile court cases where nurse mothers were charged with neglecting and causing the death of 'illegitimate' children they had been paid to care for.²² It appears that when the lump sum received for a child's care was spent many nurse mothers lost interest in the child and their wellbeing. With CWAS, a woman deposited £60 to the CWAS bank account and handed over her infant and the deposit receipt to Sister Laurentia. Sister Laurentia then sourced a suitable nurse mother for the infant and paid her the £60 over three years in twelve quarterly instalments. If a woman did not have £60 to deposit, she could pay Sister Laurentia in instalments. For women who had difficulty paying instalments CWAS used interest accrued in their bank account to pay nurse mothers on their behalf. Women who accepted a child under a nursed-out arrangement were required to notify the Board of Assistance of the reception of a child, whether they received payment or not - see Chapter 1.

- 28.55 If a woman could not return to her family home and did not have the means to pay a nurse mother, or to provide for herself and her child, then her only option was to place her child in foster care under the boarding out scheme. The policy was that a child could not be boarded out until the age of two. This option invariably meant that mother and child remained in the institutional setting of a county home for several years. A woman did not give up her parental rights when her child was boarded out and could reclaim the child at any time. The available records do not suggest that this was a frequent occurrence. Prior to the introduction of legal adoption in Ireland, many foster parents informally adopted children boarded out from Cork county home by informing the board of assistance that they no longer wished to receive a boarding out allowance for them.

Braemar Rescue Home for Protestant Girls

- 28.56 In the period 1922-60, 64 single expectant Protestant women were admitted to Cork county home. All were admitted from the Braemar Rescue Home for Protestant Girls, Old Blackrock Road. Braemar was a lay run maternity home under the auspices of the Cork Women's Aid Association.²³ Women admitted from Braemar were aged between 15 and 42 years old and most stated their occupation as domestic servant. While most women gave addresses in one of the three Cork

²² *Cork Examiner*, 20 March 1923 and *Cork Examiner*, 27 October 1923.

²³ Although the initials are similar, this was a different organisation from the Catholic Women's Aid Society.

health districts, some had travelled from Armagh and Donegal. Women stayed in Braemar until they went into labour and were then admitted to Cork county home. The South Cork board of public assistance took responsibility for their maintenance. Protestant women and their children were discharged to the Braemar home and their children were fostered out from there.

Maternal mortality

- 28.57 The Commission has identified 35 deaths among single expectant women and unmarried mothers admitted to the Cork county home between 1923 and 1960. Thirty deaths occurred in the institution; the remainder occurred subsequent to women's transfer to Bessborough and the South Infirmary. The women were aged between 15 and 40 years at the time of death.
- 28.58 Sixteen maternal deaths were notified as being due to childbirth related causes such as eclampsia and puerperal sepsis representing a maternal mortality rate of 1.12%. Ten deaths were notified as being due to cardiac failure or heart disease and five as tuberculosis. Other deaths were notified as being due to, appendicitis, bronchitis, encephalitis and kidney disease.

Unaccompanied children 1922-60

- 28.59 In the period 1922-60, 375 'illegitimate' children were admitted unaccompanied to Cork county home. Of these, seven children were found abandoned, 207 were admitted unaccompanied for boarding out or were returned by foster parents and 161 were admitted unaccompanied from Bessborough for boarding out. A further 23 children transferred with their mothers from Bessborough to Cork county home with a view to being boarded out.
- 28.60 The matrons' journals, which are available for the period April 1937 to July 1940, record frequent admissions of unaccompanied children having been returned to the county home by their foster parents for various reasons. A three-year old boy boarded out from Bessborough was admitted to the county home after one day because the foster mother complained that 'the child cried incessantly'. Two boarded out children aged eight and 11 years were returned to the county home by their foster parents. As no suitable foster parents were available both children were transferred to Kinsale industrial school. Another eight-year-old child returned

by foster parents was transferred to Greenmount industrial school.²⁴ A two-year-old boy taken by his mother was returned unaccompanied to the county home because she could not support him. A four-year old girl was returned by her foster parents because she had 'a marked cast in both eyes' and they 'found her appearance objectionable'. The girl was transferred to Kinsale Industrial School. A five-year old girl, born with one hand, was returned by several foster parents 'owing to her deformity'. She was transferred to a Good Shepherd Convent.²⁵ Many other children were returned by foster parents who claimed that the children were 'backward'. Although some 'returned' children were subsequently re-boarded out from the county home with different foster parents, most, and children aged six years and over in particular, were transferred to industrial schools.

- 28.61 Unaccompanied children transferred from Bessborough to Cork county home were transferred in groups at the behest of the Cork board of assistance. For instance, on 13 September 1941, six children aged two years and older were transferred from Bessborough to Cork county home for boarding out. Group transfers of children from Bessborough to the county home were frequent during the period under review. The transfers were undertaken at the behest of the Cork board of assistance who refused to pay the Bessborough authorities maintenance for children aged two years and over. All unaccompanied children transferred in this manner were two years and over and the transfers occurred during periods of overcrowding in Bessborough or after a departmental inspection of that institution. On 1 October 1948, 11 women and their children, all aged over two years, were also transferred from Bessborough to the county home.
- 28.62 Throughout the period under review the matron of Cork county home continually notified the board of assistance that the nursery in the institution was overcrowded with children waiting to be boarded out. In October 1927, the board of assistance was informed that 'illegitimate' children of school-going age were living in the county home with their mothers. The board was told that these women were not likely to leave the institution because of poor health or inability to procure employment and resolved to seek ministerial approval to have the children boarded out. The issue was raised again in December. The board was again informed that the county home nursery was overcrowded due to the 'large number of healthy older children' living there. The matron asked the board to expedite the

²⁴ Ryan Commission: <http://www.childabusecommission.ie/rpt/pdfs/CICA-VOL2-04.PDF>

²⁵ Almost certainly an industrial school.

boarding out of older children to alleviate overcrowding. The board said they were taking steps to secure suitable foster homes.

- 28.63 In October 1938, the matron informed the board that there were several children of both sexes in the nursery suitable for boarding out or otherwise provided for and that the nursery was 'rather crowded'. The board told her that all efforts by assistance officers had failed to secure foster parents and that the secretary was directed to issue a public advertisement. However, by 1944 the situation had worsened and the board undertook to 'advertise intensely' for foster parents at regular intervals.

Infant mortality

- 28.64 The Commission has not seen institutional death registers for the Cork county home for the years 1922-60. Other institutional records suggest that 545 'illegitimate' infants and children born in or admitted to the institution died in infancy or early childhood. When cross referenced with documentation created by the South Cork board of public assistance and the Cork Health Authority, it was established that some infants, whose deaths seem to have been indicated in the institutional records, were in fact boarded out by the local authority or had been placed at nurse by their mother. Cross reference with records held by the GRO confirmed the deaths of 512 'illegitimate' children.
- 28.65 Most deaths (55.5%) occurred among children who were accompanied in the institution by their mothers: 44.5% of deaths occurred among unaccompanied children. Most deaths among unaccompanied children related to children admitted unaccompanied from the Bessborough home.
- 28.66 Most deaths (89%) occurred in the institution. Around 9% of deaths occurred after children's transfer to Bessborough. A small number of deaths occurred following transfer to the Braemar Home for Protestant Girls, the South Infirmary and the Victoria Hospital.
- 28.67 About 84% of deaths occurred among children who were born in the institution and 16% occurred among children who were admitted after birth. Most children who were admitted after birth and who subsequently died were admitted from Bessborough.

28.68 Women who experienced complications during pregnancy were routinely transferred from maternity hospitals in Cork to the district hospital attached to Cork county home. Many such emergency cases were women transferred from Bessborough. Of the 512 confirmed infant and child deaths in Cork county home, 109 were either transferred from Bessborough or born to women transferred from Bessborough.

Age at death

28.69 Around 93% of deaths occurred in infants less than twelve months old: among these 16% were less than a week old; 10% were between one week and one month old and 67% were aged between one and 12 months old at the time of death. The remaining deaths (7%) occurred among children aged one year and over.

Deaths by Year

28.70 Infant and child deaths in Cork county home were highest in the 1920s and 1930s, peaking in 1925 when 31 deaths were recorded. Infant and child deaths were relatively high during the war years, peaking in 1944 when 23 deaths were recorded. There was a noticeable reduction from 1948 and an even further reduction subsequent to the establishment of a paediatric unit at the institution in 1951.

Death rate

28.71 The average death rate among 'illegitimate' infants and children born in or admitted to Cork county home and district hospital in the years 1921-60 was around 20%. However, a death rate of 39% was recorded in 1935 which suggests that two in every five 'illegitimate' children born in or admitted to the institution in that year died. The relatively high death rate of almost 35% recorded in 1944 was a consequence of the increased admissions of single expectant women due to the closure of Bessborough that year.

28.72 In 1948, and due to the introduction of antibiotics, infant and child mortality in the institution began to decrease. However, a more marked decline in mortality can be observed from 1951 when Dr R G Barry opened the city's first paediatric unit at Cork county home/St Finbarr's Hospital. Chief Medical Officer to Cork City, Dr Jack Saunders wrote:

One could not fail to be impressed by the striking improvements effected for the treatment of children there in connection with the paediatric unit organised by Dr R. G. Barry. While admittedly not perfect in accordance with modern standards, this unit represents a great forward step in the treatment of infants' diseases so far as this city is concerned...One was, in particular, impressed with the facilities now available for the treatment of Gastro-Enteritis and the prevention of its introduction into children's wards by way of cross-infection.²⁶

- 28.73 Dr Saunders later wrote that, although the prevalence of epidemic diarrhoea and gastroenteritis in the city and in Cork county home increased during the 1950s, deaths from the disease remained low and stated that 'it must be reasonable to suggest that the stand-alone paediatric unit at St Finbarr's Hospital continued to play a positive role in reducing infant mortality in the city.'²⁷

Cause of death

- 28.74 The most common cause of death was gastroenteritis, which accounted for over 26% of deaths. About 17% of deaths were attributed to malabsorption which included deaths notified as marasmus and wasting from birth. A further 17% were attributed to non-specific causes such as congenital debility and prematurity. Around 13% were attributed to respiratory infections, mainly bronchopneumonia and 10% were attributed to tuberculosis. Other causes of death such as convulsions, syphilis, congenital heart disease, generalised infections, haemorrhage, meningitis, spina bifida, measles and diphtheria featured to a lesser extent.

Infant Burials

- 28.75 The Commission established that the Cork District Cemetery at Carr's Hill, Cork, was owned and operated by the South Cork board of public assistance in the period in which Cork county home was in operation. The Commission understands that the unclaimed remains of those who died in Cork county home were buried at Carr's Hill. The Commission and HSE staff made extensive efforts to locate burial registers for Carr's Hill but none was located. A former administrator of St Finbarr's Hospital told the Commission that he had access to mortuary records which recorded details of burials and the removal of remains of those who died in

²⁶ J.C. Saunders, *Report on the Health of Cork County Borough for the year 1951.*

²⁷ J.C. Saunders, *Report on the Health of Cork County Borough for the year 1951.*

the institution from the 1940s to the 1970s. The Commission and HSE staff made extensive efforts to locate the mortuary records with limited success. Although some mortuary records relating to the years 1968-85 were located, mortuary records from the 1940s to the late-1960s were not found. Correspondence relating to an infant who died in Cork county home/St Finbarr's Hospital in 1960 stated that the mortuary records for that year had been consulted and that the child's unclaimed remains had been buried at Carr's Hill. Aerial photography obtained by the Commission show that Carr's Hill was in operation in the early 1950s. Anecdotal evidence from a former employee of St Finbarr's Hospital suggests that burials of deceased patients from Cork county home/St Finbarr's Hospital continued at Carr's Hill until 1962.

- 28.76 The Commission examined all available burial registers relating to cemeteries in Cork city and hinterland. Of the 449 confirmed deaths of 'illegitimate' infants and children in Cork county home in the period 1922-60, burial records for just two were found. Both were found in the burial registers of St Finbarr's Cemetery and related to burials in the 'poor ground' section in 1948 and 1950.
- 28.77 Archivists at Cork City and County Archives alerted the Commission to a ledger 'Record of Deaths in Cork County Home and Hospital' which covered periods between 1931 and 1984. The volume relating to the period April 1931 to August 1940 recorded whether the board of assistance issued a shroud, coffin or burial plot. Although many adults who died in the institution during this period were allotted burial plots, none was allotted to 'illegitimate' infants and children who died in the institution in this period. This volume recorded that 50 deceased 'illegitimate' infants and children were allotted shrouds: nine of these were also allotted coffins. It appears that those who were allotted coffins were children over one year old.
- 28.78 The Commission located mortuary records relating to St Finbarr's Hospital for the years 1968-85 at Cork University Maternity Hospital. This set of index cards was compiled by a mortuary porter at the institution and recorded patient details including name, last address, date of death, name of undertaker and place of burial. Index cards relating to 'illegitimate' infants who died in St Finbarr's Hospital in this period stated that all were interred in St Michael's Cemetery. The Commission examined the burial registers at St Michael's Cemetery but found no burial record for the infants identified on the mortuary index cards. Further analysis of the mortuary index cards revealed that in some instances deceased

infants were recorded as having been buried in the coffin of a deceased adult patient. In other instances, infants were recorded as being buried in coffins containing amputated limbs.²⁸ The Commission established that the Cork Health Authority/Southern Health Board were buying burial plots in St Michael's Cemetery since its opening in 1948. These burial plots were used to bury the unclaimed remains of adults who died in Cork county home/St Finbarr's Hospital. The Commission has not been able to establish if the practice of burying the remains of 'illegitimate' infants in the coffins of deceased adults was undertaken as far back as 1948.

²⁸ HSE, Cork University Maternity Hospital, Burial index card box/folder of burial records 1968-85.